

"Remember, then, from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first" (Rev 2:5).

453 To repent means to come to know and confess one's faults, and to renounce sin:

Those who confess their sins and accuse themselves for them, already work with God. God accuses your sins: and if you also accuse them, you are united to God ... And when your own deeds will begin to displease you, from that time your good works begin, as you find fault with your own evil works. The confession of evil works is the beginning of good works: You are doing the truth and coming to the light.³⁴³

454 Ongoing repentance is not about focusing on one's faults and offenses. It is first of all about discovering God's love. In the light of God's love, we realize to what extent sin separates us from him and prevents us from abiding in his love. "The one who sins does so because they do not appreciate the value and importance of God's grace. To bring someone to repentance one must first of all clearly and fundamentally show them the magnitude of God's gift, which they lose through grave sin."³⁴⁴

455 Frequent Confession allows us to know not only our faults and offenses, but also our weaknesses and inclinations to sin. Through the grace of the Mystery of Repentance, the Christian overcomes sins and the tendency to sin. This grace also raises up the Christian after a fall, and strengthens him or her in the virtues. The fruits of repentance are good works, almsgiving, purity of heart, and sacrificial love. The gift of the Mystery of Repentance is forgiveness from God and reconciliation with him: "[Give] thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:12-14).

2) *The Rite of Confession*

456 Confession is made before a priest, who is a witness of the sinner's repentance and a mediator of God's forgiveness:

Know, O child, that Christ himself, our Saviour, who knows all the hidden secrets of people's hearts, is invisibly present, accepting your confession. Therefore, do not conceal from me, whether from

³⁴³ AUGUSTINE OF Hippo, Commentary on the Gospel of John, 12,13: PL 35, 1491.

³⁴⁴ METROPOLITAN ANDREY SHEPTYTSKY, До ДУХОБЕЖТВА а [Letter to the Clergy] (March 15, 1935).

shame or from fear, anything of your sins ... Beware that, having come for healing, you do not leave unhealed.³⁴⁵

At the same time, the priest helps penitents to know the state of their soul, confirms their faith in God's forgiveness, offers spiritual counsel, designates an appropriate spiritual remedy (in Greek, *epitimia*, i.e., penance), and gives the absolution. As regards the contents of a penitent's confession, the priest is obliged to maintain the strictest secrecy, even after the penitent's death.

457 Preparation for Confession requires a prayerful examination of one's conscience. This consists of aligning our life with the divine commandments, the Church's precepts, and the Gospel Beatitudes. Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky teaches:

A good Confession requires, perhaps, a lengthier preparation. Before holy Confession we should beseech God in prayer for the gift of repentance, the gift of heartfelt tears. Maybe there is even a need to fast, since you know what Jesus Christ said: "This kind can come out only through prayer and fasting" [see Mk 9:29]. There are sins that cannot be expelled from the soul without fasting, without prayer.³⁴⁶

An important condition of Confession is sincere repentance, the desire to change one's life. This means having contrition, or sorrow for sins, and a resolution to make amends.³⁴⁷ Sincere repentance is first of all realizing that one is a sinner in need of God's forgiveness and seeing that one's sins have caused a turning away from God and rejection of his love. An important requisite of Confession is also reconciliation with one's neighbour: "When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24).

458 Approaching Confession, the penitent receives from the priest a blessing for the Confession. The penitent signs himself or herself with the sign of the holy cross. The penitent then sincerely confesses all the sins committed since the last Confession, and accepts the guidance of the confessor as

³⁴⁵ Trebnyk, Rite of Confession (Lviv, 1761), f. 91v-93v.

³⁴⁶ METROPOLITAN ANDREY SHEPTYTSKY, *Пастирське послання до тих, що на Пасху не сповідалися* [Pastoral Letter to 'Those Who Did Not Confess at Pascha] (October 15, 1935). 347

The Prayer book *прійдіме поклонімся* [Come, Let Us Bow in Worship] lists five conditions necessary for a good Confession: 1) examination of conscience; 2) contrition for sins; 3) resolution to amend; 4) confessing the sins in the Rite of Confession; and 5) fulfilling the penance (*epitimia*; in Ukrainian: *pokuta*) designated by the confessor (Lviv, 1991), 128,