



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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PRAYING THE JESUS PRAYER TOGETHER

by Fr. John

Recently I discovered a book on the Jesus Prayer that I hope will be of interest and value to all of us. Entitled, "*Praying the Jesus Prayer Together*," it is written by two Anglicans - Brother Ramon a monastic and Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward. They both are very knowledgeable and respectful of its roots and practice within Orthodoxy. The Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.", is simple, yet has complex implications. This book explores many ways that can be helpful:

- 1) The Simplicity and profundity of the Jesus Prayer
- 2) The Jesus Prayer and personal growth
- 3) The Jesus Prayer and solitude
- 4) The Jesus Prayer and the local church
- 5) The Jesus Prayer and intercession
- 6) The Jesus Prayer and the Church's Prayer
- 7) The Jesus Prayer in sickness and healing
- 8) The Jesus Prayer and our final union with God

Pentecost, the celebration of the Gift of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles is further continued on Sunday May 30 with the Feast of All Saints – those disciples who "through faith became instruments of the Spirit."

On Sunday June 6, we remember the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our Saints of North America (every national Orthodox group remembers its own local saints: the Saints of Russia, of Greece, etc).

Beginning on Monday May 31 and ending with the Feast of SS Peter and Paul on June 29 we are encouraged to enter into a fasting period, which ideally will direct and prepare us for the path and directions in which the Holy Spirit will send all of us – to be an apostle literally means to be "one who is sent."

To pray on any level is to allow ourselves to be formed and changed by the Holy Spirit. Brother Ramon writes that this book is meant to "allow the Spirit to take us deeper" into the work of the Jesus Prayer in our lives. Let's begin with sections from Chapter 5, "*The Simplicity and profundity of the Jesus Prayer*" written by Brother Ramon.

Definition and explanation

The power of the name of God is abundantly clear in the Old Testament (consider Jacob's encounter with name of Yahweh in his dream in Genesis 28:10-13 and his wrestling with God in Genesis 32:23-32).

The whole of the New Testament resounds with the revelation of the saving name of Jesus.

The post-biblical origins of the Jesus Prayer are found in the deserts of Palestine, Egypt, and Syria where the Desert Fathers and Mothers lived in simplicity, austerity and prayer. Such lives were a witness to the saving gospel and as a testimony against the developing worldliness of the Constantinian Church.

The Jesus Prayer has remained part of the praying of both clergy and laity in the Orthodox tradition handed down the centuries. You can imagine the wonder of being handed a prayer rope as a novice on Mount Athos, beginning a whole pilgrimage of simplicity and profundity, being caught up in this way of praying. This is not the whole of prayer, of course, and practitioners in both East and West will insist on the accompanying grounding and fellowship within the liturgical and Eucharistic life of the Church of God.

The lips, the mind, the heart

There are three degrees or stages at which the Jesus Prayer may be experienced – the lips, the mind, and the heart. They express symbolically and literally the evolution of the Prayer in human experience when directed by the Holy Spirit.

The first stage is to repeat the Prayer audibly with the lips. The mind may be distracted and full of irrelevant desires. Don't be anxious about that, for the Prayer will do its own work under the Holy Spirit. The important thing is that the believer should repeat the name of Jesus with reverence and diligence, whatever the feelings.

In the second stage, the lips are closed. The Prayer moves to the mind, and there is thoughtful attention to the name of Jesus. It is not an exercise in mental concentration; there is no striving to eject other thoughts and no anxious mental effort – just a free, simple awareness of the name of Jesus. Do not strain but gently, simply always return to the Prayer, return to the Prayer, return to the Prayer.

In the third stage, the Prayer or the name of Jesus moves to the heart. The lips and vocal cords are silent and the mind becomes quiet. The Prayer is lodged in the center of the being, the cave of the heart. There are many variations of this third stage – from the grace granted to beginners to the mature experience of those who have dwelt within the name of Jesus for many years. The apprenticeship may take the whole of one's life, but within this third stage there are glimpses of complete, quiet resting in God.

Conclusion

The living fountain that Jesus promised at the feast of Tabernacles springs up in the believer's heart and its fulfillment may well find expression in the practice of the Jesus Prayer: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38: NOTE – this is the text used in the Orthodox Church on Pentecost).

Jesus was speaking of the indwelling of the Spirit, and it is significant that the word rendered "heart" in the Revised Standard Version is translated in different ways in other versions, endeavoring to communicate the idea of the innermost sanctuary of our humanity. (50-59)

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – SATURDAY JUNE 6 - 9AM** - black bean cornbread pie
- **ST. HELENA’S GUILD MEETING – SUNDAY JUNE 6, after the Liturgy**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – to be announced**
- **DEADLINE FOR JULY CROSSROADS – SUNDAY JUNE 20 23.**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY JUNE 14 at 7 PM.**
- **CAREGIVERS GROUP – to be announce**

SUMMER TIME SCHEDULE: On Sunday **June 6** the Liturgy will begin at **9AM**.

CHURCH DONATIONS: As we head into the summer and vacation season please remember your financial commitment to our parish, especially if you’ll be away. For those who are able, we count on a weekly donation of at least \$25.00 per adult member to cover our expenses. Thanks, as always, for your support!

MONTHLY CHARITY COLLECTION: As recommended by our INREACH COMMITTEE and approved by the Parish Council we are taking monthly collections for various needs. During JUNE we will be collecting of behalf of the ATLANTIC CITY RESCUE MISSION.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING GRADUATES OF OUR PARISH:

High School

Stephanie Brook , Paul Clifton, Robert Graham, Anatoly Lane, & Julia Mosser

CHURCH PICNIC – COMING UP: SUNDAY JULY 11

DONATIONS TO THE CHURCH: Please note that donations, particularly of liturgical items (icons, etc) for use in our church, should be reviewed in advance with Fr. John before being brought to the church for placement.

Schedule of Parish Events for 2010 (as of May 30, 2010)

June

- Beginning of 9 AM Divine Liturgy – 6th

July

- Church Picnic July 11

August

- Transfiguration – 6th
- Dormition – 15th
- Summer Church School – TBA.

September

- Nativity of the Theotokos – 8th
- Golf Fundraiser – TBA.
- Elevation of the Cross – 14th
- Fall Festival – 18-19.

October

- Beginning of 10 AM Divine Liturgy – TBA.
- First day of Sunday Church School for children and young adults - TBA.
- First day of Adult Education – TBA.

November

- Holiday Mini-Festival – TBA.
- Presentation of the Theotokos – 21st
- Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service – TBA.

December

- St. Nicholas Vespers – TBA

RESPONSIBILITIES for June, 2010

COFFEE HOUR:

Please note that these Sundays are part of the SS Peter and Paul Fast which begins this year on Monday May 31 and lasts until June 28

June	6	Irene Liston & Tina Horner
	13	Margaret Little
	20	Father's Day – sponsored by the Women of the Parish
	27	Diane Vozdovic

READERS

June	6	Mark Skuby
	13	Leslie Lane
	20	Natalka Weismantel
	27	Genadi Dubiago

ALTAR SERVERS

June	6	David Hamaty & Brendan Detwiler
	13	Anatoly Lane & Eli Nugent
	20	Andrew Abdallah & Nicholas Zanghi
	27	Paul Abdallah & Stephen Shimchick

COMMUNION USHERS

June	6	Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta
	13	Elisabeth & Christina Zanghi
	20	Sierra & Miranda McCleery
	27	Faye Nugent & Natalia Rommen



Fall Festival

September 18 11:00 to 6:00
September 19 Noon to 3:00

Donations of Soda: We need 40 cases (12 cans per case) of soda and 15 cases of water. Please limit your selection to the following: Coke, Diet Coke, Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Sprite, Diet Sprite, Root Beer, Orange, Bottles of Water.

Baked Goods: Donations of baked goods would also be appreciated. Popular sellers are cookies, brownies, scones, cakes, pies, muffins. Sugar free baked goodies are extremely popular. Ethnic baked goods also a plus. Please see Margaret Little for details.

Basket Raffle: We are looking for donations of 25-30 baskets. Gift cards are also welcomed. Please solicit businesses that you know for donated items or coupons. Please see Barbara Shimchick or Diane Pasca for details.

Moon Bounce: Donations for the cost of the Moon Bounce would be greatly appreciated. This is a great activity for the kids.

Marketing/Advertising: Anyone interested in serving as a coordinator, please see Valerie Olesnovich or Liz Gibbons.

Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross – June, 2010

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5 Community Lunch 9:00 Great Vespers: 5:00
6 Divine Liturgy 9:00	7	8	9 12 Burlington Nursing Home 1:30	10	11	12 <i>Parastas for Nicholas & Olga Kwascha</i> 4:30 Great Vespers: 5:00
13 Divine Liturgy 9:00	14 Parish Council Meeting – 7 PM	15	16	17	18	19 <i>Parastas for Jason Gammuto</i> 4:30 Great Vespers 5:00
20 <i>Father's Day</i> Divine Liturgy 9:00	21	22	23	24	25	26 Great Vespers: 5:00
27 Divine Liturgy 9:00	28 Vespereal Liturgy for SS Peter and Paul – 7 PM	29	30	1 JULY	2	3 Great Vespers: 5:00