



GROWING SPIRITUALLY  
AS PERSONS & AS A PARISH  
THE "SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE" (ASCESIS)  
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# SETTING PRIORITIES FOR OUR LIFE

Two years ago at the Strategic Planning Meeting of the ministry leaders of our Parish a very significant decision was made:

**The No. 1 priority of our Parish should be to grow spiritually - to create a spiritual culture in our Parish**



**How can we do this?**



# BASIC WAYS TO HELP US GROW SPIRITUALLY AS PERSONS

- **Self examination**
- **Growing in humility**
- **Close relationship with a spiritual father**
- **Frequent confession of sins**
- **Worship: Personal prayer & participation in the Liturgy**
- **Spiritual reading - Scriptures - Spiritual books**
- **Participating in spiritual conversations**
- **Going on pilgrimages to holy places (like monasteries)**
- **Meeting holy people - people engaged in their own spiritual growth effort**

**This is one part of our "*Spiritual Struggle*" ( "Ασκησις)**

**Warning: These instructions are not meant to be done in one week or even one month, but rather established as a rule of life over time**



# THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

## HELPING US TO GROW SPIRITUALLY



- **The role of Holy Scripture in the spiritual life as *ascesis***

**St. Basil affirmed that every word and action must be checked against the witness of Scripture.**

**To Origen, Scripture and the Eucharist are intimately connected, the Eucharist being the real body and blood of Christ and the Scriptures being the indwelling of the Logos.**

**Among the monastics, Scripture has been seen as spiritual food. They practice the reciting of Scriptural texts from memory (the Psalms more than anything else).**

**St. Seraphim of Sarov, for example, read the entire New Testament once a week.**

**But the monks and ascetics emphasize the importance of approaching the Holy Writ with a simple heart and purity of life.**

***(Compare this with the way certain modern scholars approach the Bible today)***

***This is one more part of our "Spiritual Struggle"***



# THE ROAD TO THE KINGDOM

## Three major stages in our spiritual development

### a. Κάθαρσις **Catharsis**- Purification

We attain this by surrendering to God in obedience, humility and repentance. The Sacrament of Confession helps us reach purification of the heart and mind and perfection in humility.

### b. Φώτισις **Photisis**- -Illumination

As we are cleansed from sin we are illumined and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We become Temples of the Holy Spirit.

### c. Θέωσις **Theosis** - deification - ultimate state of human perfection

We seek to experience this by joining to God spiritually (in prayer) and also physically through our participation in the Holy Eucharist, the deified Body and Blood of the Risen Christ, as we become one with Him.

The Divine Liturgy seeks to take us through these three stages every time we participate in it. That is why it is important to come to the Liturgy from the beginning and participate in every stage of this development.

In this process of asceticism we can attain attain **ἀπάθεια**- *apatheia* (passionlessness). We do not uproot the passions, but take control over them.

All of this requires effort on our part - **δώσε αἷμα καὶ πᾶρε πνεῦμα** (**give blood and receive spirit**)- as we try, we draw the grace of God to help us.

# THE ROLE OF THE HOME

- ***What things to do in the home***

- 1. Prayer at home - establishing a proskynetarion**
- 2. Censing at home on a regular basis**
- 3. Making a connection with our saint - learning about his/her life, celebrating our saint's name, asking for intercessions from our saint**
- 4. Learning to make Prosforo for the Liturgy**
- 5. Learning to make kolliva & artoklasia for feast-days**
- 6. Learning to make kolliva for memorials of relatives**
- 7. Having the priest come to bless our home**

**Personal effort is required - This is the "Synergia" of man with God for the salvation of man.**

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# FROM THE HOME TO THE PARISH

- **Liturgical Participation brings about spiritual growth (*practical approach*)**
  - 1. Learning of Hymns and singing along**
  - 2. Proper preparation and frequent participation in the Eucharist (receiving Holy Communion)**
  - 3. Being in tune with the Worship Cycle of the Church - *Keeping up with the Feasts and attending services***
  - 4. Participating in the Holy Week Services**
  - 5. Dedicating an Icon, a Censor, a Chalice or other Liturgical vessel through a donation**
  - 6. Offering Time, Talent & Treasure for God's work**
  - 7. Taking care of the poor, the sick and those in need**
  - 8. Bringing the Gospel to those who have not heard it**

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# CULTIVATION OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE PARISH

- ***Our Personal growth affects the parish growth!***

- 1. As we grow spiritually as persons our parish grows spiritually as well as a community, as a family.**
- 2. More people become examples of faith and dedication to God for others.**
- 3. More children receive a deeper faith from the adults who now teach them by the word and by their life.**

**Personal effort brings the presence of the Holy Spirit -  
The "Synergia" of man brings about the Grace of God  
to the whole community.**

*The Parish is the Sum of the total of each  
one of us. We shape the Life of the Parish as  
we shape ourselves, one at a time!*



# The Parish - The Center of our Life

- Church Life cannot be Seasonal
- Parish Provides ideal environment for growth and maturity for all throughout the year
- Summer months - ideal time for Church activities (no school, no studying, abundance of time)
- GOYA Meetings for the youth - have to be regular
- The "Youth Kafenio" - a powerful concept





# Heroes and Role Models - 1

- The Parents
- The Priest
- The Bishop
- The Teachers
- The Community as family



**We need the alliance  
and cooperation of all  
for the benefit of the  
whole parish**





# Heroes and Role Models -2



- **The monks and nuns are examples of self-denial and dedication to God**



# Heroes and Role Models -3

- The modern holy men and women - Fr. Paisios, Fr. Porphyrios, Mother Gavriilia - They provide proof of God's work in the world today





# Heroes and Role Models -4

- The Saints - old and new - are prime examples of people who struggled, who fought the good fight and won the crown of victory.



- Saints represent restored humanity in its ultimate perfection



And the "Struggle"  
continues . . . .