

What is the Recollection of Death and what does it Mean? (Archimandrite Georgios Kapsanis, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou †)

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The recollection of death helps us get beyond our former self, because it brings humility to the soul. When we forget death, we're under the illusion that we'll be on earth for ever and this increases our arrogance, our greed, our worship of the flesh and our proclivity for exploiting others. Recollection of death gives us the sense of our limitations on earth and the importance of our thoughts, words and deeds for our life after death and in eternity.

It helps us to deal seriously with this present life, in the light of eternity, so that we don't waste our earthly life in dissipation, heedlessness and frivolity, never giving a thought to the consequences.



It was said by the ancient Greek sage, Socrates, that ‘the true philosophers are ever studying death; to them, of all men, dying is not terrible at all’ (Plato’s *Phaedo* 67e). And Saint John Chrysostom advises us to make frequent visits to graveyards, so that we can reflect on the futility of human affairs.

We all know that after a visit to a cemetery we’re more humble, more compassionate, less attached to material things and more open to God and other people.

The recollection of death, about which Saint John of the Ladder and other holy Fathers have written a great deal, has nothing to do with any sick, melancholic and neurotic brooding. That’s of no benefit to the soul, because it only brings despair and has to be overcome with the help of a spiritual guide.

The Godly recollection of death is a charismatic and spiritual state which brings humility, peace and joy to the soul. It’s a gift from God and He’s the One from Whom we must ask it.

How is recollection of death achieved?

The more we transcend our egocentric life and the more we love God, then the more we’ll think about God.

We think about what concerns us and what we love. The Lord Himself said as

much: 'Where your treasure is, there, too, is your heart'.

Studying the word of God in the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church, associating with spiritual people who love God, praying fervently, attending services regularly and taking Holy Communion frequently and worthily all increase the love of God within us and therefore recollection of Him.

Saint Gregory the Theologian advises: 'Remember God more often than you breathe'.

Continuous recollection of death brings profound peace and joy to the soul, even in the most difficult circumstances of life.

(Source: Αγιορειτική Μαρτυρία, vol. 2, pp. 71-72)