

THE CHURCH PRAYS WITHOUT CEASING

Special People Pray for Us



Session Six

Begin the Session with prayer to the Theotokos, *O Hail Mary, Full of Grace* (available on next page).

When you were Baptized and Chrismated, you became a member of the Holy Orthodox Church, the living Body of Jesus Christ. We here on earth are called the Church Militant because we are still striving each day to live according to God's teachings and commandments. In addition to those of us living in the Church today, this Body also includes all the righteous people who lived before us and are now living in the Kingdom of God, the Saints. Those in heaven are called the Church Triumphant because they have already fought the good fight and continue to pray for us. Together we make the Holy Orthodox Church. The Saints of the Church help us in two ways. When we learn about their lives of great faith and love of God, they become our role models...people we want to be like. But the Saints help us in another wonderful way: they pray to God for us.

The first of these people is the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Mary is greater than all of the Saints; the Orthodox Church calls her "Theotokos" or "Birth-giver of God." She is the greatest "role model" that we Orthodox Christians have in our lives because she happily accepted God's plan for Her life. She is the Mother to all Orthodox Christians and the greatest helper we have in bringing our prayers to God.

From Holy Scripture, we know that the first miracle that Jesus performed in public happened because Mary asked Him to help her friends. (Read John 2:1-11).

→ Mary, Jesus and His disciples were invited to _____ in the town of _____. Mary told Jesus that the hosts ran out of _____. She told the servants to _____ Jesus turned _____ into wine.



Of course, seeing a miracle performed is a marvelous thing that helped people believe that Jesus truly is the Son of God. But there is another wonderful thing we learn here: when Mary sees that people are in need, She asks Her Son to help them. She prays to God for all of us, and through her prayers we are saved! Because of His great love for His Mother, Jesus hears her and answers those prayers according to the will of His Father. Here is the most simple and fervent prayer to the Theotokos: "O Holy Birth-giver of God, Save Us!"

Every service in the Orthodox Church includes at least one prayer to the Theotokos, and we should remember her in our own private prayer. We thank her for giving herself to be a part of God's plan for our salvation, we recognize her life as one to follow, and we ask her to pray for us. It's very important that we understand and remember that Orthodox Christians don't *worship* the Theotokos; worship is only for God in the Holy Trinity.

Read Luke 1:28 and 1:42.

→ Who said these verses? _____ and

→ What does this tell us about Mary?

Hail, Mary, full of grace
the Lord is with you!
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of your women
for you have borne the Savior of our souls.

A little further in the same chapter Mary says a beautiful prayer thanking God. (Luke 1:46-55)

→ What does she predict about herself?

Of course, this has come true!

The Theotokos is not the only one in God's Kingdom who is praying for us. We also ask our guardian angel and all the saints to remember us in their prayers.

We can, and do, pray to *all* of the saints. There are also many saints to whom we pray in special times of need. But each one of us should come to know and pray to our *patron saint*. You may have been born on the day when the Church remembers that saint, or you may be named after him or her. You may have been given that saint's name at your Baptism and use that name when you receive Communion or participate in other Mysteries in the Church. If you don't know who your patron saint is, you can talk to your spiritual father and ask him to help you find one. As you learn about your patron saint's life, you will have a hero to follow and a very special friend praying to God for you. The simplest way to pray to your Patron Saint or any Saint is: *O Holy Saint (insert name), pray unto God for me a sinner.*

Having the Theotokos, all the saints, and our guardian angels praying for us is a wonderful comfort, but the Church doesn't stop there. We've already talked about how we, in our own prayers, remember and *intercede* for many people and how the Church prays for us, as well. There are people who live in the world with us and have responsibilities that might keep them from attending church every day or fully praying all the daily services – that is why we pray FOR them.

There is a group of people within the Holy Orthodox Church who devote their entire lives to praying without ceasing. These men and women live in communities called *monasteries*, so they are called *monastics*. Monastics who are men are called "monks", and women monastics are called

“nuns”. Monastics give up the worldly life, so that they can dedicate themselves entirely to God through prayer, fasting, obedience, and good works. You may be thinking that we *all* are taught to pray, fast, obey, and do good works, and you’re right. But monks and nuns work hard to perform these spiritual tasks constantly and more strongly than we can. They fast more often and more strictly than we do, they obey the will of God by humbly obeying their spiritual elders. They may teach or care for the sick or needy, and they pray for us, even when we “forget:” or are too tired or are “too busy” or just can’t find the words within ourselves.



Prayer is the first and most important job of the monastery. Monks and nuns spend several hours a day in church, praying the services of the Church. They also spend time in personal prayer. They work to master prayer without ceasing by learning to pray in their hearts at all times. Many monastics are able to pray the Jesus Prayer in this way, repeating it hundreds of times.

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

You may think that giving up worldly responsibilities and living in a religious community makes it easier for monastics to concentrate on prayer. But actually, their task may often be more difficult. They still have many of the same responsibilities and problems that we all face.

→ Can you think of another problem that would affect the life of a monastery?

Many, many great saints of the Church have come from the monastic life. When we pray, we should always remember these men and women of God who keep us in their prayers constantly,

Silent Contemplation Time: Scripture Reading on Self-Control - Wisdom of Sirach 18:29-32.

Supplemental Resources (next page)

Saints Called Upon in Particular Needs

Praying with the Saints

For Spiritual Help

St. Ephraim the Syrian
St. Alexis
St. Seraphim of Sarov

For a Good End to One's Life

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary
St. Barbara
Archangel Michael

For Brides and Happy Marriages

St. Nicholas of Myra
St. Joseph

For Eye Disorders

St. Lucy
Archangel Raphael
St. Paraskevia

For Those Who are Chronically Ill

St. Erasmus (St Elmo)

For Those with Stomach/Abdominal Illness

St. Erasmus (St. Elmo)

For Those with Tuberculosis, Respiratory Illness, Patron of Physicians

St. Panteleimon

For Those with Lethargy, Nervous Disorders (ADHD),

Bites of Venomous or Rabid Animals
St. Vitus

For Those Possessed by Evil Spirits

St. Cyriacus
St. Dennis of France

For Protection against Epilepsy, Panic Attacks and Nocturnal Terrors

St. Giles

For Protection Against Fire

St. Eustis
St. Barbara

For Those With Pain in Loins and Legs

St. Marina (Margaret)

For Those With Alzheimer's Disease

St. Catherine of Alexandria

For Travelers

St. Nicholas

For Those in Prison and Court Cases

St. George the Great Martyr
St. Simeon the God-receiver
St. Dismas the Good Thief
St. Barbara

For Help in Distress and Poverty

St. Nicholas of Myra

For Finding Lost Objects

St. Phanourios the Great Martyr
St. Menas the Great Martyr of Egypt

For Deliverance from the Scourge of Anger

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

For Mothers/Grandmothers

St. Anne, Mother of the Virgin Mary
St. Eleutherius

For Fathers/Grandfathers

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary
St. Joachim, Father of the Virgin Mary

For Finding Employment

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg

For Help in Studies

St. Basil the Great
St. John Chrysostom

For Good Marriages

Martyrs Adrian and Natalia

For Meeting Difficult Situations/People

St. David the Psalmist

For Teachers

St. Catherine of Alexandria

