



Self-coercion is the starting point in feeling completeness. The beginner seeking completeness may not have strong feelings encouraging him to pray long prayers at night, or with tenderness of heart. Yet he forces himself to pray, and if he is tempted to shorten his prayers forces himself to continue in prayer. If he feels he is too physically exhausted to arrive at Church when the doors are open, not to miss a single syllable of a prayer he forces himself in the car to arrive on time. He controls his scattered intellect during the Divine Liturgy through training. The technique of self-coercion is one of discipline.

One of the early Church Fathers said, ***“If you wait until you reach pure prayer and then start to pray, you will never pray.”*** This is because pure prayer, i.e. pure worship is not the starting point but the culmination of these spiritual endeavors. God may look at your exertion and striving, your patience endurance and perseverance, and irradiate you with His Grace or uplift you a step towards purer prayer.

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\*This lecture synopsis is adapted from ‘Characteristics of the Spiritual Path’ by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

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