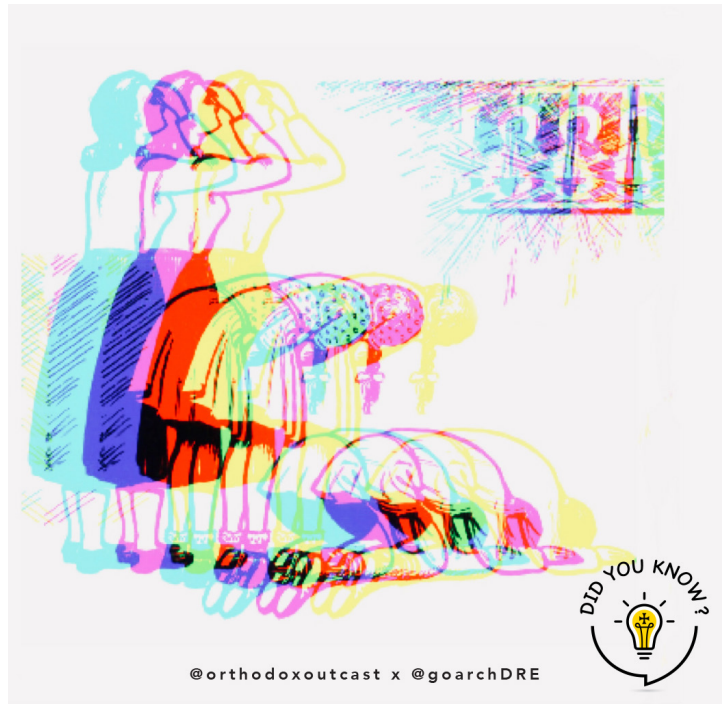


PROSTRATIONS

April 10



Did you know that prostrations began before the time of Christ?

Prostrations have been offered throughout history by Jews, Gentiles, Persians, Greeks, Muslims, and Christians alike in honor of God, political leaders, and sacred objects. The Orthodox controversy over prostrations (like icons) being idolatrous was settled with the defeat of iconoclasm in the 9th Century.

In private or public worship, prostrations serve as a suggested liturgical act of praying with our body. We pray not only with our mind, mouth, and heart (spiritual “eye”) — our thoughts, words, and spiritual “seeing” or knowing — but also with our body. Prostrations are offered at church primarily during Great Lent. They are typically not done on Sundays.

The Greek word for prostration is προσκύνησις (proskynesis) — which means to bow “towards” and to “kiss” in adoration or veneration. Prostrations (full and partial) are the most complete form of a bow, called a “metania” or “metanoia” — which means repentance. Therefore, prostrations serve as a living icon of our spiritual journey: following Christ, falling down, and getting back up — representing the fall of the human race through Adam and the Church’s resurrection and glorification with Christ.

To do a prostration, we make the Sign of the Cross, fall to our knees, and bow our heads to the floor — all in one continuous motion. When touching the floor, our hands can either be flat or a fist, with our head dropping between our hands. Then we stand up and do another prostration or continue with other prayers.

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