

# ALL CHRISTIANS MUST PRAY CEASELESSLY

—by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite—

My beloved Christians, let no one think that only members of the clergy and monastics are obligated to pray ceaselessly at all times, whereas laypeople are exempt from this. No! Not at all! All Christians in general have the obligation to constantly be in a state of prayer. The most-holy patriarch of Constantinople Philotheos writes the following in regard to this matter, in his biography of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki:

The divine St. Gregory was close friends with a guileless and virtuous monk named Job. Once, while conversing with him, he referred to the fact that every Christian in general must make a sustained effort to pray ceaselessly, citing the Apostle Paul who commands all Christians: **“Pray ceaselessly” (1 Thes. 5:17)**; the prophet David who—despite the fact that he was a king and had to attend to all the matters of his kingdom—states: **“I beheld the Lord ever before me”** [through prayer] **(Ps. 15:8)**; and St. Gregory the Theologian who similarly advises all Christians that it is necessary to commemorate the name of God through prayer more frequently than we breathe. When St. Gregory had finished making all the above (and many more similar) points to his friend Job, he further explained to him that not only must they [as monks] pray ceaselessly, but, in obedience to the counsels of the holy fathers, they should also instruct and encourage everyone else—both monks and laity, both the wise and the uneducated, men, women, and children alike—to pray ceaselessly. Upon hearing these things, monk Job deemed them unconventional, and he began to disagree with the Saint, maintaining that ceaseless prayer is something that applies only to hermits and monastics who have withdrawn themselves from the world and who are free of obligations; whereas, it is unattainable for laypeople who have to deal with so many matters and responsibilities. St. Gregory proceeded to set forth additional testimony and irrefutable proof; monk Job, however, remained unconvinced. And so, the divine Gregory desiring to avoid a long, drawn-out debate decided not to say anything further, and thus each one of them returned

to their cell. Later that evening when Job was praying in his room privately, the Lord, Who desires all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), sent an angel to him. Having appeared to him, this angel of God first reproached him sternly for arguing and disagreeing with St. Gregory, and for refuting things that are obvious, which clearly give rise to the salvation of Christians. Then, he ordered Job on behalf of our Holy God to be careful henceforth, to no longer say anything against this most beneficial work of the soul, because in this manner he would be opposing the will of God. He further told him that he should neither dare to accept any contrary thoughts, nor to think and believe anything differently than St. Gregory Palamas. In following, the simple monk Job immediately went to St. Gregory. After falling to his feet and begging for forgiveness for his obstinacy and quarreling, he then proceeded to reveal to him all that the Angel of the Lord had told him.

Do you see dear reader how all Christians, from young to old, must always pray using the noetic prayer “**Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me**”? And how it is necessary for our mind and heart to grow accustomed to saying this prayer ceaselessly? Consider how pleasing this prayer is to God and how much benefit issues from it! It is so pleasing to Him and beneficial for us that our merciful Lord decided to send a heavenly angel to reveal this truth to us, so that we may no longer have any doubts about it.