

**:: Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev ::  
On Prayer, Part X: Prayer before Icons**

In prayer the outward should not replace the inward. The outward should contribute to the inward, but it can also hinder it. The traditional disposition of the body at prayer undoubtedly contributes to a prayerful state, but can in no way serve as a substitute for the main content of prayer.

One should not forget that certain dispositions of the body are not accessible to everyone. For example, many older people are simply incapable of making full prostrations. There are many people who cannot stand for long. I have heard from older people: “I do not go to services at church because I cannot stand,” or “I do not pray to God, because my legs hurt.” God does not need our legs, but our hearts. If you cannot pray standing up, then pray sitting down; if you cannot pray sitting down, then pray laying down. As one ascetic struggled put it: “better to sit thinking about God, than to stand thinking about your legs.”

Auxiliary means are important, but they should not take the place of content. One of the most important auxiliary means for prayer is the icon. Orthodox Christians, as a rule, pray before icons of the Savior, the Mother of God, saints, and before depictions of the Holy Cross. But Protestants pray without icons. One can see here the difference between Protestant and Orthodox prayer. In the Orthodox tradition, prayer is more concrete. Contemplating the icon of Christ, we look as if through a window opening up another world to us; behind this icon stands Him to Whom we are praying.

But it is very important that the icon not replace the object of prayer, so that we would not address ourselves in prayer to the icon or try to imagine the person depicted on the icon. The icon is only a reminder, only a kind of symbol of the reality that is behind it. As the Church Fathers say, “the honor rendered to the image returns to the prototype.” When we approach an icon of the Savior or the Mother of God and venerate it – that is, kiss it – we are thereby expressing our love for the Savior or the Mother of God.

Icons should not be turned into idols. Nor should there be the illusion that God is as He is depicted on icons. There exists, for example, an icon of the Holy Trinity called the “New Testament Trinity”: it is uncanonical – that is, it does not correspond to the rules of the Church – but one can see it in certain churches. On this icon God the Father is depicted as a grey-haired old man, Jesus Christ as a young man, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. By no means should we be tempted to imagine that the Holy Trinity looks like this. The Holy Trinity is God, Who cannot be represented by the human imagination. And, turning to God the Holy Trinity in prayer, we should renounce every kind of fantasy. Our imagination should be free from images; the mind should be crystal clear; and the heart should be ready to accommodate the Living God.

Source: [www.pravmir.com](http://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

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### **Sunday, August 3, 2014 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

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

**Holy Bread and Coffee Hour:** George and Mona Kaleel

**Today's Saints:** Isaac, Dalmatos and Faustus of the Dalmaton monastery; Venerable Theoklito and Theodora; Salome the myrrh-bearer; Venerable Anthony the Roman, wonderworker of Novgorod

#### **Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 7):**

Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world the great mercy.

#### **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 of the Transfiguration (Tone 7):**

Thou wast transfigured on the mount, and Thy disciples, in so far as they were able, beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God. So that, when they should see Thee crucified, they would remember that Thy suffering was voluntary, and could declare to all the world that Thou art truly the bright splendor of the Father.

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](http://www.antiochian.org)

The Lord will give strength to His people.

Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of God, ascribe to the Lord honor and glory.

**The Reading from the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (1:10-17)**

Brethren, I appeal to you, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissension among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispos and Gaius; lest anyone should say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

**The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (14:14-22)**

At that time, when Jesus went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to Him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish He looked up to Heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Then Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds.



**Announcements and Upcoming Events**

*For a full calendar of events and services at St. George, see our website, [www.stgeorgeorthodox.org](http://www.stgeorgeorthodox.org).*

Upcoming events and services:

- 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.
- **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. Anyone who wishes to attend should meet at St. George church no later than 4pm so we can carpool together.
- **Saturday, Aug. 9:** Paraklesis to the Mother of God, 5:00 PM
- **Aug. 10-16: Camp St. George in Cedar Rapids, IA.** We are blessed to have four campers this year: Michael Harshman, Rebecca Harshman, Maggie Kishler, and Keeley Thompson.
- **Thursday, Aug. 14:** Divine Liturgy for the Dormition of the Mother of God, 6:00 PM
- **Saturday, Aug. 16:** Paraklesis to the Mother of God, 5:00 PM
- **Saturday, Aug. 30:** Crowning of Matthew and Nan McNatt, at 1:30 PM in honor of their 5th wedding anniversary. All are invited!

**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.

**A Note from Fr. Andrew on Pastoral Services**

*"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" (James 5:14).*

I am happy to make myself available every Sunday after the Liturgy, and before or after any other services throughout the week, for confession, prayers for healing, blessings for travelers, etc. If any of you are ill at home or in the hospital and would like a visit, please call and I will make it a priority.

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