

ORTHODOX PRAYER



But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place”

(Matt 6:6)

Question

- * Why do some say that Orthodox Christianity is not a Religion?
- * Religion is commonly thought of as a set of beliefs concerning the origin and purpose of the universe.

Is Orthodoxy based on a set of beliefs?

- * Yes, but more.

Living Relationship With God

- * Orthodox Christianity is Based on a living relationship with God. Nothing abstract.
- * "God is not the Absolute Thou, but a living Person Who is in organic communion with man. Moreover Christianity does not simply transfer the problem to the future or await the delight of the kingdom of heaven after history and after the end of time. In Christianity the future is lived in the present and the kingdom of God begins in this life.... Where Orthodoxy is lived in the right way and in the Holy Spirit, it is a communion of God and men, of heavenly and earthly, of the living and the dead..."
Met. Ierotheos Vlachos
- * Orthodoxy is the continuing experience of the Church of Christ on earth, and not some abstract theoretical belief... St.

Athanasius the Sianite

A Way of Life

- * Orthodoxy is a Way of Life - A Sacramental life
Life of repentance for our purification to receive the Holy Spirit (Grace) and life with virtue through Grace.
- * Involves living relationship with God
How do we nurture this relationship?
- * Begins with Baptism, Nurtured through sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession, Lived by prayer, fasting and repentance.

* What is our current state?

A fallen state with the tendency to sin.

* What did God do to save us?

Died for us on the Cross, defeating the devil with victory over death. He showed us the way to join with Him through Baptism, opened gates of Paradise, Sent the Holy Spirit, Establishing the Church.

* What must we do?

Have faith based on Love. Choose to follow Him and live life of repentance - become an icon of Him.

*“Blessed is he who **thirsts and hungers** for righteousness for he shall be filled.”* (Matt 5:6)

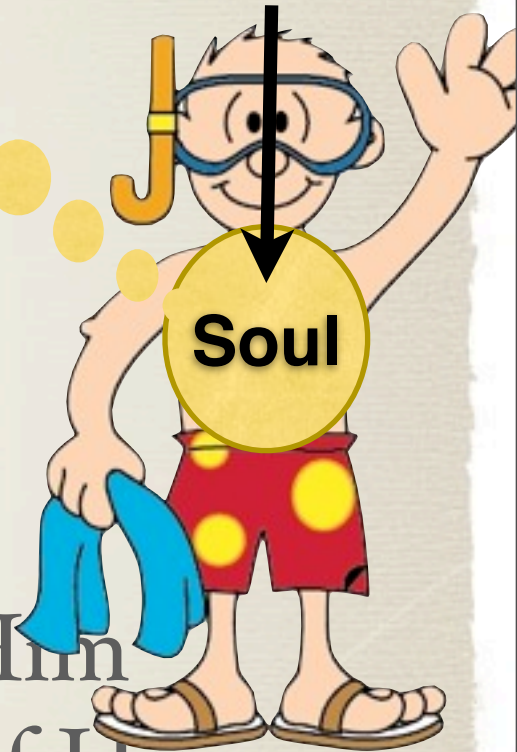
* Due to our make-up, our brain often dominates the desires of the soul. We need God’s help and self-discipline.

God

Image
of God

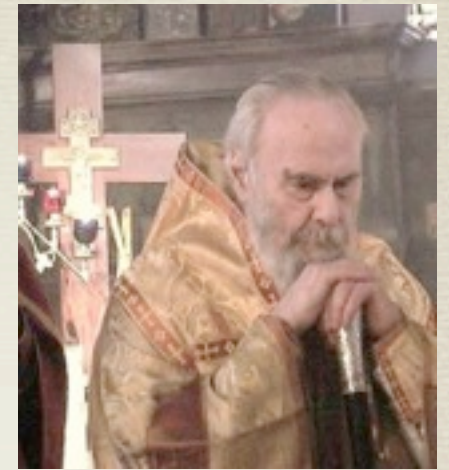
Body
(Brain)

Soul



Recognize our Condition

- * Think about the absence of God...
Before you can knock at the door ... you must realize that you are outside.
- * If you spend your time only *imagining*... you are already in the Kingdom of God, there is certainly no point in knocking at any door for it to be opened. You look round trying to see where are the angels and the saints, and where the mansion is which belongs to you, and when you see nothing but darkness or walls, you find it surprising that Paradise is so unattractive.
- * We must realize that we are still outsiders to the kingdom of God, and then ask ourselves 'Where is the door and how does one knock at it?'



Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (Beginning to Pray)

Prayer

- * Dictionary:

A practice that seeks to activate a volitional connection to God through deliberate intentional practice.

- * Saint Theophan:

*Prayer is the **raising of the mind and heart to God** in praise and thanksgiving to Him and in supplication for the good things that we need, both spiritual and physical.*

St. Theophan the Recluse, p 53 *Art of Prayer*

- * *Prayer is a conversation directly with God, being always with God, having one's soul united with Him and one's mind inseparable. A person becomes one with the angels and unites with them in perpetual praise and longing for God.* – St. Symeon of

Thessalonik

Prayer

Reflect: Answer these questions:

- * Why do you pray?
- * How do you pray now?
- * When do you pray now?
- * Where do you pray now?
- * Are you satisfied with your prayer life and relationship with God?

Prayer

* Do we still pray like a child?



Why Do You Pray?

- * What is aim of Prayer?

Aim of Prayer is to have a personal relationship with God.

- * Thoughts from St. Theophan:

*The way to God is **an inner journey** accomplished in the mind and heart.*

- * **Primary work** of the moral and religious life.

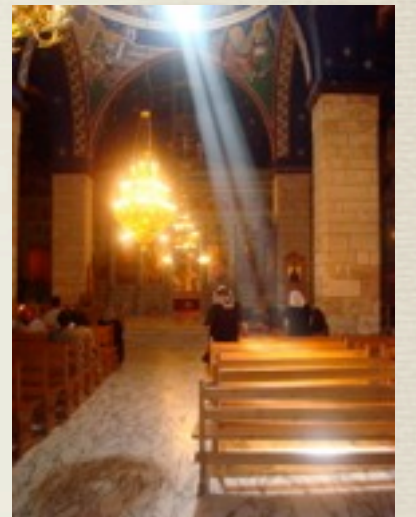
- * *We must attune the thoughts of the mind and the disposition of the heart so the spirit of man will always be with the Lord as if joined with Him.*

Theophan, *Art of Prayer*, 73, 61, 73



Two Types: Inner and Outer Prayer

- * 1. Outer prayer - worship and reading
- * 2. Personal prayer - aims towards inner prayer.
- * Outer → Inner
Outer prepares for the inner
Both are necessary.
- * To join with God in His kingdom,
we must learn to withdraw within ourselves.



Stages of Prayer

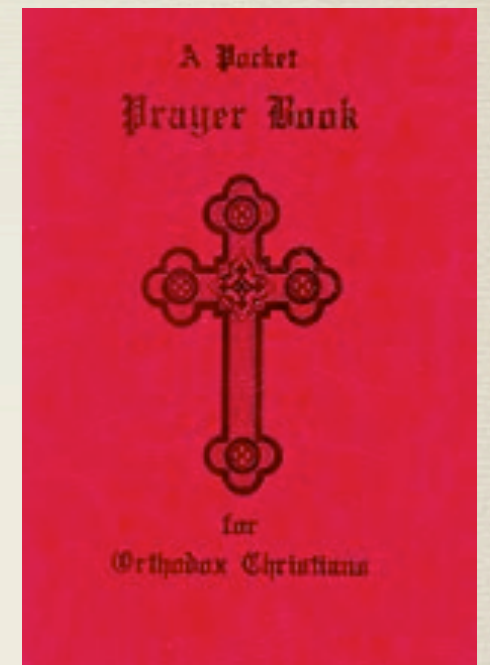


- * Oral prayer
- * Mental prayer
- * Inner (noetic) prayer of the heart



Oral Prayer

- * Not in the Orthodox tradition to make up extemporaneous prayers, unless you are in a spiritual state.
- * If you don't have noetic or inner prayer, you should pray with your mind using prayers from the church services and Prayer Books using prayers handed down through the tradition of the Church.
- * Extemporaneous prayer can be dangerous spiritually. How?



Remember

- * *Oral prayer is prayer **only** if the mind and the heart also pray.*

Theophan AP 59

Concentration essential.

- * Must aim at inner prayer - there is a progression

Orthodox View of Prayer



What Jesus Taught

- * When the disciples came to Jesus and asked “Master, how should we pray?” Jesus did not respond: “Just talk to me.” What did He tell them?
- * *“He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’ And he said to them, ‘When you pray, **say**: Our Father which art in heaven... (Lk 11:1-4)*

*When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is **in the secret place**; and Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mat 6:6)*



Inner Prayer

- * Jesus said, “*Ask* and it will be given to you; *seek* and you will *knock* and it will be opened to you” (Matt 7:7)
- * Seek what?
 - To be part of His Kingdom: “*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness*” (Matt 6:33)
- * Knock where?
 - The Heart: “*The kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17:21)
- * Purpose of prayer:
 - To enter this inner kingdom within each of us,
to be open to receive His Grace,
to work in cooperation with His Grace (synergia).
“*Thy Will be Done*”

Orthodox View of Prayer

- * When St. Paul talks about prayer and participation in the Body of Christ, he is talking about something sensed and perceived inwardly.

*The Spirit Himself bears witness **with our spirit** that we are children of God*” Romans 8:16

- * This inner sensation awakened by the Holy Spirit makes up the patristic Tradition on prayer and worship.



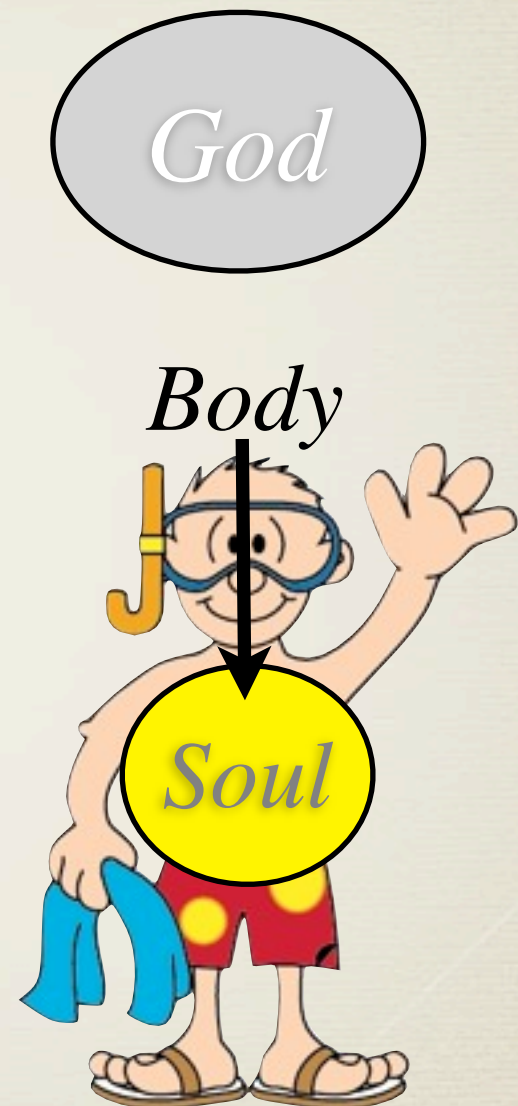
What are Requirements for Inner Prayer?

Inner prayer first requires:

- * Faith based on an inner experience of God.
- * Love & Fear (awe) of almighty God—Creator of all.
- * Acknowledgement of His infinite powers.
- * Joining with Christ in His Church.
- * Attitude of repentance (Metanoia).
- * Commitment & continual effort to practice God's commandments.

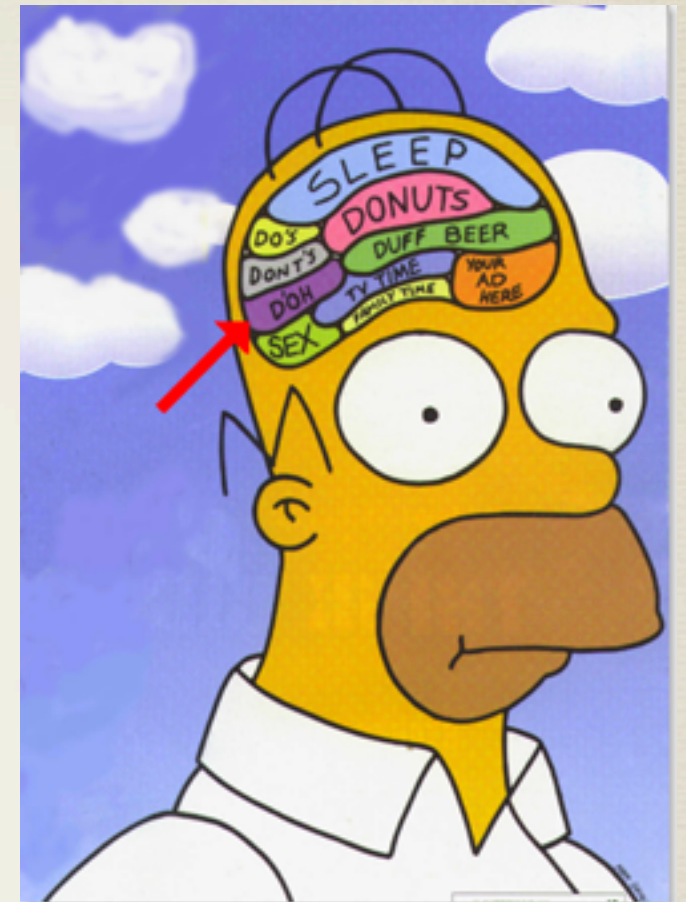
Why is Prayer so Difficult?

- * Why do you think?
- * Because of our separation from God - our sinfulness.
- * The body's programming in the brain
- * What happens when try to pray in silence?
- * Need to develop skill of concentration.

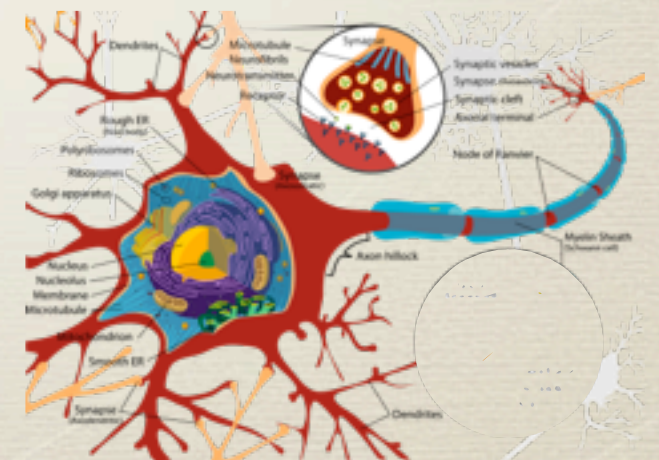


Brain - Enemy of Prayer

- * Mental programming - Patterns of behavior etched in our brain.
- * Constantly distracted by thoughts.
- * Through prayer we gain self-control and capacity to receive grace.



As we learn to control our thoughts and thus our passions we increase our ability to pray.



Where do we begin?

1. **Make commitment to daily prayer.**
2. **Establish a clear rule for our prayer.**
3. **Commit to the rule.**

What is a Rule of Prayer?

- * Personal and individual
- * Determined by you, and confirmed (the rule, as well as any changes) — by your Spiritual Father.
- * Once determined, the rule becomes a commandment.
- * Purpose — To dispose the soul towards active association with God, to awaken repentant thoughts, and purify the heart of sinful corruption.

Beginning Rule of Prayer

- * Not excessive in length.
- * Fit your schedule and able to be said in difficult times, when traveling, or in deep distress.
- * *I will repeat once again that the essence of prayer is the lifting of the mind and heart to God; these little rules are an aid. We cannot get by without them because of our weakness.*

Theophan: From *The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996), Ch. 47, pp. 204-209.



Rule of Prayer

- * Recited at the same time each day (morning and evening).
Be specific.
- * Develop a routine - a new habit.
(reprogramming your brain - changing its habits)
Easiest way is create new structures.
- * What routines do you now have?
- * How can you make time for prayer?

Traditional Daily Cycle

* **The Evening Service of Vespers**

In the Orthodox Church the liturgical day begins in the evening with the setting of the sun. This practice follows the biblical account of creation, "And there was evening and there was morning, one day" (Genesis 1:5).

* **The Compline Service**

It is a service of psalms and prayers to read following the evening meal before one retires to sleep. It focuses on three things: thanksgiving for the day that has passed; protection for the ensuing night; and forgiveness of wrongs committed during the day.

* **The Midnight service**

This service consists of psalms and prayers that are said in the middle of the night. This service focuses on the significant "middle" of the night events that are found in Scripture, the resurrection of our Lord and His Second Coming.

* **The Morning Service of Matins (Orthros)**

The Orthros Service is centered in thanksgiving for the coming of the true light of Christ and calls all to repentance by uniting the elements of morning psalmody and prayer with meditation on Biblical canticles, the Gospel reading, and the particular theme of the day in the given verses and hymns.

* **The Four Services of the Hours:**

- * the coming of the true light (First Sunrise)
- * the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Third 9:00)
- * the crucifixion and passion of the Lord (Sixth 12:00noon)
- * and the death and burial of our Lord (Ninth 3:00)



Where To Pray?

- * Specify a private space for your prayer.
- * Set up a small home icon stand.
- * Icons of Christ, Theotokos, and your patron Saint
- * Oil lamp or candle
- * Incense burner
- * Cross
- * Prayer book and Bible



Preparation - St Theophan

- * Stand, sit or walk for a while.
- * Quiet your body and Steady your mind.
- * Turn your mind away from all your worldly activities.
- * Think about who God is - on who you will be addressing.
- * Waken a feeling of humility and reverent awe.
- * Prostrate yourself a few times.
Make the sign of the Cross.



Where do we begin?

Use the prayer books and read the prayers.

Do Not Pray Carelessly - St. Theophan

- * Understand every word of the prayers. Learn them by heart.
- * Concentrate the attention on words of prayer. Still the brain.
- * When your mind wanders, recite again what you said while your mind was elsewhere.
- * Enter into every word.
- * Bring meaning down into your heart.



When Finished,
Do Not Go Onto Something Else Immediately
- St. Theophan

- * Stand for a while.
- * Consider to what this commits you.
- * Hold in your heart what has been given to you to feel.

“He who tastes sweetness does not then wish to taste something bitter.”



Beginning Prayer Rule

Hand Out

- * Place: In the icon stand in the spare bed room
- * Time: 6:30am and 11:00pm for ~20 minutes each time
- * Begin by lighting a candle, and making three prostrations and then stand quietly to collect yourself in your heart
 - * Trisagion Prayer
 - * One of six Morning or Evening Psalms
 - * Intercessions for the living and the dead
 - * Psalm 51 and confession of our sinfulness
 - * Creed
 - * Doxology and the morning or evening prayer
 - * Occasional prayers from prayer book or private prayer.
 - * Jesus prayer - repeat 100 times.
- * Reflect quietly on the tasks of the day and prepare yourself for the difficulties you might face, asking God to help you.
- * Dismissal prayer
- * Remember to stop mid morning, noon and mid afternoon to say a simple prayer.
- * Repeat the Jesus Prayer in your mind whenever you can throughout the day.
- * Offer a prayer before and after each meal thanking God and asking for His blessing.

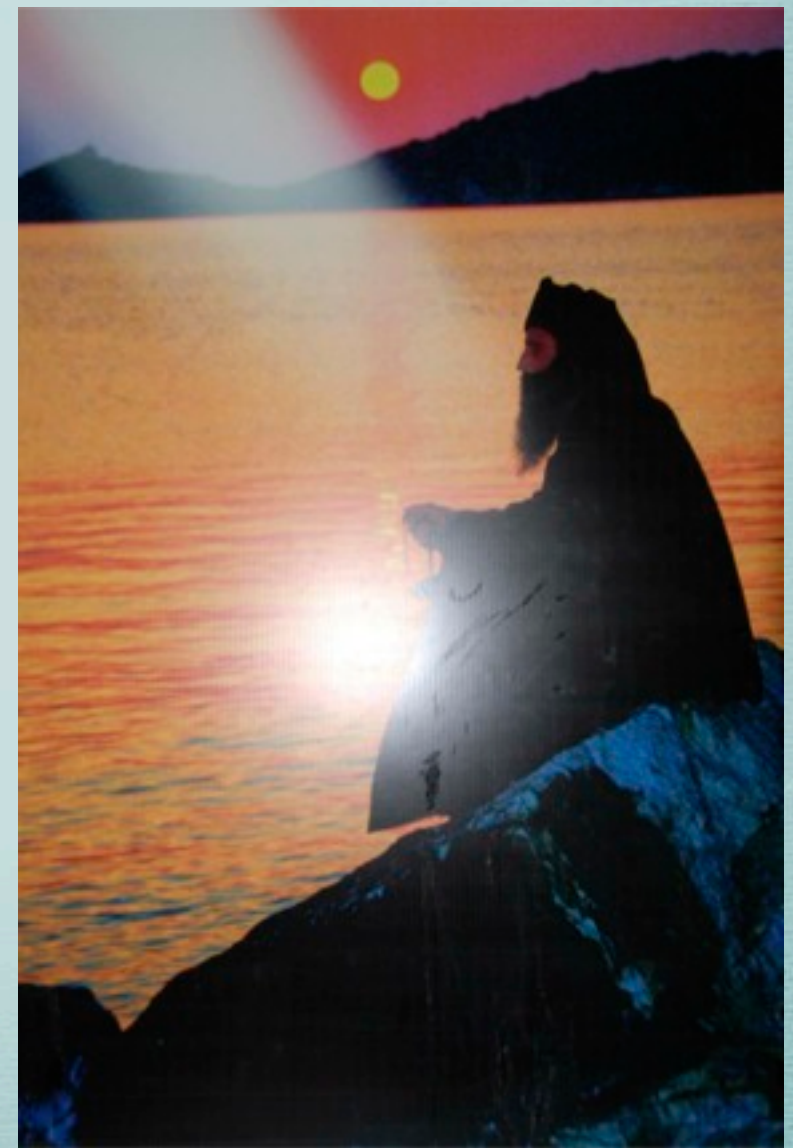
JESUS PRAYER

“LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME A SINNER”

Incredibly Simple

Incredibly Difficult

Incredibly Powerful



Jesus Prayer

- * *More than any other prayer, the Jesus Prayer aims at bringing us to stand in God's presence with no other thought but the miracle of our standing there and God with us, because in the use of the Jesus Prayer there is nothing and no one except God and us."*

From "The Jesus Prayer" by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom



Difficult in Practice

- * We learn to continually recite it so that it permeates our hearts and focuses our mind...
Why?
- * Predisposes us to follow God's will instead of our own ego directed will.

Power in the Name

Lord, Jesus Christ



- * *There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Saint Peter - Acts 4:12



- * *Only with the help of this prayer can the necessary order of the soul be firmly maintained...* St. Theophan AP 92



- * *By the power of the name of Jesus the mind is freed from doubt, indecision and hesitation, the will is strengthened and correctness is given to zeal and other properties of the soul.* Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov PJ 25

Attitude of Repentance

Have Mercy on Me a Sinner

- * As we complete this prayer we cry out for God to “*Have mercy on us.*” Why?
- * We are all sinners
- * Humility a prerequisite
- * Our salvation requires:
faith in Christ **and** awareness of our sinfulness - humility.



Jesus Prayer



It leads the practicer from earth to heaven, and places him among the celestial inhabitants. Dwelling with the mind and the heart in heaven and in God -- that is the chief fruit, that is the end of prayer.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov PJ 35

Practice of Jesus Prayer

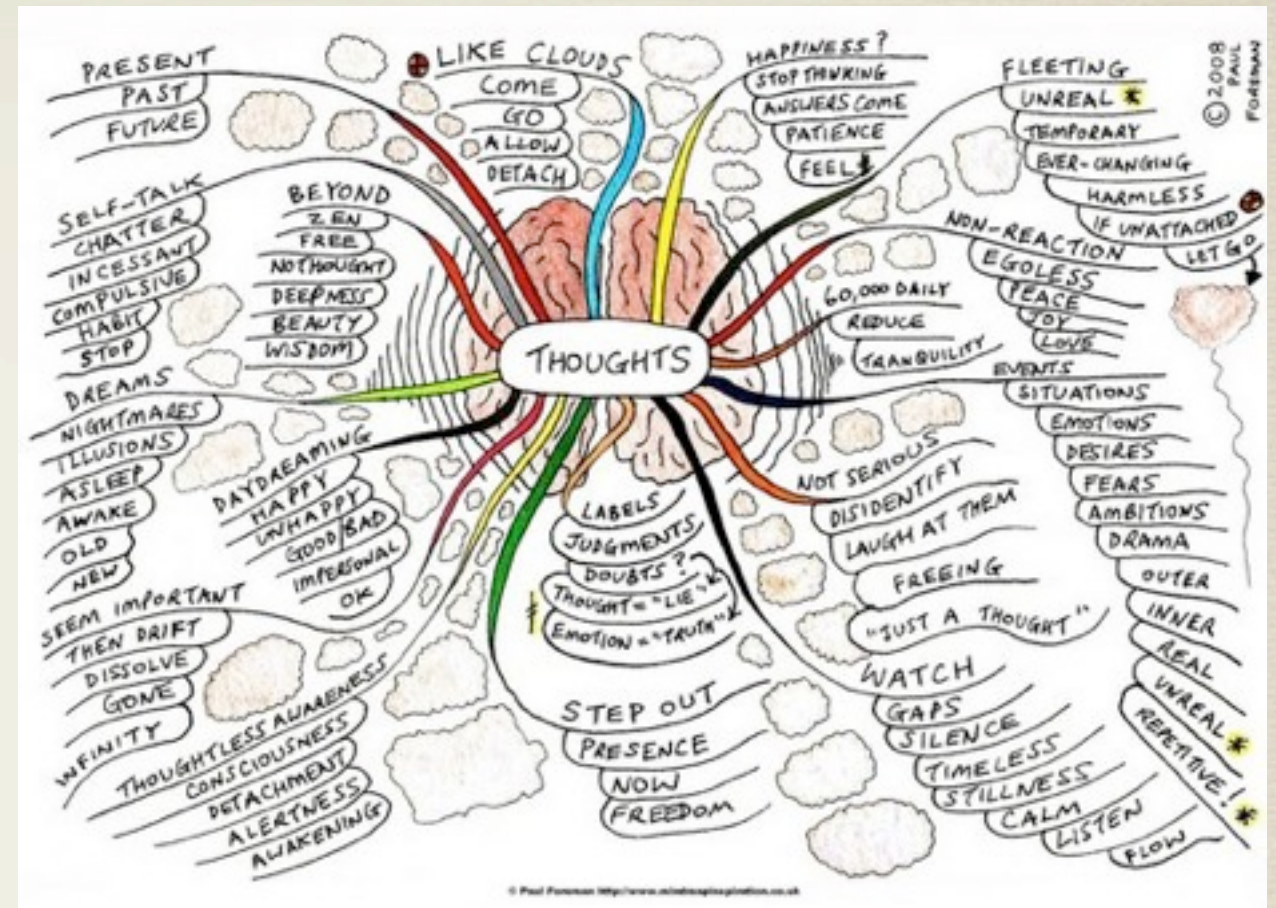
- * Begin with Glory to you..., Our Heavenly King Comforter..., the Trisagion, 51st Psalm, and the Creed.
- * Say the Jesus Prayer loud enough so the ears can hear it, slowly and concentrating on the meaning of the words.

*Lord Jesus Christ Son of God
Have Mercy on Me a Sinner.*

- * Spacing of the words must fit your own make-up
- * When you reach the end of the prayer immediately begin to say it again.
- * Keep your mind from escaping from its concentration on the words.

Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * Expect to be bombarded with thoughts like a swarm of gnats. What to do when distracted?
- * Be polite and gentle, Firmly nudge your mind back to the concentration on the words of the prayer and seeking God.
- * If you don't intercede to bring your attention back to your prayer exclusively, you will not progress in your aim to come closer to God.

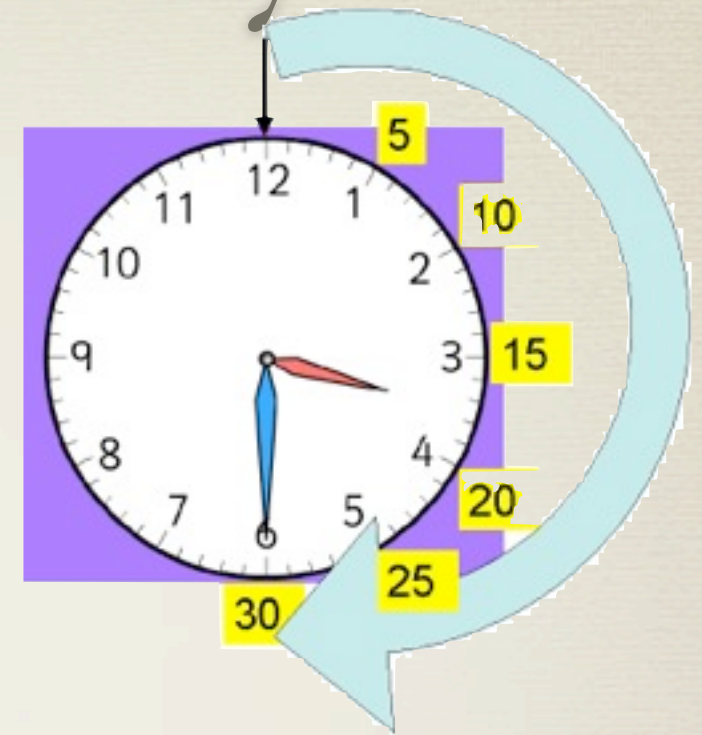


Let's Practice

*Lord,
Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy on Me,
a Sinner.*

Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * How long to pray?
- * Be sure to consult your spiritual Father
- * General rule you should repeat it for a **minimum of 15 minutes** at any one prayer session.



Problems



- * Images and lights or apparitions
- * Saint Nil Sorski tells us, *“Do not permit yourself any concepts, images, or visions. For vivid images darting to and fro, and flights of fancy do not cease even when the mind stands in the heart and recites prayer: no one is able to rule over them, except those who have attained perfection by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who have acquired stability of mind through Jesus Christ.”*

Cautions

- * 1. **Do not** practice this method of prayer unless you are regularly attending worship services, participating in the Sacraments of the Church, and reading the Scriptures.
- * 2. **Do not** force yourself into the discovery within yourself of the action of the prayer of the heart.
- * 3. **Do not** connect this practice with breathing exercises or other yoga techniques unless you are directed by your spiritual father.
- * 4. Remember, delusion is your enemy. *“An insignificant, unnoticed hope or trust in something outside God can stop the advance of progress... Faith in God is leader, guide, legs and wings.”*

Cautions

- * Pride through these efforts will stop you dead in your tracks.
- * Grace comes with humility.
- * As soon as you feel pride,
recognize it and ask for forgiveness.
If you don't,
you will fail and
prayer will become cold and dark.



Cautions

- * Regular practice is necessary
- * Every day
- * Don't let sickness or travel disrupt your efforts.



Brush, brush, brush your teeth.
At least two times a day.
Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, cleaning,
Fighting tooth decay.
Floss, floss, floss your teeth.
Every single day.
Gently, gently, gently, gently,
Whisking plaque away.
Rinse, rinse, rinse your teeth
Every single day.
Swishing, swishing, swishing, swishing,
Fighting tooth decay.

Other Uses

- * Take every opportunity you can to say the Jesus Prayer
- * Waiting in a checkout line in the store
- * Waiting for an appointment in the doctors office
- * Facing difficulty during the day or becoming angry
Take a prayer walk.
- * Before and after meals as your prayer
- * Going to sleep
- * Recurring painful memories
- * Pain - present or anticipated.
- * Every chance you get - helps you keep your mind focused on God.

Prayer Rope

(Comboschini)



Intercessory Prayer

Pray for one another

pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Family, friends and enemies

Pray for the dead. Why?

In God all are alive.

They have a spiritual nearness to us on earth.

Neither death nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ our Lord (Rom 8:38-39)

All ancient liturgies attest to this.

Prayer with Saints

- * Who are the Saints?
- * Individuals of exceptional holiness
- * Based on the common conviction of the Holiness of the reposed confirmed by special testimonies.
- * Martyrdom
- * Fearless confession of faith
- * Self-sacrificing service
- * Gift of healing
- * Miracles when person is remembered in prayer.

Prayer with Saints



* Near the Throne of God

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, who praised the Lord. (Rev 5:11)

* Communion in prayer with the saints is realization of bond between Christians on earth and Heavenly Church. (Heb 12:22-23)

Prayers to the Theotokos



- * Why is Mary (Panagia) considered to be the First and foremost among the saints?
- * Made our salvation possible. How?
 - * Chosen by God to bear His Son
 - She gave her consent to this choice.
- * Title "Theotokos," "Mother of God," to safeguard the identity of her Son as fully God and fully Man.
- * Called the "New Eve" (as Christ is the "New Adam") because, by her obedience, she lifted the curse that was laid on mankind through the disobedience of Eve.

Theotokos

- * Mary is greatly honored in the Orthodox Church, but in common with the other saints, **she is not worshipped.**
- * She leads the Church in its intercession before God.



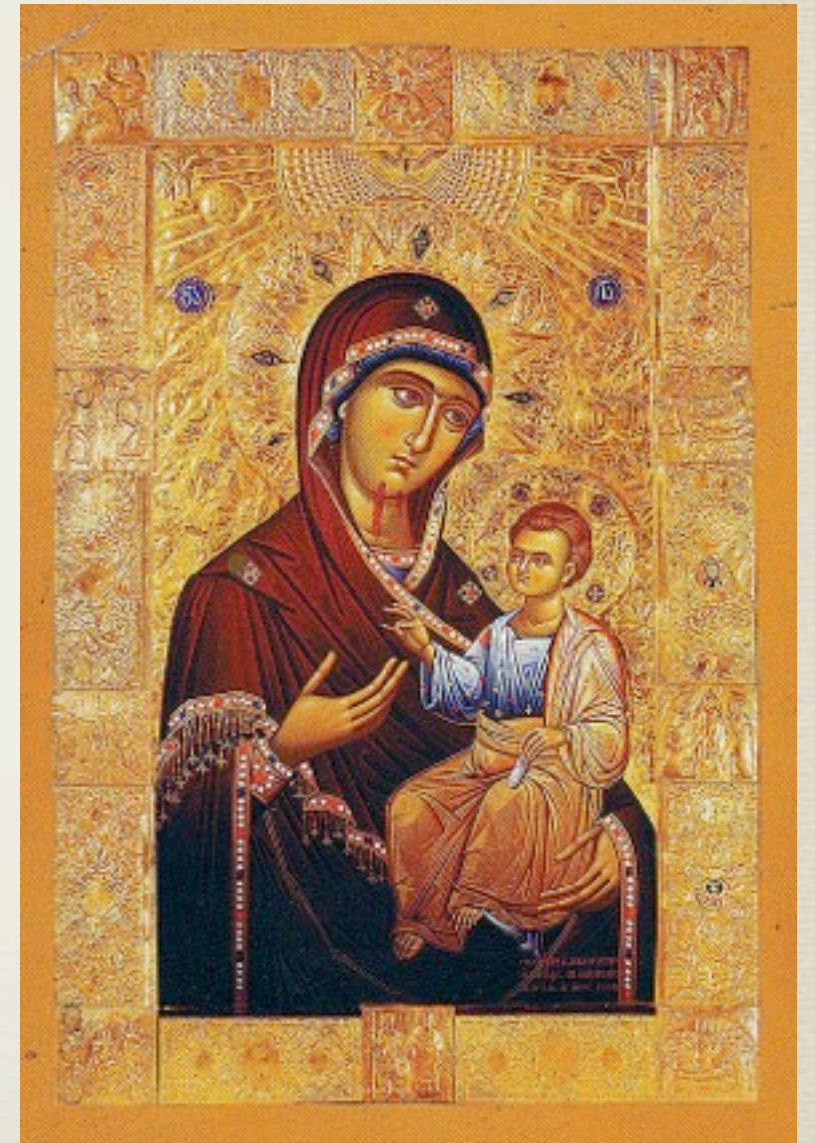
Theotokos

- * What's it mean when we sing
"Most Holy Theotokos, save us" ?
σωσον - σωτηριασ
- * Not suggesting that Mary saves like
Christ saves -
salvation from death and damnation.
Asking Mary to protect us from the
dangers of this earthly life through
her prayers.

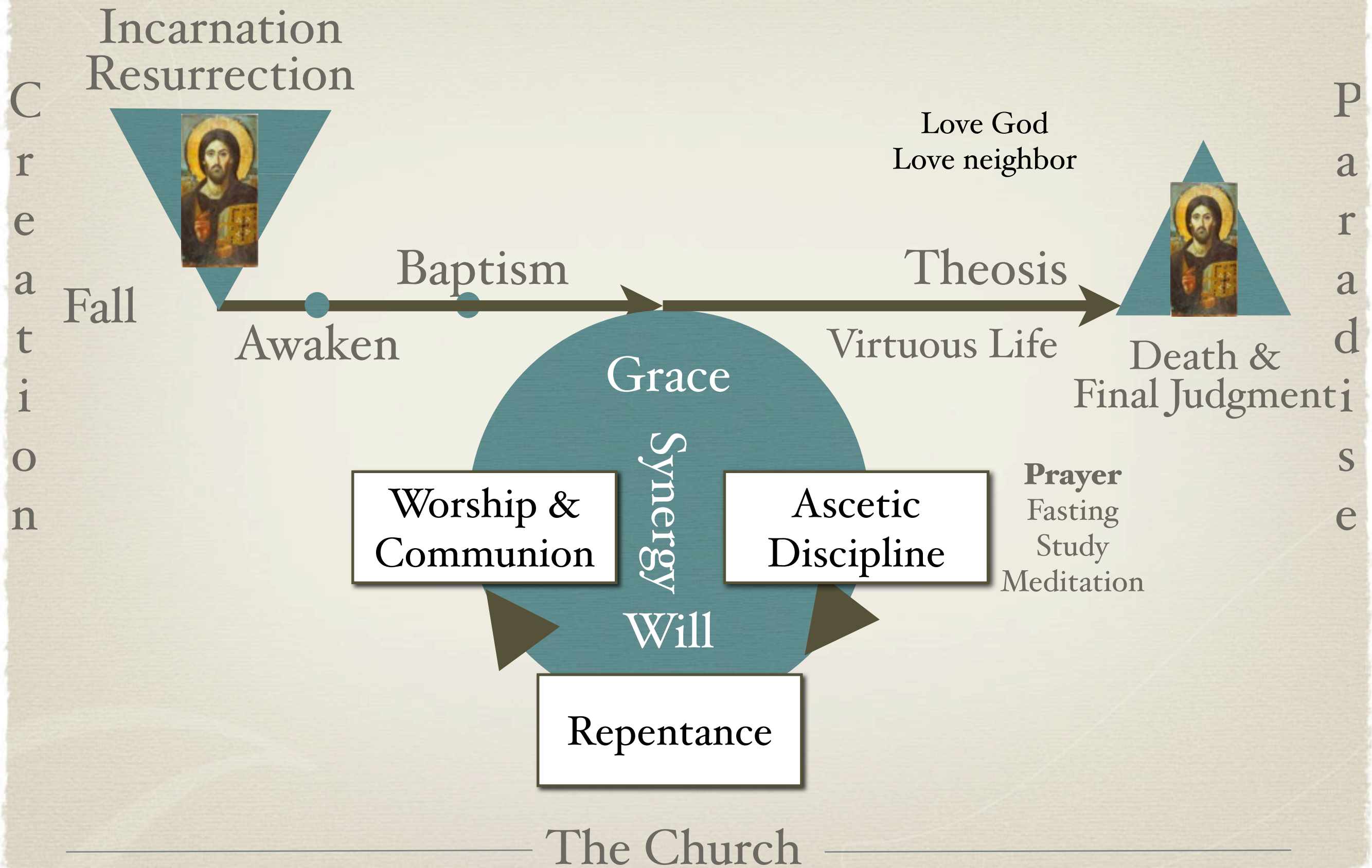


Theotokos

- * In icons, Mary is almost always depicted with Christ; in the most common pose, she holds the infant Christ in one arm and gestures toward him with the other hand, directing the believer's attention to Christ.



Orthodox Life



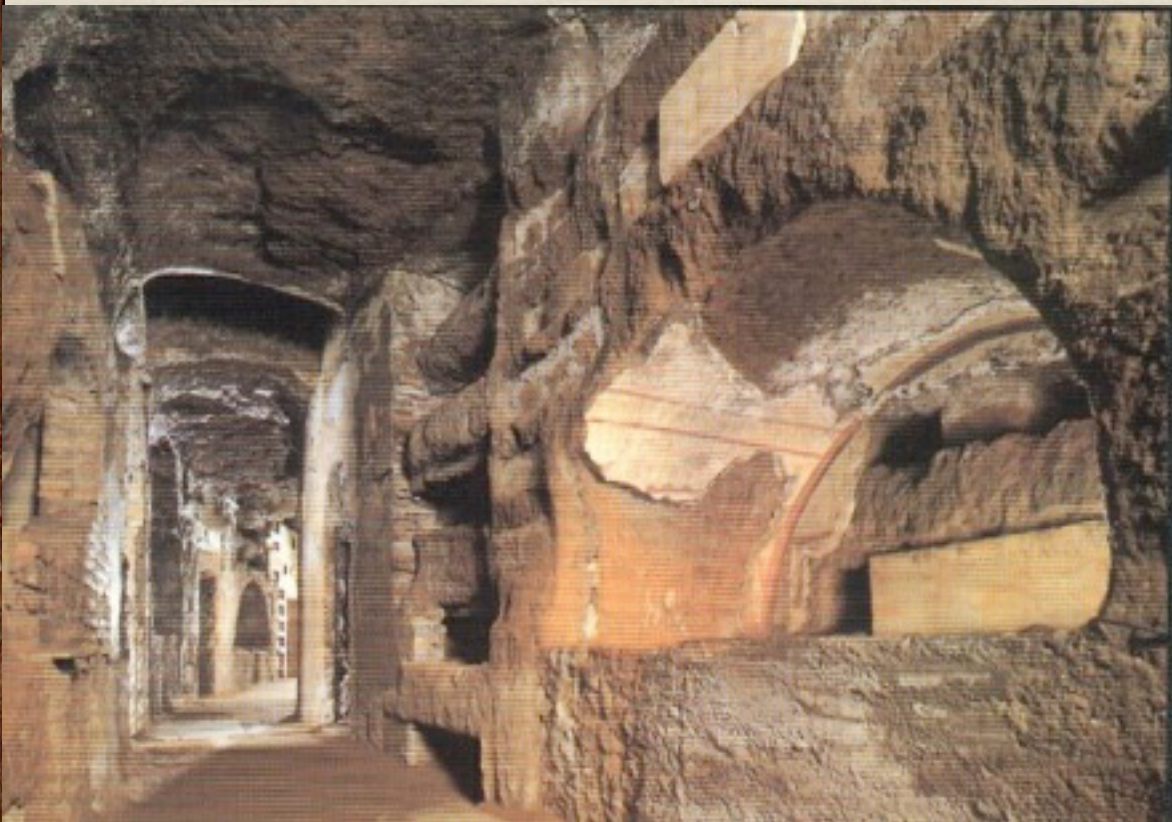


VENERATING ICONS & RELICS



Veneration of Icons

- * Scripture strictly prohibits erection of idols and the worship of them.
- * Idols are the images of false gods.
- * Sacred Scripture instructs us to put a difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean. (Lev 10:10)
- * He who cannot see the difference between icons and idols blasphemes and defiles icons.
- * Ecclesiastical archeology show that in the ancient Church there existed images in the catacombs and in other places of assembly for prayer.



* The early Christians marked the walls and tombs with secret symbols,

These included the Christian "fish" In Greek one says IXTHYS (ichtùs). Placed vertically, the letters of this word form an acrostic: Iesùs Christòs Theòu Uiòs Sotèr = Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

* PXsymbol (It's the "initials" of Christ in Greek letters, with "X" (Chi) for "Ch" and "P" (Rho) for "r." Which isn't really even an initial, but an abbreviation.)



Veneration of Icons

* Seventh Ecumenical Council (787)

We... define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images... should be set forth in the holy churches of God (for veneration)....

For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation (that is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Theotokos, the angels and saints who are depicted in the icons), by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them.

And to these should be given due salutation and honorable reverence, not indeed that true worship of faith which pertains alone to the divine Nature; but to these... incense and lights may be offered....

For the honor which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents (NPONF p50)

Veneration of Holy Relics

- * The Church honors the relics or bodies of the saints of God which remain on earth.
- * In the Old Testament there was no veneration of the bodies of the righteous for they were still awaiting their deliverance.
- * In the New Testament after the Incarnation, there was an elevation of the concept of man in Christ but also of the body as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? (1Cor 6:19)

Veneration of Holy Relics

- * Church has always followed Sacred Tradition to honor the holy relics of the saints.
- * Their bodies were reverently collected and preserved.
- * The solemn uncovering and translation of relics
- * Establishment of feasts in memory of their uncovering or translation
- * Pilgrimages to holy tombs
- * Constant rule of the placement of the relics of martyrs in dedication of altars in the antimension on which the Divine Liturgy is performed.



Holy Relics



- * St John the Baptist
- * Saint Paraskeve
- * In the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Andrew is the skull of the Apostle Andrew in the silver box, as well as pieces of the cross upon which he was crucified at Patras, Greece.





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Veneration of Holy Relics

- * In book of Acts we read of the the handkerchiefs and belts from the body of Paul where placed on the sick and their diseases were cured.

even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. (Acts 19:12)

- * The Holy Fathers have testified of the miracles occurring from the remains of the saints and called others to be witnesses to the truth of their words.

Veneration of Holy Relics

- The remains of saint are revered whether or not they are incorrupt.
- In revering holy relics we believe not in the power or the might of the remains of the saints but rather in the prayerful intercession of the saints whose relics lay before us.

