



## **HOW TO PREPARE MYSELF TO GAIN THE UTMOST BENEFIT FROM CONFESSION**

*My beloved son/daughter, the perfect confession is the one in which you fully reveal yourself before your confession father, that he can help you based on knowing the truth about your inward person. In this leaflet I have put for you some questions to review yourself before confession, to get the utmost spiritual growth through continuous practices of this sacrament. I have presented it in the form of questions under titled sections for different aspects of spiritual life, in order to make it easier for you.*

*I hope this will help you to grow deeper in our Lord. Pray for me.*

*Very Reverend Father Tadros El-Bakhoumi*

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

#### **a) Prayer**

1. Are you regular or neglecting it? Do you always neglect it or sometimes? Why the negligence? Have you thought about finding a solution for it? Is there any achievement?
2. When do you pray? (morning, before sleeping, before and after eating, before doing anything, in troubles, in travelling, while among people, etc)
3. Do you pray with the Agbia? All the hours? Some of it? If not, why? If yes, is it the whole hour or some of it? Reason?
4. Do you pray your own prayers after the Agbia? Is it long/short? Is it deep/surface? Is it regular or not? Is it replacing the Agbia or after the Agbia? Is it growing or not?
5. Do you learn off by heart some psalms and prayers of the Agbia to help you anywhere? Is this increasing or not? Do you feel its importance or not?
6. Is your prayer fervent? Are there tears sometimes? Do you feel God's presence in your prayers? Is your prayer lukewarm? Mixed? Or what?
7. Do you feel your prayers or does your mind wander? Is there any attempt to control this? Have you sought spiritual guidance to control this?
8. How do you pray? Standing? Kneeling? Sitting? Any other way? In reverence or in carelessness? Do you pray properly with hands stretched up to God in heaven?

9. What are the main subjects of your prayer? Your general life? Lives of others? Your sins? Your spiritual life? Your spiritual growth? Your beloved or your enemies? Are your requests materialistic or spiritual or both?
10. Is the time you give to God a good time, while you are fresh? Or is it the leftovers?

**b) Fasting**

1. Do you fast all the church fasts or only some of them? Do you keep the Wednesday and Friday fasts or not? Are there any obstacles to your fasting?
2. Do you abstain from food and drink for some hours? How long?
3. Do you desire certain foods and insist on eating it?
4. Is your food one of your main targets? Do you spend a lot on it?
5. How much do you have control on eating between meals?

**c) Holy Communion & Confession**

1. Do you receive Holy Communion regularly? If not, why?
2. Do you feel the importance of Holy Communion in your life?
3. Do you feel the real spiritual benefit of Holy Communion in your life?
4. Is your confession regular? Do you feel it's importance in your spiritual life?
5. Do you try to hide some things from your confession father? Or make your sin look different from it's actual status?
6. Are there any permanent sins in your life? What have you done to change these?

**d) Church Attendance**

1. How regularly do you attend the church (vespers, praises, early morning incense raising, and the Holy Mass)
2. How much effort do you put in attending early? What are the obstacles?
3. Do you attend the mass while fasting, even if you are not going to receive Holy Communion?
4. How important is church attendance in your life?
5. Do you attend the church meetings (servants meeting, youth meeting, prayer meeting, spiritual days and feasts)? How regular is your attendance?
6. Do you have any service in the church? How much is your honesty towards it?

**e) Spiritual Exercises**

1. Do you exercise any spiritual practices to grow more?
2. Are you keen to ask your confession father about this, that he may grow you step by step?

**f) Reading**

1. Are you regular in reading the Holy Bible? Do you read in a certain order, and with guidance? Or whatever comes up?

2. Is your bible reading, only reading? Study reading? Spiritual reading for benefits to live the bible? Deep reading with meditation?
3. Do you have a verse notebook next to your bible to write some verses to use and learn by heart? How many verses do you know by heart?
4. Do you read study books for the bible? Do you attend a bible study meeting?
5. Do you read spiritual books? Is this a regular thing? Are you growing in it?
6. IS there a balance between your worldly readings and spiritual readings? Which is more?
7. How keen are you to put aside time for daily spiritual reading?

### **g) Donations**

1. Are you honest in offering you first payment to the church and also your 10%?
2. Do you only give the 10%, or a bit more?
3. How do you feel while giving your donation? (blessing, pride, show-off, etc)
4. Id your donation to the church based only on money, or also from your (time, energy, health, etc)?
5. Do you feel happy when you are asked to do something for the church? Do you feel that it is a blessing? Do you feel annoyed? Are you sincere in doing it? Or do you try to get out of it?
6. Do you try to do anything for the church, even without being asked? Or do you wait until you are asked? Or do you avoid being asked?

### **h) Growing Up**

1. Are you really looking up to heaven and targeting stepping up in your spiritual life? Or do you just do it?
2. Is the spiritual life to you a duty? Compulsory? Routine? Habit? Or do you do it from the heart?
3. Is your spiritual life rigid and solid? Or easily shaken?
4. In you heart how ready are you to struggle for the continuation and growth for your spiritual life, no matter what the pressures are from outside?
5. How much sacrifice are you ready to put for your life with our Lord?

## **YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE**

### **a) Family**

1. How much love do you have for you family members? Respect? Help and support? Honesty? Sincerity?
2. Are you quick to be angry with them? With or without reason? How extreme is your anger?
3. How much can you control your anger?
4. When you reconcile do you forgive, or do you keep it in your heart? How long do you keep harsh feelings in your heart?

5. How quick are you to reconcile with others?
6. How much patience and endurance do you have? Bearing others? Longsuffering?
7. Who always starts the fight? You or others? What is your response in both cases? How much do you do to fix it up?
8. What is your level of honesty towards your family duties? How do you place your priorities?
9. To what extent are you a good Christian example for you family members? How keen are you for their salvation?
10. What is your nature in general? Cruel? Tough? Hard? Gentle? Kind? Gentle? Compassionate? Short? Etc...

**b) With People in General**

+ *In addition to the 10 points mentioned with the family members, check the following:*

1. Do you always mock others and insult them? Even in a joking sense?
2. How sensitive are you towards the feelings of others? In your actions, words, looks, behaviour, etc?
3. Do you hurt others or get angry even for the reason of defending the truth? Is there any other way to handle it?
4. Are you keen to keep your conduct gentle with others, always respecting everyone?
5. Are you keen to treat everyone the way you want to be treated?
6. Are you honest and fair with others regarding their possessions and financial aspects?
7. What is the extent of your humility/pride in dealing with others? How much respect and compassion do you give to those who are younger or lower than you?
8. Do you love continuous praise from others? How sincere are your actions? Or are they for showing off?
9. Do your actions offend others?
10. How ready are you to help others?
11. Do you always seek your own comfort? How selfish are you?
12. Are your friends good or bad? Do they bring you closer to Christ or further away? If they are not in Christ are you trying to bring them to Christ, or do you just spend time with them for fun?

## **DIFFERENT SINS**

**a) Sins of the Thoughts**

1. Have you ever considered the sins you fall into by thought? Sexual, hatred, anger, revenge, jealousy, envy, pride, wrong thinking of others, misunderstanding, judging others, blasphemies, doubts, false dreams, etc.

2. How long does the thought remain with you? How much control do you have over your thoughts?
3. Do you like the thoughts to enjoy? Or are you unhappy with them, and try to fight them?
4. Do you welcome the thought? Do you quickly try to push it away? Do you try to do the thought? Do you do it?
5. Have you tried to make a balance of Holy thoughts compared to other thoughts?
6. Are your thoughts occupied by our Lord? Or by the world?
7. How much attention do you give to holy things as compared to other aspects of life?

**b) Sins of the Tongue**

1. Do you know the different sins of the tongue? Have you tried to ask your confession father about them? What is your extent of them?
2. If you swear, is the swearing language, habit, much, little? How bad and/or rude is it?
3. How much effort have you made to control your tongue?
4. How much do you talk? With people, with God?
5. What subjects do you talk about? Holy? Religious? Pure? Clean? Dirty? Etc...
6. How much time do you spend in idle talk?
7. What comes quickly to your tongue? Worldly songs? Praises? Prayers? Good things?
8. How is your manner of speech? Decent? Rude? Cold? Etc...
9. How is the tone of your voice while speaking? Loud? Sharp? Etc...
10. Do you have body language while speaking? (facial, hands, etc)
11. Do you rush in speaking? Do you put your nose in everything, even if it doesn't concern you?
12. Is your talk with people deceptive? Straightforward? Honest? Sincere? Etc...
13. Do you always make yourself a teacher to others? Whether it is your responsibility or not?
14. Do you interrupt others in a rude way? Do you shut others up during a conversation?
15. Have you ever tried to practice the virtue of silence? Even in small amounts?

**c) Sins of the Five Senses**

1. Have you been considering this? The sins of the eyes, hearing, touching?
2. How are your feelings inside when using the senses, even if nothing is noticed outwardly?
3. Do you try to avoid those sins? Or do you search for a chance?

4. How much is your honesty with your confession father in discussing those sins?

**d) Sins of Action**

+ *These sins are obvious for everyone, and no-one can deny any of them. However, I will raise some questions to help you.*

1. How much do you repeat sins in general? A particular sin?
2. Is there an action you are taking in fighting the sin?
3. Is there any harm caused to others because of your sin? Have you made an effort to fix it?
4. Are there any permanent reasons that lead you to sin? What are they? Have you sought guidance on how to deal with them? How much effort have you made to avoid them?
5. How sincere is your repentance of these sins? Do you always ask your confession father to give you practices to control these?

**e) Sins of the Heart**

+ *These are concerning what happens in your inward person, and the feelings of your heart, as well as your sub-conscience.*

1. How pure do you feel within your heart?
2. How much of your feelings inside could be counted as a sin?
3. Are you heartily rejoicing with your Lord?
4. How much room do you think is in your heart for the Lord and His service?
5. Are your actions and deeds – either spiritual or social – done heartily or otherwise? (show-off, surface, duty, routine, forced to, etc)

*NB*

- *This list of sections and questions is to help you as mentioned in the introduction. There may be other things you might ask yourself. This differs from person to person. Your confession father is the best one to help you on the way. The more open and honest you are with him, the more you will benefit and grow.*
- *This list may help the beginners, and those who are on the way. In order to grow deeper, and to higher levels you need the assistance of your confession father.*
- *For your own benefit, always pray the Prayer Before Confession and the Prayer After Confession, from the Agbia.*