



Gaining the Attention of the Mind

One of the major challenges in our prayer life is the wandering of our mind. Here is what some of the Holy People say about this. We begin with one of the Syriac Fathers,

Evagrius:

"Be careful lest your mind wander during your time of prayer, thinking about empty things. In that case you will stir the Judge to anger, rather than to good will, seeing that he has been insulted by you. Should you be afraid in the presence of ordinary judges but show contempt in the presence of God? How can a person who is not aware of where he is standing and what he is saying imagine of himself that he is offering up prayer?..."

This is a powerful admonition. How can one expect to be in relationship with another person when your mind is not focused on the conversation with them. And how much more important this is with God. What an insult it is to Him. This is surely taking the Lord's name in vane when we let our minds wander while calling out to him for help and forgiveness.

He continues with a powerful punch:

"Arouse yourself, wretch; your Lord is speaking with you. Do not wander off. His elect angels surround you, do not be dismayed; the ranks of the demons stand facing you, so do not grow lax." Wretch? These are very strong terms he is using. The dictionary says this is "a despicable or contemptible person." He says rather directly "Do not wander off." This tendency we must fight with all our ability. We cannot be lax in this effort.

Quotes from *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, pp 66-73

Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov

Experience will teach everyone who practices prayer that the saying aloud of a few prayers of Jesus and all prayers in general is a great help in preventing the mind from being robbed by distraction. In the vent of a violent attack of the enemy, when a weakening of the will and darkening of the mind is felt, vocal prayer is indispensable. Attentive vocal prayer is at the same both mental and cordial.

Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov in *On the Prayer of Jesus*, p 57

[more from Saint Ignatius...](#)

Theophan the Recluse

When we pray we must stand in our mind before God, and think of Him alone. Yet various thoughts keep jostling in the mind, and draw it away from God. In order to teach the mind to rest on one thing, the Holy Fathers used short prayers and acquired the habit of reciting them unceasingly. This unceasing repetition of a short prayer kept the mind on the thought of God and dispersed all irrelevant thoughts. They adopted various short prayers, but it is the Jesus Prayer which has become particularly established amongst us and is most generally employed: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner!'

So this is what the Jesus Prayer is. It is one among various short prayers, oral like all others. Its purpose is to keep the mind on the single thought of God.

In order to keep the mind on one thing by the use of a short prayer, it is necessary to preserve attention and so lead it into the heart: for so long as the mind remains in the head, where thoughts jostle one another, it has no time to concentrate on one thing. But when attention descends into the heart, it attracts all the powers of the soul and body into one point there. This concentration of all human life in one place is immediately reflected in the heart by a special sensation that is the beginning of future warmth. This sensation, faint at the beginning, becomes gradually stronger, firmer, deeper. At first only tepid, it grows into warm feeling and concentrates the attention upon itself. And so it comes about that, whereas in the initial stages the attention is kept in the heart by an effort of will, in due course this attention, by its own vigor, gives birth to warmth in the heart. This warmth then holds the attention without special effort. From this, the two go on supporting one another, and must remain inseparable; because dispersion of attention cools the warmth, and diminishing warmth weakens attention.

Wandering Thoughts

You are subject to wandering thoughts because you listen to idle talk, and memories often remain with you. Out of these memories the enemy weaves a web in front of your mind's eye in order to enmesh it. When this happens, you should descend into your heart, turning your eyes away from the illusory images presented by the enemy, and call to the Lord.

[On wandering thoughts by St. Theophan
more from Saint Theophan...](#)

Saint Gregory Palamas

The closet of the soul is the body; our doors are the five bodily senses. The soul enters its closet when the mind does not wander hither and thither, roaming among things and affairs of the world, but stays within, in our heart.

Our senses become closed and remain closed when we do not let them be attached to external sensory things, and in this way our mind remains free from every worldly attachment, and by secret mental prayer unites with God its Father. "And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly," adds the Lord.

God who knows all secret things sees mental prayer and rewards it openly with great gifts. For that prayer is true and perfect which fills the soul with Divine grace and spiritual gifts. As chrism perfumes the jar the more strongly the tighter it is closed, so prayer, the more fast it is imprisoned in the heart, abounds the more in Divine grace.

So, brother, when you enter your closet and close your door, that is, when your mind is not darting

hither and thither but enters within your heart, and your senses are confined and barred against things of this world, and when you pray thus always, you too are then like the holy angels, and your Father, Who sees your prayer in secret, which you bring Him in the hidden depths of your heart, will reward you openly by great spiritual gifts.

St Gregory Palamas, from "Early Fathers From the Philokalia," translated from the Russian text, "Dobrotolubiye," by E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer, eighth edition, (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1981), pp. 412 - 415

[more from Gregory Palamas...](#)

A Monk on the Holy Mountain

Use of Prayer Rope to Control our Thoughts

We are constantly occupied by all kinds of thoughts that appear in our heads, and it seems we no sooner start to pray than we catch ourselves thinking about something else. Here again, the physical presence of the prayer rope in our fingers can help us catch ourselves and return to our task of prayer more quickly. Or meeting up with one of the markers or with the cross on the prayer rope as we move it through our fingers reminds us that we have been robbed of prayers we intended to offer. And immediately we can offer our prayers anew without getting further entangled in our thoughts about how easily we get distracted from prayer to God.

Meditation of a monk on the Holy Mountain in *On the Prayer of Jesus*, p 110

Elder Ephriam

Control of Distractions

If you are distracted for a little while, as soon as you perceive that you have strayed from the place and the manner of your prayer, immediately return. And if you are carried away again, return once more. If you keep returning every time you are distracted, God will see your labor and your eagerness, and by His grace, little by little, He will make your nous steady.

The nous is accustomed to run around and only remains where we feel pain. Therefore, pause momentarily after you inhale; do not exhale immediately. this will cause a slight , harmless pain in the heart, which is the place where we want to establish our nous. this small pain greatly assists by attracting the intellect like a magnet and holding it there to serve the nous somewhat like a servant
Elder Ephriam in *Counsels from the Holy Mountains*, p 338

Archimandrite Sophrony

When we pray in a quiet solitary place quite often useless thoughts persistently gather about the mind, distracting attention from the heart. Prayer seems futile because the mind is not taking part in the invocation of the Name of Jesus—only the lips mechanically repeat the words. And when the prayer comes to an end, extraneous thoughts then generally go away, leaving one in peace. However, there is some sense in this tedious business: in invoking the Divine Name we set in motion all that is concealed in us. Prayer is like shafts of light cast on the dark depths of our inner life, showing us what passions or attachments are lodged in us. When this happens we must urgently pronounce the Holy Name, so that a feeling of repentance increases in the soul.

Archimandrite Sophrony in *On Prayer*, pp 151-152

Those who want to pray with a cleansed mind (nous) must not concern themselves with the latest news from the newspapers, or read books that are irrelevant to our spiritual life – especially those books that arouse the passions – and they must not strive to learn out of curiosity whatever pertains

to the lives of others. All these things bring foreign thoughts to mind, and when a person attempts to elucidate them, they confound his mind even more.

Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Heirotheos

You should know that the devil will try to break the unity of the words at all costs and enter into the nous and heart. He will try to make only one small opening in order to put a bomb (a thought) and blow up all this holy effort. However we must not allow him in. We must say the Jesus prayer loudly (vocally) so the ears will also hear it, because this helps the mind concentrate more... Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Heirotheos in *A Night In The Desert Of The Holy Mountain*, p 77

We should ask for help from God when we realize that our nous is continually being distracted and scattered. Like the Apostle Peter who, when he saw the strong wind and he began to sink, cried out "Lord save me", (Matt 14:30) we, also, should do the same when the whirlwind of thoughts and weariness arises. And then what happened in the case of the Apostle will happen to us: "Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught him" (Matt 14:31). That is, after an arduous prayer, with the help of God, all these images which come to distract the nous will be dissolved, consumed in flames invisibly by the name of Christ. I repeat, we must not panic in these cases but we must go on offering resistance. And our resistance must be as strong as the attack of the evil one. Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Heirotheos in *A Night In The Desert Of The Holy Mountain*, p 80

Imagination is the most cunning weapon of Satan; imagining good works, imagining bad ones. Various thoughts come and preoccupy the nous, so that it ceases to meditate on the name of Jesus. He tries to make man not to show interest in God and express his love. Primarily he coaxes him to call to mind of the various faults he has committed in his former and recent life... Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Heirotheos in *A Night In The Desert Of The Holy Mountain*, p 95

..the athlete of prayer must not let himself be shaken. He must oppose imagination with the continuous invocation of the name of Jesus, and he must be concentrated within the words of the Jesus prayer. He just stand bravely in the conciseness of the Jesus prayer. He must not think of anything during prayer, either of wrong or even good works... Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Heirotheos in *A Night In The Desert Of The Holy Mountain*, p 96

Saint John Chrysostom Control the Mind

"It is necessary to lock oneself up with oneself, to curb and control one's mind and to chastise every thought or action of the evil one by calling on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And "where the the body stands, there the mind should be, so that nothing exists between God and the heart as a dividing wall or a partition to screen off the heart and separate the mind from God. If the mind happens to be ravished by something, it is necessary not to let the thoughts dwell on it, lest identification with thoughts is counted as sin on judgment day in the presence of the Lord, when God will judge the secrets of men. Always free yourself and remain with our Lord and God until He gives you of His bounty. Seek nothing from the Lord of glory except this one mercy; and seek this mercy with a humble and warm heart, calling to Him from morning till evening and if possible all night: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," and forcing your mind to this work until death itself. for this work demands great forcing, since "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." (Mat 11:12). I implore you therefore not to withdraw your hearts from God, but to watch them and guard them by constant remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, until the name of our Lord is deeply rooted in you heart and you cease to think of aught but glorifying the Lord in you." St. John

Callistus & Ignatius, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p233

Callistus Patriarch Purified Mind

Purified of everything external and having entirely mastered the senses by active virtue, the mind rests unmoving within the heart, its vision established in the center. There it receives mental illuminations, like flashes of lightning, and thus collects Divine understanding.

Callistus Patriarch p 272

Attention

If you wish to learn how to pray, keep your gaze fixed on the end of attention or of prayer. This end is adoration, contrition of the heart, love of neighbor. It is self-evident that lustful thoughts, whisperings of slander, hatred of one's neighbor and similar things are opposed to it. All this is incompatible with the work of prayer.

Callistus Patriarch, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 273

Hesychius of Jerusalem

Attention is unceasing silence of the heart, free of all thoughts. At all times, constantly and without ceasing, it breathes Christ Jesus, the Son of God and God, and Him alone, it calls upon Him, and with Him bravely fights against the enemies, and makes confession to Him Who has power to forgive sins. Such a soul, through continual calling on Christ, embraces Him Who alone searches the heart; and it seeks to hide its sweetness and its inner attainment from all men in every way, lest the evil one should have an easy entrance for his wickedness and destroy its excellent working.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p280

Sobriety is the steadfast setting up of the thought of the mind and posting it at the door of the heart, so that it sees alien thoughts as they come, those thieves and robbers, and hears what these destroyers say and do; and sees what is the image inscribed and figured in them by the demons, who are trying thus to seduce the mind by fantasy. For this work, when it is done with loving effort, reveals to us very fundamentally and clearly, by experience the art of mental way and brings skill in it.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p280

You should look within with a keen and intense look of the mind so as to perceive those who enter; and when you perceive them, you should at once crush the head of the snake by resistance; and along with this call on Christ with groaning. And then you will gain the experience of unseen Divine intercession; and you will see clearly what is rightness of heart (whether it works rightly and in what its right work consists).

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 283

Spider in the Web

If you wish to struggle as you ought, beloved, let that little creature the spider be a pattern to you, showing you the way and order of silence of the heart. The spider seizes and kill small flies; like the spider (sitting in the middle of its web) may you too keep silence in the soul with the utmost effort,

and never cease killing the children of Babylon; for such slaughter you would be called happy the the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (Ps cxxxvii. 9)

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 284

Mind is invisibly engaged in battle with the mind—the demon’s mind with our mind. And for this reason it is needful for us to cry out of the depths at each moment to Christ, that He will drive away from us the demon’s mind and give us the prize of victory, as He loves men.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 289

It is impossible to live our present life without food and drink. So, too, it is impossible for the soul to attain anything spiritual and pleasing to God, or to be free on inner sin, without guarding of the mind and purity of hear, in other words, without sobriety, no matter how much a man strives to refrain from committing sins indeed through fear of future torment.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 300

This virtue of attention is called mental love of wisdom. Practice it with great sobriety and zealous warmth, with prayer to Jesus, with humility and constancy, with silence of your physical and mental lips, with abstinence in food and drink, withdrawing fro all sin. Practice it by following the mental path skillfully with good judgment, and with God’s help it will reveal to you things you never expected, will give you knowledge, will enlighten you, make you wise and will teach you things which formerly your mind could not even receive, when you were walking in the obscurity of passions and dark deeds, plunged in the abyss of forgetfulness and confusion of thoughts.

Hesychius of Jerusalem, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 302

Philotheus of Sinai Warfare

There is warfare where evil spirits secretly battle with the soul by means of thoughts... Why and wherefore are those attacks and onslaughts directed against us? To prevent us from fulfilling God’s will of which we pray: “Thy will be done” (Luke 11:2), that is, God’s commandments. Anyone who sets his mind firmly in perfect sobriety in the Lord, free from wandering, and carefully observes these invasions (of the heart) by invisible enemies and the melees (skirmishes with the sober mind) which take place in dreams of fantasy, will learn all this in practice. this is why evil demons are the target at which the Lord aims. Being God and thus foreseeing their plots, He established His commandments to oppose their aim, with threats against those who transgress them.

Philotheus of Sinai, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 325-326

Guard your mind with extreme intensity of attention. As soon as you notice a (hostile) thought, immediately resist it and at the same time hasten to call on Christ our Lord to wreak vengeance. While you are still calling to Him, sweet Jesus will say: I am with you to protect you. But when by your prayer the enemies are subdued, you must again diligently pay attention to your mind. Here come waves (of thoughts), more numerous than ever, again rushing against you, one after another, so that the soul is almost engulfed in them and is about to perish. But Jesus, being God, when the disciple appeals, again forbids the evil winds (of thoughts, and they become subdued). But you, having found an hour or a moment of respite from attacks of the enemy, glorify Him Who has saved you, and plunge deep into meditation upon death.

Philotheus of Sinai, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p334-335

Let us pursue our way with the strictest attention of the heart on the sensation of the soul. Attention, when daily combined with prayer, produces something like the fiery chariot of Elias, lifting a man up to heaven.....

Philotheus of Sinai, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, p 335

Nicephorus the Solitary

...Having banished every thought from this inner talking (for you can do this if you want to). give it the following short prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me—and force it, instead of all other thought, to have only this one constant cry within. If you continue to do this constantly, with your whole attention, then in time this will open for you the way to the heart which I have described. There can be no doubt about this, for we have proved it ourselves by experience. Nicephorus the Solitary, Writings from the Philokalia On the Prayer of the Heart, pp 33-34

Mother Alexandria

Any stray thought, however good or pious, can become an obstacle. When you embrace a dear one you do not stop to meditate how and why you love--you just love wholeheartedly. It is the same when spiritually we grasp Jesus the Christ to our heart. If we pay heed to the depth and quality of our love, it means that we are preoccupied with our own reactions, rather than giving ourselves unreservedly to Jesus --holding nothing back.

[More from Mother Alexandria on the Jesus prayer...](#)

Desert Fathers – Unknown

A brother asked one of the Fathers, What shall I do? My thoughts are always turned to lust without allowing me an hour's respite, and my soul is tormented by it. He said to him, Every time the demons suggest these thoughts to you, do not argue with them. For the activity of demons always is to suggest, and suggestions are not sins, for they cannot compel; but it rests with you to welcome them, or not to welcome them. Do you know what the Midianites did? They adorned their daughters and presented them to the Israelites. They did not compel anyone, but those who consented, sinned with them, while the others were enraged and put them to death. It is the same with thoughts. The brother answered the old man, What shall I do, then, for I am weak and passion overcomes me?? He said to him, Watch your thoughts, and every time they begin to say something to you, do not answer them but rise and pray; kneel down, saying, Son of God, have mercy on me.

Then the brother said to him, Look, Abba, I meditate, and there is no compunction in my heart because I do not understand the meaning of the words. The other said to him, Be content to meditate. Indeed, I have learned that Abba Poemen and many other Fathers uttered the following saying, The magician does not understand the meaning of the words which he pronounces, but the wild animal who hears it understands, submits, and bows to it. So it is with us also; even if we do not understand the meaning of the words we are saying, when the demons hear them, they take fright and go away.

From Blog [Desert Fathers](#)

Watchfulness and Prayer - Hieromonk Damascene

In the Orthodox Church, we have a special means of cutting off thoughts: the Jesus Prayer. The effects of this Prayer are twofold. In the first place the Prayer helps us to cut off and turn away from impassioned thoughts. And in the second place the Prayer helps us to turn and keep turning to Christ our Savior at all times.

When we practice watchfulness with the help of the Jesus Prayer, we make our soul open to receive the Grace of the Holy Spirit, which transforms us and deifies us. We are no longer repelling Grace,

but attracting it. We are calling upon Christ to have mercy on our darkened souls, to dwell within us more fully, to fill us with His unending Life, with the Light of the Holy Spirit Whom He has sent from the Father (cf. John 15:26). Thus our darkened nous is illumined by the Light of the Uncreated Grace of God. “Only the Holy Spirit can purify the nous,” writes St. Diadochos of Photiki in *The Philokalia*. “... In every way, therefore, and especially through peace of soul, we must make ourselves a dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit. Then we shall have the lamp of spiritual knowledge burning always within us.”

[More on Watchfulness and Prayer by Hieromonk Damascene](#)

On thoughts of the mind - Saint John the Solitary

Be attentive to the thoughts of the mind. If some evil thought passes through you, do not get upset, for it is not the transient thoughts of your mind that the knowledge of the Lord of all observes, rather He looks at the depths of the mind to see if you take pleasure in that evil thought which resides there; for hateful thoughts float over the surface of the mind, but it is the senses that are lower down which can chase away hateful thoughts, which the Lord of all examines. He does not judge what just passes over the mind, but rather the thoughts that are lower down than those hateful ones, namely those which appear in the depths of the mind, which can drive them away with its hidden hand. For He does not pardon the thoughts which spring up from the depth of the mind, for it is they which should be chasing away those which pass over the surface of the mind; He judges those thoughts which have a passage into the heart.

[See also Attention in Prayer](#)

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-beliitment. 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 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 scornors: 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 staretz 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.

Barsanuphius 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 God's 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