

# Tales of a Russian Pilgrim



*Anonymous*

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*Pray without ceasing: The Prayer of the Heart!*

A great treasure of eastern spirituality

*Although they originate in Orthodox Christianity, the Tales of a Russian Pilgrim are one of humanity's great spiritual texts. As such, its message and its proposal resonate beyond the specific tradition that gave rise to the work, which, written in simple and warm language, narrates a pilgrimage that is not only physical, but also spiritual. This edition, the first complete single volume in the Spanish language, adds to the first four traditionally published stories the three additional ones discovered in 1911. The introduction, by Sebastià Janeras, provides the interested reader with the appropriate context in which to situate this anonymous work.*

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## **Stories from a Russian pilgrim**

*Ed. written by Sebastià Janeras*

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And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Jl. 3, 32 and Chap. 2, 21).

## PREFACE

Sebastià Janeras and Vilaró

«When a pilgrim comes to visit you, prostrate yourself before him. Not before man, but before God. If this is so, and it is the authority of whoever pronounced it [1], it is so, I would say, eminently with regard to the protagonist, as well as the narrator, of the work in question.

Through the door we open to welcome this lonely pilgrim, the presence of God will penetrate in some way; living presence that will illuminate our soul according to our needs and desires.

Magnificent and powerful exhortation to spiritual life, at the same time that it guides, encourages and consoles it, this “little classic” of spirituality, small for its simplicity and humility and “classic” for its extraordinary dissemination and reception, is a work, without a doubt, of an experienced guide of souls, capable of ordering in a gradual sequence, not according to a logical or, in fact, theological order, but specifically spiritual, a series of stories that, at first glance, may seem devoid of a thread and determined intention.

The path we follow with the pilgrim is both a spiritual itinerary in its concrete anecdote, shaped by the succession of external events, and, fundamentally, by the specific teaching contained in each of them, which leads us progressively to the spiritual path..., just as conceived by the hesychast tradition in particular.

All stages of the path are described to us, from the initial restlessness of the soul that awakens to the call from above, to the arrival at hesychia, the “holy silence”, passing through the phases of purification and illumination prior to this.

This "testament" of hesychasm, as I would like to describe this work, constitutes an invaluable testimony to it, "the most direct and most intact branch of Christic initiation... which from the Desert Fathers to the Russian pilgrim represents without doubt the most unchanged spirituality primitive Christian, that is, properly Christic, and of its purest and deepest expression" [2], which certainly would not be risky to assume as practically extinct, at least with regard to its visible manifestation.

The two pillars of the path, doctrine and method, are repeatedly exposed and commented on from various angles. The first, collected in the Philokalia, “treasure of spiritual wisdom”, as its editor, Nicodemus the Hagiorite, describes it; and the second, summarized in the “Jesus prayer”, invocation of the divine Name, an act that constitutes the “memory” of God par excellence, thus satisfying the commandment that encompasses everyone, as stated, among others, by Gregório Sinaita, a central figure. in the historical development of hesychasm: "Above the commandments is the commandment that contains them all: the remembrance of God: Remember always the Lord your God (Dt. 8, 18). This is why the others were violated, it is why This is what they are kept in. Forgetfulness, in the beginning, destroyed the memory of God, obscured the commandments, and revealed nakedness to man" [3].

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The work should not disappoint, therefore, the seeker willing to go to the bottom, to the root of our current situation of forgetfulness of God and to repair it to the extent of his possibilities and the designs of Providence, taking into account the total character of a path that, like the hesychast, has as its goal the union of the soul with God, in total essential identification. But the work can be approached from a less radical perspective, as it also offers, and I would say necessarily, elements that can be limited only to the moral sphere, offering a mosaic of exemplary virtues that can lead the pious soul to imitate them and give the lukewarm enough stimulus to fervor.

And in the same way, in another parallel order of things, the work constitutes, on a historical level, a brushstroke that traces the spiritual profile of Holy Russia in the years immediately preceding the relentless blow of the Beast, which would transform it into Sinister Russia.

We will not extend these general considerations about the work. It is explicit enough in itself to need no introduction. In any case, as far as the academic apparatus is concerned, the introduction and notes of the first part provide sufficient material, and as far as its spiritual assessment is concerned, the prologue of the second will speak better than these lines.

For this edition, completed by the inclusion in the second part of three short stories, unpublished in Spanish, published later, but inseparable from the first, the first part was based on the French translation by Jean Gauvain (pseudonym of Jean Laloy), the most widespread of the Western versions, whose introduction and notes were respected, except for minor changes that were considered opportune; and, for the second, from the English translation of RM French, which generally offers greater signs of rigor and precision than the French of Bellefontaine Abbey, which, however, was also taken into account. For this second part we also had the collaboration of Mr. Charles Krafft, a great expert on the subject, who was kind enough to write a prologue especially for this Spanish edition.

### FIRST PART

#### INTRODUCTION

##### **Jean Gawain, Pierre Pascal**

Having drawn my attention to a brief note by Nicholas Berdyaev, I discovered this little book in the Library of Oriental Languages in Paris. Despite the worries of an exam period, I didn't leave it in my hands for a whole afternoon, because better than many novels, studies and essays, it reveals the mystery of the Russian people at their most secret: their beliefs and their faith..

No one will be surprised by the obscurity in which the Pilgrim's Tales remained, if the conditions of its publication are taken into account. They first saw the light in Kazan around the year 1865, in a very primitive form, with many flaws. A correct and accessible edition of this work was only made in 1884. Nor was it possible for it to have much resonance within the socialist and naturalist movement. Only after 1920 will there be a new edition, when many emigrant hearts will miss their homeland. The book

was printed again in 1930 under the direction of Professor Vyscheslavtsev [4]. This translation is made in accordance with this text.

The stories were published without the author's name. According to the preface to the 1884 edition, Father Paisius, abbot of the monastery of Saint Michael the Archangel of Cheremisos in Kazan, would have copied his text from a Russian monk from Athos, whose name we do not know. Numerous signs lead us to believe that the narratives were written by a religious man after his conversations with the pilgrim. This hypothesis in no way undermines the authenticity of the book. The pilgrim, a simple thirty-three-year-old peasant, only knows the oral style. Writing his adventures would have cost him a lot of effort and it seems that numerous conventional expressions would have replaced the archaic and simple language that constitutes the charm of his stories. On the other hand, an intelligent confidant would have been able to accurately capture the pilgrim's tone and convey his words to the reader. There are many mystics who only communicated their experiences to us with the help of a chronicler who, with great art, knows how to hide behind the mysteries he reveals. Perhaps this character is the hermit of Athos, or perhaps Father Ambrose, the great loner of Optino – teacher of Ivan Kireevsky, friend of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Leontiev –, among whose manuscripts three other stories were found. [5], with a more didactic tone, and published in 1911.

The Stories would thus belong to the Russian literary movement of the 19th century, at its most serene and pure. In the tumult of poetic, romantic and revolutionary writings, in which the extreme tendencies of the Russian character collide with so much violence, this innocent and crystalline note which undoubtedly constitutes its secret tone was missing.

The Pilgrim's Progress takes the reader to the heart of Russian life, right after the Crimean War and before the abolition of serfdom, that is, between the years 1856 and 1861. All the characters in the story parade through the work. the prince who tries to atone for his dissipated life, the drunken and quarrelsome mail driver, and the incredulous and liberal provincial official. Those condemned to forced labor pass in caravans towards Siberia, the imperial couriers exhaust their horses on the endless plains, deserters prowl the remote jungles; nobles, peasants, officials, members of various sects, teachers and village priests, all this ancient Russia is resurrected with its defects, the least of which is drunkenness, and with its virtues, among which charity shines most brightly ., spiritual love for others, illuminated by the love of God. All of this is framed in the Russian land, an immense plain as far as the eye can see, deserted jungles, roadside shops, light-colored churches and bright, vibrant bells. And yet the peasant never stops describing the faces of these sensitive appearances. No matter how orthodox Christian he is, his concern is fixed on the absolute.

To guide his steps in this endeavor, the pilgrim has only two books available, the Bible and a collection of patristic texts, the Filocalia [6]. This name is enough to define the school to which it belongs. 19th century Russian, the pilgrim is a hesychast (from ἡσυχία / hēsychía = calm, silence, contemplation).

Hesychasm dates back to the first centuries of Christianity. Its origin is found on Mount Sinai and in the deserts of Egypt. In the Eastern Church it appears as the mystical current in opposition to the purely ascetic tradition that originates from Saint Basil and that dominated for a long time as a consequence of the condemnation of Origenism in the 5th and 6th centuries. Inspired by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa [7], Eastern mysticism places the definition as the end of the soul. Human nature is good, but it is deformed by sin. Making it return to its first virtue, reestablishing in man, made in the image of God, the divine likeness, a work of grace, this is the path to salvation. Under the action of grace, the spirit, freed from passions through asceticism, rises to the contemplation of the reasons for created things, and sometimes reaches the “luminous night”, the dark contemplation of the Holy Trinity. Such is the goal to which the solitary and great mystics of the first ten Christian centuries consecrated themselves. To fix the spirit on invisible realities, some of them will adopt technical procedures, such as the frequent repetition of a brief prayer, the Kyrie Eleison. No Catholic will be surprised by this, which is still similar to praying the rosary. Because it is linked to the dogma of future resurrection, the idea of the body participating in spiritual life is in itself deeply orthodox. This is how, little by little, what one day, amid fierce controversies, will be called hesychasm develops.

From the 11th century onwards, this doctrine tended to be corrupted. Under the indirect influence of Saint Simeon, the New Theologian, an exaggerated value is attributed to sensitive visions and revelations. No one can be considered a Christian if he has not known and concretely experienced grace. Disturbing theology that opposes the words of Saint Joan of Arc to doctors who asked her if she was in a state of grace: If I am not, may God place me in it, and if I am, may God keep me in a state of grace. this. The Christian cannot go further without taking risks. God's action in the soul is essentially mysterious, “transpsychological”, to use Stolz's expression [8].

Walking behind enlightenment leads, in effect, to contempt for ascetic practices and the search for means considered more effective to achieve visions. What is the danger of the “short path” and quietism in which the soul runs the risk of being slaughtered. Due to a similar evolution, too much attention is paid to bodily procedures, the position of the body and the role of the heart in prayer. The 14th century hesychast who hopes to be saved “without work and without pain” forgets that, in the spiritual life, everything is grace, and that no one can say: Jesus is Lord, except by the grace of the Holy Spirit (I Cor., 12, 3).

This doctrine is one that, despite the controversies of the 14th century, was transmitted to Russia by Father Nilo Sorski (1433-1508), one of the purest figures of Russian monasticism, and the one who wanted it to be banned in convents. material goods. Falling into oblivion, it was restored at the end of the 18th century by another priest, Paisius Velichkovski. The hesychast texts he collected and published in 1794 would guide Russian solitaries and mystics of the 19th century.

Linked to the monotonous chain of generations, the pilgrim finds the hesychast doctrine deformed by long centuries of history. But his spirituality is pure. If he sometimes seems to believe that only the practice of prayer can lead him to know “how good the Lord is”, his love for God is too great not to be

of supernatural origin. The almost spontaneous asceticism of his life is also a guard for him. Always wandering from one place to another, without even having a stone to rest his head on, perpetual prayer is above all for him the means of focusing his attention on the mystery of faith, and of returning his soul to that same faith. His spirit remains always active and his faith is illuminated by an ardent and sincere request.

The pilgrim's faith is not a respectful emotion in the presence of poetic mysteries, but is nourished by theological teachings. To those who turn to him, he offers technical advice and doctrinal explanations; not generous and imprecise exhortations. By knowing man in the light of God, he also knows his place and his duties in the universe.

Pilgrim morality is not a set of learned rules, nor is it internal hygiene. All his actions are guided by the desire for spiritual perfection. Asceticism is the condition of contemplation and has no meaning in itself. Spiritual life is thus reduced to unity. From faith come works, but without works faith does not exist. Coming from the world of fall, ignorance and weakness, the pilgrim heads to the new Jerusalem, which he will enter whole, body and soul, when the consummation of time arrives. Gathering all the strength of his spirit to contemplate the Absolute Being, he sometimes receives from Christ, the new Adam, some of the privileges of the first Adam. He can ignore the cold, hunger and pain; Nature itself seems transfigured to him:

"Trees, herbs, earth, air, light; All these things tell me that they exist for man and that for man they bear witness to God. "They all prayed, they all sang the glory of God."

This liberating optimism is not exclusive to the Christian East, but it is the deep tendency of Christianity. That creation is good and that after the fall it must be led fully along the path of salvation, is something taught by Saint Augustine and after him by the great medieval doctors, as well as by Saint Gregory of Nyssa. If the Western Middle Ages leans above all towards the mystery of sin and the Cross, it is because the wonderful implications of the Incarnation had already been revealed to the Christian conscience by the Fathers. Only the crises and disruption of the modern world have obscured this "cosmic" meaning of patristic theology, without which the thought of the great Western doctors cannot be truly understood.

Faced with these immense perspectives, the pilgrim can guide those who listen to him sincerely. Is this depriving him of his Russianness? On the contrary, he is the perfect type of Russian piety. This did not form a school of thought, a doctrine of its own. But just as an icon from Novgorod, with its fresh and vigorous colors, renewed the models received from Byzantium, so this piety gave the doctrines of the Christian East a new and original tone.

The innate sense of mystery in man – compassion and pity in the face of pain and sin – the simplicity of the heart, which spontaneously purifies the exalted doctrines of the Byzantine Middle Ages – the direct imitation and almost mimicry of the life of Christ and evangelical truths – such they are the foundations of Russian piety. Therefore, in Russia there is an immense religious potential, a powerful

popular force that has not been able to express itself in its own doctrine. Until the 19th century, Russian theology did not exist; everything is translated, copied from Greek or secondarily from Latin. Except perhaps in the Russian Middle Ages, the fusion, the synthesis between religious thought and the current of popular piety was not a reality, except in a few individual cases, of which the pilgrim is an example. In the life of the Church, this lack of unity gives the Russian religious idea its tragic character, a source of terrible crises. Left to itself, the Russian Church soon experienced state interference. Deprived of support, she succumbed, the schism came to tear her apart and she became exhausted and exhausted little by little. In the forests where Nilo Sorski performed his solitary meditation, it is common to see the tragic bonfires of the “old believers” in the 17th century. Spiritual vigor takes refuge in hermitages, in monasteries; from time to time it radiates over the city, but the organic unity is broken. The great efforts of the laity to create a Russian religious doctrine in the 18th century were based only on a diffuse reality, lacked support and remained isolated. Without a doubt, the Russian soul remains primarily religious. But faith is succeeded by religiosity; and on this basis are born the terrible excrescences of dark fanaticism, total nihilism and militant atheism, which is the power of darkness.

In love with the absolute, with a mysterious vocation, the Russian people, like all the peoples of Europe, betrayed their historical mission, which is that of a civilization progressively permeated with Truth, in an active balance between the abyss of sin. and the infinity of divine light. The vision of a Russia reconciling East and West, which Soloviev briefly envisioned, appears to be definitively disappearing. But infinite good can be born from radical evil. In fear and trembling is where the resurrection is prepared.

Weep, weep, you miserable people, sings Mussorgsky's Innocent, that brother of the pilgrim; Groan, groan, hungry people, may God have mercy on you.

### **FIRST REPORT**

By the grace of God I am a man and I am a Christian; by my actions, great sinner; by state, a pilgrim of the lowest condition, ever wandering from place to place. My belongings are: on my back, a saddlebag with stale bread, the Holy Bible in my pocket and no more counting. On the twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity I entered the Church to pray during Mass; They were reading Saint Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, in the passage [9] in which it is written: Pray without ceasing. These words penetrated deeply into my spirit and I asked myself how it is possible to pray without ceasing, when we all must engage in different works to guarantee our own subsistence. I searched the Bible and read with my own eyes exactly what I had heard: Pray without ceasing [10]; pray in the spirit at all times [11]; Pray everywhere lifting up pure hands [12]. It's useless to reflect; I didn't know which side to take.

What to do?, I thought. Where can I find someone capable of explaining these words to me? I will go to churches where famous speakers preach and maybe there I will find what I am looking for. And without further ado, I left. I heard many excellent sermons on prayer, but they were all instructions on prayer in general: what is prayer, why to pray, what are the fruits of prayer. But how to truly pray, no one talked



about it. I heard a sermon on the prayer of the spirit and on continual prayer; but the preacher said nothing about the manner of performing this prayer. So watching the sermons didn't solve what I was looking for. That's why I stopped going to them and decided to look, with God's help, for a wise and experienced man who could explain this mystery to me, as I felt very attracted to him.

I walked like this for a long time; I read the Bible and wondered if there was somewhere a wise and experienced spiritual teacher or guide. I was once told that in a small town there lived a man a long time ago [13] who only cared about his salvation: he has a chapel at home, never leaves the house and is always praying or reading spiritual books. When I heard these words, I immediately set out for that city; I arrived and went to my man.

—What are you looking for in my house? -I wonder.

—I am told that you are a pious and prudent man; Therefore, I ask you in the name of God to explain to me what this phrase of the Apostle means: Pray without ceasing and how it is possible to pray like this. This is what I want to understand without being able to reach it.

The man was silent for a while, looked at me carefully and said:

—Continuous inner prayer is the incessant effort of the human spirit to reach God. To carry out this healthy exercise, we must often ask the Lord to teach us to pray without ceasing. Pray more and with more zeal and fervor, and prayer will make you understand in itself how it can become continuous; but this takes a lot of time.

Having said these words, he fed me, gave me some things for the journey and left. But he didn't explain anything to me.

I went. As she walked, she thought, read, reflected as best she could on what that man had told me, but she could understand nothing; But my desire to understand him was so great that I spent nights without falling asleep. After having traveled two hundred versts [14], I arrived at a partisan town. In it I saw a monastery. At the inn they told me that a pious, charitable and hospitable superior lived there. I introduced myself to him and he received me kindly, sat me down and invited me to eat.

“Holy Father,” I said, “I don't need food, but I would like you to give me a spiritual lesson: how should I obtain salvation?” [15].

—How will you obtain salvation? Live according to the commandments, pray to God and you will be saved.

— I learned that it is necessary to pray without ceasing, but I don't know how to do it and I don't even understand what continuous prayer means. I ask you, Father, to explain these things to me.

— I don't know, my brother, how to explain it better. But wait: I have a little book here that addresses this issue. — And he took the Spiritual Instruction of the Inner Man [16] from Saint Demetrius —. Here, read on this page.

And I began to read the following: «These words of the Apostle: Pray without ceasing, apply yourselves to the prayer made by intelligence; “Intelligence can, in fact, always be immersed in God and pray to Him without ceasing.”

— Explain to me how intelligence can always be immersed in God without distractions and always pray to Him.

“This is something difficult, if God himself does not grant this grace”, replied the superior.

But he didn't explain anything to me. I spent the night at his house and, in the morning, after thanking him for his kind hospitality, I left again without knowing exactly where to go. I was very sad because I didn't understand anything, and to console myself I read the Holy Bible. So I continued along the royal road, until one afternoon I met an old man who had the appearance of being a religious man.

To my question, he replied that he was a monk and that the solitude in which he lived with some brothers was ten versts from the road, and invited me to stop with them.

“In our house,” he told me, “pilgrims are received, cared for and fed at the inn.

I didn't feel like going there and I told him:

— My rest does not depend on accommodation, but on a spiritual teaching; I don't look for food, as I carry a lot of dry bread in my saddlebag.

— What type of education are you looking for and what do you want to understand better? Come, come to our house, dear brother; In it we experience teachings [17] that can give you spiritual guidance and place you on the true path that leads to the light of the Word of God and the teachings of the Fathers.

— Look, Father, about a year ago, while I was in office, I heard this commandment from the Apostle: Pray without ceasing. Without knowing how to interpret these words, I began to read the Bible, and also in it, and in multiple passages, I found God's commandment: we must pray without ceasing, always, on all occasions, in all places, not only during the occupations of the day, not only in the waking state, but also in sleep: I sleep, but my heart is awake [18]. This surprised me very much and I cannot understand how it is possible to accomplish such a thing or what are the means to achieve it; A great desire and great curiosity were awakened in me: neither day nor night did these words leave my mind. I also started visiting churches and listening to sermons about prayer, but in vain: I never managed to know how to pray without ceasing. In them they always spoke about preparation for prayer or its fruits, without teaching how to pray without ceasing, nor what such prayer means. I read the Bible many times and found in it again the same thing I had heard; but I have not been able to understand what I so long for. So, all this time, I have been full of uncertainty and worries. He immediately made the sign of the cross and said:

— Give thanks to God, dear brother, for having revealed to you that invincible attraction that exists in you for continuous interior prayer. Recognize in this the call of God and calm down thinking that in this way the agreement of your will with the divine word has been duly proven; You have been given to understand that it is neither the wisdom of this world nor a vain desire for knowledge that leads to the heavenly light - continuous inner prayer - but, on the contrary, poverty of spirit and active experience in simplicity of heart.

Therefore, it is not surprising that you have heard nothing profound about the act of prayer and that you have learned nothing about how to achieve this perpetual activity. In fact, there is a lot of talk about prayer and there are several recent works on this subject, but all the judgments of their authors are based on intellectual speculation, on the concepts of natural reason, and on the experience that results from action; They talk more about what is an accessory to prayer than about the essence of prayer. One of them explains very well why we should pray; the other deals with the beneficial effects of prayer; a third, of the necessary conditions to pray well, that is, the zeal, the attention, the fervor of the heart, the purity of the mind, the humility, the repentance that is necessary to start praying. But what prayer is and how to learn to pray, things so essential and fundamental in prayer, are very little discussed by preachers of our time; because they are more difficult than all his explanations and require not school knowledge, but mystical knowledge. And what is even sadder is that this elementary and vain wisdom leads them to measure God with a human measure. Many make a big mistake in thinking that preparatory means and good actions generate prayer, when the truth is that prayer is a source of works and virtues. They make a big mistake when they take the fruits and consequences of prayer as a means of achieving it, thus diminishing its strength. This is a point of view completely opposite to the Scriptures, as the Apostle Saint Paul speaks of prayer thus: I ask, therefore, first of all, that prayers be made [19].

Thus, the Apostle places prayer above all. Many good works are asked of the Christian, but the work of prayer is above all others, because nothing can be done if it is lacking. Without frequent prayer it is not possible to find the path that leads to the Lord, nor to know the Truth, nor to be illuminated in the heart by the light of Christ, nor to unite with Him in salvation. I say frequent, because the perfection and correctness of our prayer do not depend on us, as the apostle Paul also says: We do not know how to ask for what is good for us [20]. Only its frequency was placed in our hands, as a means of achieving the purity of prayer that is the mother of all spiritual good. Acquire the mother and you will have descendants, says Saint Isaac the Syrian [21], wanting to make us understand that first it is necessary to acquire prayer and then put all the virtues into practice. But those who are not familiar with the practice and teachings of the Fathers know little about these issues and talk little about them.

Talking like this, we arrive, without realizing it, in solitude. In order not to part with this wise old man and satisfy my desires as quickly as possible, I hurried to ask him:

— I beg you, venerable Father, to explain to me what interior and continuous prayer is and how I can learn it; Well, I see you have a very deep and assured experience of this.

The priest listened to my request kindly and took me to his room:

— Come with me and I will give you a book of the Fathers that will allow you to clearly understand what prayer consists of and learn it with the grace of God.

We entered his cell and the priest said the following words to me:

— The inner and constant prayer of Jesus is the continuous and uninterrupted invocation of the name of Jesus with the lips, the heart and the intelligence, in the feeling of his presence, in all places and at all times, even during sleep. This prayer is expressed by these words: Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me! [22] Everyone who gets used to this invocation feels great consolation and the need to always say this prayer; After some time, he can no longer live without it and it becomes as if it were his own flesh and blood. Do you now understand what continuous prayer is?

— I understand perfectly, my father. “In the name of God, teach me now how to get to her,” I begged happily.

— How to learn prayer, we will see in this book called Philokalia [23]. Contains the complete and detailed science of continuous interior prayer, expounded by twenty-five Fathers. It is so useful and perfect that it is considered the essential guide of the contemplative life and, as the blessed Nicephorus [24] says, “leads to salvation without work or pain”.

— So, it is superior to the Holy Bible? -I asked him.

— No, it is neither higher nor holier than the Holy Bible, but it contains luminous explanations of everything that is mysterious in the Bible due to the weakness of our spirit, whose vision does not reach such heights. I'll show you with an image: the sun is a majestic, bright and very exalted star, which cannot be seen from the front. To contemplate this king of stars and withstand its fiery rays, it is necessary to use smoked glass, infinitely smaller and darker than the sun. Well, the Scripture is this shining sun and the Philokalia is the smoky glass. Listen now, I want to read to you how to exercise continuous inner prayer.

He opened the priests of the Philokalia, chose an excerpt from Saint Simeon, the New Theologian [25] and began: «Remain seated in silence and solitude, bow your head and close your eyes; breathe gently, look through the imagination into your heart, collect your intelligence, that is, your thinking, from head to heart. Say, at the rhythm of your breathing: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”, in a low voice or simply in spirit. Make an effort to throw away all other thoughts, be patient and repeat this exercise frequently.

Later, the priests explained all this to me with examples, and we even read in the Philokalia the words of Saint Gregory Sinaita [26] and the blessed Callixtus and Ignatius [27]. Everything we were reading, the priest explained to me in his own way. I listened with attention and great rapture and made an effort to fix all his words in my memory with the greatest precision. So we spent the whole night and went to Matins without sleeping at all.

The priest, when saying goodbye, blessed me and told me to return to his cell during the study of prayer, to confess with frankness and simplicity of heart, because it is vain to dedicate oneself to the spiritual life without guidance.

In church I felt a burning zeal within me that led me to carefully study continuous inner prayer, and I asked God to help me. Then I thought it would be difficult for me to go to the priest to confess or ask for advice; No one can stay in the inn for more than three days, and there is no place to stay near solitude... Fortunately, I discovered that four versts away there was a village. I went there in search of an inn and luckily God favored me. There I was able to position myself as guardian of a peasant house, with the condition that I would spend the summer, alone, in a small hut that was in a corner of the orchard. Thank God I found a quiet place. So I began to study interior prayer according to the indicated means, often going to visit the priests.

For a week, in the solitude of my garden, I studied inner prayer, following exactly my teacher's advice. At first, everything seemed to be going very well. Later, I felt a great heaviness, laziness, boredom, a sleepiness that I could not overcome, and thoughts fell over me like clouds. I looked for the priest full of sadness and told him my condition. He received me kindly and told me:

— Dear brother, everything that happens to you is nothing more than the war that the dark world declares against you, because there is nothing it fears as much as the prayer of the heart. That's why he tries to hinder you and make you hate prayer. But the enemy only works according to God's will and permission, and to the extent that this is necessary for us. Without a doubt, it is essential that your humility is put to the test; It is too early to approach the doors of the heart with excessive zeal, otherwise you would run the risk of falling into spiritual greed. I will read to you what Philokalia says about this purpose. —He looked for the priests in the teachings of the monk Nicephorus and read: «If, despite your efforts, my brother, it is not possible for you to enter the region of the heart, as I recommended, do as I tell you and with God's help you will find what you are looking for. You well know that every man's reason is in his breast... Therefore, take away every thought of this reason (you can do this if you want) and put in its place the “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”. Strive to replace every other thought with this inner invocation, and in the long run it will open the entrance to your heart, as experience teaches.” [28].

“You see what the Fathers teach in this case,” the priests told me. This is why you must accept this commandment with confidence and repeat the Jesus prayer as much as possible. Here you have a rosary with which you can say, to begin with, three thousand prayers a day. Standing, sitting, lying down or walking, repeat incessantly: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!”, softly and without rushing. And recite exactly three thousand prayers a day, without adding or removing any. Through this path you will achieve the continuous activity of the heart.

I received these words with great joy and, leaving the priest, I returned home and began to do exactly and faithfully what he had taught me. In the first two days I had some difficulty, but then I found it so

easy that when I didn't say the prayer I felt a great need to pray it, and it seemed easy and peaceful, without the difficulty at the beginning. I told the priest about this, and he told me to pray six thousand times a day and said to me:

— Remain calm and strive to adhere with complete fidelity to the number of prayers I have prescribed for you: God will have mercy on you.

For a whole week I remained in my solitary cabin reciting my six thousand prayers every day without worrying about anything and without having to fight my thoughts; I just thought about fulfilling the priest's mandate. And what happened? I became so accustomed to prayer that if I stopped for even a moment, I would feel empty, as if I had lost something; and as soon as I returned to my prayer, I felt relieved and happy again. When I met someone, I didn't feel like talking, I just wanted to be alone and recite my prayers; I got so used to elss in a single week.

The priest, who hadn't seen me for ten days, came to find out what was happening to me and I explained it to him. After listening to me, he told me:

— You are already used to prayer. Look: now we need to preserve this custom and strengthen ourselves in it. Don't waste time and, with God's help, aim to recite twelve thousand prayers a day; continue in solitude, get up a little earlier, go to bed a little later and come see me twice a month.

I submitted to the priest's orders in everything and, on the first day, I was barely able to recite my twelve thousand prayers, which I finished that night. The next day I did it more easily and even with pleasure. At first I felt tired, a kind of hardening of the tongue and a certain stiffness in the jaws, but nothing unpleasant; Then I noticed a slight discomfort in my palate, then in the thumb of my left hand as I was passing the rosary, while my arm heated up to the elbow, which produced a delicious sensation. And all of this just encouraged me to recite my prayer better. In this way, for five days, I faithfully completed my twelve thousand prayers and at the same time, as always, I received the fruit and pleasure of prayer.

One morning I went as if I had been awakened by a prayer. I started saying my morning prayers, but my tongue had trouble doing so and I wanted nothing more than to say the Jesus prayer. I started doing it like this and I felt full of joy and my lips moved on their own without any effort. I spent the whole day with great joy. I was as if abstracted from everything and felt like I was in another world, finishing my twelve thousand prayers before the day was over. I would have liked to continue with pleasure, but I didn't dare go beyond the number indicated by the priest. In the following days I continued to call on the name of Jesus Christ with ease and never tired.

I went to see the priest and told him all this in detail. When I finished he said to me:

— God gave him the desire to pray and the possibility of doing so without difficulty. This is a natural effect, the product of exercise and constant application, like a machine whose steering wheel we gradually release, which then continues to move on its own; Now, to keep it moving, you need to

grease it and give it a new boost from time to time. Now you see what wonderful powers God, friend of men, has given to our sensitive nature; and you perceived the extraordinary sensations that can be born even in the sinful soul, in the impure nature that grace has not yet illuminated. But what a degree of perfection, joy and enchantment a man reaches when the Lord wants to reveal to him spontaneous spiritual prayer and purify his soul of passions! This is an indescribable state and the revelation of this mystery is an anticipated enjoyment of the sweetness of heaven. And it is the gift that those who seek the Lord receive in the simplicity of a heart that overflows with love. From now on I allow you to say as many prayers as you want; Try to dedicate all the time of the day to prayer and call on the name of Jesus without worrying about anything else, humbly surrendering yourself to God's will and waiting for his help. He will not abandon you and will direct your path.

Obeying this rule, I spent the entire summer repeating the Jesus prayer incessantly and felt great tranquility. While sleeping, I sometimes dreamed that I was saying the prayer. And during the day, when I met some people, they seemed so kind as if they were my family. My thoughts calmed down and I only lived in prayer; I already began to incline my spirit to listen to her, and at times my heart felt a great ardor and a great joy. When I entered the church, the long sermon seemed short and didn't tire me like it used to. My lonely hut seemed to me a splendid palace, and I did not know how to thank God for having sent me, a poor sinner, a priest from whose teachings I had derived so much good.

But I did not enjoy the guidance of my beloved and wise priest for long, as he died at the end of the summer. I said goodbye to him with tears in my eyes and, thanking him for his paternal teachings, I begged him to leave me the rosary with which he prayed every day as a blessing. So I was alone. After the summer, the fruits of the garden were harvested and I no longer had a place to live. The peasant gave me two silver rubles as wages, filled my saddlebag with bread for the journey, and I continued my wandering life. But I was no longer helpless, as before; The invocation of the name of Jesus Christ made me happy all the way and everyone treated me with affection; It seemed like everyone had decided to love me.

One day I asked myself what I should do with the rubles that the peasant had given me. What could they be used for? Oh yes! I no longer have a priest or anyone to guide me; I'm going to buy a Philokalia and from it I'll learn inner prayer. I arrived in a party town and started looking for Filocalia in stores. I found one, but the bookseller asked for three rubles and I only had two; I tried in vain to convince him to let me be carried away by two, but he didn't listen to me; but finally he said to me:

— Go look for that church and ask for the sacristan; He has an old book like this and might give it to you for your two rubles.

I went to church and, in fact, bought a very old and deteriorated Filocalia for two rubles; My joy was very great. I patched it up as best I could with a piece of cloth and put it in my saddlebag, along with the Bible.

So now, I will incessantly recite the Jesus prayer, which is dearer and sweeter to me than all the things in the world. Sometimes I travel more than sixty miles a day and do not realize that I am walking; I just feel like I'm saying the prayer. When a cold and violent wind blows, I say the prayer more attentively and immediately feel warm. If I am very hungry, I invoke the name of Jesus Christ more often and I do not remember being hungry. If I feel bad and my back or legs start to hurt, I focus on prayer and stop feeling pain. When someone offends me, I just think about Jesus' beneficent prayer, and soon the anger or sadness disappears and I forget everything. My spirit has become very simple. Nothing worries me, nothing bothers me, nothing outside distracts me and I would like to always be in solitude; I am used to feeling only one need: to pray incessantly, and when I do, great joy invades my entire being. God knows what happens to me. Naturally, these are nothing more than sensible impressions or, as the priest says, the effect of nature and acquired habit; but I still dare not begin the study of spiritual prayer within the heart; I am very unworthy of it and very ignorant. I await God's time, trusting in the prayers of my late priests. Therefore I have not yet arrived at the spiritual prayer of the heart, spontaneous [29] and continuous; but, thank God, I now clearly understand the meaning of the Apostle's words that I heard one day in church: Pray without ceasing [30].

## SECOND REPORT

I continued traveling for a long time through all types of regions, accompanied by the prayer of Jesus, who strengthened and consoled me on all paths, on all occasions and in all situations. At last I thought I must stop somewhere to find greater solitude, and begin to study the Philokalia, which I could only read at night or during my midday nap; Great was my desire to dedicate myself entirely to its study to extract from it with faith the true doctrine of the health of the soul through the prayer of the heart. Unfortunately, to satisfy this desire I was unable to do any manual work, as I had lost the use of my right arm since childhood; and so, unable to settle anywhere, I headed for the Siberian countries, towards San Innocent of Irkutsk [31], in the belief that in the plains and forests of Siberia I would find greater silence and could give myself more comfortably to life. and prayer. There I went, then, I recited the prayer incessantly.

After a certain time I noticed that the prayer originated alone within my heart, that is, my heart, beating with total regularity, began, in a way, to recite the sacred words with each beat; for example: 1-Lord, 2-Jesus..., 3-Christ, and so on with the rest. I stopped moving my lips and listened carefully to what my heart was saying, remembering how pleasant it is, as my late priests told me. Then I felt a slight pain in my heart, and in my spirit such a great love for Our Lord Jesus Christ, that it seemed to me that, if I had seen him, I would have thrown myself at his feet, hugged him and bathed him. with my tears, thanking him for the consolations he gave us with his name, in his kindness and in his love for the unworthy and sinful creature.

Very soon a sweet warmth arose in my heart and flooded my entire chest. This led me, in particular, to a careful reading of the Philokalia to see what it said about these sensations and to study in it the



development of the inner prayer of the heart; Without this control, I feared falling into illusion, taking the actions of nature for those of grace and becoming arrogant through such a quick acquisition of prayer, as my late priests explained to me. That's why he walked mainly at night and spent the day reading the Filocalia sitting in the forest in the shade of the trees. How many new, profound and unknown things I discovered in these readings! While this occupation lasted, he felt a bliss far more perfect than anything he could hitherto imagine. Without a doubt, certain passages remained without my poor spirit being able to understand them, but the effects of prayer from the heart clarified what I did not understand. Furthermore, I sometimes saw my late priest in dreams, who explained to me many of the difficulties and inclined my unintelligent soul more and more to the truth. In this absolute happiness I spent two long summer months. I traveled mostly through forests and country roads; When he arrived at a village, he asked for a bag of bread, a handful of salt, filled the gourd with water and continued walking another hundred miles.

### **THE PILGRIM IS ATTACKED BY THIEVES [32]**

No doubt, as punishment for my sins and the hardness of my soul, or for the progress of my spiritual life, temptations appeared at the end of the summer. And it was like this: one afternoon, when I was on the road, I met two men who looked like soldiers; They asked me for money. When I told them I didn't have a penny, they didn't want to believe it and shouted brutally:

-You lie! That pilgrims raise a lot of money. — One of them added: It's useless to talk to him much —. And he hit me on the head with a stick; I was left meaningless.

I don't know if I stayed like that for long, but when I woke up I realized I was in the forest near the road. My clothes were in tatters and my saddlebag was missing. Thank God they left me my passport, which I hid in the lining of my old hat, so I could easily show it when necessary. I got up and cried a lot, not so much because of the pain, but because of the loss of my books, the Bible and the Philokalia, which were in the saddlebag that was stolen from me. I cried and suffered all day and all night. Where was my Bible, which I had read since I was little and which I always carried with me? Where is my Philokalia, from which I drew so many lessons and consolation? Unfortunate, I lost the only treasure of my life without taking advantage of it as I should have. It would have been better for me to die than to live like this without my spiritual food. I will never be able to have them again.

For two days I could barely walk because of the illness; On the third day, I fell helpless near a bush and fell asleep. And behold, in dreams I saw myself in the hermitage, in my priest's cell, to whom I cried for my pain. The priest, after consoling me, said to me:

— May this event serve as a lesson for you to detach yourself from the things of earth, so that you can fly more freely towards the sky. This test has been sent to you so that you do not fall into spiritual voluptuousness. God wants the Christian to renounce his own will and all attachment to it, in order to place himself entirely in the arms of the divine will. Everything He does is for the good and salvation of men. He wants all men to be saved [33]. Therefore, be of good cheer and believe that God will

provide success with temptation so that you can resist it [34]. Soon you will receive a consolation greater than all your sorrows.

Upon hearing these words, I woke up and felt renewed strength in my body and soul like a dawn and a new tranquility. May God's will be fulfilled!, I said. I got up, made the sign of the cross and left. Prayer began to work in my heart again as before, and for three days I continued on my way in peace.

Suddenly I found myself there with a troop of forced soldiers, who were being taken under escort. When I reached them, I saw the two men who had robbed me, and as they were at the head of the column, I was able to throw myself at their feet and beg them to tell me where my books were. At first they pretended not to know me, but finally one of them said:

— If you give us something, we will tell you where your books are. We need a silver ruble.

I swore to them that one way or another I would give it to them, even if I had to beg to get it.

— Take a gift, if you're interested, my passport.

Then they told me that my books were in the cars with the stolen objects they had collected from them.

— How can I get them?

—Ask the escort captain for them.

I went to the captain and explained everything as it had happened. During the conversation, he asked me if I knew how to read the Bible.

— Not only can I read, I replied, but I can also write; You yourself will see an inscription on the Bible that indicates that it belongs to me; and here you have my name and surname in my passport.

The captain told me:

— These thieves are deserters; They lived in a hut and dedicated themselves to fleecing passersby. A very skilled coachman stopped them yesterday when they wanted to steal his troika. I will be happy to return your books if they are there; but you will have to come with us to the inn. We are only four versts away and I cannot stop the whole train to look for them now.

Filled with joy, I set off alongside the captain's horse and talked to him. I soon realized that he was an honest and good man and that he was no longer young. He asked me who I was, where I came from and where he was going. I answered all the questions and little by little we arrived at the inn where we were stopping. He went in search of my books and handed them to me saying:

— Where do you plan to go now? It's already night; It would be better if you stayed with me.

And I stayed with him. I was so happy to have gotten my books back that I didn't know how to thank God; I pressed them against my heart until my arms cramped. Tears of happiness ran down my face and my heart beat with joy and happiness.

The captain looked at me and said:

— I see that you enjoy reading the Bible.

In my joy, I couldn't answer him a single word. I did nothing but cry. He continued:

“I too, brother, read the Gospel very carefully every day.” And immediately, half-opening his uniform, he took out a small Kiev Gospel [35] with a silver cover. Sit down and I'll tell you how I got used to it. Innkeeper, let us bring dinner.

### CAPTAIN'S STORY

We sat at the table. The captain began his story:—" Since my youth I served in the army and never in a garrison. I knew my job well and my superiors considered me a model officer. But I was young and so were my friends. Unfortunately I started drinking and gave in to drinking so much I got sick. When I didn't drink I was an excellent officer, but the first drink I drank again I had to stay in bed for six weeks. They put up with me for a long time; but finally, because I insulted a boss after drinking, I was demoted and sentenced to serve three years in a garrison; They threatened me with an even more severe punishment if I didn't stop drinking. In such a miserable situation, I wanted to fight to contain myself, but it was useless; It was impossible for me to give up my passion and They decided to send me to a disciplinary battalion. When they told me, I didn't know what I was getting."

One day, sitting in my room, I was thinking about all these things. And with that a monk appeared asking for a church. Everyone gave what they could. When he caught up with me, he asked me why I was so sad. I talked to him a little and told him my misfortune. The monk felt sorry for my situation and told me:

"— The same thing that happened to you happened to one of my brothers, and I'm going to tell you how he managed to overcome his addiction. His spiritual father gave him a Gospel and ordered him to read a chapter every time he felt like drinking ; If the urge came back, I would have to read the next chapter. My brother put the advice into practice and soon freed himself from his passion for drinking. He hasn't had any strong drink in fifteen years. Imitate his example and you will soon see how much it is It's good to abstain like him. I have a Gospel; If you want it, I'll bring it to you tomorrow."

To which I replied:

"— And what will I do with the Gospel, when neither my efforts nor the doctors' medicines have managed to make me abstain from drinking? (I said that because I had never read the Gospel).

"— Don't say that, replied the monk. I assure you that if you do what I told you, you will find benefits."

The next day, in fact, the monk returned with the Gospel that you see here. I opened it, looked, read a few sentences and said:

"— I don't want to, because I don't understand anything. I'm not used to reading church characters [36]."

The monk continued to exhort me, saying that in the very words of the Gospel there is contained a beneficial force; because it was God himself who spoke the words that are printed in it. It doesn't matter if you don't understand anything; you just have to read it carefully. A saint said: "If you do not understand the Word of God, the demons understand what you read and tremble." And certainly the desire to drink is the work of demons. And I also tell you this: Saint John Chrysostom writes that even the place where the Gospel is frightens the spirits of darkness and is an obstacle to their intrigues.

"I don't remember very well, but I think I gave the monk something; I took his Gospel and put it in my trunk, among other things, completely forgetting about it. Some time later it was time to drink. I had a terrible urge I had to do this; I opened the trunk to get some money and went into the tavern. The Gospel appeared before my eyes and, suddenly remembering everything the monk had told me, I opened it and began to read the first chapter of Saint Matthew. I read to the end without understanding anything; but I remembered what the monk had told me: "It doesn't matter if you don't understand anything; "You just need to read carefully." It's okay! I said to myself; Let's read another chapter. The reading seemed clearer to me. Let's look at the third; I had barely started when a bell rang: it was the afternoon retreat or call. And there was no time to leave from the barracks, so I didn't drink that day."

The next day, in the morning, when I was going out to buy cognac, I said to myself: what if I read a chapter of the Gospel? So we'll see. I read it and didn't move. Shortly afterwards I felt like drinking again, but I started reading and felt relieved. I also felt strong and overcame every bout of temptation to drink by reading my Gospel chapter. The more time passed, the better I got. When I finished the four Gospels, my passion for wine had completely disappeared; I was already completely indifferent. And it's been twenty years since I put a strong drink to my lips.

»Everyone was surprised by my change. After three years I was again admitted to the officer corps; I rose through the successive ranks and was named captain. I married an excellent woman; We gathered some goods and now, thank God, things are going well. We help the poor as best we can and provide accommodation for pilgrims. I have a son who is already an employee and who is worth a lot.

Well, after I was completely cured, I promised to read every day, throughout my life, one of the four Gospels in full, without admitting any exemption. And then I do this. When I am overworked and feel very tired, I go to bed and ask my wife or my son to read the Gospel with me and I keep my promise. As a testimony of gratitude and for the glory of God, I ordered this Gospel to be covered in solid silver and I always carry it in my heart.

I listened to him with great pleasure and said to him:

— I know a similar case: in our city, in the factory, there was an excellent worker, very skilled in his job; but unfortunately for him, he drank very often. A pious man advised him that, whenever he felt like

drinking brandy, he should recite the Jesus Prayer thirty-three times in honor of the Holy Trinity and in memory of Jesus' years of life on earth. And that's not all: three years later he entered a monastery.

— And what's worth more, Jesus' prayer or the Gospel?

—Both are the same thing, I replied. The Gospel is like Jesus' prayer, because the divine name of Jesus contains within it all the evangelical truths. The Fathers say that Jesus' prayer is a summary of the entire Gospel.

After this conversation we said our prayers; the captain began to read the Gospel of St. Mark from the beginning; I heard him saying the prayer in my heart. The captain finished reading at two in the morning and we went to sleep.

As is my habit, I got up very early, when everyone was still asleep. The day had barely dawned when I was already immersed in my Philokalia. With what joy I opened it! It seemed to me that I had met my father again after a long absence, or a friend who had risen from the dead. I hugged her and thanked God for returning her to me; I started reading Theolept of Philadelphia [37], in the second part of the Philokalia. I was surprised to read that he proposes doing three different types of activities at the same time: when you sit at the table, he says, feed your body, read to your mind and pray to your heart. But the memory of the beneficent meal after dinner the day before practically explained this thought to me. And then I understood the mystery of the difference between the heart and the mind.

When the captain woke up, I wanted to thank him for his kindness and say goodbye to him. He served me tea, gave me a silver ruble, and we said goodbye. I left full of joy.

At the end of the first versta, I remembered that I had promised the soldiers a ruble and now I had one in my pocket. Should I give it to him or not? On the one hand, I thought to myself, they beat you and robbed you, and they can no longer harm you because they are detained; but on the other hand, I remembered what is written in the Bible: If your enemy is hungry, feed him [38]. And Jesus Christ himself said: Love your enemies [39]; and in another place: And whoever wants to litigate with you to take away your tunic, let him also leave your cloak to him [40]. Having made these reflections, I retraced my steps and arrived at the inn at the exact moment the convoy was forming up to begin its march. I ran in search of the two criminals and put the ruble in their hands, saying:

— Pray and do penance; Jesus Christ is a friend of men and he will never abandon you.

Having said these words, I walked away, following the path in the opposite direction to the one they were taking.

## LONELINESS

After having walked fifty versts along the royal road, I entered some rural roads, more solitary and suitable for reading. For a while I wandered through the forest; Every now and then I would come across a village. He often spent the whole day in the forest reading the Philokalia, where he found

admirable and profound teachings. My heart was inflamed with the desire to unite with God through interior prayer, which I strove to study and discover in the Philokalia. At the same time, I was sad that I hadn't been able to find a shelter where I could read in peace and without being distracted by other things.

At that time I was also reading my Bible and I saw that I was beginning to understand it better; I found fewer obscure passages in it. The priests are right when they say that Philokalia is the key that unlocks the mysteries contained in the Scriptures. Under his guidance, I began to understand the hidden meaning of the Word of God; I discovered what the inner man hidden in the heart means [41], true prayer: worship in spirit [42], the Kingdom of God within us [43], the intercession of the Holy Spirit [44]; I understood the meaning of these words: You are in me [45], give me your heart [46], put on the Lord Jesus Christ [47], the engagement of the Spirit in our hearts [48], the invocation: Abba , Father! [49] and many other things. When I prayed deep in my heart, all the things around me appeared to me in a charming aspect: trees, herbs, birds, earth, air, light, all seemed to tell me that they exist for man and that they bear witness to the love of God. for the man; Everyone prayed, everyone sang the glory of God. Thus I came to understand what Philokalia calls “knowledge of the language of creation” and I saw how it is possible to converse with God’s creatures.

### STORY OF A RANGER

I walked like this for a long time. I finally arrived in a country so remote that I spent three days without seeing a single village. I had just eaten the bread and was wondering, not without concern, how I would avoid dying of hunger. The moment I began to pray in my heart, my anguish disappeared, I placed myself in the hands of the Lord and joy and tranquility returned to me. I then continued along the path a little through an immense forest, when a guard dog appeared before my eyes coming out of the trees; I waved to him and he approached me very affectionately, letting himself be caressed. I rejoiced and said to myself: Here also is the goodness of God; There will certainly be some flock in this forest and this will be the sheepdog, or perhaps it will be the dog of some hunter. In any case, now I will have the opportunity to ask for bread, since I haven't eaten anything for two days; or at least they will tell me where I can find the nearest city. The dog, after having walked around me a few times, and seeing that he found nothing to eat, returned to the forest along the same path he came from. I followed him and, after about two hundred meters, I saw him again, among the trees, in a hole from which he stuck his head out, barking.

Then I saw a thin, pale peasant approaching through the trees, he must have been years old. He asked me how I got there and I told him what he was doing in such a remote place, and we exchanged some friendly words. He asked me to come into his cabin and explained that he was a forest ranger and that he was responsible for the mountain, which was going to be felled. He offered me bread and salt and we struck up a conversation.

— I envy the solitary life you lead, I told him; You are not like me, who walks constantly and is in contact with everyone.

—If you like it, he replied, you can live here; Nearby there is an old hut that served as a home for the guard who was here before me; It's a bit dilapidated, but for the summer it might be worth it. You have your passport; There is bread for both of us from what they bring me every week from the city, and beside us runs this stream that never dries up. My brother, for ten years I haven't eaten anything but bread and only drunk water. In autumn, when the harvest is finished, two hundred men will come and cut down the trees; I won't have anything else to do here and they won't allow you to stay in this place either.

Hearing these words I felt so much joy that I almost fell at his feet. I didn't know how to thank God for his kindness to me.

Everything I could have wanted and longed for was offered to me here in a moment. There were still four months left until autumn and during that time I could take advantage of the silence and peace of the forest to study, with the help of Fioalía, the continuous prayer in the heart. So I decided to settle in the said cabin. We continued talking and that good brother told me about his life and his ideas.

“In my city,” he told me, “I was not the last; I had a job that consisted of dyeing fabrics red and blue; I lived comfortably, but not without sin; I deceived my clientele a lot and continually swore; Ee was rude, drunk and quarrelsome.

In that city there was an old precentor who had a very, very old book about the Last Judgment [50]. He often went to the homes of Orthodox believers to read in them and received a small remuneration for this; Sometimes he also came to my house. Most of the time I would give him a few cents and he would read until the rooster crows. One time I was working and listening to him at the same time; I was reading a passage about the torments of hell and the resurrection of the dead, how God will come to judge; how the Angels will sound their trumpets, the fire and flames that will be there and how the worms will devour sinners. Suddenly I felt a terrible fear and I said to myself: I will not escape these torments! From now on I will dedicate myself to saving my soul and perhaps I will be rescued from my sins. I thought about it and decided to quit my job; I sold my house and, as I lived alone, I became a forest ranger, asking only for bread, clothes to cover myself and some candles to light during prayers.

And I've lived like this for over ten years. I only eat once a day and only drink bread and water. Every night I get up at the first cockcrow and until dawn I genuflect and salute the ground; While I pray, I light seven candles in front of the images. During the day, as I walk through the forest, I wear thirty-kilo chains on my skin. I don't swear, I don't drink beer or alcohol, nor do I fight with anyone; women, I've never met them.

At first I was very happy to live like this, but every now and then I am attacked by reflections that I can't get out of my head. God knows if I will be able to forgive my sins, but this life is very difficult. And also, could what the book said be true? How can a man be resurrected? For of those who died a

hundred years ago or more, even the dust has disappeared. And who knows if there will be hell or not? At least none of them came back from the other world; When man dies, he becomes corrupted and no trace remains of him. This book could have been written by priests or authorities to scare us imbeciles into keeping us more and more submissive. So in this life we live miserably and without any consolation, and perhaps in the next there will be nothing. So why continue like this? Wouldn't it be better to take advantage of good opportunities immediately? "These ideas haunt me," he added, "and I am afraid of having to return to my old occupation."

I felt great compassion for him and said to myself: It is said that only the wise and intellectuals become freethinkers and unbelievers, but apparently our brothers, the simple peasants, also have very strange ideas and lack faith. Certainly the dark world affects everyone and perhaps attacks even the simplest people more easily. We must seek the best possible reasons and strengthen ourselves against the enemy by the Word of God.

Therefore, to support this brother a little and confirm his faith, I took the Philokalia out of my pocket and opened it to chapter 109 of the blessed Hesychius [51]. I read to him and explained that the fear of punishment is not the only check against sin, because the soul cannot free itself from guilty thoughts except through the vigilance of the spirit and the purity of the heart. All this is acquired through interior prayer. If someone chooses the path of asceticism not only out of fear of the tortures of hell, but also out of desire for the heavenly kingdom, I added, the Fathers compare this action to that of a mercenary. They say that the fear of torment is the path of the slave and the desire for reward is the path of the mercenary. But God wants us to come to Him as children; He desires that love and zeal impel us to behave worthily and to enjoy perfect union with Him in our soul and heart [52].

— In vain you will exhaust yourself and impose yourself on the hardest physical tests and penances; If you do not constantly carry God in your spirit and the prayer of Jesus in your heart, you will never be safe from evil thoughts; You will always be ready to sin at the slightest opportunity. Begin, then, brother, to pray the Jesus prayer continually; This will be easy for you in this solitude and you will soon see the benefit of this prayer. Ungodly ideas will disappear, while faith and love for Jesus Christ will be revealed within you. And you will understand how the dead can be resurrected, what the Last Judgment really is and what it means. And you will find so much joy and lightness in your heart that you will be amazed; and you will no longer be tired or troubled by your life of penance.

Then I explained to him, as best I could, how he should recite the Jesus prayer in accordance with the divine commandment and the teachings of the Fathers. He seemed to want nothing more and his embarrassment eased. Then, separating from him, I entered the old cabin that he had indicated to me.

### **SPIRITUAL WORKS**

What joy, my God, and what comfort! How enchanted I felt when I entered that hut, or rather, that tomb! It seemed to me like a beautiful palace full of joy, and I said to myself: Now, in this silence and in this peace, let us work as God commands and ask the Lord to enlighten my spirit. And so I began to



read the Philokalia very carefully, from beginning to end. In a short time I finished reading and understood the wisdom, holiness and depth of this book. But as it deals with multiple subjects, I was unable to understand everything, nor gather the strength of my spirit in the single teaching of interior prayer to reach spontaneous and continuous prayer within the heart. And yet my desires for this were great, according to the divine commandment transmitted by the Apostle: Aspire to the most perfect gifts [53]; and in another place: Do not quench the Spirit [54]. I reflected in vain, as I didn't know what to do. I don't have enough intelligence or understanding, nor anyone to teach me. I will tire the Lord with prayers and perhaps he will agree to enlighten my spirit. And so I spent a whole day praying without interrupting my prayer for a moment. And here I saw myself, in dreams, in my cell the priest, who explained to me Fiofalía saying:

— This sacred book is of great wisdom. It is a mysterious treasure trove of teachings about God's secret designs. This book is not accessible everywhere or for everyone; but it contains maxims written for each one: profound for the profound spirits, and simple for the simple. Therefore, you simple people should not read the books of the Fathers in the order in which they are placed here. This is a disposition in accordance with theology; But whoever is not instructed and wishes to learn inner prayer in the Philokalia, must practice the following order: first read the book of the monk Nikephoros (in its second part); second, the entire book of Gregory Sinai, except the shortest chapters; third, the three forms of prayer of Simeon, the New Theologian, and his Treatise on Faith; and fourth, the book of Calixtus and Ignatius. In these texts anyone can find the complete teaching on the inner prayer of the heart. If you want an even more intelligible text, read in the fourth part the abbreviated model of prayer by Callisto, patriarch of Constantinople.

I, who had the Filocalia in hand, was looking for the indicated section without being able to find it. The priest, turning a few pages, said to me:

— I'll show you: here it is.

— And taking a piece of coal from the floor, he made a sign in the margin of the page in front of the indicated section. I listened very carefully to all the priest's words and tried to record them firmly and in detail in my memory.

With that I woke up and as it was still night I continued to lie down, remembering everything I had seen in my dreams and repeating what the priest told me. So I started to reflect. God knows if it is the soul of my late priest that appears to me like this, or if it is my own ideas that take shape, because I think a lot and for a long time about Fiofalía and the priest. I got up in this uncertainty of spirit, because the day was already approaching. And behold, on the stone that served as my table I see the Philokalia open to the page indicated by the priests and marked with a charcoal line, exactly as in my dream; Even the coal was next to the book. I was shocked, remembering that I hadn't left the book there the night before, but I closed it and placed it next to me before falling asleep; and I also remembered that there was no line marking that page. All these coincidences gave me faith in the truth of the

apparition and confirmed me in the sanctity of my memory of the priest. I then began to read the Philokalia according to the order given to me. I read it once, then again, and this reading ignited my zeal and my desire to see everything I had read confirmed in action. I clearly discovered the meaning of inner prayer and the means to achieve it and its effects; I understood how much this joys the soul and how it is possible to distinguish whether this happiness comes from God, from healthy nature or from illusion.

And above all, I tried to find the place of the heart, according to the teachings of Saint Simeon, the New Theologian. Closing my eyes, I directed my gaze to the heart, trying to imagine it located on the left side of the chest and listening to its beat.

I first practiced this exercise for half an hour, several times a day. At first I saw nothing but darkness; but soon my heart appeared, and I began to feel its deep movement; Later, I managed to introduce the prayer of Jesus into my heart and make it flow from me, according to the rhythm of breathing, as Saint Gregory Sinai, Callixtus and Ignatius taught. To achieve this, I mentally looked at my heart, inhaled the air and held it to my chest saying: “Lord Jesus Christ”, and exhaled adding: “have mercy on me”. At first I practiced this for an hour or two, then I applied myself to this exercise more and more frequently, and finally I occupied myself with it almost the whole day. When I felt heavy, tired or restless, I immediately read in the Philokalia the passages that deal with the activity of the heart, and soon the desire and desire to pray was reborn within me. After three weeks, I felt an ache in my heart, and then a pleasant warmth and a great sense of comfort and peace. This gave me greater strength to exercise myself in prayer, to which all my thoughts were directed, and I began to feel great joy. From that moment on, every now and then I felt various new sensations in my heart and spirit. Sometimes it was like a stirring in the heart and such great agility, freedom and joy that it transformed me and I found myself in ecstasy. At times I felt a very ardent love for Jesus Christ and all of divine creation. sometimes the tears [55] They flowed effortlessly on my part as an acknowledgment to the Lord, who had compassion on me, an inveterate sinner. Sometimes my poor, limited spirit was filled with such lights that I clearly understood things that before I could not even have conceived. Sometimes the sweet warmth of my heart spread throughout my being and I began to feel the presence of the Lord with great emotion. And sometimes, finally, I felt an intense and profound joy when pronouncing the name of Jesus Christ and understood the meaning of his words: The Kingdom of God is within you [56].

In the midst of these beneficial consolations, I began to see that the effects of prayer appeared in three ways: in the spirit, in the senses and in the intelligence. In the spirit, for example, the sweetness of God's love, inner tranquility, the rapture of the spirit, the purity of thoughts, the splendor of the idea of God; in the senses, the pleasant warmth of the heart, the fullness of sweetness in the limbs, the thrill of joy in the heart, the lightness and vigor of life, the insensitivity to illness and pain; in intelligence, in the illumination of reason, in the understanding of the Holy Scriptures, in the knowledge of the

language of creation, in detachment from vain concerns, in the awareness of the sweetness of the inner life, in the certainty of the closeness of God and his love for us [57] .

After five months of solitude in these works and in this happiness, I was so accustomed to the prayer of the heart that I practiced it uninterruptedly, and finally I noticed that it was done by itself, without any activity on my part; It arose in my spirit and in my heart not only when I was awake, but also during my sleep, and it did not stop for a single moment.

The time came to cut down the trees, the woodcutters gathered and I had to leave my silent home. After thanking the guard and saying a prayer, I kissed that corner of land where the Lord had deigned to show me his kindness so clearly, I threw my bag over my shoulders and left. I walked for a long time and traveled through many regions before arriving in Irkutsk. The spontaneous prayer of my heart comforted me completely and never failed to rejoice, although in different ways; Nowhere, nor at any time, was it an impediment to anything, and nothing could diminish it either. If I work, prayer operates alone in my heart and I carry out my task with greater ease; If I listen or read something carefully, the prayer is not interrupted, and I feel one and the other at the same time, as if I were unfolded or as if two souls were working in my body. Oh my God, and how mysterious the man is!...

### THE WOLF JUMP

How great are your works, O Lord: you have done everything with wisdom [58]. In my pilgrimages I encountered very extraordinary cases. If I had to narrate them all, it would take me many days. I'll tell you something: one winter afternoon I was walking alone through a forest with the intention of spending the night two versts ahead, in a small town that was already in sight. Suddenly a large wolf jumped at me. I had my priest's wool rosary in my hand, which, as always, I carried with me, and with this rosary I made the beast escape. And will you believe it? The rosary slipped out of my hands and hung around the wolf's neck. He instantly retreated, and, leaping among the bushes, got caught by his hind legs in the thorns, while the rosary was stuck in the branch of a dry tree; The wolf fought with all his strength, but was unable to free himself because the rosary was pressing against his throat. With great faith I made the sign of the cross and ran to free the wolf, fearing above all that he would rip off the rosary and run away with an object that I valued so much. I had barely approached and placed my hand on the rosary when the wolf actually broke it and began to run with all the lightness of his paws. Giving thanks to the Lord and remembering my blessed priest, I arrived safely in the city: I went to the inn and asked for accommodation. I entered the house, where two travelers were sitting at the table; One was already old and the other was mature and corpulent. I asked the peasant who guarded his horses who they were, and he replied that the old man was a teacher and the other was a clerk for the justice of the peace. They were both of noble origin and I take them to the beautiful twenty versts from here.

After resting a little, I asked the landlady for a needle and thread, approached the light and began to sew my rosary. The attendant looked at me and said:

— You must have prayed a lot to break the rosary.

—It wasn't me who broke it, but a wolf...

-As! So even wolves pray? — replied the attendant, laughing.

I then told them in detail what had happened to me and told them how much I loved this rosary. The clerk laughed and said:

— For you gullible people, there are always miracles. What do you find mysterious about what you said? You simply threw an object at it, the wolf got scared and ran away. Dogs and wolves are always afraid of objects thrown at them; and the fact that its paws got tangled in the undergrowth is nothing special. Therefore, we should not believe that everything that happens in the world is a miracle.

Then the teacher began to argue with him:

— Don't talk like that, sir: you don't understand much about these matters. I, at least, see in this peasant's story a double mystery, sensitive and spiritual.

— How did the professor understand that? — asked the attendant.

— Listen to me: even if you don't have a very deep education, you certainly studied sacred history through questions and answers, which are published for schools. You remember that when the first man, Adam, was in the state of innocence, all the animals were subject to him; they approached him without fear and he gave each one a name. The priest to whom this rosary belonged was a saint; And what holiness is: it is nothing more than the resurrection, in sinful man, of the state of innocence of the first man thanks to his efforts to acquire virtues. The soul sanctifies the body. The rosary was incessantly in the hands of a saint; Well, through continuous contact with his body, this object was penetrated by a sacred force, the force of the first man's state of innocence. Here lies the mystery of spiritual nature... This force is felt naturally by all animals, mainly through the sense of smell, since smell is the essential organ of the animal's senses. Here lies the mystery of sensitive nature...

— For you wise men, there are only forces and stories of this kind; But we see things from another point of view: pouring a glass of drink and pouring it into the stomach, that's what gives strength and vigor”, said the clerk, and walked towards the cupboard.

“Say what you want,” replied the professor, “but at least don't try to deny what those who know more than you believe.”

I really liked the teacher's words; and then I approached him and said:

— Allow me to tell you something about my priest.

I explained to him how he appeared to me in a dream and how, after teaching me, he made a charcoal mark on Filocalia. The teacher listened to my story carefully. But the clerk was mumbling, lying on a bench.

— Now I see clearly that there are people who go crazy because they always have their nose in the Bible. All you have to do is see and hear this good man. Who will be the bogeyman that comes at night to stain your books with charcoal? Surely you dropped your book on the floor while you slept and the residue of the ash stained it... That was what his whole miracle consisted of. Oh, these shortsighted ones! If we didn't know you and your entire brotherhood!

After saying this, he turned towards the wall and fell asleep. Upon hearing these words, I leaned towards the teacher and said:

— I you want, I'll show you the book that has this mark and not some ash residue.

I took the Filocalia out of my bag and showed it to him saying:

— I will never be able to understand that it is possible for a disembodied soul to pick up a piece of coal and write...

The teacher looked at the sign in the book and said:

— This is the mystery of spirits. And I want to explain to you:

When the Spirits appear to man in corporeal form, they form his visible body of light and air, using for this the elements from which his mortal body was made. And as air is endowed with elasticity, the soul that covers it is endowed with the power to act, to write, to take possession of objects. But what book do you have in your hands? Let me see.

He opened it and found the treatise of Simeon the New Theologian.

— This must, without a doubt, be a theological book. I do not know him.

— This ancient book contains almost only the teaching of inner prayer of the heart in the name of Jesus Christ; This teaching is explained here in all its detail by twenty-five Fathers.

— Inner prayer? “I know what it is,” replied the teacher.

I bowed deeply before him and begged him to tell me a few words about inner prayer.

- Very good. It is written in the New Testament that man and all creation are subject to vanity in spite of themselves, and that all things long for and tend toward the freedom of the children of God [60]: this mysterious movement of creation, this innate desire of souls is precisely the inner prayer. It is not possible to learn it, because it is in everything and everyone...

— But how to acquire it, discover it and feel it in your heart? How can we become aware of this and voluntarily accept it, make it operate actively, joyful, illuminating and saving the soul? - I asked him.

“I don't know if theological treatises talk about this”, replied the professor.

— Undoubtedly yes; because everything is written here - I replied...

The teacher took a pen and wrote down the title of the Filocalia and said:

— I'm going to order this book in Tobolsk and I want to read it.

And without another word, we parted ways. As I left, I thanked God for my conversation with that man and prayed to the Lord to grant the scribe the grace to read the Philokalia one day and understand its meaning for the good of his soul.

### THE YOUNG GIRL FROM THE VILLAGE

On another occasion, in the spring, I arrived in a small town and stopped at the priest's house. This was an excellent man who lived alone. I spent three days at his house. After examining me in those days, he said to me:

— Stay with me and I will pay you a salary, because I need a trustworthy man. Have you seen that a new stone church is under construction next to the old wooden one. It is not possible for me to find a man of conscience who watches over the workers and is in the chapel collecting alms for the construction; I see that you would be suited to this and that this kind of life would suit you very well. You can stay alone in the chapel to pray and ask God, as there is a lonely place to spend the day. Please stay, at least until the church is over.

I resisted as long as I could, but in the end I had to give in to the priest's urgent pleas. So I stayed until autumn and settled in the chapel. At first I had a lot of peace of mind and was able to practice prayer; But especially on holidays, many people came, some to pray, some to yawn, and some to steal a few coins from the collection plate. And while I was reading the Bible or the Philokalia, some visitors would talk to me, and others would ask me to do a little reading for them.

After some time, I noticed that a local young woman often came to the chapel and remained there for a long time praying. When I paid attention to what he was praying, I heard that he said very strange prayers, and even some completely disfigured ones. I asked him who had taught him these things. And he answered me that his mother was Orthodox, while his father was a schismatic [61], of the "priestless" sect. I found this situation very sad and advised him to recite the prayers correctly, according to the tradition of the Holy Church. I taught him the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Finally I told him:

— Pray the Jesus prayer above all else; It brings us closer to God than all other prayers and through it you will achieve the salvation of your soul.

The young man listened to me attentively and behaved simply in accordance with my advice. And will you believe it? Shortly afterwards, he announced to me that he was accustomed to the Jesus prayer and that he felt the desire to repeat it incessantly whenever possible. When he prayed, he felt joy and finally great joy, as well as the desire to continue praying. All of this made me very happy and I advised him to continue praying more every day, invoking the name of Jesus Christ.

Summer was coming to an end. Many of the chapel's visitors came to visit me, not only to ask for advice or a reading, but to tell me about their family difficulties and even to ask me how to find lost objects; Without a doubt, many considered me a seer. And here, on one of these days, the young woman came, full of bitterness, to ask me what she should do. Her father wanted to marry her against her will to a schismatic like him and the officiant would be a peasant. "Is this a legal marriage?" exclaimed the poor woman; This is nothing more than pure debauchery! I want to run away anywhere. I answered:

— Where will you run if they won't find you soon? In these times, you will not be able to hide anywhere, as all documentation is missing; They will find you easily. It is better to pray to God with fervor and zeal to frustrate your father's purposes in his ways and to protect your soul from sin and heresy. This is always better than your idea of escape.

The time has passed. The noise and distractions were becoming more and more painful for me. And finally, at the end of the summer, I decided to leave the chapel and go back to pilgrimage as before. I introduced myself to the priest and said:

— My father, you know my way of being. I need tranquility to pray and here I find nothing but noise and distractions. I have already fulfilled what you asked me to do, staying all summer; Now let me go my way and bless my lonely path.

The priest didn't want to let me go and even tried to convince me with a speech:

—What can stop you from praying in this place? You have no other business than to remain in the chapel and find the table set. Continue to pray here day and night if you like, and live with God. You are valuable and useful here; You don't talk nonsense with visitors, you are faithful and honest and you also guarantee certain alms to the church of God. This is better in the eyes of the Lord than his solitary prayer. Why live alone all day? Among the people, prayer is said with much more joy. God did not create man so that he could only know himself, but so that each person could help others, communicating salvation to each other, according to each person's capabilities. Look at the saints and ecumenical doctors: day and night they were on the move and worried about the Church, they preached everywhere and did not hide in the solitude of their brothers.

— Each one receives from God the gift that best suits him, my father: many preached to crowds and many others lived in solitude. Each one acted according to their inclination, believing that it was the path to salvation that God himself indicated to them. For how will you explain that so many saints rejected all the dignities and honors of the Church, fleeing into the desert, so as not to be tempted in the world? Thus Saint Isaac the Syrian abandoned his faithful, and the blessed Athanasius the Athonite [62] abandoned his monastery: they considered these places too seductive and truly believed in the words of Jesus Christ: What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he loses his soul? [63].

"But those were great saints," replied the priest.

“If the saints were so careful to avoid contact with men,” I replied, “what shouldn’t a miserable sinner do?”

I finally said goodbye to that good priest and we said our goodbyes affectionately.

After walking ten versts, I stopped for the night in a small village. There was a peasant there who was deathly ill. I advised his family to make him partake of the holy mysteries of Christ and, at dawn, they went to the city in search of the priest. I remained there to bow before the Holy Gifts and pray during the administration of such a great sacrament. I was sitting on a bench in front of the house waiting for the priest to arrive, when suddenly I saw that young woman who I had seen praying in the chapel running towards me.

- How did you get here? - I asked him.

— It turns out that in my house everything was already prepared for me to marry the schismatic, and I ran away.

And then, throwing himself at my feet, he begged me:

- Have mercy on me! Take me with you and take me to a convent; I don't want to get married, but rather live in the convent praying the Jesus prayer. They will listen to you and welcome me.

- What you say? Where do you want me to take you, if I don't know any convents around here? Or how can I take it with me without having, as you don't, a passport? In these conditions you will not be able to stop anywhere; They will make you come home and punish you for being a slut. You better go home and pray to God; and if you don't want to get married, pretend to be incapable. This is called pious fiction; This was done by the holy mother of Clement, the blessed Marina [64], who sanctified herself in a monastery of men, and many others.

While we were talking in this way, we saw four peasants arrive in a cart galloping towards us. Taking possession of the young woman, they forced her into the car and sent her ahead with one of them; the other three tied me hand in hand and took me back to the place where I spent the summer. To all my explanations, they responded vehemently:

— Go with the saint! We will teach you how to seduce girls!

At nightfall, they took me to prison, put irons on my feet, and arrested me to stand trial the next morning. The priest, upon learning that I was arrested, came to visit me, brought me food, consoled me and told me that he would take charge of my defense and declare, as a confessor, that I was far from having the intentions he wanted me to have. to assign. He spent a little time with me and left.

At dusk, the rector of the jurisdiction passed by that place and was told what was happening. He gave the order to convene the communal assembly and take me to the court house. Upon entering, we stood still, waiting. At this point the dean arrived ready to proceed immediately. He sat down on the platform, putting away his hat, and shouted:



— Let's see, Epifânio: this young woman, your daughter, didn't take anything from your house?

- Nothing, sir.

"Didn't she make something of this idiot?"

— None, sir.

— So the matter is closed and judged, and we decide:

With your daughter, organize yourself as you see fit; We will ask this scoundrel to leave here, after having given him a good correction, so that he never sets foot in this city again. And it's over.

And without saying anything else, the rector got up and went to sleep. They returned me to prison. The next day, very early in the morning, two farmers [65] came and gave me a good beating and then set me free. I walked away, thanking God who allowed me to suffer in his name. All of this filled me with great comfort and encouraged me more and more to pray.

These events did not cause me the slightest anguish. It felt like they were happening to someone else and I was just a spectator; and that's even when they were beating me. Prayer, which filled my heart with joy, did not allow me to pay attention to anything. After traveling four versts, I met the young woman's mother, who was returning from the market. He stopped and said to me:

—The girl's boyfriend left us. He was angry with Akulka [66], all for leaving home.

Then he gave me some bread and a cake, and I continued on my way.

The weather was dry and I didn't feel like sleeping in the city. Then I saw two piles of hay in the forest and went to them to spend the night. I fell asleep and began to dream that I was on the road, reading the chapters of Saint Anthony the Great [67] in the Philokalia. Nisso, the priest appeared and told me: "That's not what you have to read"; and he pointed me to the thirty-fifth chapter of John of the Carpathians [68], where it is written: "... sometimes the disciple is exposed to dishonor, but he endures these trials for those whom he has helped spiritually." And he also pointed me to chapter forty-one where it says: "... all those who dedicate themselves most ardently to prayer are most exposed to terrible and very strong temptations".

Then he said to me:

— Cheer up and never lose courage! Do not forget the words of the Apostle: Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world [69]. Now you have seen from your own experience that there is no temptation beyond the power of man. Because God will provide success with temptation so that you can resist it [70]. By hope in the Lord's help the saints were sustained, who did not spend their lives just praying, but sought, out of love, to teach and give light to others. Let us see what Saint Gregory of Thessalonica says about this [71]: «It is not enough to pray incessantly according to the divine commandment, but we must expound this teaching to everyone: monks, lay people, intelligent or

simple, men, women or children, to awaken in them the zeal for interior prayer. the blessed Calixto Teicoudas: In the same way it is expressed “Spiritual activity (that is, interior prayer)”, he writes, “contemplative knowledge and the means of elevating the soul must not be kept to oneself, but rather must be communicated through writing or speech, in order to seek the good and love of all. And the Word of God declares that the brother whom his brother helps is like a high and fortified city [73]. In all these things we must flee from vanity with all the strength of our soul, and be vigilant so that the good seed of divine teachings is not carried away by the wind.

When I woke up, I felt great joy in my heart and a very renewed vigor in my soul. And without further ado I continued on my way.

### WONDERFUL CURES

Some time later, I had another adventure. I'll tell you if you don't find it boring.

One day, March 24th, I felt a great need to commune with the Holy Mysteries of Christ on the day consecrated to the Mother of God in memory of her divine Annunciation. I asked if there were any churches in that area and they told me there was one thirty miles away.

I walked the rest of the day and all night to get to matins. The weather was very bad: sometimes it snowed, sometimes it rained and there was also a violent, cold wind. The route crossed a stream; and I was taking my first steps when the ice broke beneath my feet. I fell into the water up to my waist and arrived completely drenched at Matins, which I heard, and also at Mass, during which God allowed me to receive communion.

To spend the day in peace, without anything disturbing my spiritual joy, I asked the guard to allow me to stay in the guardhouse until the next day. I spent this day in the midst of indescribable joy and peace of heart; Lying on a bench in that cold hut, I felt as good as if I were resting in Abraham's bosom; prayer worked effectively. The love for Jesus Christ and the Holy Mother of God coursed through my heart in beneficial waves and plunged my soul into an ecstasy full of consolation. As night fell, I suddenly felt a violent pain in my legs and remembered that I had wet them. But, rejecting this distraction, I focused again on prayer and no longer felt the evil. When I tried to get up in the morning, it was impossible to move my legs, which were weak and soft like cotton. The guard threw me from the bench to the floor and I stayed there for two days because he couldn't move. On the third day, the guard kicked me out of the barracks saying:

— If you die here, we'll still have the job of running around and taking care of you.

Crawling with my hands, I managed to get to the steps of the church and there I was, lying on the floor. People passing by didn't pay the slightest attention to me or my requests.

Until finally a farmer approached me and started talking to me. After a few words he came to say:

—What will you give me if I cure you? I had exactly the same thing as you and I know a remedy. — I replied that I had nothing to give him —. What do you have in your saddlebag then?

— I only have dry bread and some books.

“Well, then give me your word that you'll work at my house during the summer if you get better.

— I can't work either. Can't you see I only have one arm that can help me?

— What do you know how to do then?

—Nothing except reading and writing.

— Oh! What do you know how to write with? Good; then you can teach my son to write; He can read a little, but I want him to learn to write. But the teachers ask for a lot: twenty rubles to learn all the writing.

We then reached an agreement and, with the help of the guard, they transported me to the peasant's house, where they placed me in an old bathroom [74] behind the fence.

The peasant began to cure me: he gathered in the field, in the corral and in the trash bins a large pot with old bones of animals, birds and any other worms; He washed them, broke them into very small pieces with a stone and placed them in a large pot; He covered it with a lid that had a hole in the center and poured it all into a container that he had placed deep in the ground. He carefully smeared the bottom of the kettle with a thick layer of clayey earth and covered it with logs which he allowed to burn for over twenty-four hours. As he laid down the logs he said, “All this will form bone tar.” The next day, he unearthed the container, into which about a liter of a thick, reddish, oily liquid with the smell of fresh meat had been deposited through the hole in the lid. The bones that remained in the pot, black and rotten as they were, now had a color as white and transparent as mother-of-pearl or pearls. Five times a day I rubbed my legs with this liquid. And will you believe it? The next day, I realized I could move my fingers; On the third day, I managed to bend my legs; and by the fifth I was able to stand and walk around the yard with the help of a cane. After a week, my legs returned to normal. I thanked God and said to myself: God's wisdom can be seen in his creatures. Dry or rotten bones, ready to transform into earth, retain within them a vital force, a color and a smell, and exert an action on living bodies, to which they are capable of restoring life. This is all proof of the future Resurrection. With what pleasure I would have made all these things known to the forester in whose house I lived, who doubted the resurrection of the bodies!

Once my health was restored, as already mentioned, I began to take care of the child. I wrote Jesus' prayer as a model and made him copy it, teaching him how to form the letters artfully. This occupation was very comfortable for me, as the boy served during the day at the mayor's house, and only came to look for me while he was sleeping, that is, very early in the morning. The boy was intelligent and soon learned to write almost correctly.

The mayor, seeing him writing, asked him:

— Who gives you writing lessons?

The boy replied that he was the one-armed pilgrim who lived in his father's house, in the old bathroom. The mayor, curious – he was Polish – came to see me and found me when I was starting to read the Philokalia. He talked to me for a few moments and told me:

— What do you read there?

I showed him the book.

— Ah, it's Filocalia! - he said -. I saw this book at our priest's house when I lived in Vilnius. But I have heard that it contains very strange prayer formulas, invented by some Greek monks like the fanatics of India and Bukhara, who inflate the lungs and foolishly believe, as soon as they begin to feel a certain sensation in the heart, that this sensation is natural. It is a prayer made by God himself. You must pray with all simplicity, to fulfill your duties towards God; When you get up, you must pray the Our Father as Jesus Christ teaches, and that is enough for the whole day. But if you repeat the same thing over and over again, there is a danger of going crazy and getting heart disease.

— Do not speak of this sacred book like that, because it was not just any Greek monks who wrote it, but some ancient and sacred characters that your Church also venerates, such as Anthony the Great, Macarius the Great [75], Mark the Ascetic [76 ], Juan Crisóstomo and others. Monks in India and Bukhara imitated his prayer technique, but they disfigured and ruined it, according to what my priest told me. In Philokalia, all the teachings are taken from the divine Word, from the Holy Bible, in which, Jesus Christ, at the same time as he ordered the Lord's Prayer to be prayed, taught that it was necessary to pray without ceasing, saying: You will love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind [77]; watch and pray [78] abide in me and I in you [79]. And the Holy Fathers, citing the testimony of King David in the Psalms: Taste and see how good the Lord is [80], interpret it as saying that the Christian must strive hard to know the sweetness of prayer, that he must seek consolation at all times. and not be content with saying the Our Father just once. Listen and I will read to you what the Fathers say about those who do not bother to study the beneficent prayer of the heart. They declare that such persons commit a threefold sin; because: 1st, they contradict the Holy Scriptures; 2nd, they do not admit that there is a superior and perfect state for the soul. Contenting themselves with external virtues, they remain ignorant of the hunger and thirst for justice and deprive themselves of the blessedness of God; and 3rd, considering their external virtues, they often fall into self-satisfaction and vanity.

— What you read is very high, said the mayor; But how could we, laypeople, follow such a high path?

— Look, I'm going to read to you how many good men managed, in their condition as laymen, to learn incessant and never interrupted prayer. I opened the Philokalia on Simeon the New Theologian's treatise on young George [81] and began to read.

The mayor liked the reading and told me:

— Give me this book and I will read it in my free time.

— If you want, I'll lend it to you for a day, but not for more, because I read it nonstop and it's impossible for me to do without it.

—But at least you can copy this passage for me; Do this and I will give you some money.

— I don't need your money; but I will copy it for you willingly, hoping that God will give you a zeal for prayer.

Without wasting time, I presented a copy of the passage I had read to him. He read it to his wife and they both found it very interesting and beautiful. From that day on, they called me from time to time. I went to their house with Filocalia and gave them some readings, which they listened to while they drank tea. One day, they invited me to lunch. The mayor's wife, a very kind lady, was eating grilled fish when, suddenly, she swallowed a bone. Despite all our efforts, it was impossible to remove it; The lady suffered a lot with her throat and after two hours she had to go to bed. They sent for the doctor, who lived thirty miles away, and I returned home sad.

During the night, while I was sleeping lightly, I suddenly heard my priest's voice, without seeing anyone. The voice told me:

—Your boss cured you and you can't do anything for the mayor? God has commanded us to feel sorry for the evils of our neighbors.

— I would be happy to help you, but how should I do that? I don't know any medicine.

— That's what you have to do: that lady has always had a great dislike for castor oil, the mere smell of which makes her nauseous. Go, then, and give him a good spoonful of that oil; As a result, you will vomit, the pimple will come out and the oil will also soften the wound in your throat and it will heal.

—And how can I make her take the oil, if he feels such horror about it?

— Ask the mayor to keep his head under control and force the liquid into his mouth.

I woke up and immediately went to the mayor's house, to whom I told everything in detail. He answered me:

— I don't know what your oil is for. My wife is already feverish and delirious, and her neck is very swollen. But if you want to try her medicine, you can do so; If the oil doesn't do any good, it won't do any harm either.

The mayor poured castor oil into a small cup and we finally managed to get her to swallow it. Immediately she vomited heavily, and threw away the spine [82] with some blood; He felt better and fell soundly asleep.

### Tales of a Russian Pilgrim

The next morning I went back to see how things were going and found her and her husband having tea; I was very surprised by her cure and especially by what they told me in dreams about her repugnance for castor oil, because they had never talked about it with anyone. At that moment the doctor arrived; The mayor told him how she had been healed and I told him how the farmer healed my legs. The doctor declared that there was nothing surprising in either case, as a force of nature intervened on both occasions.

"But," he added, "I'll write them down so I don't forget." — He took a pen out of his pocket and wrote a few lines in his notebook.

Very soon the rumor spread that I was a seer, healer and witch; They came to see me from everywhere to consult me, they brought me gifts and began to venerate me as a saint. After a week, I began to reflect on the case and was afraid of falling into vanity and dissipation. The next night, I secretly left the village.

### LEGACY TO IRKUTSK

So I found myself walking again along the lonely road and I felt as light as if a heavy mountain had fallen from my shoulders. Prayer comforted me more and more. Sometimes my heart boiled with infinite love for Jesus Christ; and this wonderful boil ran in benevolent waves through my entire being. The image of Jesus Christ was so strongly impressed on my mind that, when I thought about the facts of the Gospel, it seemed to me that I was contemplating them with my own eyes. This moved me and I cried with joy, and at some point I felt so much happiness in my heart that I cannot describe it. Sometimes I would stay away from people and homes for three days, and as if in ecstasy I felt alone on earth, a miserable sinner before the merciful God and friend of men. This solitude was my happiness, and the sweetness of prayer was much more sensitive to me than coexistence with men.

I finally arrived in Irkutsk. After prostrating myself before the relics of Saint Innocent, I wondered where I was going next. I didn't want to stay in the city for too long, as it was very populated. And so I was walking around and thinking about these things. Suddenly I met a country merchant, who stopped me and said:

— You are a pilgrim. Why don't you come with me to my house?

We arrived at his rich abode. He asked me who I was and I told him about my trip and adventures. To this he replied:

— You should go to ancient Jerusalem. There is a holiness there that is not found anywhere else.

"I would go there willingly," I replied; but the trip is very expensive and I don't have the money to pay for it.

"If it seems good to you, I will show you a way of doing it," said the merchant; Last year I sent a friend of ours there.

I fell at his feet and he said to me:

— Look, I'll give you a letter to one of my sons, who is in Odessa and does business with Constantinople; There, in his offices, they will pay for their trip to Jerusalem. It's not as expensive as you might think.

These words filled me with joy; I enthusiastically thanked this benefactor and above all I gave them to God, who showed so much paternal love towards me, an inveterate sinner, who did no good to Him or others and uselessly ate other people's bread.

I stayed at this generous merchant's house for three days. He gave me a letter to his son and I went to Odessa hoping to reach the holy city of Jerusalem, but not knowing whether the Lord would allow me to kneel before his life-giving tomb.

### THIRD REPORT

Before leaving Irkutsk, I went back to visit the spiritual father with whom I had already spoken several times and I said to him:

— I am about to leave for Jerusalem; I came to say goodbye to you and thank you for the charity you showed me, miserable pilgrim.

He answered me:

— May God bless your path. But you didn't say anything about yourself: who you are and where you come from. I have heard many stories of your travels, and I should like to know something of your origins and your life up to the time when you began your wandering life.

— I willingly want to give you pleasure in what you ask of me, I replied; Plus, it doesn't take long to count.

### THE LIFE OF THE PILGRIM

I was born in a small town in the province of Orel. When my parents died, there were only two of us left, my older brother and me. He was ten years old, I was only three. Our grandfather took us to his house to educate us; He was an honorable old man of good reputation; He had an inn on the side of the royal road and, as he was a very good person, many passengers stopped at his house. So we went to live with him. My brother was very restless and ran around the city all day, while I almost never left my grandfather's house. On holidays he took us to church and at home he often read the Bible, the same one I carry with me. My brother grew up and started drinking. I was seven years old. One day, when we were both lying on the stove [83], he pushed me and knocked me down. I injured my left arm and have not been able to use it since; It seemed dry to me.

My grandfather, seeing that it would not be possible to employ me in field work, decided to teach me to read and, as there were no alphabets, he used this Bible for that purpose. He taught me the letters and then forced me to spell the words and then write the letters. So, by repeating it with him, I ended up knowing how to read. Later, when he could no longer see much, he would make me read the Bible aloud and correct me. A notary who had very beautiful handwriting often came to our house and I really enjoyed seeing how he wrote. I started forming words by doing exactly what I saw him doing. Then he told me how to do it, gave me paper and ink and cut feathers for me. So, little by little, I learned to write. This pleased my grandfather very much and he told me:

— You see that God granted him to know letters; then you will become a man. Thank God and pray to him more often.

We went to church for every mass and also prayed frequently at home. They made me repeat: “Have mercy on me, Lord”; and grandfather and grandmother bowed to the ground or knelt. That’s how I got to be seventeen, when my grandmother passed away. My grandfather told me:

— Do you see that we are without a master at home, and how can we live without a wife? Your older brother is worthless, so I will marry you off.

I refused, claiming that I was crippled, but my grandfather insisted and they married me to a serious and very good twenty-year-old girl. After a year, my grandfather became deathly ill. He called me, said goodbye and added:

— I leave you the house and everything I have; Live as God commanded, never deceive anyone and above all always pray to God; Everything we have comes from Him. Don't put your hope other than in God, don't forget to go to church, read the Bible and remember us in your prayers. Here you have a thousand silver rubles; keep them, don't spend them on useless things, but don't be greedy either; distributed among the beggars and the churches of God.

He died and I buried him. My brother was jealous because I inherited the inn; He gave me a hard time, and the Enemy tempted him so much that he decided to kill me. One night, while we were sleeping and there was no traveler, he entered the storeroom and set it on fire after taking all the money that was in a trunk. We woke up with the whole house already on fire and we barely had time to jump out the window as we were.

We had the Bible under our pillow and were able to carry it with us. We saw how our house caught fire and we said to ourselves: Thank God we managed to save the Bible; so that we can at least console ourselves in misfortune. In this way, the flames consumed all our possessions, and my brother disappeared from the region. He later bragged about these things while drunk, so we learn that he was the one who took the money and set the house on fire.

Then we were left naked and with nothing, like real beggars. Not without difficulties, borrowing money, we managed to build a small hut and there we lived like miserable people. My wife had no



equal in spinning, weaving and sewing. She took orders from people and worked night and day to feed me. Due to the condition of my arm, I couldn't even weave bark shoes. Usually she would spin or weave and I would sit next to her and read the Bible; She listened and sometimes started to cry. When I asked her: "Why are you crying? Thank God, even with difficulties, we can live", she replied: "I am moved to hear things written so well in the Bible."

We also remembered the recommendations that our grandfather had given us; We fasted frequently, read the Akathist hymn every morning [84] and at night each of us made a thousand salutations before the images so that they would free us from temptation. So we lived in peace for two years. But here is something remarkable: we knew nothing about inner prayer made in the heart, we had not even heard of it; We made the inclinations like ignorant people, but even so the desire to pray was present, this long external prayer was not difficult for us and we even prayed it with pleasure. That professor was undoubtedly right who once told me that within man there is a mysterious prayer, of which not even he himself knows how it occurs, but which leads each person to pray as they know and can.

After two years of this life, my wife fell ill with a severe fever and, on the ninth day, after receiving communion, she passed away. I was alone, completely alone, and I couldn't do anything. I had no choice but to go around the world begging, but this made me very ashamed; Furthermore, I felt so unhappy thinking about my wife that I didn't know where to hide. When I entered the hut and saw one of her dresses or headscarves, I would start sobbing and lose consciousness. Living at home, I couldn't bear so much sadness; So I sold it for twenty rubles and distributed my clothes and my wife's clothes among the poor. Because of my crippled arm, they gave me a perpetual passport, I took my beloved Bible and left there aimlessly.

When I hit the road, I asked myself: where do I go now? First I will go to Kiev, prostrate myself before the saints of God and ask them to have mercy on my misfortune. As soon as I made this decision I felt better and with great comfort I arrived in Kiev.

I have been walking without rest for thirteen years; I visited many churches and monasteries, but now I walk more through the steppes and fields. I don't know if the Lord will allow me to reach holy Jerusalem: if this is God's will, perhaps I can arrive to give land there for my sinful bones.

— Well, how old are you now?

- Thirty three years.

— The age of Christ.

#### **FOURTH REPORT**

My good is in union with God. I placed all my hope in the Lord.

(Sl. 73, 28).

The proverb is right, I said when I returned to my spiritual father's house: "Man proposes and God disposes". It was my intention to depart today for the holy city of Jerusalem, but it will not be so; A completely unforeseen event keeps me here for another two or three days. I couldn't help but come to see you to announce it to you and ask your advice about what I'm going to tell you.

I had already said goodbye to everyone and, with God's help, I had left; I was about to cross the barrier, when, next to the door of the last house, I saw a pilgrim that I hadn't seen for three years. We greeted each other and he asked me where I was going. I replied to him:

— I'm going, God willing, to ancient Jerusalem.

"If so," he replied, "you have an excellent traveling companion here."

"Very grateful," I replied. But don't you know that I never have company and that I always walk alone?

— I know, but listen to me for a moment; Do not hesitate to accept this partner for the advantages he will bring you. You will understand each other very well. The father of the owner of this house where I work as a waiter promised to go to Jerusalem. This is a merchant here, a nice old man who is also completely deaf. No matter how much you yell at him, he hears absolutely nothing; If you want to tell him something, you will have to write it down on paper. It is always silent and will not disturb you during the trip. On the other hand, you will be indispensable to him. His son will give him a horse and buggy that he will sell in Odessa. The old man wants to make the journey on foot, but he will take his luggage and some gifts to the Lord's tomb in the car. You can also put your saddlebag in it... Now think about it. Do you think it's possible to let a completely deaf old man go alone? We have been looking everywhere for someone to guide him, but everyone asks for a lot of money, and it is also dangerous to let him go out with a stranger, because he carries money and other precious objects. For my part, I will be his guarantor and my employers will be very happy; They are very good people and they like me very much. I've been with them for two years.

After we talked like that in front of the door, he made me come in and I could see that it was an honest family. So, I accepted his proposal. We decided to leave two days after Christmas, with God's help, after having attended the divine liturgy.

These are events that cross the path of life. But it is always God and his divine Providence that act through our actions and our intentions, as it is written: because it is God who works in you both to will and to do [85].

My spiritual father answered me:

— I am very happy and very happy, my brother, that the Lord has allowed me to see you once again. And since you're free now, I'll make you stay here a few more days, so you can tell me everything you've encountered throughout your wandering life. Because it gave me great pleasure to hear the previous stories.

"I'll be happy to do that," I replied and started talking.

Things happened, some good and favorable and others, however, not pleasant; It is not possible to tell everything and much is also what I have forgotten, because above all I tried to keep in mind the memory of those things that led my lazy soul to prayer; Everything else I rarely evoked, or rather, I tried to forget it, as the apostle Saint Paul teaches us, who wrote: Leaving to forget what is already behind and setting out in search of what is before me, I run towards to the goal [86]. And my blessed priest told me that obstacles in prayer can come from the right or the left [87], that is, if the Enemy cannot divert the soul from prayer with vain thoughts or guilty images, he makes it in memories. He reminds you of uplifting memories or beautiful ideas, thus diverting the spirit from prayer, which he cannot bear. This is called a deviation to the right: the soul, leaving the conversation with God, enters into a delightful conversation with itself or with creatures. He also taught me that during the time of prayer one should not admit even the most beautiful or highest thought into the spirit; and if at the end of the day we realize that we spend more time in meditation or uplifting conversations than in absolute and pure prayer, we should consider this as imprudence or as selfish spiritual greed, especially among beginners, for whom the time spent in prayer should exceed the spent in all other pious pursuits.

But it's not possible to forget everything. Certain memories are so deeply engraved in the memory that they are always present without the need to evoke them, like that sacred family with whom God allowed me to spend a few days.

### AN ORTHODOX FAMILY

On the occasion of my visit to Tobolsk province, one day I was passing through a small town. I barely had any bread, so I went into a house to ask for it. The owner of the house told me:

— You arrived just in time; My wife just took the bread out of the oven. Take this bread and pray to God for us.

Thanking, I was putting the bread in the saddlebag, when the lady saw me and said:

— What a miserable saddlebag you are carrying! It's all undone! I'll give you a better one.

And he gave me a very good one. I thanked him with all my heart and left. When leaving the village, I asked for salt at a store and the owner gave me a bag full. This brought me a lot of joy and I thanked God who made me speak to such good people.

— I have enough for a week, I thought to myself. Now I can sleep peacefully. My soul, bless the Lord! [88].

I had walked five versts since leaving the city, when I saw a mediocre village that had a poor wooden church, but well painted on the outside and beautifully decorated. The road passed beside it and I wanted to prostrate myself before the temple of the Lord. I went up the stairs and said a prayer. In a meadow that bordered the church, two small children, around five or six years old, were playing. I

thought to myself that, despite being so well placed, they would be the priest's children. After finishing my prayer, I left. I hadn't even walked ten steps when I heard someone shouting behind me:

— Good beggar, good beggar! Hang on!

It was the children who were screaming and coming towards me: a boy and a girl; I stopped and when they came running they grabbed me by the hand.

— Let's look for mom, who really likes beggars.

— I am not a beggar, but a walker.

— And what is this saddlebag?

— Here I bring bread for the journey.

- Good doesn't matter; come with us. Mom will give you money for the trip.

—And where is mom? -I asked them.

— There, behind the church, beyond the woods.

I went with them and they made me enter a wonderful garden, in the middle of which there was a large and beautiful house; We enter the lobby. How clean everything was and how well organized! Immediately the lady came towards us.

— What happiness is mine! Where does God send you to our home? Sit down, sit down, darling!

She herself took the saddlebag from me, placed it on a table and made me sit in a very comfortable and soft chair.

- Do you want to eat something? Do you want to drink tea? Don't you need anything?

— I thank you with all humility, I replied; I have food in my saddlebag and tea, although I can drink it, as I am a peasant I am not in the habit of doing so; Your kindness and gentleness are much more precious to me than a good meal. I will pray to God to bless them for such evangelical hospitality.

And as I said these words, I felt a great desire to withdraw into myself. Prayer was boiling in my heart and I felt the need for calm and silence to let this flame rise freely, and hide a little the external signs of prayer, tears, sighs and movements of the face and lips.

So I got up and said to the lady:

— I apologize, ma'am, but I need to go. May the Lord Jesus Christ be with you and your precious creatures.

- In no way! May God keep him from leaving; I can not let you go. My husband has to come back from town this afternoon as he is a district court judge. He will be very happy to see you among us! He accepts all pilgrims as sent from God. Also, tomorrow is Sunday; You will pray with us at the

celebration, and whatever God wants to offer us, we will all eat together. In our house, at festivals, we always receive at least thirty poor beggars, brothers of Jesus Christ. And you still haven't said anything about yourself, nor where you came from, nor where you're going. Tell me all these things; I really enjoy hearing those who worship the Lord speak! Children! Take the pilgrim's bag to the image room, where he will spend the night.

Hearing these words I was amazed and said to myself: "Is this a human being or an apparition?"

So I waited for the owner of the house. I told them briefly about my trip and told them that I was going to Irkutsk.

- Great! — said the lady —. In this case you will have to go through Tobolsk; My mother lives there in a convent where she retired a long time ago; We will give her a letter and she will give you lodging. Many people come to her for advice; Also, you can bring her a book by John Climacus [89] which we ordered for her in Moscow. How well all these things combine!

It was time to eat and we sat down at the table. Four ladies also showed up and sat with us. After the first course, one of them got up, bowed to the image and then to us and went to bring the next one; For the third course, he made another one like the previous one. Seeing this, I addressed the lady:

— May I ask if these ladies are perhaps your family?

— Yes, they are my sisters, the cook, the coachman's wife, the housekeeper and my maid; They are all married and there is no single person in my family.

Seeing and hearing such things, I was even more amazed and thanked the Lord who brought me to the home of such pious people. And I felt prayer grow with momentum in my heart; so, to find solitude, I got up and said to the lady:

— You must rest after the meal; On the other hand, as I'm so used to walking, I'm going to walk around the garden for a bit.

— No, I'm not in the habit of resting, said the lady. I will go with you to the garden and you will tell me something that will serve as instruction for me. If you go alone, the children will not leave you alone; They will not leave your side, because they are very fond of beggars, brothers of Christ and pilgrims.

I had no other choice and we went to the garden together. To better maintain silence, I bowed to the lady and said:

—Tell me, good mother, in the name of God, have you been leading such a holy life for a long time? Tell me how you reached such a level of kindness.

— It's a very easy thing to answer, she said. My mother is the great-granddaughter of Saint Josaphat [90], whose relics are honored in Belgorod. We had a large house there, the wing of which we rented to a gentleman of little fortune. He died and his wife also died after giving birth to a son. The newborn

was completely orphaned. My mother picked him up at her house and the following year I was born. We grew up together, had the same tutors and were like brother and sister. When my father died, my mother left the city and came to live with us in this place. When we reached adulthood, my mother married me to her godson, naturalized us in this village and decided to enter a convent. After giving us his blessing, he recommended that we live as Christians, pray to God with all our hearts and keep above all the most important commandment, which is to love our neighbors, help the poor, brothers of Jesus Christ, educate our children in fear of God and treat our servants as brothers. We've lived like this for ten years in this solitude, trying to follow my mother's advice. We have an asylum for beggars, where at this moment there are more than ten, sick or infirm; If you want, we can go see them tomorrow.

When he finished speaking, I asked him:

—And where is that book by Juan Climaco that you want to send to your mother?

— Let's go into the house and I'll show you there.

We had barely started reading when the owner of the house arrived. We hugged like brothers, and he took me to his room saying:

—Come, my brother, to my room and bless it. My wife certainly tired him out a lot. As soon as he meets a pilgrim or a sick person, he feels so happy that he does not abandon him day or night; It's an old family custom of his.

We entered his office. How many magnificent books and icons! And what a beautiful life-size cross, before which was a gospel! I made the sign of the cross and exclaimed:

— You have God's paradise at home, sir. There is the Lord Jesus Christ, his most pure Mother and his holy servants; and here are his words and his living and immortal teachings. I have no doubt that you will be very happy to spend quality time in such good company.

“That's right,” he replied; I really like reading.

“What kind of books do you read?” I asked him.

— I have many spiritual books: here is the Menologium [91], the works of Saint John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, many philosophical or theological works and not a few sermons by preachers of our time. This library cost me five thousand rubles.

— Maybe you don't have a paper on prayer? - I asked him.

— I really like books that deal with prayer. Here is a very recent pamphlet, the work of a St. Petersburg priest.

The man brought a commentary on the Our Father and we began to read it. Soon the lady arrived with tea, and the children brought a large silver tray filled with a certain type of cake that I had never seen or eaten before. The man took the book from my hands, placed it in his wife's and said:

— She will read to us, she reads very well; and in the meantime, we will both regain our strength.

The lady started reading. As I listened, I felt prayer rise to my heart; and the more she read, the more the prayer developed and filled me with joy. Suddenly, I saw a figure passing quickly in the air, as if it were my late priest. I couldn't repress a movement, but to hide it I told them:

— Forgive me, I wanted to sleep.

At that moment I had the impression that my priest's spirit penetrated mine and illuminated it; I felt great clarity and abundant ideas about prayer. Just as I was crossing myself, trying to get rid of these ideas, the lady finished reading and the man asked me if I liked it. And we started talking about it.

— I really liked what I heard, I replied; Of course, the Lord's Prayer is greater and more precious than all the written prayers we have, because Jesus Christ himself taught us. The commentary you read about him is good, but it all refers to the active life of the Christian, whereas I read in the Fathers an explanation that is above all mystical and oriented towards contemplation.

— In which Fathers did you find this?

— Well, in Maximus the Confessor [92], for example, and, in the Philokalia, in Pedro Damasceno [93].

— Would you remember anything? Repeat for us if you remember.

- Of course. The prayer begins like this: Our Father who art in heaven; In the book you just read, these words mean that we must love our neighbor fraternally, because we are all children of the same Father. And this is very true, but the Fathers put a more spiritual comment on these words, and say that when these words are pronounced, it is necessary to raise the spirit to the heavenly Father and remember the obligation to always be in the presence of God. The words: hallowed be thy name are explained in this book by the care that must be taken not to invoke the name of the Lord in vain; but mystical commentators see in them the request for inner prayer of the heart, that is, for the name of God to be sanctified it is necessary that it be engraved in the heart and that through perpetual prayer it sanctifies and illuminates all feelings... and all the forces of the soul. The words thy kingdom come are explained thus by the Fathers: May inner peace, rest and spiritual joy come to our hearts. In the book it is said that the words: Give us this day our daily bread, refer to the needs of our bodily life and the things necessary to rush to the aid of others. But Maximus the Confessor understands by daily bread the heavenly bread that feeds the soul, that is, the Word of God and the union of the soul with God through contemplation and continuous prayer in the heart.

“Interior prayer,” he said, “is something difficult and even almost impossible for those who live in the world; Even to pray in common prayer without laziness, the Lord has to help us with all his favor.

“Don’t talk like that,” I replied. If it were an undertaking that surpassed human strength, God would not have demanded it from everyone. In weakness my power is perfected [94], and the Fathers offer us means that facilitate the path to interior prayer.

— I’ve never read anything about it, said my interlocutor.

— If you want, I can read some excerpts from the Philokalia.

I picked up this book, looked for a passage by Pedro Damasceno in the third part and read the following: “We must exercise ourselves in invoking the name of the Lord, more than in breathing, at all times, in all situations and in all places . Pray without ceasing, says the Apostle; and with these words he teaches that we must remember God at all times, in all places and in all occupations. If you do anything, you have to think about the Creator of everything that exists; If you see the light, remember who gave it to you; If you happen to behold the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the things contained in them, admire and glorify Him who created them; If you put on a dress, think about the One to whom you owe it and thank Him for it, the One who provides your existence. In short, let every movement be a reason for you to celebrate the Lord, and then you will pray without ceasing and your soul will always be in joy.

— See how simple, easy and accessible this method is for anyone with the slightest human feeling.

They really liked this text. The man hugged me enthusiastically, thanked me, looked at my Filocalia and said:

— I have to buy this book; I will order it for St. Petersburg; but to remind you better I will immediately copy this passage which you read; tell me

And he immediately transcribed it into fast, beautiful writing. Then he exclaimed:

- My God! In fact, I have an icon of Saint Damascene [95] here.

He opened the box and placed the paper he had just written under the icon, and said:

— The living word of a servant of God placed in his image will often move me to put this salutary advice into practice.

We went to dinner later. Everyone was back at the table with us, men and women. What a silent memory and tranquility during dinner! After that, we all prayed together, even the children, and they made me read the Akathist hymn to the Sweet Jesus.

The servants went to rest and the three of us continued in the dining room. Then the lady brought me a white shirt and some socks, but I, bowing deeply, said to her:

— Good mother, I can't accept the socks, which I've never worn; We always use the [96] bands.



A little later she returned with an old yellow blouse that she cut into strips. And her husband, telling me that my shoes were no longer worth anything, brought me completely new ones that he put on over the boots.

—Go to the next room, he told me; There is no one in it and you can change your clothes.

I went to change and then came back to them. They made me sit on a chair and started putting on my shoes; The husband rolled up the sashes for me and the lady started putting on my shoes. At first I resisted as much as I could, but they made me sit down saying:

— Sit down and be silent, because Christ also washed the feet of his disciples.

I couldn't resist anymore and started crying; They were also crying.

Then the woman went to sleep with the children, and I went with the man to the garden to talk a little. We spent a lot of time there. We were sitting on the floor and suddenly he came up to me and said:

— Answer me in conscience and tell me the whole truth; who are you? You must be from a noble family and want to be seen as unhappy. You know how to read and write perfectly and think and speak correctly; You certainly did not receive the education of a peasant.

— I spoke with my heart in my hand to you and your lady; I told you my origins truthfully and never thought of lying or deceiving you. And for what? What I know to say does not come from me, but from my wise and late priest or from the Fathers I read. The inner prayer that illuminates my ignorance like no other, I did not acquire from myself; She was born in my heart by divine mercy and thanks to the priest's teachings. Anyone can achieve what I achieved; Just dive more silently into the heart and invoke the name of Jesus Christ a little more, and then the inner light will begin to be discovered, everything will appear clear and in this clarity certain mysteries of the Kingdom of God become evident. And it is already a great mystery that man discovers this ability to enter into himself, that he truly knows himself and that he gently mourns his falls and his perverted will. It is not very difficult to think correctly and talk to people; rather it is a possible thing, because the spirit and the heart existed before human science and wisdom. It is always in our hands to cultivate the spirit through science and experience; but where there is no intelligence, our education will achieve nothing. What happens is that we are far from ourselves and we don't feel the slightest desire to get closer; We are always running away from the fear of finding ourselves in front of ourselves; We prefer trifles to the truth and think: I would really like to lead a spiritual life and occupy myself with prayer, but I don't have time for that; Business and busyness prevent me from seriously devoting myself to these things. But which is more important and more necessary, the eternal life of the sanctified soul, or the temporary life of the body for which we spend so much effort? This is the explanation of why people achieve wisdom or animality.

— Forgive me, dear brother; I didn't ask him out of simple curiosity, but out of benevolence and Christian feeling; and also because more than two years ago I encountered a totally curious and

interesting case: One day an old beggar came to our house, very weak and depressed; He carried a free soldier's passport and was so poor that he was almost naked; He spoke little and had a peasant manner. We committed him to the asylum; After five days, he fell ill. We took him to the infirmary and my wife and I took care of him completely. When it became clear to us that he was going to die, our priest confessed him and gave him communion and the last rites. The day before he died, he got up, asked me for a pen and paper, and insisted that the door be closed and that no one should enter while he wrote his will, which I would send to his son in St. Petersburg. I was surprised when I saw that he wrote perfectly and that his sentences were perfectly correct, elegant and overflowing with tenderness. Tomorrow I want to show you the will, of which I keep a copy. All of this caused me great admiration and, out of curiosity, I asked him to tell me his origins and his life. He made me swear that I would not say anything to anyone before his death, and to the glory of God he told me the following story:

"— I was a prince and had great wealth; I led the most dissipated, brilliant and luxurious life imaginable. My wife had died and I lived with my son who was captain of the guard. One night, as I was preparing to go to At a grand ball, I became angry with my servant; In my impatience, I hit him on the head and ordered him to be sent to his village. This was at night and the next morning the servant died of inflammation of the head. No further importance was given to the matter and, although I regretted my violence, I completely forgot what had happened. After six weeks, the servant began to appear to me in my dreams; Night after night he came to bother me and reprimand me, repeating incessantly: "Man without conscience, you were my murderer!" Later, I began to see him when I was awake. The appearances began to become more and more frequent, until I ended up having him present almost constantly. Finally, at the same time as my servant, I began to see other dead people: men I had seriously offended and women I had seduced. Everyone scolded me until they wouldn't let me rest; so much so that it was no longer possible to sleep, eat or do anything. My strength was consumed and now I had nothing but bones and skin. The efforts of the best doctors achieved nothing. I went abroad in search of a remedy; But, after six months of treatment, not only had my improvement not progressed at all, but the terrible appearances were getting worse and worse. I returned home more dead than alive; Thus my soul knew, before being separated from the body, the torments of hell; Since then I have believed in hell and have experienced what it is like.

"While suffering these tortures, I finally understood my infamy; I repented, confessed, sent my servants home and promised to spend the rest of my life in the midst of the hardest work and hide under a beggar's rags to be the humblest servant of the people of the lowest condition. He had barely made this decision when the apparitions ceased. My reconciliation with God gave me so much joy and a feeling of confidence so great that I still cannot explain it. So I also understood by experience what it is paradise and how the Kingdom of God spreads in our hearts. In a short time I was completely healthy and put my project into execution; Armed with the passport of a soldier who was finishing his service, I secretly left my birthplace. I have been traveling around Siberia fifteen years ago. Sometimes I placed myself in a peasant's house to work according to my strength, and other times I went to beg in the name

of Christ. How much happiness I found in the midst of these privations! This can only be understood by the one whom divine mercy freed from a hell of pain to transport him to the paradise of God.

— Then he gave me his will to send to his son, and the next day he died. Here I have a copy of the Bible that is in my bag. If you want to read it, I'll show it to you. Start here.

I opened the newspaper and read:

"In the name of God, glorified in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

My dear son:

It's been fifteen years since you've seen your father, but in retirement he would sometimes hear from you and feel fatherly love for you. This love is what moves him to send you these last words, so that they may serve as a lesson in your life.

You know how much I suffered to rescue my guilty and light life; but you do not know the happiness which the fruits of repentance brought me, during my dark and wandering life.

I die in peace in the house of my benefactor who is also yours, because the benefits that a father receives extend equally to his caring son. Express my gratitude in any way I can.

At the same time that I leave you my paternal blessing, I urge you to remember God and obey your conscience; be good, prudent and reasonable; Treat your subordinates with kindness, do not despise beggars or pilgrims, remembering that only nakedness and a wandering life allowed your father to find the tranquility of his soul.

Asking God to grant you his grace, I silently close my eyes in the hope of eternal life through the mercy of the Redeemer of men, Jesus Christ."

That's how we talked to this nice man who was hosting me in his house. At one point I said to him:

— I believe, sir, that your asylum gives you a lot of headaches. There are so many of our brothers who only become pilgrims through carelessness or laziness, and who travel these paths like libertines, as I myself have seen more than once.

— No, these guys are kind of weird, he replied. Here we only welcome true pilgrims. And when someone arrives who doesn't seem so serious, we treat them with more care and keep them in the nursing home for a while. Placed in contact with our poor, brothers of Christ, they often correct themselves and leave with a meek and humble heart. Not long ago, we had such a case. A merchant in our city had fallen so far that everyone was beating him and no one wanted to give him even a piece of bread. This merchant was drunk, violent, turbulent and also stole everything he could. One day he came to our house out of hunger; He asked for bread and brandy, because he liked to drink very much. We received him very kindly and told him:

“Stay here and you will have all the drink you want, but on one condition: after drinking, you will go to bed and if you make the slightest noise, not only will we expel you for good, but I will ask the dean to arrest you.” him for being a bum.” He accepted and stayed between us. For more than a week, he drank as much as he wanted; but each time he kept his promise, and perhaps for fear of being deprived of alcohol, he went to find his bed or he would lie down peacefully at the bottom of the garden. When he woke up, our brothers in the asylum would talk to him and exhort him to drink even a little less. So he began to do this and after three months he was completely sober. Now he works in some place and does not eat other people's bread. The day before yesterday he came to visit me.

How much wisdom in this discipline guided by charity! I thought and exclaimed:

— Blessed be God who, with his mercy, is present in your home!

After this conversation, sleep began to invade us a little; But upon hearing the bell ringing announcing the morning service, we went to the church where the lady was already with her children. We heard the service and then the divine liturgy. I was in the choir with the man and his son, while the lady and her little daughter were where the iconostasis opens to see the elevation of the Holy Gifts. Oh, Lord, and how everyone prayed and how many tears of joy they shed! Their faces were so bright that, looking at them, I began to cry.

After the religious services were over, the lords, the priest, the servants and the beggars all sat together at the table. There were about forty beggars, sick people and children. What silence and peace at the table! I, gaining confidence, said in a low voice to the gentleman:

— In monasteries it is customary to read the lives of the saints during the meal; Here you could do the same, since you have the complete Menology. The man turned to his wife and said:

— True, María, it would be good to present this news that will be good for everyone. I will do the reading at the first meal, then you, then our priest and our brothers, each in turn and according to his knowledge.

The priest stopped eating and said:

— Listening to this gives me a lot of pleasure, but reading it, I don't have the free time for. As soon as I set foot in my house, I no longer know what to do or where to start: what if the children, what if the animals enter someone else's field; The whole day is spent on things like this, without a minute left to educate yourself. Everything I learned at the seminar I forgot a long time ago.

When I heard these things I trembled, but the lady took me by the arm and said:

— He speaks like that out of humility. He always lowers his own merits, but he is an excellent and pious man; He has been a widower for twenty years, raises his children and also celebrates religious services frequently.

These words reminded me of a phrase by Nicetas Stethatos [97] in the Philokalia: “The nature of objects is appreciated according to the inner disposition of the soul”, that is, each person forms an idea of others according to what he himself is... And then he adds: "He who has come to prayer and true love no longer distinguishes objects, nor distinguishes the righteous from the sinner, but loves all men equally and does not condemn them; the same as God who makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, and to send rain on the just and the unjust" [98].

Again we were silent; In front of me sat a beggar from the asylum, completely blind. The man fed him, broke the fish, put the spoon to his mouth and gave him a drink. I looked at him very carefully and noticed that, in his mouth, which was always slightly open, his tongue was moving continuously; I wondered if he would recite the prayer and continued looking at him more closely. At the end of the meal, an elderly woman felt sick, choked and moaned loudly. The man and his wife took her to the bedroom to put her to bed and laid her down on the bed; The lady stayed to look after her, the priest, whatever happened, went in search of the Holy Gifts, and the man ordered a car to be prepared to go look for a doctor in the city. Everyone went their own way.

I felt a hunger for prayer; I felt a violent need to let her out, as I had lacked tranquility and silence for two days. I felt in my heart like a river about to overflow and spread through all my limbs; but, as I kept it within me, I felt a violent pain in my heart - but a beneficial pain, which only inclined me to prayer and silence. Then I understood why true followers of continuous prayer fled the world and hid away from everyone; I also understood why the blessed Hesychius says that the highest conversation is no more than a conversation if it lasts a long time, and I also remembered the words of Saint Ephrem the Syrian [99]: "A good speech is silver, but silence is pure gold. Thinking about all these things, I arrived at the asylum: everyone was sleeping after dinner. I went up to the attic, calmed down, rested and prayed a little. When the poor woke up, I went to look for the blind man and took him to the garden; We sat in a lonely corner and began to talk.

— Tell me, in the name of God and for the good of your soul, do you pray the Jesus prayer?

— I've been repeating this incessantly for a long time.

— What effects does this have on you?

— I just know that neither day nor night I can live without her.

—How did God reveal this activity to you? Tell me in detail, dear brother.

- Then I'll say it. I'm an artisan here, who earned my bread working as a tailor. I also traveled to other provinces, toured the cities and sewed the peasants' costumes. In one village, it happened to me that I had to stay several days in the house of one of its inhabitants to dress his entire family. One holiday, when there was nothing to do, I saw three books on the shelf above the icons. And I asked them:

— Is there anyone among you who reads?

And they answered me:

- There is nobody; These books belonged to an uncle; he was polite.

I took one of the books, opened it at random and read the following words, which I still remember: “Continuous prayer consists in incessantly invoking the name of the Lord; sitting or standing, at table or at work, on all occasions, in all places, at all times, the name of the Lord must be invoked.”

I reflected on what I read and saw that it suited me very well; So, while I was sewing, I began to repeat the prayer quietly and with that I felt very happy. The people who lived with me in the izba noticed what I was doing and made fun of me:

—Are you a sorcerer who murmurs incessantly? Or are you trying out some magic tricks?

So that they wouldn't see me, I stopped moving my lips and started saying the prayer, moving only my tongue. Finally, I got so used to it that my tongue recites it day and night and it does me a lot of good.

I continued my work for many years until I suddenly became blind. In our house, in our family, almost all of us have cataracts. As I am poor, the municipality found me a place in the Tobolsk asylum. “I intend to go there, but the owners of this house kept me here because they want to prepare a cart to take me there.”

—What is the name of the book you read? Wasn't it Philokalia?

- The truth is, I don't know. It never occurred to me to look at the title.

I went in search of my Filocalia. In the fourth part I looked for the words of Patriarch Calixto that the old man repeated to me by heart and I started reading.

—It's the same thing I read, exclaimed the blind man. Read, read, my brother, for these things are precious.

When I got to the passage that says to pray from the heart, he asked me what that meant and how it was practiced. I told him that the entire teaching of prayer from the heart was explained in detail in this book called Philokalia, and he insisted that I read to him everything that referred to it.

“We'll do it this way,” I told him. When do you plan to leave for Tobolsk?

“If you wish, we will leave immediately,” he replied.

-All is well then. I would like to leave tomorrow; We can leave together and along the way I will read to you everything that refers to the prayer of the heart and I will teach you how to discover your heart and the way to penetrate it.

— And the cart? -she told me.

— I don't remember the cart. From here to Tobolsk is just one hundred and fifty versts, which we will do on foot, without rushing. And while we walk we might as well read and talk about prayer.

In this way we agree. In the evening, the gentleman came to call us to dinner, and after dinner we declared our intention to leave and that we did not need a carriage, as we preferred to read the Philokalia. To which he replied:

— I really liked Filocalia; I have already written the letter and prepared the money, and tomorrow, when I go to court, I intend to send everything to St. Petersburg so that they can send me the book in the first post.

And as agreed, the next morning we left, after having given thanks to our benefactors for their great charity and meekness. The two accompanied us for a verst and we said goodbye.

### THE BLIND PEASANT

We walked slowly with the blind man; we only made ten to fifteen versts a day, and the rest of the time we spent sitting in solitary places and reading the Philokalia. I read to him everything that has to do with prayer from the heart, following the order indicated by my priest, that is, starting with the books of the Monk Nikephoros, Gregory Sinaita, etc. How much attention and fervor he put into hearing these things! How they moved him and filled him with happiness! He immediately began to ask me so many questions about prayer that my spirit did not find enough knowledge to answer them.

After listening to my reading, the blind man asked me to teach him a practical way of finding the heart through the spirit, of introducing into it the divine name of Jesus Christ, and thus praying interiorly with the heart. I said:

—No doubt you don't see; But through intelligence you can represent things you have seen before: a man, an object or one of his limbs, his arm or his leg. Can you imagine him as clearly as if you saw him, and is it possible for you, though blind, to direct your gaze at him?

"Yes, I can," he replied.

— So, represent your heart like this, turn your eyes as if you were looking at it through your chest and listen with your ears to how it works, beating rhythmically. When you get used to it, strive to adjust to each beat of your heart, without losing sight of the words of the prayer. In other words, on the first beat say or think Sir; to the second, Jesus...; to the third, Christ; to the fourth, have mercy; for the fifth, from me; and repeat this exercise frequently. This will be easy for you because you are already prepared for prayer from the heart. Later, when you are already used to this activity, begin to introduce the Jesus prayer into your heart and let it come out at the same time as your breath; In other words, when breathing in, say or think: Lord Jesus Christ, and when breathing out: Have mercy on me. If you do this often and for a long time, you will soon notice a slight pain in your heart, and then a life-giving warmth will occur in it. With God's help, you will thus achieve the constant action of prayer within your heart. But above all, be careful with any representation or image that arises in your spirit as you pray. Reject all imaginations, as the Father orders us, in order not to fall into illusions, to keep our spirit free and empty in every way during prayer.

The blind man, who listened to me attentively, practiced with great zeal what I had taught him and, at night, at the inn, he spent a lot of time on it. After five days, he felt a very strong warmth and indescribable happiness in his heart; Furthermore, he had a great desire to dedicate himself unceasingly to prayer, which revealed to him the love he felt for Jesus Christ. Sometimes he saw a light, without any object appearing; as he entered his heart, he seemed to see the brilliant flame of a candle spring up in it, which, coming out, illuminated him entirely; and this flame allowed him to see even distant objects, as happened once.

Once we were passing through a forest and he was silent and absorbed in prayer. With that, he said to me:

- What a disgrace! The church is on fire and the tower has just fallen.

“You don’t want to conjure up those empty images,” I told him, “because that’s a temptation.” Dreams must be rejected as quickly as possible. How can you see what is happening in the city? We are still twelve miles away from it.

He obeyed and, returning to prayer, remained silent. At dusk we arrived in the city and I could see many burned houses and a fallen bell tower, supported by two wooden columns. Nearby, people were arguing and were surprised that when it fell, it had not crushed anyone. From what I could understand, the misfortune occurred at the exact moment the blind man spoke to me in the forest. Then I heard him say:

—As you said, my vision was nothing, but everything happened according to it. How can we not give thanks and love our Lord Jesus Christ, who reveals his grace to sinners, the blind and the foolish? Thank you also to you who taught me the activity of the heart.

I replied to him:

— Loving Jesus Christ is very good and thanking him too; But to take any vision as a direct revelation of grace, you should not do so, as it is something that often occurs naturally according to the order of things. The human soul is not entirely subject to matter. This is why she can see distant and near objects in the dark. But we do not cultivate this faculty of the soul, but burden it with the weight of our heavy body and the confusion of our distracted and light thoughts. When we focus on ourselves and abstract from everything that surrounds us, and sharpen our spirit, then the soul completely returns to itself, operates with all its energy and all this is nothing more than a natural action. My late priest told me that not only men of prayer, but also certain sick people or some specially gifted people, when they find themselves in a dark room, see the light coming from objects, perceive the presence of their bodies and penetrate the thoughts of those too much. But the direct effects of God's grace, during the prayer of the heart, are so delightful that no human tongue is able to describe them; They are not comparable to any material thing; The sensitive world is something very low compared to the sensations that grace awakens in the heart.



The blind man listened to these words with great attention and became even more humble; Prayer continued to develop in his heart and brought him ineffable joy. My soul was happy for this and I thanked the Lord, who made me know such piety in one of his servants.

We finally reached Tobolsk; There, I took him to the asylum and, after saying goodbye to him with great affection, I returned to my solitary path.

For a whole month I walked little by little and began to feel how useful living examples are for us and how much good they do us. I read the Philokalia many times, and what I read in it confirmed what I had said to the blind man. Their examples inflamed my zeal and love for the Lord. The prayer of the heart made me so happy that I did not think it was possible to be so again on earth, and I wondered how the delights of the heavenly Kingdom could be greater than these. This happiness didn't just illuminate the inside of my soul; The external world also appeared to me in a charming aspect, and everything invited me to love and praise God: men, trees, plants, animals, everything seemed familiar to me, and everywhere I found the image of the name of God, Jesus Christ. Sometimes I felt so light that I had the impression of no longer having a body and of floating gently in the air; Sometimes I went completely inside myself. There I clearly saw my insides and admired the wonderful construction of the human body; other times he felt as great a joy as if he had become king; and in the midst of all these consolations, I wished that God would allow me to die as quickly as possible and that I could let my gratitude overflow at his feet, in the world of spirits.

Without a doubt, I took great pleasure in these sensations, or perhaps God decided that it should be so; but after a while I felt a kind of fear in my heart that gave me something to think about. Is this not, I said to myself, a new misfortune or tribulation like the one I had to suffer for that young woman to whom I taught the Jesus prayer in the chapel? Thoughts overcame me like dark clouds, and I remembered the words of the blessed John of the Carpathians, who says that the teacher is often dishonored and suffers temptations and tribulations from those whom he helped spiritually. After struggling with these thoughts, I gave myself over to prayer, which made them disappear completely. Then I felt stronger and said to myself: May God's will always be done! I am willing to endure whatever Our Lord Jesus Christ wants to send me to atone for my hardening and my pride. Furthermore, all those to whom I have recently revealed the mystery of inner prayer were prepared for it by the mysterious action of God, before I met them on my path. This thought completely calmed me down and I was able to continue walking in prayer and joy, happier than before. For two days it rained incessantly, and the road was so full of mud that it was a continuous swamp; At this time I was walking across the steppe, and in fifteen versts I did not find a single inhabited place. Until finally, at dusk, I saw an inn on the road in the distance, which filled me with joy, thinking that at least there I could rest and spend the night. And the next day, God will say; Maybe the weather will improve.

## THE POS HOUSE

As I approached the house, I saw an old man in a soldier's coat; He was sitting on a slope in front of the inn and appeared drunk. I greeted him and said:

— Who can I ask permission to spend the night here?

—Who can let you in if not me? - shouted the old man -; I'm the owner here. I'm a postmaster and the relays are made here.

- Very good; Allow me then, grandfather, to spend the night at your house.

- You have passport? Let's see your documents!

I showed him my passport and, with it in my hands, he started shouting:

— Well, where is that passport?

"You have it in your hands," I replied.

— Okay, let's go in.

The postmaster put on his glasses, examined the passport and said:

— Everything seems to be in order; You can stay here. See, I'm a good man; Wait, I'll pour you a drink.

"I never drink," I replied.

- Well, it doesn't matter. But at least have dinner with us.

He sat at the table with the cook, a young woman who was also quite drunk, and I sat next to them. Throughout dinner they didn't stop arguing and scolding each other, until finally a real battle broke out. The owner went to sleep in the storeroom and the cook stayed to wash the dishes, while she cursed the man a thousand times.

I continued sitting and, seeing that he showed no signs of remaining silent, I said to him:

— Where can I sleep, good woman? I'm very tired from the road.

— I'll prepare your bed right now.

And he placed a bench near the one under the front window, spread a felt blanket over it, and placed a pillow on it. I fell onto that bed and closed my eyes, pretending I was already asleep. The cook continued for a long time, filled with rage, pacing up and down the room; Finally, she finished her tasks, turned off the light and came close to me. Suddenly, the entire window that was in the corner of the facade flew out of its frame with a terrible crash, and the frames, glass and mullions shattered; At the same time, groans, screams and a noise similar to that of a fight were heard outside. The terrified woman jumped to the center of the room and fell to the floor. I jumped off the bench, believing that the earth was opening up at my feet. At that moment I saw two coachmen taking a man covered in blood,

whose face could not be distinguished, to the izba. This increased my anxiety. It was a State messenger who had to change horses there. The coachman had taken the wrong way to get in and ripped out the window with the stick, and as there was a hole in front of it, the cart had tipped over and the messenger had injured his head on a sharp stake that held the ground. The messenger asked for water and alcohol to wash the wound. He doused it with brandy, then drank a glass and shouted:

- The horses!

I approached him and said:

— How do you wish to continue your journey with such an injury?

“A messenger doesn't have time to be sick,” he replied, and left.

The waiters took the woman to a corner near the stove, and covered her with a blanket saying:

— She fainted from fear.

The postmaster poured himself a good glass and went to sleep. I was alone.

Shortly afterwards, the woman got up and began to walk from one place to another, like a sleepwalker; Finally, she left the house. I said a prayer and, feeling weak, fell asleep before dawn.

In the morning, I said goodbye to the postmaster and, as I walked, I raised my prayers with faith, hope and gratitude to the Father of all mercy and all consolation, who had removed imminent misfortune from me.

Six years after these events, as I passed near a convent, I went into the church to pray. The abbess kindly welcomed me into her home after Mass and made me serve tea. At that moment they announced that passing guests had arrived; She came to greet them and I stayed with the nuns who lived with her. When I saw one of them serving me tea with great humility, I became curious and asked her:

— How long, sister, have you been at the convent?

“Five years,” he replied; When they brought me to this place, my head was not right, but God had compassion on me. The Mother Abbess took me with her to her cell and forced me to take my vows.

—And how did you lose your mind?

— Scared. He worked at a post office. One night, while I was sleeping, the horses blew out a window and I went crazy with terror. For a whole year my parents took me to the pilgrimage sites, but it was only when I arrived here that I regained my health.

Upon hearing these words, I rejoiced in my soul and glorified God, whose wisdom transforms everything to our benefit.

## A CURE IN THE VILLAGE

“Other adventures still happened to me,” I said, addressing my spiritual father. If I wanted to tell you everything, three days wouldn't be enough. But if it's okay with you, I'll tell you one more.

One fine summer day, I saw a cemetery at some distance from the road, or rather, a parish community, that is, a church with a house for the servants of the harvest and a cemetery. The bells rang announcing Holy Mass and I ran to go to church. The people around followed the same path; but many sat down on the grass before reaching the church and, seeing that I was in a hurry, said to me:

— Don't go so fast, you'll get there in time; In this church, masses are celebrated very slowly: the priest is sick and is also very calm.

And indeed, the liturgy was not moving very quickly. The priest, young but pale and thin, celebrated very slowly, with piety and feeling; At the end of the Mass, he gave an excellent sermon on how to reach the love of God.

The priest invited me to eat with him. During the meal I said to him:

— You celebrate the mysteries with great piety, my Father, but also very slowly.

"Certainly," he replied; And my parishioners don't like it very much and that's why they murmur. But they waste time, because I like to meditate and consider each word before saying it; If you are deprived of this inner feeling, words will be of no value to you or others. Everything is in the inner life and attentive prayer. Oh, and how little one is interested in inner activity! - he added -. There is no desire or concern for inner spiritual enlightenment.

I asked again:

— But how do you get to that? It's such a difficult thing!

— It's not difficult at all. To receive spiritual enlightenment and become an inner man, one must take any text of Scripture and concentrate all one's attention on it for as long as possible. Through this path we discover the light of intelligence. To pray, you must proceed in the same way:

If you wish your prayer to be pure and straight and to produce good effects, you must choose a short prayer, consisting of a few short but energetic words, and repeat it long and often; That's where you come to enjoy prayer.

I really liked this priest's teaching because it was practical and easy and at the same time profound and wise. I thanked God in spirit for making me know a true pastor of his Church.

After the meal, the priest said to me:

— Go get some rest; I will read the Word of God and prepare my sermon for tomorrow.

### Tales of a Russian Pilgrim

I went to the kitchen. There was just a very old cook, bent over, sitting in the corner and coughing. I sat down near a window, took the Filocalia out of my backpack and began to read in a low voice. Shortly afterwards I noticed that the old woman sitting in the corner was incessantly reciting the Jesus prayer. She gave me great joy to hear him invoke the Holy Name of the Lord and I said to him:

— How good it is, good woman, that you are praying like this! It is the best and most Christian of works.

"That's right," he replied. In the decline of my life, this is my consolation. May the Lord forgive me.

—Have you been praying like this for a long time?

— Since my youth; and without this I could not live, because the prayer of Jesus saved me from misfortune and death.

- How did this happen? Tell me, please, for the glory of God and in honor of Jesus' powerful prayer.

I put Fiocalía in my bag, sat down next to the old woman and she started to tell me:

— When I was young and beautiful, my parents married me; The day before the wedding, my boyfriend was about to enter our house when he suddenly fell dead just a few steps from the door. Upon seeing him, the terror I felt was such that at that very moment I decided to remain a virgin and go to the Holy Places to pray to God. However, I was afraid to walk alone on those roads, because bad people might attack me because of my youth. An old lady who had been wandering for a long time taught me that I should pray the Jesus prayer without ceasing and assured me in very persuasive words that this prayer would protect me from any danger on the road. I believed what that woman told me and nothing untoward happened to me, even in the most distant regions. My parents sent me the money I needed for the trip. As I grew older, I also became sick, and fortunately for me, the priest at this church feeds and shelters me out of pure kindness.

I heard that story with great joy and I didn't know how to thank God for that day, which revealed such edifying examples to me. Shortly afterwards, I asked that good and holy priest to give me his blessing and I left again full of joy.

### KAZAN ROAD

And I looked closely; Not long ago, when I was passing through Kazan province to come here, I became aware again of the effects of Jesus' prayer. Even for those who practice it unconsciously, it is the safest and fastest way to achieve spiritual goods.

One afternoon, I had to stay in a Tatar village. As I entered the streets of the city, I saw a car and a Russian coachman in front of a house; The horses were loose and grazing near the carriage. With great joy I decided to ask to spend the night in that house, where I hoped to find at least Christian souls. I approached and asked the driver who he was carrying in the car. He replied that his master was going

from Kazan to the Crimea. While I was talking to the coachman, the man opened the leather window curtain, looked at me and said:

— I intend to spend the night here, but I will not enter the Tatars' house because they are very dirty; I prefer to sleep in the car.

A little later, the man went out for a walk, because it was a very beautiful afternoon, and we started talking. We talked about different topics and he told me more or less the following:

"— Until I was sixty-five years old I served in the fleet as a ship captain. As I grew older, I fell ill with gout and retired to the Crimea, to some of my wife's lands; I was almost always sick. My wife liked a lot of receptions and even more of playing cards. He ended up getting tired of constantly living with a sick person and went to Kazan to stay with our daughter, who was the wife of an official; She took everything with her, even the maids, leaving a boy as a servant eight years old, my godson."

I continued like this, deprived of all company, for three years. The boy was very smart: he cleaned the room, lit the fire, prepared my stew and heated my teapot. But at the same time he was very impulsive, a real brat. He ran, screamed, played, hit everywhere and that bothered me a lot; Because of my illness and to pass the time, I read many spiritual authors. I had an excellent book by Gregorio Palamas [100] on the Jesus Prayer. I read almost continuously and prayed a little. The noise the boy made was very unpleasant to me, and no measure or punishment of any kind could make him make any amends. I ended up inventing a way: I made him sit in the room on a stool and repeat the Jesus prayer there. At first this measure was so violent to him that, in order not to comply with it, he remained silent.

But to force him to carry out my order, I took some sticks home. When he prayed, I calmly read or listened to what he said; But as soon as he was silent, I showed him the sticks and, trembling with fear, he began the prayer again. This did me a lot of good because there was finally calm and silence in my house. After some time, I was able to realize that the threat of the rods was no longer necessary: I carried out my order with pleasure and great joy; Later, his character changed completely; He began to be soft and calm and did much better at household chores. I was very happy and started giving him more freedom. What were the results? Well, he became so accustomed to prayer that he repeated it incessantly and without me having to force him in any way. When I spoke to him about this, he replied that he felt an uncontrollable desire to recite the prayer.

— What do you feel when you pray?

"- Nothing special; But I feel good when I say the prayer."

—But how, well?

"- I do not know how to explain."

— Do you feel happy?

— Yes, I feel happy.

The boy was twelve years old when the Crimean War broke out. I left for Kazan and took him with me to my daughter's house. There we installed him in the kitchen with the other residents of the house and he felt very unhappy because they spent their time entertaining and playing and also making fun of him, without allowing him to occupy himself with prayer. After three months he came looking for me and said:

- I'm going home; I can't take this busy life anymore.

I replied to him:

— How do you want to go so far away, alone and in the middle of winter? Wait until I come back and I'll take you with me.

The next day, the boy had disappeared. We sent to look for him everywhere, but everything was useless. Finally, one fine day I received a letter from Crimea; Those responsible for the house I have there announced to me that, on April 4th, the day after Easter [101], they found the boy dead in the lonely house. They found him lying on the floor of my room, with his hands crossed over his chest, his hat under his head and wearing the poor dress he always wore and with which he had run away. They buried him in my garden.

Upon receiving this news, I was amazed at how quickly he got there. He had left on February 26th and was found dead on April 4th. Three thousand versts a month can hardly be covered by a horse, as it is a hundred versts a day. Furthermore, with very little clothing, no passport and no currency. Even if he found a carriage to take him, it could not have happened without divine intervention. From this it can be seen that my little servant found the fruit of prayer, while I, at the end of my life, still could not reach as high as he did.

I then said to the Lord:

— I know that excellent book by Gregorio Palamas that you read; but it talks more about oral prayer. You should read this other book called Philokalia. In it you will find the complete teaching of Jesus' prayer in the spirit and in the heart.

And as I said this, I taught him Philokalia. He listened to my advice happily and replied that he would buy the book.

My God! I said to myself. What marvelous effects of divine power are revealed by this prayer! How uplifting and profound this story is; The sticks taught that boy prayer and gave him happiness! The misfortunes and sorrows we encounter, what else are they but the rods of God? Why fear, then, when the hand of our heavenly Father threatens us with them? He is always full of infinite love for us, and these wands teach us to pray with greater fervor and lead us to ineffable joy.

Here I finished my stories and said to my spiritual Father:

— Forgive me in the name of God; I have been talking a lot and the Fathers teach that a conversation, even a spiritual one, is only vanity if it lasts a long time. It's time to look again for who will accompany me to Jerusalem. Pray for me, poor sinner, that the Lord, in his mercy, will make everything go well for me on my pilgrimage.

“I wish you this with all my heart, beloved brother in the Lord,” he replied. May God's superabundant grace illuminate his steps and accompany him on his path, as the angel Raphael accompanied Tobias.

## SECOND PART

### PROLOGUE

Charles Krafft

For many of our contemporaries, the traditional question: “Tell me how I can save myself” no longer makes sense. What should be saved from a man who is naturally good or “normally abnormal”? The only attitudes offered to “today's man” are an optimism, however, belied by everyday reality, a disillusioned, desperate and exasperating pessimism, or the utopian hope of a day when imperfect men will finally create a perfect society that will make them perfected by the art of birlibirloque, only reason triumphing over baseness and passions.

However, our contemporaries often feel deep within themselves, like men of all times, a profound need for absolute truth, for perfect beauty and infinite happiness. It then happens that they receive, like the Russian pilgrim and often thanks to him, Saint Paul's appeal: Pray without ceasing!, and their hearts ask themselves: What does this appeal mean? What is prayer? Why should we pray? How can you pray without ceasing? Does prayer respond to this need for truth, beauty and bliss that seems like nostalgia, a mysterious calling?

For many too, the history of the Church basically reveals only errors, illusions and failures; These people know nothing about Christianity, other than some distortions or imitations, and they are full of slander that prevents them from wanting to see for themselves whether perhaps there is an unknown reality in the Church. They, and often even practicing Christians, are unaware of the history of the saints, the response given by mystics to the Bible's frequent and instantaneous calls to prayer and the practice of the commandments, to the knowledge of the Truth and to union with our Father who is in heaven. .

The Stories of a Russian Pilgrim place us in the presence, in a context unusual for Western Europeans, of a tradition that goes back to Christ and the Apostles, and which is that of continuous prayer, of prayer from the heart; From the early Church to Russia, passing through Mount Sinai, the desert of Egypt and Mount Athos, a precise, delicious, luminous, sanctifying experience of prayer and, through it, of the merciful, saving and unifying Love of God was transmitted, taught. from an experienced teacher to a disciple, experienced by religious or lay people. A relatively recent illustration of this



tradition is found in the person, life and teachings of Saint Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833), known to many in the West, and in the famous starti of Optino, the great Russian convent.

In the first four stories of a Russian pilgrim, the reader was able to get to know the pilgrim himself, his vocation, his spiritual experiences nourished by the Bible and the Philokalia, which is a compilation of patristic texts that deal with spiritual prayer and the guarding of the heart. Before entering the Camino, the pilgrim received from his priest a blessing that helped him to live on the graces conferred by the sacraments and to avoid the dangers of proud or capricious individualism, through humble and fervent submission to a master, who incarnated for his disciple the Will of God.

The three stories that appear in this part allow us to rediscover the pilgrim. They were found among the papers of Father Ambrosio de Optino and published in Russia in 1911.

The fifth story shows the dark and irrational character of nature left to itself, and the urgent need for prayer to mercifully escape the weight that drags man to the abyss; it speaks of Providence, the Love of God, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the protection that prayer guarantees. Below are direct and practical advice on confession, considerations on the excellence and greatness of the formula Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner, which constitutes what is called the “Jesus Prayer”; This is what, in Orthodoxy, and sometimes in a simplified form, constitutes the “support” of continuous prayer from the beginning of your learning. Afterwards, the story talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, love for others; responds to the fears of those who do not dare to resort to prayer and, finally, offers an evangelical method of prayer, showing in the Holy Gospel a progressive teaching on prayer and its fruits.

The sixth story talks about the function of the Gospels; gives, relying on the teaching of the saints, the secret of salvation, revealed by continuous prayer: “To be in Him (Christ) means to continually feel His presence, to continually invoke His Name”; It is about the gravity and power of prayer, the possibility of praying in the midst of absorbing occupations or in company, of laziness or the desire for spiritual enjoyment; Finally, a brief summary revisits some important points.

The seventh story talks about the hermit, the role of the priest, the dangers of imagination, discouragement and shows, finally, how to pray for others.

These stories contain precise instructions, supported by Tradition and illustrated by short anecdotes. It is, in particular, the frequency of prayer, which is "the only method of arriving at pure and true prayer... To convince you definitively of the necessity and fruitfulness of frequent prayer, pay attention to: — That every desire and every thought of praying is the work of the Holy Spirit and the voice of our guardian angel.

— May the name of Jesus Christ invoked in prayer contain within itself a salvific power that exists and acts by itself...".

This character of invoking the Name of Jesus has biblical origins; The Apostles speak of him, after having been invited by Jesus Christ to pray in His Name and attentive by the Pater Noster: Hallowed be thy Name and by the Magnificat: Holy is his Name. The Holy Virgin evidently knew the meaning of the Name of Jesus, which is: God the Savior, and invoked this Name that summarizes the entire merciful Revelation of the Father in His Son and the entire history of salvation; The Apostles, in turn, invoked him, as shown in the biblical texts and the wonderful story of Saint John's disciple, Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who continually invoked the Name of Jesus and even inscribed it in letters of gold on his heart. The "Jesus Prayer" mentioned by the Russian pilgrim shows the continuity of this invocation over time, associated with an explicit appeal to Mercy. But the names of "Father" and "Mary" have also been frequently invoked, as have those of "God" or "Lord".

The practice of calling on a divine Name can be supported, for example, by these quotations from the Psalms: but I called on the Name of the Lord; Lord, save my soul; I will sacrifice a multitude of praises and call on the Name of the Lord; Blessed are those who love Your Name. The holy bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov wrote in the last century: "The Name, by its external form, is limited, but represents an unlimited object, God, from whom it receives an infinite and divine value, the power and properties of God." It is the doctrine of Tradition.

Catholics may wonder if they can find teaching in their Church similar to that found in Tales of a Russian Pilgrim. It is not possible to answer this question in detail here; Let us simply say that if the Orthodox Church has developed and continues to teach a particularly precise doctrine of invoking the Name of Jesus and continuous prayer, the Catholic Church has also responded to Saint Paul's exhortation: Pray without ceasing!, and preaches devotion to the Holy Name.

On the one hand, the Christianity of the saints of the Eastern Church is of such authenticity that their teaching concerns all those who want to be truly Christians; On the other hand, the works of a Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, a Saint Bonaventure, a Saint Bernardino of Siena or a Saint Alphonsus Maria de Ligório, who are saints of the West, also contain teachings on the invocation of the holy Name of Jesus and also that of Mary, about which Saint Ephrem wrote: "The Name of Mary is the key that opens the doors of heaven". And Frère Laurent of the Resurrection, for example, wrote masterfully about The Experience of the Presence of God.

If today it is difficult to find a priest, a teacher of prayer life, in the West, we must ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. He compensates for the absence of a human teacher or can give the opportunity to meet him, for He Himself is the Master par excellence and every human teacher, whatever his degree of holiness, is in a certain way nothing more than His representative and His incarnation.

As the monk teaches in the sixth story: "Every desire and every thought of praying is the work of the Holy Spirit." May this same Spirit guide the steps of those who seek the Way, the Truth and the Life!

On the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.

## FIFTH REPORT

THE PRIEST: A year had passed since I last saw the pilgrim, when finally a soft knock on the door and a pleading voice announced the arrival of that pious brother, for whom a cordial welcome awaited.

— Come in, dear brother, and let's thank God together for having blessed your path and for bringing you back.

THE PILGRIM: Praise be to and thanks be to the Father who is in heaven for his generosity in all things, which He orders according to His best opinion and always for the good of us, pilgrims and strangers in a strange land. Here is this sinner, who left you last year and whom God's mercy deemed worthy of seeing and hearing your joyful welcome again. And, of course, you expect to hear from me a full description of God's Holy City, Jerusalem, for which my soul longed and to which I was firmly determined to go. But our desires cannot always be satisfied, and that is what happened in my case. And rightly so, for how could I, an unfortunate sinner, be considered worthy of treading that sacred land where the divine steps of Our Lord Jesus Christ left their mark?

You remember, Father, that I left here last year with a deaf old man as my companion, and that I received a letter from a merchant in Irkutsk to his son in Odessa asking him to send me to Jerusalem. Well, we arrived in Odessa perfectly in no time. My companion immediately bought a ticket to Constantinople and left. I, in turn, started looking for the merchant's son to find out the address of the letter. I soon found his house, but there I discovered, to my surprise and regret, that my benefactor was no longer among the living. He had died, after a short illness, and had been buried three weeks earlier. This discouraged me a lot, but I still trusted in God's power. The whole house was in mourning, and the widow, who was left with three young children, was so distressed that she cried continually and fainted from grief several times a day. Her pain was so great that it seemed like she wouldn't live long either. Despite everything, in the midst of all this, she received me warmly, although in such a state of affairs she could not send me to Jerusalem. But she asked me to stay with her about a fortnight until her father-in-law came to Odessa, as he had promised, to put the affairs of the helpless family in order.

So I stayed. A week passed, then a month, then another. But instead of coming, the merchant wrote that his own affairs would not permit him to come, and advising that the servants be dismissed and that they should all go immediately with him to Irkutsk. A great commotion then began and, when I saw that they were no longer interested in me, I thanked them for their hospitality and said goodbye. Once again I wandered around Russia.

I thought and thought. Where should I go? I finally decided that I would go to Kiev first, where I hadn't been for many years. So I went there. Naturally, at first I was upset that I had not been able to fulfill my desire to go to Jerusalem, but on reflection I saw that even this had not happened without God's providence, and I calmed myself with the hope that God, who loves men, would accept the intention of the act and I would not let my unhappy trip be devoid of edification and spiritual benefit. And so it was, because I came across people who taught me many things I didn't know and who, for my salvation,

brought light to my dark soul. If necessity had not put me on this journey, I would not have found these spiritual benefactors of mine.

So, during the day I walked praying and at night, when I stopped for the night, I read my Philokalia to strengthen and stimulate my soul in its struggle against the invisible enemies of salvation.

On the way, about seventy versts from Odessa, I came across a surprising fact. There was a long line of carts loaded with goods; there would be about thirty. I caught up with them. The driver in front, who was the guide, walked alongside his horse, and the others followed in a group at a distance. The route passed by a pond, which was crossed by a stream, and where the broken spring ice swirled and piled up on the banks with a horrible noise. Suddenly, the first driver, a young man, stopped his horse, and the entire line of cars behind him had to stop too. The other drivers ran towards him and saw that he had started to undress. They asked him why he did this and he replied that he really wanted to bathe in the lake. Some of the astonished drivers began to laugh at him, others to scold him, calling him crazy, and the oldest, his own brother, tried to stop him, giving him a push so he wouldn't continue. The other was defending himself and had no intention of paying attention to what he was being told. Several young drivers began to draw water from the lake into the buckets they used to water their horses and, as a joke, threw it on the heads and backs of those who wanted to bathe, saying: "Here, here; We're going to give you a bath! As soon as the water touched his body, he exclaimed: "Ah, how good!" and sat down on the floor. They kept pouring water on him and after a while he lay down and died peacefully right there. Everyone was shocked, not knowing why this had happened. The older ones became very agitated, saying that the authorities should be notified, while the rest came to the conclusion that it was their destiny to die such a death.

I stayed with them for about an hour and then continued on my way. About five versts further I saw a village on the road, and as I entered it I met an old priest walking along the street. It occurred to me that I could tell him what I had just seen, to get his opinion. The priest took me to his house, I told him what happened, asking him to explain to me the cause of what happened.

—I can tell you nothing about that, dear brother, except perhaps that there are many surprising things in nature that our reason cannot comprehend. I believe this was arranged by God to show men more clearly his government and providence over nature, by certain instances of abnormal changes in its laws. It turns out that I myself was a witness to a similar case. Near our village there is a very deep and steep ravine, not very wide, but twenty meters deep or more. It's shocking to look at its dark background. They built a kind of walkway to cross it. A peasant from my parish, a man from a very respectable family, was suddenly seized, for no reason, by the irresistible desire to throw himself off this small bridge and into the bottom of the ravine. He fought the idea and resisted the urge for a whole week. Finally, he could no longer hold back. One day he woke up early, left the house like lightning and jumped into the abyss. Soon they heard his moans and, with great difficulty, they removed him from the hole, with his legs broken. When asked the reason for his fall, he replied that, despite the great pain he now suffered, his spirit was calmed by having fulfilled the irresistible desire that had obsessed

him for a whole week, and for the satisfaction of which he was willing to lose his life. He spent an entire year in the hospital, recovering. I used to go to see him and often found the doctors near him. Just like you, I wanted to know from them the reason for this event. The doctors unanimously responded that it was a “frenzy”. And when he asked them for a scientific explanation of what this was and what led him to attack a man, he was unable to get anything else out of them, except that this was one of nature's secrets not yet revealed to science. I, for my part, pointed out that if in such a mystery of nature, one turned to God in prayer, and also talked about it with good people, then this uncontrollable “frenzy” of which they spoke would not achieve its purpose.

In fact, we encounter many things in human life that we cannot have a clear understanding of.

While we were talking, it was getting dark and I spent the night there. In the morning, the mayor sent his secretary to ask the priest to bury the deceased in the cemetery, and to say that the doctors, after the autopsy, did not detect any sign of madness, and gave the cause of death as a sudden convulsion.

“Look at this now,” the priest told me. Medical science cannot give a precise reason for this uncontrollable need for water.

And so I said goodbye to the priest and resumed my journey. After traveling for several days and feeling quite tired, I arrived at a sizable commercial town called Bielaya Tcherkov. As the afternoon was already falling, I started looking for accommodation for the night. In the market I met a man who seemed to be a traveler. He made inquiries in stores about the address of a certain person who lived there. When he saw me, he came towards me and said:

— You also look like a pilgrim, so let's go together and find a man named Evreinov, who lives in this city. He is a good Christian and runs a splendid inn where he welcomes pilgrims. Look, I have something written about him.

I readily consented and we soon found his house. Although the innkeeper was not at home, his wife, a kind lady, received us very warmly and offered us a small, isolated space in the attic. We settled down and rested a little.

Then our innkeeper came and invited us to have dinner with them. During dinner we talked about who we were and where we came from, and for one reason or another the conversation turned to the question of why he was called Evreinov [102].

“I'll tell you something strange about this,” he said, and began his story:

“I'll tell you what happened. My father was Jewish. He was born in Schklov and hated Christians. From an early age he prepared to be a rabbi and studied in detail all the Jewish discourse that aimed to refute Christianity. One day he passed by a Christian cemetery. He saw a human skull, which must have been taken from some recently excavated grave. It still had both jaws and in them were some horrible-looking teeth. In a fit of rage, he began to mock it; He spat on it, covered it. insulting her and kicked her. Not content with that, he picked her up and tied her to a post, as they do with animal bones to scare

away voracious birds. After having fun, he went home. The next night, he had barely asleep, when a stranger appeared to him and violently rebuked him, saying: "How dare you insult what remains of my poor bones? I am a Christian; but as for you, you are an enemy of Christ." The vision was repeated several times each time. nights and he couldn't sleep or rest. Later, the same vision began to appear before his eyes in broad daylight, as he heard the echo of that reproachful voice. Over time, the vision became more frequent until, finally, he began to feel discouraged, full of fear, and losing strength. He went to his rabbi, who showered him with prayers and exorcisms. But the appearance not only didn't stop, it became more frequent and threatening."

This state of things became known, and, upon learning of it, a Christian friend of his began to advise him to accept the Christian religion, and to encourage him to think that there was no other way of getting rid of his disturbing aspect. . But the Jew was reluctant to take this step. Still, he said in response, "I will gladly do whatever you wish to rid yourself of this tormenting and intolerable apparition." The Christian was happy to hear this and convinced him to send the local bishop a request for baptism and reception into the Christian Church. The petition was written and the Jew, not very anxious, signed it. And behold, at the same moment the petition was signed, the apparition stopped and never bothered him again. His joy knew no bounds, and with his spirit completely calm, he felt such ardent faith in Jesus Christ that he flew to the bishop, told him the whole story, and expressed his deep desire to be baptized. He learned the dogmas of the Christian faith with difficulty and quickly and, after baptism, came to live in this city. Here he married my mother, a good Christian. He led a pious and well-being life and was very generous to the poor. He taught me to be the same, and before he died, he gave me instructions on the matter, along with his blessing. That's why I'm called Evreinov.

I listened to this story with respect and humility and thought to myself: How good and how benevolent is Our Lord Jesus Christ, and how great is His love! By what different paths does he draw sinners to himself! How wisely he uses little things to lead to great things! Who could have imagined that a Jew's evil play with lifeless bones would lead him to the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and would be the means of leading him to a godly life?

After dinner, we thanked God and our host and retired to our attic. We didn't want to go to bed yet, so we started talking. My companion told me that he was a merchant from Mogilev and that he had spent two years in Bessarabia as a novice in one of the monasteries there, but only with a passport that expired on a fixed date. He was now returning home to obtain the consent of the merchant corporation for his final entry into monastic life.

"These monasteries satisfy me," he said, "by their order and constitution and by the rigorous life of the many pious principles that live there.

He assured me that placing the Bessarabian monasteries next to the Russians was like comparing heaven to earth, and encouraged me to do as he did.

While we were talking about these things, a third guest was brought to our room. He was an army non-commissioned officer who was now returning home on leave. We saw that he was very tired from the trip. We said our prayers together and went to sleep. The next morning, we woke up early getting ready for the trip and just wanted to go and thank the innkeeper when suddenly we heard the bells announcing matins. The merchant and I began to think about what we would do. How can you leave without going to church after hearing the bells? It would be better to stay for Matins, say our prayers in church and then march with more joy. Once this is decided, we communicate it to the non-commissioned officer. But this one said:

—What's the point of going to church while you're traveling? What does God gain from our going? Let's go home and say our prayers later. You two go if you want. I will not go. When they attend Matins, I will be five miles away and want to get home as quickly as possible.

To this the merchant said:

— Be careful, brother; Don't go so quickly with your projects until you know what God's plans are.

We then went to church and he went on his way.

We stayed for matins and also for mass. So, we returned to our attic to prepare our saddlebags for the march, when what did we see but our innkeeper bringing the samovar?

- Where are they going? - he said -. You must have a cup of tea; yes, and eat with us too. We can't let them go hungry.

So we stayed. We had been sitting by the samovar for half an hour when suddenly we saw our non-commissioned officer running in, out of breath.

— I come to you with sadness and joy at the same time.

- How is that? -we asked him.

And this is what he said:

— When I left them and went away, I thought about going into the tavern to change a bill and have something to drink at the same time, so I could continue better. I did so, and after getting my change and drinking something, I flew away. After having traveled about three versts, it occurred to me to count the money that the man at the tavern had given me. I sat down on the side of the road, picked up my bag and looked through it. No news. Then suddenly I discovered that my passport was missing. Just some papers and money. I was so scared as if I had lost my mind. In an instant I saw what had happened. No doubt I dropped it when paying at the tavern. I had to go back immediately. I ran and ran. Another scary thought came over me: What if it's not there? That would spell trouble. I ran up to the man behind the counter and asked him. "I didn't see that," he said. How discouraging! I searched from place to place; I looked everywhere, wherever I could be. And what do you think?: I was lucky enough to find my passport. There he was, still bent over, on the ground, among the straw and trash, trampled

all over. Thank God! I was happy, I promise. It was as if a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Sure, I was dirty and covered in mud, enough to earn me a slap in the face, but that wasn't important. Either way, I could go home and come back safely. But I came to tell you. And what's more: after running, in a state of shock, my foot became raw from the friction and I can no longer walk. So I came to ask for an ointment to apply before applying the dressing.

“You see, brother,” said the merchant. That's because you didn't want to listen to us and go to church with us. You wanted to give us a good head start, and instead, here you are again, and lame, as proof. I already told you not to be so hasty with your plans; You see where it all ended. It was a small thing not to go to church, but to use language like “what good do we do God by praying?” That, brother, was wrong. Of course, God does not need our prayers as sinners, but still, in His love for us, He is pleased for us to pray. And it is not only that holy prayer that the Holy Spirit himself helps us to offer and awakens in us that pleases him, as He asks this of us when He says: Abide in me and I in you, but every intention, every impulse, Even every Thought directed to His glory and our salvation has value in His eyes. And for us, God's infinite mercy grants generous rewards. God's love grants grace a thousand times more than human actions deserve. If you give Him the simplest penny, He will return gold in payment. If you simply decide to go to the Father, He will come to meet you. You say a single word, short and without feeling: “Welcome; have mercy on me,” and He turns to you and kisses you. This is the love of the heavenly Father for us, unworthy as we are. of this love, He rejoices in every step we take toward salvation, no matter how short it may be. But you see it this way: what glory there is to God and what advantage there is to anyone, if one prays a little and then lets go of his thoughts. wander again, or if he does some small meritorious deed, such as saying a prayer in five or ten bows, or invoking the Name of Jesus with a sincere sigh, or devoting himself to some good thought, or indulging in some spiritual reading, or abstain from food, or bear some affront in silence? — All this does not seem sufficient for your total salvation, and you believe that doing so is fruitless. No, none of these small acts are in vain, for God, who all see, will take this into account and will give you a hundredfold reward, not only in eternal life, but in this life. Saint John Chrysostom states:

"No good of any kind, however insignificant, will be overlooked by the righteous Judge. If sins will be investigated in such detail that we will respond with words, desires and thoughts, so much the more will good works, however small, be taken into account account in all details and will count as our merit before our loving Judge."

I'm going to tell you a case that I saw myself last year. In the monastery in Bessarabia where he lived there was a priest, a monk with a holy life. One day, a temptation attacked him. He felt a great desire to eat dried fish. And since at that time it was impossible to get it in the monastery, he planned to go to the market and buy it. For a long time he fought against the idea, arguing that a monk should be content with the usual food provided to his brothers and avoid at all costs indulging his own desires. Furthermore, walking through the market, among the crowd, was also a source of temptation for a monk and something inappropriate for him. In the end, the Enemy's lies defeated his reasoning and he,



surrendering to his own obstinacy, made up his mind and went in search of the fish. After leaving the monastery and walking down the street, he realized that he did not have the rosary in his hand and began to think: "What is this about walking like a soldier without a sword? This is very inappropriate, and the lay people who meet me will criticize me and fall into temptation, seeing a monk without his rosary." He was about to go back for it when, feeling in his pocket, he saw it was there. He took it off, crossed himself and, with the rosary in his hand, continued calmly. As he approached the market, he saw a horse standing in front of a store with a large cart filled with huge barrels. Suddenly this horse, frightened for some reason, bolted with all his might and, with a great clatter of hooves, charged straight towards him, grazing his shoulder and knocking him to the ground, although without causing him much harm. Immediately afterwards, two steps away from him, the load tipped over and the cart broke down. He sat down quickly, of course, quite frightened, but at the same time marveling at how God had saved his life, for if the load had fallen a fraction of a second earlier, he would have suffered the same fate as the cart. Without thinking further, he bought the fish, came back, ate, said his prayers and went to sleep.

"He had a light sleep, and in it a pleasant-looking priest, whom he did not know, appeared to him and said: "Listen; I am the protector of this house and I wish to instruct you so that you will understand and remember the lesson that was given to you. Observe: The feeble effort you made against the feeling of pleasure and your negligence in understanding and mastering yourself gave the Enemy the opportunity to attack you. He prepared for you that bomb that exploded in front of your eyes. eyes. But your guardian angel predicted this and inspired you with the idea of saying a prayer and remembering your rosary. Because you listened to this suggestion, obeyed it and put it into practice, that is what saved you from death. You saw love of God for men and His generous reward for the smallest act of turning to Him?" Saying this, the priest of the vision quickly disappeared from the cell. The monk prostrated himself at his feet, and as he did so, he awoke, finding himself not in bed, but kneeling in the doorway. He told the story of this vision for the benefit spiritual life of many people, including mine."

Truly limitless is God's love for us sinners. Is it not wonderful that so insignificant an action - yes, the simple act of taking the rosary out of one's pocket and carrying it in one's hand, and invoking the Name of God just once - can give life to a man, and that in the balance of Justice, can a moment of invocation of Jesus Christ compensate for many hours of negligence? Here, in fact, is payment in gold for a trifle. Do you see, brother, how powerful prayer is, and how much the Name of Jesus is when we call on Him? John of the Carpathians says in the Philokalia that when, in the prayer of Jesus, we invoke the holy Name and say: "Have mercy on me, a sinner", to each of these supplications the Voice of God secretly responds: "Son, your sins are forgiven." And he goes on to say that when we say the Prayer, there is nothing at that moment that distinguishes us from the saints, the confessors and the martyrs. For, as Saint John Chrysostom says, "prayer, even when we are full of sin when we say it, immediately purifies us". God's loving benevolence toward us is great; However, we, sinners, are indifferent and are not willing to give a single hour to God in thanksgiving, and we exchange the time for prayer, which is the most important, for the cares and hustle and bustle of everyday life, forgetting to God and our duty.

It is for this reason that we often encounter misfortunes and calamities, but even these are used by God's most loving providence for our instruction and to turn our hearts to Him.

When the merchant finished his talk, I said to him:

— What comfort you also brought to my sinful soul, your adoration! I would prostrate myself at your feet.

Upon hearing this, he started talking to me like this:

—Ah, it seems that you are a lover of pious stories. Wait then; I will read you another similar to what I told him. I have a book here that I travel with called Agapia or “The Salvation of Sinners,” which contains many admirable things.

He took the book out of his pocket and began to read a beautiful story about a certain Agathonik, a devout man, who since childhood had been taught by his pious parents to pray every day before the icon of the Mother of God the prayer that begins with Rejoice. you, virgin pregnant with God, and you have always done so. Later, when he grew up and started his own life, he became absorbed in the worries and hustle and bustle of life and rarely said prayers, until he abandoned them altogether.

One day he gave lodging for the night to a pilgrim, who told him that he was a hermit of the Thebaid, and that he had seen a vision in which he was ordered to go to a certain Agathonik and rebuke him for abandoning prayer. to the Mother of God. Agathonik said the reason was that he had prayed the prayer for many years without observing any results. Then the hermit said to him: “Remember, blind and ungrateful, how many times this prayer helped you and kept you from misfortunes. Remember how in your youth you were miraculously saved from drowning. Don't you remember how an epidemic took many of your friends to the grave and you remained healthy? Do you remember when, traveling with a friend, you both fell out of the wagon and he broke his leg while you were unharmed? Did you not know well that a young man of your acquaintance, who was in good health and strong, now lies sick and weak, while you are healthy and suffer no pain? And in this he reminded Agathonik of many other things. Finally, he said: “You must know that all these evils were removed from you by the protection of the Most Holy Mother of God, thanks to that brief prayer with which you daily lifted your heart to union with God. Watch now; Continue with her and do not stop praising the Queen of Heaven, so that she does not abandon you.

When he finished reading, we were called to dinner, after which, feeling refreshed, we thanked the innkeeper and left. We separated, and each one went where they thought best.

I walked for about five days, encouraged by the memory of the stories I had heard from the good merchant of Bielaya Cherkov, and I was already approaching Kiev. Suddenly, for no reason at all, I began to feel discouraged and sad, and my thoughts became dark and depressive. Prayer came with difficulty and a kind of indolence took over me. At this point, seeing a forest of thick undergrowth next to the road, I entered it to rest a little, looking for a secluded place where I could sit under a bush and

read my Philokalia, in order to stimulate my weak spirit and comfort my fearful spirit.. I found a quiet place and started reading João Cassiano, in the fourth part of the Philokalia – about the Eight Thoughts. After reading happily for half an hour, I unexpectedly noticed the figure of a man about a hundred meters away further into the forest. He was kneeling and absolutely still. I was happy to see this as I naturally realized he was praying and started reading again. I continued reading for an hour or so and then looked up again. The man was still kneeling there and did not move. All this made a great impression on me and I thought: “What devoted servants of God there are!”

As I was thinking about this, the man suddenly fell to the ground and lay motionless. This scared me and as I hadn't seen his face, as he was kneeling with his back to me, I was curious to go and see who it was. When I reached him, I found him sleeping lightly. He was a country boy, a young man of about twenty-five. He had a pleasant, handsome but pale face. He wore a peasant caftan with a rope for a belt. There was nothing more special about him. He had no kotomka [103] and not even a cane. The noise of my arrival woke him up and he got up. I asked him who he was and he told me that he was a state peasant from the Smolensk province and that he came from Kiev.

—And where are you going now? - I asked him.

“I myself don't know where God will take me,” he replied.

— Haven't you left the house for a long time?

- Yes; more than four years.

— And where have you been living all this time?

— I have gone from sanctuary to sanctuary, to monasteries and churches. There was no point staying at home. I am an orphan and have no relatives. Plus, I have a crippled foot. So I'm going to wander the world.

“Some God-fearing person must have taught you, it seems, not to wander, but to visit holy places,” I said.

“Yes, you did,” he replied. Having no father or mother, as a child I went with the shepherds in our village and everything went well until I was ten. Then one day he brought the flock home without realizing that the mayor's [104] best ram was not among them. And our mayor was an evil and inhumane man. When he got home that afternoon and saw that his sheep was lost, he attacked me with insults and threats. If I didn't go find the ram, he swore he would beat me to death and said, “I'll break your arms and legs.” Knowing how cruel it was, I went after the sheep, visiting the places where the herd grazed during the day. I searched and searched for more than half the night, but there was no sign of him anywhere. And it was a very dark night too, as autumn was already approaching. When I had already gone deep into the forest (and in our region the forests are infinite), suddenly a storm broke out. It seemed like all the trees were dancing. In the distance, wolves began to howl. I was so scared that my hair stood on end. Everything became more and more horrible, so much so that I was about to faint

from fear and horror. Then I fell to my knees, made the sign of the cross and with all my heart said: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”. As soon as I said that, I felt absolutely calm and as if no distress had happened. All my fear disappeared and I felt so happy in my heart, as if I had been transported to heaven.

This made me so happy that, well, I couldn't stop repeating the Prayer. Even today I don't know if the storm lasted long, or what the night was like. When I looked up, the day was already approaching and I was still kneeling in the same place. I sat down calmly, saw that I was no longer going to find the sheep and went home. But now all was well in my heart, and I repeated the prayer as much as I could. As soon as I arrived at the village, the mayor saw that I hadn't brought the sheep and beat me until I was half dead; He left that foot out of place, see? I had to stay in bed for six weeks, barely able to move, because of this beating. All I knew was that I kept repeating the Prayer and that it comforted me. When I recovered a little, I went to wander the world, and as jostling among the crowds did not interest me, and at the same time represented many opportunities for sin, I resorted to wandering from one holy place to another, and also through the forests. That's how I spent almost five years.

When I heard this, my heart rejoiced because God considered me worthy of meeting such a good man, and I asked him:

— And do you still use Prayer frequently?

“I could not exist without her,” he replied. Just remembering how I felt that first time in the forest, it's like someone made me kneel and I started praying. I don't know whether my sinful prayer pleases God or not, for when I pray I sometimes feel a great happiness (I don't know why), a lightness of spirit, a kind of joyful stillness; but in other cases I feel a melancholy sadness and despondency of spirit. Despite everything, I want to continue praying always, until death.

— Don't be sad, dear brother. Everything pleases God and serves our salvation, everything, no matter what happens during prayer. This is what the Holy Fathers say. Whether there is joy in the heart or sadness, it is okay. No prayer, good or bad, is wasted in the eyes of God. Joy and fervor show that God rewards and consoles us for our effort, while sadness and dryness indicate that God purifies and strengthens our soul, and that through this salutary trial he saves it, preparing it with humility to enjoy it. of blessed happiness in the future.. As proof of this, I will read to you something that Saint John Climacus wrote.

I found the passage and read it to him. He listened carefully to the end and liked it, thanking me very much. And so, we parted ways. He walked straight into the depths of the forest and I walked back to the path. I continued on my way, thanking God for considering me capable, sinner as I am, to receive such teaching.

The next day, with God's help, I arrived in Kiev. The first and most important thing I wanted to do was fast a little and go to confession and communion in that holy city. So I stopped near the Saints [105], as it was easier to go to church that way. A good Cossack took me in and as he lived alone in his hut, I

found peace and tranquility there. After a week, during which I prepared for the confession, it occurred to me that I should make it as detailed as possible. Then I began to remember and completely review all the sins from my youth. And so as not to forget anything, I wrote down, in detail, everything I could remember. I filled a large sheet of paper with it.

I learned that in Kitaevaya Pustina, about seven versts from Kiev, there lived a priest of an ascetic life, very wise and understanding. Those who approached him in confession found an atmosphere of tender compassion and left with teachings for their salvation and relief of spirit. I was very happy to hear this and went there immediately. After asking his advice and having talked for a while, I gave him my sheet of paper to read. He read it in full and then said:

— Dear friend, much of what you wrote is absolutely futile. Listen: First: do not confess sins that you have already repented of and been forgiven; do not return to them, for that would be to doubt the power of the sacrament of penance. Second: do not remember other people who were related to your sins; Judge only for yourself. Third: the Holy Fathers forbid us to mention all the circumstances of sins and order us to confess them in general, to avoid temptation both for ourselves and for the priest. Room; You came to repent and you do not repent because you do not know how to repent, that is, because your repentance is lukewarm and negligent. Fifth: you went over all these details, but neglected the most important one: you did not reveal the most serious sins of all. You have not confessed, nor noticed, that you do not love God, that you hate your neighbors, that you do not believe in the Word of God and that you are full of pride and ambition. An immense amount of evil and all of our spiritual perversion resides in these four sins. They are the roots from which the shoots of all the sins we fall into sprout.

I was very surprised to hear this and said:

— Forgive me, Reverend Father, but how is it possible not to love God, our Creator and our Guardian? What is there to believe but the Word of God, in which everything is true and holy? I love all my fellow men and why should I hate them? I have nothing to be proud of; Besides having countless sins, I have nothing worth exalting, and what could I covet, with my poverty and poor health? Naturally, if I were an educated or wealthy man, I would undoubtedly be guilty of the things you speak of.

"It's a shame, dear, that you understood so little of what I said." Look, you'll learn faster if I give you these notes. It's what I always use for my own confession. Read them from cover to cover and you will have, quite clearly, an exact sample of what I have just told you.

He gave me the notes and I started reading them. Here they are:

### **CONFESSION THAT LEADS THE INNER MAN TO HUMILITY**

“Looking carefully at myself and observing the course of my inner state, I have found by experience that I do not love God, that I do not love my fellow men, that I have no faith, and that I am full of pride

and sensuality. I actually discovered all of this in myself by carefully examining my feelings and behavior, like this:

"1. I do not love God. — For if I loved God, I would be continually thinking of Him with deep joy. Every thought of God would give me joy and delight. On the contrary, I think much more often and much more longingly about things earthly things, and thinking about God seems tiring and dry to me. If I loved God, I would speak to Him in prayer and He would then be my food and my delight, and He would lead me into uninterrupted communion with Him. But, on the contrary, not only I do not find pleasure in prayer, but it even represents an effort. For me I struggle with reluctance, I am weakened by laziness and I am always ready to occupy myself with any trifle, as long as it shortens the prayer and takes me away from it. Time passes without I realize in vain occupations, but when I am occupied with God, when I place myself in His presence, every hour seems like a year to me. Whoever loves another person, thinks about him all day without ceasing, represents him in his imagination, worries about and under no circumstances will it ever leave your thoughts. But throughout the day I hardly reserve an hour to immerse myself in meditation on God, to inflame my heart with love for Him, while I eagerly give twenty-three hours as fervent offerings to the idols of my passions. I am quick to talk about frivolous matters and things that displease the spirit; this gives me pleasure. But when it comes to the consideration of God, everything is dryness, boredom and indolence. Even when I am inadvertently led by others into a spiritual conversation, I quickly try to change the subject to one that satisfies my desires. I have a tireless curiosity for news, be it citizen events or political issues. I sincerely seek the satisfaction of my love for the knowledge of science and art, and for the way of obtaining the things I desire to possess. But the study of the Law of God, the knowledge of God and religion have no effect on me and do not satisfy any appetite of my soul. I see these things not only as a non-essential occupation for a Christian, but occasionally as a kind of secondary matter to perhaps occupy at leisure, in lost moments. In short: If love for God is recognized by the observance of his commandments (If you love me, you will keep my commandments, says Our Lord Jesus Christ), and I not only do not keep them, but even try very little, it is truly concluded that I don't love God. This is what Basil the Great says: "The proof "that a man does not love God and His Christ is the fact that he does not keep his commandments".

"2. I also don't love my neighbor. — Because not only can I not decide to give my life for him (as the Gospel says), but I don't even sacrifice my happiness, my well-being and my peace for the good of others. my fellow men. If I loved him as much as myself, as the Gospel commands, his misfortunes would also distress me and I would equally delight in his happiness. But, on the contrary, I hear strange and unhappy stories about my neighbor and I do not I feel sorry; I remain undisturbed, or, what is worse, I find a certain pleasure in it. Not only do I not cover my brother's bad behavior with love, but I also openly proclaim it with censure. His well-being, his honor, and his happiness do not give me pleasure as if they were mine and, as if they were something absolutely foreign to me, they do not give me any feeling of happiness. Furthermore, they subtly awaken feelings of envy or contempt in me.

"3. I have no faith. — Neither in immortality nor in the Gospel. If I were firmly persuaded and believed without a doubt that beyond the grave lies eternal life and the reward for the deeds of this life, I would think about it continually. The very idea of immortality would terrify me and make me behave in this life like a foreigner preparing to enter his homeland. On the contrary, I don't even think about eternity and see the end of this earthly life as the limit of my existence. And this secret idea nestles- If inside me: "Who knows what happens in death?" If I say that I believe in immortality, I speak only on the basis of my understanding, for my heart is very far from a firm conviction of it. This is clearly attested by my conduct and by my continual concern to give satisfaction to the life of the senses. If my heart received in faith the Holy Gospel as the Word of God, I would be continually occupied with it, I would study it, delight in it, and devote my attention to it with all devotion. Wisdom, mercy and love are hidden in it; He would lead me to happiness and I would find great joy in studying the Law of God day and night. In it I would find food, as my daily bread, and my heart would be moved to keep its laws. Nothing in the world would be strong enough to keep me from it. On the contrary, if from time to time I read or listen to the Word of God, it is only out of necessity or out of general interest in knowledge, and because I don't pay much attention to it, I find it monotonous and without any interest. I generally reach the end of the reading without take nothing away from it and I am more than willing to switch to worldly reading, in which I derive greater pleasure and find new and interesting themes.

"4. I am filled with pride and sensual love for myself. — All my actions confirm this. Seeing something good in myself, I want to show it off or be proud of it to other people, or internally admire myself for it. Although Although I reveal an outward humility, I still attribute it entirely to my own strength and consider myself superior to others, or at least no worse than them. If I observe a fault in myself, I try to excuse it and hide it by saying: "I was made like this" or "it's not my fault". I get irritated with those who don't treat me with respect and consider them incapable of valuing people. I go around bragging about my talents and consider my setbacks in any company a personal insult. I murmur and I find pleasure in the misfortune of my enemies. If I strive for something good, it is only for the purpose of gaining admiration, or spiritual self-complacency, or worldly consolation. In a word: I continually make an idol of myself and serve it uninterruptedly, seeking in everything the pleasure of the senses and the sustenance for my sensual passions and my appetites.

"Examining all this, I see myself as arrogant, spurious, unbelieving, without love for God and with hatred for my fellow men. What condition could I be more guilty of? That of the spirits of darkness is better than mine. They, although they do not love the God, hate men and live in pride, at least believe and tremble. But as for me, can there be a more terrible sentence than the one that awaits me? And what punishment will be more severe than that which will fall on the life of indifference and madness that I recognize in myself?

Reading in full this model confession that the priest gave me, I was horrified and thought to myself: "My God! What terrible sins are hidden within me, and I never noticed them! The desire to be cleansed

of them made me beg this great spiritual father who taught me to know the causes of all these evils and how to cure them. And he began to instruct me.

— Look, dear brother. The cause of not loving God is lack of faith; Lack of faith is motivated by lack of conviction; and the cause of this is negligence in the search for holy and true knowledge, indifference to the light of the spirit. In a word: if you don't have faith, you can't love; If you don't have conviction, you can't have faith; and to obtain conviction you must obtain a complete and accurate knowledge of the question before you. By meditation, by studying the Word of God, and by observing your experience, you must awaken in your soul a longing and a longing (or, as some call it, a “wonder”) that gives you an insatiable desire to know the greatest things. closely and more fully and penetrate more deeply into your nature.

One spiritual author speaks of it this way: “Love,” he says, “generally grows with knowledge, and the greater the depth and extent of knowledge, the more love there will be, the more easily the heart will soften and open to love. " love of God, diligently contemplating all the fullness and beauty of the divine nature and his unlimited love for men.

Now you see, then, that the cause of those sins of which you have read is laziness in thinking about spiritual things, a laziness which stifles the very feeling of the need for such reflection. If you want to know how to overcome this evil, fight for the enlightenment of your spirit with all the means at your disposal, and achieve it through the applied study of the Word of God and the Holy Fathers, with the help of meditation. and spiritual counsel and by the conversation of those who are wise in Christ. Ah, dear brother, how many misfortunes we encounter just because of our laziness in seeking light for our souls in the Word of truth! We do not study the Law of God day and night, and we do not ask for it diligently and without ceasing. And that is why our inner man, helpless, suffers hunger and cold, so much so that he does not have the strength to take a resolute step on the path of virtue and salvation. So, dear ones, let us resolve to make use of these methods and fill our minds as often as possible with thoughts of heavenly things, and love, poured into our hearts from above, will kindle within us. We will do this together and pray whenever we can, as prayer is the capital and most powerful means for our regeneration and our happiness. We will pray in the terms that the Holy Church teaches us: “O God, make me capable of loving you now as I loved sin in the past”. [106].

I listened to all this carefully. Deeply moved, I asked this holy Father to hear my confession and administer communion to me. And the next morning, after the gift of communion, I prepared to return to Kiev with this blessed viaticum. But the good priest, who was going to spend a few days at Laura's, kept me in his hermit's cell during that period, so that in her silence I could give myself up to prayer without hindrance. And indeed, I spent these two days as if I were in heaven. Through the prayers of my priest, I, unworthy of myself, enjoyed perfect peace. The prayer poured into my heart with such ease and joy that during that time I think I forgot everything, including myself; In my thoughts there was only Jesus Christ, and Him alone.



Finally, the priest returned and I asked him for guidance and advice on the next step on my pilgrimage route. He gave me his blessing, saying: "Go to Pochaev, bow before the miraculous Footprint [107] of the most pure Mother of God, and She will guide your steps on the path of peace."

So, faithfully following his advice, three days later I left for Pochaev.

For about two hundred versts I did not travel at all happily, for the road stretched past Jewish taverns and villages, and I rarely found any Christian habitation. On one property, I noticed the presence of a Russian Christian guesthouse and I was happy about it. I went in to spend the night and also ordered some bread for the journey as I was running out of biscuits. I saw the boss, a well-to-do-looking old man who, as I discovered, came from the same province as me, Orlov. As soon as I entered the room, his first question was this:

- What is your religion?

I replied that I was Christian and pravoslavny [108].

— Yes, pravoslavny! — he said laughing —. You are pravoslavny only in words; In actions you are nothing more than pagans. I know all about your religion, brother. An enlightened priest invited me once and I tried it. I joined your Church and remained there for six months, after which I returned to the customs of our community. Joining your Church is nothing more than a mistake. Readers murmuring the divine office in any way, with things they cannot hear and others they cannot understand. And the singing is no better than what you hear in a tavern. And the people are all crowded together, men and women together; They talk during the celebration, turn around, look around, walk from one place to another and leave no peace or tranquility to say their prayers. What kind of celebration is this? It's nothing but a sin! While with us, the celebration is devout; you can hear what is said without missing details; The song is very moving, and the people are silent, the men on one side and the women on the other, and everyone knows what bow to do and when, according to what the Holy Church orders. When you enter one of our churches you really and truly feel that you have come closer to worshiping God; But one of them doesn't know where it arrived, whether in the church or in the market!

From all this I understood that the old man was a stubborn raskolnik. But he spoke so plausibly that I could neither argue with him nor convert him. I just thought to myself that it would be impossible to convert the "old believers" to the true church until religious services were corrected among us, and until the clergy in particular set an example in this. The raskolnik knows nothing about the inner life; he trusts the external, and that is where we are careless.

I then wanted to get out of there, and I had already gone out into the corridor, when I saw, with surprise, through the open door of a private room, a man who did not look Russian; He was lying in bed reading a book. He called me by signs and asked who I was. I told him this and he said this:

—Listen, dear friend: wouldn't you agree to take care of a sick person, say for a week, until, with God's help, I get better? I am Greek and a monk from Mount Athos. I came to Russia to collect alms for my

monastery and, upon returning, I fell ill, so much so that I could not walk because of the pain in my legs. So I rented this room here. Don't say no, servant of God! I will pay you.

— There is no need for you to pay me. I will be happy to take care of you in the best way I can, in the name of God.

I stayed with him then. I heard a lot from him regarding the salvation of our souls. He told me about Athos, the Holy Mountain, about the great podvizhniki [109] there, and about the many hermits and anchoress. He had with him a copy of the Greek Philokalia and a book of Isaac the Syrian. We read together and compared Paisius Velichkovsky's Slavic translation with the Greek original. He declared that it would be impossible to translate from the Greek with more accuracy and fidelity than with the Philokalia Paisius the Slav had done.

Noticing that he was always in prayer, and that he was well versed in the inner prayer of the heart, and that he spoke Russian perfectly, I consulted him on this matter. He readily explained a lot about it to me, and I listened attentively and even wrote down many of the things he said. Thus, for example, he spoke to me of the excellence and greatness of the Jesus Name Prayer, in these terms:

“Even the very form of the Jesus Name Prayer,” he said, “shows how great this prayer is. It consists of two parts. In the first, that is, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, leads our thoughts to the life of Jesus Christ or, as the Holy Fathers say, it is a compendium of the entire Gospel. The second part, Have mercy on me, a sinner, confronts us with the reality of our own helplessness and guilt. And it must be noted that the desire and supplication of a poor, sinful and humble soul cannot be expressed in words in a wiser, clearer and more exact way than this: Have mercy on me. No other arrangement of words would be as satisfying and complete as this. If someone were to say, for example: Forgive me, take away my sins, cleanse me from my transgressions, erase my offenses, all this would express only one request, that of being free from punishment, from the fear of a timid and languid soul . But saying Have mercy on me implies not only the desire for forgiveness that comes from fear, but it is the sincere appeal of filial love, which places its hope in God's mercy, and humbly recognizes that it is too weak to bow down. own will and keep a careful watch over oneself. It is an appeal to mercy, that is, to grace, which will manifest itself in God's gift of the strength that allows us to resist temptation and overcome our sinful inclinations. It is like a debtor without money who asks his benign creditor not only to forgive his debt, but also to take pity on his extreme poverty and give him alms; This is what these profound words (Have mercy on me) express. It is like saying: “Merciful God, forgive my sins and help me to correct myself; awaken in my soul a strong impulse to follow Your commands. Distribute Your grace in the forgiveness of my present sins and direct my careless mind, my will and my heart only to You.

I marveled at the wisdom of his words and thanked him for instructing my sinful soul, and he continued to teach me other wonderful things.

“If you wish,” he said (and I took him somewhat for a scholar, for he said he had studied at the Academy of Athens), “I will continue by telling you the tone in which the Prayer is said. I had the opportunity to hear many God-fearing Christians pray orally as the Word of God commands them and in accordance with the Tradition of the Holy Church. They use it both in their private prayers and in church. If you listen carefully and intimately to this silent recitation of the Prayer, you may notice, to your spiritual benefit, that the tone of the voice varies from person to person. Thus, some place emphasis on the first word of the Prayer and say Lord Jesus Christ, and then complete the rest in a simple tone. Others begin the Prayer with a uniform voice and place emphasis in the middle of the Prayer, on the word Jesus, as if it were an exclamation, and conclude, again, in the same tone as at the beginning. Still others begin the Prayer and continue it without emphasis until they reach the last words, Have mercy on me, where they raise their voices in ecstasy. And some say the entire Prayer with all the emphasis on the phrase Son of God.

Now listen. Prayer is one and the same. Orthodox Christians maintain a single profession of faith. And it is a common notion among them all that this Prayer, sublime among all, includes two things: The Lord Jesus and the call to Him. This is known to be the same for everyone. Why, then, does not everyone express it in the same way, that is, why not in the same tone? Why does the soul pray in a particular way and express itself with particular emphasis, not in the same place for everyone, but in a certain place for each one? Many say that this is perhaps the result of habit or imitation of others, or that it depends on the way of understanding the words that correspond to the particular point of view, or finally that it is just what comes most easily and naturally to someone. ... each person. But I think very differently about this. I like to look for something higher, something unknown not only to those who hear, but even to those who pray. Is there not in this a mysterious impulse of the Holy Spirit, who pleads in us with ineffable groans in those who do not know how or for what to pray? And if it is by the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle says, by which each one invokes the Name of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, who works in secret and gives a prayer to him who prays, can also dispense His beneficial gift over everything, despite of his lack of strength. To one he bestows the reverential fear of God; for another, love; for another, firmness in faith; and another, humility. And so with everyone.

If so, then the one who has received the gift of reverence and praise for the power of the Almighty will emphasize with special feeling in his prayers the word Lord, in which he feels the greatness and power of the Creator. He who has received the secret outpouring of love into his heart is transported into ecstasy and filled with joy upon exclaiming Jesus Christ, in the same way as a certain priest who could not hear the Name of Jesus without experiencing an extraordinary overflow of love and joy. even in a normal conversation. The unshakable believer in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, consubstantial with the Father, ignites with an even more ardent faith when saying the words Son of God. He who has received the gift of humility and is deeply aware of his own weakness, repents and humbles himself with his words, have mercy on me, and pours out his heart more effusively in these last words of the Prayer. He hopes in God's loving benevolence and hates his own fall into sin. Here, in my opinion, are the causes of the different tones in which people say the Jesus Name Prayer. And thanks to this you can perceive,

in listening, for the glory of God and for your own instruction, what particular emotion moves each person, what spiritual gift each person possesses. Many people have spoken to me about this: “Why don’t all these signs of hidden spiritual gifts appear together?” Then, not just one, but every word of the Prayer would be imbued with the same tone of ecstasy. I answer thus: “Since the Grace of God distributes his gifts wisely to each man separately, according to his strength, as we see in the Holy Scripture, who can discover with his limited understanding and penetrate the designs of thanksgiving? Isn't the clay entirely in the hands of the potter and he can't do one thing or another with it?”

I spent five days with this priest and his health improved a lot. This period was so beneficial for me that I didn't even notice how quickly it passed. Well, in that small room, in silence and seclusion, we were occupied with nothing other than silently invoking the Name of Jesus or talking about the same subject, inner prayer.

One day, a pilgrim came to see us. He complained bitterly about the Jews and insulted them. He walked through their cities and had to endure their enmity and cheating. His resentment against them was so great that he cursed them, going so far as to say that they did not deserve to live because of their obstinacy and disbelief. Finally, he said he had so much aversion to them that he couldn't control anything.

“You have no right, friend,” the priest had said, “to insult and curse the Jews in this way.” God made them as he made us. You should mourn for them and pray for them, not curse them. Believe me, the antipathy you feel towards them comes from the fact that you are not grounded in God's love and do not have inner prayer as support and, therefore, lack inner peace. I will read to you a passage from the Holy Fathers about this. Listen, this is what the Ascetic Mark writes: “The soul that is closely united with God becomes, because its joy is so great, like a gentle and naive child, and no longer condemns anyone, be it Greek, pagan, Jew ”. sinner, but contemplates everyone equally with a pure gaze; “He finds joy throughout the world and wants all Greeks, Jews and Gentiles to glorify God.” And Macarius the Great, of Egypt, says that the contemplative “burns with a love so great that, if it were possible, he would make his interior a home for everyone, without making distinctions between good and evil”. Here you see, dear brother, what the Holy Fathers think of this. Therefore, I advise you to put aside your ferocity and look at everything considering that you are under the omniscient Providence of God, and that when you encounter humiliation, accuse yourself mainly of a lack of patience and humility.

Finally, more than a week passed and my priest recovered. I thanked him with all my heart for all the blessed teachings he gave me and we said goodbye. He left for his homeland and I began the journey he had planned. I had already begun to approach Pochaev and had not gone more than a hundred versts when a soldier caught up with me. I asked him where he was going and he told me he was returning to his homeland, in Kamenets Podolsk. We continued in silence for about ten versts, and I noticed that he was sighing deeply, as if something were distressing him, and that he was very depressed. I asked him why he was so sad.

— Good friend, since you have noticed my regret, if you swear to me on everything that is most sacred to you that you will not tell anyone, I will tell you everything about me, since I am close to death and no I have no one with who to talk about this.

I assured him, as a Christian, that I didn't need to tell anyone and that, out of brotherly love, I would be happy to give him all the help I could.

"Well then," he began, "I was recruited as a soldier from among the peasants of the State." After about five years of service this became unbearable for me; indeed, I was often whipped for negligence and drunkenness. The idea of running away came to mind and here I am, a deserter for fifteen years. For six years I hid wherever I could. I robbed farms, pantries and warehouses. I stole horses; I robbed stores. And I continued this type of profession always alone. I got rid of what was stolen in several ways. I drank the money and led a depraved life committing all kinds of sins. Only my soul did not perish. I continued to do very well, but ended up in prison for wandering around without a passport. But even then I escaped when the opportunity arose. Then I unexpectedly met a soldier who had been discharged from service and was returning home to a remote province; But as he was ill and could barely walk, he asked me to take him to the nearest town where he could find accommodation. I led him then. The police allowed us to spend the night in a haystack, on a haystack, and we slept there. When I woke up in the morning, I looked at my soldier and there he was, dead and stiff. I hurriedly looked for his passport, that is, his driver's license, and when I found it, along with a good amount of money too, and while everyone was still sleeping, I left that shed and the yard as quickly as I could, and entered the forest and I disappeared. When I read his passport, I saw that in terms of age and distinguishing characteristics he was almost the same as me. I was very happy with this and decidedly left for the Astrakhan region. There I started to settle down a little and got a job as a farmer. I teamed up with an old man who had his own house and was a cattle dealer. He lived alone with his daughter, who was a widow. After a year of living with him, I married his daughter. Then the old man died. We were unable to complete the deal. I started drinking again, and so did my wife, and in one year we spent everything the old man left us. And then, my wife got sick and died. I sold everything that was left, as well as the house, and soon spent the money.

So I had nothing to live on, nothing to eat. I then returned to my old profession as a dealer in stolen goods, and even more boldly because I now had a passport. So I went back to my old depraved life for about a year. A season came when I was unsuccessful for a long time. I stole a wretched old horse from a bobil [110] and sold him to the butchers for a penny. With the money, I went to the tavern and started drinking. I had the idea of going to a town where there was a wedding, with the intention of getting everything I could as soon as everyone was asleep after the party. As the sun hadn't set yet, I went into the forest to wait for the night. There I lay down and fell soundly asleep. And then I had a dream in which I saw myself in a wide, beautiful meadow. Suddenly a horrible cloud appeared in the sky, and then there came a thunder so terrible that the ground shook beneath my feet. And it was as if someone had pushed me up to my shoulders in the earth, which oppressed me on all sides. Only my hands and

head were left out. Then that horrible cloud seemed to settle on the ground, and out of it came my grandfather, who had been dead for about twenty years. He was a man of great integrity and served as a chaplain in our city for thirty years. He approached me with an angry, threatening face, and I trembled with fear. I could see, nearby, several piles of things that he had stolen on several occasions. I was even more scared. My grandfather came up to me and, pointing to the first pile, said ominously: "What is this? Go ahead!" Grandfather pointed to another pile and said again: "What is this? Squeeze it tighter! And I felt pain and anguish so intense that no torture in the world could compare. Finally, my grandfather brought me the horse that I had stolen in the afternoon and exclaimed: "And what is this? Go ahead; as hard as I can!" And I felt so much pain everywhere that I can't describe it, it was so cruel and terrible and exhausting. It was as if all my strength had been taken away and I was suffocating in this horrible pain. I felt like I couldn't I would be able to resist and that I would lose consciousness if the torture continued a little longer. But the horse kicked and hit my cheek, opening it. And at the moment of receiving that blow I woke up horrified and shaking like a weakling. I saw that it was already over. day and that the sun was rising. I touched my cheek and it was bleeding. And those parts that, in the dream, had been buried were all, as it were, hard and rigid, and there were holes in them. I was so scared that I could barely get up and go home. My cheek hurt for a long time. Look, you can still see the scar. I wasn't like this before. And so, after that, fear and horror often assaulted me, and all I can do is remember what I suffered in that dream so that the anguish and fainting reappeared, with such torment that I no longer know what to do. And what's more; This happened more often, and eventually I began to be afraid of people and feel ashamed, as if everyone knew about my past ignominy. And because of this suffering I could no longer eat or sleep. I was devastated. I thought of going to my regiment and declaring everything openly. Maybe God would forgive my sins if I accepted my punishment. But I was scared and lost my courage when I thought they would make me run with drumsticks. And then, losing patience, I felt like hanging myself. But it occurred to me that I won't live long anyway; I will soon die, as I have lost all my strength. So I thought about going back to say goodbye to my land and die there. I have a nephew there, and here I am on my six-month journey, and meanwhile grief and fear make me miserable. What do you think, brother? What should I do? I really can't take much more.

Hearing all this, I was amazed and praised God's wisdom and goodness, seeing the different ways he reaches sinners. So I told him:

— Dear brother, you should have prayed to God in this moment of fear and anguish. This is the great remedy for all our ills.

- Don't even talk! - he said -; I thought that as soon as I started praying, God would annihilate me.

— What nonsense, brother! It's the devil who puts these ideas in your head. God's mercy is infinite, and He has compassion on sinners and immediately forgives those who repent. You may not know the Jesus Prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner; This must be said continually.

— Wow, I know that phrase. I used to repeat this a few times to cheer myself up when I was going to commit a robbery.

- Then listen. God did not annihilate you when you were about to commit a bad deed and you said the Prayer. Will you do this now if you begin to pray in the way of repentance? You see, then, how your thoughts come from the devil. Believe me, dear brother, if you say the Prayer, without paying attention to the thoughts that come to your mind, you will soon find relief. All fear and tension will disappear and you will finally be completely at peace. You will become a godly man and all your sinful passions will leave you. I assure you, because I have seen many cases like this in my life.

And then I told him several cases in which the Jesus Prayer manifested its wonderful power to act on sinners. Finally, I convinced him to go with me to the Pochaev Mother of God, a refuge for sinners, before returning home, and there to confess and receive communion.

The soldier listened to all this with attention and joy, as I could see, and agreed with everything. We went together to Pochaev, on the condition that neither of us spoke to each other, but that we would say the Prayer all the time. In this silence, we walked for a whole day. The next day, he told me that he felt much more relieved and that his mind was clearly calmer than before. We arrived at Pochaev on the third day, and I exhorted him not to interrupt prayer either day or night while he was awake, and I assured him that the most holy Name of Jesus, which is unbearable to our spiritual enemies, would have the strength to save it. On this point I read to him in Philokalia that, although we should pray the Jesus Prayer at all times, it is especially necessary to do so with the greatest care when preparing for communion.

He did this and then confessed and took communion. Although the old thoughts still assailed him from time to time, he now easily chased them away with Prayer. On Sunday, in order to be able to stand up more calmly for Matins, he went to bed early and continued to say the prayer. I was still sitting in the corner reading my Philokalia next to a candle. An hour later; He fell asleep and I started to pray. Suddenly, about twenty minutes later, he got scared and woke up, quickly jumped out of bed, ran towards me crying and, overflowing with happiness, said:

- Oh brother! What I just watched! What peace and joy I feel! I believe that God has mercy on sinners and does not torment them. Glory to You, Lord, glory to You!

I was surprised and pleased and asked him to tell me exactly what had happened to him.

— Well, look; "That," he said, "as soon as I fell asleep, I found myself in that meadow where I had been tormented." At first I was terrified, but I saw that instead of a cloud the sun was rising and a wonderful light was shining over the entire meadow. And I saw that there were red flowers and grass in it. Then, suddenly, my grandfather approached me, looking as affable as you could imagine, and greeted me with sweetness and affection. And he said: "Go to Zhitomir, to the church of St. George. They will place you under ecclesiastical protection. Spend the rest of your life there and pray without ceasing. God will have mercy on you." After saying this, he made the sign of the cross over me and

immediately disappeared. I can't tell you how happy I was; It was as if a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders and I had soared into the sky. At that moment I woke up, with a calm soul and a heart so full of joy that I didn't know what to do. What should I do now? I will leave immediately for Zhitomir, as my grandfather instructed me. It will be easy for me to go with the Prayer.

—But wait a moment, dear brother. How can you go out in the middle of the night? Stay for Matins, say your prayers and then go to God.

We didn't sleep after that conversation. We went to church; He remained at Matins, praying truly, with tears, and said that he felt great peace and contentment, and that the prayer continued happily. Then, after the liturgy, he took communion, and after we ate a little, I went with him to the Zhytomyr road, where we said goodbye with tears of joy.

After that, I started thinking about my own affairs. Where would I go now? In the end, I decided to return to Kiev. My priest's wise teachings drew me there, and besides, if I stayed with him, he might find some Christ-loving philanthropist who would set me on the road to Jerusalem, or at least to Mount Athos. I stayed another week in Pochaev, taking advantage of the time to remember everything I had learned from those I met on my trip and to write down a large number of useful things. Then I got ready for the trip, put on my kotomka and went to church to entrust my trip to the Mother of God. When the liturgy ended, I said my prayers and prepared to leave. I was at the back of the church when a man came in, who, although not dressed in rich clothes, was undoubtedly of the distinguished class, and asked me where the candles were sold. I pointed it out to him. At the end of the liturgy, I prayed in the Sagrada Pegada chapel. When I finished my prayers, I left. I had taken a few steps down the street when I saw an open window in one of the houses, next to which a man sat reading a book. My path passed right under that window and I saw that the man sitting there was the same one who asked me about the candles in the church. As I passed by, I took off my hat and, when he saw me, he motioned for me to come to him and said:

— I suppose you must be a pilgrim, right?

"Yes," I replied.

He asked me to come in and wanted to know who I was and where I was going. I told him everything about myself, without hiding anything. He offered me some tea and started talking to me.

— Listen, soul of God. I advise you to go to the Solovetsky Monastery [111]. There is a quiet and very secluded theater called Anzersky. It's like a second Athos, and everyone is welcome there. The novitiate consists only of the alternating reading of the psalter in church, for four hours out of every twenty-four. I'm going there myself and I promised to go on foot. We could go together. I would be safer with you; They say it's a very lonely path. On the other hand, I have money and can support you throughout the trip. And I would propose that we continue under these conditions: that we walk about twenty paces from each other; This way, we wouldn't get in the way, and while we walked, we could spend time reading or meditating. Think about it, brother, and accept it; it will be worth it for you.



Upon hearing this invitation, I took this event as a sign of the path that was offered to me by the Mother of God, who I asked to show me the path to bliss. And without thinking twice, I accepted immediately. And the next day we started the journey. We walked for three days one after the other, as we had agreed. He always read a book, a book he never left, day or night; and sometimes I would meditate on something. Finally, we stopped at a certain place for dinner. He ate with the book open in front of him and without taking his eyes off it. I saw that the book was a copy of the Gospels and I said to him:

— Allow me to ask, sir, why don't you separate yourself from the Gospels even for a moment, day or night? Why do you always have them in your hand and carry them with you?

“Because with him and only with him I learn almost continuously”, he replied.

— And what do you learn? —I said then.

— The Christian life, which is summed up in prayer. I consider prayer to be the most important and necessary means of salvation and the first duty of every Christian. Prayer is the first step of the pious life and also its crown, and it is for this reason that the Gospel commands unceasing prayer. For other acts of devotion there is a set time, but in matters of prayer there are no moments of rest. Without prayer it is impossible to do any good, and without the Gospel one cannot adequately learn about prayer. Therefore, all those who have attained salvation through the inner life, the holy preachers of the Word of God, as well as the hermits and solitaries, and certainly all God-fearing Christians, have been instructed by their unflinching and constant occupation with the abysses of the Word of God and by reading the Gospel. Many of them had the Gospel constantly in their hands, and in their teachings on salvation they gave this advice: “Sit in the silence of your cell and read the Gospel, and read it again”. Here is the reason why I deal only with the Gospel.

This argument of yours and your desire for prayer satisfied me greatly. I then asked him from which specific Gospel he derived his teaching on prayer.

“Of all equally,” he replied, “or rather, of the whole New Testament, read in order.” I have been reading this for a long time and grasping the meaning, and it has shown me that there is in the Holy Gospel a graduation and a regular chain of teaching on prayer, beginning with the first evangelist and continuing to the end in systematic order. For example: Right at the beginning, the way of focusing or introducing the teaching on prayer is established; then, the outward form or expression of it in words. Later, we find the necessary conditions to be able to offer prayer and the means to learn it, with examples; and, finally, the secret teaching on the incessant inner and spiritual prayer of the Name of Jesus Christ, which proves to be higher and more salutary than external prayer. And then comes your need, your blessed fruit, and so on. In a word: Complete and detailed knowledge about the practice of prayer can be obtained from the Gospel, in a systematic order and sequence, from beginning to end.

Upon hearing this, I decided to ask him to show me everything in detail and said: “As I want to hear and talk about prayer more than anything else, I would be very pleased to see this secret chain of

teachings on the subject, in all its aspects ." For God's sake, then, show me all this about the Gospel itself. He gladly accepted and, offering me a pencil, said:

— Open your Gospel; Look at it and write down what it tells you. Please take a look at these notes of mine. Now, he said, look first at the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew and read from the fifth to the ninth verse. You see how here we have the preparation or introduction, teaching that we should begin to pray not vainly and loudly, but in silence and in a solitary place; and that we should pray only for the forgiveness of sins and communion with God, and not invent a multitude of unnecessary demands upon temporal things, as the Gentiles do. Then read later in the same chapter, verses nine through fourteen. Here we are given the form of the sentence, that is, in what terms it should be expressed. There you brought together with great wisdom everything that is necessary and desirable for our lives. Continue reading verses fourteen and fifteen of the same chapter and you will see the conditions that must be observed for prayer to be effective. For God will not forgive our sins unless we forgive those who have wronged us. Open now the seventh chapter and you will find, from the seventh to the twelfth verse, how to be successful in prayer, how to be fearless in hope: ask, seek, knock. These energetic expressions describe the frequency of prayer and the urgency of practicing it, in such a way that prayer not only accompanies each action, but even precedes it in time. This constitutes the main property of the sentence. You will see an example of this in the fourteenth chapter of Saint Mark's Gospel, from verse thirty-second to fortieth, where Jesus Christ himself repeats the same words of prayer many times. The Gospel of Saint Luke, chapter eleven, verses five to fourteen, gives a similar example of repeated prayer in the parable of the importunate friend and the repeated request of the widow [113], which illustrates the command of Jesus Christ that we should always pray, at all times and in all places, and not abandon ourselves to discouragement, that is, to laziness. After this detailed teaching, it is the Gospel of Saint John that shows us the essential teaching about the secret inner prayer of the heart. This is illustrated to us, first of all, by the profound story of Jesus Christ's dialogue with the Samaritan woman, where the inner adoration of God is revealed. in the spirit and truth that God desires, and which consists in true continuous prayer, like a fountain of living water that flows into eternal life [114]. Later, in chapter fifteen, verses four to eight, the strength, power and necessity of interior prayer, that is, of the presence of the spirit in Christ, in the unceasing commemoration of God, are described to us in an even more decisive way. Finally, read verses twenty-three to twenty-five of the sixteenth chapter of the same evangelist. See what mystery is revealed to us there. You observe that the Jesus Prayer, when repeated frequently, has greater strength and with great ease it opens the heart and sanctifies it. This can be observed very clearly in the case of the Apostles, who were disciples of Jesus Christ for a whole year, and to whom He had already taught the Lord's Prayer (which we know through them); but at the end of his earthly life, Jesus Christ revealed to them the mystery that was still missing in their prayers. That his prayer might take a clear step, he said to them: Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. And so it happened in his case. For, ever after, when the Apostles learned to offer prayers in the Name of Jesus Christ, how many wonderful works they performed and how abundant light was shed

upon them! Do you now see the chain, the fullness of the teaching on prayer deposited with so much wisdom in the Holy Gospel? And if we continue later with the reading of the Epistles of the Apostles, we can also find in them the same consecutive teaching on prayer.

As a continuation of the notes I have already given you, I will show several passages that illustrate the properties of prayer. Thus, its practice is described in the Acts of the Apostles, that is, the constant and diligent exercise of prayer by the first Christians, who were enlightened by their faith in Jesus Christ [115]. We refer to the fruits of prayer or the result of being constantly in prayer, that is, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his gifts upon those who pray. You will see something like this in chapter sixteen, verses twenty-five and twenty-six. Then follow the Epistles of the Apostles in order, and you will see: First, how necessary is prayer in all circumstances [116]; second, how the Holy Spirit helps us to pray [117]; third, how we should all pray in the spirit [118]; fourth, how necessary are tranquility and inner peace for prayer [119]; fifth, how necessary it is to pray without ceasing [120]; and sixth, that we should not pray for ourselves alone, but for all men [121]. And in this way, by spending a lot of time carefully extracting the meaning, we can find even more revelations of the secret knowledge hidden in God's Word that escapes us if we only occasionally read it or skim through it.

Do you realize, after what I have just indicated to you, with what wisdom and with what method the New Testament reveals the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ on the subject we have been investigating? in what wonderful sequence is it presented in the four evangelists? It goes like this: In Saint Matthew we see the access, the introduction to prayer, its concrete form, its conditions, and so on. Let's continue. In Saint Mark we find examples; in Saint Luke, parables; in Saint John, the secret exercise of interior prayer, although this is also found in the other evangelists, whether briefly or at length. In Acts the practice of prayer and its results are described to us; in the Epistles of the Apostles and in the Apocalypse itself, many properties are inseparably associated with the act of praying. And therein lies the reason why the Gospels are sufficient for me as a teacher in all the ways of salvation.

The entire time he was showing me this and instructing me, I was marking in the Gospels (in my Bible) all the passages he was pointing out to me. I found this very noteworthy and instructive and thanked him. Then we continued for another five days in silence. My companion's feet began to hurt a lot, no doubt because he was not used to walking continuously. So he rented a cart with some horses and took me with him. And so we reached its outskirts, where we stayed for three days so that, after resting a little, we could set off directly for Anzersky, whither he was eager to go.

THE PRIEST: This friend of yours is magnificent. Judging by his devotion, he must be very polite. I'd like to see him.

THE PILGRIM: We stayed in the same place. I'll bring it to you tomorrow. It's too late. Bye Bye.

#### SIXTH REPORT

THE PILGRIM: As I promised you yesterday, I asked my respectable fellow pilgrim, who consoled my journey with his spiritual talk and which you wanted to see, to accompany me here.

THE PRIEST: It will be very pleasant for me, and I hope also for my respected visitors, to see you both and have the opportunity to hear about your experiences. I have here with me a venerable skhimnik [122] and a pious priest. And where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ, He has promised to be present. And now five of us are gathered here in His name, so no doubt He will deign to shower His blessings even more generously. What his companion told me yesterday, dear brother, about his ardent attachment to the Holy Gospel is very remarkable and instructive, and it would be very interesting to know in what way this great and blessed secret was revealed to him.

THE TEACHER: The most loving God, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, revealed this to me by His great mercy in a wonderful way and without any human intervention. I was a teacher for five years and led a kind of life of sad dissipation, captivated by the vain philosophy of the world, and not according to Christ. Perhaps I would have perished completely if I had not been supported, to a certain extent, by living with my very pious mother and my sister, a very serious young woman. One day, while I was walking, I met an excellent young man who called himself a Frenchman and a student, who had just arrived from Paris and was looking for a job as a tutor. I was very enchanted by his high level of culture and, as he was a foreigner in this country, I invited him to my house and we became friends. Over the course of two months, he came to see me frequently. Sometimes we would go for walks and have fun together, and we would pursue interests that you might consider very immoral. Finally, one day he came with an invitation to a place of this kind, and, to persuade me more quickly, he began to praise the particular vivacity and friendliness of the company to which he invited me. After having talked about it for a short time, he suddenly asked me to leave the office where we were sitting and go sit in the living room. This seemed very strange to me. And I told him that I had never before noticed any reluctance in him to remain in my office, and what was the cause of it now, I asked him. And I added that the room was adjacent to the room where my mother and sister were and that, therefore, it would be inappropriate to continue this type of conversation there. He insisted under various pretexts, but in the end he declared openly: "Among these books on the shelf, you have a copy of the Gospels. I have so much respect for this book that, in your presence, it is difficult for me to talk about shameful subjects. Please, take it away. -thence; "Then we can speak freely." I smiled, frivolously, at his words. Taking the Gospels from the shelf, I said, "You should have told me much sooner," and held them out to him, saying, "Well, take them yourself and place them in any corner of the room." I had barely touched him with the Gospels when, instantly, he shuddered and disappeared. This confused me so much that, with fright, I fell senseless to the floor. Upon hearing the noise, everyone in the house came running towards me and for half an hour tried in vain to make me recover. Finally, when I came to, I was shaking with fear and feeling absolutely disturbed, and my hands and feet were completely numb and I couldn't move them. The doctor was called, who diagnosed paralysis as the result of some great shock or fright. After this I was in bed for a whole year, and even with the most careful medical care I could not obtain the slightest relief, so that, owing to my illness, it seemed that I would have to leave my position. My mother, who was already getting older, passed away during this period and my sister was preparing to take up the habit, which increased my pain even

more. I only had one consolation during this period of illness, which was reading the Gospel, which never left my hands from the beginning. It was like a kind of reminder of the wonderful thing that happened to me. One day, an unknown monk came to see me. He made a collection for his monastery. He spoke to me very persuasively and told me that I should not depend solely on medicines, that without God's help they would not be able to give me any relief, and that I should pray to God and pray diligently for just that, already that prayer is the most powerful means to cure all ills, both physical and spiritual.

"How can I pray in this state, when I don't have the strength to do any kind of reverence, I can't even raise my hand to cross myself?", I replied, perplexed. To which he said: "Well, be that as it may, pray one way or another." But he didn't go into the subject any further, nor did he really explain to me how to pray. When my visitor left, it seems to me that almost involuntarily I began to think about prayer and its power and effects, remembering the teachings he had received on religious knowledge long ago, when he was still a student. This made me very happy and renewed my knowledge about religion in my mind, as well as giving joy to my heart. At the same time, I began to feel some relief in my condition. As the book of the Gospels was continually with me, such was my faith in it as a result of the miracle, and as I also remembered that all the talks on prayer I heard in conferences were based on the text of the Gospel, I thought it would be best to make a study of prayer and Christian piety based solely on the teaching of the Gospel. Laboriously extracting its meaning, I drank from it as from an abundant fountain and found a complete method for the life of redemption and authentic inner prayer. I marked with reverence all the passages on this subject, and since then I have sincerely tried to learn this divine teaching and put it into practice with all my might, though not without difficulties. While I was thus occupied, my health gradually improved, and at last, as you see, I recovered completely. As I still lived alone, I decided, in gratitude to God for His paternal benevolence, which restored me and enlightened my mind, to follow the example of my sister and the dictates of my own heart, and dedicate myself to a retired life, so that, free from obstacles, I could welcome and make mine those sweet words of eternal life that were given to me in the Word of God. So here I am today, escaping to the solitary solitude of the Solovetsky Monastery on the White Sea, called Anzersky, which I have heard on good authority is a very suitable place for the contemplative life. I'll tell you something else too. The Holy Gospel gives me much comfort on this journey, it sheds abundant light on my uneducated mind and quickens my frozen heart. Still, the truth is that, despite everything, I frankly recognize my weakness and admit without reservation that the conditions for fulfilling the spiritual task and achieving salvation, the demand for total self-denial, extraordinary spiritual achievements and the deepest humility that The commandments of the Gospel frighten me by their magnitude and also by the weak and damaged state of my heart. So now I find myself between despair and hope. I don't know what will become of me in the future.

THE SKHIMNIK: With such a clear example of a special and miraculous grace from God, and taking into account your upbringing, it would be unforgivable not only to give in to depression, but even to admit in your soul a shadow of doubt about the protection and help of God. Do you know what

Chrysostom, the Enlightened One of God, says about this? “No one should become discouraged,” he teaches, “and give the false impression that the precepts of the Gospel are impossible or impractical. God, who predestined man's salvation, did not, of course, impose upon him commandments with the intention of making him a transgressor because of their impracticality. No; but that by their holiness and necessity of a virtuous life, they may be a blessing to us, both in this life and in the eternal. Of course, the regular and unwavering fulfillment of God's commandments is extraordinarily difficult for our fallen nature, and therefore salvation is not easy to achieve, but the same Word of God, which lays down the commandments, also offers not only the means for its prompt realization, but also comfort in its execution. If this is hidden at first glance behind a veil of mystery, it is then, without a doubt, to make us apply even more to humility and to lead us more easily to union with God, indicating that we turn directly to Him in prayer and supplication. for His paternal help. This is where the secret of salvation lies, and not in trust in our own efforts.

THE PILGRIM: How I wish, weak as I am, to know this secret, so that I could correct, at least to a certain extent, my indolent life, for the glory of God and for my own salvation.

THE SKHIMNIK: You know the secret, dear brother, of your book, the Philokalia. It resides in that continual prayer upon which you have made such determined study, and in which you have so ardently occupied yourself and found solace.

THE PILGRIM: I throw myself at your feet, Reverend Father. For the love of God, let me hear from your lips, for my sake, about this saving mystery and about the holy Prayer, about which I long to hear more than anything else and which I like to read about for strength and comfort for my sinful soul.

THE SKHIMNIK: I cannot satisfy your desire with my own opinions on this lofty subject because I have very little experience in it. But I have some very clearly written notes from a spiritual author on precisely this issue. If the rest of those present wish, I will bring them immediately and, with your permission, I can read them to everyone.

ALL: Be kind, Reverend Father; Do not hide this saving knowledge from us.

### **THE SECRET OF SALVATION REVEALED BY CONTINUOUS PRAYER**

How to save yourself? This pious question naturally arises in the mind of every Christian who takes into account the damaged and weakened nature of man and what remains of his original impulse toward truth and virtue. Everyone who has the slightest degree of faith in immortality and the reward of the afterlife is inadvertently confronted with the thought, as they turn their eyes heavenward, “How can I be saved?” When he tries to find a solution to this problem, he asks the wise and learned. Then, following their guidance, he reads edifying works written on the subject by spiritual authors and begins to follow without hesitation the truths and rules he has read and heard. He finds in all these instructions which are constantly presented to him as necessary conditions for salvation, a pious life and heroic struggles against himself, which must result in a decided denial of himself. This should lead you to perform good works and constantly comply with God's Laws, thus testifying to a firm and unbreakable

faith. Furthermore, it is preached to him that all these conditions must necessarily be met with the greatest humility and combined with each other. As all good actions depend on each other, they must also support, complete and strengthen each other, in the same way as the sun's rays, which only reveal their strength and light the flame when they are projected onto a single point through a lens. Otherwise, whoever is unfaithful in a little will also be unfaithful in a lot.

Furthermore, to instill in him the deepest conviction of the necessity of this complex and unified virtue, he hears the most passionate praise of the beauty of virtue, and hears the vileness and misery of vice censured. All of this is engraved in your memory by true promises, whether of sublime rewards and joys, or of atrocious punishments and misfortunes in the future life. This is the particular character of preaching in modern times. Guided in this way, the one who ardently desires salvation begins to carry out with all joy what he has learned and to experience everything he has heard and read. But, unfortunately, already at the first step he realizes that it is impossible for him to achieve his purpose. He foresees, and verifies this even by experience, that his damaged and enfeebled nature will prevail over the convictions of his mind; that your free will is subject; that his inclinations are perverse; that your spiritual strength is nothing more than weakness. So the thought naturally comes to you: "Isn't it possible to find some way that allows us to fulfill what the Law of God demands, what Christian piety requires and what all those who achieved salvation and holiness used?" Therefore, and to reconcile the demands of reason and conscience with the insufficiency of his strength to satisfy them, he once again addresses those who preach salvation, with the question: "How can I be saved? How is this inability to satisfy the conditions for salvation justified? Are those who preach everything I have learned strong enough to carry it out?" "Ask God. Pray to God. Pray for His help," he is told. "Thus, would it not have been more profitable, concludes the inquirer, if initially, and always in all circumstances, he had made a study of prayer as a means to fulfill everything that Christian piety demands and through which Salvation is achieved?"

And so, continue the study of prayer: Read; meditate; study the teaching of those who have written on the subject. You will certainly find in them many luminous thoughts, very deep knowledge and words of great strength. The necessity of prayer is spoken admirably; another writes about its strength, its beneficial effects; about prayer as a duty, or about the fact that it requires zeal, attention, fervor of heart, purity of spirit, reconciliation with enemies, humility, contrition and the rest of the necessary conditions. But what really is prayer? How do you really pray? For these questions, however primordial and urgent they may be, there is rarely a precise answer that can be understood by everyone, and so whoever asks ardently for prayer finds himself once again faced with a veil of mystery. As a result of his reading, his mind is drawn to an aspect of prayer which, although pious, is only external, and he comes to the conclusion that prayer is going to church, making the sign of the cross, bowing, kneeling, , read psalms, canons. and akathists. In general, this is the idea that those who do not know the writings of the Holy Fathers on interior prayer and contemplative action have of prayer. Finally, however, the seeker ends up finding the book called The Philokalia, in which twenty-eight Holy Fathers explain in an understandable way the scientific knowledge of truth and the essence of prayer

from the heart. This begins to remove the veil that has been lifted from the secret of salvation and prayer. You see that truly praying means directing your thought and memory restlessly toward the remembrance of God, walking in His divine Presence, awakening to His love by thinking of Him, and uniting the Name of God with the breath and heartbeat. He is guided in all this by the invocation with the lips of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Christ, or by the recitation of the Jesus Prayer, at all times, in all places and during any occupation, without rest. These luminous truths, by illuminating the spirit of the seeker and opening the path to the study and realization of prayer, help him to immediately put these wise teachings into practice. However, when he tries, he is still subject to difficulties until an experienced teacher shows him, in the same book, the whole truth, that is, that only incessant prayer is the effective means of perfecting inner prayer and saving the soul. the frequency of prayer which forms the basis of the entire method of saving activity and which maintains its unity. As Simeon, the New Theologian, says, "He who prays without ceasing unites all that is good in this one thing." Thus, to expose the truth of this revelation in all its fullness, the teacher develops it as follows:

"For the salvation of the soul, authentic faith is necessary, above all. The Holy Scripture says: Without faith it is impossible to please God [123]. Whoever does not have faith will be judged. But it can be seen in the same Scripture that the Man cannot light up faith within himself, not even to the size of a mustard seed; that faith does not come from us, but is a gift from God. It is given by the Holy Spirit. So, what should be done? How to reconcile man's need for faith with the impossibility on his part of producing it? The way to do this is revealed in the Holy Scriptures themselves: Ask and it will be given to you. The Apostles were unable to awaken within themselves the perfection of faith, but they prayed to Jesus Christ: Lord: Increase our faith. Here is an example of how to obtain faith. It shows that faith is achieved through prayer. For the salvation of the soul, in addition to faith, good works are necessary, since faith, if he has no works, he is dead in himself. For a man is judged by his works and not only by his faith. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments... you will not kill; you will not commit adultery; you will not steal; you shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother and love your neighbor as yourself. And all these commandments must be kept at the same time, because whoever observes the entire Law, but violates a single precept, becomes guilty of them all [124]. This is what the apostle James teaches. And the apostle Saint Paul says, describing the weakness of man, that by the works of the Law no one will be recognized before him [125]. Because we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold as a slave to sin... Because wanting good is in me, but doing it is not. In truth, I do not do the good that I want, but rather the evil that I do not want... Therefore, I myself, who serve the Law of God with the mind, serve the law of sin with the flesh."

How can we carry out the works prescribed by the Law of God if man is without strength and cannot keep the commandments? He doesn't have a chance to do it until he asks for it, until he prays for it. And you don't have it because you don't ask [127]; This is the cause, the Apostle tells us. And Jesus Christ himself says: Without me you can do nothing. And as for doing this with Him, He gives us this teaching: Abide in me and I in you... Whoever abides in me and I in him bears much fruit. But being in Him means continually feeling His presence, continually praying in His name. If you ask me for



something in my name, I will do it. Thus, the possibility of performing good works is only achieved through prayer. An example of this can be seen in Saint Paul himself: Three times he prayed to overcome temptation, bending the knee before God the Father, so that He would give him strength in the inner man, and in the end he was ordained above all. pray, and pray continually for everything.

From what we have just said, it follows that the entire salvation of man depends on prayer and that, therefore, it is primordial and necessary, since through it faith is vivified and with it all good works are accomplished. In short, with prayer everything progresses successfully; Without it, no act of Christian piety can be performed. Thus, the condition that it be offered incessantly and at all times belongs exclusively to prayer. Well, each of the other Christian virtues has its time. But in the case of prayer, we are commanded to have continuous and uninterrupted action. Pray without ceasing. It is fair and convenient to pray always, anywhere.

True prayer has its conditions. It must be offered with a pure mind and heart, with ardent zeal, with applied attention, with fear and reverence, with the deepest humility. But what conscientious person will fail to admit that he is far from meeting these requirements; who offers his prayer more out of necessity, out of compulsion, than out of inclination, pleasure and love for it? About this, too, the Holy Scripture says that it is not in the power of man to keep his spirit firm, to cleanse it of impure thoughts, because man's thoughts are evil from his youth, and that only God gives another heart and another spirit. ..., since wanting and acting come from God. The Apostle Saint Paul himself says: My spirit (that is, my voice) prays, but my mind remains unfruitful [128]. We don't know how to ask for what's good for us [129], he says. It follows that we are unable to offer authentic prayer. We cannot, in our prayers, reveal its essential properties.

If such is the impotence of every human being, what is still possible for the salvation of the soul on the side of the human will and its strength? Man cannot acquire faith without prayer, and the same goes for good works. And finally, even praying is not within his means. So what's left for you to do? What is left for him to exercise his freedom and his strength, so that he does not perish, but is saved?

Every action has its quality, and this quality God reserved for His own will and gift. So that man's dependence on God, God's will, can be demonstrated with the greatest clarity and he can delve deeper into humility, God has assigned to man's will and strength only the amount of prayer. He ordered unceasing prayer, so that we pray always, at all times and in all places. Here the secret method for achieving true prayer and, at the same time, faith, the fulfillment of God's commandments and salvation is revealed. Thus, it is the quantity that is attributed to man, as part of him; The frequency of prayer is up to you and is under the jurisdiction of His will. This is exactly what the Church Fathers teach. Saint Macarius the Great says that truly praying is a gift of grace. Hesychius says that the frequency of prayer becomes a habit and becomes a natural thing, and that without frequent invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ it is impossible to purify the heart. The Venerables Callixtus and Ignatius advise frequent and continuous prayer of the Name of Jesus Christ before all ascetic practices and good works, because frequency makes even imperfect prayer perfect. The blessed Diadochus states that if a

man invokes the Name of God as often as possible, he will not fall into sin. How much experience and wisdom there is here, and how close to the heart are these practical instructions of the Fathers! With their experience and simplicity, they shed much light on the means of bringing the soul to perfection. What a stark contrast to the moral instructions of theoretical reason! The reason is this: “Do such and such a good deed; arm yourself with courage; use your willpower; convince yourself by considering the happy results of virtue, purify your mind and heart from worldly dreams, fill your place with instructive meditations, do good and you will be respected and live in peace; Live as your reason and conscience dictate.” But, unfortunately, even with all your strength, all this does not achieve its purpose without frequent prayers, without asking God for help.

Let us now turn to some other teachings of the Fathers and see what they say about, for example, the purification of the soul. Saint John Climacus writes: “When the spirit is darkened by impure thoughts, put the enemy to flight with the frequent repetition of the Name of Jesus. You will not find a more powerful and effective weapon in heaven or on earth than this.” Saint Gregory Sinaita teaches like this: “Know this: no one can control his mind alone; Therefore, when impure thoughts arise, call upon the Name of Jesus Christ often and at frequent intervals, and the thoughts will be stilled.” What a simple and easy method! In short, it is proven by experience. What a contrast to the advice of theoretical reason, which presumptuously claims to achieve purity by its own efforts!

And once we take note of these instructions based on the experience of the Holy Fathers, we come to the true conclusion: That the main, the only and very easy method of achieving the goal of salvation and spiritual perfection is the frequency and uninterruptedness of prayer, for weaker than it is. Christian soul, if you do not find within yourself the strength to worship God in spirit and in truth, if your heart does not yet feel the warmth and sweet satisfaction of inner prayer, then contribute to the sacrifice of prayer with whatever you can. , that is, within the possibilities of your will, what is within your reach. Above all, familiarize the humble instrument of your lips with pious, frequent and persistent invocation. May they invoke the powerful Name of Jesus Christ frequently and without interruption. It's not a big effort and it's within everyone's reach. This is also what the precept of the Holy Apostle commands: Through Him we continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that bless His Name. [130].

Certainly, the frequency of prayer creates a habit and becomes something natural. It guides the mind and heart, from time to time, into a suitable state. Suppose a man continually fulfills this commandment of God about unceasing prayer; Well, in this one thing he will have fulfilled them all. Because if you offer the Prayer without interruption, at all times and in all circumstances, secretly invoking the Most Holy Name of Jesus (although at first you may do so without ardor or spiritual zeal, and even forcing yourself to do so) lo), then you will not have time for idle conversations, nor for judging others, nor for useless waste of time in sinful pleasures of the senses. Every bad thought of yours would find resistance to its development. Any proposed culpable act would not be carried out as easily as with an unoccupied mind. Many idle words and conversations would be restrained and even entirely

eliminated, and every fault would be immediately cleansed from the soul by the merciful power of frequent invocation of the divine Name. The frequent exercise of prayer would often prevent the soul from committing sinful acts and would call it to what constitutes the essential exercise of its art, union with God. Do you now see how important and necessary quantity is in prayer? Prayer frequency is the only method to achieve pure and true prayer. It is the best and most effective preparation for prayer and the surest means of achieving the goal of prayer and salvation.

To finally convince him of the necessity and fruitfulness of frequent prayer, warn: First; that every impulse and every thought aimed at prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit and the voice of our guardian angel; second, that the Name of Jesus Christ invoked in prayer includes a salutary power which exists and works of itself, and therefore you should not be disturbed by the imperfection or dryness of your prayer; patiently awaits the fruit of frequent invocation of the divine Name. Do not listen to the foolish and inexperienced insinuations of the vain world, that a lukewarm invocation, however insistent, is a useless repetition. No! The power of the divine Name and its frequent invocation will bear fruit in due time. A certain spiritual author spoke wonderfully about this. "I know," he says, "that to many so-called spiritualists and wise philosophers, who look everywhere for false greatness and practices that seem lofty in the eyes of reason and pride, the simple vocal but frequent exercise of prayer seems something of little importance, a trivial occupation, even a trifle. But, unhappy, they deceive themselves and forget the teaching of Jesus Christ: Truly I say to you, unless you convert and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven [131]. They elaborate for themselves a kind of science of prayer, on the unstable foundations of natural reason. We need a lot of science, or reflection, or knowledge to say with a pure heart: Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me? Ah, Christian soul, take heart and do not silence the uninterrupted invocation of your prayer, even if your call comes from a heart still at war with itself and half filled with the world. Do not worry. Continue with the prayer, don't let it silence you and don't worry. It will purify itself through repetition. Never let your memory forget this: Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world [132]. God is bigger than our heart and knows all things, says the Apostle.

"And so, after all these convincing arguments that frequent prayer, so powerful in every human weakness, is certainly accessible to man and depends entirely on his own will, decide to try it, even if only for a single day, to principle. Keep watch over yourself and make the frequency of your prayer such that, out of the twenty-four hours of the day, you spend much more time occupied with the pious invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ, than with other tasks. And this triumph of prayer over worldly affairs will certainly demonstrate in due time that that day will not have been lost, but salvation will have been sought; that in the scales of divine Judgment, frequent prayer overcomes one's weaknesses and evil actions and erases the sins of that day from the record book of conscience; that it places your feet on the ladder of virtue and gives you the hope of sanctification in the next life.

THE PILGRIM: I thank you with all my heart, Holy Father. With this reading you brought joy to my sinful soul. For the love of God, allow me to make a copy of what you read. I can do it in an hour or

two. Everything you read was so beautiful and consoling, and is as comprehensible and clear to my dull mind as the Philokalia, in which the Holy Fathers deal with the same question. Here, for example, John of the Carpathians, in the fourth part of the Philokalia, also says that if you do not have enough strength for self-control or for ascetic achievements, know that God wants to save you through prayer. But how beautifully and understandably all this is developed in his notebook. I thank God above all and you for allowing me to listen to you.

THE TEACHER: I also listened very carefully and enjoyed your reading, Reverend Father. Any argument that relies on strict logic is a delight to me. But, at the same time, it seems to me that the possibility of continuous prayer depends to a large degree on the circumstances that are favorable to it and on total and peaceful solitude. For I agree that frequent and incessant prayer is a unique and powerful means of obtaining the assistance of divine grace in every act of devotion for the sanctification of the soul, and that it is within human possibilities. But this method can only be used if someone enjoys the possibility of solitude and calm. By removing oneself from busyness, worries, and distractions, one can pray frequently or even continuously. You just need to fight laziness or the boredom of your own thoughts. But if he is bound by constant duties and occupations, if he is necessarily in the noisy company of people, and has a strong desire to pray frequently, he cannot fulfill this desire because of inevitable distractions. Therefore, the method of frequent prayer, because it depends on favorable circumstances, cannot be used by everyone, nor does it concern everyone.

EL SKHIMNIK: It makes no sense to draw such a conclusion. And this is without mentioning the fact that the heart that has learned inner prayer can always pray and invoke the Name of God without hindrance during any occupation, whether physical or mental, and with any noise (those who know this, know from experience). ), and those who ignore it must learn it through gradual training). It can be said with complete confidence that no external distractions can interrupt the prayer of one who wishes to pray, because the secret thought of man is not bound by any link with the external world and is entirely free in itself. At all times it can be recognized and guided towards prayer; even the tongue itself can express prayer secretly and without audible sound in the presence of many people and during external occupations. Furthermore, our affairs are certainly not so important, and our conversation so interesting, that it is sometimes impossible to find during them the means of frequently invoking the Name of Jesus Christ, even when the spirit has not yet been trained in prayer. to be continued. Although, of course, solitude and avoidance of distractions really constitute the main condition for attentive and continuous prayer, we should still feel guilty about the infrequency of our prayer, because quantity and frequency are in the hands of everyone, both healthy and healthy. as sick people. They are under the sphere of action of his will. Examples that prove this can be found in those who, although burdened with obligations, duties, cares, worries and work, not only always invoked the divine Name of Jesus Christ, but also learned and achieved the incessant inner prayer of the heart. Such was the Patriarch Photius, elevated from the rank of senator to the patriarchal dignity, who, governing the vast patriarchate of Constantinople, continually persevered in invoking the Name of God, and thus attained the prayer of the heart that acts for itself. Or Calixtus, from holy Mount Athos, who learned to pray

incessantly while carrying out his busy work as a cook. Or the simple Lazarus, who was continually burdened with work for the congregation, repeated uninterrupted, in the midst of all his noisy occupations, the Jesus Prayer and was at peace. And many others, who also practiced the continuous invocation of the Name of God.

If it were impossible to pray in the midst of distracting occupations, or in the company of people, then, of course, we would not have been commanded. Saint John Chrysostom, in his teaching on prayer, says: “No one should answer that it is impossible for a man occupied with the cares of the world and who cannot go to church always to pray. Anywhere, wherever you are, you can raise an altar to God in your spirit through prayer, and therefore it is appropriate to pray at work, while traveling, standing at the counter or sitting in your manual occupations. Everywhere and everywhere it is possible to pray, and indeed, if one diligently turns his attention to himself, then everywhere he will find suitable circumstances for prayer, provided he is convinced that prayer should constitute his occupation main precedence over any other duty. And in this case, we would naturally order our affairs more decisively; in necessary conversations with others he would maintain brevity, a tendency to silence, and an aversion to empty words; He would not be overly disturbed by irritating things. And this way, he would find more time to pray silently. With such a rule of life, all his actions, by the power of invoking the Name of God, would be crowned with success and, finally, he would be trained for the uninterrupted and pious invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ. He would know from experience that the frequency of prayer, this unique means of salvation, is a possibility of the human will; that it is possible to pray at all times, in all circumstances and in all places, and easily move from frequent vocal prayer to mental prayer and, from there, to prayer of the heart, which opens the Kingdom of God within us.

THE TEACHER: I admit that it is possible, and even easy, to pray frequently, and even continually, during mechanical occupations, since the mechanical work of the body does not require a deep employment of the mind or much reflection, and therefore in carrying it out lo, my mind may be immersed in continual prayer, and my lips follow it likewise. But if I am to engage in something exclusively intellectual, as, for example, reading carefully, or carefully studying a profound question, or literary composition, how can I pray with my mind and my lips in that case? And since prayer is, above all, an action of the mind, how can I give the same mind, at the same moment, different things to do?

THE SKHIMNIK: The solution to your problem is not at all difficult, if we take into consideration that those who pray continually are divided into three classes: First, the beginners; second, those who have made some progress; and third, the well trained. Now beginners are often able to experience, at times, an impulse of the mind and heart towards God, and to repeat short prayers with the lips, even when they are engaged in mental work. Those who have made some progress and achieved a certain mental stability are able to meditate or write in the uninterrupted presence of God as a basis for prayer. The following example will illustrate this: imagine that a stern and demanding monarch ordered you to write a treatise on an obscure issue in his presence, at the foot of his throne. Even if you could be absolutely busy with your work, the presence of the king, who has power over you and who has your

life in his hands, would not allow you to forget for a single moment that you are thinking, reflecting and writing not in solitude, but in a place that demands from you a particular reverence, respect and composure. This vivid feeling of closeness to the king very clearly expresses the possibility of being engaged in incessant inner prayer even during intellectual work. As for the rest, those who, through long habit or by the grace of God, have progressed in mental prayer until reaching the prayer of the heart, these do not interrupt continuous prayer during profound intellectual exercises, not even during sleep. As the Most Wise One told us: I sleep, but my heart is awake [133]. Many, that is, those who have attained this mechanism of the heart, acquire such an aptitude for invoking the divine Name, that it alone awakens to prayer, inclines the mind and entire spirit to an outpouring of unceasing prayer at any time. whatever the circumstance in which the prayer finds itself, and however abstract and intellectual its occupation at that moment.

THE PRIEST: Allow me, Reverend Father, to say what I think. Give me a chance to say a few words. It has been admirably indicated in the article you read that the only means of salvation and attaining perfection is frequent prayer of any kind. Well, I don't understand this very well, and it seems like this: What good would it do me to pray and continually invoke the Name of God with just my tongue and lips, if I didn't pay attention to what I was saying or understanding? This would be nothing more than a vain repetition. The only result would be that the tongue would continue to chatter and that the mind, impaired in its meditations, would see its activity impaired. God does not ask for words, but an attentive mind and a pure heart. Wouldn't it be better to say a prayer, however short it may be, perhaps even rarely or only at certain times, but with attention, with zeal and fervor of the heart, and with due understanding? Otherwise, even if you perform the prayer day and night, you will still not achieve purity of mind and you will not be performing any act of devotion or obtaining anything towards your salvation. You would trust nothing but external talk and you would become tired and bored, and in the end the result is that your faith in prayer would become completely cold and you would completely abandon this fruitless path. Furthermore, the futility of praying with just the lips can be seen from what has been revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, such as: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me [134]. Not everyone who says: Lord, Lord!, will enter the kingdom of heaven [135]. But in church I prefer to speak ten words with meaning... rather than say ten thousand words in tongues [136]. All this shows the sterility of external prayer distracted from the mouth.

THE SKHIMNIK: There could be something true in your point of view if the advice to pray with the mouth was not added the need to be continuous, if the Jesus Prayer did not possess a force that acted on its own and did not obtain, for itself, , attention and zeal as a result of the continuity in its exercise. But as the issue now at hand is the frequency, duration and uninterrupted character of the prayer (even if at first it may be performed in a distracted or dry manner), then, by this very fact, the conclusions you erroneously drew do not stop in nothing. Let's investigate the issue a little more closely. A spiritual author, after arguing about the great value and benefit of frequent prayer expressed in a single formula, finally says: "Many supposedly enlightened people consider this frequent offering of a single prayer as useless and even insignificant, calling it mechanical." occupation, typical of simple people. But,

unfortunately, they do not know the secret that is revealed through this mechanical exercise; They do not know how this frequent worship of the lips imperceptibly becomes an authentic appeal of the heart, penetrates the inner life, becomes a delight and becomes, as it were, natural to the soul, giving it light and sustenance, and leading -to union with God. These critics make me think of young children learning the alphabet and reading. When they got tired, they exclaimed: "Wouldn't it be a hundred times better to go fishing, like Dad, than to spend the whole day repeating 'a', 'b', 'c' incessantly, or scribbling with a pencil?" on a sheet of paper? The value of knowing how to read and the benefits it brings, which they could only achieve as a result of this tiring memorized study of letters, was a hidden secret for them. In the same way, the simple and frequent invocation of the Name of God is a hidden secret for those who are not convinced of its results and its great value. They, evaluating the act of faith based on the strength of their own inexperienced and short-sighted reason, forget, in doing so, that man has two natures, in direct influence of one upon the other; that man is composed of soul and body. Why, for example, when you want to purify the soul, do you first take care of the body and make it fast, depriving it of sustenance and stimulating foods? It is, of course, so that it does not get in the way, or rather, so that it becomes the means of promoting the purification of the soul and the illumination of the mind, so that the continuous feeling of hunger can remind you of your resolution to seek inner perfection and the things pleasing to God that you so easily forget. And you see by experience that by fasting your body you obtain the purification of your mind, the peace of your heart, an instrument to tame your passions and a reminder of spiritual effort. And so, through external and material things you receive internal and spiritual benefit and help. You must understand the same thing about frequent prayer of the lips, which by its long duration obtains the inner prayer of the heart and favors the union of the mind with God. It is vain to imagine that the tongue, fatigued by this frequency and by this sterile lack of understanding, will be forced to abandon entirely this external effort of prayer as useless. No. Experience shows exactly the opposite here. Those who have practiced incessant prayer assure us that what happens is the following: whoever has decided to incessantly invoke the Name of Jesus Christ or, what amounts to the same thing, continually pray the Jesus Prayer, naturally encounters difficulties at the beginning and has to struggle against laziness. But the more and more he strives for this, the more he becomes imperceptibly familiar with this task, so that in the end the lips and tongue acquire such an ability to move of themselves that even without any effort of the For their part, they themselves act irresistibly and say the prayer silently. At the same time, the mechanism of the throat muscles is re-educated in such a way that when praying he begins to realize that praying is one of the essential and perpetual properties of himself, and he even feels, each time he stops, as if something were happening. missing. And it follows that his mind in turn begins to bow down, to listen to this involuntary action of the lips, and is thus awakened to attention, which finally becomes a source of delight for the heart and of authentic prayer. Here you see, then, the true and beneficial effect of continuous or frequent vocal prayer, exactly the opposite of what those who have neither experienced nor understood it suppose. As for the passages of Holy Scripture which you have presented in support of your objection, they will be explained if we examine them properly. The hypocritical worship of God with the mouth, the boasting contained therein, or the insincere praise of the exclamation, "Lord,

Lord!”), were revealed by Jesus Christ for this reason, namely, that the faith of the proud Pharisees was only a matter by mouth, and his conscience did not justify it in any way, nor did his heart confess it. It was to them that these things were addressed, and they do not refer to praying, about which Jesus Christ gave clear, explicit and precise instructions. You must always pray and not become discouraged. Likewise, when the apostle Paul says that in church he prefers five words spoken with understanding to a multitude of words spoken thoughtlessly or in an unknown language, he is speaking of teaching in general, not of prayer in particular, about which he says firmly : I want men to pray everywhere [137], and this is the general precept: pray without ceasing. Do you now see how profitable frequent prayer is in all its simplicity, and what serious reflection a proper understanding of Holy Scripture requires?

THE PILGRIM: That's right, Reverend Father. I have seen many who, simply, without the light of any instruction and without even knowing what attention is, incessantly offered the Jesus Prayer with their mouths. I saw them reach the point where their lips and tongue could no longer be stopped from reciting the Prayer. She brought them happiness and enlightenment, and from weak and negligent people she made podvizhniki and champions of virtue [138].

The Skhimnik: Prayer takes man to a new birth, so to speak. Its strength is so great that nothing, no degree of suffering, can confront it. If you want, and as a farewell, I will read to you, brothers, a brief but interesting article that I bring with me.

ALL OF THEM: We will listen with great pleasure.

### **ABOUT THE POWER OF PRAYER**

Prayer is so strong, so powerful, that it was possible to say: “Pray and do what you want”. Prayer will guide you to right and righteous action. To please God you need nothing more than love. “Love and do what you want”, says the blessed Augustine [139], “because whoever truly loves cannot want to do something that does not please the person he loves”. Since prayer is the outpouring and activity of love, it may be truly said in like manner, “Nothing but continual prayer is necessary for salvation.” “Pray and do what you will,” and you will achieve the goal of prayer. Through it you will obtain enlightenment.

To further develop our understanding of this subject, let’s take some examples:

"1. “Pray and think what you want.” Your thoughts will be purified by prayer. Prayer will enlighten your mind; it will separate and drive away all bad thoughts. This is assured by Saint Gregory the Sinaite. If you wish to eliminate thoughts and purify your mind, his advice is: “Eliminate them with prayer!” Since nothing like prayer can control thoughts, Saint John Climacus also says about this: “Defeat the enemies in your mind with the Name of Jesus. You will not find another weapon like this.

"2. “Pray and do what you want.” Your actions will be pleasing to God and useful and wholesome to you. Frequent prayer, whatever it may be, does not remain sterile, because in it is the power of grace: And everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved. For example: One man who prayed without result and without devotion, obtained through this prayer clarity of understanding and a call to



repentance. A girl given to pleasures prayed on her way home, and prayer showed her the path of virginal life and obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

"3. "Pray and don't worry too much about controlling your passions with your own strength." Prayer will destroy them in you. For He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world, says the Holy Scripture. And Saint John of the Carpathians teaches that if you do not have the gift of self-control, you should not grieve for him, but know that God asks you for diligence in prayer, and that this will save you. The priest of whom we are told in the Otechnik [140] that when he fell into sin he did not give in to discouragement, but devoted himself to prayer, and through it regained balance, is an example of that.

"4. "Pray and fear nothing." Do not fear misfortunes or disasters. Prayer will protect you and prevent them. Remember Saint Peter, who had little faith and was sinking; Saint Paul, who prayed in prison; the monk who by prayer was freed from attacks of temptation; to the girl who was freed from the evil intentions of a soldier as a result of prayer; and similar cases, which illustrate the power, strength and universality of the Jesus Prayer.

"5. "Pray one way or another, but always pray and don't worry about anything." Be happy in spirit and calm. Prayer will set everything right and instruct you. Remember what the saints—John Chrysostom and Mark the Ascetic—say about the power of prayer. The first declares that prayer, even offered by us who we are full of sin, it immediately purifies us. The second says: "Praying in one way or another is within our power, but praying with purity is a gift of Grace." So offer to God what you have in you to be able to offer. Give Him first only the amount (which is in your power), and God will pour strength upon you for your weakness. "Prayer, which may be dry and distracted, but continuous, will form a habit and become a natural thing, and if will transform into a pure, luminous, passionate and meritorious prayer." Finally, it should be noted that if your vigilance in prayer is prolonged, then, naturally, you will not have time not only to commit sinful actions, but even to think about them.

You see now that deep thoughts are concentrated in this wise statement: "Love and do what you want"; "pray and do what you want"? How comforting and consoling all this is to the sinner oppressed by his weaknesses, who groans under the weight of his conflicting passions.

Prayer: here is gathered the totality of what is given to us as a universal means of salvation and growth of the soul in perfection. Just that. But when prayer is mentioned, a condition is added. Praying without ceasing is the commandment of the Word of God. Therefore, prayer shows its power and its most effective fruit when it is offered many times, incessantly; because the frequency of prayer undoubtedly belongs to our will, just as the purity, zeal and perfection contained in it are a gift of Grace.

So we will pray whenever we can; we will dedicate our entire lives to prayer, even when it is subject to distractions at first. Its frequent practice will teach us attention; quantity will definitely lead to quality. "If you want to learn how to do something well, whatever it may be, you must do it as often as possible," said one experienced spiritual author.

THE TEACHER: Truly, prayer is a great thing, and the fervent frequency of it is the key that unlocks the treasure of its grace. But how often do I discover in myself a conflict between fervor and laziness! How happy it would make me to find the means to obtain victory and to convince and awaken myself to constant application in prayer!

THE SKHIMNIK: Many spiritual authors offer numerous means based on logical reasoning to encourage diligence in prayer. They advise him, for example, to impregnate his mind with thoughts about the necessity, excellence and benefit of prayer to save the soul; acquire the firm conviction that God absolutely asks us to pray and that His Word commands it everywhere; always remember that if you are lazy and careless in prayer, you will not be able to progress in acts of devotion or in attaining peace and salvation, and therefore you will inevitably suffer punishment in this life and torment in the next; encourage your resolution by the example of all the saints who obtained holiness and salvation through continuous prayer.

Although all these methods have their value, and come from authentic understanding, the soul, given to pleasure, which is sick with apathy, even when it has accepted and used them, rarely sees their fruits for this reason: that these medicines are bitter to his taste buds impaired and too weak for his deeply damaged nature. Because what Christian does not know that he must pray frequently and diligently, that God asks him to do so, that we are punished for our laziness in praying, that all the saints prayed constantly and fervently? Yet how rarely does all this knowledge give good results! Everyone who observes himself sees that he justifies very little, and on very rare occasions, these dictates of reason and conscience, and that, with little memory of them, he lives all the time in the same bad and lazy way. And for this reason the Holy Fathers, with their experience and divine knowledge, knowing the weakness of the will and the exaggerated love of pleasure of the human heart, make a particular determination in this regard, and in this regard they spread honey on the rim of the cup with the medicine. . They show the easiest and most effective means of putting an end to laziness and indifference in prayer, in the hope, with God's help, of attaining perfection and the sweet expectation of love for God through prayer.

They advise you to meditate whenever possible on the state of your soul and to read carefully what the Fathers wrote on this subject. They offer the encouraging assurance that these inner delights can be obtained quickly and easily in prayer, and they say how desirable they must be. Deep joy, a great inner outpouring of warmth and light, indescribable enthusiasm, lightness of heart, deep peace, and the very essence of bliss and contentment are all results of the prayer of the heart. Immersing itself in reflections like this, the weak and cold soul becomes inflamed and gains strength, it is encouraged with fervor by prayer and is, so to speak, tempted to put the practice of prayer to the test. As Saint Isaac the Syrian says: "Joy is an encouragement to the soul; the joy that results from the hope that blooms in the heart, and meditation on this hope constitutes the well-being of the heart. The same author continues: "From the beginning of this activity until its end, it is assumed that there is a certain method and confidence in its completion, and this both moves the soul to establish a basis for the task and to derive comfort from

the vision of its objective throughout the work to achieve it. In the same way, Saint Hesychius, after describing the obstacle that laziness represents to prayer, and dispelling false ideas about the renewal of fervor for it, finally says, openly: “If we are not willing to desire silence of the heart for no other reason, then let it be for the delight that the soul experiences in it and for the joy it brings. It follows from this that this Holy Father places the delicious feeling of joy as an incentive to assiduity in prayer, and in the same way Macarius the Great teaches that our spiritual efforts (prayer) must be carried out with purpose and in the confidence that they will bear fruit, that is, joy in our hearts. Clear examples of the effectiveness of this method are found in many passages of the Philokalia, containing detailed descriptions of the delights of prayer. Anyone who struggles with the weakness of laziness or dryness in prayer should reread them whenever they can, considering themselves, however, unworthy of these joys and always reproaching themselves for their negligence in prayer.

THE PRIEST: Will not such meditation lead the inexperienced person to spiritual voluptuousness, as theologians call this tendency of the soul, which longs for excessive consolation and the sweetness of grace, and is not content with performing acts of devotion? obligation and duty without dreaming of rewards?

THE PROFESSOR: I think theologians, in this case, warn against excess or the desire for spiritual happiness, and do not entirely reject the enjoyment and consolation of virtue. For if the desire for reward is not perfection, God has not yet forbidden man to think of rewards and consolations, and He Himself uses even the idea of reward to urge man to fulfill His commandments and achieve perfection. Honoring your father and mother is the commandment, and you see the reward follow as a goad for its fulfillment, so that you may be happy. If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and come follow me. Here is the demand for perfection, and then comes the reward as an incentive to achieve it: And you will have treasure in heaven. Blessed will you be when men, hating you, excommunicate you and curse you, and proscribe your name as evil because of the Son of Man [141]. There is a great demand here for spiritual fulfillment that requires exceptional soul strength and unwavering patience. And therefore there is for him a great reward and consolation, which are capable of raising and maintaining this exceptional strength: for his reward in heaven will be great. For this reason I think that a certain desire for pleasure in the prayer of the heart is necessary, and that it probably forms the means of achieving diligence and success in it. And so, all this undoubtedly corroborates the practical teaching on this subject that we have just heard from Father Skhimnik.

THE SKHIMNIK: One of the great theologians – I refer to Saint Macarius of Egypt – speaks more clearly on this issue. It says: “Just as when you plant a vine you dedicate your attention and your effort for the purpose of harvesting the grapes, because otherwise all your work would be fruitless, so also in prayer, if you do not seek spiritual benefit, this is, love, peace, joy and the rest, your work will be useless. Therefore, we must fulfill our spiritual duties (prayer) with the purpose and hope of reaping the fruit, that is, comfort and joy in our hearts. Do you see how clearly the Holy Father answers this question about the need for pleasure in prayer? And actually, a point of view that I read recently from a

spiritual writer came to mind, which was more or less that the fact that prayer is natural to man is what constitutes the main cause of his inclination towards prayer. she. Thus, the recognition of this naturalness can also serve, in my opinion, as an effective means of enlivening diligence in prayer, a means that the teacher seeks so much.

Let me now briefly summarize the points to which I drew attention in that notebook. For example, the author says that reason and nature lead man to the knowledge of God. The first investigates the fact that there can be no effect without a cause, and climbing the ladder of tangible things, from the lowest to the highest, one finally arrives at the first Cause, God. The second displays at every step its wonderful knowledge, its harmony, order and gradation, and offers the basic material for the ladder that leads from finite causes to the Infinite. Thus, the natural man naturally comes to the knowledge of God. And therefore there is not, nor ever was, any people, any barbarian tribe without some knowledge of God. As a result of this knowledge, the wildest islander, without any external impulse, involuntarily turns his gaze, as it were, to the sky, falls to his knees, exhales a sigh that he does not understand, although it is so necessary, and has the unmistakable sensation of that there is something that draws you upward, something that pushes you towards the unknown. This is the basis from which all natural religions start. It is a very remarkable thing in this context that, universally, the essence or soul of all religion consists in secret prayer, which manifests itself in some kind of activity of the spirit and which is clearly an oblation, although more or less deformed by the darkness of the raw understanding of the pagan peoples. The more surprising this fact is in the eyes of reason, the more necessary it is for us to discover the hidden cause of this wonderful thing, which is expressed in a natural inclination to prayer. The psychological answer to this is not difficult to find. The root, source and strength of all man's passions and actions lies in his innate love for himself. The universal and deeply rooted notion of self-preservation clearly confirms this. Every human desire, every undertaking, every action has as its purpose the satisfaction of love for oneself, the search for one's own happiness. The satisfaction of this requirement accompanies the natural man throughout his life. But the human spirit is not satisfied only with what has to do with the senses, and innate love for itself never attenuates its insistence. And so, desires multiply, efforts to achieve happiness intensify, filling the imagination and inciting feelings towards that same end. The flow of this inner feeling and desire is, when developed, the natural stimulant of prayer. It is a demand for self-love, which hardly achieves its purpose. The less the natural man can achieve happiness and the more he strives for it, the more his longing grows and the more he finds a way out of it in prayer. He addresses himself, asking for what he desires, to the unknown Cause of all being. This is how this innate love for oneself, the main element of life, constitutes the stimulus to prayer strongly rooted in the natural man. The all-wise Creator of all things instilled in man's nature the capacity for self-love precisely as a "spur", to use the expression of the Fathers, which stimulates man's fallen being and puts him in contact with heavenly things. Oh, if man had not deteriorated this capacity, if he had maintained it in its excellence, in contact with his spiritual nature! He would then have a powerful incentive and an effective means of leading him along the path of perfection. But

unfortunately! How often does he make this noble capacity a vile passion, when he makes it the instrument of his animal nature!

OO PRIEST: I thank you with all my heart, my dear visitors. His salutary conversation was a great consolation to me and taught me, in my inexperience, many useful things. May God give you His grace in reward for your uplifting love.

(They all separate).

### SEVENTH REPORT

THE PILGRIM: My pious professor friend and I could not resist the desire to undertake our journey and, before doing so, take a moment to say goodbye and ask him to pray for us.

THE TEACHER: Yes, our intimate contact with you meant a lot to us, as did the salutary conversations on spiritual matters that we had at your home, in the company of your friends. We will keep in our hearts the memory of all this as a pledge of fraternity and Christian love in that distant land to which we will soon leave.

THE PRIEST: Thank you for remembering me. And, by the way, how you arrived at the right time! There are two travelers staying here, a Moldovan monk and a hermit who has lived peacefully in a forest for twenty-five years. They want to see you. I present it to you immediately. Here they are.

THE PILGRIM: Ah, what a blessing a life of solitude is! And how appropriate it is to bring the soul into unbroken union with God! The silent forest is like a Garden of Paradise where the delightful tree of life grows in the devout heart of the solitary. If I had something like this to live, nothing, I believe, would separate me from a hermetic life.

THE PROFESSOR: Everything seems particularly desirable to us from afar. But we all see from our own experience that each place, although it may have its advantages, also has its disadvantages. Certainly, if one is melancholy by temperament and inclined to silence, then a solitary life is a consolation. But how many dangers there are on this path! The history of ascetic life offers numerous examples that show how numerous solitaries and hermits, deprived of all human treatment, deceived themselves and became victims of profound seductions.

The Hermit: I am surprised at how often it is said in Russia, not only in religious houses, but even among God-fearing laymen, that many who desire the hermitical life, or exercise themselves in the practice of inner prayer, keep following this inclination for fear that seductions will lose them. Determined to do so, they present examples of the conclusion they reached as an argument both for avoiding their own inner life and for diverting others from it as well. In my opinion, this comes from two causes: either the inability to understand the task to be carried out and the lack of spiritual enlightenment, or their own indifference towards contemplative achievement and the jealousy that others, who are on a lower level in relation to them, they can leave them behind in this higher knowledge. It is a shame that those who have this conviction do not investigate the teaching of the

### Tales of a Russian Pilgrim

Holy Fathers on this subject, as they teach, very decisively, that one should not fear or doubt when invoking God. If some have indeed fallen into self-deception and fanaticism, this is a consequence of pride, of not having a teacher and of taking appearances and imagination as reality. If such a time of trial came, the Fathers specify, it would bring the experience and give a crown of glory, because God's help comes quickly in protection when such a thing is permitted. Be brave. I'm with you; Do not be afraid, says Jesus Christ. It follows that feeling fear and concern about one's inner life under the pretext of the risk of self-deception is a vain thing. For the humble consciousness of one's sins, the openness of the soul to the teacher, and the absence of images in prayer are a strong and sure defense against those tempting illusions of which some are so afraid and into which they do not venture. in spiritual activity. And, by the way, the latter are themselves exposed to temptation, as the wise words of Philotheus the Sinaite remind us, who says: "There are many monks who do not understand the delusion of their own minds, who suffer at the hands of demons; That is, they dedicate themselves diligently to only one form of activity, external good works, and as for spiritual activity, that is, internal contemplation, they hardly worry, because on this point they are ignorant.

Although the Tales were published without the author's name, the English edition of Aleksei Pentkovsky's *The Pilgrim's Tale*, Paulist Press, 1999, suggests that the first four stories are a rewriting of an original work by Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov (1826-1884), and that the supplementary reports are the work of Arsenii Troepolskii (1804-1870).

### NOTES FROM THE FIRST PART

[ 1] O Abbot APOLLO. Cfr. *Apophthegmata Patrum* (quoted by Paul Evdokimov, *The Ages of the Spiritual Life*, Paris, 1964, p. 230).

[ 2] Frithjof SCHUON, *On the Transcendent Unity of Religions*, chap. IX, "On Christic Initiation", Paris, 1968, pp. 155 and 161.

[ 3] Jean GOUILLARD, *Little Philokalia of the Prayer of the Heart*, "Book of Life", number 83-84, Paris, 1968, p. 177.

[ 4] *Oskrovennye razskazy Strannika dukhovnomu svoemu otcu*, Paris, YMCA Press, 1930. A first French translation was published in the magazine *Irénikon* (Amay/Meuse, Belgium). German translation: *Ein russisches Pilgerleben*, by R. von WALTER, Berlin, 1925.

[ 5] *On the beneficial effects of the Jesus prayer*, Ladimirova u Svidnika, Czechoslovakia, 1933 (in Russian). (It is these stories that make up the second part of this edition.)

[ 6] See note 23.

[ 7] Cfr. Gregory of NISA, *Friday of Moses*, translated and presented by J. Daniélou, SJ, Col. "Christian Sources", Lyon-Paris, 1943. In German: Gregor VON NYSSA, *Der Versiegelte Quell*, trans. and introduction. by Baus Urs von Balthasar, Salzburg, O. Müller, 1939. With regard to Eastern theology, see more in particular C. CONGAR: "The Notion of Deification in Orient", *Vie spirituelle*, 1935, p. 99, and Mrs. Lot BORODINE: "Deification in the Greek Church", *Review of the History of*

Religions, t. Revelation 105, 106, 107 (1933).

[ 8] Anselmo STOLZ, OSB, *Theologie der Mystik*, Regensburg, 1936.

[ 9] Literally: pericope 253. This term designates the texts of the Bible as they are read in services or at mass.

[10] 1 Hand. 5, 17.

[ 11] If. 6, 18.

[12] 1Tm. 2, 8.

[ 13] In other words: a pomieshchik, gentleman of the rural gentry.

[ 14] 1 reverse = 1,067 km.

[ 15] It is the traditional question that the disciple addresses to his master in the monasteries and hermitages of the East.[ 16] Brief treatise on the effectiveness of prayer, written by Saint Demetrius of Rostov (1651-1709); (cf. Works, Moscow, 1895, pp. 107-114). Demetrius (born Daniel SAVICH TUPTALO), son of a Cossack officer, acquired the habit in 1668. Appointed by Peter the Great to the episcopal see of Rostov (near Moscow) in 1701, he fought vigorously against the laxity of the clergy and faithful. and restored discipline in his eparchy. Author of numerous sermons and treatises, as well as a survey on sects, he dedicated most of his life to writing the Russian Menologium, a liturgical calendar that contains the lives of the saints in the order of their feasts that Pedro Mohila had not managed. to perform. The edition, which began in 1684, was only completed in 1705, in Kiev. In this work, as well as in a sermon, he spoke out in favor of the Immaculate Conception, which earned him severe reprimands from Joachim, Metropolitan of Moscow. His body was found intact in 1752. He was canonized in 1757. His feast day is celebrated on September 21st. He is the first saint canonized by the Holy Synod.

[ 17] Pl. of priest. The priest, or Elder, is a monk or solitary man who leads an ascetic or prayerful life and who, without having a particular role in the monastery, is chosen by young monks or lay people as a spiritual master. Charity on the part of the teacher and humility on the part of the disciple are the virtues on which a more intimate spiritual relationship is established than what in the West is called "direction of conscience". In addition to the description of Father Zosimos in *The Brothers Karamazov*, many details on this subject are given in the very complete book by Igor SMOLITSCH: *Leben und Lehre der Starzen*, Vienna, 1936.

[ 18] Cant. 5, 2. This quotation made by the pilgrim from a fundamental text for hesychasm, at a time when this mystical school was still unknown, seems to imply without a doubt that the stories were written after certain conversations, by a monk who, at the same time who reproduces the pilgrim's words, adds himself the quotations that are familiar to him.

[19] 1 Tim. 2, 1.

[ 20] Rom. 8, 26.

[ 21] Isaac of Nineveh, also called "the Syrian." Nestorian ascetic and mystic of the late 7th century. Originally from Arabia (Beit Qataraya region, on the coast of the Persian Gulf facing the islands of Bahrain), at a young age he entered the Mar Mattai convent in Jabal Makkub, about thirty kilometers north of Mosul. Elevated to the episcopal see of Nineveh by the Nestorian Patriarch George (660-680),

he was unable to remain there, doubtless because of the jealousy of the local clergy against a foreigner, and retired after five months. He died at a very old age in the convent of Rabban Schabor, having become blind due to his austerities and his reading.

From his works, translated into Greek in the 18th century and published by Nicéforo Theotoki (2nd ed., Athens, 1895), some excerpts are found in MIGNE, *Patrologie grecque*, t. 86. col. 8 11-886. Under the title *Liber de contemplu mundi*, 25 different sermons are gathered, arbitrarily distributed into 53 chapters. The same collection was included in the Greek and Slavic *Philokalia*. On this way he passed to Russia. Recall that in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Smerdyakov is a regular reader of Isaac the Syrian. Cfr. WENSINK, *From the contemplative vita of Isaac of Nineveh*, Trans. English, 1930.

Cfr. likewise, Marius BESSON, "A Collection of Sentences Attributed to Isaac, or Syria," *Oriens Christianus*, Rome, 1901, t. 1, pp. 46-60 and 288-298.

[ 22] This definition of continuous prayer, which with the "search for the place of the heart" constitutes the foundation of hesychasm, dates back to the earliest times of spirituality in the East. It is already found in Evagrius Ponticus (died in 401), in Diadocus of Photice (5th century), in John Climacus (6th century), in Maximus, the Confessor (7th century) and in Simeon, the New Theologian (11th century). The tradition of continuous prayer is then lost. It reappears in the 14th century, with the arrival of Gregory Sinai on Mount Athos, in a technical and even "scientific" form, as its defenders say, which gives rise to major deformations.

Introduced to Russia by the priest Nilo Sorski (1433-1508), who lived on Athos, it spread throughout the hermitages of the North. After a new eclipse, it regained popularity at the end of the 18th century, in the Greek world, thanks to Nicodemus the Hagiorite, who published the *Philokalia* in Venice in 1782, and in the Slavic world, thanks to the priest Paisius Velichkovsky. The great Russian solitaires of the 19th century will be inspired by him>/span>...

The texts presented below can give you an idea of this tradition:

Evagrius Ponticus, *Practicos*, II, 49: «Manual work, vigils and fasting are not commanded to us at all times; but it is law that we pray without ceasing... Prayer, in fact, makes our spirit robust and hard for the fight..." (According to HAUSHERR, "Traité de l'oraison d'Evagre le Pontique", *Rev. Asc. et Mystique*, volume XV, January-April 1934, p. 53).

Diadocus Of Photice, *One Hundred Chapters on the Life of the Spirit*. Chapter 59: «Our spirit, when we close all its outlets by constantly thinking about God, demands something on which to act, because by nature it needs to be constantly in movement. It is appropriate, therefore, to give him the most holy name of the Lord, which can fully satisfy his zeal. But it is important to know that no one can say: Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit..." (1 Cor. 12, 3). Chapter 97:

...Whoever wants to get rid of every bad mood must not be content with praying a little from time to time, but must practice praying in the spirit...

Because, just as anyone who wants to purify gold must not let the crucible cool for a single moment, if he does not want to see the purified nugget reduced to its first state, in the same way whoever does not think about God except from time to time, what he has acquired through prayer, he loses as soon as it ceases.



Whoever loves virtue must consume through the thought of God all the materiality of his heart so that, through the progressive evaporation of evil in contact with this burning fire, his soul finally appears above the eternal hills in all the splendor of its dawn.

(Texts from the Philokalia. Completed Russian translation. Moscow, 1889).

[ 23] Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπιτικῶν, Venice, 1782. Collection of patristic texts on “spiritual prayer” and the guarding of the heart or sobriety (), collected and published in Venice by a Greek monk from Athos, Nicodemus of Naxos or the Hagiorite. ... Almost simultaneously, Father Paisius Velichkovsky (1722-1794) commissioned a Slavic Philokalia (Dobrotoliubie), published in 1794. The Russian translation, the work of Theophanes, bishop of Tambov, appeared in Moscow in 1889.

[ 24] Monk of Athos (14th century). Author of a treatise on the "guarding of the heart" (MIGNE, PG, t. 147, cols. 945 ss.) and perhaps of the Treatise on the three forms of prayer or Method of hesychast prayer, attributed without reason to Saint Simeon the New Theologian (cf. HAUSHERR, "La méthode d'oraison hésychaste", *Orientalia Christiana*, vol. IX, 2, June-July 1927). These writings provided the basis for the quietist exaggerations of the fourteenth-century hesychasts.

[ 25] One of the greatest mystics of the Greek Church (949-1022). Taken at the age of 19 to the imperial court, he soon entered the monastery of Studion and, after six years, San Mamas, of which he was abbot for twenty-five years. After a conflict with Patriarch Stephen of Nicomedia, he had to leave Constantinople for some time, but was rehabilitated before he died.

Graced with visions since the age of fourteen, he composed hymns in verses of luminous lyricism, the Loves of Divine Hymns, of which there is a German translation: SYMEON DER NEUE THEOLOGE, *Licht vom Licht, Hymnen*. Translated by PK Kirchhoff, OFM, by J. Hegner in Hellerau, His theology, due to the excessive importance he gives to visions and sensitive mystical phenomena, must be considered the origin of hesychasm in the 14th century.

Cfr. in French: "Life of Saint Simeon, the New Theologian", by Nicetas Stethatos, edited by Father Hausherr, *Or. Christiana*, July-October 1928. In German: K. HOLL, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt*, Leipzig, 1898, and N. ARSENIIEV, *Ostkirche und Mystik*, Munich, 1925. In Russian: LODYCHENSKI, *Invisible Light*, Saint Petersburg, 1912, and P. ANIKIEV, *Apology of Mysticism in Saint Simeon the New Theologian*, Saint Petersburg, 1915.

[ 26] Monk of Athos (14th century). Born in the second half of the 13th century, he died around 1346. Originally from Asia Minor and coming from Sinai, he restored the hesychast tradition on Athos and put into effect "continuous prayer". During the great Hesychast controversies (1320-1340) he had to leave Athos and settle in Bulgaria, where he founded a monastery near the present town of Kavaklu. The Greek text of his life was published by Pomialovski in St. Petersburg in 1894 (in *Publications of the Faculty of History and Philology of the University of St. Petersburg*, vol. 35); the Slavic text, by P. Syrku, St. Petersburg, 1909. Works in MIGNE, PG, t. 150.

[ 27] Calixtus Xanthopoulos, patriarch of Constantinople for a few months in 1397, received ascetic training on Athos as a monk. He composed with his friend Ignatius Xanthopoulos a treatise on the ascetic life (PG, t. 147).

[ 28] Extracted from the treatise on the “guardianship of the heart” (de Cordis custody, MIGNE, PG, t. 147, cols. 963-966).[ 29] Literally, “automatic”.

[ 30] The pilgrim, therefore, knows nothing more than the first degree of prayer. In the following stories he will explain his progress and the progressive discovery of “spontaneous prayer of the heart”. It must be admitted, then, either that the first story did not take place in Irkutsk, but in a previous period of the pilgrim's life, or rather, that it was written in a didactic way, with a certain sense of composition, bringing together all the details given by the pilgrim about initiation into prayer. This is a new argument for attributing the writing of the stories to a religious friend of the pilgrim.

[31] Innocent (Kulchitski), first bishop of Irkutsk (1682-1731). Originally from the Chernigova province of Little Russia, he studied at the Kiev school; He was a professor at the Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy in Moscow, a hieromonk, later superior at the Laura of Saint Alexander Nevsky in Saint Petersburg. Sent on a mission to China with the title of bishop, he had to spend almost five years in Selenginsk, and in 1727 he was appointed bishop of Irkutsk. His fight against abuse, his zeal for improving customs, his patience, his meekness and his charity created a great reputation for holiness. His relics were solemnly exposed for the veneration of the faithful in 1805, and his feast was scheduled for November 26, with the title of pontiff and miracle worker.

[ 32] This story recalls an episode from the life of Saint Seraphim of Sarov. In the autumn of 1801, while chopping wood in the forest, the monk was attacked by robbers who wanted to take his money. When he told them he had nothing, they hit him on the head and seriously injured him. The lonely man did not want to let the doctors take care of him, trusting in the help of the Lord who gave him a vision while he was lying on the ground. And he asked that his attackers not be persecuted, according to the words of the Gospel: Do not fear those who kill the body, for they cannot kill the soul; rather fear the one who can lose body and soul in Gehenna (Mt. 10, 28).

[ 33] I Tim. 2, 4.

[ 34] I Cor. 10, 13.

[ 35] This is a book published by the famous Kiev printing house Laura.

[ 36] The Slavic alphabet has thirty-seven letters. Its characters are very different from those of the Russian alphabet.

[ 37] He lived at the end of the 13th century. Many of his works are still unpublished. One finds in MIGNE (PG, t. 143, cols. 381-408) many of his ascetic writings, a polemic against the schismatics and some hymns in Latin translation.

[ 38] Prov. 25, 21.

[ 39] Mt. 5, 44.

[ 40] Mt. 5, 40.

[ 41] In Pe. 3, 4.

[ 42] Because. 4 23.

[ 43] Lc. 17 21.

[ 44] Rom. 8, 26.

[ 45] Because. 15, 4.

[ 46] Prov., 23, 26.

[ 47] Rom. 13, 14 and Gal. 3, 27.[

48] Cf. Ap. 22, 17.

[ 49] Cf. ROM. 8, 15-16.

[50] This is undoubtedly a sermon by Ephrem the Syrian, in which the Judgment is described in a particularly dramatic way.

[ 51] From Jerusalem. Priest and exegete, undoubtedly from the 5th century. Author of allegorical commentaries on the Old and New Testaments according to the method of Origen and the Alexandrians. The text to which the pilgrim alludes is due to another monk with the same name, Hesychius of Bathos (6th-7th centuries), disciple of John Climacus. It occurs in the second century dedicated to Theodulus, sentence 7 (Cfr. MIGNE, PG, t. 93, cols. 1480-1544).

[ 52] Cf. Gregório De Nisa, Vie de Moïse, ed. Danielou, p. 174. «For in this truly lies perfection; not in abandoning the sinful life for fear of punishment, like slaves, not in doing good in the hope of reward, but in fearing only one thing: losing divine friendship, and in cherishing only the only estimable and kind thing: becoming become a friend of God.

[53] I Cor. 12, 31.

[ 54] I Tes. 5, 19.

[ 55] Cf. Isaac the Syrian. "The heart becomes like that of a child, and when one begins to pray, the tears flow." (Quoted by ARSENIEV in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Tübingen, 1927-1931, art. Mystik.)

[ 56] Lc. 17, 21.

[57] There is here an analogy with the tripartite division of the spiritual life, as defined by Maximus the Confessor and before him by Evagrius: "The spirit that triumphs in action runs towards prudence; If it succeeds in contemplation, it advances towards to science. The first leads the fighter to the distinction between virtue and vice; The second leads those who participate in it to the science of incorporeal and corporeal beings. As for the grace of knowledge of God, he obtains it when, having crossed everything on the wings of charity and having arrived at God, considers with the spirit divine knowledge as much

as is possible for man.(MAXIMUS, Centuries on charity, II, 26. Quoted by VILLER, "Aux source de la spiritualité de saint Maxime", Revue d'Asc . et Mystique, volume XI, April-July 1930, p. 165).

[58] Will. 104, 24

. [ 59] The rosary, which Russian religious people constantly have at hand, is made of a long silk or woolen cord whose knots function like Western rosary beads.

[ 60] Rom. 8, 19-20.

[ 61] In other words, a raskolnik, an "old believer". In the middle of the 17th century (1652-1658), the reforms undertaken by Patriarch Nikon gave rise to a schism within the Russian Church. The raskolniki, led by Avvakum, broke with this rather than accept the changes. This schism was worsened by the "modernist" decrees of Peter the Great, who instituted a synod in 1721 in place of the Patriarch, thus depriving the Church of the independence that Nikon claimed. The schism gave rise to the creation of multiple sects, among which two main branches can be distinguished: those who preserved the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the popovtsy, and those who rejected it from the beginning, the bezpopovtsy or "priestless". Among the latter, tendencies towards naturalistic mysticism or, on the contrary, towards moral rigor of the Jansenist type developed. See on this subject LEROY-BEAULIEU, L'Empire des Tsars et les Russes, t. III, and especially P. PASCAL, Avvakum et les débuts du Raskol: La crisis religieuse au XVII siècle en Russie, Ligugé, 1938, and from the author: The life of Archpriest Avvakum written by himself, Paris, 1938.

[ 62] Founder of the Monastery of Great Laura on Mount Athos. Born in Trebizond around 920, he acquired the habit on Mount Kyminas in Bithynia. He lived there as a hermit, later fleeing to Mount Athos to avoid being named higumen superior (around the year 958). Hiding among the lonely under the name of Dorotheus, he was found by his friend Nikephoros Phokas, who made him accept, against his will, a sum of money to build a convent and a church dedicated to the Virgin. This was the Monastery of Laura, the first on Mount Athos. In 963, when Nicephorus Phokas was proclaimed emperor, Athanasius fled to Cyprus to escape the honors his friend had reserved for him. He returned, however, and after several disputes with the hermits, on whom he wanted to impose cenobitic life, he died in 1003, crushed, along with five other monks, by the fall of a bow while placing the key. His party is celebrated on July 5th.

[ 63] Mt. 16, 26.

[ 64] His feast is celebrated by the Latin Church on July 17th and by the Greek Church on February 12th. Probably originally from Bithynia, she lived in the 8th century. Her father, Eugênio, who joined the monastery when he was widowed, could not bear to live apart from his daughter. Not daring to tell the priest abbot, he made him believe that it was a son. Authorized to have his son with him, he dressed Marina as a boy, gave her the name Marino and installed her in the monastery. He was 17 years old when his father died. Having remained in the convent, he always demonstrated great piety. Harassed

for having forced herself on a young woman, she underwent a harsh penance. Only after her death could her identity be discovered. (Cf. Acta Sanctorum [bol.], July, volume IV, pp. 278-287.)

[ 65] Literally: “centenero” and “decenero”. Elected by the communal assembly, the “centenero” was the active agent of the rural police, under the direct control of the police commissioner. These functions, which date back to the Middle Ages, only received a precise definition in 1837, the year the rural police were founded. The “centeneros” were under their orders the “deceneros”, also elected by the communal assembly.

[66] Akulka is a diminutive of Akulina, a popular form of Acylina, a saint whose feast days fall on April 7 and June 13 in the Greek Church.

[ 67] These are the Instructions of Saint Anthony in 170 chapters, which open the Greek and Slavic Philokalia. They can be read in MIGNE, PG, t. 40. They are certainly apocryphal, as are the other writings attributed to the initiator of the anchorite life (except the letter to Abbot Teodoro, PG, t. 40, cols. 1065 - 1066), and are reduced to an essentially stoic writing with small interpolations of Christian hand. (Cf. Hausherr, *Orientalia Christiana*, vol. XXX, June 3, 1933). See also: Antoine le Grand, *stop des moines. Life of him, of Saint Athanasius*. Translated and presented by Father Benoit Lavaud, Freiburg, 1943.

[68] He probably lived in the 7th and 8th centuries. Sometimes he is mentioned as a bishop, sometimes as a monk, and is said to have lived on the Carpathian island. His known works include:

1st Chapter Comforter C aos monges da India (Filocalia), Venice, 1782, pp. 241-257; MIGNE, PG, t. 85, col. 791-812).

2nd At the same physiological ascetic Chapter 116 (Migne, *ibid.*, cols. 812-826).

3a. *Capitula moralia*, etc., reproduced in MIGNE under the name of Elijah the Eclicus, PG, t. 127, cols. 1148-1176. The manuscripts prove that these “Chapters” must be attributed to John of the Carpathians.

[ 69] And I. 4, 4.

[ 70] I Cor. 10, 13.

[ 71] Also called Gregorio Palamas. See the fourth story, note [ 100].

[ 72] Ascetic of the school of Callisto and Ignatius Xanthopoulos. One booklet of his is known: *On Hesicist Practice*, reproduced by MIGNE (PG, t. 147, cols. 817-825).

[ 73] Prov. 18, 19.

[ 74] It is a small house specially prepared for steam baths used throughout Russia. To avoid fire risks, it is placed in a corner of the fence, well away from other buildings.

[ 75] Also called Macarius the Egyptian (300-390), anchoress for sixty years in the desert. Originally from Upper Egypt, he was undoubtedly a disciple of Saint Anthony. Of the works published in his name, only the letter to the young monks (MIGNE, PG, t. 34, cols. 405,410), known since the 5th century, can be attributed to him with probability. The fifty homilies that fill volume 34 of Migne's *Greek Patrology* have aroused much discussion and are generally considered apocryphal. Cf. STOEFFELS, *Die mystiche Theologie Makarius des Aegypters*, Bonn, 1908.

[76] Also known as Mark the Hermit (died around 430 AD), he is the author of ascetic writings and

appears to have lived in the early 2nd century. A disciple of Saint John Chrysostom, he was abbot of a monastery in Ancyra da Galatia (Ankara) and later a hermit in the Judean desert. A writer of "sober and good law" asceticism, he left nine ascetic treatises, the best known of which is *De Lege spirituali*, and two dogmatic treatises, one of which was written against the Nestorians. His works are in MIGNE, PG, volume 65, cols. 905-1140. Cf. KUNZE, Marcus Eremita, in *Neuer Zeuge für das altchristliche Taufbekenntnis*, Leipzig, 1895.

[ 77] Mt. 22, 37.

[ 78] Mc. 13, 33.

[ 79] Because. 15, 4.

[80] Shall. 24, 9.

[ 81] This treatise is a Catechesis of Saint Simeon reproduced in MIGNE, PG, t. 120, queue. 693-702.

[ 82] An analogous episode is found in the life of Archpriest Avvakum (Pierre PASCAL, op. cit., pp. 205-210). The archpriest was choking on a fish bone, but his daughter Agrippina "took a deep breath and hit me in the back with her little elbows; A little blood came out of my throat and I could breathe.

[ 83] In izbas, the stove is an important brick construction that always stays warm. Especially in winter, farmers place their beds on top. Elderly people usually spend the whole day there. Leo TOLSTOY described this custom in his famous story *Three Deaths*.

[ 84] It is a hymn or religious service in honor of the Virgin Mary and is sung standing up. Composed in memory of the miraculous victory achieved by Emperor Heraclius against the Scythians and Persians who were besieging Byzantium in the year 626. A sudden hurricane dispersed the enemy fleet, which fell near the church of the Virgin of Blacherna.

The hymn contains twenty-four verses in alphabetical order, among which hallelujahs and litanies are interspersed. It narrates the main steps in the life of the Virgin Mary, in terms of deep and beautiful poetry:

God save you, says the litany after the annunciation remains:

God save you, you through whom happiness will shine in the world!

God save you, you through whom evil will end!

God save you, you who raises fallen Adam!

Redemption from Eve's tears!

[ 85] Flp. 2, 13.

[ 86] Flp. 3, 13.

[ 87] Cf. Evagrius Ponticus (Pseudo-Nile), *Treatise on Prayer* (French translation by Hausherr, Rev. Asc. Myst., vol. XV, January-April 1935), or. 72. «Once intelligence reaches pure and true prayer, demons no longer come from the left, but from the right. They represent an illusory vision of God, some figure pleasing to the senses, making you believe that you have already completely achieved the objective of prayer...»

Which Father Hausherr comments like this:

«Let's read the Centuries of Evagrius, suppl. 27: "Devilish thoughts blind the left eye, which is the one used to contemplate beings." The Syrian commentator Babai does not need much imagination to

understand that the right eye is used for the contemplation of God. Now, this is the stage we are in, for understanding already “prays in truth.” It is, therefore, easy to understand that demons come from the right and not through thoughts, but through physical steps” (Op. cit., p. 121).

[ 88] Ps., 103 and 104-1. This invocation, placed at the beginning of numerous psalms, is sung in the liturgies of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil during the first part of the mass, in the form of an antiphon.

[ 89] Also called John of Sinai (525-616). A great mystical doctor, he spent his entire life in solitude, at the foot of the sacred mountain, with the exception of a few years when he directed the monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai. His most famous work is the *Escada do Paraíso*. Written in an energetic style and full of phrases, this treatise of perfection is part of the mystical and contemplative tendency of Evagrius and, through him, of Gregory of Nyssa and Origen (Text in MIGNE, PG, t. 88, cols. 596-1209). In the *Ladder of Paradise* there is one of the first allusions to the “Jesus Prayer”: “Let the Jesus prayer be one with your breath, and you will see the fruit of silence and solitude” (PG, t. 88, column 1112 w).

[ 90] Called Joaquín Gorlenko in the century. He was born in 1705 and died in 1754. A monk since the age of eighteen, he left several writings, including *The Combat of the Seven Sins against the Seven Virtues*, published in Kiev in 1892. It seems unlikely that Saint Josaphat did so. left descendants. This is undoubtedly another Josaphat (Mitkevich), bishop of Bielgorod and Kursk since 1758, who died on June 30, 1763, who was for a long time a priest and seminary teacher, and was married.

[ 91] The *Menologium* is a collection containing the lives of the saints following the dates of their feasts. The *Russian Menology*, the work of Saint Demetrius of Rostov, was published in Kiev from 1684 to 1705. It appeared in Moscow in the synodal press in 1759 under the editorship of Josaphat Mitkevich and was republished several times.

[ 92] He was the greatest Greek theologian of the 7th century (ca. 580-662). At first he was private secretary to Emperor Heraclius and later a monk and abbot of the monastery of Chrysopolis, near Constantinople. He fought against the Monothelite heresy and had to be exiled to North Africa and Rome. Arrested in 653, he was returned to Byzantium, where he was martyred for his faith. He ended his life in exile, in a corner of a monastery.

Commentator on Pseudo-Dionysius, he purified the doctrine of the great Eastern mystic of all traces of Neoplatonism. He was known in the West through Juan Escoto Eríngena.

His essential work, *The Four Centuries of Charity*, was published in French in the collection «Sources chrétiennes» (Lyon-Paris). An allegorical commentary on the Mass, the *Mystagogy*, appeared in French in the magazine *Irénikon* (published by the Benedictines of Amay-Chevetogne, Belgium) in 1938-39. Also: Hans URS VON BALTHASAR, “The Gnostic Centuries of Maximus Confessor”, *Freib. The hell. Studies*, fasc. 61, Freiburg of Breisgau, 1941.

[ 93] Also called Peter Mansur. He lived around 1158. Author of numerous ascetic works that remain unpublished, he has two writings on the Eucharist. See STEITZ, *Yearbook of German Theology*, 13 (1868), pp.

[ 94] II Cor. 12, 9.

[ 95] Probably Saint John Damascene. He lived around the years 700-750. A monk at the monastery of Saint Sabas in Jerusalem, he played a very important role as a defender of images in the first iconoclastic period. His essential works are the Three Discourses against the Iconoclasts (726-737) and the Source of Knowledge (II), a vast synthesis of philosophical and theological doctrines, as well as a collection of the main heresies. This book was the "Dogmatic Manual of the Greek Middle Ages". Translated into Latin in the 13th century, it was known by Saint Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard. (Text in MIGNE, PG, t. 94-95.)

[ 96] It is quite common among Russian peasants to wear canvas bands wrapped around their legs, somewhat similar to those worn by the military.

[ 97] Niketas PECTORATUS for the Latins. He was a monk at the monastery of Studion in the mid-11th century. He was an ardent disciple of Simeon the New Theologian. Some controversial works against the Latins and Armenians are known of him, but the essence of his work is of an ascetic and mystical order. In his three centuries he repeated the doctrine of Simeon and Saint Maximus about the three degrees of spiritual life. His Life of Simeon the New Theologian was published in French translation by Father HAUSHERR (*Orientalia Christiana*, vol. XII, July-September 1928).

[ 98] Mt. 5, 45.

[ 99] Doctor of the Church and the oldest of the Syrian writers after Bardasanes and Aphraates. Born in Nishib of pagan parents, he was baptized by Bishop James; He composed many poems and commentaries on the Bible. He retired to Edessa, where he died on June 9, 373. His influence was very great, as the numerous translations of his writings, in Greek, Arabic and Armenian, testify. Gregory of Nyssa knew his works and wrote his panegyric.

He was primarily a Bible commentator and rarely ventured into metaphysical or theological speculation. One of his favorite topics in his sermons is the Last Judgment. «One of his sermons made this terrible announcement a very vivid representation due to the dialogue that was established between him and his audience; the restlessness of the questions, the terrible precision of the answers. This speech, or rather this drama, famous throughout Eastern Christendom, was quoted with admiration by Vincent de Beauvais in the twelfth century, and Dante undoubtedly knew it too. (VILLEMAIN, *Tableau de l'Eloquence chrétienne au IV siècle*, pp. 254-255; cited by NAU, *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*, art. "Ephrem").

[ 100] Archbishop of Thessaloniki in 1349. Rejected by the city, he retired to the island of Lemnos and died around the year 1360. An ardent supporter of the hesychasts, he wanted to give his doctrines a dogmatic basis. In this endeavor, he launched himself into formulating bold and insecure theses, especially the distinction in God between essence and energies or operations, which tends to admit a division in God and consequently lead to error. Considered a heretic by Rome, Gregory Palamas, after the hesychast struggle, was canonized by Byzantium. The Church of the East celebrates his feast on the second Sunday of Lent. Most of his ascetic writings are collected in the *Filocalia* and found in MIGNE, PG, t. 150, cols. 909-1225; t. 151, cols. 9-549.

For the Latin point of view, see Father JUGIE's article, written with energy but with a slightly polemical spirit: Palamas, in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*. For the Orthodox point of view,



Father Basilio KRIVOSHEIN's study, *The Doctrine of Saint Gregory Palamas*. Semin.

*Kondakovianum*, Prague, 1938 (in Russian). See also Sébastien GUICHARDAN, *Le problème de la simplicité Divine en Orient et en Occident aux XIV — XV siècles*, Lyon, 1933.

[101] In the Julian calendar, the year 1860 is the only year between 1850 and 1870 in which Easter fell on April 3.

## NOTES FROM PART TWO

[102] Literally, "son of a Jew."

[ 103] A kind of backpack made of birch bark. It has two pockets, one on the front and one on the back, and can be worn on the shoulder.

[ 104] The head of the village community, or Mir.

[ 105] That is, near where they are buried, the Kiev-Pecherskaya Laura. This was one of the most famous and influential monasteries in Russia and was visited by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year. It was founded in the 11th century and its catacombs contained the incorrupt bodies of many saints of ancient Russia.

[ 106] From the eighth prayer of Matins from the Devotionary for the Laity of the Russian Church.

[ 107] The legend, which is said to date back to around the 13th century, tells that Our Lady, surrounded by saints, appeared, in a blaze of glory, to a group of shepherds. The rock on which he landed was later seen to bear the imprint of his foot, and from it came a trickle of water that was later revealed to have healing powers. Later, a monastery was built on the site, and the Huella chapel is still preserved in the crypt.

[ 108] It is the name that Russians give to the Orthodox Church. Literally means "correct praise".

[ 109] A podvizh is a remarkable feat, and the one who performs it is a podvizhnik. These terms apply, in the spiritual life, to notable achievements in the life of prayer and ascetic practices, and to those who achieve them.

[ 110] A peasant without land, therefore a poor and needy person.

[ 111] The famous monastery on the group of islands of the same name, in the White Sea. It was founded in 1428 by San Germán and San Sabás. The first was a monk from Valamo.

[ 112] A skete is a small monastic community dependent on a large monastery.

[ 113] See Lucas. 18, 1-8.

[114] Cf. JN. 4, 5-25.

[ 115] Cfr. Hch. 4, 31.

[ 116] See Saint. 5, 13-16.

[ 117] Cfr. Jds., 20-21 and Rom. 8, 26.

[118] Cf. If. 6, 18.

[ 119] Cfr. Flp. 4, 6-7.

[ 120] Cfr. 1 Tess. 5, 17.

[ 121] Cfr. 1Tm. 2, 1-15.

[122] The skhimnik is a monastic ascetic order of the Orthodox Church, and a skhimnik is one who is

part of it.

[ 123] Heb. 11, 6.

[ 124] Saint. 2, 10.

[ 125] Rom. 3, 20.

[ 126] Rom., 7.

[ 127] Saint. 4, 2.

[ 128] 1 Cor. 14, 14.

[ 129] Rom. 8, 26.

[ 130] Heb. 13, 15.

[ 131] Mt. 18, 3.

[ 132] Because. 4, 4.

[ 133] No. 5, 2.

[ 134] Mt. 15, 8.

[ 135] Mt. 7, 21.

[ 136] 1 Cor. 14, 19.

[137] 1Tm. 2, 8.

[ 138] died at Laura Troitskaya The Russian original includes a note here that says: «At the end of the last century, a priest, a layman of one hundred and eight years old,; "He could not read or write, but he recited the Jesus Prayer even in his sleep and lived continually as a child of God, with a heart that longed for Him. His name was Gordi."

The Laura Troitskaya is the famous Holy Trinity Monastery near Moscow, founded by Saint Sergius in the 14th century. The role it played in Russian religious life has been compared, in some respects, to the Cluniac movement. Laura Troitskaya was closely related to Russian history and was the focus of the national movement that expelled the Poles and placed the first Romanov on the Russian throne in 1613.

[ 139] St. Augustine. The reference is to "Dilige, et quod vis fac". Treatise of the First Epistle of São João, Treatise VII, Chapter X, paragraph 8, MIGNE Edition 3, p. 2033.

[ 140] Lives of the Fathers, with extracts from their writings.

[ 141] L

c. 6, 22.