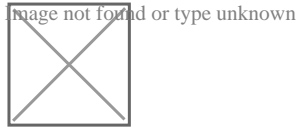


Turn your mind gently to Christ when you say the Jesus Prayer (Saint Porphyrios of Kavsoakalyvia)

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Prayer of the heart, the Jesus Prayer, occurs only for those who've been given the grace of God. It shouldn't happen with the thought: 'I must learn it; I have to know how to do it, to achieve it', because that might lead us into pride and egotism. It needs experience, longing, but also a sound mind, vigilance and caution, if it's to be pure and pleasing to God. If you have the thought: 'I've really advanced in this', that'll spoil everything. What have we got to be proud about? Nothing we have belongs to us. These are delicate matters.

Pray without forming images in your mind. Don't imagine Christ. The Fathers stressed prayer without images. An image is a slippery slope, because another one might be superimposed on it. It could well be that the evil one will intervene and then we lose grace.

The prayer should take pace within us, with the mind, not with the lips, so that the mind isn't distracted and flies all over the place. In a gentle way, we should put Christ in our mind, saying really gently: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me'. Don't think of anything except the words: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me'. Nothing else. Nothing. Calmly, with your eyes open, so you're at no danger from fantasies and delusions, turn to Christ with attention and devotion. Say the prayer in a gentle manner and not all the time, only when you feel moved to do so, when you feel compunction, because that's a gift of divine grace. Without grace, you'll hypnotize yourself and you may fall into delusion and derangement.

The prayer shouldn't be a chore. Any pressure to say it might cause an adverse reaction on our part and do us harm. A lot of people have fallen sick because of the prayer, because they were under pressure to say it. Of course, something comes of it even if you say it as a chore, but it's not healthy. And don't use special techniques. You don't need a little stool, never mind bowing your head or closing your eyes. A lot of people say: 'Sit on a little stool, bow your head, apply yourself and concentrate'. But how...try it and see. You don't need to concentrate particularly to say the prayer. There's no need for any special effort if you love God. Wherever you are, on a stool, a chair, in a car, on the street, at school, in the office, at work, you can say the prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me'. Gently, without pressure, without forcing yourself to do so. Don't be tied down to a place. The whole thing is love for Christ. If your soul says, with devotion and desire, the words 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me' it'll never get enough of it.. They're insatiable words! Say them all your life long. There's so much 'juice' in them.