

Prayer of St Basil the Great

Master, Christ our God, King of the ages and creator of all, I thank you for all the good things you have bestowed on me and for the partaking of your pure and life-giving mysteries. I ask you therefore, good and loving one, guard me under your protection and in the shadow of your wings; and grant that with a pure conscience until my last breath I may worthily partake of your holy things for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. For you are the bread of life, and the source of holiness, and the giver of good, and to you we offer glory, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Anonymous

May your holy Body, Lord Jesus Christ our God, be to me for eternal life, and your precious Blood for the forgiveness of sins. And may this Eucharist be to me for joy, health and gladness; and in your fearful second coming make me, a sinner, worthy to stand at the right hand of your glory, through the intercessions of your all-pure Mother and all your Saints. Amen.

Anonymous

All-holy Lady Theotokos, the light of my darkened soul, my hope, protection, refuge, consolation and joy, I thank you for making me, who am unworthy, worthy to partake of the pure Body and precious Blood of your Son. But you who gave birth to the true light, enlighten the spiritual eyes of my heart; you who conceived the source of immortality, give life to me who am dead through sin; you the compassionate Mother of the merciful God, have mercy on me and give me compunction and contrition in my heart, humility in my reasoning, and the recall of my thoughts from captivity. And make me worthy until my last breath to receive without condemnation the sanctification of the pure mysteries, for the healing of both soul and body; and grant me tears of repentance and confession, so that I may praise and glorify you all the days of my life. For you are blessed and glorified for ever.

Amen.

Please note:

Holy Communion should not be taken if one has not been for Holy Confession. The frequency of Communion and Confession and the fasting required can be discussed with your spiritual father.

There should be no food or drink consumed for at least 6 hours prior to taking Holy Communion.



PREPARING FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is communion between God and man. It is God's gift to humanity, allowing us to have a tangible experience with Him. During the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Spirit descends, through prayer, to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. It is not a symbolic change, it is real. In order to participate in such an awesome, mystical experience of the Holy Spirit, we need to be prepared.

Preparing for Holy Communion is not simply limited to fasting of foods. It also requires an honest self-examination of ourselves and our lives, in order to recognise any personal shortcomings and errors which may have led us to sin. Having examined our conscience and recognising our mistakes, preparing for Holy Communion *truly* begins with a genuine, heartfelt repentance, a cleansing of the body and soul through the sacrament of Holy Confession and fasting, and the reading of certain prayers before and after approaching the Holy Chalice.

For many, the thought of confessing to a priest can be daunting: some feeling embarrassed and ashamed, others indignant at the thought of having to bare their souls and darkest secrets to another person. And yet God is pure love. In inviting us to formally confess, He does not want us to be humiliated or 'exposed', instead, He gives us the chance to acknowledge our transgressions and be *truly* forgiven and cleansed so that we can be transformed and guided towards a higher state of being.

Many people mistakenly believe that they can confess directly to God through personal prayer without the presence of a Father Confessor. Whilst private prayer is important and encouraged, it is not the same as Confession. Holy Confession is actually a Holy Sacrament not just a human process or experience. In fact, it is something which dates back to the days of Christ Himself when He sent out His apostles to evangelise the world, giving them authority on earth to release the sins of anyone who was truly repentant, making the Sacrament of 'Holy Confession' also the Sacrament of 'Holy Forgiveness'; [Cf. the Holy scriptures; '..... *"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* Matt. 16:19].

During Confession, the Holy Spirit descends and participates, in order to forgive our sins and cleanse our souls. It is yet another direct experience of God which helps us to establish an eternal relationship with Him. What makes it especially amazing is that any sins confessed during Holy Confession are permanently erased and therefore omitted from our Final Judgement.

It is most beneficial to have one spiritual father to whom we confess regularly, and with whom we can have an open, ongoing relationship.

Our spiritual father can also help guide us in our spiritual life with advice specific to our personal circumstances.

The first confession is usually the hardest. Regardless of the number and severity of sins; they *can* be forgiven. Many people are not clear what constitutes a sin and therefore some believe that they do not ever sin, while others feel they have sinned so greatly that there is no point in even asking for forgiveness. Either way, people are not taking the opportunity to allow God to participate in their lives and forgive them; to cleanse them and help them advance spiritually. The Church teaches that man's purpose is to advance through certain levels of spiritual purification and enlightenment by participating in the sacraments of the Church, in order to reach his ultimate potential in Christ; becoming deified through the Holy Spirit and becoming a Saint. In fact, the Orthodox Church has countless numbers of Saints who became so, by doing exactly that – fasting, praying, confessing and partaking of Holy Communion.

In this regard, it should be remembered that the Orthodox Church is the original, eternal Church of Christ, which has *always* existed, but was revealed to *us* during Christ's earthly ministry. It is the Truth which other spiritualities and religions try to mimic.

PRAYERS BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

Prayer of St John Chrysostom

I believe, Lord, and I confess that you are truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. I also believe that this is indeed your pure Body, and this is indeed your precious Blood. I ask you, therefore, have mercy on me and forgive me my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, in knowledge and in ignorance; and make me worthy, uncondemned, to partake of your pure mysteries, for the forgiveness of sins and life eternal. Amen

Verses of St Symeon Metaphrastes

Behold, I approach for holy Communion; Maker, burn me not as I partake; For you are fire burning the unworthy; But cleanse me from every impurity.

Troparion

Of your mystical Supper, Son of God, receive me today as a partaker; for I will not speak of the mystery to your enemies; I will not kiss you as did Judas; but as the Thief do I confess you; remember me, Lord, in your kingdom.

Verses

Tremble, mortal, as you behold the deifying Blood; for it is a burning coal consuming the unworthy. The Body of God both deifies and nourishes me; It deifies the spirit and wondrously nourishes the mind.

Troparia

You have smitten me with yearning, Christ, and by your divine love you have changed me; but consume my sins with immaterial fire, and make me worthy to be filled with delight in you, that leaping for joy, Gracious One, I may magnify your first and second comings. Into the splendour of your Saints how shall I, the unworthy one, enter? For if I dare to enter the bridal chamber, my clothing betrays me, for it is not a wedding garment, and I shall be bound and cast out by the Angels. Cleanse the defilement of my soul, Lord, and save me in your loving kindness.

Prayer

Loving Master, Lord Jesus Christ my God, let not these holy gifts be to me for judgement through my unworthiness, but for the purification and sanctification of both soul and body, and as a pledge of the life and kingdom to come. For it is good for me to cling to God, and to place in the Lord the hope of my salvation

THANKSGIVING PRAYERS AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

Glory to you, O God

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Anonymous

I thank you, Lord my God, for not rejecting me a sinner, but making me worthy to be a partaker of your holy things. I thank you for making me, who am unworthy, worthy to partake of your pure and heavenly gifts.

But loving Master, who died for us and rose again and bestowed on us these your dread and life-giving mysteries, for the benefit and sanctification of our souls and bodies, grant that they may be to me for the healing of both soul and body, for the averting of everything hostile, for the illumination of the eyes of my heart, for the peace of my spiritual powers, for faith unashamed, for love unfeigned, for the fullness of wisdom, for the observing of your commandments, for the increase of your divine grace, and the attainment of your kingdom; so that protected by them in your holiness I may always remember your grace and no longer live for myself, but for you our Master and benefactor.

And so when I have departed this life in the hope of eternal life may I attain to everlasting rest, where the sound of festival is unceasing, and the pleasure is endless of those who behold the indescribable beauty of your countenance.

For you are that which is truly desired, and the inexpressible gladness of those who love you, Christ our God, and all creation praises you for ever. Amen.