

### 3. Keeping Prayerful Vigil

*Blessed is the one who stays awake.*

*(Rev 16:15)*

701 "Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial" (Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38). With these words Christ cautioned the apostles in the garden of Gethsemane, and in the parable of the Ten Virgins he warned: "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13). The spiritual Fathers used the image of sleep to depict the state of the sinful person who "in their sin has fallen asleep unto death." Through sin the person sinks into a dreamy state of self-deception. If this sinful "dreaminess" persists, it ends in death—the full incapacitation of the person toward the good, and the lack of will to do what is right.

### 4. The Mutual Link of Prayer and Fasting

*Prayer with fasting is good.*

*(Tob 12:8)*

702 In the Gospels, Christ emphasizes the mutual relationship between prayer and fasting. Both are needed if one is to overcome the influence of the Evil One, that is, if one is to be freed from sin. "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mk 9:29, KSV-CE). The Holy Fathers stressed the inseparability of fasting and prayer: "To the measure that you take away from the body, to that measure you will fortify the soul with spiritual strength."<sup>460</sup> Through fasting, we restrain and check the outer person so that through prayer, the inner person might thrive. When prayer is separated from fasting, the inner person lacks the necessary conditions for growth.

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<sup>460</sup> BASIL THE GREAT, On Fasting, 2, 1: PG 31,183.

## 5. Prayer before Icons

*Let your face shine on your servant.*

*(Ps 30[31]16)*

703 Icons serve prayer so that as the Christian grows spiritually, he or she might gradually pass from faith in the Mystery of God to the contemplation of him "face to face. "The Seventh Ecumenical Council teaches that we come to know God through God's Son—the Word and Image of God. Each of the ways of divine knowledge is equally valid and important. In prayer before icons the main organ of our communication with God is not our lips, which pronounce the words, but our eyes. With our eyes we look at the image in order to contemplate the image Person. Like vocal prayer, prayer before icons is a gradual process, in which we progress as if climbing the rungs of a ladder.