

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES: SCRIPTURE & LIVES OF SAINTS – STUDY 6

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is a great cliff and a deep abyss. Not knowing the Scriptures is the cause of all evils. Reading the Scriptures is like possessing a great treasure. A Christian cannot help but read the Scriptures. To be a Christian is to rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit speaks to us through the Scriptures.” (Chrysostom)

REVELATION IS PRESERVED IN THE CHURCH...THE CHURCH IS THE PROPER AND PRIMARY INTERPRETER OF REVELATION (FLOROVSKY)

"It is the traditional teaching of the Orthodox Church that the Bible is the scripture of the Church, that it has its proper meaning only within the life and experience of the people of God, that it is not a thing-in-itself which can be isolated from its organic context within the Church community, in which and for which and from which it exists." (Hopko, *The Bible* p. 49)

²⁷He (Christ) went on interpreting to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself...as He reclined *at table* with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and was giving it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He disappeared from them. ³²And they said to one another, “Our heart was burning in us as He was speaking to us in the way and as He was opening to us the Scriptures, was it not?...[Lk. 24]”

The Opening of Scriptures is LITURGICAL – A SACRAMENTAL ACTION

- Post Passion & Resurrection
- Christ makes all things new including the scriptures as they are fulfilled in Him
- It is in worship that the scriptures are open to us and the bread is broken
 - There are over 212 direct quotations from the Bible in the Liturgy and hymns sung.
- We become ‘bread’ – Christ – and only in Christ can we understand all mysteries.

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF SCRIPTURE (FR. JOHN BEHR)

- Scripture is cryptic – it has to be *opened to us*, it is *veiled*. St. Paul “knew” scripture
- It is harmonious – it all about Christ and about us.
- Contemporary – it reveals to us what it means to be human.
- It is inspired – the Risen Christ opens it, He is the author speaking through the prophets.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE (HOPKO)

“In (the) Orthodox view, Scripture is not merely a text in the sense of having a bounded meaning. Rather for the Orthodox, Scripture is understood in a sacramental sense, as conveying the presence of Christ in manifold ways.” (*A Basic Guide to Eastern Orthodox Theology*, Eve Tibbs, p. 57).”

❖ Pray for understanding

Loving Master, shine the pure light of Your divine knowledge in our hearts. Open the eyes of our minds (spiritual understanding) that we may understand the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us reverence for Your blessed commandments, that having conquered our sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, O Christ our God, are the light of our souls (Christ sends His Spirit to illumine us) and bodies and to You do we offer glory, together with Your Father who is

without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

- ❖ Daily readings: try to put into practice what is *heard*
- ❖ The epistle lesson and the gospel lesson are connected thematically for the day.
- ❖ The daily Epistle and Gospel lessons are all connected thematically with the coming Sunday

St. Ambrose of Milan: “As in Paradise, God walks in the Holy Scriptures, seeking man.”

HOLY TRADITION – is the life and presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church (Lossky). It is the “umbrella” or context under which all aspects of faith (scripture, creeds, writings, hymnography, iconography, theology, doctrines, and saints) and life in the Orthodox Church are properly understood.

Holy Tradition does not refer to “content, teachings” of what is entrusted but “the living breath of the Church that makes Truth known.” (Lossky)

Holy Tradition is the Holy Spirit “communicating to each member of the Body of Christ the faculty of hearing, of receiving, of knowing the Truth in the Light (Who is Christ) which belongs to it, and not according to the light of human reason.” (Lossky, Tradition & Traditions)

“We can say that Scripture is a God-inspired image of Truth, but not Truth itself. . . If we declare Scripture to be self-sufficient, we only expose it to subjective, arbitrary interpretation, thus cutting it away from its sacred source. Scripture is given to us in Tradition. The Church, as the body of Christ, stands mystically first and is fuller than scripture.” (Florovsky)

THE CHURCH FATHERS & SAINTS

“Loyalty to Tradition does not mean loyalty to bygone times and to outward authority; it is a living connection with the fullness of Church experience. . . The Church alone is a living witness of Tradition; and only from inside, from within the Church, can tradition be felt and accepted as a certainty. . . Tradition is the witness of the Spirit; the Spirit’s unceasing revelation and preaching of good tidings. . . Tradition is a charismatic, not a historical principle” (Florovsky, p. 46)

"Having received this preaching and this faith, . . . the Church, although scattered in the whole world, carefully preserves it, as if living in one house. She believes these things (everywhere) alike, as if she had but one heart and one soul, and preaches them harmoniously, teaches them, and hands them down, as if she had but one mouth." (St. Irenaeus of Lyons)

THE WORD OF GOD IS CHRIST

“Christ is not a text, but a Living Person.” (Florovsky,

“For the Church, the **Word of God** meant not only the expression of absolute truth in human language, but **primarily the appearance of God Himself** and the revelation of His divine life and strength. . . The preaching of the Word of God by the Apostles . . . not only told about Christ, but transmitted Christ Himself; it led men into His life and united them with it.” (Schmemmann, p. 42)

RESOURCES FOR STUDY

- ❖ Interlinear scriptures WWW.BIBLEHUB.COM; The Orthodox New Testament, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, Co, 1999, The Orthodox Study Bible (OT & NT)– Conciliar Press; Patristic Commentary <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/>