

Living the Faith in Today's World

[Ξένες γλώσσες](#) / [In English](#)



‘Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief’

This phrase shows the real struggle which Orthodox Christians are called upon to wage. Faith isn't a philosophical construct nor an abstract concept but an actual experience. The Creed which we say isn't simply something we read; it's something we first experience and then confess.

In the Gospel excerpt which is read on the 4th Sunday of Lent (Mark 9, 17 – 31), the likely consequences of a lack of faith on our part are revealed. Today's world may seem very different from that of the time of the Gospel, but if we examine it more closely, it has the same passions and the same misguided mindset. The technological and philosophical achievements may have changed, but the human person has remained fundamentally the same, fighting against our passions and weaknesses. The words of the Gospel and the Holy Fathers are enduring and speak to each person in every era.



The father in the excerpt says that he believes but still asks Christ to reinforce that belief. People today often reach the point where they not only deny God but distort him. Denying God isn't as bad as changing the teaching concerning him in order to accommodate our various infirmities and to salve our conscience. What makes this practice worse than mere denial is that it not only imperils the person concerned but may affect the whole of the setting in which they live.

Complacency and stagnation bring people to spiritual death. 'Watch and pray lest you come into temptation', says Jesus Christ (Matth. 26, 41), indicating that we Christians need to be aware and always on our guard. Those who believe in an abstract fashion, without participating in the holy sacraments and divine worship, distance themselves from God. This results in a gradual vitiation of faith and morals. Faith is adulterated and secularized to such an extent that we no longer realize just how far from God we've placed ourselves.

Moreover, faith presupposes a struggle with particular weapons, as presented by Christ in the same excerpt, when he says: 'this breed [demons] cannot depart except by prayer and fasting' (Mark 9, 29). Without these tools, Christians can make no progress in their spiritual struggle. Especially during the season of Lent, with so many extended services, we have an opportunity to work harder at the

care of our soul.

While there's still time, we should repent and bring fresh vigour to our faith. We, too, should say every day: 'Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief', so that we may draw closer to Christ. There's no other way to approach him. It takes boldness and sacrifice, not easy options, if we're to take up our cross every day. If we forever choose the easy, painless way, we'll be in for a rude awakening at the end of our life. Life as a Christian is difficult but it's only through patience and persistence that we will arrive at our desired goal, our deification 'by grace'. Besides, this is what Jesus Christ himself teaches us: 'those who stand firm to the end will be saved' (Matth. 24, 13).

This is why, as long as we're alive, we need to change our way of life and make it more Christ-centered. We must have true repentance, not just guilty feelings such as those of Judas, whose egotism prevented him from seeking forgiveness from God. On the contrary, let's turn to God's mercy, as Saint Peter did. Despite his denial, he repented and this repentance was accepted by God. Apart from at the sacrament of confession, our repentance and faith are further made manifest by the way we live the teachings of the Orthodox Church. Let's not pretend that our physical presence in church (sometimes even at the last minute), or lighting candles is what makes us Orthodox Christians. The confession of the faith that's expressed by fervent prayer and by frequent attendance at the services and sacraments of the Church is what will attract divine grace. If we move forward with this in mind, we'll see that only then will we feel truly liberated, without any fear or anxiety regarding the various trials which may befall us.