

Preparation for Holy Confession



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Contents

Things to Remember	4
Making your Self-Examination	6
Prayers Before Self-Examination	7
Methods of Self-Examination	8
THE SEVEN GRIEVOUS SINS	8
<i>I. Pride</i>	8
<i>II. Anger</i>	11
<i>III. Envy</i>	12
<i>IV. Covetousness</i>	12
<i>V. Gluttony</i>	13
<i>VI. Lust</i>	14
<i>VII. Sloth</i>	15
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	16
<i>II. Thou Shalt Not Make To Thyself Any Graven Image (Idolatry)</i>	16
<i>III. Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of the Lord Thy God in Vain (Profanity)</i>	17
<i>IV. Remember the Sabbath Day, to Keep It Holy (Irreverence)</i>	17
<i>V. Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother (Disobedience)</i>	17
<i>VI. Thou Shalt Not Kill (Hate)</i>	18
<i>VII. Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery (Impurity)</i>	19
<i>VIII. Thou Shalt Not Steal (Theft)</i>	19
<i>IX. Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness (Deceit)</i>	19
<i>X. Thou Shalt Not Covet (Discontent)</i>	20
Prayers After Self-Examination	21
The Mystery of Holy Confession	22
Prayers After Confession	24

Things to Remember

The first commandment is: “Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all Thy heart, with all Thy mind, with all Thy soul, and with all Thy strength.”

The object of self-examination is to help us to love God and to do his will. It is not either solely or mainly looking into ourselves, Though a good self-examination will include this. If we merely look into ourselves, we shall see either only the self we want to see, or else be depressed and discouraged. Self-examination consists in looking upon Jesus Christ, who is the express image of God the Father, and what God wants us to be. In looking at our Lord, we shall have the true standard with which to compare ourselves. We shall be able to see ourselves as God sees us. But, we shall not be depressed or discouraged, because in through the grace of the Holy Spirit given to us through Christ, we can become as he is.

Utter and fearless reality and honesty are essential. Our Lord was very severe with “hypocrites.” His greatest condemnations were addressed to those who pretended to be what they were not, pretended not to be what they were, or refused to face the truth about themselves.

Deeds are the fruit of words, Thoughts and desires. To discover wrong actions is only valuable if we discover the words, Thoughts, desires and motives from which they sprang. To do otherwise is to pluck off the heads of the weeds and let the roots remain.

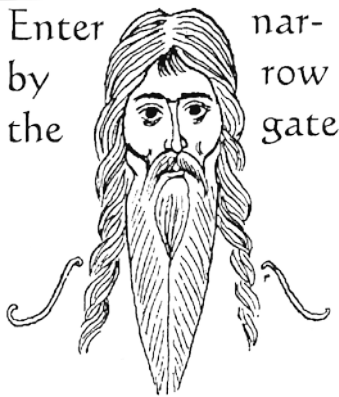
To omit to do good is just as dangerous and deadly as to do evil.

Temptation is not sin. To feel the lure of sin is temptation. To yield in body, mind or spirit or to acquiesce in Thought, word or deed is sin.

When we sin, we are breaking the love of God and turning our backs on the love of God. Sin therefore always places us outside of love, conditioning our every Thought, word and deed. So we must be on the watch. Sin may have become so “natural” in our life that we do not recognize it as sin, or it has become so much a part of us that we do not realize what it truly is.

It is very difficult to examine our hearts and lives as a whole. It is much easier to divide it into logical periods and examine each period in turn (for example: this week; this month; since marriage; etc.).

One Saint of sure and certain spiritual knowledge said that in self-examination we should “search for the passions of the heart.” The result of self-examination should be to show forth where our love is really fixed.



Making your Self-Examination

To examine your conscience, go somewhere that you can be alone and undisturbed — anywhere you can get away from the phone and the children. Your icon corner is a wonderful place. Try to have placed before you an icon of Our Lord, a pencil and some paper.

Then begin with prayer, asking God to help you see your sins and to appreciate their consequences, not only for yourself, but also for others. There are suitable prayers below, or some may be found in *A Pocket Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians*, published by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese.

Make a list of all the sins you can recall from memory that you have committed since your last confession. If this is your first confession, then list all your sins since your baptism. Write down all of the sins you can remember no matter how grave or “innocent” you think they are.

Once you have confessed a particular instance of sin in one confession, do not confess that instance again. That would imply God had not already taken that sin away. But if you become aware of something that happened before your baptism, or something you wish you had remembered to include in a previous confession, you may include it.

After you’ve exhausted your memory, then try looking at some of the methods of self-examination to help you examine your conscience completely. You don’t need to do this second part every time you make your confession, but it is helpful to do it every couple of times you make confession. You should at least use one of these methods as you prepare to make your Lenten confession and, during Holy Week, your Paschal confession.

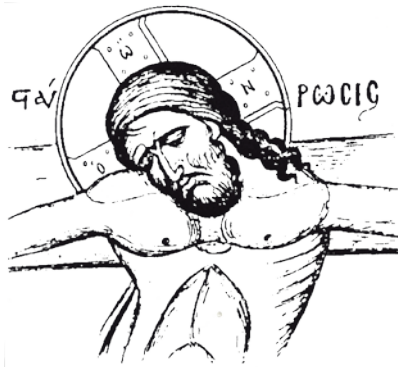
Prayers Before Self-Examination

The prayers below are, of course, only suggestions. Many will prefer to use other forms of prayer or to pray in their own words.

For Guidance and the Help of the Holy Spirit:

O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things, Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain and save our souls, O Gracious Lord. Amen.

O Holy Spirit, Source of all light, Spirit of wisdom, of understanding and of knowledge, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Enlighten me, and help me now to know my sins as one day I shall be forced to recognize them before Thy dread judgment seat. Bring to my mind the evil that I have done and the good that I have neglected. Permit me not to be blinded by self-love. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my transgressions, and help me to make a good confession that all stain of guilt may be washed away. Amen.



Methods of Self-Examination

THE SEVEN GRIEVOUS SINS

I. Pride

Pride is putting self in the place of God as the center and objective of our life, or of some department thereof. It is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures, dependent on God for our existence and placed by him in a specific relationship to the rest of his creation.

Irreverence. Have you deliberately neglected the worship of God on Sunday in his Church? Were you content with just “going through the motions” when you were at church? Have you disregarded Holy Days and additional opportunities for worshiping God? Have you failed to thank God or to adequately express your gratitude to God for all the many blessings he gives you every day? Have you shown disrespect of God or holy things by deliberately treating them, in Thought, word, or deed, in a profane, contemptuous or over-familiar manner? Have you used holy things for personal advantage? Have you attempted to bribe or placate God by religious practices or promises?

Sentimentality. Have you been satisfied with pious feelings and beautiful ceremonies without striving to obey God’s will?

Presumption. Have you been dependent on yourself rather than on God, with the consequent neglect of the sacraments and prayer? Have you dispensed yourself from ordinary duties on the grounds that you are too superior for those duties or obligations? Have you been satisfied or complacent over your spiritual achievements? Have you refused to avoid, when possible, immediate occasions of temptation? Have you preferred your own ideas, customs, schemes or techniques to those of the Church? Have you held to or encouraged foolish optimism? Have you failed to recognize your job as a divine vocation, or to offer your work to God? Have you been unwilling to

surrender to and abide in Christ, to let him act in and through you? Have you failed to offer intercessions for persons or causes that have, or should have, your interest and support, to God?

Distrust. Have you refused to recognize God's wisdom, providence and love? Have you been worried, anxious, had misgivings, or scrupulosity? Have you been guided by your own perfectionism rather than on the love of God? Have you attempted to discern or control the future by spiritualism, astrology, fortune-telling or the like? Have you practiced magic or superstition?

Over-Sensitiveness. Have you expected that others will dislike, reject or mistreat you? Have you been over-ready to interpret the attitude of others, or quick to take offense? Have you held to unfounded suspicions?

Have you been timid in accepting responsibility, or been cowardly in facing difficulty or suffering? Have you surrendered yourself to feelings of depression, gloom, pessimism, discouragement, self-pity, or fear of death, instead of fighting to be brave, cheerful and hopeful?

Disobedience. Have you rejected God's known will in favor of your own interests or pleasures? Have you been disobedient to the legitimate (and therefore divinely ordained) laws, regulations or authority of the Church, state, husband, parents, teachers, etc.? Have you been slow and reluctant to give your obedience to such authority? Have you failed, when in authority, to fulfill responsibilities or to consider the best interests of those under you?

Have you refused to learn God's will as revealed in Scripture, expounded in instructions or expert advice, or discernible through prayer, meditation or the reading of religious books? Have you been absorbed in your own affairs, leaving little time, energy or interest for the things of God?

Have you violated the confidence of someone? Have you broken legitimate promises or contracts? Have you done so through irresponsibility or through treachery (willfulness and malice)? Have you unnecessarily disappointed another, or the caused shame or anxiety to those who love you?

Impenitence. Have you refused to search out and face up to your sins, or to confess and admit them before God? Have you disregarded your sins or held to the pretense that you are better than truly you are? Have you justified yourself or discounted your sins as being insignificant, normal or inevitable? Have you been self-righteous in comparing yourself with others?

Have you refused to accept just punishment or to make due reparation for your words and deeds when possible? Have you resorted to deceit or lying to escape the consequences of your sins? Have you allowed another to suffer the blame for your faults? Have you tried to overcompensate or attempted self-reform or self-vengeance, to avoid surrendering to God in humble penitence?

Have you felt shame (hurt pride) or sorrow for yourself because your sins make you less respectable than you like to think you are, or because you fear punishment or injury to your reputation, rather than feeling sorrow for what sin is in the eyes of God? Have you refused to admit you were in the wrong or to apologize? Have you refused to accept forgiveness from God or others? Have you doubted that God can forgive your sins or failed to make your confession when you need to do so? Have you been unwilling to forgive yourself?

Vanity. Have you taken the credit, rather than giving credit and glory to God, for your talents, abilities, insights, accomplishments and/or good works? Have you refused to admit indebtedness to others, or adequately to express gratitude for their help? Have you been a hypocrite? Have you held pretense to virtues you do not possess? Have you feigned humility, when you really were not humble? Have you harshly judged others for faults you excuse in yourself?

Have you boasted, exaggerated, drawn attention to yourself by talking too much, by claiming ability, wisdom, experience or influence you do not have, or by eccentric or ostentatious behavior? Have you held undue concern over, or expenditure of, time or money? Have you spent too much energy on your appearance, looks, dress, surroundings, etc., in order to impress others? Have you deliberately been slovenly for the same purpose? Have you sought, desired or relished flattery or compliments?

Arrogance. Have you insisted that others conform to your wishes, recognize your leadership, or accept your own estimation of your worth? Have you been overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, or obstinate?

Snobbery. Have you had pride over your race, family, position, personality, education, skill, achievements, or possessions?

II. Anger

Anger is open rebellion against God or our fellow creatures. Its purpose and desire is to eliminate any obstacle to our self-seeking, to retaliate against any threat to our security, and to avenge any personal insult or injury.

Resentment. Have you refused to discern, accept or fulfill God's vocation for you? Have you been dissatisfied with the talents, abilities or opportunities God has given you? Have you been unwilling to face up to difficulties or sacrifices? Have you unjustly rebelled or complained at the circumstances of your life? Have you tried to escape from reality or attempted to force your will upon reality? Have you indulged yourself in daydreams to escape reality? Have you transferred blame for your maladjustment to God, to your parents, to society, or to other individuals? Have you had hatred for God, or been anti-social? Have you been cynical? Have you harbored annoyance at the contrariness of things? Have you used profanity or grumbled at reality?

Pugnacity. Have you attacked another in anger? Have you committed murder in deed or desire? Have you been combative or nursed grudges? Have you injured another person by striking, cursing or insulting him? Have you injured another person by damaging his reputation or property? Have you been quarrelsome; bickered with, contradicted, nagged, been rude to, or snubbed others?

Retaliation. Have you wrought your vengeance for wrongs, real or imagined, or plotted vengeance? Have you been harsh or excessive in punishing those for whom you are responsible? Have you been hostile, sullen or exercised rash judgment? Have you refused to forgive, or to offer or accept reconciliation? Have you been unwilling to love, to do good to, or to pray for your enemies? Have you boycotted or ostracized another for selfish reasons? Have you spoiled the pleasure of others by being uncooperative or filled with disdain, because you have not gotten your way, or because you feel out of sorts or superior?

III. Envy

Envy is dissatisfaction with our place in God's order of creation, manifested in begrudging his gifts and vocation to others.

Jealousy. Have you taken offense at the talents, success or good fortune of others? Have you been selfish or unnecessarily competitive? Have you taken pleasure at the difficulty or distress of others? Have you belittled others?

Malice. Have you felt ill will towards another or dealt in false accusations, slander, or backbiting? Have you read false motives into others' behavior? Have you initiated, collected or retold gossip? Have you aroused, fostered or organized antagonism against others? Have you been unnecessarily critical, even when you've related the truth? Have you deliberately annoyed others, or teased or bullied them?

Contempt. Have you scorned another's virtue, ability, shortcomings, or failings? Have you felt prejudice against those you consider inferior, or who consider you inferior, or who seem to threaten your security or position? Have you ridiculed persons, institutions or ideals?

IV. Covetousness

Covetousness is the refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures, expressed in the inordinate accumulation of material things; in the use of other persons for our personal advantage; or in the quest for status, power or security at their expense.

Inordinate Ambition. Have you pursued status, power, influence, reputation, or possessions at the expense of the moral law, of other obligations, or of the rights of others? Have you been ruthless or unfair in competition? Have you put yourself or your family first? Have you conformed to standards you recognize as wrong or inadequate in order to get ahead? Have you participated in intrigue or conspiracy for self-advancement?

Domination. Have you sought to use or possess others? Have you been over-protective of your children? Have you refused to correct or punish your children lest you lose their affection? Have you insisted that they conform to your ideal for them contrary to their own vocation? Have you imposed your

will on others by force, guile, whining, or refusal to cooperate? Have you been over-ready to advise or command? Have you abused authority? Have you patronized, pauperized, or put others under a debt of gratitude? Have you considered yourself ill-used when others' affection or compliance is not for sale?

Have you been a sycophant (attempted to win favor, support, affection or advancement in position, through practicing flattery of persons of influence)? Have you refused to uphold the truth, to fulfill your duties, to perform good works, or to defend those wrongfully attacked because you fear criticism or ridicule, or because you seek to gain the favor and approval of others? Have you lead, tempted or encouraged another to sin?

Avarice. Have you inordinately pursued wealth or material things? Have you stolen, been dishonest, misrepresented, or shared in stolen goods? Have you cheated in business, taxes, school or games? Have you made worldly success the goal of your life or the standard for judging others?

Prodigality. Have you wasted natural resources or your personal possessions? Have you been extravagant or lived beyond your income, to impress others or to maintain status? Have you failed to pay debts you acquired? Have you gambled more than you could afford to lose, or to win unearned profits? Have you unnecessarily borrowed or been careless with others' money? Have you spent on yourself what is needed for the welfare of others?

Penuriousness. Have you been unduly protective of wealth or security? Have you selfishly insisted on vested interests or on claimed rights? Have you refused to support or to help those who have a claim on you? Have you "sponged on others?" Have you been stingy? Have you failed to give due proportion of your income to the Church and charity, or of your time and energy to good works? Have you failed to pay pledges promised to the Church or charities when you have been able to do so?

V. *Gluttony*

Gluttony is the overindulgence of natural appetites for food and drink, and by extension the inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort.

Intemperance. Have you been overindulgent in food, drink, smoking, or other physical pleasures? Have you been fastidious, fussy, demanded exces-

sively high standards, or been a dilettante? Have you condemned some material things or pleasures as evil in themselves, attempting to prohibit their use rather than their abuse?

Lack of Discipline. Have you been negligent in keeping the Church's days and seasons of fasting? Have you failed to use other needed means of self-discipline? Have you neglected your bodily health — not getting sufficient rest, recreation, exercise, or wholesome nourishment? Have you failed to use or to cooperate with available medical care when ill? Have you used sickness as a means to escape responsibilities?

VI. Lust

Lust is the misuse of sex for personal gratification, debasing it from the holy purpose for which God has given it to us.

Unchastity. Have you violated of the Church's marriage laws? Have you lacked consideration for your spouse in partaking of the marital relationship? Have you refused to fulfill the purpose of Holy Matrimony in the bringing forth and giving adequate care of children, or to take your full share in the responsibilities or work involved? Have you been unfaithful to your spouse? Have you indulged in sexual contact outside of matrimony, in Thought or act, alone or with others?

Immodesty. Have you stimulated sexual desire in others by word, dress, or actions; or in yourself by reading, pictures, or fantasies? Have you collected or recounted sexual stories?

Prudery. Have you had a fear of sex or condemned it as evil in itself, even when sanctified within marriage? Have you refused to seek instruction from the Church regarding a true understanding of sexuality, or attempted to prevent others from obtaining it? Have you stimulated excessive and harmful curiosity by undue secrecy?

Cruelty. Have you deliberately inflicted pain, mental or physical, on another. Have you tormented or abused animals?

VII. Sloth

Sloth is the refusal to respond to our opportunities for growth, service or sacrifice.

Laziness. Have you been indolent in performing spiritual, mental or physical duties? Have you neglected your family, business or social obligations? Have you been discourteous because you didn't wish to spend the extra energy? Have you procrastinated in performing disliked tasks? Have you involved yourself in business or triviality to avoid more important commitments? Have you devoted excessive time to rest, recreation, amusement, television, light reading or the like? Have you wasted your employer's time, or performed shoddy or inadequate work?

Indifference. Have you been unconcerned over injustice to others, especially that caused by currently accepted social standards? Have you been unmindful of the suffering of those around you? Have you failed to become adequately informed on the Christian principles involved in contemporary issues? Have you neglected duties to state or community? Have you failed to provide adequately for those whom you employ, or to treat them justly? Have you required them to stay late to perform urgent tasks, and then forced them to "loose" the overtime they had acquired for the work required by you?

Have you ignored the needy, lonely or unpopular persons in your own family, or in the parish family, or in the neighborhood? Have you been unwilling to minister to them? Have you been insufficiently attentive to the religious and other needs of your family? Have you failed to fulfill your obligation of Christian missionary witness?



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The second method of self-examination is to look at the Ten Commandments with the questions and definitions given and ask oneself to what degree one is guilty of these, and how one has transgressed these sins.

I. Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me (Pride)

- Have you loved God as much as you ought to?
- Have you been more interested in self than in God?
- Have you made it your chief aim to be always on top?
- What have you been vain about; personal appearance, clothes, personality, possessions, your family, ability, success in games or in studies?
- Have you scorned other people for their misfortunes, sins, stupidity, or other weaknesses? Scorned other people's religion?
- Talked too much; called attention to yourself?
- Been sorry for yourself, self-pitying?
- Refused to admit when you were in the wrong? Refused to apologize?
- Been resentful or suspicious of others through over-sensitiveness?
- Have you been stubborn and self-willed? In what ways?

II. Thou Shalt Not Make To Thyself Any Graven Image (Idolatry)

- Have you put another person before God's law; by not going to church, or by committing some other sin to please that person?
- Have you wanted popularity so much that you have not said your prayers, or done some other good things, for fear of being laughed at?
- Have you not said a blessing before eating a meal when in public so as not to be ridiculed or scorned?
- Have you loved money or clothes too much; or even sinned to get them?
- Have you gone to mediums or attended "spiritualistic" meetings?

- Have you made your own ideals an idol that you will neither allow anyone to question nor profane?
- Have you made the Church's worship or ceremony an idol that you adore (instead of worshiping God himself)?
- Have you turned the Church's theology or Fathers into idols instead of recognizing in them directors to Christ our God?

III. Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of the Lord Thy God in Vain (Profanity)

- Have you sworn? Especially, have you misused the Holy Name of Jesus?
- Have you given way to anxiety, instead of turning to God for help?
- Been worried, or afraid, or allowed yourself to get into a panic?
- Allowed yourself to feel that it was impossible even for God to help you?

IV. Remember the Sabbath Day, to Keep It Holy (Irreverence)

- Have you missed Divine Liturgy on Sunday, when you could have gone?
- Have you failed to say your prayers morning and night? Or to say them earnestly?(Remember that it was not a sin if you honestly forgot to say your prayers. It was only a sin if you neglected it willfully, perhaps through laziness or fear of being laughed at.)
- Have you always kept Sunday as it ought to be kept?
- Have you done some unnecessary work on Sunday?
- Have you always tried hard to worship God when in church? Or have you sometimes been irreverent? Joked about holy things?
- Have you ever been ashamed of your Christianity? Ashamed of Jesus?

V. Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother (Disobedience)

- As a child, were you always as loving and respectful to your father or mother as you ought to have been?
- Have you been grateful enough for all that they did for you?
- Did you ever disobey them, or others who were over you; or did you ever obey them slowly and reluctantly?

- Have your actions ever caused them anxiety or shame?
- Have you ever deliberately disobeyed God or ignored His desires for you? In what way?
- Have you ever shown disregard for the laws of the Church? For the laws of the land?
- Have you contributed as much as you ought to have done to the support or the happiness of your parents?
- What sins have you committed with regard to your spouse, children, or other members of your family?
- Have you given as much care and attention as possible to the religious life of your family; for example, with regard to Grace at Meals, Family Prayers, Church-going, etc.?
- Have you seen that your children have had adequate and continuous religious instruction?
- Have you been just and generous to people in your employment, or under your authority in business? In what ways have you failed? Have you tried to dominate the lives of others unduly? How?

VI. Thou Shalt Not Kill (Hate)

- Have you killed anyone, either in outward deed, or in your heart? Have you wished that someone was dead?
- Have you been angry unjustly? Struck people? Or hurt them by ridicule or contempt?
- Have you ever cursed people?
- Have you gossiped about people?
- Is there anyone against whom you now hold a grudge? Or are unwilling to forgive? (Think how of ten God has forgiven you; and ask Him to help you to forgive and love your enemies for His sake.)
- Have you refused to help people who were in real need of help? Ignored the sick or the poor? Not tried to be friendly with people, especially with people who are not very popular?
- Have you been afraid to stand up for a person when others were mistreating him?
- Have you ever taught (or tempted) another person to sin?

VII. Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery (Impurity)

- Have you been impure in Thought, word, or deed? (You need not talk much about it, but make it quite plain to the Priest just what kind of sins you mean; whether they were done alone; or with a man or woman; and, if possible, how often.)
- Have you looked at suggestive pictures? Or read bad passages in books? Have you been immodest in actions, or in dress?
- Have you been lazy in prayers, work, or study? Neglected business, family, or social duties?
- Have you ever eaten, drunk, or smoked more than was good for you?
- Have you neglected the days of fasting or abstinence?
- Broken rules or resolutions which you have made for yourself?
- Allowed yourself to be over-engrossed in light reading, the movies, television, or other pastimes, to the exclusion of worthwhile things?
- Have you been cowardly in sickness or pain?
- Been unmindful of the suffering of the world?

VIII. Thou Shalt Not Steal (Theft)

- Have you ever stolen anything (as a child or more recently)? What things? Have you shared in stolen goods?
- Have you cheated in business, games, or lessons?
- Have you been over extravagant; gambled or bet too much?
- Tried hard to pay all your debts? Contracted debts unnecessarily?
- Have you remembered that God has given you all that you have? Have you thanked Him enough?
- Have you given as much as you ought to the Church or to charities?
- Have you been stingy?
- Have you wasted time?

IX. Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness (Deceit)

- How many lies have you told?
- Have you exaggerated too much? Been deceitful, unfair, hypocritical?

- Allowed others to receive blame for your faults?
- Been harsh toward others, or in speaking of others, for sins that you also have committed?

X. Thou Shalt Not Covet (Discontent)

- Have you been jealous of others, because they had more things, or more money; or because they were better looking or more successful; or because someone loves them more than you?
- Been grieved at the prosperity or attainments of others?
- Been dejected because of the position, talents, or fortune of others? Have you been glad when they failed, or were in trouble? Glad when you heard people speak ill of them?
- Have you allowed yourself to be sad and discouraged at times; and not always fought to be brave and joyful?
- Have you tried to accept loss or sorrow or hard things at the Hand of God?
- Have you Thought that God does not love you? Have you ever given up trying to be good?



Prayers After Self-Examination

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and steady me with a guiding spirit. – Psalm 50:11-13

O my God, how great are my sins! Would that I had never offended Thee. If by carelessness or ignorance I have forgotten anything in my self-examination, show it to me now that I may make a good confession. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Give a brief space of time to allow the Holy Spirit to illumine your heart in any way that is necessary to aid your confession.

O Lord God of my salvation, the Savior and Benefactor of my soul, I am truly sorry for my every transgression and I firmly resolve never again to offend Thee by my sins, and sincerely promise to amend my way of life. Implant in me the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that I may trample down all carnal appetites and may lead a godly life, both thinking and doing always such things as are well-pleasing unto Thee. I pray Thee, grant unto me the Grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that thus strengthened, I may shun all evil deeds and works, and words and Thoughts, and may avoid all snares of the Evil One. Shine in my heart with the true Sun of Thy Righteousness; enlighten my mind and guard all my senses, that walking uprightly in the way of Thy statutes, I may attain unto life eternal. For unto Thee are due all glory, thanksgiving and worship, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Then go the church at the appointed time for confessions, or for your appointment, with your list of sins prepared and make your confession as outlined on the next page.

The Mystery of Holy Confession

While the Penitent is waiting for the priest to hear his confession, he may quietly say the “Trisagion Prayers” and Psalm 50, if he has time.

When the penitents turn comes, he goes forward and stands or kneels (according to local custom) in front of the icon next to the priest. He then says aloud:

O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I confess to Thee all the hidden and open sins of my heart and mind, which I have committed unto this present day; wherefore I beg of Thee, the righteous and compassionate Judge, remission of sins and grace to sin no more.

The priest says to the penitent:

My brother, inasmuch as thou hast come to God, and to me, be not ashamed; for thou speakest not unto me, but unto God, before whom thou standest.

The penitent says aloud, in the priest’s hearing, all of his sins of which he has become aware in his self-examination. The priest may question the penitent concerning his sins. When the confession, questioning and any counsel has ended, the priest lays his epitrachelion over the head of the penitent and says:

God it was who forgave David through Nathan the Prophet, when he confessed his sins, and Peter weeping bitterly for his denial, and the sinful woman in tears at his feet, and the Publican, and the Prodigal Son: May the same God forgive Thee all things, through me a sinner, both in this present world, and in that which is to come, and set Thee

uncondemned before his dread Judgment Seat. And now, having no further care for the sins which thou hast confessed, depart in peace.

The penitent then kisses either the priest's epitachelion, or his right hand, and says:

"Thank you, Father, and pray for me a sinner."

Prayers After Confession

Return to your place and make your thanksgiving for your absolution.

O *almighty and merciful God, I truly thank Thee for the forgiveness of my sins; bless me, O Lord, and help me always, that I may ever do that which is pleasing unto Thee, and sin no more. Amen.*

O *Lord God of my salvation, the Saviour and Benefactor of my soul, I am truly sorry for my every transgression and I firmly resolve never again to offend Thee by my sins, and sincerely promise to amend my way of life. Implant in me the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that I may trample down all carnal appetites and may lead a godly life, both thinking and doing always such things as are pleasing unto Thee. I pray Thee, grant unto me the Grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that thus strengthened, I may shun all evil deeds and works, and words and Thoughts, and my avoid all snares of the Evil One. Shine in my heart with the true Sun of Thy Righteousness; enlighten my mind and guard all my senses, that walking uprightly in the way of Thy statutes, I may attain unto life eternal. Amen.*

O *Sovereign Master, who lovest mankind, lead me in Thy way, that I may walk in Thy truth. Make glad my heart, that I may fear Thy Holy Name. O Lord, mighty in mercy, gracious in strength, aid and comfort and save me, as I put my trust in Thy holy Name. Rebuke me not, O Lord, in Thy displeasure, neither punish me in Thy wrath, but show unto me Thy great mercy and compassion, O Physician and Healer of my soul. O Merciful Saviour, blot out all my transgressions, for I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee. Grant me Thy Grace that I may avoid my previous evil ways. Strengthen me, O Mighty One, to withstand those temptations before which I am weak, that I may avoid all future sin. Keep me under Thy protection and in the shadow of Thy wings, that I may serve Thee, praise Thee, and glorify Thee all the days of my life. Amen.*

Then if the priest has given you some psalm or prayer to say, it is said now. If he has given some task for you to perform, do this as soon as possible.

