A GUIDE FOR EXAMINING ONE'S SELF BEFORE CONFESSION

(اللغة العربية تلي اللغة الإنجليزية)

A complete true confession is when you reveal yourself completely in front of your priest and when you feel that you have not hidden anything that you know about yourself from your priest. Hence, you have to examine yourself very thoroughly and accurately before confession. These are some questions which may help you to know and examine yourself. They are classified into topics some concerning worship, relationships with people and others concerning the various kinds of sins.

1. ACCORDING TO WORSHIP

PRAYER

1. Do you neglect your prayer or are you regular in your prayers? Do you neglect them sometimes or completely? Have you thought of a solution for it? What was the result?
2. When do you pray? When you wake up in the morning? Before sleeping? Before and after eating? Before leaving home? Before you start any work? Do you pray while you are on the road? While you are with people?
3. Do you have long private prayers where you have a private conversation with God? Are you regular in these prayers? Are these prayers growing or diminishing?
4. Do you pray with the psalms? Do you pray all prayers of the Agpeya or some of them? Which ones do you pray? If you do not pray with the psalms, why is that?
5. Do you memorize the psalms and litanies from the Agpeya? Is this memorization growing or diminishing?
6. Do you pray with a fervent heart? Do you pray with tears at times? Do you feel the presence of God while praying? Are your prayers lukewarm or sometimes hot and sometimes lukewarm? Why?
7. Does your mind wander during prayers? During which kind of prayer does your mind wander? In which kind of topics does your mind wander? What is the length of time for which this occurs? What have you done to remedy this problem?
8. What is the posture of your body during prayer? Do you stand and lift up your hands to God? Do you kneel? Do you bow? Do you have any other posture? Do you stand respectfully in front of God? Do you bend your feet or lean your body against a wall? Do you move your hands or do your eyes look at other things?
9. Are there any special topics that occupy your mind during prayers? Do you pray for your sins and your spiritual life? Do you pray for others? Do you pray for those who bother you? Do you have material requests?
10. Do you give God your best time while you are fully active? Do you pray while you are physically and mentally exhausted?

FASTING

1. Do you fast all the fasting days of the church or just some of them? Which fasting days do your practice regularly? Do you fast Wednesdays and Fridays of every week? Are there any obstacles which hinder your fasting? What are they?
2. Do you abstain from food during fasting? For how long?
3. Do you desire a special kind of food? Do you fulfill that desire? Do you ask that special kinds of food be prepared for you?
4. Do you spend much on food, in general and on its luxuries, specifically?
5. Do you eat between meals?

GIVING ALMS

1. How about your financial obligations towards God; the virtue of giving alms?
2. What is your reaction towards tithes, the first fruits and participating in the needs of the church?
3. Do you only give your tithes or do you give generously?
4. What do you feel when you give? Do you feel pride or love towards Jesus's brothers?
5. Do you get annoyed sometimes by those who ask you for alms? Or do you give cheerfully?

COMMUNION & CONFESSION

1. Are you regular in receiving communion? When was the last time you received communion?
2. Are you regular in confession? When was the last time you confessed?
3. If you are negligent, what is the reason?
4. Do you feel that there is something you want to hide from your priest?
5. Do you prepare and examine yourself thoroughly before confession?
6. Are there repeated sins in your confessions? What have you done to overcome them?

READING

1. Do you read the bible regularly? Do you read in sequence?
2. Do you mediate in your readings? Do you write these meditations or just think about them?
3. Do you study the bible? Do you read any commentaries?
4. Do you read other religious books? What kind do you read (Spiritual lives of saints, dogma, etc....)? Do you read regularly?
5. Do you read inappropriate books or magazines? Do you sometimes read topics that make you stumble?
6. What is the average time you devote to spiritual readings every day and every week?
7. Do you try to apply what you read in your life or do you train yourself with spiritual exercise?

Prostrations

Do you do prostrations that is, bowing before God while asking for forgiveness? How many do you do? Are they accompanied by short prayers?

Going to Church

1. Do you go to church and attend the Divine Liturgy regularly? If there are obstacles in your way, what are they?
2. Do you attend the Divine Liturgy while fasting?
3. Do you come early to the Divine Liturgy? Do you attend all prayers?
4. Do you attend other meetings other than the Divine Liturgy, such as the vespers services, midnight praises, sermons, youth meetings, servants meetings, Sunday school, etc....? Do you attend them regularly?
5. Do you serve in the church? Are you faithful in your service? Are there any problems that bother you?

Spiritual Exercise

1. Do you have spiritual exercises? What are they? Are you successful in applying them? If not, what are the reasons for your failure?
2. Are there any virtues, which you would like to attain?

2. RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE

1. Do you have good relations with people? Old, young, family members, colleagues, or others? If not, why?
2. Have you been angry with someone? For what reasons?
3. Was your anger suppressed or apparent? Did you raise your voice? Did you say any words that hurt others? Did you insult them or fight with them?
4. Did your anger go away fast, or did it remain for a long time? For how long? Did you have bad thoughts because of your anger? Did your anger leave bad feelings towards any person? Did this anger change to hatred for a period? Did this anger remain in your heart as enmity with someone?
5. If you were angry with someone, have you reconciled with him? Did you initiate this reconciliation, or did others interfere? How long did this enmity last? Is everything all right now?
6. Is there anyone who offends or makes you angry? What is your reaction towards him or her outwardly? Inwardly?
7. To what extent do you have virtues such perseverance, long suffering, forgiving and loving your enemies?
8. Do you sometimes hurt others even by joking through ignorance or by being forgetful? What have you done to overcome this matter? Have you apologized to those whom you hurt?

9. Do you hurt others with the excuse of defending the truth? How did you hurt them?
10. What are the obstacles towards the virtue of meekness in your behaviour?
11. Do you abuse the rights of anyone? Do you perform all your duties towards everyone faithfully, whether in the family, at work, in church, or in your social relations?
12. Do you keep bad company? With whom? What sins do you commit because of this bad company? Do you have friends who drive you away from the church and from God's love?
13. Are your financial relations with people good? Were you unjust with anyone?
14. Are you humble in treating other people or do you treat anyone with pride?
15. Do you behave violently toward others or treat them unkindly? On the other hand, are you calm, merciful, and moderate? Are you passive? What kinds of sins do you commit due to your passive nature?
16. Do you love to have people praise you? Do you see that? How? What is your feeling if someone rebukes you, ignores you, rejects you, or does not treat you appropriately?
17. Do you try sometimes to pretend before people to be the opposite of what you are?
18. Is your behaviour an obstacle/offensive to others?
19. Do you serve others and tire yourself for other comfort?

3. OTHER KINDS OF SINS

Sins of the Tongue

1. What are the sins that you commit with your tongue? Do you lie, judge others, blaspheme, swear, insult, humiliate others, bad humor, silly discussions, or any inappropriate talk, etc....?
2. With whom have you sinned? And to whom? How many times (if possible) and for what reason? Did this matter become a habit?
3. Have you thought of overcoming those sins? How? What was the result?
4. Are you very talkative? Do you talk about subjects that you do not understand? Do you feel that you waste your time in useless talking instead of talking about something more useful?
5. Do you sing worldly songs? Do you sometimes use words that are inappropriate for God's children to use?
6. Is your voice loud or harsh? Do you think before you talk? Do you interrupt during discussions? Do you make mistakes while discussing something?
7. Do you interfere in other people's business? Do you give your opinion even if you are not asked? Do you like to be always critical of others, rebuke and advise others, even those whom are older than you, those who are strangers or even do not accept your advice?
8. Have you trained yourself to be silent? What are the results?

Sins of the Thought

1. What kinds of sins do you fall into by your thoughts? Is it adultery, lust, thoughts of wrath, hatred, revenge, judging others, thinking evil, pride, envy, blasphemy, doubt or daydreaming?
2. Does this thought stay with you for a long period? For how long?

3. Does a negative thought come to you from outside? Do you try to cast it away or do you welcome this thought, enjoy it and try to build on it other thoughts?
4. Does this thought change into lust and tempt you to actually sin? Every time you sin by thought, do you also sin by deed?
5. Is your mind occupied with cares of this world, it's many problems and worries?

Sins by Senses

What are the sins that you fall into by your senses; by sight, hearing or touch? Do you fall into adultery by your senses? Do you desire what others have? Do you spy on others? Do you list to dirty jokes and words?

Sins of the Heart

1. Are there any desires and feelings in your heart that do not please God? I n your heart, is there any envy, jealousy, hatred, a desire to be rich, desire for high positions, love of authority, pride, love of the world, vain glory, love of the flesh, or love of revenge?
2. In your heart is there any wrath, complaints, despair, or sadness?
3. Do these feelings and desires appear in your daily life, in your thoughts and your dreams?

Sins of Deeds

1. What are the actual sins you have committed? What commandments have you broken? Adultery, stealing, killing, fighting, drinking, rebellion, negligence, bad habits, attracted to same sex, drugs intake....etc?
2. How many times have you repeated sin? With whom have you sinned and to whom?
3. What are the bad consequences of your sin? Have you treated them, or do they still exist?
4. Are there constant causes that lead you to sin? What are they? Are these occasional causes or have they become a habit? What have you done to avoid these causes?
5. Have you tried to repent and forsake these sins? Have you succeeded or failed in repenting?

Note

These questions are meant to help you examine yourself accurately so your confession may reveal what is inside you.

However, those who are advanced in spiritual lives should examine themselves from the positive aspect, which are the virtues they neglect to possess.

We are all required to be perfect and hold and we all must grow in the grace and virtues as St. Peter said, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

Therefore, those who are spiritually growing should examine themselves from both aspects: the negative and positive in such a was that there may be an incentive for their continued growth in their holy life with God.

"لذلك أيها الأحباء، إذ أنتم منتظرون هذه، *اجتهدوا لتوجدوا عنده بلا دنس ولا عيب، في سلام*" (2 بط 14:3)

سمح الله أن يعطينا فرصة جديدة.. فلتجلس مع نفسك تحاسبها.. ولا تمكث غارقا في بحر هذا العالم غير مقدرا أن نفسك هي أثمن وأغلى ما في العالم. بل ان نفسك هي ملكا لله وليس من حق أحد ان يفسدها، حتى انت، كقول معلمنا بولس الرسول: "*أم لستم تعلمون أنكم لستم لأنفسكم لأنكم قد اشتريتم بثمن. إن كان أحد يفسد هيكل الله فيفسده الله*".

فلنحاسب إذا أنفسنا في هذه الساعة ولا ندع هذه الفرصة تفوتنا.. فلنرجع الي أنفسنا ونتوب ونعترف بخطايانا. ... ولنقترب لربنا الحنون وخالقنا المحب... ونطلب منه غفران خطايانا وآثامنا التي علت فوق رؤوسنا ..

لنبدأ برفع القلب والصلاة لكي يفتح الرب قلوبنا لنري خطايانا... ويفتح مسامعنا لنسمع تبكيت الروح القدس ... ويفتح عيوننا لنري الطريق ... ونسير في نور المسيح نحو حياة أفضل تقودنا للحياة الأبدية في المنازل المعدة لنا.

1. أولا: التوبة والاعتراف:

- □ هل لك أب اعتراف؟ وهل تواظب على الاعتراف مرة كل شهرين على الأقل؟
- □ ما هي العقبات التي تمنعك او تعطلك عن الاعتراف؟ وهل حاولت التغلب عليها؟
- □ هل تصارح أب اعترافك بكل شيء؟ هل تجتهد في تنفيذ إرشاداته بصدق؟

2. ثانيا: الصلوات الأساسية والقداسات:

- □ هل تقدس مواعيد الصلاة.. أم هي حسب الظروف؟
- □ هل تحب الصلاة بالأجبية؟ أم تغصب نفسك على الصلاة بها؟
- □ هل تصلى قبل الأكل وبعده.. وقبل المذاكرة أو العمل.. أى تشعر أن الصلاة قوة وبركة؟
- □ هل حاولت أن تصلى صلاة نصف الليل.. وهل لك صلوات خاصة أخرى؟
- □ هل تشعر باحتياجك لحضور القداس الإلهي.. أم أنه أمرا ثانويا؟
- □ هل تقدس موعد حضور القداس الإلهي وتشترك فى الصلاة.. أم حسب الظروف؟
- □ هل تحضر القداس الإلهي بقصد التناول فى كل مرة.. وتحزن إذا فاتك التناول؟
- □ هل تحترم الكنيسة وتقدسها وتشعر أن الله حاضر فيها.. أم ليس لك هذا الشعور؟
- □ هل لك اجتماع خاص مثل درس كتاب او أجتماع أسرة تقدسه وتواظب عليه وتفرح باقتراب موعده مهما كانت الظروف؟
- □ هل حاولت أن تشترك فى عمل تخدم فيه الرب.. وتشعر باحتياجك إليه؟

3. ثالثا: السلوك الروحى فى حياتك عموما:

□ هل تسلك مع الناس كما يحق بإنجيل المسيح.. أم حسب ما يريد المجتمع؟
□ هل تحاول أن تتماشى مع المجتمع والظروف بما فيه من تهاون وتنازلات .. أم أنك صارما مع نفسك؟
□ هل لك عادات معروف إنها لا تليق بأولاد الله (تدخين – شرب الخمر – الرقص - القمار – ملاهى – مكيفات – معاكسات.. إلخ) وهل حاولت أن تقلع عنها.. أم مازلت ضعيفا أمامها؟
□ هل أنت مستعبد لعادات شبابية أو لزيارة مواقع انترنيت غير أخلاقية؟
□ هل تضيع وقت طويل علي السوشيال ميديا؟
□ هل تكذب على السوشيال ميديا بأظهار شخصية غير شخصيتك أو بالتباهي بأحداث في حياتك بغرض المظاهر الكذابة أو المنافسة بينك وبين اصدقائك؟
□ من هم أصدقاءك؟ هل تشعر أنهم يقربونك إلى الله.. أم إلى الشر؟
□ ما هو موضوع حديثك فى أى مجتمع.. هل فى أمور العالم.. أم فى مجد السيد المسيح؟
□ هل لك العين البسيطة.. والفكر البسيط.. والقلب البسيط.. أم أن الكبرياء هو محور قلبك وفكرك؟
□ ما هو المصدر الرئيسي لثقافتك وقراءتك.. هل هو الكتاب المقدس؟ وهل له أهمية عندك؟
□ هل تواظب عل قراءة الكتاب المقدس؟ هل تشعر أنه صوت الله فى اذنك.. أم هى عادة القراءة فقط؟
□ هل لك مكتبة روحية فى بيتك تهتم بها وتخصص وقتا للقراءة منها؟
□ هل أنت تسلك بروح الأدانة؟ أم أنك متمسك بقول السيد المسيح لا تدينوا لكى لا تدانوا؟
□ هل أنت سريع الغضب؟ هل حاولت أن تأخذ إرشادا لعلاج الغضب؟
□ هل انت تسيئ الظن بالناس؟ أم أنك تثق فى سلوكهم.. وتصدقهم؟
□ هل تشعر أن الناس تحبك؟ أم تشعر أنهم يحقدون عليك.. ويكرهونك؟
□ هل تزور المريض ومن له ظروف صعبة وهل تجامل الناس فى كافة الظروف؟ أم أن شعورك بعدم مجاملة الناس لك يمنعك من هذه الزيارات؟

4. رابعا: سلوكك فى البيت مع الأولاد (هذه الأسئلة للآباء والأمهات):

□ إذا كنت أبا لأسرة، هل تشعر أنك تحب زوجتك؟ هل تؤمن أن الذى جمع هذه الزيجة هو الله "فالذى جمعه الله لا يفرقة إنسان". أم تشعر أنك تستحق زوجة أفضل منها بكثير. ونفس هذا السؤال للزوجة أيضا؟
□ هل تحب أولادك؟ وتحب أن تجالسهم؟ ما هو صدى حبك لأولادك؟ هل تأمل وتصلي من أجل أن تراهم قديسين فى يد الله أم تراهم رجالا نافعين فى المجتمع فقط؟
□ هل فكرت كأب أو كأم أن تحاسب أولادك عن إهمالهم فى الصلاة أو حضور القداس؟
□ هل تتابعهم يوميا وتسألهم عن سلوكهم الروحى بقدر إهتمامك بسلوكهم فى المدرسة؟
□ هل تمنعهم عن حضور بعض أنشطة الكنيسة؟ ...لماذا؟
□ هل تشعر أن أولادك يحترمون كلامك ورأيك و يعملون به؟ هل أنتم تتشاجرون؟

- □ هل تسعى دائما للسلام.... فى البيت ومع الجيران؟
- □ هل تشعر أنك وأولادك وزوجتك أعضاء فى جسد السيد المسيح وحدة واحدة؟
- □ كيف تشغل وقت فراغك فى البيت؟ .. هل بمتابعة الأخبار .. ورؤية التليفزيون .. والأنترنيت فقط.. أم تحاول أن يكون وقت الفراغ مقدسا؟
- □ هل حاولت أن تقف مع أولادك تصلى صلاة جماعية.. باكر والغروب أو النوم؟
- □ هل تقدس العشور وتشعر أنها بركة للقليل؟ كيف تتصرف فيها؟
- □ هل ستبدأ هذة الفرصة الجديدة وأنت فى خصومة مع زوجتك وأولادك؟

5. خامسا: سلوكك فى البيت (هذه الأسئلة للأبناء):

- □ هل تحب والديك.. وحبك لهم من كل قلبك؟
- □ ما مدى طاعتكم لهم.. عن حب ام عن خوف ام عن احترام فقط؟
- □ هل تحاول ان تشترك معهم فى العمل اى تساعدهم؟ ام تشعر ان مهام البيت من مسؤولية الآباء والأمهات فقط؟
- □ هل تحاول دائما أن تشعر برضاهم.. ام انه لا يهمك هذا الشعور؟
- □ هل تشعر بالمسئولية.. مسئولية نحو مذاكرتك ونجاحك ومسئولية نحو السلام فى البيت.. ومسئولية نحو اخوتك.. اى هل تقدر المسئولية وتهتم بها؟
- □ هل انت تركز على طلباتك فقط. ولا يهمك ظروف الأسرة. اى أن كل ما يهمك أن تحصل علي ما تريد فقط؟
- □ هل لك هوايات تتصل بحياتك الروحية؟ ام ان هواياتك كلها من العالم؟

اجلس مع نفسك.. واجب على كل هذه الاسئلة لكى تكشف ذاتك و تعرف ضعفك و تقبل على التوبة و الاعتراف.. احضر معك هذه الورقة عند جلسة الاعتراف.. ارجو ان تهتم بأن تعطى وقتا لخلاص نفسك.

6. صلاة قبل الاعتراف:

أيها الآب القدوس الذي يحب رجوع الخطاة، وقد وعدت أنك مستعد لقبولهم، انظر يا رب الآن إلى نفس خاطئة قد ضلت وتاهت في أودية العصيان زمانًا طويلًا، فيه تمررت وشعرت بشقاوتها، لبعدها عن ينبوع خلاصها. والآن تتقدم إليك، تطلب منك تطهيرها من الأدناس والأقذار التي توحلت فيها. اقبلها ولا ترفضها، فإنك إن نظرت إليها بحنوك و عاملتها برحمتك، تنقت وخلصت، وإن أهملتها بادت وهلكت. امنحني يا رب نعمة بها أتجاسر على الدنو منك بإيمان وطيد ورجاء تام. لأعترف بذنوبي وأكره العودة إليها. وليبكتني روحك على آثامي. أنر قلبي لأرى كم أخطأت وأسأت وتركت وأهملت. وامنحني عزمًا على عدم الرجوع إلى الإثم، لأثبت فى حفظ وصاياك، وأحيا لمجد اسمك القدوس. آمين.