

# Prayer A WAY OF LIFE

## - Going to the Gymnasium

Be exercising yourself toward piety. <sup>8</sup>For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but piety is profitable for all things, having promise of *the* life that now *is* and of that which *is* coming. [1 Tim. 4:7,8]

You know, do you not, that they who run in a stadium all indeed run, but one receives the prize? Thus keep on running that you might obtain. <sup>25</sup>And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; indeed then, those do it that they might receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. [1 Cor. 9:24,25]

# “Trainers” at the Gym

Askesis – is the submission of one’s self to a program of spiritual exercise (Fr. Harakas).”

“And in this I exercise myself, to have continually a conscience without offense toward God and men. [Acts 24:16]

It is the voluntary and willing acceptance of the Church’s requirements and spiritual direction regarding fasting, prayer, works of charity and confession under the guidance of a spiritual father.

# “Trainers” at the Gym

The Spiritual Father – a guide, a gymnast or trainer, shepherd, elder, the one who assumes the responsibility for another, priest

“In order to receive the healing grace of God one needs to open up to at least one other person....for the tradition of the Savior and the saints, individual self-sufficiency is not the way of life...it resembles more the way of demons. (John Chryssavgis, *Soul Mending: The Art of Spiritual Direction*).”

Education – reading on Orthodoxy, formal in classes, informal in worship, community life, conferences, retreats

# Prayer A WAY OF LIFE

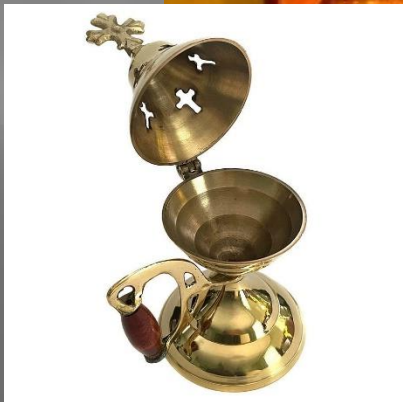
Two Goals: the development of virtue & the transformation of sinful habits into virtue.

Watchfulness: attentive to life situations which either lead to spiritual progress or backsliding

Now all chastisement for the present indeed seem not to be *a matter* of joy, but of grief; then afterwards it yields *the* peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it. [Heb. 12:11]

Corrections by God are sent to awaken us to our sin

# A Prayer Corner Having a Place to go to



# A Discipline (rule) of Prayer

## 1. Praying presupposes

- ❖ Actively participating in the Liturgy
- ❖ Bible Readings
- ❖ Practicing the Commandments
- ❖ Seeking God

## **Obedience is more powerful than fasting**

"Those who struggle regain their original state by keeping two commandments—obedience and fasting; for all evil entered into the generation of mortals through practices opposed to them. Those who keep the commandments through obedience ascend to God more quickly than those who fast....Obedience is more suitable for beginners, and fasting for those on the way, who possess courage and vision of mind. But in fulfilling, the commandments it is given to very few to always obey God undeceived...(St. Gregory of Sinai)."

# A Discipline (rule) of Prayer

The Church does not mandate a particular rule of prayer (as a rule) on anybody. Everybody has to have one but the Church does not define its content.

Every person **MUST** have a very particular practice that suits that person. Everyone will do that differently

How does one figure out their particular rule of Prayer?

Flee from willfulness – doing whatever you want.

Seek- what is God's calling, His providing, empowering, inspiring me to do?

In general, the rule is that it should be short rather than long because this has proven to be more fruitful for most people.

# A Discipline (rule) of Prayer

One learns by practice what works and what does not.

- ❖ One works on their rule of prayer all the time.
- ❖ Do not change it frequently but as seldom as possible and only as necessary.
- ❖ Circumstances in life change

Start with morning prayers and evening prayers

God is the one that is ultimately guiding us in spiritual direction.

a) If one is humble

“The mouth of the spiritual director is opened by the humility, the obedience, the willingness to hear and to practice on the part of the petitioner. (Hopko).”



# General Elements of a Prayer Rule

- ❖ Jesus Prayer- every Orthodox Christian needs a way of staying awake to God, even in one's sleep. Repeating a short verse of scripture. "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me a sinner."
- ❖ Invoking the Holy Spirit – "Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth..."
- ❖ The Trisagion Prayers – "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy..."
- ❖ The Lord's Prayer & Psalms (50)
- ❖ Scripture Daily Readings - Certain temptations are combated with a corresponding word of God. God reveals what these are to us.
- ❖ Silence – sitting in the presence of God, emptying one's thoughts. Practice not thinking. "If you are thinking you are not praying" (Fr. Hopko)
- ❖ Intercession for others (living and dead) is a natural fruit of praying.
- ❖ Certain people come to mind as we begin to pray, often people whom we want to block out.
- ❖ Use an Orthodox Prayer Book

# When You Fast

“Adam’s sin was one of NOT fasting and eating the forbidden fruit which brought death into the world. The act of eating was one of believing that he could have life apart from God. He believed that food had life in itself and by partaking of that food he could be like God (Schmemmann, Great Lent, p. 95).”

❖ Christ is the new Adam and his first act was one of fasting and experiencing hunger. He overcame temptations of the devil and restores life to humanity. (Matt 4:2) Christ does not believe the lie of the devil and answers – man shall not live by bread alone but by God. Life is in God.

“Hunger is that state in which we realize our dependence on something else – when we urgently and essentially need food – showing thus that we have no life in ourselves...it is the time when we face the ultimate question: on what does my life depend?... “Ultimately, to fast means one thing: *to be hungry* ...and that it is in its last reality *a hunger for God* (Schmemmann, Great Lent, p.95).”

# On Fasting

## General Rules:

- ❖ Fasting is never done without intensifying one's prayer life and doing acts of mercy - charity
- ❖ One should finish a meal feeling ready to pray and not satiated
- ❖ Medical conditions allow for adjustments
- ❖ Fasting is done as a community not in isolation
  - ❖ 40 days of Lent
  - ❖ 15 days of August
  - ❖ Nativity Fast – 40 days before Christmas
  - ❖ Fast of the Apostles varies in duration
  - ❖ Wednesdays & Fridays

## Types of Fasting

- A.) Complete absence of food practiced from Saturday evening until after liturgy Sunday morning.
- B.) Ascetical Fasting – prolonged period 40+ days of Lent
- C.) Fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays

# Types of Fasting

Strict Fast (vegan diet) = no meat products, no dairy products – eggs, milk, cheese, fish, oil and alcohol.  
\*Shell fish, octopus, squid, rains, nuts, vegetables, tofu, rice, beans, humus, olives, vegan foods are allowed.

Seek God's direction and guidance to what level He is calling you – fasting is a work of the Holy Spirit within us.

During Great Lent – hybrid fasting is practiced by some with nutritional issues which make a “strict” fast not possible allowing for dairy products and fish