



# Prayer and Fasting



# 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)



# 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.*

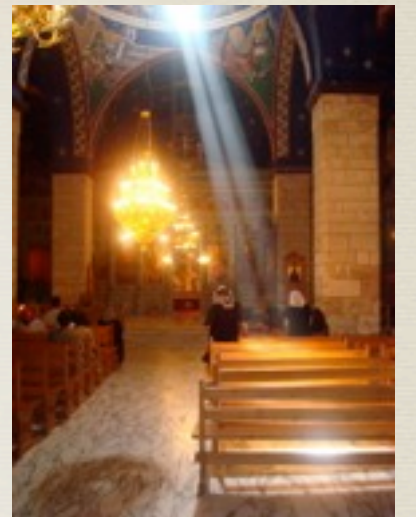
Theophan, *Art of Prayer*, 73, 61, 73





# 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



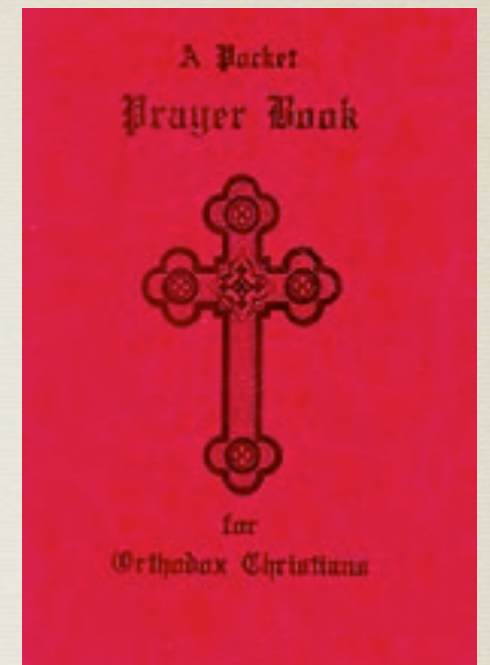
- \* Oral prayer
- \* Mental prayer
- \* Inner (noetic) prayer of the heart





# 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?





# Aim is Inner Prayer

- \* Oral prayer leads to inner prayer
  - \* Enter into the spirit of prayers you read and hear, reproducing them in your heart.  
Offer them up from your heart to God as if they were born in your heart under the action of the Holy Spirit.
- \* *Oral prayer is prayer **only** if the mind and the heart also pray.*  
Theophan AP 59
- \* What is essential for this?
  - \* Concentration essential.
- \* Must aim at inner prayer - there is a progression



# WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT PRAYER?



# Orthodox View of Prayer



## What Jesus Taught

- \* When the disciples 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)
  - “*Thy Kingdom Come*”: Grace and Divine Light
- \* 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.
- \* How do you relate to this teaching? Is it clear?





# What are Requirements for Inner Prayer?

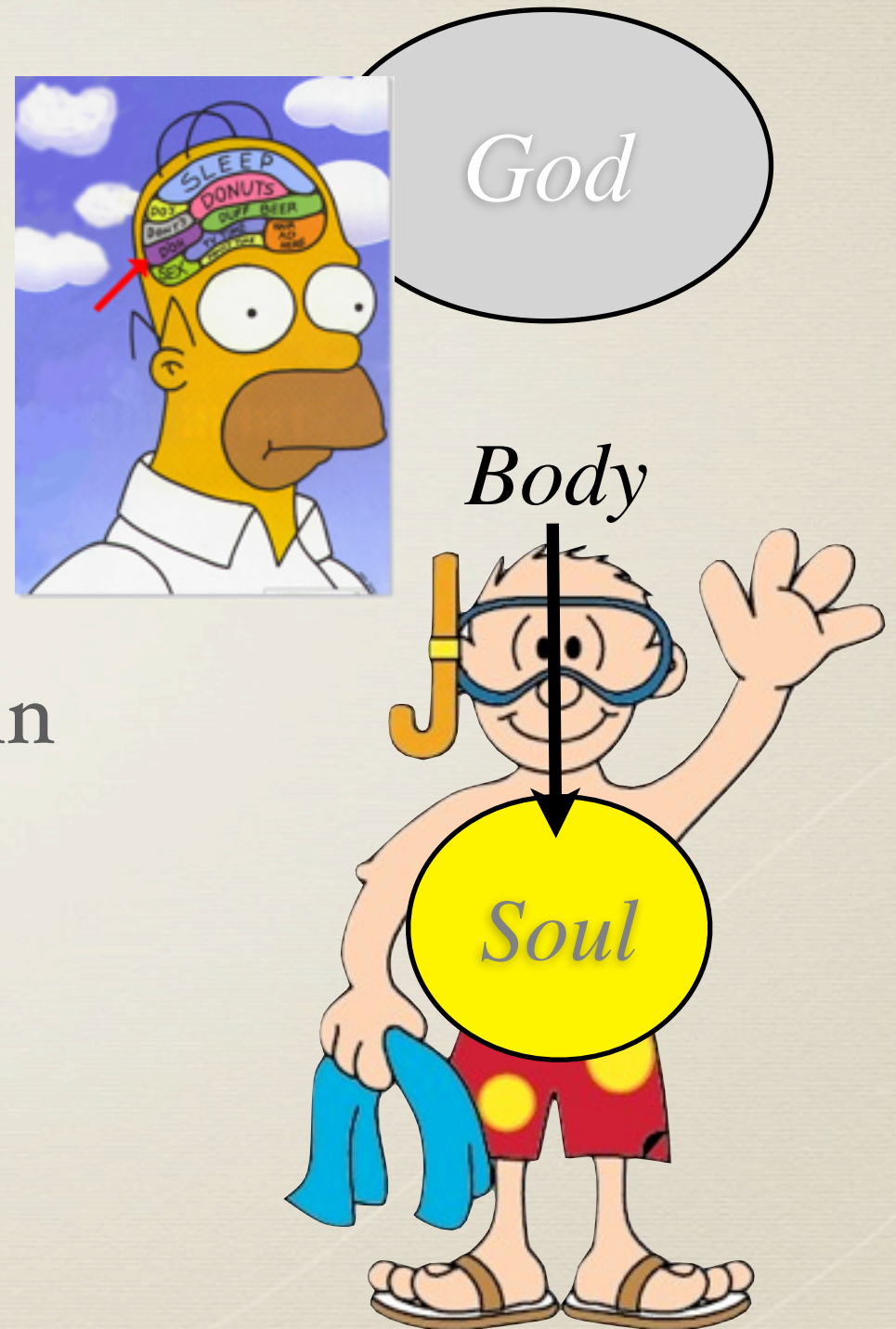
Inner prayer first requires:

- \* **Faith** based on an **inner** experience of God.
- \* **Fear** (awe) of almighty God—Creator of all.
- \* **Love** of God – God is your top priority
- \* **Humility**: 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?

- \* Because of our separation from God - our sinfulness.
- \* The body's programming in brain
- \* Takes Time
- \* What happens when try to pray in silence?
- \* Need to develop skill of **concentration**.
- \* How to do this?





# 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.
- \* Start **slowly** - do not over commit
- \* Example of simple Rule of Prayer



# 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.



# 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?





# 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
- \* How can you make a place for Prayer?





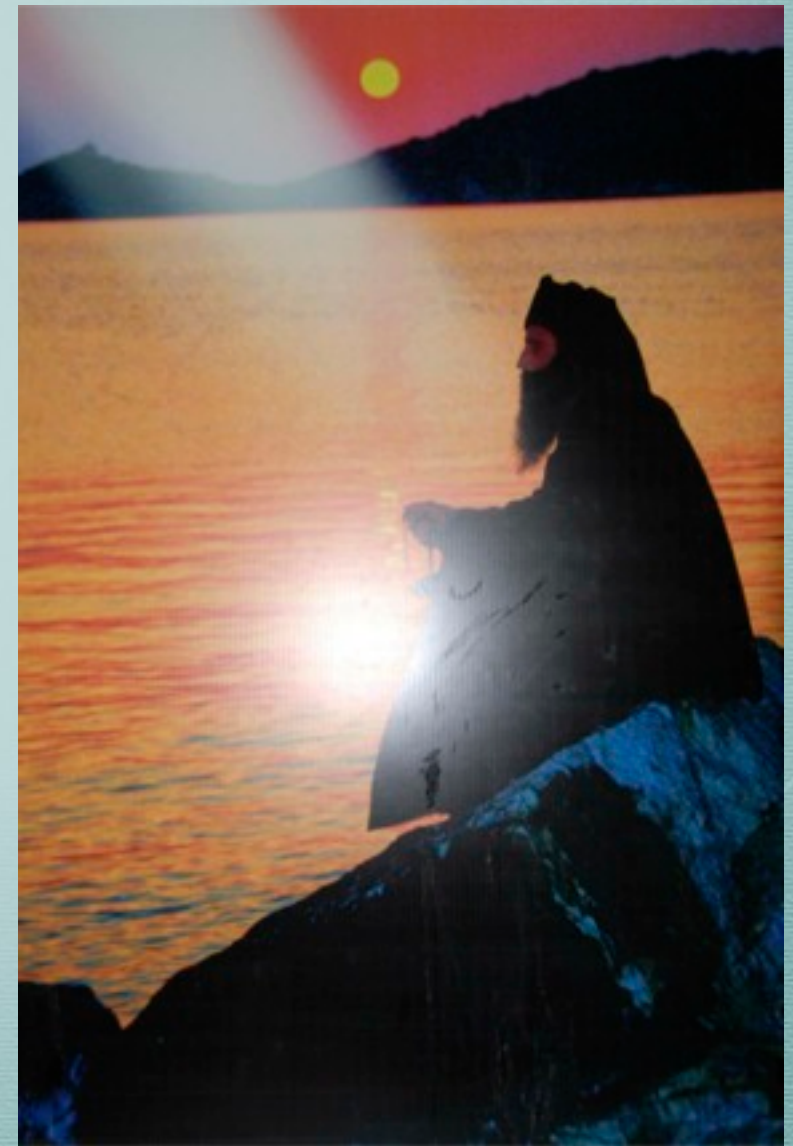
# JESUS PRAYER

*“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.





# Two Functions

- \* Jesus prayer has two functions
  - a. **Worship** with repentance like all prayer. Must be sincere with awe of God and repentant with contrite heart aware of our limitations.
  - b. **Means of concentration** for our inner life to still and focus our attention on God. Counteract over active brain and its programming.  
An ascetic discipline.



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



# 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.

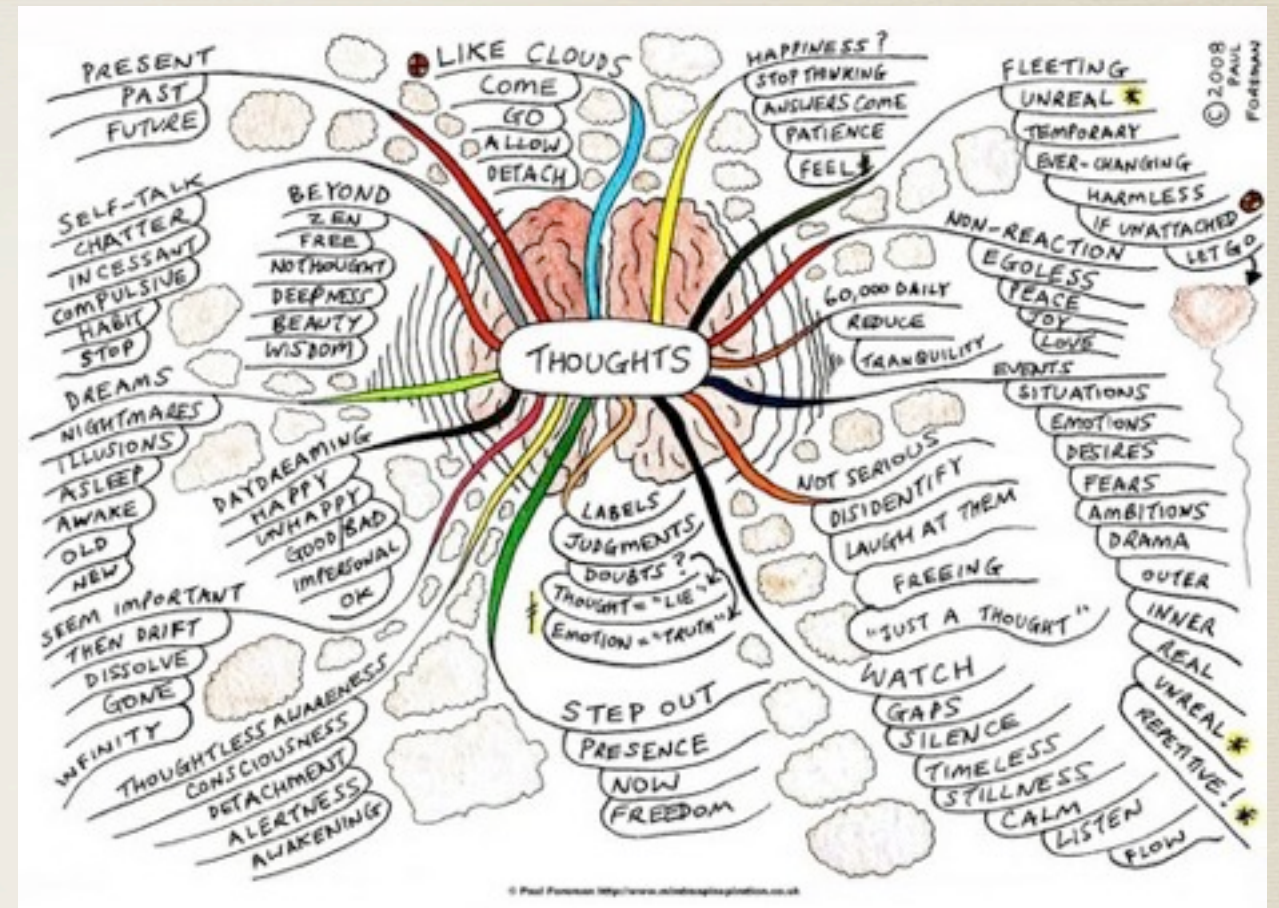
*Lord .... Jesus Christ .... Son of God ....  
Have Mercy .... on Me .... a Sinner.*

- \* 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

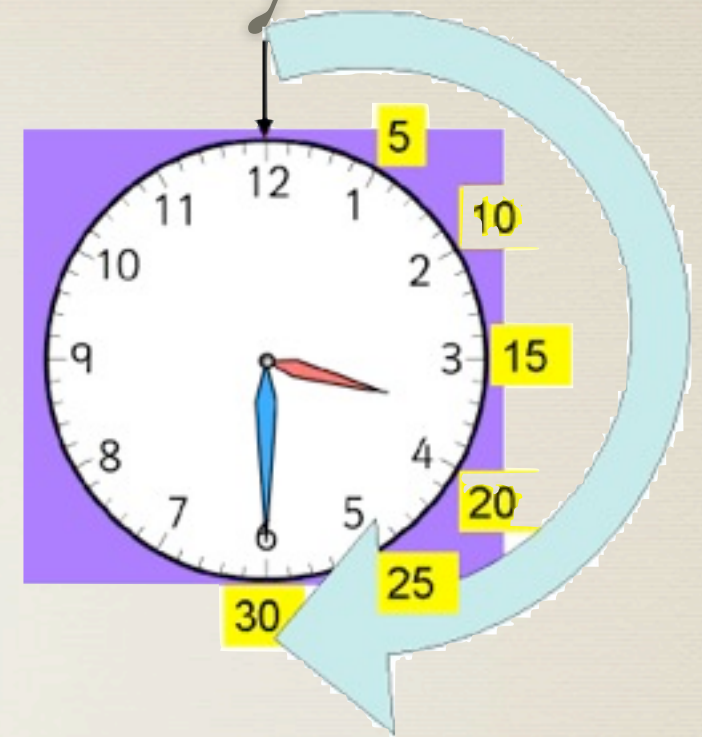
- \* Expect to be bombarded with thoughts like a swarm of gnats. What to do when distracted?
- \* Be polite and gentle, Firmly nudge your mind back to the concentration on the words of the prayer and seeking God.
- \* If you don't intercede to bring your attention back to your prayer exclusively, you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





# 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.





# 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)





# Fasting

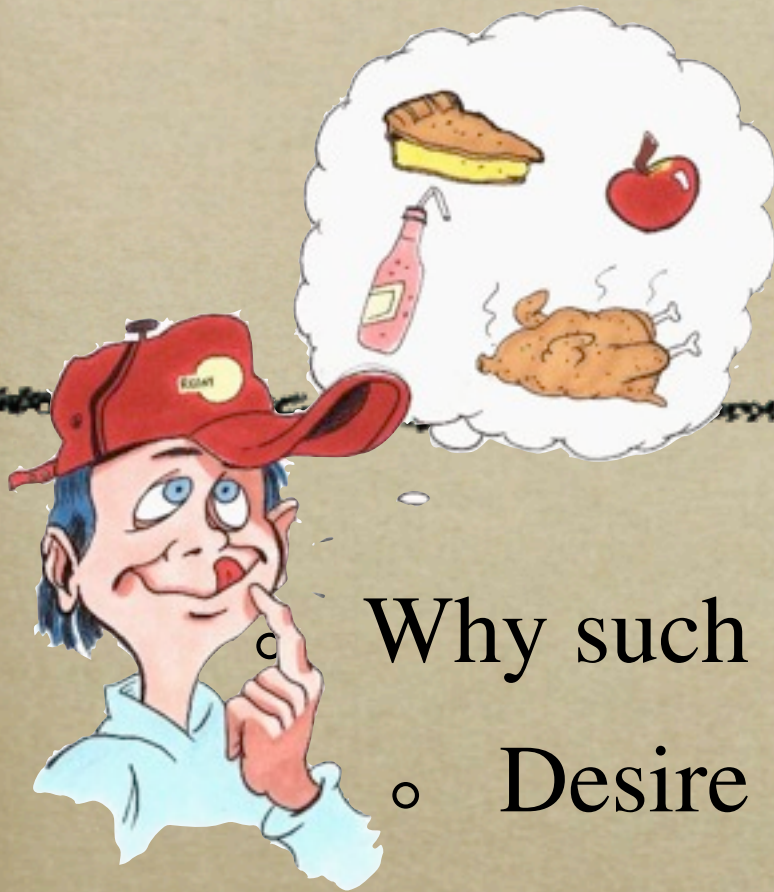
- \* Fasting is one of main disciplines in our Spiritual battle
- \* What are some of the questions you have about this activity?
- \* Common questions:  
Why do we fast? Did Jesus fast? When did fasting originate? What is purpose of fasting? Is it only a matter dieting? What is inner significance of fasting? How do we fast?



# FASTING



# Fasting

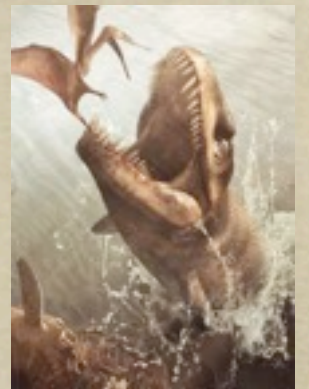


- Why such an important discipline?
  - Desire for food one of our most basic desires.
  - What do we experience when we hunger?
  - What is at work when we deny hunger?
  - Fasting lifts us up
    - to a greater awareness of our soul
    - and exercises its authority.
  - humble ourselves - self-sacrifice for God
  - Lifts us above passions and brain's domination



# Fasting

- Gluttony - excessive craving for food.  
Lust - excessive craving for anything—and  
Greed - excessive desire to accumulate things.  
How do you see these related?
- Lust and greed are never satisfied, as James says:  
*"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain."* James 4:1-2
- Why are gluttony, lust and greed sins?
  - They control our will and separate us from God.
- Control of desire for food leads to control of these other desires.





# Fasting is Scriptural

- *Old and New Testaments  
Moses, Prophets, Jesus, Apostles  
and Church Fathers.*
- Proverbs  
*The righteous has enough to satisfy  
his appetite, But the stomach of the  
wicked is in need.* Proverbs 13:25





# Moses



OK, but they're  
not gonna like it!

- *When I went up into the mountain to receive the tables of stone...I was in the mountain forty days and forty nights, I ate no bread and drank no water.* Deuteronomy 9:9 (LXX)





# Jesus Fasted

- Immediately after His Baptism, what did He do?

*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry.*

- What was His instruction for Apostles in the case of the epileptic boy whose demon the Apostles could not cast out?

*This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*

- When challenged by Pharisees about His disciples what did He say?

*Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*





# Jesus Fasted

- The Lord Himself gave instructions for fasting:
- *But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; That you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret.* Matthew. 6:17-18
- Why did he say this?



# Apostles

- The Apostles taught about fasting

Paul says,

*Do not destroy the work of God  
for the sake of food. All things  
indeed are pure, but it is evil for  
the man who eats with offense.*

Romans 14:20





# Apostles

- Coupled fasting with liturgical acts
- Acts of the Apostles:  
*As they ministered* (liturgical rite) *to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*





# Apostles

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Apostle Paul describes his own spiritual life as one of sacrifice, vigils, thirst, and fasting lived “*in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*”

- He refers to fasting in the context of marriage saying by mutual consent husband and wife abstain from marital relations periodically while fasting and prayer.



# Apostles

- The first century - Didache  
“*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*”
- *Your fasts must not be identical with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Mondays and Thursdays; but you should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.*
- The fasting referred to here was a complete abstention from both food and drink until sundown.

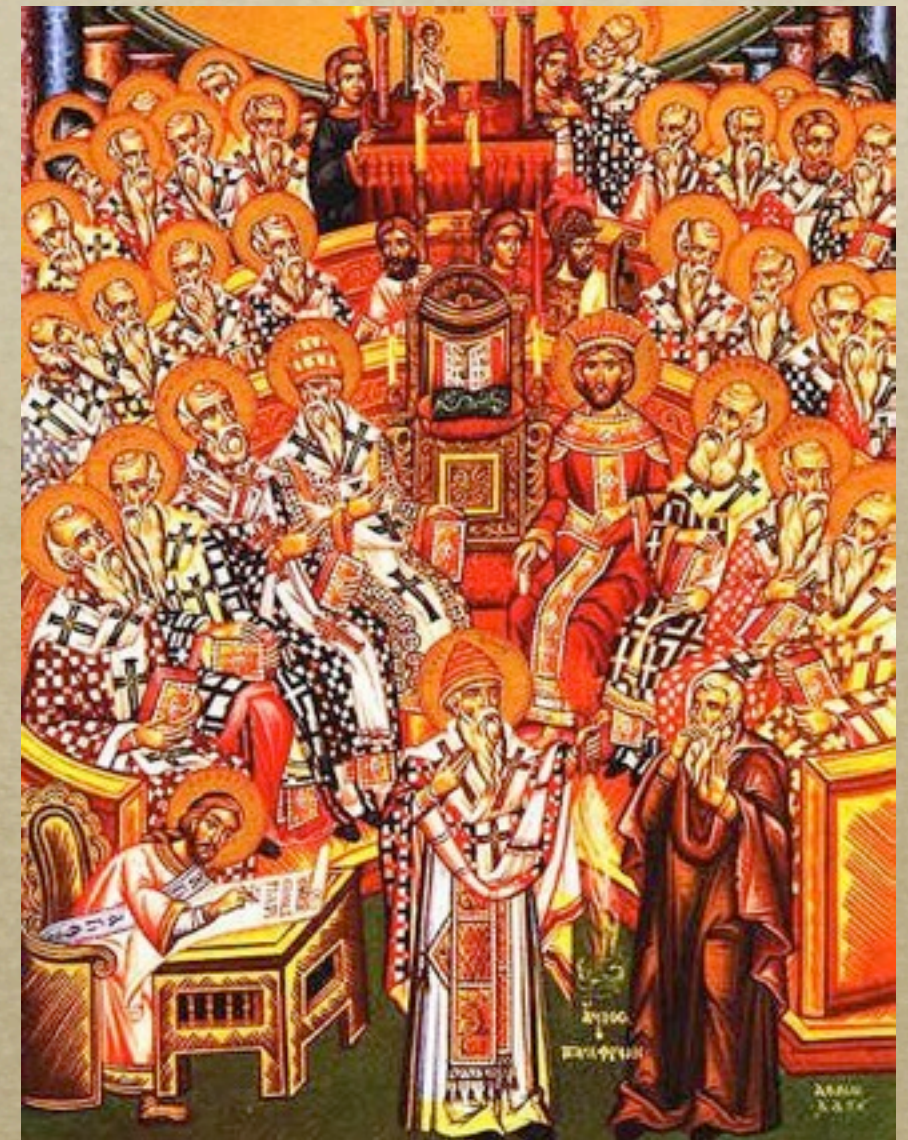
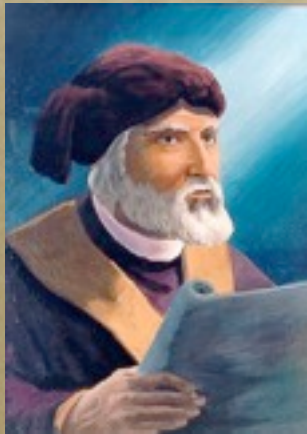




# Church Fathers

- Church Fathers fasted.

Ecclesiastical writer Tertullian (220 d.) notes that spiritual growth requires confession and prayer fed by “*fasting, ...not for the stomach’s sake, ...but for the soul’s.*”





# Church Fathers

- Saint Gregory (391) - practice of receiving the Eucharist after fasting.



Saint Basil (379) wrote much on fasting.



John Cassian (435): *Therefore, fastings, vigils, meditation on the Scriptures, self-denial, and the abnegation of all possessions are not perfection, but aids to perfection: because the end of that science does not lie in these, but by means of these we arrive at the end.*



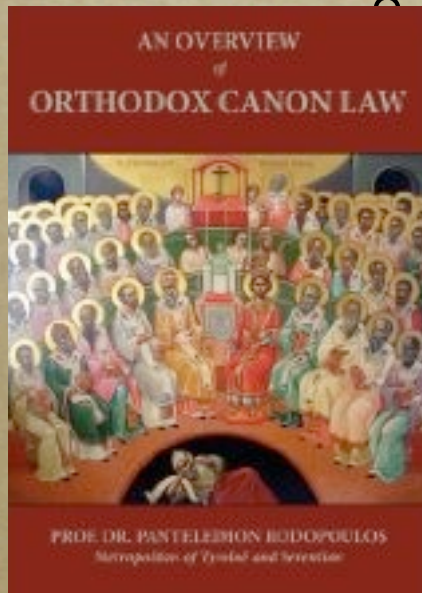
- Many others



# Canons of Church

Canons of Church affirm fasting

- If you do not honor the **Wednesday** and **Friday** fast you are to be **excommunicated**.
- Must fast **prior** to taking Communion
- Strict fast during entire **Lenten** period
- Do not fast on Sunday and Saturday
- If ill or weak relaxation of guidelines appropriate





# Fasting



- *Fasting guidelines*



# Severity of Fasts

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1. Abstention from meat
2. Abstention also from animal products, such as eggs, milk, butter and cheese.
3. Abstention from fish
4. Abstention from oil and wine.





# When Do We Fast?

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*Wednesday and Friday fast*



*Fasting in preparation for receiving  
Communion*



# When Do We Fast?

- Day before **Christmas** (Dec 24)
- Day before **Theophany** (Jan 5)
- **Exaltation of the Cross** (Sept. 14)
- **Beheading of John the Baptist** (Aug. 29)
- Five fasting periods





# When Do We Fast?

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## Five Fasting Periods

- Great Lent
- Holy Week
- Apostles Fast  
Second Monday after Pentecost and continues until the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29
- Fast of the Dormition (Aug 1-14)
- Fast of Nativity (Nov 15 - Dec 24)




# Fasting

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## *Fast-free Periods*

- Nativity to Eve of Theophany.
- Week following the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee.
- Bright Week — the week after Pascha.
- Trinity Week — the week after Pentecost, ending with All Saints Sunday.



<b>26</b>  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy 1 yr memorial - Pete L. Kythas	<b>27</b> 	<b>28</b>  4:10p Greek School	<b>29</b>  4:00p Greek School 7:00p Choir Practice 10:00a Bible Study	<b>30</b>  9:30 Divine Liturgy - Andrew the Apostle 4:10p Greek School 6:00p Orthodoxy Class	<b>1</b> 	<b>2</b>  2:00p Greek School bakes Koulourakia
<b>3</b>  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy Greek School Carolers	<b>4</b>  10:00am Divine Liturgy 12:00n Saint Barbara Nameday celebration luncheon at Hilton	<b>5</b>  4:10p Greek School	<b>6</b>  9:30a Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas 4:00p Greek School 7:00p Choir Practice 10:30a Bible Study	<b>7</b>  4:10p Greek School 6:00p Orthodoxy Class	<b>8</b>  4:30pm Nativity Pageant Rehearsal	<b>9</b> 
<b>10</b>  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy Santa's Luncheon 6:00p AHEPA Christmas Party at Ceaser's	<b>11</b>  7:00p Laconian Meeting at Olive Tree	<b>12</b>  9:30a Divine Liturgy for St. Spyidon 4:10p Greek School	<b>13</b>  4:00p Greek School 5:30p Agape trip to Hollywild and Dinner 7:00p Choir Practice 10:00a Bible Study	<b>14</b>  4:10p Greek School	<b>15</b>  4:30pm Nativity Pageant Rehearsal	<b>16</b> 
<b>17</b>  9:00a Orthros 10:00a Divine Liturgy Nativity Pageant Greek School Carolers	<b>18</b> 	<b>19</b>  4:10p Greek School	<b>20</b>  4:00p Greek School 7:00p Choir Practice 10:00a Bible Study	<b>21</b>  4:10p Greek School	<b>22</b> 	<b>23</b> 

Fasting guidelines from the Archdiocese calendar:  fish allowed  Wine and oil allowed  Strict Fast  
 Dairy, eggs and fish allowed



# Fasting

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- Do not try and invent special rules
- Learning Obedience is part of discipline
- Humble yourself - surrender to guidance of Church
- Follow the acceptable pattern given by Holy Tradition.  
Contains collective conscience of the people of God.



# How to Begin

- Difficult
- Begin with **Wed. and Fri.** fast
  - commit
  - Meat
  - Then dairy
  - Build a habit
- Go to Confession
- Get permission for Frequent Communion
- Lenten fast - strict first week and Holy Week
- Then all other fasts w/o meat





# Fasting



- A means to an end.
- Not a virtue - an ascetic discipline
- Engage in it to grow spiritually and walk the path towards Theosis.
- Exercise your free-will & make this a **rule** for your Life
- What changes do I need to make to follow the fasting guidelines.