

THE EASTERN
121: February 2020

ЦЕРКОВЬ СВТ. ИОАННА
ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN
Military Road, Colchester,

His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch
Russias

Most Rev. Metropolitan
the Church Outside Russia

Rt. Rev. Bishop Irenei, Bishop of Richmond and Western Europe

www.orthodox-europe.org



ORTHODOX No

ШАНХАЙСКОГО
ORTHODOX CHURCH
Essex CO1 2AN

of Moscow and All the

Hilarion, First Hierarch of

The Church of St John of Shanghai, built in 1855, is the largest Russian Orthodox church building in the British Isles and is attended by 3,000 Orthodox of 24 nationalities, with some 100 baptisms per year. It is a parish of the East of England Orthodox Church Trust (Charity No: 1081707), part of the Russian Orthodox Church, comprising Colchester, Norwich, Wisbech and Bury St Edmunds, looking after faithful Orthodox in the East of England.

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Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE2T2sYTy8s>

Website: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk

Расписание Богослужений / Timetable of Services

Saturday 1 February

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 2 February: Zacchaeus Sunday/ Неделя о Закхее

10.00 Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 8 February

Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 9 February: The Publican and the Pharisee / Мытарь и Фарисей
The Holy New Martyrs and Confessors / Память святых новомучеников и исповедников российских

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Friday 14 February

5.30 pm Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Saturday 15 February: The Meeting of the Lord / Сретение Господне

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Sunday 16 February: The Prodigal Son / Блудный сын

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 22 February

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 23 February: Sunday of the Last Judgement / Неделя о Страшном суде.

Meatfare Sunday / Масленица

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 29 February

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Dates for Your Diary / Важные Даты на
Следующий Год

Easter: Sunday 19 April / Пасха: Воскресенье 19 апреля

Patronal Feast: Saturday 4 July

Престольный праздник: Суббота 4 июля

Baptisms in January

12 January: Gavriil Ababei

12 January: Petru Golea

29 January: Alexandru Cotofrei

Church News – VERY IMPORTANT!

On 4 July, which is our patronal feast, God willing, Vladyka together with an old friend, Bishop Alexander of Vevey, will consecrate our church – we have been waiting for this

moment for ten years, so this is a very important event for us. Another new reader will also be tonsured and other events will also occur, God willing. We are expecting many guests from many places.

On 35 years of Service at the Altar in France, Portugal and England

46 years ago, in 1974, after six years of waiting, I was at last able to move to a town which had a Russian Orthodox church: at that time there were only two permanent Russian Orthodox churches and four chapels in the whole of England. Later I worked in Greece and studied at seminary in Paris. Exactly 39 years ago I was tonsured reader by Metropolitan Antony Bloom at the Ennismore Gardens Cathedral in Knightsbridge. In the last 35 years since being ordained deacon at St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Paris on 27 January 1985, God has allowed me to serve His Church in many countries in Western Europe, in France, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and Portugal, by the grace of God setting up the first ever Russian Orthodox church in Lisbon and then some the first ever churches and communities in Eastern England.

Thus, this church began in tiny temporary premises in Felixstowe, which then moved to my native town of Colchester, as soon as I had raised the funds to buy the first suitable property which appeared, here in Colchester. I then did the same in Norwich, raising the funds to buy, convert and equip premises. I have also served and serve in Bury St Edmunds and Wisbech and made missionary travels all over Eastern England, including to Kent and Yorkshire. Others have been brought back into our Church in the East of England from suspension and schism, notably a reader and two priests, and I have also obtained three new priests for our Diocese, Fr Ion here, Fr Spasimir for Norwich, Fr Yaroslav for London and, God willing, very soon a fourth for our church here. After 22 years of struggle, I was honoured when the Synod awarded me the gold cross for this tenacity in the face of every discouragement.

However, the most important thing done in these 35 years was to ask our Synod in New York to send Bishop Irenei to this Diocese. This is now united with my own Western European Diocese, where our St John was Archbishop and where I was ordained by his spiritual son, Archbishop Antony of Geneva. Our Diocese had previously had no resident bishop for 34 years and the previous bishops had been ill. Moreover, Bishop Irenei has the title which I had long wanted to see for a bishop in this country, 'of London'. Thus, the heritage of St John, who left us nearly sixty years ago in 1962, is being restored by the grace of God. Our Diocese will survive, despite all the huge difficulties it has been through since the late 1960s, when nearly everyone thought it was going to die out. Now in 2020, the centenary year of our Church Outside Russia, I thank God for everything, as He has done all these things using us all as His instruments. Glory to God for all things!

PROTOPRESBYTER MATTHEW STADNYUK,
THE MOST SENIOR MARRIED PRIEST OF THE
RUSSIAN CHURCH, SERVING AS FAR AS NEW
YORK AND EGYPT, REPOSES IN THE LORD

[Matfey Shaheen](#)



The ever-memorable Protopresbyter Matthew (Matfey in Russian) Stadnyuk, the most senior married clergyman of the Russian Church, fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday, January 26, at the age of 95. His funeral was served by His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', His Eminence, Metropolitan Sergei of Ternopil, from Fr. Matthew's homeland, and several other bishops at Theophany Cathedral in Elokhovo, Moscow, on Tuesday, January 28. Among the clergy were many of his family members.

As Patriarch Kirill said, Fr. Matthew represents in and of himself "an entire epoch" for the Russian Church, and thus it follows to say his repose marks the end of an era. Though he personally knew some of the greatest spiritual figures of our times, in his humility, he would only say that he was blessed to serve among giants, though in reality, he himself was a

spiritual giant. Gentle, not particularly tall in stature, this Volhynian priest died a colossus whom the Russian Church will never forget.



Fr. Matthew served the Russian Orthodox Church faithfully for a good 75 years. His service took him everywhere from his native Pochaev in Western Ukraine, to Egypt, to New York City, and finally to Moscow, where he was the long-time rector of Theophany Cathedral in the ElokhoVo district of Moscow. The Theophany Cathedral is a magnificent basilica that served as the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Moscow Patriarchate during the dark days of Soviet persecution; its golden domes topped with crosses became a beacon of hope for the suffering, at times crucified, Russian people.

Fr. Matthew lived through it all like a true confessor; he met everyone from Patriarchs to Presidents to the Queen of England, and for his loyal service to the Church of Christ, he was awarded practically every honor the Church can bestow upon a married priest, including the miter, the right to wear three crosses, and Patriarchal Cross itself. Let's remember his blessed life.

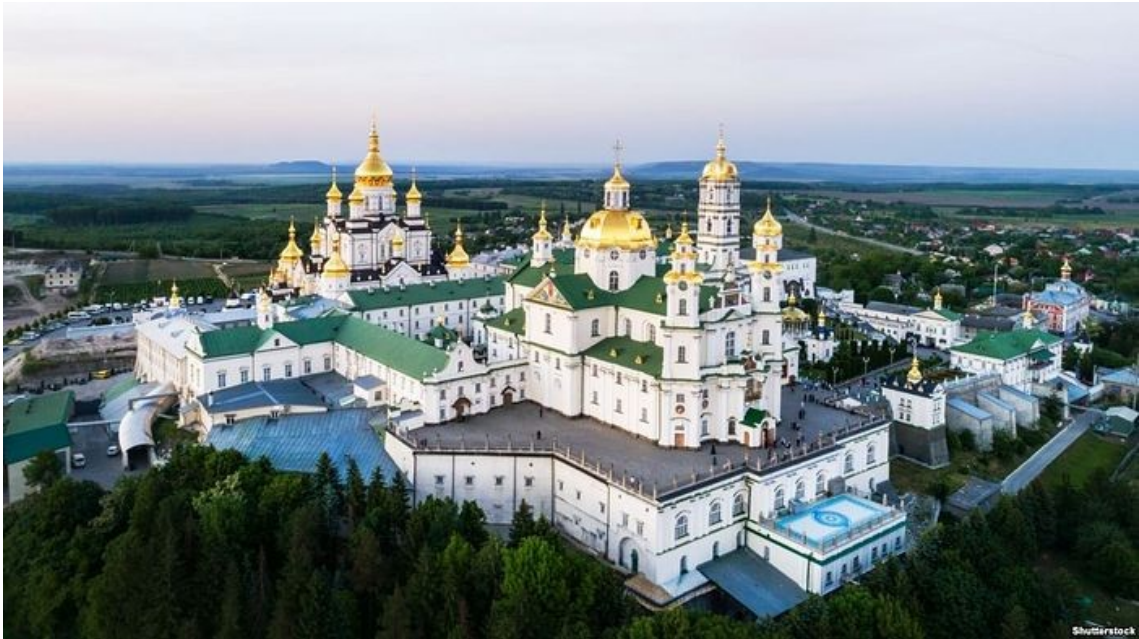
Protopresbyter Matthew was born on September 22, 1925, in the village of Zalistsi, very close to the Pochaev Lavra in the sunny and green forested [fields of Volhynia](#)—a [land of many saints](#). To emphasize the piety of Volhynia, that most ancient land of Western Rus'—possibly the birthplace of the Equal-to-the-Apostles St. Vladimir of Kiev himself—it is

enough to say that his humble village alone was [known for the fact](#) that over 150 young men dedicated their lives to serve Christ as clergy.



Theophany Cathedral in Elokhovo

To this end, it is worth recalling the ever-memorable Patriarchal Archdeacon Andrei Mazur, Fr. Matthew's contemporary compatriot, who was born in the nearby village of Novi Kokoriv. Their homes [were only two miles apart](#). Protopresbyter Matthew and Archdeacon Andrei are representative of the Western Ukraine that always existed strongly within the hierarchy and clergy of the Russian Church, and both Fathers Matfey and Andrei were [strong supporters](#) of the canonical unity of the Ukrainian lands with the entire Russian Church.



Pochaev Lavra

Fr. Matthew was the son of Anna Demyanovna, who always took him to Pochaev Lavra for services. Of her four sons, three became priests, while the fourth died during WW2. By 1942, after taking courses in Pochaev, he became a chanter.

On March 10, 1945, he was ordained a deacon by Bishop Job of Kremenets. On January 4, 1946, he was ordained a priest in Chernivtsi, the capital of Bukovina, which is also the homeland of Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine, who would later [conduct his hierarchical services](#) for many years in the cathedral where Fr. Matthew was ordained.

His first parish was an old village church in honor of the Nativity of the Theotokos, deep [within the Carpathian Mountains](#), over thirty-five miles from the nearest train station. Due to a lack of clergy, he also served four nearby churches, and he was quickly appointed as the local dean for his dedicated service.



In 1949, he entered Moscow Theological Seminary directly into the third year, and later graduated from Moscow Theological Academy in 1955, and would go on to serve in the Moscow area, and assist Protopresbyter Nikolai Kolchytsky, yet another famous priest from Ukraine, who also served as rector of Theophany Cathedral in Elokho.

Fr. Matthew was sent to America in 1962. From 1964 to 1967 he served in Egypt, and then returned to America, where between 1970 and 1973 he served as Rector of St. Nicholas Cathedral in New York. He then returned to Russia where he was named secretary to Patriarch Pimen.

On June 9, 1978, he was named rector of Theophany Cathedral and elevated to Protopresbyter, the highest dignity a married priest can hold. For decades, he served in and later led the Financial and Economic Management Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, and participated in the creation of the famous Church supplies company Sofrino, reviving an old tradition of excellence in ecclesiastical craftsmanship.

In 2000, he was named secretary to his dear friend Patriarch Alexei II who is entombed in the Theophany Cathedral together with the relics of St. Alexei of Moscow.



Fr. Matthew closely served with every Patriarch of Moscow from Pat. Pimen to Pat. Kirill.

Protopresbyter Matthew is a perfect example of the fact that Ukrainians, particularly Western Ukrainians, have been known to occupy some of the highest positions in the Russian Orthodox Church. Fr. Matthew is part of a long line of [Volhynian](#), Galician, [Carpatho-Rusyns](#), Malorossians, and otherwise Ukrainians, who rendered indispensable service to the Moscow Patriarchate. In the Russian tradition, there are very few living protopresbyters at any one time.

Fr. Matthew was truly part of that great generation whom we read about in Met. Tikhon's (Shevkunov's) extremely popular book, [Everday Saints](#), shining in those final soviet years.

In these latter days, when there are many troubles in the home of the Orthodox Church, it is lamentable to see so many great elders and spiritual pillars passing away. Those who were here with us moments before are gone the next day. One can only think to say in the words of the Prophet Baruch: *Ubi Sunt?* And where are they who were gone before us? Considering Fr. Matthew understood English, and was from the green mountainous fields of Volhynia and

Transcarpathia, one could paraphrase in his honor the lament of the great Christian writer J.R.R. Tolkien:

“They have passed like rain on the Carpathian Mountains, like a wind in the Volhynian meadow; The days have gone down in the West, behind the hills, into shadow. Who shall gather the smoke of the dead wood burning, or behold the flowing years from the Sea returning?”

May God grant eternal memory unto Protopresbyter Matthew, who was buried in the shadow of Theophany Cathedral which he served for decades.



The Final Procession of Protopresbyter Matfey Stadnyuk. Photo by Matfey Shaheen

In his humility he never knew how loved he was—by people from Pochaev to Transcarpathia and Bukovina, Moscow to Egypt, and New York to San Francisco. It is easy to fall into melancholy at the death of these great figures, but this is not the Orthodox way. Fr. Matthew has passed on the torch to a new generation of clergy, many of whom are his kinsmen.

When we see such holy men repose, this means it is up to each and every one of us to keep the faith, and to carry on where they left off; to faithfully serve God and holy Mother Church in such a way that people like even the humble Fr. Matthew would be proud to call us their spiritual children.

As for Fr. Matthew of Pochaev and Moscow, *he fought a good fight, he finished the course, he kept the faith*. Eternal Memory, dear Batiushka, on behalf of everyone who loved you so dearly!



Fr. Matthew with family, loved ones, and friends. Then-Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), now Metropolitan of Pskov, stands on the right near the picture of Theophany Cathedral.

THE COMPUTER, IQ, AND OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

[Andrei Drăgulescu](#)

In contemporary world intelligence, the accumulation of concepts, technical skills and all that is “mental”, is valued ever more highly. But even specialists have begun to express their concern, admitting that “the spiritual law” is above all else; it is the basis of all these abilities of ours, and we need to develop our emotions, feelings, relationships with other people—the realm of the “heart”.



In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman collected the results of studies of intelligence conducted over several decades and concluded that in general we tend to underestimate the importance of social and emotional skills¹. If we take the longer term, there are far more efficient parameters of assessment for it than IQ (*intelligence* quotient).

According to Jane Healy, “the fact that this book by Goleman became a hit and the top bestseller, remaining so for a long time, indicates that Goleman touched a sensitive chord in modern society which is oversaturated with information.”²

Goleman expresses his concern over the dramatic decline in “emotional competence” in the past two decades, called by researchers “emotional deprivation disorder.” In the USA, where most of such studies were conducted, children demonstrated a decline in the level of emotional skills in over forty indicators of social-emotional well-being (from the mid-1970s till the late 1980s). Such discoveries arouse alarm, given that according to Goleman, IQ

contributes only twenty percent to someone's financial and personal success, while the remaining eighty percent largely depend on his socio-emotional skills.

The marshmallow test

Goleman's book cites a remarkable example. It was a long-term study in which a group of preschoolers was tested and then the test was repeated fourteen years later.

At the first stage, each preschooler was offered one marshmallow and told that if he or she waited for fifteen to twenty minutes without eating it, they would receive one more treat. Fourteen years later, the same individuals were tested again and the following remarkable fact was revealed: those who in their childhood had displayed self-control and abstained from satisfying their appetites immediately were found to be more emotionally stable, teachers were more favorably disposed towards them, their friends loved them more, and they showed far better results in national tests compared to the children who had immediately eaten their marshmallows fourteen years before³.

This and many other studies clearly demonstrate that there are factors associated with effective mental skills apart from IQ.

What is the reason behind the loss of these skills, which the whole world has seen in recent years? In one of his interviews Daniel Goleman clearly gives the reason without beating about the bush:

“Children spend more and more time on the TV or the computer, cutting themselves off from their peers and grown-ups. And most emotional skills we have mentioned are acquired not by oneself but interactively with other children and adults. In connection with this the emphasis on the computer (regardless of the great help it gives us) worries me. The more time you spend in front of the computer and TV the less time you spend with other people⁴.”

Several years ago, many employers across the globe who hire people with technical and financial profiles began to display more interest in their potential employees' “social and emotional intelligence” than in their professional skills. For example, according to research conducted in Switzerland as early as 1997, big companies (engineering, banking) hired people with the following qualities: self-control, initiative, high concentration, communicational skills, creativity, the ability to work in a team, flexibility, honesty, taking pleasure in working with people—these skills are in decline in our days. In the mentioned quality lists school grades were mentioned at the very end and computer skills were not mentioned at all!⁵

Jane Healy states: “Many contemporary children think about their computers more than about themselves or their values.” She also wonders:

“The computer does so much harm to our social, emotional, and personal development, including such vital habits of life as motivation, attention and memory! How can we help our children develop their talents and qualities, values, the capacity for introspection, care for others, their spontaneous playing skills and personal satisfaction?”⁶

Brain development and the use of the computer

In our increasingly technologized world we are witnessing an unprecedented growth in such issues as attention deficit disorder, anti-social behavior, weak motivation, [depression](#), and ineffective work habits. These originate in the emotional centers of the brain and are formed in childhood.

However, it is impossible to develop the most important neural pathways that regulate this behavior when we leave our children alone with computers; this requires frequent and emotional interaction with others, the development of responsible thinking skills, along with physical exercises. For instance, neuronal chains that regulate aggressive behavior are very flexible in childhood, and excessive playing of cruel computer games, coupled with a shortage of tenderness and cordiality from others, may have a negative impact on children and they may become criminals when they grow up⁷.

One of the key aspects of children’s brain development is the integration of the various ways that brain systems function; for example, looking at a piece of sheet music, transferring music on paper into notes on a keyboard, and the addition of the neuro-motor program to enable fingers to play these notes—and all of this while listening to a tune. This brain integration develops gradually, in the course of long-term practice as someone who starts learning (at any age) transforms raw material into new forms: clay into figures, boxes into bird houses, ideas into sentences, and impressions into life philosophy.

“Will the new technology strengthen or weaken this process?” Dr. Healy asks. “The computer itself does too much for this integration (e.g. combining images, sounds and movements); so a child at the computer only experiments instead of managing everything on his own; thus his activity lacks the active process, which may turn out to be indispensable.”⁸

The researcher also notes:

“It is strategic knowledge that sets apart the students who demonstrate the best results and the adults who have been successful in the professional sphere from others. And the young people whose work of reflection and practical problem-solving has been carried out by someone else (whether man or computer) tend to have poor strategic knowledge⁹.”

The famous Prof. Howard Gardner from Harvard University said that if we really want our children to learn to be creative, we should put emphasis on activities that stimulate resourcefulness and inventiveness and are held concurrently with parents and teachers.

It is the parents who are to decide whether or not their little one will spend too much time on a computer. “A parent who believes that a computer can substitute for a parent is simply crazy!” Howard Gardner, a father of four, used to say.

Dr. Jane Healy arrives at the following conclusion:

“If such skills as the capacity for reading and deep reflection are lost by a generation, they may not be restored by the next generation. The use of computers for enhancing our abilities is one thing, but allowing them to replace the system of our intellectual values is another thing.”¹⁰

[Andrei Drăgulescu](#)

Translated from the [Russian version](#) by Dmitry Lapa

[Familia Ortodoxa \(“The Orthodox Family”\)](#)

1/30/2020

¹ See: Daniel Goleman. Emotional Intelligence. 1995.

² Dr. Jane Healy. Your Child's Growing Mind: Brain Development and Learning From Birth to Adolescence. 2004. P. 174.

³ Daniel Goleman. Ibid. Pp. 119–121.

⁴ Daniel Goleman, în: O’Neil John, “On Emotional Intelligence. A conversation with Daniel Goleman.” *Educational Leadership*. September 1996. P. 11.

⁵ Samuel Halpern. “School-to-Work, Employers and Personal Values”. *Education Weekly*, March 12, 1997. P. 52. See: Jane Healy, *ibid*, p. 175.

⁶ Jane Healy. Ibid. P. 175.

⁷ Goleman Daniel. “Early Violence Leaves Its Mark on the Brain”, *New York Times*. October 3, 1995. P. C10. See: Jane Healy, *ibid*, p. 176.

⁸ Jane Healy. *Ibid*. Pp. 135–136.

⁹ *Ibid*. P. 140.

¹⁰ *Ibid*. P. 167.

ST THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE ON PRAYER

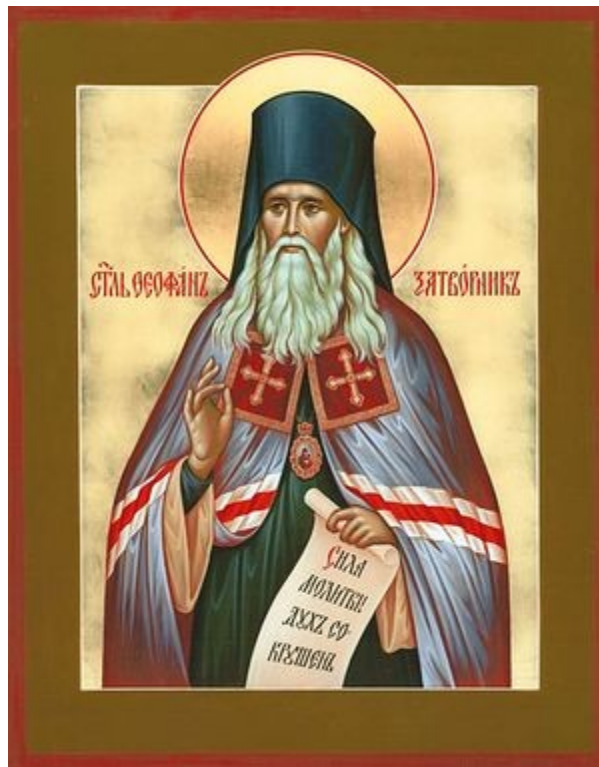
From the Letters of Bishop Theophan the Recluse

The Art and Science of Prayer (from Letter 15)

You write that you prayed fervently and at once you were calmed, receiving an inner assurance that you would be released from oppression; and then, indeed, it was so....

Recall how you prayed and always strive to pray this way, so that [prayer comes from the heart](#) and is not just thought by the mind and chattered by the tongue.

I won't conceal the fact that, though once you prayed from the heart, it is hardly possible to pray that way constantly. Such prayer is given by God or is inspired by your Guardian Angel. It comes and goes. It does not follow, though, that we should give up the labor of prayer. Prayer of the heart comes when one makes an effort; to those who do not strive, it will not come. We see that the Holy Fathers made extraordinary efforts in prayer, and by their struggles they kindled the warm spirit of prayer. How they came to this prayerful state is illustrated in the writings they have left us. Everything they say about striving in prayer makes up the science of prayer, which is the science of sciences. The time will come when we will study this art [see the classic work *The Art of Prayer* (Faber & Faber)—webmaster]. But now, since it came up in our correspondence, I touch on it only in passing. Let me add: There is nothing more important than prayer; therefore, our greatest attention and most diligent attention must attend it. *Grant us, O Lord, zeal for such an effort!*



Wandering Thoughts during Prayer (from Letter 31)

Thoughts wander when one is reading spiritual works and during prayer. What should one do? No one is free from this. There is no sin in it, only vexation. Having wandering thoughts becomes a sin when one willingly allows flightiness of mind. But if thoughts scatter involuntarily, what fault can there be? There is fault, though, when one notices thoughts wandering and, taking no action, one wanders along with them. When we catch our thoughts wandering off, we must bring them back to their proper place at once.

To be free from the tendency to have wandering thoughts during prayer, one must concentrate and pray with warmth. Before prayer, one should prepare for such an effort by making prostrations and by a moment of reflection.

Accustom yourself to pray your own prayers. For instance: it is the essence of evening prayer to thank God for the day and everything that happened, both pleasant and unpleasant; to ask forgiveness for all wrongs committed, promising to improve during the next day; and to pray that God preserve you during sleep. Express all this to God from your mind and from your whole heart.

The essence of morning prayer is to thank God for sleep, rest and regained strength and to pray that He will help us do everything to His glory. Express this to Him with your mind and with your whole heart. Along with such prayers in the morning and evening, present your greatest needs to the Lord, especially spiritual needs. Besides spiritual needs, present your worldly cares, saying to Him as would a child: "See, O Lord, my sickness and weakness! Help and heal!" All this and the like can be spoken before God in your own words, without the use of a prayer book. Try this and, if it works, you may leave the prayer book altogether; but if not, you must pray with the prayer book, otherwise you might end up with no prayer at all.

Spiritual Coldness (from Letter 40)

You have correctly determined that the enemy of our fundamental striving for prayer, and, therefore, our chief enemy, is a [spiritual] cooling. Oh, what a bitter and wretched state it is! But realize that not all decrease in the heat of fervor is pernicious chill. Some comes from weakness, other from disease of the body. Neither is bad; both will pass.

Disastrous cooling down is caused by falling away from God's will, through our own willful passion for anything ungodly. Willful passion runs counter to our conscience, which tries to enlighten and to keep us from ungodly desires. Willful passion kills the spirit and cuts off spiritual life. This you must fear most of all—as fire, as death itself. Willful passion is caused by a loss of the fear of God and by inattention to oneself. These, then, you must watch for in order to avoid such a terrible evil. As for those times when a cooling down comes involuntarily, due to sickness or weakness of body, one law applies: Endure, without changing your appointed rule, even if it is completely without savor. For those who endure patiently, cold feelings pass, and the usual warm and heartfelt fervor quickly returns.

Please, hold it in your mind and make it a rule, never to let cooling arbitrarily steal away your fervor. In case of unavoidable cooling, make it another rule to drag and to keep dragging through your established prayer rule, with the assurance that this dry performance of deeds will soon bring back life and warmth to your prayer.

Brief Prayers (from Letter 42)

Zealous Christians have a certain technique that they apply to secure the continual remembrance of God more firmly. It is the constant repetition of a short prayer, ordinarily either, "Lord, have mercy," or "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner." If you haven't heard this, then listen now. If you have never done this, begin now.

Time Will Bring a Constant Remembrance of God (from Letter 43)

Be encouraged! Take up prayer more readily and continue without interruptions—and you will soon achieve your desired goal. Soon a reverent attention to the One God will be established, and with it, inner peace. I say soon, not now, or in a day or two. Months may be required, sometimes, even years. Ask the Lord and He will help.

Prayer Rule (from Letter 47)

You ask about the [prayer rule](#). Yes, because of our weakness, it is proper to have a prayer rule. For one thing, it controls excessive zeal. The great men of prayer had a prayer rule and kept to it. Every time, they began prayer with the established prayers, and then, if self-initiated prayer came, they turned to it from reciting prayers. If *they* needed a prayer rule, then we need one even more! Without formal prayers, we would not know how to pray correctly at all. Without them, we would be completely without prayer.

Nevertheless, we should not collect too many prayers. A few prayers, correctly read, are better than many prayers raced through. And, of course, it is hard to keep from rushing when, in our eagerness to pray, we have gathered more prayers than we can handle.

For you, it is quite adequate to complete the morning and evening prayers as they are found in the prayer book. Always strive to complete them with as much attention and feeling as possible. To do this successfully, make an effort in your spare time to read them with extra care, attention and feeling, so that when you are at prayer, you will be familiar with the holy thoughts and feelings contained in them. Praying does not mean repeating a certain number of words of prayer; praying is reproducing the contents of the prayers within ourselves, so that they flow as if from our own mind and heart.

Having contemplated their meaning and reacted deeply, make an effort to learn the prayers by heart, so when it is time for prayer, you will not have to fumble with books and lighting. If you learn prayers by heart, you will not be distracted by what your eyes see, and you will be able to hold your mind's attention more steadily upon God.

You will see for yourself how beneficial this is. Learning prayers by heart ensures that at all times and in every circumstance the prayers are with you, and this means a great deal.

Having so prepared yourself to stand at prayer, strive to keep your mind from drifting away and strive to keep your feelings from turning cold and indifferent. Always strain to pay attention and to nurture warmth. After reading each prayer, do as many prostrations as you feel necessary, or say the usual short prayer (that is, the Jesus Prayer). Your prayers, no doubt, will take longer this way, but they will grow in strength.

Particularly at the end of your prayer rule, spend additional time saying your own prayers. Ask for forgiveness for involuntary inattention during prayer and surrender yourself to God's care for the whole day.

We must continue to hold our attention on God during the day. To support our attention, I have said more than once: Remember God through a briefly worded prayer.

At times, it is very fruitful to substitute a few psalms for the short prayer psalms you have reflected upon thoroughly and memorized. You can do this during free moments and throughout the day's activities. Repeating memorized psalms is an ancient Christian custom that was developed and brought into the monastic rule in the fourth century by Saints Pachomius and Anthony [the Great].

After spending the entire day in such a prayerful attitude, take even more time in the evening to concentrate at prayer and increase your prostrations. Intensify your supplications to God and, having again dedicated to God's care, bed down with a brief prayer on your lips and fall asleep with it, or with the repetition of a psalm.

Which psalms to learn? Memorize those that drop into your heart when you read them. Different people are moved by different psalms. Begin with Psalm 50, then Psalms 102 and 145, the antiphons for the Liturgy; also, the psalms from the Preparation for Communion (Psalms 22, 2:3, 115); as well as Psalm 69, Psalm 4 (the first psalm of [Great] Compline [during the first week of Great Lent]), the psalms for the Hours, and the like. Read the Psalter and choose.

Having memorized all this, you will be totally armed for prayer. When a disturbing thought comes to mind, rush to the Lord with a brief prayer or some psalm, especially, "O God, be attentive unto helping me" (Psalm 69), and the disturbing cloud will immediately vanish.

That summarizes prayer rules.

But I repeat: Remember, all of this is a guide. The heart of the matter is: *Stand with reverence before God, with the mind in the heart, and strive toward Him with longing.*

A Prayer Rule of Brief Prayers (same Letter)

It occurs to me to add this: You may substitute prostrations, the brief prayer and your own words of prayer for your whole prayer rule.

Stand and begin to do prostrations by saying, "Lord, have mercy," or some other prayer expressing your needs, or by glorifying God or thanking Him. To avoid laziness, you must repeat a definite number of prayers, or set a specific length of time for prayer, or both.

Such a prayer rule is imperative because we have a certain, strange quirk about us. When we are busy in the world, hours pass as minutes. But when we stand at prayer, a minute does not go by, and it seems as though we have prayed for hours. Time distortion brings no harm when we complete a full, established prayer rule from our prayer book. But when we pray with only prostrations and the brief prayer, such distortion can be a great temptation and can cause us to stop prayer, having only begun, leaving us with the delusion that our prayer was completed as prescribed. To avoid falling into this kind of deception, the good men of prayer invented the prayer rope. The prayer rope is used by those who plan to pray independently of the prayer book. It is used by saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner, ' and pulling one knot through your fingers.

Say it again and move another knot, and so on with each prayer. You may make a prostration, from the waist or to the ground as you desire, at each prayer. Or for small knots, you may do a bow from the waist; large knots, prostrations. The whole rule consists of a fixed number of prayers and prostrations, interspersed with prayers in your own words.

Speeding up the repetition of prayers and prostrations is another danger. After you determine a set number of prayers, it is a good idea to guard yourself from haste by setting a definite length of time in which to complete the prayer rule. If you find you have rushed the prayers, fill the time with more prayers and prostrations.

The number of prayers to substitute for a fixed service of liturgical prayer is listed at the end of the Horologion in two tables, one for the zealous, and another one for the slothful or those who are busy. The *Startsi* [Elders] who still live among us in hermitages and special cells, at Valaam and Solovki for instance, do all their services on the prayer rope. This is how you go about it: See how long it takes you to read through your morning and evening prayers; then count out on the prayer rope how many prayers you can do in that length of time, and as many times as you can complete the prayer rope, that should be your rule, following this method. Work out your prayer rope rule outside of your regular prayer time, but with the same attention you would give to regular prayer. You should then proceed with your actual prayer rule at its appointed time, standing and with prostrations.

Reading this, don't think that I am pushing you toward monasticism. I myself first learned of prayer with the prayer rope, not from a monk, but from a layman, for many lay people pray this way. And you too will profit by this. When prayers from the prayer book become tedious and uninspiring, you may use the prayer rope for a day or two, then return to your memorized prayers.

Again I repeat: The essence of prayer lies in lifting the mind and heart to God. Prayer rules are only aids to this end. We weak ones cannot do without them.