

GUIDE TO A SINCERE CONFESSION OF SINS: SIN AS FAILURE TO LOVE

(Compiled for the Laity of St. Athanasius Orthodox Church in Nicholasville, Kentucky)

The Two 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 Myself as God Has Called Me to Love Myself (though His Commandments)

In what ways have I been self-centered, egotistical, self-referenced?

Have I taken care of myself, physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually? In what ways have I been obsessed about my self, my image, my appearance, my desires and agenda?

Have I indulged in laziness? Have I been overly despondent, depressed, despairing? In sloth, have I refused opportunities to repent and get up from my “bed of despair?”

Have I selfishly beaten myself up, indulging self-hatred or self-pity? Have I injured myself? Have I attempted to blot out God's likeness in me by thinking myself worthless?

Have I blamed other people for my reactions? Have I indulged thoughts of victimhood? Have I taken responsibility for my own reactions and behaviors?

Have I engaged in addictive behaviors, abusing alcohol, food, drugs, sex, pornography, or masturbation? How have I tried to numb myself myself when I'm feeling down?

Have I been angry or borne resentment, rage, and other strong emotions and passions, even if only suppressed within me? Have I acted out on them? How has my anger affected my behavior? Has my anger ever led me to seek to control or hurt others?

Have I been conscious of how my words affect other people?

How have I been a hypocrite? Can I face my own hypocrisy? Have I lied to or deluded others or myself? Have I cultivated in my own mind an honest view of myself? Have I projected a false self to others? What kind of façade have I put up?

Have I done things which I don't want to confess or am too ashamed to admit? Have I ever abused other people or animals? Have I ever committed incest, homosexual acts, or other promiscuous actions? Have I abused drugs, sex, or other things which I don't want to acknowledge? Am I afraid that I *am* those things—an alcoholic, a drug addict, gay, a 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? Can I love myself by acknowledging my deepest weaknesses to the Lord? Have I doubted that God either desires to save me or can save me? Am I being faithful to myself, to God, to others? Am I trying to live with integrity?

Loving My Neighbor (as God Shows Through His Commandments)

How have I treated the people around me? Have I allowed myself to judge, criticize, gossip about or condemn my neighbor? Have I put people down? Have I looked for their faults? Have I been condescending to my neighbors, talking down to them? Have I belittled others, “writing them off” as hopeless in my thoughts?

Have I treated others with kindness, gentleness, patience? Or have I instead been cruel, coarse, and nasty towards them?

Have I tried to control others or manipulate them?

Have I regarded others with love and compassion?

Have I harbored anger or resentments against others? Hatred, bitterness, scorn?

Have I used or objectified others for my own pleasure or advantage? For sex, for profit, or for anything else which de-personalizes them?

Have I borne envy and or jealousy towards my neighbors? Have I taken pleasure in the

misfortunes of others?

Have I acted thoughtlessly, oblivious to the feelings or consciences of others? Have I lead my neighbor into temptation intentionally? Have I consented to the sin of another or otherwise encouraged friends to sin? Have I mocked, made fun of, or made light of my neighbor and my neighbor's struggles?

Have I honored the commitments I have made? Marriage vows? (Monastic vows?) Have I honored my parents? Have I shown godly respect for my employer? Have I been faithful in my relationships? Have I shown stability in my commitments? Have I given thanks regularly to God for the people in my life? Have I prayed for those for whom I have pledged to pray?

Am I conscious of how my words and actions have affected others?

Have I stolen anything, abused or hurt anyone? Have I committed adultery or indulged impure glances and thoughts about my neighbor? Have I injured or killed someone?

Have I coveted other people's things? Have I lusted after possessions or money? Does my life revolve around making money and buying things?

Loving God (as God Shows Through His Commandments):

Have I loved God? In what ways have I failed to love God? Have I lived as though I truly believe in God or have I too-often just gone through the motions?

Have I prayed? Have I prayed regularly? When I have prayed, do I connect, or are my prayers just mechanical? Have I rushed through my prayers, Scripture readings, and spiritual readings, or been otherwise inattentive? Have I sought the will of God in all things?

Have I rebelled against what I know to be God's will, and the Christian life? Have I tried to be obedient, constantly surrendering my life to God?

Have I gone to church, to Confession and to Communion regularly? Have I kept the Fasts and the Feasts of the Church, both by attending divine service and by appropriate observance in my home?

Have I tried to be conscious of God's Presence, or not?

Have I tried to sanctify my life? Or have I given in to temptation easily? Thoughtlessly? Have I justified my sins in any way, setting myself up as my own God?

The Passions (and their opposing Virtues):

Pride (Humility)

Avarice (Generosity)

Lust (Chastity)

Anger (Meekness)

Gluttony (Temperance or Self-Control)

Envy (Brotherly Love)

Sloth or Acedia (Diligence)

Vainglory (Giving Glory to God)

Additional preparation tools:

10 Commandments

8 Beatitudes

I Corinthians 13 (*On Love*)