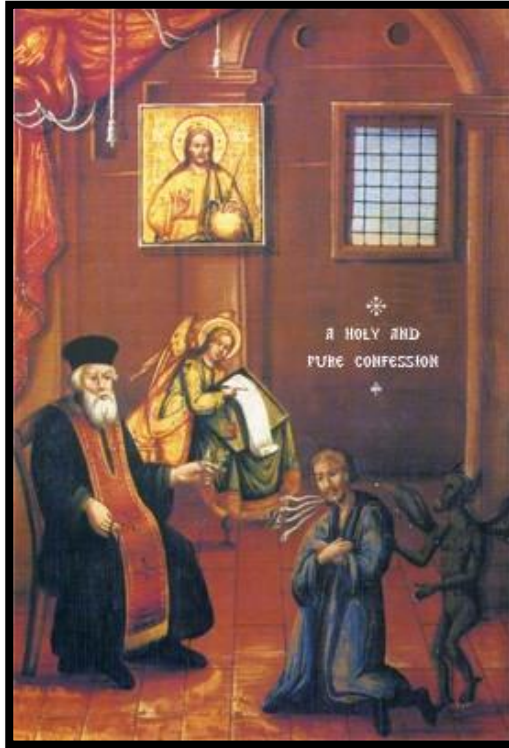


PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION



During Great Lent, and the other fasts of the Church Year, it is customary for all Orthodox Christians to go to confession to their priest. Properly this should be done several times a year, the exact frequency depending upon how often one is blessed to receive the Holy Mysteries and on the counsel and blessing of one's spiritual father. As a preparation for this sacramental confession and to help one examine one's conscience before coming to confession, the following questions are provided and, although of course the list is not exhaustive, it may be a helpful to aid your preparation.

Anyone preparing for confession must ask God to help his resolve to tell all his sins. A penitent should prepare for confession and collect his thoughts regarding his sins at least a day before confession. The most valuable thing in the eyes of God is the confession of the sin which weighs most on the conscience.

The questions listed are intended to help the Orthodox Christian examine himself and identify the symptoms of his spiritual ills; they should not be taken as some kind of test to ascertain how well we are doing as if there was a certain "pass-mark." Before God's perfections, we shall always fail. It is for that reason that, as believing Christians, we throw ourselves on the mercy of the Lord and do not trust in our own righteousness.

Remember that our sins can never outweigh God's love towards us. Even if we should seem to have failed with regard to all the points mentioned and even more, we should not lose heart but confess our sins. We should regret the wrongs we have done, be resolved to make amends, and receive whatever remedy our confessor should be guided to lay upon us. Most of all, one should be assured of the blessing of God which these endeavors will bring upon you.

Sins Against God

Do you pray to God in the morning and evening, before and after meals?

During prayer have you allowed your thoughts to wander? Have you rushed your prayers?

Do you read the Scriptures and other spiritual writings regularly?

Have you read books or watched shows or movies whose content is anti-Christian, or is spiritually damaging?

Have you pronounced the name of God without reverence, in joking or just without respect?

Have you asked God's help before starting every activity?

Have you made the sign of the Cross carelessly, thoughtlessly?

Have you sworn?

Have you murmured against God?

Have you sinned by forgetting God?

Have you been slack in attending church?

Have you consecrated even part of the feast days, particularly Sundays and the Twelve Great Feasts, to God?

Have you tried your best to attend church on these days, or have you spent them more sinfully than ordinary days?

If unable to attend church for some reason, have you nonetheless tried to devote some part of these days to prayer and spiritual reading?

Have you joined with people not of the Faith in prayer, or attended their worship services without the blessing of your priest?

Have you kept the fasts?

Have you behaved irreverently in church, or before the clergy and monastics?

Have you laughed or talked in church, or moved about unnecessarily, thus also distracting other people from prayer?

Have you dressed modestly and in a becoming manner when in church?

Have you ever left church after the Divine Services, and particularly after receiving the Holy Mysteries and immediately engaged in light talk and thus forgotten the blessings and graces you have received?

Have you been ashamed of your Faith or the sign of the Cross in the presence of others?

Have you made a show of your piety?

Have you used your Orthodox Faith or its teachings merely to browbeat others or belittle them?

Have you used it as a shield or excuse for your own inadequacies rather than humbling yourself?

Have you believed in dreams, fortune telling, astrology, signs and other superstitions?

Do you give thanks to the Lord for all things?

Have you ever doubted God's providence concerning yourself?

Do you at least try to perceive His purpose in all the things that come upon you?

Sins Against Your Neighbors

Do you respect and obey your parents?

Have you offended them by rudeness or contradiction?

Do you remember your deceased relatives in prayer and by offering Holy Oblations on the anniversary of their passing?

Have you been respectful and obedient to your Spiritual Leaders, the Clergy?

Have you insulted anyone?

Have you quarreled or fought with anyone? Have you hit anyone?

Are you always respectful to the elderly?

Are you angry, bad tempered or irritable?

Have you called anyone names? Do you use foul language?

Have you derided any that are disabled, poor, old or in some way disadvantaged?

Have you entertained bad feelings, ill will or hatred against anyone?

Have you forgiven those who have offended you?

Have you asked forgiveness from those whom you have offended?

Are you at peace with everyone?

Have you left the needy without help when you could have helped?

Have you attended the sick or elderly when they have asked you to do so?

Have you shown kindness and attention to all, remembering that God is expecting just such an attitude from you?

Have you hit animals without a cause or been cruel to them, or neglectful of those in your care?

Have you stolen anything?

Have you taken or used other people's things without asking?

Have you kept money or things that were lent you without returning them?

Have you wasted your employers' time or resources? Have you taken things from work for your own use, used the firm's phone or other facilities for your own purposes without permission or repayment?

Are you obstinate, and do you always try to have your own way?

Have you been inconsiderate of other people's feelings?

Have you tried to have your revenge against those who have offended you?

Have you harbored resentment? Have you deceived people?

Have you gossiped?

Have you told untruths?

Have you judged and condemned others?

Have you taken pains before approaching for confession to be reconciled with all?

Sins Against Yourself

Have you been proud? Do you boast of your abilities, achievements, family, connections or riches?

Do you consider yourself worthy before God?

Are you vain, ambitious? Do you try to win praise and glory?

Do you bear it easily when you are blamed, scolded or treated unjustly?

Do you think too much about your looks, outward appearance and the impression you make?

Have you sinned in thought, word or deed, by a look or glance, or in any other way against the seventh commandment? (Adultery, fornication, all extra-marital sexual relationships, masturbation, engaging in unnatural sexual acts, fantasizing, pornography, etc.)

Have you envied anyone anything?

Have you been over-sensitive?

Have you been lazy? Have you done your duties heartily?

Have you wasted your time, energy or abilities in things that do not profit the soul?

Have you become obsessive about anything?

Have you been despondent or listless?

Have you entertained thoughts of committing suicide?

Have you brought a curse on yourself or others or wished them ill?

Have you been impatient with others?

Have you a weakness for alcohol? Have you drunk too much; are you dependent on drink?

Have you taken illegal drugs?

Have you smoked?

Have you watched television or spent time in the internet too much or indiscriminately? Have you given yourself up to any other similar pastime which wastes your time and energy and might have harmed you?

Have you been greedy, either with regard to food or to possessions?

Have you indulged in comfort-eating? Have you become accustomed to eating between meals?

Have you been picky about your food, or wasteful of foods, forgetting that so many people are without proper nourishment? Have you been extravagant? Have you been wasteful?

Do you care for and seek first the salvation of your soul, the spiritual life and the kingdom of God, or have you put earthly considerations in the first place?

Is there any other sin, which burdens your conscience, or which you are ashamed to tell?

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