

Sin as Sickness (Fr. Andreas Agathokleous)

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It's natural to have feelings of guilt if we look at sin as a transgression against 'the law of God' rather than as a sickness we've inherited as children of the first Adam. Because if, over time, sin becomes second nature, it exercises authority in our soul making us do what we don't want to, as Saint Paul says. As we all know, this brings its own pressure, peace is lost and turmoil arrives, with everything this means for our daily life.

Because they knew themselves so well and therefore had a deep knowledge of human nature, our holy Fathers and Mothers speak of sin, festering within us, as an illness. So we aren't guilty, but sick and we need to seek a cure if we're to enjoy life, our relationships, our gifts and a natural state of health.



As a way of life, the Church is in the world to act as a sanatorium. It's the task of the clergy, in carrying out the work of the Church, to treat the people who come to them with the means the Church places at their disposal: the true faith, fasting, prayer and the sacraments. This is their main mission; the rest stems from this.

Since they've grown up in a society that is, in some ways, prudish, puritanical and human-centred, it's no surprise that most of its members suffer from depression, repression, anxiety and neuroses. What's tragic is when ministers of the Church and other people in it act in the same way, attempting to regulate external behaviour while disclaiming all knowledge of the inner world. If that's the case, what hope do we have?

As it is in every age, the message of the Church today is one of optimism, hope and joy. Because death, in its various manifestations, has been defeated by Christ, the new Adam. This means that sin- in whatever form it takes- is no longer an incurable sickness. Whoever we are, however we live, we're not alone. If we're truly to live, all we need is the desire to be healed.

It may be that the above just sounds like nice-sounding words stemming from theological ebullience. But those who've experienced what I've spoken about, or are doing so now, will tell you that the words reflect a wonderful reality which gives us what we all want in our innermost depths: freedom and joy.

Let's not stay rooted in the negativity of our self and the world around us. Let's not

allow our life to become miserable because we see only our weaknesses and sins. In any case, how important is our self? The One Who matters is Christ, Whose love forced Him to become 'one of us', to descend into Hell, like us, and to defeat our greatest enemy- death.

This is why His teaching is called the Gospel, the good news, and why His presence marked the advent of the Kingdom of God, which is characterized by joy, joy and more joy. What a shame if we continue to dwell on death.