

Justice

Among the virtues that have suffered most in modern times, one of the outstanding is that of justice. It has been attacked by many false principles, such as: "Business is business," "You can't get ahead without some sharp dealing," and "So long as a thing is legal it is O.K." Such disregard of the principles of justice between man and man has gradually distorted the necessary distinctions between "mine" and "thine" until in some instances the conscience is completely dulled.

Despite all popular notions to the contrary, justice is still an essential part of the natural law, and every sin and fault against it will be punished by God. It is defined as the virtue whereby a man respects the rights of others to what they possess; whereby he gives to every man what is his due, and takes from no man anything except that to which he has a just title. Just titles for the acquisition of material things are: 1) occupation, e.g., settling on unowned and unclaimed land, finding a lost article without trace of the owner, etc.; 2) the acceptance of increase, fruit or additional value that arises in a thing already possessed; 3) exchange of material things with other men, either thing for thing, or money for thing, or services for thing, etc.; 4) heredity.

Any taking of material things from others without one of these titles or a title akin to one of them is injustice. It can readily be seen, therefore, that there are many ways in which justice can be violated. The principal ones are outlined in the questions below.

I. Mortal Sins

1. Have I directly stolen anything of considerable value from another, i.e., either 1) of great value to the person involved, as one or two dollars might be to a poor person, or five dollars might be to a person of more means; or 2) of great value in itself and in the common estimation of society, so that even if it were taken from a corporation or a very rich person, it would still be considered a grave injustice?

2. Have I stolen a considerable sum of money or valuable articles from a church, which adds sacrilege to the sin of theft? 3. Have I stolen small sums from a person or corporation with the intention of continuing the practice over a period of time? 4. Have I actually continued to steal small amounts at regular intervals and so taken a large sum over a period of time?

5. Have I joined with others in stealing, each one agreeing to take a little, but the total amounting to a grave sum?

6. Have I failed to make restitution for grave thefts when I could have done so?

7. Have I accepted stolen goods from another, either as a gift or a sale, to be used by myself or sold again?

8. Have I willfully injured the property of another to a serious extent?

9. Have I refused to pay for another person's property that I have willfully and seriously damaged?

10. Have I defrauded another of something valuable, to which he had a right, by telling a lie, or giving false testimony, or secretly changing a contract or a will?

11. Have I acquired the property of another through deceit, lying, misrepresentation, etc., or sold a bad investment in the same way?

12. Have I found something of considerable value and kept it when I knew the owner, or failed to try to find the owner when there was a possibility of doing so?

13. Have I deprived my family of a decent living by keeping my money for myself or foolishly spending it?

14. Have I, as executor or official representative of another in business matters, enriched myself or others by acting contrary to his known will, or refused to carry out his express will in distributing his goods?

15. Have I given short weight or measure in selling things to others, either to the extent of a grave amount on one occasion, or by cheating in small amounts regularly and continuously? 16. Have I charged a gravely exorbitant price for something because I knew that somebody would pay that much?

17. Have I lied about the quality of something I sold or exchanged, thus cheating another gravely?

18. Have I enriched myself by paying gravely inadequate wages to those who worked for me?

19. Have I campaigned and conspired to prevent laborers from obtaining a living wage?

20. Have I cheated my employer by seriously neglecting the work I was hired to do?

21. Have I supported communists or racketeers in making unjust demands upon employers?

22. Have I cooperated in sabotage or the destruction of property because of labor disputes?

23. Have I cheated or deceived a partner in business so that there was a gravely unjust distribution of profits?

24. Have I bribed others to give me contracts to which I had no right, so that somebody was unjustly deprived of gain?

25. Have I taken bribes for the use of my authority either in business or public life, to give unjust preferences or awards to others?

26. As an official of the people, have I accepted bribes on condition that I would permit evil or allow it to go unpunished? 27. Have I cheated in gambling, or offered fixed devices for gambling to others, thus winning valuable stakes to which I had no right?

28. Have I evaded paying any just and grave debt I had incurred?

II. Venial Sins

1. Have I deliberately stolen anything of small value, even though it was worth very little?

2. Have I used the property of others without their permission?

3. Have I damaged things belonging to others by carelessness and misuse?

4. Have I borrowed things from others, such as books, articles of clothing, etc., and never returned them?

5. Have I kept lost articles of small value when I knew or could find the owner?

6. Have I accepted small things from others, which I knew were stolen?

7. Have I given away small things that were not mine to give?

8. Have I lied my way out of small debts and obligations?
9. Have I been guilty of petty cheating in games of chance, thus gaining by dishonesty?
10. Have I induced people to give me things by lying about the extent of my property?
11. Have I failed to reveal to others the mistakes they inadvertently made in giving me too much change or more of a commodity than I paid for?
12. Have I neglected to make restitution for small articles I had stolen or unjustly acquired?