Sitting in the Presence of God: St. Isaac the Syrian insists that we can and must commune with God continually to be on regular speaking terms with Him, as it were. "Sit in the presence of the Lord every moment of your life, as you think of Him and recollect Him in your heart. Otherwise, when you only see Him after a period of time, you will lack the freedom to converse with Him, out of shame; for great freedom of conversation is born out of constant association with Him."

What St Isaac calls "sitting in the presence of God" others in both East and West have described as developing an awareness of the presence of God. We regularly pray that God is "everywhere present and filling all things" ("O heavenly King") but are more frequently unaware of God's presence as we go about our daily tasks. As the Divine Liturgy expresses it, "Christ is in our midst – He is and ever shall be."

Even more compelling is the realization that the Spirit of God is not only with us but also within us through baptism, that we are members of the Body of Christ. If God "dwells within us", then everything we do is in the presence of God although we regularly forget it. Developing an awareness of the presence of God, then, simply means keeping the memory of God in our thoughts, and living like we really mean it.

Many people have learned to use an everyday event to trigger their awareness that God is present now. It may be an icon at one's desk or kitchen counter, the ringing of a telephone or the sight of a child. Whenever they encounter their "trigger" they say a brief prayer.

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

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

NOVEMBER 27, 2011

13TH SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS - THE RICH MAN

LK 18:18-27 **EPH 2:14-22** **TONE 7**

St. John of the Desert Calendar

Sunday, December 4	*9:00 AM*	*Children Religious Education*
Feast of St. Barbara	*10:20 AM*	*Doxology*
	10:30 AM	*Divine Liturgy Followed by the Social Hour*
	(+) Nellie O'Connor	

Today's Intentions:

- **For the Health and Salvation of Nadia Demian by Kh. Simone**
- **For the Repose of the Soul of Nellie O'Connor by Paul & Shirley Davis**
- **For the Repose of the Soul of Barbara Chisnell by Joseph Davis**
- **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.

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

Today is the last session at **1:00 pm**

How one participates in the Divine Liturgy?

Baby-sitting will be provided

The Holy Great Martyr Barbara - December 4

The Great Martyr Barbara was a fervent follower of Christ. Her father, Dioscorus, was a pagan in the city of Heliopolis in Egypt and was famed for his wealth and standing. Dioscorus shut up his only daughter, who was both intelligent and beautiful, in a high tower, surrounded her with all possible comforts, gave her a host of attendants, set up idols for worship and built her a bathroom with two windows. Once, when her father was away from the city, she came out of the tower and, by God's providence, met some Christians who told her about the true Christian faith. Barbara's heart was set on fire with love for Christ. She had a third window cut in the bathroom as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, and traced a Cross with her finger on one wall of it, which etched itself deep in the stone as if cut by a chisel. A spring of water gushed forth from the bathroom floor from her footprint, and it later gave healing from sickness to many. When Dioscorus found out about his daughter's faith, he beat her harshly and drove her from the tower, chasing after her to kill her, but a cliff opened and hid Barbara from her irate father. When she appeared again, Dioscorus took her to Marcian, the governor of the city, who handed her over for torture, but the Lord Himself appeared to her in the prison with many angels, and healed her. Juliana, beheld this and conceived a desire for martyrdom herself. Both of them were fearfully tortured and taken around the city to be mocked, then their breasts were cut off and much blood flowed from them. They were finally led out to the place of execution, and Juliana was slain by soldiers while Barbara was killed by her own father. On the same day, lightning struck Dioscorus's house, killing both him and Marcian. St. Barbara suffered in 306, and her wonderworking relics are preserved in Kiev. Greatly glorified in the Kingdom of Christ, she has appeared many times down to our own days, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of the most holy Mother of God.

THE BISHOP'S APPEAL: In today's Gospel, Our Lord warns us how earthly riches can be an obstacle to our faith, and He calls us to seek our treasure in Heaven by giving of our earthly goods. If our Lord has blessed us with riches, He does so, not only for ourselves and our families, but for the good of His Church. We are able to enjoy the blessings of our beautiful Melkite faith and tradition only because of the labor and sacrifice of our forebears in the faith who have gone before us. Store up treasure in Heaven by giving a generous gift to the Bishop's Appeal. If you have not already sent your gift, please do so today so that 100% of our parish will be counted. Thank you for your generosity.