



# *Let Us Examine Our Ways*

How to Prepare for the Mystery of  
Repentance and Confession

"Let us search out and examine our ways,  
And turn back to the LORD;  
Let us lift our hearts and hands  
To God in heaven." Lamentations 3:40-41



In the name of the Father and the Son and  
the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen

Throught the intercession of the Holy Theotokos,  
St. Mary, St. John the Baptist, St. Stephen the  
protomartyr, St. Gregory the Illuminator, and the  
prayers of our Holy Patriarch Catholicos Karekin II,  
May the Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins.  
Amen.

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# *How Do We Examine Ourselves?*

“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are **not wise.**” 2 Corinthians 10:12

When we **look only inside** of us to make an examination of our ways, we make a mistake. The thought “it is ok, everybody thinks this way” or “everybody does it” would be very unwise to use as an examination standard.

God called us **“His children”** and appointed us to be like His beloved Son. In old times, God gave us an image of His Son in the commandments. In the perfect time, God sent His Son for us to see Him and know Him. Our Lord said: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”. When examining our ways, we look at our Lord as the model for life.

The **Ten Commandments** are the basic description of who Christ is. Our Lord started His mission by giving us the Christian Standard in the **“Sermon on the Mount.”** The Sermon on the Mount is a description of Himself. The apostles described Christ to us in their letters when they wrote commandments of love, humility and unity.

A person cleaning a house would need ample light to see what to remove from the house. The Word of God is **the light** that examines our ways. The commandments are a mirror by which **we see how God meant us to be,** and how we’ve fallen short of His plan for us.

When we turn our attention to Christ in prayer, we can start to feel the gentle rebuke for our sins. **The rebuke** is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen;  
**REPENT** and do the first works...” Revelation 2:5

# *What is Repentance?*

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”  
Matthew 3:2

The appropriate response to discovering our sinfulness and weaknesses is repentance. In Armenian:

**Ապաշխարել (Abashkharel) = Turning away from sorrow**

God wants us to return, change direction, make a **U-turn**. Repentance is recognizing the sorrow in your heart for disobeying God, and then turning back to God to relieve your sorrow.

What does repentance look like? Our Lord taught us through the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican:

**“The tax collector standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”**

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 8:13-14

Our Lord gave us the example of the **Prodigal Son** (Luke 15) to show us what it looks like to make that U-turn and come back to Him. God awaits the return of the sinner to Him with eagerness.

God and heaven **REJOICE** at the return of the sinner. God asks His church to rejoice with Him over the return of the sinner.

Repentance also includes correcting any wrong that was done. The story of **Zacchaeus** (Luke 19) shows that we recognize our sinfulness when we seek to see Christ. The return of Zacchaeus started by his **EAGERNESS TO SEE OUR LORD**.



Pharisee and Tax Collector • Luke 8

Coming closer to our Lord changed his heart. We need to make corrections for the wrongs we've done as Zacchaeus did. Apologizing to others for the hurt we caused, returning the stolen material, uncovering a lie we told are all examples of corrections of wrongdoings and are signs of strong repentance.

Christ has told us of the **Final Judgment** as a 'day' when we are to be judged according to our actions, "Judge the whole world in righteousness and give everyone according to his deeds."

- St. Basil's Liturgy -

We ought to examine our hearts to keep a clean source of our words and actions because out of our hearts comes all good and all evil.

# *What is Confession?*

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

When we finish examining ourselves, we are ready to confess our sins. Confession is one of the Mysteries of the Holy Church. Mysteries are the way we as the members of Christ's body experience the living Christ. We begin confession by a prayer of repentance to God, like the prodigal son: "I have sinned against heaven and before You and I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Then we go to the priest to confess before the church to receive absolution. We confess to the priest trusting in Christ's words: "So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**" (John 20:21-23)

Confession here is an act of faith in the promise and gift of forgiveness of our Lord to His church. The gifts of Christ seem beyond human logic. In the story of the sinful woman, the Pharisee responded with unbelief, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." And again, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" She showed faith in God's forgiveness through Christ. "Then He said to the woman, **Your faith has saved you.** Go in peace."

The prodigal son, after meeting his Father, would return to the House of the Father, which represents the Church. The Father asks the servants (the priests) to take care of his returning son.

Confession is a **cleansing process** that takes **courage**. It is also an **offering** made to God on His Altar.

# *How to Prepare for Confession*

## **1. Come Back to Yourself**

Set a regular time for self examination. Self-Examination is the regular practice of comparing yourself to the commandments with the intent to do them: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." James 1:22-24

You can write your reflections in a dedicated journal to keep a record for confession and follow-up.

## **2. Come Back to God in Repentance**

After you get a clear image of yourself, speak to God privately. If you do not have words of your own, use the prayers of the church e.g. Psalm 50, Holy Holy Holy, or the Prayer Before Confession etc.

## **3. Come Back to the Church for Absolution**

Now you are ready to confess to the priest! Confession is traditionally done in the church. First, the priest prays "Our Father," then asks you to confess your sins. Start by saying "I have sinned against God in..." and then list your sins. It helps if you write them down – then you can just read them! Do not bring excuses for your sins, nor say "the usual sins," since sins should never become usual. Focus on your faults, not those of others. For example, do not speak of others in your confession nor blame anyone or circumstances. *Confession is seeking reconciliation with God's Church.* The parables of Christ teach us that God's Church consists of many members, in both heaven and earth, including our families, friends, the saints and angels. When you sit with the priest for confession, trust that you will be reconciled with all the members of God's Church. The priest is not there to judge you but to absolve you. At the end of confession, the priest will pray "the absolution prayer" to ask for Christ's pardon.

## **4. Thank God After Confession**

After confession, offer a thanksgiving prayer for Christ's gift of loving forgiveness. The Mystery of confession prepares you for receiving communion. *Confession should be regular (monthly).*





*The*  
**10**  
*Commandments*

"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path."

Psalm 119:105



## **1. YOU SHALL HAVE NO GODS BEFORE ME**

- Do I hold anything (e.g. reputation, praise success) or anybody (e.g. family, friends, coworkers) higher than God?
- Do I love anything or anybody more than God?
- Do any worldly attachments such as work, school, money, physical appearance, smart phones take God's time and importance?

## **2. YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF A CARVED IMAGE**

- Does television, or social media take God's or any type of images and screens distract me while praying?

## **3. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN**

- Do I use God's name in casual conversation without proper honor to God's Name (like making the sign of the cross & bowing)?
- Do I make jokes about God or the Church?
- Do I swear or make oaths in the name of God?

## **4. REMEMBER THE LORD'S DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY**

- What do I do on Sunday?
- Do I spend it at Church at all or do I let other things keep me from Church?
- Do I give my best heart filled attention in the Badarak on Sunday
- Do I go home after church and work or watch TV?
- Do I spend quality time with my family, visit the sick or needy, and ask about them?

## **5. HONOR YOUR FATHER & YOUR MOTHER**

- Do I respect and care for my parents?
- Do I spend time with them and honor their wishes?
- Do I ignore my parents when they call my name? Or try to get my attention?
- Do I keep in touch with them and let them know how important they are in my life?
- Do I argue or complain when I am asked to do something?
- Do I try to please them by doing my best in school?
- Do I help around the house or at least do my chores if I live with them?
- If I don't have chores do I ask my parents if they need help to do something around the house?
- Do I think I know better than my parents?
- Do I submit to my parents in obedience despite my age?
- Do I ever speak poorly, harshly, or despairingly to my parents?

## **6. YOU SHALL NOT MURDER**

- Do I get angry with people without a good cause? Do I treat people's feelings with carelessness?
- Do I hurt others' feelings?
- Do I slander or revile others?
- Do I resent, despise, or hate others?
- Do I take communion while I am fighting with someone?

## **7. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY**

- Do I respect my body? Do I wear inappropriate clothing that is revealing, short, transparent or tight?
- Do I use inappropriate language in describing others?
- Am I unfaithful in my relationships?

- Am I using people to fulfill my desires and wants under pretense of friendship?
- Do I have an inappropriate relationship (physical or emotional) with someone I am not married to?
- Do I lust after other people?
- Have I sinned in regards to images on TV or the internet?
- Have I had impure thoughts?
- Have I committed sins of physical impurity?

## **8. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL**

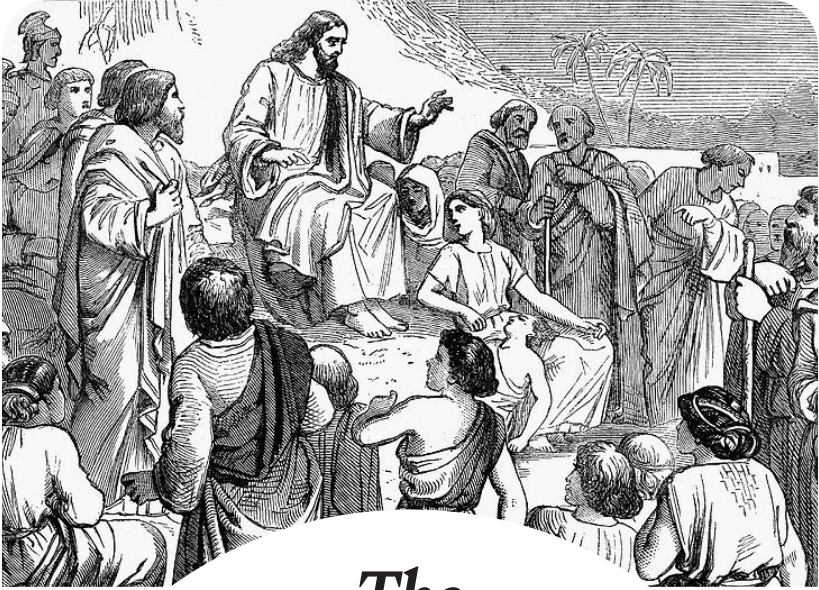
- Do I take what is not mine?
- Do I cheat or copy other people's work or homework?
- Do I gossip (stealing reputation)?
- Do I respect other people's property by not abusing it?
- Do I transmit bad comments from one person to another?
- Am I honest with the hours I bill at work? Am I honest with my taxes?
- Do I pay my tithes to the church?
- Do I take supplies from work?

## **9. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR**

- Do I lie?
- Do I tell half truths?
- Do I tell "white lies?" What is my motive to lie? Is it fear of false pretense?

## **10. YOU SHALL NOT COVET**

- Do I want what my neighbor (friend, classmate, co-worker) has when I know that I don't need it?



# *The* **Sermon on *the* Mount**

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell.

And great was its fall.” Matthew 7:21-27

## **BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT**

- Do I feel that I need God?
- Do I think I am better than others or that I know better than others?
- Do I feel a need to acquire power and control?
- Do I have a spiritual guide or do I feel self sufficient?
- Do I murmur about my life?

## **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN**

- Am I sad when I am far away from God?
- Do I feel sad when someone is away from God, sick or in trouble?
- Do I feel Godly sorrow when I sin?

## **BLESSED ARE THE MEEK**

- Do I use a gentle voice?
- Do I use my inside voice?
- Am I kind and caring to others? Do I pray for others?

## **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

- Do I want to learn about God and do I want to get to know God?
- Do I want to have a real relationship with God?
- Do I just put on a show on Sundays that I am a good Christian and ignore God throughout the week?
- Do I fast with the church or do I follow my own mind?
- Do I want to learn about God and do I want to get to know God?
- Do I want to have a real relationship with God?
- Do I just put on a show on Sundays that I am a good Christian and ignore God throughout the week?
- Am I a hypocrite in any way?

## **BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL**

- Do I show care to people who hurt? Do I forgive?
- Am I kind and caring to those who no one else is kind & caring to?
- Am I charitable to the poor or needy around me? Do I help the sick?
- Do I judge others?

## **BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART**

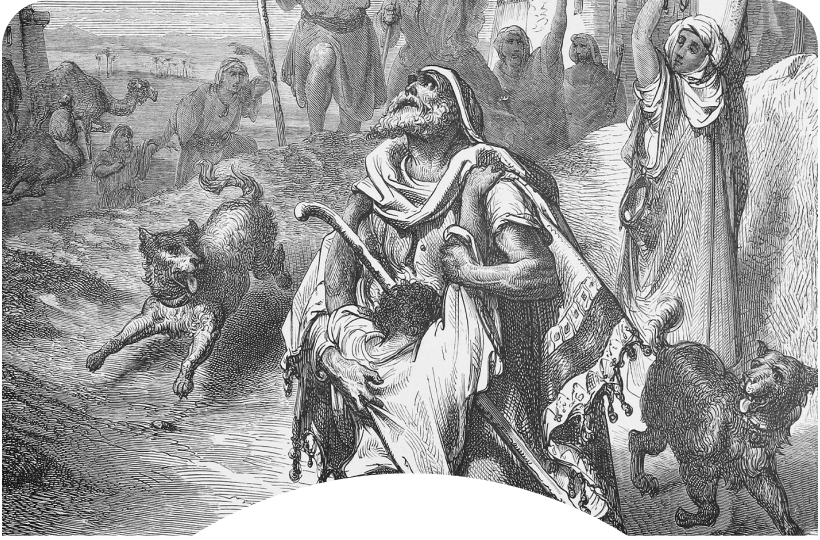
- Do I control my senses and make sure that what I say, see, do and hear is pleasing to God?
- Do I judge anyone in my heart?
- Do I hold grudges in my heart?
- What images and feelings do I keep in my heart?

## **BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS**

- Do I feel peace in my heart?
- Do I take part in gossip or spreading rumors?
- Do I instigate fights? Do I try to mediate for those who are fighting around me?

## **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE**

- Do I get pressured into doing sinful things because I am afraid to be excluded?
- Do I want to fit in so bad that I will do anything?
- Do I get angry when people make fun of me for going to church or refuse to engage in ungodly talk or actions?
- Am I ready to be singled out for Christ & for my relationship with Him?
- Do I show off sometimes?
- Does it bother me when I am fasting & my peers are not?
- Do I hide my level of commitment to Church or Christ?



# *First Corinthians*

# 13

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." James 1:22-25



## **LOVE SUFFERS LONG**

- Am I being impatient or intolerant of anyone?
- Am I patient during temptations or trials? Do I avoid confrontation?
- How do I deal with conflict?

## **AND IS KIND**

- Am I being cruel, harsh, or mean to anyone?

## **LOVE DOES NOT ENVY**

- Am I jealous or envious of anyone?
- Am I satisfied with what God has given me?

## **LOVE DOES NOT PARADE ITSELF**

- Do I show-off or speak highly of myself and my achievements to impress others?

## **IS NOT PUFFED UP**

- Am I thinking or trying to show that I am better than others?
- Can I tolerate criticism?
- Do I get angry when people point out my weaknesses?

## **DOES NOT BEHAVE RUDELY**

- Am I rude to anyone?

## **DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN**

- Do I do things only for myself? Am I selfish?
- Do I get annoyed when people ask me to do things for them?

## **IS NOT PROVOKED**

- Do I get angry easily?

## **THINKS NO EVIL**

- Do I think that others have a bad intention for what they say/do?
- Do I give others excuses and the benefit of the doubt?
- Do I think or speak poorly of others and of their intentions?

## **DOES NOT REJOICE IN INIQUITY**

- Do I feel happy when others are in the wrong or have done evil?

## **BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH**

- Do I feel happy when others are in the right? Is truth valuable to me?

## **BEARS ALL THINGS**

- Am I ready to bear all circumstances with and for others?

## **BELIEVES ALL THINGS**

- Do I take others' words as truthful?

## **HOPES ALL THINGS**

- Do I expect others to change for the better?
- Do I place my hope in God in all spiritual and physical situations?

## **ENDURES ALL THINGS**

- Do I willingly carry the burdens of others?

## **LOVE NEVER FAILS**

- Do I give up on others whom I say I love?
- Do I show love regardless of the outcomes?

## *Psalm 50*

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, That the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.

Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar. Alleluia.

## ***Holy, Holy, Holy***

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory and honor. God the Father Almighty, have mercy upon us. Oh Holy Trinity have mercy upon us. Oh Lord, God of hosts, be with us, for we have no other supporter in our tribulations and adversities but You. Oh God, absolve, remit and forgive us our sins which we have done willingly and unwillingly, and those which we committed knowingly and unknowingly, the hidden and the visible. Oh Lord forgive us for the sake of Your Holy Name that is called upon us, and according to Your mercy and not to our sins.

"Our Father, who art in heaven ..."

## ***Prayer of Repentance***

My Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, treasure of mercy and spring of salvation, I come to You confessing my sins. I confess that, insolently, I dared to defile Your Holy Sanctuary with my sins. Now I seek Your mercy and love, for Your mercies are boundless; You never turn back a sinner who comes back to You. I confess that my mind is burdened with sin and that I have no strength left. Do not turn away from me, do not rebuke me in Your anger nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. I am worn out, have compassion upon me, O' Lord do not judge me in Your justice, but according to Your mercy. Remember Your creation, do not put me on trial, because none of Your servants can justify his deeds. Dress me in a new attire that befits Your glory. Forgive my sins and I shall sing; "Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven."

**When I confess my sins, and reveal my iniquities, You cleanse them. Amen.**

## ***Prayer Before Confession***

○ Holy Father who awaits the return of sinners, You gave Your promise that You are ready to accept those who repent. Look now to a soul that was lost in the valleys of disobedience. For a long time I have tasted the bitterness of misery, being away from the stream of salvation. Now I come back to You to be purified, accept and not reject me, for when you look at me with mercy and compassion, I will be cleansed and saved. If you turn away, I shall perish. Grant me O Lord, Your blessing to strengthen my will to come closer to You in faith and hope, to confess my sins and detest returning to them. May Your Holy Spirit remind me not to stray. May You enlighten my heart so I can see the graveness of my sins and negligence and have the will to obey Your commandments and live for the Glory of Your Holy Name. Amen.

## ***Prayer After Confession***

○ Father, I am grateful for Your goodness, and love for mankind. You did not wish that I perish, but awakened me from my sleep and guided me to Your path. You saved me from the valley of death to the protection of Your strong fortress. Fill me with hope and faith, I come to You like the sick wishing to be healed, like the hungry seeking to be filled, like the thirsty to the springs of living water, like the poor to the source of riches and the sinner to the redeemer, and like the dying to the origin of life. You are my salvation, my health, my life and my strength. With You, I find consolation, happiness and comfort. Help me, protect me and surround me with Your goodness. Teach me to put my will in Your hands and live according to Your will. Remove my weakness so I may be firm and honest to You to the end. Amen.

*“Whatever you forgive on earth  
shall be forgiven in heaven” Matthew 18:18*



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