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ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Archbishop Jovan, Bishop Robert, Metropolitan Savas, Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Paul Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Protopresbyter William & Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smoly nec, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father Joe Cervo, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Igumen Patrick, Pani Mary Ann Chubenko, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Fr. Vasyl Sendeha, Father Steve Hutnick [COVID-19], Father Victor Wronskyj [COVID-19], Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Fr. Volodymyr Muzychka [COVID-19], Father Harry Linsinbigler [COVID-19], Archimandrite Raphael [COVID-19], Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Joseph Sliwinsky, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert

Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Strozh [young lady with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Nancy Heinbaugh, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Manny "Lazarus" Lopez, Glenn & Lucas Burlack, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaugenhaupt, Louis & Teresa Bercelli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Sarah Dorning, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Denis Strittmatter, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Mike Pawlyshyn-Jeannie Stutchell's brother, Joe Samchuck—vocations, Albert Heckman, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat Jennings, Tim Sams, Mike Ruzzi, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Mary Kay Ludovicy, Pastor Sara Irwin, George Dilendorf, Andy Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye,

William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Joe Veto, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Monk Andrew, Jeff & Buschra Kerr, Steven—Harry Batch’s cousin, Rose Mary Pavlovich—Mary Anne Kuznik’s Cousin, Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Dollie Irvin, Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik, Micky Delans [COVID-19], Pastor Terry Polen, Eleanor Kitt, Stacie & Gary, Maria Warholak, Stacie & Gary, Anna Sekelik, Christy, Mariruth, Rich & Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Denis Strittmatter, Father Joe Uzar—newly ordained, Tim—surgery, John Wakin, Olivia—young girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko [triple by-pass], John, Kris & Kait, Jeff & Mary Jane Double [COVID-19], Terri Crosby-Vega [COVID-19], Kristi Wilson, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Mike, Amy, Nathan, & Ben Forbeck [COVID-19], David Salazar, Ann Zurasky [knee replacement], James Mary, Barb Bookser, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Carolyn Strittmatter, Barbara Shegat & Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Candace Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Stacie Riley, Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr. [infant], Elizabeth [5-year-old], Lillian Skowvron, Pani Cathy Danczak, Sue & Greg Heinen, Paul Simpson [Father Bob’s cousin, car accident], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Linda Snow, Zack Blair [Pani Gina’s nephew], Greg & Mary Lou Sheakley [Pani Gina’s cousins—COVID], the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, Robert & Eleanor Rodrigues & family, Don Menagon [COVID-19], Father Nick Mahaly [COVID-19], Mike Wilcox [COVID-19], Father Deacon James Rossetti & Diakonissa Kari—ordination!, Steve Sivulich, Steve Sawchuck, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, and Susan Pulcini—Father Ted Pulcini’s mom. ARNOLD: Homer Paul Kline and Walter Sakol. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is NOTHING to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters, police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be SAFE!!! God Bless!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and ALL American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE

SUNDAY, February 27 **OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS** **10:30 AM**
36TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; MEATFARE SUNDAY; SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT; SAINT AUXENTIUS-MONK OF BITHYNIA; SAINT MARON-HERMIT OF SYRIA; SAINT ABRAHAM-BISHOP OF CHARRES IN MESOPOTAMIA; SAINT CYRIL-EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES & TEACHER OF THE SLAVS; SAINT ISAAC-RECLUSE OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; 12 GREEK MASTER-BUILDERS OF DORMITION CATHEDRAL IN PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF PRINCE-MARTYR MICHAEL & HIS COUNSELOR SAINT THEODORE OF CHERNIHIV

Tone 3

1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Matthew 25:31-46

SUNDAY, March 06 **OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS** **10:30 AM**
37TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; CHEESEFARE SUNDAY; EXPULSION OF ADAM & EVE FROM EDEN; SAINT TIMOTHY OF SYMBOLA IN BITHYNIA; SAINT EUSTATHIUS-ARCHBISHOP OF ANTIOCH; SAINT GEORGE-BISHOP OF AMASTRIS ON THE BLACK SEA

3Tone 4

Romans 13:11-14:4

Matthew 6:14-21

Litany in Blessed Memory of Mary Smith, John Metrick, Andrew Hanczar, Anna Lawrence, Daria Masur, Michael Cicio, Charles Shumsky, Terry Reinhart, Jean Stuchell, Joseph Vangrin, Frank Riznow, Michael Holupka, and Joseph Nezolyk—Fr. Bob

MONDAY, March 07 **GREAT LENT/THE GREAT FAST/BEGINS**

SUNDAY, March 13 **SAINT BASIL THE GREAT-OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS**
10:30 AM
1ST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY; SAINT BASIL THE CONFESSOR; HIEROMARTYR NESTOR-BISHOP OF MAGYDOS; SAINTS MARANA & CYANNA; HIEROMARTYR PROTERIUS-PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA & 6 COMPANIONS

Tone 5

Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

John 1:43-51

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 27 FEBRUARY 2022

36TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; MEATFARE SUNDAY; SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT; SAINT AUXENTIUS-MONK OF BITHYNIA; SAINT MARON-HERMIT OF SYRIA; SAINT ABRAHAM-BISHOP OF CHARRES IN MESOPOTAMIA; SAINT CYRIL-EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES & TEACHER OF THE SLAVS; SAINT ISAAC-RECLUSE OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; 12 GREEK MASTER-BUILDERS OF DORMITION CATHEDRAL IN PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF PRINCE-MARTYR MICHAEL & HIS COUNSELOR SAINT THEODORE OF CHERNIHIV

TROPARION—TONE 3

Let the Heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm!
He has trampled down death by death!
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
And has granted the world great mercy!

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

KONTAKION—MEATFARE SUNDAY—TONE 1

When Thou, O God, shalt come to earth with glory
All things shall tremble and the river of fire shall flow before Thy Judgment Seat;
The Books shall be opened and the hidden things disclosed;
Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire
And make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand
O Righteous Judge.

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 3

On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One!
Leading us from the gates of death.
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;
With the prophets and patriarchs
They unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 3

READER: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

PEOPLE: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

READER: Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

PEOPLE: Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

READER: Sing praises to our God, sing praises!

PEOPLE: Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 3

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame!

Be Thou a God of protection for me, a house of refuge, in order to save me!

Vigils: Training in Patience

by orthodoxtampabay

Time moves differently in a vigil than it does outside of liturgical services. It slows down as psalm after psalm after psalm is read and peace descends upon Israel. And then it speeds up like rapids approaching a roaring waterfall as it draws closer to that mystery before which Angels shield their hallowed eyes. And then, when the Lord so wills, it as though time stops entirely and eternity enters the soul filling her and the darkened Church with another light, not from the candles, not from the oil lamps, but from the presence of the Giver of Light Himself in the midst of His faithful. And when that presence is felt, the heart softens, the thoughts grow still, the soul becomes humble, and the radiant words—"Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me"—fill all things with light. Vigils are precious treasures; they are the wealth of monks and the angelic feasting of Christians.

Vigils can be exhilarating, but they can also be exhausting. That is why after an all-night vigil on the Holy Mountain, oil is allowed even on fasting days, because of the labor involved. Vigils epitomize that famous monastic saying: "good things are acquired by labors." And vigils, which offer such heavenly good things, also require a great deal of labor, physical and mental. The body can grow tired and the spirit can grow weary, but the soul endures. The soul waits on the Lord. And the soul becomes patient. Vigils provide essential training in patience, a virtue so great that our Lord Himself said, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

In his letters to his spiritual children, Elder Joseph often linked the vigil with the acquisition of dispassion and patient endurance in the midst of trials, temptations, and struggles with the passions. Thus, he once wrote to a nun, "Be patient in the temptations that come. God always helps. He always comes in time, but patience is necessary. He hears us immediately

when we cry out to Him, but not in accordance with our own way of thinking. You think that your voice did not immediately reach the saints, our Panagia, and Christ. On the contrary, even before you cried out, the saints rushed to your aid, knowing that you would call upon them and seek their God-given protection. However, since you do not see beyond what is apparent and do not know how God governs the world, you want your request to be fulfilled like lightning. But this is not how things are. The Lord wants patience. He wants you to show your faith." In this brief passage, we see that vigils heal the soul by teaching her to be patient and to realize that all things do not proceed as we think they should, but as the Good Lord allows. Vigils teach us that the world does not revolve around us and how tired we may feel or whether our desires have been fulfilled. Vigils heal the soul by encouraging us to strengthen our faith, believing that God is rushing towards us, even when we feel that we are making all the motions. Vigils slow us down, so that we live not on the basis of what will happen, but what is happening now.

Vigils teach us to watch and to wait, saying "Thy will be done" in this moment, and the next, and the moment after that. And if we have not learned that most basic lesson of the Christian faith, vigils can show us our passions in the presence of our impatience. The Elder Joseph wrote, "It is necessary also to work towards whatever one prays for, and then to learn to wait. You see that what you longed for in the past has finally happened. However, you were harmed because you didn't have the patience to wait, in which case you would have gained both the one and the other: both the temporal and the eternal. Now you become angry and fainthearted and grieved, thinking that the heavenly Father is slow in answering. But I tell you that this will also happen as you desire—it will definitely happen—but first it takes prayer with all your soul, and then you must wait. And when you have forgotten your request and have ceased asking for it, it will come to you as a reward for your patience and endurance. When you reach the verge of despair while praying and seeking, then the fulfillment of your request is near. Christ wants to heal some hidden passion within you, and this is why He delays in granting your request. If you obtain it sooner, when you demand it, your passion remains uncured within you. If you wait, you obtain your request and the cure of the passion. And then you rejoice exceedingly and give warm thanks to God Who arranges all things in wisdom and does everything for our benefit."

The patient endurance of which Elder Joseph writes is cultivated during these extended hours of prayer, especially in vigil throughout the night. To use the words of a familiar psalm, a thousand thoughts shall fall at your side, and ten thousand memories at your right hand, but if you are patient, if you cleave to the prayer, the pestilence that walks darkness shall not

come nigh. Instead, the dayspring from on high will visit you. The soul will be made alive and see her salvation.

*orthdoxtampabay | March 15, 2013 at 10:02 pm | Categories: Themes | URL:
<http://wp.me/p2vytf-89>*

Great Lent: A Time for Morality or a Time for the Heart

by orthdoxtampabay

There is certainly nothing wrong with people trying to do the right thing and to be moral and upstanding citizens. The problem is that salvation and transfiguration are not a matter of morality. The publican and the prodigal were not moral people. They did all the wrong things, but yet they came to themselves, they discovered their hearts, and in so doing found the way, not just to moral goodness, but to holiness, to righteousness, and to feasting in the Father's household. In the West, many speak about Lent as period of struggle whose goal is for Christians to become a better people. For the ancient fathers, however, it is not just about "the good being preserved in their goodness and the crafty becoming good" (anaphora of Saint Basil the Great), although these are things to be prayed for. Rather, it is about discovering the heart, being honest about oneself, being humble before God, and in repentance beginning an incredible journey in which the soul seeks to be clothed in Christ, so that thoughts, desires, the will, all become holy, all become bent on salvation, all become an expression of His forgiveness and His love. No frail human morality can ever hope to contain the overflowing fullness of life with which Christ desires to rejuvenate the faithful.

Unfortunately, an emphasis on morality apart from Christ, apart from repentance, apart from humility can lead to conditions like the Pharisee or the elder son, conditions that are ultimately foreign to the spirit of Lent. This is the problem with morality that Father John Romanides points out with trenchant clarity: "The biblical tradition as preserved by the Fathers cannot be identified with or reduced to a system of moral precepts or Christian ethics. It is rather a therapeutical asceticism which is not daunted by any degree of malady of the heart or noetic faculty short of its complete hardening. To take the shape of this asceticism without its heart and core and to apply it to a system of moral precepts for personal and social ethics is to produce a society of puritanical hypocrites who believe they have a special claim on God's love because of their morality, or predestination, or both. The commandments of Christ cannot be fulfilled by any simple decision to do so or by any confidence in having been elected."

Fyodor Dostoevsky takes up this theme in many of his novels and concludes that the humanism derived from a moral code on its own cannot serve as man's ultimate salvation. The world will not be saved by optimistic

humanism that believes human progress and morality will eventually save the world. For Dostoevsky and the church fathers, man's deepest problems are not moral, nor even psychological, but ultimately existential and ontological. It's not about following the rules or feeling balanced. It is a matter of choice and it is a matter of human nature being touched by the hand of God Himself. Only by daring to leap towards God in spite of the good and evil that exist in the heart can the believer hope to get beyond the contradiction of the human condition. In order to avoid descending into nihilism, Dostoevsky offers his readers another path: the acceptance of suffering and affliction in the context of a relationship with God. It is only in this context that man is able to recognize a path out of his fallen condition. It is only this Love that is able to transform suffering into salvific joy.

This is the goal of Great Lent, a journey through the acceptance of ascetical toil and struggle culminating in the joyous feast of Pascha where we celebrate the Risen Lord as One Who trampled down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestoweth Life. The journey of Great Lent is not about "doing this" or "avoiding that," but about cleansing our hearts in repentance by reaching out to touch the Lord Jesus. Then, we will do what is truly good, forgiving and loving, then we will avoid what is truly bad, pride, judging, and hatred, not because of a moral precept, but because we will feel Christ's mercy in our heart, so that with Saint Paul, each one of us might say, "yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." Amen.

*orthdoxtampabay | March 17, 2013 at 12:12 am | Categories: Themes | URL:
<http://wp.me/p2vytf-8g>*

Distractions During Prayer and the Place of the Heart

by orthdoxtampabay

Many sincere Christians have experienced distracting thoughts or even bad thoughts during prayer and are naturally distressed when this happens.

After all, their intention is to communicate with God, not to talk to themselves about things mundane or even worse! Some have become so discouraged by such thoughts that they give up on prayer altogether. And yet, seeking to find the Lord Jesus even when He seems lost in an unruly crowd of our distractions and bad thoughts is very much a part of our struggle as Christians. The presence of these unwanted, yet to be honest, not totally rejected, thoughts, provides us with a wealth of self-knowledge that can also become a source of genuine humility. They show us that our best efforts are not enough without God's mercy and love coming to us to save us. They also show us that we are living and searching for God in and with our minds, instead of using that unique instrument with which we can come into contact with God, namely, our heart.

Archimandrite Zacharias has noted, "The great tragedy of our times lies in the fact that we live, speak, think, and even pray to God, outside our heart, outside our Father's house. And truly our Father's house is our heart, the place where 'the spirit of glory and of God' would find repose, that Christ may 'be formed in us.' Indeed, only then can we be made whole, and become hypostases in the image of the true and perfect Hypostasis, the Son and Word of God, Who created and redeemed us by the precious Blood of His ineffable sacrifice. Yet as long as we are held captive by our passions, which distract our mind from our heart and lure it into the ever-changing and vain world of natural and created things, thus depriving us of all spiritual strength, we will not know the new birth from on High that makes us children of God and gods by grace."

Distressing distraction in prayer, which sometimes develops into extensive conversations with ourselves, means that we are praying with our minds, but not with our hearts. In *Ancient Christian Wisdom*, I make reference to how we should pray in spite of the distractions and bad thoughts. "The watchful fathers knew by experience that when the believer's mind is gathered in the heart and repeats the prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me' demonic thoughts, fantasies and illusions are exposed as false and thus can be more easily rejected. The correct application of this approach known as monologistic prayer entails 'cognitively' paying attention to the words of prayer and 'emotionally' feeling compunction in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Attentive and compunctious prayer in turn augments the believer's yearning for Christ and watchfulness over the thoughts, thereby bringing him clarity of mind. Although it requires much toil, humility, and even 'assistance from heaven,' the holy fathers consider this 'cognitive method' to be as effective in bridling unruly thoughts as the behavioral technique of not voicing one's reaction to an insult is successful at stifling anger."

It is worth noting that demonic thoughts, fantasies and illusions can appear even if someone is praying correctly and in a God-pleasing way. The difference lies in the ease and the speed with which distractions are rejected. The mind is always making associations, churning out thoughts, saying, "Look over here, look over there." And the mind has an exquisite knowledge of our buttons (which are often our passions) and knows full well which ones to push to get our attention. When we pray in the heart, though, we can tell from afar the difference between the real gold of Christ and the fool's gold of the devil. And so, when praying from the heart, we ignore extraneous thoughts with the blink of an eye, and keep looking to the radiant countenance of our compassionate Lord.

The problem is not really distraction in prayer. Distraction is a symptom of our spiritual state. When we find ourselves especially

distracted, when conversations in the mind with ourselves are more vociferous than our cry of repentance, we need to humble ourselves and strive again to turn to the Lord with compunction, praying to Him with all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength. Perhaps it might be helpful to recognize that one who engages in prayer, especially during the period of purification from the passions is not going to experience it as all "sweetness and light." If that were so, the passions would remain forever hidden and one could hardly make any progress against enemies that remain lurking in the heart. Rather, it might be beneficial to consider the time of prayer as one's entrance into the spiritual arena in which the wild beasts of our passions are let loose, in which the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, and in which the Angels, the Saints, and Christ Himself watch on ready to help us if we call out for help with our entire soul. Prayer introduces the faithful to the battleground for the heart. Let us not grow discouraged by distractions, but take note, and turn to the Lord with increasing fervor. Seeking always seeking what the Lord seeks most of all, our heart. The Lord reminds us that trials and temptations will come our way and that includes trials and temptations in Church and at the time of prayer. But He also told His disciples, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" and with it every possible distraction and evil thought during the hallowed time of prayer.

orthodoxtampabay | March 19, 2013 at 9:28 am | Categories: Themes | URL: <http://wp.me/p2vytf-8m>

St. Gregory Palamas rightly says, that the devil beguiles us little by little, whispering to us, "even if you live independently without going to God's Church or listening to the Church teacher, you will still be able to see for yourself what your duty is and not depart from what is good" (Homily Three, On the Parable of the Prodigal). This is the lie he whispers to us in our day.

The reality is that if we're too busy for church and still think our soul is healthy, we are deceived. Likewise, if we compare ourselves to others who take and leave what they want from holy Church and pattern our lives the same way and think we're not squandering our inheritance, we're deceived. Luke warmness will not grow us in Christ, but only keep us in exile.

-Fr. Robert, Holy Archangels Orthodox Church

Hands

Matthew 18:8- Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. (KJV)

Hands are an integral part of the human body as a blessing from the loving God. The daily use of the hands is determined by the believer's deeply held values. Believers and lovers of the Lord use the hands in ways that are God-pleasing. When used inappropriately the use of the hands will put the soul in ultimate peril. A believer is better off without a hand than to use the hand to put the soul in peril. Serious care of the soul requires conscious attentiveness to the use of the hands.

I Thessalonians 4:11—And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; (KJV)

Personal discipline keeps the believer focused on the Lord in the ways of daily life. A well-disciplined believer uses the mind, tongue, and hands to keep the soul safe. The hands are to be used well for meeting daily needs and for benefitting others. Believers attentive to the Lord's teachings will use the hands in charitable ways. Neighbors in need benefit from caring believers using their loving hands to help. Constantly pleasing God with the use of the hands is a challenge for believers.

I Timothy 5:22—Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. (KJV)

The Holy Scriptures instruct, nourish and guide believers in use of the body. Careful restraint in temperament in daily relationships merits believers' attention. Directing the hands in anger against family members, friends or others is perilous. The heart, mind and soul filled with love will guide the hands in human relations. The believer's daily use of the hands establishes a record for the Final Judgment. All believers will stand before the Lord and answer for personal behavior in life.

James 4:8—Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (KJV)

Repentance and drawing near to God are possible throughout the course of life. The Lord God welcomes sinners to draw near and to seek a new beginning in life. Repentant believers verify a change in heart by applying their hands for charity. Sincere charitable use of the hands reflects values maintained in the heart and soul. Wise and charitable use of the hands facilitates joy for the believer and for others. God strengthens believers choosing to use the hands in charitable acts of mercy.

Afterfeast of the Meeting of the Lord. Venerable Isadore of Pelusium. Venerable Nicholas the Confessor. February 4/17, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic