

The Bible, Prayer and Fasting

Supplementing the talk by Father Raphael Armour

‘And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.’

Luke 24:27



Mrs Margaret Carlyle
‘But would you tell them how?’

In addition to the Sacraments – we need to nourish our life in Christ:

- A By reading and studying the Bible
- B By communicating regularly with God in prayer
- C By denying self through fasting.

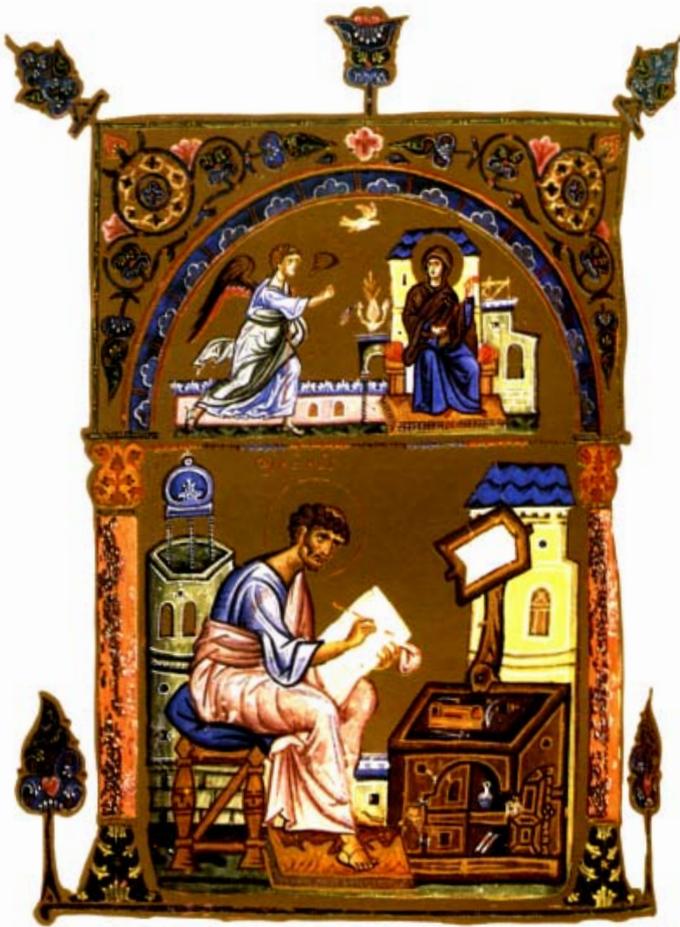
The Bible:

The Old and New Testaments figure prominently in Orthodox services:

- The Psalms in Vespers and Matins
- Hymns from the New Testament e.g. the Magnificat
- The Lord’s Prayer is read often
- The whole of the New Testament (except Revelation) is read during the year
- The Canon of St Andrew of Crete is full of Bible references
- In confession the Priest reads prayers full of Bible references
- At house blessings the Scriptures are read.

But why and how do we read the Bible?

- a We should read the Old Testament because it points to Jesus Christ
- b In the services the hymns help us to interpret the Scriptures
- c Our reading should be done regularly and methodically
- d It helps us to ‘stay in tune’ with the life of the whole Church
- e The final criterion for interpretation is to know the mind of the Church.



St Luke the Evangelist
Slavonic Gospel, Monastery of Neamt, Moldavia



St John the Theologian
Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece

Prayer

- A The essence of prayer is intimacy
- B The model of prayer is the Lord's Prayer.

How to pray?

- with attention
- with humility
- with affection and tears
- with patience and ardour
- from the depths of the heart
- with faith and trust in God
- Use the Jesus Prayer
- Sometimes pray without words – wait on God in silence.

Prayer in practice

- 1 Stand in front of your icons
- 2 Use a book of prayers
- 3 Read the scriptures appointed for the day
- 4 Read one or two Psalms
- 5 Remember your Bishop, your family, your Priest etc.

- 6 Pray for your enemies
- 7 Pray for yourself
- 8 Give thanks to God and acknowledge your sins
- 9 Say the Jesus Prayer
- 10 Stand in silence.

Fasting

- Jesus assumed we would pray and fast
- We fast most Wednesdays and Fridays
- During the Nativity Fast, in Lent, and twice more in the year
- We fast before receiving the Holy Gifts at the Divine Liturgy
- It can help to bring the self under control
- It can help us in prayer
- It can help us to live more simply
- It allows us to give more to the poor
- We can fast from other things – e.g. television
- It needs to be balanced.

Recommended Reading

On the Bible:

- i. Bishop Kallistos' booklet, *How to Read Your Bible* (Conciliar Press: Ben Lomond, CA), available on the internet.
- ii. George Cronk, *The Message of the Bible* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York, 1990) ISBN 0-913836-94-x.

For advanced readers, and those who know Greek: Paul Terazi's Bible Commentaries; and Archbishop Dimitri Royster's series on the Epistles.

On Prayer:

- i. *The Art of Prayer: an Orthodox Anthology*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and E. M. Palmer (Faber and Faber: London, 1966) ISBN 0 571 06899 5.

- ii. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, *Living Prayer* (Darton, Longman and Todd: London, 1966) ISBN 232 51026 1; also his *School for Prayer* (Darton, Longman and Todd: London, 1970) ISBN 0 232 51113 6.
- iii. *Orthodox Spirituality*, by 'a monk of the Eastern Church' (St Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York, 1978) ISBN 0-913836-516.
- iv. On the Jesus Prayer, Bishop Kallistos, *The Power of the Name* (SLG Press, Convent of the Incarnation: Fairacres, Oxford, 1986) ISBN 07283 0113 X.

On Fasting:

Bishop Kallistos, *When You Fast*, a booklet from his introduction to the *Lenten Triodion*.

'There is no life without prayer. Without prayer there is only madness and horror. The soul of Orthodoxy consists in the gift of prayer.'

Vasilii Rozanov

'Just as nothing resembles God, so there is no ministry or work which resembles converse with God in stillness.'

St Isaac the Syrian



St Mary Magdalene
Wood carving by Donatello, Florence, Italy

Your notes:
