



THE WAY OF A PILGRIM



THE WAY OF A PILGRIM

*Translated from the Russian by R. M. French
With Study Guide, Glossary, and Timeline*

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For all who seek to pray without ceasing



ABOUT THIS SERIES

The *Holy Nativity Press Study Editions* are published for the use of Orthodox Christian parishes, study groups, and individual readers.

Each volume in this series presents a foundational text of the Orthodox spiritual tradition in a carefully typeset pocket edition, accompanied by an exhaustive study guide, glossary of key terms, and historical timeline. Our aim is to make these works *usable*—to place them in the hands of the faithful as instruments of prayer, formation, and communal study.

The study guides are designed for parish groups meeting weekly. Each session includes close readings of the text, patristic parallels, discussion questions, and concrete exercises for personal prayer and practice. No prior theological training is assumed;

only a willingness to read attentively and to seek God.

We believe that the great texts of Orthodox spirituality belong in the parish hall and in the coat pocket, not only on the scholar's shelf. These editions are made to be carried, read, marked, and shared.

HOLY NATIVITY PRESS

Gatineau, Quebec

CONTENTS

<i>About This Series</i>	ix
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THE WAY OF A PILGRIM

<i>Publishers' Preface</i>	xv
<i>To the Reader</i>	xvii
<i>Introduction</i>	xix
<i>The Way of a Pilgrim</i>	i
Narrative the First	3
Narrative the Second	27
Narrative the Third	91
Narrative the Fourth	99
<i>Timeline</i>	159
<i>Study Guide</i>	163

Session 0: Before We Begin: The World of the Pilgrim	167
Session 1: “Pray Without Ceasing”: The Question That Changes Everything	175
Session 2: The Starets and the Gift of the Prayer	183
Session 3: Alone With God: Grief, Solitude, and the <i>Philokalia</i>	191
Session 4: The Prayer Takes Root: Transformation and Encounter	199
Session 5: Who Is This Pilgrim? Origin, Loss, and Vocation	207
Session 6: The Pilgrim as Teacher: Sharing the Prayer	213
Session 7: Trials, Wonders, and the Grace That Sustains	221
Session 8: The <i>Philokalia</i> : Orthodox Wisdom for the Study Group	229
Session 9: “Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy on Me”: A Living Practice	237
<i>Glossary of Key Terms</i>	245

<i>Index of Subjects</i>	259
<i>Index of Scripture</i>	269
<i>A Note to the Reader</i>	271



PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

The text before you was first printed at Kazan in 1884, from a manuscript found on Mount Athos. Its author, a Russian peasant of the mid-nineteenth century—crippled in one arm, recently widowed, owning little—heard the Apostle's command to pray without ceasing and determined to learn how. An old monk gave him the Jesus Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. He began to say it, thousands of times a day, across the provinces of Russia. In time the Prayer descended from his lips to his heart and continued there of its own accord, sustained by the teaching of the *Philokalia*, that great patristic anthology of hesychast wisdom. R. M. French's English translation, published by Philip Allan & Co. in London in 1930, has introduced this account to readers outside Russia for

nearly a century. It is now in the public domain. We present his text without alteration.

The Pilgrim learned what the Fathers had always taught: that interior prayer belongs to every baptised Christian, not to monastics alone. St Theophan the Recluse said as much in his Russian recension of the *Philokalia*. The elders of Optina Pustyn said it to the laypeople who came to them by the hundreds. The Pilgrim, walking among thieves and peasants and indifferent clergy, said it with his life.

We have prepared this edition for parish use. A glossary explains the theological and ascetical vocabulary the Pilgrim assumes his reader already knows. A timeline situates his world between the Napoleonic wars and the emancipation of the serfs. Ten sessions of guided study, furnished with patristic parallels, discussion questions, and prayer practices, offer a way to read the book in company over the course of a season. The volume is small enough for a coat pocket, because a book about ceaseless prayer ought to be within reach.

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