

Those Who Are Always Praying for Us

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>.

On October 5th we read from Ephesians 6: 18: "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints..."

Saint Paul is urging those who read his words to pray at all times, to persevere and stay alert in prayer, and to remember everyone—"all the saints"—in prayer.

While the words are meant for all of us, there are certain Orthodox Christians who take them as their life's work—the monastics. In men's and women's monasteries, prayer is offered constantly for members of the Church, and for the world beyond the Church. That kind of prayer is a great effort, and it is serious work.

Mother Christophora, of the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, was recently interviewed on the occasion of her 25th anniversary as abbess of the monastery. She addressed some of the questions people often ask about the life of monastics, and spoke about prayer as a central part of that life. She said that though some people may believe that nuns and monks are disconnected from the world, "we are really connected to the world through prayer. The reason that we are here and doing prayers every day is not because it makes us feel good—actually, sometimes it tires us very much—but because the world really needs prayer. People really depend on our prayers."

Her reply to the question, "Do you have a favorite meal here at the monastery?" might be surprising to many people. She said, "I would have to say the Divine Liturgy...I love food, and I am always thinking about food, so do not think I am that spiritual. But because you asked me for one meal, I would have to say it is the Liturgy, where we all come together and share in that chalice."

The abbess' words are a good reminder not to take lightly the privilege of sharing the Eucharist. In speaking about this, she said, "There are some [Liturgies on a weekday morning] when maybe we are coughing or off-key, there is nobody but the priest and the nuns, or maybe it is a rainy, cloudy day—and God comes! He lets us do this. He lets us have the Liturgy, and receive His Body and Blood. Wow. Here we are, some Wednesday morning in Ellwood City, and we just touched heaven."



"A Place Where the Quiet Rhythm of Unceasing Prayer Will Become a Fountain of Refreshment to All Who Enter Therein"

The monastery has begun a building program. A large part of the nuns' ministry is hospitality, and they receive all kinds of guests, some who visit for a few hours and others who stay for several days. They need more space to accommodate their guests and also for their own work and worship.

For all of us who would like to visit a monastery, this is good news. The nuns open their doors and their hearts to us, and even when we are not there, they are "making supplication" for us, and for every person in the world.