

Father John Catoir

Thanksgiving Meditation



In the book **The Way of a Pilgrim** (Seabury Press, New York), there is "A Confession Which Leads The Inward Man To Humility." I'd like to share it with you. This book by an unknown Russian author was written about a hundred years ago, and it encourages the reader to pray "without ceasing." The text is as follows:

"TURNING MY eyes carefully upon myself, and watching the course of my inward state, I have verified by experience that I do not love God — for if I did, I should be continually thinking about Him with heartfelt joy. Every thought about Him would give me gladness and delight. On the contrary, I much more often think about earthly things and thinking about God is labor and dryness. Basil the Great says: "The proof that a man does not love God and His Christ lies in the fact that he does not keep His commandments."

"I do not love my neighbor either. For not only am I unable to make up my mind to lay down my life for his sake, but I do not even sacrifice my happiness, well-being and peace for the good of my neighbor. His well-being, honor and happiness do not delight me as my own.

"I have no religious belief, neither in immortality, nor in the Gospel. If I were firmly persuaded and believed without doubt that beyond the grave lies eternal life and recompense for the deeds of this life, I should be continually thinking of this. But the secret thought nestles in me — who knows what happens after death? If I say I do believe in immortality, then my heart is far removed from a firm conviction about it. Were the Holy Gospel taken to my heart in faith, I should be continually occupied with it, I should

study it, find delight in it and with deep devotion fix my attention on it. Wisdom, mercy, love are hidden in it, it would lead me to happiness, I should find gladness in the study of the Law of God day and night.

"I am full of pride and sensual self-love. Seeing something good in myself, I want to bring it into view, or pride myself upon it. Although I display outward humility, yet I ascribe it all to my own strength and regard myself as superior to others, or at least no worse than others. If I notice a fault in myself, I try to excuse it, I cover it up by saying, 'I am made like that, or I am not to blame.' I get angry with those who do not treat me with respect.

"I am horrified at my unworthiness, my surprise at the sins hidden within me. Often I do not believe, because I am not convinced, and I do not love, because I do not believe. The cause of this condition is slothfulness in thinking about spiritual things, a sloth which stifles even the feeling of a need for such thought. To overcome this weakness, I must strive after enlightenment of the spirit by every means in my power, attaining it by the diligent study of the Word of God."

THE ABOVE may be a bit too absolute for the modern diet, but it does say something to us about ourselves. "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." This is the Jesus Prayer which the book promoted throughout. It can be recited frequently, not only as a prayer of petition, but as a prayer of thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is a time for counting our blessings. One of the great blessings of our life is God's patient mercy with us. How fortunate we are to know the Goodness of God.