

## PREPARING FOR HOLY CONFESSION

**T**he purpose of the Mystery of Repentance is to confront the fact that, in spite of our Baptism into Christ and the putting on of Christ, sin is still in us. We constantly fall away from the New Life we have received. We have turned away from God, refused His love for us, and gone our own way.

We then realize that we lost something precious. We know we need to be healed, to be reconciled, and to be reunited. We have a deep desire to return and to receive what we have lost. Like the Prodigal Son, we must want with all our heart to return. Then remembering God's ever-present love for us, we gain the courage, turn around, and return to begin a new life.

God forgives us in His Church through Christ. This forgiveness is seen most clearly in the Mystery of Repentance. As a Sacrament, it is an encounter in which we meet Jesus Christ and through which we are saved. Christ is seen in His Body the Church, represented by the priest-confessor. Because he stands in the name of His Body, the priest stands in the place of Christ.

At the time of Confession we confess to Christ and before the priest. The priest accepts our confession of sins and our desire to be reconciled on behalf of the Church, the Body of Christ. We are accountable to the other members of this Body. No one member of the Body of Christ stands alone.

The priest not only receives our confession on behalf of the community, but he also invokes God's mercy and forgiveness for us on its behalf. Christ forgives us as the sign of His love for us, and the priest speaks to us of this love as He urges us to return to Christ with all our hearts.

We come to be healed because we have broken away. We have forgotten how to love. God's forgiveness is a healing that brings us into union with Him and His Church once again. We are given a chance, once again, to begin a new life as a newly-baptized person. The Mystery of Reconciliation is often called "a second Baptism" or the "Baptism of tears" – a Baptism into Christ Who is the forgiveness of our sins. In this "second Baptism," into Christ we are restored to New Life in Christ in His Church.

## THE LORD SAYS: "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART."

- Is my heart set on God so that I really love him above all things as a child loves its father? Am I faithful to his commandments or am I more concerned about the things of this world? Have I a right intention in what I do?
- God spoke to us in his Son. Is my faith in God firm and secure? Have I been careful to grow in my understanding of the faith, to hear God's word, to listen to instructions on the faith, to avoid dangers to faith? Have I been always strong and fearless in professing my faith in God and the Church? Have I been willing to be known as a Christian in private and public life?
- Have I prayed morning and evening? When I pray, do I really raise my mind and heart to God or is it a matter of words only? Do I offer God my difficulties, my joys, and my sorrows? Do I turn to God in time of temptation?
- Have I love and reverence for God's name? Have I offended him in blasphemy, swearing falsely, or taking his name in vain? Have I shown disrespect for the Mother of God and the saints?
- Do I keep Sundays and feast days holy by taking a full part, with attention and devotion, in the liturgy.
- Are there false gods that I worship by giving them greater attention and deeper trust than I give to God: money, superstition, spiritism, or other occult practices?

## THE LORD SAYS: "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU."

- Have I a genuine love for my neighbors? Or do I use them for my own ends, or do to them what I would not want done to myself? Have I given grave scandal by my words or actions?
- Have I contributed to the well-being and happiness of the rest of my family by patience and genuine love? Have I been obedient to parents, showing them proper respect and giving them help in their spiritual and material needs? Have I been careful to give a Christian upbringing to my children, and to

help them by good example and by exercising authority as a parent? Have I been faithful to my husband (wife) in my heart and in my relations with others?

- Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate? Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune, and poverty? Or do I look down on my neighbors, especially the poor, the sick, the elderly, strangers, and people of other races?
- Does my life reflect the mission I received in baptism and chrismation? Do I share in the apostolic and charitable works of the Church and in the life of my parish? Have I helped to meet the needs of the Church and of the world and prayed for them: for unity in the Church, for the spread of the Gospel among the nations, for peace and justice, et. cetera?
- Am I concerned for the good and prosperity of the human community in which live, or do I spend my life caring only for myself? Do I share to the best of my ability in the work of promoting justice, morality, harmony, and love in human relations?
- In my work or profession am I just, hardworking, honest, serving society out of love for others? Have I paid a fair wage to my employees? Have I been faithful to my promises and contracts?
- Have I obeyed legitimate authority and given it due respect?
- If I am in a position of responsibility or authority, do I use this for my own advantage or for the good of others, in a spirit of service?
- Have I been truthful and fair, or have I injured others by deceit, calumny, detraction, rash judgment, or violation of a secret?
- Have I done violence to others by damage to life or limb, reputation, honor, or material possessions? Have I been responsible for advising an abortion or procuring one? Have I kept up hatred for others? Am I estranged from others through quarrels, enmity, insults, anger? Have I been guilty of refusing to testify to the innocence of another because of selfishness?

- Have I stolen the property of others? Have I desired it unjustly and inordinately? Have I damaged it? Have I made restitution of other people's property and made good their loss?
- If I have been injured, have I been ready to make peace for the love of Christ and to forgive, or do I harbor hatred and the desire for revenge?

### CHRIST OUR LORD SAYS: "BE PERFECT AS YOUR FATHER IS PERFECT."

- Where is my life really leading me? Is the hope of eternal life my inspiration? Have I tried to grow in the life of the Spirit through prayer, reading the word of God and meditating on it, receiving the sacraments, self-denial? Have I been anxious to control my vices, my bad inclinations and passions, e.g., envy, love of food and drink? Have I been proud and boastful, despising others as less important than myself? Have I imposed my own will on others, without respecting their freedom and rights?
- What use have I made of time, of health and strength of the gifts God has given me to be used like the talents in the Gospel? Do I use them to become more perfect every day? Or have I been lazy and too much given to leisure?
- Have I been patient in accepting the sorrows and disappointments of life? How have I performed mortification so as to "fill up what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ?" Have I kept the precept of fasting and abstinence?
- Have I kept my senses and my whole body pure and chaste as a temple of the Holy Spirit? Have I dishonored my body by fornication, impurity, unworthy conversation or thoughts, evil desires, or actions? Have I given in to sensuality? Have I indulged in reading, conversation, shows, and entertainments that offend against Christian and human decency? Have I encouraged others to sin by my own failure to maintain these standards? Have I been faithful to the moral law in my married life?
- Have I gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?

## PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

**B**efore you approach the priest, say the Trisagion Prayers and the following:

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us. At a loss for any defence, we sinners offer this prayer to You, the Master: have mercy on us.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit .

O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have put our trust in You. Rise not in full anger against us and do not remember our transgressions, but look down upon us even now in the depth of Your mercy and save us from our enemies; for You are our God and we are Your people. We are all the work of Your hands and we constantly call upon Your name.

Now and always and forever and ever. Amen. Blessed Mother of God, open the portal of your deep mercy to us who put our trust in you, so that we may not be brought to confusion but, through you, may be delivered from adversity, for you are the salvation of the Christian fold.

I have sinned, O Lord; have mercy.  
O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Confess your sins to God in the presence of the priest, saying:

Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, I confess to You all the hidden and open sins of my the heart and mind which I committed. I ask of You, the merciful and righteous Judge, forgiveness and the grace to sin no more.

Then make your confession. The priest may counsel you or pray with you. Then, laying the stole over your head, he will pray the prayer of forgiveness and dismiss you.

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