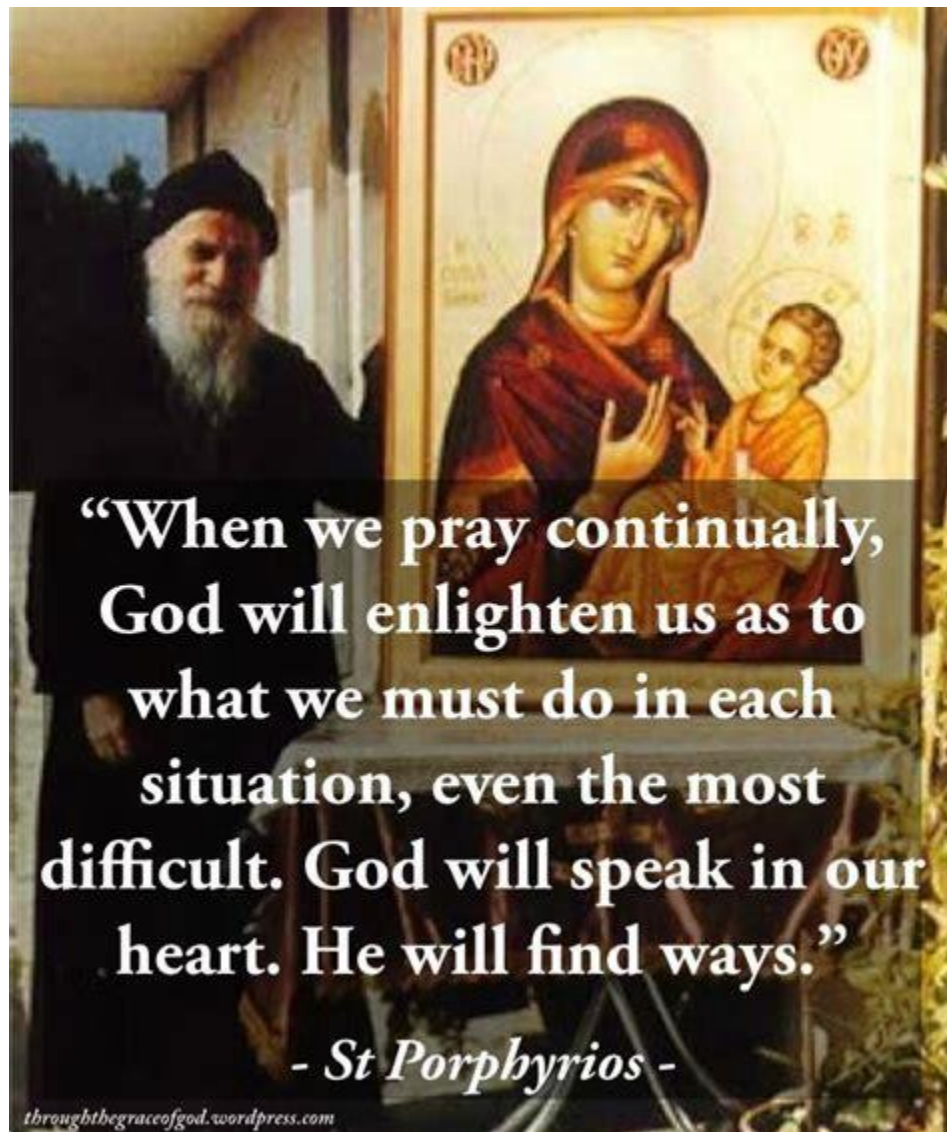


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"The Lord spoke to Moses; he said: 'Speak to the whole community of the sons of Israel and say to them: Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. Each of you must respect his father and mother. And you must keep my Sabbaths, I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols, and cast no gods of metal, I am the Lord your God.'" ~ Leviticus 19*

The Lord is gracious and merciful. The Lord is faithful in all His words and holy in all His works!!!



An important part of our Lenten discipline is prayer. Prayer, in fact, is a critically important part of our lives and of our journey of faith. Unfortunately, many people struggle in their prayer. The thing to remember is that, at its core, prayer is an intimate communication of the heart with God.

Often times, we think of prayer as “saying” our prayers. This is a risky way of looking at prayer because in the sixth chapter of Matthew's gospel, *“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘In*

praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This is how you are to pray:'" and then he gave the disciples the Lord's Prayer. If all we do is say our prayers but don't actually enter into an intimate communication of the heart with God, we run the risk of babbling like the pagans.

In the concluding doxology of all our Eucharistic prayers, we hear the priest say "through him and with him and in him". This means that we pray in, through and with Christ Jesus every time we pray to the Lord our God. As Pope Pius XII wrote, "*The unbroken tradition of the Fathers from the earliest times teaches that the Divine Redeemer and the Church which is His Body form but one mystical person, that is to say, the whole Christ.*"

We pray from within the whole Christ, within the Mystical Body of Christ, every time we pray. We are looking out from ourselves through the eyes of Christ and are taking on the mind and heart of our Lord Jesus. In essence, we become larger than ourselves when we truly enter into prayer that is an intimate communication of the heart with God. St. John Chrysostom, bishop, said this about prayer in one of his homilies.

"Prayer and converse with God is a supreme good: it is a partnership in union with God. As the eyes of the body are illuminated when they see light, so our spirit, when it is intent on God, is illumined by his infinite light. ... Our spirit should be quick to reach out toward God, not only when it is engaged in meditation; at other times also, when it is carrying out its duties, caring for the needy, performing works of charity, giving generously in the service of others, our spirit should long for God and calling to mind, so that these works may be seasoned with the salt of God's love, and so make palatable offering to the Lord of the universe. Throughout the whole of our lives, we may enjoy the benefit that comes from prayer if we devote a great deal of time to it.

Prayer is the light of the spirit, true knowledge of God, mediating between God and man. The spirit, raised up to heaven by prayer, claims to God with the utmost tenderness; like a child crying tearfully for its mother it craves the milk that God provides. It seeks the satisfaction of its own desires, and receives gifts outweighing the whole world of nature.

Prayer stands before God as an honored ambassador. It gives joy to the spirit, peace to the heart. I speak of prayer, not words. It is the longing for God, love too deep for words, a gift not given by man but by God's grace. The apostle Paul says: *we do not know how we are to pray but the Spirit himself pleads for us with an expressible longings.*

When the Lord gives this kind of prayer to a man, he gives him riches that cannot be taken away, heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. One who tastes this food is set on

fire with an internal longing for the Lord: his spirit burns as in the fire of the utmost intensity.

Practice prayer from the beginning. Paint your house with the colors of modesty and humility. Make it radiant with the light of justice. Decorate it with the finest gold leaf of good deeds. Adorn it with the walls and stones of faith and generosity. Crown it with the pinnacle of prayer. In this way, you will make it a perfect dwelling place for the Lord. You will be able to receive him as in a splendid house, and through his grace you will already possess him, his image and thrown in the temple of your spirit."

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

