The Services of the Hours - The Great Book of the Hours - Great Horologion

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PRIVATE PRAYERS ON RETIRING TO SLEEP :

A PRAYER OF SAINT JOHN OF DAMASCUS

(*which is said while pointing at one's bed*)

O Master, lover of Man, will not this bed be my grave ? or will You again enlighten my condemned soul with the day ? Behold, the grave lies before me ; behold, death stands before me. Your Judgement, O Lord, I fear, and the unending torments, yet I cease not from doing evil. O Lord my God, continually I anger You, and Your most pure Mother, and all the heavenly powers, and my holy guardian angel. I know indeed, O Lord, that I am not worthy of Your love towards Man, but am worthy of every condemnation and torment. But, O Lord, whether I wish it or not, save me ; for if You save the righteous, it is nothing great ; and if You have mercy upon the pure, it is nothing marvellous, for they are worthy of Your mercy. But upon me, the sinner, show the wonder of Your mercy ; in this manifest Your love towards all Man, and let not my evil nature overcome Your ineffable Grace and kindness ; and as You wish, order my goings aright.

And when you are about to lie down in bed, say :

Lighten my eyes, O Christ my God, that I sleep not in death: lest my enemy at any time say, "I have prevailed against *him*".

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Be the defender of my soul, O God, for I walk through the midst of many snares ; rescue me from them, and save me, O Blessed One, for You are the Lover of Man.

Now, and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Let us extol with heart and lips incessantly, the most glorious divine Mother, who is more holy than the holy angels, confessing that she is the Mother of God, for truly she bore for us God Incarnate, and she prays ceaselessly for our souls.

Then kiss the Cross, and make the sign of the Cross with the Cross, from the head to the foot of the bed, and from side to side, and say :

Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered ; let those who hate Him flee from before His Face. As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish ; as wax melts before the fire, so let the demons perish at the presence of those who love God, and who sign themselves with the sign of the Cross and say in gladness, Rejoice. O most honourable and life-giving Cross of the Lord, put to flight the devils by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified on you, who descended to Hadēs, and over-ruled the power of darkness, and gave us you, His most honourable and life-giving Cross to repulse every adversary. O most

honourable and life-giving Cross of the Lord, help me, with the holy Virgin, the Mother of the Lord, and with all the saints unto the ages. Amen.

– or –

Fence me about, O Lord, with the power of Your honourable and life-giving Cross, and preserve me from every evil.

Then, before lying down on your bed, go through the following in your thoughts and memory :

FIRST : *Give thanks to Almighty God for having given you during the past day, by His Grace, to live and abide in health.*

SECOND : *Lay before yourself your words, and make an examination of your conscience, a thorough and detailed review of all the hours of the day from your rising from sleep, and call to mind where you went, what you did, with whom and on what you conversed, and all your words and deeds from morning to evening, and recite them to yourself, remembering and examining with all fear.*

THIRD : *If you have done any good, this has not happened of you, but of the same God who gives all good things to us who fear Him, to whom be praise and thanksgiving ; and pray that he confirm You in this good, and enable you to accomplish other good things.*

FOURTH : *If you have done anything evil, of yourself and from your own weakness, for from evil habits and arbitrariness which result from speech ; repent, and pray to the Lover of Man, that He may will to grant you forgiveness, and with a firm intention never to do this evil again.*

FIFTH : *With tears implore your gracious Creator to grant that the present night be quiet, undisturbed, pure, and sinless ; to grant that the coming day be devoted wholly to the glorification of His holy name.*

SIXTH : *If you find a soft pillow, forsake it, and put a stone in its place for the sake of Christ ; if you sleep in winter, bear it with patience, saying, "Some did not sleep at all". (Paterikon, Sermon IV)*

As you yield yourself to sleep, make the sign of the Cross, think of the Day of Judgement, and of how you shall have to stand before God, and say :

Into Your hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, my God, I commend my spirit. Bless me, have mercy upon me, and grant me eternal life. Amen.

[THE END OF PRIVATE PRAYERS OF RETIRING]