

# Orthodox Prayer Rope



## The Jesus Prayer

***“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”***

*“Prayer is the greatest means by which man can successfully preserve his spirituality and create within himself a holy atmosphere. Through prayer, man maintains a link with God and revitalizes his spirituality... As soon as man neglects prayer and begins feeling indifference towards it, his link with God weakens. His life becomes mundane and unstable, while spiritual disintegration begins to advance within his heart. The absence of prayer and disinterest for this fundamental obligation for our spiritual existence is the greatest evil that harms us.” (by a Monk of St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Monastery, Roscoe, NY, 2008, p. 3)*

Both the Holy Scriptures and the Church Fathers tell us to “pray without ceasing.” One way that we can learn to do this is by the repetitive saying of the short “prayer of the heart,” the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” This prayer echoes several short prayers found in the Gospels: the prayer of the tax collector, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Lk18:13); the prayer of the lepers, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (Lk17:13); and the prayer of the blind man, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me (Mk 11:47.)

The beauty of the Jesus Prayer is that you can say it wherever you are, whatever you are doing. With repetitive use, the prayer becomes an “internal prayer,” a “prayer of the heart,” a part of your very being. Some people who regularly say the Jesus Prayer find that they awake from sleep with the words of the prayer in their minds and hearts.

The prayer rope is an ancient aid to prayer used by both monastics and ordinary Orthodox Christians for centuries. Having a prayer rope with us – on our belt, on our wrists, in our pocket, in our car, at the head of our bed – reminds us to pray “without ceasing.” Moving our fingers from knot to knot with each repetition of the Jesus Prayer helps us to maintain focus and keeps our mind from wandering. It is as if the movement of our fingers reinforces the movement of our minds and hearts.

It is recommended that we use the Jesus Prayer as a part of our morning and evening prayers as well as at odd times throughout the day and night. As part of a daily “prayer rule,” the Jesus Prayer is said a set number of times, with the prayer rope used to keep track of the number of times the prayer has been said. Your priest or other spiritual director can advise you as to how many repetitions should be said.

Some people also find the prayer rope to be a useful aid to intercessory prayer, mentioning each name on your prayer list as your fingers move from knot to knot. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on (Name).” You can use your prayer rope to pray for the departed as well as the living, “Give rest, O Lord, to the soul of thy servant, (Name.)”

You can also use the prayer rope to pray to the Mother of God, “Most Holy Theotokos, save me,” to the Guardian Angel, “Holy Guardian Angel, pray to God for me,” and to a particular saint, “Holy Saint (Name), pray to God for me.”

(Saint Matthew’s Orthodox Church of America, Columbia, Maryland, 2009)