

JESUS PRAYER

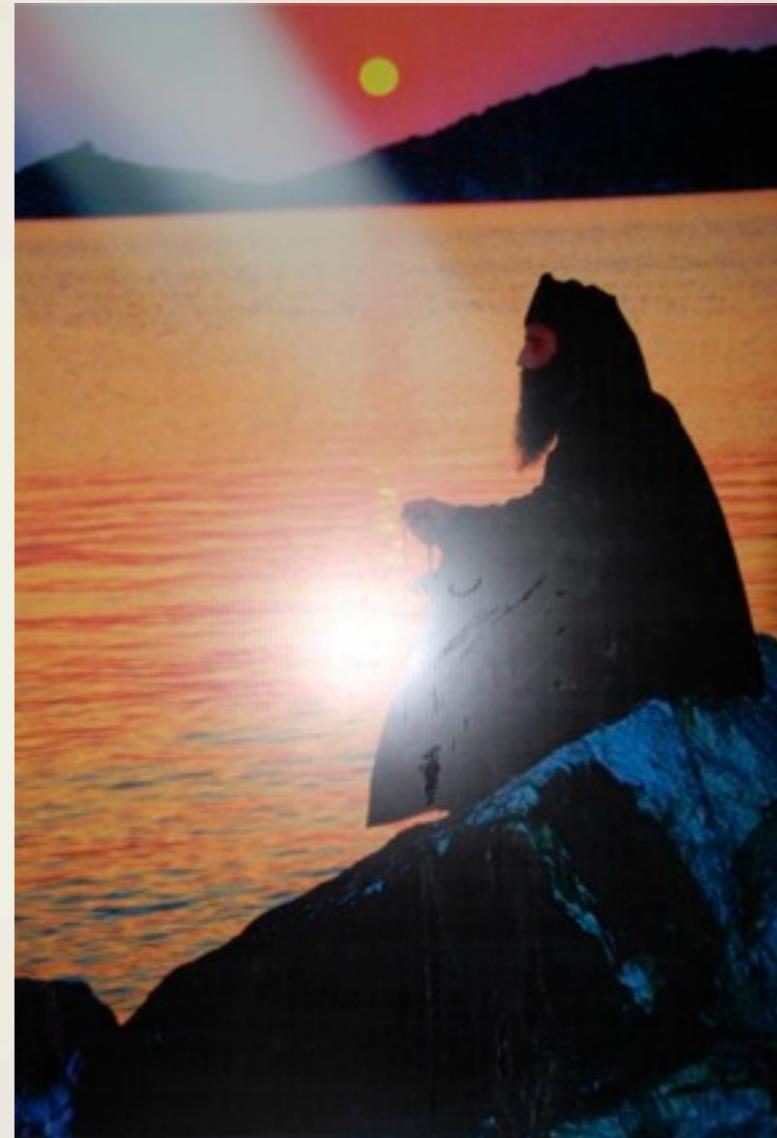
“Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, Have Mercy on Me a Sinner”

“Just as it is impossible to fight battles without weapons, or to swim a great sea with clothes on, or to live without breathing, so without humility and the constant prayer to Christ it is impossible to master the art of inward spiritual warfare or to set about it and pursue it skillfully.”

Saint Hesychios

Jesus Prayer

- * Incredibly Simple
- * Incredibly Difficult
- * Incredibly Powerful



Jesus Prayer

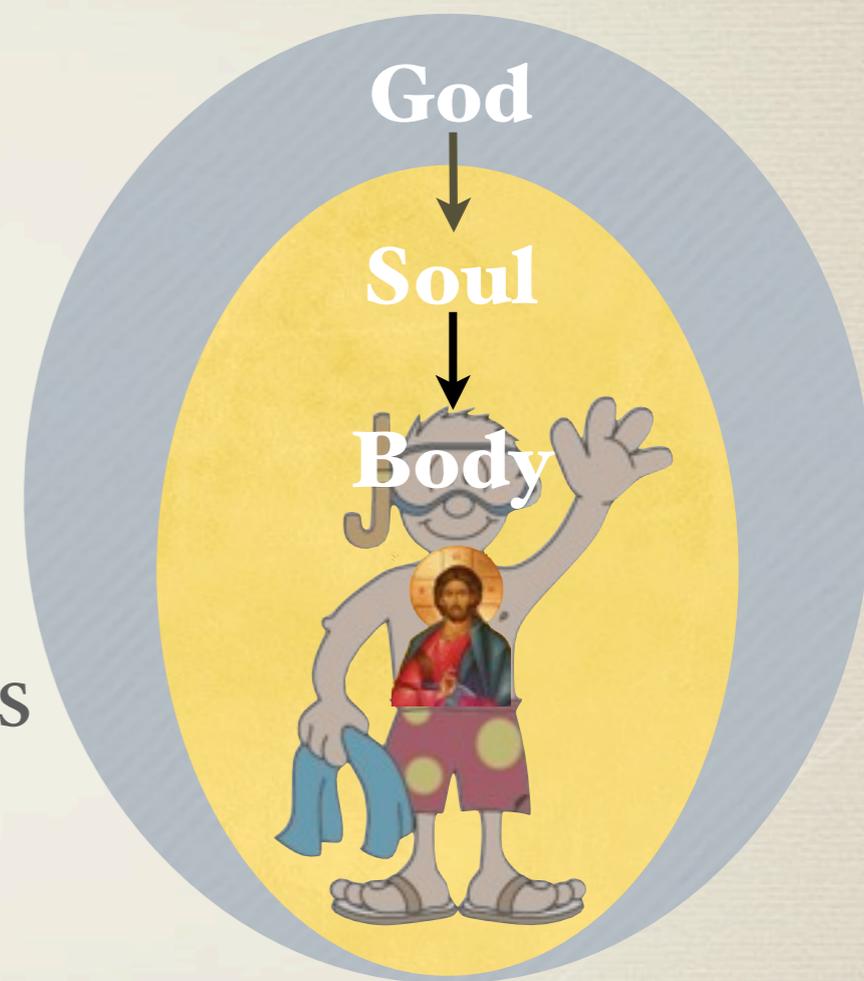
* *More than any other prayer, the Jesus Prayer aims at bringing us to stand in God's presence with no other thought but the miracle of our standing there and God with us, because in the use of the Jesus Prayer there is nothing and no one except God and us."* From "The Jesus Prayer" by Metropolitan

Anthony Bloom



Purpose

- * Bring **concentration to the mind** and detach it from domination by objects of the physical world gained through the senses.
- * **Liberate the soul** from the passions of the body.
- * Bring us back to a **unity with God.**



Our Natural
Condition

Difficult in Practice

- * We learn to continually recite it so that it permeates our hearts and focuses our mind...
Why?
- * Predisposes us to follow God's will instead of our own ego directed will.

Power in the Name

Lord, Jesus Christ



- * *There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Saint Peter - Acts 4:12



- * *Only with the help of this prayer can the necessary order of the soul be firmly maintained...* St. Theophan AP 92

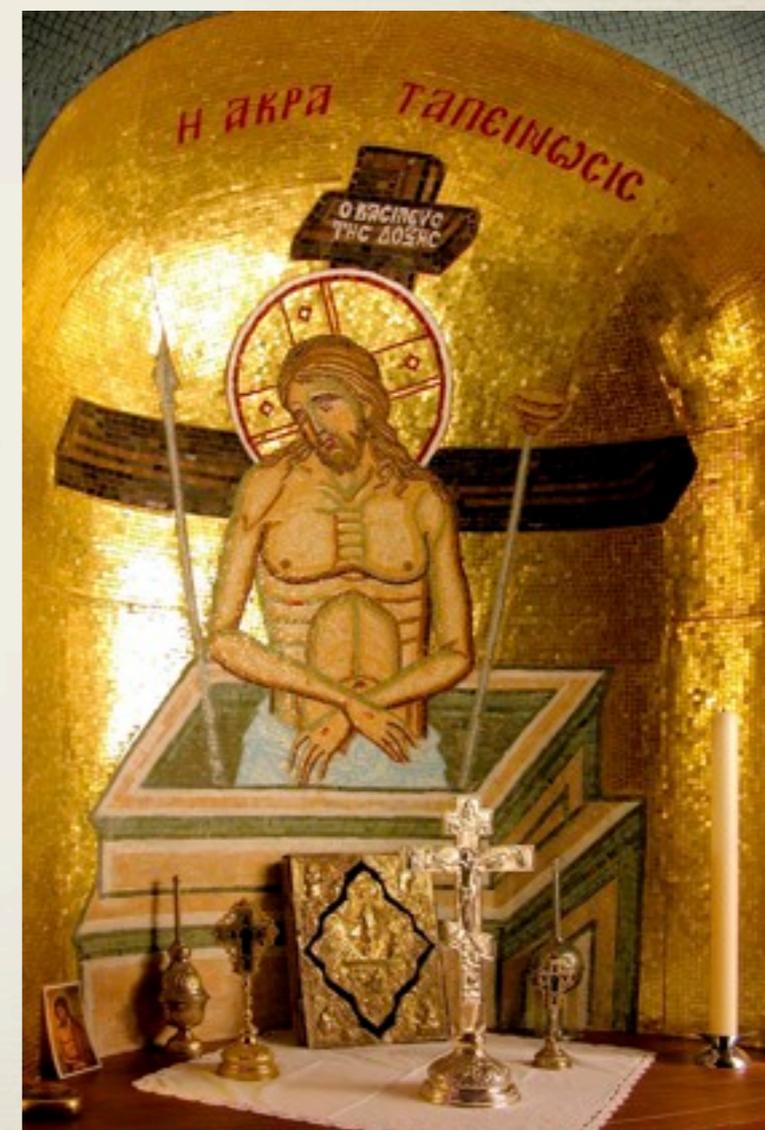


- * *By the power of the name of Jesus the mind is freed from doubt, indecision and hesitation, the will is strengthened and correctness is given to zeal and other properties of the soul.* Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov PJ 25

Attitude of Repentance

Have Mercy on Me a Sinner

- * As we complete this prayer we cry out for God to “*Have mercy on us.*” Why?
- * We are all sinners
- * Humility a prerequisite
- * Our salvation requires:
faith in Christ **and** awareness of our sinfulness - humility.



Pride - Two Ignorances

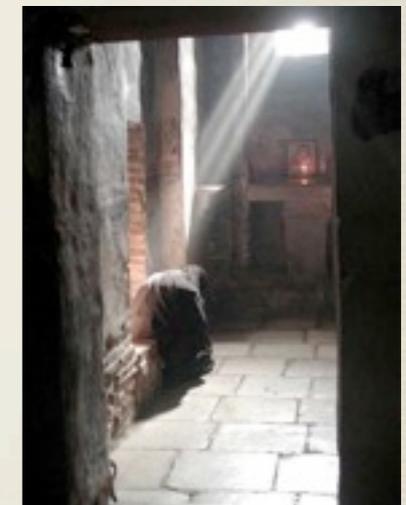
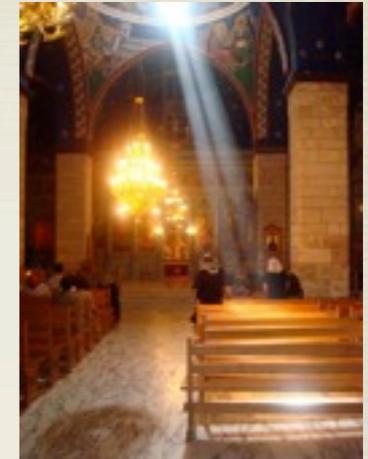
- * Pride- opposite of Humility - two ignorances
 - * Ignorance of the divine power
 - * Ignorance of human weakness
- * In the Jesus Prayer we confess the power of Christ as our Lord and God along with our weaknesses seeking His mercy for our sinfulness.



Saint Maximos the Confessor

Two Functions

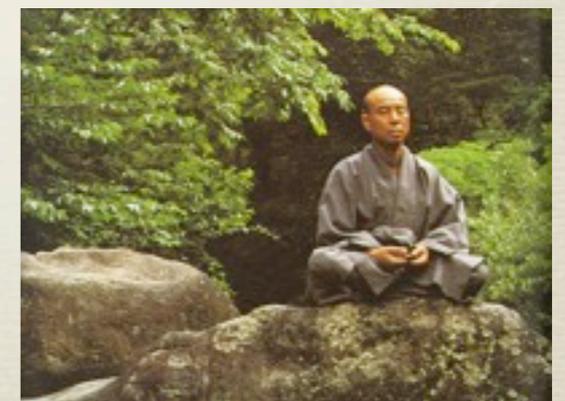
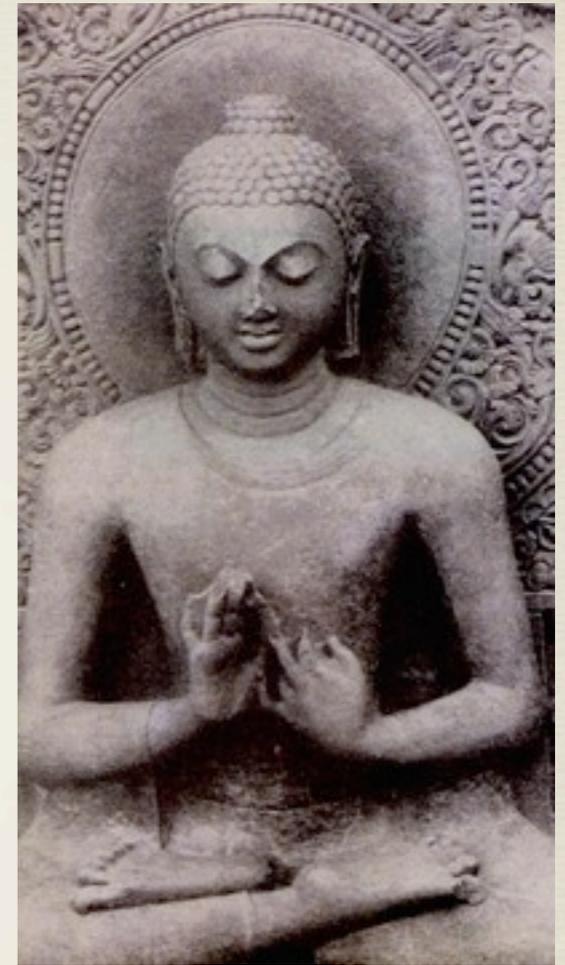
- * Jesus prayer has two functions
 - a. **Worship** with repentance like all prayer. Must be sincere with awe of God and repentant with contrite heart aware of our limitations.
 - b. **Means of concentration** for our inner life to still and focus our attention on God. Counteract over active brain and its programming.
An ascetic discipline.



*Lord Jesus Christ Son of God,
Have Mercy on Me a Sinner*

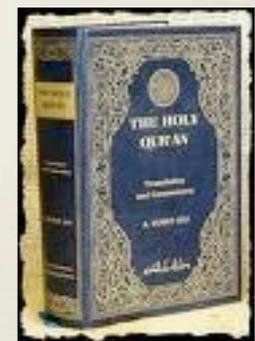
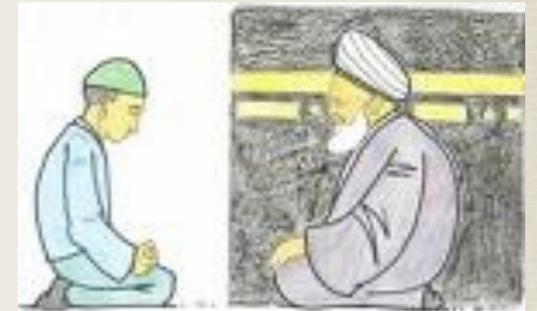
Not Form of Eastern Meditation

- * Buddhism teaches use of a mantra -
“Om mani padme hum.”
- * Aim of Buddhism is to free oneself from all suffering and attain what the Buddha called Nirvana or the perfect peace of mind.
- * The Buddha never taught about any form of God.
- * Practice this form of meditation to gain calmness in their lives — self-centered



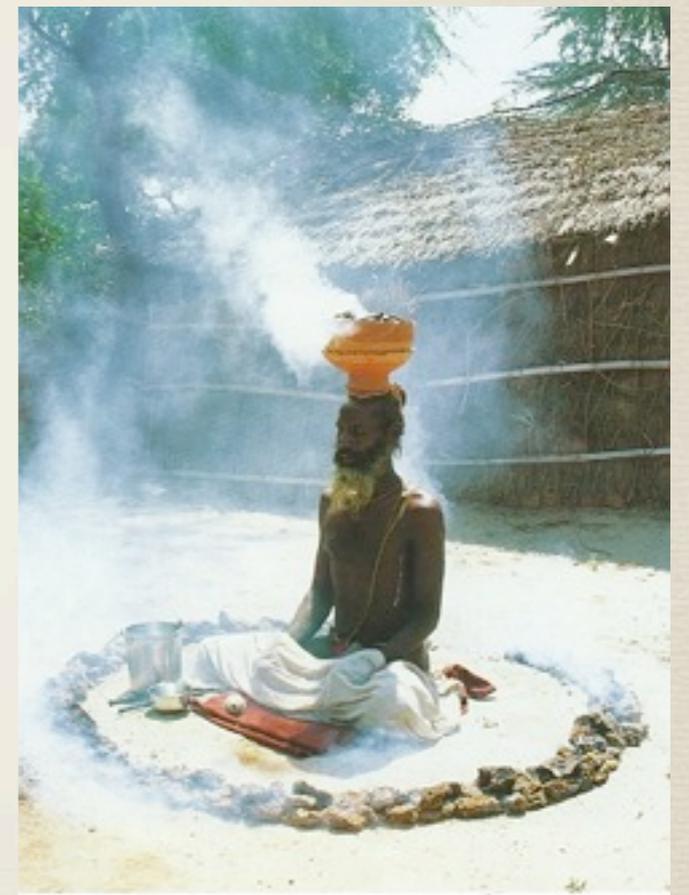
Not Form of Eastern Meditation

- * Sufi meditation - aim to reach an awareness of oneness with the universe, believing that in doing so we can attain fundamental truths.
- * Do not believe that Jesus is God - Based on Islam



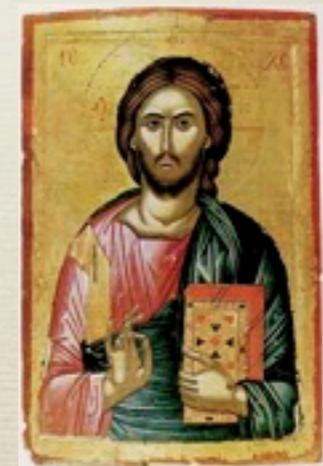
Not Form of Eastern Meditation

- * Hinduism the chief aim is to gain release from the cycle of reincarnation caused by karma - the consequences of past actions.
- * Release leads to some kind of absolute Truth.



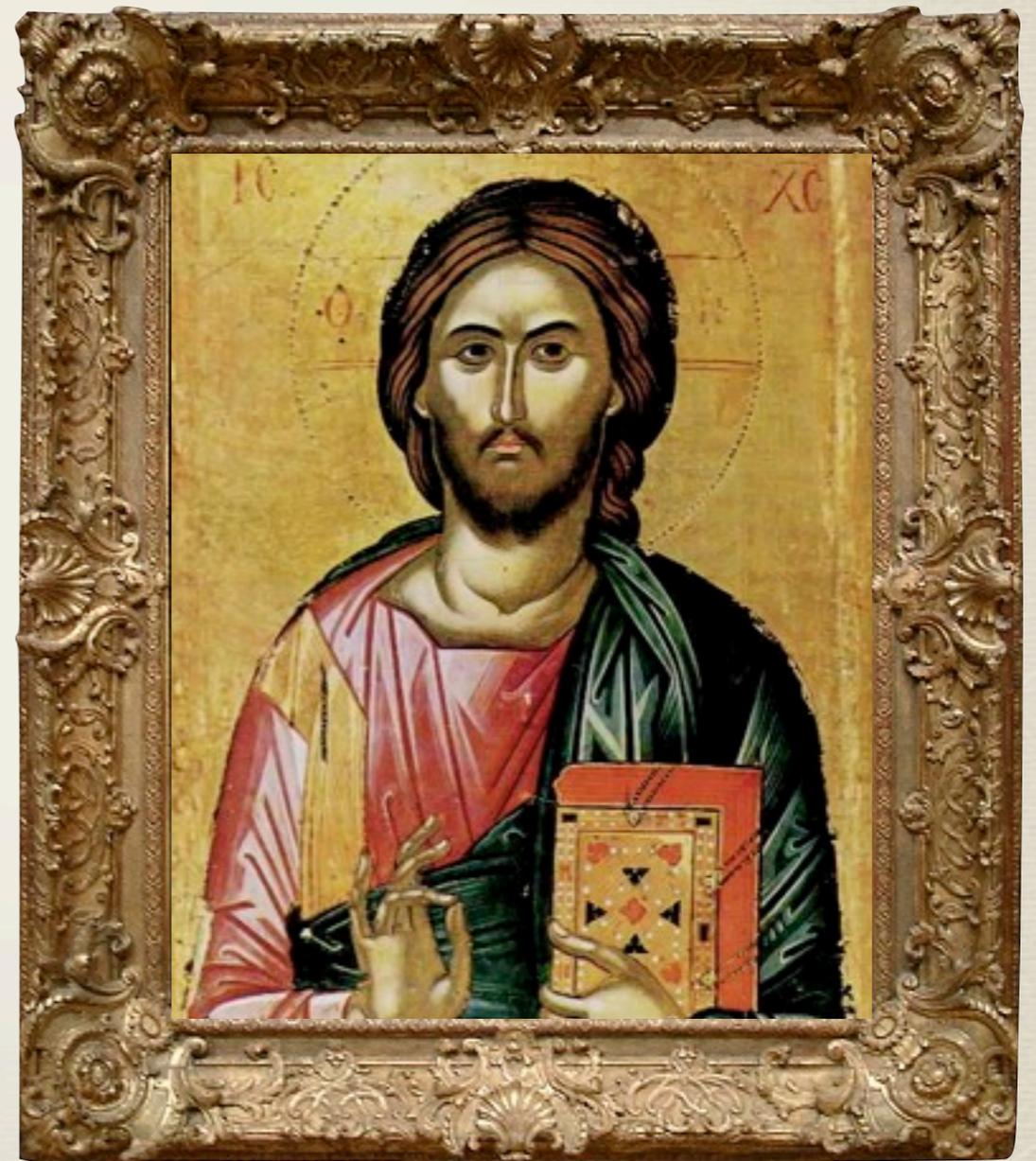
Not Form of Eastern Meditation

- * Many of these approaches have been adapted to serve as means of relaxation and lessen our stress of our over active lives.
- * They form the basis of the “New Age” spiritual movement.
- * Taught without any specific aim of repentance, nor to do the will of God, or to seek union with Christ.
- * In the practice of the Jesus Prayer *with an attitude of repentance* we seek an encounter with the living Christian God, Jesus.



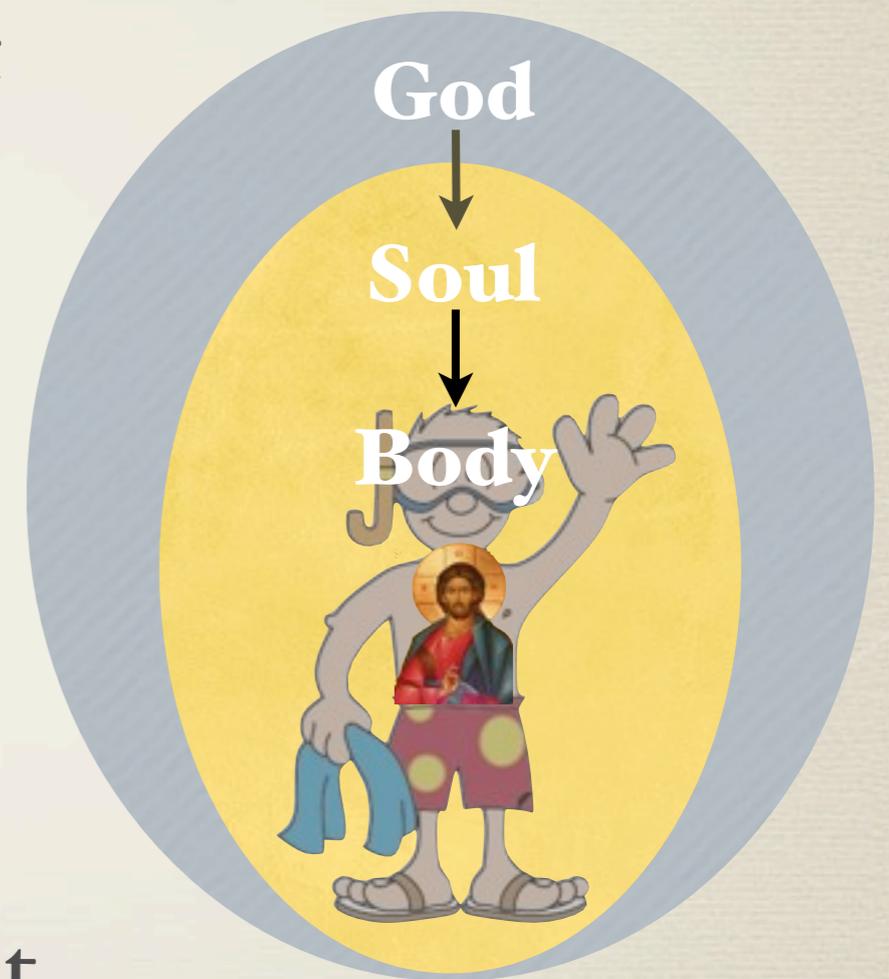
Not Form of Eastern Meditation

- * Like a beautifully framed Masterpiece
- * Similarities are like the frame. Christ is the masterpiece.
- * The postures, techniques and outer form may be similar, but the content is unique.



Aim Theosis

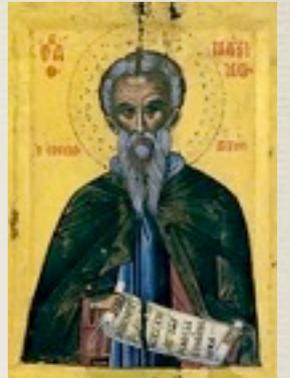
- * We don't say the Jesus Prayer, to get "some benefit."
to reduce our stress,
strengthen our immune system,
lose weight,
add years to our life.
- * Why do we do it?
- * We engage in prayer to follow Christ,
to become in union with Him.



Our Natural
Condition

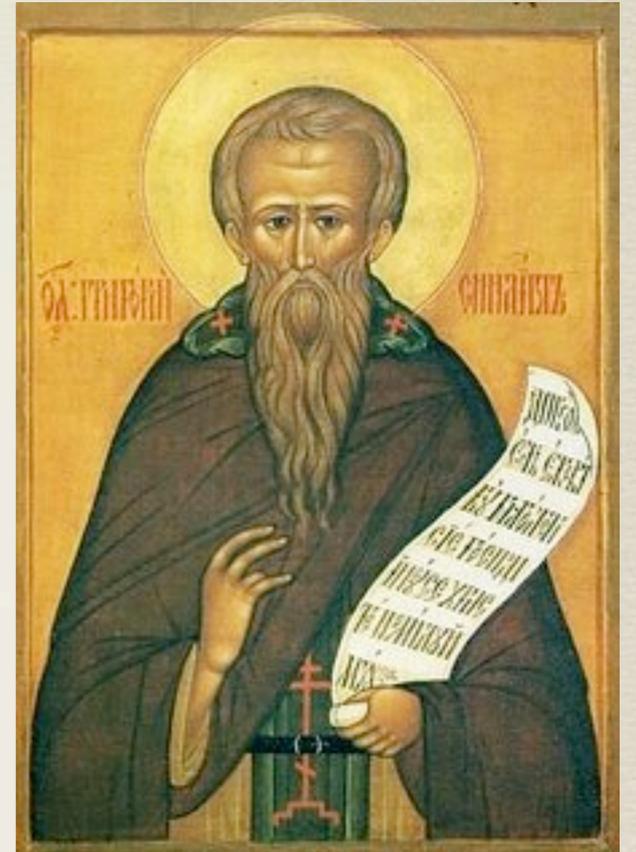
Long Difficult Path

- * Saint Maximos said, *“Spiritual knowledge without ascetic practices is the theology of the demons.”*
- * Doctrine of Synergia
- * Reflect on difficulty you encountered in developing other disciplines you have learned in your life.
- * Jesus Prayer requires a firm commitment, much effort and time.



Long Difficult Path

- * Don't be over zealous.
- * Begin with idea that this is a difficult task.
- * Prepare for long effort.
- * Remember the tortoise and the hare.
- * Seek God's help and have patience.
- * Fighting strong forces.
- * Gregory the Sinaite says, *"In the beginning there occurs unutterable contrition and unspeakable pain of the soul."*
- * Recognize the nature of our brain and how it is programmed.



Jesus Prayer



It leads the practicer from earth to heaven, and places him among the celestial inhabitants. Dwelling with the mind and the heart in heaven and in God -- that is the chief fruit, that is the end of prayer.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov PJ 35

Three Stages of Prayer

- * 1. **Oral prayer** or prayer of the lips.
Begin to observe the activity of your thoughts
Prayer still mainly external.
- * 2. **Mental prayer** - prayer said silently in the mind.
Comes naturally.
Theophan says, at this stage "*the mind is focused upon the words*" of the Prayer, "*speaking them as if they were our own.*"
Begin to see how we can intercede and counteract thoughts to appreciate the center that is our heart.
- * 3. **Prayer of the heart** - prayer is no longer something you do, but something you are.
You are noetically connected with the divine energies of our God, and know that He dwells in the depths of your heart.

Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * Where did Jesus go to pray?
- * He says, "*Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile*"; "*Study to be quiet*"; then pray in secret—alone and in silence.
 - Select a quiet place - protect your senses
 - Think about who you are about to address.
 - Make sign of cross and a few prostrations
 - Have feeling of humility and contrition
 - Select a comfortable position
 - Shut you eyes
 - Set aside all worldly cares
 - Relax



Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * Begin with Glory to you..., Our Heavenly King Comforter..., the Trisagion, 51st Psalm, and the Creed.
- * Say the Jesus Prayer loud enough so the ears can hear it, slowly and concentrating on the meaning of the words.

*Lord Jesus Christ Son of God
Have Mercy on Me a Sinner.*

- * Spacing of the words must fit your own make-up
- * When you reach the end of the prayer immediately begin to say it again.
- * Keep your mind from escaping from its concentration on the words.

Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * Avoid associations
- * Don't try to visualize the human person of Jesus or any other image.
- * Don't try and take a diversionary path by letting your mind go into the life of Jesus or any theological questions.
- * Don't reflect on your sinfulness or try to solve any of your problems.
- * Simply hold in your heart the awe of God and a feeling of contriteness.
- * Expect these distractions and more.



Practice of Jesus Prayer

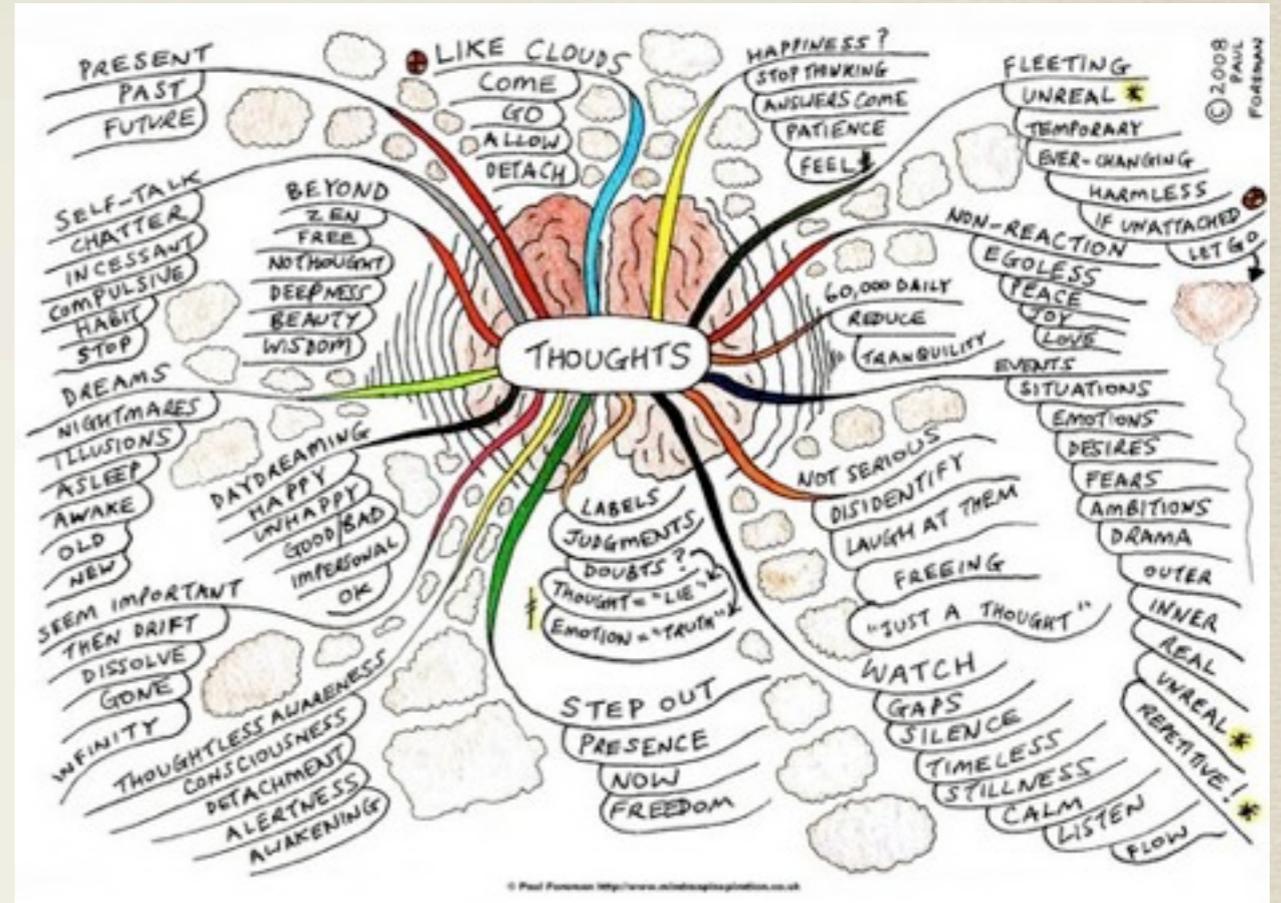


Saint Theophan says,

“The essential part is to dwell in God, and this walking before God means that you live with the conviction ever before your consciousness that God is in you, as He is in everything: you live in the firm assurance that He sees all that is within you, knowing you better than you know yourself. This awareness of the eye of God looking at your inner being must not be accompanied by any visual concept, but must be confined to a simple conviction or feeling”.

Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * Expect to be bombarded with thoughts like a swarm of gnats. What to do when distracted?
- * Be polite and gentle, Firmly nudge your mind back to the concentration on the words of the prayer and seeking God.
- * If you don't intercede to bring your attention back to your prayer exclusively, you will not progress in your aim to come closer to God.

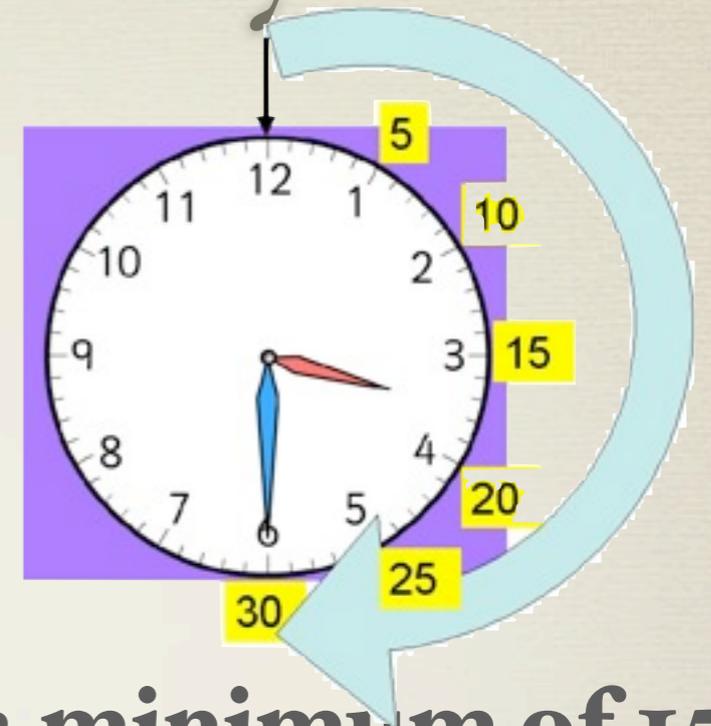


Let's Practice

*Lord,
Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy on Me,
a Sinner.*

Practice of Jesus Prayer

- * How long to pray?
- * Be sure to consult your spiritual Father
- * General rule you should repeat it for a **minimum of 15 minutes** at any one prayer session.
- * Quickly work up to a period of **thirty minutes**.
- * Best to start in the mornings.



Problems

* Sleep or Drowsiness

- Natural for body to relax when we enter into prayer.
- Change your position.
- Begin to say the prayer orally or louder.
- Make a few prostrations.
- You must fight drowsiness. Don't let it become a habit.



Problems



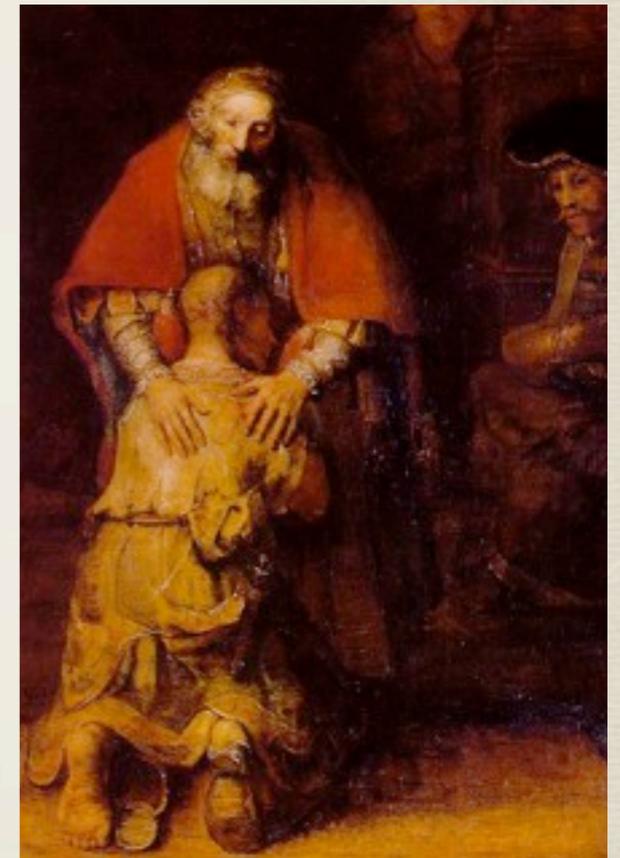
- * Images and lights or apparitions
- * Saint Nil Sorski tells us, *“Do not permit yourself any concepts, images, or visions. For vivid images darting to and fro, and flights of fancy do not cease even when the mind stands in the heart and recites prayer: no one is able to rule over them, except those who have attained perfection by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who have acquired stability of mind through Jesus Christ.”*

Cautions

- * 1. **Do not** practice this method of prayer unless you are regularly attending worship services, participating in the Sacraments of the Church, and reading the Scriptures.
- * 2. **Do not** force yourself into the discovery within yourself of the action of the prayer of the heart.
- * 3. **Do not** connect this practice with breathing exercises or other yoga techniques unless you are directed by your spiritual father.
- * 4. Remember, delusion is your enemy. *“An insignificant, unnoticed hope or trust in something outside God can stop the advance of progress... Faith in God is leader, guide, legs and wings.”*

Cautions

- * Pride through these efforts can stop you dead in your tracks.
- * Grace comes with humility.
- * As soon as you feel pride, recognize it and ask for forgiveness. If you don't, you will fail and prayer will become cold and dark.



Cautions

- * Regular practice is necessary
- * Every day
- * Don't let sickness or travel disrupt your efforts.



Brush, brush, brush your teeth.
At least two times a day.
Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, cleaning,
Fighting tooth decay.
Floss, floss, floss your teeth.
Every single day.
Gently, gently, gently, gently,
Whisking plaque away.
Rinse, rinse, rinse your teeth
Every single day.
Swishing, swishing, swishing, swishing,
Fighting tooth decay.

Other Uses

- * Take every opportunity you can to say the Jesus Prayer
- * When you are waiting in a checkout line in the store
- * When you are waiting for an appointment in the doctors office
- * When you face difficulty during the day or find yourself becoming angry
Take a prayer walk.
- * Before and after meals as your prayer
- * As you try and go to sleep
- * Recurring painful memories
- * Pain present or anticipated.
- * Every chance you get to say the prayer will help you keep your mind focused on God.

Orthodox Way of Life

- * **1. Worshiping and Participating in Sacraments**
Attend and participate in the Divine Liturgy receiving Holy Communion regularly as well as regular participation in Confession.
- * **2. Honoring the Liturgical Cycle of the Church**
Follow the seasons of the church and participate in the fasts and feasts of the Church.
- * **3. Slowing Down and Ordering Your Life**
Set priorities and reduce the stress and friction caused by a hurried life.
- * **4. Watchfulness**
Give one-pointed attention to what you are doing at the moment.
- * **5. Taming the Passions**
Overcome your habits, attachment to your likes and dislikes, and learn to practice the virtues.
- * **6. Putting Others First** - loving others.
Free yourself from your selfishness and find joy in helping others.
- * **7. Spiritual Companionship**
Spend time regularly with other Orthodox Christians for support and inspiration.
- * **8. Reading the Scriptures and Holy Fathers**
Be inspired by the lessons of the Holy Scriptures, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and the lives of the Saints of the Church.

Prayer Rope

(Comboschini)



Prayer positions



- * 1. Posture of Elisha the Prophet (1 Kings 18:42)
“bowing toward the earth, he placed his face between his knees.”
Saint Gergory Palamas recommends this way for beginners.
- * Sitting between the heels, we bend forward until the head touches the ground, the forehead presses against the knees, the arms resting on the ground on both sides of the legs, palms toward the sky.

Prayer positions



- * 2. Posture of **coiling up the body**: sitting on one's heels, on a little bench or on a chair, we incline the top of the body until the chin is placed against the chest. This gathers oneself internally but also sends toward the interior of the heart the power of the Spirit.



Prayer positions



- * 3. **Sitting on one's heels** or on a small bench on our knees on a blanket the tips of the feet lightly covering one another, we sit between the heels. The knees can be together or spread out. In the beginning a cushion or a blanket placed between the heels and the buttocks will make the sitting less painful or one can sit on a small bench that can be lowered until one can sit on one's heels. This is probably the most traditional and most agreeable for most people.
- * What is most important is sitting straight. Saint Theophan "*the body straight, the shoulders at ease.*"



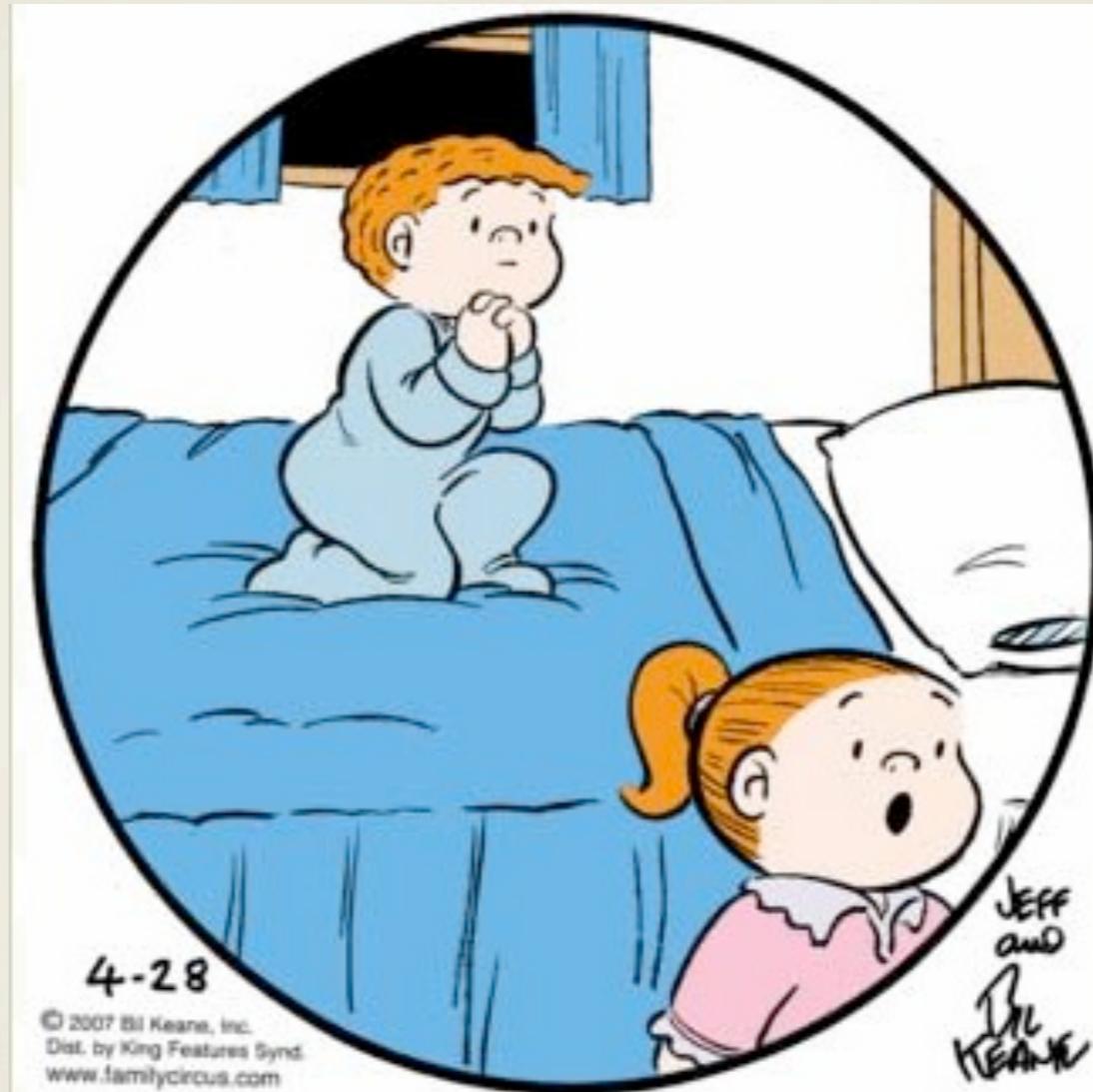
Prayer positions



4. Other postures:

- * a. **Sitting on a chair.** Sit on the forward edge, legs perpendicular to the ground, feet parallel, soles firmly planted on the ground. Hands can either be placed on the legs, palms toward the sky or falling freely between the legs.
- * b. **Standing up.** Arms loosely hang next to the body

Prayer positions



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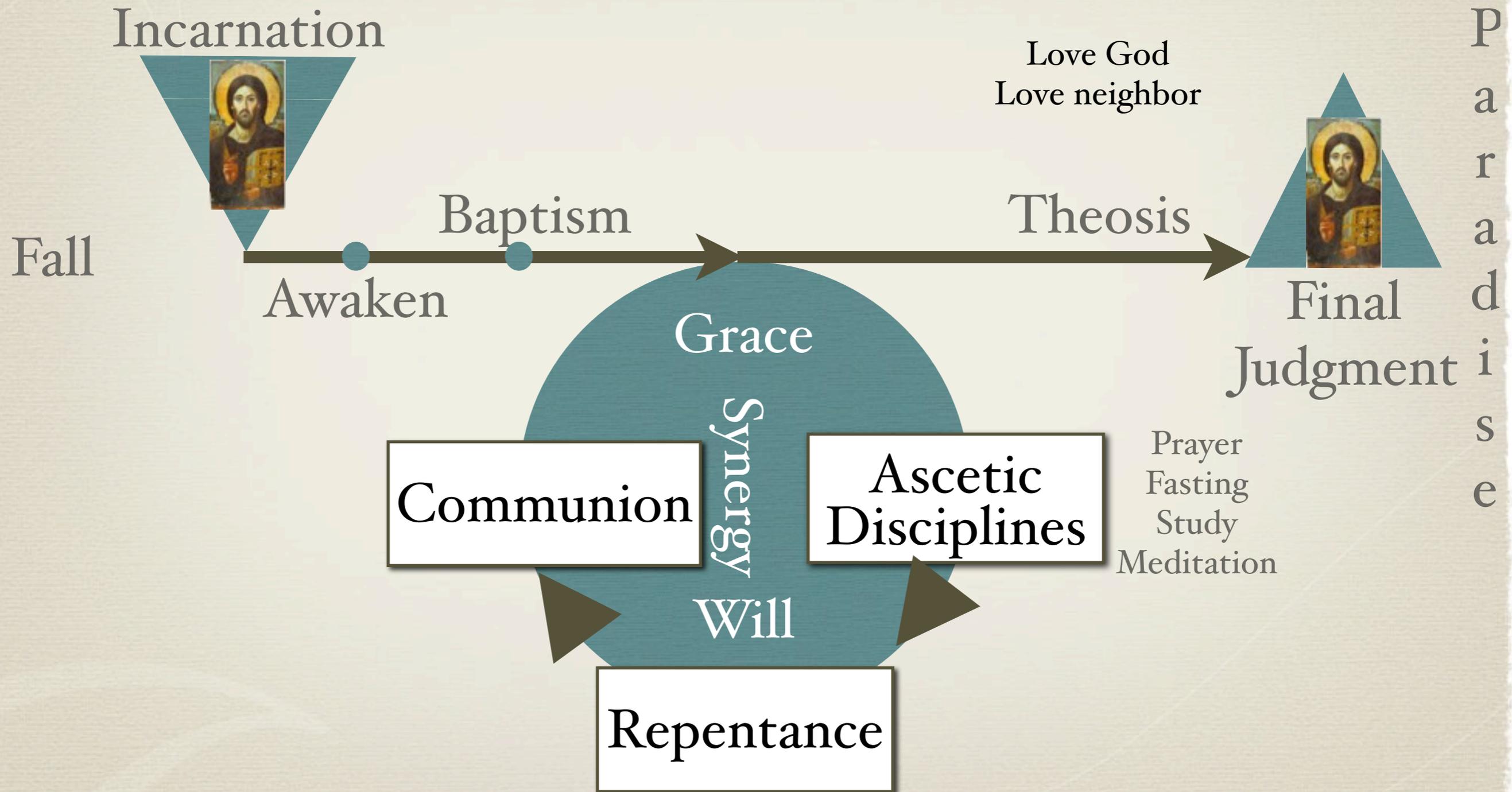
**“Jeffy’s only kneeling on one knee
again and saying half the
Hail Mary.”**

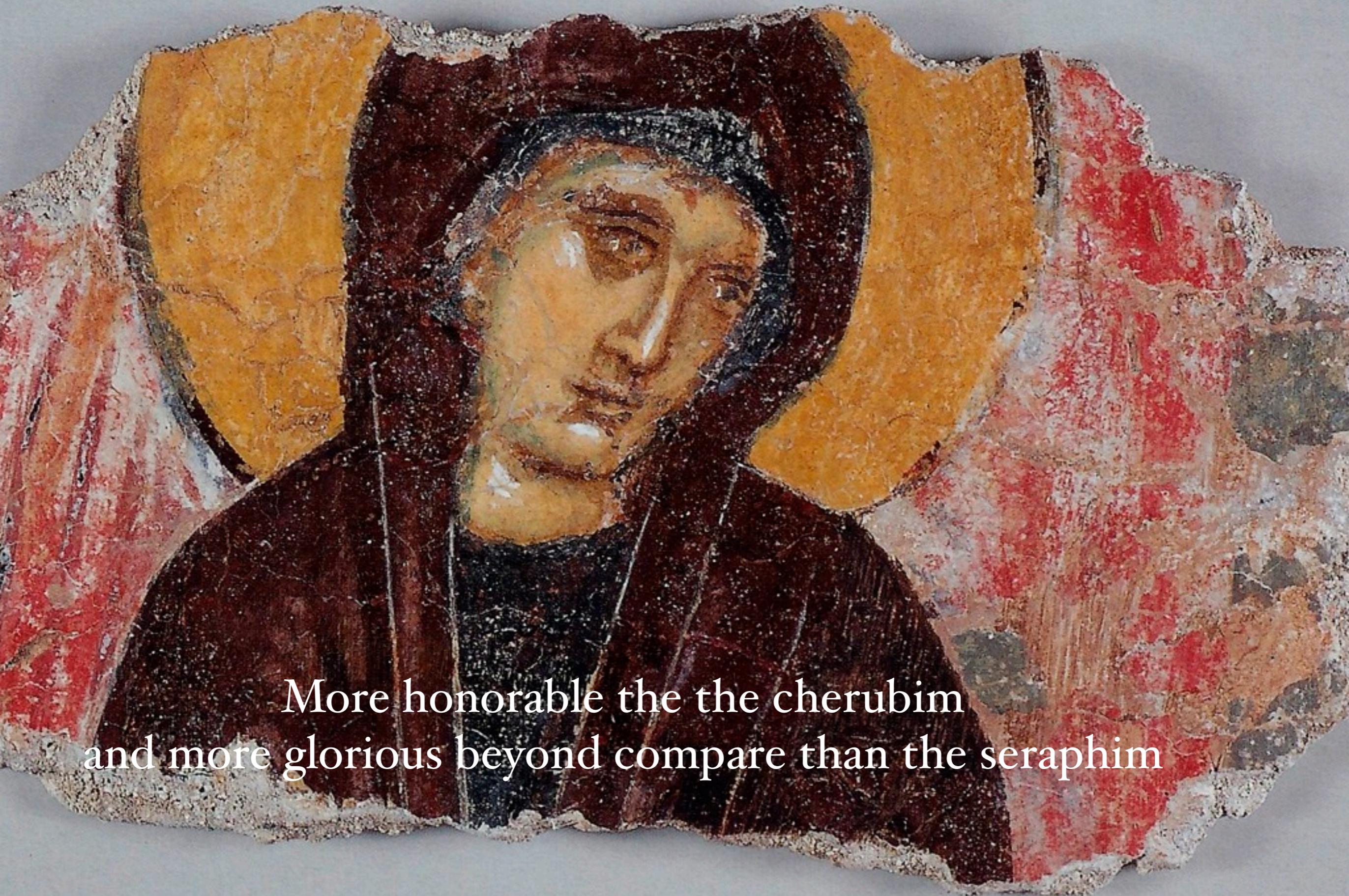
Eyes



- * Open or closed?
- * Eyes may remain partly open during the prayer - eyes half open, eyelids relaxed placing a neutral look on a point at a distance of a yard in front of us without seeing anything in particular.
- * Or you can close them.
If you close your eyes beware of false images.

Orthodox Life





More honorable than the cherubim
and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim