

Letter to prisoners.

Catechumen service explained

Exorcisms, Renunciations, Affirmations, The creed

Disposition

Sept 11/23

[A letter written when on a spiritual retreat on a ranch in Indian Creek, Almost heaven, West Texas... I am preparing several men for baptism. Important information about the Catechumen service, the exorcisms. Why the Creed is important. Our disposition determines everything.]

Dear in Christ brothers:

I am at a ranch in Indian Creek, TX, right on the Colorado River (pond at this moment). It is near Brownwood, about 1.5 hours West and a little N of Gatesville. I unexpectedly had some time after going to prison, and I took it. I have been road hard and put away wet. Being in the TX woods, and seeing deer and maybe some pigs, and seeing the stars "hearing" the quiet and praying on the bluff overlooking the river is a good tonic.

I will run the Hills every day, hike all over, drive the four wheeler mini pickup all over, spy on deer, and pray and read in the quiet. I will, of course, look for and mark my beloved "horse killer" cactus (I have put rings of rock around dozens of fine specimens). I will of course pray for all of you, and my parishioners and many more. I appreciate your prayers. I seem to need getaway time more often. I would like to have more endurance.

It's kinda funny. My getaway time is to pray in the woods and have solitude. The world wants to go to Vegas. If I were kidnapped and taken to Vegas, I would need a retreat to recover from all the nonsense.



Man! A flock of turkeys came right up to the cabin. I got some pictures. I was thinking today, as I walked in the woods and saw about 8 deer that I have never seen turkeys on this ranch, and here they are!

I was sorry to miss so many of you today. I learned some very good news today, and you will know of it when we meet again.

Unfortunately, I must go to our Diocesan Assembly the 2nd week of October. The next scheduled time is the 4th week of October. I will see if the chaplain will let me come next week (a fifth

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Wednesday, when I normally do not go to prison). I will try to let you know.

Three of you have made it clear you want to be catechumens and eventually get baptized. Billy told me today, plus Howard and Brian H. If anyone else also wants to make this commitment, please tell me and don't be sore with me if I left you out. I am writing from memory on my phone, and my notes are at home.

I want you all to read the Creed every day. You should try to memorize it. It is in the morning prayers, and other places, in the prayer book. It begins: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty..." Russians call this statement of Faith "Ver-ooo-yoo" because this means "(I) believe". This is a way we refer to many hymns, by their first word or beginning phrase.

I will teach about the creed as fast as possible, tell you about the catechumen service, then perform it. In a seasonal time, you will be baptized.

Catechumen, btw, means "learner". The catechumen service is hard core. It demands a serious commitment from you, and solemn promises. It consists of basically three parts.

Exorcism Prayers

At the beginning, I read the exorcism prayers over you. We do not believe you are possessed, but you are under the influence of the demons. They are foul and tricky, and they never sleep. Since the time they rejected the love of God, they are filled with hate for us. We are God's beloved, and He will eventually, when we are ready, show Himself completely to us, and we will know Him and be in Union with Him.

Even the Holy Angels cannot achieve this. The angels that love God rejoice for us, and aid us in many ways, as God commands them. They ****freely and easily**** follow His commands with pleasure. We poor ones do not follow His commands as freely and easily. Some foolish ones do not follow either because of ignorance, or worse, stubbornness and laziness, and others we try to follow, but our will is weak, and still others, we follow, but only with great and sometimes exhausting effort.

Another definition of Salvation: Freedom

In the Kingdom, we will *easily* do good, and never even struggle against bad, just like the good angels. This is the freedom Christ speaks of when He says "in that day, ye shall be free indeed"¹. *Christianity is the gaining of this freedom.* We are able to accomplish this task after baptism, after which we become "a new creature". God sets us free from the law of sin and death. We are responsible to cooperate with His grace, and struggle against sin.

It does not matter if some of your sins are too big for you. All God requires is struggle, and desire and He will give us all sufficient grace and everything needful.

¹ John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

This, btw, is our understanding of works. We are not saved by any works we do, and neither are we saved if we do not struggle to do works. Nobody who refuses to repent is saved. Repentance is to "change ones mind" and struggle against sin. For some sins, we will be completely victorious, even in this life. Other sins we may never fully conquer.

Disposition

The most important factor is our disposition. Do we struggle against sin? Do we promise, as the Psalmist David sings (and we sing in every day's evening Vesper service), to not "make excuse with excuses in sins"?

This is a *process*. If you have "sticky" sins, beg God to help you have the desire and, of course, the strength, to fight them. Most of the time our sins are "sticky" is because we lack full desire to fight them, and also firm faith. Never excuse your sin. Fight! Fight! Fight! And you will be saved.

Back to the exorcism prayers. They are long and very strong prayers against all machinations of the Devil. Do not be proud and think that the Devil cannot fool you or hurt you. He is much more intelligent than you, and he never sleeps. He is powerless against love and humility, and of course, faith grounded on these virtues. These are your only useful weapons against them. I will discuss them with you soon.

Renunciations

The second part of the service is the "renunciations". You will turn to the West, the symbolic place of the Devil (since the Lord, the Dayspring of the East, is associated with the East, and He will come again from the East), and be asked three times: "Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his angels, and all his service, and all his pride?" You answer loudly each time "I do".

Then we blow and spit upon him (in some churches, such as ours, we actually go outside and spit on the ground).

The Affirmations

Then follows the "affirmations". We face to the East and you are asked a question three times: "Dost thou unite Thyself unto Christ"? You answer "I do".

Then follows a series repeated three times, a kind of mega affirmation, where you recite the Nicene Creed in its entirety each time. This is very important. First, you must know and understand the Creed. Second, you are proclaiming your faith and making solemn promises before God, the angels and men, and the entire church.

The service then ends after a few more prayers, said by the priest. We will go over this in detail. I wanted to send you something. I am way behind in letter writing, do consider this a promissory note for the rest.

God bless you and help you in all things!

This is being sent Thursday morning, because I could not get a signal last night!

Priest Seraphim Holland 2015

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