



**St. John Of the Desert**  
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**PHYSICAL FITNESS IS BIG BUSINESS TODAY** By Rev. Fred Saato

People run to gyms and exercise programs, or they just run. St. Paul sees the value of keeping one's body in shape, but puts it in a perspective of his own. *"Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise for the life that now is and of that which is to come"* (1 Tim 4:8). We may readily grasp that spiritual exercise may bear fruit in the life to come, but what promise does it have *"for the life that now is"*?

A great part of spiritual training is concerned with the control of the passions. We strive to free ourselves from the compulsion to pursue pleasure so that we can pursue a relationship with the living God. If we follow this training, the result in our life now is that we are no longer driven to acquire or possess. We are content.

When a person is beset by greed he is never satisfied with what he has. There is always more, there is always something better to be acquired. While he seems content with his latest acquisition it is only for a moment, because nothing he has truly satisfies. The same is true of people governed by gluttony, lust, popular acclaim or pride. They never have enough.

A person who has learned to control the passions, on the other hand, is content knowing that all he is and all he has is the gift of God. He has learned that material wealth, physical pleasure, or the good opinion of others are all passing and insignificant when compared with the possibility of knowing and serving God. He is happy to devote energy and resources to others as much as possible because he controls them; they do not control him. Controlling the passions makes us free here and now.

Someone who undertakes spiritual discipline devotes himself to developing spiritual strengths or virtues just as an athlete strengthens physical muscles. These strengths, or virtues, enable spiritual athletes to remain faithful in the face of persecution or hardship. How could the martyrs and confessors have endured the torments they suffered without the fortitude spiritual discipline produces? How could people like Father Damien in a leper colony, Mother Teresa on the streets of Calcutta, or Dorothy Day in the tenements of New York have served day after day in such atrocious conditions without the patience and dedication of a spiritual athlete? Without the endurance which spiritual discipline produces believers would quickly fall away from their commitment and collapse on the sidelines. Spiritual discipline develops the endurance to live for God in the here and now.

Another aspect of spiritual discipline is concerned with fidelity to prayer. Many people pray – or say prayers – from a sense of duty. Praying, they feel, is something we "ought to do." A person of prayer is rather one who senses an authentic relationship with God and who prays out of love rather than a sense of obligation. Such a person reaps the fruits of a commitment to prayer in this life, becoming someone who experiences the presence of God in his life on earth.

The presence of God may be experienced in many ways. There are saints who have experienced God directly in visions or in charismatic gifts. But the presence of God may also be experienced in consolations or in the assurance of blessing from God without any exterior manifestation. In either case to experience the presence of God in one's "life that now is" is clear evidence of the truth of St. Paul's statement: godliness profits a person in this life as well as in the life to come.

Do not forget the hungry! (Collection Basket at the door)

**JANUARY 22, 2012**  
**15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE HOLY CROSS - ZACCHEUS**

LK 19:1-10

1 TIM 4:9-15

TONE 7

**St. John of the Desert Calendar**

Sunday, January 29	9:00 am 10:20 am 10:30 am	Children Education Doxology Divine Liturgy followed by Social Hour <small>(+) Gloria Herro, (+) John Ronan, Sister Esther</small>
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**Today's Intentions:**

- For the Health and Salvation of Paul Davis Family by Joseph Davis
- For the Health and Salvation of Paul Davis by John & Evelyn Davis
- For the Repose of the Soul of John Nabity by Kh. Simone
- For the Repose of the Soul of Gloria Herro
- For the Repose of the Soul of Dunya Lynne Aziza by Sondos Kassier
- For the Repose of the Soul of Sister Esther by Mary & Marti Herro
- For the Repose of the Soul of Hanna, Fadoua, Samir & Salim Abou Eid by Samira Abou Eid
- For a Special Intention

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS**

Eric Rimmer, Mary Kostisak, Andre and Osama Eid, Lynn Hume, Linda Herro, Kafa Dababneh, Camille Holt, Refga Sayegh, Bo Bolinaga, Pauline Hamra, Sue Bieber, Ray Weirick, Bill Estes, Samira Horan, Baylee Beamer and Nadia Demian.

There is a sign-up poster in the hall for different maintenance jobs that need to be done around the church. Unfortunately, very few of you signed-up and offered to help. We will have "Work Days" and you will be notified if you marked your name. Soon we will have a work day to remove the Christmas Decoration around the church and hall. I urge you to be involved in your church with a spirit of stewardship for the talents that God gave us. If you can help in any way, please sign your name on the poster in the hall today. Thank you.

**HOUSE BLESSING** - Just prepare a candle, icons and assemble your family for about an hour.

Please bring Peanut butter, Soups, Jelly, breakfast cereals (not the ones with lots of sugar, please), Canned meats and vegetables, disposable diapers & detergent, etc. Put your donations in the Narthex.

**You can now schedule Divine Liturgies, read our Bulletin, make donations, read our Parish Guidelines for Membership, or follow our Children Education Blog; all from our Web Site, [www.Stjohnofthedesert.com](http://www.Stjohnofthedesert.com).**

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** We are in the process of updating our Email list. If you have a different email address or didn't give us your email yet, please do so now to be added to our Parish list for memo distribution and such.

The common life of loving service to one another is one of the tenets of our Christianity. Can you list what you did for other than your immediate family to fulfill this belief in 2011? Do you have a plan for 2012?

**THE BISHOP'S APPEAL:** Gifts to the Appeal will continue to be received and credited to your parish until 31 January 2012 for anyone who makes an end-of-year, tax-deductible donation. Your gift means so much to so many! Our Father and Shepherd Bishop Nicholas thanks you for your generous support and asks God's abundant blessings upon you and all your family in the New Year.