

Epitimia

Genuine Repentance¹ begins with an accurate knowledge of oneself, one's strengths and weaknesses, one's deeds, desires and one's motives. It takes a great deal of openness to reveal the depths of one's soul to another human being so finding a spiritual father – or a confessor – is something that generally takes time and must be done with a great deal of wisdom and prudence. Not every priest is suited for the task, and choosing the wrong person can lead to spiritual disaster. Ideally, one's spiritual father is not only a holy man, but a wise one – an expert capable of supplying the proper *epitimia* to our spiritual ailments as the canons of the Sixth Ecumenical Council enjoin a priest to do: Having received from God the power to “bind and loose”² a man or woman from their sins, a priest must evaluate the nature of their sin and the spiritual state of their souls. Having done this, he must apply a proper means of healing to the souls of great sinners – for our sins and weaknesses are quite different and personal in nature.

¹ "Repentance is the returning from that which is against nature to that which is according to nature, from the devil to God, through asceticism and agony" (*De Fide Orthodoxa* 2, 30, PG 94, 976A)

² Canon 102 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council