

February 10: The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

When we hear this Gospel story we are asked to take a look at how we choose to pray. Let's take a look at the prayer of the Pharisee. He begins to thank God that he is not a "bad person" and begins to list all of his attributes, as if God doesn't already know all of those things. "I" do this and "I" do that..."I" is all he talks about. This man is so impressed with himself, yet sadly, God is not impressed with this man. Our friend the Publican however, silently takes his humble place and simply asks God for mercy. He offers a simple, yet powerful, prayer which sums up everything a soul needs in every time and in every situation.

We can learn this powerful prayer and pray it often throughout our day!

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner

We can make a simple bracelet upon which we can pray this prayer, during the day or night, whenever we have the time or the desire to connect with God. This bracelet design is based on the Chotki, or knotted cords that were first made and used by St. Pachomius, a monk of the fourth century in order to keep better track of his prostrations during the day. Later on, the monk began to notice that as he tried to pray with these knotted cords, the devil would come and attempt to trip him up by untying the knots! It is said that the Theotokos, herself, appeared to him and taught him how to tie each knot in the form of seven crosses so that the enemy, at the sign of the cross, would flee and leave him to his precious prayers.



This is so much simpler to make than those knots, and anyone can do it!

You will need:

Some woolen yarn
Matching embroidery floss
Clear tape
21 Pony beads

Cut two pieces of yarn, and two pieces of coordinating floss, each measuring at least 12 inches. Pair each length of yarn with a piece of floss, wrap each end together with a piece of transparent tape, like a shoelace, in order to

make it easier to push the yarn through each bead. Push one end of both cords through one bead and place the bead in the center of the cords. Tie the bead in place by knotting the cords on either side. This will become the center bead of your chotki. You may wish to make this bead red, or some other accent color.

On each side of the center bead, string 10m pony beads (mine are black, for the Fast; you may choose any color you like) in the following manner: Take the bead, push one cord through the hole in the bead from the right side to the left, and then take the other cord and push it through the same hole from the left side to the right. Then pull the bead down toward the center bead. Continue with the other beads, 10 on each side until all 20 beads are strung.

Then bring all four ends together and make a great big knot, thus making a circular set of beads. Cut off the excess yarn and fray the ends a bit to form a tassel which, according to tradition is there to dry the penitent's tears.