

PRAYER FOR ENEMIES

BY ST NICHOLAS VELIMIROVICH

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In 1941, with the German occupation of Yugoslavia, Bishop Nikolai, together with Patriarch Gabriel Doshich, was arrested, and sentenced to imprisonment in the infamous Dachau Prison Camp in Germany. He spent two years in Dachau, witnessing, and suffering some of the cruelest torture of human beings the world has known.

Bless my enemies, O LORD. Even may I bless them, and not curse them. Enemies have driven me into Your embrace more than friends have. Friends have bound me to earth, enemies have loosed me from the earth, and have demolished all my aspirations in the world. Enemies have made me a stranger in worldly realms, and an extraneous inhabitant of the world. Just as a hunted animal finds safer shelter than an unhunted animal does, so have I, persecuted by enemies, found the safest sanctuary, having secured myself beneath Your Tabernacle, where neither friends, nor enemies can slay my soul.

Bless my enemies, O LORD. Even may I bless them, and not curse them. They, rather than I, have confessed my sins before the world. They have punished me, whenever I have hesitated to punish myself. They have tormented me, whenever I have tried to flee torments. They have scolded me, whenever I have flattered myself. They have spat upon me, whenever I have filled myself with arrogance.

Bless my enemies, O LORD. Even may I bless them, and not curse them. Whenever I have made myself wise, they have called me foolish. Whenever I have made myself mighty, they have mocked me as though I were small. Whenever I have wanted to lead people, they have shoved me into the background. Whenever I have rushed to enrich myself, they have prevented me with an iron hand. Whenever I thought that I would sleep peacefully, they have wakened me from sleep. Whenever I have tried to build a home for a long, and tranquil life, they have demolished it, and driven me out. Truly, enemies have cut me loose from the world, and have stretched out my hands to the hem of Your garment.

Bless my enemies, O LORD. Even may I bless them, and not curse them. Bless them, and multiply them : multiply them, and make them even more bitterly against me ; so that my fleeing to You may have no return ; so that all hope in Men may be scattered like cobwebs ; so that absolute serenity may begin to reign in my soul ; so that my heart may become the grave of my two evil twins — arrogance, and anger; so that I might amass all my treasure in heaven ; so that I may for once be freed from self-deception, which has entangled me in the dreadful web of illusory life. Enemies have taught me to know what hardly anyone knows, that a person has no enemies, but cruel friends. It is truly difficult for me to say who has done me more good, and who has done me more evil in the world: friends, or enemies.

Therefore, bless, O LORD, both my friends, and my enemies.

A slave curses enemies; for he does not understand. But a son blesses them; for he understands. For a son knows that his enemies cannot touch his life. Therefore, he freely steps among them, and prays to God for them.

Bless my enemies, O LORD. Even may I bless them, and not curse them. Amen.