



Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
MAR GREGORIOS ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN STUDENT MOVEMENT
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HOLY CONFESSION

St. James, in his epistle, says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (*James 5:16*). A sinful life is a state of dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction (*1 Jn 3:21*) results from sins of commission and sins of omission. The sins of commission are those that we do which we are prohibited from doing (*i.e., Gal 5:19-20*). Sins of omission are failures to do obligatory duties (*i.e., Ex 20:8-12*). The desire to confess comes from one's own mind. The mystery of Holy Confession renews the covenant of baptism which we had entered into through our godparents. The covenant is a promise to live according to God's will. The faithful are admonished to confess before the priest every forty days and at a minimum, once a year.

GUIDELINES FOR HOLY CONFESSION

- I. **Retrospection** - Meditate on the following to self-examine and realize sins you have committed: Ten Commandments and their essence, and preparatory biblical readings, including the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt 5-7*). It is suggested to write down your sins on paper to help remember them during the confession. For each sin committed, it is also helpful to recall each occasion and how often it was repeated to help lead a life avoiding sin and sinful occasions.
- ii. **Repentance** - King David sang "You will not reject a broken and repentant heart" (*Ps 51:17*). Once the retrospection is completed with selected readings, we should repent for our sinful state. Repentance must be complete and not partial. Read, meditate, and concentrate on the penitential psalms written by David, the King and Prophet, associate the sins identified during retrospection with these readings, and pray for forgiveness. Use the list of sins prepared during retrospection and compare against the most recent confession. This will help us re-examine our life and strengthen our resolve to not commit these sins again.

- iii. **Vow** - The penitent must decide to never again commit the sins that were identified and repented of as part of self-examination. The penitent must also decide to observe holy deeds (alms-giving, fasting, prayer, meditation, observation of obligatory days, bible reading, confession, holy communion, etc.) on a regular basis.
- iv. **Confession** - The repentant must kneel before the priest and reveal his/her sins, not concealing any, to the priest as a patient reveals his illness to a doctor. The repentant must have faith that the priest is the representative of the Lord, and confessing before the priest is like confessing to the Lord. The repentant must also have the faith and conviction that one who truly confesses will be granted complete absolution by the priest, that what he looses or binds on earth will be loosed or bound in heaven (*Mt 18:18*). Since the priest will never reveal, nor is permitted to reveal the confessed sins to the priest, confess with courage. The priest is a spiritual doctor and father as well as spiritual friend and judge. He will pray during Holy Qurbana for the special grace you need. It is advised to choose a priest as your father of confession/spiritual father, and confess regularly to him only, unless a particular need arises. Building a relationship with one priest as your father of confession is important, as your spiritual father will be better aware of your struggles and sins and can help you grow and remove these sins from your life. Additionally, you will feel more accountable and encouraged because your spiritual father knows you well, and knows the struggles you are enduring.
- v. **Absolution** - After necessary counseling, at the end of confession the priest will say the prayer of absolution. At the end of the absolution while the priest says, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each time he will draw the sign of cross on your forehead, and the penitent should say, "Amen."
- vi. **Reception of Holy Qurbana** - After confession, without delay and at the first possible opportunity, receive the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord.
- vii. **Penance** - The penance assigned by the priest, such as fasting, kneeling, alms giving, and offerings, must be fulfilled immediately after the confession.

PREPARATORY BIBLE READINGS FOR HOLY CONFESSION

- St. Mathew Chapters 5, 6, & 7
- Seven Penitential Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 & 143
- St. Luke 15:11-24; 7:36-50
- St. John 8:1-11
- Galatians 5:17-21
- Romans 13:7-14

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE USING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- I. **I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.** Have I believed in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Have I failed to trust in him? Have I been thankful to God for his blessing? Have I doubted the Christian faith and the teachings of the Orthodox Church? Did I find happiness and pleasure in serving and adoring God? Have I given way to superstition, magic, or such Satanic devices? Have I been associated with heretics compromising the Orthodox faith? Have I neglected my duties to God through fear of ridicule or persecution? Did I do my regular prayers demanded by my Church?
- II. **You shall not make unto yourself any graven image (for adoration).** Did I worship idols? Did I consider any person or anything greater than God? Did I worship anything or anybody but God? Did I attend the liturgy regularly? Did I read the bible to get spiritual nourishment? Have I been irreverent and insincere during prayers and liturgies? Have I neglected to receive Holy Communion regularly or without due preparation?
- III. **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.** Have I used any profanity? Have I abused the name of God in swearing a false oath? Have I cursed or abused any persons? Have I failed to give proper respect to priests and bishops and to holy things? Have I broken any vow or promise before God? Have I entered into any illegal contract or broken a promise legally or seriously contracted?
- IV. **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.** Have I stayed away from Church on Sundays and Holy days due to laziness or profitable motives? Have I done any gainful employment on those days? How have I spent Sunday, if I could not attend liturgy on account of my illness or other grave reasons - have I prayed at home? Have I restricted or

prevented anybody from attending liturgy? Have I observed the prayers, fast and abstinence prescribed? Have I done anything sacrilegious inside a Church or anywhere?

V. **Honor your father and mother.** Have I respected my parents, uncles, aunts, and elders according to the degree of respect they are entitled to? Have I caused them pain by my words or actions? Have I been obedient to them? Have I done my duty to my family? Have I loved my wife/husband as God wants? Have I injured her/him in words or actions? Have I physically abused her/him? Have I given good example to my children and tried to bring them up properly in the Orthodox faith? Have I corrected their faults with patience and understanding and not with unjustifiable anger? Have I spoiled them? Have I respected my godfather/godmother? Have I neglected my godchildren and failed in my obligations to them? Have I honored the Church as my spiritual mother by honoring and practicing my religion?

VI. **You shall not kill.** Have I caused death to any person? Have I aborted a fetus conceived in the womb deliberately or encouraged anyone to perform an abortion? Have I wished that I or anyone else were dead? Have I done anything to shorten my life or anybody's life? Have I injured anyone physically? Have I given way to extreme rage and anger and/or done brutal actions? Have I criticized others unjustly or destructively? Have I defamed others? Have I been cruel to anyone? Have I mistreated or destroyed animals or any life unnecessarily? Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against anyone?

VII. **You shall not commit adultery.** Have I indulged in impure habits and actions? Have I fostered impure thoughts in me or found pleasure in using impure words? Have I forgotten human dignity and the purpose of human sexuality by indulging in homosexuality or self-abuse? Have I read immoral books and literature? Have I watched immoral movies? Have I looked at anyone with lust? Have I committed adultery or fornication? Have I Indulged in impure touch, look, etc? Have I eaten or drunk too much? Have I engaged in the habits of drinking Alcohol, smoking or drug abuse, which destroy the use of my mental and physical faculties? Have I done anything against the sanctity of marriage or my body? Have I led anyone to such sins? Have I made up my mind to commit any of such sins

although not committed it in action?

VIII. **You shall not steal.** Have I stolen anything or wished to do so? Have I kept someone's property without authorization or used it? Have I honestly tried to find owners of lost articles? Have I cheated anyone? Have I cheated my employer in any way? Have I paid my debts when I was financially able? Have I lived within my income? Have I been extravagant or wasteful? Have I helped charities in proportion to my income?

IX. **You shall not bear false witness.** Have I told lies distorting reality altogether? Have I honored truth? Have I made careless statements about anyone? Have I opened any secrets entrusted to me? Have I gossiped? Have I put anyone's reputation at stake? Have I testified in a court of law or to anyone against truth?

X. **You shall not covet.** Have I envied anything good that has come to others? Have I been jealous about another's fortune? Have I wished anything that was another's? Have I deliberately destroyed the property of others? Have I been stingy? Have I wished for another's disaster that I might gain from it? Have I been thankful to people who helped me?

PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION

O God, relying on Your promise that You do not desire the death of the sinner but rather that he repent and live, I pray and beseech Your mercy. Forgive me the transgressions and sins that I have committed knowing and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly.

(Recall here the sins that you have committed)

Lord, forgive all offences I have committed and save me. By the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit, wipe away the offences my sinful soul and from my filthy body. O God, reconcile with me and do not ever feel anger toward me. Just as You made unholy people saints and justified sinners, count me among the righteous by Your merciful affection and love. As You forgave Mary Magdalene, the tax collector Zacchaeus, the thief on the cross, and Simon who denied You, forgive my sins and absolve me. Behold, I have turned toward Your mercy, taken refuge in You and in Your mercy, and believed in Your teaching. O my Lord, do not make me enter into Your judgement and sentence me. O Lord, You are omniscient and discern everything. Make me worthy to praise and adore You and Your Father and Your Holy Spirit for all good things You have bestowed upon me.

- Nicene Creed
- Kurielaison (Repeat ten times and prostrate)
- Lord, have mercy upon me (x10)
- Lord, be kind and have mercy(x10)
- Answer, Lord, and have mercy (x10)
- Glory to You, O Lord! Glory to You, O Lord! Glory to You, our hope forever. Barekmor.
- Our Father, who art in heaven...

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE BEFORE THE PRIEST

I confess to God the Father Almighty, and to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, in the presence of the Virgin Mary and all the angels, prophets, seventy-two preachers, twelve apostles and four evangelists, and confess in the faith of the three holy synods of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus, trusting in the honorable priestly authority conferred upon you. O priest, by which you bind and retain sins. I have sinned in thought, word, and deed. I repent my sins. You are the master and I am the servant. Accept me as the prodigal son. I have sinned against heaven and against you. I believe that you have authority to bind and retain or to forgive sins and that you are the mediator between God and me. And I pray that you deliver me from all my sins by your priestly authority that I may obtain forgiveness. I pray that you remember me before God, in your prayers, and in the Holy Qurbana. Amen

SUPPLICATION

Lord God, forgive all my offences that I have committed against You, knowingly or unknowingly, voluntarily or involuntarily, secretly or openly; I beseech You. I am genuinely sorry for offending Your love. Forgive me as You did forgive the sinful woman in the house of Simon. Have mercy upon me as You manifested Your mercy to the thief when You were on the cross, Justify me like the publican. Grant me remission of sins like the prodigal son. Take me back like Simon Peter who denied You. Purify me like You did the unclean ones. Sanctify me like the ones stained with sin. O Christ, who accepts penitents, absolves the offences of sinners, and rejoices on the return of the lost sheep, wash me and purify me from the stains of my sins, so that I may constantly praise and adore You, and Your blessed and glorious Father who sent You for our salvation, and the living Holy Spirit who rejoices over my conversion. Amen.