

Contemplations on the Psalms and Segments of
the Compline Prayer (Before Sleeping)
By
His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

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Introduction

The Holy Church has placed for us “The Seven Prayers” for our benefit, to be a connection between us and God throughout the hours of the day.

Practically, we have noticed that the majority of the faithful care more so about the Sunset and Compline prayers at the end of the day and the Morning prayer at the beginning of the day.

Therefore, I first published for you “Contemplations in the Psalms of the Sunset Prayer”, then “Contemplations in the Psalms of the Morning Prayer”, along with contemplations in separate Psalms like “O Lord, Why?” from the Morning Hour Psalms, and Psalm “May the Lord answer you” from the Third Hour Psalm. What remains is the contemplations in the Compline Prayer, despite having advertised this.

Truly, this book has been late in getting to you, my beloved reader, but we thank God that it has finally arrived.

It comprises contemplations in some of the Compline Hour Psalms, which are;

1. Out of the depths I have cried to You.
2. Behold, bless the Lord
3. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!

After this, the segments of the Compline prayer, which include:

- Behold, I am about to stand before the Just Judge.
- Repent therefore, Oh my soul so long as you dwell on earth
- Rise up from your laziness
- O pure Virgin.

We place all this between your hands, and we hope that God will accept your prayers and ours.

Pope Shenouda III

Out Of the Depths I cried to You, O Lord
Psalm 130(129)

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning - I say, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities. Alleluia.

On the occasion of the Great Lent, which is a holy period appropriate to repentance, I would like us to contemplate together in this Psalm, which is one of the known Psalms of repentance.

The psalmist says, “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications....”

Out of the depths:

This Psalm is not a normal prayer but a cry out of the depths, for he says, “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord..”

What depths are these?

From the depths of the heart, thought, feelings and sense I have cried to you. I have cried to You from the depths of my need for You, from the depths of my weakness and toil.

From the depths of feelings of hopelessness and failure, which sometimes drag me to fear.

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord, Lord hear my voice.

Out of the depths of problems that surround me, and I have no solution for them except in You. Out of the depths of troubles and temptations that come to me from people and Satan.

Out of the depths of dangers which I feel, You draw near to me.

Out of the depths of my shame of myself, and before me are my weaknesses and falls.

Out of the depths of Sheol which I am in, Like Jonah who fled from You and prayed saying, “I cried out to the Lord because of my afflictions.....Out of the belly of Sheol I cried...”(Jonah 2:2)

Out of the depths of my grief over myself, out of the depths of my fear...

From all of these depths I cried to You, O Lord, and He heard my voice.



There are people, which in the depths, do not pray or cry out.

And others pray and cry out, but not from the depths.

As for me, I will cry out to You from the depths while I am in the depths.

I will cry out to You, so that You can uplift me from it. You are the One who "...raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap." (Psalm 113:7)

I from the depths of my weakness, have cried out to the depths of Your might.

And from the depths of my needs, have cried out to the depths of Your compassion and love.

And from the depths of my falls, I have cried out to the depths of Your forgiveness.

And from the depths of my problems, I have cried out to the depths of Your wisdom that solves problems.

From the depths of Sheol, I have cried out to the heights of Your heaven.



It is a Psalm from a person who feels their sin, confesses it and seeks forgiveness.

Or it is a Psalm from a person who is in the depths of weakness, seeking help.

No matter how bad his state, he prays. Truly, the depths of toil and being crushed helps one to pray, and calls for prayer and grants its depth.

The deepest prayer you can pray, is offered while we are in the depths of toil.

God can sometimes permit this toil so that we can pray.

To go down into the depths so that our prayers are lifted up.

And in this Psalm, the person praying mentions the name of God eight times.

And he starts with the expression “Out of the depths I have cried out to You, O Lord, Lord hear my voice!”

I have cried to You:

A person may pray many times, but rarely does he cry out in his prayers.

Crying out is a deeper level, indicating the measure of need and seriousness of prayer.

Here I am Lord crying out to You, from my depths.

I cry out to You as a child seeking refuge and crying out to his father, who is able to help him.

Likewise I cry out to You, O Compassionate One, who is able to do everything.

It’s a cry for help and a cry of faith, hope and need.

It’s a strong cry that reminds me of the Egyptian poet, who said in one of his poems explaining the power of his cry, saying “Like the deep call of a drowning person to be rescuedcalling, calling, calling with all his might for life...”

It is a cry, and not a mere call, a cry attracting the compassion of God, according to the Psalm that says:

“For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise, says the Lord; I will set him in the safety for which he yearns.” (Psalm 12:5)

It reminds us of the saying of the Lord in the parable of the unjust judge “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him.” (Luke 18:7)

It also reminds us of the Lord’s saying “I have surely seen the oppression of My people...and have heard their cry....So I have come down to deliver them...” (Exodus 3:7), and the saying of the Bible “...and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.” (Exodus 2 :23) How deep is the expression “....their cry came up to God...”

The Psalms offer us examples of crying out, and the answer, in his saying:

“I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His Holy hill.” (Psalm 3:4)

“May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble...” (Psalm 20:1)

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.” (Psalm 18:6)

Thus David prayed saying “I cry out with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord!”(Psalm 119:145) “Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.” (Psalm 5:1)

The Bible offers us an example of the cry of the Ninevites, in their repentance and contrition:

It was proclaimed in the city “But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; Yes, let every one turn from his evil way...” (Jonah 3:8) The Lord heard their cry, answered them and had mercy upon them.

It is amazing that the first cry in the Holy Bible is mentioned in the saying of the Lord to Cain:

“The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” (Genesis 4:10)



In this Psalm, the Psalmist desires that his cries reach God, so he says:

“Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord hear my voice!”

Hear my voice:

It is natural that God hears all that is in the world. What is meant then by the words “hear my voice,” and similar expressions like “hear us” in the Hymn of “Efnouti Nay Nan – O God Have Mercy Upon Us.”

What is meant is not the mere hearing of ears, but care and acceptance.

It is like when we say that someone’s ‘word is heard’, that is, it reaches to the people in charge and to all who care about the matter. It has its affect, its weight and is appreciated. Likewise when the person praying says to God “hear my voice”.

That is hear me with care, with a willing heart and with an answer.

In this, one of the most prominent prayers is that of Solomon on the day of the inauguration of the temple.

In that day, he said to the Lord: “that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day...that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. And may You hear the supplication of Your servant...” (I Kings 8:29, 30)

He kept presenting the conditions of the people that need help and an answer from God. Many times, he repeated the expression “then hear in heaven Your dwelling place...” One time he said “hear...and forgive.” At another time he says “hear...and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know.” At another time he said: “hear...their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause...” (I Kings 8:39, 49)



“Hear my prayer” reminds us with the saying in the great Psalm when the person praying says “Let my cry come before You... Let my supplication come before You...” (Psalm 119: 169-170)

Likewise, he says in another Psalm “O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob...and look upon the face of Your anointed.” (Psalm 84:8-9)

He seeks hearing, attention and care, and an answer, as he says “Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications...for You will answer me.” (Psalm 86:6-7)



He says “Hear my voice,” for there are prayers that are not heard, that is, God does not turn to them, nor accept them, for they are rejected prayers.

Like the saying of the Lord to the Jews in the days of Isaiah the prophet, when they kept the statutes and prayed with their lips, not from their hearts, being far from God because of their sins. So the Lord said to them “When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.” (Isaiah 1:15)



Can God shut His ears and block out this person praying?

Yes, there are prayers that are not acceptable, like the prayer of the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:11, 12). Or the prayer of the hypocrites...“For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.” (Matthew 6:5) Or like the

Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who “for a pretence make long prayers,” whereas they “devour widows’ houses.” (Matthew 23:14)

They are all prayers not heard by God that do not deserve to be heard by God.



As for me, I cry out to You, O Lord, so that You will hear my prayer, so that my prayer will enter into Your presence, to be acceptable to You. This is despite my sins and unworthiness, and despite my feeling that there is no relationship at present between me and You!!

All that I want is for my prayer to reach You. I will leave the rest to Your love. You will not deal with me according to my sins, but according to Your mercy.

We know that our needs reach You, even if we do not pray!

You have previously said “I have surely seen the oppression of My people... and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them...” (Exodus 3:7-8)

You did this despite that they did not pray at that time.



Likewise the Lord can hear out tears without praying.

As the psalmist says in the Psalm “Give ear to my tears.”

Tears have a voice that God hears, even if its without prayer, but it has acceptance from the compassionate heart of God. Or even if the person prays in his heart, and his voice is not heard, just like Hannah did when she asked from God for offspring, without her voice being heard. (I Samuel 1:13)

“Hear my voice O Lord.” – Make me feel that You have received my prayer, and that You know it, and cries have entered Your ears, and this is sufficient.

I pray that my prayers are heard, and I will continue in prayer till I am sure of this. I trust that as long as You have heard the prayer, that You will manage the situation.

After that, the psalmist says “If You, Lord, should make iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You...”

If You Should Mark Iniquities....

It is natural that God knows every sin you commit, whether in word, deed, thought or with all the senses. As Saint John said in his revelation "...and books were opened...and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Revelation 20:12) And as Saint Paul the Apostle said "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he had done, whether good or bad." (II Corinthians 5:10)

Then what is meant by "If You should mark iniquities," if all is recorded and detailed?

God has full knowledge, and nothing is hidden from Him, and therefore He is the One who knows all. He is the One who has placed the conscience in the person, which keeps track of the person's works. God, who is also Holy, does not accept sin, He is just, and before Him, the kind and devious are not equal.

Then what is mean by the psalmist in saying "If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities..."

That is, if You are marking iniquities to punish us, piling them up so as to judge us by them.

If You are like this, then who could stand?! We are all sinners...we are all in the balance. If You open our account, then every mouth shall be shut. It is as the psalmist says to the Lord in another Psalm "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous." (Psalm 143:2)

You do not mark sins, but wipe them out with forgiveness.

You are like the physician who marks diseases in order to treat them, and not to rebuke the patient about them...all the ailments of the patient are clear before him, but to rescue him from them. This is why You also said "I did not come to judge, but to save..." "For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." (Luke 9:56) "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

How can this be done?...With forgiveness.

But there is Forgiveness with You:

His longsuffering leads to repentance (Romans 2:4), and through repentance, forgiveness.

The psalmist sings with this forgiveness saying "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity." (Psalm 32:1-2) About this sin that is not

counted, the Lord, in the Book of Jeremiah the prophet, says “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34)

He will not ascribe to us our sins, because of our repentance from our side, and also in the reconciliation that occurred upon the cross, as Saint Paul the Apostle said “...that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them...” (II Corinthians 5:16)

God therefore, in the reconciliation, does not mark sins, but abolishes them.

“...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us...having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14) And the Lord said “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.” (Isaiah 43:25)...And also “I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins.” (Isaiah 44:22)

All this is on the condition of repentance.

For the Sake of Your Name...I Wait for the Lord:

For the sake of Your name, I wait for Your salvation to come. I wait for Your help to come to me, and to gain Your forgiveness.

What is Your name that I have waited for?

Your name as a Savior. About You, the angel announcing Your birth said “...and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21) The word JESUS means Savior.

I also waited for the sake of Your name “Immanuel,” which is translated “God with us.” (Matthew 1:23) As long as You are with us, I will wait for Your work in us, and for Your work for us.

For the sake of Your compassionate, caring and forgiving name, for “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” (Psalm 103:10) About whom it was said “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever.” (Psalm 103:8-9)

For this, for the sake of Your name, I wait while full of hope.

I wait while I trust that You will work in me for repentance and forgiveness.

And You will work in me to fulfil Your commandments and law.

My Soul Waits for Your Law:

My soul watches for Your law.

It watches so I can fulfill Your law in me. It waits so that help can come to me by which I can fulfill all Your words.

My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning.

In another translation “More than those who await for the morning,” that is, those who are in darkness and are waiting for the day to come.

Here I watch for the coming of Your morning, when it comes to cease my darkness.

† † †

Then he turns from prayer for himself to prayer for all the people, saying:

More than those who watch for the morning...O Israel, hope in the Lord.

The word ‘Israel’ here has a symbolic meaning. That is, all the people wait for the Lord from night till day.

† † †

“For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

Here he cries from the depths, who watches from the darkness, waiting for the morning to come, he watches the salvation of the Lord that will come with redemption. It is the salvation that all the people wait for. About this, Simon the elder expressed it by his saying “Lord, now you are letting Your servant depart in peace...for my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all people.” (Luke 2:29-30)

The praying person is trustful that God will redeem the people from all their iniquities.

EXPLANATION OF PSALM

“BEHOLD, BLESS THE LORD...”

(PSALM 133 [134])

Psalm 134 (133)

Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion! Alleluia



This short Psalm, which is easy to memorize, is one of the well-known Psalms in our daily prayers in the Agbia. It is repeated in the Prayer before sleeping, Prayer of the Veil, in the Introduction of the Midnight Prayer and its Third Service as well.

What is the secret of the depth that is in it, that it has been placed in all these prayers?

To answer, this question, let us look at the sections of this Psalm one by one.

Behold, Bless the Lord

The blessing of the Lord to us is the blessing of the better to the lesser (Hebrews 7:7).

It is our blessing to the Lord, meaning to praise Him, or to confess His blessing and to thank Him for it.

And thus David says in the Psalms “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” (Psalm 103:1-2) This means the confession of His blessings and goodness, and to remember them always. From the depth of the heart “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”... After this, the Psalmist mentions in detail the benefits of God to him.

This is what Zachariah the priest, the father of John the Baptist, did when God loosened his tongue...his mouth was opened and he spoke praising God (Luke 1:64). Also this is what Simon the elder did, when he saw the infant Jesus...he thanked God for His salvation, having taken “Him up in his arms and blessed God...” (Luke 2:28)



Our blessing of God also means to glorify Him.

This we say in the Pascha praise “To You is the power, the glory, the blessing.”

And Saint James the Apostle says about the tongue, that “With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God...” (James 3:9) Here the expression ‘bless our God’ means to praise Him or glorify Him...

Likewise also, what Job the righteous said in his trial, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed (i.e. glorified) be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21)

The psalmist says to the Lord in the Psalm: “Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You.” (Psalm 84:4) That is, they will glorify You and praise You.



Here, we see David in this Psalm, inviting people to bless God.

That is, to praise Him and glorify Him, so he says “Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord.” And in Psalm 103, he does not only invite humanity, but he also says, “Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion, Bless the Lord, O my Soul!” (Psalm 103:20-22)

We see here that those who bless the Lord, that is glorify Him, are those who do His word, who do His pleasure.

They are the ones who glorify Him by obedience, and praise Him by doing His will. They are the ones that can be said about them, what the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mountain: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) Doing good, makes the name of the Lord blessed by people.



We bless the Lord in many different and varied spiritual ways.

We bless Him in our prayers through words of praise and glory. We bless Him by accepting His will, and not murmuring no matter the situation, as the righteous Job left us an example. We bless Him also by being reverent and pious in God’s house and at time of prayer. We bless Him when we do not utter the name of the Lord in vain (Deuteronomy 5:11). We bless Him when our lives are an example to people, and when we invite people to His love and keeping His commandments.

The psalmist offers us two incentives as a foundation to blessing, saying:

“All you servants of the Lord,” and “who by night stand in the house of the Lord!”

You Servants of the Lord

These are His ministers who do His pleasure. They are not servants to another, no matter who this other is, whether a person or thing, as the Lord said about money. “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)...The servants of the Lord are the ones who do not make a carved image for themselves on earth...Here I would like to say:

That our son-ship to God does not disallow that we are servants to Him.



The Lord will say to the righteous person in the last day “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matthew 25:21, 23)...He said this to the one with the five talents just as He said it to the one with the two talents also.

Even the shepherds also, He called them servants, just like flock.

He said “Who, then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.” (Luke 12:42-44) This wise and faithful steward who is made ruler over all, is also a servant as well...

How beautiful it is to read in the Epistles of Paul the Apostle, who ascended to the third heaven, and who toiled more than all the other apostles (2 Corinthians 12), that he starts some of his Epistles by saying “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:1)... “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:1)... “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...” (Titus 1:1)

Let us not make our son-ship to God cause our hearts to be elevated.



The expression ‘servant’ should lead us to humility and reverence.

It should also lead us to obedience, and even as the Lord said, "...when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'we are unprofitable servants...'" (Luke 17:10)

How beautiful is what Saint Augustine said in one of his prayers for his people...He said "I ask you Lord for the sake of my masters, Your servants." If we are servants for the members of the flock, then how much more for its God and our God...

Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord!

Who Stand in the House of the Lord

We say this expression about two types of people:

Either about the servants of the house of the Lord, or about people in His house.

O bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord, His ministers, in general, the clergy who are continually in the house of the Lord...Or about the monks who live in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God, about whom the psalmist said in the Psalm "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You." (Psalm 84:4) Therefore, they have no other duty except praising the Lord, they praise Him now and forever.

Or it is said about those who pray in the Church, or in the courts of the Lord. They are not occupied with anything else except praise.

He is saying to these: When you enter the house of the Lord, do not have any other work but this: O bless the Lord... For if we do not praise God in His house, then why have we then entered His house?!

Any place that is sanctified by our prayers can be considered a house for the Lord. It is a "church in your house." (Philemon 1:3, Romans 16:5)... How beautiful that the martyrs, when they prayed and praised the Lord in the prison, by this they changed them to houses of the Lord, even if for a short while... Even every place we pray in it the Thanksgiving Prayer, we say to the Lord about it "...and from this holy place that is Yours."



The true faithful person changes every place to the house of the Lord.

He prays and says, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1)...Did not our fathers the monks, anchorites and ascetics transform all the deserts they lived in into the house of

the Lord by their praises and prayers that are lifted to Him... Even the faithful person who loves God can say to Him: Every house that is not Yours, I cannot enter it O Lord, except to bring Your name into it, or to change it for You in any way...

The psalmist invites those who stand in the courts of our God to bless Him (praise Him). But how and when? He says "...who by night...lift up your hands ... and bless the Lord."

Who by Night

The quiet and calm night, which is void of the noise of the day and its busy ways, and gatherings, is when prayer is sweet... How true is what the spiritual father said "The night is separated for the work of prayer."...He also said "One prayer you pray at night is better than one hundred prayers prayed by day."

He means the prayer that you pray in this calmness, which is distinguished by gathering the thoughts and senses and without pre-occupation or wondering of mind...

For this, how beautiful is what was said about the Lord Christ "And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet." (Luke 21:37) This mountain called Olivet was a place for prayer and contemplation. It was also said about the Lord that "**He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.**" (Luke 6:12)

Here we concentrate on the relationship between the night and prayer, and the mountain... What is also to be mentioned about the night is that "in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them..." (Matthew 14:25) It was also said about the second coming of Christ "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold the bridegroom is coming...'" (Matthew 25:6)



The matter of the night reminds us of the virtue of keeping watch...

Keeping watch to meet Him... As it was said "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming...in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning – lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." (Mark 13:35-36) He also said "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching." (Luke 12:37)

There are many stories that have been recorded in the lives of the saints about their keeping watch the whole night in prayer, like what Saint Arsanious the Great used to do. How beautiful is what was said about the shepherds in the

story of the Nativity, that they were "...keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8)



The night has its contemplations and many prayers in the Psalms of David:

He says "I remember Your name in the night, O Lord..." (Psalm 119:55) ... "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments." (Psalm 119:62)... "...my hand was stretched out in the night..." (Psalm 77:2) ... "All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears." (Psalm 6:6) The night was therefore for prayer, thanksgiving and weeping over sins, as he also says "... weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)



The night is excellent for contemplation, and to also give an account of one's self too.

As the virgin in the Song of Songs says "By night on my bed I sought the one I love..." (Song of Songs 3:1) ...Even God Himself asks for us at this quiet time. And if we do not open our hearts to Him, He rebukes us by saying "... for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night." (Song of Songs 5:12)

Truly, the one who gains friendship of the night is not bothered with the boisterousness of the day.

I mean that the person who spends the night in prayer, reading, contemplation, conversing with God, and in weeping over his sins...this person treasures for himself a wealth of spiritualities that block from him the attacks of the enemy in the wars of the day and its stumbling...



The night also entails the stories of the revelations and dreams that are from God.

The righteous Elihu, in the story of the righteous Job, said "For God may speak...In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men..." (Job 33:14-16)

There are many holy dreams in which the Lord has directed His righteous by night. Like when the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph the Carpenter and announced to him the birth of Christ. (Matthew 1:20-24). In another dream, He told him to go to Egypt, and in another dream He ordered him to return from there. (Matthew 2: 13, 19) He also appeared in a dream to the Magi and guided them (Matthew 2:12).

The angel who rescued Peter from prison came at night (Acts 12:6). Likewise, at midnight, was the rescue of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25, 26). At night also, was the saying of the Lord to Paul "... for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." (Acts 23:11)

The psalmist says "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." Here we can stop at the expression "Lift up your hands."

Lift up your Hands

The lifting of hands is a direction towards heaven, the throne of God.

David the prophet says "...I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness..." (Psalm 63:4-5) He also says "Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm 141:2) He also says "I spread out my hands to You; my soul longs for You like a thirsty land." (Psalm 143:6) Also "...Lord, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You." (Psalm 88:9)



The lifting of the hands is a share of the body with the spirit in prayer.

It is a type of reverence of the body, and its uplifting to God, with the spirit...

The spirit does not pray alone, but the person as a whole – spirit, mind and body. The body lifts its hands up, as well as its sight, the forehead bows down, and the legs kneel and worships.

Moses the prophet lifted up his hands, and the army was victorious over Amalek (Exodus 17:11). When his hands dropped, the army was defeated. So they made his hands steadfast in an uplifted state till the sun set, so Joshua defeated Amalek (Exodus 17:12, 13). The lifting of the hands like this, is the sign of the cross.

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."

The psalmist is talking to the saints who pray, who lift up their hands in prayer, keeping vigil at night in prayer praising God, and says to them that God will grant you His blessing.

The Lord Bless You

“The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion!”

Here is the answer to prayer: The granting of the blessing to you from God.

“From Zion,” that is from His holy mountain, from His holy place, the place of the sacrifice, altar and aroma of incense.

“The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you...” Who made heaven, towards which you lift your hands, and who made earth, upon which you stand...God the creator, who is able to do all things, the source of all blessing, will bless you with every spiritual blessing...

The topic of blessing is a long one. On another occasion, we may discuss it further.

PRAISE THE LORD , O JERUSALEM
PSALM 147

Psalm 147:12-20(147)

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders, And fills you with the finest wheat. He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; He casts out His hail like morsels; Who can stand before His cold? He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Alleluia.

We present Psalm 147, which is the last Psalm in the Compline Prayer (Prayer before Sleeping).

“Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!”

Jerusalem is Zion... The psalmist asks her to praise her God. As for the literal meaning, as Saint Augustine says, this Psalm is an expression of praise for the return from captivity from Babylon.

As for the symbolic meaning, Jerusalem is symbolic for the Church, where the person praying directs his contemplations to her during the Psalm.

And from the personal spiritual side, Jerusalem can symbolise the heart of the person, or his soul which is a bride for Christ.

But why does the psalmist ask of Jerusalem to praise God? What is the occasion of praise?



“For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat.”

This can be said as a prayer of thanks whenever the person feels God’s protection of the Church and His pastoral work for her. So Jerusalem praises the Lord for He makes peace in her borders. The enemy cannot break the bars of her gates, for the Lord “has strengthened the bars of your gates.” The enemy also cannot take captive her children, for the Lord “has blessed your children within you.”

But if these words are taken about Jerusalem as the heart or the soul of the person praying, then he praises God thanking Him for keeping him from sin, for He has strengthened the bars of his gates. The gates of the soul are the senses: hearing, sight, touch etc... God has strengthened all their bars, so that they cannot allow any evil thought or bad feeling to enter the heart. The gates of the soul are also the desires, wants and thoughts. And God has strengthened all their bars. So if the enemy tries to enter them to the soul to corrupt it with the vanities of the world, he finds them closed in his face.

† † †

This is all from the negative side. As for the positive side, he says **“He has blessed your children within you.”** These children are the virtues born to the soul from the work of the Holy Spirit in it. And when God blesses those children, it means that He increases the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the soul. This is because God has blessed them **in it, that is, inside the soul**, and not outside like the hypocrites do.

† † †

The result of all this is **“He makes peace in your borders,”** that is, the body no longer fights against the spirit, not the spirit against the body. But both have been reconciled, so the person lives in peace. There is no inner struggle that weakens him in fighting desires. He is at peace with regards to his wars against Satan, the flesh, the world, etc....

“And fills you with the finest wheat.” That is, from goodness, from His grace and goodness.

But how did this victory or this glorious work appear, whether for the heart or the Church? The psalmist answers by saying:

† † †

“He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.”

Saint Augustine says that the Word of God is Christ, He sent Him to earth, so His word runs very swiftly, for in a very short time, evangelism reached to the ends of the earth.

Not even half a century went by before the Lord Christ sent His disciples carrying His word till His word runs very swiftly, and it entered the hearts of the faithful very easily... With one sermon from Peter, more than three thousand believed (Acts 2:41). After the miracle of the healing of the paralytic at the Beautiful Gate, the number increased greatly. Then we hear that “... believers

were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women...” (Acts 5:14) “... and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7)

And thus His word runs very swiftly till it filled the earth. It is as if the psalmist is saying to the Church: This One who has blessed your children within you, is the One who sent His command to the earth and His word runs very swiftly... So bless Him and praise Him for His presence now and previously with you...



We can also take this about the human souls.

For the Lord Christ resembles the righteous person with the good ground that gave fruit, some thirty, some sixty and some a hundred fold (Matthew 13:23). So the person who is resembled with the good ground, praises God in this Psalm about this great fruit, for God sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.

You can mention this verse of the Psalm whenever you read or hear the words of God and they leave in your soul a quick and strong effect... Then you can stand before God and say: “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! ... He has blessed your children within you... He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.”

This is the “**finest (i.e. fatness) wheat,**” which was meant in the previous verse, for “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4) These words that God sends to the earth will be the finest. David even says “... I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.” (Psalm 63:4-5) This is the fatness that God gives to “... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...” (Matthew 5:6) For they shall be filled.



An important question arises here, which is:

Can we not say this Psalm except in the sublime spiritual conditions, thanking God for the times when we see peace in our borders and that God has strengthened the bars of her gates and blessed her children within her, or can we say it at times of wars also, at times of toil and struggle against sin?

The psalmist answers this question by saying: “**He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; He casts out His hail like morsels.**”

God does not only call to His kingdom the righteous who are fervent in the Spirit, but also He calls to it, from east and west, people of all kind. Here, the psalmist distinguishes between three types: snow, frost and hail. To whom do these point to?



The snow points to the coldness from the spiritual side. The Lord said “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12) If lawlessness makes love grow cold, then what makes it frost? No doubt, that this points to a state of extreme misleading. And those who are in this state, the Lord also calls them to His kingdom. Like the woman, about whom the Pharisee was amazed from her touching of Christ, and the multitudes of tax collectors and adulterers... etc. These, the Lord not only made them normal believers, but also fervent in the Spirit like wool... such as Zaccheus the tax collector.



As for the frost, it points to darkness as it obscures vision. For sin makes the soul captive by darkness, nor seeing the light of truth and unable to discern. Therefore, it was said about the evil that they “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19) The Bible called them “...those who sit in darkness...” (Luke 1:79) But how did the Lord invite them from darkness to His marvellous light? (1Peter 2:9) He did this by inflaming in them the spirit of repentance, so it crushed their souls and burnt in them all desires and pride and changed them to ashes.



And ashes are symbolic of repentance. As the Lord said about Tyre and Sidon, that if the mighty works were done in them, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matthew 11:21). And as Job said “... and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6) And like what happened in the repentance of the popular place Nineveh, that even her king “...covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.” (Jonah 3:6) Yes, those who had “... a dark mist fell on them...” (Acts 13:11) This mist obscured from them the Sun of Righteousness so they did not see the Lord. Even those, God will not leave them. By repentance, the mist will be removed from some and they will see their mist changes to ashes.



What about hail? Hail is very solid and does not melt easily like ice. It symbolizes extreme spiritual coldness or harshness and stubbornness of being far from God.

Even those who are on this side, He changes them to morsels, that is, through them He nourishes others. This points to, in the opinion of St. Augustine, that He makes them members of His body, to which bread is symbolic of, in His Body, that is the Church which is the body of Christ. Also compare this with the verse in 1 Corinthians 10:17.

Saint Augustine, gives, as an example of this, Paul the Apostle. He says: he was solid hail, resisting the truth, crying out against the Gospel... He appeared as hail, magnificently white, but he was very solid and cold. How was he white and shining? Look... a Hebrew amongst the Hebrews, with regards to the law, a Pharisee. This is the shiny appearance of hail. But listen now about the harshness of hail: with respect to zeal, a persecutor of the Church. (Philippians 3:5, 6)



The person praying can apply these three spiritual situations to himself:

The snow is the situation of spiritual coldness that God may allow, and He is able to change it to the warmth of wool. The frost is darkness that captures the soul from the reality of sin, and the Lord takes it away with ??? (Pg 28 5 lines from bottom). The hail is extreme harshness and stubbornness in being far from God or being fanatical to a certain thought. And God changes these extremes for the benefit of others or changes it into morsels.

No matter the situations, we thank God for He has not retained the snow, frost nor hail as it is, but has melted it...



Who can stand before His cold?!

Who can bear all these situations?! The person cannot except but cry and say "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24) With my strength, I can do nothing. I will only increase in coldness and rigidity... Any warmth will melt me to become liquid and run! Who will deliver me from this body of death, who can stand before His cold? Can hopelessness?! No, for He says:



He sends out His word and melts them... He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.

God the Word is the Sun of Righteousness, He melts the snow and hail, and changes them, by His Holy Spirit, to “living water,” ... “water springing up into everlasting life.” It also quenches those who “thirst for righteousness.” But how can this happen? Is there a secret behind this? Yes, and the secret is:



He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel.

What did the Lord declare to Jacob? He said to him “... you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.” (Genesis 32:28)

The matter then requires struggle, just like the struggle with which Jacob struggled with God. It is not right that we sleep, and become careless, and expect that He will grant His Spirit and the waters will flow! For the “Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matthew 11:12) In this, Saint Augustine says “Lest we easily gain what we have lost, we will learn to easily lose what we gain. Let the person toil so that he receives, then he will strongly hold onto what he has gained after toil... These are His statutes and judgments to Israel.”



He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.

Then how were the gentiles saved? How did the snow, frost and hail melt from them? The Apostle says “...you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them (in the original olive tree), and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree...” (Romans 11:17)

They are no longer gentiles, all are one people in Christ, the people of Jacob.

Spiritually, the person praying can, by this verse, thank God for what He has clarified to him of understanding of his commandments that He has not clarified to others; and especially from the gentiles that did not know Christ. He can thank Him for He has opened his eyes, that he may see wondrous things from His law (Psalm 118:18).

CONTEMPLATIONS IN THE SEGMENTS OF THE PRAYER BEFORE SLEEPING

1

Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge...

The majority of people pray the prayer Before Sleeping, and in its first segment, they say:

“Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge in fear because of my numerous sins, for a life spent in pleasures deserves condemnation. Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth, for the dust in the grave offers no praise, and amongst the dead no one remembers, nor those who are in Hades give thanks. Rise up from your laziness and implore the Saviour in repentance, saying; Lord have mercy upon me and save me.”

Remembrance of Death

I would firstly like to say that the Holy Church always puts the remembrance of death before the person, because of what it contains of spiritual benefit.

The person who loses the memory of death from his mind, can easily think of the pleasures of worldly life, become occupied with them and sin. Like the rich fool who thought that he will live many years, and he started to think to pull down his barns and build greater than them, and his goods will increase and he will have enjoyment (Luke 12:18, 19).



The remembrance of death is present in a clear way in the prayer before sleeping. Likewise also in the other prayers:

In the Gospel of this hour, we read that Simon the Elder says “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.” (Luke 2:29) In the segments, the remembrance of judgment is clear. And also in the second segment “If this life was everlasting, and this world eternal, O my soul, you would have a valid excuse.”

In the Morning Prayer, despite that we are still at the beginning of the day, we pray in Psalm 12 and say “Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

And in the Prayer of the Third Hour, in the Psalm “The Lord is my shepherd,” we say “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...”

And in the Sixth Hour Prayer, we commemorate the cross of Christ, that by His death, He abolished death. We converse with the Virgin Saint Mary by saying”... because of the Cross of your Son, Hades has fallen and death destroyed. We were dead before, but we have been raised, and made worthy to inherit eternal life...”

And in the Ninth Hour, the commemoration of the death of Christ is clear. We say in its Psalms “Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” And also “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” (Psalm 116)

And in the Sunset Prayer; we also remember death. The praying verse converses with our Mother the virgin and says “Come to my rescue, when my soul departs from my body, defeat the conspiracies of the enemy, shut the gates of hell lest they swallow my soul. O blameless bride of the true Lord.”

And in the Prayer of the Veil, we remember the awesome day of Judgment and say “Your judgment O Lord is fearful, where people are gathered, angels standing, books are opened, works unveiled and thoughts are examined. What judgment is mine, who is caught with sins! Who will quench the flame of fire away from me? Who will enlighten my darkness if you do not have mercy on me, O Lord?”

And in the Midnight Prayer, we commemorate the second coming of Christ. And in its Gospel, the Parable of the wise and foolish virgins is mentioned (Matthew 25) and the preparation of meeting the Lord. And that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in an unexpected hour, and blessed is that servant whom when his master comes will find him watchful (Luke 12). Therefore he says in the preparation for death “Let your waists be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return...”



There is no doubt that remembering death is beneficial and that is why the church reminds us of it.

And especially in the Prayer Before Sleeping, for we consider that sleep is somewhat symbolic of death, from the viewpoint that the person loses his awareness. And some call it the small death.

One of the most important memories of death the Church gives us is in the litany of the Departed, and prayer upon the dead, where people see death before them, and hear the prayers particular to this, with the sad hymns. They are affected by all this, and that death is the end of every living being, and the beginning of another life that does not end...



Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge.

One day, I must stand before the just judge. I can never forget this fact-ever. But I must be prepared for it from now.

The saints, who placed before themselves the image of judgment continually, were very careful in their spiritualities. As for the people of the world, they placed before

themselves the lusts of the world and what it contains, so their lusts attracted them to itself... As for the children of God, each night they say in their prayers “Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge in fear because of my numerous sins.



Therefore, before I stand before the just judge, it is better that I stand before my conscience and before my reality.

How deep is the word of saint Macarius the Great “My brother, judge yourself, before they judge you.” For when you judge yourself, there is a chance before you to correct yourself, and change what is in you of sins. Do not wait to stand before the just judge, after the chance has gone, the chance of repentance and forgiveness...

Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge A stand of contrition and awe, but also a stand of fear. A stand of a person waiting for judgment upon him.



He did not say: stand before the compassionate, kind, good and forgiving Christ, but stand before the just judge.

The situation of the “Kind and forgiving” is here on earth, in the period of examination during which you can repent. Whereas in the awesome day of judgment, you will stand before the just judge. Not before the Lord who “... has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” – “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:10, 12) All this was said about the period of possible repentance... As for that day, then all of our deeds will stand before us – I mean all that we have not offered repentance about in our earthly life – Yes all of our deeds will stand before us, they will not pass nor be hidden.



You say this expression in the Prayer Before Sleeping, and before you are all your deeds of the day.

You must judge yourself about them and offer repentance about them before you sleep... You also offer another repentance about your deeds in the previous days...

This also suits what we say in the Absolution of the Prayer Before Sleeping: “For the sake of Your Holy name, Lord, for Your goodness and love to mankind, forgive us those sins we committed against You this day, whether they are by action, by words, by thought or any of our senses.” We ask for forgiveness for all of our sins. We try to place them before ourselves so that by repentance, the Lord forgives by His precious Blood.



There are expressions that the Lord said in the period of His incarnation that will not be said in the awesome day of judgment, after the door is shut (Mathew 25: 10-12)

Like what He said to the woman caught in adultery “Neither do I condemn you.” (John 8: 11) And His saying to the one who wiped His feet with the hair of her head “Your sins are forgiven... Go in peace.” (Luke 7: 48- 50) And His saying “... I judge no one.” (John 8: 15) Or the expression “For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3: 17)

All this was in the period of His incarnation, and the period of possible repentance with regards to humanity.

But before the just judge, there will be no intercessor, nor an absolution –but judgment and sentencing...



Here on earth we intercede through the Saints. As for that day, there is no intercession. Look at what our father Abraham said to the rich man “... remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things... And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.” (Luke 16: 25, 26)



My brethren, that hour is fearful and awesome, about which the Apostle said:

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10: 31)

When we stand before the judge, and what judge? The just judge, about whom it was said that “... He will reward each according to his works.” (Matthew 16: 27, Revelation 22: 12) And as Saint Paul the Apostle said “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (II Corinthians 5: 10) Thus, in the Prayer before Sleeping, the praying person says “Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge in fear because of my numerous sins...”



Here on earth we say “Let it be according to your mercy O Lord, and not according to our sins,” for there is an avenue for mercy, for there is an avenue for repentance. As for that day, there will be judgment for every idle word that comes from your mouths (Matthew

12: 36). Before us, there is the verse that says "... whoever says to his brother 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matthew 5: 22) Also the expression "For by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12: 37)... Therefore, judgment is not only for horrible sins, but also for sins that we think are small.

If judgment is therefore so dangerous, then work at wiping out your iniquities by repentance.

And work the deeds of mercy many times and this will stand beside you on that day, for the Lord said "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5: 7)... Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon (Luke 16:9). Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20) where you will find them there.



Why do we stand in fear and with trembling before the just judge?

You say "because of my numerous sins"... May you get rid of these sins while you are here on earth. May your conscience not rebuke you about anything just before you stand before the just judge. Listen, with all your heart, to the saying of the Apostle "... be reconciled to God." (II Corinthians 5:20) Saint John the Apostle says "... if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence towards God." (I John 3:21) Does your heart condemn you about anything? Therefore, hasten and rid yourself of it... Now there is a chance, in which you can receive absolution and forgiveness. But as for that day, there is no absolution or forgiveness, for the door has been shut. And as what was said about Jezebel in the Book of Revelation "And I gave her time to repent... and she did not repent." (Revelation 2:21)



Will you stand trembling because of your numerous sins? God has given you a promise with blotting out these sins if you return to Him.

He says "Return to Me, and I will return to you..." (Malachi 3:7) Therefore return to Him. If you return to Him, what will happen? He says, about the one who returns from his sins, that "... he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him..." (Ezekiel 18:21, 22)

And the Lord says, in the Book of Jeremiah, about the repentant, "... For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31: 34) Therefore, in the day of judgment, you will not find these sins, that God will not remember any more. And as it was said in the Psalm "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. (Psalm 32:1-2)

Paul the Apostle was joyous with this expression of the Psalm, so he used it in his Epistle to the Romans (Romans 4:7, 8). Truly, how beautiful is the expression "... the Lord does

not impute (to him) iniquity. “Therefore the Apostle uses it in the reconciliation with God, and says “... not imputing their trespasses to them...” (II Corinthians 5: 19)



In the day of judgment, there is no discussion with God, but “every mouth may be stopped...” (Romans 3:19) He is the one who blots out our sins by His Blood through repentance.

I know that in the Prayer of the veil, it is said: “Your judgment O Lord is fearful, where people are gathered, angels standing, books are opened, works unveiled and thoughts are examined. What judgment is mine, who is caught with sins!”

These books are the books in which our deeds have been recorded. In them is the harvest of what we have sown on earth. And as the Bible says “... for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Galatians 6: 7, 8)

The day of judgment is the day of harvest. Have you sown for the flesh or for the Spirit, so that you reap the result of your sowing when you stand before the just judge? But listen to this comforting verse:



“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8: 1)

Therefore, if you are in Christ Jesus, and you walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh, then you will not fear when you stand before the just judge... Your name will not be written in the book of sinners, but in the Book of Life. Saint John the beloved says in the Book of Revelation: “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books... And they were judged, each one according to his works... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20: 12 – 15)



The lake of fire is the fear that the sinners tremble from.

And also the shame and embarrassment before the angels, saints and all humans.

Your beloved will be very astonished when your sins are revealed before them. And your enemies will be happy saying: ‘where was all of this hidden, which we did not know about you?!’

Was he hidden under a garment of hypocrisy, like the whitewashed tombs which appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness (Matthew 23: 27).



Truly, it’s an awesome day, the day we stand before the just judge.

Even the mere day of His coming for judgment is awesome. In this, Saint John of the revelation says “And the Kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”” (Revelations 6:15-17)



That day also will be a day for comparison.

A comparison between standing on the right and standing on the left. Between those whom the Lord will say to them “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” (Matthew 25:34) and those to whom He will say “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:41)

A day in which all the peoples will gather before the Lord, to distinguish them from each other, as the shepherd distinguishes the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32)... A day in which the wise virgins will enter the wedding, whereas the foolish ones will stand outside pleading to the Lord, and He will say to them “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.” (Matthew 25:12)

Therefore, the praying person says in the prayer before sleeping:

“Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge in fear because of my numerous sins.”



Why will the person stand in fear and trembling before the just judge?

Because amongst the punishments is being cast from the face of God, and being cast from the congregation of the righteous, or being unworthy of being there. The punishment of being cast out started since Adam (Genesis 3:24). And it took a harsher image with regards to Cain, who said to the Lord “Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face.” (Genesis 4:14)

In eternity, the matter will be even harsher as the Lord will say “I do not you.”

He said it to those amazed at the working of miracles “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:23) And He said it to the foolish virgins “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.” (Matthew 25:12) And He said it to many of the sinners “I do not know you, where you are from, ...depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.” (Luke 13:25, 27)

Therefore it was said that they will be thrust out (Luke 13:28) into “outer darkness.” (Matthew 8:12)

“In darkness” for God is light, and the righteous are light, and the heavenly Jerusalem is an illuminated city (Revelation 21:23). And the expression “outer darkness” means that those sinners will be outside “the tabernacle of God is with men.”(Revelation 21:3) How difficult is the state of those cast away from God!!



Being denied God is the worst punishment that the sinful face.

Being denied from eternal bliss. Being denied from the company of angels and saints. Being denied from the tree of life and the crown of life (Revelation 2:7, 10). And from the crown of righteousness that the just judge will grant (II Timothy 4:8). Being denied from what God has prepared for those that love Him “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man.” (I Corinthians 2:9) ...Being denied from eternal life and from the knowledge of God (John 17: 3).

For all of this, the sinful person stands in fear and trembling before the just judge.

In addition to this is the fear of eternal punishment (Matthew 25: 46) in the “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25: 41) “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24: 51)



But now there is still a chance for salvation from all of this.

If we repent and return to God, then we will not meet Him with fear but with joy, listening to His honored promise “I go and prepare a place for you ...I will come again

and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:2, 3) Yes, there with Him we will live in unending joy that no one will take from us...

† † †

CONTEMPLATIONS IN THE SEGMENTS OF
THE PRAYER BEFORE SLEEPING

2

REPENT THEREFORE, O MY SOUL
SO LONG AS YOU DWELL ON EARTH

The praying person stood trembling and in fear before the just judge because of his numerous sins, then he says “Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth, for the dust in the grave offers no praise, and amongst the dead no one remembers, nor those who are in Hades give thanks. Rise up from your laziness and implore the Savior in repentance, saying; Lord have mercy upon me and save me.”

It is very good that the person wakes up and returns to himself...

For many of the people fall while not alert, and do not comprehend what they are in. Like a person tossed by the tide, or revolving in a circle, not feeling anything. And like what one of the Saints said, that most of the sins are either preceded by laziness, carelessness or not being alert. So the person lives outside of himself. Therefore, it was well said that in the repentance of the lost son that “...he came to himself.” (Luke 15:17)

The person here, in his repentance, wakes up. It is far better to wake up early.

And he can say with the Psalm “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” (Psalm 3:5) Yes, blessed is the person who wakes up early. Sleep does not overtake him for a long period of time. He wakes up and says “Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge in fear and trembling because of my numerous sins.” And here, he comprehends that just as God is merciful, He is also just and that He is also judge. And Paul the Apostle says “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God; on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.” (Romans 11:22) There is also therefore severity, that can judge to be cut off...



Some resemble the relationship of God with humanity by the woman.

You may look at the woman, and see a smiling face. And you may look at her and see a sad face, and the woman is the same woman, but she reflects the face that looks at her. Likewise with you, in the state of righteousness, you see the face of the Holy God who loves righteousness, and in the state of your sin, you see the face of the Holy God who cannot bear sin...

Like the Angel of the Passover, who to some was the source of destruction, and to some was the source of salvation, seeing the blood and passes over them (Genesis 12).

Some look at the Angels as messengers of mercy and compassion, but sometimes they are messengers of judgment, destruction and death.

The Angel of Resurrection was a source of joy to the two Marys. But with regards to the soldiers (guards), the Bible says "...the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men." (Mathew 28:4) Therefore, there is a time when the person looks to the angel and is comforted, where if he looks at him another time, he is fearful... It all depends on the inner state of the heart...

The angel who was sent to punish David for his sin, stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to punish it. Another angel struck 185 thousand from the army of Sennacherib (II Kings 19:35). Other angels were for rescue, like the angel who rescued Peter from prison (Acts 12:7, 8).

Likewise with the Lord – at one time you can rest on His chest with John (John 13:25). At another time, it was said "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)

It is also written in the same chapter "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries..." (Hebrews 10:26, 27) Will this happen in the era of grace? Yes, the Apostle follows on by saying "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ... 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." (Hebrews 10:29, 30)

† † †

We say this, lest some think that punishment was present in the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament is all love, and has no punishment in it!!

Those people should read about the woes that occurred from the trumpets of the seven angels as mentioned by the Book of Revelation (Revelation 8, 9). Also read about the seven bowls that were poured by the seven angels upon the earth, the sea and the air (Revelation 10). Also about what was said in these chapters about the wrath of God ... fearful words.

† † †

In addition to the punishment of God and the punishment of eternity, there is the punishment of the conscience.

The person might bear the insults and despising of others to himself, but it is hard to bear his own despise of himself. The Lord mentioned "... weeping and gnashing of teeth ... from regret and rebuke of the conscience, and the dejection of the sinner because of what he has done, while he says to himself; 'where was my mind at that time, and where was my conscience?!'

We stand before the just judge here on earth, and also in heaven.

We stand here before Him when we enter into taking account of ourselves, and forget the enjoyment of sin and the pleasure of the world, bodily and materialistic matters. We even tremble at the memory of our iniquities ... and we blame ourselves and rebuke them. Happy is the person who rebukes himself here, and by repentance his sins are abolished, before he stands in fear and trembling on the last day ... How true is Saint Macarius the great when he said "My brother, judge yourself before they judge you."

And in rebuking himself, the person says "Repent ... so long as you dwell on earth." Repent, for there is a chance now for repentance and forgiveness, before you hear the voice of the Lord saying "... I gave her time to repent and she did not repent." (Revelation 2:21) How true is the one who said:

Those in Hades desire one minute from the life on earth to offer in it repentance...

But the chance has passed, and the period of repentance is lost, no matter how much they cry out and say "Lord, Lord, open to us!" (Matthew 25:11) He will answer them "... depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23) ..."Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you" (Matthew 25:12)



Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth.

This is as long as the door of repentance is still till now open and before it is shut after death. Saint Ephrem says "Woe to the careless who seeks time they have wasted... Toil in this, the eleventh hour, before the day ends... Gather your day, before it leaves, before it flees from you..."

The day that you lose from your life, you cannot bring it back.

You may grieve over it and you may offer repentance about it, but you cannot bring it back. It has finished. Therefore try to work for your eternity, in the day

you live, before it slips by and becomes yesterday, never returning. I remember that I said once:

My life is but a lost yesterday
All of it is a yesterday, no matter how long
My day is a yesterday tomorrow
My tomorrow will be yesterday the day after tomorrow.

† † †

I fear that many of us who are righteous, will spend half their life in sin, and the other half in crying over it!!

Or they will spend the day in committing sin, and the night in crying over it...

What is really sad, is that people spend their time in committing sins, and do not find time to weep over them...! They do not find time to regret their sins, because of being busy in committing other sins!!

And you, I wonder what type you are? Are you the type who weeps for his sins in the Prayer before sleeping? I wish that you rebuke yourself in the Prayer before sleeping, every day...

† † †

There is a person who does not rebuke himself over his sins because he is righteous in his own eyes!

He does not know any sin for himself upon which he can rebuke himself!! He says what have I done?!... Most likely, this person has wrong spiritual evaluation, and taking account of himself is not precise. Or he is of the type that compliments himself, giving excuses and justifications in all that he does... As for you, do not be like that. You must live the life of meticulousness, rebuking yourself about every wrong action, every deviant thought, every vain word and every inappropriate desire...

† † †

Remember how David the prophet, on every night, drenched his couch with his tears (Psalm 6). Repeat to yourself the expression that we say in the Second Service of the Midnight Prayer: **“Give me, Lord, fountains of many tears as You did in the past to the sinful woman.”**

And some of the monks pray it like this: “Give me, O Lord, a pure repentance. Give me, O Lord, forgiveness of sin. Give me, O Lord fountains of many

overflowing tears as you did in the past to the sinful woman.”... And some follow up this prayer with many details saying “Give me, Lord, fountains of many tears to weep over this and this...” He continues to mention the details of his sins and his shortcomings, asking for each to be granted fountains of many tears...



But we, my brethren, want to spoil ourselves and say why should we grieve ourselves by mentioning our sins, and we prefer to spend our nights in comfort!!

Whereas Saint Isaac says “The night is separated for the work of prayer.” And the psalmist says “Lift up your hands [in the night] and bless the Lord.” (Psalm 134) Where are our holy nights that we spend in prayer, contemplation and repentance; and in them say “Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth...” If you did not repent previously, then repent now, even if it is with those of the eleventh hour, or even in the last hour of life as the right thief did... For it is the acceptable time (II Corinthians 6:2).

Seek repentance before death seeks you.

If all the hours of the day have been lost, and your busy time has delayed you, then do not allow the hours of the night to be lost. Use some of it for reconciliation with God... Seek repentance before Satan uses your carelessness and binds you more and more. And know that the person who delays repentance, then he gives sin the chance to be deeper in his life. Then the offence becomes a fall, and the fall to a habit, then to a nature!

Do not delay repentance, for you cannot guarantee that the visit of grace that is with you now will continue...

You cannot guarantee that the current desire for repentance that you have will continue or stop? And you cannot guarantee that the chances that God has offered you will remain. Likewise, you do not know what the evil one will present before you of wars, if he sees you being careless in repentance. Remember Felix the emperor when he was shaken from the words of Saint Paul about righteousness, judgment and self-control. He did not take the chance for repentance, but said to the Apostle and Saint “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” (Acts 24:25) The Bible did not say that he found time!!

Likewise when king Agrippa was affected and said to Saint Paul “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:28) Agrippa did not take the chance, he lost it...

Therefore do not say to the visit of grace: Go away for now till I have a convenient time...

Do not be like Felix and Agrippa. And do not be like the plants that grew a little then were choked by thorns. And do not be like the seeds snatched by the birds (Matthew 13:4, 7). And do not be like the foolish virgins who went late to purchase oil (Matthew 25:10).



It is enough the time that has gone, do not increase the number of your sins.

It is possible that a person might sit with himself to take an account, and see that he has committed a number of sins. If these were divided among the people of the whole world, then each of them would be sinful! And if his evil thoughts are divided among them, then all of them would be defiled!!

Do not say that I am young, and when I grow older, I will repent. Maybe when you grow older, then repentance will be difficult for you, because you have not been used to it, nor connected to it and it is not in your blood. Also repentance at an older age might not be of much value. Therefore the Bible says "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth..." (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Your body would have become weaker, and you were not the one who was victorious over it.

Do not say my example is the right thief! You cannot be sure, maybe your fate will be like the other thief who, in the hours of death, was blasphemous towards Christ (Luke 23:39 - 41).



When you say repent therefore, O my soul, change this to a practical repentance.

Do not merely make it a thought or desire. The lost son, when he said "I will arise and go to my father," he arose immediately and went to his father (Luke 15:18, 20).

The praying person says to himself: Repent before death ... Why?

For the dust in the grave offers no praise, and amongst the dead no one remembers, nor those who are in Hades, give thanks.

With this verse, we can answer those who are occupied with the spirit world and who say that repentance exists after death!! We can also answer with the saying of the Bible in the parable of the virgins "... and the door was shut." (Matthew

25:10) And with the saying of the Lord Christ to the Jews who did not believe in Him: "... you... will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." (John 8:21) And also the saying of our father Abraham to the rich Lazarus: "... between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." (Luke 16:26)

Therefore repentance is a must from now...

And while we are in the body, and in the materialistic world, we become victorious over the flesh before we take it off, so that when we take it off by death, we take off a repentant body; remembering the saying of the Apostle: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (II Corinthians 5:10)

CONTEMPLATIONS IN THE
SEGMENTS OF THE
PRAYER BEFORE SLEEPING

3

Repent therefore, O my soul...
Rise up from your laziness...

Every person says to himself “repent.” For repentance is for all, and not just for the beginners in the spiritual life.

There is no person without sin, even if his life on earth is a single day. What differs is the quantity and type of sin.

He says “repent therefore, O my soul,” for his soul is the cause of sin, no matter the outer reasons. For if the soul did not submit to these reasons, it would not have sinned.

It is good that the person calls himself to repentance, before the people call him to this.

There is no doubt that the inner incentive is the stronger and more preferred. For whoever does not have this inner incentive, then the guides and spiritual fathers will probably suffer with them. And like the general saying says “whoever does not come by himself, his driver suffers.”



There are many reasons that make the person say to himself: Repent.

There is a person whose love for God is very deep. And his heart is enflamed with fire if he sins, and his conscience greatly rebukes himself, so he says to himself repent.

Another person might have been devastated by sin, and suffered its horrible consequences as well as the catastrophes that it brought upon him, so he says repent therefore, O my soul.

And another person might have suffered a terrible disease, or faced hardship of complex problems, so he resorts to God to reconcile with Him. And he says to himself repent, fearing that God might have left him because of his sins and that is why tribulations surrounded him.

And a person has the chance to sit with himself and give an account, and he finds that he has been weighed in the balances, and found wanting, so he says repent, therefore O my soul ...



The person needs to hate sin so that he will repent.

As for the person who enjoys sin, then he does not have in his intention to say “repent, therefore O my soul,” for he does not desire to repent!! Likewise is the person who is not convinced that he is in the wrong. He needs to adjust his balance and values by leaving what he is in, and to say “repent, therefore O my soul ...”

Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth.

For the dust in the grave offers no praise, and amongst the dead no one remembers, nor those who are in Hades, give thanks. After the person’s body enters the grave and changes to dust, it is not logic that he praises God. And if his sinful soul has gone to Hades, then it will not give thanks there. It does not have the chance for repentance after it has departed from the body. Therefore he says to his soul:



Rise up from your laziness, and implore the Savior in repentance.

The spiritual person has alert senses continually, and his thoughts are directed to God, viewing everything clearly. He is looking after his soul. As for the sinful person, he is careless with regards to his salvation, in needs of rising up from his laziness, from the sleep that he is in.



The sleep of laziness here comprises both the body and soul – The body is lazy not keeping vigil in prayer, and the spirit also is lazy and careless. Therefore the Lord invites us to keep vigil and says “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning.” (Luke 12:35) Therefore He says after that “Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find them watching.” (Luke 12:37) He also says:

“...lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.” (Mark 13:36)

With regards to the body, our fathers kept vigil the whole night in prayer, like what saint Arsanious did ... And like what was said in one of the Psalms of the

Prayer before Sleeping “Lift up your hands [in the night] in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.” (Psalm 134) With regards to the spirit, we continually need spiritual vigil (and I have published for you a book titled Spiritual Vigil). We must have alert spirits, that do not allow any wrong thought to enter into it...

The person cannot justify not being able to stay awake in prayer. For many times, he stays awake in enjoyable discussions, or a television show that attracts him, or stays awake preparing for an exam, or in analyzing a particular problem... The Lord rebuked His disciples saying “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40) It is a rebuke to all of us.



To keep watch does not mean that the person is awake, in vain discussions, but what is meant is that he keeps vigil in a spiritual work.

As the Lord said to His disciples “Could you not watch with Me...” I wish you can learn psalms and prayers with which you can pray with at night, even in darkness, without anyone noticing... If someone is embarrassed to be seen by his relatives holding an Agbia praying.

The practice of spending the whole night in prayer is a practice exclusive for the saints, and the fathers the monks used to practice this. As for you, at least, spend what you can from the night in prayer. And do not be like the people of the world who spend the night in fun and amusement... The saying of one of the fathers about the spiritual work is so true:

Whoever gains the friendship of the night, he is able to spend the day in goodness with God.

That is, what he stores of contemplations and spiritual thoughts during the night, all these accompany him during the day, and save him from the wars of mixing with people and being occupied with materialistic matters.

Think with me, my brethren: How can we spend our nights with God? And is there someone more enjoyable than Christ in your nights? And what is the fruit that you gain from every night? Are our nights for the flesh or for the spirit? **There is no doubt that according to how we spend the night that the dreams of the night will be also...** There are two matters before us that we must avoid both of them: Laziness of sleep and the sinful vigil. And in the sinful vigil, we must avoid the slumber of the spirit. Therefore rise up my soul from your laziness of sleep and implore the Savior in repentance...

How beautiful it is to remember the saying of David the prophet, the man of prayer:

“Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, or go up to the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.” (Psalm 132: 3 - 5)

Are you like that, not giving sleep to your eyes, until you find a place in your heart for the Lord, and in the hearts of people also? Try to do this – whether keeping vigil in prayer or vigil in service, or both. And do not leave yourself to the fun of the night and its amusement.

† † †

I am sad for the night that has lost its reputation, and has become an avenue for singers and dancers. Even the words Night Clubs have become a bad name, ruled over by Satan; and whoever goes to these clubs gets a bad reputation...

Thus, the saints who have returned honor to the night, and joined it to the Kingdom of God, the Lord will not forget their toil, vigils and prayers... They are the ones who see people asleep at night, so they isolate themselves with God in prayer and petitions... As David the prophet says “At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments.” - “My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may mediate on Your word.” - “When I remember You on my bed, I mediate on You in the night watches.” (Psalm 119:62, 148; Psalm 63:6)

† † †

Yes my brother, if the world has bought from you the day and gave you its value as a job and salary, then you only have the night left to spend with God. The matters that have taken from your time during the day will not occupy you from Him... This night in its calmness and stillness, and being far from mixing with others and keeping you away, is a good avenue for a relationship with God; in which you can show Him your longing and apologize for what has kept you from Him during the day... There is no excuse for you at night, if you became lazy in being in the presence of God. If your soul becomes lazy, and makes the excuse of being tired or desiring to sleep, rebuke it saying “Rise up from your laziness and implore the Savior in repentance...”

† † †

Befriend the night, which desires your friendship, offering you its calmness.

It offers you its distance from the busy life of the world and its turbulence, and its distance from those who stir up your calmness in gatherings and discussions... Do not waste a third of your life sleeping, instead break the night

with prayer, so that when you go up to your bed, you consecrate it with psalms, prayers and spiritual thoughts, and that way your sleep will be pure and the bed holy. Also your prayers at night will sow in your sub-conscience holy thoughts that will nourish your spirit and help you in your wars.

And just as God is the last One you speak to before you sleep at night, God also must be the first One to speak to when you rise up in the morning, Then He becomes the beginning and the end of every day of your days.

Many times we are upset with God as if He has not given to us, and very rarely we are upset with ourselves for not giving God what we should of our time...

Do not sleep more than what your body needs. Excessive sleep makes the body tired with laziness, and also makes your spirit tired and is denying it time that can be spent with God, for your benefit. As for being watchful, it makes us active and alert... When you go home tonight, I wish that you can place before you the saying of the Lord “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40)

And whenever your soul becomes lazy in its spiritual work, rebuke it saying “Rise up from your laziness and implore...”



Do not leave your soul in a vicious cycle: night hands it to day and day hands it over to night; as if it is unconscious or asleep, not realizing what it is in. Don't be like one as if in a whirlwind, the waves turning him and dragging him below... And if it happens that sleep takes you, say to yourself “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” (Psalm 3:5) So say ‘I awoke early.’

Awake from your sleep, like the wise virgins awoke,

Your lantern in your hand, full of oil – the oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. And keep watch waiting for the Heavenly Groom. For you do not know when He will come - “... in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning...” (Mark 13:35) So be watchful always to meet the Lord.



When you ask yourself to rise from the sleep of laziness, make this request a continuous one throughout life.

In actual fact, laziness in the spiritual life makes the person waste his life. It is like when the Lord rebuked the one who buried his talent in the ground, and did not use it for profit. So the Lord said to him “You wicked and lazy servant...”

(Matthew 25:26) So the one who did not profit with his talent, was considered wicked and lazy...

You must profit spiritualities for yourself, and gain souls to Christ.

You must gain growth for yourself and the Church... And rebuke yourself every time you become lazy. Do not accept from yourself any excuses in this, like what the lazy person said "There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!" (Proverbs 26:13)

... You can be victorious over all excuses, if you have a sincere desire to live with God...

† † †

The devil may fight you with many fears, and offer you justifications for laziness, so do not listen to him... And know that the children of God must be courageous, like what was said about the guards around Solomon's throne that they are mighty "They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night." (Song of Songs 3: 7, 8)

The children of God are always "Fervent in spirit ..." (Romans 12:11)

They are "not lagging in diligence." And as the Apostle said to them "... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58)

† † †

CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE SEGMENTS OF THE PRAYER BEFORE SLEEPING

4

O Pure Virgin...

O pure Virgin, cast the shadow of your assistance on your servant. Remove the evil thoughts and raise my frail soul to stay awake and pray, because it has been lying long in deep sleep. You are a capable, merciful and helpful mother, the mother of the spring of life, my King and God, Jesus Christ, my hope.

Is it a Prayer or Intercession?

Non-Orthodox, who do not intercede through the Virgin Saint Mary; do not pray this segment and similar segments in the Agbia, thinking that it is a prayer directed to the Virgin Saint; whereas prayer is directed to God alone!

We never offer prayer to the Virgin Mary.

But during our prayer to God, we entreat her, asking for her help.

This matter is very common in the Holy Bible.

This is especially in the Psalms of David.



1. During the prayer of David in the Psalms, he turn to himself and entreats himself.

He says in his prayer: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits...” (Psalm 103:1, 2)

He entreats himself during his prayer in Psalm 42: 5 and says “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God...”

And he says to himself in another Psalm “Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” (Psalm 116:7)

And David speaks to himself in the prayers of the Agbia, and says:

“Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth, for the dust in the grave offers no praise, and amongst the dead no one remembers...”

Again, during his prayer, turns to himself, saying to himself:

“If this life was everlasting and this world eternal, O my soul, you would have had a valid excuse. But if your wicked deeds and repulsive evils are exposed before the just judge, what answer would you give when you are lying on the bed of sin and failed to subject the body...”

Can we say here that the person praying is praying to himself? Is this logical?! Or do we say, that in his prayer to God, he turns to himself and speaks to himself, before God...

† † †

2. And as he entreats himself during his prayer, likewise he entreats the angels.

So he says in Psalm 103 “Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure.” (Verses 20 -21)

Maybe also he was turning to the angels, when he said in another psalm: “Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in...” (Psalm 24:7)

Can we say that David was praying to the angels? Of course not, but he is entreating them during his prayer, and sometimes by the spirit of prophecy.

† † †

3. Sometimes in his prayer, he even turns to the devils or evil people and talks to them.

Thus we see him while praying in the sixth Psalm, he turns to them and says “Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.” (Verses 8 - 9)

† † †

4. And David, during his prayer, entreats many groups of people.

We see him saying in a complete psalm “Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.” (Psalm 134:1-2)

And he says in another psalm “Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forever more! From the rising of the sun to its going down the Lord’s name is to be praised.” (Psalm 113: 1-3)

And in another psalm he says “Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” (Psalm 29:1-2)

And he says in Psalm 98 “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! ... Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm ... shout joyfully before the Lord, the King. (Psalm 98:1, 4, 5, 6)

And also Psalm 100 is in the same style “Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!”

Likewise all of Psalm 47 “Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!”

So was David praying to all peoples and to all the lands?! Or was he, at the time of his prayer, turning to them, and inviting them to prayer with him...

† † †

5. And David, in his prayer, turned to Jerusalem and entreated her.

So he says in Psalm 147 “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders.” (Verses 12-14) He also says to her in Psalm 87 “Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.” (Verse 3)

Is it logical that he was praying to Jerusalem?!

† † †

6. If the matter is such, and if David, with the Spirit of God, was turning to all these in his prayer and entreated them, then why should we not turn also to the Virgin in our prayers and entreat her, asking for her intercession?!

† † †

O Pure Virgin:

We bless the Virgin in her purity, in her motherhood, and in her help.

She lived as a Virgin, and gave birth while a Virgin, and remained a Virgin after giving birth to the Lord Christ. Therefore the Church calls her with the title “Ever Virgin.”

Here, we call her in our prayers with the expression “O Pure Virgin.”

The mere word ‘Virgin’ without the mention of a name means the Virgin Mary.

This is the name by which she was known by. It is the name that Isaiah the Prophet mentioned when he said “Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) And this is the verse that the angel used to comfort Joseph the Carpenter (Matthew 1: 22, 23).

So with this title, we call her in the prayer before sleeping “O Pure Virgin.”

Without mentioning her name, but the mere expression ‘O Pure Virgin’ is sufficient...

We love the Virgin from the depths of our hearts, and we honor her. And many are the praises in her name, and especially in the Keiahk Psalmody. And many are the Churches that are built in her name. And many are her apparitions in Egypt, and her miracles...

Cast The Shadow of Your Assistance:

The shadow means protection, as we say in the psalm “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Psalm 91:1) And as the Virgin in the Song of Songs says about the Lord “... I sat down in his shade with great delight...” (Song of Songs 2:3) And as Saint Paul the simple said to his master Saint Anthony “I live under the shadow of your prayers.”

And here the shadow of your assistance means that intercession through her is quick in its response ... And this is a point of practical faith, which we feel in our lives.

And the expression “Cast the shadow” means take us under your protection and care.

In what matter do we ask for protection? The person praying here mentions two points:

- (a) Remove the evil thoughts from me
- (b) Raise my frail soul to stay awake and pray.

We ask that evil thoughts are kept away from us, whether while we are awake, or in the images of sleep. And here, our faith appears in the power of interceding by the Virgin in protecting us from the waves of evil thoughts. Two factors help her in this, her motherhood and her capabilities.

You are a Capable, Merciful and Helpful Mother:

She is a mother to all of us. If the Lord Christ said to Saint John, the beloved Apostle, about the Virgin “Behold your mother!” and this Saint says to us “My little children...” (I John 2:1) Then the Virgin is our mother, so long as she is the mother of a Father to us... She was also the spiritual mother to all the apostles.

And she is the Mother of Christ in the flesh, and He says to us “Little children...” (John 13:33) Thus she is also our mother, for she is the mother of our Father “The mother of the Spring of Life.”

So we do not only look to the Virgin as a great Saint only, but also as a Mother.

And not just an ordinary Mother, but “a capable, merciful and helpful Mother...”

With this, we trust in the power of her intercession, which is built upon the compassion of her motherhood, and upon her great status before our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the praying person says about her “... the Mother of the Spring of Life, my King and God, Jesus Christ, my hope.”

And as long as our hope is Jesus Christ, we turn to His Mother, the acceptable intercessor - He performed His first miracle in Cana of Galilee by her intercession (John 2:3).



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- 2. Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth...**
- 3. Rise up from your laziness...**
- 4. O Pure Virgin...**

In this book

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, One God Amen

You will read in this book about these Psalms:

1. Out of the depths I have cried to You.
2. Behold, bless the Lord
3. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!

We will speak to you about the segments of the Compline Prayer, which are:

1. Behold, I am about to stand before the Just Judge.
2. Repent therefore, Oh my soul so long as you dwell on earth
3. Rise up from your laziness
4. O pure Virgin.

And there are many contemplations here on the topic of repentance.

Pope Shenouda III