

## **It's difficult for young people to come to church (part 2) († Archimandrite Georgios, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou)**

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We have many examples of young people who've been disappointed with one and all and have turned to Christ as the last and sole resort to escape their situation. Lots of young people who've been involved with drugs and are from good families have said to me: 'Father, we didn't do drugs because we'd gone off the rails, but because we were disappointed with everything and were trying to find a way out of this impasse'. The devil deceives them and they think that in drugs they'll find that depth that the human soul longs for.

Another thing that young people can understand from their own experience is that, at bottom, all sins are selfishness, that is a sick, egotistical love of oneself, and that selfishness leads people into the predicament of loneliness. You can't restore real communication with God and other people through self-love and so, in the end, you

live in unbearable loneliness. And this loneliness is hell before hell. The condemned experience the lack of communication between each other, according to the answer given by the skull of a pagan priest. It was asked by Makarios the Great about conditions in Hades and it said that people couldn't see each other. In the Church, however, we can see each other in Christ Jesus.



Since we've been created in the image of God, we're theological beings. No independence can give us that which completes us, explains us and makes us content deep in our soul, unless we return to the prototype of our image, which is Christ.

In the Church, people can truly realize their personality in communion with God and with other people, and so can attain the supreme potential of our existence, which is glorification. The Church offers us the opportunity for real humanism.

God and the Church love people as they are, often when their own parents reject them. No matter how sinful they are, the Church receives them as they are, but in order to give them the chance to become as God wants them to be. And how greatly this receptive attitude helps them. The generosity of the holy Fathers and Elders of the desert is well known. To this day, we see discerning Fathers on the Holy Mountain, who are very strict with themselves, showing extreme charity and understanding to our fallen, afflicted and impaired human nature. They also give those who come to them the courage and the assistance to get them out of where

they are, from the hell they're in, and to bring them, with great love and discernment, to God.

Within the Church there's the opportunity for the mystical experience of God. People aren't satisfied with merely an external relationship with God. We're made to be in love with God. Divine love, according to the holy Fathers, is a need of the human soul. In the end, what brings solace to people is the erotic relationship with God. This erotic relationship and mystical life and experience of God are nourished by our sacramental life, unceasing prayer and the whole of the ascetic practice of the Orthodox Church which the Philokalia and the holy Fathers have passed down to us.

The grace of Christ grants heavenly experiences to Orthodox Christians who strive hard. So we don't need to seek other redemptive measures, nor to labour in vain.

These are a few of the possibilities, points of contact, which we have in order to speak in depth to the souls of our children, to the core of their existence, their anxiety and their restless searching. This should always be undertaken with a positive attitude of love and tenderness towards them. Of course, for all this we need enlightened teachers and gifted spiritual guides. So we must ask God to provide them. They're the light of the world.