



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Priests Wives

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Repentance

Volume 11

Prayer and Meditation for Repentance and Joyful Return to God

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, Most Merciful and Loving, I come before You with a contrite heart, seeking Your forgiveness and grace. As I embark on this journey of repentance, guide my spirit, O Lord, and let Your Word be a lamp unto my feet. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

Scriptural Foundation: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."* (Psalm 51:10 - NKJV)

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.'" (Luke 15:18 - NKJV)

Meditation:

1. **Acknowledging the Straying Heart:** In the stillness of this moment, I acknowledge my transgressions, dear Lord. Like the prodigal son, I have wandered away from Your loving embrace. I bring before You the weight of my sins, laying them at the foot of the cross.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23 - NKJV)

2. **The Sorrowful Journey Back:** Lord, I feel the godly sorrow that grips my heart, recognizing the separation caused by my actions. In humility, I confess my sins and turn away from the path that leads away from Your light.

"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:10 - NKJV)

3. **Confession and Seeking Forgiveness:** Merciful Father, I confess my sins before You. In the name of Jesus, I seek Your forgiveness, trusting in the promise that, if I confess my sins, You are faithful and just to forgive and cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 - NKJV)

4. **Embracing the Father's Love:** Lord, I envision Your open arms, ready to welcome me back. In the richness of Your love and grace, erase the stains of my past. I embrace the truth that, in Christ, I am a new creation.

"But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." (Luke 15:20 - NKJV)

5. **The Robe of Righteousness:** Heavenly Father, clothe me in the righteousness of Christ. Let me stand before You, not in the rags of my sin, but adorned in the robe of Your salvation, a testament to Your redeeming love.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:10 - NKJV)

6. **Feasting in His Presence:** Lord, I imagine partaking in the heavenly feast prepared by Your abundant grace. May the joy of reconciliation resonate through the heavenly realms as I rejoice in Your forgiveness and love.

"And bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:23-24 - NKJV)

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, as I rise from this time of prayer and meditation, let the joy of Your forgiveness fill my heart. May the journey of repentance be a continual walk in Your grace and a testimony to Your transformative power. In Jesus's name, I pray. Amen.

Humbling oneself and avoiding pride is a central theme in both the Bible and the teachings of the Church Fathers. Here are some steps based on biblical stories, and quotes from Church Fathers:

1. **Recognize God's Sovereignty:**

- "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:10, NKJV)
- Church Father Quote: "The beginning of pride is sin. And the beginning of sin is pride." - St. Augustine

2. **Practice Servanthood:**

- Jesus washed His disciples' feet, demonstrating humility and servanthood. (John 13:1-17)

- Church Father Quote: "Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist, there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance." - St. Augustine

3. Learn from the Example of Jesus:

- Jesus, though being God, humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death on the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)
- Church Father Quote: "He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." - St. Athanasius

4. Seek Correction and Guidance:

- "Rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool." (Proverbs 17:10, NKJV)
- Church Father Quote: "No one heals himself by wounding another." - St. Ambrose

5. Cultivate Gratitude and Contentment:

- "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NKJV)
- Church Father Quote: "The proud person always wants to do the right thing, the great thing. But because he wants to do it in his own strength, he is fighting not with man, but with God." - St. Augustine

6. Practice Self-Examination and Repentance:

- "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24, NKJV)
- "The proud man counts his newspaper clippings, the humble man his blessings." - Fulton J. Sheen

7. Associate with the Humble:

- "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life." (Proverbs 22:4, NKJV)
- "The greatest of all virtues is humility, for there is no other virtue except in humility." - Bernard of Clairvaux

By following these steps, one can strive to humble oneself and avoid pride, drawing inspiration from biblical teachings and the wisdom of the Church Fathers.

References for repentance:

1. **St. Augustine of Hippo:** In his work "Confessions," Augustine explores the theme of repentance extensively, reflecting on his own journey of conversion and the transformative power of God's grace.
2. **St. John Chrysostom:** Known for his eloquent sermons, Chrysostom frequently preached on the importance of repentance and the need for sincere contrition in order to receive God's forgiveness and mercy.
3. **St. Athanasius of Alexandria:** Athanasius, in his "Life of St. Antony," emphasizes the role of repentance in the Christian life, highlighting the example of St. Antony's asceticism and spiritual struggle as a model for repentance and transformation.
4. **St. Basil the Great:** Basil, in his writings on asceticism and monasticism, discusses the process of repentance as a lifelong journey of purification and spiritual growth, leading to union with God.
5. **St. Gregory of Nyssa:** He explores the theme of repentance in his theological works, emphasizing the healing and transformative power of God's grace in restoring fallen humanity to its original state.

From the Books of Pope Shenouda III:

1. **"Repentance and Confession":** In this book, Pope Shenouda III provides practical guidance on the process of repentance and confession in the Coptic Orthodox tradition, offering insights into the spiritual significance of these sacraments and their role in the believer's life.
2. **"Life of Repentance and Purity":** Pope Shenouda III delves into the importance of repentance and purity in the Christian life, exploring various aspects of spiritual struggle and offering practical advice for cultivating a life of holiness and virtue.
3. **"Return to God":** This book by Pope Shenouda III addresses the theme of repentance from a pastoral perspective, offering encouragement and support to those who seek to turn back to God and renew their relationship with Him.
4. **"The Joy of Repentance":** Pope Shenouda III reflects on the joy that comes from genuine repentance and reconciliation with God, highlighting the transformative power of God's love and mercy in the believer's life.

5. **"The Path of Repentance":** In this book, Pope Shenouda III outlines the steps of repentance and offers practical advice for overcoming sin and cultivating a life of spiritual renewal and growth.

These references from both Church Fathers and Pope Shenouda III provide valuable insights into the significance of repentance in the Christian tradition and offer guidance for those seeking to turn back to God and embrace a life of holiness and virtue.