

## ST. JOHN CLIMACUS (579 – 649)

At age 16 he joined Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai. Renowned for his prayer, fasting and austerity. He spent 40 years in a cell in the desert. Then elected Abbott. Much sought after for his spiritual guidance. His writings, especially *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* [Mahwah, NJ, 1982], outlines 30 steps of spiritual discipline on the way to God.

### DEATH

“No one who has acquired the remembrance of death will ever be able to sin.” 134

“a perfect sense of death is free from fear.” 133

“a man who has heard himself sentenced to death will not worry about the way theaters are run”  
143/144

### SILENCE

“Talkativeness is the throne of vainglory” 158

“Intelligent silence is the mother of prayer” 158

“you should be silent when ridiculed. Accept patiently these spiritual cauterizations, or rather, purifying flames” 118

### THE BODY IN PRAYER

“The effort of bodily prayer can help those not yet granted real prayer of the heart. I am referring to the stretching out of the hands, the beating of the breast, the sincere raising of the eyes heavenward, deep sighs and constant prostrations” 184

### CONTEMPLATION

“One can be held back and distracted by the singing of psalms in a congregation. This does not happen when one is solitary” 278

“Fight always with your thoughts and *call them back when they wander away*. God does not demand of those under obedience that their thoughts be totally undistracted when they pray. And do not lose heart when your thoughts are stolen away. Just remain calm and *constantly call your mind back*” 112

“Draw in inseparably *with your breathing* the phrase which says, ‘He who perseveres to the end will be saved’ (Mt 10.22)” 117

“Let the remembrance of *Jesus* be present *with your every breath*” 270

“let the remembrance of death and the concise Jesus Prayer go to sleep with you and get up with you, for nothing helps you as these do when you are asleep” 178

“When a man has found the Lord, he no longer has to use words when he is praying, for the Spirit Himself will intercede for him with groans that cannot be uttered” 279

“Do not form sensory images during prayer, for distraction will certainly follow” 279