

Prayer for Dying Persons

At the end of human life, at withdrawal of his soul from this world, is read the so-called Prayer for Dying Persons - "A Molieben canon to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Immaculate Theotokos Mother of the Lord, at the separation of the soul from the body of all of the devout" (See Little Trebnik., ch. 15.)¹).

The Orthodox Church, addressing each member in the beyond the grave world through confession and holy communion, above all cares about this and about the very last minute of his earthly life whenever possible it were easy for him. With this purpose it also established at the moments before death of each Christian to uplift a prayer to the Supreme Being (A. Almazov, *Tainaia isp. [The Mystery of Confession]*, vol. 2, p. 243), namely, the "Molieben Canon at the Departure of the Soul". In this canon, the Holy Church mainly turns to the intercessor and advocate before the Lord, the All-undefiled Sovereign Lady Who is "unashamed and sinless in everything, in need, a refuge" and "in this awful hour", "when the soul leaves the body" when the dying contains the soul "fear is great, with unspeakable trembling and is painful", - "O Invincible Helper". This canon comes to an end with a special prayer in which the priest appeals to the Supreme Being: "we entreat and implore You, absolve the soul of Your servant, name, from all bonds, and free it from every curse, pardon his transgressions, committed from youth, known and unknown, in deed and word, and that he cleanly confessed or forgot, or concealed through shame", "command that he be released from bonds of flesh and sins, and receive in peace the soul of Your servant, name, and grant it rest in the eternal mansions with Your Saints". From here it is apparent that this "prayer, said by the priest at the departure of the soul", is only intercessory, but not authorizing in that meaningful sense, made by the authorizing formula in the mystery of repentance.

If time does not permit to read the whole canon, then they are usually limited to reading only one prayer, which is available at the end of a canon and by all means said by the priest during the minutes of the separation of the soul from the body²) (Fr. Silchenkov, p. 110).

There are parents, who for their consolation in grief, at the viewing of a dead **child**, ask the priests to read **the prayers for the dying child**. Of course it may be out of the question to read for the dying child the canon for an adult at death's door as absolutely not suitable for this case. In the opinion of the "Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors]" to execute the will of the parents, priests will make it best if at the death of the child he begins to read. "A canon over the child who has died" is in the "Office of the Burial of Children". Advising to arrive so, the "Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors]" motivates with this canon is very touching and if it is possible to be so expressed, it is comforting in its content that it may satisfy like parents in this case and so the priest reading in every respect (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1886, 7).

Besides the above-stated canon on the separation of the soul from the body, in the Trebnik (see ch. 75 in the Great, but ch. in the Little Trebnik) there is still "**The office at the separation of the soul from the body, when the person had long suffered**".

To lay the aer on the face of the dying in sufferings, used in the liturgy, does not follow, by the way, and to that through this aer can become infectious and therefore has to be withdrawn from liturgical use; the main thing there is no present need to resort to creative means for relief of the sufferings of the dying when the Church specified and defined the special (just given us above) "Office ... when the person had long suffered" (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1887, 43).

¹⁾ At the entry into the house of the priest, for the parting word of the sick, the superstitious try to notice with what foot the priest will cross the threshold of the house, if the right then the sick will recover; if the left then he dies (for more information see the Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1872, 7). The priest should, of course, eradicate such **superstitions** among his flock. He should also care and about the eradication the existence in some places among simple people the custom during the death of the sick to light a huge wax candle (see note 1 on p. 63), and, of course, it has to mean that in itself in the indicated case the burning of an ordinary wax candle or lampada before the icons is a pious deed.

²⁾ Undoubtedly when the patient already completely dies, then if he lives close to the church, in some dioceses there exists a custom **to ring the bell so** that it will be known "to the Christians living in the city or rural lands about the then reposed patient, that they may pray to God for him" (the Trebnik of P. Mogila). But, according to standard custom, only after the death of a priest they **strike the big bell** 3 times in the local church (see Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1893, 38), but after the death of a Bishop they also strike the bell on the cathedral bell tower but 12 times, or they do the perezvon; this perezvon is usually also offered to be done in all the churches of the cathedral city.

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1195-1196.
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