



Fasting & Confession

An elder was giving instruction on the spiritual life, enthused by the talk, one of his disciples asked a question: “Abba, how far can one grow in the life with God?” The elder raised his hand toward heaven and suddenly his whole arm became like a flaming torch. He turned to his disciple and said: “If you want, if you truly desire it, you can become all fire!”





An Orthodox Christian is like an oil lamp which consists of oil, the wick, and the flame. (St. Symeon the New Theologian)

The *Oil*



The oil is the whole life of a Christian, one's prayers, fasting, sacramental participation, and all other good works of piety.

- ❖ Prayer Life
- ❖ Fasting
- ❖ Confession
- ❖ Eucharist
- ❖ Outward: Good Works – love & faith in action
- ❖ Upward: Worship

THE WICK

- ◎ The wick is the soul, trimmed, straight and reaching upward to receive the light.
- ❖ Trimmed of all that keeps the flame burning
- ❖ Straight – living a right
- ❖ Bent – obedient, humble
- ❖ Desiring Light over Darkness



The *Flame*

- The flame is the gift of grace which God alone kindles. All three elements are integral to and work together in the oil lamp.



- ④ Without the oil of a righteous life, the wick would soon smolder and die out.
- ④ Without the wick of the soul yearning for Christ, no amount of good works could receive and sustain the holy flame.
- ④ The flame of the Holy Spirit, which God alone can give, burns brightly only when the wick is trimmed and soaked with oil.
- ④ Where the Spirit finds eagerness of soul and abundance of goodness, according to St. Symeon, the whole lamp of the Christian becomes full of light burning with holy fire.

Discipleship - Taking up one's cross - living for Christ alone

- ❖ *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of the wheat that falls into the earth should die, it abides alone; but if it should die, it bears much fruit. “The one who loves his life shall lose it; and the one who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. “If anyone serve Me, let him keep on following Me; and where I am, there My servant shall be also. And if anyone serve Me, the Father shall honor him. [Jn. 12:24-26]*
- ❖ *“(Fasting) It is our entrance and participation in that experience of Christ Himself by which He liberates us from the total dependence on food, matter and the world. (Fr. Schmemmann)”*

Fasting & Eucharist

³Then Jesus said to them, “Verily, verily, I say to you, unless ye should eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye are not having life in yourselves. [Jn. 6:53]

- ◎ "This means that without the corresponding spiritual effort, without feeding ourselves with Divine Reality, without discovering our total dependence upon God and God alone, physical fasting would indeed be suicide." (Fr. Schmemmann)

- ◎ Saint Justin Martyr: “Among us the food is called the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the one who believes that the things we teach are true, and who has also been washed with the washing that is for the forgiveness of sins and unto regeneration, and who is living as Christ has taught us. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but as Jesus Christ our Savior, made flesh by the Logos of God, took flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught, that the food which is consecrated by the prayer of His words, and by which our own flesh and blood by transmutation is nourished, is the flesh and blood of the Jesus Who became flesh and blood.”

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled [Mt. 5:6].”

- ◎ "Ultimately, to fast means only one thing: to be hungry . . . and being hungry, to discover that . . . hunger itself is first of all a spiritual state and that it is in its' last reality hunger for God." (Schmemmann, Great Lent, p. 97)

Fasting & Prayer leads to living right in the eyes of God

- " Every Christian should know that unless one lifts his mind and heart towards God through Christian fasting and through prayer, he cannot attain a consciousness of his sinful state and earnestly seek the forgiveness of sins. . . . Prayer and fasting serve as a means of self-study, of discernment of our true moral state, of an accurate estimation of our sins and of a knowledge of their true character. Without fasting and prayer we lack the means of acquiring this knowledge, and we cannot have a true picture of our sins, a perfect awareness of them and contrition of heart, and hence true and fruitful confession."

Confession (Chrysostom)

- ❖ He that is penitent ought never to forget his sin, but to beseech God not to remember it; while on the other hand, he himself never forgets it. If we remember it, God will forget it.
- ❖ For sin confessed becomes less, but sin not confessed becomes worse. For if sin adds to itself shamelessness and ingratitude, how will he who does not know that he sinned before be at all able to guard himself from falling again into the same [evils]?
- ❖ Transparency before God: Let us then not deny our sins, I beseech you, nor be shameless... It is a great good to acknowledge our sins, and to bear them in mind continually. Nothing so effectually cures a fault, as a continual remembrance of it. Nothing makes a man so slow to wickedness.

Freedom from Anger

“For he who repents ought not to be angry, nor severe...nor boldness...”

What state of mind exists when we have repented of a sin? If anger and severity are still present, we are still only at the initial stage of realizing a sin. A sin is defined as “missing the mark” not living up to the standard set for us by Christ. Anger is a sign of pride which cannot have a place in us if we are to be humble as Christ is humble. “Take up My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble in heart; and you shall find rest to your souls. [Mt. 11:29]