

“Stepping Stones to Eternity”

“For there the Lord commanded the blessing, life for evermore,” sings King David in Psalm 132. Where is this life? In the image of brethren praying together, thereby imitating the hosts on high who praise our Father unceasingly. Nothing is “so good or so joyous as for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 132:1).* The daily Divine Service of Vespers, which inaugurates each new day in the liturgical life of the Church, begins with a model of such praise, Psalm 103. Every weekday at St. John’s, at 5pm, the words, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God” are the occasion for praising all of creation: the heavens spread above us like a curtain, the abyss that the Lord wears like a garment, the springs of the valleys that give drink to all the beasts of the field, the bread that grows from the earth to feed us, the trees that provide nests for the sparrows...

As Orthodox Christians, we are to pray both privately and as part of the Church, which as Christ’s Body the Apostle Paul tells us is “fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love” (Eph 4:16). The example of both private and public prayer comes from our Lord himself, who both prayed privately in Gethsemane and worshiped at the Temple. He instructed us explicitly to gather together to pray: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Additionally, we know from Scripture that both King David and the Prophet Daniel prayed three times a day.

The Divine Services of the Church represent an actual participation in the Heavenly realm, without which our life is meaningless. Blessed Fr. Seraphim Rose regarded them as “stepping stones to eternity.” We are fortunate to have daily Vespers at

St. John's; there are Cathedrals that do not provide for this opportunity of daily coming together as Christ's Body to pray. We encourage everybody to schedule their day to join us in prayer so that we may all use the tools that Christ has given us through His Church to reach eternity in joy and with love.

Fr. Daniel