

Using a Prayer Rope

(Comboschini)



The prayer rope is not some kind of amulet with magic or exorcising powers. On the contrary, it is a purely Orthodox holy object used only for praying and nothing else.

There are two ways we can pray using the prayer rope:

1. At any time of the day when we have free time, without being seen by anyone, secretly, we hold the prayer rope with our left or right hand and move from knot to knot with our thumb whispering simultaneously or meditating upon the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me" or "Most Holy Theotokos save us".
2. At the time of our regular prayer, when we pray following the rule of prayer that our spiritual father has told us to follow, we hold the prayer rope with our left hand between the thumb and the index finger and move from knot to knot. At each knot we simultaneously do two things: i) with our right hand we make the sign of the cross over ourselves and ii) we say the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me". When we finish with all the knots of the prayer rope, we continue following the same procedure, for as many times as our spiritual father has advised.



Prayer ropes are made in keeping with a tradition whose origin is lost in antiquity. Perhaps one of the earliest forms was simply gathering small pebbles

or seeds and moving them from one spot or container to another as one said his prayer rule or did his rule of bows or prostrations. The story is told of a monk who decided to make knots in a rope, which he could use in carrying out his daily rule of prayer. But the devil kept untying the knots he made in the rope, frustrating the poor monk's efforts. Then an angel appeared and taught the monk a special kind of knot that consists of ties of interlocked crosses, and these knots the devil was unable to unravel.

Prayer Ropes come in a great variety of forms and sizes. Most prayer ropes have a cross woven into them or attached to mark the "end", and also have some kind of marker after each 10, 25, or 50 knots or beads. There are many forms of prayer ropes, some knotted of wool or silk, or other more elegant or simpler materials. Others are made of beads or the dried flower of a plant called "Tears of the Mother of God". They most often are made of black wool or silky lace (soutache). The black colour symbolises repentance.

"When mind and heart are united in prayer and the soul is wholly concentrated in a single desire for God, then the heart grows warm and the light of Christ begins to shine and fills the inward man with peace and joy. We should thank the Lord for everything and give ourselves up to His will; we should also offer Him all our thoughts and words, and strive to make everything serve only His good pleasure."

St. Seraphim of Sarov

[Using the Prayer Rope: Meditations of a Monk of the Holy Mountain Athos](#)
[Instructional Video](#) on making a prayer rope