



THE MOST REVEREND
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ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP – FOUNDER

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Bishop JOHN, Reverend Fathers, Sisters in Christ,

The Church Fathers have written that we should remember three things every day: the Lord Jesus Christ, our Baptism and the remembrance of the day of our death.

Realizing none of us knows the day or hour of our death, we must still be prepared when the Lord comes. Whether at His Second Coming or when we breathe our last breath here and go to be with Him.

Preparation is needed for our last days and, as mentioned, most of us do not know how long we will be on this earth. Any day could be our last. Due to illness, some are made aware of the probable time left.

We have been given a way to follow by the Theotokos.

The following is taken from the book, “The Life of the Virgin Mary, The Theotokos” published by Holy Apostles Convent and Dormition Skete.

The Theotokos often went from there (St. John’s house) to the Mount of Olives, to the very place of the ascension into the heavens of her Son and Lord. There, in solitude, she would offer up her fervent prayers.

One day, as she was praying, the Archangel Gabriel gave into her hand a date palm branch from Paradise, which shone with the light of heavenly grace.. It signified that bodily death would not have power over her, just as spiritual death had not had dominion over her.

She knelt and offered her petitions and thanksgiving to her Creator.

The Theotokos then prepared for her repose. She told the matter to the beloved disciple, John, who had taken her into his own home as his mother. She also showed him the flowering branch from Paradise and told him to carry it before her bier.

The Virgin then disclosed her pending repose to the rest of the household and virgins, Mary Magdalene, Sepphora, Abigail and Jael. She then ordered that her bed and room be decorated, and that incense and as many lamps as possible to be lit in it. She then changed her clothes. Simply put, all necessary preparations for her burial were made.

As we prepare: Let us pray every day.

1. The Hours of Prayer –
 - a. First Hour (7:00am) – the coming of the light in the dawn of a new day
 - b. Third Hour (9:00am) – when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost
 - c. Sixth Hour (12:00 noon) – the hour of our Lord’s crucifixion
 - d. Ninth Hour (3:00pm) – the hour Jesus died upon the cross

(over)

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- e. Vespers – The theme of vespers takes us through creation, sin and salvation in Christ. It includes thanksgiving for the day now coming to an end and God’s protection for the evening.
 - f. Compline – This is prayed after supper and before retiring for bed. It focuses on:
 - a) thanksgiving for the day that has passed, b) protection for the ensuing night and c) forgiveness of wrongs committed during the day.
 - g. Some brief prayers that may be used throughout the day:
 - “Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner.”
 - “My hope is the Father, My refuge is the Son, My protection is the Holy Spirit. Blessed Trinity glory to Thee.”
 - “I am loved by God the Father, I am redeemed by God the Son, I am indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. Blessed Trinity glory to Thee.”
 In addition to these, you may surely offer your personal prayers at any time.
2. Let us claim the palm branch we have been given. This is our hope of resurrection and promise of victory over death. We celebrate this with the palms each Palm Sunday, looking to Holy Pascha.
 3. Let us kneel and offer our petitions and thanksgiving to God our Creator. Here we must consider the sacrament of Confession.
 4. Let us tell those closest to us of our pending repose, if we know. In any case, tell them of our plans for that time when it comes.

The Theotokos then made a will concerning her two garments. She desired that they be given to two poor widows who faithfully served her and received their maintenance from her. With respect to her pure body, the Mother of God made her will known that it should be buried on the Mount of Olives, not far from Jerusalem, in the Garden of Gethsemane. There also were interred her parents, the righteous Joachim and Anna, and her spouse, St. Joseph. The tombs lay in the Valley of Jehosaphat between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.
 5. If we are granted to stay in our home, let us prepare our room. As did the Theotokos, we can light our lamps or candles and burn incense. Those closest to us can be with us, praying and singing. Many people are in other places and these places can be prepared as if they were at home. Sometimes, our departure comes suddenly due to accidents or certain situations. We all need to be prepared in our souls for that approaching hour, and our plans known to those closest to us.

In our lives, let us pray for God to give us wisdom as we make our preparations for that hour.

St. Isaac the Syrian once wrote:

“In your heart, be always ready for your departure. If you are wise, you will expect it at every hour Go to sleep with these thoughts every night, and reflect upon them every day. When the messenger comes, go joyfully to meet him, saying: “Come in peace, I knew you would be here and I have not neglected anything that could help me on my journey.””

From the Ninth Ode of the Paraklesis to the Theotokos:

Do thou, O Virgin Maiden, fill my heart with gladness, for thou art she who received all the fullness of joy and made to vanish away all sorrow of sinfulness.

A haven of protection, and a wall unshaken, and a rejoicing and shelter and place of retreat do thou become, O thou Virgin, for those who flee to thee.

Your sister in Christ,

Kh. Dannie Moore

NAB Religious Coordinator

Cc: : Metropolitan JOSEPH
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