



Ouzkourni Fi Malakoutika
Remember me in Your Kingdom

The sermon of Father Philipp Reczka during the Divine Liturgy for the deceased "Remember me in your Kingdom", on Wednesday, November 19th, 2014, at Our Lady of the Annunciation, West Roxbury Massachussets

Helping to find the lost sheep of Christ

Each of you knows of people who are lost from the Church. They might be family or friends. They might be people that we used to see in Church and no longer see them. Almost all of them probably have problems. People do not leave the Church because everything is wonderful. Usually they have some kind of a problem that is occupying their mind. Maybe they have money problems. Maybe someone in the family is ill. Maybe they have addictions. Maybe they have marriage problems. Most people have problems, and most people who have fallen away from Church have problems as well. Especially lack of knowledge of the faith, or a weak spiritual life will help people to fall away from the Church, for they do not have the spiritual strength to deal with their troubles.

To return to Church people need to have hearts that are open to God. If a heart is closed, even the personal appearance of the Pope will not affect the person. So first, we must pray that people's hearts will be open to God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit as explained by St. Basil the Great in his book on Baptism. We cannot underestimate how important our prayers are for people's hearts to be softened. People have to be ready to hear the message of God and only a receptive heart can hear it.

So, how do we reach out to people? First, their hearts must be open. So our prayers go before our words and other actions. Once we have prayed we can reach out. What do we say? I think that the easiest and best thing is to follow the advice of

Christ. He told the man possessed by demons from Gerasa, whom He had cured, to tell the people all that God had done for him. We all can tell others what God has done for us in our lives. These stories will tell people that God is alive and God loves us. From such a story the person could learn that God might love them and help them also.

Once we have told our story to a person we must be patient. They will have to think about it and see how God could help them. They hopefully will talk to us again about God. We must speak with them each time they need to talk with us. Eventually, they will work through their thoughts and come to the point when they return to Church.

Our Lord told us in the Gospel that there is much rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. By helping to bring one person back to God we give joy to God and will receive a reward from Him. Let us all pray and reach out to the lost sheep of Christ.