

A Preparation for Confession

by St. John of Kronstadt

I, a sinful soul, confess to our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, all of my evil acts which I have done, said or thought from baptism even unto this present day.

I have not kept the vows of my baptism, but have made myself unwanted before the face of God.

I have sinned before the Lord by lack of faith and by doubts concerning the Orthodox Faith and the Holy Church; by ungratefulness for all of God's great and unceasing gifts; His long-suffering and His providence for me, a sinner; by lack of love for the Lord, as well as fear, through not fulfilling the Holy Commandments of God and the canons and rules of the Church.

I have not preserved a love for God and for my neighbor nor have I made enough efforts, because of laziness and lack of care, to learn the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Holy Fathers.

I have sinned: by not praying in the morning and in the evening and in the course of the day; by not attending the services or by coming to Church only half-heartedly, lazily and carelessly; by conversing during the services, by not paying attention, letting my mind wander and by departure from the Church before the dismissal and blessing.

I have sinned by judging members of the clergy.

I have sinned by not respecting the Feasts, breaking the Fasts, and by immoderation in food and drink.

I have sinned by self-importance, disobedience, willfulness, self-righteousness, and the seeking of approval and praise.

I have sinned by unbelief, lack of faith, doubts, despair, despondency, abusive thoughts, blasphemy and swearing.

I have sinned by pride, a high opinion of my self, narcissism, vanity, conceit, envy, love of praise, love of honors, and by putting on airs.

I have sinned: by judging, malicious gossip, anger, remembering of offenses done to me, hatred and returning evil for evil; by slander, reproaches, lies, slyness, deception and hypocrisy; by prejudices, arguments, stubbornness, and an unwillingness to give way to my neighbor; by gloating, spitefulness, taunting, insults and mocking; by gossip, by speaking too much and by empty speech.

I have sinned by unnecessary and excessive laughter, by reviling and dwelling upon my previous sins, by arrogant behavior, insolence and lack of respect.

I have sinned by not keeping my physical and spiritual passions in check, by my enjoyment of impure thoughts, licentiousness and unchastity in thoughts, words and deeds.

I have sinned by lack of endurance towards my illnesses and sorrows, a devotion to the comforts of life and by being too attached to my parents, children, relatives and friends.

I have sinned by hardening my heart, having a weak will and by not forcing myself to do good.

I have sinned by miserliness, a love of money, the acquisition of unnecessary things and immoderate attachment to things.

I have sinned by self-justification, a disregard for the admonitions of my conscience and failing to confess my sins through negligence or false pride.

I have sinned many times by my Confession: belittling, justifying and keeping silent about sins.

I have sinned against the Most-holy and Life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord by coming to Holy Communion without humility or the fear of God.

I have sinned in deed, word and thought, knowingly and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly, thoughtfully and thoughtlessly, and it is impossible to enumerate all of my sins because of their multitude.

But I truly repent of these and all others not mentioned by me because of my forgetfulness and I ask that they be forgiven through the abundance of the Mercy of God.

by St. Ephraim the Syrian

After having gained knowledge of the truth, I have become a brawler and an offender. I argue over trifles; I have become envious of and callous toward my neighbor, merciless toward beggars, wrathful, argumentative, obstinate, slothful, irritable. I harbor vile thoughts, I love fancy clothing. And to this day I have many corrupt thoughts and fits of selfishness, gluttony, sensuality, vainglory, arrogance, lust, gossiping, breaking of fasts, despondency, rivalry, and indignation.

I am worthless, but think much of myself. I lie constantly, but get angry with liars. I defile the temple of my body with wanton thoughts, but sternly judge the wanton. I condemn those who fall, but myself fall constantly. I condemn slanderers and thieves, but am myself both a thief and a slanderer. I walk with a bright countenance, although I am altogether impure.

In churches and at banquets I always want to take the place of honor. I see hermits and act dignified; I see monks and I become pompous. I strive to appear pleasing to the opposite sex, dignified to strangers, intelligent and reasonable to my neighbors, superior to intellectuals. With the righteous I act as if I possess vast wisdom; the unintelligent I disdain as illiterates.

If I am offended, I take revenge. If I am honored, I shun those who honor me. If someone demands of me what is rightfully his, I start a suit. And those who tell me the truth I consider enemies. When my error is exposed, I get angry, but I am not so dissatisfied when people flatter me.

I do not want to honor those who are worthy but I myself, who am unworthy, demand honor. I do not want to tire myself with work, but if someone fails to serve me I get angry with him. I do not want to walk among laborers, but if someone fails to help me in my work I slander him.

I arrogantly deny my brother when he is in need, but when I have need of something I turn to him. I hate those who are ill, but when I myself am ill I wish that everyone would love me. I do not want to know those who are higher than I, and I scorn those who are lower.

If I abstain from indulging my foolish desires, I praise myself vaingloriously. If I succeed in vigilance, I fall into the snares of conceit and contradiction. If I refrain from eating, I drown in pride and arrogance. If I am wakeful in prayer, I am vanquished by irritability and wrath. If I see virtue in someone, I studiously ignore him.

I have scorned worldly pleasures, but do not want to abandon my desire for them. If I see a person of the opposite sex, I go into raptures. To all appearances I am wise in humility, but in my soul I am haughty. I seem not to be acquisitive, but in reality I suffer from a mania for possessions. And what good is it to dwell on such things? I appear to have forsaken the world, but in fact I still think about worldly things all the time.

During services I always occupy myself with conversations, wandering thoughts, and vain recollections. During meals I indulge in idle chatter. I yearn for gifts. I participate in the sinful falls of others and engage in ruinous rivalry.

Such is my life! With what vileness do I obstruct my own salvation! And my arrogance, my vainglory does not permit me to think about my sores that I might cure myself. Behold my virtuous feats! See how vast are the regiments of sins which the enemy sends to campaign against me! Yet in the face of all this, I who am wretched endeavor to boast of sanctity. I live in sin, but want others to honor me as a righteous person.

In all this I have but one thing to say in my defense: the devil has ensnared me. But this did not suffice to absolve Adam of his sin. Cain was of course also prompted by the devil, but he did not escape condemnation either. What shall I do if the Lord comes to me? I have no means to justify my negligence.

I fear that I shall be numbered among those whom Paul called vessels of wrath, who will share the devil's fate and whom God, because of their contempt for Him, has committed to the passions of degradation. Thus there is the danger that I will be sentenced to the same fate.

If You would save me, who am unworthy, O Merciful Lord, grant me, a sinner, repentance; enliven my soul deadened by sins, O Giver of Life. Drive out the stony hardness that is in my miserable heart and grant me a fountain of contrition, O You who did pour forth life unto us from Your life-creating rib.

Repentance

by St. John Klimakos (*of the Ladder*)

Repentance is the renewal of Baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life. A penitent is a buyer of humility. Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort. Repentance is self-condemning reflection, and carefree self-care. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. A penitent is an undisgraced convict. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience. Repentance is the voluntary endurance of all afflictions. A penitent is the inflicter of his own punishments. Repentance is a mighty persecution of the stomach and a striking of the soul into vigorous awareness.

Remission of Sins

by St. Isaac the Syrian

Someone was asked, 'When will a man know that he has received the remission of his sins?' He answered, 'When in his soul he becomes conscious that he has completely hated them with his whole heart, and when he governs himself in his external actions in a manner opposed to his former way of life. Such a man, as having already hated his sin, is confident that he has received remission of his sins by reason of the good witness of his conscience which he has acquired, after the saying of the Apostle, "A conscience uncondemned is a witness of itself" (Rom. 2:15).' And may we also gain remission of our sins by the grace and love for man of the unoriginate Father with His only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.