

like Jesus, knows not only what is in God, but "*what is in man.*" (Cf John 2:25)

The wise man who has knowledge lives according to the truth through a totally **honest** life. Honesty means first of all, to speak the truth and never to. "*bear false witness.*" (Exodus 20:16)

In the Orthodox tradition, **humility** has often been called the "mother of all virtues," and pride has been named "the cause of all sin." The wise and honest person is the one who is humble.

In speaking of Christ's humility, Saint Paul said that Jesus was **obedient** to God His Father "unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:8) In truth, Jesus obeyed God in all that He did. In the Orthodox spiritual tradition, obedience is a basic virtue: obedience to the Lord, to the Gospel, to the Church (Matthew 18:17), to the leaders of the Church (Hebrews 13:7), to one's parents and elders, to "every ordinance of man" (I Peter 2:13, Romans 13:1), "to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 6:21) There is no spiritual life without obedience, no freedom or liberation from sinful passions and lusts. To submit to God's discipline in all of its human forms, is the only way to obtain "the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:21) God disciplines us as His children out of His great love for us. "He disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness." (Cf. Hebrews 12:3-11) Our obedience to God's commandments and discipline is the exclusive sign of our love for Him and His Son.

To be obedient in all things to God requires the virtue of **patience**. Saint Paul lists this virtue as one-of the "fruits of the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22) Christ Himself in His humble obedience to God was exceedingly patient.

The virtue of **courage** and strength must accompany patience. Only the one who has courage can truly be patient in all things. To be courageous means simply not to be afraid. Many times in the Gospels, Christ speaks of this virtue and commands it to His disciples, In so doing, He follows the Old Testament example. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? - Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!* (Psalm 27.1,14; Psalm 31:24)

According to the scriptures, one of the main characteristics of God is His absolute **faithfulness**. This virtue in man is also considered to be one of the "fruits of the Holy Spirit." (Galatians 5:22)

**Self-control** is also listed by the Apostle Paul as a "fruit of the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22) This virtue is one which is not often easily attained because people forget that, like patience, it is a grace of God and they must seek it from the Lord. Instead they think that it can come from human effort and will power alone.

The spiritual person is kind. He never practices cruelty in any of its forms, but is always gentle in his relations with others. **Kindness**, according to the Apostle Paul, is also a "fruit of the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22)

The spiritual person is the one who is **grateful** for everything. He is the one who receives everything with thanksgiving, and who knows that he has nothing except what he has received from God. (Cf. John 3:27)

According to the Christian faith "**the greatest virtue is love**" (I Corinthians 13:13) Love is the "fulfilling of the law" of God. (Romans 13:10) For God Himself is Love.

In the spiritual tradition of the Church, the aim of life as the "acquisition of the Holy Spirit" is expressed most perfectly in love. (cf. Saint Macarius of Egypt, 4th c., Spiritual Homilies; Saint Seraphim of Sarov, 19th c., Conversation with N. Molodilov) Indeed, the Holy Spirit Himself is identified with God's love by the saints, as witnessed in the writings of Saint Simeon the New Theologian.

*0 Holy Love, - i.e., the Holy Spirit of God - he who knows you not has never tasted the sweetness of your mercies which only living experience can give us. But he who has known you, or who has been known by you, can never have even the smallest doubt. For you are the fulfillment of the law, you who fills, burns, inflames, embraces my heart with a measureless love. You are the teacher of the prophets, the offspring of the apostles, the strength of the martyrs, the inspiration of the fathers and masters, the perfecting of all the saints. Only you, 0 Love, prepare even me for the true service of God.* (Saint Simeon the New Theologian, 11th c, Homily 53)

Thus God, who is Love, enters into union with man through the Son of His love by the Spirit of love. To live in this divine love is the spiritual life.

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For more on Orthodox Christianity see:  
<http://ChurchMotherOfGod.org>  
<http://www.oca.org> and  
[http://nynjoca.org/about\\_orthodoxy.html](http://nynjoca.org/about_orthodoxy.html)

## Spirituality, the Beatitudes, and Virtues

**Spirituality** in the Orthodox Church means the everyday activity of life in communion with God. The term spirituality refers not merely to the activity of man's spirit alone, his mind, heart and soul, but it refers as well to the whole of man's life as inspired and guided by the Spirit of God. Every act of a Christian must be a spiritual act. Every thought must be spiritual, every word, every deed, every activity of the body, every action of the person. This means that all that a person thinks, says and does must be inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit so that the will of God the Father might be accomplished as revealed and taught by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

*... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*  
(1 Cor 10:31).

Doing all things to the glory of God is the meaning and substance of life for a human being. This "doing" is what Christian spirituality is about.

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### Beatitudes

In the Gospel writings, **the beatitudes** introduce the teachings of Jesus and are traditionally considered to contain the most concise summary of the spiritual life of man. In the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, the beatitudes are chanted when the Book of the Gospels is carried in solemn procession to the sanctuary to be proclaimed as the Word of God to the faithful. Thus it is the clear teaching of the Gospel and the Church that one enters into the mysteries of Christ and the Kingdom of God only by way of following the Lord's teachings in the beatitudes.

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**1. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.** To be poor in spirit is to have a spiritual conviction that we have nothing of our own, nothing but what God bestows upon us, and that we can do nothing without God's help and grace, thus counting ourselves as nothing, and in all throwing ourselves upon the mercy of God; spiritual poverty is humility. (St. John Chr. Hom. Mat. XV.)

**2. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.** By the word "mourn" is meant this precept: Sorrow and contrition of heart, with unfeigned tears, for that we so imperfectly and unworthily serve the Lord, or even rather deserve His anger by our sins. It logically follows the first. If one is poor in spirit, liberated from the spiritual and physical lusts of this world, he will necessarily mourn and weep over the conditions of man.

**3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.** Meekness is quiet disposition of spirit, joined with care neither to offend any man, nor be offended at any think one's self. To never murmur against God, nor even against men, when anything falls out against our wishes, nor give way to anger, nor set ourselves up.

**4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they shall be filled.** The word "*righteousness*" may stand for every virtue, which the Christian ought to desire even as his meat and drink and the justification of guilty man through; race and faith in Jesus Christ.

**5. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.** To be merciful means to have compassion on evil-doers and to sympathize with those who are caught in the bonds of sin. It means to forego every self-righteousness and every self-justification in comparison with others. It means to refuse to condemn those who do wrong, but to forgive those who harm and destroy, both themselves and others. It is to say with utter seriousness, "*forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" (Matthew 6:12).

**6. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.** Purity of heart is attained by constant and strict watchfulness over oneself, driving away from the heart every unlawful wish and thought, and every affection for earthly things, and ever keeping in heart the remembrance of God and our Lord Jesus Christ with faith and charity.

**7. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they will be called the sons of God.** We must not only keep peace but as well to make peace. In making peace, the peacemaker himself is a son of God like the Lord Jesus Himself, who paradoxically and inevitably is the cause of much scandal and strife. (Cf. Luke 2:34-35, 7:23, 21:18)

**8. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all matter of evil against you falsely for My sake.** In saying these words, Christ promised that those who would follow Him would certainly be persecuted. This is a central prediction of the Gospel and an essential condition of those who accept it. The generous and loving forgiveness by the persecuted for the persecutors is an essential condition of the spiritual life. Without it, all suffering "for righteousness' sake" is in vain, and does not lead to the Kingdom of Heaven.

**9. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in Heaven.** Joy is an essential element of the spiritual life, and is one of the "*fruits of the Holy Spirit.*" (Galatians 5:22) There is no genuine spirituality without joy. From the first pages of the Gospel, until the very end, the apostles of Christ, with Mary His mother and all of the Christians, are continually rejoicing in the salvation which Jesus has given.

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## Virtues

In addition to the beatitudes of Jesus, there are many *fruits of the Holy Spirit* enumerated in the apostolic scriptures and referred to in the writings of the saints of the Church. These fruits of the Spirit are often called the **Christian virtues**, which literally means those powers and possessions of the mind and the heart which all men should have if they are truly human, fulfilling themselves as created in the image and likeness of God.

Generally speaking, all of the human virtues are attributes of God Himself. They are the characteristics of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God in human flesh. They are the divine properties which should be in all human persons by the gift of God in creation and salvation through Christ.

It has been said, and it is true, that the Christian virtues are not all particularly "Christian" in the sense that only Christians know about them and are committed to attain them. Most, if not all, of the Christian virtues have been honored, respected and recommended by all great teachers of the spiritual life. This in no way detracts from their Christian value and truth, for Christ and His apostles and saints have not taught and practiced something other than that which all men should teach and practice. As the fulfillment of all positive human aspirations and desires, it is quite understandable that Jesus Christ, the perfect "**man from heaven**" and "**final Adam**" (I Corinthians 15:45-47, Romans 5:14), should fulfill and realize in Himself that which all men of wisdom and good-will have sought for and desired in their minds and hearts, enlightened by God

For in truth, whatever is found in man to be good and beautiful and true, is found there because of God and is from God. This is the case, whether it is realized or not, "**for every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights**" (James 1:17), and it is Christ Himself, the eternal Son and Word of God, who is the light and the life of every man who has ever lived and been enlightened on this earth. (Cf. John 1: 1-10) Thus the Apostle Paul has counseled Christ's faithful:

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about those things.* (Philippians 4:8)

As we "think about those things," we will refer to the teaching of the apostle himself, and to all of the apostles and teachers of the Christian faith who have been enlightened and inspired by God through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

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The foundation of all Christian virtue and life is **faith**. Faith is the natural possession of all men who are wise and virtuous. For if a person lacks faith in man's ability to know, to do good and to find meaning in life; if he does not believe that this is possible, profitable and worthy of man's efforts, then nothing wise or virtuous can be achieved. The striking characteristic of all prophets of doom, apostles of despair and preachers of absurdity is the absence of faith in man's capabilities for goodness and truth, and the absence of faith in the meaning and value of life. It is also an absence of faith in God.

The virtue of **hope** goes together with the power of faith. The patriarch Abraham "*in hope believed against hope that he should be the father of many nations.*" (Romans 4:18) And hope, like faith, is in that which is not seen.

Faith and hope go together with **knowledge**. They are built on knowledge and lead to knowledge. For what is "not seen" is believed and hoped on the basis of what is seen. And the understanding of what is seen depends on belief and hope in what is not seen. One's belief and hope in the ability to know, to trust his senses, his mind and the revelation of his God, are the foundations of all knowledge.

The virtue of **wisdom** differs from knowledge in that wisdom is normally understood as the immediate insight into things, the practical understanding and grasping of what is true and right in its living expression and form. The wise man is the one who sees clearly and deeply into the mysteries of God. He is the one who can give concrete advice in the everyday affairs of life, the one who can point out the will of God to man who is confronted by actual problems and decisions. He is the one, who