The Rite of Confession outside the Divine Liturgy

*Introduction.*

*Recently Archbishop Mark asked me for English translations of some of the prayers of the traditional order of confession for him to use for English Speaking visitors to the Monastery of St Job of Pochaev in Munich. As most confessions today take place in the context of the Liturgy, many of these prayers are either omitted or are unknown to English Speaking clergy. The fullest text that is easily accessible has always been the translation in Hapgood but even this is not complete. I have searched various sources on the internet and found translations of the prayers normally found in the Slavonic Trebnik. The following text is what I have put together from all these sources and form the rite of Confession when served for an individual as a separate service. The rubrics are from my memory of once or twice having attended this service in a monastic context. It is hoped that this might be of some use to those who might like to use the traditional form of confession for those individuals who request it. The rite itself is clearly within the Russian tradition and does not include prayers or forms from Greek sources which are substantially different. None of these translations are my own. Please feel free to use as much or as little of this as you need.*

**Order of Confession when served as a separate service.**

The lamps on the Holy Table and the Iconastas are lit. The priest, bare headed, wearing epitrakil and cuffs reverences the Holy Table and opens the curtain, the doors remaining closed. He takes the blessing Cross from the Holy Table and exits the altar through the north door and stands upon the centre of the solea. He / she who wishes to confess comes forward, being duly prepared and stands before the priest in front of the icon of the Saviour. The priest may exhort the penitent before the formal rite of Confession begins. He turns towards his spiritual child still standing on the solea. An Analoi is prepared upon which is placed a Gospel Book.

Priest: **My beloved spiritual child N., it is good that you have come unto Holy Repentance, for here you will wash the sins of your soul as if in a spiritual font, and it will be healed of its death bearing wounds as if by heavenly medicine. Strive only that your heart may be broken on account of all your transgressions, and that you choose to confess them truthfully unto the Lord your God who is invisibly here with us and before me, the wretched one, who has received the power of absolution from Him. Hide nothing and do not lie, but recall everything that you have done and confess them. Remember that the hiding of sins is soul destroying deception and lying leads to death and those hidden sins will not be forgiven. Thus, as the Mystery is not fulfilled through this act of deception, new sins are committed. Therefore, do not even conceal one sin, not even because you are ashamed, for I am also a man subject to the passions and am inclined to fall into similar sins. I too have the experience of the weakness of man. So, when you despise the shame which you expose to the One God through me, you will no longer be accused of those transgressions before the Angels of God and before all men at the Last Judgement. Therefore, if you do hide anything before me from the One God, then you will be accused before the whole assembly and shall not then be delivered from the eternal punishment. Nor should you hide anything because of weakness for I will not be angry with you but I will bring healing unto you with gentleness of soul. So my child, when you confess, confess everything and I will not censure you. Reveal your sins and I will not be a stranger unto you. Do not speak to me about those who take part with you in your sin for it is evil to speak of the weakness of others. Confess only your sins, not lazily but with a pieced heart and a good intent. Preserve yourself from like transgressions for if you don not, it is impossible to have true repentance. So, my child, give glory to your Lord by having order in your heart. Confess your transgressions to me a sinful priest and, when you receive absolution, you will be freed from the chains of sin and cleansed. Thus you will be healed spiritually by the grace of God.**

The priest stands before the holy doors upon the solea facing east and the spiritual child continues to stand before the icon of the Saviour. The service begins thus;

Priest: **Blessed is our God, always; now and ever + and unto the ages of ages.**

Penitent: **Amen.**

Priest: **Glory to Thee our God, glory to Thee. O heavenly King, the Comforter, Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things; the treasury of blessings and Giver of life. Come and abide in us, cleanse us from all impurity and of Thy goodness save our souls.**

Penitent: **Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us** (3x) **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. All-holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord be gracious unto our sins, Master, pardon our trangressions, Holy One visit and heal our infirmities for Thy Name’s sake.**

**Lord have mercy** (3x) **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: + both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen**

**Our Father who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts and we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into tempation but deliver us from the evil one.**

Priest: **For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory: of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,+ now and ever and unto the ages of ages.**

Pentitent: **Amen. Lord have mercy** (12x)

Priest: **O come let us worship God our King.+ O come let us worship Chrsit our King and our God.+ O come let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.**

Penitent: Reads Psalm 50 from the Psalter. There follow these Troparia (in Tone 6)

Priest or Penitent: **Have mercy upon us O Lord, have mercy upon us, for any offence do we offer unto Thee, O Master, have mercy upon us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, +**

**O Lord have mercy upon us as we put all our trust in Thee. Do not be angry with us, neither remember our iniquities, but look upon us as Thou art compassionate, and deliver us from our enemeies. For Thou art our God a we are Thy people and the work of Thy hands, and we call upon Thy Name.**

**Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages +. Amen**

**The doors of compassion open unto us O Blessed Theotokos, that hoping in thee we need not perish but be delivered from our enemies. For thou art the salvation of the Christian race.**

**Lord have mercy** (40 x)

The penitent stands with bowed head with his/her arms by his/her sides

Priest: **Let us pray to the Lord.**

Pentitent: **Lord have mercy.**

Priest: **O God, our Saviour, Who by Thy Prophet Nathan did grant remission of his sins to the repentent David, and did accept the penitent prayer of Manasseh: do Thou Thyself, in Thy customary love for mankind, accept this, Thy servant / handmaid N. who repents of the sins he/she has committed, overlooking all that he/she has done, forgiving him/her unrighteousness, and overlooking his / her transgressions.**

**For Thou, O Lord, has said: “I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his way and live.”; and that sins shall be forgiven even unto seventy imes seven, For as Thy majesty is immeasurable, so is Thy mercy beyond compare. For if Thou should mark iniquities, who shall stand?**

**For Thou art the God of those who repent and unto Thee do we send up glory: + to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Priest: **Let us pray to the Lord.**

Penitent: **Lord have mercy.**

Priest: **O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, the Shepherd, and the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, Who gave remittance to the two debtors, and granted remission of her sins to the harlot: do Thou Thyself, O Master, loose, remit and pardon the sins, trangressions and iniquities, both voluntary and involuntary, whether known or unknown, whether by mistake or in disobedience, why Thy servant / handmaid may have done, and whatsoever he/ she may have done, as men bearing flesh and living in the world, being beguiled and tricked by the evil one.**

**And if by word or deed, in knowledge or in ignorance, he / she may have sinned, or may have dedspised the word of a priest, or a under the ban of a priest, or have fallen under their own curse, or are bound by an oath: do Thou Thyself, as Thou art a good and gentle Master, be pleased that this, Thy servant / handmaiden, be loosed by Thy word, forgiving them their own curse, according to the greatness of Thy mercy.**

**Yea, O Master and Lord, O Friend of man, hearken unto us who are entreating Thy grace for this Thy servant / Handmaiden N, and, as the greatly – merciful One, overlook all his/ her trangressikons, and diliver him / her from eternal torment, For Thou has said, O Master; “What soever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” For Thou only art sinless, and unto Thee do we send up glory: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, + now and ever and unto the ages of ages.**

Penitent: **Amen**

The priest then guides the penitent to the analoi, placing the blessing Cross upon it and he says these words:

Priest: **Behold my child, Christ stands here invisibly and recieves your confession. Therefore be not ashamed, neither be afraid, and conseal nothing from me but tell me all the things that you have done, so that you may receive forgiveness from our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, His holy image is before us and I am but a witness, bearing testimony before Him of all that you shall say unto me. But if you conceal anything from me, you shall have the greater sin. Take heed therefore, that having to the physician, you depart unhealed.**

The penitent kisses the Gospel Book and the blessing Cross then kneels and says this prayer of St Symeon the New Theologion.

Penitent: **O God and Lord of all. Who has the power over every breath and soul, the only One able to heal me, hearken unto the prayer of me, the wretched one, and, having put him to death, destroy the serpent nestling within me by the descent of the All- Holy and Life –Creating Spirit, And vouchsafe me, poor and naked of all virtue, to fall with tears at the feet of my spiritual father, and call his holy soul to mercy, to have mercy on me. And grant, O lord, unto my heart humility and good thoughts, becoming a sinner, who has consented to repent unto Thee, and do not abandon unto the end of the one soul, which has united itself unto Thee, and instead of all the world has chosen Thee and has preferred Thee. For Thou knows, O Lord, that my evil habit is an obstacle. But all things are possible unto Thee, O Master, which are impossible for man.**

The Priest may question the penitent and / or the penitent may open his/ her heart unto the Lord.

Priest: **In all these things which you have confessed, you must henceforth be on your guard. For you receive now a second baptism, according to the Christian Mystery. And you must see to it that, God helping you, to make a new and good beginning. Above all, you must not take the sins you have confessed lightly, in case you become a cause of scorn to men or angels; for these things are not befitting a Christian. So may God, by His grace, help you to live honourably, uprightly and devoutly.**

Priest, addressing the penitent: **Bow your head unto the Lord.**

Priest: **Let us pray to the Lord.**

Penitent: **Lord have mercy.**

Priest: **O Lord God of the salvation of They servant / handmaiden, merciful and long-suffering; who repents concerning our evil deeds, desires not the death of a sinner but that all should turn from their evil ways and live. Show now Thy mercy upon Thy servant / handmaiden N. and grant them an image of repentance, forgiveness of sins and deliverance, pardoning all their sins, whether voluntary or involuntary.**

The priest lays his epitrakil upon the head of the penitent saying:

Priest:  **Reconcile and unite this Thy child to Thy Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with Thee are due dominion and majesty, + now and ever and unto the ages of ages.**

Penitent: **Amen**

Finally the priest, while saying the absolution, signs the penitent with the sign of the Cross.

Priest: **May our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, by the grace and compassion and love for mankind, forgive you, my child N. all your transgressions,+, and I, His unworthy priest N. through the power vested in me, forgive and absolve you + of all your sins; in the Name of the Father + and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

Penitent: **Amen**

Priest, raising the penitent says: **Now my child, having no further care for the sins which you have confessed, depart in peace, knowing that such sins are as far from you as the East is from the West.**

The penitent, after having kissed the Gospel Book and the Cross moves and stands before the icon of the Saviour and the priest returns to the solea with the blessing Cross. The priest bows towards the Icon of the Mother of God saying:

Priest: **It is truly meet to bless thee who didst bring for the God. Ever blessed and Most Pure and the Mother of our God. More honourable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim. Who without defilement beareth God the Word. True Mother of God, thee do we magnify.+**

The priest turns towards the icon of the Saviour saying:

Priest: **Glory to Thee O Christ our God and our Hope, glory to Thee. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, + now and ever and unto the ages of ages.**

Penitent: **Amen. Lord have mercy** (3x) **Father bless**

Priest: **May Christ our True God ( who has risen from the dead) through the intercession of His most pure Mother and all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is a good God and the friend of man. +**

The penitent, still facing the icon of the Saviour says this prayer of thanksgiving.

Penitent: **What praise, of what hymn, or of what thanksgiving, or what recompense shall we offer unto Thee, the only God and friend of man? For when we were condemned to destruction and immersed in our sins, Thou didst bestow freedom upon us, and has given us the immortal and heavenly nourishment of the Body and Blood of Thy Christ. Therefore we pray Thee, deliver us from judgement together with Thy servants who minister unto Thee. Keep us and them in honour and holy living; and those who pray with us, and who have been partakers of Thy Mystical Table, preserve free of condemnation unto their last breath. May it be unto them a sanctification of soul and body, unto the keeping of Thy commandments; and thus may we be granted to attain Thy heavenly Kingdom, together with all who have been well pleasing unto Thee from all the ages. Amen.**

The penitent kisses the Cross once more and the hand of the priest who says:

Priest: **And pray for me a sinner.**

Priest: **Through the prayers and intercessions of our holy, most pure, immaculate and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary and all the saints, + have mercy upon us and save us, for He is a good God and the Friend of Man,**

The priest departs into the altar through the south door returning the blessing Cross to the Holy Table. He kisses the Gospel and the edge of the Holy Table and closes the curtain.