

Maronite Monks of Adoration

Most Holy Trinity Monastery
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November
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Pray Constantly

With the month of November the Liturgical Year comes to an end for both the Roman and the Maronite Churches respectively with the *Solemnity of Christ the King* and the *Season of the Holy Cross*. Traditionally, it is the month to remember the faithful departed. In the Solemnity of All Saints, we honor the "Church Triumphant:" those who have won the "crown of glory" and from their place in Heaven, assist us with their prayers so that we may attain our eternal salvation. On All Souls Day, we pray for the "Church Suffering:" the Holy Souls in Purgatory. They cannot pray for themselves, but pray for us. We in turn, pray and offer sacrifices that the time of their expiation may be shortened. To reject prayers for the dead is to reject the words of Our Lord Who said: "Now He is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him." (Lk: 20:38)

As we of the "Church Militant" on earth remember the faithful departed, our thoughts should turn to that reality called "eternity" which awaits each one of us. Do we ever remind ourselves that one day we will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ? Each day we rise in the morning is one day closer to that event. What better way to prepare us for that event than by reminding ourselves of the importance of prayer in our lives. Do you want to prepare well for eternity? St. Paul gives us the sure-fire way. "Pray Constantly." (1Thessalonians 5:17)

We can look at what prayer is, its importance,

and apply some monastic spirituality to help us "pray constantly."

One of the greatest needs the Church has today is for her faithful to heed Our Lord's command: "Watch and Pray." Our Blessed Mother, in urging the daily recitation of the rosary, warned us that unless this were done, "The Faith would

disappear from nations." Are we not witnessing this today? If the only time we pray is when we attend the one hour of Sunday Mass (that is if we are not "too busy"), then something is amiss. As the saying goes, "Tell me how you pray, and I will tell you what you believe."

Prayer that is spiritual and genuine is both a call and a response: a divine call and a human response. The initiative comes from God, His free offer of grace. We respond to that by "turning towards the Lord." The essential

starting point for a life of prayer is the realization that we are created in the "image and likeness of God." We have an immortal soul that bears this image and forever will be restless until it has communion with Him. The massive indoctrination with Darwinism (naturalistic religion which masquerades as science) has made us forget this important fact. We have an immortal soul that didn't evolve from matter, but was created by God Himself. Also God placed each and every one of us on this earth for a specific purpose (mission). Neither we nor the universe are here "by chance." And each one of us was given the same destiny to fulfill: to be with

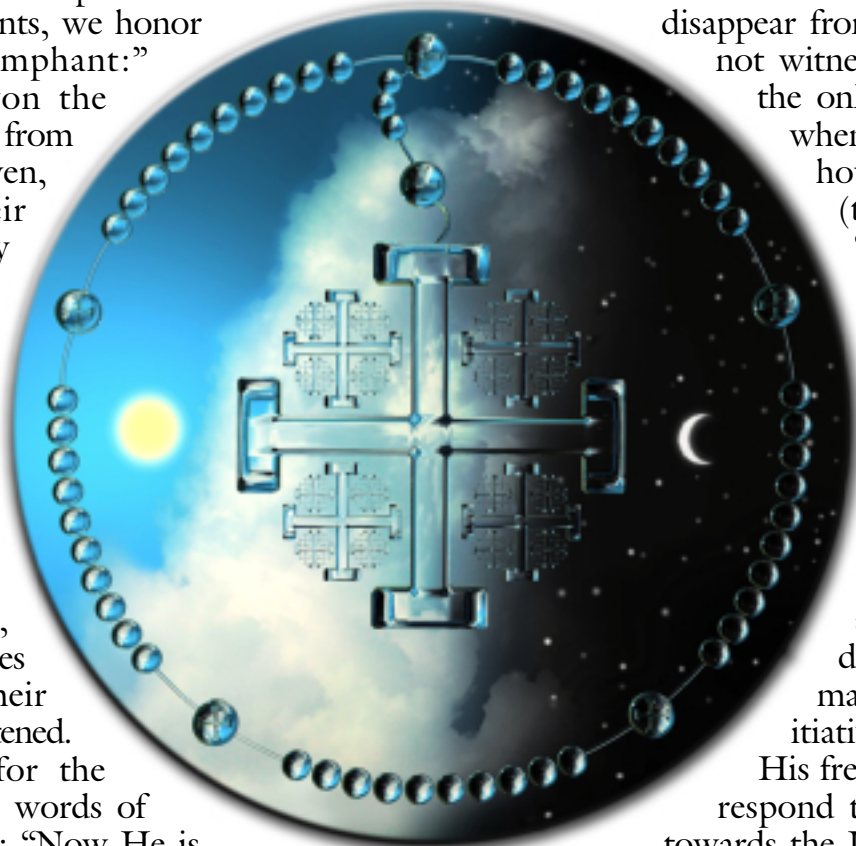


Illustration: Maronite Monks

God forever. As St. Augustine says: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”

Put another way: because God is our beginning (He gave us life) and our end (we are meant to enjoy eternal beatitude with Him), He is **owed** our worship which comes through prayer. Because of years of “Hey-Pal” religiosity, many of us have a rather casual attitude towards Him. We think of Him as our “wonderful friend” forgetting that a “wonderful friend” cannot give us eternal life. So we “fit him in” if we are not too busy pursuing the things of this world which are temporary at best.

How can I make prayer more of a priority in my life? Some suggestions from monastic spirituality might be helpful. Each monk has in his cell a “prayer corner.” In this corner is a kneeler, a wall crucifix, an image of the Blessed Mother and the Holy Scriptures or some devotional book. Here the monk leaves all behind so that he could be in “communion with the Lord.” It is a sacred space for prayer and only prayer takes place there. This physical setting reminds him of the necessity of prayer in his life, helps turn his mind to God, and gives him space to facilitate prayer.

Everyone can do the same in their own home. Set aside a space or a room if you can, which is reserved for prayer. Have it away from the TV, radio, computer. Make it a place where you can come and be in “communion with God.” What should characterize this space? If possible, have it facing east. Why? Because the direction “East” has a rich Christian symbolism and tradition behind it. It reminds us of our original homeland. As St. Gregory of Nyssa says, *“Therefore we all look to the east during prayer, but few know that we are in search of our original home, Paradise, which God planted in the Garden of Eden, to the east.”* East is the direction that the Risen Christ will come from at His Second Coming to take us back “home,” back to Paradise. Much more can be said about this. Incidentally, this is why in the original tradition (which most of the Christian East still adheres to) priest and people face in the same direction, that of the Risen Christ) during

the highest form of prayer — the Divine Liturgy. Much was lost when the priest was made to “turn around.”

This sacred space should have a wall crucifix, an image of our Blessed Mother, maybe some other saint, and if possible a candle to be lit during prayer. A kneeler or prayer stand should be available. For use in prayer we can start with the Holy Scriptures. Our Holy Pope Benedict XVI has urged the practice of “Lectio Divina” — the prayerful reading of the Holy Scriptures. The Liturgy of the Hours is also an excellent prayer because it is the “Prayer of the Church.” Many people think that it’s just for the priests and religious or think that it’s too complicated for the average layperson to use. There are several simplified versions available. Remember too, the Book of Psalms, which is the oldest “formal liturgical prayer” there is. You can start at Psalm 1 and pray all of them. Not all at once of course. At least, make Morning and Evening Prayer, the pillars of your daily prayer life. If possible, pray all the hours of the Divine Office. Then you will really be united with the Universal Church.

Have a place where you can hang prayer beads and pray the Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Jesus Prayer. Most important of all, **make** time for prayer.

There is the story of the lady who died and when she arrived at the gates of Heaven, St. Peter assigned an angel to conduct her to her heavenly dwelling. She and the angel passed many magnificent mansions and she thought happily that one of them would be hers. But they kept walking. As they continued the houses became smaller and less elaborate. Eventually they reached the outskirts of Heaven and the angel pointed to a small shed and told her, “that’s your dwelling.” The lady was astounded and asked the angel why this shed after they had passed all those beautiful mansions. The angel answered her: “Sorry, but that was all we were able to build with the material you sent up.” During November may we send up good material for the Holy Souls and ourselves by heeding St. Paul’s admonition: “Pray constantly.” ✠