

Preparing for Confession

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Excerpted from Metropolitan Jonah's address, "Do Not Resent, Do Not React, Keep Inner Stillness"

Repentance, conversion, the transformation of our mind and our life, is the core of the Christian life. Repentance does not mean to beat ourselves up for our sins, or to dwell in a state of guilt and morose self condemnation. Rather, it means to confront our sins, and reject and renounce them, and confess them, trying not to do them again. ...

The process of purifying our self is hard and painful, at first; but becomes the source of great joy. The more we confess, honestly and nakedly, the more we open ourselves to God's grace, and the lighter we feel. Truly the angels in heaven (and the priest standing before you bearing witness to the confession) rejoice immensely when a person truly repents and confesses their sins, no matter how dark and heinous. There is no sin so grievous that it cannot be forgiven. NOTHING! ...

Preparing for confession is an important process. It means to take stock of our life, and to recognize where we have fallen, and that we need to repent. The following should help to prepare for confession, but it is not a laundry list. Rather, it should help to spur our memory, so that we can bring things to consciousness that we have forgotten. It is more of an examination of conscience.

The Passions

- Gluttony,
- Lust
- Avarice
- Anger
- Envy
- Despondency

- Vainglory
- Pride

The Commandments

- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself

Loving God

Do I love God?

Do I really believe in God, or just go through the motions?

Do I pray, and when I do, do I connect, or is it just mechanical?

Do I rush through prayers, Scripture readings, and spiritual literature?

Do I seek the will of God in all things?

Do I rebel against what I know to be God's will, and the Christian life?

Do I try to be obedient, and constantly surrender my life to God?

Do I go to church, go to confession and communion regularly, keep the fasts?

Do I try to be conscious of God's Presence, or not?

Do I try to sanctify my life? Or do I give in to temptation easily? Thoughtlessly?

Loving Our Neighbor

How do I treat the people around me?

Do I allow myself to judge, criticize, gossip about or condemn my neighbor?

Do I put people down? Do I look for their faults?

Do I condescend and talk down to others?

Do I treat others with kindness, gentleness, patience? Or am I mean, rough and nasty?

Do I try to control others, manipulate others?

Do I regard others with love and compassion?

Do I bear anger or resentments against others? Hatred, bitterness, scorn?

Do I use and objectify others for my own pleasure or advantage? For sex, for profit, or for anything else which de-personalizes him/her?

Do I envy and bear jealousy towards my neighbor? Do I take pleasure in his misfortunes?

Do I act thoughtlessly, oblivious to the feelings or conscience of the other?

Do I lead my neighbor into temptation intentionally?

Do I mock him or make fun of him?
Do I honor the commitments I have made? Marriage vows? Monastic vows?
Do I honor my parents? Am I faithful in my relationships?
Do I have stability in my commitments?
Am I conscious of how my words and actions affect others?
Have I stolen anything, abused or hurt anyone?
Have I committed adultery?
Have I injured or killed someone?
Do I covet other people's things? Do I lust after possessions or money? Does my life revolve around making money and buying things?

Loving Our Selves

How am I self-centered, egotistical, self-referenced?
Do I take care of myself, physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually? Am I obsessed about my self, my image, my appearance, my desires and agenda?
Do I indulge in laziness? Do I get despondent, depressed, despairing?
Do I beat myself up, indulge in self-hatred or self-pity?
Do I injure myself? Do I have low self-esteem, or think myself worthless?
Do I blame other people for my reactions? Do I feel myself a victim?
Do I take responsibility for my own reactions and behaviors?
Do I engage in addictive behaviors, abusing alcohol, food, drugs, sex, pornography, masturbation? How do I try to console myself when I'm feeling down?
Do I have anger and resentment, rage, and other strong emotions and passions suppressed within me? Do I act out on them? How do they affect my behavior?
Can I control them or do I abuse other people?
Am I conscious of how my words affect people?
How am I a hypocrite? Can I face my own hypocrisy? Am I lying to and deluding myself?
Do I have a realistic idea of myself? Am I honest with myself and others? What kind of façade do I put up?
Have I done things that I don't want to or am too ashamed to admit? Abuse of others or animals, incest, homosexual acts, perverse actions? Have I abused drugs, sex or other things that I don't want to acknowledge? Am I afraid that I am those things—an alcoholic, drug addict, gay, child abuser? Am I afraid to confess them?

Can I forgive myself for these things? What do I feel guilty about? Does guilt control my life?

Am I being faithful to myself, to God, to others? Does my life have integrity?

CREDIT: An excerpt from "Do Not Resent, Do Not React, Keep Inner Stillness," posted at <http://www.facebook.com/notes/st-maria-of-paris-orthodox-church/do-not-resent-do-not-react-keep-inner-stillness/226638570696822>