

A PRAYER ABOUT PRAYER

We thank You O God, for blessing us with the awesome privilege to pray to You. You have created us with a unique divine potential, a built-in spiritual SIM to call you and to receive calls. We misunderstood many a times that prayer is just a request. Thanks for enlightening us through Your saintly servants that, *prayer is above all a relationship with you*. Help us to experience the joy of this incredible union with you as the Psalmist who says, "I will go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding Joy" (Psalm 43:4). Help us to love You, our Most Beloved, with our whole heart and mind and to be in perfect union with You forever.

It was a mistake by us to worship many pleasure-giving things of the world that failed to give us true happiness which we sought in them and in turn frustrated us. Let us be with You so that we lead a dynamic life in peace and happiness thereby making our world peaceful. Thank You for guiding us towards You. Keep us always close to You and never forsake us. Even when we deviate from You and wander like a lost child, come to us and take us back to Your joyous sanctuary. Our ardent desire is to be with You and to live in Your joyous fellowship for which we have been created.

We also thank you for teaching about prayer as a nourishing and fulfilling relationship with You. We all receive water, food, air, light and other energy resources gracefully from the world You have given us. As our relationship with the rest of the creation nourishes us physically to live, grow and work, may our prayerful relation with you nourish and fulfill our inner being. You are our existential necessity as soil is to a tree, water to a fish and air to the living beings like us. When, life-giving water flows to us through the pipe of prayer, the seeds of virtues like love, forgiveness, truthfulness, justice and holiness, which are sown in us in the very image of You, sprout and blossom in us. O Lord Jesus, when You invited us to abide in You to be fruitful, You were calling us to have a constant communion with You, for fulfilling our hidden potential. We thank You O Lord for teaching us through Your saint St. Gregorios of Parumala that 'prayer helps us to enhance truth, virtuous life, faith, and reverence and mutual respect' and also that 'Prayer is the enthusiasm of childhood, the refuge of youth and the peace of old age'. Bless also to be like You as the saint fulfilled his being with You throughout.

Help us to ascend to You through prayer for overcoming the attack of evil passions and temptations. When we dwell with You and lodge (reside or inhabit) in Your shelter, we will be able to have the experience of the Psalmist who says to you "You are my protector and my refuge" (Ps 91:1,2). We thank you for the light of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* in which Abba John says: "*I am like a man sitting under a great tree, who sees wild beasts and snakes coming against him in great numbers. When he cannot withstand them any longer, he runs to climb the tree and is saved. It is just the same with me; I sit in my cell and I am aware of evil thoughts coming against me, and when I have no more strength against them, I take refuge in God by prayer and I am saved from the enemy.*" You have tried to enlighten the world with the same idea through great righteous persons like Gandhiji who wrote thus about prayer: "*There is an external struggle raging in man's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon, will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world, the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also*

miserable.” (Young India 23-1-1930 p.25). Help us to come to You for being protected from the destructive attacks of passions like hatred, greed, lust, jealousy etc.

O God, our infinite Source and Guide, help us to express our faith through prayer in the midst of the flood of materialism. We will continue to witness through prayer that You are not an illusion, but it is the claims of atheistic materialism, a myth. Even if we find You absent and silent to our senses, most of the time we travel in this world by seeing You through the eyes of faith and good hope for which we thank You. Help us to see You as more real than this world visible to us. We also pray to You for all our fellow beings who are losing their faith and hope because You appear to be absent and silent especially during the trials and catastrophes that break-in into their lives. May the rays of hope rise and shine in their hearts again to discover the dawn of your love and prayer-relation with You. Since You are the original source of our journey, our companion and the One who receive us at the end, help us to take every step by holding on to You. It is with You that we will face all challenges in this transient journey in this tiny planet in the universe, like a man who travels sitting comfortably in a plane or train, without seeing the destination or the discomfort and unfavorable incidents directly.

Sanctify us O Lord, to pray meaningfully for further sanctification and deification. Help us, because our impure thoughts and negative impressions of our sinful acts hinder us from seeing You. Clear us of all corrupt ways and filthy acts, so that we could worship You effectively. We come to You, to be pure and transparent to see You and the world around us and also ourselves and our fellow beings, as You expect us to see. Through your servant St. Gregory of Nyssa, You remind us that *“as long as the evil man persists in his wickedness, his prayer is an invocation of the devil.”* O God, our most supreme good, enable us to invoke You only through our prayers with a pure heart. Using one sentence of the prayerful interpretation of the Lord’s prayer by the same saint, we also pray *“May thy kingdom (rule) come to me so that the passions which still rule me so mercilessly may depart from me or rather may be altogether annihilated.”*

Help us to worship You by celebrating the fellowship as You have taught us through Jesus Christ, Your true image. Give us the clarity of vision to understand the interconnectivity of all. May we become worthy to worship You by appreciating all members of mankind, all living and non-living beings, planets, stars and galaxies and all kinds of angels as our brothers and sisters and Your children. Forgive us for praying to You in spiritual blindness and ignorance to reciprocate our forgiveness without we giving forgiveness to our fellow beings as You have taught us. Set us free from hate, arrogance and bless us to know and practice equality and fellowship with all our fellow beings.

O Holy Spirit, teach us not to rush to prayer, not to rush through prayer and also not to rush to other activities after prayer. Our Beloved Father, bless us to have an effective preparation through silence and inner stillness for having communion with You. O Lord Jesus, enable us to create ‘mountain tops and deserts of silence’ to pray as You used to pray in solitude and non-inhabitant places. Train us one Triune God to move from the crowded valleys of technology and devices to the silence of mountain-tops to meet You and to be with You. Bless us with the short-term pain of being away from the world, to be with You for the long-term goal of eternal happiness and being a blessing to this world.

Even if we know that prayer leads us to orderliness, peace and discipline, during our prayer itself our mind is distracted due to many unwanted thoughts that pops in. We confess that many times our hearts were silent while our mouths were making empty sounds. We fear whether You will rebuke us with the words “.....these people worship me with their lips only.” Help us over and over again to bridge the gap between our mouth and mind in prayer and to pay full attention to You while praying. Continue to help us to use the glorious prayers we received from our holy ancestors as our own prayers. Teach us O Lord to get into the inner sanctuary of our heart to meet You and worship You over there. Instead of using the sentences of such prayers hypocritically to comfort our spiritual pride or empty consolations, Lord bless us to use them as fingers to touch You for getting charged by You and to be good.

According to Your servant St. Paul’s exhortation to pray unceasingly (1 Thess. 5:17), remind us to remember you and relate to you constantly. As we breathe always, we would like to be with You and in You unceasingly, for the fullness of life for us and for the peace of our world. Everything in this world which is designed by You- atoms, stars, planets, black holes, galaxies, , trees, rivers, seas, mountains cells, fishes, birds, animals, humans, - they all draw our attention to You. Thank You for everything and have mercy upon us. As we breathe when we sit, walk, talk, travel, work, and sleep, let us remember You and have communion with You unceasingly. O Lord, bless us to pray for the purification of our mind as well with the daily physical cleansing.

Give us a mind to surrender completely to Your will even after asking for the fulfillment of our wishes and desires. Bless us to know Your will, love it wholeheartedly and pray accordingly. It is when ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’, we will overcome all kinds of anxiety and wait for your answers and intervention according to your way and timing. But even during this peaceful but dynamic waiting, we will hopefully say ‘everything is possible with You who empower us.’

Enlighten our hearts O God to see You not only in our holy places and our inner sanctuaries but also in the faces of the groaning world around us. Bless us to understand and follow the enlightening insight given to us through your servant Sophrony thus : “At first we pray for ourselves, but when God by the Holy Spirit gives us understanding, our prayer assumes cosmic proportions. Then, when we pray, ‘Our Father’, we think of mankind and solicit fullness of grace for all as for ourselves.” (*His Life is Mine p.68*). Lord bless us to pray selflessly by remembering the unity of all and the agony of the victims of sin, various addictions, exploitations, injustice, fanaticism and poverty. Lead us from the mountain top with You to meet You in the valley of pain and destruction. Motivate us and fill us with Your love O God so that we will be really concerned about the well being of all around us. Bless us to reach out to the marginalized, the sick and the suffering through prayer and compassion. Help us to be prayer.

We know that You know the great poverty and selfishness of our fallen nature. But we also know that You are an ever-flowing inexhaustible source of every goodness and perfection. Help us and have mercy upon us. O Holy Spirit! help us to be sincere not only in our secret prayers but also in family prayers and our community worship. Glory be to the Father our eternal source, the Son Jesus Christ our Saviour and the Holy Spirit our perfecter, now and always unto the ages of ages!

(Seeking Prayers, Bijesh Philip Achen, St. Thomas Orthodox Seminary, Nagpur.)