

## On Practicing the Jesus Prayer (Saint Ignatius Brianchaninoff)

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**«Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.»**

**The correct practice of the Jesus Prayer proceeds naturally from correct notions about God, about the most holy name of the Lord Jesus, and about man's relationship to God.**



God is an infinitely great and all-perfect being. God is the Creator and Renewer of men, Sovereign Master over men, angels, demons and all created things, both visible and invisible. Such a notion of God teaches us that we ought to stand prayerfully before Him in deepest reverence and in great fear and dread, directing toward Him all our attention, concentrating in our attention all the powers of the reason, heart, and soul, and rejecting distractions and vain imaginings, whereby we diminish alertness and reverence, and violate the correct manner of standing before God, as required by His majesty (John 4:23-24; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27). St. Isaac the Syrian put it marvelously: «When you turn to God in prayer, be in your thoughts as an ant, as a serpent of the earth, like a worm, like a

stuttering child. Do not speak to Him something philosophical or high-sounding, but approach Him with a child's attitude» (Homily 49). Those who have acquired genuine prayer experience an ineffable poverty of the spirit when they stand before the Lord, glorify and praise Him, confess to Him, or present to Him their entreaties. They feel as if they had turned to nothing, as if they did not exist. That is natural. For when he who is in prayer experiences the fullness of the divine presence, of Life Itself, of Life abundant and unfathomable, then his own life strikes him as a tiny drop in comparison to the boundless ocean. That is what the righteous and long-suffering Job felt as he attained the height of spiritual perfection. He felt himself to be dust and ashes; he felt that he was melting and vanishing as does snow when struck by the sun's burning rays (Job 42:6).

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is a divine name. The power and effect of that name are divine, omnipotent and salvific, and transcend our ability to comprehend it. With faith therefore, with confidence and sincerity, and with great piety and fear ought we to proceed to the doing of the great work which God has entrusted to us: to train ourselves in prayer by using the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. «The incessant invocation of God's name,» says Barsanuphius the Great, «is a medicine which mortifies not just the passions, but even their influence. Just as the physician puts medications or dressings on a wound that it might be healed, without the patient even knowing the manner of their operation, so also the name of God, when we invoke it, mortifies all passions, though we do not know how that happens» (421st Answer).

(To be continued)

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