

## What is sin?

### Confession of sins is a skill

Oct 19, 2015

Dear in Christ \_\_\_:

I would like to receive you in to the church this \_\_\_\_. I want to tell you what to expect. There will be two main things: confession, and the chrismation service. (Note: this person fulfils the criteria TO THE LETTER that the church specifies in its canons. He was baptized by triple immersion in the name of the Holy Trinity, by a schismatic group that has Orthodox belief.)

### What is sin?

Regarding confession, you should contemplate your sins. We must understand sin in order to confess it! Sin is a condition of fallen man, and also men who have become new creatures, but unfortunately, are weak in their will, and continually "fall short of the mark". This phrase is actually the working definition of sin. Sin is not just the things we do (or do not do) - it is our condition. We are called to perfection, and to achieve perfect purity, and knowledge and righteousness. Sin is anything that deviates from that purpose.

**None** of God's laws are externally imposed upon us. All of them are a *reflection of Who God is*, and we are called to act like He is, since we are His children. Sin is to not act (and of course, this may be only in our thoughts, or also in our physical actions) according to WHO GOD IS.

The vast majority of our sins are only in our *thoughts, and priorities and attitudes*. We must learn to, as the Psalmist says: "Feel compunction on your beds for what you say in your hearts."

It is important to feel deeply our sin, and to firmly desire to eradicate it. We may be very weak, and this will be forgiven us, if we have desire. God will always respond to our desire to change. He will never help us if we have no compunction concerning our sins.

The most pernicious sins are those deep in the heart - pride, lust, jealousy, anger against others, judgment of others, and other such things. Basically, the worst sins are those that contradict love, since God is love, and we are called to love as He loves.

### Confession of sins is a skill

Confession of sins is a skill that must be developed. We must feel deep compunction for our sins, but not despair over our lack of progress. I do not know how to tell you to attain this skill, except to struggle, and always believe in the mercy of God. Fasting, prayer, and

the reading of scripture are critical to learn this skill. All of these things are USELESS without our effort to follow the commandments and to avoid sin.

Our success in our efforts is contingent on our strength. We cannot provide this strength. God provides it. It is a mystery how the human soul can consider itself to be full of sins and yet, at the same time, be confident in the mercy of God. I only know that those who struggle against their sins will be victorious. Those who, as the Vespers psalm says: "Make excuse with excuses in sins" will not only remain in their sins, but will be as the tares in the parable, and be gathered up and burned.

Contemplate your thoughts and motivations. Write them down. Consider also your actions which come about because of those thoughts. Reveal them to God, with me, a sinful priest as a witness, and God will heal you of all of them.

After confession, the chrismation service is pretty simple and not too long.

With you and \_\_\_ (he promised to come to liturgy) able to commune, I will endeavor to establish (a certain day) as a day we celebrate liturgy, and you will be able to commune then.

I am honored to serve you and rejoice that I will be able to commune you. the Eucharist gives us life, and is a critical part to the eradication of sin.

I also plan to receive the others as catechumens, as time allows. I would like to write more, but my hope is that this letter will get to you \_\_\_ if I send it now. God bless you and help you in all things!

Priest Seraphim Holland 2015

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[St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas](#)

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