

Introduction

The first part of this topic about the Mystery of Confession, one of the seven holy mysteries in the Orthodox church and of such great importance in our spiritual life and our walk with God, discussed the role of the spiritual father. As stated, confession is multidimensional because along with its main function of granting absolution from sin, a large part of it is devoted to counseling, encouragement and guidance the success of which is directly related to the personality of the spiritual father and the person under confession. How then can individuals with different attitudes achieve spiritual and psychological satisfaction after confession? The answer to this question depends on two main factors:

1. The role of the spiritual father (discussed in part one)
2. The personality of the confessor

The Personality of the Confessor

1. Stages of & Remedies for Spiritual Change When giving spiritual practices in confession, care must be taken in discerning the individual's attitude towards spiritual life. Typically, there are six types of behaviors:

a. *The Apathetic*

A person showing no interest in confession nor asking for guidance from a priest but is quite satisfied with his life desiring no change is an apathetic, indifferent person. Periods of impassiveness may result from tribulations that eventually might lead to helplessness that requires intervention for help. A good example is the prodigal son who became anxious for change only after he had lost everybody and everything and became in need of his father. Another example is Samson who sought change after God's spirit had departed from him and was given over to the enemies. In order for such people to accept change they need to be surrounded with an environment of love first and foremost before intervening with counseling while waiting for God's work in them. Group support is also recommended because God did not create us as single beings and when we worship him in church we worship as a body of Christ.

b. *The Dreamer*

A person who knows the good effect of change but feels that it is a far-fetched dream will live in his dreams knowing how good the results could be. A good example is of a student who though

convinced of the positive outcomes that exist in e passing his exams yet do not concentrate on his studies. With his book open before his eyes, he spends hours dreaming of success without achieving it. Such a person needs a few spiritual practices before launching big ones. "*I fed you with milk and not with solid food*" (1 Corinthians 3:2). For example to increase a person's faith in the power of prayer, he is to be given a psalm or two to memorize and pray with.

c. *The Desirer*

A person who has the will and draws a plan and a life-changing-program for himself is typically represented in the multitude who, for example, on New Year's Eve make resolutions and affirmations to commit themselves more to reading the bible, going to church, etc. However, these plans gradually dwindle by time and the desire shifts and accommodates itself in future opportunities mainly the following New Year's Eve. God wants to see these desires in implementation, as St. Paul says, "*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). Such a person needs encouragement through building spiritual friendship "*Two are better than one,*

because they have a good reward for their labor" (Ecclesiastes 4:9). A husband and wife can support each other in their journey of spiritual change and growth.

d. *The Worker*

A person who takes a desire and brings it to fruition is someone who puts St. Paul's words into action. "*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). However, a start is not enough without continuity. Such a person needs encouragement in order not to give in to the devil's attacks against persistence.

e. *The Persevere*

A person who keeps trying will eventually reach the goal, spiritual maturity. However, in order to receive the crown of maturity, one has to put before him the joy that made Jesus Christ persist till the cross "*despising the shame*" (Hebrews 12:2), looking to Christ the author and finisher of our faith.

f. *The Mature*

A person who has overcome obstacles on the way and persistently and insistently stayed on track concerning change and growth will eventually reach spiritual maturity.

These six stages or types of behavior do not exhibit themselves in this linear order regarding all spiritual journeys. For instance, a person can be in the first stage regarding the life of prayer but in the fifth stage concerning fasting. Therefore it is important to evaluate each virtue separately.

2. Obedience Versus Stubbornness

Voluntary submission in counseling depends on the individual's capacity to say "NO" and "YES" at the right time and under the right circumstances. A balanced personality is one that is able to say "YES" and accept "YES" from others. Likewise saying "NO" and accepting "NO" is an attribute of an agreeable personality. This ability and flexibility is in conformity with Jesus Christ's teachings "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'" (Matthew 5:37). A person who cannot say "NO" has a problem because chances are that he will not be able to say "NO" to sin. A person who cannot accept a "NO" from the others is a manipulative stubborn controller who does not like anyone to contradict him. A person who cannot say "YES" is prone to procrastination and uncertainty in actions. A person who does not want to hear "YES" from others is concealing pride and unwillingness to accept help or favors from them.

Conclusion

A confessor comes to the seat of confession aspiring to hear God's voice through the father of confession. This is not surprising because the Holy Spirit, one of whose titles is "the counselor" (Isaiah 11:2), functions in the Mystery of Confession. Also, the priest represents Jesus Christ and is His servant and steward of His mysteries. If this is the case, why do some leave the seat of confession still not feeling relieved? The fault might partly reside in the advice given and partly in the attitude of the confessor himself. St. Paul's words to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:1-5) concerning people with itching ears show that itching ears usually indicate sensitivity against the word of truth which causes discomfort to those who want to go after their own counsel. A good example is King Herod's reaction to John the Baptist's admonitions and warning against the fatal blunder of marrying his brother's wife. He ended up getting rid of John the Baptist and killed him. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers"* (2 Timothy 4:3). A confessor of such an attitude seeks someone to tell him what he wants to hear not the words of truth.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Clement says, "Let us therefore implore forgiveness for all those transgressions which through any suggestion of the adversary we have committed. And these who have been the leaders of sedition and disagreement ought to have respect to the common hope. For such as live in fear and love would rather that they themselves than their neighbors should be involved in suffering. And they prefer to bear blame themselves, rather than that the concord which has been well and piously handed down to us should suffer. For it is better that a man should acknowledge his transgressions than that he should harden his heart, as the hearts of those were hardened who stirred up sedition against Moses the servant of God, and whose condemnation was made manifest unto all; for they went down alive into Hades, and death swallowed them up. Pharaoh with his army and all the princes of Egypt, and the chariots with their riders, were sunk in the depths of the Red Sea, and perished, for no other reason than that their foolish hearts were hardened, after so many signs and wonders had been wrought in the land of Egypt by Moses the servant of God. The Lord, brethren, stands in need of nothing; and He desires nothing of anyone except that confession be made to Him. For, says the elect David, 'I will confess unto the Lord; and that will please Him more than young

bullock that hath horns and hoofs. Let the poor see it, and be glad.' And again he saith, 'Offer unto God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. And call upon me in the day of thy trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me' for 'the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.'"

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