

6. In Step With Sts. Patrick and Gregory of Tours

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6. LOOKING UPWARD



The Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Holy Fathers, the examples of Saint's lives, the services of the Church—all these things have to do, not with worldliness in our daily life, but with conducting us to heaven. By looking above to these things, we are enabled to have zeal; that is, to see that there is something above this routine of worldliness, which is very boring, discouraging, and leads nowhere. But these higher things—these services, tales of people who have come back from the dead, Lives of Saints, writings of the Holy Fathers, Holy Scriptures, the interpretations of the Holy Fathers on passages of Scripture, which are very profound sometimes—these things always make us very zealous, if we have a spark of love for God within ourselves. We want ourselves to be living in such a state and to be going to heaven. But this zeal, by itself, must be of such a kind that it does not come just in a spurt and then eventually fade away. It must be of such a kind that it will last. This means the zeal must be tempered by something deeper, and that something deeper is what St. Seraphim calls determination; that is, zeal that is constant and keeps going—a sort of constant point for your whole life. It keeps you going even when you're discouraged, because you see that there is something above towards which you are striving, and which does not depend upon your moods or your opinions. It is something which must be your constant possession. It is your determination to get to heaven. And this determination, or rather this zeal which becomes determination, must be constant, so that it will not go up and down and burn out. [Next...](#) In everything that happens, we must look at the higher side, that is, the spiritual side; because if we are sometimes looking at the higher side and sometimes at the lower side, we will be up and down. And the lower side is so powerful, operating even through what we saw in the life of St. Patrick in the golden age of Christianity: even through bishops, through those who are supposed to be the very ones leading the flock to heaven. They can be contrary, because they are human beings also. They can be actually discouraging, keeping people away from that goal in our times, of course, it is even worse.

Therefore, if we are sometimes looking above and sometimes below, if we are going one foot forward, one foot back, and then one foot forward and two feet back, we will simply not get to the gate of heaven. We must be at all times where we are in some way looking at the spiritual reality. I have an interesting quote from Abba Dorotheos of Gaza which we read just recently in church, and which gives a little hint about this. He says: "It is good, O brethren, as I always tell you, to place your hope for every deed upon God, and to say nothing happens without the will of God. Of course, God knew that this was good and useful and profitable, and therefore He did it, even though this matter also had some outward cause. For example, I could say that inasmuch as I ate food with pilgrims and forced myself a little in order to play the host to them, (that is, he overate) therefore my stomach was weighed down, and there was a numbness caused in my feet, and from this I became ill. I could also cite various other reasons for one who seeks them. For one who seeks them there is no lack of them. But the most sure and profitable thing is to say: in truth, God knew that this would be more profitable for my soul, and therefore it happened

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in this way. For out of everything which God creates, there is nothing of which it can be said that it is not good. For in the beginning He created all, and behold, they were all very good. And so no one should grieve over what happens, but in everything he should place his hope in God's Providence, and be at ease." *In Step With Sts. Patrick and Gregory of Tours*
A Homily by Fr. Seraphim Rose of Platina