

Discipleship – Running the Race

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Discipleship, Spiritual Athletics

How do we serve God? How do we serve our Church? What is a disciple? What does it mean for us to be a disciple?

The dictionary tells us the following:

dis·ci·ple noun

Somebody who strongly believes in the teachings of a leader, a philosophy, or a religion, and tries to act according to them

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Our Christian definition is more specific; we are disciples of Jesus Christ. If we're not, then we're not Christian, as the term "Christ-ian" literally means "bond servant of Christ". In previous ages when there were slaves that earned their freedom, some would stay with their masters as an extended part of the family. These servants would have the surname "ian" added on to their masters names and adopted as their own. At some point in the distant past, this was applied to followers of Christ, and it fits since we willingly choose to serve Him.

Discipleship is a Race!

A "Christian" is a servant, or disciple of Christ. But doing that isn't just a matter of saying we are Christians, no more than its possible to simply say we're all football players or all accomplished athletes. There is actually a great comparison between our spiritual progress in life and the effort it takes to be a physical athlete. The difference could be termed "spiritual athletics". Holy Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers actually show us many comparisons between spiritual and physical efforts.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, **and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

Preparing to run a race with endurance means to undergo a training regimen, and just like a race, requires us to pay some kind of cost. If you ask bicyclist Lance Armstrong how he won so many Tour-De-France races, you can be sure that some where in the response he would refer to a single minded dedication and dedication. Just like Lance, we must also focus on what our goal is. What are we training for? Where is the finish line?

This is a serious effort! Saint Chrysostom tells us "*Christianity is no child's play, my beloved: no matter of secondary importance.*" (Homily "ON THE APOSTOLIC SAYING, "IF THY ENEMY HUNGER FEED HIM,"). Being a disciple of Christ means hard fought decisions, action and even sorrow.

Luke 10:51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

What's all this talk about division? Is this a Church or a boxing match? Didn't Jesus come to unite people? The answer is yes, but to unite us to God, not to our worldly concerns! This means that we are all called to be followers of Jesus Christ, who came into the world to reunite it to God. To be a follower of Christ is to become a disciple. If we are going to follow Christ, to become disciples, we need to understand what that means. Jesus gives us some words that may seem a little unsettling:

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Today's lesson is on the cost of discipleship; taking up our Cross, caring for others well being, justice, prayer and helping to alleviate the suffering of others.

Discipleship 101

How to be a Disciple

The question we have to ask ourselves is whether we "are really being disciples?" Are we more concerned with "saving our lives" and actually losing them? How do we become disciples?

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Christ tells us that where our treasure is, we will find our heart. So to better understand the state of our own discipleship, let's ask ourselves three questions:

1. How do I spend my time?
2. How do I spend my money?
3. How do I make my decisions?

In other words, where is my treasure? We all have one or more good friends who we spend time with, probably every day. We look forward to seeing them, think about them when they're not around, send emails, call them, etc. We can't ever forget that Jesus Christ is our greatest friend of all and has to be personally involved in all of our efforts. God truly does become a friend to his followers as we see in Exodus:

Exodus 33:11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

John 15:14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

Neither true friendship nor eternal salvation are a one time event! Remember the race? It requires a full time training regimen, not the spiritual equivalent of running around the block once a week (hint... going to Church for 90 minutes each week and never looking back).

Lets look at how come of the Apostles first became disciples:

Mark 1:17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. (also see Matthew 4:18-22)

Notice that Christ leaves the following up to us in Matthew. He doesn't say "presto change-o, welcome to the club", he compels us to "take up our cross" and to become fishers of men. Following Christ isn't a small thing; it requires both faith and work.

The apostles show us examples of how they were called to a holy life, and Christ puts it very simply:

Luke 14:33 So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Remember our example of Lance Armstrong and the Tour-de-France? Think of the countless hours he spent preparing; now consider how much it takes to "run with endurance" in our spiritual lives. In his book "God and You: Person to Person", Father Coniaris says "Our response to God's grace is discipleship. It is a discipleship of nourishing and developing a daily, personal relationship with God." (Coniaris)

Our Training Regimen, the Race & the Rewards

Of course Lance Armstrong and other athletes know exactly what lays at the finish line, so what will be our reward for an lifetime of "spiritual athletics"? How do we train for this life? What exactly is the race? Who are we competing against?

Counting the Cost

Luke 14:27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it...

Right now we know two things, there is a "race of endurance" in front of us, and that we are going to win the prize we have to have a plan (count the cost).

In a football game, when a runner gets the ball, what happens? Player hit them! How do they guard against this? – by wearing pads that are essentially like armor. Without this protection a football player would be in agonizing pain. Our daily life is a competition! The other team is none other than Satan, “*rulers of darkness*” and “*spiritual hosts of wickedness*” (**Ephesians 6:12**), and they will hit us just like football players hit the other team’s players; and it is going to hurt.

Taking up Armor!

The answer to the daily hits we will take lays in the protection, or armor, that God provides us:

Ephesians 6:13 Therefore **take up the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 **above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.** 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 **praying always with all prayer and supplication** in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints

Each day we are going to get spiritual hits, and its important to take note of what Saint Paul tells us to do – pray! **Prayer is to our discipleship what exercise is to athletes. Without a daily prayer life, we are not prepared for “the race”.** We could talk a long time about all the things that make up a strong prayer life, but it is sufficient to say that the Church has provided is with all the help we need in the form of daily prayers. In a manner of speaking the Orthodox Church has developed a huge “spiritual arsenal”, against which evil can not withstand. (see attached daily prayer outline)

What’s makes our spiritual race even more intense is that we all have different spiritual talents (gifts), making our race a little different from those around us. We are all part of the Body of the Church, which needs It’s Disciples to all perform different works in order for its mission to be fulfilled. Just like a football team has a quarterback or running back and a basketball team has a forward and a guard; the Church has different types of spiritual warriors (what else would you call someone decked our in “armor”?)

Class Discussion

Talk to the class, asking how they feel about the ways they spend their time, money and on what sorts of things base their decisions. How do they exercise their discipleship? How can they make changes in their daily lives to reflect it? Students should begin to identify that discipleship doesn’t always mean becoming a desert hermit; rather that it is a state of mind, obedience and loyalty to God over worldly concerns.

Discussion Points for Teachers

- Discipleship is a personal commitment, and relationship with Christ, but it isn’t a casual relationship.
- Orthodox is a faith based on growth (2 Peter 3:17-19, James 2:14-26, Ephesians 4:15, Colossians 1:10, 1 Peter 2:2, 2 Peter 3:18) and that like athletes, we will often be at different “conditioning” levels.

- Our discipleship can not be based on talk, or a once a week attendance at Church. (James 1:22). The Gospel account of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14) is a good example to use, asking the students what they think the “garment” means. Saint Chrysostom summarizes it superbly by saying “...the garment is life and practice.” (Chrysostom Homily LXIX on Matthew 22)
- Ask the students if they’re familiar with the basic prayers attached to this lesson. Go over how they can develop a daily “rule of prayer” that helps provide them with the “armor” to run each day’s “race”.

References

http://www.oca.org/pages/orth_chri/orthodox-faith/spirituality/love-of-neighbor.html

John Cassian, THE SECOND PART OF THE CONFERENCES OF JOHN CASSIAN, THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF ABBOT JOSEPH ON FRIENDSHIP, <http://www.synaxis.org/ecf/volume34/ECF00030.htm>

Appendix

Introduction to Prayer

[Note: From "Building a Habit of Prayer" by Fr. Marc Dunaway]

Most sincere Christians desire to commune with God deeply and personally. Many Christians, however, find it difficult to develop a consistent habit of personal prayer in their lives. This booklet is written to help you develop a more consistent life of personal prayer, tailor-made to your own abilities and circumstances.

Consistent personal prayer begins with a Rule of Prayer, or what might be called "fixed prayers" or "liturgical prayers" that are said on a daily basis. Personal prayer is built on the foundation of the corporate life of the Church—it is not a substitute for regular participation in the liturgical worship and sacraments of the Church. At the same time, however, corporate prayer at Church cannot take the place of personal prayer. A Rule of Prayer is the "framework" which guides one regularly as he or she prays personally.

Some might ask, "Is a Rule really necessary? Why not rely on being spontaneous in prayer?" Spontaneity does have a place in personal prayer, but not as a starting point. You can, of course, pray without a Rule, but it is almost impossible to pray consistently day by day, year in and year out, for a lifetime, without one. Once a Rule is established as a framework, there is great opportunity to incorporate spontaneous prayer into that framework. For instance, in the intercessory prayers do not hesitate to personalize the prayers with names, specific needs, and situations as they pertain to you and those for whom you are concerned. There are few things you'll ever want to pray for that do not fit into this basic framework.

Because we are all different, our Rules will vary somewhat. This is, after all, personal prayer we are discussing. What follows is a basic guideline to establishing a Rule of Prayer based upon the ancient and well-proven practice of the Orthodox Church. The basic outline begins with an invocation to the Holy Trinity, followed by a prayer to the Holy Spirit and the Trisagion Prayers. After this beginning, you may add some Psalms, other written prayers and hymns. Scripture reading, the Nicene Creed, a time of silence, intercession for other people, and closing prayers. You will need to personalize your Rule based upon the amount of time you plan on devoting to prayer and other personal considerations.

In developing your own Rule of Prayer, it is important to establish not only the content of the prayers, but also to determine the time of day, the place, the physical postures and helps you will use in your prayer. Being consistent in these matters will help your Rule of Prayer become a regular habit in your life.

To establish your own "Rule of Prayer" read and study the prayers included in this booklet and from other sources. Then answer in writing each of the questions below, asking yourself not what *should* I do or even what do I *want* to do, but what *can* I do and what is God calling *me* to do? Remember that a Rule must be clear and regular, and, therefore is usually short rather than long. Attempting too much will discourage prayer. The Rule you develop is what you will do every day. You can always add to it, but don't subtract from it if possible.

Some Considerations in a Rule of Prayer

Time

- When will I pray and how will it fit into my (and my family's) routine?
- How many times a day will I pray as part of my "Rule"?
- Will the time be different on weekdays and weekends?

Place

- *Where in my house (or other place) will I pray?*

Physical Aspects

- *What will be the physical arrangements of icons, books, etc.?*
- Will I use candles (or oil lamps), and, if so, when and how?
- Will I use incense, and if so, when and how?
- Will I use any other physical items (i.e. prayer rope) to aid me in my attention at prayer?

Physical Posture

- *Will I stand, kneel, sit, or use a combination of these?*
- *Will I bow or prostrate myself at any time?*

Travel

- Will I keep my Rule when I travel, and if so, what adjustments in my Rule might I need to make?
- What items do I need to carry with me?

Content

- Will I use the "Basic Outline" that is provided in this guide or will I use only part of it, and if so, specifically what part?
- Specifically what prayers, if any, will I add to this "Basic Outline" and where will I add them?
- Will I include the Psalms in my Rule, and if so, what Psalms, and how will I sing (or read) them?
- Will reading the Scriptures be part of my Rule, and if so, specifically what Scriptures will I read or what lectionary will I follow?
- Will a time of silence be part of my Rule, and if so, will I use any meditative verse or prayer to help me control my thoughts?
- If I wish to do more than my Rule at times, what sort of prayers and/ or readings might I want to add?
- To whom will I submit my Rule for feedback and direction?

After you have answered the above questions, begin to keep your Rule faithfully and humbly. Although a Rule of Prayer must and will be uniquely personal, according to one's abilities and circumstances in life, to be at all effective it must be a "Rule." Stick with it, even if this means starting with a Rule which will be very short by some standards and expectations. Then periodically review your Rule of Prayer, fine-tuning to fit changing schedules, circumstances, and abilities as you feel God directs.

Orthodox Prayer Guide

A Basic Outline for Morning Prayers

Invocation of the Holy Trinity

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen.

[Having invoked the Holy Trinity, be still so that your thoughts and feelings may be freed from worldly cares.]

[Make the sign of the cross and bow 3x, saying each time the prayer of the publican]

"O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Then pray your Rule of Prayer without haste and with your whole heart.

"The Rule of Prayer by St. Seraphim of Sarov" may be inserted here.

The Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Glory to You, O Lord. Glory to You.

O Heavenly King, the comforter, the spirit of Truth, Who art present everywhere and fillest all things; Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life; come and abide in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Gracious One.

The Trisagion Prayers

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (Three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us; O Lord, wash away our sins; O Master, forgive us our iniquities; O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for thy Name's sake.

Lord have mercy! (Three times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not | into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the •

kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

[The "Morning Prayer to the Holy Trinity" may be inserted here.]

Lord, have mercy. (12x)

The "Morning **Prayer by St. Basil the Great**" may be inserted here.

Call to Worship

Come, let us worship and bow down before God our King. Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ, our King
and our God. Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ Himself,
our King and our God.

Psalmody

Sing selected Psalm(s) as desired or according to a schedule.

Scripture Readings

Read Epistle and Gospel for the day or other Scriptures as desired (refer to a service book or lectionary). Also see <http://www.goarch.org> where the daily Epistles and Gospels are posted.

"The Nicene Creed" may be Inserted here .

Other prayers may also be inserted at this point, either other written prayers from the Fathers and saints of the Church and/or your own personal prayers.

A "Prayer to the Guardian Angel" may also be inserted here.

Prayer to Patron Saint

Pray to God for me. Saint_____, in whom the Lord is well-pleased. I am happy to imitate your life, you who are quick to help me and pray for my soul.

Hymn for the Day

*The Hymn for the day or season may be **sung** or said (Refer to various service books or prayer books).*

Intercessions

Any personal intercessions for the living and/ or the departed may be inserted here.

Hymn to the Mother of God

It is truly right to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you.

During Lent "The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim" may be inserted Here.

Closing Prayers

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, through the intercessions of Your most pure Mother and of all Your Saints (especially Saint *[of the day]* whose memory we commemorate today), have mercy on us and save us, for You are good and love mankind. Amen.

A Basic Outline for Evening Prayers

Invocation of the Holy Trinity

+In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for the sake of the prayers of Your most pure mother and of all Your saints, have mercy on us.

The Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Glory to You, O Lord. Glory **to You**.

O Heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth. Who are in all places and fill all things, the Treasure of good things and Giver of life, come and abide in us. Cleanse us from every stain and save our souls, O Good One.

The Trisagion Prayers

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.
O Lord, cleanse us from our sins.
O Master, pardon our iniquities.
O Holy One, visit and heal our iniquities
for Your Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The "Penitential Troparia" may be inserted here.

Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Other evening prayers may be inserted as desired.

Psalmody

Sing selected Psalm(s) as desired or according to a schedule. (For a schedule of the Psalms appointed for each of the services in the daily cycle see page 12,}

Scripture Readings

*Read Epistle and Gospel/or the day or other Scriptures **as desired** (refer to a service book or lectionary).*

Other prayers may also be inserted at this point, either other written prayers from the Fathers and saints of the Church and/or your own personal prayers.

Intercessions

Any personal intercessions/or the living and/or the departed may be inserted here.

Hymn to the Mother of God

It is truly right to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you.

During Lent "The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim" may be inserted here .

Closing Prayers

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, through the intercessions of Your most pure Mother and of all Your Saints (especially Saint [of the day] whose memory we commemorate today), have mercy on us and save us, for You are good and love mankind. Amen.

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

The Rule of Prayer by St. Seraphim of Sarov

Lord, cleanse me of my sins and have mercy on me. You have created me; have mercy on me. There is no way to measure my sin; have mercy on me. Lord, forgive the many times I disobey You. Master, I bow down before Your cross and glorify Your resurrection. Lord, when I sin in what I say and do, have mercy on me because of Your great compassion.

Morning Prayer to the Holy Trinity

As we rise from sleep, we fall down before You, our good God, and sing to You the Angels' Hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...

Lord, You woke me at dawn and brought me from my bed. Now give light to my mind and heart, and open my mouth that I may sing to You, the Holy Trinity: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, have mercy on us.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Judge will come suddenly and what everyone has done will be revealed. Therefore, with fear we cry out in the early morning: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, have mercy on us.

Morning Prayer by St. Basil the Great

As I rise from sleep, I thank You, Holy Trinity, for Your loving-kindness and patience. You were not angry with me, even though I am lazy and full of sin. You have not destroyed me for the wrongs I have done. Rather, You have shown unchanging love for me. When I was bowed low in dark despair. You raised me up to sing the morning hymn and glorify Your Lordship. Now give light to the eye of my mind, and open my ears to hear Your words and learn Your commandments. Help me to obey Your will, sing to You with all my heart, and give praise to Your Holy Name, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Psalms in the Daily Cycle of Services

- **Midnight:** 51, 121, 134
- **Matins:** 3, 38, 63, 88, 103, 143, (Lauds) 148, 149, 150
- **1st Hour:** 5, 90, 101
- **3rd Hour:** 17, 25, 51
- **6th Hour:** 54, 55, 91
- **9th Hour:** 84, 85, 86
- **Vespers:** 104; (O Lord, I Cry) 141, 142, 130, 117, (Aposticha) 93, 123
- **Little Compline:** 51, 70, 143

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, Begotten of the Father before all worlds. Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. Whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer by St. Basil the Great

Almighty God, Lord of angels and all creation. Who dwell on high yet care for the lowly. Who search the heart and know every hidden thing, eternal and unchanging Light, we trust in Your great mercy to hear the prayers offered from our unclean lips. Forgive the sins we have committed in knowledge or in ignorance, in thought, word, or deed; and cleanse us, body and soul, from every stain. Allow us to pass through the darkness of this present life watchful and alert, always expecting the coming bright day of Your Only-begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ. He shall come in glory to judge all people and reward us according to our deeds. Help us to put away laziness, be full of courage, and be found doing His work ready to enter His glorious kingdom with joy. You are the true light of every creature, and to You all creation sings. Amen.

Morning Prayer of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace.
Help me in all things to rely on Your Holy will.
In every hour of the day reveal Your will to me.
Bless my dealings with all who surround me.
Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with
peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that Your will governs all.
In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all
are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and
embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of this coming day
with all that it shall bring.
Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray You Yourself in me. Amen.

Prayer for the Acceptance of God's Will by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

O Lord, I do not know what to ask of You.
You alone know what are my true needs.
You love me more than I myself know how to love.
Help me to see my real needs which are concealed from me.

I do not dare to ask either for a cross or for consolation. I can only wait on You. My heart is open to You. Visit and help me, for the sake of Your great mercy. Strike me and heal me; cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Your holy will and Your unsearchable ways. I offer myself as a sacrifice to You. I have no other desire than to fulfill Your will. Teach me to pray. Pray You Yourself in me. Amen.

Prayer to Guardian Angel

Holy Guardian Angel, do not depart from me, a sinner, or allow me to be overcome by the enemy. Give strength to my weak hand, and set me on the path of salvation. Forgive me when I offend you, and protect me in the coming day, that I may not anger God by sinning. Pray to God for me that I may come to fear Him and become a servant worthy of His great kindness. Amen.

Intercessions for the Living

Lord Jesus Christ, because of Your everlasting mercy and loving-kindness You became man, enduring crucifixion and death for the salvation of all who truly believe in You. You rose from the dead and now sit on the right hand of the Father, yet You hear the humble prayers of those who call upon You with all their heart. Turn now Your ear to Your lowly servant who prays for all Your people.

First of all remember Your Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church which You redeemed with Your precious blood. Keep it strong and growing; keep it in peace; protect it from the gates of hell forever; heal the divisions of the Churches; silence those who speak against her; and root out every heresy by the power of Your Holy Spirit.

Lord, have mercy and save our rulers and all who protect us. Keep our nations at peace and subdue the enemies of good government. May our government be at peace with Your holy Church and all Your people, that we may have a tranquil life, free to pursue right belief, virtue, and godly living.

Lord, have mercy and save the holy patriarchs, bishops, and clergy of Your Church, and especially my spiritual father, _____. You have ordained them to feed the flock with Your everlasting Word. Through their prayers have mercy **on** me, a sinner, and save me.

Lord, have mercy and save my family (*parents, brothers and sisters, spouse, children, others*) and my friends. Give them blessings now and salvation in the life to come.

Lord, have mercy and save:

- the very old and the very young (*including the unborn*)
- the needy
- orphans
- widows
- the sick and afflicted
- those in sorrow and distress
- the imprisoned
- Orthodox Christians who suffer for Your sake
- those in military service
- travelers
- (*others who come to mind*)

Remember them, and come to them with strength and comfort, and quickly deliver them.

Lord, have mercy and save those who slander and work against me. Help me to love them, forgive them, and pray for their salvation. Bring those who fall from the true faith to the light of Your holy wisdom, and unite them to Your Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Amen.

Prayers for the Departed

Lord, remember all those who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection and eternal life. Forgive all their sins committed in knowledge or ignorance. Let them enjoy Your eternal blessings in the Light of Your presence; grant them peace, refreshment, fellowship with Your saints, and life that never ends. Have mercy on us, for You are full of grace and love mankind. Amen.

Prayers Before Communion

Another Prayer of St. Basil the Great

O Lord, I know that I am unworthy to receive thy Holy Body and Precious Blood; I know that I am guilty, and that I eat and drink condemnation to myself, not discerning the Body and Blood of Christ my God. But trusting in thy loving-kindness I come unto thee who hast said: He that eateth my Body and drinketh my Blood shall dwell in me and I in him. Therefore, O Lord, have compassion on me and make not an example of me, thy sinful servant. But do unto me according thy great mercy, and grant that these Holy Gifts may be for me unto the healing, purification, enlightenment, protection, salvation and sanctification of my soul and body, and to the expulsion of every evil imagination, sinful deed or work of the Devil. May they move me to reliance on thee and to love thee always, to amend and keep firm my life; and be ever in me to the increase of virtue, to the keeping of the Holy Spirit, and as a good defence before thy dread Judgement Seat, and for Life Eternal. Amen.

A Prayer of St. John Chrysostom

O Lord my God, I know that I am not worthy nor sufficient that thou shouldest enter under my roof into the habitation of my soul, for it is all deserted and in ruins, and thou hast not a fitting place in me to lay thy head. But as from the heights of thy glory thou didst humble thyself, so now bear me in my humility; as thou didst deign to lie in a manger in a cave, so deign now also to come into the manger of my mute soul and corrupt body. As thou didst not refrain from entering into the house of Simon the leper, or shrink from eating there with sinners, so also vouchsafe to enter the house of my poor soul, all leprous and full of sin. Thou didst not reject the sinful woman who ventured to draw near to touch thee, so also have pity on me, a sinner, approaching to touch thee. And grant that I may partake of thine All-holy Body and Precious Blood for the sanctification, enlightenment and strengthening of my weak soul and body; for the relief from the burden of my many sins; for my preservation against all the snares of the devil; for victory over all my sinful and evil habits; for the mortification of my passions; for obedience to thy Commandments; for growth in thy divine Grace and for the inheritance of thy Kingdom. For it is not with careless heart that I approach thee, O Christ my God, but I come trusting in thine infinite goodness, and fearing lest I may be drawn afar from thee and become the prey of the wolf of souls. Wherefore I pray thee, O Master, who alone art holy, that thou wouldest sanctify my soul and body, my mind and heart and reins, and renew me entirely. Implant in my members the fear of thee, be thou my helper and guide, directing my life in the paths of peace, and make me worthy to stand at thy right hand with thy Saints; through the prayers and intercessions of thine immaculate Mother, of thy Bodiless Servitors, of the immaculate Powers, and of all the Saints who from all ages have been well-pleasing unto thee. Amen.

A Prayer of St. John of Damascus

O Lord and Master Jesus Christ, our God, who alone hath power to forgive the sins of men, do thou, O Good One who lovest mankind, forgive all the sins that I have committed

in knowledge or in ignorance, and make me worthy to receive without condemnation thy divine, glorious, immaculate and life-giving Mysteries; not unto punishment or unto increase of sin; but unto purification, and sanctification and a promise of thy Kingdom and the Life to come; as a protection and a help to overthrow the adversaries, and to blot out my many sins. For thou art a God of Mercy and compassion and love toward mankind, and unto Thee we ascribe glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Another Prayer of St. John of Damascus

I stand before the gates of thy Temple, and yet I refrain not from my evil thoughts. But do thou, O Christ my God, who didst justify the publican, and hadst mercy on the Canaanite woman, and opened the gates of Paradise to the thief; open unto me the compassion of thy love toward mankind, and receive me as I approach and touch thee, like the sinful woman and the woman with the issue of blood; for the one, by embracing thy feet received the forgiveness of her sins, and the other by but touching the hem of thy garment was healed. And I, most sinful, dare to partake of thy whole Body. Let me not be consumed but receive me as thou didst receive them, and enlighten the perceptions of my soul, consuming the accusations of my sins; through the intercessions of Her that without stain gave Thee birth, and of the heavenly Powers; for thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

A Prayer of St. John Chrysostom

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is truly thine own immaculate Body, and that this is truly thine own precious Blood. Wherefore I pray thee, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me worthy to partake without condemnation of thine immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins and unto life everlasting. Amen. Of thy Mystic Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of thy Mystery to thine enemies, neither will I give thee a kiss as did Judas; but like the thief will I confess thee: Remember me, O Lord, in thy Kingdom. Not unto judgement nor unto condemnation be my partaking of thy Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto the healing of soul and body.

Prayers After Communion

Glory to thee, O God; Glory to thee, O God; Glory to thee, O God.

I thank thee, O Lord my God, that thou hast not rejected me, a sinner, but hast accounted me worthy to become a communicant of thy Holy Mysteries. I thank thee that thou hast accounted me, the unworthy, worthy to partake of thine immaculate and heavenly gifts. But, O Master who lovest mankind, who didst both die for us and rise again, and didst bestow upon us these thy terrible and life-giving Mysteries for the benefitting and sanctification of our souls and bodies: grant that they may be for me also unto the healing of soul and body, unto the averting of everything contrary thereto; unto the enlightenment of the eyes of my heart; unto the peace of my spiritual powers; unto faith invincible; unto love unfeigned; unto fulfilling of wisdom; unto the keeping of thy commandments; unto growth in thy divine grace, and the attainment of thy kingdom: that by them preserved in thy holiness, I may ever remember thy grace, and henceforth live not unto myself, but unto thee, our Master and Benefactor. And thus, when this life is ended, in the hope of eternal life, I may attain unto everlasting rest, where the voice of those who keep festival is unceasing, and the delight of those who behold the ineffable beauty of thy countenance is boundless; for thou art the true

desire and unutterable joy of all those who love thee, O Christ our God, and all creation hymneth thee forever. Amen.

A Prayer of St. Basil the Great

O Master, Christ our God, King of the ages, and maker of all things: I thank thee for all the good things which thou hast bestowed upon me, and for this partaking of thine immaculate and life-giving Mysteries. Wherefore I pray thee, who art good and lovest mankind: Keep me under thy protection, and in the shadow of thy wings; and grant unto me with a pure conscience and even unto my last breath, to partake of thy holy Mysteries, unto remission of sins and unto life everlasting. For thou art the Bread of Life, the Fountain of holiness, the Giver of good things, and unto thee we ascribe Glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

A Prayer of St. Simeon Metaphrastes

O Thou who willingly dost give thy flesh to me as food, Thou who art a Fire, consuming the unworthy, Consume me not, O my Creator; But rather pass through all my body parts, Into all my joints, my reins, my heart. Burn thou the thorns of all my transgressions, Cleanse my soul, and hallow thou my thoughts. Make firm my knees, and my bones likewise; Enlighten as one my five senses, Establish me wholly in thy fear; Ever shelter me, and guard and keep me From every soul-corrupting deed and word, Chasten me, purify me, and control me; Adorn me, teach me, and enlighten me. Show me to be a Tabernacle of thy Spirit only, And in no wise the dwelling-place of sin, That from me, thy habitation, through the entrance of thy Communion, Every evil deed and every passion may flee as from fire. As intercessors I bring to thee all the Saints, Both the Angelic Leaders of the Bodiless Powers, Thy Fore-runner, and thy wise Apostles; And besides these, thine immaculate and chaste Mother; Do thou accept their prayers, my Christ, who art Compassionate, And make thy servant to be a child of the light: For thou alone, Good Lord, are the sanctification and splendor of our souls, And to thee as God and Master, day by day, Duly we all ascribe glory.

May thy holy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, be unto me for life eternal, and thy precious Blood unto remission of my sins. May this Eucharist be unto me for joy, health, and gladness; and at thy dread Second Coming make me, a sinner, worthy to stand at the right hand of thy glory: through the intercessions of thine all-immaculate Mother and of all thy Saints. Amen.

A Prayer to the All-Holy Theotokos

O All-holy Lady Theotokos, light of my darkened soul, my hope, my shelter, my refuge, my consolation and my joy: I thank thee that thou hast accounted me worthy, although unworthy, to be a partaker of the immaculate Body and precious Blood of thy Son. But do thou, who gavest birth to the true Light, enlighten the mental eyes of my heart; O thou who didst bear the fountain of immortality, quicken thou me who lie dead in sin. O compassion-loving Mother of the merciful God, have mercy upon me and grant me humility and contrition of heart, and meekness in my thoughts, and deliverance from the bondage of my vain imaginings. And account me worthy, even unto my last breath, to receive without condemnation the sanctification of the immaculate Mysteries, unto the healing of both soul and body. And grant unto me tears of repentance and confession, that I may hymn thee and glorify thee all the days of my life: for blessed and glorified art thou unto all ages. Amen.

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

0 Lord and Master of my life, do not give to me the spirit of laziness, faintheartedness, lust for power, and idle talk. (*Prostration*)

But give to me Your servant the spirit of purity, humility, patience, and love. (*Prostration*)

0 Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults and not to judge my brother, for blessed are You unto ages of ages. Amen. (*Prostration*)

Bow 12x, saying each time, "0 God, cleanse me, a sinner."

Then say the prayer of St. Ephraim once more with one prostration at the end.

The Penitential Troparia

Have mercy on us, 0 Lord, have mercy on us; for we sinners, who are without means of defense, offer You our Master this supplication, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...

Lord, have mercy on us, for in You we trust. Do not be exceedingly angry with us, nor remember our iniquities. But look upon us now in Your compassion and deliver us from our enemies. For You are our God, and we are Your people; we are all the works of Your hands, and we call upon Your Name.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Open the gate of your compassion to us, 0 blessed Mother of God, and hoping in you may we not fail. Through you may we be delivered from adversity, for you are the salvation of the Christian family.

Evening Prayer by St. Macarius the Great

0 Eternal God, King of all creation. Who have granted me to attain to this hour: forgive me the sins which I have committed this day in thought, word, and deed; and cleanse, 0 Lord, my humble soul from every stain of flesh and spirit. Grant me, 0 Lord, to pass through the sleep of this night in peace, that when I rise from my bed I may please Your holy Name all the days of my life, and conquer the enemies, both corporeal and incorporeal, that contend against me. Deliver me, 0 Lord, from the vain thoughts that stain me, and from evil desires. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Evening Prayer by St. Antioch

0 Almighty Lord, Word of the Father, Jesus Christ, Who are Yourself perfect: for the sake of Your great mercy never depart from me. Your servant, but ever abide in me. 0 Jesus, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, do not let me fall into the revolt of the serpent, nor leave me to the will of Satan, for the seed of corruption is in me. 0 Lord God Whom we worship, 0 Holy King Jesus, preserve me while I sleep with Your unchanging light. Your Holy Spirit, by Whom You sanctified Your disciples. Grant, 0 Lord, even to me. Your unworthy servant. Your salvation upon my bed; enlighten my mind with the light of the understanding of Your holy Gospel, my soul with the love of Your Cross, my heart with the purity of Your Word, my body with Your passionless passion; keep my thoughts in Your humility, and rouse me in good time to glorify You. For You are glorified above all, with Your eternal Father and with the most Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Evening Prayer for the Forgiveness of Sins

O Lord our God, in Your goodness and love for mankind forgive me all the sins I have committed today in word, deed, or thought. Grant me peaceful and undisturbed sleep. Send Your guardian angel to guard and protect me from all evil. For You are the guardian of our souls and bodies, and to You we send up glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.