

‘Here’s to us; who’s like us?’ (Protopresbyter Georgios Dorbarakis)

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How often do we do something considered spiritual- prayer, church attendance, fasting, some alms-giving- and think we’ve become ‘Saint Anthony’. Because we compare ourselves... to ourselves. We ourselves are the criterion. It’s like somebody going on a run and thinking they’re running quickly. Then a proper athlete turns up alongside them and they realize that they might as well be running on the spot. Scripture points this out directly: ‘Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight’ (*Is. 5, 21*). So our delusion is obvious: we’re living in a dream-world, under the false impression that we’re ‘magnificent’ and ‘saintly’. Because naturally, we could, in fact, compare ourselves to other people and become aware of our real stature- other people are our mirror.



And, of course, for a Christian the other people can't be those outside the Church, those with a secular outlook which is not that of Christ. Because they've written God out of their lives. So the other people we have to use as our measuring-rod are the people of God, that is holy people and, above all, the first among all the saints, Our Lady herself. We must turn our gaze onto her, the first among us, and onto our brothers and sisters among the saints. We should see ourselves mirrored in their lives- they're our charismatic selves, the limits we can reach. Because they're the ones who followed in the footsteps of Christ to the greatest extent possible. This is why it's so important to study their lives, their works and the hymns of the Church which sing their praises.

If we do this, we'll realize two things. First that we, too, will begin to act on a charismatic level, because we'll see for ourselves what we've observed in all the saints: their synergy with Christ. They wanted him in their lives in response to his love, because without him they could do nothing. Secondly, and more importantly, we'll be constantly aware of how small and inadequate we are, that 'we haven't even take a step on the path of the real Christian life'. Faced with Our Lady and the saints, all we can do is beat our breast, repeating again and again: 'God have mercy upon me, sinner that I am'. Is this not how we're brought to holy humility, the foundation of the virtues where God acts? Saint John of the Ladder puts it in no

uncertain terms:

'Let's not cease to discuss our Fathers and luminaries who've gone before, comparing ourselves to them. Then we'll discover that we haven't even take a step on the path of the real monastic (viz. Christian) life' (*Ladder Discourse 22*, 21).

Source: pgdorbas.blogspot.com

***The traditional Scottish toast is: 'Here's tae us, wha's like us? Gye few and they're a' deid', that is 'Here's to us, who's like us? Very few and they're all dead'.**