

THE MEANING OF THE AGBIA:

“AGP” is a Coptic word that means “hour”; hence the AGBIA means the book of Hourly Prayers. It is an organized Church book that is used by the members collectively in the congregational prayers as well as individually at home. Prayer is one of the pillars of the Christian life (Matt 6), the Lord Jesus commanded us to both pray individually (Matt6: 6) and collectively (Acts 2:1, 13:1-3). The AGBIA is a method of prayer known as written prayers. This is a biblical method, as we find many Psalms were used as written prayers uttered by the people of God on different occasions (Ps 102 & 2 Chron 29:30). Through the AGBIA’s written prayers each Orthodox believer **communicates** with the Lord periodically throughout the day. The AGBIA is simply “time out“ to meet the Lord and talk to Him; aided by the divine inspired Psalms and the Churches prayers. Bishop Moussa (Bishop of youth affairs) defines the AGBIA as “the best of the fathers praises. It is new appeals and sermons for the soul. It is union with the important daily occasions and active and interactive emotions” (Serving Today’s Youth, Bishop Moussa)

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYING

BY THE AGBIA

Below are only some of the reasons why it is important for us to pray by the AGBIA.

1- **The commandment of the Lord:**

The Lord commanded the Church to pray without ceasing: “that men ALWAYS ought to pray and not lose heart” (Lk 18:1). The Holy Spirit also says through St. Paul, “Pray without ceasing” (I Thess 5:17). This commandment may not solely mean praying by the AGBIA, but it is obviously obeyed (at least partially) through the AGBIA. Many of us do not take life with the Lord as seriously as we ought to, consequently we wonder why we should be praying throughout the day!

2- **The practice of the Apostles:**

By praying the AGBIA we are truly following the apostolic fathers. The apostles continued to participate in the worship of the Jewish temple, (Acts 2:46) which was prepared in a similar order to that of the AGBIA. The book of Acts mentions that “Peter and John went up together to the temple at the HOUR OF PRAYER, the NINTH HOUR” (Acts 3:1). David of old, despite his demanding schedule practiced the seven hourly prayers.

3- **The Church’s Canons:**

Prayer of the AGBIA is no modern approach, we are following the Church’s practices up-rightly. In the council of Nicene the seven canonical hours of prayers were appointed as a holy practice of the true believers.

4- **The Model of Prayer:**

The prayer of the AGBIA provides us with a model to shape our own prayers, in much the same way the Lord Jesus gave the “Our Father” as a model prayer to His disciples. Practicing the AGBIA prayers is crucial to acquire the God approved style of praying. We realize for example, that prayer should start with thanksgiving and praise, and not simply a list of requests! Bishop Theophan the Hermit speaks of this saying: “This is like a person who is learning a new language, he may memorize passages to be trained in its style and art. Likewise, the language of prayer is a special language, we learn it from the books that contain samples of prayers uttered by persons who have been trained to communicate with the Lord through such language” (cited in *The Life of Orthodox Prayer*, pg. 637). Thus, through the AGBIA the Spirit teaches us how to pray, “as we ought” (Rom 8:26)

5- **The intermingled doctrine:**

The prayers of the AGBIA contain the upright doctrines that are important for us to absorb in order to be established in the truth, and not be shaken by every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14). For example, we pray the creed in the morning, the twelfth hour prayer and the mid night prayer, so that we may memorize the truth of the doctrine and immune ourselves against the reoccurring Heresies of Arius, Nestour and Autarchy.

6- **The inspired word of God:**

When we are praying by the AGBIA, we are using the Lord’s own words, the divine approved **content** of prayer. Hence, we have no need to wonder whether our prayers are in the will of God, and accepted by Him. Through the AGBIA the Spirit teaches us “WHAT we should pray” (Rom 8:26). If it is in the word of God, it is certainly in the will of God. The Lord Jesus

makes this connection clear: “if you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ASK what you desire, and it shall be done for you. “ (Jn 15:7)

7- **Two way communication:**

When we pray by the AGBIA, we are involved in two way communication, we hear the Lord’s voice in the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Church’s organized prayers and we reply back using the Psalm, the Church’s prayers and the inward reply of the heart to the Lord’s message.

Many are the reasons that make the AGBIA an essential tool to every serious and sincere Orthodox youth. The AGBIA makes it possible to pray continually, obeying the Lord’s commandments, following the Apostles worship schedule, and abiding by the Church’s wise instructions. The AGBIA is also important because it teaches us what to pray and How to pray in the style and will of God. Further, the AGBIA is important because it establishes us in the correct doctrine, and allows us to have free flowing communication with the Lord.