

10. December 2025
THE ADVENT JOURNEY
Day 11: "The Prayer of the Heart"

On several occasions, I have spoken and written in detail about the "Prayer of the Heart," which is practiced mainly in the Eastern Church. I recommend that you reread or listen to what I have said, which you can find in the links at the bottom of the page¹. You can also find other sources to learn more about this valuable prayer and its history².

Since this week we are focusing on deepening our relationship with Jesus and on his deeper indwelling in our hearts, I return once again to this prayer, which is almost indispensable for souls seeking silence and recollection. Personally, I have been practicing it for almost forty years, and now I find it impossible to imagine my life without the "Prayer of the Heart." Anyone who has tasted the "spiritual flavor" of this prayer will agree with me and understand why I recommend the "Jesus Prayer" to all Christians. It is unsurpassed in its simplicity and can be prayed anywhere.

There, in the "inner chamber" of our heart, in intimate communion with the Lord, where we have given shelter to the Holy Family and where our heart is being transformed into a "temple of God" under the influence of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 3:16), the one who *"prowls around like a roaring lion"* seeking to devour us (cf. 1 Pet 5:8) cannot enter. We can ask for the presence of the holy angels at the doors of the "temple" of our heart, so that they may exercise their role as guardians there, ensuring that the adoration of the Lamb may never cease on earth, even in times of growing anti-Christian persecution.

The classic ejaculatory prayer, repeated in the "Prayer of the Heart," is as follows: *"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."*

To avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted in advance that this prayer is part of the rich treasure of our Church and is practiced especially by the faithful of Eastern Christianity. It is by no means a foreign practice derived from the forms of meditation of other religions, but is genuinely Christian. Currently, this practice is also spreading

¹ Conference on prayer from the heart: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8NmWQ1W0Ks>

² One of the best-known books on this subject is "The Russian Pilgrim."

in the Roman Church. Indeed, the Prayer of the Heart can fruitfully respond to our longing for silence and recollection.

Metropolitan Seraphim Joanta writes the following: *"The Jesus Prayer is a profession of Trinitarian faith. In it, we confess Jesus as the Son of God and true God; we also confess God the Father as the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and, albeit indirectly, we also confess the Holy Spirit, because no one can say that Jesus is God unless moved by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who prays in us and for us with inexpressible groans (cf. Rom 8:26). The prayer of Jesus, like any other prayer, is a prayer in the Holy Spirit."*

The ejaculatory prayer can be repeated over and over again in silence, sung³, or said in the heart, which, in the long run, is probably the most appropriate form for those who already have some practice.

Beginners can start with a few minutes, especially in the mornings. Some people relate the prayer to their breathing, so that as they inhale, they say, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God...", and as they exhale, they add, "...have mercy on me, a sinner." Something that helps a lot and is very common among monks is the use of a prayer chain, often called a "chotki" or "komboskini." The larger chain usually has one hundred or ninety-nine beads or knots, which are passed along while silently praying the prayer. If this prayer chain is not available, a rosary can also be used.

As the teachers of this prayer explain, this practice helps to purify the heart, to order the thoughts, and to focus them on God through the frequent invocation of the Name of the Lord. In this way, we enter more deeply into our interior, where God has made his dwelling, as Jesus Himself tells us (cf. Jn 14:23), and where we can encounter Him ever more intimately. The extraordinary simplicity of this prayer, which helps us to restrain and calm the external senses, makes room for the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, to the point that we can actually feel it. The masters of prayer speak of a kind of "inner warmth" that arises in the heart through deep prayer.

If we practice the "Jesus Prayer" regularly, we will notice that, over time, the desire to increase it more and more, to the extent of our possibilities, will grow in our hearts. We

³ The Prayer of the Heart sung by Harpa Dei:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfzXHDBSaIQ&list=RDmfzXHDBSaIQ&start_radio=1

will increasingly seek appropriate moments to withdraw to pray. Once we have “trained” ourselves a little in this prayer, we will see that, thanks to its simplicity, it lends itself perfectly to being prayed anywhere and in any circumstance. We could say that, with the help of this prayer, a kind of “monastic cell” is formed within us, to which we can retreat even when we are in noisy environments. Thus, we can pray the Prayer of the Heart while driving, while in a waiting room, and on many other occasions. It will help us to enter into inner silence, even if there is no silence on the outside.

Here I conclude this brief explanation of the “Prayer of the Heart,” which, as a prelude to contemplation, is very appropriate for deepening our love for Jesus, so that He may dwell more and more in our hearts and His love may completely shape us.

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/my-burden-is-light/>