

*The
Sacrament
of
Penance*

The Order of Confession for Groups



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**THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE
OF AMERICA**

THE ORDER FOR CONFESSION

PREPARATORY PRAYERS

Priest: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Faithful: Amen.

Glory to you, our God, glory to you.

Heavenly king, comforter, Spirit of truth who are present everywhere and fulfilling all things, the treasury of blessings and source of life: come abide in us, cleanse us of all stain and save our souls, O good one.

Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

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Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

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

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us of our sins. Master, forgive our transgressions. Holy one, look down on us and heal our infirmities to the glory of your name.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

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

Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory: of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Faithful: Amen.

Have mercy on me, O God, In Your goodness, In your great tenderness wipe away my faults.

Wash me clean of my guilt, purify me from my sin.

For I am well aware of my faults, I have sinned against none other than you, having done what you regard as wrong.

You are just when you pass sentence on me, blameless when you give judgement.

You know that I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception.

Yet, since you love sincerity of heart, teach me the secrets of wisdom.

Purify me with hyssop until I am clean; wash me until I am whiter than snow.

Instill some joy and gladness into me, put into me a new and constant spirit, do not banish me from your presence, do not deprive me of your holy spirit.

Be my savior again, renew my joy, keep my spirit steady and willing; and I shall teach transgressors the way to you, and to you the sinners will return.

Save me from death, God my savior, and my tongue will acclaim your righteousness; Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will speak out your praise.

Sacrifice gives you no pleasure, were I to offer holocaust, you would not have it.

My sacrifice is this broken spirit, you will not scorn this crushed and broken heart.

Show your favor graciously to Zion. Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Then there will be proper sacrifice to please you---holocaust and whole oblation---and young bulls to be offered on your altar.

Tropars of Humility

Faithful: Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy on us; we sinners, your servants incapable of response offer you as master this supplication: have mercy on us.

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

Lord, have mercy on us for we hope in you. Do not be very angry with us, do not remember our transgressions but, being merciful, look on us and deliver us from our enemies. For you are our God and we are your people, we are all the work of your hands and we call your name.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Open the door of mercy to us, blessed Birthgiver of God, so that we who hope in you do not perish but may be saved from adversities through you, for you are the salvation of the Christian race.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O God, our Savior, who through your prophet Nathan granted repentant David remission of his sins and accepted the prayer of penitent Manasse, in your love for mankind, receive your servants N..who lament the sins they have committed and overlook all that they have done, forgiving their unrighteousness and passing-by their transgressions. For it was you, Lord, who said: I desire not the death of a sinner but rather that he turn from wickedness he has committed and live, and that sins should be forgiven seventy times seven. As your glory is incomprehensible so your mercy is immeasurable, and if you never overlooked our sins could anyone survive? But You are God of the penitent and we offer glory to you: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Faithful: Amen.

Faithful: Hear me my Lord and my Savior, again listen to me a sinner, your unworthy servant.

Often I promised to change my wicked life and even so, I have not altered it.

I transgressed and I am sorry for what I have done.

I am ashamed to come before your face for I have disobeyed you many times and I have not cast off my sins.

With whom shall I speak of my great discontentment and where shall I go?

I have done many evil things! I come to you, my merciful master, and humbly fall down at your feet for I know that you accepted the terrible death on the cross for my sins.

You call all sinners to you through your scriptures, proclaiming: He that comes to me, I will not cast out.

Therefore, O Lord, receive me the unworthy one and forgive all my sins and bestow your grace and blessing on me, because of your great and immeasurable mercy.

I am sincerely contrite for I have transgressed before you and I have angered you by word, by deed and thought, voluntary and involuntary.

Therefore, from this moment on, I truthfully promise that, with your grace and your help, I will not return to my former transgressions.

But I will prefer death rather than disobey one of your commands.

I am determined to obey you now and ever and I bow at your holy name, Lord Jesus Christ, and I shall glorify you to the ages of ages. Amen.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Faithful: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O master, Lord God, who are the salvation of your servants, O merciful, compassionate and patient one, who are sorry at our evil doings and who desires not the sinner's death but that he should turn and live, now be merciful to us your servants, N. and grant us the Image of repentance, forgive-

ness of sins and remission, forgiving us all our transgressions, voluntary and involuntary. Give us peace and unite us to your holy Church, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, with whom you are glorified and worshipped together with your all-holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Faithful: Amen.

Priest: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your great mercy, we pray you, hear us and have mercy.

Faithful: (Three times). Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Again we pray for the forgiveness and remission of the sins of the servants of God N. and that they be forgiven all their sins, voluntary and involuntary.

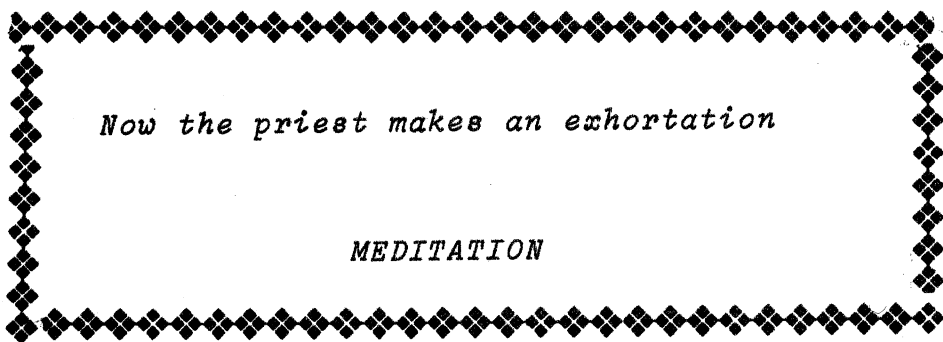
Faithful: (Three times). Lord, have mercy.

Priest: That the Lord God grant them forgiveness of sins and time for repentance, let us pray to the Lord.

Faithful: (Three times). Lord, have mercy.

Priest: For you are merciful, O God and the lover of mankind and we offer glory to you: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Faithful: Amen.



Faithful: All these terrible sins are found in me. Therefore I shall search my thoughts and feelings in detail.

I. I should love God more

If I loved God more, I would think more frequently about him with a joy springing from the depths of my heart and every thought concerned with God would bring a new pleasure to my soul. But, on the contrary I think more often and with great pleasure about material things and the time in which I meditate on God produces only heaviness and dryness.

If I loved Him more, then my conversation with him during prayer would nourish me, gratify me and bring me into uninterrupted union with him. I do not, however, receive pleasure from my prayer, but at the very moment of praying, I feel a heaviness: I fight against exhaustion, weak because of my laziness and I am ready to occupy myself with more pleasures, with any trifling distraction, only to shorten or terminate my prayer.

In chattering about useless things which are of no significance to the soul, I am very lively, I feel good; but in conversing about God, I am dry, weary and lazy. Even in the moment when I willfully am attracted to talk about holy things, I quickly pursue talk about those subjects which stir up the passions. I am overcome by the desire to acquire all sorts of worldly knowledge while the teaching concerning God's laws, knowledge about God, about religion do not remain for anything in my mind, they do not feed my soul.

Therefore, I reckon that all these pursuits, other than being a moral obligation in the life of every Christian, are nothing more than interior exercises and are of small importance and which I must occupy myself with only in free time when I have nothing better to do.

In short, if the love for God is known according to the fulfilling of his commands, as the Savior says: "If you love me, keep my commandments", I, not only do not keep his commands, but I am not even concerned with fulfilling them and therefore, I must conclude that I do not love God. This is confirmed by Saint Basil the Great who says: "Evidence that a man does not love God nor his Christ is the fact that he does not fulfill his commandments."

2. I have no love for my neighbor

Instead of following the exhortation of the Gospel that I lay down my soul for the good of my neighbor, I do not sacrifice honor, happiness nor even calm in behalf of my brother. If I loved him as myself, as the Gospel commands, then his misfortune would pain me and his joy would fill me with happiness. But after listening with unfeigned delight to the story of my neighbor's misfortune, I don't grieve myself, don't break my heart from sorrow, but I remain unmoved and, what is an even greater sin, I feel pleased when I hear such stories repeated.

Furthermore, I do not cover the bad deeds of my neighbor with love, but spread them and judge them. His wellbeing, honor and happiness do not make me happy as if they were my own. But being totally aloof, I do not allow them to awaken not one feeling of joy in my soul, but, on the contrary, they goad a type of jealousy, almost contempt in my heart.

3. I am not strong in faith

If I had been strong in faith and without any doubt that there is an unending life on the other side of the grave, with a definite reward for the works performed on this earth, then I would have thought unceasingly about that which awaits me and one simple thought about immortality would have frightened me and I would have lived this life as a Christian who is ever prepared to enter the celestial fatherland.

On the contrary, I do not confront the problem of eternity, and I consider the end of this life here as a conclusion to my existence. Sometimes, a secret thought nestles in my heart: Who knows what will be after death? It is clear that I say that I do believe in immortality, but I say it only in my mind while my heart remains aloof from a strong belief in eternal things. This is vividly demonstrated by all my works and by my unrestrained concern for the best manner of mortal existence.

If the Holy Gospel, which is the Word of God, had been received into my heart with faith, I would have been constantly concerned with it. I would have delighted in reading it and a single consideration of it would have aroused profound piety in my heart.

Wisdom, happiness and love, which are all contained in its pages, would have filled me with joy and I would have been nourished by them even as you are nourished by your daily bread and I would have begun with all my heart, to fulfill their precepts. No person on earth would have been able to keep me from my decision.

And yet, even though I listen to or even read the Word of the Lord now and then, I do it only when I feel sorrowful or when I have some temptation. At the same time, I cannot reach, even with the greatest attention, the spirit of the Gospel. I feel overcome by dryness, by a lack of interest and as I have a book of a different nature nearby, I remain without benefit and I am ready, even happy, to exchange it with that mundane work which I read with intense pleasure and in which I find novelty and entertainment.

4. I am filled with pride and with physical love of self

All my actions prove the following: Every time I find something good in myself I want to bring it to attention so that I can show off in front of others or take pleasure in it myself. Outside of occasionally showing humility, and this usually within myself, I attribute this good to my own power and I think myself to be the most perfect being, or at least no worse than others.

If I do notice something lacking in me, I try to justify it, to cover it up. I am quickly angered with anyone who does not respect me. I therefore think them ignorant because they fail to appreciate and recognize a good man. I boast of my good deeds and speak badly and rejoice in my enemies' misfortunes while my own downfalls annoy me.

When I do apply myself to contrive something good, I really have in mind my own praise or personal benefit or else crave the world's admiration. In a few words, I have set up an idol within myself in front of which I serve in uninterrupted adoration, soliciting either pleasures of the senses or fuel for my desires and passions.

From all that is said here, I perceive that I am proud, that I am lacking faith, that I do not really love God nor do I love my neighbor.

(Being thus prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament of Confession, the faithful approach the priest, one by one, for further expression of their sins and to receive their absolution.)

Priest: My spiritual child N...., you have confessed to me, an unworthy man and I, humble and sinful, cannot forgive your sins on earth; for only God can do this: but according to his divine command which was given to the apostles after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: What sins you forgive are forgiven, what sins you retain are retained; because of this we also boldly say: All which you have told to me, an unworthy man and all which you have not said due to ignorance and forgetfulness, God forgives you now and in the life to come. Amen.

Priest: Glory to you, Christ our God, our hope, glory to you.

Faithful: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. In the name of the Lord, Father give the blessing.

Priest: May Christ our true God, through the intercessions of his most-pure Mother, of the holy and all-laudable apostles and of all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for he is good and the lover of mankind.

Faithful: Amen.

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

Faithful: Amen.

O Lord Master, I am not worthy to have you come under the roof of my soul, but as you, being the lover of mankind, want to dwell in me, I boldly approach.

Command me and I shall open the doors of my soul which you yourself have made, and enter with your constant love for mankind and enlighten my darkened mind.

I truly believe that you will do all this, for you did not send away the harlot who came to you in tears, nor did you drive away the publican who repented, nor the thief who acknowledged your kingdom, nor did you abandon Paul the persecutor who repented.

But all those who came penitantly to you were numbered among your friends, O you that alone are blessed always, now and to ages unending. Amen.

(Saint John Chrysostom)

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I stand before the doors of your House and still I do not put aside evil thoughts.

But you, O Christ God, who reformed the publican and had mercy on the Canaanite woman and opened the door or paradise to the thief, also open to me your great love for mankind, and receive me who come and touch you as did the harlot and the woman who suffered from hemorrhage.

For she was immediately healed by touching the hem of your robe and the other obtained forgiveness of her sins by embracing your pure feet.

And I, a wretched one, dare to presume to receive your whole body and thus, lest I am burned, receive me as you receive those who were penitent and enlighten my spiritual senses, burning only the iniquity of my sins.

Through the intercessions of her who without seed bore you and through the heavenly powers, for you are blessed for ever. Amen.

(Saint John the Damascene)



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