



On Confession

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh
1st sermon
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In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I was asked to give a certain number of sermons on Confession; because many come to Confession and repeat only things which they have read in manuals of devotion or which other people have told them about. And I would like to start where I start with a child and attract your attention to the fact that our situation is the same.

When a child comes to Confession, usually he brings either on paper or by memory a long list, or a short list, of sins. And when he has finished, I always say, "Are these things which break your heart? Are these things which you feel are wrong in you? Did you invent for yourself this confession?" And most of the time the answer is, "No, my mother gave me this list because that makes her cross!" After that I usually have a conversation with the mother. But as far as the child is concerned, it has nothing to do with him, it is not his confession. It is the judgement which the parents have established, accusations against him. And the same could be asked about grown-up people who come with lists of sins which they have found in manuals, or been told to consider by their spiritual fathers. And the answer is always the same: it is not my confession, yet it is a challenge which I was given.

And then, the next move, indeed, is to ask, "What do you know of Christ? Does He attract you? Do you like Him? Does He mean anything to you?" And the answer is varied. Some say, "No, I know Him from afar off, I know Him from the Church, from what I was taught, but I never had a personal attitude to Him." Then the answer is, "Find out. Read the Gospel and try to find out what Christ is like."

And the next move: ask yourself, "Do I like Him? Would I wish to be His disciple, His friend?" If the answer is "no", then begin to think about your whole situation, because if Christ means nothing, if you dislike Him, if He is no image of what you would like to be, then you must start a long, long way away. But if you can say, "Yes! I like Him, I can respect Him, I can admire Him. Yes, I would like to be His personal friend if He was here," then my next question will be, "Do you know what friendship is?"

Friendship consists most of all in choosing someone among all the people to be to you the one you treasure above all, whom you admire, by whom you are prepared to stand in case of danger or unpleasantness; one to whom you wish to give joy.

Ask yourself these questions with regard to Christ; and ask yourself, in what way have you tried in the past week to give some joy to the Lord Jesus Christ, or in what way have you been for Him a cause of pain. "I have loved him to the point of giving My life and My death to him and he does not care at all. Not for My suffering or My death, but for Me".

If that is the conclusion, begin to re-examine all your status as a Christian. If you can say, "yes, I choose Him as a friend," begin to ask yourself every day, every day: what have I done, said, thought, felt, been, which can be to Him a joy or a pain?

And when you will come to Confession that is what you must bring to Confession; between the last Confession and today's Confession this is what I have been: an unfaithful friend, an indifferent friend, a cowardly friend, or on the contrary, no, I have chosen Him for my friend and I stood by Him . . .



Think in those terms; and we will see in the following sermons of mine what else we can think and do, and prepare, to pronounce a Confession that will be your own; the truth, the rock bottom of your life and heart, the truth about your relationship with Christ. Amen.

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