

HEARING A SAINT'S CONFESSION

Or

"Welcome to the Human Race"

by

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I venture to say that many of us who are Orthodox Christian clergy have heard the confession of a Saint of God.

"What's that?" you say. "Your Eminence, are you trying to tell us that you've heard a *Saint's* confession?"

That's exactly what I am saying, and, if I were a wagering man, I'd be willing to bet that almost all our clergy have done the same.

Now, allow me to explain.

I have personally met Saint Philaret of New York and Saint John Maximovich of San Francisco, but I did not hear their confessions, of course. I was, after all, only a monk at the time, and I feel privileged to have received their blessing.

But I *have* heard the confessions of many other holy men and women.

How do I know that they were holy?

Well, for one thing, they told me so themselves!

"I'm a good woman, Father. I've never stolen anything. I've never lied; I don't gossip; I keep the fasts (whenever I remember); I say my prayers (whenever I remember); I don't have bad thoughts," etc., etc., etc.

"Amazing!" I think to myself. "I'm speaking with a Saint of God!" Of course, if you begin to interrogate this "saint" a little more carefully, you may be appalled at what you hear.

She may have poisoned her husband by putting arsenic in his morning coffee, or he may have robbed his brother of his rightful inheritance, but except for that, he or she is a "good person." The little, but important, details often become afterthoughts in holy confession, if they are mentioned at all.

My friends, if you want to learn the truth about yourself, and if you want to learn how you should make your confession when you speak with your spiritual father, you should read the chapter "A Confession Which Leads the Inward Man to Humility" in the book, *The Way of a Pilgrim*. Those pages say it all. Once you have read that chapter, you will say, "I am so ashamed of myself. Is there any sin that I have *not* committed?" And when you come to holy confession in that frame of mind, you will hear this wake-up call from your spiritual father:

"Well, my child, welcome to the human race."

And you have taken the first baby steps towards *true* sainthood.