

Preparation Guide by St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

I, the great sinner, (name), confess to the Lord God our Saviour Jesus Christ and to you, honorable father, all of my sins and all my evil deeds, which I have done during every day of my life, and of which I have thought to this very day.

I have sinned by breaking the promises of holy Baptism and not demanding of myself to fulfill them.

I have sinned against the Lord by little faith, and by distraction by thoughts from the enemy of us all against faith and the holy Church; by unthankfulness for the Lord's great and ceaseless goodness; and by calling on the Lord's Name vainly and without cause.

I have sinned by having neither love nor fear of the Lord; by not fulfilling His holy will and holy commandments; by inattentively making the sign of the Cross, not piously venerating the holy icons, by not wearing a cross, shame in making the sign of the Cross, and thereby by confessing the Lord.

I have sinned by not preserving love for my neighbors, not fed the hungry nor given drink to the thirsty; I have not clothed the naked nor visited the sick or imprisoned; I have not kept the Law of God or the Traditions of the holy fathers from my laziness and negligence.

I have sinned by not fulfilling the Church's rule of prayer or my personal rule, by going to Church without zeal or eagerness, but with laziness and negligence; I have left off morning, evening and other prayers; during church services I have sinned by idle talking, laughing, lack of attention to the singing and reading, distracted thoughts; I have left church during services; and I have sinned by not going to church from laziness and negligence.

I have sinned by going to the temple of God in a state of impurity, and by touching holy things.

I have sinned by disregarding the feasts of God, breaking the fasts, and not observing fast days, Wednesday and Friday; by gluttony in food and drink, overeating, secret eating, drunkenness, dissatisfaction with food, drink and clothing; by fulfilling my own will and thoughts, selfishness, self-directedness, and self-exaltation; by not respecting my parents, by not raising my children in the Orthodox Faith, by cursing my children and those close to me.

I have sinned by disbelief, holding superstitions, doubting, despair, despondency; blasphemy, impious lying, dancing, smoking, playing cards; by fortunetelling, sorcery, magic; by gossiping.

I have sinned by pride, self-opinion, high-mindedness, self-love, love of honor; envy, self-exaltation, suspicion and irritability.

I have sinned by judging all people, living and the dead, by evil words and anger, remembrance of evils, hatred, repaying evil for evil, blaming others; by wickedness, laziness, deceit, hypocrisy, gossip, bickering, stubbornness; by unwillingness to support or serve my neighbor; by taking

delight in evil, by wishing evil on someone, entrapping in evil; by insulting and laughing at others, abuse, man pleasing.

I have sinned by vain talking, joking, listening and remembering worldly songs, reading inappropriate books, looking at tempting pictures, taking delight in the remembrance of past sins; by being overcome by the temptation of the desire for others by the seduction of others; by willfulness, impudence, preoccupation with the spirit of the world and worldly habits, which are contrary to the Orthodox Faith.

I have sinned by spiritual and bodily feelings, impurity of soul and body, delighting in and entertaining unclean and passionate thoughts; by passionate and voluptuous arousals and desires for women, youths and men; by defilements during sleep from impure dreams; and by not preserving my marriage vows.

I have sinned by not patiently enduring illness and trials, by love of comfort in this life, by distraction of mind and a hardened heart, and by avoidance of every good work.

I have sinned by inattention to spiritual counsel, careless and laziness in reading the Word of God, and in carelessness towards the Jesus Prayer.

I have sinned by love of gain, love of money, unrighteousness, acquisitiveness, embezzlement, thievery, avarice, miserliness, preoccupation with various things and people.

I have sinned by judging and disobeying spiritual fathers, arguing with and being offended at them, and by not confessing before them all of my sins because of forgetfulness, carelessness and false shame.

I have sinned by being unmerciful, having contempt for and judging the lowly and meek; going to church without fear of God, praying with a cold heart, lack of attention, lack of zeal and preparation; and by paying attention to heresy and sectarian teachings.

I have sinned by laziness, weakness for comfort, love of bodily rest, oversleeping; by voluptuous dreaming, passionate arousals, shameless movements of the body by touch, fornication, adultery, dissolute life, masturbation; by extramarital affairs; and by uncrowned civil marriage.

I have greatly sinned in having an abortion or doing one, or persuading someone to that great sin of child-murder.

I have sinned by spending time in empty and vain occupations, vain conversations, jokes, laughter and other shameless sins.

I have sinned by falling into despondency, low spirits, impatience, complaining, despair of salvation, by not having hope in the mercy of God; by unfeelingness, ignorance, insolence and lack of shame.

I have sinned by slander of my neighbors, anger, insults.

I have sinned by boldness and lack of feeling in confession, by belittling my sins, accusation against my neighbors, and by not judging myself.

I have sinned against the life giving and holy Mysteries of Christ, have come to them without the necessary preparation, without reverence and the fear of God.

I have sinned in deed, word, thought and all my senses; touch, hearing, sight, taste and smell, willfully and unwillingly, with knowledge and in ignorance, rationally and irrationally, and it is impossible to count the multitude of my sins. But in all of them, those committed knowingly and in ignorance, I say and desire, in the future and with the help of God: I promise to amend myself.

Preparation Guide by Fr Thomas Hopko

Blessed are the poor in spirit . . .

Am I poor before God and men? Do I cultivate the attitude of poverty? Do I realize that all is God's and from God? Do I use my life and everything I have as that which belongs to God? Do I share the goods of the earth with others, knowing that all is God's? Do I take my opinions and ideas from God? Do I acknowledge my spiritual and intellectual poverty before God, accepting His Wisdom and Truth? Am I possessive, selfish, self-satisfied, self-righteous, self-seeking? Am I an idolater of my own opinions, ideas, possessions? Do I lust after status, power, authority, wealth, position? Do I really love and value poverty as the perfect ideal?

Blessed are those who mourn . . .

Am I a person who mourns? Do I lament over the suffering of men? Do I weep over the troubles in church and state, family and society? Do I suffer with all who suffer, in poverty and squalor, in misery and sin? Do I weep over sickness, disease, tragedy and death? Or do I simply "take it as it is" passing off as courage what is really hardheartedness and lack of sympathetic concern? Do I have compassion on the lowly, the lustful, the addicted, the selfish, the wretched, the evil and sinful of the world without judgement or condemnation? Am I sad over the sins and faults of others? Or do I in fact laugh and gloat and mock and take perverse pleasure over that about which true Christians, in imitation of Christ, can only mourn?

Blessed are the meek . . .

Am I meek with the meekness of Jesus? Am I meek in the sense that I only fight evil with good? Do I accept and practice the fact that humble love and truth and courage in goodness is the only weapon available in any battle with sin and sinful people? Do I lord it over others, at home, at work, at church? Do I love and actually use force, brute command, blind authority, intimidation, coercion, to accomplish my will? Do I bless those who curse me, pray for those who abuse me, do good to those who hate me, serve those who misuse me, speak to those who shun me? Do I love my enemies and forgive my offenders? Do I believe in the method of the meekness of Christ as the only way for genuine achievement?

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . .

Do I hunger and thirst for God? Do I desire to be righteous? Do I work to be holy? Do I read or study or make any continued effort for Love and for Truth, for the Spirit of God? Do I pray? Do I fast? Do I do any “spiritual exercises” which train me in goodness? Do I come to Church? Do I participate in the sacraments? Do I go out of my way to help, to teach, to serve in some way? Do I do the things which I know bring righteousness?

Blessed are the merciful . . .

Do I show mercy to others? Do I forgive those who offend me? Do I try to understand those who are different? Do I take pleasure in judging and condemning? Do I talk about others? Do I revel in gossip? Do I say things, though possibly true, which need not be said but only can harm? Do I rejoice in wrong? Am I legalistic, loving the law more than the Spirit? Do I smooth things over and cover offences, or do I stir things up by picking and condemning? Am I petty and small? Do I slander and shame? Am I prejudiced, making judgements and coming to conclusions without proper facts but with pre-formed opinions? Do I actually prefer strict judgement to tender mercy?

Blessed are the pure in heart . . .

Do I love purity, cleanness and wholeness? Am I polluted by filthy thoughts and words and actions? Is my mind stained by demonic rationalizations and prejudices? Or am I pure in my openness to all that is good? Is my body corrupted by beastly sensuality and lust? Are my thoughts and deeds pure, or are there always hidden motives and intentions? Am I trusting and trustful, with a singleness of purpose and total integrity in everything? Or do I connive and deceive, cheat and lie? Am I hypocritical and pretentious? Am I caught by some passion: eating, drinking, smoking, working, playing, sleeping, or something else which has more control over me than I have over it? Is there any darkness or impurity which blinds me and holds me from freedom and wholeness with God?

Blessed are the peacemakers . . .

Do I love and make peace? At home, at work, at church, in society and the whole world? Am I angry and impatient? Do I look for fights and arguments? Do I provoke others to be angry? Do I believe in “turning the other cheek”? Or do I take refuge in physical force? Do I love violence? Do I worship aggression and power? Do I seek inner peace and quiet which is the basic condition for peace in the world?

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake . . .

Am I ever persecuted for what is right? Am I ready to be? Am I ready to give my life without vengeance, for what is true? Do I participate in good activities which may bring criticism from others? Or do I take the easy road of non-involvement in human affairs, in family or job or church or society at large? Do I go along with things which are wrong from fear or cowardice or laziness? Do I flee responsibility? Do I worship security? Am I defending my own small life in contradiction to the righteousness of God? Am I in fact ashamed of Christ?

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven . . .

Is my joy and gladness in God? Or is it in this world with its passions, powers, possessions and praise? Am I mean and grouchy or jealous and moody? Am I despairing and without hope? Am I pessimistic and anxious? Do I complain and spread darkness and irritation to others? Is my faith of no consequence in my actions and attitudes to the events of life? Do I really “consider the lilies of the fields . . .” and trust in God and rejoice in this trust? Is my treasure in God or in myself? Is my life “hid with Christ in God in heaven” or am I in fact a man of this age in body, mind and spirit? Do I believe and have in truth the “joy of believing”?

A Prayer of Repentance

O Lord Our God, good and merciful, I acknowledge all my sins which I have committed every day of my life, in thought, word and deed; in body and soul alike. I am heartily sorry that I have ever offended thee, and I sincerely repent; with tears I humbly pray thee, O Lord: of thy mercy forgive me all my past transgressions and absolve me from them. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy Grace, to amend my way of life and to sin no more; that I may walk in the way of the righteous and offer praise and glory to the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.