

thing: We cannot trick God and he will not be mocked!

Before you come to Confession, pray earnestly for humility and God's grace. No one likes to recount his sins: this is human nature. But a real peace comes into our lives if we make a good confession.

### **An Examination of Conscience before Confession**

Have I believed in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Have I failed to trust in God and his mercy? Have I complained against God in times of misfortune? 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 (tarot cards, horoscopes, etc.)? Have I frequented the religious meetings of the non-Orthodox? 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?

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 and Confession regularly or without due preparation? Do I come to church after the Liturgy begins or carry on business that can be done at other times?

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 bishops and 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?

Have I stayed away from Church on Sundays and Holy Days, or prevented others from going? Have I done unnec-

essary 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 honorable reasons, did I pray at home? Have I caused anyone else to profane the Lord's Day? Have I kept the Fasts and Festivals prescribed by the Church, especially Wednesdays and Fridays?

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 in a Christian manner? 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 Faith in accordance with her teachings?

Have I caused the injury or death of anyone, or wished that they were dead? Have I done anything to shorten my own life or wished that I were dead? Have I done anything that was injurious to my health or that of another 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?

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 viewed immoral books, magazines,

websites 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, or over indulged in anything at all? Have I become involved with drugs or marijuana? 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?

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 faithfully supported the work of my Church both financially and with my time? Have I given to charitable causes in proportion to my means? Have I been honest and upright?

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 of? Have I tried to see the good in others rather than their shortcomings?

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 that God has not given me, or been discontented with my lot in life? 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 heartfelt and thorough confession is a most wonderful and powerful way to have peace of heart, mind and spirit.

## Helps for Confession

Our Lord and God Jesus Christ accomplished the redemption of the human race by his ministry of reconciliation, his suffering and his death on the Cross. By his glorious Resurrection he triumphed over death and, thereby, over Satan's hold over mankind. We have the possibility, once more, of becoming the adopted children of God if we respond to his grace and if we become co-workers with this grace. In order for grace to be available to us, for all times, our Blessed Lord founded his holy Church, the community of faith and grace, in which all means of salvation are made accessible to those who believe in him.

Among the means of grace he has given us, Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), bestowing upon the Apostles and their successors the authority to forgive sins: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John. 20:23)

Every Orthodox Christian has the obligation before God of putting his life in order. The fasting seasons are those particular periods of the year that have been set aside for this purpose, although confessions can be heard, at any time. Because there is no man who lives and does not sin, all of us must return to God, from time to time, asking forgiveness of our sins. This we must do with the firm intention of correcting ourselves in the future.

Confession is that part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which the Orthodox Christian confesses his sins to God in the witnessing presence of a priest. It is through the priestly prayer of absolution, pronounced in God's name, that our sins are forgiven. Thus, when we confess our sins, we do so in the presence of the Holy Gospel, the Holy Trinity, the entire Communion of Saints and all of mankind. If we confess insincerely, if we omit sins, if we try to justify our evil-doing, if we think we can trick the priest into believing a bad confession . . . if any of this is done, nevertheless remember one