

## Bishop Aleksandr of Omsk: A Primer for the Christian Beginning to Lead a Spiritual Life



### A Primer for the Christian Beginning to Lead a Spiritual Life

By Blessed Aleksandr of Omsk (+1977)

1. As soon as you wake, cross yourself. Try to think about God before anything else.
2. Do not begin your daily tasks without having said your rule of prayer.

3. Throughout the day, regardless of what you are doing or where you are, repeat short prayers. Prayers are the soul's wings. Prayer makes the soul God's throne. The power in a spiritual man comes entirely from prayer.
4. If you want God to hear your prayer, do not wag your tongue, but pray with your heart.
5. Sincerely greet everyone you meet in the morning.
6. If the enemy robs you of attention and compunction during prayer, do not desist. He who forces himself to pray when his soul is dry stands higher than the man who prays with tears.
7. Your mind and heart should be intimate with the New Testament. Study the New Testament constantly. Do not invent your own interpretation of it, but learn its meaning from the Holy Fathers and from your own spiritual Father.
8. Drink Holy Water with thirst and longing, so that you may be sanctified, body and soul.
9. Repeat constantly, or at least hourly, the Angel's greeting to the Queen of Heaven: "O Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice, O Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb; for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls."
10. During your free time read the Holy Fathers and the teachers of the spiritual life. If you do not have their books, borrow them from someone who does.
11. In dangers and trials read the Psalter and the Paraklesis, that is, the Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos, which begins, "By many temptations am I distressed." The Queen of Heaven is a fervent intercessor for Christians.

12. When demons loose their arrows at you, when you are threatened by sin, chant hymns of Great Week and Holy Pascha, or read the Canon and Akathist to Sweetest Jesus, and the Lord will enlighten your mind and loose your shackles.

13. If circumstances prevent you from singing and reading, then, at the moment of temptation, remember the Name of Jesus, stand noetically before the Cross, and tears will bring healing.

14. Observe fast days, but remember that God is not pleased with mere abstinence of the belly. He wants our hearts to renounce the passions.

15. The man determined to lead a spiritual life must understand that he is sick, that his thoughts are in error, that his will is more inclined to evil than to good, and that his heart is defiled by boiling, seething passions. The goal of the first stage of spiritual life is to restore a measure of health to the soul.

16. Spiritual life is an unending, never-abating war with the enemies of our salvation. Never let your soul fall asleep. Your spirit should always be alert. In this battle you must never tire of calling upon your Savior for help.

17. Be watchful, lest you consent to the sinful thoughts assailing you. Never allow conjunction between them and your mind. If you give assent to such thoughts, you have already sinned.

18. If you are heedless, then you will certainly perish.

19. Ask the Lord to grant you fear of God. Oh, how blessed are they who ever tremble before the Lord!

20. Give God, your whole heart without reservation and you will experience Paradise on earth.

21. You must continuously strengthen your faith by recourse to repentance and prayer and by contact with persons who themselves have profound faith.

22. Make a commemoration list for yourself and pray for all the living and the dead you know, for those who hate or offend you, for those who have suffered for the Faith in our time, and for those who have no one to pray for them.

23. Search, search always for opportunities to show compassion and co-suffering love for others. You cannot please God without deeds of mercy. Be like the sun and shine upon all. Compassion has greater value than any sacrifice.

24. Go nowhere without a pressing need.

25. Speak and laugh as little as possible; give no rein to useless curiosity.

26. Do not remain idle. Honor the Lord's Day and Feast Days as God commands.

27. Love holy solitude.

28. Endure every affront. At the onset of the temptation, suffer in silence, and when a little time has passed, reproach yourself with pray for your offender.

29. What is most important is to learn patience and humility. By humility we prevail over the demons; by patience we conquer the passions that war against our souls and bodies.

30. When you pray, let no one notice your tears of compunction or zeal for salvation, except God Himself.

31. Revere Orthodox Priests as Angelic heralds of good tidings, sent to

gladden the faithful and bring you salvation.

32. Treat others with the respect due heirs of the celestial kingdom, yet with the caution you would employ handling fire.

33. Forgive everything and empathize with all men in their sufferings.

34. Do not be obsessed with yourself like a hen with an egg she has just laid, but take thought for your neighbor.

35. The Holy Spirit flees the man who seeks an easy, tranquil life.

36. Melancholy and a troubled spirit result from insufficient prayer.

37. Call upon your Guardian Angel everywhere and always.

38. Ever lament in your heart for your sins. When you have occasion to confess them and partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, rejoice in silence, and you will be cleansed.

39. Concern yourself only with your own inadequacies and imperfections. Guard yourself against dwelling on the sins of others and on passing judgment. Do not bring about your own perdition by judging others. He who judges others is an antichrist.

40. Do not trust even your good inclinations. Do not trust your own heart; instead, refer to the judgment of your spiritual Father,

41. Every evening confess to God all of your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds.

42. Before you go to sleep, make peace with all, prostrating yourself before anyone you have offended.

43. Do not tell others about your dreams.

44. Prayer said at night is of greater value than prayer said during the

day.

45. Cross yourself before you go to sleep.

46. Do not let your ties with your spiritual Father loosen. Fear to grieve or offend him. Hide nothing from him.

47. Thank God for everything.

48. Conceive of your inner self as divided into two halves, one your possession, the other the enemy's domain. Flee every suggestion of the noetic foe.

49. It befits you to bless others and to have words of thank on your tongue.

50. Love the Church's ordinances and strive to fulfill all of them.

51. Keep diligent watch over yourself, especially over your sense, through which the adversary gains access to your soul.

52. When confronted by your infirmity, by your weakness in accomplishing good deeds, remember that you cannot save yourself. Your Savior is our Lord Jesus Christ.

53. The cruel foe never slumbers. He stalks you throughout the day. Let faith be your impregnable fortress.

54. Sorrows, difficulties, illnesses – all these bring us closer to God; therefore, do not complain about them and do not fear them.

55. No one has ever reached heaven by a life of pleasure and unbroken happiness.

56. Partake as frequently as possible of the Holy, Life-Giving Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, with faith,

compunction, and a contrite heart. Only through the Holy Eucharist can you know true life.

57. Never forget that Divine judgment and requital are at hand.

58. Remember also everything beautiful that the Lord has prepared for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, most of us are far from even beginning to fulfill these precepts; nevertheless, accept from me, sinful Aleksandr, this Primer of the Spiritual Life.

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