

Maronite Monks of Adoration

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On the Government of the Soul by St. Bonaventure

Translation from the Latin: Maronite Monks

1. First of all, O my soul, you should think of **God** in the *highest*, the *most loving* and the *most holy* way, namely with a sure faith believing, with an attentive mind considering and by the penetrating gaze of reason in admiration.

2. You will think of God in the *highest* way if with a faithful, loving and penetrating gaze, you believe, marvel and praise the boundless *power* of the One who created all things out of nothing and sustains their existence; the infinite *wisdom* of the One who governs all things and orders them; the timeless *justice* of the One who judges all things and retributes them. Then, going outside yourself, re-entering yourself and rising above yourself you will truly sing with that prophetic word: *The daughters of Juda rejoiced, because of thy judgments, O Lord. For thou art the most high Lord over all the earth: thou art exalted exceedingly above all gods* (Ps. 96:8-9). — You will think of God in the *most loving* way if you admire, embrace and bless his immense *mercy* as supremely *kind* in the assumption of our humanity and mortality, as supremely *compassionate* in enduring the cross and death and supremely *generous* in giving the Holy Spirit and in the institution of the Sacraments, since He communicates Himself most liberally in the Sacrament of the altar. Then, you will chant from your soul the Psalm: *The Lord is sweet to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works* (Ps. 144:9). — You will think of God in the *most holy* way if you turn towards, admire and praise His inexplicable *holiness*, and you proclaim with those blessed Seraphim: Holy, holy, holy (Is. 6:4). First, He is *holy* by possessing holiness *in Himself* so supremely and purely that it is impossible for Him to will or approve of anything but what is holy. Second, He is *holy* by perfectly loving holiness *in others* so that it is impossible for Him either to withdraw grace from or refuse the rewards of glory to the servants of true holiness. Third, He is *holy*, so severely abhorring what is opposed to holiness that it is impossible for Him not to reprove sin or leave it unpunished. Now, if you think this way, you will sing



Illustration: Maronite Monks

"The wise man is the one who can save his soul."

—St. Nimatullah Al-Hardini

The Maronite Church has been covered in glory as one of her sons, the Blessed Nimatullah Al-Hardini, was officially recognized and honored as saved and in heaven — canonized — May 16th, raised to the altars at St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome, by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. The Holy Father had previously declared Fr. Nimatullah venerable in 1989, and elevated him to the rank of Blessed in 1998.

St. Nimatullah (1808-1858), whose baptismal name was Joseph, was a Maronite priest and religious, and lived a life of heroic virtue in Lebanon where he passed most of his years in monastic solitude. Although shouldering heavy duties of administration, teaching and manual labor (St. Nimatullah practiced his craft of bookbinding even while serving as Assistant General of the Lebanese Maronite Order), the saint maintained an intense spiritual and devotional life including heavy bodily mortifications. He taught at various schools of the Lebanese Maronite Order and among his students was Brother Sharbel Makhlof—the illustrious St. Sharbel. Along with Sts. Rafka and Sharbel, St. Nimatullah was outstandingly devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, kneeling, sometimes for hours-on-end, in adoration. The Maronite Church celebrates his feast day on the 14th of December.

St. Nimatullah, "Blessing from God," pray for us!

with the Lawgiver: *God is faithful and without any iniquity, He is just and right* (Deut. 32:4).

3. After this, turn the eyes of your mind to the *law of God* which commands you to offer to the most High a *humble* heart, to the most Loving a *devout* heart and to the most Holy a *whole* heart. I say that you ought to offer a *humble* heart to the *most High* by *reverence* in soul, *obedience* in deeds and *honor* in words and gestures, carrying out the apostolic rule and doctrine: *whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Cor. 10:31). — You ought to offer the *most Loving* a *devout* heart through the *frequency* of fervent prayers, through the *taste* of spiritual sweetness, through manifold *thanksgiving*, so that your soul might continually ascend through *the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense* (Cant. 3:6). — You ought to offer to the *most Holy* Spouse a *whole* heart so that nothing ever reign in you of the eagerness of bodily pleasure, the desire of worldly greed or the indulgence of interior malice either in the senses, by consent or in the affection, while every stain of sin is excluded, you are able to sing with the Psalmist: *Let my heart be immaculate in thy justifications, that I may not be confounded*

(Ps. 118:80).

4. Attend diligently, therefore, and see whether you have kept all these things since your youth. If in your conscience you find it so, do not attribute it to yourself, but to the gift of God and offer thanks to Him. But if you find that once or many times, in one, in many or perhaps in all of these, whether seriously or lightly you have sinned, either through weakness, ignorance or with certain knowledge and malice, then you should strive, with *unspeakable groanings* (Rom. 8:26) to be reconciled with God, and take up the spirit of virtue in order to offer Him a corrected conscience. Then you will be able to chant and

sing truly with the penitent: *For I am ready for scourges: and my sorrow is continually before me* (Ps. 37:18).

5. In order that a *sorrowing spirit* purify the soul and be pleasing to God it ought to have two companions, namely, *fear of divine judgment* and the *ardor of inner desire* so that by fearing you might recover a *humble heart*, by desiring you might recover a *devout heart* and by sorrowing you might recover a *whole heart*. — *Fear*, therefore, the *divine judgments*, which are a great deep (Ps. 35:7). Fear, I say, *vehemently*, lest perhaps you are only somewhat penitent, yet still displeasing to God; fear *more*

vehemently, lest after this, you offend God again; fear *most vehemently*, lest you be finally separated from God, always lacking the *light*, always burning in the *fire*, never lacking the *worm*, (unless through true penitence you depart in final grace), that with the Prophet you might sing: *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments* (Ps. 118:120).

6. *Lament* and pay your debt on account of *sins committed*. Lament, I say, *vehemently* because of the annihilation of every good divinely given to you; lament *more vehemently* for the attack against



St. Bonaventure

Christ, born and crucified for you; lament most vehemently for the total contempt of God, by transgressing whose laws you have dishonored His *majesty*, denied His *truth*, offended His *goodness*, and dishonored, deformed and disordered the whole universe. While opposing the statutes, commands and judgments you have abused all that was to serve you for God's sake, nature, Scripture, justice, mercy, gratuitous gifts and promised rewards. Diligently considering these things, *make thee mourning as for an only son, a bitter lamentation* (Jer. 6:26); *let tears run down like a torrent day and night: give thyself no rest, and let not the apple of thy eye cease* (Lam. 2:18).

7. *Desire*, nevertheless, the *divine graces*, the flame of divine love ascending to God, who so patiently endured you, a sinner, who waited so long for you, who so mercifully led you back to repentance, by granting you forgiveness, infusing grace promising you the crown, while you pay back to Him — rather, while you receive from Him what you repay — *an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humbled heart*, (Ps. 50:19) through bitter *compunction*, through truthful *confession*, through worthy *satisfaction*. Desire, I say, *vehemently* the divine *good pleasure* through a plentiful outpouring of the Holy Spirit; desire *more vehemently* divine *conformity* through an expressed imitation of Christ crucified; desire *most vehemently* the divine *embrace* through manifest vision of the eternal Father, that you might truly sing with the Prophet: *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Ps. 41:3).

8. Further, so that you might interiorly preserve in yourself this spirit of fear, sorrow and ardor, *exercise yourself externally* in every manner of *modesty, justice and godliness*, since according to the Apostle's warning: *denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world* (Titus 2:12). — And so, exercise yourself in every manner of modesty, that according to the doctrine of the Apostle *your modesty might be known to all men* (Phil. 4:5). Exercise, I say, *modesty of frugality* in food and clothing, in sleep and vigil, in leisure and labor so that you are excessive in nothing. — As opportunity requires and right reason dictates, exercise *modesty of discipline* through moderation of silence and speaking, sadness and joy, meekness and sternness. — As moral virtue and regular observance demand, exercise *modesty of probity* through ruling, ordering and composure of acts, movements and gestures, dress, bodily members and senses, so that you might rightly be among the number of those to whom the Apostle says: *let all things be done decently and according to order among you* (I Cor. 14:40).

9. Exercise yourself also in *justice*, so that the prophetic word might be fitted to you: *because of truth and meekness and justice, etc.* (Ps. 44:5). Exercise *pure justice* through *zeal for divine honor*, through *observance of the divine law* and *desire for the salvation of souls*. — Exercise *ordered justice* through *obedience* to superiors, *sociability* with equals, *correction* of inferiors. — Exercise perfect justice so that you assent to every truth, foster goodness, resist malice in thought, word and deed, doing nothing to another what you would not want done to yourself, denying nothing to another what you would want given to yourself, insofar as you would be a perfect imitator of those to whom it is said: *unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Mt. 5:20).

10. At last, *exercise yourself in godliness*, since, as the Apostle says: *godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come* (I Tim. 4:8). Exercise yourself in *godliness of divine worship* by fulfilling daily prayers attentively, devoutly and reverently, by confessing and deploring daily sins, by receiving the most holy Eucharist frequently and hearing daily Mass. — Exercise the *godliness of saving souls*, now by helping with abundance of prayers, now by edifying conversation, now by the inspiration of examples so that *he who hears should say: Come* (Apoc. 22:17). This, however, should be wisely done so that you don't incur the loss of your own salvation. — Exercise the godliness of the relief of bodily necessities in bearing patiently, consoling amicably, ministering humbly, cheerfully and mercifully, that you might fulfill the law, as the Apostle says: *bear one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ* (Gal. 6:2). To obtain all this, what helps, I believe, above all things is the memory of the Crucified, so that your *beloved, as a bundle of myrrh* in the *bosom* of your mind *shall abide* continuously (cf. Cant. 1:12). May He deign to grant this to you, He who is blessed forever and ever. Amen. ✠