

Prayer: Basis of Our Christian Life

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



"Would that you were hot or cold!" we read in Revelation 3: 16. Zeal—ardent dedication—is a good quality for Christians to have. We are meant to be zealous and "on fire" for Christ, rather than lukewarm and half-hearted. One of the twelve apostles, Simon, is called "the Zealot" because he was so dedicated to preaching the Gospel that he traveled to Africa, and later accepted martyrdom.

Like Simon, the apostle Peter did great things. He carried on the work of Christ, who healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, by raising the paralyzed Aeneas, and then bringing back from the dead Tabitha (Dorcas in Greek), who was a model of generous service.

Prayer is the basis of our efforts to emulate Simon the Zealot, Peter, Tabitha, and many others. A resource to help our teens build their own prayer life and to be zealous for God is always welcome, and a book from several years ago is such a resource.

"Hear Me: A Prayerbook for Orthodox Teens" is compiled and edited by Annalisa Boyd. It has only 87 pages, but they offer thought-provoking and enlightening guidance. The first part of the book contains daily prayers for morning, midday and evening. They are not so lengthy as to be overwhelming, but are long enough to require concentration and effort.

The daily prayers include, along with Orthodox texts, prayers of Saint Patrick and Saint Augustine. These will remind our teens that many Western saints whose names may be familiar to them appear in the Orthodox calendar. There is also an invitation to add personal "prayers, praises and requests" and space for filling in names of people to be prayed for.

The next part of the book is called Declaration of Dependence and gives readers something to think about for each of the Ten Commandments, as a way of preparing for Confession. For example, the first Commandment that "You shall have no other gods before Me" is followed by these words: "Many of us have gods in our lives that we don't even know about: money, popularity, fashion, possessions." Then there is a series of questions to consider. One caveat: the author might have done more, in her treatment of the fourth Commandment, to define "Sabbath" in the Orthodox understanding.

The book lists seven deadly sins as "poisons" with a list of synonyms for each one. Teen readers will probably understand better what "anger" is when they see the words tantrum, impatience, blowing up and violence associated with it. As "weapons" against anger and other sins, virtues with their own synonyms are listed next. The book gives guidance in praying with Scripture, and suggests asking for the intercession of particular saints in problems that teens might face.

There are also suggestions for talking to others about Orthodoxy (gently but, we may hope, with zeal) and a final section offering brief but thoughtful and compassionate discussions of common teen issues.

