

Intercession

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” (Hebrews 13:7)

To Intercede: *To Act between parties with a view to reconciling differences (Webster Dictionary). Intercession is actions by those who are more able than we are in our behalf. Some times the Church refers to the Cloud of Witnesses (Hebrews 12:1-2) “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

“Follow Their Example, Ask And You Shall Receive Their Intercession”

The Redemptive Intercession (Shafaa Kafareiah):

Was the act of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christ is the only reconciliation between God the Father and man in salvation. **There is no other savior or redeemer. Hebrews 9:12 “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”**

Other Intercessors (In Church Specified Order):

St. Mary, The Archangels, Angels, St. John the Baptist, Disciples, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Saints, and all those who please God (past, present, and future) in their deeds..

Intercessor Qualifications:

To please God in their deeds, they are acceptable to him, present in his kingdom, their voices are heard.

How Do We Know There Is Intercession:

Numbers (21:7-9): “Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

Daniel (10:10-13): “And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”

Colossians (4:3): “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds” We have to pray for the success of the service of the Church, Like Paul asked the believers in Colossy to do. We become intercessors.

Are Our Intercessors Alive:

Revelation (21:6): “And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Can you refuse your children requests, hardly. This means that those who believed and followed Him, are with him, they inherited everything. They are in paradise. They can Intercede, see also **Revelation (1: 4):** “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and

which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own Amen.”

John (12:26): “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour..” God honors his servants, and responds to their requests.

Acts 16:9 “**And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.**”

Revelation (8:3): “**And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.**”

Also, from the story of Lazarus and the rich man, we learn that they are alive, because the foolish richman asks the Lord to send Abraam to comfort him: “And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke 16:20-31). This we hope answers the non-orthodox critics who mistakenly think there is no saints and no intercession.

Also, from the old testament we know when Saul tried to consult the Prophet Samuel, using an evil spirit, a woman with “familiar” spirit: “Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:” (I Samuel 28:7-17)

Moreover, listen to the words of Jesus, describing God, the Father: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matthew 22:32).

What Can They Do:

I. Intercede:

St. Mary, Archangels, Angels, John the Baptist Intercede in our behalf to the Lord.

II. Pray:

All the others Pray in our behalf to the Lord.

[We also, can and should pray for each other to the Lord. We are intercessors for those whom God entrusted us with. Pope and Bishops for all the believers, priest for his congregation, Sunday School Servant for his pupils, parents for children.. etc. **We need to practice this in our daily life.**]

Methodology:

1. Prayers, Fasting, and Giving are good catalysts for Intercession. Some Carry a list of names they pray for. I knew a man who wrote all the names and birthdays of people he met. He prayed for them on their birthdays. He had hundreds of names.

2. Pleasing the Intercessor: Anything we do to please God, will please our intercessors. But, we should direct things special to the intercessor. Examples: Feasts of Saints, Giving In the Name of the Saints, Remembering the Saints, and telling the wonderful things we experienced/witnessed..

Intercession In the Church:

The Church asks for the intercessions of all the saints all the time. It takes faith for these intercessions to bring fruits. **In the Raising of Incense:** we start with praises: Epsaliah (Psalms unto the Lord), Theotekia (Magnifying the Theotokos), and Doxologia (Glorifications for the saints according to the order given above). We then conclude with the Congregation of the Saints which is a long list of names from all categories.

In the Liturgy: We sing Zoxapatri (Glory to the Holy Trinity), Tai-shori (to the Virgin Mary), Heeteniat (Intercessions) In the order given, Agios (Praising and giving Glory to Jesus Our Lord), 7 Prayers (Intercessions), Khenevran (Glory to the Holy Trinity, followed with Axios, worthy to St. Mary, Saint of the Church, and the Saint(s) of the day and/or Occasion). The Cherubim Glory to God through his angels, and the Congregation of Saints towards the end of the Liturgy.

What It Means:

Through Intercession and Prayers:

We are assured of our Salvation, Someone is helping you.

We Receive Help with Problems: Spiritual and Physical.

Clear Assurance that God Is Working In Our Life. Romans (8:27-29): “And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Spiritual Help:

Better Spiritual Being, You feel better, You behave better, People treat you better. Prayer Is Easier, Fasting Is Easier, Giving Is Easier. You feel attracted to the Holy Books: The Bible, Stories of the Saints, Church Books and Doctrine. It all makes sense.

Physical Help:

Body, Sole, and Matter all improve through Intercession. We feel better, Our bodies are healthier, our minds are healthier and even if we have sickness, it does not matter as much. It does not hurt as much.

We also get help with financial matters and other material affairs through intercession. Intercession is adding prayers of the worthy (saints) to the prayers of the unworthy (us) which makes it count a lot more.

How They Do It:

Pope Kyrillos VI called on St. Mena all the time. St. Mena was his intercessor. He also celebrated him, and built a monastery to honor his saint. Abouna Mikhail Ibrahim used to greet the saints in the Church each with his name, asking them to do different things for different people. Abouna Mikhail Al-Beheery used to say ummi (my mother) meaning the virgin Mary, or the Church told me when he instructed people what to do .

Old Testament Examples

Abraham/Abraam/Ibrahim:

Abraham interceded for his cousin Lot. He also tried to intercede for the people of Sodom and Gamorah. They could not find ten good people (Genesis 18) in Sodom and Gamorah. Lot was saved through the intercession of Abraham.

Also, Abraham intercede for Isaac his son when Abraham servant went to find a wife suitable for Isaac. The servant asked the God of his master Ibrahim to help him choose. The God of his master Abraham!

Jacob for Rachel:

Rachel was barren, and through the intercession of her husband she bore Joseph and Benjamin. She cried to her husband and in turn he cried to God.

Joseph for Egypt and His Brothers:

Joseph certainly interceded for Egypt by his wisdom and prayers also. Egypt was saved from famine through his wisdom, word of knowledge, and prayers. He also saved his eleven brothers from famine through his generosity and prayers. They could have been destroyed for more than one reason.

Eli the Priest for Hannah:

Eli the Priest interceded for Hannah when he heard her hurtful cries. She was given Samuel who followed Eli as Priest and highly regarded prophet of Israel. I Samuel 1:17: "Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

Nathan and David:

Nathan was a prophet, David was prophet and King. David sinned. God sent Nathan to remind David of his sin. The Lord was going to destroy David for taking Bath-sheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite (II Samuel 12) and sending him to the front line where he was killed in the war. God saved David through his repentance and certainly the intercession of Nathan, but there was still a punishment. God accepts intercession, but He is still fair and just God. David prayed and fasted to spare the life of his child, from bath-sheba, but the Lord's Justice did not allow for the child to live!

Solomon:

Solomon sinned, and Israel sinned. God heard the prayer (intercession) of Solomon and spared him losing the kingdom. However, the kingdom was divided as punishment during the rule of his son rahbaam. A kingdom of Judea continued because of God's promise to David and Solomon, even with all their transgression.

King Hezekiah and Isaiah the Prophet:

Through their sorrowful prayers and intercessions (II Kings 18), God saved Jerusalem from invasion by Sennacherib King of Assyria (Persia).

Elijah:

Prayed and the rain stopped for 3 years and 6 months. Prayed again and it rained. He prayed for the woman from shonum, and her jar of oil and bowl of flour lasted three years and six months. He also raised her son from the dead through prayer.

Elijah:

His prayers healed Naman the leader of the army of the king of Syria. His anger transferred the illness (leprosy) to his disciple Gehazi. His intercession gave the woman from Serfat Seida a child, His prayers also raised the child from the death when the woman begged him to pray.

Daniel:

Through prayers and intercession he saved the king of Persia from destruction. Also when he was in the den of lions his prayers brought the Archangel Gabriel although of 21 days of struggle with Satan, a beautiful story of striving and struggling with Satan in which the Archangels defeat the devil Daniel 10:13-14 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."

There is a lot more about Prayers and Intercessions.....

New Testament Examples

The greatest gift is faith in our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. But we also can use the help of intercessions and prayers:

Jesus heard the intercessions of the people: For example the Centurion asked for the healing of his servant, the whole flock testified to him about how good this gentile (non-believer) was to them. Then the man showed Jesus even a greater thing by asking Jesus not to enter under his roof because he was a sinner, but say one word and my servant will be healed. Combining intercession with the goodness of a person, his good deeds is most powerful!

St. Mary (Theotokos):

She asked her Son, and he provided heavenly wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, it is the first miracle recorded in the gospel.

She always intercedes for our race.

The stories in Church history are very many. The dissolving of Iron bars of the jail in Asia Minor (Hallat Al-Hadeed), The saving of the Church in Atreeb (during Abassid Rule), The Moving of Mukataam Mountain East of Cairo (during Fatimide Rule). These are but a few stories of intercession. The Apparition in Zeitoun (1968) and Shoubra (1986) are intercessions. We call her full of grace, fair dove, censor of Aaron, Dome of Moses, the intercessor of our race. Through her intercessions and prayers we can triumph on many of our adversaries. We celebrate for her the 22nd of every month of the Coptic Calendar.

Archangel Michael:

He is the first in the Archangels as we sing in the praises. His Intercessions are very powerful. We celebrate for him the 12th of every month in the Coptic Calendar. The stories of his intercession in the Bible, and in the history are many. He fought for Daniel, He fought the devil not to reveal the location of the body of Moses, .. etc.

Archangels: Gabriel, Rafael, Sorial, Sadakiel, Saraseial and Ananial:

Are all powerful as well.

The Disciples:

Their prayers and Intercessions are most helpful. Think of Sts. John, James, Andrew and Peter for example. They are Christ's first disciples. He called them and they followed him. They became fisher of men. Can

we be like them. First we need to ask for their intercession and prayer. Peter heard the intercession for Tabetha, and he raised her from the death, in the Name of Jesus.

The Apostles:

Think of St. Mark the Apostle. We call him our father. He came to our land Egypt, and taught us the Father and the Son and The Holy Spirit. Can he be our Intercessor. I know a story about Pope Kyrillos VI, he called on St. Mark in his distress and St. Mark came to his assistance, St. Mark walked in front of Pope Kyrillos during giving incense in the Great Cathedral in Darb Al-Wasse (Cairo).

There are 70 Apostles. They all can intercede and pray for us.

The Martyrs:

Are very special in the eyes of God. They followed the example of Jesus by giving their own life for the name which is above all names. Think of St. George, St. Mena, St. Demiana, St. Markorios Philopateer, St. Abanoob (Just a 12 years old, who endure suffering and finally was executed for professing the name of God). How about saints Kouzman and Demian from the Arabian Desert, St. Gregory the Armenian,

The Saints:

There are many saints. The book of Synxarium is full of stories of saints. Also, the book of the Orchard (paradise) of the Monks and other Church Books. There are Universal Saints, before the schism, and local saints after the schism. There is also contemporary saints some canonized like Anba Abraam the Friend of the Poor, and some not canonized yet like Pope Kyrillos VI, Abouna Mikhail Ibrahim, Abouna Bishoy Kamel, .. etc.

The Universal saints are the likes St. Athanasious the Apostolic, St. Cyril the Great, St. Anthony the Father of all Monks, St. Bassellious, St. Gregorious the speaker of divine things, St. Gregorious the performer of miracles, and St. Gregorious the Armenian, St. John Chrysosotom. Others include Sts. Maximus and Domaduous (The Roman Princes), the three Sts Makarios, St. Bishoy the beloved of our good Savior, St. Moses the Black, .. etc.

A good practice is to choose a patron saint for your life and give him special honor on his feast by attending the celebration and bringing a special offering (gift) to the Church in the name of your patron saint. . My family back in Egypt had a special annual celebration for the Archangel Michael and for St. Demiana. The Archangel is celebrated on the 12th of the Coptic Months. St. Demiana has two celebrations: January 21 is her martyrdom and May 20 is the commemoration of building a Church on her name.

Concluding Remarks:

Intercession is a powerful tool available to all believers. By asking the intercession and prayers of the saints, we receive help from the heavenly host. We should use it always. May their Holy Blessing be With Us All. Glory Always be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. One God. Amen.