

55 Maxims of Christian Living

by Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

A few years ago, I was asked: "Father Thomas, if you summarized, in the shortest form, what a practical life of a believing Christian, of a human being who believes in God and believes in Christ, what would it be like? What kind of maxims or rules would that include?" And in response to that request, I made up a list of what I called "55 Maxims," 55 things that a believer, very simply, would do if they were really a believer and were really obedient to God and wanted to live the way God would have us live.

- 1 Be always with Christ and trust God in everything.
- 2 Pray as you can, not as you think you must.
- 3 Have a keepable rule of prayer done by discipline.
- 4 Say the Lord's Prayer several times each day.
- 5 Repeat a short prayer when your mind is not occupied.
- 6 Make some prostrations when you pray.
- 7 Eat good foods in moderation and fast on fasting days.
- 8 Practice silence, inner and outer.
- 9 Sit in silence 20 to 30 minutes each day.
- 10 Do acts of mercy in secret.
- 11 Go to liturgical services regularly.
- 12 Go to confession and holy communion regularly.
- 13 Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings.
- 14 Reveal all your thoughts and feelings to a trusted person regularly.
- 15 Read the scriptures regularly.
- 16 Read good books, a little at a time.
- 17 Cultivate communion with the saints.
- 18 Be an ordinary person, one of the human race.
- 19 Be polite with everyone, first of all family members.
- 20 Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
- 21 Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
- 22 Exercise regularly.
- 23 Live a day, even a part of a day, at a time.

- 24 Be totally honest, first of all with yourself.
- 25 Be faithful in little things.
- 26 Do your work, then forget it.
- 27 Do the most difficult and painful things first.
- 28 Face reality.
- 29 Be grateful.
- 30 Be cheerful.
- 31 Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
- 32 Never bring attention to yourself.
- 33 Listen when people talk to you.
- 34 Be awake and attentive, fully present where you are.
- 35 Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
- 36 Speak simply, clearly, firmly, directly.
- 37 Flee imagination, fantasy, analysis, figuring things out.
- 38 Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
- 39 Don't complain, grumble, murmur or whine.
- 40 Don't seek or expect pity or praise.
- 41 Don't compare yourself with anyone.
- 42 Don't judge anyone for anything.
- 43 Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
- 44 Don't defend or justify yourself.
- 45 Be defined and bound by God, not people.
- 46 Accept criticism gracefully and test it carefully.
- 47 Give advice only when asked or when it is your duty.
- 48 Do nothing for people that they can and should do for themselves.
- 49 Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
- 50 Be merciful with yourself and others.
- 51 Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
- 52 Focus exclusively on God and light, and never on darkness, temptation and sin.
- 53 Endure the trial of yourself and your faults serenely, under God's mercy.
- 54 When you fall, get up immediately and start over.

55 Get help when you need it, without fear or shame.

Very Reverend Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko (March 28, 1939 – March 18, 2015) was an Orthodox priest, author, and theologian of the Orthodox Church in America. He was the Dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary from 1992 until 2002, having also taught there from 1968 until 2002.