

Homily 33
Saint Macarius the Great

It is necessary to pray to God unceasingly and with attention.

1. We ought to pray, not according to any bodily habit nor with a habit of loud noise nor out of a custom of silence or on bended knees. But we ought soberly to have an attentive mind, waiting expectantly on God until he comes and visits the soul by means of all of its openings and its paths and senses. And so we should be silent when we ought, and to pray with a cry, just as long as the mind is concentrated on God. For as when the body does any task, it is completely occupied with the work and all its members help one another, so also the soul should be totally concentrated on asking and on a loving movement toward the Lord, not wandering and dispersed by its thoughts but with concentration waiting expectantly for Christ.

2. And thus he will enlighten, teaching one how to ask, giving pure prayer that is spiritual and worthy of God and bestowing the gift of worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). Take the example of a businessman. He is not content with only one way of making a profit, but he ambitiously stretches out in all directions to increase and multiply his profits. He tries one technique after the other and then runs still to something else, cautious only that he not incur a loss. So also let us develop in our souls versatility and expertise in order to obtain the genuine and great gain, namely, God, who teaches us how truly to pray. In this way the Lord finds rest in the well-intended soul, making it a throne of glory, and he sits on it and takes his rest. In a similar way with the Prophet Ezekiel we heard about the spiritual animals tied to the chariot of the Lord (Ez 1). He presents them to us as eyes all over. In a similar way also is the soul that carries God, or rather that is carried by God-it becomes all eye.

3. And just as a house that has its master at home shows forth an abundance of orderliness, and beauty and harmony, so too is the person who has his Lord abiding with him. He is full of every beauty and uprightness. He has the Lord with his spiritual treasures inhabiting within and as his charioteer. But woe to the house whose master is absent, whose lord is not there. It is desolate, run down, full of dirt and disorder. There, as the Prophet says, "sirens and demons" dwell (Is 34:13 - 14). For in the deserted house cats and dogs and all sorts of dirt take over. Woe to the person that does not get up after he has seriously fallen and that has within himself those who convince him and compel him to live as an enemy to his very own Spouse. They eagerly seek to corrupt his thoughts away from Christ.

4. But when the Lord sees that to the best of his power a person recollects himself, always seeking the Lord night and day as he cries out to him, just as he commanded "to pray incessantly in everything" (I Thes 5:17), he will "avenge" him, as he

promised (Lk 18:7), cleansing him from the evil within himself. And he will "present him unto himself," a bride "without blemish and without spot" (Eph 5:27).

If, then, you believe these things to be true, as indeed they are, look to yourself to see whether your soul has found its guiding light and the genuine meat and drink which is the Lord. If you have not, seek night and day in order to receive. When you see the sun, seek the true sun. For you are blind. When you gaze on a light, look into your soul to see whether you have found the true and good light. For all the visible things of the senses are but a shadow of the true realities of the soul. For there is another man within, beyond the sensible one. And there are other eyes within, which Satan has blinded, and ears which he has rendered deaf.

And Jesus has come to make this inner man healthy. To whom be glory and power with the Father and Holy Spirit forever. Amen.