

## A Self Examination Before Confession

*(Based on two models: one based on the Ten Commandments offered by the Antiochian Archdiocese, and the second based on the Beatitudes offered by Fr Thomas Hopko)*

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### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

**First Commandment: I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have none other gods before me (Deuteronomy 5:7).**

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? 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 neglected my duties to God through fear of ridicule or persecution? Have I failed to pray to God faithfully? Have I put myself before God?

**Second Commandment: Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them.... (Deuteronomy 5:8, 9a).**

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? 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: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Deuteronomy 5:11)**

Have I profaned the holy name of God in any way? Have I cursed anyone or anything, or sworn a false oath? 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: Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee (Deuteronomy 5:12).**

Have I stayed away from Church on Sundays 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 kept the Fasts and Festivals prescribed by the Church?

**Fifth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Deuteronomy 5:16).**

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 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?

**Sixth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill (Deuteronomy 5:17).**

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 mistreated animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily? Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against them?

**Seventh Commandment: Neither shalt thou commit adultery (Deuteronomy 5:18).**

Have I given way to impure thoughts, words, or deeds? Have I committed any unworthy actions alone or with others? Have I degraded myself in any way, or forgotten human dignity? Have I read immoral books or magazines, or delighted in obscenity of any kind? 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: Neither shalt thou steal (Deuteronomy 5:19).**

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 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?

**Ninth Commandment: Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor (Deuteronomy 5:20).**

Have I told lies, or added to or subtracted from the truth? 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: Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbor's (Deuteronomy 5:21).**

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?

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## THE BEATITUDES

**Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).**

Am I poor before God and men? Do I cultivate the attitude of poverty? Do I realize that all is God's and from God? Do I use my life and everything I have as that which belongs to God? Do I share the goods of the earth with others, knowing that all is God's? Do I take my opinions and ideas from God? Do I acknowledge my spiritual and intellectual poverty before God, accepting his wisdom and truth? Am I possessive, selfish, self-satisfied, self-righteous, self-seeking? Am I an idolater of my own opinions, ideas, possessions? Do I lust after status, power, authority, wealth, position? Do I really love and value poverty as the perfect ideal?

**Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).**

Am I a person who mourns? Do I lament over the suffering of men? Do I weep over the troubles in Church and state, family and society? Do I suffer with all who suffer, in poverty and squalor, in misery and sin? Do I weep over sickness, disease, tragedy, and death? Or do I simply "take it as it is", passing off as courage what is really hard-heartedness and lack of sympathetic concern? Do I have compassion on the lowly, the lustful, the addicted, the selfish, the wretched, the evil and sinful of the world without judgment or condemnation? Am I sad over the sins and of others? Or do I, in fact, laugh and gloat and mock the faults of others, and take perverse pleasure in those things about which true Christians, in imitation of Christ, can only mourn?

**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).**

Am I meek with the meekness of Jesus? Am I meek in the sense that I only fight evil with good? Do I accept and practice the fact that humble love and truth and courage in goodness is the only weapon available in any battle with sin and sinful people? Do I lord it over others, at home, at work, at church? Do I love and actually use force, brute command, blind authority, intimidation, coercion, to accomplish my will? Do I bless those who curse me, pray for those who abuse me, do good to those who hate me, serve those who misuse me, speak to those who shun me? Do I love my enemies and forgive my offenders? Do I believe in the method of the meekness of Christ as the only way for genuine achievement?

**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6).**

Do I hunger and thirst for God? Do I desire to be righteous? Do I work to be holy? Do I read or study or make any continued effort for love and for truth, for the Spirit of God? Do I pray? Do I fast? Do I read the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers, the lives of the Saints, and other spiritually profitable works?

Do I do any "spiritual exercises" which train me in goodness? Do I come to Church? Do I participate in the Mysteries? Do I go out of my way to help, to teach, to serve in some way? Do I do the things which I know bring righteousness?

**Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).**

Do I show mercy to others? Do I forgive those who offend me? Do I try to understand those who are different? Do I take pleasure in judging and condemning? Do I talk about others? Do I revel in gossip? Do I say things, though possibly true, which need not be said but only can harm? Do I rejoice in wrong? Am I legalistic, loving the law more than the Spirit? Do I cover offenses, or do I stir things up by picking and condemning? Am I petty and small? Do I slander and shame? Am I prejudiced, making

judgments and coming to conclusions without proper facts but with pre-formed opinions? Do I actually prefer strict judgment to tender mercy?

**Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).**

Do I love purity, cleanness, and wholeness? Am I polluted by filthy thoughts and words and actions? Is my mind stained by demonic rationalizations and prejudices? Or am I pure in my openness to all that is good? Is my body corrupted by beastly sensuality and lust? Are my thoughts and deeds pure, or are there always hidden motives and intentions? Am I trusting and trustful, with a singleness of purpose and total integrity in everything? Or do I connive and deceive, cheat and lie? Am I hypocritical and pretentious? Am I caught by some passion: eating, drinking, smoking, working, playing, sleeping, or something else which has more control over me than I have over it? Is there any darkness or impurity which blinds me and holds me from freedom and wholeness with God?

**Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God (Matthew 5:9).**

Do I love and make peace? At home, at work, at church, in society, and the whole world? Am I angry and impatient? Preparation for Confession -- 12 Do I look for fights and arguments? Do I provoke others to anger? Do I believe in turning the other cheek? Or do I take refuge in physical force? Do I love violence? Do I worship aggression and power? Do I seek inner peace and quiet which is the basic condition for peace in the world?

**Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake (Matthew 5:10–11).**

Am I ever persecuted for what is right? Am I ready to be? Am I ready to give my life, without vengeance, for what is true? Do I participate in good activities which may bring criticism from others? Or do I take the easy road of non-involvement in human affairs, in family or job or church or society at large? Do I go along with things which are wrong from fear or cowardice or laziness? Do I flee responsibility? Do I worship security? Am I defending my own small life in contradiction to the righteousness of God? Am I, in fact, ashamed of Christ?

**Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:12).**

Is my joy and gladness in God? Or Is it In this world with its passions, powers, possessions, and praise? Am I mean and grouchy or jealous and moody? Am I despairing and without hope? Am I pessimistic and anxious? Do I complain and spread darkness and irritation to others? Is my faith of no consequence in my actions and attitudes to the events of life? Do I really consider the lilies of the field and trust in God and rejoice in this trust? Is my treasure in God or in myself? Is my life hid with Christ in God, or am I, in fact, a man of this age in body, mind, and spirit? Do I believe and have in truth the “joy of believing”?