

ORTHODOX PRACTICE

What every Orthodox Christian must do to be saved

FAITH ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

Faith alone cannot save a man. Every Orthodox Christians must worship God in order to attain life everlasting. This worship is rendered by: FAITH, which makes us adore God and embrace all the truths which He has revealed, no matter how obscure and incomprehensible they might seem to be.

We worship God by HOPE, which honors the infinite power, mercy and goodness of God. We rely on God because He cannot deceive His creatures nor fail in His promises to them. Hoping in God's goodness, mercy and grace the soul rises to a reasonable certainty of its eternal salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ and the powerful intercession of our Lady, Mother of Perpetual Help.

We worship God by CHARITY, which makes us love God with our whole hearts, for His own sake above everything, and our neighbors as ourselves for God's sake. To love God above everything we must be ready to lose everything, our own lives included, in order to avoid even the slightest sin.

The chief acts of charity our adoration, praise, thanksgiving, offering of ourselves to God, sacrifice and prayer. Christians must flee all idolatry, i.e., Adoring false gods or idols. They must avoid superstition, divination, fortune telling, witchcraft, charms, spells, believing in dreams, observations of omen, etc. All these things are heathenish and contrary to the true worship of God. In adoring God we all not to forget the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of Jesus Christ. We should invoke the protection of the Blessed Virgin and the Angels because they are God's friends and therefore able to help us with their prayers.

We should likewise reverence the sacred relics of God's servants, the cross upon which our Lord atonement for our sins and the holy pictures (icons) representing and calling to our minds Jesus Christ, His Mother or the Saints.

RESPECT FOR GOD'S NAME

We must reverence the Holy Name of God, Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. It is forbidden to curse, to swear and to take the name of God in vain, i.e., without sufficient reason, for fun, etc. It is also forbidden to take oaths indiscriminately. An oath is a sacred thing because it is calling upon God as witness of what we say. We cannot call upon God as a witness unless the thing is very important. St. Augustine warns all Christians: "Do not take oaths at all, if you wish to avoid perjury," which is one of the most grievous sins.

Sometimes it is permitted to take an oath on the following **conditions**: We must know the truth or have a serious intention to keep our oath: there must be an important reason for calling upon God as a witness, and that thing upon which we are taking an oath must be honest.

We must be very careful about **vows**. We should not make rash vows or promises to God without a previous consultation with our confessor; we must avoid blasphemies, etc.

SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS

We must dedicate some time to God's worship: we must pray every day; we must attend the Divine Liturgy at least every Sunday and Holyday; we should take part in other church services, for instance, in Vespers-Vechirnia, Moleben, Suplikatsia, etc. It would be a **mortal sin to miss Divine Liturgy** through carelessness on Sundays and Holydays. It is Holy Communion that make Sunday holy. We should try to receive it as often as possible. We should often review our Catechism, read the Gospel or the Holy Bible, some good book or paper to better sanctify the days that are ordered by the Church to be kept holy. We must also abstain from a hard, servile work on these days. Some servile works are: washing clothes, repairing the house, waxing floors, sewing, threshing, cutting wood, etc. Such work profanes the days of the Lord and must be avoided.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

God is our greatest benefactor. After Him, our parents. Parents take God's place on earth. We must love, obey, respect and take care of our parents when they grow old, providing them with food and lodging.

Parents must be ready to except from God any number of children that He wants to send. **Abortion** is a very **grave** sin and is punished with excommunication, that is with exclusion from the Orthodox Church. When a child comes into this world, the parents must take care of his physical, moral and intellectual education. They must make out of him a man or a woman, a loyal citizen of his country and a good member of the Orthodox Church. They must watch over their child, punish him, if need be, and still love of God into his heart and hatred sin.

Orthodox Christians must also obey their lawful superiors, spiritual and temporal, the Bishops and the Priests and the civil authorities. They must observe the just lawless of the State because all authority comes from God. (Romans 13, 1 – 2).

RESPECT FOR LIFE

We must respect our own and our neighbors life. Suicide and murder or mortal sin. A person who commits suicide is excluded from a Christian burial and cannot be buried in consecrated ground. We must avoid any serious injury either to ourselves or to our neighbor. It must be noted that women commit a **mortal** sin when they have recourse to certain operations in order to

become sterile **reckless** and **impaired** driving can easily lead to suicide or homicide. It is a sin to drive too fast or carelessly.

We must avoid all hatred, envy, and desire of free then, for they need to murder and violence. We must also avoid spiritual murder, i.e., scandal, which is committed by drawing a neighbor into sin by words, they had conversation, indecent jokes, bad advice, bad example, bad magazine, bad websites, that behavior, etc.

CLEAN BODY AND SOUL

We must abstain from all uncleanness in thoughts, words and actions.

Any bad thoughts knowingly and willingly cherished in one's mind or any indecent talk or action done in order to arouse the sexual passion is a mortal sin. Better thoughts are not sins at all, however, if we put them away as soon as we notice them. We should invoke the names of Jesus and Mary when bad things come to our mind.

Prayer, flight from sinful occasions, especially drunkenness, and life always occupied are the best means to preserve innocence and purity. Frequent confession and Holy Communion are the most powerful aids to purity.

RESPECT FOR MATERIAL GOODS

Stealing, cheating and any other way of damaging our neighbors material goods is a sin. We must pay our debts to the workers, storekeepers and servants. We must make restitution for all damages which we have calls through our fault. We must return goods we have stolen or their equivalent in money. "God will not forgive our sin," says St. Augustine, "as long as we do not make restitution, if we can." It is enough to confess other sins to be forgiven by God, but in the matter of fact the person must return the stolen goods, if he can, before God forgives his sin.

RESPECT FOR GOOD NAME

An Orthodox Christian must respect the good name of his fellow men. He must avoid **calumny**, that is, attributing faults to his neighbor to which he is not subject. He must avoid **detraction**, that is revealing this one's real secret faults unknown to the majority of the people. In both cases a person may easily become guilty of mortal sin, if the fault revealed or attributed is very injurious, for a Christian should cover up his neighbor's faults instead of revealing that. This is charity in action.

The same Commandment forbids an Orthodox Christian to make a rash judgment of his neighbor, that is, to suspect and to judge him without a sufficient reason. A Christian should not reproach or a front or robbed his neighbor of these peace of mind by Scots, contempt or by tale bearing. Tale bearers are hateful to God and men. No one may take a false oath against his neighbor.

In all cases in which the good name or character of a person has been wrong, whoever wronged them, is obliged to make reparation or satisfaction to his fellow man before he can expect to be forgiven by God.

Do not talk at all to your neighbor unless you have something good to say about him. The fathers of the Church say, “do not talk badly of your neighbor. Always try to justify it. If you cannot justify his action, at least try to justify his intention.” And our Blessed Lord commands all His followers: “Do not judge, and you shall not be judged.” (Matthew 7, 1). Finally, **lying** is also a sin.

AVOID BAD DESIRES

God commands us to abstain from impure deeds; at the same time we are ordered to abstain from all desires of lust and injustice. We must resist the irregular motions of concupiscence. If we ought to avoid in action, we are also obliged to refrain from everything that leads to such action. If adultery is forbidden, all bad thoughts, desires and looks that lead to it are also forbidden.

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These are the obligations imposed upon all men by the 10 Commandments of God, which are a short abridgment of the whole of supernatural and natural law. They are spiritual signposts which show us the road that leads to heaven.

CHURCH LAWS

The Orthodox Church, being a depository of Christ's power and endowed with the authority of making new laws if the salvation of men requires them, make some laws to explain the will of Christ and make the way of salvation easier. All Orthodox Christians must keep these laws as if they were made by our Lord Himself, for He said to Peter: “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound (ratified) in heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16, 19).

The Church made the following laws which bind all Orthodox:

SUNDAYS

We must sanctify Sundays and Holydays. All servile work is forbidden on these days which should be wholly dedicated to God and our soul.

DIVINE LITURGY

We must attend the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and Holydays.

DAYS OF ABSTINENCE

We must strictly observe the days and periods of abstinence appointed by our Church. These days or periods are Advent, **Lent, the Apostles Fast (Petrivka), the Dormition Fast (Spasivka)**, and **every Friday** except these so-called Zahalnytsia or Compact Weeks. It is a mortal sin to eat meat on Friday.

EASTER CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

Every Orthodox Christian must confess his sins and receive Holy Communion **at least once a year**. Good Orthodox, should go to confession and receive Holy Communion at **least once a month** if they wish to be practical Orthodox one whom the Church can rely in the time of trials.

“One Holy Communion,” says one Saint, “is worth more than all our good works, penances and prayers performed in one week.”

Orthodox Christians should receive Easter Holy Communion in their own Jurisdiction, and, if possible, in their own Parish Church.

CHURCH SUPPORT

Every Orthodox Christian must support his own church. The decree “Cum data fuerit” states: “The faithful of the Church are bound to attend and liberally support their own churches and to observe the prescriptions of our jurisdiction.” (Article 28).

The Jews of the Olga Testament were commanded by God to pay tithes to their synagogues, that is, 1/10 part of their yearly income was assigned to God Himself with the support of the Jewish priests and synagogues. In the New Law the Church does not prescribe any particular amount to be contributed to the support of the churches, schools and pastors. We must contribute according to our material means to the support of those who minister to us in spiritual matters and help us to save our immortal souls.

Orthodox Christians are **not free** to pay or not pay their church dues. They are bound to pay them as they are bound to attend Divine Liturgy on Sundays or to go to confession and Holy Communion at least once a year. Since there is no general rule as to how much each Orthodox Christian should contribute to the support of his church, local customs must be observed.

The administration of church goods and properties belongs to the pastors and Bishops. The laymen may help their Pastors, but they cannot pretend to control them or to claim the administration of the church properties. Each Orthodox Christian should remember that the priest is the head of the parish. He is subject to the Bishop, and not to the church committee.

MIXED MARRIAGES

Orthodox Christians are forbidden to marry non-Orthodox. The Church does not approve of mixed marriages between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, although she permits them in exceptional circumstances under special conditions. Mixed marriages are harmful to the Orthodox partner and to the children born of such marriages. A proper Orthodox education of the children is very difficult, if not impossible. Orthodox Christians are also forbidden to marry anyone related to them within the third degree of kindred. They cannot get married during prohibited times. Orthodox Christians must get married in the Orthodox Church and before an Orthodox priest, whether both partners are Orthodox or just one of them. Any marriage contracted by an Orthodox Christian in a non-Orthodox “church” or in court is invalid.

Orthodox Christians must get married in their own jurisdiction.

GOOD BOOKS

Read good books, and visit good websites. They will help you to know your faith and strengthen your Orthodox mentality. Sundays and Holydays are appropriate times for such reading. The Bible and Orthodox literature should be your best friends when you have some leisure time to spend. Avoid reading bad things and trashy things because they corrupt you. The Church forbids Orthodox to read bad things. A person commits a mortal sin if he reads very bad and indecent things whether in print or digitally.