



The Cell Rule of Five Hundred of the Optina Monastery

A Russian Orthodox monastic prayer rule involving the Jesus Prayer, Psalter, Gospels, and Epistles.

In ADDITION to the church services: the Liturgy, Matins, and Vespers with Compline, which all of the brethren of the monastery are obligated to attend, many of them daily read in their cells:

Scripture Reading

- One chapter from the *Gospel* in order, beginning first with the Gospel of Matthew, to the last chapter of the Gospel of John,
- Two chapters from the *Epistle*, likewise in order, beginning with the Acts of the holy Apostles and ending with the last chapter of the Apocalypse of Saint John

the Theologian. The last seven chapters of the Apocalypse are read one a day.

- One kathisma a day of the *Psalter*, beginning with the first and ending with the last.

In this way the last chapter of the Apocalypse is read on exactly the same day as the last chapter of the Gospel of John.

Then, after the completion of the reading of the whole New Testament, in this manner they begin again from the first chapters a new cycle of reading in precisely the same order.

In addition to this, they perform the so-called:

Cell Rule of Five Hundred

It is begun with the customary three prostrations performed at the commencement of every rule of prayer, both in church and in one's cell, with the prayers:

1. God, be merciful to me a sinner.
2. God be gracious unto my sins and have mercy on me.
3. O Thou Who hast fashioned me, Lord, have mercy. I have sinned beyond measure, O Lord, forgive me.
4. In one's cell a fourth prostration is added together with the prayer: My Lady, Most Holy Theotokos, save me a sinner.

Then the following prayers are said:

Through the Prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee. O Heavenly King. Holy God (3). Glory. Both Now. Amen.

All Holy Trinity. Lord, have mercy (3). Glory. Both Now. Amen.

Our Father.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Lord, have mercy (12). Glory. Both Now. Amen.

O come, let us worship God our King.

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

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

Psalm 50.

Symbol of Faith.

First group.

Then *one hundred prayers*: **Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,**

- with full prostrations for the first ten prayers,
- full bows for the next twenty prayers,
- and on the last, that is, the hundredth prayer, again a full prostration.

After this, the following Prayer to the Most Holy Theotokos:

My Most Holy Lady Theotokos, by thy holy and all-powerful entreaties dispel from me, thy humble, wretched servant, despondency, forgetfulness, folly, carelessness, and all impure, evil, and blasphemous thoughts out of my wretched heart and my darkened mind. And quench the flame of my passions, for I am poor and wretched, and deliver me from my many cruel memories and deeds, and free me from all evil actions: for blessed art thou by all generations, and glorified is thy most honourable name unto the ages of ages. Amen.

At the end of this prayer a full prostration.

Second group.

Then again *one hundred Jesus Prayers* in the same order as before with ten full prostrations and twenty full bows. On the last Jesus Prayer a full prostration and again the same prayer: My Most Holy Lady Theotokos, with a full prostration.

Third group.

One hundred likewise as the first and second.

Fourth group.

One hundred consisting of prayers to the Most Holy Theotokos: **My Most Holy Lady Theotokos, save me a sinner.**

In this group of one hundred

- the first ten prayers are likewise made with full prostrations
- and the following twenty with full bows,
- the remaining without bows.
- The last and hundredth prayer is made with a full prostration, after which with a full prostration the prayer: My Most Holy Lady Theotokos.

Then *fifty prayers*: **O Holy Angel of God, my Guardian, pray to God for me a sinner.**

- On the first five prayers, full prostrations;
- on the following ten, full bows;
- the remaining thirty-four, without bows.
- Only on the last prayer a full prostration and again the prayer: My Most Holy Lady Theotokos, with a full prostration.

Then *fifty prayers*: **All Saints, pray to God for me a sinner.**

- On the first five prayers, full prostrations;
- on the following ten, full bows;

- the remaining thirty-four, without bows.
- Again the last prayer with a full prostration, after which is said the prayer: My Most Holy Lady Theotokos, with a full prostration.

Then:

It is truly meet to call thee blessed, the Theotokos, the ever-blessed and all-immaculate and Mother of our God. More honourable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, thee who without corruption gayest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.

At the end of this prayer a full prostration.

After this:

Glory to Thee, Christ God, our Hope, glory be to Thee.

Glory. Both now.

Lord, have mercy (3)

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

On weekdays all of the above-mentioned bows and prostrations are performed.

- On the days of Pentecost,
- on days when there is the Polyeleos,
- on Forefeasts and for the duration of the Feasts,
- on days when the Great Doxology is chanted at Matins
- and in the church services full prostrations are dispensed with,

in like manner in one's cell the full prostrations are replaced with full bows, as is also the case on all days throughout the year when there is a Vigil.

- On the last two days of Passion Week,
- for all of Bright Week,
- and from the twenty-fourth of December until the seventh of January,

this cell rule is completely dispensed with, as is likewise the case on all Sundays throughout the year, even if the all-night Vigil has not been performed, but only Vespers and Matins, as is done in winter.

Any change in the composition of this cell rule, as well as deduction from it or addition to it, is left to the will and blessing of the Elder or Spiritual Father of the individual.

