

## Questions and Reflections for Discussion

to be used with Volume 4, Spirituality, of the revised four-volume series  
*The Orthodox Faith* by Father Thomas Hopko

### *Introduction*

When Father Thomas Hopko of blessed memory was in the process of revising his series *The Orthodox Faith*, he requested the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America, which had originally published the series, to create questions to accompany the texts of each volume. The following questions are the fulfillment of his request for the Spirituality volume of the series.

There are questions for each chapter of this volume, based on the text. They can be used to review or further consider the material in the chapter. A page number follows each question to show the part of the text it's based on.

A separate document gives numbered answers. We would suggest that a discussion leader, after the group has read a chapter, give each participant a copy of the questions for that chapter. The group can then answer them together, as a way of reinforcing and reviewing what they have read.

Another way of using the questions is to give them to participants before they read the text, and then have them find the answers together. The group leader can check the answers with the answer sheet, though most should be easy to find within the text.

A reader going through the book on his or her own can use the questions and answers in whatever way is most helpful.

Some of the answers on the sheet also offer points for reflection. Father Thomas always liked to reflect further on things as he taught, and we hope those who use the books will want to do likewise. Most of all we hope that people will benefit from this revised editions of Father Thomas' valuable gift to the Church, his series *The Orthodox Faith*.

Department of Christian Education  
Orthodox Church in America

## **Chapter 1: Orthodox Spirituality**

1. In the book's first paragraph Fr. Thomas defines spirituality as "the everyday activity of life in communion with God." What familiar prayer words does he say are the heart and soul of all spiritual effort and activity? (p. 16)
2. What two things do people not do if they are not "of God"? (p. 18)
3. What did St. Seraphim of Sarov say was the essence of Christian life, in fact of life itself? (p. 20)
4. Why is it "contradictory" to be both human and a sinner? (p. 23)
5. How does 2 Cor 11:14 describe Satan? (p. 25)
6. How does the Church differentiate two meanings of the words world and flesh? (p. 26-7)
7. Who is St. Paul referring to when he writes about the law of God written on their hearts? (p. 30)
8. What does the grace of the Holy Spirit enable a person to do through Holy Unction? (p. 32)

## **Chapter 2: The Beatitudes**

1. What is the "source of all sorrows"? (p. 38)
2. To what does St. John Climacus compare honey in the comb? (p. 39)
3. How does Fr. Thomas distinguish between being "tolerant" and being "merciful"? (p. 44)
4. Fr. Thomas writes that a Christian must expect persecution. How does a person's attitude toward persecution determine whether it is, as it should be, "for righteousness' sake"? (p. 52)

## **Chapter 3: The Virtues**

1. Are the Christian virtues, or Fruits of the Spirit, things that only Christians know and try to attain? (p. 56)
2. Is weak faith often the result of an intellectual mistake or mental confusion? (p. 59)
3. What is the "noonday demon"? (p. 61)
4. What foolish exchange does St. Paul say human beings make? (p. 66)

5. What is the “most vile” of evils in God’s sight? (p. 70)
6. How do God the Father and Jesus Christ show their humanity? (p. 72)
7. What connection is there between patience and will power? (p. 76)
8. What does each person’s “uniqueness” have to do with finding joy, wisdom and peace? (p. 81)
9. What is “passionlessness”? (p. 82-3)
10. Why does St. John Chrysostom tell us to be thankful to God even for things that seem evil? (p. 87)

#### **Chapter 4: The Greatest Virtue is Love**

1. Of the three types of love—agape, eros and philia—which can exist between God and human beings? (p 92-3)
2. Fr. Thomas writes about loving and hating oneself. What is the one way in which it is appropriate to hate ourselves? (p. 100)
3. What is the “new element” in the new commandment Jesus Christ gives us in Jn 13:34? (p. 102)

#### **Chapter 5: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving**

1. What problem in prayer is described by St. Nilus of Sinai? (p. 109)
2. What does it mean to say that God is *in the heavens* as we do in the Lord’s Prayer? (p. 110)
3. Why is it a “daring and dangerous” to pray to God, *Thy will be done*? (p. 112)
4. Are we tempted by God to sin? (p. 114)
5. What kind of prayer has *great power in its effects* according to the Letter of James? (p. 116)
6. Why do Orthodox spiritual teachers advise us not to go back and repeat prayers we may have said poorly? (p. 118)
7. The *hesychast* method of contemplative prayer is based on the Jesus Prayer. Aside from that method, though, anyone can use the prayer. How is it done? (p. 125-6)
8. What is the model of liturgical prayer in the Orthodox Church? (p. 127)

9. What is *lectio divina*? (p. 128)
10. What assurance did St. Augustine give to those who seek God in prayer? (p. 131)
11. Is it possible to fast “foolishly”? (p. 135)
12. Why does Jesus Christ say that a rich person can hardly be saved? (p. 140)

### **Chapter 6: Sexuality, Marriage and Family**

1. Under what conditions can sexual relations be “holy and pure”? (p. 148)
2. Can people serve God as well in the single life as they can in marriage? (p. 149-150)
3. What makes the sexual act satisfying in marriage? (p. 153)
4. How does loving, honoring and respecting one’s parents relate to one’s service to God? (p. 158)

### **Chapter 7: Sickness, Suffering and Death**

1. What is the greatest possible witness to love of God and faith in Christ? (p. 164)
2. What was the greatest agony suffered by Jesus Christ? (p. 167)
3. In what way is Jesus Christ’s death different from the deaths of all others born on this earth? (p. 170)

### **Chapter 8: The Kingdom of Heaven**

1. On what basis will Jesus Christ judge us at the last judgment? (p. 174)
2. Fr. Thomas writes that each person’s eternal destiny “depends solely” on his or her response to one thing. What is it? (p. 180)