



**St. John Of the Desert**  
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**Learning to Focus on God's Presence**

Setting aside time for silent reflection helps us refocus our attention on the presence of God in our midst. Spiritual writers of all ages recommend that we go apart – to our rooms, the outdoors, a church – where we can be undisturbed. There we can disengage from the activities of the day, close our eyes and begin to focus on the unceasing presence of God in which we stand. A time of silence may be enhanced by a simple breathing exercise to help us concentrate on the fact that we are in the holy presence of God.

St John Climacus, the 7th century abbot of Mount Sinai and author of The Ladder, suggests the next step. "Become aware of God, in whose presence you are while you pray," he writes. "Then take a formula of prayer and recite it with perfect attention both to the words you are saying and to the Person to whom you are saying them." In time the Jesus Prayer – Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner – became the standard prayer in the Byzantine Churches for resting in the presence of God.

Sit quietly and repeat the prayer without hurrying for whatever length of time you have set apart for sitting in God's presence. It is good to have a regular period of time for this activity – e.g. 15 minutes, for a start – which may be adjusted as circumstances dictate. Counseling 17th century nuns, the Bishop of Geneva, St Francis de Sales, suggests a different kind of adjustment than we would normally consider. "Half an hour's meditation is essential except when you are very busy," he teaches. "Then a full hour is needed." The more harried we are by stress at home or work, the more we need to focus on the presence of God to bring us peace.

As Brother Lawrence, the 17th century Carmelite monk, whose teachings are recorded in the book "The Practice of the Presence of God", adds another dimension to our consideration of our true wealth as Christians. We are fulfilling our eternal calling as people devoted to the worship of God "I am doing now what I will do for all eternity," he exclaimed. "I am blessing God, praising Him, adoring Him, and loving Him with all my heart."

Rev. Fred Saato Pamphlets - Modified

**Stewardship** makes us more like Christ who came not to be served, but to serve. It is a grateful awareness that all we have and all we are comes freely from God. When we offer our lives back to God in love, like the bread and wine that we offer Him, He blesses that generosity a hundredfold. He returns to us the bread and wine as His Body and Blood for our divinization and our lives flourish. As each member of St. John of the Desert, young and old alike, understands and lives out the life of a good steward, we will begin to flourish. We will see families eager to hand on the Faith to others. We will see vocations to the priesthood and religious life. We will begin to move away from secularized notions of fundraising and volunteerism to ones rooted in gratitude and love flowing from our worship of God.

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

**NOVEMBER 20, 2011**

**9<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS - THE FOOL**

**PREPARATION OF THE FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD INTO THE TEMPLE**

**LK 12:16-21**

**EPH 2:4-10**

**TONE 6**

**St. John of the Desert Calendar**

Thursday, November 24	9:00 AM	Thanksgiving Divine Liturgy
Friday, November 25	10:20 AM	Doxology
Saturday, November 26	10:30 AM	Divine Liturgy Followed by the Social Hour
		Nadia Demian, (+) Nellie O'Connor

**Today's Intentions:**

- For the Health and Salvation of Nadia Demian by Kh. Simone
- For the Health and Salvation of Rt. Rev. Frank Milienewicz
- For the Repose of the Soul of Gabriel Khordoc by Arlette Khouzam
- For the Repose of the Soul of Nellie O'Connor by Paul & Shirley Davis
- For the Repose of the Soul of Rose Petersen by Paul & Shirley Davis
- For the Repose of the Soul of Dunya Lynne Aziza by Sondos Kassier

Today I am asking all of you to please pray for a special intention.

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS**

Fr. Stephen Washko, Eric Rimmer, Mary Kostisak, Andre and Osama Eid, Lynn Hume, Linda Herro, Kafa Dababneh, Camille Holt, Refga Sayegh, Bo Bolinaga, Pauline Hamra and Nadia Demian.

Some of the advertisers in our Sunday Bulletin are not renewing their ads as we are not patronizing their businesses. However, if you do patronize their businesses, please be sure to let them know that you saw their ad in our bulletin. By the same token, please try to get new ads from any of the people you patronize: hairdressers, lawyers, etc. A business card size is \$100 for a whole year and \$200 for double the size. These ads help us pay for the Sunday Bulletin.

**Come, plunge and swim in the Deep Water of the Liturgy**

On Sunday, **Today** and November 27 at **1:00 pm**

Each session (about two hours with a ten minutes break) will include a presentation, a group discussion and Q/A sessions. (Why we do what we do at the Divine Liturgy?)

How one participates in the Divine Liturgy?)

Baby-sitting will be provided

Traditionally **Thanksgiving day** is a day spent in thanksgiving and celebration with the Family and Friends. As we noticed last year, many of our Parishioners are spending Thanksgiving day by themselves because they have no family or friends in Phoenix. This year again we ask all those who are alone to please join our Parish Family for the celebration. Please talk to Kh. Simone if you are planning to join us.

**THE BISHOP'S APPEAL:** At this time of year when we offer thanksgiving for all God's blessings, Our Lord speaks to us in the Gospel about storing up treasure in Heaven and about being rich in the things of God. Let us give back to the Lord in return for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us. Let us give thanks to God for the precious gift of our Melkite Church and offer a tribute of thanksgiving in honor of the labor and sacrifice of our forebears in the faith who have gone before us. Offer thanks to God by giving a generous gift to the Bishop's Appeal. Extra Appeal envelopes are available in the narthex. Thank you for your generosity.