

will with time give place to a robust spirit and the desire for prayer. This is a sign of progress and grace-filled help from above.

3. Quality. Quality is better than quantity. Anyone who has decided to take up the work of prayer should remember this. The quality of prayer can be determined by two signs: attention of the mind and depth of repentance in the heart.

St. John Climacus calls attention the soul of prayer. He counsels anyone to enclose the mind in the words of prayer. At first this very hard for everyone, but we mustn't give up. If we put in the effort, God will definitely help us, and in time will send a guardian angel for our prayer.

Repentance in the heart and deep humility—this is the true table of oblation from which God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, the most important of which is prayer. Also, be at prayer like a burbling child and a guileless infant—forgive all those who have offended you and pray for them. Remember your irredeemable debt before God, and then it will be easier for you to forgive people. It is important to acquire inner lamentation of heart over your sins—the important sign of true repentance.

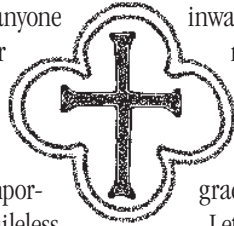
Understandably, it is possible to fulfill these conditions with a short prayer rule. Everything of authentically good quality is usually found as a limited edition. In teaching music to children we require them to play “purely” a simple scale, when learning a foreign language we have to correctly build a phrase, and a beginning driver has to keep from knocking over the flags when parking. Experience comes with time, and then more labors can be added. But we will fulfill with humility our small prayer rule, everyday and consistently, controlling the quality of our prayer, remembering that it is not our labors that determine success, but God's all-powerful aid—with which everything is possible for us in this life and the next.

Priest Valery Dukhanin

—Our life is such that any content is bound up with the form. The immortal soul is present in a mortal body, the Holy Gifts are kept in a tabernacle, fragrant myrrh is kept in a vessel, and the external form for prayerful sighs is the rule. Just as the river has a riverbed along which the water easily flows forward, so is the prayer rule this riverbed along which our prayer flows to God.

When a person wants simply to pray without any rule at all, usually that sort of prayer quickly ends, thins out after a few heartfelt sighs of the soul, and he doesn't know what to say; because we can't find a prayerful mood all by ourselves.

The prayer rule organizes the soul, and gets it into the mood for prayer. Morning and evening prayers, the prayer rule before Communion, various prayers from the prayer book—all these prayers were composed by holy people; in them are placed the thoughts and feelings that anyone who prays should have. Therefore we cannot learn to pray if we ignore the prayer rule.



In a prayer rule, consistency is important. If the rule is not fulfilled regularly, it ceases to be a rule. It will be a sort of spiritual hobby on weekends, when you take up a prayer book because there is nothing better to do, saying, “What do we have here?” The prayer rule is like a soldier going out to his post, his watch: It's not important how you feel or what mood you're in—you go to pray anyway. And a miracle happens—you can start praying in a depressed, sluggish, and inwardly crushed mood, but you end it feeling cheerful and strong, inwardly robust. This is because prayer gives the soul strength.

But the sense in a rule is not just reading the texts, but in standing before God, acquiring a prayerful mood and the spirit of communion with the Lord. The prayer rule is only the means, but the goal is God's grace, which the person praying should be trying to acquire.

Let's imagine that someone is trying to find a hidden treasure. The pick and the shovel are only the means used for this; they are valuable only inasmuch as they enable him to find the treasure. Therefore it's ridiculous to get proud about your prayer rule as if you are already a saint because of it. St. Silhouan the Athonite talked about an ascetic who said that he should definitely be saved, because he makes such-and-such an amount of prostrations every day. But on the day of his death he rent his garments, because it was revealed to him that prostrations by themselves cannot save a man. We are not saved by our prostrations or prayers, but by God—for communion with Whom we thirst through our prayers.

We have to do our prayer rule every time with the feeling that the Lord is present next to us, that He sees how we are turning to Him; this is our personal address to God. A prayer rule that is fulfilled fervently, attentively, and with repentance opens the heart to God's grace, and grace fulfills every need. And perhaps our eternal lot depends upon the feeling and attention we have when doing our prayer rule.

<http://orthochristian.com/100366.html>

FATHER, GIVE US A PROFITABLE WORD...

When we lay bare the hidden meaning of the history, scripture is seen to teach that the birth which distresses the tyrant is the beginning of the virtuous life. I am speaking of the kind of birth in which free will serves as the midwife, delivering the child amid great pain. For no one causes grief to his antagonist unless he exhibits in himself those marks which give proof of his victory over the other.

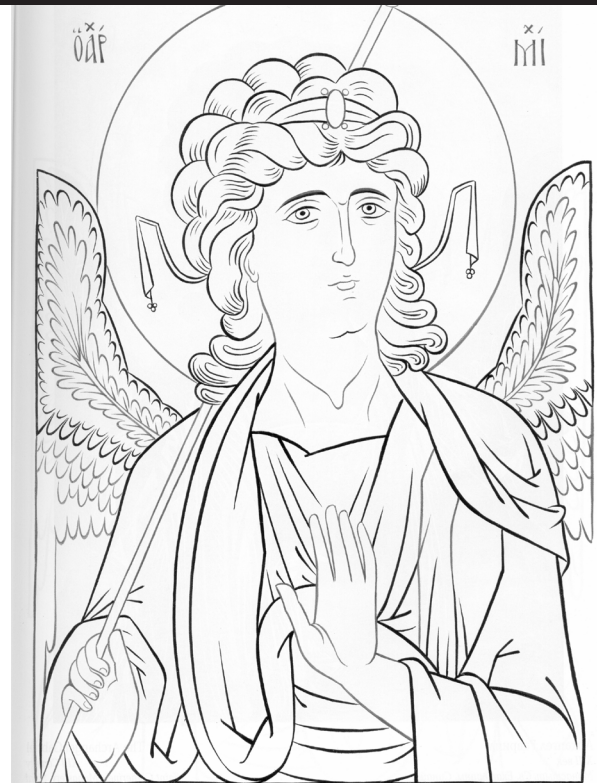
St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of Moses.

Observe your thoughts, and beware of what you have in your heart and your spirit, knowing that the demons put ideas into you so as to corrupt your soul by making it think of that which is not right, in order to turn your spirit from the consideration of your sins and of God.

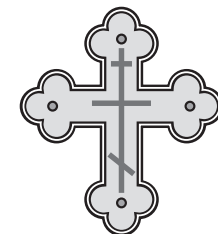
Abba Elias

SS. Constantine and Elena Orthodox Church

November 5, 2017



WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 8
SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS



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PARISH LIFE

**NOVEMBER 5, 2017: 22ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
(TONE 5, MATINS GOSPEL 11)**

8:40 am Matins
10:00 am Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

6:30 pm Vigil for the Synaxis of the Archangels

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8: SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS

8:00 am Divine Liturgy for the Archangels
(with Academy students; festal pitch-in brunch following)
6:00 pm Daily Vespers
7:00 pm “Heavenly Banquet” Study

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

5:00 pm Mystery of Confession (by appointment, please)
6:00 pm Great Vespers (followed by confessions)

PRAY FOR THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND OF OUR PARISH:

Victor Cosgarea, Jay Hanko, Jan Isham, Zachary Waltz, Margaret Wey and Brett Zimmerman.

LOOKING AHEAD...

*Next Sunday's readings: (25th Sunday after Pentecost): Ephesians 4:1–7;
Luke 10:25–37.*

Sunday, November 12

Annual pre-Fast Thanksgiving pitchin (in place of coffee hour)

November 15 – Beginning of the Nativity Fast

Monday, November 20

6:30 pm Vigil for the Entrance of the Theotokos

Tuesday, November 21: The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

8:00 am Divine Liturgy for the Entrance
(with Academy students; fasting pitchin following)

Thursday, November 23: Pan-Orthodox Thanksgiving Day Liturgy (hosted in our parish)

9:00 am Divine Liturgy, followed by Litia of Thanksgiving

NOVEMBER IS PLEDGE MONTH

The time of year has arrived again, when your parish asks you to consider what and how much to give in the coming year. Pledge cards are available in the narthex or at the book corner. As we approach the realization of the expansion of our facilities ahead of us, it is more crucial than ever for the faithful to support the work of the Church. Please consider how much, and in what ways, you can give of your treasure, time and talent in 2018. May God inspire us to generosity and receive our humble offerings.

PRE-NATIVITY FAST THANKSGIVING PITCHIN

Our annual “early celebration” of Thanksgiving, before the beginning of the Nativity Fast, will be next Sunday, November 12 (in place of coffee hour). A sign up sheet is posted online; look for an e-mail from Tawnya Provenzano with the link. We are to be a “Eucharistic people” (“eucharist” means thanksgiving), so it is always appropriate, but particularly meaningful in this last part of the year. This is a wonderful community event that nurtures our spirit of thanksgiving to God for our life together in Christ. Don't miss it!



BOOK STUDY THIS WEEK

We continue our study this Wednesday of “The Heavenly Banquet,” – this session focusing on the side article, “The Gate and the Curtain.” We will consider these in light of the Great Entrance, which has been the theme of the last several classes. All are invited and encouraged to attend, and be edified in the discussion of the fullness of our Orthodox Faith.

OUR PARISH WEBSITE AND DATABASE

Hopefully everyone has taken time to look at our recently updated website. Much is being done behind the scenes to enhance and expand it. In particular we are working on a feature that will allow members to access their own information, e.g. contribution records. Now you can help: A household information sheet is being made available that will allow parishioners to list/update basic personal information to be added to the new parish database. Hardcopies are available at the book corner; an electronic version should also be available to those who are on the email lists.

Please fill these out promptly and completely, including birthdays, name days and anniversaries (it is helpful to the clergy to have the years on birthdays and anniversaries). They may be folded and placed in the offering box in the narthex, or in the offering basket on Sundays.

Important Note: The website and the parish database are two separate things that can work closely together. Any personal information shared will NOT be accessible publicly, but only stored in the database for intra-parish use.

PAN-ORTHODOX THANKSGIVING DAY LITURGY

This year our parish is privileged to host the annual gathering of all the Orthodox faithful in the city to celebrate the Eucharist (“thanksgiving”) on the civil Thanksgiving holiday. What an appropriate way to begin this wonderful day of giving thanks with family and friends for all of God's blessings in this life, and in our land. The Liturgy will begin at 9 am, and will be followed by a special Litia service of thanksgiving and distribution of loaves for inclusion in the home meal. Make plans to be present.

AN ADDITION TO OUR PATRONAL ICON

A beautiful white cloth was carried by Brian and Jennifer Pletcher earlier this year to Paris, and brought to the tomb of our patroness, St. Elena, laid near her relics there with prayer and anointing with oil from the vigil lamp, and then brought back to us. It has now been draped around the icon of our patrons that is usually set on the south stand for veneration. It is a physical “connection” with our beloved patroness. Thank you to the Pletchers for their caring efforts on behalf of us all. St. Elena, pray to God for us!

HOW SHOULD WE BUILD OUR PRAYER RULE?

Archpriest Andrei Ovchinikov:

–There are three important components to a prayer rule: proper measure, consistency, and quality.

1. Proper measure. The proper measure adorns a person in any work—both earthly and spiritual. It is very important to find the middle, royal path. This is a surety of success. This law is important and relevant in our prayer rule. We have to force ourselves in prayer on the one hand, but refrain from zeal not according to reason on the other. We mustn't be lazy, but it is also dangerous to overdo it. In my view, it is better not to complete something in a prayer rule, and leave the desire to pray for another day. Overdoing it more often than not causes aversion and inner protest. The fathers say that the small rule is without price. Obviously there is need of a spiritual guide here, who is experienced and discerning in the practical work of prayer. But this advice presupposes a measure of freedom and personal choice on the part of the inquirer.

Do not take on a long rule. Let it be something that you could do all your life. Remember: The rule is for man, and not the other way around. The proper measure found keeps a person in good spiritual shape, but also preserves joy in the heart and the desire for prayer. Take many factors into consideration: age, health, marital status, workload, and so on. The fruit of correct prayer labor is deep humility and inner peace.

2. Consistency. Be consistent in prayer. This is what the apostle Paul tells us to do. Success in any work depends upon our zeal and consistency—but not only on this. To be sure, the rolling stone gathers no moss. But we also have to remember that we are only God's co-workers. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (1 Cor. 3:7). It is essential that God bless our labors. The holy fathers talk about synergy—about our consistent labor in prayer and grace-filled help from on high. This is the pledge of our success. There can be no pauses in the labor of prayer. The labor of prayer reminds us of riding a bicycle or rowing upstream—only unremitting effort and work ensure our forward movement. The same laws are at work in prayer: Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). For the sake of our constancy in the work of prayer, dryness of heart and emotional boredom

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