

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?
- Have you neglected to perform your penance from your last confession?
- Is there any other sin, which burdens your conscience, or which you are ashamed to tell?

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 perfection, 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.

Just as a patient cannot be cured of his wounds if he does not reveal them to his doctor, we cannot be cured of our spiritual infirmities if we do not reveal our sins and problems to our spiritual father, our confessor. Remember that our sins can never outweigh God’s love and mercy towards us. Even if we should seem to have failed with regard to all the points mentioned above and more, we should not lose heart but confess our sins without shame, we should regret the wrongs we have done, be resolved to make amends, and receive whatever remedy, penance or rule of prayer 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.

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 sometimes distributed in parishes and, although of course the list is not exhaustive, it may be a help to those who are Orthodox Christians.

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 or mumbled your prayers? or when reading in church?
- Do you read the Scriptures daily? Do you read other spiritual writings regularly?
- Have you read books whose content is not Orthodox or even anti-Orthodox, or is spiritually damaging?
- Have you pronounced the name of God without reverence, joking? 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 dedicated 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?
- 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 dressed modestly and in a becoming manner when in church?
- Have you tried to pay reverent attention to the readings, hymns, and prayers in church?
- Have you striven to pray with the service, crossing yourself, etc., or have you rather simply stood and day-dreamed?
- Have you prepared for the services beforehand, looking up the Scriptural readings, making sure you have the texts to follow the service etc., especially if the service will be in a language you do not readily understand?
- 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? Have you engaged in gambling?
- Do you give thanks to the Lord for all things?
- Have you stolen from God by failing to tithe or pay your pledge?
- Have you not given alms to the poor when you could have done so?
- Have you ever doubted God's providence concerning yourself?
- 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 company'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 gossiped?
- Have you told untruths? Have you deceived people?
- 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 or 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 altered your God-given physical appearance (shaving, perming your hair, makeup, jewelry, tatoos, piercings, etc.) or worn clothing that is inappropriate for Christians?
- Have you sinned in thought, word or deed, by a look or glance, or in any other way against the seventh commandment? (Adultery, fornication, extra-marital sexual relationships with others, 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 had thoughts of committing suicide?
- Have you brought a curse on yourself or others or ill-wished them, being impatient?
- Have you a weakness for alcohol? Have you drunk too much, or become dependent on drink?
- Have you taken drugs, other than necessary medicines? Have you smoked?
- Have you watched television or movies too much or indiscriminately? Have