

How do we get rid of regret and other ADDICTIONS?

The Kingdom of heaven, and violence, which is prayer

Letter to a prisoner



Priest Seraphim Holland PO 37 McKinney TX 75070

To: ...

June 10, 2017 ns.

Dear in Christ ...:

I am responding to your letter. I will be at ... this coming ..., June ... You told me a lot of things, and I appreciate your honesty. I read about not fitting in, enduring abuse, being angry, feeling like a failure, enduring many losses, and feeling a “dark side”. I also read: “I believe I’ve taken up enough of your time”. You can stop that right now. I go to prisons because I am happy to do it, I write letters, because I am happy to write them. I do this because it is what God told me to do. So, you are not “taking up my time”, as if I have something better to do. It is always better to do what God tells you to do. I am trying to assure you that you should write – as much as you want, and you will not be “taking up my time”.

All the stuff you mention is hard, but all of it can be recovered from. I believe it, I have seen it, I experience it personally. Just come around, listen, ask questions. I will answer any question.

I have a few simple thoughts. You indicate that you do not have much of a religious background. Some of the stuff that I feel with all my heart because I have experienced it, you have not known. Anything can be learned in the ready to learn.

Regret is a stronger toxin for our life than even anger. Regret is like self-directed anger. It paralyzes us. We continually hit ourselves with a hammer! It is based on wholly incorrect assumptions about ourselves and God. We are all failures. The scripture tells us that without God, we cannot do anything. We seem to “own” our failures too much. We are sinners, but God created us for perfection. Sin gets in the way, but if we try, even a little, it cannot win. If we have a healthy (true) view of ourselves, and of God, our regret, and its sister, shame, and another sister, depression, and another sister, anger, and many more devious and demonic sisters – will dissipate, and we will experience God. The experience of God cleanses, and refreshes, and makes us feel alive, happy. This can be a long

process when we have injuries. You have a lot of injuries. I want you to believe you can recover from all of them. I believe this, and I will pray for you every day.

Your recovery from all the things that make you unhappy will not be a passive one. This is not like putting up our feet and relaxing on a couch while someone cleans our house, We must be active participants. One of my favorite verses in the scripture is: “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Mat 11:12) This means that we must make a lot of effort, and God will magnify our comparatively small effort. The violence that this verse refers to is violence against sin, and our thoughts, and our laziness, and all the rest of the stuff that paralyzes us and makes of feel miserable.

The scripture also says “the kingdom of heaven is within you”¹. This means that our redemption is the change of our interior selves. God made the human soul so that He could live in it, and we could experience Him. If God is in the soul fully, all the other stuff is out of it – anger, regret, remembering wrongs, lust, coldness, darkness.

You must be “violent” against your anger. This violence is expressed in two ways. One way is that you do not give yourself the “right” to be angry. You must rebuke your thoughts of anger. This is very hard. It cannot be accomplished without the second way. This is the most critical and violent thing you, or I can do.

A holy Orthodox father once said “prayer is warfare, till the last breath”². Even more so, prayer for others, especially our enemies, and those who have hurt us, ignored us, hated us – this is the greatest warfare a man can engage in. This warfare is the fulfilling of the commandment: “love your enemies”³. It is also the fulfilling of the greatest commandment⁴ and the one that is like it: to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. This is not easy. Few people do it. We are commanded to do it for one reason only. We were born to know God⁵ and be like Him, and since God is love⁶, we cannot be like Him if we hate.

We cannot do the things we cannot do, but struggling to do the things we CAN do will, with God’s grace, cause a mountain to be moved – our sins, and we will learn to do things that are impossible for us now. We cannot do some things – pray with full attention, control our thoughts, cease judging, pray with our heart, but with God all things are possible, and indeed WILL happen, but they will happen when we are ready, and will not suffer spiritual harm.

Anger, regret, shame – these are addictions, as much as an addiction to a drug. We do not perceive them as addictions, but I will give you a “test” to apply. Can you stop any of these easily and completely? No, you and I cannot stop these things, without effort, and many falls. They are addictions, of an injured soul.

We cannot fight our additions head on only, because we fail very often. Perhaps we cannot stop from judging someone, or being angry at them, or harboring bad thoughts about them. We can, and he MUST – pray for those persons, daily.

That is it! That is the way to perfection. It is not an easy way, but it becomes easy. If you believe me, and try to do what I say, you will be amazed.

Make a list of important people in your life – for good or bad reasons. People who have been kind to you should be on that list. People who have hurt you should be on that list. People who have helped you, and perhaps you have not shown enough gratitude – should be on that list. People you have hurt should be on that list. Living or dead – it does not matter. The scripture tells us that “all live to God”⁷, so they are dead only to us, and not to God

It is simple to pray for another person. Here is one way, the way I use 99% of the time.

Say “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on _____”.

If a person is dead, you can say the same prayer, or, if this becomes familiar to you, say “Lord Jesus Christ, grant rest to Thy servant ____”.

We Orthodox do these prayers with the sign of the cross and bows or prostrations. That might be too much right now, but I will teach you if you want to know.

If you follow my advice, you will get resistance from within. Praying for others is hard, but it is the way of life. Try this, and see.

Doing this stuff is a learned skill. If you have questions, ask me.

As for some of your other comments:

You do not need an exorcism! You need healing. We all need healing. We are all weak, and without God, we can do nothing. I have a prayer that I say daily that encapsulates our reality: “Lord I am a wretch, but save me and the whole world”. None of us are good guys, but God is good and made us so that we could be good. Do not be afraid to admit you are bad, but this thought must always be accompanied by knowledge of your purpose and that God will forgive anything and help us to do anything.

Another thing. You mention no “outlets” for your anger. The world does not understand that indulging anger does not make it go away. I hope you get a lot of physical exercise because it is good for the body, and clears the mind – maybe wall ball or basketball, or weightlifting, or running.

I will bring a bible. I expect that you will read it, and correspond to me about it. You write, I write. That is how it works. Talk to me this God will help you, if you try.

In Christ, Priest Seraphim

http://www.orthodox.net/prison-ministry/prison-ministry-letters_2017-06-10+how-do-we-get-rid-of-regret-and-other-addictions+the-kingdom-of-heaven-and-violence-which-is-prayer.doc

http://www.orthodox.net/prison-ministry/prison-ministry-letters_2017-06-10+how-do-we-get-rid-of-regret-and-other-addictions+the-kingdom-of-heaven-and-violence-which-is-prayer.pdf

http://www.orthodox.net/prison-ministry/prison-ministry-letters_2017-06-10+how-do-we-get-rid-of-regret-and-other-addictions+the-kingdom-of-heaven-and-violence-which-is-prayer.html

¹ Luke 17:20-21 KJV And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: (21) Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

² A saying of Abba Agathon ca. 4th cent: “In my opinion, no other labor is as difficult as prayer to God. Every time a person wants to pray, our spiritual enemies want to come and disrupt it, for they know that it is only by deflecting humans from prayer that they can do them any harm. Whatever good work a person undertakes will produce success, if it is done with perseverance; but the labor [of prayer] is a warfare that will endure until our very last breath.” (The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: Agathon, 9)

³ Matthew 5:43-48 KJV Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. (44) But I say unto you, **Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;** (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? (47) And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the publicans so? (48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

⁴ Matthew 22:36-40 KJV Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? (37) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

⁵ John 17:2-3 KJV As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. (3)
And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

⁶ 1 John 4:7-8 KJV Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (8)
He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

⁷ Luke 20:37-38 KJV Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. (38) For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.