

Preparation for The Holy MYSTERY or SACRAMENT of REPENTANCE

Holy Confession is a Mystery (Sacrament) of the Church. It is the avowal and recognition of our guilt and of our sins in order to obtain absolution and remission. We come to God in order to manifest our love for Him and our sorrow for the sins we have committed, thus recognizing Him as our Father and the forgiving Lover-of-Mankind.

It is important to prepare for Confession through sincere prayer, fasting and reconciliation with others. We go to the priest as to a physician who has received the power of healing in the name of the Lord.

Christ told His Apostles, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you retain, they are retained." (John 20:22-23) He clearly endows His Apostles with the power of absolution, which has been passed down to their successors, priests. The Grace they receive in Holy Orders enables them to offer words of spiritual healing and forgiveness.

The Council of Trullo (632) affirmed, "Those who have received the power to bind sins or retain them shall behave like careful physicians who find the healing remedy for each individual penitent and his particular sins."

This is a great gift to people and a grave responsibility for priests.

Holy Confession is regarded as a renewal of the Holy Mystery of Baptism. Hence, it is sometimes called the "Second Baptism".

Holy Confession consists of

1. An examination of conscience, coupled with prayer. Ask/pray the Holy Spirit to help you recall the sins committed since your last confession and reveal to you the attitudes that are the cause of your sinfulness. Our Church teaches that all sins are damaging to our relationships and to our spiritual health. Serious (mortal) sins should be confessed as soon as possible, and the less serious ones should not be ignored, as their accumulated effects can be just as damaging.
2. Repentance
3. Confession, absolution. Through Holy Confession, we actively strive to maintain our healthy soul by providing an opportunity for introspection, absolution, and restoration of Divine forgiveness.



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE ACCORDING TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- 1 And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods beside me. - Exodus 20:1-2
 - Is there anything in my life more important to me than God: wealth, glory, family, career, entertainment, other?
 - Do I pray to God every morning and every evening? Is my prayer zealous?
 - Have I consulted fortune-tellers (astrologers, numerologists, etc.)? Have I taken part in séances?
 - Do I trust in luck and chance? Do I gamble obsessively?

2 You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, or fashion the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth below, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them; nor worship them... - Exodus 20:4-5

- Perhaps because of worrying for my family or myself I forget about God and fail to please Him and do not carry out what is required of me by the Church? If so, that means I am serving an idol and that it, not God, has first place with me.
- Perhaps art, sport, recreation, or studies take first place with me?
- Perhaps some passion (love of money, gluttony, carnal lust) has taken possession of my heart? Have I made an idol of myself out of pride or egotism? Has pride blinded me to my own sins?

3 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. - Exodus 20:7

- Have I been thoughtless and irreverent with the name of God, or what is worse, have I treated something holy as a joke? Or, in a fit of anger or bitterness or despair have I given way to impudent grumbling at God or even reviling Him?
- Have I sworn an oath and then broken it?
- Do I pray absent-mindedly or inattentively?

4 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. - Exodus 20:8-11

- Do I attend Divine Services whenever possible?
- Do I miss Divine Services without good reason?

Do I violate the sanctity of Sunday and the great feast-days, which have been fixed by the Church, by working not out of necessity but for gain and profit? Instead of attending Divine Services on feast-days, do I spend time entertaining myself where there is no mention of God?

Have I arranged such entertainment and gatherings and thus distracted other people from attendance at church?

Do I conscientiously attend Divine Services? Do I come to church late, at the middle or even at the end of the Service? Do I leave it early? Do I enter into the Service itself? Do I leave the Service to gossip, smoke, or do chores thinking that God will not notice my behaviour?

5 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you. - *Exodus 20:12*

Have there been times when I was disrespectful towards my parents, or inattentive to their advice and concern?

Have I taken care of them in their illness and old age?

If my parents have died, do I often pray for the repose of their souls?

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, or preparation for it, or the salvation of my soul, of sins; or when they call on me to be obedient to the Church and her rules?

6 You shall not murder. - *Exodus 20:13*

Have I killed anyone? Although I may not have physically killed anyone, perhaps I was the cause of someone's death indirectly: I could have helped someone but did not; I did not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in a stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison?

Have I committed spiritual murder, that is, have I led someone astray from the proper path; have I tempted someone to sin?

Have I killed someone spiritually by a display of malice or hatred; have I destroyed a life through gossip?

Do I forgive those who offend me? Do I bear malice or resentment in my heart for long?

Am I addicted to alcohol, drugs, or other things harmful to the body, which is the Temple of the Holy Spirit?

Have I had an abortion, or had recourse to any other anti-reproductive technology, which involves the destruction of human life? Have I counseled anyone to have an abortion, performed or assisted at an abortion?

7 You shall not commit adultery.

- *Exodus 20:14*

Have I committed adultery?

Have I had carnal relations outside of the state of marriage or engaged in unnatural sexual practices?

8 You shall not steal. - *Exodus 20:15*

Have I taken someone else's property in a direct or indirect way--by fraud, by cunning, conspiracy?

Have I withheld a worker's pay or attempted to cheat him or her out of what is their rightful due?

Perhaps I have not done what I was obliged to do in return for the recompense I received?

Have I appropriated stolen goods?

Have I disposed of others' goods when they were entrusted to me?

9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

- *Exodus 20:16*

Have I slandered others? Have I criticized others, spread scandal or abused them for what I imagine are their sins and vices?

10 You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, you shall not covet your neighbour's house, nor his land, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any of his cattle, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

- *Exodus 20:17*

Do I envy others? Envy always leads to malice and hatred and is capable of leading me to commit reckless acts, even murder.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God
have mercy on me, a sinner.

Prayer of Repentance

Forgive and forget, O God, all my sins, which I have committed willingly and unwillingly, in thought, word and deed, in daytime and at night; for Thou art good and lovest humankind.

My hope is the Father, my refuge—the Son, and my protection—the Holy Spirit.
Holy Trinity, glory to Thee.

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

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, through the prayers of thy Most Holy Mother and of all the Saints, have mercy upon us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (*Thrice*)

* Confession is one of the Seven Holy Sacraments (*Baptism, Chrismation, Repentance [Confession], Eucharist [Communion], Anointing of the Sick [Holy Unction], Holy Matrimony, Priesthood*) of the Church.

*Also, you may wish to read: **Repentance and Confession** by Fr. John Chryssavgis, **These are the Sacraments** by Fr. Anthony Coniaris, **We return to God** (for children and youth) by Fr. Constance Tarasar, **If we confess our sins** by Fr. Thomas Hopko.

Brochure content from **The Good Shepherd and Faith Prayer Books (UOCC), and a St. Mary the Protectress UAOC, Rochester, NY Lenten handout.