

A Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, you who are present in all places and filling all things, the treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurity, and save our souls, O Gracious Lord.

Trisagion Prayer

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *(3 times)*
Glory to the Father... now and always... Amen.

All-holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, pardon our sins. Master forgive us our transgressions. Holy One visit and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father... now and always... Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

A Lenten Prayer

Almighty Lord, You have created all things in wisdom. In Your inexpressible providence and great goodness You have brought us to these saving days, for the cleansing of our souls and bodies, for control of our passions, in the hope of the Resurrection.

After the forty days You delivered into the hands of Your servant Moses the tablets of the law in characters divinely traced. Enable us also, O benevolent One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the fast, to keep the faith inviolate, to crush underfoot the heads of unseen tempters, to emerge victors over sin and to come, without reproach, to the worship of Your Holy Resurrection.

For blessed and glorified is Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. Amen.

The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

During Great Lent, we customarily we make a prostration at the sign ❖

Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of laziness, meddling, the desire for power, and idle talk. ❖ Give me instead, a pure and humble spirit, the will to be patient with other people and to love them. ❖ Yes, O Lord and King, let me realize my own mistakes and keep me from judging others. For You are blessed now and forevermore. Amen.

The Lenten journey 2013



More Than All, I Have Sinned

During the first week of Lent the penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is chanted each evening during Compline. It is an allegorical poem comparing the thoughts and deeds of the sinful soul with biblical characters and events. It is a cry for mercy and compassion which stresses the goodness of God and the forgiveness of all iniquities in Christ. Yet many of its lines strike the modern person as artificial and exaggerated. It makes claims which many people find impossible to affirm with conviction.

More than all have I sinned; I alone have sinned against You. O God my Savior, have compassion upon me, Your creature.

There has never been a sin, a deed, an evil act, which I have not cherished, O Savior. I have sinned in thoughts, words and deeds, and no one has sinned more than I.

David was a forefather of the Lord, O my soul, yet he sinned doubly by committing both murder and adultery. Your sickness, however, is

even worse than his deeds because of your impulsive will.

David, though once compounding his sins by first murdering a man and then stealing his wife, was quick to repent of both. You, however, O my soul, have done worse things than he, yet you never repented of them before God.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned against You. Be merciful to me though there is no one whose sins I have not surpassed.

Is it really right to say that I have sinned more than all others and that there is no sin which I have never cherished? Does it make sense to claim – in prayer before God no less – that my sickness has surpassed that of David in his murder and adultery? And that sinning more than all others, I have not repented at all? Is this necessary? Is it true? Is it not rather an unacceptable hangover in the Church of a spiritual style, that should be removed from the life of God's people? Is it not but one more example of that repulsive obsession with sin, that pious fraud of inauthentic devotion, that disgusting hyperbole of liturgical expression that tends more to turn people off than to inspire them to authentic repentance and genuine adoration and gratitude to God for His great mercy poured out upon the world in the person of His Son?

Each person can answer these questions only for himself. But there are certainly some, like St. Andrew of Crete and those who have so identified with his supplications as to have them become part of the Church's own prayer, who find sense in such sayings and sing them with conviction. How can this be? Something like the following seems to be the answer.

Every person stands alone before God. This is not to say that we are isolated one from another in self-enclosed individuality: Just the opposite is in fact the scriptural claim: "for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). But we are not in a spiritual contest with one another. And we are not judged before God in comparison with each other. God's judgment, as the saying goes, is not on a curve! Each person is unique. Each person has his or her own calling and gifts. Each person has his or her own life to fulfill or to fail. Each human being is personally judged according to God's righteous judgment, which applies strictly to that person alone.

Standing before God, one does not look at others. One looks only at God. But in this mystical moment, this instant of lucid insight concerning the meaning of all things in the perspective of the unique soul before its Master, the spirit can only cry out, in all integrity and conviction: *I have sinned as no other!* In my unique personality, in the life which my Maker has given to me, with what I have received from my

bountiful Lord, I have truly surpassed all in my sins! Each person will feel this. Each soul will be convinced of it. No rational analysis or logical deduction that it is patently absurd will make any difference. A hundred people at the very same service – and thousands, even millions, across time and space – will be fully convinced that this is true for them alone. And it is.

For each one, in the spiritual uniqueness of his or her own life – especially in the Church of Christ where willful, lustful thoughts are fornication and adultery, and hidden movements of anger and judgment are torture and murder, and the failure to share is thievery, and the failure to give is covetous idolatry – will say with St. Paul with perfect conviction that "the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first." All Orthodox Christians claim this in the prayer before receiving Holy Communion at all celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. It is a spiritual fact which all affirm and none deny who see themselves in the light of Christ before the face of God in whose likeness they are formed for life everlasting. Those of us for whom such prayers ring untrue have yet, it seems, to authentically encounter the living God.

Let us go quickly while there is still time, let us lament, let us be reconciled to God before the end comes. For the judgment is fearful at which we all shall stand naked.

The day is upon us; Judgment now is at the door. Be vigilant, O my soul. Princes and kings, rich people and poor are gathering together, and each will be rewarded for what he has done.

Monks and bishops, slaves and masters, old and young, each shall be examined in his proper place. Widow and virgin shall be corrected, and woe to all whose lives are sinful.

The judgment is without respect of persons. No cunning defense or skill of speech can deceive the Judge. False witnesses cannot pervert the sentencing, for in Your sight, O God, every secret sin stands revealed.

I cry to You, O Lord: "Have mercy, have mercy on me! When You come with Your angels to give due reward to each person for his deeds."

I have sinned as no other person before. I have transgressed more than any other, O Lord. Before the Day of Judgment comes, be merciful to me, O Lover of Man.