



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, January 16th, 2013, at Our Lady of the Annunciation, West Roxbury Massachussets

Why We Can Pray for the Dead

Those who think that we cannot pray for the dead believe that a person's spiritual progress stops with death. Since there can be no change in the soul then it is not possible to pray for the dead.

We believe the exact opposite. We believe that there is change in the spiritual life of a person after physical death.

First, they are judged by God. We pray that God will be merciful and forgiving to the person and overlook their sins and see rather the good that they did in life. Remember that we must also answer for the gifts that God gave us and we either developed or ignored. We also have to answer for the good that we could have done and did not do. It is not just a question of obeying the 10 Commandments. How God judges is up to Him but we ask Him for forgiveness and mercy.

Second, Sin is a spiritual illness with consequences for the soul. Just like after an operation we have to recover and maybe even have therapy to get back to normal. When I had my gall bladder out it took me 6 months regain my full energy. So too after sins are forgiven they must be removed from the soul and the effects of the sins also. So the soul undergoes a period of purification and spiritual recuperation to overcome the effects of sins. So we pray that this process will proceed rapidly so that the person may have the full joy of heaven.

Third, we all have a certain potential for spiritual growth and this potential must be fulfilled. Very few people fulfill it on earth. Maybe Blessed Pope John Paul II and Blessed Mother Theresa did so but we cannot say for sure. In a sense we have to finish growing up spiritually. St. Paul says that we go from glory to glory in Christ. This means as the soul develops and the person's relationship with God advances they go from good to better to best in heaven until their full potential is reached. We pray that the person will continue to grow closer to God.

There has been some change lately in thinking among our Protestant brethren. Most of them say that you cannot pray for the dead because there is no spiritual growth in heaven as I said above. Now, some of them are starting to say that when a baby or child dies God does not keep them as a baby or child forever but allows them to grow up in heaven to become an adult. This is great for they are admitting to the possibility of growth in heaven. Hopefully some day they will see the logical conclusion to this and admit that everyone may grow spiritually in heaven and therefore we can pray for the dead.

Finally, although there is spiritual growth and change in heaven this is not an excuse to be spiritually lazy on earth. If we love Christ and want to be close to Him we should not wait for death. We should begin now. Indeed to love Christ is the best way to insure we go to heaven. If we do not love Jesus; we may run away from Him when we see Him after death and thus end up in hell. Or if we are lazy in loving Him; after death we will see everyone else much closer to Him while we have to advance step by step from far away to get closer to Him. We then will realize that we wasted much of our time on earth on things that do not last and in the grand scheme are even silly. Let us look to Christ and what truly lasts and gives eternal happiness and joy.