

THE PREACHING AND PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

September 1, 2015
The Beginning of the Indiction
 Revision C

GOSPEL: Luke 4:16-22
EPISTLE: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

The beginning of the ecclesiastical New Year has its roots in the Old Testament Feast of Trumpets, which occurred at about this time of year. To understand the significance of the Gospel and Epistle lessons, therefore, a good understanding of the Feast of Trumpets and its prophetic significance is necessary.

In the West, today’s Gospel lesson is sometimes used for January 1st or New Year’s Day; other times, it is used for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany. Today’s Epistle lesson is generally used in the West for the American holiday of Thanksgiving Day in November.

Table of Contents

Background: The Feast of Trumpets	1
Features of the Day of Trumpets	2
Various Uses of Trumpets in the Old Testament.....	2
Prophetic References to Trumpets in the New Testament.....	3
THE PREACHING OF THE CHURCH	5
Gospel: Luke 4:16-22	5
Jesus Was Anointed in His Humanity	6
Jesus’ Reading in the Synagogue	7
The Reaction of the People of Nazareth.....	8
THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH.....	10
Epistle: 1 Timothy 2:1-7.....	10
Background to Paul’s letters to Timothy	10
The Prayers of the Church	10
Different Kinds of Prayer	11
Praying for All Men.....	13
Warning: Do not Pray Against Someone	14
Thy Will Be Done	15
A Quiet and Peaceable Life.....	15
Becoming Like God	16

Background: The Feast of Trumpets

The Lord in the Mosaic Law proclaimed seven Feasts as follows:

FEAST	MONTH	FEAST DAY
Day of Lord’s Passover	First	14 Nisan
Feast of Unleavened Bread	First	15-21 Nisan
Day of Firstfruits	First	16 Nisan
Feast of Weeks or Pentecost	Third	6 Sivan
Feast of Trumpets	Seventh	1 Tishri
Day of Atonement	Seventh	10 Tishri
Feast of Tabernacles	Seventh	15-22 Tishri

The first month, Nisan, was proclaimed to be the first month of the year (Exodus 12:2), but the 1st of Tishri came to be referred to as Jewish New Year's Day. This is still the case today. In the Orthodox Church, a similar situation exists. Pascha (or Passover or Easter) is the beginning of the Orthodox lectionary and the chief of the feast days. But yet September 1st is the Beginning of the Indiction or proclamation¹.

Features of the Day of Trumpets

Between the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Trumpets is a long summer (almost four months) that can be quite hot, especially in the Southern lowlands. In areas near the Negev today, work is often suspended for several hours during the heat of the day. While this may not have been the case in Biblical times, "bearing the burden and scorching heat of the day" (Matthew 20:12) was difficult and the relief of cooler weather was welcomed.

According to rabbinical traditions², the Feast of Trumpets was the anniversary of the beginning of the world. In addition, since the Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur) was regarded as a day of judgment, the Feast of Trumpets inaugurated a period of repentance in preparation for Yom Kippur.

The distinctive feature about the Feast of Trumpets was simply a day of the blowing of trumpets where only the priests were allowed to blow the silver trumpets (Numbers 10:8). Nothing is mentioned in the Mosaic Law regarding how to do it, but the day was declared a Sabbath (no matter what day of the week it fell on). Thus it was regarded as an important day.

Since it was the first day of the month, the normal sacrifice for the beginning of the month (or new moon) was required (Numbers 28:11-15). Under Mosaic Law, the beginning of any month was determined by the first sighting of the new moon. In addition to these sacrifices, others were required also (Numbers 29:1-6). While this was a Mosaic Law requirement, there were no instructions to answer the question: "Why are we doing this?" However, this can be inferred by comparing the uses of trumpets in the Scripture.

Various Uses of Trumpets in the Old Testament

There were many different uses of trumpets described in the Scriptures. Among them are the ones listed below:

- **Calling the Assembly³ Together:** One blast was used for the heads of clans; two blasts was used for the entire assembly of the congregation (Numbers 10:1-4, 7).

¹ For more details on the Seven Hebrew Feast Days, see Mark Kern, The Hebrew Feast Days, St. Athanasius Press, 1975.

² Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p.350

³ Assembly is the Hebrew word *edah*; in the Greek Septuagint, *edah* is translated as *ekklesia*. In the New Testament, *ekklesia* is translated Church.

- **Commencing a Journey:** At the sound of the first alarm, the camps on the East side of the Tabernacle moved out. At the second alarm, those on the South side moved out (Numbers 10:5-6), etc.
- **Going into Battle:** Moses was instructed that when going into battle “you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and be saved from your enemies” (Number 10:9).
- **Warning of an Imminent Battle:** Watchmen were required to blow a trumpet to warn of an approaching enemy (Ezekiel 33:3-6).
- **Proclaiming a New King:** For example: Zadok the priest anointing Solomon (1 Kings 1:39), Elisha anointing Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-13), and Jehoiada anointing Joash (2 Chronicles 23:11-13).
- **Leading the Procession of the Ark:** As the Ark of the Covenant was moved, trumpets preceded it (1 Chronicles 15:24, 16:6).
- **With Other Instruments:** Along with horn, cymbals, harps, lyres and voices at various events centered on the Ark and the Temple (1 Chronicles 15:24, 16:42; 2 Chronicles 15:14; Ezra 3:10-13; Nehemiah 12:31-43.)

There are few descriptions of how the people of God actually celebrated the Feast of Trumpets in the Old Testament. One of the few references that give us some insight, however, occurred in the days of Nehemiah shortly after the completion of the wall of Jerusalem. On the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), Ezra began reading the books of the Mosaic Law to the people. The people all wept because they realized that they hadn't kept the Law and the Babylonian captivity was the result. However, Nehemiah instructed them that this day (the Feast of Trumpets) is holy to the Lord, and weeping and mourning are not appropriate. “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to the Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:9-12).

Prophetic References to Trumpets in the New Testament

There are many references to the end of time where trumpets are involved. Among them are:

- **Angels Will Blow the Trumpets:** When the Son of man comes on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory, He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather His elect from one end of the sky to the other (Matthew 24:30-31).
- **Seven Distinct Trumpet Blasts:** Seven angels will sound seven trumpets. The first six trumpet blasts consist of all kinds of wars and plagues (Revelation 8, 9).
- **The Last Trumpet:** At the seventh or last trumpet, the Kingdom of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord, who will rule it forever. At this time, the dead will be raised to face judgment (Revelation 10:5-7, 11:15-19, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.)
- **Meet Lord in the Air:** At the last trumpet the dead in Christ shall rise first, then the living will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air as He comes (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

From the above references, one can see that on the Feast of Trumpets, an assembly is called together. This assembly is the Church who are gathered together to be with their Lord on His return. Collectively they represent various camps of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16, 3:6-9, 3:29) and they are commencing a journey. The trumpets are blown both to warn of an

impending battle (giving people a chance to repent) and to lead the Armies of God into battle (Revelation 19). The last trumpet also proclaims a new King to rule over the Kingdom of this world. The trumpets also precede the Ark of His Covenant which will appear in the Temple in heaven (Revelation 11:19) and which is about to move to the earth for its permanent resting place in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-3).

Thus the Feast of Trumpets is a time of rejoicing. There has been a long, hot summer (2,000 years so far), and the Church is very eager for her Lord to return (Revelation 6:9-11, 3:11; 1 Corinthians 16:22). The Feast of Trumpets thus does begin a “new year” in that it begins the end of time.

In choosing this occasion for the beginning of the Church Year, the Church Fathers have directed our attention to the Lord’s return in Glory. Today is referred to as “The Beginning of the Indiction” (i.e. the proclamation) which is exactly what trumpets were used for.

THE PREACHING OF THE CHURCH

September 1, 2014

Gospel: Luke 4:16-22

Background

Today's Gospel lesson took place in Nazareth, Jesus' hometown (Luke 4:16), in the year 27 AD, or early in His public ministry where He was asked to read from the Prophet Isaiah in the Synagogue. He had recently been baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34) and tempted for 40 days in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13).

Luke's Gospel omits some of the events recorded in John's Gospel. For example, after His baptism, John records Jesus' trip to Cana of Galilee for the wedding feast (John 2:1-12), then to Capernaum before returning to Jerusalem for Passover of 27 AD (John 2:12-13). While there, Jesus cleaned out the Temple (John 2:13-25), spoke with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and, with His disciples began baptizing many people in Judea (John 3:22-36) such that word got out that Jesus had baptized more people than John (John 4:1).

At this point He left Judea to go to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (John 4:3, Luke 4:14). On the way, He spoke with Photini, the woman at the well in Sychar (John 4:4-45). Following this, He came to Nazareth where our Gospel lesson picks up.

The next identifiable date in the Scriptures is Pentecost of the following year, 28 AD, (John 5:1) where John Chrysostom and other Church Fathers identify the feast mentioned in John 5:1 as Pentecost due to the references to the Mosaic Law. Pentecost, in Jewish tradition, commemorated⁴ the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. See footnote to John 5:1 in the Orthodox Study Bible).

Thus, Jesus' reading from Isaiah in the Synagogue (Luke 4:18-19) could refer to the Feast of Trumpets, but we do not have firm dates to confirm this. Since the Year of Jubilee was announced by the blowing of trumpets 10 days after the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 25:8-13) and since the context of Jesus' reading speaks of liberty for the captives and the oppressed (which was what Jubilee was all about), the date of the Gospel lesson was probably around the Feast of Trumpets.

Whether the Year of Jubilee was actually observed according to Mosaic Law, we don't know. Jewish tradition suggests it was. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records⁵ the gist of the regulations for the Year of Jubilee, but doesn't mention any instance when it was actually followed.

Copyright © Mark Kern 2007

⁴ The nation of Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai on the first day of the third month, Sivan (Exodus 19:1). A few days later, after Israel had been prepared, the Lord gave the Law from the midst of the fire on the top of the mountain. Thus Pentecost commemorated the Old Covenant Law. Under the Hebrew calendar, Pentecost could fall on the 5th, 6th or 7th of Sivan depending on whether the first two months (Nisan and Iyyar) had 29 or 30 days.

⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities* iii, xii, 3.

At the time of the Gospel lesson, Jesus was very highly regarded. He “was being glorified by all” (Luke 4:15), “all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22). They just couldn’t believe this was Joseph and Mary’s son, the kid they grew up with.

Jesus Was Anointed in His Humanity

The first part of the Reading from Isaiah that Jesus read stated, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me” (Luke 4:18) to do several things. Christ did not need anointing in His Deity; but this was appropriate for His humanity.

Ambrose of Milan stated⁶ that not only was Christ anointed in His humanity, but just as the Spirit sent Christ by His anointing, so later Christ sent the Spirit. The Trinity works together in their dealing with mankind.

“The clear evidence of the Scriptures is that the Holy Spirit appointed the Apostles and Prophets. We add that the Spirit was upon Christ. As Christ sent the Spirit (John 14:26), so the Spirit sent the Son of God. For the Son of God says: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me; He has sent Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and sight to the blind’. And having read this from the Book of Isaiah, He said ‘Today has this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears’ (Luke 4:18-21); that He might point out that it was said of Himself”.

“Can we, then, wonder if the Spirit sent both the Prophets and the Apostles, since Christ said, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me?’ (Luke 4:18) And rightly did He say ‘upon Me’, because He was speaking as the Son of Man. For as the Son of Man He was anointed and sent to preach the Gospel”.

Hippolytus wrote⁷ about Christ’s anointing as being part of the message of the Prophets. Those who believed this were cleansed; those who didn’t had their sins sealed for Judgment Day.

“Gabriel said, ‘And to anoint the Most Holy’ (Daniel 9:24). The Most Holy is none other than the Son of God, who, when He came and manifested Himself, said to them, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me’ (Luke 4:18, Isaiah 61:1), and so forth. Whoever, therefore, believed on the heavenly Priest, were cleansed by that same Priest, and their sins were blotted out. And whoever did not believe on Him, despising Him as a man, had their sins sealed, as those, which could not be taken away. The angel, foreseeing that not all should believe on Him, said, ‘To finish sins, and to seal up sins’ (Daniel 9:24 LXX). For as many as continued to disbelieve Him, even to the end, had their sins not finished, but sealed to be kept for judgment. But as many as will believe on Him as One able to remit sins, have their sins blotted out. Therefore he says: ‘To seal up vision and prophet’” (Daniel 9:24).

⁶ Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, III, i, 1-2

⁷ Hippolytus, Commentary on Daniel, II, 17, in Part I Exegetical

Jesus' Reading in the Synagogue

When Jesus was asked to read from the Prophet Isaiah (which was the prescribed reading for the day according to the Synagogue lectionary) He read from Isaiah 61:1-2. There are six items included in this and most of them relate to the Feast of Trumpets and thus the beginning of the Church Year. What made this reading all the more powerful is that Jesus stated after He read it: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). The six items are:

I am the Messiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me." Messiah means "Anointed One." For Jesus to say that this Scripture was fulfilled in their ears meant that He claimed to be Messiah. The villagers found this hard to believe (Luke 4:22ff).

Preaching the Good News (Gospel) to the Poor: As with the rich young (synagogue) ruler that Jesus asked to sell all that he had to obtain treasure in heaven, the rich generally have difficulty receiving the Good News. The burden of their wealth makes it difficult for them to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The poor, however, receive it much easier. The Indiction is the proclamation of the Good News to the poor. So it was with the preaching of the Twelve and the Seventy: largely to the poor.

Send Out the Downtrodden Forgiven: Luke's Gospel quotes the Septuagint text of Isaiah 61 word for word except for this phrase. The Septuagint reading of this phrase is "heal the brokenhearted." The word "send out" in Luke's Gospel is the Greek word *apostollo* from which comes the word apostle. The Twelve and the Seventy Apostles and others like them throughout the centuries have been sent out forgiven. This is part of the Indiction.

Cyril of Alexandria stated⁸ that the words "heal the brokenhearted" referred to those "whom Satan had broken by the rod of spiritual violence".

Proclaim Release to the Captives: This refers to those saints of all ages held captive in Hades awaiting the coming of Messiah. When Christ rose from the dead, He led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8, Psalms 68:18) and plundered Hades. Celebration of this event is a part of the Pascha sunrise service in the Orthodox Church and more discussion of this is included under Holy Saturday.

Proclaim Recovery of Sight to the Blind: Many people are unable to see what is going on around them. This was true of the villagers in Nazareth who tried to throw Jesus off a cliff shortly after He read these passages (Luke 4:28-30). This was also true of the Pharisees who had such difficulty with Jesus' healing of a blind man on the Sabbath (John 9:1-34). Jesus spoke to them afterward: "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind" (John 9:39). The problem here is the blindness caused by sin (John 9:41).

Proclaim an Acceptable Year of the Lord: In the Mosaic Law, every seventh year "the Land shall have a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field nor prune your

⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, tr. R. Payne Smith, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983, Chapter 4

vineyard” (Leviticus 25:4). After seven Sabbaths of years, or seven times seven, the fiftieth year was the Year of Jubilee. If the seventh year was a Sabbath to the Lord, the fiftieth was more so.

John of Damascus stated⁹ that Christ’s Reading from Isaiah applied to those held captive in Hades awaiting His coming just as much as it applied to those living in Israel.

Christ’s soul, when it was deified, descended into Hades, in order that, just as the Sun of Righteousness rose for those upon the earth, so likewise He might bring light to those who sit under the earth in darkness and shadow of death. He brought the message of peace to those upon the earth, release to the prisoners, sight to the blind. He became to those who believed the Author of everlasting salvation and to those who did not believe a reproach of their unbelief; He became the same to those in Hades. The result was that every knee should bow to Him, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth. After He had freed those who had been bound for ages, immediately He rose again from the dead, showing us the way of resurrection.

Beginning each year in the Church calendar, we ask that this be an acceptable year of the Lord. As Paul said, after quoting a Messianic passage from Isaiah, “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2, Isaiah 49:8).

In the coming year, the Church lectionary will proclaim the Messiah and will preach the good news (Gospel) to the poor. Those broken by Satan will be healed and the bishops will be sent out to do the Lord’s work. The Church will remember the Lord’s victory over sin, death and Hades in leading captivity captive and those whose sin is forgiven will have the eyes of their heart opened. This is the preaching of the Church.

The Reaction of the People of Nazareth

After Jesus had finished the Reading and His commentary, the people of Nazareth got so angry with Him that they hauled Him outside the city and tried to throw Him off a cliff. However, Jesus “passed through their midst and went His way” (Luke 4:30). How Jesus did this is not obvious, but He did it on two other occasions also (John 8:59, 10:39).

Tertullian spoke¹⁰ of Christ being called a Nazarene, according to prophecy, although the proper term was Nazirite¹¹, which Tertullian uses interchangeably.

Christ had to be called a ‘Nazarene’ according to prophecy; therefore the Jews also designate us¹², on that very account, ‘Nazerenes’ after Him. For we are they of whom it is written, ‘Her Nazirites were whiter than snow’ (Lamentations 4:7); even they who were once defiled with the stains of sin, and darkened with the clouds of ignorance. But to Christ the title ‘Nazarene’ was destined to

⁹ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, 29.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 4,8.

¹¹ Tertullian links the words “Nazarene” and “Nazirite”, also spelled “Nazarite”. Nazareth, as a town, does not appear in the Old Testament, perhaps due to its insignificance, nor does the term “Nazarene”. The term “Nazirite” predates Moses, and refers to a person dedicated to God for a certain period of time with specified duties and regulations (Numbers 6).

¹² The word for “Christian” in Hebrew today is “Notsri”, meaning “Nazarene”.

become a suitable one, from the hiding-place of His infancy, for which He went down and dwelt at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), to escape from Archelaus, the son of Herod (Matthew 2:22).

But Christ will be (the Christ) of the prophets, wherever He is found in accordance with the prophets. And yet even at Nazareth, He didn't preach anything new, but was rejected (Luke 4:29) by reason of a simple proverb (Luke 4:23). When I observe that they laid their hands on Him, I cannot help drawing a conclusion respecting His bodily substance. It cannot have been a phantom, since it was capable of being touched and even violently handled, when He was seized, taken and led to the brink of a precipice. Although He escaped through their midst, He had already experienced their rough treatment, and afterwards went His way, no doubt because the crowd gave way, or was even broken through. If Christ was in disguise, as Marcion claimed, He would not have submitted to any touch.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

September 1, 2015

Epistle: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Background to Paul's letters to Timothy

Paul first met Timothy in Lystra and Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren there and at Iconium (Acts 16:1-4). While this occurred at the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey (49 AD) or right after the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), Paul probably met Timothy on his first missionary journey¹³ also. Timothy may have been among the elders (or presbyters) Paul and Barnabas appointed at the end of their first missionary journey in 48 AD (Acts 14:23).

Lystra was not Timothy's first contact with Christianity. Timothy had probably come to Jerusalem with his mother some time during Jesus' three-year public ministry. He was probably familiar with what Jesus was doing, but he was not numbered among the original Seventy that were sent out by the Lord two by two to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 10:1-24). Timothy had probably been a believer for at least 20 years when Paul met him, and Timothy was added to the number of the Seventy later when some of them apostatized.

Paul's first letter to Timothy was written in about 64-65 AD, or following Paul's release from house arrest in Rome; that is, after the end of Acts 28. During the intervening years 48-64 AD, Timothy had accompanied Paul on all his missionary journeys doing apostolic work (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3, Acts 19:22, 1 Corinthians 4:17).

Paul had recently left Timothy in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3) to set some things straight. The words Paul used for Timothy's mission there are very strong. Timothy may even have ordained other bishops in the area. Paul described to Timothy the qualifications and characteristics of a bishop (1 Timothy 3:1-7). Paul knew many of these didn't apply to Timothy himself, but these very well may apply if Timothy, himself, was ordaining Bishops. Timothy remained Bishop of Ephesus until about 95 AD when he was martyred. Shortly after Timothy's martyrdom, the Apostle John returned from a 15-year exile on Patmos and ordained Onesimus, Philemon's former slave (Philemon 10), as bishop in Timothy's place. Tradition credits Aquila (also one of the Seventy) as the first Bishop of Ephesus beginning in 52 AD during Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:18-19). Gaius (also of the Seventy) was the second Bishop of Ephesus; he, like Timothy, traveled with Paul a lot (Romans 16:23, Acts 19:29, 20:4).

The Prayers of the Church

As Bishop of Ephesus, one of Timothy's responsibilities was to establish a regular prayer life of the churches in his area. This is the thrust¹⁴ of John Chrysostom's commentary on this text. He begins by stating,

Copyright © Mark Kern 2007

¹³ Compare 2 Timothy 3:10-11 where Paul referred to events of his First Missionary Journey that Timothy was very familiar with.

¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, VI.

“The priest is the common father of the entire world; it is proper therefore that he should care for all even as God, whom he serves”.

As Paul speaks about “supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1), so this has been incorporated into the Orthodox Liturgy and prayer life from the earliest times. Chrysostom states¹⁵ that “first of all” (1 Timothy 2:1) means the daily service, both morning and evening, which has been a strong tradition in Orthodoxy just as the Mosaic Law required it (Numbers 28:3-10).

Different Kinds of Prayer

John Cassian stated¹⁶ that Paul did not make some arbitrary division of types of prayer when he referred to supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving (1 Timothy 2:1). Cassian defined these divisions as follows:

- 1) **Supplication** is an imploring or petition concerning sins, in which one, who is sorry for his present or past deeds, asks for pardon.
- 2) **Prayers** are those by which we offer or vow something to God, what the Greeks call *euche*, i.e., a vow. For where we read, “I will pay my vows unto the Lord” (Psalm 116:14), according to the exact force of the words it may be thus represented, “I will pay my prayers unto the Lord.” We also find this in Ecclesiastes, “If you vow a vow unto the Lord, do not delay to pay it”, which means “If you pray a prayer unto the Lord, do not delay to pay it” (Ecclesiastes 5:4), which will be fulfilled in this way by each one of us. We pray when we renounce this world and promise that, being dead to all worldly actions and the life of this world, we will serve the Lord with full purpose of heart. We pray when we promise that despising secular honors and scorning earthly riches we will cleave to the Lord in all sorrow of heart and humility of spirit. We pray when we promise that we will ever maintain the most perfect purity of body and steadfast patience, or when we vow that we will utterly root out of our heart the roots of anger or of sorrow that work death. And if, enervated by sloth and returning to our former sins, we fail to do this we shall be guilty as regards our prayers and vows. Then these words will apply to us, “It is better not to vow, than to vow and not to pay,” which can be rendered in accordance with the Greek: “It is better for you not to pray than to pray and not to pay” (Ecclesiastes 5:5).
- 3) **Intercessions** are what we offer up for others, while we are filled with fervor of spirit, making request either for those dear to us or for the peace of the whole world. To use the Apostle’s own phrase, we pray “for all men, for kings and all that are in authority’ 1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- 4) **Thanksgivings** are what the mind, in ineffable transports, offers up to God, either when it recalls God’s past benefits or when it contemplates His present ones, or when it looks forward to those great ones in the future which God has prepared for them that love Him. With this purpose, we sometimes pour forth richer prayers, while we gaze with pure eyes on those rewards of the saints

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, VI.

¹⁶ John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Isaac, I, ix, 9-14.

which are laid up in store hereafter, and our spirit is stimulated to offer up unspeakable thanks to God with boundless joy.

Cassian continued¹⁷ to say that these four kinds of prayer are sometimes used together, sometimes separately. Typically people at different places in their walk with God use different kinds of prayer. But there are times when the Holy Spirit helps us offer up the purest prayers with groaning that cannot be uttered.

“Of these four kinds of prayer, although sometimes occasions arise for richer and fuller prayers, it is clear that all these kinds of prayer are found to be useful and needful for all men. In one and the same man his changing feelings will give utterance to pure and fervent petitions now of supplications, now of prayers, now of intercessions. Yet the first seems to belong more especially to beginners, who are still troubled by the stings and recollection of their sins. The second belongs especially to those who have already attained some loftiness of mind in their spiritual progress and the quest of virtue. The third belongs to those who fulfill the completion of their vows by their works, and are so stimulated to intercede for others also through the consideration of their weakness, and the earnestness of their love. The fourth belongs to those who have already torn from their hearts the guilty thorns of conscience, and thus being now free from care are borne onward with fervent hearts to that ardent prayer which cannot be embraced or expressed by the mouth of men. Sometimes however the mind which is advancing to that perfect state of purity and which is already beginning to be established in it, will take in all these at one and the same time. Like some incomprehensible and all-devouring flame, it may dart through them all and offer up to God inexpressible prayers of the purest force, which the Spirit Itself, intervening with groaning that cannot be uttered, pours forth to God, grasping at that hour things so great that they cannot be uttered with the mouth nor even be recollected by the mind. And in that way, in whatever degree any one stands, he is found sometimes to offer up pure and devout prayers. Even in that first and lowly station which has to do with the recollection of future judgment, he who still remains under the fear of judgment is so smitten with sorrow for the time being that he is filled with no less keenness of spirit from the richness of his supplications than he who through the purity of his heart gazes on and considers the blessings of God. For, as the Lord Himself says, he begins to love the more, who knows that he has been forgiven the more” (Luke 7:47).

Cassian illustrated¹⁸ the use of these four kinds of prayer in examples given by Christ in His three-year ministry:

“These four kinds of prayer the Lord Himself by His own example originated for us, so that in this He might fulfill that which was said of Him, ‘which Jesus began both to do and to teach’ (Acts 1:1). For He made use of *supplication* when He said, ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me’ (Matthew 26:39); or this which is chanted in His Person in the Psalm, ‘My God, My God, look upon Me, why have You forsaken me’ (Psalm 22:1), and others

¹⁷ John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Isaac, I, ix, 15.

¹⁸ John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Isaac, I, ix, 17.

like it. It is *prayer (vow)* where He says, ‘I have magnified You upon the earth, I have finished the work which You gave Me to do’ (John 17:4); and this, ‘And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified in the truth’ (John 17:19). It is *intercession* when He says, ‘Father, those Whom You have given Me, I will that they also may be with Me that they may see My glory which You have given Me’ (John 17:24); or at any rate when He says, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do’ (Luke 23:34). It is *thanksgiving* when He says, ‘I confess to You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight’ (Matthew 11:25-26); or at least when He says, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. But I knew that You always hear Me’” (John 11:41-42).

Cassian concluded¹⁹ that the most exalted and most sublime condition is brought about by the contemplation of God using the formula of the Lord’s Prayer. Cassian begins by saying:

“There follows after these different kinds of supplication a still more sublime and exalted condition which is brought about by the contemplation of God alone and by fervent love, by which the mind, transporting and flinging itself into love for Him, addresses God most familiarly as its own Father with a piety of its own. That we ought to seek after this condition, the formula of the Lord’s Prayer teaches us, saying ‘Our Father’. When we confess with our own mouths that the Lord of the universe is our Father, we profess that we have been called from our condition as slaves to the adoption of sons. When we add, ‘Who art in heaven’, we confess that we shun all lingering in this present life, which we pass upon this earth as a pilgrimage. While a great distance separates us from our Father, we prefer to hasten with all eagerness to that country, where we confess that our Father dwells, and do not allow anything to deprive us disgracefully from our Father’s inheritance, and make us incur the wrath of His justice and severity. We are inflamed with the piety which belongs to good sons, so that we shall bend all our energies to the advance not of our own profit, but of our Father’s glory, saying to Him: ‘Hallowed be Your Name’”.

Praying for All Men

Why pray for all men? Chrysostom comments on this at length, giving two advantages:

- Hatred for those outside the Church is done away with; one can’t hate those that he is praying for.
- Those outside the Church are made better by the prayers of the Church.

This involves not just prayer but also thanksgiving. Chrysostom stated²⁰ that praying for someone involves showing love for them:

“For he who is urged to thank God for his neighbor’s good, is also bound to love him and be kindly disposed towards him. And if we must give thanks for our neighbor’s good, much more for what happens to ourselves, and for what is

¹⁹ John Cassian, *First Conference of Abbot Isaac*, I, ix, 18.

²⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, VI.

unknown, and even for things against our will and such as appears grievous to us, since God dispenses all things for our good.” This includes prayer for kings in order that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. Without them (kings), we “would be scattered up and down as fugitives if they were cut off”.

Athenagoras, writing to Emperor Marcus Aurelius (2nd Century) in defense of the Christians, stated²¹ that the Christians support his rule and pray for his welfare, even though he persecuted them.

“You are by nature and by education, upright, moderate, and benevolent, and worthy of your rule. I have proved that we are pious, and gentle, and temperate in spirit, and ask that you bend your royal head in approval. For who are more deserving to obtain the things they ask, than those who, like us, pray for your government, that you may, receive the kingdom, son from father, and that your empire may receive increase and addition, all men becoming subject to your sway? And this is also for our advantage, that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life, and may ourselves readily perform all that is commanded us”.

Tertullian connected²² Paul’s instruction to pray for all men with the words of the Lord’s Prayer, “Hallowed be Thy Name”.

“In our own petition, when we say, ‘Hallowed be Thy name’, we pray that it may be hallowed *in us* who are in Him, as well in all others for whom the grace of God is still waiting. We obey this precept, in ‘praying for all’ (1 Timothy 2:1), even for our personal enemies. And therefore with suspended utterance, we do not say, ‘Hallowed be Your Name *in us*’, but we say, ‘*in all*’”

Warning: Do not Pray against Someone

Chrysostom warns that some people provoke God by saying in their prayers “show him the same!” “So do to him!” “Smite him!” “Recompense him!” Chrysostom makes a number of points:

- Praying against someone indicates a lack of forgiveness. If we don’t forgive, we won’t be forgiven either (Matthew 6:15).
- Prayers against someone are against our self, not him.
- Since we are judged with the same judgment we use (Matthew 7:2), by praying against someone, we do not allow The Judge to be lenient to our own offenses.
- Injuriousness, cursing and accusations are at variance with prayer; revilers shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).
- Let not the tongue that touches the Lord’s Body utter anything offensive.
- Prayers of cursing, injuriousness, etc., are prayers of the Gentiles. Prayers of the Christians are forgiveness and forgetting of offenses.

John Cassian stated²³ that the death of anyone is equally a loss to God, whether it is because we pray against someone or because we don’t pray for our enemies.

²¹ Athenagoras the Athenian, “A Plea for the Christians”, Chapter 36, in Roberts and Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2.

²² Tertullian, On Prayer, III, iii, 3

“He who said that you should not be angry with another, said also that you should not disregard the vexations of another, for it makes no difference in the sight of God, ‘Who wills all men to be saved’ (1 Timothy 2:4), whether you destroy yourself or someone else. Since the death of anyone is equally a loss to God, and at the same time it is equally a gain to him to whom all destruction is delightful, whether it is acquired by your death or by the death of your brother”.

John of Damascus asked us to remember²⁴ that God had formed us all to share in His goodness.

“Remember that all the assaults of dark and evil fortune contribute to the salvation of those who receive them with thankfulness, and are assuredly ambassadors of help”.

“Also one must bear in mind that God’s original wish was that all should be saved and come to His Kingdom. It was not for punishment that He formed us but to share in His goodness, inasmuch as He is a good God. But inasmuch as He is a just God, His will is that sinners should suffer punishment”.

Thy Will Be Done

John Chrysostom stated²⁵ that we achieve a different perspective when we pray “Thy will be done”. We pray from God’s viewpoint, where He supplies good things even to blasphemers.

“If we only understood the force, the depth, the hidden treasure in the Lord’s Prayer. Only unfold it and you will find prayers for unbelievers comprised within it. It is implied when one says ‘Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven’. Now in heaven there is neither unbeliever nor offender; if therefore it were for the faithful alone, there would be no sense in that expression. If the faithful were to do the Will of God, and the unbelievers not to do it, His Will would not be done on earth as it is in heaven. But it means: As there is none wicked in heaven, so let there be none on earth; but draw all men to the fear of God, make all men angels, even those who hate us, and are our enemies.”

“Do you see how God is blasphemed and mocked daily both by believers and unbelievers? What has He done? Extinguished the sun? Crushed the heavens and uprooted the earth? Dried up the sea? No! On the contrary, He makes His sun to rise, His rain to descend, gives the fruits of the earth in their seasons, and thus supplies yearly nourishment to the blasphemers, to the insensible, to the polluted, to persecutors, not for one day but for their whole life. Imitate Him then in your prayers; emulate Him as far as human powers admit.” Practicing this will avoid it becoming annoying to us. For one is not annoyed at hearing others do the things we practice ourselves.”

A Quiet and Peaceable Life

In writing to Timothy regarding the prayers of the Church, Paul said to pray “for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and

²³ John Cassian, *First Conference of Abbot Joseph*, II, xvi, 6.

²⁴ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 29.

²⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, VI, Moral.

reverence” (1 Timothy 2:2). Chrysostom spoke²⁶ about three kinds of wars that can interrupt a quiet and peaceable life:

- Public War: where a foreign army attacks us.
- Civil War: where we are at war with one another.
- War with Oneself: where the body is at war with the soul.

Public and civil wars may slaughter us and cut us off, but they cannot injure the soul against our will (Matthew 10:28). Even if friends and neighbors are at war with us, we may be peaceable ourselves. (Compare Psalm 104:4, Psalm 120:6,7).

War with ourselves raises up evil desires and sensual pleasures, anger and envy; we cannot attain the promised blessings till this war is put to an end. Whoever does not still this tumult will fall pierced by wounds that will bring the death that is in hell. We have daily need therefore to take care that this war is not stirred up within us, or if stirred up it may be laid asleep soon.

To this end, the public peace contributes no small amount. But Paul did not ask Timothy to pray just for public peace, but “in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:2). The heathen, the depraved, prostitutes and the licentious, can lead a quiet and peaceable life. Since Paul speaks of a peaceable life with all godliness, he means a godliness of doctrine supported by righteous living. Compare Titus 1:16, 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 1 John 2:9. This is what Paul states that is “good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior” (1 Timothy 2:3). And praying for this for all men is a part of being acceptable.

Becoming Like God

God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore there is reason to pray for them. By doing so, we imitate God in His concern for all men. We become like Him if we will what He does. He sacrificed Himself for His enemies, who hated and rejected Him. What no one would do for friends, for brethren, for children, that the Lord has done for His servants. The Master did this for His servants as one of His servants; that is, God for men, and for men not deserving. For had they been deserving, had they done His pleasure, it would have been less wonderful; but that He died for such ungrateful, such obstinate creatures, this it is which strikes every mind with amazement. For what men would not do for their fellowmen, that has God done for us! Yet after such a display of love towards us, we hold back, and are not in earnest in our love of Christ. He has sacrificed Himself for us; for Him we make no sacrifice. We neglect Him when He wants necessary food; sick and naked, we don’t visit Him (Matthew 25:34ff).

In this regard, Jesus Christ is the One Mediator between God the Father and men, since He gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Being of one nature with the Father and yet being truly man also, He can thus be a mediator between the two. As we imitate Him, since we are joined to Him in the Body of Christ, we also can be mediators between Christ and His fallen creation. The Virgin Mary has been called a mediatrix between Christ and mankind. She

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, VII.

cannot be a Mediator in the same sense as Christ, since she does not share the Divine Nature. But she can be our model in praying for and interceding for all mankind.

Gregory of Nyssa stated²⁷ that Christ as Mediator has two aspects: by baptism and by resurrection. By His Ascension, He brought us to God the Father.

“Since it was fitting that He should implant in our nature the power of rising again from the dead, He became the ‘first-fruits of them that slept’ (1 Corinthians 15:20) and the ‘first-born from the dead’ (Colossians 1:18), in that He first by His own act loosed the pains of death (Acts 2:24). His new birth from the dead was made a way for us also, since the pains of death, wherein we were held, were loosed by the resurrection of the Lord. Just as by having shared in the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5), He became ‘the first-born among many brethren’ (Romans 8:29). By having made Himself the first-fruits of the resurrection, He obtained the name of the ‘first-born from the dead’ (Revelation 1:5). He becomes the first-born of the new creation of men in Christ by the two-fold regeneration, alike that by Holy Baptism and that which is the consequence of the resurrection from the dead, becoming for us in both alike the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15), the first-fruits, and the first-born. This first-born has brethren, concerning whom He speaks to Mary, saying, ‘Go and tell My brethren, I go to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’ (John 20:17). In these words He sums up the whole aim of His dispensation as Man. Men revolted from God, and ‘served them which by nature were not gods’ (Galatians 4:8), and, though being the children of God, became attached to an evil father falsely so-called. For this cause the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), having assumed the first fruits of all human nature, sends to His brethren the announcement of Himself not in His divine character, but in that which He shares with us. He said, ‘I am departing in order to make by My own self that true Father, from whom you were separated, to be your Father, and by My own self to make that true God from whom you had revolted to be your God. By that first fruits which I have assumed, I am in Myself presenting all humanity to its God and Father’”.

Gregory Nazianzen stated²⁸ that Christ intercedes for us along with the Holy Spirit. Christ continues to wear His human body, and makes us god by the power of His incarnation.

“He lives forever to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). How beautiful, mystical and kind! For to intercede does not imply to seek for vengeance, as is most men’s way, but it is to plead for us by reason of His Mediation, just as the Spirit also is said to make intercession for us (Romans 8:26). There is One God, and One Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). He still pleads even now as Man for my salvation; for He continues to wear the Body, which He assumed, until He makes me god by the power of His Incarnation”.

²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, II, 8.

²⁸ Gregory Nazianzen, Fourth Theological Oration, XXX, 14.