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On The Teachings Of Father Agapit On The Jesus Prayer

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Boise, Idaho
19 April 1999

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



Schema-monk
Agapit The Blind

Introduction by Father Demetrios Serfes:

My Dear Friends In Christ Our Lord,

Peace be unto your souls!

Humbly I greet you with the joy, the love, and the peace, of our Lord God, I pray all are well. *Rejoice always in the Lord our God!*

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Often when I address someone, I do so in the above matter, and in conclusion of my letter I always indicate: *Peace be unto your soul!*

Peace for the soul in today's world is essential, and often one wonders how to obtain this inner peace for the soul? Everyone seeks it and everyone wants it spiritually, or should desire it as we deal with our lives while on this earth as true loving Orthodox Christians. The peace I am of course speaking about is the peace of our inner souls with God Himself being present within us.

In obtaining this peace of the soul is prayer. Constant and unceasing prayer: ***O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner.*** This prayer is known as the "Jesus Prayer", or the "Prayer of the Heart". Another means for us to obtain this inner peace of the soul is by the Holy Mysteries of the Church, in frequently going to Holy Confession, and participating in Holy Communion (as well as

reading these prayers before hand). Also we might go to the Divine Services that the Church provides for us not only on Sunday, but also attending Vespers, Matins, and the week day services. Then again we can do our morning and evening prayers as well. This in itself keeps us all in the participation of true prayer.

Lord, have mercy!

Lord, have mercy!

Lord, have mercy!

Grant this O Lord!

To Thee O Lord!

Glory To Thee O Lord, Glory To

Thee! AMEN!!

Finally we can begin by reading and learning about the Holy Scriptures of the Church, and as well as the Patristic writings of the Holy Fathers, and the lives of the Saints, and holy Martyrs of the Church, which in itself gives us inner peace for the soul.

Seek the peace for you soul! Learn more about the peace of our Lord God, and His love.

Let me humbly and piously now present to you about a Russian Orthodox monastic, who was a Elder of Valaam, who was blind, but inwardly had spiritually peace in his soul -*Fr. Demetrios Serfes*

Schema-Monk Agapit was a monastic at the Russian Orthodox Valaam Monastery, and was known as the Elder Agapit the Blind. Father Agapit was blind, and was born in 1838, and reposed in the Lord on April 7, 1905, on St. Lazarus Saturday.

What was so spiritually remarkable about Elder Agapit the Blind monastic was the fact he was spiritually in contact with many spiritual fathers and ascetics of his times, especially St. Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894), as well as St. Antipas who reposed in the Lord in +1882, and Archimandrite Agathangel who reposed in the Lord in +1909.

The Elder Agapit was a very pious monk, and was devoted to his monastic life, who wrote in his own words: *"how to be delivered from the passions before death and, in true repentance, to end my life in the holy monastery."* Everyone who came in contact with Father Agapit where spiritually uplifted by the pious life of this monastic, who was even considered at one time to be the Elder of his monastery, but out of great humility, and citing his unworthiness, feeblemindedness and inexperience, declined to be the Elder. After much prayer and the suggestion from then Bishop Theophan (the recluse) Father Agapit accepted to be Elder.

The Elder Agapit was a monastic in not only obedience, but also fasting, prayer in its various methods, church attendance, prostration's etc., desired also to further give instruction to others about the Jesus Prayer, also known as the Prayer of Heart. On one occasion



St. Theophan the Recluse

Father Agapit was in correspondence with Bishop Theophan who suggested to him about prayer: *"the whole essence of prayer is humble and penitent feelings, with unflagging remembrance of God, Who is everywhere present and All-seeing, and with fear and reverence."* In another letter the pious Bishop Theophan wrote again about prayer to Father Agapit: *"In prayer everything must be absorbed in a feeling towards God - either contrition, or thanksgiving, or glorification, or in asking for something needful for the soul or of the body, with faith and hope"*.

When anyone ever turned to Father Agapit for spiritual advice, he would humbly remembered the words of Holy Scripture: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding"* (Prov. 9:10). Never did Father Agapit admit to his way of pious life as others felt it and saw it in him daily, but he

himself constantly reproached himself asked others constantly for prayers. Then again the spiritual joy of Father Agapit where the Holy Fathers of the Church, the Patristic Fathers of the Church where very essential to him, as he would constantly read these teachings in his monastic cell. Father Agapit also would speak to others in the manner of the Holy Apostles, and what ineffable gifts they had, and all the Apostles came together for common spiritual counsel.

Another most important spiritual matter for Father Agapit in giving his instructions to his fellow monks was "patience", as he said: *"susceptible by its nature to bad habits, is very inconstant, and therefore it is necessary for the instructor, with fortitude, to protect beginners and young monks, inspiring them with the words of Holy Scripture: In your patience possess ye your souls (St. Luke: 21:19).*

Finally prayer was essential teaching of Father Agapit who would say: *"Take care for the salvation of your souls; for God's sake, do not lose heart, but fortify yourselves with prayer, with living faith in the fact that the Lord is concerned for your salvation, and that at your every humble appeal, in His love for mankind He is always read to help you."*

Like all the early writers and ascetics of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Father Agapit himself prayed and instructed others to pray the Jesus Prayer: *O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* This prayer to Father Agapit was the most essential prayer for him, and for others would say: *"The inward activity of the heart," (concerning the Jesus Prayer) "is the science of sciences and art of arts, and those experience in this activity always abide in fear and trembling by reason of that narrow and exceedingly obscure pate, which is found only with the help of experience instructors..."*

The Jesus Prayer must be done with free will of the individual, and done with the need to spiritually have constant prayer with our Lord

God, and that is to say to have unceasing prayer, which in itself has benefit for the soul, and brings it inner peace.

Several ways are available for you to learn more about the Jesus Prayer, and you can spiritually accomplish this is by first either talk in discussion with guidance by an monastic, who does the the Jesus Prayer, and or your parish priest. Finally we have much material in writings by those who have written about the Jesus Prayer. If you yourself are unable to be in contact with a parish priest on a constant basis, or a monastic, then you should correspond with a Eastern Orthodox priest who does this prayer, to learn more about the prayer, and how to do the prayer. In the end you will be spiritually filled with the presence of our Lord God, and His love. The spiritual path towards your salvation in doing the Jesus Prayer, will be for you spiritually rewarding, and you will begin to feel inner peace within you soul. You can also write to a Eastern Orthodox Monastery to obtain the prayer rope, or you might write to me, as I have indicated my address below.

Now I would like to humbly present to you, "The Teachings of Father Agapit on the Jesus Prayer".

1. On Oral Prayer

"In its abbreviated form it is said thus: *Lord, have mercy!* or, *Lord Jesus Christ, have me on me, a sinner!* But in full it is: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!*

"At the outset it is uttered for the most part constrainedly and reluctantly, and to the degree that one practices it and forces oneself in it (if only there is resolute intention, by means of the prayer and the the help of God's grace, to lessen the general passions) it will, now and then, from frequent exercise and to the degree that the passions are lessened, become easier, more pleasant and more desirable.

"In oral prayer one must try as much as possible to hold the mind in the words of prayers, to say it unhurriedly, concerning all of one's attention in

the thoughts expressed by the words. When the mind is attracted to extraneous thoughts, then without disturbance lead it back to the words of prayer. (From *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Homily 28, chapter 17).

"The absence of dispersion of the mind is not given soon, and not when we want it, but when we humble ourselves by time, nor by the quantity of prayers, but by heartfelt humility and the grace of Christ and by constantly forcing oneself in it.

"From oral and attentive prayer there is a passing to mental prayer, which is so-named when with the mind alone we strive towards God or see God..."

2. On Mental Prayer

"In mental prayer it is essential to hold the attention in the heart before the Lord. According to the measure of our diligence and humble zeal God will grant. His first gift to our mind - recollection and concentration in prayer. When attentiveness to the Lord no longer departs from you, then it is from grace; but our own attentiveness is always forced. From such mental prayer there is a transition to interior prayer of the heart, which occurs quite easily and freely, if only there is an experienced teacher. When, with the feelings of our hearts, we abide with God, and when our heart is filled with love for God, then such prayer bears the name of prayers of the heart.

3. On Interior Prayer of the Heart

"In the Gospels it is said: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross* (Matt. 16:24). If we apply these words to the doing of the prayer, they will mean the following: Whoever wishes to lawfully labor in the *podvig* (struggle). Having given himself over entirely to the untiring care of God, he must humbly and placidly bear this labor for the sake of the true good which will be granted to the zealous man of prayer from God in due course. Then God, by His grace, will put a limit to our mind and set it immovably with the remembrance of God in the

heart. When such a standing of the mind (in the heart) becomes like something natural and constant, the Fathers give it the name "the union of the mind with the heart." In such a state the mind no longer wishes to be outside the heart. On the contrary, if due to some circumstances it is kept from heedfulness to the heart, it will have an irrepressible desire, with a kind of spiritual thirst, to return again within itself, and with fresh zeal will again occupy itself with the building of its interior home. In such an ordering of the heart everything in man's head passes into his heart and then a kind of mental light illumines his entire inward being, and no matter what he does, says or thinks, it is all kind of thoughts, intentions and desires come to him, and will readily compel his mind, heart and will to obey Christ, to fulfill every commandment of God and the Holy Fathers. But he expiates every deviation from them with feelings of heartfelt repentance and contrition, with unfeigned regret and with a humble, aching prostration before God, begging for and awaiting help from on high for his weakness. And God, looking upon such humility, does not deprive him of His grace.

"Be it known to you that prayer of the mind in the heart comes to the heart of some soon, while to others not so quickly. I know three people: to one it came as soon he was told about it, and in that very hour; to another it came after six months; and to one great elder it came after two years. And why it happens this way is known to God alone.

"You should further know that before the extermination of the passions the prayer occurs in one way, and in another way after the purifying of the heart from the passions. The first is an aid during the cleansing of the heart from the passions, while the second is as it were a spiritual pledge of future blessedness. Do it this way - when you sense the entrance of the mind into the heart and the action of the prayer, give total freedom to such prayer, dismissing all that is not propitious for it; and as long as it is there, do not do anything else. When you do not feel drawn

in this way, then pray using oral prayer with prostration's, striving in every way to hold your attention in your heart before the face of the Lord. The heart will also become enkindled in this form of prayer.

"Be sober and vigilant, especially during prayer of the mind in the heart. No one is so pleasing to God as he who correctly takes up this prayer. When it is inconvenient for you or when you have no time to practice the prayer, then as much as possible, during any occupation, preserve in yourself a prayerful spirit - that is, have God in your remembrance and exert yourself in every way, with your mental eyes, to see Him before you with fear and love. And sensing Him as real before you, with reverent submissiveness in all your activities, commit yourself to His Almightyness, Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Omniscience in such a way that in your every need, word and thought you remember God and His holy will.

"This, in short, is what comprises a prayerful spirit! For one who loves prayer it is essential to have this spirit and he must, as much as possible, with constant heartfelt attention, place his own understanding beneath God's understanding, and humbly and reverently submit himself to Him. He must likewise submit all his wishes and desires to those of God and yield himself entirely to God's understanding and God's favor. He must in every way stand against the spirit of arbitrary self-will or the desire to act upon his urges, not being held back by anything. This spirit whispers. 'This is beyond my strength; I don't have enough time for this; or there is not enough time yet to take this up - I need to wait a little; or, the responsibilities of my obedience prevent it' - and my other similar things. Whoever listens to it will never acquire the habit of prayer. In fellowship with the spirit is the spirit of self justification, which enters in and begins to act after someone is carried away by the spirit of arbitrary self-will and does something or other for which his conscience troubles him. Then the spirit of self justification employs various tricks in order to deceive the conscience and

represent our wrongs as rightness. May God
presere you from these evil spirits!" -
Schema-monk Agapit.

Source: *The Orthodox Word.*, St. Herman of
Alaska Brotherhood., Platina, Ca., Vol. 43, No.6
(203) Nov.- Dec. 1998., pp. 300-303

For further information about the basics of the
"Jesus Prayer", or the "Prayer Of The Heart",
please click [here](#).

**O Lord Jesus Christ Son Of God,
Have Mercy Upon Me
A Sinner!**

Glory Be To God For All Things!

Content written/compiled by [Father Demetrios Serfes](#).
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