



LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER!

The Jesus Prayer is one of the oldest of Christian prayers, dating in its original form to the words the two blind men cried out to Jesus in Matthew 20:31. It was formalized by the fifth century, and is part of our heritage of prayer even to this day. It also serves as perhaps the most succinct Gospel message available. Contained in the Jesus Prayer are core elements of our Christian faith: Jesus is declared by name to be the Christ, the anointed one of God, as well as being the Lord of our lives. He is proclaimed to be the Son of God, and therefore divine. He is acknowledged to be in the position of judgment and mercy, and we confess to be sinners who are always in need of his saving and empowering grace. What is more, through this prayer we receive an abundance of grace.

The Jesus Prayer is also a form of the constant prayer that Saint Paul speaks of in his First Letter to the Thessalonians (5:17), where prayer is kept on the lips and in the hearts of believers at all times. By repeating the Jesus Prayer several times each day, for several minutes at a time, this beautiful prayer ultimately sinks into our consciousness. Eventually, we no longer pray the prayer, but the prayer begins to pray us. At this point, the real blessings of the Jesus Prayer start to become evident in our lived experience of faith, along with the increased consolation of the Holy Spirit. An inward stillness gradually springs up within us when we “become this prayer.”

When a state of contemplation is reached through the Jesus Prayer, Jesus is literally always on our mind. We begin to see him more clearly in the sacraments, in other people, in the circumstances of daily life, and even in ourselves. Through the Jesus Prayer, Jesus is also literally in our hearts. We begin to feel that, as forgiven sinners, we are able to lovingly extend that same mercy to other sinners as well. Finally, through the Jesus Prayer, Jesus is also in our hands. Whatever we do to the least of our brothers and our sisters, we knowingly do unto Christ himself. Thus, we can begin to live more consciously and conscientiously according to the Beatitudes, and continue practicing even more fervently the spiritual and corporal works of mercy as privileges to be embraced, rather than just duties to be fulfilled. The Jesus Prayer brings all these blessings together as one.

In order to reap all the spiritual benefits of the Jesus Prayer, many people use a prayer rope as an aid to developing this unique prayer form in their spiritual lives. While the use of a prayer rope is not necessary, it is a beneficial tool. If you are interested in obtaining a prayer rope, just search online for the Jesus Prayer, prayer ropes, chotki, or komboskini. You can also just use your Rosary beads to help you enter into the contemplative state that the Jesus Prayer offers to all who take the time to make the Jesus Prayer the “prayer of the heart” that it is truly meant to be. The rest of the spiritual journey is really between you and Jesus, for he will be your companion and guide along the way. Jesus loves us enough to accept us just the way we are, and then he loves us even more, by giving us the grace to become all that we were destined to be as sons and daughters of God.

