

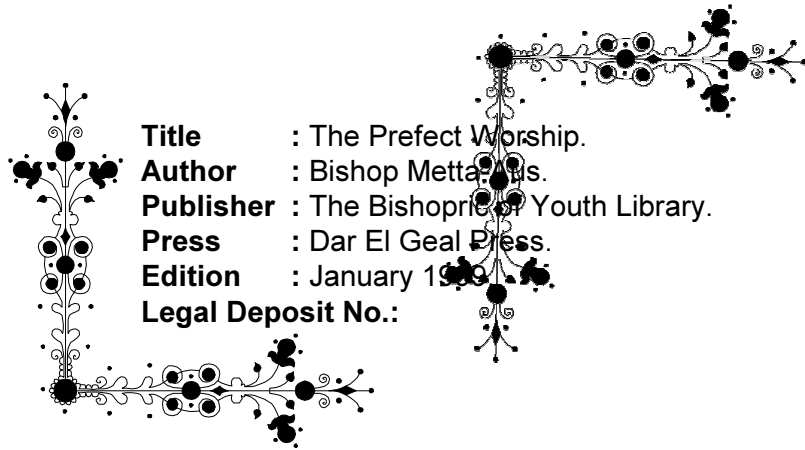
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The Perfect Worship

H.G. Bishop Metta - Aus

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of Virgin St. Mary*

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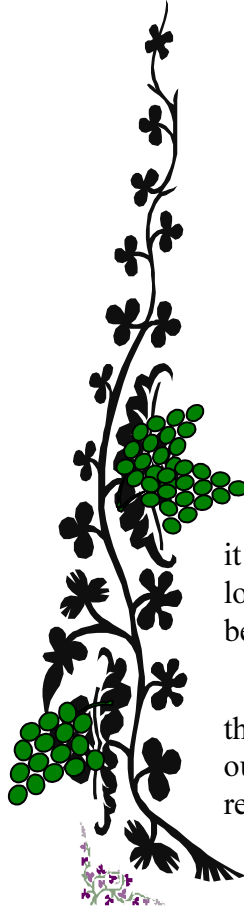
INTRODUCTION

*In the name of the Father and the
Son and the Holy Spirit (One God)
Amen*

The acceptable worship in the Orthodox Church has three important pillars according to the instructions of our saviour the lord Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount. These are Charity (offertory), prayer and Fasting Prayer is described by some father as a bird flying upwards unobstructed to God.

If a strong bird breaks or loses one of its wings it can no longer fly In the same way, if praye4r loses any of its wings (charity and / or fasting) it becomes weak and frail.

Our prayers become strong and effective through the Grace of God when we couple it with our charity (offertory) and fasting, we can then reach the throne of grace and live with the Lord.

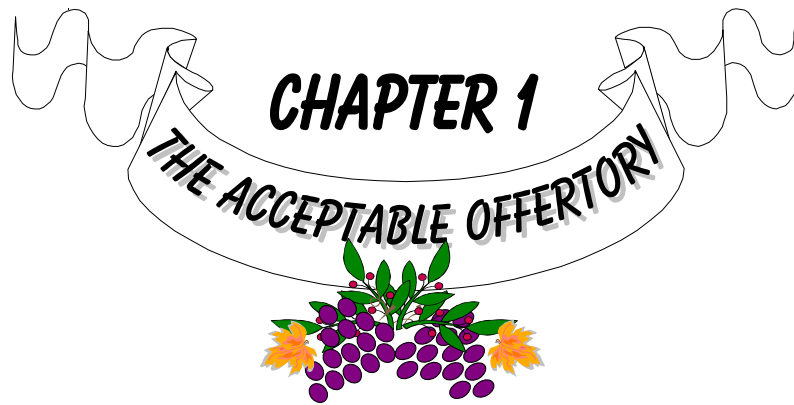


Through charity we worship God offering Him our sacrifices and remembering St. Paul's advice: "***But do not forget to do good and to share for with such sacrifices God is well pleased***" (Hebrews 13:16).

Through fasting we worship with our bodies offering our bodies as living sacrifices. Our worship is further perfected through charity, prayer and fasting. We know that the number three is considered a perfect holy number and that every thing is complete through the Holy Trinity. May the Lord accept our worship and help us to reach perfection through the prayers of H.H. Pope Shenouda III and his brother in the apostolic ministry H.G. Bishop Athanasios.

Bishop Metta – Aus





CHAPTER 1

THE ACCEPTABLE OFFERTORY

In this chapter, we shall look at the first of the three main corner stones of Christian worship namely; offertory , prayer and Fasting .

OFFERTORY IS A GODLY COMMANDMENT:

David the psalmist illustrates God's great love and care for mankind when he wrote: "*A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows , Is God in His holy habitation "* (Ps68:5).

He also cares for the orphans and poor and therefore we should also do the same. He advises us to look after them

If there is among you a poor man of your brethren , within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you , you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother , but you

shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need , what even he needs . beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart , saying , ' the seventh year, the year of release , is at hand ; and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing , and he cry out to the LORD against you , and it become sin among you . You shall surely give to him , and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him , because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand." (deu 15:7-10).

Our Lord Jesus Christ encourages us to help them , in order to receive more blessings in our life:"*sell what you have and give alms, provide yourselves with money bags which do not grow old a treasure in the heaven that does not fail , where no thief approaches nor moth destroys"* (Luke 12:33)

"But rather give alm of such things as you have them indeed all things are clean to you." (Luke 11:41)

At the judgement day, we will be greatly rewarded for the deeds of mercy, which we have done in our lives:

"then the king will say to the merciful come you blessed of My Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world for I was hungry and you gave Me food ; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink ; I



was a stranger and you took Me in ; I was naked and you clothed Me ; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me . then the righteous will answer Him saying Lord when did we see you ahungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink ? When did we see you a stranger and take you in , or naked and clothe you" (Matt 25:34-39).

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment , but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt 25:46).

"For judgement is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment " (James 2:13).

The Apostles learned the deeds of mercy from their Great Teacher and the benefits of being merciful , faithful and so they followed His example teaching the same. St James wrote:

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"(Acts 4:32)

The Church in the early ages responded to the teachings of our Lord and His pure disciples.

"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul ; neither did anyone say that any of



the things he possessed was his own , but they had all things common" (Acts4:32)

" For all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them , and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the Apostles feet and they distributed to each as anyone had need. " (Acts 4:34-35)

The virtue of charity deserves every honour as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself expressed saying :

" He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord and He will pay back what he has given. " (Prov 19:17)

It intercedes not only for the believers but also for the non believers as it opens the door of faith for them . An example is Cornelius the centurion who used to do charitable works. An angel appeared to him and told him that his prayers and alms had gone up before God , then he led him to St Peter who then baptised him (Acts 10:3-4)

GIVING IS A GREAT & HONOURABLE VIRTUE:

St Basil warning the non merciful says : because you did not have mercy with others , you will receive no mercy and as you closed your doors in the faces of the poor and needy , the Lord shall not give you eternal life when you ask Him. you will reap what you have sown. If you sow bitterness you will reap the same, If you sow unmercifulness you will reap nothing but pain and



suffering and if you run away from mercy , mercy will run away from you. God , who out of love became poor for your sake will rebuke you.

CHARITY PROVIDES PROTECTION FROM SIN:

Another blessing of charity is that it saves us from sins and illness . In the wonderful words of David the Prophet:

" Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble and he will be blessed on the earth; you will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord sustains him on his sick bed in his sickness you heal all his infirmities" (Psa41:1-3)

It is enough for the doner to fell the inner happiness of sharing and helping those in need whether they may be distressed or broken hearted.

Sinika the philosopher wrote: *"You cannot live happily if you only live for yourself. "*

There is a well known saying which says: *"It is not worthy for him to be born he who lives only for himself."*

TYPES OF CHARITY:

Charity is not only giving material offerings but it also a good word calming down an upset person, smiling to a person in a distress, comforting the sad, encouraging the



despaired, helping the weak, guiding the lost and all other emotional aspects of mercy and charity which are a source or reward for the cheerful giver.

TO WHOM SHOULD WE GIVE?

Our offerings should not be directed to one facet of distribution but in general to all members of the church without any discrimination:

"therefore as we have opportunity let us do good to all especially to those who are of the household of faith. "
(Gal6:10)

FOR EXAMPLE WE CAN:

- ✘ Give the church what it needs of incense, flour, oil, candles, books, altar's furniture and utensils.
- ✘ Give donations for buildings and renovations in church.
- ✘ Give donations to those who serve God to support their families.
- ✘ Help the poor unemployed, handicapped, widows and orphans.
- ✘ Spiritual service in the areas when they are needed for school, giving out free pamphlets or books, or spending on literature for the salvation of souls.



HOW DO WE GIVE?

The Lord Christ sitting opposite the treasury box in the temple watched how people put their money and not how much they put in, (Mark 12:41)

God is concerned with our intentions and motives when giving, more so than the amount.

Cain and Abel both gave offerings to the Lord, but He only accepted" Abel's offerings and rejected Cain's offerings, (Gen 4:4-5)

RECOGNISE THAT YOU ARE IN DEBT:

While giving our offerings, we should feel that we are repaying just a small part of our debt to God who is the giver of all that we own. David the prophet while collecting gold and silver to build the house of God said:

" for all things come from you and of your own we have you"
(1Chr 29:14).

God has given us everything we have. It is only right that we show our gratitude by giving back to God a gift. God did not only offer us material gifts but also, He sacrificed Himself on the Cross for our salvation:



"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1Pet 1:18-19)

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (Cor8:9)

Give with the spirit of love:

Love to every virtue is as the spirit to the body. A body without spirit is dead. Any virtue devoid of the spirit of love is vain and useless. The believer who does not love others is not a disciple of the Lord who said:

"By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

"If you leave your brother hungry so you do not love him but whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17-18)

Also, St. James says:

"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them depart in peace be warmed and



filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? " (James 2:15-16)

We should resemble our heavenly father Who provided tunics for Adam and Eve to cover themselves, (Gen 3:21).

St. Paul explains how the deeds of charity are strongly related to love:

" And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profits me nothing. " (1 Cor13:3).

Also in the Song of Songs:

" Many waters cannot quench love nor can the floods drawn it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised. " (song 8:7)

GIVE VOLUNTARILY:

Giving should be the result of embarrassment or pressure from others St. Paul wrote about the generosity of the Macedonians:

"That in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. " (2 Cor8:2)



GIVE WITH SELF DENIAL:

The Lord advise us to give secretly and without any pride saying:

" Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streers, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly I say to you they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that you charitable deed may be in secret and your father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly". (Matt 6:1-4)

When people praise our charity our heavenly reward is lost. When the Lord said do not let your left hand know what you right hand is doing, He be proud of showing everyone our deeds of charity. But if thousands of people see us giving, but we do not intend to show them, god shall accept our offerings. Especaillyif they come from a pure and loving heart:

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ".(Col3:23-24).



GIVE GENEROUSLY AND TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY:

As children of god we should always imitate our heavenly Father who always:

"Gives to all liberally and without reproach" (James 1:5)

The people of Macedonia gave generously:

"That in great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality". (2Cor8:2)

So their poverty was turned into generosity as the apostle explained:

"For I bear witness that according to their ability.... imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did not as we had hoped but first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God". (2Cor 8:3-5)

The last sentence reveals the reason for giving so much, they gave themselves completely to the Lord so that they were not attached to material possessions.

IN HAPPINESS AND JOY:

The apostle says:

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart not grudgingly or of necessity for god loves a cheerful giver". (2Cor 9:7).

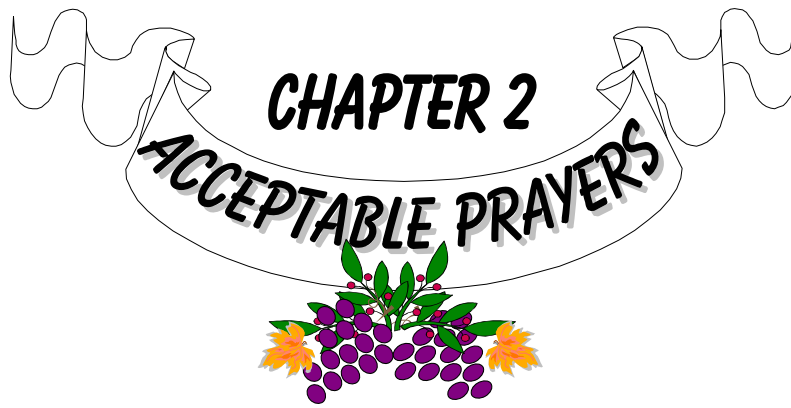


Having a lovely smile when meeting a poor person or giving and donation is a sign of your pure heart and good conscious encouraging the need without any humiliation to their situation.

GIVE FROM LEGAL AND JUST INCOME:

The Church's Canon states that the offerings of evil people and unbelievers should not be accepted because it is considered an insult to God to offer Him offerings from illegal income or an income as a result of sin or forbidden works. St John Chrysostom said that offerings should be from legal income and real earnings as the impure offerings are not accepted by God.





CHAPTER 2

ACCEPTABLE PRAYERS

With regard to prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ said:

"And whatever you ask in my name that the father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).

"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly I say to you whatever you ask the father in My Name He will give you" (John 16:23).

For our prayers to be accepted before the throne of God we need to fulfil the following spiritual and bodily conditions:

WSPIRTUAL CONDITIONS FOR ACCEPTABLE PRAYERS:

1- Faith :



We should pray with strong faith and confidence that God is the Almighty who listens to our prayers and is capable of granting us what we ask for, according to His will.

God will answer our prayer with one of the following three responses:

- 1- **Yes** if it is the proper time to fulfil our pleadings and if it is for our benefit.
- 2- **No** if it is not for our good.
- 3- **WAIT** if it is not the appropriate time.

Based upon our limited view of matters we may get disappointed if we receive one of the last two responses to our prayers. But, be sure that the bitterness chosen by God is much better than the sweetness we choose for our lives according to our limited judgement because He is our creator and He knows what will most benefit us.

The Lord Jesus Christ says:

"You should have faith in God" (Mark 11:12)

And the apostle teaches us saying:

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. " (Heb 11:6)



If we trust in Christ we will find Him very faithful. Beware of being doubtful in the faithful and true promise of God because God is not a human being who lies or regrets.

" God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will he not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? " (Num 23:19)

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need". (Heb4:16)

2- To be forgiving and tolerant :

We should forgive and mistakes or sins committed against us remembering the Lord's word:

" and whenever you stand praying if you have anything against anyone forgive him that your father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses". (Mark 11:25).

Christ His love for us forgives a;; our transgressions once we confess them and repent. The apostle advises us saying:

"Bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another even as christ forgave you so you also must do" (Col 3:13).



Therefore, when we pray with pure hearts without anger or disputes our prayers will be acceptable.

3- To follow the Lord's commandments and do what pleases Him :

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do these things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

The Psalmist says:

" For I have lepta the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from God. For all His Judgements were before me and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless before Him and I kept myself from my iniquity. "
(Ps 18:21-23)

"Let the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer. "
(Ps 19:14)

Therefore the priest prays in the Midnight Absolution:

"Help us O Lord to please you help us to keep your commandments"

The lord also advised His disciples:

"Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you and so I am with you always, even to the end of the age".
(Matt 28:20)



If we keep all His commandments He'll be with us all the days of our lives, and if we disobey them He will not listen to our prayers.

4- To Offer our prayers in the Name of Christ :

All our prayers and adoration should be offered in the name of Christ so that He might accept them as He said:

" I am the way, The truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me". (John 14:6).

Also *"I am the Door, if anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture". (John 10:9).*

St Paul teaches us how our prayers can be accepted when offered in the name of Christ:

" Therefore, By Him, let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name". (Heb 13:15).

"Therefore, brethren having boldness to enter the Holiest by the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ ". (Heb 7:25).

As for ourselves, we have no favour when praying. We ask God through the intercession of Our Lord Jesus Christ:

" That at that time you were without Christ being aliens from the common wealth of Israel and strangers from the covenats of promise, having no hope and without god in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ ". (Eph 2:12-13).

Every prayer or litany must contain the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ so that it might be an acceptable prayer. The Lord advises us saying:



"And whatever you ask in My Name that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the son". (John 14:13).

" If you ask anything in my name I will do it ". (John 14:14)

" Most assuredly I say to you whatever you ask the Father in My Name He will give you ". (John 16:12).

5- In Love :

Love for God and people:

" You shall love the lord your god with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind you shall love your neighbour a your self " (Matt22:37-39)

The Apostle says:

" Through I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love I have become sounding brass or a clinging cymbal ". (1Cor13:1).

6- Merey :

The wiseman says:

"Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard ". (Prov 21:13).

Mercy boasts over judgement as there is no mercy on the judgment day to those who were not merciful.

" They cried out, but there was none to save; Even to the Lord, But He did not answer them. " (Ps 188:41).

But the merciful who help and care for the needy and those in hardships: *"Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry, and He will say; here I am". (Isa 58:9).*

7- Fasting :



If we conceptualise prayer as an eagle, then its two wings would be fasting and mercy, without which it cannot fly. The psalmist said connecting fasting with prayers:

"Blessed is h who considers the poor; The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, And he will be blessed on the earth; you will not deliver him to the will of his enemies". (Ps 41:1-2).

The Lord also said:

"However, This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting". (Matt 17:21).

Fasting controls the desires of the body and the murmuring of the tongue, it prepares ourselves for spiritual prayers so that the spirit is released from the slavery of the body and its senses allowing us to meditate in eternity and the life after death.

8- Pray According to God's Will :

"Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will hw hears us". (1John5:14).

But if we pray ask against God's will our prayers shall be rejected:

" You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasure". (James 4:3).



These desires can be bodily (eg. food, drink, clothes, work, service, talents or gifts), or selfpraising.

We should always remember and praise the glory of God chanting with David:

" not unto us O Lord not unto us, but to your name give glory". (Ps 115:1).

If our prayer is for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, then it shall be accepted.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the Firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge ". (Ps19:1,2).

We can discover more about the will of God through reading and meditating on the Holy Bible which is the word of God, and not the message of our salvation. That is why St Paul says:

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ ". (Phil1:27).

9- Being firm in Christ :

The Lord gave us a divine promise:

"If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you ". (John 15:7)



WE should be firm in Him and His love and commandments that we may find favour, and receive the answer to our prayers from His glorious richness.

10- Bearing For The sake of Christ :

We cannot really pray in the Name of Christ unless we declare His name before everyone. The Lord said about St Paul the Apostle:

"He is a chosen vessel of mine to bear My name before Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel ". (Acts 9:15).

We should not deny Christ in our personal life through our evil deeds and sins.

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My father who is in the heaven. But whoever denies Me before men him I will also deny before My father who is in heaven ". (Matt 10:32).

11- The life of piety and fear of god :

God will never accept the prayers of someone who is careless about his own salvation.

" He does not delight in the strenght of the horse; He take no pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasue in those who fear Him, In those who hope in his mercy ". (Ps 147:10,11).



St Paul explain to us clearly that the Father accepted the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane because of his piety saying:

"When He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of his godly fear". (Heb5:7)

So, how much more do we sinners need to be pious lest our prayers be hindered from reaching God. David the psalmist asked for [piety saying:

" My flesh trembles for fear of you". (Ps119:120).

Also: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all those who do his commandments. His praise endures forever ". (Psalm 111:10).*

And St Paul advises:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". (Phil 2:12).

12- persistence In Prayer :

Persistence is an important factor in our prayer because prayer is struggling with God. He might not answer us from the first time we ask Him till he examines our honesty, love and persistence in prayers.



The Lord gave us two examples of persistence in prayer: the widows and the unjust judge and the friend at midnight. About the second example the Lord comments:

"I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs". (Luke 11:8).

The Lord asks us to follow the example of this friend in his persistence when we ask of the Lord:

"And I say to you as and it be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you". (Luke 11:9).

Here, we notice how we gradually increase our request. First we ask the Lord as sons then if it is not granted, we persist in love and faith without complaint.

If he does not answer we keep knocking hard at the door of His mercy through our strong heartfelt prayer and continually seeking with great hope for the Lord faithfully promised saying:

"For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened ... How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:10,13).

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah. For twenty years, Isaac kept praying to God for children but God delayed his response to examine his honesty and faith, (Gen 25).



13- Honouring parents :

Whoever angers his parents receives their disapproval and God shall not listen to their prayers. But he who pleases them and receives their approval, the Lord shall accept their prayers. also if the Husband ridicules and troubles his wife, the family shall lose its beauty and joy and so their prayer shall lose its pleasure and spirituality.

ST Peter the apostle said:

"Likewise, you husband well with them with understanding giving honour to the wife as to weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered ". (1 Peter 3:7).

He also advises the wives to obey their husbands:

"As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror ". (1 Peter 3:6).

PREPARING THE PROPER ATMOSPHERE FOR PRAYER:

There are some condition that help in controlling our thoughts and concentration while praying to enable strong blessed and divine prayers.

Dedicating A Room For Prayer:

You should dedicate a special room for prayer.

Hang Up the icon of the crucifixion on the eastern wall.



Look at it every now and then to meditate on the nails, the blood, and the Lord's nakedness, which He endured in order to cover us with His Grace.

This rekindles the divine love in our hearts.

Hang up the icon of the Virgin St. Mary on the right of the crucifixion icon, so that you may look at it when addressing St. Mary while praying in the Agbeya (Hourly prayers) or when beseeching her intercessions and pleadiings to our Lord.

Preparing Yourself:

You always need time to prepare to enter the spiritual world, which is different to our material world. Even in the morning when the spirit is still drowsy or at the end of the day when you are exhausted and still busy with the concerns of the day, take the time to communicate with God through prayer.

Relax And Be Calm:

Before praying, relax and detach yourself from the cares of the world. Direct your emotions and feelings towards God. To help you to do this, read a chapter or even a few verses from the Holy Bible or sing a hymn especially those dealing with repentance. Meditate on God's love and His care, especially for you and for yours sins and how much you hurt and are still hurting God.



Remember that you are standing in the presence of God, He is listening to you and watching you. Father Nestorian said: *"Make sure that you stand in front of God every day without sin, pray to Him as if you see Him because He is truly present. "*

Prepare your Body:

Our bodies should be fully strong and alert, lest they fail us when we stand before the Lord. Stand attentively and uprightly as soldiers in front of the commander. (St John Of The Steps), Yohanna El Daragi says about one of the fathers who used to recollect this thoughts at the beginning of prayer saying, **"Come on, let's cross over, let's bow before Christ our God"**.

In the same manner in our morning prayer we say **" O come let us worship, O come let us ask Christ our King.."** to collect our thoughts and senses and awaken them. Do not lean on the wall behind or beside you, because when the body relaxes, the mind wanders away from the meaning of our prayers.

Raise up your arms as much your arms as much as you can while praying especially at the verses where you mention raising up your jhands or eyes eg.

"Thus I will bless you while I live, I will lift up my hands in your Name ". (Ps63:4).

"Let my prayer be set before be set before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice ". (Ps140:2).



*"Lift up your hand in the sancturay and bless the Lord ".
(Ps 134:2).*

*"My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments which
I love, and I will meditate on your statutes". (Ps 119:48).*

Moses the prophet when he was praying on the mountain
liftes up both hands:

*"So that it was when Moses held up his hands that Israel
prevailed and when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed.
But Moses' hands became heavy so they took a stone became
heavy so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on
it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, One on one side,
and one on the other side; and his hands were steady until the
going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his
people with the edge of the sword ". (Exo 17:11-13).*

Hold the Crucifix:

It is preferable to hold a cross in your right hand, which
you can kiss when thanking God for his good gifts as is
mentioned in the psalms. Thus you can concentrate while
praying.

Beat Your Chest:

Beat your chest remembering your sins, repenting and
asking for mercy up me O God. I have sinned' or 'have
mercy upon me or my sins are in front of my eyes at all
times' ... ect

Savour the Prayers



Repeat the psalms or the verses, which comfort you and are relevant to you, life. By repeating them and interacting with them, you lift up your mind and regenerate warmth in your heart.

Repeat the Name Of Jesus:

Always utter the sweet Name of Our lord Jesus Christ during the Psalms so whenever you find the word ' O Lord or " The Lord' say after it: "**Our Lord Jesus Christ**". By thus lifting up your heart to Him you will control your thoughts during prayers.

Prostration (Metanyas):

Bowing down and standing up during prayers also controls your thoughts. Therefore when the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ or glorification to Him is mentioned it is good to make the sign of the ground, or at least bow your head down.

Kneel when tired:

If you get tired of standing up you can kneel down but don't lean you head or hand on a wall or chair as our body relaxes and your thoughts are distracted.

But Don't Dose Off:

Don't dose off into sleep after bowing down. Stand up quickly, remembering that you are bowing down for worship and not for rest.

Meditate on the Words You Pray:



Ready some commentaries on the Psalms and Gospels that you pray with, so that you may understand the hidden or mysterious verses and the circumstance in which they were said. You may also write your own comments and meditations on your Agbeya.

Avoid Mechanical Recitation:

Don't read the Psalm quickly because this makes you confuse the words and your prayers lose their spirituality and sweetness.

Balance Your Time:

Don't pray for a long time. The fathers advise us to increase the number of times we pray and decrease the length of time rather than the opposite, so that we may not exhaust our mind and body, consequently get distracted and absent-minded.

The 41 Keryeleysons (Lord Have Mercy)

When you pray Keryelison (Lord have mercy) "41 times", always remember:

- The 39 times the Lord was whipped for the sake of your salvation
- The crown of thorns on His head and the sword that pierced His Holy side.

As you repeat Keryelison 41 times, remember your sins which always hurt Our Lord Jesus Christ and tell Him; " O you Who were whipped for my sake, have mercy upon me', or "O you whose Holy head was crowned with thorns



for my sake have mercy upon me", or "You who was pierced for me have mercy upon me".

So through your repentance and persistence on having mercy, you may lessen the terrible pains which Our Lord Jesus Christ is bearing for the sake of your sin.

Pray Thoughtfully:

Always remember that strong, prsistent, thoughtful prayers will obtain the sympathy of heaven, and acceptance from God.

When you pray likewise you will obtain strength and divine support which help you in your struggle.

When Daniel was praying from his heart God sent to him Archangle Michael to help him against the deil who was fighting him and to inform him that God accepted his request was granted. When the lord Jesus Christ was praying on the mountain and His sweat was dropping like blood, the father listened to His prayers and sent an angel to strengthen Him, (Luke 22:43-44)

Have Your Own Prayers after Reading the Psalms

Don't forget your own prayer at thee end of the psalms.

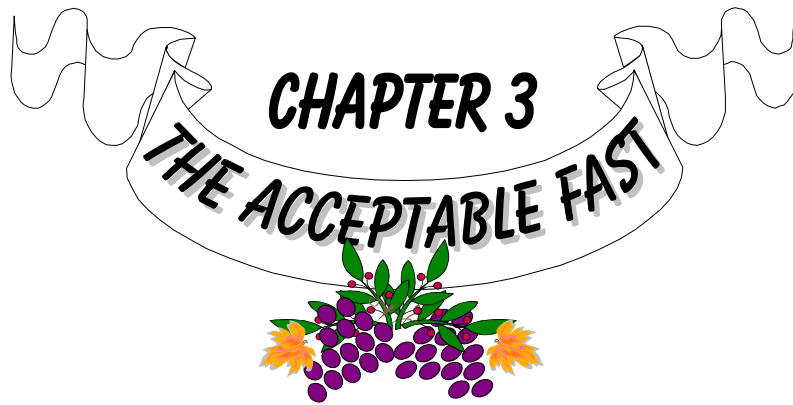
In this portion of the prayer thank the LORD and praise Him, telling Him your heavenly desires and asking His help in your troubles and temptations.

The Quite Time:



If you have enough time, sit silently for a while after finishing your prayer so that you may have a rest from your efforts in prayers and so that you may be saturated with the spirit of prayer. This creates a new level of peacefulness and spirituality although we may not be conscious of it.





CHAPTER 3

THE ACCEPTABLE FAST

Fasting is the third important pillar in the accepted Christian worship.

THE MEANING O FASTING:

Fasting has two meanings, devotional and spiritual.

Devoutness

Fasting is the abstinence from food for a certain period of the day, then you may eat vegetarian food.

You can fix this period of abstinence with your father the confessional priest because it differs from one person to another according to each persons ability.

Spirituality:

The periods of fasting are the best times for a person to refresh their soul and overcome the body's bondage.

The fasting person becomes united with God because God is a spirit and can only be approached through the spiritual way.



If we represent the spiritual relationship between God and man as telephone lines, then fasting purges these lines enabling them to become good conductors of sound.

CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE FASTING:

Should Be Coupled With Prayer

Fasting should be accompanied with prayers because it will then reach prayers because it will then reach the throne of Grace and shall be accepted. It also conquers the devils because the Lord Jesus said:

"This kind does not come out except through fasting and prayer".(Matt 17:21).

Fasting and prayer can solve the most difficult of problems because God - Glory be to Him never ignores sincere prayers with supplication and submission, accompanied by fasting The prophet advised saying:

"Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the lord your god and cry out to the Lord" (Joel :14)

Also:

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly ... let the priests who minister to the Lord weep between the porch and the altar let them say spare your people, O Lord and do not give your heritage to reproach"(Joel2:15).

Should Be Coupled With Charity:

Fasting should be accompanied by charity, remembering the Lord Jesus' words:



"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

St. Paul advised:

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7)

Your prayer shall be weak if it loses any of the other two factors; fasting and charity.

The wise Man says:

"Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard" (Prov 21:13).

The Lord also taught through Isaiah the Prphet about the acceptable fast accompanied by charity, (Isaiah 58).

Coupled with Love:

Fasting should be accompanied by love. One of the conditions of the acceptable fast is love, the Apostle says:

"And though I give to be burnt, but have not love, it profits me nothing" (1Cor 13:2).

It is not reasonable to abstain from eating cooked meat, and then devour your brother's own flesh.

The Apostle warns us saying:

"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consume by one another! " (Gal5:15).

Should Be Coupled With Humility :

Fasting should be accompanied by humility. Fasting is not just the felling of hunger, but we should also humble



our souls in front of the Lord so that He may have mercy upon us our sins as in the case of the people of nineveh. David practiced fasting with humility saying:

"I humbled myself with fasting" (Ps 35:13).

Also;

"When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting that became my reproach" (Ps 69:10)

When God threatened Ahab the King, he cried to the Lord and fasted and humbled himself so the Lord said to Elijah the prophet :

"I shall not bring the calamity in his days" (Kings 21:27-29)

Should Be In Secret :

Fasting should be in secret.

If you are proud of your fasting, and your fasting is intended as a means to show off it in front of others, so that they may praise you, then you will have no reward from God. Your reward has become the praise of people and what a minserable reward that is. The Lord Jesus Christ warns us against this dangerous illness saying:

"Moreover when you fast do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. assuredly I say to you they have their reward " (Matt 6:16).

Then He advises us in great fatherly love saying:

"But you when you fast anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to men to be fasting but to your



Father who is in the secret place.... will reward you openly ".
(Matt 6:7-18).

The meaning of this advice is to act so that we do not lose our reward for fasting through showing off, to act normally while fasting lest we should lose our great heavenly reward.

There is another greater and deeper spiritual meaning for this advice.

Washing the face means cleaning it from dirt and dust. Since most of the senses are related to the face. So we should cleanse our senses from every evil so that our fasting may be perfect and acceptable before God.

The Hearing:

The sense of hearing is in the ears so we should keep it fasting from listening to gossip, slanderous talk, lies encouraging deeds, songs that affect our desires and so on. Just use this sense for its original function of listening to the words of God and enjoying spiritual hymns and relating to people in our lives.

The Smell:

There is a sense of smell in the face, we should keep it fasting from smelling the perfumes which affect the sexual desires.

The Vision:

The sense of sight is in the face through the eyes, therefore, we should keep our eyes fasting from any evil or



Iustful looks so that we may have pure hearts, clean bodies and holy thoughts.

Tate and Speech:

The senses of taste and speech are in the mouth and tongue. We should keep our mouths fasting from eating food which is forbidden during fasting and most importantly our tongue from insulting others, murmuring, using the name of God in vain, lying, condemning others, idle talk.... etc.

Let's use our tongues in praising God, praying truthfully and respectfully with others, knowing that we have to give an account for every idle word we utter (Matt 12:36).

Touching & The Hands:

When washing our faces we first wash our hands and the hands is the sense of touch, which we should keep pure from touching others. Impure desires is committing adultery by thought which can lead to physical adultery.

We should also keep away from stealing, physical violence, killing or sharing any illegal works.

Thus we can keep our senses fasting in purity so that our fasting may be accepted. As for the Lord's words "anoint your head", it means cleaning our minds and thoughts as in our minds are the inner senses which should fast and be purified these are :

The Thoughts:

We should keep our thoughts away from every deceit and from hurting others. We should only think of the



mercies of God, the glory in heaven and eternal life. also, we should consider ways of correcting our actions and deeds, and the essentials imposed upon us.

The Memory:

We should be elevated above this sense by not remembering people's faults and sins so that we don't hate or desire revenge.

We should remember our own sins and repent from them so that the lord may forgive us.

Fasting is the best period to remember our sins and offer real repentance to gain forgiveness.

Discretion:

You should use this sense to discern between what is useful and the harmful, truth and falsehood, good and evil, purity and impurity when making decisions.

The fathers say that the sense of discretion is the best virtue which is the sight and lantern of our souls.

Imagination:

We should not give our imagination the chance to think the way it likes, or wander in any direction, imagining things that may excite our sexual desires, emotions of anger and other selfish desires. But rather, we should use this sense in imagining the joy and happiness in Paradise, the beauty of heavenly Jerusalem where we will live with God and the Angels, and thus yearn to live with them.

Also imagine Hell and the worms that never die, the crying and horrible weeping of those without hope for



salvation, then ask the Lord save us and help us reject the works of satan.

Illusions:

We should not imagine that there is on God, resembling the ignorant:

"The foll has in his heart there is no God " (Ps 14:1).

Or imagine that there is no judgment or punishment although they are very clear in the Holy Bible, because this makes us careless and would lead oto our eternal condemnation.

My dear brethren :

Please don't just think that fasting is giving up meat and other kinds of food. But understand its spiritual meaning and condition. Follow them as closely as smell in the sweet sacrifice of your fasting, the aroma of satisfaction and joy.

Glory be to God forever, Amen.

