



## 3.2. The Prayer in the Spirit

The early Christian fathers describe a higher form of prayer, one that goes beyond spoken words and occurs without thoughts or images, as "prayer in the spirit" - a prayer that leads to the constant presence of God.

A concrete practice that can lead to prayer in the spirit is the Jesus Prayer.

"Prayer in the Spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα προσευχή)

- The expression comes from the Bible, specifically from Ephesians 6:18 ("Pray at all times in the Spirit"; Greek προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι).
- It refers to a prayer that occurs not only outwardly but with the inner person and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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### **Historical background**

The Jesus Prayer was developed in the 3rd and 4th centuries in the first Christian monasteries in Egypt.

Through the continuous repetition of a short phrase ("Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me"), a gathering and focusing of the spirit is effected. The monks based this practice on 1 Thessalonians 5:17 ("Pray without ceasing").

The Jesus Prayer was primarily practiced in the Eastern Church, especially within Hesychasm, a mystical tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Later it also became known in the West, particularly through the book *The Way of a Pilgrim* (19th century).

### **Prayer of the heart**

The Jesus Prayer is often used synonymously with the Prayer of the Heart and is intended to lead into the depths of the heart — a prayer that springs directly from the heart, without thoughts or images.

It is meant to develop from a temporary practice into a state in which the heart prays continuously — a unceasing prayer.

The Prayer of the Heart is not methodologically limited to the fixed form of the Jesus Prayer, but can also be practiced with individually chosen words or phrases.

It is thus a concrete form of prayer that leads to praying in the spirit – a state in which we experience the presence of God directly.

It leads us into the "**zero-point**" state, which opens us to the divine presence and allows us

to become an object for God.

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