

THE PRAYER* OF THANKSGIVING

"Glory to God for all things!"

The Very Reverend Father Gregory Petroff (died 1942)

STANZA* 1

Incorruptible King of all ages, holding in your hand every path of human life through the power of Your saving Providence. We thank you for all the good things You do, those we know and those we don't know, for earthly life and for the heavenly joy of Your Kingdom to come. Hold us in Your mercy now and ever we who sing: Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

Response*

Into the world I was born as a weak, helpless child, but Your Angel spread wings of light over me, guarding my crib. Ever since then Your love lights all my paths, wonderfully guiding me towards the light of eternity. Gloriously, the generous gifts of Your Providence have been manifest from the very first day. I am thankful to You and with all who have come to know You, call out:

Glory to You, Who called me to life,
Glory to You, Who have shown me the beauty of the universe,
Glory to You, Who have opened before me the sky and the earth as an eternal book of wisdom,
Glory to the eternity of You, in the midst of the world of time,
Glory to You, for Your hidden and evident goodness,
Glory to You, for every sigh of my sadness,
Glory to You, for every step of my life, for every moment of joy,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 2

Lord, how good it is to be Your guest; the delicately scented wind, the mountains stretching to the sky, the waters reflecting like infinite mirrors, the golden rays of sun, the airiness of clouds. All nature secretly whispers, full of tenderness, and even the birds and beasts bear the mark of Your Love. Blessed is mother earth with her transient beauty, longing for the homeland which is eternal and where an imperishable beauty rings out: Alleluia.

Response

You brought me into this life as into an enchanting paradise. The sky is a deep blue vessel of azure out of which rings the sound of birds; there is the rustling sound of the forest and the sweet sounding music of the waters; the fragrant and sweet fruit and honey which we eat. It is good to be with You on earth, joyous to be Your guest:

Glory to You, for the festival of life,
Glory to You, for the fragrant lilies of the valley and the roses,
Glory to You, for the delectable variety of berries and fruits,
Glory to You, for the morning dew, shining like diamonds,
Glory to You, for the smile of awakening enlightenment,
Glory to You, for all that is heavenly, foreshadowing eternal life,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 3

Every flower is fragrant through the power of the Holy Spirit, in a delicate flow of aroma and tenderness of color; the beauty of the Great contained in what is small. Praise and honor to God Who gives life, Who spreads forth the meadows like a flowering carpet, Who crowns the fields with golden ears of wheat and azure basilisks, and the soul with the joy of contemplation. Let us rejoice and sing to Him: Alleluia.

Response

How beautiful You are in the triumphant festival of spring, when all creatures come to life again and in a thousand ways joyfully call out to You: You are the source of life; You are the victor over death.

To the song of the nightingale, the valleys and forests stand in snow white bridal array by the light of the season. All the earth is Your bride, waiting for the immortal bridegroom. If You clothe even the grass in such a splendid way, how will You transfigure us in the future age of resurrection, how will our bodies be made light and our souls be made luminous:

Glory to You, Who brought out of the earth's darkness diversity of color, taste, and fragrance,

Glory to You, for the warmth and caress of all nature,

Glory to You, for surrounding us with thousands of Your creatures,

Glory to You, for the depth of Your wisdom reflected in the whole world,

Glory to You, I kiss reverently the footprint of Your invisible tread,

Glory to You, Who kindled before us the bright light of eternal life,

Glory to You, for the hope of immortal, ideal, incorruptible beauty,

Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 4

How you bring sweetness to those who think of You, how life-giving is Your Word, it is softer than oil, it is sweeter than honey to talk with You. Praying to You brings Life into us and gives us wings. What trembling then fills the heart. What dignity and greatness and wisdom there are in nature and all of life. Where You are not there is emptiness. Where You are there is richness of soul, a torrent of life: Alleluia!

Response

When sunset descends over the earth and the peace of eternal sleep and the stillness of the fading day come to reign, I see Your abode in the guise of glistening palaces and clouds hovering in the evening light. Fiery red, gold and azure speak prophetically of the unutterable beauty of Your world and cry out triumphantly: "Let us go to the Father!"

Glory to You, in the stillness of the evening,

Glory to You, Who have bestowed great peace to the world,

Glory to You, for the last rays of sunlight,

Glory to You, for rest and the gift of sleep,

Glory to You, for Your presence in darkness, when the world is so remote,

Glory to You, for prayer from the depth of a heart touched by You,

Glory to You, for the promise of awakening to the joy of the eternal, unending day,

Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 5

The storms of life are not frightening to one in whose heart shines the light of Your Fire. All around the weather is bad; there is darkness, horror, and the howling wind. But in the soul of such a one there is peace and light. Christ is there! And the heart sings: Alleluia!

Response

I see Your heavens glittering with stars. O how rich You are, how much light You have! Eternity looks at me through the rays of distant worlds; I am so small and inconsequential, but the Lord is with me, His loving hand is everywhere protecting me:

Glory to You, for Your constant care of me,
Glory to You, for providential encounters with people,
Glory to You, for the love of relatives, the devotion of friends,
Glory to You, for the gentleness of animals who serve me,
Glory to You, for the luminous moments of my life,
Glory to You, for the bright joys of my heart,
Glory to You, for the happiness of living, of moving and contemplating,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 6

How great and near You are in the power of thunderstorms, how visible is Your mighty hand in the blinding curves of lightning, amazing in Your greatness. The voice of the Lord is over the fields and in the sound of the forests; the voice of the Lord is in the birth of the thunder and rain; the voice of the Lord is over many waters. Praise be to You in the thundering of volcanoes spitting fire. You shake the earth about like a garment. You lift up the waves of the sea into the sky. Praise be to You Who humble human pride, drawing out the repentant cry: Alleluia!

Response

When the palaces of earth are suddenly lit up by lightning bursting forth, how paltry seem our ordinary lights afterward. In just such a way You suddenly light up my soul during the times of deepest joy in my life. And after the brilliance of Your light, like lightning, how colorless, dark and unreal these moments seem. And my soul rushes in pursuit of You:

Glory to You, beyond the limit of the highest human dream!
Glory to You, for our tireless thirst for You,
Glory to You, Who have inspired in us dissatisfaction with earthly things,
Glory to You, Who have enveloped us in the delicate rays of Your light,
Glory to You, Who have broken the power of the spirits of darkness, and Who have doomed to annihilation every kind of evil,
Glory to You, for Your revelations, and for the happiness of feeling Your presence and living with You,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 7

One hears Your call in a wonderful composition of sounds. You open for us the environment of our future paradise in melodious singing and harmonious tones, in the height of musical color, in the brilliance of artistic creativity. All that is truly beautiful carries the soul to You in a mighty call, and forces it to sing rapturously: Alleluia!

Response

Through the descent of the Holy Spirit You enlighten the thought of artists, poets and scientific geniuses. Through the power of the inmost mind, they are prophetically able to perceive Your laws, opening for us the abyss of Your creative wisdom. Their works involuntarily speak of You; of how great You are in Your creations, of how great You are in man:

Glory to You, Who have manifested the unfathomable force of the laws of the universe,
Glory to You, all of nature is full of the laws of Your being,
Glory to You, for all that has been revealed to us through Your goodness,
Glory to You, for all You have kept hidden in Your wisdom,
Glory to You, for the genius of the human mind,
Glory to You, for the life-giving strength of work,
Glory to You, for the fiery tongues of inspiration,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 8

How near You are in the days of illness; You Yourself visit the sick. You Yourself bend down to the bed of the sufferer and the heart speaks to You. In times of hardship and suffering, You illumine the soul with peace; You send unexpected help. You are consoling, searching and saving love, and to You we sing the song: Alleluia!

Response

When as a child I consciously called to You for the first time, You answered my prayer and my soul knew a wonderful peace. Then I understood that You are goodness; blessed are those who seek You. I began to call to You again and again, and call to You even now:

Glory to You, Who grant my wishes when they are good,
Glory to You, Who watch over me day and night,
Glory to You, curing hardships and losses with the healing course of time,
Glory to You, for Whom there is no such thing as a hopeless loss; You give eternal life to all,
Glory to You, Who have made immortal all that is good and lofty, Who have promised our desired reunion with those who have died,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 9

Why does all nature smile mysteriously on feast days? Why is the heart filled at these times with a wonderful lightness that is incomparable to anything on earth; how is it that the very air at the altar and in the Church become light bearing? This is the breath of Your grace, the glow of the light of Tabor; the sky and the earth are singing at these times in praise: Alleluia!

Response

When You have inspired me to serve those around me and illumined my heart with humility, one of Your innumerable rays falls on my heart making it light bearing, as iron in fire; and I saw Your mysterious, imperceptible Face:

Glory to You, Who have transfigured our life with the good things that we do,
Glory to You, Who have imprinted an unutterable sweetness on every precept of Yours,
Glory to You, Who clearly abide where there is kindness and generosity of heart,
Glory to You, Who send failures and sorrows to us so that we might be sensitive to the sufferings of others,
Glory to You, Who have placed a great reward on the value of goodness in itself,
Glory to You, Who accept our moments of soaring,
Glory to You, Who have raised love higher than anything on earth or in heaven,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 10

That which is broken cannot be restored, but You can set aright those whose conscience has become decayed; You restore the soul to its former beauty in those who have lost it beyond all hope. With You there is nothing that cannot be put aright. You are all love. You are the Creator and the Restorer. To You we sing praise: Alleluia!

Response

My God, You Who know the fall of the proud angel, save me through the power of Your grace, do not let me fall away from You, do not allow me to doubt You. Sharpen my hearing so that every minute of my life I can hear Your mysterious voice, and call to You Who are everywhere present:

Glory to You, for providential coincidences,
Glory to You, for the gift of premonitions,
Glory to You, for the guidance of a secret inner voice,
Glory to You, for revelations in dreams and when awake,
Glory to You, Who destroy our useless plans,
Glory to You, Who sober us from the heat of passions with suffering,
Glory to You, Who humble pride of heart to save us,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 11

Through the icy link of the ages, I feel the warmth of Your Divine breath; I hear the flow of blood. You are already near; time has partly vanished. I see Your Cross; it is for my sake. My spirit is in ashes before the Cross, where there is a triumph of love and salvation, and unceasing praise unto all ages: Alleluia!

Response

Blessed is he who will have supper in Your Kingdom, but You have already admitted me to this bliss. How many times have You extended to me with Your Divine Hand, Your body and blood; and I, such a sinner, have taken this sacred gift and felt Your love - unutterable and beyond all being:

Glory to You, for the unfathomable, life-giving power of grace,
Glory to You, Who have raised up Your Church as a refuge of peace for an exhausted world,
Glory to You, Who breathe new life into us with the life-giving water of Baptism,
Glory to You, Who restore the purity of immaculate lilies to those who repent,
Glory to You, inexhaustible abyss of forgiveness,
Glory to You, for the cup of life, for the bread of eternal joy,
Glory to You, Who led us to heaven,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 12

Many times I have seen the reflection of Your glory on the faces of the dead. What unearthly beauty and joy shone from them; how ethereal and immaterial were their features. This is the triumph of happiness and peace received gracefully, as they silently call upon You. At the hour of my death also illumine my soul as I call: Alleluia!

Response

How can I give praise to You? I have not heard the songs of the cherubim. That is the gift of the highest of souls. But I know how nature gives praise to You: in winter I have beheld the moonlight stillness when the whole earth quietly prays to You, clothed in white and sparkling with diamonds of snow; I have seen how the rising sun rejoices in You and the choirs of birds resound in praise; I have heard the forest speak mysteriously of You, the waters murmur and the choirs of stars preach of You with their harmonious movement in infinite space. But what is my praise? Nature responds to Your laws, but I do not! Yet while I am alive I see Your love; I want to thank You, to pray to You, and call out:

Glory to You, Who have shown us light,
Glory to You, Who have loved us with love immeasurable, deep, Divine,
Glory to You, Who have surrounded us with light, and with hosts of angels and saints,
Glory to You, all Holy Father, Who have willed us Your Kingdom,
Glory to You, all Holy Son, the Way, the Truth, and the Life,
Glory to You, all Holy Spirit and life-giving sun of the future age,
Glory to You for everything, O Divine Trinity, all bountiful,
Glory to You, O God, unto ages of ages.

STANZA 13

O all bountiful and life-giving Trinity, accept this gratitude for all of Your mercies and make us worthy of your Divine gifts so that having multiplied the talents given us, we may enter into the eternal joy of our Lord with victorious praise: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

* - The proper name of this prayer is "The Akathist of Thanksgiving," each stanza is called a "Kontakion", and each response is called an "Ikos". The approximate English equivalents are used so that the unfamiliar terms will not be an obstacle to entering into the beauty of the prayer. Father Petroff wrote this while imprisoned in Siberia during World War II, shortly before his martyrdom.