WHAT IS VIRTUE?

The word "virtue" is used to define a person's character.

Every good quality to be found in a person is really first and foremost found in God.
He made each and every person in His image, with the potential to become like Him.

All good things come from Him and He desires that we share in this goodness.

Therefore, to be like God, is to acquire His goodness and His virtues.

In Greek, this is called ηθικη αρετη, or "habitual excellence."
These qualities are practiced at all times, in a state of perfection,
which we often fall short of doing because we are sinners.
However the closer we grow towards Christ, the more we will resemble
His virtues or otherwise known as the fruits of the Spirit.

"be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Words of Christ from the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:48

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God,
holy and beloved, bowels of mercies,
kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,
if any man have a quarrel against any:
even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
And above all these things put on charity,
which is the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,
to which also ye are called in one body;
and be ye thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing
one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"

(Colossians 3.12-16)

How do we achieve virtues?

We know it's possible to achieve virtues and share in God's perfection in this life, because the Saints of the Orthodox Church did so. If we look at their lives, we will find a map to follow!

All of the Saints have something in common. They struggled and made great sacrifices because of their love for God.

Some Saints led sinful lives at first, but through repentance they committed the rest of their lives to Christ. Others gave up great wealth and fame to follow the narrow path. Some willingly clothed themselves in simple attire, ate very little, slept few hours to keep vigil during the nights, offered everything they had to the poor and surrounded themselves with silence. Because of this, their days were filled with prayer and abundant joy!

Just as God blessed them, He will bless us too when we attempt small gestures for Him to show our gratefulness.

Can you write a few examples below of things you can do for God?

_____

_____

_____

_____

E W H G O L H T A L K P E E S M
F E N N D C Y T O F N B A T F E
A W I S D O M G F E X H Y X H H
I Z L F I U K E F E H R X C H E
T E M P E R A N C E E O A E P V
H E Y O I A G E O S E Y A O A H
F O B Z B G R R W W T Z H M T U
U O N W E E E O A I L S Z G I S
L E D E V A D S L T I E F B E R
N S O O S H H I F N I O D T N Z
E D L O C T M T E E I T E G C P
S U Y S T U Y Y O N B N U E E M
S A A F H Q C R K L C G L D A R
O C D T T D I E T I R E X H E E
E D L T L A U A S S L R G L X J
T V T O C N N I P F R Z S M P T

faith, hope, knowledge, wisdom, honesty, humility, obedience,
patience, courage, faithfulness, temperance, generosity, gratitude, love

VIRTUE MATCH-UP

Draw a line connecting the correct definition

- FAITH
- HOPE
- KNOWLEDGE
- WISDOM
- HONESTY
- HUMILITY
- OBEDIENCE

to be truthful at all times and avoid hypocrisy

to follow the will of God by sometimes denying our own desires joyfully

undoubting belief in things hoped for

illumination not from books but from a holy way of life pleasing to God

belief in what is possible

complete reliance on God for all things rather than ourselves or others

the ability of the mind to understand God

VIRTUE MATCH-UP

Draw a line connecting the correct definition

the care and concern for
the well-being of others

To wait upon God's doing
with acceptance of your faults
and the faults of others

A commitment to achieve
your calling, and bearing
fruit with the gifts and talents
given to you by God

Having no fear even unto
martyrdom or humiliation

being thankful for everything
and full of inner peace

to truly imitate God

making sacrifices and decisions
for a holier mind, body, and soul

- COURAGE
- GRATITUDE & CONTENTMENT
- SELF-CONTROL & CHASTITY
- FAITHFULNESS
- PATIENCE
- GENEROSITY & KINDNESS
- LOVE

PAINTING ROCKS OF VIRTUE

Supplies needed:

Smooth rocks, paint, paint brushes

Instructions:

Choose a favorite virtue to paint on a stone and carry it around in your pocket as your special reminder.

THE OPPOSITE CHALLENGE

Fill in the empty spaces below with an opposing character trait of the virtues up above

faith

hope

knowledge

love

generosity

chastity

wisdom

courage

honesty

humility

obedience

patience

gratitude

disbelief

indifference

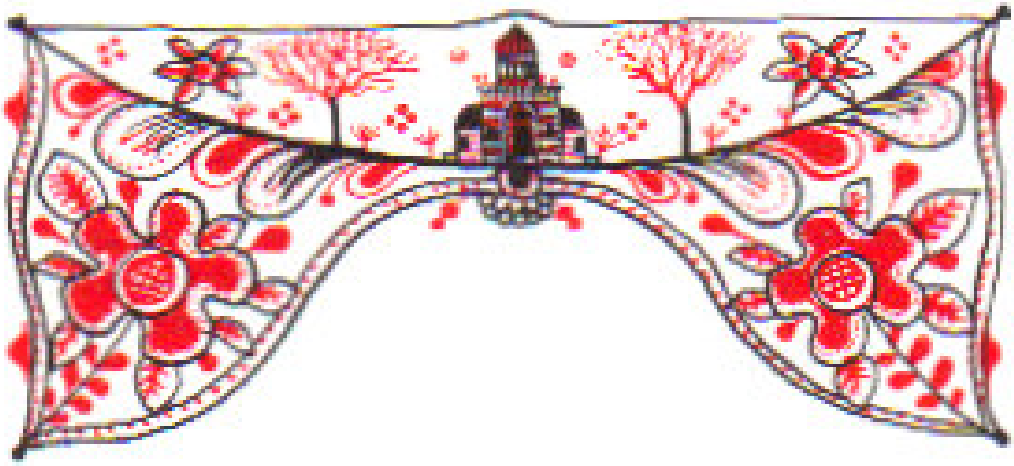
WHAT IS CHASTITY?

In Zadonsk there labored
the ascetic George, who was well-known in his time.
Early on he realized all the vanity of worldly life and went to a monastery,
but was not satisfied even with this and chose for himself absolute solitude—reclusion.
Here he spent his time in fasting, prayer and contemplation of God, but temptations
did not leave him. When he was still in the world, he had loved a girl with a pure love,
and her image often stood before him, disturbing his state of spiritual calm. Once, sensing
his helplessness in the struggle, he cried out: "O Lord, if this is my cross, give me the
strength to bear it; but if it is not, then erase the very recollection of her from my
memory." The Lord heard him. And on that very night he saw in a dream a young
maiden of uncommon beauty, clothed in gold raiment. In her gaze there radiated such
unearthly majesty and angelic purity that George was unable to tear his eyes away from
her, and with reverence he asked, "Who are you? What is your name?" "My name is
chastity," she replied, and the vision came to an end. Coming to himself, the ascetic
offered up thanks to the Lord for bringing him to reason. The image he had seen in
his dream was so ingrained in his mind that it completely erased all other images.

-Elder Barsanuphius of Optina

DID YOU KNOW?

The holy canons of the Orthodox Church specify that male candidates for the priesthood are to be virgins. *Chastity is for guys and girls alike!*



Abba Longinos was once asked which virtue
he considered most important of all.

"Just as pride is the greatest of all evils, since it succeeded in casting the angels from heaven to the abyss, so humility is the greatest of all virtues. It had the power to raise the sinner from the abyss up to heaven. For this reason, the Lord blesses, before all others, the poor in spirit."

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

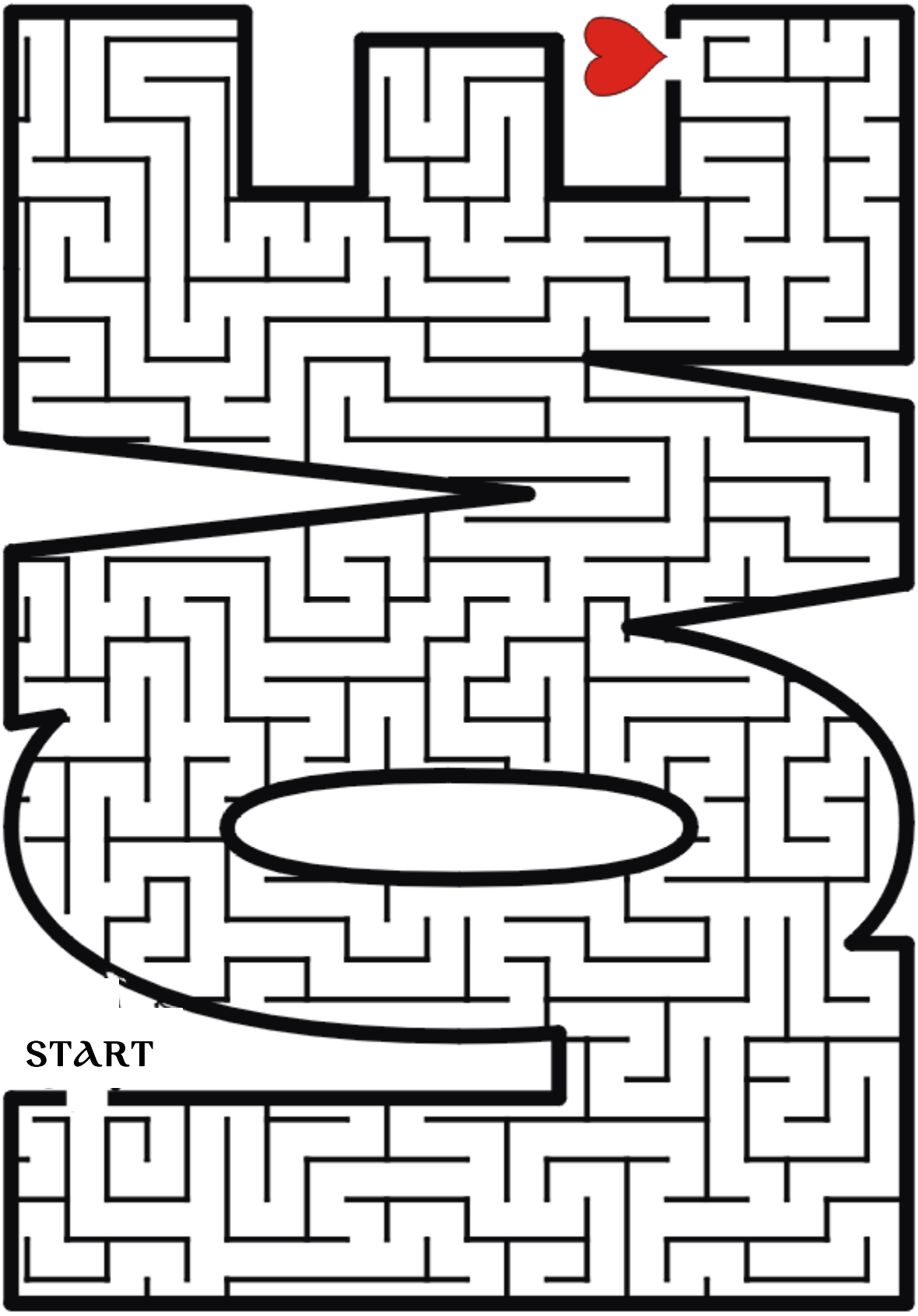
"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied:

"Love the Lord
your God with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your mind."

"And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:35-38


START

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer of a Single Person

Jesus my Lord, Who became man and graced us with the beauty of Your life and with the example of faith, purity and love; help me, I pray, to love You with all my mind, heart and soul, and to live according to Your teachings. Strengthen me when temptations strike, that I may remain pure in thought and steadfast in virtue, doing only things that are pleasing to You. Guide me to live Your will and not my own as I look to the future. Grant me faith, courage and love, that I may serve You in holiness all the days of my life, through the prayers of the Theotokos and of all the Saints. Amen.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A MAN WITHOUT LEGS TO WALK,
EVEN IF THE REST OF HIS BODY IS HEALTHY,
SO IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO APPROACH GOD,
OR REACH GOD IN PRAYER,
WITHOUT ACTIVE VIRTUE.

By St. Theophan the Recluse, *On Prayer,* Homily 4