

## ***The Arrested Priest***

"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God " Acts 20:24 "

A priest was arrested in the former Soviet Union because of his Christian teaching and preaching. He was placed in one of the most horrifying prisons of the country at that time. In that prison, there was a famous prisoner, well known for his cruelty and long history in crime. The priest started to fervently pray for him, showing him love and compassion, and even passing on some of his food rations to him despite the severity of the labor required of them at the prison.

The priest used to wait until prisoners went to sleep after the long physically demanding day at the prison, then he would bow down and start praying and pleading to God in tears, for that prisoner who was feared by all.

One Night, when the priest retired to his nightly prayers routine, he felt the presence of someone standing behind him. he turned to find that convict who asked about what the priest was doing. With tears pouring down his face the priest responded: I am praying. In amazement the guy asked, "and why do you pray"? the priest answered: "I am praying for you".

The prisoner was deeply touched and convicted in his heart. he wondered how could the priest be that concerned about his salvation while he himself didn't care. He started to spend time with the priest who talked to him about pure and sanctified life. The prisoner offered a true repentance and a drastic difference in his behavior was noticed by everyone. The Atheist Prison Director was fascinated by the changing power of that priest, so he moved him to assume lighter tasks at the prison kitchen, to give him more time to serve the other prisoners.

The priest was eventually moved to the former SU's worst correctional facility, and was promised an early release if he was successful in changing the prisoners of that prison the same way achieved in the previous one. The priest however, sensing the urgent need to serve those who are deprived of the spiritual word of God, wrote to his wife asking her permission to spend the rest of his life serving the prisoners in that prison.

Would you endure toil and suffering to serve God for the sake of the salvation of those around you? even if this requires from you giving up your rights and freedom.. would you gladly give this up for Christ?

Remember that all your skills are a gift from God given to you so that you in turn give back from it, out of your love for him, and to restore the souls of his lost children. Therefore, look at those around you, be concerned with their salvation, work hard for each one them and trust that your prayers will not go in vain.

By Father Youhanna Baki