

## Orthodox calendar 31 March 2011



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## The basics of orthodox christianity

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### ABOUT PREPARING FOR BAPTISM

One must prepare oneself beforehand for the reception of the sacrament of baptism. First of all it is necessary to know whether special classes are being held for “catechumens” (those who are getting ready to be baptized and those studying the principles of the Orthodox faith). If classes are being held, then one needs to attend them regularly.

In the days before receiving the sacrament it is necessary to read the Gospel and books explaining Christian doctrines, such as The Law of the Lord. Know that these days are special, and therefore one shouldn't distract oneself with other matters, even if they are rather important. Consecrate this time to spiritual-moral reflection, and concentrate on the internal life of your soul. Avoid vanities, empty conversations, and watching television, and don't take part in various amusements, because that which you will receive is both **great** and **holy**, and everything that is holy of God is received with the greatest respect and veneration.

If there is the opportunity, one can keep the fast for 2-3 days. On the actual day of baptism, one must not eat, drink or smoke from morning on; those who are married should abstain from conjugal relations the night before.

The sanctity of God requires of a person a special cleanliness. It is necessary for baptism to be especially clean and tidy. Women who are having their period do not approach the baptismal font until the end of their period. Moreover, women come to be baptized without cosmetics and adornment.

One must arrive on time for the beginning of the sacrament. It is not necessary to be baptized on Sunday if the church conducts this great sacrament during the week.

### GODPARENTS

One time I had to go help a priest during a baptism. When the sacrament ended and we were already getting ready to go, a woman with a small boy entered the baptismal house, accompanied by a man with Oriental features.

The woman began to ask us to baptize her son, saying that they were going out of town that day. The man was recommended as godfather.

“Do you have a little cross that you wear?” the priest asked him. “What for?” answered the man questioning. “What do you mean ‘what for’? Aren't you Orthodox?” “No, I'm a Muslim,” followed the unexpected answer.

This anecdotal episode clearly demonstrates how nonchalantly people take the choice of godparents. A great majority of “godparents” don't meet the minimum Church requirements: they know not even one prayer, they've never read the Gospel, they don't know how to cross themselves correctly, they don't wear a cross. Some godfathers before arriving at the church think of their duty as only a “badge of honor”; godmothers from time to time are immodestly dressed, with abundant make-up. And practically nobody knows what kind of people the godparents are, what they are needed for and what their duties are.

By tradition, an infant needs to be baptized on the eighth day or on the fortieth day of life. It is understood that at that age it is impossible to expect from him belief and repentance – two important conditions of reunion with God. So from ancient times there appeared the “godparents” – people, behind whose faith the first-born are baptized (along these lines it follows to note that godparents are not needed when baptizing adults older than 18 years of age).

A godparent can only be an Orthodox-believing person who is able to give an account of his own faith. Correctly, a boy only needs a godfather, and a girl only a godmother. But by old Russian tradition both are invited. Parents may not be the godparents to their own child; a husband and wife may not be godparents to the same infant. Grandmothers, grandfathers, brothers and sisters completely serve the purpose as godparents.

After submersion of the infant in the baptismal font, the godparent takes him from the hands of the priest. After this the Slavonic name is *vospriyemnik* (godparent). This very same person takes upon himself for his entire life the responsibility to raise the child in an Orthodox spirit, and will give an account of his bringing up of the child at the Final Judgment.

Godparents always, until the end of their days, pray for their godchildren, teach them faith and piety, and administer sacraments. The bond between godparents and their godchildren is eternal and deeper than that with blood parents. The godparent's own destiny and that of the infant taken from the font both depend on the godparent's carefully fulfilled obligations.

### ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF VISITING GOD'S CHURCH

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who came down to earth for our salvation, founded the Church, where He is

present until now, giving us everything necessary for eternal life, where “the Powers of Heaven serve unseen”, according to the Orthodox canticle. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20 KJV), He said to His disciples the apostles and to all of us who believe in Him. Therefore those who seldom visit God’s church miss a great deal. Even greater is the sin of parents who don’t see to it that their children go to church. Remember the words of our Savior: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14).

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4) our Savior says to us. Spiritual food is also indispensable for the human soul, just as physical food is to maintain physical strength. And where else will a Christian hear the word of God, if not in the church, where the Lord Himself instructs those who have gathered together in His name? Whose teaching is preached in the church? The teachings of the prophets and apostles, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, the teaching of the Savior Himself, Who is true Wisdom, true Life, the true Way, the true Light, Who enlightens every person who comes into the world.

The Church is Heaven on Earth; the divine service celebrated in it is the work of angels. According to the teaching of the Church, by visiting God’s church Christians receive a blessing, which promotes success in all their good undertakings.

“When you hear the ringing of the church bell, calling everyone to prayer, and your conscience suggests to you ‘Let’s go to the Lord’s house,’ put aside, if you can, whatever you are doing, and hurry to God’s church,” advises Bishop Feofan Zatvornik. “Know that your guardian angel is calling you to go under the roof of God’s house; it is he, a dweller of Heaven, reminding you about Heaven on Earth, to there sanctify your soul to the goodness of Christ, to cheer your heart with heavenly consolation, and – who knows? – perhaps he is calling you there in order to take you away from a temptation that you won’t avoid if you stay home, or perhaps to shelter you under the protection of God’s church from a great danger...”

What does a Christian learn in church? Heavenly wisdom brought to earth by the Son of God – Jesus Christ! Here he finds out the details of the Savior’s life, becomes acquainted with the life and homilies of God’s saints, and takes part in church prayer. And the combined prayer of believers is a great power!

The prayer of one righteous person is capable of much – there are many examples of this in history, but the ardent prayer of those gathered together in God’s house brings even greater fruit. When the apostles were waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit according to Christ’s promise, they remained together with the Mother of God in a Hebrew room praying of one accord. Getting together in God’s church, we eagerly look forward to the Holy Spirit descending upon us. So it happens ... if we ourselves don’t place obstacles in the way.

For example, insufficient openness of the heart hinders the parishioners’ coming together in church prayer. In our time this often happens because believers conduct themselves in God’s church not as the sanctity and greatness of the place commands. How is the church arranged, and how should we conduct ourselves in it?

#### **ABOUT BEHAVIOR IN CHURCH**

Enter the holy church with spiritual joy. Remember that our Savior Himself promised to calm you when in distress. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Always come here with humility and meekness, in order to leave the church justified, as the tax collector in the Gospel left justified.

When you enter the church and see the holy icons, think about how the Lord Himself and all His saints look at you; be at that time especially reverent and have the fear of the Lord.

Having entered the holy church, bow three times from the waist, and during the fast three times down to the floor, praying: “Lord Who created me, have mercy,” “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,” “My sins are without number, Lord have mercy”.

After that, having bowed to the right and to the left to those who arrived before you, stand in your place and attentively listen to the psalms and prayers read in the church, but don’t say others to yourself, and don’t read in the songbooks separately during the church singing, since the Apostle Paul condemns such as distancing themselves from the church assembly. It is good if there is in the church a place where you are used to standing. Go to it quietly and modestly, but while passing the royal doors, stop and cross yourself and bow. If there isn’t yet such a place, don’t be troubled. Without bothering others, stand in a free place so that you can hear the singing and reading.

Always arrive in the holy church ahead of time, so there will be time before the service begins to place candles, request a prayer for the dead, and kiss the holy images. If, however, you are running late, be careful not to disturb the prayer of others. Entering the church during the reading of the exapsalmos, the Gospel or after the cherubicon on the liturgy (when the actualization of the Holy Gifts occurs), stand by the entrance until the end of these most important parts of the service.

Reverently regard the church candle: it is a symbol of our prayerful burning before the Lord, His Immaculate Mother, and the Lord’s holy saints. The candles are lit, one from another that is already burning, and, with a little wax melted at the bottom, they are stood in the candlestick peg-holes. The candle should stand absolutely upright. If on the day of a great holiday the servitor snuffs out your candle in order to place another, don’t be troubled in the spirit: your offering has already been received by our All-Seeing and All-Knowing Lord.

During the service try not to walk around inside the church even to place a candle. Veneration of the holy icons also should be done before the service begins, after it ends or at a set time – for example, during the all-night vigil after the anointing.

Certain moments of the service, as already discussed, require special concentration: the reading of the Gospel, the Hymn of the Blessed Mother, the Great Doxology of the all-night vigil; the prayer “The Only

Begotten Son..." and any liturgy beginning with the cherubicon....

In church greet your acquaintances with a prayerful bow; even with especially close friends don't shake hands and don't ask about anything – be truly modest. Don't be inquisitive about and don't examine those around you, but pray with sincere feeling, looking deep into the order and maintenance of the services.

In an Orthodox church during the divine service it is accepted that we stand. One may sit only during the reading of the kathismas (the Psalms) and the paroemia (the readings from the Old and New Testaments on the great vespers on great holidays and days of observance of especially honored saints). The rest of the time it is permitted to sit and rest only if one is feeling ill. However, Bishop Filaret of Moscow spoke well about bodily limitations: "It is better to sit and think about God, than to stand and think about one's feet."

In church pray as one who takes part in the divine service, and not as one who only is present, so that the prayers and hymns, which are read and sung, come from your heart; follow the service attentively, in order to pray about that which the rest of the church is praying about.

If you come with children, watch over them, that they conduct themselves modestly and don't make noise; accustom them to prayer. If children need to step out, tell them to cross themselves and quietly step out, or else lead them out yourself.

Never permit a child to eat in the holy church, except those occasions where the priests are giving out blessed bread. If a small child begins to cry in church, immediately lead or carry him out.

Don't criticize the involuntary mistakes of those conducting the service or of those present in the church – it is better to examine your own shortcomings closely and ask the Lord to forgive your own sins. It occasionally happens, that during the divine service you see someone that you think is disrupting the parishioners' concentrated prayer. Don't become irritated, don't correct anyone (unless of course, obvious rowdiness or sacrilege occurs). Try not to pay attention to it, and if because of weakness you can't overcome the temptation, it is better to quietly retire to another place.

When you go to God's church, prepare your money for candles, the wafer and the church collection while still at home: it is incommodious to handle it buying candles, since that bothers both the divine service and those who are praying. Similarly get your money ready for the offering.

Never, without extreme necessity, leave the church before the end of the divine service, because this is a sin before God. If this should happen, do penance on confession.

According to our old customs, men should stand on the right side of the church, and women on the left. They also go separately to Holy Communion and anointing – first the men, then the women. No one should occupy the passage from the main doors to the royal doors.

Women should go to church modestly dressed, in a dress or skirt, with a covered head and as a rule preferably without cosmetics. In any case it is inappropriate to partake of the Holy Mysteries and venerate the icons while wearing lipstick.

Some churches have accumulated their own "pious" traditions, instructing, for example, to pass a candle only over the right shoulder, to put one's hands together like a little boat at the priest's words "Peace be with you," "The Lord's Blessing..." and so on. Let's keep in mind that such rules that are not mentioned in the Church regulations are not important in Orthodox life. Therefore it's not worth falling into disorder by obeying our grandmothers' teachings. Humbly accepting their rebuke, say "Excuse me" and don't try to "enlighten" them yourself; there are church officers in the church for that.

The main thing is mutual love among the parishioners and an understanding of the contents of the service. If we enter God's church with reverence, and if, standing in church, we think we are in heaven, then the Lord will hear all our requests.

#### CANDLES

What's the first thing a person does crossing the threshold of a church? Nine times out of ten, he walks up to the candle box. Our practical Christianity begins with a small wax candle, joining in with the ceremony. It is hard to imagine an Orthodox church where they don't burn candles...

The Liturgical Commentator Saint Simeon Solunskiy (15th Century) says that clean wax signifies the cleanliness and purity of the people who bring it. It is brought as a sign of our repentance from our stubbornness and self-will. The softness and pliability of wax speak of our readiness to obey God. The burning of the candle signifies the deification (humanity's union with God) of the person, his transformation into a new creation by the action of the fire of Divine love.

Aside from that, the candle is testimony of the truth, the relation of the person to Divine light. It expresses the flame of our love for God, the Blessed Mother, the angels or saints. Never place a candle formally, with a cold heart. The internal action should be completed by prayer, even the most simple, in one's own words.

The burning candle is present at many church services. Those who are newly-baptized or being joined in the sacrament of marriage hold it in their hands. A funeral service is observed among a great many burning candles. Protecting the small flame of the candle from the wind, devotees walk in a religious procession.

There are not obligatory rules about where and how many candles to place. Their purchase is a small offering to God, voluntary and unburdensome. A large, expensive candle is not more blessed than a small one.

Those who correctly visit church try to place several candles every time: at the icon of the celebrated holiday, which is on the pulpit in the middle of the church; at the image of the Savior or the Mother of God, for the health of one's friends and relatives; at the Crucifixion on a rectangular candle table – for the

repose of the dead. If your heart desires, you can place a candle for any saint or saints.

It occasionally happens that there is no free place in the candleholder before an icon; they are all taken up by burning candles. To place one's own candle it is not worth extinguishing another; it is more appropriate to request the servitor to place it at an opportune time. Don't be troubled if your not-completely-burned candle is extinguished at the end of the service – your offering has already been received by God.

Don't for any reason pay attention to talk about how a candle needs to be placed with the right hand, or that if it goes out that means there will be something bad, or that melting the lower end of the candle for stability in the hole is a deadly sin, and so on. There are many superstitions about the church, and they are all nonsense.

The wax candle is pleasing to the Lord. But He esteems the burning of the heart more. Our spiritual life and taking part in the divine service does not end with the candle. By itself it does not free us from our sins, it does not unite us to God, it will not give us strength for the invisible war. The candle is full of symbolic meaning, but we are not saved by a symbol, but rather by real substance, the grace of God.

#### **How many candles to place, and where to place them, in the church.**

There are no obligatory rules for this. The purchase of candles is a small offering to God, voluntary and unburdensome, and a large, expensive candle is by no means "more pleasing to God" than a little one. Those who regularly visit church usually try to place several candles every time; at the icon of the celebrated holiday on the pulpit in the middle of the church, at the image of the Savior or the Mother of God, and on the commemorative table (at the vigil, the special rectangular candlestand with the image of the Crucifixion) for the repose of the deceased. You can place a candle before any icon of a saint or saints that you especially regard.

#### **How to properly place a candle in church.**

Placing a candle before an icon, the Cross, or the relics of saints, we raise our prayer before the church's holy thing, and we symbolically show the burning of our soul before God (the candle's flame signifies precisely this). In every church there are holy things that are specially regarded, before which we place candles. There is a small table with a Crucifixion – usually located on the left side of the church, in front of a representation of the Lord's Cross – where candles are placed with a prayer for the rest of the deceased. Approaching the candlestand, you cross yourself and bow before the holy icon twice, then light the candle from the other candles or from the icon lamp on the candlestand, and place it in a free place (or if all the places are occupied, simply place it nearby – church officers will themselves place your candle on a place that becomes available).

After placing a candle, you once more cross yourself and bow. If the situation allows, you can approach the holy icon and reverently kiss it. All of this is accompanied by a prayerful turning to God, the Mother of God or the saint, whom we are honoring by burning the candle.

If the church has many people and it is difficult to go where you want to place the candle, you can simply give it to one standing in front of you and say which icon you want it placed at. It needs to be noted that among some older parishioners there is an absolutely irrational opinion, that passing a candle with the left hand is "sinful" ("it is only to be done with the right hand"). Therefore, coming into church, it should be kept in mind not to irritate such people and ruin the mood for oneself and others.

#### **THE CHURCH NOTE**

If you want a commemorative note given by you to the altar to be read attentively and not hurriedly, remember the rules:

1. Write with legible understandable handwriting, preferably block letters, trying to mention in one note no more than 10 names.
2. Entitle it "for the health" or "for the repose".
3. If writing in Russian, write the names in the genitive case (кого – of whom?).
4. Write the person's full first name, even if mentioning children (for example, not "Bob", but "Robert").
5. Know the Church spelling of secular names (for example, not Poliny, but Apollinari; not Artema, but Artemiya; not Yegora, but Georgiya).
6. Before the names of church officers indicate their rank, completely or in an understood abbreviation (for example, Father Peter, Archbishop Nikon).
7. A child up to 7 years of age is referred to as a child, from 7 to 15 as a youth.
8. It is not necessary to indicate the last names, patronymics, titles, or professions of those mentioned, or their relationship to you.
9. It is acceptable to include in the note words like "servicemember", "monk", "nun", "ill" "traveler", "imprisoned".
10. Conversely, it is not necessary to write "lost", "suffering", "angered", "studying", "mourning".
11. Indicate in the notes "for the repose" "newly deceased" (the deceased during 40 days after death), "ever-remembered" (the deceased who have same memorable dates on this day) and "killed".
12. For those whom the Church has canonized as saints (for example, Saint Xenia of Petersburg, blessed), it is no longer necessary to pray.

For the health are commemorated those who have Christian names and for the repose only baptized in the Orthodox Church.

On the liturgy you can give notes to be commemorated:

on the proskomide (service of preparation for Holy Communion, first part of the liturgy), when for each name, mentioned in the note, some particles are taken out of especially prosphora (altar bread). Then these particles with a prayer about forgiving of sins of commemorated person are put into a Holy Cup with the Blood of Christ;

on the liturgy (in Russian obednya). With the word obednya Russian people signify liturgy in general and the act of remembrance on it, for instance. Usually notes of this kind are read by clergy before the Holy Altar table;

on the supplication, when parishioners hear the names of remembered persons, mentioned by deacon. In many temples, notes of this kind are remembered twice. For the second time it is done after liturgy, on the service of prayers. You can also give a note to be commemorated on the prayer service (in Russian moleben) or on the burial service (in Russian panikhida).

#### HOW TO CROSS ONESELF CORRECTLY

“Cross yourself, son,” a middle-aged woman quietly said to a teenager standing next to her, when the priest from the ambo crossed those praying with the Gospel. He together with his mother decently and unhastily began to cover themselves with the sign of the cross. “In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” lips whispered scarcely audibly, and the face of the boy acquired a ceremonious and devout expression.

What a comforting picture! But, unfortunately, how often it is that we must see something different – believers who for many years have been attending services cross themselves incorrectly...

One flaps his hand around himself, as if brushing off flies; another puts his fingers to his thumb, and it looks like he isn't crossing himself, but rather strewing salt on himself; a third with all his might drives his fingers into his forehead, as if they were nails. What can be said about the most common mistake, when the hand doesn't make it to the shoulders, falling somewhere near the neck.

Minutia? Nothingness? Formalities? No, not at all. Even Bishop Vasilij the Great wrote: “In church everything should be decent and ceremonious.” The sign of the cross is a visible testimony of our faith. In order to find out if an Orthodox Christian is before you or not, one simply asks him to cross himself, and it will all be clear by how he does it and whether he does it at all. We recall the Gospel: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10).

The power of the sign of the cross is unusually powerful. Many times in the Lives of the Saints we encounter stories about how devilish charms are scattered after one image of the Cross on a person. That's why those who negligently, hastily or inattentively cross themselves simply delight evil spirits.

What is the correct sign of the cross? We must put together the thumb and the first two fingers of the right hand, which symbolizes Unity of the Holy Indivisible Trinity. The other two fingers are compactly bent to the palm of the hand, symbolizing the descent of the Son of God from Heaven to earth (the two fingers are the image of the dual nature of Jesus Christ).

First the fingers that are together are placed to the forehead, for the consecration of the mind; next, to the belly in the area of the solar plexus, for the consecration of the senses; after that, to the right and then the left shoulder, for the consecration of the bodily strengths. Having dropped our hand, we bow from the waist. Why? Because we have just portrayed the Golgotha Cross, and we bow to it. By the way, another common mistake is bowing while making the sign of the cross. This shouldn't be done.

In many old textbooks of the Law of God in the description of the sign of the cross the lower point of the Cross is suggested to be made on the chest. In such a situation the Cross comes out upside-down and involuntarily becomes a satanic symbol.

The sign of the cross accompanies the believer everywhere. We cross ourselves getting up and lying down to sleep, going out on the street and entering the church; before eating we cross ourselves and with the sign of the cross bless the food. The Cross of Christ itself consecrates everyone and everything, so it is both salutary and edifying when believers making its sign on themselves.

#### GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

**The First Commandment: I am the LORD thy God, thou shalt have none other gods before me.**

Sorcerers, wizards, fortune-tellers and diviners – all those people who have left behind faith in the power of God, and believe the secret powers of creatures, especially evil spirits, and try to act in concert with them to the detriment of others – still sin against the first commandment. For participation in sorcery the Church forbids communion with it for 20 years, on an equal footing with murderers, and those not repenting are completely excluded. Do not console yourself that now everyone can step across the church threshold and approach the Holy Cup. Perhaps one can fool people and a priest, but God is not going to be fooled! Do not think “Sure, we're sinners, but thank God, at least we're not sorcerers.” If someone has had a fortune told or been healed with charms or consulted with a sorcerer or advised someone going to a “grandmother” (as a rule old woman who practice healing with charms) then that person is no less a sinner than the sorcerers themselves. You will say, “But they read prayers and make the sign of the cross.” Here is what St. John Chrysostom says: “Even if they speak in the name of the Holy Trinity or call names of saints or make the sign of the cross, run away from them”.

**The Second Commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them.**

Thank God, among us Christians this is something not seen, so it turns out that we seem not to sin against



the Second Commandment. But are our passions not the very idols before which we bow down all our lives?!

Drunkenness is a terrible idol, at the feet of which are so many human souls, before which have been wasted so many talents and abilities, because of which have fall and still fall so many streams of hot tears from mothers, fathers, brothers, wives and children. Almost all of us are guilty of making a drinker of someone. We place a half-liter in front of him, the person drinks it and his judgment gets impaired, he begins to disparage God, he gets violent with his wife, he beats and injures his children, he kills someone – and we share his sin, partners in crime: Lord, forgive us sinners!

**The Third Commandment: Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.**

In our representation, blasphemers are hardened non-believers. We believers go to church, participate in the Church Sacraments. And still we are blasphemers:

-- in unfortunate circumstances and sickness, we grumble against God, thus judging Divine Providence and the will of God.

-- there are among us fainthearted Christians and those who, not having the patience to put up with some or another sorrow or abuse without murmuring, openly declare: "There is no God!" – and if they don't say it, they think it.

-- and perhaps one of you still dares to blame God, that He allows people to sin? "Am I really to blame that I have this kind of character? I've had it since birth..." or "If there really were a God, would He permit wars, robbery, murder, the death of children?" and so on. And these words belong to Christians?!

There are still those of little faith who tempt God, saying insolent words to the Lord: "If You, Lord, exist, then fulfill this or that desire of mine..." and all this is from the lips of those who haven't just come to the faith, but who call themselves real believers!

**The Fourth Commandment: Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

Many people console themselves with the thought, "We also go to church on Sundays and holidays..." We go, but how do we behave there? Without any fear or veneration we cross the Church threshold, we force our way through somewhere, we push, we abuse each other, we're quarrelsome, and we even fight in church. Think!

With horror one man recounted to me how, during the Eucharistic canon, one elderly woman chased young woman who was sitting on the bench from her place. The latter's quiet words about how she couldn't stand because of a sore on her foot, were answered by the loud, horrible words of the offender: "May your leg rot off and roll away!" And then as if nothing had happened, this woman crossed herself, bowed, sang "Our Father" and, quite possibly, went to take communion. It is awful to tell about this and awful to hear about it.

Lord, forgive us sinners!

**The Fifth Commandment: Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.**

Whoever is an adult and has his own family, does he strive to take care of his parents in their old age, or does he think, as is now widespread, that his parents should take care of him until their death?! We demand, not ask, but demand, that they do the housework and raise and attend to our children. And we justify our pretensions: "We're working, they're just sitting home!" And if, for some reason, our parents refuse to be our slaves or otherwise do something that's not obliging to us, we pour out on them our indignation and anger!

Lord, forgive us sinners!

**The Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill."**

A horrible, immediate killing is when mothers put to death their children in their own womb. This is killing that is doubly horrible, because the mother-murderer kills not only the body but the soul of her own child! Who gave you the right to dispose of life? But if we have never killed anyone in that way, we are guilty to no end of inciting murder among those around us by our hardhearted relations with them, because these are sins against the love for one's neighbor. Very near to killing are those who in anger set their fists in motion, giving someone a beating. Perhaps they get excessively angry at children and beat them cruelly with whatever was at hand? Has no one ever died because you didn't give them some help?

-- perhaps someone died from hunger, and you knew and didn't help;

-- perhaps someone was drowning, and you didn't take any measures;

-- perhaps someone was dying of a sickness and you didn't come to help;

-- perhaps a person was killed before your eyes, and you ran away. People, what kind of Christians are we after this?!

**The Seventh Commandment: Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

This means do not commit adultery. Sins against this commandment are: fornication, incest, in chastity in thought, word and deed, and sins against this commandment are terrible – terrible in their indecency, consequences and unbelievable prevalence among us. This sinful sickness starts destroying a person from his very childhood and doesn't leave him until his very death. Since our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, then in chastity, in either marriage or virginity, runs the Holy Spirit out of our body and gives place to the devil. We sin with sensuality in all its forms: entertaining unclean thoughts, even delighting in them, and in so doing kindling in our soul a carnal flame; though not carrying it out in fact, we already commit adultery in our heart. Then there are sins of open fornication: if anyone is living in a marriage

not sanctified by the Church's Sacraments, repent, because you are living in fornication. Ask the Lord to sanctify your union, at whatever age you are. Those who are in a union sanctified by the church, check your conscience, whether you have changed, even in your heart looking with an unclean gaze at the face of the opposite sex, though not speaking of open adultery.

**The Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not steal.**

Remember, have you ever been tempted by something that was just left somewhere? We don't consider this a sin, but it is, after all, clearly pilfering. Have we not brought our kids something and in so doing taught them that one can carry something off from work? And is this not theft? Have you ever been tempted by something that was in someone else's garden, either private or public. Who when bargaining has cheated in measuring, deceived in weighing, deliberately reported an incorrect count, passed off bad merchandise for good? Perhaps someone has worked in children's establishments, and sponged off the kids – that's a crime....

Perhaps you have bought something for nothing from some drunk or something you know was stolen. Don't ever even bring such things into your house!

Don't dirty your hands and conscience. Such supposed kindness doesn't bring any good. On the contrary, it will all someday turn to dust, but the peaceful soul will not. And what shame before God and men, if a Christian learns to steal... Lord, forgive us sinners!

**The Ninth Commandment: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.**

This commandment forbids a lie in any form. Blame and gossip? A lie's close neighbors, the threshold to ruin! After all, do you know the whole story? Do you know what circumstances surround it? Do you know what enticements others were exposed to? Do you know whether, at the fatal hour of fall, there was lacking a brotherly helping hand, able to help out? Perhaps the helping hand that was missing was yours. The fall of one's neighbor should serve as a mournful turning to one's own self, a deeply felt compassion for the one who was seized by evil....

"Blessed are the peacemakers," says the word of God. But we make mischief among people, judging what we don't know, when this is completely uncalled for, which brings only insult and injury.

Lord, forgive us "lovers of truth"! Generally, we lack sincerity, simplicity, the ability to remain silent, and because of this we offend those around us and You, Lord, by breaking Your law.

**The Tenth Commandment: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.**

We sin against this commandment when we are unsatisfied with our lot in life and fall into the sin of envy. Confess, whoever envies the wealth, happiness, health, abilities, beauty or success of our neighbors. Have we never been happy at someone else's misfortune? Have we never wished an offender illness or death? We consciously and unconsciously envy everything we see; we need everything: food, clothes, a house, some other surroundings. If I see something, I want it; we even feel some kind of offense that we don't already have it. We get out of tune, even sick. The main thing is, we don't even consider it sin – after all, we were just thinking, dreaming....

Lord, forgive us sinners!

**The Three Virtues:**

Faith, Hope, Love.

**The Seven Sacraments:**

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. The Eucharist
4. Penance
5. The Holy Orders
6. Matrimony
7. The Anointing of the Sick

**The Seven Deadly Sins:**

1. Pride
2. Greed
3. Fornication
4. Anger
5. Gluttony
6. Envy
7. Despair

Why does the Orthodox Christian call certain sins deadly? After all, in the Orthodox religious tradition there is no practice of physical punishment for sins, much less the death penalty. The fact is that for these sins punishment isn't from people, but from God. The following sins are called deadly: pride, anger, envy, despair, greed, fornication and gluttony. We deliberately listed them in that order to call attention

to the fact that the greater part of them relate to the spiritual domain. It is interesting to notice that among the deadly sins, murder, rape, theft and unfaithfulness were not mentioned. Human judgment considers them the most horrible, criminal – even capital sometimes, worthy of the death penalty. There is no contradiction here. For all intents and purposes, the observance of religious rules is more important. It is possible to commit criminal sins unintentionally, which can't be said about Orthodox Christians, since they do it knowingly. Besides that, a person who does not commit what is considered by Orthodox Christians to be sin simply cannot commit criminal sins.

Now it is interesting to consider why the seven listed sins are considered deadly, that is, what punishment follows from committing them? After all, we well know from life's experiences that a person who scolds someone or who eats abundantly doesn't die. Where is the Heavenly Judgment? After all, the person has committed a deadly sin. Immediate death in these circumstances would be too simple of a verdict. It is not the destruction of humanity that is God's goal, but the perfection. So how do the sinners get punished? At first it's quite light – a bad mood, drowsiness, heaviness in the stomach and so on. If a person continues in that vain, then sickness appears, at first not bad, then worse and worse. That person has children born with problems. The one who persists in sin after all gets what's promised.

From what has just been said there follows a very important conclusion: if we get sick, then there is a very important cause for reflection on how we live.

[1][2][3]