

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
91 (2), pp. 11-24, 2022

The Body When Praying

Vasile VLAD

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“Hilarion V. Felea” Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Arad, Romania
E-mail: prvasile_v@yahoo.com

Abstract

The spiritual life in Orthodoxy it is the consequence of the work and of the presence of the grace within man. But, in the same time, and in the same measure, it is also the answer of the man to the grace's work, answer manifested as a searching for, and as a running after, grace. When the “dispositions of the soul in time of praying”, which create an “icon” that fits them to the manifestations of the body, are repeated to exhaustion, in time, there takes place the forming and the fixing of bodily habits (gestures) of the prayer (for instance: praying by standing, raising up the hands, kneeling, making the sign of the cross, etc.). They become traditional bodily ways of praying, through which are preserved and transmitted, from generation to generation, the rule of the faith and the state of prayer. Imposed as rule of the tradition, they can no longer be modified in time, without considering this modification as renouncement, or at least deformation, of the rule of faith. Consequently, in the Orthodox spirituality, there are two bodily gestures through which, the ethos of the Early Church and the rule of the Apostolic faith, have been transmitted over centuries. Their present practicing roots the contemporary Orthodoxy in the biblical Apostolic tradition. From the standing point of view of these affirmations, we will approach few bodily forms of praying.

Keywords: spiritual life, the Church, the Christian Orthodoxy, the prayer, the Eastern Fathers, the Christian piety, praying by standing

To Christendom, the man is man, in the fullness of the word's meaning, only together with his body. Being interwoven with his soul, the body takes also part to the entire spiritual living. According to the Scripture, the man was created *entirely* in the image of God: "and God said: Let's make a man in Our image and in Our likeness... and God made a man in His image; in His image God made him" (Genesis 1, 26-27).

Although many Fathers of the Church avoid saying that also the man's body is in the image of God, lest somebody would think that God would have a body Himself, or some materialness, though there are some Fathers (and the Eastern theology impropriated to itself this perspective) who, following the example from Genesis (that doesn't separate the soul from the body, but it speaks about man in its entirety), they affirm that the man, body and soul, was created in the image of the Creator.

The soul and the body belong to the human person, expressed by each individual, according to his nature and measure. The body isn't only a vehicle of the soul, it isn't a purely physical substance and separated from the person whom it belongs, but it is part of the person, unique and with absolute value. In an unbreakable unity with the soul (not even done by death, for the man will receive back *his body* at resurrection¹), the body

¹ According to the Christian Orthodoxy, the separation of the body from the soul, in the moment of death, it is temporary - for cannot remain separated the ones which are inseparable -, and at Resurrection, the man will receive back *his body* for his life in eternity. That's why it is impossible to be accepted the teaching about metempsychosis, or reincarnation, widely spread in Antiquity, and present today in the Oriental religions and in the New Age movement. Christendom affirms the personal identity of the man, in virtue of which, the man can't successively be different persons or having, in time, more identities. Also, the Christian teaching believes that the body belongs to a sole person and that between soul and body, in the moment of conception, there was initiated an eternal unity and connection. "And after the tearing apart of the elements (which compose the matter of the body, o. n.), when they are added each one to the related element, the simple and not-composed nature of the soul *remains in each part, even after their separation*. The soul itself, once he mysteriously grew up with the elements with which it mixed itself, it remains forever like that, and since it grew up with them, it not at all breaks out from this mix, even when this mix is torn apart. This is because, if a composed body it torn apart, it doesn't follow to be destroyed together with the body also what it wasn't composed [...]. The soul participated both to the union of the elements and to their separation, without being forcedly narrowed when it is united with them, neither forsaken by them when they turn back to the related elements, and which are of the same nature with them, no matter how big would be the difference between each one's characteristics" (Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Despre suflet și înviere (About Soul and Resurrection)*, in: "Writings", part II, translation into Romanian by Priest Teodor Bodogae, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary

participates to the spiritual life. The prayer, though seems to be a reality and a work of the soul, it is, equally, a reality and a work of the body.

Let's remember an elementary truth of the Orthodox faith: the initiation Mysteries (Baptism, Anointment, Eucharist) they dress up the whole man in the redeemer power, work received in bodily forms. The body has an important role in receiving the Holy Mysteries. Through the body's limbs, which express the soul's limbs, the man is imparted by the work of the Holy Mysteries. The sinking (the killing) of the fallen man in the sanctified water of the Baptism, and the raising (resurrection) of the new man, are done through a ritual of the body. The Anointment (the seal of gift of the Holy Ghost) is done on the body's organs (forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, chest, back, hands and feet) for these ones manifest the power of the soul and the impartation by the Ghost of the Anointment it is equally of the body and of the soul. And through Eucharist (in which dwells *the Body* in the whole fullness of the godhead; Colossians 2, 9) the godlike Body and Soul of Christ penetrate all the body's and the soul's limbs of the human person, mysteriously becoming mixed together ("The One Who willingly has given me Your body as food... enter the *composition of my limbs and in all my joints, in entrails and in heart...* clean my soul, sanctify my thoughts and my *bones*; the fullness of the five senses lighten it to me...")².

The prayer must be prepared and approached on the coordinates of these doctrinal considerations upon body. To the Eastern Fathers, the prayer starts with few elementary forms, with the body, and it reaches its

Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1998, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, vol. 30, p. 361). Therefore, the man cannot successively have more bodies: the spiritual body received at resurrection (1 Corinthians 15, 35-53) will be a different body in what regards the new way of its living, and not in what regards its personal identity. At resurrection, our body will resurrect, and not other one.

² The impartation is the way in which our body participates to the full union with the Savior. "This Body (Impartation, o. n.), once introduce within us, it changes and it transforms our entire body according to the measure of That One (...) It is shared like a seed in all believers through this body composed of bread and wine, and it is merged with the body of the believers, for this union with the immortal Body, to allow the man to also participate to immortality", writes Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Marele cuvânt catehetic, Despre Sfânta Cuminecătură (The Great Catechetical Word, about the Holy Impartation)*, in "Writings", part II, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1998, , coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* vol. 30, pp. 338-341.

highest forms, again into body: finding the heart and descending the mind into it³.

The prayer must be prepared (introduced) through an attentive position of the body. And this regards the meeting from the cell with the One Who knocked at the door and accepted to be Guest. The conscience that you are in the real presence of God, and that the prayer is a dialogue with Him, it imposes the way in which the body is presented for the prayer.

The body must be fully clothed. We cannot pray when being clothed only in pajamas, or wearing only the underwear. Not because something of the limbs or the nakedness of the body would be indecent or filthy, or because the eye of God could be covered with something. It would be childish to think like that. But this is because by clothing the body we make a confession of faith: the instinctual and the irrationality of the biology of death, which dominates the earthly condition of the body, do not constitute our true nature. The clothing covers the condition of the falling and, by covering the body, it disrobes the body of the skin clothing, and it dresses it up with the coat of grace from the time when the man was naked and not ashamed. The purpose of the clothing is to reveal the spirit. The clothing does not stay on its own account. It seems to cover but, actually, it undresses the spirit the body is animated by.

³ In the Eastern Christendom, the word “heart” indicates both the bodily organ and also a spiritual reality. Saint ISAAC the Syrian calls it “the inner chamber”, (ISAAC THE SYRIAN, *Cuvinte despre nevoință (Words about Asceticism)*, Buna Vestire Publishing House, Bacău, 1997, p. 147). But the heart is also called the “eye of the soul”, which, once cleaned of all the passionate feeling, it becomes able to see the beauties of the godlike image which compose the man’s nature: “(...) within you is the measure of knowing God, by you. This is for, by creating you, He immediately gave existence to this good by nature thing. For God imprinted in His composition (in the created man’s nature) the images of His nature’s good things, by imprinting within you, as in a wax, a sculpted image... The one who has cleaned his heart of all the creation and of all the passionate feeling, he sees in his beauty the image of the godlike nature” – Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Despre Fericiri (On the Beatitudes)*, in: “Writings”, part I, translation into Romanian by Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, , coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* 29, p. 382. The heart is the existential center of the man, the inside of his inside, his quintessence, his metaphysical nucleus. Through the hesychast experience, between the spiritual heart and the heart of flesh, principle of the bodily life, there is a connection, due to a close union between soul and body. Thus, the spiritual heart dwells into the flesh one, and what moves one it moves also another, even if the spiritual heart is bodiless and free.

One must say the clothing has also an eschatological character. It reminds about the general resurrection. In this sense, the Christian's clothing no longer has its origin in "leather clothes", with which God dressed up the fallen Adam, but in the coat of the resurrection, with which He dressed up the body of Christ.

Let's remember that the Lord was naked on the Cross, without that piece of rag, added by the Christian piety, on the Icon of the Crucifixion. The dead body of the Lord was naked and so it was wrapped in shrouds, embalmed and buried. But at Resurrection, the Lord's Body appeared to His Mother, to Mary Magdalene, to the Apostles and to the many, covered with clothes, though the shrouds for burial were found laying into tomb. It was the coat of grace from the body of the first people ("naked and they weren't ashamed") and the coat our bodies will be dressed up with, at the General Resurrection. In eternity, the resurrected body will wear the coat of the earthly ministration and it will have the brightness according to the measure of his likeness to God. Therefore, the Christians' clothing covers what have been unnaturally added, and unveils the road towards resurrection of the body. Behold why when praying, the clothing is a significant element. Due to this reason, the monk prays in his cell, by having its monastic coat put on, likewise the priest, and the laymen, by wearing his best clothing (the luminous one of the Baptism). When praying, the clothing has the significance of the vestment – it accomplishes a ministration, and expresses a relation.

Before starting the dialogue of uttering the prayer, Saint Iosif Volokolamsky teaches us: "Let's start by taking care of a correct posture of the body and of our limbs, and *only then* let's think at the inwards guarding of the heart and of the mind"⁴. The posture of the body, the pious attention that balances and orders the movements of the hands, they also do not depend on a formal own reckoning. They are the seen icon of the unseen settlement of the soul: "with the mind into God and with the heart broken, let's show, outwardly, this recollection of the soul, by standing up, with the hands piously clasped, with humble voice, and asking for appeasement"⁵.

⁴ *Regula monahală (The Monastic Rule)*, apud TOMĂȘ ȘPIDLIK, *Spiritualitatea Răsăritului Creștin (The Spirituality of the Christian East)*, Volume II, *Rugăciunea (The Prayer)*, translation into Romanian by Ioan I. Ică Jr., Publishing House Deisis, Sibiu, 1998, p. 77.

⁵ *Regula monahală (The Monastic Rule)*, p. 77.

Within body, in time of praying, it is shown the icon of the soul⁶. By praying, the body participates to the spiritual life and finds again the purpose it has been created for: the immortality through the likeness to God. “During prayer, writes Saint Ignatius Brianceaninov, through the untold mercifulness of God... our corruptible body will turn back to the prayer, being created with the desire of God, but which, consequently to the falling, has been plagued with the desire characteristic to animals... Then the whole man is engulfed by prayer: even his hand and fingers, all of them participate in an untold way, but, in the same time, a real and felt way, to prayer, and they are filled up with a power impossible to the human word to interpret”⁷.

The spiritual experiences of the Fathers warn us that praying it means also waging war declared to the evil one:

“An old man said: I stood up to do my praying program, and when I started, I heard trumpets of war and I got sad. Then I said to myself: is this a war? And the devil answered: war it is, and noise. And if your will is to not be yourself fought, then do not wage war, but eat, drink, sleep, and I won't fight you!”⁸

The war of the body, when praying, it consists in a ghost of helplessness, of the weakness. Immediately after the prayer starts, the body feels a weakness in staying in a decent posture (a pious posture). There start: skin itching, somnolence, yawning, and the most awkward pains. The weak mind perceives them as impediments for prayer, and it searches for a more comfortable posture of the body (from knees on heels, then on elbows, standing up and sittings) reckoning that, in this way, the mind can concentrate easier.

But it soon ascertains that no position is accepted by the bodily powers. It is actually about the war of the unclean ghosts. One must start praying

⁶ ORIGEN, *Despre rugăciune, 31,2, (About Prayer, PG11, 416-561, in: “Chosen Writings”, part II-a, translation in Romanian language by Priest Teodor Bodogae, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982 [PSB 7], p. 284.*

⁷ IGNATIE BRIANCEANINOV, *Approches de la prière de Jésus*, p. 99 apud TOMÀS SPIDLÍK, p. 78.

⁸ *Egyptian Paterikon, XXII, For Prayer, 21, Alba-Iulia, 1993, p. 417.*

with the steadfast conscience that we are in the real and felt Presence of God. And like in the presence of a worldly superior of us, we restrain ourselves from nose scratching, from having an indecent bodily posture, and from relentlessly moving our hand and body; likewise, we must not forget Who is our partner of dialogue when we pray. The mind's convictions alight (generate) the body's powers. The one who knows before Whom he stays and who doesn't forget ever this fact, he will feel that the tiredness of kneeling won't tire the body, but will fill it up with pain.

The one who keeps his hands unmoved, and who doesn't use them but for sealing himself with the sign of the Cross, he will be able to master also the slipping of the thoughts. Unlike this, the erratic movement of the body's limbs, when praying, it will fill the mind up with helplessness, and it will facilitate the desolation of the prayer through the fickleness of the thoughts.

I. Traditional gestures when praying

Within any spiritual work is manifested the undividable unity between the human person's body and soul. The things done through the limbs of the body, are transferred to the soul⁹, and the soul's states are found in the body's manifestations¹⁰. Into prayer one can easily notice the reciprocal relation between the state – in other words: the settlement of the soul - and the external attitudes or the bodily manifestations of the prayer.

When the “dispositions of the soul in time of praying”, which create an “icon” that fits them to the manifestations of the body, are repeated to exhaustion, in time, there takes place the forming and the fixing of bodily habits (gestures) of the prayer (for instance: praying by standing, raising up the hands, kneeling, making the sign of the cross, etc.). They

⁹“The body is washed up, for the soul to be liberated from stains; the body is anointed with chrism, for the soul to be sanctified; the body is sealed (with the sign of the Cross), for the soul to be strengthened”, TERTULLIAN, *About the Resurrection of the Body*, 8, apud GABRIEL BUNGE, *Practica rugăciunii personale după Tradiția Sfinților Părinți (The Practice of the Personal Prayer at the Holy Fathers)*, translation into Romanian by I. Ică Jr., Publishing House Deisis, Sibiu, 1996, p. 149.

¹⁰ “We mustn't doubt that out of the countless postures of our body when praying, that one with stretching the hands and with raising the eyes it is preferable in the first place, because the body brings (carries) thus the image of the features which best fit the soul when praying” – ORIGEN, *Despre rugăciune*, 31,2, p. 284.

become traditional bodily ways of praying, through which are preserved and transmitted, from generation to generation, the rule of the faith and the state of prayer. Imposed as rule of the tradition, they can no longer be modified in time, without considering this modification as renouncement, or at least deformation, of the rule of faith.

Consequently, in the Orthodox spirituality, there are two bodily gestures through which, the ethos of the Early Church and the rule of the Apostolic faith, have been transmitted over centuries. Their present practicing roots the contemporary Orthodoxy in the biblical Apostolic tradition. From the standing point of view of these affirmations, we will approach few bodily forms of praying.

II. Praying by standing

Saint Hippolytus of Rome, in his work entitled *The Apostolic Tradition* (ca. 200-235), recorded that, in the rule of the evening religious service (of the bringing of the candlestick with light): “and after dinner, let everybody *pray standing on their feet*, and let the children and the female virgins utter psalms”¹¹.

The practice of praying by standing (standing on feet), and sometimes with the hands raised up, it is an apostolic tradition, keenly preserved by the Eastern Christendom, both in the cultic prayer and in the personal prayer. Its meaning is double. On one hand, it signifies the restoration, or the objective salvation, brought to the human nature by Christ the Savior, through His Resurrection, and, on the other hand, it means straining the mind to remain elevated towards God.

Saint Anthony the Great received the rule of praying when standing from the angel himself:

“Lord, I want to be saved and the thoughts don`t allow me. What can I do in my sufferance? How will I save myself? And by getting a little up, he saw somebody like himself, *sitting* and intertwining rope, and then *standing up* from work and praying,

¹¹ IPOLIT DIN ROMA (HIPPLYTUS OF ROME), *Tradiția apostolică (The Apostolic Tradition)*, in: “Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole” (“Apostolic Canon of the First Centuries), XXV, translation into Romanian by I. I. Ică Jr., Deisis/Stavropoleos Publishing House, Sibiu, 2008, p. 584.

and then *again sitting* and intertwining the rope; and then *against standing up* to pray. This was the angel of the Lord, sent to teach and strengthen Anthony. And he heard the angel saying: do so, and you will be saved!”¹²

Abba Arsenius the Great, like many other monks, was spending his Saturday towards Sunday, by taking vigil, and by praying, while standing: “it was told about him, that in the evening of the Saturdays, when the daylight was coming, towards Sunday, he left the sun behind and *stretched his hands towards the sky*, praying, until the sun shined again before him, and *then he sat*”¹³.

III. “I stretched my hands towards You, and I raised my eyes to the sky”

The gesture of raising the hands when praying, it belongs to the biblical man. Saint Apostle Paul urged the believers, on the line of the tradition of the Old Testament, to “raise up, in any place, holy hands, without hesitation” (1 Timothy 2, 8). This gesture orients the prayer and gives the man an *existential dimension*. By raising up his hands, towards sky, the man is no longer a creature that is wasted (lost) on the surface of the earth, but a *homo viator*, who walks the road from earth to sky.

The rising of the hands *reveals*, on one side, the icon of raising the mind towards the heavens, and, on the other side, *it determines* the mind to raise itself up towards God. And after it is kidnapped into the high ones, the mind remains in contemplation, as long as the hands are stretched as two pillars of fire towards sky.

Abba Sisoe was striving during the common prayer, to hide himself from the eyes of the others, to quickly lower his hands, lest his mind to be kidnapped and to tarry into heavens: “it was told about Abba Tithoe (Sisoe), that, if he didn’t quickly lower his hands, when praying, his mind was kidnapped upwardly. If it happened to be his brothers praying together with him, he was forcing himself to quickly lower his hands, to not be his mind kidnapped and to tarry”¹⁴.

¹² *Egyptian Paterikon*, For Abba Anthony, 1 Alba-Iulia, 1993, p. 7.

¹³ *Egyptian Paterikon*, For Abba Arsenius, 30, Alba-Iulia, 1993, p. 19.

¹⁴ *Egyptian Paterikon*, For Abba Sisoe, 1, Alba-Iulia, 1993, p. 229.

The rising of the hands is, the most often, accompanied by raising the eyes towards sky (“towards You, the One Who dwells into heavens, I rose my eyes”; Psalm 122, 1). The external gesture is the reflex of the internal attitude, of the mind, which looks towards God – and the symbolical “place” of God is the height (the firmament, the celestial vault). The eyes’ looking “upwards”, it does not mean localizing and limiting God in a circumscribed somewhere (for “up” and “down” are conventional), but *directing* the man’s face towards sky, and placing the one who is praying in *dependence* on God. In this sense Origen writes: “David says: *towards You, the One Who lives in heavens, I raised my eyes* (Psalm 122, 1) and *towards You Lord a raised my soul*” (Psalm 24, 1).

If the soul’s eyes are raised in such a measure, than they no longer tarry upon the earthly things, and they no longer let themselves to be burdened by worldly representations, reaching at such a great height than they no longer look at things from this world, but they are staring only at God, Whom they listen with respect and awe, then, how they wouldn’t renounce to the greatest advantages, while they see, as in a mirror, with a plain face, the brightness of the Lord’s greatness, being transformed in the same time, from glory to glory, as from the Lord’s Ghost (2 Corinthians 3, 18)? They are imparted then of a godlike overflowing of the grace, as the Psalmist tells us: “*Was imprinted over us the light of Your face, Lord!*” (Psalm 4, 6)¹⁵.

Therefore, raising up the eyes when praying, it is a sensitive showing, through the body’s gestures, of the man’s dependence on God. The sight is always directed towards the ones the man is in relation with. When the sight looks at the Lord, the man affirms his dependence on heavens. In the same time it is also a gesture of familiarity, and of intimacy, between the one who prays and God.

On a higher stage of the prayer, looking at the sky (icon) it becomes recognition, a finding again, a reciprocal transfer of love, a dialogue of a silent joyfulness.

“Abba James said: I went once to Baleos, to see Abba Isidor of Esere, and I found him sitting in his cell and writing. I remained there for a while and I noticed *how often* he was raising his eyes towards sky, without moving his lips and without his voice being

¹⁵ ORIGEN, *Despre rugăciune*, IX, 2, p. 218.

heard. I asked him: what are you doing, father? He answered: Don't you know what am I doing? Not at all, Abba, I answered. Then he told me: if you don't know this, James, you weren't a monk even for a single day! Behold what I'm saying: Jesus, have mercy on me! Jesus, help me! I praise You, my Lord!"¹⁶.

IV. Kneeling spiritually

The spiritual life in Orthodoxy it is the consequence of the work and of the presence of the grace within man. But, in the same time, and in the same measure, it is also the answer of the man to the grace's work, answer manifested as a searching for, and as a running after, grace.

If standing of feet when praying, it shows that the grace and the restoration have already come, for Christ already resurrected and elevated the human nature on the right hand of the Father's Glory, praying when kneeling, with the eyes turned towards dust and with the hands brought to the chest, it shows that, in the present age (to the end of the history) the human condition is searching for the grace, because it still is tributary to death, and the sin must be permanently defeated and banished away from our bodies and souls.

Within Eastern spirituality, the humbleness and the humiliation are constitutive for the most profound states of exaltation into grace. Kneeling makes room for God within man. Although it represents, without any doubt, the humiliation that comes out of the conscience of the sinfulness, the kneeling represents, especially, the understanding that God is everything, and that the spiritual life springs out of grace, respectively out of the restoration brought to the human nature by the redeeming work of Christ. Due to this reason, the prayer done when standing it is alternated with the spiritual kneeling. This thing can be limpidly seen in the liturgical cycle of the Churchly Year.

We recall here that, to an Orthodox believer, the spiritual life is totally a churchly one. The ecclesial liturgical time – as time of the daily intervention, of each moment, of God, into creation – it generates the mode of praying. The Church, in its early period, the apostolic one, it was powerfully expressing this conviction, of the realism of the salvation

¹⁶ GABRIEL BUNGE, *Practica rugăciunii personale după Tradiția Sfinților Părinți*, pp. 164-165.

through the churchly image of the life. The holidays have always been understood as the time of the man's impartation out of the oikonomic work of salvation, done by God - the Holy Trinity, with the world. The Holidays were born out of the understanding of the acts of salvation done by God (for instance: the Annunciation, the Lord's Birth, the Epiphany, the Resurrection, etc.) into the heart of the time. That's why, these holidays have become images of the Kingdom that already has reached to (within) us. During Feasting Days, the time is healed of the aspect of the inevitable passing towards death (it is healed of blindness, of darkness), and it is entirely regenerated, being transformed in a time of salvation. In this way, the Orthodox calendar is strewn with "luminous periods" – namely with temporal sequences, within which the Christian already lives in the Kingdom of God.

Having this certitude, ever since the apostolic century, the Christians didn't kneel on Saturday, on Sunday, during the period of the Nativity (and of the Epiphany) and during the Paschal period (from the Resurrection Day to the day of Pentecost).

“From our God-bearer Fathers, we have received, canonically, to not kneel on Sundays, honoring (thus) the Resurrection of Christ; for taking heed, very clearly, we make known to the believers that after the priests' entering the Altar, to the Saturday's vespers, according to the rule, let nobody kneel, until the vespers from the evening of the Sunday”¹⁷.

¹⁷ Canon 90, Ecumenical Synod VI; in the same way expresses itself also the Canon 20, Ecumenical Synod I, Canon 91 of Saint Basil the Great and Canon 15 of Saint Martyr Peter. The *Rudder* specifies also: all the churches due to respect what the Apostles and the Fathers taught us. Thus, on Sunday and during the Pentecost (from Easter to Whitsuntide) nobody kneels, during these days we pray standing on our feet for the Resurrection of Christ elevated us and we owe to show (by praying when standing up) the ones from above and heavenly. This is because the Sunday is somehow imagining the age to come during which everybody will appear standing (the bodies rose by resurrection from dust). This is because Sunday isn't simply the first day (of the week) but one that begins the (days of) the future age; it is also called the eighth day, namely it is the day from after the end of this age. And during the whole Pentecost period we pray standing up for it is the period that remembers us the hoped Resurrection in the age to come, for through the right image of the body, the mind is moved from the present age to the future one. Likewise say also: the Great Basil (91), the Blessed Irenaeus of Lyon in his Word for Easter, Epiphany, and Augustine in his Epistle towards January, Hieronymus in his Epistle against the Worshipers of

Saint Justin the Martyr answers the question concerning kneeling on Sundays and during the Pentecost:

“We need to always remember two things: our falling into sin and the grace of our Christ, through which we have been raised up from falling; that’s why our kneeling during the six days (of the week) it is a symbol of our falling into sin. But the fact that we do not kneel during the Lord’s Day, it is a symbol of the Resurrection through which we have been liberated through the grace of Christ, from sins, and from death which killed us through these sins. This custom originates from the time of the Apostles, as the Blesses Irenaeus, the Martyr and the Bishop of Lyon, says, in his writing *About Easter*, mentioning also the Pentecost, during which let’s not kneel, because it has the same signification like the Lord’s Day, for the reasons told for this day”¹⁸.

Knelling means time and state of repentance, heart broken by burdening the conscience with the multitude of the sins, searching for, and depending on, the mercy of God, confessing the nothingness of the man who is in total dependence on God.

One mustn’t forget even for a moment that the bodily gestures of the prayer are only epiphanic (namely they manifest the savior work of God with the man, and the work of the man for edifying his own salvation) and they contribute to accomplishing the mystery of the praying.

Kneeling and standing up are not in a competition with each other, they don’t exclude each other, and they aren’t hierarchically aligned by their value, they don’t represent *per se* purposes, neither are they methods of

Lucifer, Ambrosius, Tertullian, Theophilus (Canon 1) and Nicephorus the Confessor (Canon 10). The last one specifies that on Sundays, and during Pentecost, one can kneel for give kisses, but cannot do the great prostrations. It is here about kneeling (bowing down) done for kissing the icons, either for bowing down before the Abbot, and Hierarch, for kissing their hands. Bowing down before icon, when somebody enters the Church (even with kneeling), it aims the confession of the faith in the real Embodiment of God into world (the possibility and the motif of icon’s existence), but during the religious service everybody stands up. See *The Rudder*, pp. 168-170; 300; 729.

¹⁸ GABRIEL BUNGE, *Practica rugăciunii personale după Tradiția Sfinților Părinți*, p. 172.

mantra type from the oriental pantheistic religions, but they cannot be also relativized and slighted, and neither reduced one to another nor considered only depending on what the ecclesiastically not-integrated individual piety confers to them. They remain both to the prayer of the liturgical Synaxis and to the one from the cell, forms through which the life is poured within world and given to the man as churchly life.