

Deaf-mutes are necessarily admitted to Confession and Holy Communion¹.

Though in the ancient practice of our Church in the case of the confession of deaf-mutes there also was a special Ustav [Typikon] by which the necessity of the confession here was eliminated by facial expression and the permission of the deaf-mute in dependence simply became from his appearance (in appropriate mood) at confession and the fulfillment of its liturgical order over them. But with the elimination (since Nikon) of the indicated Ustav [Typikon] they have come to that conclusion, that at the confession of a deaf-mute the absolution of sins should not be given differently, as only during the confession of such a person, if not by words, then by facial expression (A. Almazova, *Tain. ispov. [The Mystery of Confession]*, vol. 2, pp. 22-25, 448-449). At the present time, as it is usually accepted in our practice, if the deaf-mute (but also equally the sick deprived of the use of their tongue) is not competent, then he explains to the priest as well as he can, his sinfulness by means of signs², more or less easily understood. Having been assured of special attention and patience in observing external signs and gestures of the internal situation of the confession by the deaf-mute, the priest can satisfactorily fulfill his debt, better as the general moral appearance of the one being confessed should be known to him, as to a good and attentive shepherd³. If the deaf-mute is able to write, he can state, as he is able, his confession on paper and to present it to the priest who, having read it, should in the presence of the one being confessed himself to burn it; this is necessary both for calming of the conscience of the one being confessed and in order to avoid various accidents, like, e.g., that the note can come into the hands of an outside person. If the deaf-mute or mute is able to read, then the priest may offer him printed or written questions and to demand that he, after reading each question, answer with some kind of sign in the affirmative or negative. It itself is clear that thus there may be such necessary explanations by means of gestures⁴.

In whatever avoidance or temptation for others, it is necessary to confess deaf-mutes not in the presence of strange persons; otherwise the facial expression manner of an explanation of the father confessor with the deaf-mute or mute may provoke laughter in other confessors, or those in such a manner of an explanation of the father confessor with the deaf-mute and mute may uncover the mystery of confession of the latter. So far as the confession will be done in this or that of the specified ways⁵, the deaf-mute is regularly admitted to Holy Communion, except for cases when the non-admission to Holy Communion is called for by heavy sins (refer below about this) and appears as a result of pastoral foresight (*Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger]*, 1889, 11; *Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastirej [Manual for Village Pastors]*, 1888, 12; *Napominanie Sviashchenikov [The Reminder of Priests]*, p. 58).

¹ It certainly follows to read the **Prayers, placed before confession and communion**, for deaf-mutes as they although they cannot hear the words of the prayer, but can watch prayerful movement of the lips of the priest and his gestures and in that way to participate in the prayers (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1896, 8).

If deaf-mutes are literate, then besides the reading those specified prayers, which should read by the priest, they can follow the prayers, but to read them themselves, after the indication of the priest.

² In the opinion of the "Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastirej [Manual for Village Pastors]", it follows to confess deaf-mutes in such a way, from the **age of seven** (Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastirej [Manual for Village Pastors] 1893, 20); during which time, possibly, those of them who have in view with the specified age grew up and developed a moral sense (refer to p. 1015).

³ During the absence of personal acquaintances, the priest before confession may familiarize himself through persons knowing the deaf-mute with his moral situation, but also equally with the explanatory signs used by the deaf-mute (see Zabelin, p. 186).

⁴ One priest, departing from this reason that through the reflection of sounds, the number of its waves is enlarged and the sound amplifies, advises to confess those **suffering with the affliction of the deaf-mute**: if the confessor stands at the table or analogion, then he places his right hand on the table or analogion, and the left hand on the right shoulder of the priest, the priest places his right hand on his left shoulder, and the left on a table. Thus made, the chain strengthens the sounds and those suffering from the affliction of the deaf-mute can easily enough hear. If those suffering from deafness comes to confess during his illness and the patient sits, then it is necessary to place his hands on his shoulders and his hands on his own shoulders; while the patient is in the lying position it follows to place his hands on his shoulders and to press his knees in the bed or bench occupied by the patient; during light deafness it is sufficient to place the hands on the shoulders of the confessor (Tobol'skiia Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Tobolsk Diocesan News], 1891, 5-6; Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger], 1892, 9; Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastirej [Manual for Village Pastors], 1892, 13). It is even easier and better to use, at a confession of the deaf, a simple sheet of writing paper curled into a tube of 1 1/2 vershoks [1 3/4 inches] and no more than 1 1/2 [1 3/4 inches] or 2 diuma [2 inches] in diameter, having placed the tube to the ear of the confessor. With the help of similar simple adaptations such strength in sound is reached that some completely deaf put aside the tubes of paper from his ears in order not to too strongly irritate the tympanic membrane with sharpness of the sound vibrations condensed by the walls of the paper cylinders.

⁵ In the opinion of the "Tser. Vestnika [Church Messenger]" as the deaf-mutes developed even a little, they possess rather developed facial expressions, art of gestures by means of which they express their spiritual situation at confession they may be taught about their sins, and to give them advice to guard themselves from sins by means of a facial expression; to directly read the prayer of absolution, without trying to query the penitent about sins in relation to the deaf-mute, as well as for all others - it would be wrong (Tserkovnyi Vestnik [Church Messenger] 1892, 32).

According to others it is enough if the priest sees in the deaf-mute his understanding of the purpose of confession, full sincerity in the consciousness of committing sins and the intention not to trespass henceforth. Once such a person feels a heavy sin on his conscience and has an intention to explain it to his father confessor, he will do this by means of a facial expression - and without a call on that from the priest. As to the demand in this case the most detailed **facial expression, that** such a demand is an extreme measure even for sins, e.g., against the seventh commandment there is very little to be applied (A. Almazov, Tain. Ispoved. [The Mystery of Confession], vol. 2, p. 449).

It certainly is understood that it is impossible to demand in anyway detailed facial expressions at the confession of deaf-mutes and out of it to consider impossible the absolution of the deaf-mute confessor, but the priest all the same should follow one way or another to call in the deaf-mute confessor the consciousness in sins and the repenting of them as much as is possible and comfortable in each separate case.

*S. V. Bulgakov < Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1013-1014.
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