



## Humility Essential in Practicing the Jesus Prayer

The Jesus prayer is also a complete practice of humility. As we complete this prayer we cry out for God to “Have mercy on us.” Why? Because we recognize that we are sinners. This is important because the confession of our faith in Jesus is connected with our inability to be saved on our own accord. For our salvation we require faith in Christ and our humble awareness of our sinfulness. Saint Maximos points out that pride, the opposite of humility and the predominate sin of mankind, consists of two forms of ignorance. The first is the ignorance of the divine power and the second is the ignorance of human weakness. The humble person is one who has faith in the divine power and recognizes his weaknesses. Therefore, in the Jesus Prayer we confess the power of Christ as our Lord and God along with our weaknesses seeking His mercy for our sinfulness.

(Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain*, p 44-45)

### Saint Gregory of Sinai

Those who say or do something without humility are like a man who builds a house in winter or without cement. It is given to very few minds to acquire humility and to know it through experience. Those who speak of it in words are like people measuring a bottomless pit. We others, who are blind and guess but little the meaning of this great light, say: true humility does not say humble words, nor does it assume humble looks, it does not force one either to think humble of oneself, or to abuse oneself in self-beliitement. Although all such things are the beginning, the manifestations and the various aspects of humility, humility itself is grace, given from above. There are two kinds of humility, as the holy fathers teach: to deem oneself the lowest of all being and to ascribe to God all one's good actions. The first is the beginning, the second the end. Those who seek humility are advised to keep in their minds the following three thoughts: that they are the most sinful of all men, that they are the most despicable of all creatures since their state is an unnatural one, and that they are more damned than the demons, since they are the slave of demons.

Saint Gregory of Sinai, *Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart*, p 63

### Hesychius of Jerusalem

Having begun to live in attention of the mind, if we combine humility with sobriety and prayer with resistance, we shall progress on our mental journey with the holy and adored name of Jesus Christ, which will light our way like a lamp. Thus we will sweep the house of our heart clean of sin and will set it in order and adorn it. But if we put our trust solely in our own attention and sobriety, we shall be speedily attacked and overcome by the enemy. Then these wicked evil-doers will begin to overpower us in everything, and we shall become more and more enmeshed in evil desires as in a net. Or we shall be completely put to death by them, since we shall not have with us the victorious sword—the name of Jesus Christ. For on this sacred sword, if it is constantly wielded in a heart swept clean of all images, can turn them to flight, slay and scorch them and devour them as a fire devours straw.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart*, p 310

THE Lord said: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29). He said also: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:4). "Learn of me", He says. So you see what we must learn? Humility. His commandment is eternal life—and this commandment is humility. Therefore whoever is not humble has abjured life and so will naturally find himself there where is its opposite.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart*, p 318

### Philotheus of Sinai

If we sincerely wish to guard our mind in the Lord, we have need of great humility, first in

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"Just as it is impossible to fight battles without weapons, or to swim a great sea with clothes on, or to live

without breathing, so without humility and the constant prayer to Christ it is impossible to master the art of inward spiritual warfare or to set about it and pursue it skillfully." Saint Hesychios



relation to God, and second, in relation to men. We should always strive to make our heart contrite, seeking for the putting into practice every means for humbling it. It is well known that what renders the heart humble and contrite... is memory of all our sins from youth onwards; if the mind examines them in detail, the recollection habitually makes us humble, brings tears and moves us to a whole-hearted gratitude to God; so too does a constant and active (deeply felt) memory of death which gives birth to sweetness, glad mourning and sobriety of mind. The thing which pre-eminently humbles our mind and disposes us to keep our eyes downcast to the ground is memory of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, if a man goes over it in his memory and remembers it in detail. This also engenders tears. In addition our soul is made truly humble by the great mercies of God towards us personally, if we examine and enumerate in detail; for our fight is with proud demons (who are ungrateful to God).

Let not your self-love turn you aside from these salutary remedies of the soul if you are in need of them. For otherwise you are no longer a disciple of Christ nor an imitator of Paul who says of himself: "I am...not meet to be called an apostle" before "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (1Tim i:13). Do you see, proud man, how even a saint did not forget his former life: All saints, from the beginning of creation to our times, have always clothed themselves in the last holy garment of God (that is in humility). Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was clothed in humility through His life in the flesh, despite being God the incomprehensible, the unknowable and ineffable. So that holy humility should rightly be called a Divine virtue, the Lord's commandment and garment. Likewise the angels and all the Divine powers of light practice and keep this virtue, knowing of the terrible downfall of the proud Satan who, because of his pride, has shown himself before God as the most wicked of all creatures, and who now lies in the abyss as an example of how all angels and men should fear to be cast down (for this sin). We know too how Adam fell through pride. Keeping these examples before our eyes, let us strive to attain this high virtue and let us humble ourselves by all the means in our power, using the remedies we mentioned above. Let us be humble in soul and body, in mind, in desire, in speech, in thought, in outward appearance; humble without and within. We must have special concern that Jesus Christ, Son of God and God, Who is for us, should not become against us. For the Lord "surely...scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly" (Prov 3:34). "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov 16:5). "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 18:14). "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29), says the Savior. So take heed.

Philotheus of Sinai, *Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart*, p 328

#### **Barsanuphius and Saint John**

The Lord has taught us how to acquire wise humility, saying: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt 11:29). If you too want to find perfect rest, understand what the Lord has endured and suffer the same; and cut off your will in all things. The Lord Himself says: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). And perfect humility consists in enduring blame and abuse and other things which our Teacher, Christ Jesus, has suffered. The same is also a sign that a man has touched perfect prayer—namely the fact that he is no longer troubled even if the whole world were to abuse him.

Barsanuphius and Saint John, *Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart*, pp 351-352

The Lord wishes you to regard every man as superior to yourself. Show obedience to your starets in all things and do all that he tells you, whether it refers to food or drink or some other matter. If they slander you, rejoice—it is most useful. If they insult you, endure it, for "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt 10:22). Give thanks to God for all things, because thanksgiving is intercession before God for our weakness. Judge yourself always and in everything as a sinner and as one seduced—and so God will not judge you; be humble in everything and you will receive grace.

Let us have recourse to humility on all occasions; for the humble lie prone on the ground, and how can a man fall if he lies on the ground? But a man who stands on a height can easily fall. If we have been converted and have mended our ways, it did not come from ourselves but was a gift of God, for "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down" (Ps cxlvi.8).

Barsanuphius and Saint John, *Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart*, p 356

Strive to acquire humility and submissiveness. Never insist that anything should be according to your will, for this gives birth to anger. So do not judge or humiliate anyone, for this exhausts the heart and blinds the mind, and thereon leads to negligence and makes the heart unfeeling. Watch

constantly, learning to understand God's law, for this warms the heart with heavenly fire, as is said: "While I was musing the fire burned" (Ps XXXIX 3). Guard your lips from an idle word, or empty talk, lest the heart gets used to evil words. Cast yourself before God, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), and He will have mercy upon you and will keep and protect you from all evil, to lead you from darkness to true light, from prelest to truth, from death to life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Barsabuphius and Saint John, , p 372

### **Elder Piasios**

Begin with Humility

Some (unfortunately) do not set the goal of putting off the old man (repentance, humility, and asceticism as a way of helping the sanctification of the soul) with a deep sense of their sinfulness. Then, they would naturally feel the need for Gods mercy, saying "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," often. This with pain in their heart and then the feeling of the sweetness of divine comfort of the most Sweet Christ within their heart.

But unfortunately some people (as I mentioned) start off with a dry ascetic practice and seek after divine pleasure and lights and continually multiply their prayer-ropes and are sanctified by their calculation, reaching that conclusion (about their sanctity) from the mathematical reckoning of the greater amount of prayer-ropes they say.

They also (naturally) make footstools to the exact inch and all the other things, the bending of the head towards the heart. They regulate their breath and whatever else the watchful Saint Kallistuses and Gregory of the Philokalia say. Then they create the false sensation that they are somewhere near the measure of those Saints.

From the moment they believe that thought, the tangalaki (the demon) immediately appears and sets up a television for them (with their fantasies) and devilish prophecies etc. of delusion follow.

For this reason, only certainty is repentance and let every spiritual edifice be built upon it and let us continually seek repentance from God and nothing else except that.

We should not ask for lights or miracles, or prophecies, or gifts of the Spirit, only for repentance. Repentance brings humility; humility will bring grace from God, because grace always goes to the humble, of necessity. Therefore, repentance is necessary for our salvation and when we have it, the grace of God will come and it will teach us what we need to do for salvation even of our fellows too, if it is necessary.

[more from Piasios...](#)

### **Metropolitan Anthony Bloom**

What we must start with, if we wish to pray, is the certainty that we are sinners in need of salvation, that we are cut off from God and that we cannot live without Him and that all we can offer God is our desperate longing to be made such that God will receive us, receive us in repentance, receive us with mercy and with love.

*Beginning to Pray, p 31*

Humility is the situation of the earth. The earth is always there, always taken for granted, never remembered, always trodden on by everyone, somewhere we cast and pour out all the refuse, all we don't need. It's there, silent and accepting everything and in a miraculous way making out of all the refuse new richness in spite of corruption, transforming corruption itself into a power of life and new possibility of creativeness, open to sunshine, open to the rain, ready to receive any seed we sow and capable of bringing thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold out of every seed.

*Beginning to Pray, p 35*

