

Church (Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion, anointing, marriage, ordination, burial, house blessings, other blessings, and so on), by acts of worship, Pilgrimage, some people become monks or nuns and in doing those things that are necessary to make the world a fine place to be.

The Promised Land is yours! Now fight for it! When God showed the Hebrews the Promised Land He said it was theirs. They did not just walk in and start farming though! First they had to conquer it. God gave them everything they needed for the task but the Hebrews themselves had to put in a huge effort to make the promise theirs. It is the same with our salvation from sin. Jesus Christ has already saved you from sin and, in the Church and the sacraments, he gives you everything you need to become holy. Now it is your turn! You must fight every temptation and sinful urge that comes your way and simply follow Jesus Christ on His Way of the Cross. The Way of the Cross involves a constant struggle and a determination not to be overcome by the hardships and difficulties. By the Lord's teaching and Christian Experience we know that to follow this Way we must pray all the time, we should fast, give alms and

Spend out time on this earth in constant joyful repentance.

Judging others. One of the temptations is feeling better than everyone else who is not repenting. You should live in such a way that you come to see that perhaps only you and you alone need to repent. After all you know that you are a sinner and it may be that clouded with your own sin you see sin in others where there is none!

“Put your heart in hell and do not despair.” This is the advice of a famous monk. It means that you stand before God blaming only yourself and pointing the finger at your own sins. Has anyone spoiled creation “Yes I have” you say. That is not all: Jesus, who is God, loves you immensely. He loves us so much that when people put him to death he called out “Forgive them!” He loves us so much that he wants us to change.

He wipes away all sin and presents you brand new to God the Father.

God bless you!



Sin

The disease!

Sin means "missing the mark" (the literal meaning of the Greek word for sin, *hamartia*), falling short of the glorious purpose for which God created you.

Imagine a woman aiming a gun at a tiny target a long way away but when she pulls the trigger the bullet misses the target! That is what is meant by sin. It might be a near miss or miss by miles but the target was missed. God is absolutely perfect and pure. You are not perfect so you have missed the target.

Sin is also understood as separation from God. People were meant for close friendship and a warm relationship with God. That is normal life! Our lives don't usually live up to this and that is sin. We have fallen from normal life with God.

Sin is imperfection, anything which fails to live up to the fullness of life in Jesus Christ for which man was created.

The Bible sometimes talks about sin as if it is a crime against God's law. For Orthodox Christianity, the stronger word picture for sin is also from the Bible: sin is a kind of disease and salvation is the cure.

Ancestral Sin

In the Bible there are stories about Adam and Eve, Noah and the Tower of Babylon. All of these try to explain how sin and death came into the Human existence. It might be best to see these stories in terms of our own experience – these stories are really our own stories.

Sin and death are realities and need to be placed next to our understanding of God as absolutely good and wanting our good. God does not cause us to sin though He knows that we are likely to sin. We call this "The Fall". In some Churches this Fall is thought to be from being perfect to being "totally depraved". This is not the traditional teaching though. The early teachings tell us that the Fall made humans stay spiritually immature – with Jesus the God-Man working with us we can begin to climb up the hill of spiritual growth until we become like Him.

Traditionally there was no thought that people inherited guilt for the

ancestral sin. For a time a teaching about "Original Sin" suggested that everyone was born in some way damaged and guilty of sin (and therefore punishable) that only Baptism could undo. This is not taught by the main denominations of Christianity any more.

In **Baptism** all sin is washed away and the person who has been baptised has a new, perfect, start in life able to grow spiritually into the perfect image of God as they have put on Christ like a piece of clothing. Clothed with Jesus Christ they are freed from past sin and given the power to overcome sin in the future.

Struggle! The life of a baptised Christian is a constant struggle against evil. We must fight hell all the time. We fight hell in the power of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit and be acts of love, through prayer, through forgiving others, by receiving the holy sacraments. We feed these things through prayer (listening first!), through reading and learning the meaning of the Bible, by taking part in the sacraments of the