



and Confession

Question: How many times a year must

one receive Holy Communion? Is the Sacrament of Confession necessarily tied to Holy Communion?

Answer: Holy Communion is not absolutely linked to Confession. In the ancient Church, people had the Grace of God in them; they were in a state of enlightenment of the nous* and they of course prayed and received Holy Communion frequently. When someone committed a sin, it meant that they had forfeited the Grace of God, in which case, they would remain outside the Temple, together with the catechumens. This is because one cannot have the Grace of God and yet deny Christ. When one sins, and especially in the flesh – and I am not referring to the carnal relations within a marriage in Christ – it shows that they are preferring carnal pleasure more than Christ and as such, are denying Christ in practice. This reduces them to the ranks of the repentants, and they will need to re-attain the state of enlightenment of the nous, following a specific procedure.

In Basil the Great and other Fathers, we notice that there were four ranks of Christians. Firstly, there were the “forgiveness-seekers”, who sat outside the Holy Temple and asked for forgiveness from the Christians that went into the Temple.

Secondly, there were the “beseechers”, who remained in the Temple only up to the recitings of the Divine Liturgy and would depart along with the catechumens. Thirdly there were the “aligned”, who remained in place until the end of the Divine Liturgy, but without receiving Holy Communion. And fourthly, there were the partakers of Holy Communion. In other words, when someone committed a sin, they would have to go through a period of repentance and repentance meant that the person had to reach the enlightenment of the nous through catharsis – he would have to alter his nous, and from a darkened state make it light again. The Bishop would then read a blessing and that person could afterwards receive Holy Communion.

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