

▣ Practicing Ceaseless Prayers

(H. H. Pope Shenouda)

You cannot reach at once what the saints attained in several years. Therefore, you need to follow these gradual steps:

- Decide, for yourself, on a short prayer that suits you. You may repeat it several times, in depth, expressing your personal feelings.
- Use this prayer at your leisure to keep yourself busy lest your thoughts should wander over trifles or sins. That is how you can gain a double profit: praying and also resisting evil thoughts. At the same time, you use your time in what helps you spiritually.
- Keep your mind busy with prayer while you are among people whose talk has nothing to do with your salvation. You do not benefit from it, and, at the same time, you'll be embarrassed to withdraw from them. At least, be there physically, but, as for your heart, keep it busy with God in prayer without anybody noticing.
- You may also busy yourself with these prayers during the time you spend in public transport or in waiting for it or while you are waiting for somebody. This could also save you from anxiety.
- You may repeat these short prayers while you are having your meals. It feeds your spirit while your body is receiving its food. At the same time, you'll keep table etiquette.
- If anyone talks to you during these prayers, do not ignore him by remaining silent thus getting yourself into trouble, but answer him briefly and quietly, then go back to your prayers...
- You may also repeat these prayers while you are in bed before you go to sleep. This will keep your subconscious busy with spiritual things, besides the act of praying. By doing this, your bed will be sanctified and your dreams kept pure.
- When you wake up, start also by repeating these prayers, even before washing your face. Thus your first thought becomes spiritual and the first one you talk to will be God.
- Whenever you find a chance to pray, take advantage of it. That is how you overcome the problem of "wasting time" and get used to prayer.
- All these prayers shall not prevent you from practicing the Agpeya prayers (the Book of Hours) or your personal prayers, and standing in reverence before God...