

A RULE OF PRAYER

Commentary: This is a standard rule of prayer. (By “rule” is meant a standard order or arrangement that is done on a regular basis, usually, at minimum, once a day.) This rule contains elements found in most every rule of prayer we would find in a traditionally arranged Orthodox Christian prayerbook. These elements have an essential quality. In other words, they reflect the core of the tradition as regards personal prayer in the Orthodox Church.

In beginning the rule of prayer, we first set the context with the Opening Blessing. The rule of prayer is done, as all things should be, in God’s name.

Having said the opening blessing, perhaps accompanied by a prostration (a profound bow to the ground), we should stand quietly for a moment, collecting our thoughts, or maybe, letting those thoughts go, so that we will be ready for prayer.

Once settled, we continue with the words that give God glory, “Glory to You, O God, Glory to You!”

Then, we invoke, that is, call down, the Holy Spirit. St. Paul the Apostle tells us that without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we cannot call God, “Father.” So the prayer “O Heavenly King...”, the only ancient prayer in the Orthodox tradition that directly addresses the Holy Spirit, asks that we might pray with the Holy Spirit abiding, dwelling, within us.

Then, we go on with the Trisagion (Thrice Holy) Prayers, which begin almost all Orthodox worship services. Saying these prayers unites us clearly to the Orthodox Church, since they so epitomize the Church’s life of prayer.

Then, we say the central prayer of the rule, the Lord’s Prayer, which He Himself gave us.

Then having completed, as it were, the completely essential elements, we move on with the remainder of the rule. We say “Lord have mercy,” that phrase which permeates Orthodox Christian worship and which, even in the absence of any other prayer, can bring us to salvation.

Then having glorified God again with the standard invocation of “Glory to ...Father...Son...Holy Spirit...Amen,” we call ourselves to continue our worship, and enter into Psalmody, drawing from the Psalter, the “prayerbook” of the Bible.

Presented here is the quintessential psalm, the psalm King David prayed in repentance for arranging the death of ...

Opening Blessing

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glorification of God

Glory to You, O God, Glory to You.

Invocation of the Holy Spirit

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things, Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Trisagion (Thrice Holy) Prayers

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (*3 times*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most Holy Trinity have mercy on us. O Lord, cleanse us from our sins. O Master, pardon our transgressions. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your Name's sake.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Lord Have Mercy

Lord have mercy. (*12 times*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Call to Worship

O come, let us worship God, our King. O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God. O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God.

Psalmody

(*Psalm 50/51, Revised Standard Version*) Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified in Your sentence and blameless in Your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sins did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than

...Bathsheba's husband, but we might with good effect read any of the Psalms here.

Then, having prayed God's own word, we reconfirm our Faith, reciting the Creed. Often we call the Creed the Confession of Faith, for in saying it we "confess," that is, witness to and acknowledge what and in whom we believe.

Then, at this point in the rule, we add any other prayers we may desire to recite. It is here in the rule of prayer that the so-called "morning" and "evening" prayers are added. In this rule of prayer, however, which has the goal of being brief and simple, there is in this place the "Jesus Prayer," which in its simplicity and directness encapsulates every prayer. The tradition is rich in commentary about this prayer and there is no room here to add to those explanations. Let it be said, though, that every Christian should have this prayer on his or her lips and in his or heart many times a day.

Finally, we come to the point where, having given God glory, having expressed penitence for our sins, having confessed the faith, we make our intercessions. We begin by asking the prayers of our patron saint and any other of the holy ones whom we may hope will intercede on our behalf before God. Then we bring to God the names of those—both departed this life and still with us in this world—to whom we especially desire Him to show His mercy and love.

Also, we do not forget the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, and the Mother of God. She stands before us, not as the great exception, but rather as the great example of faith. It was her "Yes," given to the Angel Gabriel that in part made possible the birth of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, made incarnate in her womb. So, we bless her.

In the traditional dismissal we remember that we do not save ourselves, but that salvation is a free gift of God, often made more available to us through the prayers of others, whom we here identify as "our Holy Fathers." Our prayers, together with ascetic discipline (fasting) and charity (alms-giving), serve to turn us to God in repentance, and make us open to the possibility of salvation and eternal life, with God in His Heavenly Kingdom.

We finish these comments, as we conclude the rule of prayer, saying "Amen," "Yes," to God, thanking him for everything.

snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Your deliverance. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You have no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, You would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good to Zion in Your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, then You will delight in a sacrifice of righteousness, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Jesus Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

Intercessions

O Holy Saint *NAME*, my heavenly patron, pray to God for me.

Remember, O Lord, all those in need of Your mercy and help, especially *NAMES*.

Remember O Lord, all those who have fallen asleep in the Lord in the hope of resurrection and eternal life, especially *NAMES*.

Hymn to the Theotokos

It is truly meet to bless you O Theotokos, ever blessed and most pure and the Mother of our God, more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word, true Theotokos we magnify you.

Dismissal

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.