

How do we acquire untainted faith? (Hieromonk Dionysios (†))

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Let's struggle with all the strength that God's given us. Let's entreat Him to agree to help us, so that we keep His commandments and that His will may be accomplished within us, by the coming of His kingdom, that is His Grace. May the All-Good Spirit visit us and thus restore the tripartite balance of our soul. Then we'll be counted worthy to obtain not only the image but also the likeness, and to become children of God by grace.



Photo by Spyros Drosos

How does divine Grace visit us and dwell within us? First of all, God seeks pure and untainted faith. If you've got real faith, it's not possible that you won't have works, as well. As Saint James, the brother of our Lord, says: 'Show me your faith from your works. Secondly, keep knocking at the door of God's mercy, and don't despair if you haven't been heard until your last breath, because He said to us truly: 'Knock, and it will be opened to you. Ask, and it will be given. Seek, and you will find'. He will grant us His grace in abundance.

Let's see, then, how we acquire pure and untainted faith. First we have to be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity (which is most necessary thing of all) and secondly we have to be instructed by experienced and believing Christians, who are illumined by Divine Grace, regarding the mystery of God's providence. We have to learn why God became human, and what we, as humans should ask of God our benefactor. We need to know what we lack and then ask to receive it. In this way, we'll acquire the faith that makes people want to do God-pleasing works and to apply His commandments.

Unless we humble ourselves and ask those who know for their advice, but instead trust in ourselves, we'll easily be led astray into sin, at the least temptation. Through the mouth of the Prophet David, the Lord said: 'Seize education*, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you be lost from the righteous way'. What does this saying mean? It means that we should examine the Scriptures, humble ourselves, ask to learn from those who are experienced in the things we don't know. And, most importantly, we should labour at our prayers, so that the Lord will enlighten us. When He sees how hard we're trying, He'll enlighten us and won't be angry with us. But if people don't work hard in an effort to learn, then He does become angry and doesn't send them His illumination. Then they stray from the proper path, which is the Orthodox faith.

After the true, Orthodox faith, we must ask God to help us to do good works, because, without His help we can't achieve anything. God is willing to lend strength to our weakness, to soften the hardness of our heart, to warm our coldness, and to gentle our savagery, since these passions have become almost natural to us. They lord it over us like executioners and won't let us see 'good days' as the psalm puts it [34, 12, Sept.]. They distort our proper understanding with hatred and vindictiveness, jealousy and envy, encourage us to utter taunts and blasphemy, curses and slander against our fellow believers. They turn almost all the senses towards evil and gladden our enemies the demons.

There's no cure unless someone else effects it, and who else would that be but our

Lord, Jesus Christ, the healer of our souls and bodies, the true God of all, Who has no reason to agree to this other than to help us and to make us worthy of His kingdom. Of which, may He make us all worthy, through the supplications of His All-Spotless Mother, our patron saint, the Great Martyr Dimitrios, and all the Saints. Amen.

***The word used in the Greek text of the Septuagint, 'παιδεία', can mean either 'education' or 'correction'. Here, Fr. Dionysios seems to be implying reading, so 'education' has been preferred. Interestingly, the Masoretic (Hebrew) text has 'Kiss the son'. Had the Seventy chosen this text to translate from, the word for 'son' would have been 'παῖδα', which is obviously related to 'education/correction'. WJL.**

Source: **Διονυσίου Ιερομονάχου, Βιβλίον καλούμενον Ἰχνος Χριστού, Ομιλία ΣΤ΄. Pubd. by Ανων. Εταιρείας Εκδόσεων «Νέα Ελληνική Ηώς» Athens. In Modern Greek.**