

**PREPARATION FOR THE
SACRAMENT OF
HOLY CONFESSION**

**A Guide for Youth and
Sunday School Students**

**Malankara Syrian Orthodox Sunday School
Association of North America**

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

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As a Christian we have already taken a vow at the time of our baptism (Most of us our God-father/ mother) to abandon Satan and his works, and to accept Jesus Christ and his ways. This means that we are called to live a God-centered life following the ways of Christ. Our call is to lead a life of faith, keeping virtues of honesty, purity, nobility, and love in our thoughts, words and deeds. However, we seldom attain this goal of living a God-centered life as we are constantly tempted by the worldly pleasures and temptations. God, who created us, knows our weaknesses; he knows what we think, what we do in secret, what we hide and what our intentions are. He knows everything about us and He wants us to be back in his ways. Therefore, God has set the sacrament of Confession where we can repent our sins (failures in keeping up with God's ways), return back to God, and rededicate ourselves in following Jesus Christ.

What are the steps in the sacrament of Confession?

In order to benefit from the sacrament of Confession, first, you must have a strong desire to live according to the ways of God. Secondly, you must have a sense of responsibility regarding yourself; what you do, what you think, what you feel and what you say. The general five stages of Confession are:

1. Self-examination:

Examine yourself periodically; are you staying off from the ways of God? Whenever you realize that you have failed in keeping up with God's ways (living a God-centered life keeping honesty, purity, forgiveness and love), seek for divine help through the sacrament of confession.

2. Repenting about your sins:

Repentance is not synonymous to worry or guilt about something you have done, though or felt. But it is a realization that you have sinned and then affirming not to repeat the sins again.

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3. Confessing before the priest:

Once you have done a prayerful self-examination and repented on your sins, you can approach the priest for Confession. The confession will be conducted inside the church, where you can feel the presence of God. Though you are talking to the priest, it's God who listens to your confession. The priest who is enacting as the mediator between you and God will keep everything confidential. You can talk to the priest as if you are in front of a doctor who can heal your spiritual sickness. Remember, you are speaking directly to the creator God, who knows your heart, your secrets and your intentions. Therefore, do not be hesitant to confess your secrets or sins. Your sins can never outweigh God's love towards you!

4. Absolution of sins:

The priest will guide you through the process. Once you are finished with your confession, you will receive the absolution from the priest that originally comes from the God. Priest will also advise you to affirm not to repeat those confessed sinful thoughts, feelings or deeds.

5. Act of repentance (contrition):

This is not a punishment for your sins, but to help you to acquire strength to resist similar sins and situations that you may encounter in the future. For example, you may be asked to meditate a particular Psalm that helps you to enhance your spiritual strength to resist sin.

What benefits you have through the sacrament of Confession?

- You are assured the divine forgiveness of sins (John 20: 23).
- Confession provides the opportunity to talk about your deeper concerns, feelings, and thoughts.
- Confession of sins helps you to resist them better.
- Confession will readjust your strained relationships; with your parents, siblings, or friends.
- Your peace of mind is assured; you are free of guilt.
- You are reconnected with God and his entire creation.
- Since you are back in communion with God you can praise him with all your heart.

How to prepare for confession?

Preparation for confession is a prayerful self-examination. We have to examine our feelings, thoughts, words, behaviors, attitudes, habits, values, priorities, goals, direction and so on. This is not an instant process, rather a true self-examination requires several days of prayer and preparation. Pray to God to help us to recognize our sinful thoughts, behaviors and feelings. Keep in your mind that our sins can never outweigh God's love towards us!

The Church insist its members to meditate on The Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Seven Commandments of the Church, as well as meditate on Merciful deeds of a faithful by the Church, Sins against Holy Spirit, Seven Sins that leads to death and so on. Service book of the Holy Qurbana is an inevitable aid for Confession, especially to self-examine, repent and meditate using Moudyonooso Prayer.

How to Go for Confession?

When you are through with the self-examination and repented on your sins, spend a few minutes silently inside the church.

You can silently recite the Moudyonooso prayer in the Service book of Holy Qurbana and then read the following Psalms for repentance in a slow pace. **Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 142.** You are not expected to read all the prescribed Psalms, but the idea is to connect what you read with your life and feel a true repentance.

When you are ready to confess, go to the priest, kneel down then make the sign of cross. Remember you are face down in front of the Almighty God. Say this prayer:

“To the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one true God; I am a sinner and I am confessing my sins. My spiritual father, I trust in your divine authority to absolve my sins. I have sinned in my thoughts, deeds, feelings and in my words. Therefore, I confess before you. You are the mediator between God and me. I pray to receive absolution and mercies through your prayers. Amen.”

Listen to the priest as he will guide and facilitate you through the entire process. Tell the priest your sins. Ask the priest any questions you may have about your sins. When you have finished, say:

“O Lord, I thank you for forgiving my sins that I have confessed before your priest. Glory be to the Lord! Glory be to the Almighty! You have been merciful to your sinful servant. O God, bless me and help me as I am a sinner. Be always merciful to me O God. Amen.”

The priest will also give you advices and guidance. Sometimes he may ask you to do specific acts of repentance (contrition) which you have to do just after the confession. The priest will pray for you by laying his hands on your head and gives you absolution of sins by making sign of cross three times on your forehead. At this time you have to silently pray **“Forgive my sins, O Lord”**.

Affirm in your mind that you are not going to do sin anymore. Enjoy the peace and happiness in your heart. Yes you are back on His ways. Thank you Lord!

A FEW QUESTIONS TO HELP SELF-EXAMINATION:

Examining my thoughts:

1. Do I obey and believe in God?
2. Do I always say Gods name with love and respect?
3. Do I respect everyone?
4. Do I always consider myself as the boss (superior to others)?
5. Is my life God-centered?
6. Have I sought to control my thoughts or just allow my imagination to run wild?

Examining my words:

1. Did I talk back to my parents?
2. Did I talk nicely to my grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters?
3. Have I used foul or ugly language?
4. Did I make fun of others or call names?
5. Have I stopped speaking to anyone?
6. Did I tell any lies?

Examining my Feelings:

1. Do I have difficulty keeping my temper?
2. Am I frustrated or hopeless?
3. Am I lazy?
4. Did I hate anyone? Am I holding a grudge and refuse to forgive?
5. Am I restless and impulsive; do things without thinking the consequences?
6. Am I jealous or envious?
7. Have I wished evil on others?
8. Am I thankful to God and my parents?
9. Did I always say "Thank You" to people?

PSALMS TO READ

- Psalm 6
- Psalm 32
- Psalm 38
- Psalm 51
- Psalm 102
- Psalm 130
- Psalm 142

ALWAYS REMEMBER

- Death
- Judgment
- Hell
- Eternal Life

THREE VIRTUES

- Faith
- Hope
- Love

Examining my behaviors:

1. Do I attend Holy Qurbana on Sundays and other Holy Days?
2. Do I say my prayers every day from my heart?
3. Do I respect and obey my parents?
4. Did I fight or argue with anyone?
5. Did I love and help my friends and others?
6. Did I eat or drink too much; or trashed my food?
7. Do I encourage others to do bad things?
8. Did I ever cheat on school-work, tests or games?
9. Have I destroyed or misused someone else property for fun?
10. Did I see inappropriate things on the Internet or TV?
11. Did I dress improperly?
12. Am I hard to get along with?
13. Have I used any type of drugs or alcohol?
14. Have I engaged in any sexual acts?
15. Have I respected my body which is the temple of God?
16. Have I physically harmed anyone?
17. Have I not cared for others' spiritual and physical good?

SEVEN DICTATES OF CHURCH

1. Take part in worship on Sundays and Feast days
2. Observe the Lents
3. Fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays
4. Have regular confessions
5. Partake in Holy Communion
6. Avoid marital relations on days specified
7. Pay the tithes and dues to the church

SINS THAT LEAD TO DESTRUCTION

1. Pride
2. Greed
3. Desire for worldly things
4. Anger
5. Consuming more than required
6. Jealousy
7. Laziness

LIFE-GIVING GOOD QUALITIES

1. Humility
2. Charity
3. Power to overcome the weakness of the five senses
4. Gentleness
5. Knowing limits
6. Brotherly love
7. Alertness

SINS AGAINST HOLY SPIRIT

1. Thinking that God will keep forgiving you no matter what sin you commit
2. Despair (giving up hope)
3. Difficulty in adjusting and accepting what is true
4. Being envious of the spiritual growth of others
5. Doing wrong knowingly
6. Incomplete repentance

SINS THAT CRY OUT TO HEAVEN

1. Premeditated murder
2. Unnatural and immoral sexual acts
3. Abusing of the poor
4. Taking money of people who serve you by tricking them

SINS THAT LEAD OTHERS TO SIN

1. Bad thinking
2. Forcing or telling others to do something wrong
3. Doing wrong to please others
4. Instigating others
5. Praising someone when you don't mean it
6. Knowingly suppressing information
7. Keeping quiet when one should speak
8. Taking part in what is wrong/ not taking part in what is right
9. Trying to justify own mistakes
10. Acting in a way that attract others to sin

THINGS TO DO: PHYSICAL

1. Feed the poor and hungry
2. Welcome migrants and homeless
3. Provide necessities of the less fortunate
4. Visit the sick
5. Visit the prisoners
6. Bury the dead

THINGS TO DO: SPIRITUAL

1. Reaffirm the dubious
2. Guide the immature
3. Counsel the sinners
4. Forgive others
5. Reassure those who are hopeless and depressed
6. Be patient
7. Pray for the living and dead

MOUDYONOSO PRAYER (PRAYER OF REPENTANCE)

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

O Lord God Almighty, one who knows everything, one who has infinite compassion; in the presence of the eternal Virgin Mary, the mother of God; the Holy angels and all the saints, O respected Father, in the presence of your priesthood, I confess my sins.

With all my senses I have sinned; with my thoughts, deeds, and words I have sinned. Against heaven and in God's sight I have sinned.

(Confess all your sins)

I beseech you to forgive my sins that I have committed willingly and unwillingly, knowingly and unknowingly. I truly believe that you are the intermediary between God and me; and what you forgive here on earth is forgiven in heaven. What you do not forgive will not be forgiven in heaven.

Therefore, I request you to give me pardon of my sins and to pray for me before God. Keep me in your prayers and in the Holy Qurbana. O Lord, Accept me like a prodigal son. Make me worthy to sing praises in heaven with the just and with the righteous.

O Lord, protect me that I may not be lost. Make me worthy to rejoice in heaven with the just and the righteous. May I be found worthy to sing praises to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen