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# PI MONAKHOS THE MONK

## ΠΙΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ

A monthly newsletter with monastic issues for today's youth

Vol: 4 Issue: 2

Amsher 1725 / February 2010

### Prayer & Psalmody

By: Abba Evagrius



- Pray as is fitting and without trouble, practise psalmody with understanding (Ps. 46: 8) and harmony, and you will be like a young eagle soaring in the heights.
- Psalmody puts the passions to sleep and works to calm the incontinence of the body; prayer prepares the mind to exercise the activity that is proper to it.
- Prayer is an activity befitting the dignity of the mind, or, indeed, the superior and pure activity and use of the mind.
- Psalmody belongs to multiform wisdom (Eph. 3:10); prayer is the prelude to immaterial and non-multiform knowledge.
- Knowledge is excellent, for it cooperates with prayer to awaken the intellectual power of the mind to contemplation of divine knowledge.
- If you have not yet received the charisma of prayer or psalmody, wait for it and you will receive it.
- Scripture says, 'He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart' (Luke 18: 1). So in the mean time do not lose heart nor be disheartened that you have not received, for you will receive later. Then he continued later in the parable: 'Though I have no fear of God and no regard for people, yet because this woman keeps troubling me, I will grant her justice' (Luke 18: 4-5). Therefore, in this way too will God speedily grant justice to those who cry to him day and night (Luke 18: 8). Be of good courage then as you persevere diligently in holy prayer.
- To pray without distraction is a considerable achievement, but greater still is the ability to practise psalmody also without distraction.
- The prayer of the irascible person is an abominable incense offering (Isa. 1:13); the psalmody of an angry person is an irritating noise.

(From: Sinkewicz, Robert E. *Evagrius Of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*)



## Fr Pavlos Abbot of St Athanasius Monastery



Fr Pavlos Bishop Antony

After the request of H.G. Bishop Antony and with the blessing of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Fr Pavlos el-Anba Bishoy has been posted to be the abbot of St Athanasius monastery in Scarborough, N.E. of England, under the jurisdiction of Bishop Antony bishop of Scotland, Ireland, and N.E. of England.

Fr Pavlos has spent most of his monastic life constructing new monasteries. For over two years he was helping in the construction of St Anthony's Monastery in California. In August of 1995 he was chosen by H.H.

Pope Shenouda III to be the abbot of St Shenouda monastery, Putty, Australia, where he served for 12 years. During this period he directed the construction of the monastery in terms of buildings and monastic life.

From the depth of our hearts H.G. Bishop Anba Daniel and the fathers of the monastery would like to congratulate Bishop Antony and St Athanasius monastery for their new abbot. we also would like to congratulate Fr Pavlos for his new post.

## Fr Wissa Celebrates his 10th Anniversary in the priesthood

On the 29th of January 2010 Fr Wissa St Shenouda has celebrated his 10th year in the priesthood. Congratulations to Father Wissa and may God bless your priesthood for many years to come.



## A neighboring Family receiving the Grace of Baptism



On the 12th of January Bishop Daniel had Baptised a neighboring family to the monastery into the Coptic Orthodox Church. The family has been regularly coming to the monastery and participating in church services. They have also been attending regular catechumen classes with Bishop Daniel for over a year. Congratulations to the new members of the church.



## Tasbeha - Heaven on Earth

By: One of the Youth



The tasbeha, or the midnight praise, is an important component of the life of the church and all of her members. For many generations, it has been prayed daily by thousands of monks in monasteries all over the world and the question that we thus need to ask is "Why?" What is the point of praising in this manner *every day*? What do the monks benefit from praising through tasbeha? Can the rest of the congregation reap these benefits?

The answer to many of these questions is found in an unlikely place - Isaiah 6, where Isaiah describes the vision of heaven the Lord revealed to him in calling him to be a prophet. Isaiah describes a beautiful image of the angels praising God; "each one [seraphim] had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **And one cried to another and said:** " Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!"

And it is this very formula that the church emulates – with one group crying out to the other in praise. The fact that tasbeha is a journey to heaven will become clearer as we discuss the various components of the praise...

**Arise O Children of Light:** We start our journey with a pleading to God – that we, the children of light, arise in order to praise the Lord of hosts. We beg the Lord that he awakes us from our spiritual slumber. The verses in this praise are all concluded with "Glory be to You O Lover of Mankind" which sets the scene for the rest of the tasbeha – we are here purely to praise the Lord.

**The First Hoos (or Canticle):** The word canticle means "praise" and the words of the four canticles are taken directly from the Bible. The first canticle is taken from Exodus 15 (word for word) and is the praise of Moses and the Israelites after the Lord parted the Red Sea so that they could escape from the Egyptians. This is followed by the "Lobsh" (explanation) of the first hoos, which is the beautiful tune "Khen O Shoat." During these praises, we can contemplate on how there was a Red Sea of sin separating us from the Lord and through His great love and mercy, this sea has been split and now we are in His presence with the heavenly hosts in praise.



**The Second Hoos:** The second hoos is from Psalm 135 and is also followed by the "Lobsh" which starts with "Maren oanh evol; Let us give thanks to Christ our God..." Unsurprisingly, the contemplation on this hoos comes from the explanation; "let us give thanks." In the first hoos, the Lord has parted the Red Sea of sin, of preoccupation with this world, of whatever separates us from His presence and now we thank Him!



**The Third Hoos:** The Third Hoos is the praise of the three saintly youth after the Lord delivered them from the furnace. It also is taken word for word from the book of Daniel; however it is found in the extra chapters that constitute a part of the deuterocanonical books. The Hoos is followed by the famous “Aripsalin – O Sing unto Him who was crucified.” The lesson we are taught in this Hoos comes from the somewhat strange verses in the middle – “Bless the Lord O sun and moon,” “Bless the Lord all the birds of the air.” The church teaches us that if all of humanity spent all of its days praising God, it would be insufficient! It is for this reason that we exhort the angels, the stars, the mountains and so on to praise the Lord – and it is also for this reason that the chorus of the hoos is “praise him and exceedingly exalt him.” Do I dare fall into the sin of being unthankful if the church is telling me that everyone and everything should praise Him above all forever?

The third hoos is then followed by the **commemoration of the saints**. We are slowly approaching the climax of tasbeha, which is addressing the Lord directly as He sits on His throne in heaven. As we approach him however, and are present in heaven, we see the saints all around us and ask for their intercessions.

This is then followed by the **Doxologies**, which are a series of praises for St. Mary, the Heavenly hosts, as well as many of the saints. This is followed by the fourth hoos, which is psalms 148-150, which presents another opportunity to contemplate on the greatness of the Lord and the fact that He is worthy to be praised. It comes as no surprise that many of the hooses are centred on praise considering hoos is defined as praise!

This is followed by the **Psali** for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are very close to our final destination, but before we look at the throne of God and address Him directly, we look to the right hand of the throne towards St Mary and ask for her intercessions.

**The Psali for the Lord:** This is the moment we have been waiting for. It starts off with “I sought after you from the depth of my heart,” and the chorus of “my Lord Jesus, help me.” If one keeps this final destination in mind at the beginning of the journey of praise, there will be two consequences. The journey will be easier, and the destination sweeter on arrival. It is at this point where we can place all our cares at the feet of Christ, or our problems pale into insignificance in His glory or our sins are illuminated, drawing us to repentance.

This is followed by the **Theotokia of the Day**, which is an extensive praise for St Mary, and then the Conclusion of the Theotokia (Your mercies O my God are countless...) and then the Concluding Litany “Kerie Elesion (x3) O God have mercy on us etc.)

It is thus clear that the ancient treasure of tasbeha allows us to participate in the heavenly duty of praising the Lord. The benefits of doing this everyday are many – and the depth of the praise is such that we can choose to contemplate on a different aspect every single time, and yet never reach the depths of the experience of standing in the presence of God with the congregation of the saints surrounding...



Groups visited the Monastery during the month of January



Left: A Group of Ethiopian Orthodox youth from QLD during their visit to the monastery

Right: A Sunday school group from St Abraam Church spending the day in the monastery



Above: A group of youth from The Apostles Church during their visit to the monastery



## Praise is the work of Angels

By: Bishop Metaos

Praise is the work of angels who are always standing before the Throne of Grace praising God without tire or boredom, because it is their utmost pleasure, fullness and joy to praise their Creator. Praise in the church is the highest level of prayers and talking to God. It is actual participation with the Heavenly hosts in praising God the Creator. St. Gregory the Theologian says in his wonderful Liturgy: "Who gave those on earth the praise of the Seraphim, accept our voices with the unseen, count us with the heavenly hosts..."

Praise is the precious heritage that the fathers kept in our Holy Church, it satisfies our prayers in our soliloquy to God, it consists of praise, glorification, thanks, requests...etc. The believer who learns the Praise, its awesome tunes and different ways, becomes a pillar in the church, and as one of the saints who are the water which waters the tree, (i.e. the church) and makes it flourish, blossom and gives fruits.



we talked briefly about the Doxologies, which are praises of the Saints, and they narrate the life of the saint in a simple tune. After, comes the Fourth Hoos, which is the three last Psalms. considered a talented servant carrying one of the dearest mysteries of the church. In addition, there are lots of doctrines, rites, and spiritual contemplations in the Praise.

In this article, I wanted to highlight the Rite of the Praise and its procedures, its contents concerning the Hooses, Psalis, Theotokayas and how they include Orthodox fatherly teachings, theological expressions, beliefs, doctrines and rites. I included some detailed explanations and meditations for the Midnight Praise, The First Hoos, which is the Praise of Victory after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, is also a detailed interpreting for the Second Hoos, which is Psalm 135, full of thanksgiving to the Gracious Lord.

Then the Third Hoos, which is the Praise of The Three Young Saints in the furnace. In the Praise for the Saints, I mentioned the story of their lives briefly in order to know a bit about everyone of them, because we benefit a lot from their lives and faith. The blood of the martyrs is considered the seeds sown for the church, also the struggle, devoutness, sweat and tears

**Prayers and Praises and the Spirit of Community:** Prayers and Praises which are carried inside the church are actually a means of community, activated by the Holy Spirit, making all the members of the church one body. This is a very old tradition in our church. We read about the early fathers in the 3rd and 4th century who used to live in solitude, and used to come to church every Saturday and Sunday to spend the



night in praises and prayers, ending with the Holy Liturgy.

If solitude lasts for a long time, it becomes dangerous. Attending praises and prayers with the rest of the monks would distract the soul from any egoism or unhealthy solitude.

The church is not only satisfied by the presence of the believers in praises and prayers, but it also insists on the presence of the saints who departed and the holy angels. That is why the church specialised some parts in praises for them, with glorification and pleadings in every occasion.

The pictures of the saints decorating the Icon holder and facing the believers, assure their presence and community with us in the church.

*"I will praise You with my whole heart; Before the gods I will sing praises to You." (Ps. 138:1)*

*"Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!" (Ps. 150:1)*

*"Kings' daughters are among Your honorable women; At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir." (Ps. 45:9)*

*"I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You." (Ps. 22:22)*

**Praise is a Community with the Heavenly Chorus:** Participating in praises at the church, or even listening, is considered a community with the chorus of those who are living and those who have departed. Thus, in the Fourth Hours we pray *"Praise God in all His Saints,"* because every service offered by a person in the church is "in the saints." We are praising according to what those saints handed to us concerning their words, faith, tradition....etc.

**He Who Gave Those on Earth The Praise of The Seraphim:** The Seraphim are the highest rank of angels. Seraphim means "the inflamed," because they are inflamed with God's love and warmth in His worship, praise and service. Isaiah the Prophet mentioned this rank in his vision in Chapter Six. He heard them singing their everlasting hymn *"And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!'" (Is. 6:3).*

In the wonderful Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian he says: *"Who gave those on earth the praise of the Seraphim, accept our voices with the unseen, count us with the heavenly hosts..."*

Here on earth, we use the same praise as that in the heavens (Holy, Holy, Holy...), and this is originally the Seraphim's praise which Isaiah the Prophet heard them singing, while surrounding the Awesome Divine Throne...



## Question & Answer

### How should we praise in the Church?

Besides the great awe of this inheritance, yet how much we distort it whenever the worship is changed to just a ritual and this appears a lot in:

- The competition of voices in the church, so that some people try to reply and sing the hymn before others in church. They cannot even bear staying in church unless their voices are apparent to the people. The truth is that the hymns are a delight and a personal pleasure as a means for worship and the spiritual highness resembling the angels.
- The loud voices in the praises are not from the character of the angels. But it is a means by which the enemy misleads us so that by it we lose the tranquility of the hymn and its magnificence.
- Chanting and praising is a prayer, then how do we stand for prayer? Possibly we stand for prayer with submission, but at the moment of chanting the submission escapes. Indeed, worship uses the senses from the raising of hands and heart and thoughts and tunes that express the depth of the soul more than it expresses the words.
- And above all of this, we ought not forget that "My house shall be called a house of prayer." We should say again, "Arise, O you sons of light to praise the Lord of powers..." We ought to say, "Let us praise with the angels..." We should say, "My heart and my tongue praise the Trinity." Let us praise the praises of the four incorporeal beasts, "Holy, holy, holy," and with the twenty-four priests cast our crowns before the throne and chant the new hymn, "For He redeemed us out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation," and also say with them, "We thank You, O Lord God Almighty ...Amen. Alleluia."

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### Liturgies during Lent

During the fast of the Great Lent the Monastery will only hold Liturgies on

- Fridays 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm
- Sundays 9:00 am - 12:00pm

May the blessings of these holy days be with us all amen.