

How Do We Pray?

From anonymous fathers of the desert

The brothers said, "What kind of prayer is that which is not acceptable before God?" The old man said, "The prayer for the destruction of enemies. When we ask that evil things may come upon those who do harm to us, and for bodily health, and abundance of possessions, and fertility in respect of children, these requests are not acceptable before God. If God beareth with us, who are sinners and who offend Him, how much more is it right that we should bear each with the other? It is, then, not meet that we should ask for the things which concern the body, for the wisdom of God provideth everything necessary.

The brothers said, "In what way ought we to pray before God?" The old man said, "For the repentance of sinners, the finding of the lost, the drawing near of those who are far off, friendliness toward those who do us harm, love towards those who persecute us, and sorrowful care for those who provoke God to wrath. And if a man doeth these things truly and with a penitent mind, the sinners will often gain life, and the living soul will be redeemed.

Now the prayer which our lord delivered to us as to the needs of the body, is one which applieth to the whole community, and it was not uttered for the sake of those who are strangers to the world, and with whom the pleasures of the body are held in contempt. He in whose life the kingdom of God and His righteousness are found lacks nothing, even when he asks not." END

from "The Paradise of the Holy Fathers," vol. II, translated by E. A. Wallis Budge, (Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1984), p. 332-333.