

SS Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

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ST. JOHN THE WONDERWORKER OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO/ ST. JUDE

Sunday July 2, 2017

Romans 6:18-23, Matthew 8:5-13

Tropars and Kondaks Tone 3

We are collecting canned foods, cereal, peanut butter, ... for the Love Basket for the next 3 weeks!

“Our Grief Over the death of our close ones would be inconsolable and boundless if the Lord had not given us eternal life. Our life would be meaningless if it ended with death. What benefit, then, would there be from virtue or good deeds? They would be right who say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!” But man was created for immortality....” — St. John of Maximovich of Shanghai and San Francisco

We are participating in the community yard sale. If anyone has anything to donate to the church to sell have it in the basement by Friday morning.

THE PRAYER OF AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What does it mean to concentrate the mind in the heart?

A: Concentrating the mind in the heart means to pay attention to the devout feelings which rise in us while praying. Without mental images, we must simply feel the presence of the invisible God before us, glorifying, thanking, and making request of Him, while at the same time not letting foreign thoughts enter the soul.

Q: Can prayer be considered full if it is only in the mind?

A: When prayer is said with attention and the fervent participation of the heart, it is considered heartfelt prayer; the mind sends up the prayer, but it proceeds from the depths of the heart. Heartfelt prayer is a sign of the grace of God. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23)

Q: How do we learn to pray with our lips, and then with our mind?

A: 1. If our childhood habits have been forgotten, then it is possible to learn to pray aloud (that is, step onto the first level of prayer) by using a prayerbook and paying close attention to the standard Church prayers. "The Church wisely established hymns and various troparia on account of the weakness of our mind, so that we, although foolish, might be attracted by the sweetness of the singing and thus praise God even against our will" (St. Peter of Damascus). The Church accepted hymns and troparia so that we would be humbled and rise to excellent thoughts as if upon a ladder.

2. Christ's teaching demands that our faith and our way of living be inseparable. For this reason, every Christian, in order to live in constant prayer, must have a daily order of prayer; that is, to establish under the guidance of a spiritual father a prayer rule.

3. Every established prayer, be it for home or church use, merely imparts to prayer an outer form; the soul or essence of prayer, however, is born by every person within, in the mind and heart. Our entire cycle of church prayers, as well as every prayer designed for home use, is filled with invocations of God...it is impossible to argue with the fact that mental prayer is necessary for all Christians; and if it is necessary, then no one can say that it is impossible, for God does not force us to do the impossible. That is difficult—certainly. But then everything worth doing is difficult; and all the more so should prayer be, since it is the source of everything good in our lives. (St. Theophan the Recluse, *Letters to Various Persons*)

The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, for by the Cross the kingdom of hell was destroyed. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross. The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons. When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the Sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished. St. John of Maximovich

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