

OCTOBER – from the Eparchial Office of Evangelization and Religious Education

The Kingdom of God is among us - now, today

“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”-*Matthew 6:33*

#1 Lesson in Evangelization - Prayer

How can you put into practice the New Evangelization? How can you fulfill your most important calling as a Byzantine Catholic - to be a witness to the Risen Christ?

For the next few months, the Eparchial Office of Evangelization and Religious Education will assist you in finding answers to these questions. Since you must possess the love of Christ before you can share it, these Lessons in Evangelization are designed to help you renew your Catholic faith, and then go out to all and share the Good News. This first lesson focuses on the most important behavior of the authentic Christian.

Prayer is communicating personally with your all-powerful Creator. Such communication is impossible in other religions because they view the Divine as Beyond, Implacable, or Disinterested, and Impersonal. Yet, Christianity is utterly different from all other religions - and that is the Good News that you, as a Christian, are called to share with others.

In Christ, God did not keep Himself at a distance, but made Himself known, accessible to you personally by being born into a family, growing up, playing, working, and dying, and ultimately resurrecting – and then founding a Church wherein the people of all times and places can be baptized, forgiven, healed, nurtured and instructed, and finally welcomed into the heavenly kingdom.

But you derive no benefit from this extraordinary love of the Creator unless you open your heart to Him in prayer - daily. God invites, but He does not force.

The Byzantine Catholic Church contains a treasure trove of resplendent prayers: from the Eucharistic celebration of the Divine Liturgy, to Matins (morning prayers), Vespers (evening prayers), Akathists, Molebens, and the Jesus Prayer and the hours of the Divine Praises. It also has the Bible, the teachings of the church, the fathers and the saints.

With this wealth at your disposal, there is no excuse for having a poor prayer life – that is, there is no excuse for failing to communicate personally and directly with your Creator.

But there are plenty of excuses. Job, driving the kids, yard work, social media, texting, ill health, catching up on the news. Like Martha in Luke’s Gospel, people are “worried and anxious about many things.”

Martha was “burdened with much serving” when she asked Jesus to admonish her sister to help her with the household tasks. Yet the Lord did not respond by releasing Mary from her prayer. Just the opposite, He said, “Only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part and she will not be deprived of it.” (*Luke 10:40-42*)

Jesus was exceedingly busy. He left his work as a carpenter in Nazareth to travel throughout Judea and Samaria, preaching and healing. He had “nowhere to lay His head,” (*Matthew 8:20*) and was inundated by the crowds. Yet, He frequently separated Himself from His companions and went to lonely places to pray.

Through His words and actions, Jesus taught that prayer is essential. Prayer is at the heart of the New Evangelization; it is the first and most important task of the Christian.

Until the next Lesson, I encourage you to make prayer a priority. If private prayer is not incorporated as a daily habit in your life, resolve to begin at once. A good practice is to start small the first week, with 10 minutes a day. It takes about two months to establish a habit. Add five or ten more minutes each week until you commune with your Redeemer for at least one half hour per day. Let liturgical and private prayer permeate your life. From this fountain, you will go forth refreshed and able to give a cup of Living Water to the thirsty, who will otherwise perish in the parched land of godlessness.