

ORTHODOX BOOKLETS

Basic substantial teaching on what
Orthodox Christians believe



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THE WAY OF HOLINESS

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THE WAY OF HOLINESS

God's heart to make us holy

1

True faith encounters God as the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It finds that the gift of life and the gift of love comes from him.

The Father, from whom all things come, created us to enjoy Life in his Son, Jesus Christ, a life bestowed on us with love by the Holy Spirit.

This Life consists of Union with the living, Risen and Ascended Christ. In this union, he lives in us, he reigns in us and he makes us like him; and being made like him, we are made in the likeness of God himself.

This Life is characterized by the love that comes from God and which makes for unity with all. For the Trinity is perfect Love and Unity.

In Baptism we die with Christ that we may rise with him and have Life in him.

In Communion we are made one with Christ and each other in his Body and Blood.

Both Baptism and Communion effect a real participation in the Kingdom of God; they also require from us a continual dying to ourselves, daily.

2

Participation in these Mysteries is essential to receiving the Life God wishes to bestow on us all in his Love.

To be one with Christ is to be bonded in the same Life and the same Love which Christ gives to his church. He establishes this bond in the church as a visible manifestation of his Life and in his Kingdom.

Unless this Life and Love is visible in the church there is no evidence of Christ's love in the world for humanity to see.

Disciples are known by the quality of their Life in Christ and by their love for one another and all people.

There is only one Christ, therefore only one Life of Union in Christ. There may be many differences in people due to language and culture, but there is only one way of holiness in his Kingdom.

For Christ's purpose is to draw all people to himself and thereby unite them with the Father.

Christ himself is Life for us all.

Every saint down the ages has been made holy by union with him. No one can attain true holiness outside him. For to be outside him is already to be in a place of separation from the Life which is in his church.

The Life of Christ cannot properly be described. It can only be received as a gift in the church.

The divine life which the Risen and Ascended Christ gave to the church makes it something infinitely more than an

institution or group of people.

He imparted this Life to those who are his, in the church, well aware of their human frailty and vulnerability because his Life is stronger than sin and death. This gift cannot be acquired by effort or created by method. For then it would be possible to obtain it apart from Christ and apart from his Love in the church.

Unity comes about by doing God's will in loss of self for the sake of others.

To participate in Christ's Kingdom and to live in its unity we must lay down our life in heartfelt repentance.

The 'unity of faith' (Eph 4.13) has to be received from God unaltered. To change it and chop it is the sign of the 'natural man'.

The 'unity of faith' comes from on high, from God. It does not come from our own choosing, making or devising.

The New Testament says that divisions are a sign of the 'mind of the flesh', that is one which does not operate according to the Holy Spirit.

An 'invisible unity' of Christians is insufficient. Christians use the same words – God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, kingdom, church, sacraments, holiness – without realising they mean different things by them. This is some unity but truth and unity must go together.

2

To be made holy is to be filled with Christ's love on a permanent basis. Christ's own divine life makes us holy, both personally and together as a community

To be made holy is:

- to live obediently and effectively in the Light of Christ,
- to see all creation in him and to contemplate him without ceasing.

We have to make **a right beginning** – by participating in the unity of faith in the church.

The unity of faith accepts the essential mysteries

- of God himself as Trinity,
- of the Church where Christ dwells,
- of the Sacraments in which Christ gives us his Life

and of the way of holiness by which he makes us like him.

Doctrine, or church teaching does not define these mysteries. It directs us to their necessity.

Doctrine is a given. We do not make it up. We trust what is given us. We cannot pretend to know better than the Fathers or Saints.

The way of holiness is also given us. For the natural mind does not understand how God works at the deep level of the heart in the human being.

The New Testament refers to the way of holiness in terms of growing. It speaks of those who are 'beginners, 'young (men)' and 'fathers'.

Experience is everything in the way of holiness. That is why beginners and those still young in the faith learn by following the 'Fathers'.

The Fathers are the 'holy ones –those who have lived a holy life; those in the church have always learnt from their experience. Words cannot convey what it means to be holy. But when the Life and Love of Christ is embodied in a 'father', it can be 'felt, seen and touched' far deeper than words.

The Fathers and Saints were given wisdom to teach us how to follow Christ and be made holy.

They spoke of growing in faith and repentance and in all the spiritual virtues associated with obedience to Christ.

They spoke also of the goal of the spiritual life in terms of contemplation, where the emphasis is on resting in God, enjoying him and seeing him.

The Fathers also spoke of the 'cleansing' of our souls of our sinfulness.

They spoke of the 'illumination' of the heart which leads to the intimate knowledge of God's will.

They spoke further of the soul's 'union' with God.

The way of holiness is the same everywhere, whatever the area, whatever the language used (Greek, Syrian,

Latin etc), whatever the words used to describe it.

The Fathers avoided subjectivity. 'Faith' was never reduced to thoughts or feelings. All the saints, whatever their experience, spoke in objective terms:

- of obedience to God's commands
- of daily continual prayer,
- of sound perception,
- of personal stability,
- of patent love for all.

The emphasis by the Fathers on the objective obedience of the whole person, within and without, meant that the room for deception was minimal.

3

God begins where we are and with what we are in a life set within the ordinary circumstances of the world.

In order to draw us more closely to himself, God draws us away from the attractions of the world and dissolves the attachments we have made to the world. The self sees life in the world as the be all and end all. God helps us see through the attractions of the world. When God draws us away from the world we may feel a little strange. Things don't seem the same. We don't get the same 'buzz' out of life that we used to.

Even worship and prayer may not seem to do for us what they did before, or any other of the Christian things we once did.

We may even think 'something has gone wrong', or

maybe 'everything seems to be going wrong'.

We may even think God does not love us any more. We seem in the dark. Nothing, it seems, will alter it.

If we think, 'I don't understand', that is correct. We do not understand what God is doing.

When the Love and the Light of God draw near, they show us that whatever is not of God isn't worth having.

This feels strange because we have got used to being 'at home' in the world.

The natural mind will try and work things out. It can't. Only faith and trust in God will help us. We are in God's hands. We must come to a place of peace so as not to hinder God's work.

4

Humility accepts:

- that God is at work,
- that he knows what to do,
- and that we can trust him.

At first, our faith may prove to be fragile and weak. God has to build us up in true faith in him.

We can tell how weak or strong our faith is, by observing each day how negative we get.

We grow in faith by affirming each day our trust in God in the face of any negativity. Every time we affirm faith God will increase it.

We struggle to keep faith.

We may think:

- ‘God doesn’t want me to be holy’,
- I am too much of a sinner. God can’t make me holy’,
- ‘I don’t believe this is God’s will for me.’

These are lies. Faith sees through them, and through all the other half-truths hidden in our mind.

Or, we may try to explain things away: it’s just one of those things; it’s just a passing phase.

Thoughts like this take our focus off God. They distract us and send us down blind alleys; they make us lose our peace,

God is in control of all aspects of our life, external and internal, the good and the bad, the past and the future.

We may deny this - until our faith grows

We have to go on affirming faith until our faith is made perfect, in every trial and t in every temptation.

There is no other way to grow into the fullness of God.

It is essential to gather up the whole person into our relationship with God.

Faith enables us to relate to God with the whole of ourselves and avoid a partial relationship with just the bits we choose.

With faith the broken bits of us can be gathered together by Jesus, cleansed, healed and restored to a new unity in him. It takes courage to do this. But unless we do we will dally on the edge for years and not get anywhere.

Faith understands what God wants and learns to love it. With faith we develop a willingness to grow and to get on with it.

Accepting that God is in control of our circumstances does not mean that they will not change. They will. But if our focus in life is merely to get rid of things we dislike, we will not see how God wants to change us. God may change outer circumstances. But he wants to change the inner responses of our hearts.

True faith brings peace. With peace comes deeper surrender.

5

God builds up our hope so that we can endure the journey.

The only hope the world gives is our own capacity to 'solve problems'.

If we put our hope in our own strength our hope in God will be weak.

God exposes the hold the world has on us. We believe that what the world tells us is true. The self has fashioned a way of working and thinking on the basis that our sense perceptions are the only means of perception. The affect

of this is to limit our view and distort our understanding.

The world shuts God out. Unwittingly the self has learnt to do the same.

The grip of the self on our lives, in our hearts and minds, is very strong. The self and all its instincts is set on survival in this life. Preservation – keeping hold on life - is the all-consuming goal.

The self which is separate from God thrives in this exclusion of God. It is blind and lives in the dark. We don't realize this – until God shows us otherwise. The Light of God shows up our blindness. It shows us how helpless we are. At first we are very reluctant to accept this.

Poverty of spirit enables us to accept our helplessness. It sees the need to learn dependence on God.

We ask him to set us free from our blindness and darkness.

To walk into the Light is wonderful; but it can also be painful. For the self still wants to stay in the darkness. This will cause some conflict.

We will have to endure difficulties, temptations and trials.

With God however the struggle becomes our friend for this is the way we learn to grow in God.

Our head will tell us 'there must be a better way'. But our head does not know the ways of God. The self will always look for an easier way. It doesn't exist.

Our hope lies in God's own heart to change us and make us more and more like Jesus. God will pursue us in his love. He will find a way of overcoming the obstructions we put in his way. We will find a way of being on God's side to will his will whatever that may be. Lack of faith, low self-esteem, gut negativity, act like great boulders barring progress on the way of discipleship. But faith will ask God to remove these blockages; so that we can go forward in peace and hope.

6

God exposes the areas in our heart which need to be brought to repentance. He shows them through the everyday incidents of life.

We just need to be honest with ourselves, and admit to ourselves what we really feel and think!

We must endure this exposure, as far as lies in us, with thankfulness, and if possible without objecting and without complaining.

The presence of sin in us will cause us pain so too will our attempt to hold onto sin.

Faith surrenders everything to God. Hope asks Christ to cleanse us, whatever the cost. Christ knows we will feel so different when we are healed and so grateful when we have been fully united to him. Our hope must be like his hope.

Prayer becomes increasing surrender to God. Rather than asking for things, we ask that his will be done.

Prayer from our lips or our head becomes a deep cry to him from the heart.

When prayer comes more deeply from within, it draws the energies of our heart to him.

Prayer cries out to him in our need. He draws near to us in tenderness and mercy.

Conventional advice may tell you to 'pray harder'. This is not what is required now. Our task is to learn dependence on him.

Things may seem dark: but in this 'night' faith learns to thrive and shine. Our way is one of 'not knowing'.

Faith trusts God that he knows and that is what counts. We keep praying even though we do not know yet where we are going

Faith tells us that, though we may be in darkness according to our senses, God is still present though we cannot see him or feel him. Much 'spirituality' today is based on self-development. They may have a 'Christian' veneer, but they are based on using one's own light and self-effort. This goes directly contrary to the way of holiness.

Other 'Christian' spiritualities are 'blithely' optimistic and unrealistic. They regard darkness as a temporary blip. They do not understand that it is the presence of God which produces the sense of darkness in the self.

Pain is seen as something to be avoided. The world

does not understand that spiritual pain can sometimes be fruitful.

A lot of time can be taken up just coming to terms with this emotionally and mentally.

The spiritual conflict between God, the self, and the world, is profound and unavoidable. The battle has to be played out in the soul of each person.

The amount of faith and hope we have is seen in our prayer. When prayer is running low our faith and hope are running thin.

We have to find faith to cry out to him not only once but again and again, until the cry inside becomes continuous.

We must never forget that the Risen Jesus has already won the victory over all darkness, sin and death. The Christian is baptised into the death of Jesus that we may live and reign with him.

The spiritual conflict is about getting our whole self on the winning side.

7

Jesus said 'from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' There is a lot of other 'stuff' also. There are plenty of words to add onto the list. The evidence is all there – if we are willing to see it. We will hear it in our thoughts and feel it in our feelings.

Negative, negative, negative; negativity is what our thoughts and feelings tell us when the self is being exposed.

We may even try and object when God shows us the extent of the mess inside. We might blame others - or even the devil. It doesn't work. The self is too deep inside us. We have to accept it is 'me' and take responsibility before God for 'me'

We cannot break free of the self's power by our own determination. This will be a source of great trial. The only way is **deep and continual repentance from the heart**

The experience of self will become so awful that we will be ready to do anything, if only we can escape it.

The habits and memories of the past profoundly affect our feelings, and thoughts. Through them the self still controls, enslaves, and imprisons us.

Our feelings and thoughts are stamped through and through with the self that chooses and wills to be separate and independent of God. They are so familiar to us that we don't notice how dark and sinful they are.

We have to see what we have done to ourselves and our relationship to God. Only then will we find the will for it to be taken away. For us to repent, and to let God cleanse us deeply from the consequences of sin, will involve pain; because we are so deeply attached to the self.

While we are attached to our stuff and don't want let go and surrender to God trials will continue. The pain of holding onto our life will do its own work, and we will let go..

God will expose every area of our life where we do not freely live in him. There can be no hiding place for the self to cling to its own life.

God will cleanse our heart; but he cannot do so without our consent, nor rid us of our stuff without the full cooperation of our will.

The relationship God seeks with us is one of mutual love. This requires free consent, acceptance and surrender in self-giving. God for his part freely gives everything of himself to us.

God creates a unified will in us by building us up in faith, hope, and love; then we will freely accept the changes in us which God wants to make.

Once we accept the cost involved in discipleship we can settle down in a more steady faith and cope in peace with the reactions of the self.

8

Knowing that God loves us and that his mercy never fails, whatever our faults and failures, we can begin to take more seriously the truth that Jesus can deal with all the stuff inside us however horrible, awful and disgusting.

We can stop being so frightened and self-protective in our relationship with God. We can begin to cope with all the false guilt and shame that comes from our self still wanting to be good in its own eyes.

Because we want to be good in our own eyes the self can give us a hard time. It can get angry and impatient and tell us off. It can threaten us with abuse and

punishment. It can go into misery and indulge in self-pity.

All this hinders the soul enormously. The sooner we surrender it all to Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse it the better. Then the Spirit can get to work on the deeper things still.

We need to be patient with ourselves. God undoubtedly has mercy. We need to give ourselves more mercy.

We can begin to let go of our hurts, angers and resentments. These block the process of opening up. When we let go of the debts we believe others owe us, our hearts will have more space for God's mercy on us.

In the same way we need to let go of anxiety. This can consume great amounts of energy emotionally and mentally. The self is always trying to work things out in its head. This too is a great impediment and renders us exhausted and weak.

In our struggles and confusion we will need guidance, support and encouragement.

The self sometimes tries to exclude itself from God's mercy out of lack of faith, pride or false humility. These too are traps for the unwary.

Confusion is one of the soul's sorest trials. As the truth is spoken to us it is important to listen for conviction by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can show us the truth about anything. It is then important to obey him. We should develop a steadiness in prayer. Let prayer draw all the desire and affections of our heart.

On the other hand do not force things too much. Develop a habit of surrender, to God, his love and his mercy. Any short phrase of prayer can be used as long as it redirects our desires and feelings towards Jesus.

The prayer 'Jesus have mercy' contains our need of everything. Jesus always sends the Holy Spirit into us. Other phrases can also be helpful - 'God help me'. 'Jesus I need you', 'Jesus I love you' and so on. Short and frequent prayer will result in a greater degree of intimacy day by day.

9

At times there will be dryness and boredom. Faith keeps the prayer going and lets God get on with the cleansing. Love waits on him while he does it.

God will begin to take over. He will bring moments of stillness to the heart.

Confusion and defeat will be repeated until the person owns all the emotions and thoughts that afflict him or her. Courage is needed to see them all, however many, and begin to face them.

Once identified the person can become open about them and learn how to turn away from them and stand against them in continuous prayer.

There is no area of human life which cannot be gathered up into God's cleansing work. Every excess and shortfall of sin can be corrected by the Holy Spirit.

The outer and inner life can be healed so that we become chaste in every way in body, mind, soul and spirit. Full faith must guide us unerringly here so that we never settle for anything less than the full truth. True hope is equally important so that we do not settle down and allow the self to retain secret comfort zones.

We will have to endure days when everything seems to gang up against us. The things that afflict us sometimes operate like a pack of wolves seeking to bring us to our knees.

At times we will feel like we have been set upon and left for dead. We will feel abandoned and in despair and feel like giving up. Faith and hope hold us to the truth of God's love for us and keep us in peace.

Jesus will always pick us up and give us new life in the Spirit.

Misery and self-pity eat away at the soul rendering it open to attack and vulnerable to the lies of the enemy. The soul can wallow in misery for hours or days to no avail, turned in on itself and not open to God.

Misery, anxiety, anger, fear, along with greed, lust and so on are the 'vices'. They hold us in their grip and are a great impediment to progress.

We must seek conviction about everything in our lives and move in that conviction. God can bring us to an inner peace and certainty about any issue.

At the same time it is important in the early stages to

check things out because lies and half-truths may still be lodged in heart and mind.

When the spiritual conflict is on things are difficult and it is a struggle. It is vital to persist for as long as it takes until we see victory. If we stand in prayer in the spiritual conflict Jesus will break the power of every stronghold.

When we know all the things that overcome us and have given them to Jesus there is little for us to 'do' but avoid obvious sin, keep faith and hope alight, keep watch over our hearts and pray continually. That is a lot in itself.

10

The cleansing of our deep sin is now in the hands of God. Our response is to be patient and endure.

In the cleansing we may experience various pains or strange feelings. No attention should be paid to them because they are only part of the process. They have little or no meaning in themselves and we should not become focused on them. If necessary, talk to the one who helps you.

Consistent repentance involves persistent awareness. There is no substitute for vigilance over the thoughts and feelings.

We must spot attack immediately. At the moment of attack we still have choice not to listen, not to feed the temptation by attending to it and therefore not to give it energy. If we consent to temptation, the wolf will bite us and we will end up dead on the floor. But even through

failure, the Lord will strengthen our resolve and determination to choose him.

With practice the time it takes to turn away from temptation becomes shorter and shorter until we can turn away and pray in an instant.

It is important to believe this. We need a full faith in the ability of God to help us and patience while we learn. Without these we will doubt, dally and lose every time.

As faith and obedience grow so will our prayer. We will begin to see victories. We will grow in intimacy.

The more we experience this the more we will know that Jesus' mercy and commitment to us is complete and the more the flame of hope and love will grow.

Each area of our heart will slowly be cleansed of its habitual distortion, each attachment of the self, and to the world will be broken.

As each 'vice' is identified and handed over to Jesus the Holy Spirit works on the heart to set us free. He attaches each part to Jesus until he has power over them all.

As mind and memory are set free of the rubbish of the years we must learn to be empty and content till Jesus is ready to fill us with himself.

In particular we must learn to let go of the habit of jumping to conclusions, making judgements about everything and holding onto them.

This habit is another great snare to the soul. We must sit

lightly on all our perceptions. The truth is God knows and we do not.

Progress is always along the way of 'not knowing'. This leads us into great humility and poverty of spirit. These, along with patience and love, are the supreme all-conquering 'strengths' or 'virtues' which God gives to replace the vices.

Our progress will be seen no more clearly than in our attitude to others. The work of mercy and love in our hearts is intended to benefit not merely ourselves but others. The self is always betrayed by hardness and exclusion. However, as God deals with our hearts, and we find a new identity and integrity in his love; we have a new heart for others also.

This can feel frightening at first; but as we trust him and are obedient we see the barriers we put up between ourselves and others are not necessary, because his love is holding us on the inside. He expands our hearts more than we are ever able to dream or think, for our heart is made for the Kingdom of God - to 'contain' the Uncontainable.

The night may feel dark but the spirit will realize that we are moving into the light. The presence of God will become more obvious. At times he will press in so strongly we will feel we dare not even stir.

As we persevere in the cleansing our perception of things changes. Instead of the mind being dominated by the self the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the truth of things.

When times of conflict re-appear we must remember what the Holy Spirit has shown us. God renews the mind to be able to understand his ways. However obedience comes first, then understanding. Understanding never comes through the head only.

As we have the courage to own our sin and submit it to Jesus, he sends the Holy Spirit to work on it to set us free.

The Holy Spirit also gives us conviction as to the new way of life he wishes us to lead in each and every aspect of it.

As we are faithful and obedient in this too, Jesus unites us increasingly to himself. The result is that our life 'manifests our baptism'.

11

As we are healed and restored we are **sanctified**, inside and outside.

Continuing ever more steady in prayer every negative feeling and thought is overcome in the victory of Jesus.

God is very close. He just needs us to pray at all times.

The experience that the self always deals death moves us to seek God at every moment and seek him without fail.

Prayer becomes constant, patience continually increases. God's mercy is so great there is no alternative.

The important thing now is not to turn back.

From time to time we may become **aware of God** touching us with peace and joy.

He may do this at any time ; or it may come when we are very still, as our whole being is gathered or 'recollected' in prayer. We must let him do whatever he wants and not interrupt.

These touches may be accompanied by beautiful sensations. It is important however that the soul does not hold onto these or becomes attached to them, or seek them rather than the Lord himself. For God has to cleanse our spirit from all attachment even of spiritual things. The Lord teaches us not to become attached to anything whatsoever but to seek him only.

The more detached we are the more freely can he give these touches. We must expect every prayer time to be different and not want a repeat of the last.

The prime purpose of any touch is not to give delight so much as to effect a further cleansing in the heart to prepare us for greater union with Jesus still.

It is the desire of Christ to draw everyone into union with him. What at first called for faith becomes a matter of knowledge.

This does not lessen the need for faith, obedience and prayer for union always leads to conformity to the will of God in all things. Indeed, our **vigilance** must become a matter of habit or 'second nature'.

The Holy Spirit will give us times of great peace when there is an influx (or infusion) of divine love into our soul.

We know beyond words that we do belong to him, that we are his, and that he dwells in the heart.

Peace comes to our heart at a depth beyond knowing, and yet we know it.

This peace may be fitful, come and go, but we will also realise it is our destiny and our inheritance. It is gift but it is ours.

We could never desire anything more beautiful than this. We become all the more single-minded and whole hearted about our vigilance, waiting on him to give us knowledge of himself once again.

The discovery that we can, by the grace of God, stand in the spiritual conflict and know in ourselves the victory Jesus has won for us is a big turning point. Stability becomes the key now, our aim the ability to stand at all times.

We must see that all our escapes, all our bolt-holes are sealed off. We do so not under duress but simply out of love for the beloved. We may still have to work hard but at least now we have tasted too much of the goodness of the Lord to ever want to go back.

As the soul is taught by God it realises the best thing is to be content to die.

God will cleanse our attachments to spiritual things in his

own time. We must happily endure whatever he wills with love.

Sometime we may have to endure lack of energy and fervour. Do not be misled into thinking 'something has gone wrong'. It is the very cleansing that can temporarily produce this effect. Patience is everything

12

Stability and consistency in love are everything. Prayer is ever growing, love is ever deepening.

The time it takes to become still in prayer becomes briefer, more frequent and habitual.

At the same time our serving has no conditions and our giving holds nothing back.

Eventually we find we have acquired a habit of obedience. We are not for turning. We become a person of peace. The energies of the heart are surrendered and open to the impulse of the Spirit at all times Our energies flow together in a unified way.

Whatever impulses and pressures we experience the heart remains calm and unified.

This does not mean we are free from these things as such. But we are not thrown off balance by them. Recourse to prayer quickly restores the soul to complete peace. The 'virtues', of humility, poverty of spirit, goodness, mercy, patience, and love, flower under the repeated influx of divine grace and love into our hearts.

Even our dream life becomes quiet. God heals disturbances at all depths.

When we have learnt to stand in the spiritual conflict for our own stuff God will use us to stand in the victory for others.

13

God now holds the will in the heart in ever more constant union with himself. The mind and memory are kept in repeated surrender. The test here is how far we truly see all things in life as they are in God, that is in the truth, free from self, free from the self's deceits and the lies of the world. The test of this is seen in our actions, all of them, small and great - how we respond to and handle things, people and situations.

This is a true contemplation of the created order.

The beginnings of the contemplation of God come about in those intimate times of stillness and quiet when God touched us deeply in our hearts. As these continue we develop the capacity to 'look at' God from the heart.

We know God is there but it has nothing to do with the head - that is quite still and empty, its energy united with that of the heart. This stillness is not engineered by us. It comes from God himself and the inflow of his love and grace into our heart.

These touches become more and more powerful, longer and deeper. They set our hearts on fire with longing for nothing but the presence of God; they effect ever deeper

cleansing and draw from us even greater love to respond to and obey every revelation of his will.

We should ensure that we find the time to be still before God each day so that he can fill us as much as he wills.

These times become so powerful; that the grace received in them becomes the great anchors of our daily life.

At times the power of the presence will be so great that prayer itself ceases and we are held so close it is as if we are unable to move. These things effect a great work in the soul.

The unified energies of the heart get drawn from the very deepest parts of body and soul, so as to support the steady rhythm of prayer within us. They become ever more quiet.

The prayer becomes so gentle in its movement towards God that the intimacy becomes almost overwhelming.

This is the prayer of union. It is quite the opposite of going to sleep – there is a beautiful sense of life in relationship.

The soul becomes like a lake which is perfectly still; there are no words or thoughts, images or imagination.

The soul becomes as it were light - though no light is seen. It becomes a mirror in which it senses the 'reflection' of the presence of God: it 'sees his face' by reflection. Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD'. Paradoxically, in this life, we can

also say we see him 'in darkness' meaning by that that we see him neither by shape or form, or anything in our normal sense perceptions.

But we can know HIM with a pure and certain awareness in our spirit and we know that *he* is perfect light.

The contemplative is never afraid of action. Indeed the greater the stillness in which the soul dwells the more he or she can serve God in all circumstances all the day long.

The night too is used for prayer as God wills. Active service in daily life does not conflict with prayer but is part of it.

The soul looks to God, receives the light and obeys without hesitation. With vigilance of heart the self should have no chance to get in.

When there is pressure from the self the soul allows the Lord to burn out the roots of desire or assertion that is not of him.

The sacrifice of one's life on the altar of the heart burns bright with the flame of love as all our energies and capacities are consumed on it. The whole person walks day and night before our Holy God.

The Lord rejoices and brings forth fruit in abundance.

How far the Lord takes any individual into the ultimate depths of union is of his choosing. Not all will be taken into the highest reaches. Each has to be open, each has

to surrender and be obedient to the full.

The images of 'spiritual betrothal' and 'spiritual marriage' are taken from the scriptures to speak of 'the Bride' as the recipient of God's love.

As God prepares us we may receive the most overwhelming experiences of love. Our focus however will be on simply letting the cleansing power of these infusions do its final work in our hearts.

The soul will often be made aware of how unsanctified it still is. This generates a loving fear of God not to entertain the slightest sinful thought or feeling even for a moment.

We have opportunity to do this and grow every moment of the day. As our hearts expand under the influx of his grace we will continue to ignore all passing phenomena. Our spirit functions ever more directly with the Holy Spirit through our hearts without consciously knowing how it happens except that we know it is he who is working. The evidence is in the prayer and the abundance of the fruit of the Spirit.

Nothing in the world now gives the soul any pleasure for its whole pleasure is in God at all times even when God gives us pleasure at the created level. The heart desires nothing but to pray. God pours his life into it continually. Every day becomes a transformation of the soul into God. The intimacy of God with the soul is quite simply beyond all description.

There is also rare quality of service in immediate and

joyful response to God's prompting. More trials bring an even greater overcoming. This will seem extreme to others but to God's servant it is simply

love.

The Booklets

- 1 Who is God?
- 2 Who is Jesus?
- 3 Why the Church?
- 4 The Holy Spirit
- 5 What is Salvation?
- 6 What is Tradition?
- 7 Why Liturgy?
- 8 The Interpretation of Scripture
- 9 Knowing the Will of God
- 10 The Way of Holiness**
- 11 Living, Dying and Departed
- 12 The Saints