

PASTORAL LETTER II

On Prayer

Dear Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters and my dear People,

Thy Kingdome Come!

Prayer is often defined as communication with God, listening to God and talking to God. It has different forms such as adoration, thanksgiving, petition, reconciliation etc. While affirming that prayer is communication, with all its different forms, a necessary dimension of prayer is life in the presence of God. It means to live with 'a sense' that God is present with us always. In other words to live in the presence of God at every moment of our life. Live as if God is watching us and observing every move that we take. It can also be called to live in "prayer-consciousness."

When Paul exhorts "pray constantly" (1Thes. 5:17) it means, not praying always with rosary in the hands or a prayer book, but be spiritual-persons led by the Spirit. Guided by the Holy Spirit, one does always what God wants. Such a person always seeks the will of God. Prayer of Jesus at Gethsemane is beautiful: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Mt. 26:39). Life of a Christian is a constant seeking of the will of God. A person who lives in the awareness of the presence of God, seeks God's will what may come, such a person can accept God's will easily and peacefully.

When one live prayerfully in God's presence he/she witness godliness in daily life. Such a person serves others gracefully, loves one another faithfully and respects each one generously. They build up community, establish harmony in the society and allow God to work in him/her gratuitously. As God's creatures and social beings we are oriented towards it. It is not charity but it is our duty. By the sacrament of baptism we are bound to this task.

Another effect of prayer as living in the presence of God is personal holiness. Mathew 5:48 we read "Be holy as your heavenly Father is holy." Every Christian is called to holiness. We are obligated to participate in God's holiness. In Hebrew context 'holiness' is primarily understood as self-dedication consecration of one's self for the task entrusted to the person concerned in the family, in the Church, and in the society. In other words, it is acting responsibly out of conviction and dedication. Everyone has some responsibilities and each one should do it for the common good. However, one cannot dismember the importance of prayer life, connected to spiritual exercises. They are part and parcel of our spiritual life. It will be wrong if one equates spiritual life with spiritual exercises. They are means by which one builds up one's spirituality. Spiritual exercises for the sake of it do not produce much spiritual fruits in any person. On the other hand, it can produce counter effect - a spiritual pride.

St. John of the cross explains in the Spiritual Canticle, the three effects in a person living in the presence of God a genuine prayerful person. God is present by essence - created in God's image and likeness, the divine essence is present in every person. Secondly God is present in a person by divine grace one receives it when a person is favored by God. One loses it when one commits mortal sin. The third way by which God is made present in a person is 'presence by affection'. It is acquired by loving relationship and right human relations. God grant this to any devout person. Let us make great efforts to be men and women of prayer in the right sense. God bless you all.



Your Shepherd in the Lord

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ephrem Nariculam".

† Ephrem Nariculam
Bishop, Eparchy of Chanda