



070. Jan. 23/Feb. 5, 1971. Priest-Martyr Clement

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : May 3, 2016

Dear Sister in Christ, Nina [Kojevnikov],

Rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ! I was glad to receive your letter — not because I have any particular means to help you, but because all of us who have been baptized in Jesus Christ are one in Him, and it is our joyful duty to bear one another's burdens, as the Apostle Paul tells us. This is all the more true of me, since I myself have gone through somewhat the same experience you seem to be going through. Coming from a Protestant background, I rejected it completely and became an agnostic and atheist, and then started searching for some meaning to life in various philosophies and Eastern religions, until I finally came to the point where I thought there was no meaning to life at all, and I wondered why I should keep on living. And then I went for the first time to a Russian Orthodox Church, and something in my soul responded to this, and I began a gradual but sure recovery from my spiritual disease of despair and lack of faith.

Many people today say that God has turned away from us and does not listen to us. But I have found that just the opposite is true: it is we who have turned away from God and followed vain philosophies and our own selfish desires. But God remains always the same and is always ready to receive us with great love.

Right now you probably feel that there is no hope for you. This may be very painful for you, but it is actually a good sign — if only you do not give up but continue to beg God's mercy. Real spiritual death is the state where one no longer desires God or feels anxious because of not having His grace, but instead is satisfied with those worldly things which actually separate us from God — wealth, honors, and the rest. Because you are anxious and unhappy — that means you are still alive spiritually, and there is indeed hope.

However, do not expect any sudden light, revelation, or whatever. True faith comes from a small seed which is planted in our hearts by God Himself, and which is nourished and gradually grows through God's grace and through our own actions which are in accordance with His commandments and the tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church, which has been given by the Holy Spirit and handed down to us through our Holy Fathers.

You do not say what you are doing in trying to open the door of faith, and so here I will give you a suggestion: God is everywhere and sees and hears everything; therefore you do not need to cry out to him loudly or dramatically — but you must be persistent. The seed of faith which you have within you will sprout and grow only if you water and tend it every day, and not just when you feel like it. Therefore:



(1) Every morning just after getting up and every night before going to bed you should read the morning and evening prayers in the Orthodox prayer book — at least the opening prayer “O Heavenly King” (where we call on the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in us) and a few of the other prayers. (If you do not have a prayer book, tell me and I will get you one.) Say a brief prayer also for those who are close to you, asking God to preserve and save them; and for those who have died, asking God to grant them eternal rest. And add a prayer in your own words for your present situation: ? Lord, grant me faith in Thee and set me on the path of salvation — or something like that. Even 5 minutes in the morning and evening of such prayer, spoken from your heart, will begin to open the door of faith for you.

(2) Read every day at least a chapter or even a few verses from the Four Gospels: begin with the first chapter of St. Matthew and read all the way through the book of St. John, and then start all over again. The whole foundation of our salvation is there in the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and it is there that you will learn to love Him and have faith in Him.

(3) We have already sent you (after Mrs. [Tania] Blinoff told us about you) the book Unseen Warfare. Try to read a little of it every day too, if possible, for it tells about the spiritual warfare which is the whole meaning of our existence on earth.

Do not read any books on “spirituality” by Catholics, Protestants, psychologists, or anyone who is not Orthodox, because they will only mix you up. There may be wisdom or insights in some of these, but only in our Orthodox Faith is there to be found the whole path of salvation, the infallible way of coming to God. Many people spend a lifetime trying to find what is only to be found in the Orthodox Church; but God has granted you the good fortune of being born in His Holy Church, and you only need to return to what is yours already. Even I, from a Protestant background, felt that I had “come home” when I found Holy Orthodoxy; how much more you will feel the same way when faith begins truly to grow within you.

When you pray, please pray for the sinful monks Herman and Seraphim, who are trying to serve God in the monastic calling. Please write again, and feel free to ask any questions, and I will try my best to answer them.

With love in Christ our Saviour,
Monk Seraphim