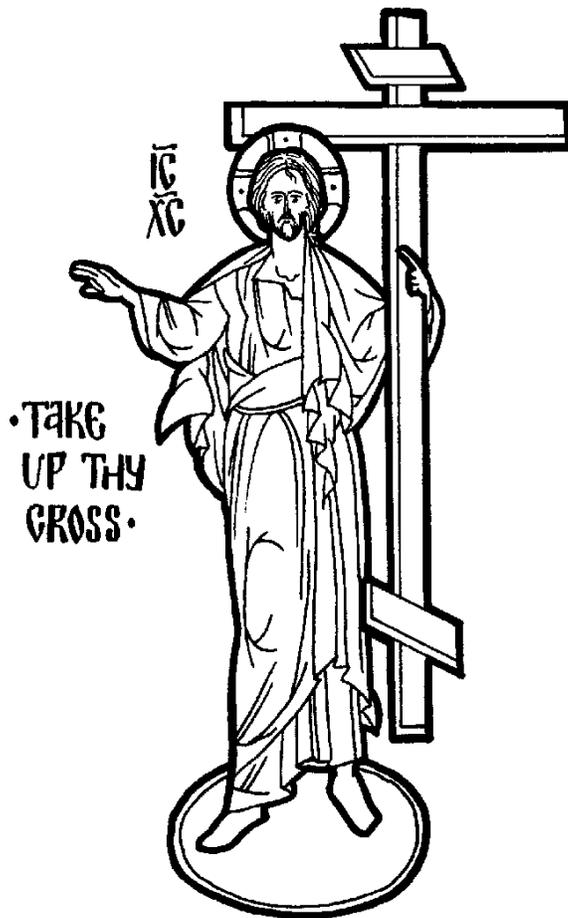


PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION
IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH
BASED ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
AND
A RITE FOR CONFESSION
IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH



St. Elias Orthodox Church
Austin, Texas

PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

God does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn away from his sins and live. In the holy Sacrament of Penance we have the means whereby we may obtain forgiveness of our sins, and be restored to the favor of God, our heavenly Father.

In order that you may make a good confession it is necessary for you to prepare yourself carefully. Ask God to give you grace to make a thorough examination of your conscience, courage to make a sincere and complete confession, and strength to amend your way of life in the days to come.

Begin your examination with the time of your last confession; try to recall whether you omitted anything through carelessness or lapse of memory, or from fear of embarrassment. Examine yourself with the assistance of the form of Self-examination according to the Ten Commandments of God which follows.

It is most necessary that you be truly sorry for the sins which you have committed, and that you firmly purpose amendment of your manner of living.

Make every attempt to go to confession during each of the fasting seasons of the Church. This is a minimum—most should go more often than this. And go to confession if you have been away from the church for awhile or have not taken Holy Communion for some time.. Make the sacrament a regular part of your spiritual life. It is a key part of spiritual growth.

A SELF EXAMINATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

First Commandment

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

Have I believed in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Have I failed to trust in God and His mercy? Have I complained against God in adversity? Have I been thankful for God’s blessings? When the Church requests it, do I willingly make donations to charitable causes and to the Church? Have I doubted the Christian faith and the teachings of the Church? Have I tried to serve God and keep His Commandments? Have I given way to superstition? Have I frequented the religious meetings of heretics and schismatics? Have I consulted fortunetellers? Have I taken part in seances (sometimes called channeling)? Have I neglected my duties to God through fear of ridicule or persecution? Have I failed to pray to God faithfully? Do I keep a consistent daily rule of prayer? Have I put myself before God?

Second Commandment

“You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”

Have I made an idol of any person or thing? Have I given to anyone or anything the worship that is due to God alone? Have I set before myself the holy life of Jesus and tried to imitate Him? Have I read the Holy Scriptures regularly? Does God take first place with me? Perhaps God does not take first place, but something else, for example, the accumulation of money, the acquisition of property, amusement and entertainment, food and drink, clothes, self-adornment, the urge to devote attention to myself, to play the leading part, to receive praise, to spend my time in distractions, in reading frivolous books, etc? Am I distracted from God by a passion for television, movies, the theater, card-games, sports? Have I been irreverent during Church Services, let my attention wander, or been insincere? Have I neglected to receive Holy Communion regularly or without due preparation?

Third Commandment

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”

Have I profaned the holy name of God in any way? Have I cursed anyone or anything, or sworn a false oath? Have I used foul language in ordinary everyday conversation? Have I been thoughtless and irreverent with the name of God or have I treated something holy as a joke? Have I failed to give proper reverence to holy persons and things? Have I had due respect for the clergy of the Church or hindered them in performing God’s work? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into any unlawful contract or made an unlawful promise?

Fourth Commandment

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

Have I stayed away from Church on Sundays or Feast Days or prevented others from going? Have I done unnecessary work on Sundays? Have I spent the day in unwholesome fashion or profaned it by improper conduct? If I could not go to Church because of illness or other grave cause, have I prayed at home? Have I caused anyone else to profane the Lord’s Day? Have I come to church late, at the middle or end of the service? Do I leave it early? Have I kept the Fasts and Festivals prescribed by the Church?

Fifth Commandment

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.”

Have I respected my parents and been obedient to them? Have I been guilty of deception, or caused them pain by my words or actions? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I taken care of them in their illnesses and old age? If my parents have died, do I often pray in church or at home for the repose of their souls? Have I done my duty towards my family? Have I been wanting in love or kindness towards my husband (or wife), or harmed him (or her) in any way? Have I set my children a good example and tried to bring them up properly? Have I corrected their faults with patience and not with anger? Have I over-indulged or spoiled them?

Have I neglected my god-children and failed in my obligations towards them? Have I worked for my employers honestly and diligently? Have I treated fairly all those who have worked for me? Have I honored God as my Heavenly Father by treating others as my brothers, and have I honored the Church as my spiritual Mother by honoring and practicing my religion in accordance with her teachings? Have I been disrespectful towards the pastors of the Church? Have I criticized them? Have I become embittered against them when they reminded me of eternity, of preparation for it, of the salvation of my soul, of sins; or when they call on me to be obedient to the church and her rules?

Sixth Commandment

"You shall not kill."

Have I caused the injury or death of any one, or wished that I were dead? Have I done anything to shorten my own life or that of someone else by injuring health, or through evil and intemperate living? Have I given way to anger, or harmed others with words or actions? Have I defamed others who needed help, or failed to stand up for those unjustly treated? Have I been cruel to anyone? Have I neglected someone poor or sick? Have I given drink to the thirsty, taken in a stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in jail (Matt. 25:34-46)? Have I led someone astray from the proper path, committing spiritual murder? Have I mistreated animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily? Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against them? Have I harbored malice and resentment towards others? Have I had recourse to unlawful operations (abortions), which is also killing, a sin of both husband and wife?

Seventh Commandment

"You shall not commit adultery."

Have I given way to impure thoughts, words, or deeds? Have I lived with someone of the opposite sex in a carnal relationship without having had a church marriage? Have I committed any impure acts alone or with others (such as masturbation)? Have I had carnal relations with another person? Have I engaged in unnatural practices (bestiality, transvestitism, homosexuality, sodomy)? Have I degraded myself in any way, or forgotten human dignity? Have I read immoral books or magazines, or delighted in

pornography or obscenity of any kind (including internet pornography)? Have I given myself to sinful songs, suggestive dances, dirty jokes, pornographic movies or public performances, or immodest dress? Have I associated with bad companions or frequented unsavory places? Have I eaten or drunk or smoked too much? Have I been lazy, idle, or wasted my time? Have I led others to commit sinful acts? Have I been unfaithful to any trust confided in me?

Eighth Commandment

"You shall not steal."

Have I stolen anything or wished to do so? Have I kept anything that did not belong to me? Have I tried honestly to find owners of lost articles I have found? Have I cheated anyone? Have I paid my debts? Have I lived within my income, and not wastefully and extravagantly? Have I given to charitable causes in proportion to my means? Have I been honest and upright? Have I excessively yearned for material goods without wishing to share them with others who need them? Has miserliness taken possession of my soul? Have I accepted stolen goods? Have I disposed of others' goods when they were entrusted to me?

Ninth Commandment

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Have I told lies, or added to or subtracted from the truth? Do I always try to be truthful? Have I made careless statements or spoken evil of anyone? Have I told any secrets entrusted to me, or betrayed anyone? Have I gossiped about anyone or harmed their reputation? Have I concealed the truth, assisted in carrying out a lie, or pretended to commit a sin of which I was not guilty? Have I tried to see the good in others rather than their shortcomings?

Tenth Commandment

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's."

Have I envied anything good that has come to others? Have I been jealous of another's good fortune? Have I wished for anything that was another's? Have I damaged or destroyed the property of others? Have I wished for things God has not given me, or been discontented with my lot? Have I been stingy? Have I held back anything due another? Have I hoped for the downfall of anyone so that I might gain by it? Have I failed to be gracious and generous to anyone? Have I expected God to give me that which I would refuse one of my fellow men?

A BRIEF CONFESSION BEFORE A SPIRITUAL FATHER

based on a prayer by St. Dimitry of Rostov

The following "confession" can be helpful in preparation, giving guidance to your own self-examination. Some like to use this confession as a beginning to their own confession of sins.

I confess to the Lord my God before thee, reverend father, all my sins which I have committed up to the present day and hour, in deed, word and thought. Every day and every hour I sin through ingratitude to God for His great and numberless blessings to me and His most gracious providence and care for me, a sinner. I have sinned through:

idle talk	saying unseemly things
condemnation of others	laughter
scorn	self-love
insubordination	love of glory
pride	love of honor
envy	gluttony
anger	love of sensual pleasure
slander	over-eating
inattention	drunkenness
listlessness	attachment to things
negligence	love of money
carelessness	vainglory
resentment and	acceptance of lustful and
remembering wrongs	impure thoughts
disobedience	laziness
grumbling	missing church services
self-will	dozing and sleeping in church
reproaching others	neglect of prayer
evil speech	concealing sins at confession
lying	

(Here you may tell about other sins that you have on your conscience)

I have sinned with all my senses, both spiritual and physical, wherefore I repent to the Lord and ask forgiveness. Absolve all my sins, reverend father, and bless me to partake of the Mysteries of Christ.

The Order of Confession

While the penitents is waiting for the priest to hear his confession, he will say to himself "The Trisagion Prayers" and Psalm 50/51 if he has time.

PENITENT: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.
 Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.
 Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.
 Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
 both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

 All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from
 our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit
 and heal our infirmities for thy name's sake.

 Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

 Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
 both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

 Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy
 kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our
 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of
 the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and
 ever, and unto ages of ages.

 Amen.

Psalm 50 (51)

On Sundays of the resurrection the choirs then chant antiphonally, in tone 6, Psalm 50, but on all other occasions this psalm is read.

Have mercy upon me, O God,
 according to thy great mercy;
according to the multitude of thy tender mercies
 blot out mine iniquity.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge mine iniquity:
and my sin is ever before me.
Against thee only have I sinned,
and done evil in thy sight,
that thou might be justified in thy words,
and prevail when thou art judged.
For behold, I was shapen in iniquity:
and in sins did my mother conceive me.
For behold, thou hast loved truth:
the unclear and hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made
clear to me.
Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness;
the bones which thou hast broken shall rejoice.
Turn away thy face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
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.
Then will I teach transgressors thy ways:
and the impious shall be converted unto thee.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
thou God of my salvation:
and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
O Lord, open thou my lips,
and my mouth shall declare thy praise.
For hadst thou desired sacrifice, I would have given it thee:
thou delightest not in burnt offerings.
Sacrifices to God are a contrite spirit:
a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
Do good, O Lord, in thy good will unto Zion;
that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up.
Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness,
with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings:
then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

When the penitent's turn comes, he will go forward and stand or kneel in the proper place, and say before the priest:

PENITENT: I have sinned, O Lord, forgive me. O God, be merciful to me a sinner. (*Thrice*)

PRIEST: O God our Saviour, who through thy prophet Nathan didst grant to penitent David forgiveness of his sins and didst receive Manasseh's prayers of repentance, do thou thyself in thy wonted lovingkindness receive thy servant _____, who repenteth of the sins he (*she*) hath committed, overlooking all that he hath done, O thou who forgivest offences and passest over transgressions. For thou, O Lord, hast said, I desire not the death of a sinner but rather that he should be forgiven even unto seventy times seven. How beyond compare is thy greatness, and thy mercy is without measure, for if thou shouldst regard iniquity, who should stand? For thou art the God of the penitent and to thee we ascribe glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PENITENT: 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, forgiveness and grace to sin no more.

The priest will then read one of the following admonitions:

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

Here, the penitent will mention whatever sins he may have committed, concealing nothing. The priest then questions the penitent in detail about his sins and gives him his penance, after which the penitent will kneel or bow while the priest says:

PRIEST: My spiritual child, who hast confessed to my humble self, I humble and a sinner, have not power on earth to forgive sins, but God alone; yet through that divinely spoken word which came to the Apostles after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they

are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained," we too are emboldened to say: Whatsoever thou hast said to my most humble self, and whatsoever thou hast not succeeded in saying, either through ignorance, or through forgetfulness, Whatever it may be: God forgive thee in this present world, and in that which is to come.

And the priest adds this Prayer, making the sign of the Cross over the Penitent:

PRIEST: +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 that 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.

The Priest lifts the stole from the head of the Penitent, allowing him to stand.

PRIEST: And now, having no further care for the sins which thou hast confessed, depart in peace.

The Priest blesses the Penitent saying:

PRIEST: +May Christ our true God, through the prayers of his most holy Mother and of all the Saints, have mercy upon us and save us, forasmuch as he is good and lovest mankind. Amen.