

Going Deeper

Lecture by Fr. Peter Heers, 2018

–[Part I]–

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*Excerpted from a lecture given by Fr. Peter Heers, 2018
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We'll begin with... going deeper. Going from the horizontal to the vertical plane is... how I refer to it. But I will get to the whole question of ecumenism on the parish level. **Ecumenism is on many levels. It's a disease...** the heresy of ecumenism particularly, I'll define that later, not the movement so much but the particular heresy, the delusion that we call ecumenism. We label it that way, but it's a **particular ecclesiological sickness or disease or delusion and it's not only on the hierarchical or international level, but it's on many levels.** But in order for us to see that and to talk about that, we need to set the stage and I think that actually this talk on going deeper will reveal some of that....

Many Orthodox Christians live on the horizontal plane. And what do we mean by that? Well, we are encouraged because **we grow up in this society which trains us, teaches us, to think and to develop our rational intellect to the zenith, to really work and become people of the *διάνοια*, the mind** and we're not at all trained, in fact **we don't even admit that it exists, this thing we call the nous** in the Orthodox Church.

Which, let me say right off that another way to understand the nous, because it's a term that many of us do not know are not familiar with it, or it's very hard to wrap our minds around it, **what exactly do we mean by the nous?** In scripture, **St. Paul uses the term 'spirit of man'** but the Fathers use the term nous in order to distinguish it from the spirit of God.

But you can also understand **the *spirit* or the *eye of the heart* also is another term to understand the nous.** In contemporary philosophy something that is close to it but not really the same is the intuition, the perception. So **the eye of the heart is that which sees and communes with God. It's not on the level of the rational intellect.**

So, what we want to do, and what we must do in the spiritual life is to... yes, many of us became Orthodox, we're converts... by using, in America especially there's many converts, by using very well, the rational intellect to learn about Orthodoxy and we continue in many of our catechism... many of our catechetical tools, and the way we do catechism in the Church is essentially learning about Christ, learning about the faith, learning about the Church history. And that's all very good. That's only preparatory, however, for the spiritual life. It's only preparatory.

You can amass great knowledge. You can become a great academic theologian and have no essential initiation into the spiritual life and you can remain spiritless, without purification and illumination. So it is certainly NOT the spiritual life. And just like in the Old Testament we had the law which prepared us for the grace of God, we had the 10 Commandments which prepared us morally and it was a presupposition, prerequisite so to speak for the coming of the incarnate Logos.

It was not the aim, to be a good person in other words, is not the aim or the point of the Church or the incarnation. Moral perfection or moral development is actually like the rational intellect in development. **Rationally knowing about God is actually just preparatory. It's NOT the spiritual life.** So we can become really good people. Do a lot of good things and know all about the Church and still be uninitiated into the spiritual life. Or at least the spiritual life remains inactive within us.

So, **we have to get beyond that.** We have **to become people who experience God directly.** So the Lord begins his mission in this earth by saying to us 'Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.' And these words we need to unpack because many of us in the English language and within the Protestant... the English language has been, I would say, in many ways poisoned by an experience of God which is not the authentic experience and so we think of terms, without wanting to, within a context which is not the context of the Gospel, is not the context of the faith.

So the term repentance. Let's look at that. The term **repentance**, the term **Kingdom**. We're also going to look at the term **knowledge**, *πίγνωσις* in Greek, which is used by St. Paul to explain what it means to know God. We'll look at **these key terms** because they **reveal to us more and more about what the true meaning of the spiritual life is.**

So the Lord says in the beginning of the spiritual life, of the initiation of the Kingdom of God on earth, the spiritual life, He says 'Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.'

What does repentance mean? Repentance in Greek is μετάνοια, μετάνοιες is the verb used by St. John in the baptism of our Lord and **that means change of nous**. Not change of διάνοια, not change of ways of thinking about God only, but much deeper. Change in your spirit, in your whole stance before God. So **repentance is a change of orientation, a change of stance that reorients us and... puts us in a position to be able to receive the Kingdom of God, receive Christ within us. It is a change of the nous, not, again, not of the mind.**

So it's not [that] we change our way of thinking about God. **So many people associate becoming Orthodox with accepting a certain set of doctrines and opinions or positions about the things of the Church. Actually, that's not yet the spiritual life, [it] is not yet the Orthodox faith. It's much deeper. You have to go deeper. And the change has to be in the whole spirit and stance of man.** This is what the Lord is... so that we may become *able to receive* the spirit of God within us and the Kingdom.

Let's look at the word 'Kingdom.' βασιλεία, in Greek, **and it really should have been translated as 'the reign of God' not the Kingdom.** Of course, the Kingdom would have been a perfectly good word if it was not filled with meaning which is foreign to the spirit of the Church. **It is not an external thing, a thing of this earth, it's not a part of the created world but it is the Kingdom of God *within us* says the Lord says which is the reign of God, the spirit of God that reigns *in the nous over the man*, over his senses, his imagination, and his rational intellect.**

So these things are subjected to the nous which has been reoriented and accepts the spirit of God, and the spirit of man and the spirit of God commune. God reigns within us. Only, however when we have been purified. When we have been made a temple, a vessel which can receive the spirit of God. **The spirit of God does not dwell there where there is passions and delusions.** The spirit of truth does not dwell and, well, it doesn't activate and work together with a mind and a stance which is contrary to it. **So we have to prepare ourselves to receive it.**

This whole process of purification is a prerequisite, a presupposition of the spiritual life. And so we talk about the presuppositions of the mysteries, this is very important.... **There are virtues in men and women of every race, and of every creed and of every religion on the face of the earth. Men have virtues. Human virtues, however.** Many times people get confused and they say 'I met a very pious good Muslim or Buddhist' and therefore, this is the wrong thought, recognizing piety or devotion which is a human virtue which is perfectly good. You can recognize that in anyone, it doesn't have to be an Orthodox Christian. What's the wrong thought? Therefore, the spirit of God and the path to God is available in every religion and in every creed. ***This human virtue does not save. This human virtue that people cultivate, which is only human, is not salvific because salvation happens when? When there is a divine/human synergy.***

So the theanthropic nature of the Church, the theanthropic nature of the life in Christ is salvific. When we cooperate with the spirit of God and our virtues are a fruit of this cooperation, then we have salvation. And this is apparent in the lives of the saints. Obviously anyone who has met a holy man or woman who has been purified and illumined understands what I'm going to tell you right now. Their virtues are not a fruit of their activity alone but of the Holy Spirit. And so, therefore you don't find one thing in them that is compelling. But you find their whole stance, their whole way, the way they look, the way they sit, the way they communicate, as filled with the grace of God. And convicting and transformative. So you see that it is not them alone which is communicating this to you but the Divine grace, the grace of God within them. It is a synergy of spirit and the spirit of God, the divine with the human nature. And so virtues in of themselves are not salvific but virtues which are a fruit of the Holy Spirit are salvific for the person and for others. That's when the others say, this presence of this person alone, the presence of God alone is convicting and changes me. Not the words they say or the things they do.

We are in a society which trains us and teaches us to DO things. To become good. We don't need to do... the question is not what are we doing. The question is, what are we becoming? Who are we becoming? Are we becoming Christ? Little Christs by grace? And how does that happen? The question is one of becoming, and not doing. Now, the doing, the works, are a natural result and fruit of one who becomes Christ-like. But the order is essential and it has to follow this.

So our objective in the spiritual life is not to be good people, to do right things, to think correctly. That's all going to happen in a man who is deified or is on the path to deification but it is to acquire the Holy Spirit which will then bring forth as a fruit of its presence these virtues and then we have salvation.

A way to understand this in an image which I think is ultimately from Elder Paisios but through my professor is that... and this maybe helps those who have always had a problem with this false dichotomy in the West between faith and works. **What saves? Works or faith? It's a dilemma that is ridiculous and unfortunate and it never existed in the Fathers or in the Church. Because they're both works. Essentially they both are effort. The whole of them is our love towards God.**

So everything we do (this is the image of the example I want to give you) **everything we do, no matter what we do, if it's done in Christ and for Christ, and that means in the Church and for the person of Christ**, not because we're religious, not because we want to make an impression on others and we want them to say 'Bravo, you're a good Christian' but for the person of Christ, out of love for Him, and in the Church, in Christ.

Those things which are a human effort are nonetheless zero. Everything we do is zero at the end of the day. I'll explain why they don't end up as zero and there is salvation at the end. But they're all zero. So I maybe will... have enough love for God and faith in God to do one zero

or two zeros. Father, maybe 50 zeros because he's very faithful and then Elder Paisios is 3,000 zeros and he's a billionaire or something. **But none of them have any ultimate salvific significance unless before all those zeros there is placed the one. And of course, the one is Christ. The one is what gives value to everything we do. All those activities that we do and all those efforts that we expend takes on eternal significance and salvific value and transforms ourselves and others because of Christ.**

So, this criteria that I said earlier, in Christ and for Christ, those 2 things if you take nothing else from this talk tonight, remember that. Everything you must do, if you want to be transformative and salvific, has to be in Christ, in the Church and for Christ, for the person of Christ.

Many Christians spend their days in this world and in the Church spinning their wheels because they are not working for the person of Christ, they are not loving the person of Christ. Whatever they're doing is not in the name of Christ, for Christ in their brothers and sisters. You remember the criteria of the judgment in Matthew 25, 'whatever you did for the least of these you did for Me.' What's important there is this 'you did for Me.' In other words, what we're doing is for Christ and in Christ and whatever we do, whether it be a spiritual feeding of the poor or physical feeding of the poor, and there are many ways, whether you're in the caves, the mountains of Mount Athos, or whether you're in the streets of San Francisco or Thessaloniki, feeding the poor, spiritually or physically, you are... **if you're doing it for Christ you are fulfilling, and this commandment of our Lord and you are on the path of salvation. But if you are doing it for any other reason, and because you want to be a glorious and remembered bright and wonderful academic and priest who goes around teaching and preaching, you have nothing in the spiritual life. You are... it's vanity and it's not going to be transformative.**

And so, one of the reasons at the beginning of this talk I said what I want to do is go deeper. **And we want to make progress. We don't want to spin our wheels. We have to recognize some of these pitfalls we have that we're not going and doing things for Christ and in Christ. This is the criteria that we have to remember always.**

Let's talk a bit about the question of the knowledge of God. In the Epistles of St. Paul, he says, many times he uses the term knowledge. 'Come to the knowledge of God.' Yes. But this word that he uses in Greek, not the word that, it is different kinds of knowledge. There's different words for the term we translate as knowledge. It's not γνώση where we get the word gnostics, gnosticism from. It's not this, but επίγνωσης in Greek. 'Come to the επίγνωσης της αλήθειας,' knowledge of the truth. **And this implies a hands-on, experiential knowledge of God.** So salvation that St. Paul was talking about it is always, almost always, this term is almost always used. Then we come to the experiential knowledge of God.

And this reminds us of St. John the Theologian who says, 'We saw him, we are *αυτόπτης* visions... martyrs of Christ.' And elsewhere, we have the Apostle Thomas who put his hand in the print of the nails and was praised by the holy Fathers for the good unbelief because he wanted

an experience of the Resurrection, he wanted an experience of the Resurrection. Yes, the Lord says 'Blessed are those who believe and have not seen' but at the same time the holy Fathers say that this is praiseworthy to want to experience firsthand the Resurrection.

But even this knowledge that Thomas had, believe it or not, pales in comparison to the knowledge that you and I can achieve in the Church and with Pentecost. Everything the Lord did, his whole mission and this whole economy of salvation, what aim of it was to end in Pentecost. And what happened post-Pentecost and what happened pre-Pentecost are very different.

What could... there's a Protestant hymn I think it's something like 'Oh, I wish I would have lived in the time of Christ that I could have had him as a friend,' something like this. And that's a nice sentiment. Who wouldn't have wanted to have lived then? But in fact, it's a little misleading and unfortunate because **we don't understand that after the Ascension and with the coming of Pentecost, we commune more intimately, more closely, more directly with Christ than all of those who walked with Him and saw Him with their eyes because we commune of His body and blood. And we become His temples and His spirit dwells within us.**

So, we have... no one can say that I could not draw near to Christ. **Why is it then that many of us commune and we don't see any major change spiritually with us? That should be the question we all ask.** Why am I not? I've communed perhaps 10, 15, 20 years every Sunday but I'm just more or less the same person. If that's the case, God forbid, but that is the case with many perhaps, or only people who commune a few times a year. But still, you're communing of the Body and Blood of Christ. **What's missing?**

Well, **these are the presuppositions of the spiritual life, of the presuppositions of the mysteries** that unfortunately, at least in Orthodox Greece today, I don't know about your parish, I hope not, unfortunately, **very little attention is paid to these presuppositions on the part of many of our pastors today and bishops.** So we, the phenomenon, for example in Greece where I lived for 18 years, we open the doors to the Church and we do mysteries without any kind of examination, without any kind of presuppositions of any kind of prerequisite. **People walk up and are baptized, married, ordained, perhaps, God forbid, without any sense of 'what is the presupposition for this mystery, this true unity of God in there? This extension of the incarnation.'**

When we live in the Church, we partake of the mysteries. We are essentially approaching Christ Himself in a direct way and this is the extension throughout history of the incarnation. So there's no difference God is not a respecter of persons, just saying that He will give a better and more intimate, open the door more directly to those who lived in Jerusalem during his 3 year walk on this earth, that they have a privilege that the rest of us did not have - not at all. No one can say since the coming of Christ 'they had it easier.' **From the moment you are baptized and participate in the Church you have access to salvation. In fact, when you were baptized you have the whole of salvation given to you, you have the entire salvation given to**

you. There is nothing lacking. With the baptism, chrismation and communion, everything has been given.

So what's wrong? Why are we not making progress? What is at fault? Certainly not God. God has given everything. Something's wrong. We're not fulfilling the presuppositions for the grace to become activated within us.

What happens? Well we're baptized, we grow up in the Church or we're baptized as adults. **Because we've not been given the tools, we've not been purified beforehand. Usually our catechism is very wanting because, again, we think of learning about God as a preparation for baptism as opposed to being purified before we're baptized.** Catechism if done properly in the Orthodox Church for whatever it is, if it be the mystery of baptism or any mystery, or ordination, if it's done properly, it's a process of purification from the passions.

So you're purified of delusion, first of all, heresy, and idol worship, of course. We said earlier it's a presupposition to enter in, is to understand God, yes all of this is a preparation, and we need that. So that is a part of purification that we need to learn. Who IS God?

But that is only a preparation for the spiritual life. **We understand there's two kinds of faith. There's the Orthodox faith which we commune, which we confess, which is a presupposition to the spiritual life. We all have to confess this.** Why? This is also in doubt today. Many people doubt this is a necessary prerequisite for the spiritual life. **Do you really need to confess the Orthodox faith?** Because they see the Orthodox faith as an ideology, as an idea. Well, it's... and **they see salvation as being a good person. They think it's about being a good person. So I can be a good person without saying the 'I believe in one God,' the Creed. Why is that a presupposition of the spiritual life? Why is that a presupposition into the initiation of the mysteries?**

Because this is reality. This is reality. Reality is that we have one God and three persons. We have the God Who is both God and Man. We have the Church which is one, holy, catholic and apostolic and all the rest of the doctrines and much more. **What are they telling us and what are we confessing with the Creed that we read every day in the morning and the evening prayers? REALITY. NOTHING LESS.** He revealed to us the reality of the universe, the reality of Himself, the reality of the Truth. And so **how can we talk about salvation in the spiritual life if we don't even accept reality.** We do not accept reality. How can you draw near to the person of Christ, the Trinity, if you deny that He is the Trinity and that He IS God and Man? So there is a presupposition about that.

If I said to you that I know Fr. Thaddeus and he's 6' 5", has a short beard and doesn't wear his cassock anywhere. Right? Which is very the opposite. You would say 'you're not in reality, Father.' I've met him he's not like that at all. No, no, no, this is Father Thaddeus. I've seen him, I know him *you're* not in reality! Then of course we have a problem here. Let's bring Father Thaddeus in here. Let's see what he looks like and then we'll establish reality.

Well, this is exactly the same thing with God. He's revealed himself. **If I stand up and you say 'the reality is that He is NOT the Trinity but he is what Mohammed says,' you have to choose. Either Mohammed has it right or the Apostles. Not both of them. And we can't talk about the same God if we do not describe him as the same God because we know Him by experience. He's not a philosophical idea we've accepted. The minute that we start to say 'well, maybe they also worship the same God...' we reveal what? That we don't know God!! We reveal that we are without grace, that we have not met Him, just as I said, if I said to you He is not anything like what you know, you would have said you haven't met him yet.**

So this is a prerequisite, of course it's a prerequisite and **God forbid we ever get to the point where Orthodox Christians say it's not a prerequisite.** In fact, where are you at that point? Where are you as Christians? Help them who say 'well, there are many paths up the mountain. There are essentially one mountain and many paths. We are on this side of the mountain and, that's the perennialist theory that some Orthodox Christians teach, even some great theologians.

You know, all the heretics were great theologians. They were all usually bishops too and priests. I don't know of any layperson that was a great heretic. If you know anybody, tell me and I'll correct what I usually say about this. So they're all...

So they teach that 'this mountain exists and Christians go up one side and Muslims up the other and we don't see that they're actually going up the mountain because we're on this side and they're on that side but actually at the end of the day we're all going to be surprised because they're all paths up the mountain and they're all reaching God and if you really know the internal workings of every religion as I do, the great teacher and theologian of the universe, you would see that this is all the same. Yes, it appears differently, we don't talk about Christ in Islam, but it's really Christ that's in Islam bringing them to Mohammed's God.'

This is the kind of theory that is passing within Christianity today as a legitimate interpretation of reality.

So, reality is a prerequisite for communion and salvation. And to approach the mysteries without reality is not... is to walk away without the grace of God. There are two types of faith as we said, there's the Orthodox faith that we confess, which is reality. If we confess that, we are doing well but we are not yet living the spiritual life. Because we need another kind of faith... and that is trust. And the Greek word for faith, for trust, we have the word faith, εμπιστοσύνη. It has, it's the word for trust. It has the word faith in it. **This is the kind of thing, trust in the Master, that we have to increase and kindle.**

If you are in a marriage, where you have very little trust of your husband or wife, it's not going to be a good communion, is it? And the same thing happens in the communion of man and God. **You have to trust the Master. And if you don't KNOW Him, you can't trust Him.**

And how do we come to know Him? By encountering Him face to face in the Church but also in the Scriptures. And also in the lives of the saints.

It always amazes me when I meet Orthodox Christians and they don't read the lives of the saints. **How is it possible to come to know Christ if we don't read the lives of the saints? It has to have that as a basic daily or at least as often as possible during the week, reading the lives of the saints.**

Why? Because it is the continuation of the incarnation. It is Christ in every age. The faces of the Saints are the face of Christ in every age. If I were to tell you that the Old Testament is only the first 5 books, the Pentateuch, what would you say to me? 'You haven't read the whole Testament! You need to go back and read the rest of the...' We have the book of Wisdom, we have the historical books, the prophetic books. All of it is the old covenant and all of it is the revelation of the Old Testament, the God of the Old Testament. And the same is true in the new covenant. **Until the second coming, the revelation of God continues in the lives of the saints. The Church is not bereft of God's presence in the ecumenical councils, but especially in the lives of the saints. And the scriptures are being written every day, including in our own age in the lives of the saints. This is very important.**

So if we want to know Christ, so that we can trust him and therefore be prepared for the mysteries, and walk away from the mysteries changed, we have to come face to face with Christ, in the scriptures of course, this is basic, but also in the whole history of the Church and the lives of the saints.

But there's more that's necessary. There's much more that's necessary. This is a narrow way, it's not an easy way, it's the narrow way in the Orthodox Church. More is necessary.

So when they say in the scriptures, the Lord says to someone who comes to Him and asks that a miracle or a healing takes place, what's the phrase that we hear most often after the miracle takes place and the person is healed or even before? 'According. To. Your. Faith.' Right? 'According to your faith.' **So this is a prerequisite. But in this faith, this trust, all the virtues are there. The virtues are not obtained one at a time. They're not obtained one at a time if they're divine-human produced.** We made that distinction earlier. The divine-human virtues are not obtained one at a time because they're fruits of the holy spirit and so **if we are to obtain the acquisition of the holy spirit and the virtues come out, all of it is one life, one whole that is experienced. And so, repentance and faith go together. The return, that reorientation, and the trust in Christ are prerequisites for the holy mysteries.**

Let's look at one by one of the holy mysteries. So we can get a little sense more practically of what it means. So we're approaching baptism and usually in the Orthodox countries it's infant baptism. Many people think 'well, since they're infants of course they can't be catechized beforehand and therefore it's not a prerequisite, catechism.' And remember **catechism is not just**

learning *about* God, but it's coming, being purified so that we can become vessels of the holy spirit, when the mystery does come and take place.

So they believe that this is not a prerequisite but the scriptures are clear. **'Believe and be baptized.'** They do not separate... you cannot separate faith and baptism. So how do we do infant baptism? It's one of the complaints of the anabaptists. I'm sure you are familiar with this history in the protestant reformation. Well, catechism takes place after baptism. And it's a prerequisite for the activation of the spirit of God which was given during baptism. So the Church says when someone comes to be baptized whether it be adult or infant, there must be... **we must have the grounds, the surety that this child or this person has been or will be purified, prepared, catechized, however you want to put it, so that this life will be activated and energized within them. The spirit will be energized within them. This purification is a presupposition.** And so the whole, the most of the spiritual life on the human side, the zeros, so that the one will be at the center, is purification.

So how do we purify our souls? This is what... our main concern should be. This is why in our day and age the temptations are tremendous. Because everywhere there is defilement through images and through words and through intuitions and all this stuff that has filled our society is a demonic attempt to defile the soul so that it cannot become the recipient of the grace of God. This is the demonic... the mystery of iniquity at work in our day and age. **If we can be sufficiently defiled and convinced that we do not need to be purified, well, then, even if we're in the Church we can spend our whole life spinning our wheels. Because we have not understood that *purification is the prerequisite for the reception of the illumination of the grace of God.***

How do we become different? Well, the ascetic life, of course. But what is the ascetic life? Many Christians have a misunderstanding about the ascetic life. The ascetic life is not this narrow thing that we usually associate it with and it only takes place in a cave or in a monastery somewhere far away in the desert or Mount Athos.

The ascetic life is the entire offering of love for God. Everything you do out of love for God is ascetism essentially. So you sacrifice your will for the sake of your brother, you cook the meal for the sake of your children, you keep silent for the sake of not injuring your sister, etc., etc., etc., **Self-denial, picking up of your cross for the sake of the love of God, for Christ and in Christ, is ascetism, is a part of the purification of your soul.** And so you understand that **my job in order to make this mystery that I will go and commune on Sunday if this is going to be life-bearing, throughout the week I have to watch my senses, watch my mouth.**

This is why St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite has a whole book on the guarding of the senses. Because **this is where the defilement enters, through the senses. So we guard our senses, together with prayer which is of course akin to the spiritual life.** You always have, what, nipsis in Greek, watchfulness. **There is no such thing as prayer without watchfulness. If you have prayer without watchfulness, you have a gate open to thieves to steal the grace that you receive.**

So from Sunday after we commune until the next Sunday that we commune, we should have one thing in mind: how to purify and to protect from defilement our soul, our nous, our heart. So that the next time I commune, it will be for greater increase. Increase our faith he says, increase the grace, the apostles call upon the Master. And this increase, this purification, we go from purification to purification to illumination, it's a constant process of growing and becoming more and more, enabling our nous...

If you can imagine it, what we've done in most of our lives in many of our lives, we've been trained to do it is that we've cultivated the rational intellect which actually doesn't really help us at the end of the day to become spiritual people. It may or may not it depends on how we use it. But it's not in and of itself... a doorway to spiritual life. It could be a preparation but it's not a doorway. We've made this big boulder, if you could see it's a big boulder in our soul, just huge boulder that we have and then the nous is this tiny pebble over here. It's been neglected, spirit of man. It's been neglected, it's been put aside. **So we have to change the way we understand the spiritual life. Not about becoming more knowledgeable about it, but becoming more receptive to the grace, opening ourselves to the grace which is, therefore what are we going to do, we're going to focus on prayer.** But not just liturgical prayer, mainly if you notice, there's always two - faith and works, it's always dogma and ethos. It's always, in Orthodoxy, both/and. It's never either/or.

And here, we have to have... and we said prayer and watchfulness. **So we have to do not just a liturgical prayer, but a personal prayer.** What kind of personal prayer? **The main personal prayer that each Christian does is the prayer of the heart, the prayer of the Jesus prayer.** This is at the heart of the hesychastic tradition and note that I said at the heart of hesychasm - that doesn't mean that there is some other tradition in the Orthodox Church which we can appeal to as an acceptable way of the spiritual life. **Actually hesychasm and Orthodoxy are identifiable. This IS the path to the spiritual life in the Orthodox Church.** **So at the heart of hesychasm or the hesychastic way, is the prayer and the prayer, to understand what the prayer does - it as at once a purifying energy and an illuminating energy. It both cleanses and brings with it Christ.**

So actually, at the end of the day, **this is the great mystery of our salvation - He does everything. His name cleanses us and illumines us at the same time. So it's impossible to understand and imagine a true spiritual life without the Jesus prayer, without the prayer of God, the prayer of Christ. *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.***

So we have, we received this Kingdom, it's all... it's in us and yet it's inactive. We said that earlier, right? To understand it a bit, it's... **we've lived the life, we've been baptized, we've been communed, but we've not been taught how to guard the senses, we've not been taught how sufficiently to remain pure and to remain cleansed of the passions and defilements.** We've allowed them to enter in and we have all this garbage that's covering up the pearl of great price in us. We've buried within us. And so **this whole process of purification is us taking this garbage out, and the kingdom being revealed with us. The gift is already within us. Every one**

that has been baptized, chrismated, communed, has it within them but it's dormant because it is not allowed to manifest itself so if one is properly prepared for baptism, properly prepared for communion and is, that means purification, then immediately it is manifest! And when it is not manifest, then we have yet to purify ourselves. We have yet to work this work of salvation within us.

So the Kingdom of God is within us, how do we get it to be manifest and to become... and what it is, when the prayer works within and purifies and brings Christ, then he reigns within us, the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and then everything we do is an expression of the Holy Spirit, and the virtues are an expression of the Holy Spirit. And that's why you can say... St. Paul can say 'Not I but Christ who lives in me.' **That's when Christ lives within us, when everything we're doing is an expression of Christ.** St. Paul says somewhere that the spirit says within us 'Abba Father.'

You can see that it's actually the spirit of God Himself who is working and saving and illuminating, and carrying out the virtues and when you meet somebody who has attained this reality, everything he does no matter how he sits or stands or walks or looks at you, you feel the grace of God. It's not one thing, oh, he's a really good speaker, he has the virtue of an orator, That's a human virtue. It has nothing to do with the salvation of mankind from sin and death.

And even if he does, he doesn't do anything spectacular and many of them didn't... they were... many of these holy men didn't do anything spectacular in a worldly sense, but people were converted.

That's what the great saint of Russia, **Saint Seraphim of Sarov says, 'Acquire the holy spirit and a thousand around you will be saved.'** He doesn't say 'Acquire the holy spirit which therefore you will acquire many virtues and therefore convince people they need to become Christians.' But 'acquire the holy spirit' **because then you will be a conduit of God there.** You, yourself, **everything you do, will be grace-filled and people will want what you have. That's how Orthodox missionary activity works.** There's a little book we publish... it's called *Noetic Prayer: the Basis of Mission and the Struggle Against Heresy*... very important book. Anyone who wants to do missions, but even just be a good Christian obviously, be a purified, illumined Christian, needs to read this book. It's short but it's very powerful and it has many patristic quotations.

So in a nutshell **after all this, these presuppositions we need to have before the spiritual life can be within us, the end of it is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit which comes about through the working of the name of Christ within our soul.** So just as we offer in the Divine Liturgy, by the clergy on the altar every Sunday, **every minute we need to offer the name of Christ in our soul, this altar that we have within us needs to be a sanctuary and a sacrifice to God of our soul; our spirit...**