

:: Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev ::
On Prayer, Part VIII: The Danger of Habituation

Every believer faces the danger of becoming habituated to the words of prayer and of becoming distracted during prayer. For this not to happen, one needs to do constant battle with oneself or, as the Holy Fathers put it, to “guard one’s mind” and learn “to enclose one’s mind in the words of prayer.”

How does one achieve this? First of all, one should not allow oneself to pronounce words when one’s mind and heart do not respond to them. If you begin to read a prayer, but in the middle your attention strays, go back to the place where your attention strayed and repeat the prayer. If necessary, repeat it three, five, or ten times – but get to the point that your whole being responds to it. Once in church a lady appealed to me: “Batiushka, I have read prayers for many years: both the morning and the evening prayers, but the more I read them, the less I like them, and the less I feel myself believing in God. I am so tired of the words of these prayers that I no longer respond to them.”

I said to her: “Do not read the morning or evening prayers.”

She was astonished: “What do you mean?”

I repeated: “Put them away; do not read them. If your heart does not respond to them, you need to find another means of prayer. How much time do your morning prayers take?”

“Twenty minutes.”

“Are you ready to dedicate twenty minutes every morning to God?”

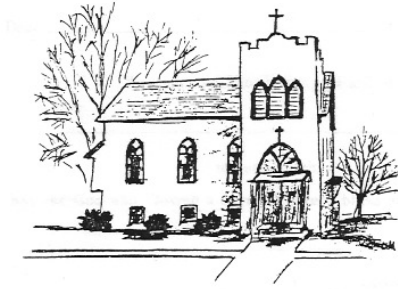
“I’m ready.”

“Then take one morning prayer – your choice – and read it over the course of twenty minutes. Read one phrase, be silent, and think about what it means. Then read another phrase, be silent, and think about its content. Repeat it again, thinking about whether it corresponds to your life, whether you are ready to live in such a way that this prayer would become real in your life. You read: ‘Lord, deprive me not of Thy heavenly goods.’ What does that mean? Or: ‘Lord, deliver me from eternal torments.’ What is the danger of these eternal torments? Do we actually fear them? Do we really hope to be delivered from them?” The woman began to pray in this way, and soon her prayer began to revive. One needs to learn to pray. One has to work on oneself; one cannot allow oneself to stand before the icons and utter empty words.

The quality of prayer also manifests itself by what precedes it and by what follows it. It is impossible to focus on prayer when one is angry or, for example, if before beginning to pray one has argued with somebody or shouted at someone. This means that in the time preceding prayer we should prepare ourselves for it inwardly, freeing ourselves from whatever interferes with our prayer, and tuning ourselves in to a prayerful disposition. Then it will be easier for us to pray. And, of course, after prayer one should not immediately give oneself over to bustle. Having finished praying, give yourself some time to hear God’s response, so that something would sound in you in response to God’s presence. Prayer is only valuable when we feel that, thanks to it, something changes in us, that we begin to live differently. Prayer can bear fruit, and these fruits should be felt.

Source: www.pravmir.com

Any announcements for the Sunday bulletin? Please submit by Wednesday each week to Fr. Andrew, by email or phone.



St. George Orthodox Church of Spring Valley

211 E. Minnesota St., Spring Valley, IL 61362

www.stgeorgeorthodox.org

815-664-4540 (church office)

Pastor: Father Andrew Kishler
frandrew@stgeorgeorthodox.org

773-575-3272 (cell)

815-663-8701 (home)

Sunday, July 20, 2014 – The Holy Prophet Elijah

Matins (Morning Prayer), 9:00 AM :: Divine Liturgy, 10:00 AM

Holy Bread and Coffee Hour: Richard and Bette Malooley

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 5):

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Troparion of the Prophet Elijah (Tone 4):

O angelic of body, pillar of the prophets and their cornerstone, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ, the venerable and glorious Elijah, thou didst send grace from on high to Elisha to dispel sicknesses and purify lepers. Wherefore, he overflows with healing to those who honor him.

Troparion of St. George the Great Martyr (Tone 4):

Since thou art a liberator and deliverer of captives, a help and succour of the poor and needy, a healing physician of the sick, a contender and fighter for kings, O great among martyrs, the victory-clad George: Intercede with Christ God for the salvation of our souls.

Kontakion to the Theotokos (Tone 2):

O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix unrejected by the Creator, turn not away from the voice of our petitions, though we be sinners. Come to us with aid in time, who cry to thee in faith, with assistance, for thou art good. Hasten to us with intercessions, O Theotokos, who dost ever intercede for those who honor thee.

St. George is a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

The Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend Bishop ANTHONY, Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest

www.antiochian.org

The Epistle and Gospel Readings

Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord said unto my Lord:
Sit Thou on my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. James (5:10-20)



Brethren, take as an example of suffering and patience the prophets who spoke in the Name of the Lord. Behold, we call those blessed who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by Heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let

them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit. My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (9:1-8)

At that time, Jesus got into a boat, crossed over and came to His own city. And behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He then said to the paralytic—"Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they marveled, and they glorified God, Who had given such authority to men.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

For a full calendar of events and services at St. George, see our website, www.stgeorgeorthodox.org.

From Fr. Andrew and Kh. Patty: Many thanks to all of you for your generous support of our family at the birth of our daughter Bridget Rose. We appreciate all of the phone calls, visits, meals, and prayers! She is now a very healthy baby, and we look forward to introducing her to all of you.

Camp St. George will be held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, August 10-16. We are blessed to have four campers this year: Michael Harshman, Rebecca Harshman, Maggie Kishler, and Keeley Thompson.

Upcoming events and services:

- **Saturday, July 26:** Vespers, 5:00 PM
- **Tuesday, August 5:** We have been invited to worship with Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Rockford, for their patronal feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord. Vespers begins at 6:00 PM.
- The **Dormition Fast** takes place each year, **August 1 to 14**. This is a holy season dedicated to the Mother of our Lord, and if you are able, Orthodox Christians fast from meat during this time.
- On Saturdays during the Dormition Fast, we will offer the **Supplicatory Canon (Paraklesis) to the Theotokos**. This service is a special prayer to St. Mary for help and assistance for all illnesses, difficulties, and troubles of life. The dates will be Saturday, August 2 and 9, 5:00pm. A **Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Our Lady's Dormition and Assumption** will take place Thursday, Aug. 14, at 6:00pm.

Sunday School and Christian Education resumes in the fall

We will resume in September with Sunday school for both children and teens. We also plan to initiate a Teen SOYO ministry at St. George, and resume the Adult Education on Wednesday evenings. More details will be forthcoming! See Fr. Andrew if you have any questions or suggestions.

"We are grateful for everything that our beloved Metropolitan Philip of thrice-blessed memory created over the past 48 years. We humbly accept the fruit of his labor, as well as the labor of the faithful who worked alongside him and the legacy upon which we will now build. We have serious work ahead of us. We don't have time to waste. ...

"Although we begin a new chapter, let me remind you that we are not starting from the beginning. As good stewards, we will only continue the work with which we have been entrusted, and my expectation is, that we continue to work as a team. ... We are working together. We are one Body, and this is what unity means."

~ His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH
17 July 2014