

Faculties Exam – Study Guide

The candidate is to be examined on his understanding of moral and sacramental principles, and on his ability to explain how those principles may be employed in pastoral situations. The successful candidate will demonstrate the capacity:

(a) to apply the relevant principles of Catholic moral theology, especially those of St. Thomas Aquinas, to pastoral situations in general, and to confessional situations in particular [DSPT MDiv Outcome 6];

(b) to explain simply, accurately, and effectively these theological principles in pastoral situations [DSPT MDiv Outcome 1]; and

(c) to analyze, assess, and address moral/spiritual/pastoral situations, through scriptural, historical, and systematic theological approaches, according to the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church [DSPT MDiv Outcome 3].

The candidate's responses are to be doctrinally sound and pastorally focused, reflecting moral, intellectual, psychological, and emotional maturity.

1. The moral act – The candidate should understand:

- Aquinas's analysis of the moral act: object, end, circumstances.
- Aquinas's understanding of intentionality, including that which is *praeter intentionem* (and its relation to the principle of "double effect").
- the factors that diminish an agent's responsibility, both the classical five as well as other social, cultural, economic and psychological factors.
- such reflex principles as a doubtful law, the safer course, presumption concerning past actions, etc.
- the principles of "cooperation," "appropriation," and "toleration."
- the place of law and kinds of law in moral life: divine law, natural law, positive law, canon law.
- the chief kinds of sins against the truth: lying, perjury, rash judgment, calumny, detraction, etc.;
- the Christian's obligation regarding telling the truth and any circumstances that may modify this obligation.
- moral principles concerning confidentiality.
- the distinction between mortal sin and venial sin, their relation to one's friendship with God, and the conditions necessary for formally mortal sin.
- the role of grace (the infused and theological virtues) in the moral life.

2. Conscience. – The candidate should understand:

- the role of the confessor with respect to the formation of conscience.
- the dynamics of scrupulosity, and obsessive-compulsive factors that may be relevant to it.
- the stages of moral development as classically developed, as well as more recent theories (such as that of Kohlberg).
- the stages of practical reasoning and the levels of moral responsibility relevant to them.

3. Sexuality and Marriage. – The candidate should understand:

- moral principles relating to homosexuality and homosexual activity.
- moral principles relating to premarital or non-marital sex.
- moral principles relating to sexual activity between spouses.
- the Church's teaching and canonical practice regarding mixed marriages, separation, annulments, and divorce.
- the principles that come into play with regard to Eucharistic communion and participation in other sacraments for those who are living in objectively anomalous situations with regard to Church teaching (e.g., contraception, homosexuality, pre-marital sexual relationships, divorced and remarried, as well as patently unjust social situations).

4. Contraception and fertility/pregnancy technologies. – The candidate should understand:

- the Church's teaching on contraception, including the fundamental principles involved in the Church's teaching about the transmission of human life.
- morally acceptable forms of family planning.
- possible abortifacient effects of various means of contraception.
- the Church's teaching on artificial fertilization (heterologous and homologous in vitro fertilization, embryo transfer, artificial insemination, and surrogate motherhood).

5. Justice. – The candidate should understand:

- the principles that govern the restitution of property.
- the basic principles operative in end-of-life decisions (nutrition, hydration, life support; ordinary vs. extraordinary means; the place [if any] of quality of life criteria).
- the rationale behind the twin Christian traditions of non-violence and just warfare, as well as the traditional criteria for fighting a just war.
- the principles that guide believers regarding participating in, and seeking to improve, contemporary political, economic, and social structures.
- the Christian's obligations to the state: taxes, social welfare.
- the respective rights and duties of employer and employee.

6. Sacrament of Penance. – The candidate should understand:

- the elements of a valid celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation.
- who should approach the sacrament, its frequency, and the annual obligation.
- the meaning and importance of contrition and purpose of amendment.
- the role of penance (satisfaction) in the sacrament, and the principles that should guide the assignment of the penance by the Priest.
- any circumstances which may dictate that absolution should be delayed or withheld.
- the various aspects of the Church's faculties for hearing sacramental confessions: how they are granted, where they apply, etc.
- the three rites of the sacrament, and when are they to be used.
- why a priest is the proper minister of the sacrament of reconciliation.
- the obligations of the confessor regarding ministerial practice, Christian education, and formation of conscience.
- the conditions relevant to the incurring/infliction of canonical penalties, and to their remission by the confessor.

In addition, the candidate should be familiar with and able to discuss the practical principles for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (see, e.g., Fr. Krasevac's "Rules of Thumb").