

Prayer of the Month • November 2014

O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon your holy will. In every hour of the day reveal your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that your will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all are sent by you. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering or embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of this coming day with all that it will bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray you yourself in me. Amen.

St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow (1782-1867)



This prayer was introduced into the Orthodox tradition by Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, where it became popular, and is often called 'Morning Prayer of Philaret of Moscow', but seems to have been written by François Fenelon, the French Quietist writer. It is a prayer for the beginning of the day, or rather, a prayer to start the day with. It has a very open beginning, preparing to greet 'the coming day'. As the author imagines the day ahead, he sees the need for help and guidance, and asks particularly to begin the day in peace. More than that, though, he realises the need for God to direct his very will. In the end he shows he is aware that his desires can be best realised by inviting God to 'pray you yourself in me'. This links in with the 'prayer of the heart' in the Orthodox tradition that was keenly supported by St Philaret.

PHILARET WAS BORN AS BASIL DROZDOV, NEAR MOSCOW IN 1782, AND ENTERED A SEMINARY WHEN HE WAS YOUNG. HE SHOWED DEEP PIETY AND SKILLED SCHOLARSHIP IN ANCIENT LANGUAGES. IN 1808 HE RECEIVED THE MONASTIC TONSURE WITH THE NAME PHILARET, AFTER SAINT PHILARET THE ALMSGIVER. AFTER BEING ORDAINED TO THE DIACONATE, HE TAUGHT GREEK, HEBREW, AND RHETORIC AT THE ST PETERSBURG THEOLOGICAL ACADEMY, WHERE HE PERSUADED THE AUTHORITIES TO HAVE COURSES TAUGHT IN RUSSIAN RATHER THAN IN LATIN. HIS WRITTEN AND SPOKEN EXPOSITIONS WERE HIGHLY REGARDED. METROPOLITAN PLATON OF MOSCOW SAID OF HIM: 'I GIVE SERMONS LIKE A MAN, BUT HE SPEAKS LIKE AN ANGEL'. HE WAS CONSECRATED BISHOP AT THE AGE OF 37, IN 1817, AND THEN A FEW YEARS LATER BECAME METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW, IN WHICH POST HE WAS TO REMAIN FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE. HE GAINED GREATER INDEPENDENCE FOR THE CHURCH FROM THE STATE, AND SUPPORTED THE SPIRITUAL REVIVAL SPARKED BY SAINT PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY AND HIS MONASTIC FOLLOWERS, AND THE PRACTICE OF UNCEASING PRAYER WHICH THIS REVIVAL PROMPTED. THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE HE WAS A TIRELESS WORKER – NO ONE KNEW WHEN HE SLEPT. HE WORKED TO RAISE THE STANDARDS OF THE CLERGY AND THEIR TRAINING, UNDERTOOK CHARITABLE WORKS, AND SUPPORTED A FIFTY-YEAR TRANSLATION PROJECT FOR THE BIBLE, TRANSLATING SOME OF THE BOOKS HIMSELF. HE HIMSELF WROTE A CATECHISM WHICH HAS REMAINED A STANDARD TEXT OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH EVER SINCE ITS INITIAL PUBLICATION IN 1823. HE DIED ON 19 NOVEMBER 1867 AT THE AGE OF 85.

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