



An Extreme Christian Makeover

Our Orthodox faith is not only a set of beliefs; it is also a set of tools which has the power to transform our lives and ourselves.

Do you understand you have a call beyond your own self-esteem, a higher call to be all you can be?

PRAYERS

OPENING PRAYER—SIXTH PRAYER OF HOLY UNCTION SERVICE:

“O Lord and Master, fill our mouths with the praise of you. Open our lips, so that we may glorify your Holy Name. Stretch forth our hands to execute Your commandments. Direct our feet aright, in the way of your Gospel. Strengthen our bodies and our thoughts by Your Grace. For You are our God.”

BAPTISMAL HYMN:

“As many as have been baptized unto Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia!”

CLOSING PRAYER—PSALM 139:

“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on

my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”



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PASSAGES & PRAXIS

ELEMENTS OF AN EXTREME SPIRITUAL MAKEOVER

OUR MINDS

Ephesians 4:20-24: That was not what you learned about Christ! You certainly heard about him, and as his followers you were taught the truth that is in Jesus. So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to—the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God’s likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy.

Romans 12:2: Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

OUR HANDS

James 2:14-26: My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it? Can that faith save you? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don’t have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, “God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!”—if you don’t give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.... You see, then, that it is by our actions that we are put right with God, and not by our faith alone.

Philippians 2:12: So then, dear friends, as you always obeyed me when I was with you, it is even more important that you obey me now while I am away from you. Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation...

Psalms 26:6-8: Lord, I wash my hands to show that I am innocent and march in worship around your altar. I sing a hymn of thanksgiving and tell of all your wonderful deeds. I love the house where you live, O Lord, the place where your glory dwells.

James 4:8: Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners! Purify your hearts, you hypocrites!

OUR EARS

James 1:19-25: Remember this, my dear friends! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry. Human anger does not achieve God’s righteous purpose. So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your hearts, which is able to save you. Do not

deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice. If you listen to the word, but do not put it into practice you are like people who look in a mirror and see themselves as they are. They take a good look at themselves and then go away and at once forget what they look like. But if you look closely into the perfect law that sets people free, and keep on paying attention to it and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice—you will be blessed by God in what you do.

Proverbs 18:15:
Intelligent people are always eager and ready to learn.

Proverbs 23:12:
Pay attention to your teacher and learn all you can.

Mark 4:9: And Jesus concluded, “Listen, then, if you have ears!”

OUR TONGUES

James 3:3-10: We put a bit into the mouth of a horse to make it obey us, and we are able to make it go where we want. Or think of a ship, big as it is and driven by such strong winds, it can be steered by a very small rudder, and it goes wherever the pilot wants it to go. So it is with the tongue small as it is, it can boast about great things. Just think how large a forest can be set on fire by a tiny flame! And the tongue is like a fire. It is a world of wrong, occupying its place in our bodies and spreading evil through our whole being. It sets on fire the entire course of our existence with the fire that comes to it from hell itself. We humans are able to tame and have tamed all other creatures—wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish. But no one has ever been able to tame the tongue. It is evil and uncontrollable, full of deadly poison. We use it to give thanks to our Lord and Father and also to curse other people, who are created in the likeness of God. Words of thanksgiving and cursing pour out from the same mouth. My friends, this should not happen!

Psalms 115:2-8: Why should the nations ask us, “Where is your God?” Our God is in heaven; he does whatever he wishes. Their gods are made of silver and gold, formed by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, and eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, and noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, and feet, but cannot walk; they cannot make a sound. May all who made them and who trust in them become like the idols they have made.



OUR FEET

Isaiah 52:7: How wonderful it is to see a messenger coming across the mountains, bringing good news, the news of peace! He announces victory and says to Zion, “Your God is king!”

Romans 10:15: And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, “How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!”

Psalms 37:30-31: The words of good people are wise, and they are always fair. They keep the law of their God in their hearts and never depart from it.

Psalms 119:100-102: I have greater wisdom than those who are old, because I obey your commands. I have avoided all evil conduct, because I want to obey your word. I have not neglected your instructions, because you yourself are my teacher.

Psalms 140:4: Protect me, Lord, from the power of the wicked; keep me safe from violent people who plot my downfall.

John 13:14: I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another’s feet.

LITURGICALLY

As spiritual athletes for Christ, the forehead, breast, ears, feet, nose, mouth and hands of the anointed are all dedicated to spiritual service.

The anointing of the forehead acknowledges servant-hood as the primary focus of life and thereby dedicates the mind to the Godly use of reason.

- The ears are dedicated to the hearing of faith.
- The mouth is dedicated to speaking wisdom.
- The feet are dedicated to the following of Christ’s footsteps and thereby emphasizes adherence to the commandments.
- The nose is dedicated to the enjoyment of the sweet fragrance of spiritual life.
- The anointing of the hands acknowledges that God created the individuals. The hands are thereby dedicated to holy work.
- Finally, the breast of the individual is anointed in the form of a cross. This action signifies that a Christian must live a life of sacrifice and selfless love for others.

PATRISTICS

St. John Chrysostom teaches extensively on the transformation we undergo as followers of Christ. Examples from his writing include:

HOMILIES ON LETTER TO HEBREWS

“Let us then stretch out our minds towards Heaven. Let us be held fast by that desire. Let us clothe ourselves with spiritual fire. Let us gird ourselves with this flame. No one who bears this flame fears those who meet him, be it wild beast, be it man, be it snares without number so long as he is armed with this fire. All things stand out of his way, all things retire. With this fire let us cloth ourselves, offering us glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“We have it in our power to make our eyes beautiful. For when we direct our eyes to a delicate breeze instead of smoke it is like directing our eyes towards the things of heaven rather than those of the earth. Nothing so troubles the spiritual eyes as an evil conscience. Nothing so darkens it as anger. Set it free from this injury by nourishing it with the hope of God and your eye will become vigorous and strong.”

“We should strive to be beautiful in spiritual form. Our soul should be adorned with gold, our robe pure, our shoes royal. The face of our soul should be well formed adorned with the golden ornament of truth around our neck.”

ON LETTER TO EPHESIANS

“And not by death only, but by many things besides; for instance, beauty, at the advance of either disease or old age, withdraws and dies away, and suffers corruption. Bodily vigor again is destroyed by the same means; nor does luxury itself afford the same pleasure in old age. Or again, in another sense, lust corrupts and destroys the old man; for as wool is destroyed by the very same means by which it is produced, so likewise is the old man. For love of glory destroys him, and pleasures will often destroy him, and ‘lust’ will utterly ‘deceive’ him. For this is not really pleasure but bitterness and deceit, all pretense and outward show. The surface, indeed, of the things is bright, but the things themselves are only full of misery and extreme wretchedness, and loathsomeness, and utter poverty. Take off the mask, and lay bare the true face, and thou shall see the cheat, for cheat it is, when that which is, appears not, and that which is not, is displayed.

“The Apostle delineates for us four men. Of these I shall give an explanation. In this place he mentions two, speaking thus, ‘Putting away the old man, be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man.’ And in the Epistle to the Romans, two more, as where he said,

‘But I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.’ (Rom. 7:23) And ‘old man’ to the ‘outer man.’ However, three of these four were subject to corruption. Or rather there are three, the new man, the old, and this, man in his substance and nature.

“In order that no one may suppose that, whereas he speaks of old and new, he is introducing a different person, observe his expression, ‘That ye be renewed.’ To be renewed is, when the self same thing which has grown old is renewed, changed from one thing into the other. So that the subject indeed is the same, but the change is in that which is accidental. Just as the body indeed is the same, and the change in that which is accidental, so is it here. How then is the renewal to take place? ‘In the spirit of your mind,’ saith he. Whosoever therefore has the Spirit, will perform no old deed, for the Spirit will not endure old deeds. ‘In the spirit,’ said he, ‘of your mind,’ that is, in the spirit which is in your mind.

“‘Put on the new man.’ See thou that the subject is one, but the clothing is twofold, that which is put off, and that which is put on? ‘The new man,’ he continues, ‘which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.’ Now wherefore does he call virtue a man? And wherefore vice, a man? Because a man cannot be shown without acting; so that these things, no less than nature, show a man, whether he be good or evil. Now as to undress one’s self and to dress one’s self is easy, so may we see it is with virtue and vice. The young man is strong; wherefore let us also become strong for the performance of good actions. The young man has no wrinkle, therefore neither should we have. The young man wavers not, nor is he easily taken with diseases, therefore neither should we be.

“‘Put on the new man.’ How does he say to them who are already clothed, ‘put on?’ He is now speaking of that clothing which is from life and good works. Before, the clothing was from Baptism, whereas now it is from the daily life and from works; no longer ‘after the lusts of deceit,’ but ‘after God.’ Our part then is, never to put off the garment of righteousness, which also the Prophet calls, ‘the garment of salvation’ (Isaiah 61:10), that so we may be made like unto God. For He indeed hath put on righteousness. This garment let us put on. Now the word, ‘put on,’ plainly declares nothing else, than that we should never at all put it off.”

ON LETTER TO COLOSSIANS

“How can one put on Christ? Hear Paul saying, ‘As many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ.’ (Gal. 3:27) Hear the Apostolic precept, ‘Make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.’ (Rom. 13:14) Thus doth one put on Christ, if one provide not for the flesh unto

its lusts. If thou have put on Christ, even the demons will fear thee; but if gold, even men will laugh thee to scorn: if thou have put on Christ, men also will reverence thee.

“Do you want to appear fair and beautiful? Be content with the Creator’s fashioning. Would thou appear comely? Clothe thee in alms; clothe thee in benevolence; clothe thee in modesty, humbleness. These are all more precious than gold; these make even the beautiful yet more comely; these make even the ill formed to be well formed. For when any one looks upon a countenance with good will, he gives his judgment from love; but an evil woman, even though she be beautiful, none can call beautiful; for the mind being confounded pronounce not its sentence aright.”

ON LETTER TO I TIMOTHY

“But rather seek a clothing woven from things above, an admirable and radiant vesture, raiment of real gold; of gold not dug by malefactors’ hands out of the mine, but the produce of virtue. Let us clothe ourselves with a robe not the manufacture of poor men or slaves, but wrought by our Lord Himself. But your garments, you say, are in-wrought with gold!”

ON LETTER TO TITUS

“It is for this reason called vainglory. Dost thou see the masks worn by stage-players? How beautiful and splendid they are, fashioned to the extreme height of elegance. Canst thou show me any such real countenance? By no means. What then? Didst thou ever fall in love with them? No. Wherefore? Because they are empty, imitating beauty, but not being really beautiful. Thus human glory is empty, and an imitation of glory: it is not true glory. True beauty is only that which is natural, which is within, is lasting: that which is put on externally often conceals deformity, conceals it from men until the evening. But when the theater breaks-up, and the masks are taken off, each appears what he really is.”

PARTICIPATION

Critique modern media when it promotes defining self-worth by external criteria of success, even if this means challenging friends or being controversial.

Work to increase your awareness of your own struggles with doubt about your worth, and your awareness of the struggles of others. Notice and support kind or virtuous behavior in yourselves and others.

Discuss self-esteem, self-worth and personal transformation with your families and with Orthodox authority figures whom you respect.