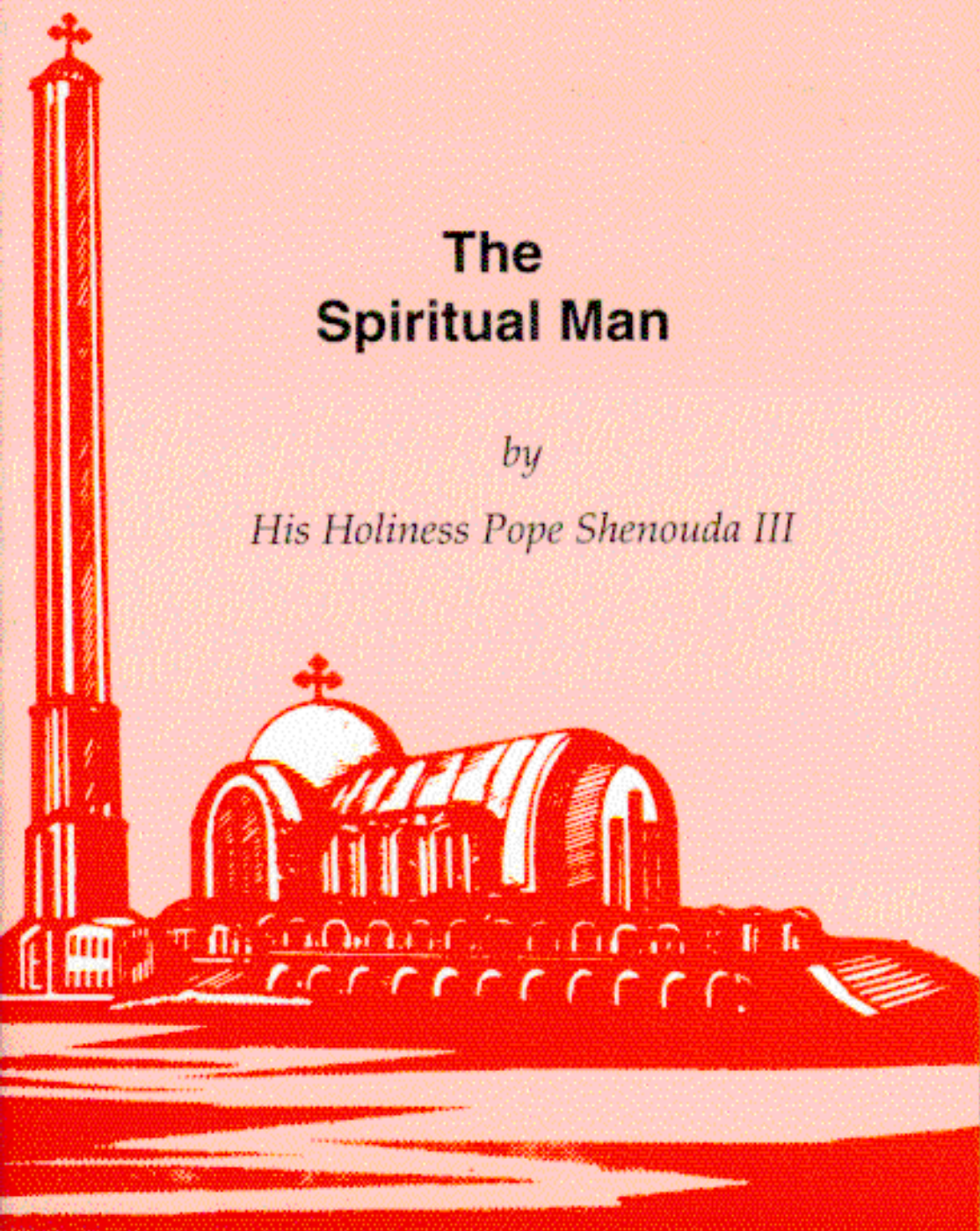


The Spiritual Man

by

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



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Coptic Orthodox Publication and Translation
Postal Address:
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SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

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Title:	The Spiritual Man
Author:	His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
ISBN:	0 908000 28 6
Translated by:	Emile & Ramza Bassilious
Edited by:	COPT

Printed in Australia

First Edition 1998

Published by



C.O.P.T.



**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and
Lord of lords**



**His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria
and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark**

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INTRODUCTION

Many various and separate lectures were given at the Cathedral, St Mark's hall at Anba Reweis and at Alexandria ... but remained unassembled under one topic.

Then we selected about twenty lectures to compile this book under the title "The Spiritual Man".

Perhaps such a subject might cover the whole life and therefore includes all the spiritual lectures. However, in this book we wanted to talk to you about basics, which contain many details...

Each item of these details might need a special book.

Other subjects which relate to the Spiritual Man were covered by books previously issued such as . "The Life Of Faith", "The Life Of Thanksgiving", "Hope", "Being With God", "The Life Of Repentance And Purity", "The Spiritual Wake" and "Holy Zeal"...

About the qualities of the Spiritual Man, I will try to issue books on them this year such as Love, Fruit of the Spirit, Fear of God, Humbleness, Meekness... also "The Spiritual Means" which must be followed by every spiritual person...

And other topics which might appear in Part two of this book.

However, in this book I wanted to talk about the basics, or some of these basics, leaving out what we previously published...

The book in your hands is the outcome of lectures, some of which were given in the sixties, some in the seventies and eighties... It was God's will that they were assembled together from these years. Also, they were published in serial weekly articles in "Watany" newspaper. Then we compiled them in this book.

Here, they are published in a concise way. Perhaps some of these topics may be re-printed in a special book or booklet.

Now, dear reader, I leave you amid the pages of this book.

In your reading of each topic, I would like you to memorize some of the Bible verses mentioned therein, to form spiritual principles that would become firmly established in you.

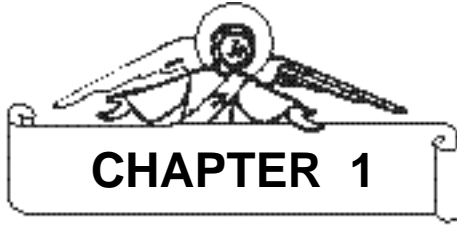
Such verses remind you of the facts relating to them, which represent spiritual principles by which you lead your life... You will find many verses in each topic; select what moves your heart, easy to memorize and take it a sphere for contemplation.

Till we meet again in Part Two.

Please pray that God gives me time.

Pope Shenouda III

This book was printed
on
The Feast of the Apostles
1998.



THE SPIRITUAL MAN:
THE IMAGE OF GOD

THE IMAGE OF GOD

Perhaps this question is addressed to every person:
Who are you? What is man?

Some would answer:
Man is a body, soul and spirit.

Another would answer :
Man is a living, sensible, talking, free, wishful creature.

Others say - with a sense of humility - that Man is dust and ashes, as our father Abraham said about himself (Gen 18:27).

All this is said about any man, then what is the accurate answer? We say it is the definition of the Spiritual Man according to the Holy Bible:

HE IS THE IMAGE OF GOD

This is what God said in the History of Creation: *“Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him.”* (Gen 1:26,27).

E E E

Perhaps man in his divine image was what philosopher Diogenes was searching for, or what the intellectuals mean by the word “Superman”.

Of course, by the divine image, it is not meant that man resembles God in His Divine qualities, such as eternity, infinity and the power to create! Not to be thought of! But it means the relative qualities such as:

THE CREATION OF MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD IN PURITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

The spiritual man - before the fall - was innocent and simple. He did not know sin at all. I mean our parents Adam and Eve before the fall, when they were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:25). They have not yet eaten from the tree of life and therefore they did not know evil. They were like the innocent children, whom Jesus loved and said, *“Assuredly, I*

say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Mt 18:3).

The serpent deceived and lied to our mother Eve who did not doubt the serpent’s words because she did not know lying, deceit or suspicion. Such words were not in her intellectual dictionary at that time.

MAN WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HOLINESS:

Indeed how beautiful were the times when Adam and Eve were holy before the fall. But, what happened was that by sin man lost his holiness and accordingly he lost his divine image.

Man became captive to a strange duality which still accompanies him: good and evil, lawful and unlawful and what follows that of life and death. Thus, God said to him: *“I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that you may live”* (Deut 30:15-19).

And as man lost his divine image by the loss of holiness, he lost purity and simplicity and also lost the knowledge of his divine image...

Then came The Lord Jesus Christ “*the image of the invisible God*” (Col 1:15) and returned to us, by His incarnation, the image of God to try and be similar to it..

E E E

How can the spiritual man reach such image? The beloved St John said: *“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked ”* (1 Jn 2:6). By this, God selected His saints... to be conformed to the image of “His Son” (Rom 8:29). If man acted up accordingly on earth, our Lord Jesus Christ - in the general resurrection - *“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* (Phil 3:21).

E E E

As regards the return to the image of God in holiness, the Lord says: *“You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”* (Lev 11:45). And again repeated it in (Lev 20:26). Also, St Peter the Apostle adapted the same phrase when he said:

“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Pet 1:15).

And added: “Be holy, for I am holy “ (1 Pet 1:16), namely, return to your divine image...

By this holiness we are worthy to partake in the Divine Sacraments... and it is said: “the holies are for the holies.” We call the Mass at which the congregation receives Communion “Liturgy of the Holies”... By holiness, the believers prepare for Holy Communion and also by which they are sanctified. What a beautiful phrase which Samuel the Prophet said to the house of Jesse when he chose David as a King, “Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice ” (1 Sam 16:5). Here we ask:

HOW IS THE SPIRITUAL MAN CALLED A SAINT?

+ He is a saint because he is created in the image of God, according to His likeness.

+ He is a saint because he is the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in him. (1 Cor 3:16). It is impossible that the Spirit of God dwells in an unclean temple. It is said: “Holiness adorns your house, O Lord, for ever ” (Ps 93:5).

+ Supposedly, he is a saint for being a son to God. The Bible says, “Whoever is born of God does not sin... and the wicked one does not touch him ” (1 Jn 5:18) “And he cannot sin, because he has been born of God ” (1 Jn 3:9).

+ **He is a saint because of the Divine Sacraments working in him.**

He is a saint by the sacrament of Baptism in which “... our old man was crucified with Him ” (Rom 6:6). His sins were washed away (Acts 22:16), through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5). He is a saint by the sacrament of Repentance in which his sins are forgiven and the sacrament of the Eucharist by which he abides in Christ and Christ abides in him (Jn 6:56).

E E E

+ He is a saint because he is a member in the body of Christ (1 Cor 6:15).

And as the Body of Christ is holy and he is a member in it, he must be holy, “for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Cor 6:14). In the days of the Apostles, the believers were called saints. The phrase “called to be saints” was repeated in the Epistles of St Paul (Rom 1:7), (1 Cor 1:2), (Eph 1:4), (Col 1:22). In his Epistle to the Philippians, he says: “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus ” (Phil 4:21).

E E E

MAN WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD IN PERFECTION

Naturally we mean the relative perfection as to what the spiritual man can achieve in his struggle according to his abilities and the extent of the work of grace in him. But the full perfection belongs to God alone.

It was said about Job the Righteous that “He was blameless and upright” (Job 1:8). It was also said: “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations” (Gen 6:9). God said to our father Abraham: “Walk before Me and be blameless” (Gen 17:10). And the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount :

“Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

And the Lord Jesus Christ, in each stage of His life was perfect, during His incarnation on earth. So He showed us how to be in the Divine image in the periods of our childhood, boyhood, youth and manhood.

Then, we must seek perfection in order to be an image of God and fulfil His commandment to us...

E E E

We also say when God created man in His image, He did not create him in His image only, in holiness, righteousness and perfection, but ...

GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS IMAGE IN AUTHORITY:

The Lord said: *“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28)...*

God granted the same blessing to our father Noah after the ark rested: *“And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth and on all the fish of the sea” (Gen 9:2).*

When man was in the image of God, he was king and master of the creation .

And when he lost the divine image, the creation started to rebel against him ... *“the serpent shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15) and “When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you” (Gen 4:12).* **And man began to hunt animals and beasts began to kill man, who lost his respect when he lost his divine image...**

E E E

ALSO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS IMAGE IN STRENGTH:

The spiritual man is a strong person and I do not mean the samsonic bodily strength, but I mean the strong personality: strength of the spirit, thought, will and endurance, strength to combat diabolic wars and spiritual struggle. Also, strong morals: the spiritual man does not shake, fear, hesitate or let the thoughts of despair and failure rule over him.

He who is in the image of God never fears.

In this, David the Prophet said: *“Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident” (Ps 27:3).* **Who is fearful is not in the image of God, therefore the cowardly will not enter the kingdom (Rev 21:8).** Adam, after the fall, was afraid (Gen 3:10). And Cain, after he sinned, was overtaken by horror (Gen 4:14), because both lost the divine image.

The saints and prophets gave a profound illustration of having no fear.

St Anthony first lived in a grave and he did not fear the warfares of Satan. He was not afraid when the devils appeared to him in the shape of beasts, screaming in horrible sounds and attacking him.

The martyrs did not fear all the threats and tortures of the rulers. Daniel the Prophet did not fear the lion's den and the three youth did not fear the burning fiery furnace.

E E E

AND HE WHO IS IN THE IMAGE OF GOD IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL:

And therefore a failure or an unsuccessful person is not the image of God because the one who is in the image of God: *"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruits in its season and whatever he does shall prosper"* (Ps 1:3). It is also said about the Upright Joseph : *"The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man"* (Gen 39:2).

E E E

AND HE WHO IS IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MUST BE HUMBLE:

Indeed, God is the sole humble One in the accurate understanding of the word, because as He is the high in the highest, comes down to our level, deals with us, talks with us and listens to our prayers. But man also can be humble according to his level. At least he knows himself being dust and ashes and should not take to himself the thoughts and manners of pride, haughtiness and vain glory. The humble man scares the devils because they see in him the image of the humble God when He made Himself of no reputation (Phil 2:7). But, the proud man is deprived of the divine image.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN IS IN THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MANY QUALITIES:

Among the attributes of God is love and he who is in the image of God must be loving like Him: “and who abides in love abides in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). He is gentle and lowly in heart and wants us to learn from Him (Mt 11:29). Likewise in other virtues... “God is the light of the world” (Jn 8:12). He is the true light (Jn 1:9). He also called us: “You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14), considering that we are in His image and likeness.

The Lord said: “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10:11). And at the same time, He Himself gave some to be pastors (Eph 4:11). And although He is the teacher - and He was called so - yet He gave some to be teachers (Mt 28:19,20).

E E E

Some said that God created man in His image in His incarnation. Of course He knew the image He will take when He came to our salvation, so He created us in His image and likeness...

E E E

God wants us to be like Him, in His image, even at work, to walk in His way, to have His same will: “On earth as it is in heaven.” (Lk 11:2). We speak as if God is speaking in our mouths. We utter His words: “For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Mt 10:20). In our actions, “... also to walk just as He walked” (Jn 2:6) and do His work. In all that we do, we ask ourselves first: If the Lord Christ was in our place, would He do that?... And in all our life, whoever sees us will say: Truly, they are the children of God, they are like their Father, as real sons to Him...

E E E

The message of the children of God is to carry the image of God in themselves to the world, whoever sees them knows God and loves Him because he loved His image.

Whoever sees them in their love, calmness, integral personalities and living examples, glorify their Father in heaven. The Lord Christ ascended to heaven... but He left His image in His Disciples to be carried from generation to generation with His teachings.

Some may ask: How can man be in the image of God while God alone is unlimited? Is man in His image in this too?!

The answer: Man is definitely limited and cannot be like God who is unlimited. However, God who created him in His image put inside him the longing to all that is unlimited. From here, man has the ambition and also the growth and lack of satisfaction . He continually forgets those things which are behind and reaches forward to those things which are ahead, pressing towards the goal for the prize (Phil 3:13-14)...

Naturally man, who is in the image of God, would have the spiritual ambition and growth and not the ambition in materialistic and worldly matters.

E E E

The second question: How can man be in the image of God and God is Creator?

Of course God is the sole creator, but also He gave man the gift of invention and creative thinking, which constantly produce new things which were not available before... But the difference is that God creates from nothing and man uses what God created to make a new thing.

E E E

I CAN ALSO SAY THAT WE ARE THE IMAGE OF GOD IN TRINITARIANISM AND MONOTHEISM

Man is a self with a mind and a spirit , and the self, mind and spirit are one being. In this, he is the image of God who is Self, Mind and Spirit and all three are One.

E E E

Finally, I say: As long as we are the image of God, we should keep this image and strive not to be the image of the world.

I wonder at those who want to copy the people of the world in everything so that they are called modern and not backward. We should be wise in this matter as St Paul the Apostle says:

“And do not be conformed to this world...” (Rom 12:2).

Which means do not be like it, as your image is much better than that of the world, you are the image of God and St John the Apostle says: *“In this the children of God are manifest.” (1 Jn 3:10).* Therefore it is not right for the spiritual man to copy the people of the world, but be an example to them, light to the world in whom they see the image of God and love it...

E E E

The spiritual man compares himself to the Divine Image and constantly asks himself: Where am I now and how far have I reached?

In the happy eternity there is one image, God and those who are in His image. But those who are not in His image will be cast out into outer darkness.

E E E

Brethren, you were not created to be just dust and ashes because God created you to give you His glory, so that your beauty becomes perfect through the splendour bestowed on you (Ezek 16:14).

St Paul the Apostle, when he wanted to clarify this picture, said in a phrase which also needs clarification:

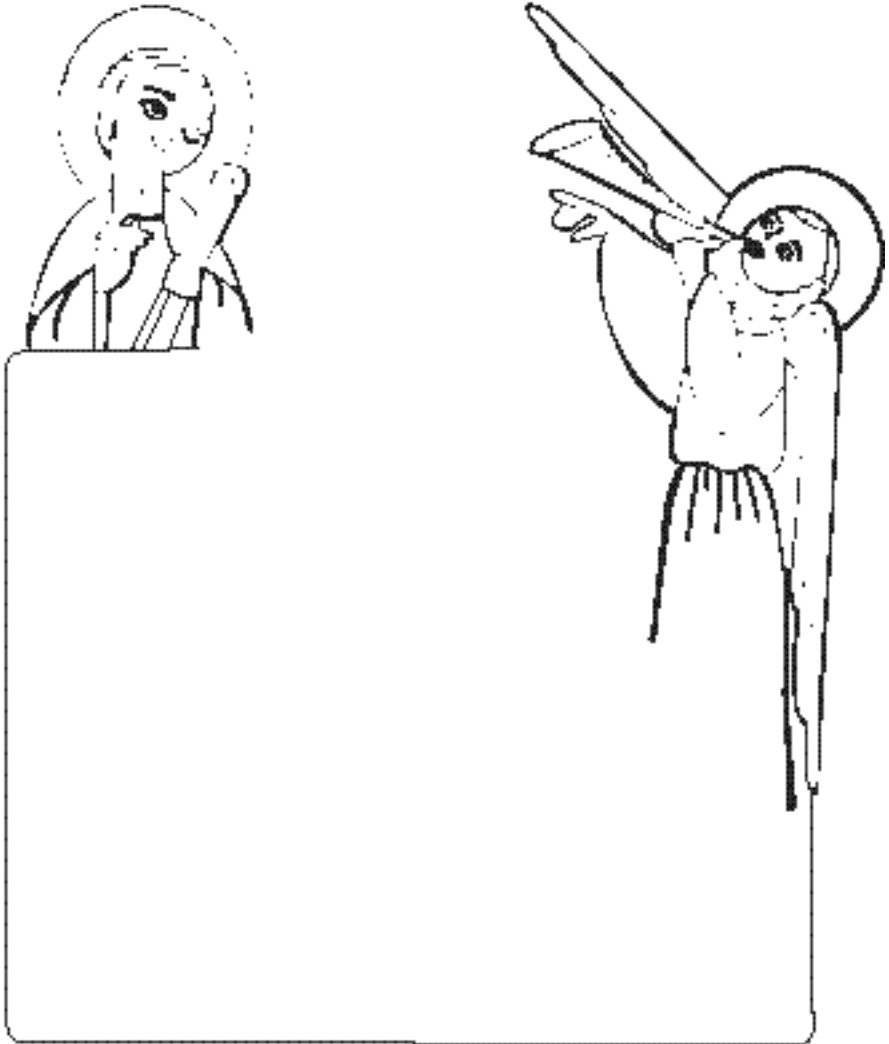
“For as many as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal 3:27). What is the meaning of “have put on Christ”?

Do I stand before it as an explainer, or stand in astonishment and amazement ... before the image of God...?

E E E



CHAPTER 2



PUTS GOD FIRST IN ALL HIS CONCERNS

References: (Is 44:6 - Rev 1: 84:7 - Rev 12:6 - Rev 22:13)

God is always the first. He said about Himself: *“I am the First and the Last.”* (Rev 22:13).

And as God is the first, He cared about the first fruit of things and asked for them and gave us the commandment of the first fruit, its offering and blessing...

He said: *“Sanctify to me all the first-born whatever opens the womb. It is mine”* (Ex 13:2). Also, *“the firstling of cattle and sheep, the first-fruits of your labours from the field ...you shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruit of your harvest,”* (Lev 23: 10) even the shearing of the sheep.

The Lord God did not require the first-fruit only but he blessed them too...

Everything to Him is blessed and sanctified and so He said: *“Sanctify to me all the first-born “. God blessed the first-born: he has the blessing, the birthright, the share of two of his brothers, the headship of the family after his father and the priesthood, before Aaron’s priesthood.*

The feeling of whoever gave the first fruits was that God comes first...

The produce of his land, the offspring of his sheep and cattle and also the first-born were all to God and not to man, and he was glad that God is the first to take.

E E E

So, if we look at the first commandment, we find it belongs to God...

Yet it is not only the first commandment, but also the first four commandments, all the commandments of the first tablet concern God. The commandments of the second tablet relate to human relations, because God comes first.

Likewise love is directed to God first, then later to people...

The first commandment of all is: “*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.*” And the second, like it is this: “*You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*” (Mk 12:30-31). So God is first...

Because love is for God first, the Lord said: “*He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy to me*” (Mt 10:37).

Even the soul does not come first, but God...

And so He said that for the sake of God you have to deny yourself and follow Him. He also said: “*He who finds his life will lose it, and who loses his life for My sake will find it*” (Mt 10:39).

E E E

The Spiritual Man puts God first in his life and his concerns .

No interests to hinder his love for God, or receive priority in his life....

The Lord Christ said to Martha: “*You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed*” (Lk 10:41).

But Mary has chosen the good part and looked after Him.

E E E

And you my brother, what is your concern? What are the priorities in your life? According to your priorities, so would be your work and your will.

People differ in their interests as Martha and Mary. Mary’s concern was with His love, sitting at His feet and listening to Him..

One became a model for service and the other a model for contemplation.

A few - like St Paul the Apostle- hold the two things. The pastors looked after the service and the monks were interested in the life of contemplation.

E E E

IS GOD THE FIRST IN YOUR LIFE?

In order to understand this question, we put before us the story of our father Abraham to whom God gave a son in his old age. And when he rejoiced in him, the Lord God said to him: *“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love and offer him to Me as a burnt offering” (Gen 22:2).*

How did our father Abraham act? He did not think twice but put God first, and his feelings as a father last. Also the feelings of Sarah, the mother of Isaac. God is the first, we love Him and obey Him, then comes Isaac who never precedes God. The Lord wants him as a burnt offering so the Lord's command must be enforced promptly and with content.

Also, the story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who was given a child after years of being barren, praying and weeping. But she put God first, and gave the child Samuel to serve the Lord in the temple.

It is a lesson to every mother who refrains from giving her son to God to serve Him .

Whether he wanted to become a monk or a priest... God is first and the motherly emotions come second or third. However, it is appropriate to present this son with joy.

This is also a lesson to every wife whose husband is called for priesthood. It is not right that she says: the service will preoccupy him and keep him away from me and from home!!! But it is proper that she presents him to the Lord and says: God is first.

E E E

The Spiritual Man makes God first in obedience...

And says with the Apostle: *“We ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29). The commandments of God first, then people’s request , then our wishes and personal requests. The spiritual Man makes obedience to men in the bounds of his obedience to God. But, if it contradicts with it, God ought to be obeyed first.

And as he puts God first, he places himself last and never looks at himself at all...

Consider the story of John the Baptist, who when Christ appeared, he abandoned his service, his glory, his preaching and his disciples too, and handed the bride to the bridegroom and stood afar rejoicing as a friend of the bridegroom, saying: *“He must increase, but I must decrease”* (Jn 3:30).

E E E

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS FULLY CONCERNED WITH OTHERS AND WITH THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

“He went about doing good” (Acts 10:38) *“Preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people”* (Mt 4:23). He had compassion on all, and satisfied all from His delight... He preached good tidings to the poor; liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound (Is 61:1) .

In the meantime He did not care about himself, and has nowhere to lay his head. (Lk 9:58).

He did not care about his dignity when a Samaritan village rejected Him. He rebuked his disciples who commanded that fire comes down from heaven and consume that village, and said to them: *“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them”* (Lk 9: 51-56).

Even on the cross, His whole concern was the salvation of men and forgiveness for those who crucified Him, and the paradise to the thief. He also cared for His Mother, the Virgin St Mary and His Disciple St John.

And you, what is your first concern? Is it yourself?!!

The Spiritual Man comes out of the “self ” circle, to care about others, in a spiritual way ...

Care from the depth of the heart, in which his service reaches high levels of giving and sacrifice, to the extent of giving the self too. He sacrifices his comfort for the comfort of others.

E E E

SOMETIMES, ALL MAN’S INTEREST IS TO REACH A CERTAIN OBJECTIVE:

And it might not be a spiritual objective, but to prove the existence of the self...

To reach this point, he does not care about the means: spiritual or non-spiritual... It does not worry him if it is a human or worldly trick or sinful ways... The whole concentration is how to reach the objective even if this man ruins himself... Similar to what king Ahab did to take the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite and what Queen Jezebel did so that her husband would reach his aim, even by crime, false accusation of Naboth and false witnesses... And they both received punishment for what they did (1 Kings 21).

Also, what Rebekah did so that her son receives the blessing of his father. The purpose was spiritual , yet the concentration on it made them lose the good means and so they used deceitful ways (Gen 27).

E E E

Likewise, a servant might care to fill the minds of his listeners with information without giving attention to how they grow in their spiritual lives.... His only interest is in the information not the spiritualities.

Or a father who gives his children words from the Bible to memorize and does not care about the spiritual exercises that deepen their relationship with God. The Holy Bible says, “ *These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone*” (Mt 23:23).

Another person in the service, his goal is how to fill the church with people and he does not care about their getting to God. He might even turn to worldly means!

Some sects give financial and social subsidies to attract those who are in need, taking them away from their churches! Their main interest is not in the kingdom, but to increase their number, even at the expense of other churches.

E E E

Now, we ask ourselves, what is our main concern?

Our Lord Jesus Christ says in the Sermon on the Mount:

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt 6:33).

There is a problem that we find in the spending and projects of some churches...

Most of the money they spent on building and construction works or the beautification and decoration of the church with icons and expensive chandeliers. The church council or the priests do not show the same interest to the service of the needy or to the neighbouring districts or even the spiritual service in the church itself... Unfortunately, all the interest is concentrated on the building and the decor..

E E E

THE SAME SITUATION APPLIES TO THE FAMILY'S CARE FOR THE CHILD...

The father and mother say that their main concern is to bring up their children and care for their future. It is well said. But which type of upbringing they care about? They care about their health, eating, drinking and clothing. Also their education, preparing them for a suitable job and then getting them married... Afterwards, each of the father and the mother would say: “Thank you Lord, I have fulfilled my mission towards my children. Now my conscience is at ease”.

However, they do not put into consideration their children's spiritual education and everlasting fate. !

They do not give them their spiritual daily bread like giving them their material food. If you ask them about their duty, perhaps they would answer: “ We have sent them to Sunday school “ ... without following up the lessons they received or memorized, and without adding anything during the week, as if the father is not responsible for his son’s religious information and his spiritual upbringing! And as if the mother is not responsible, and she is the one who received him from the baptistery as his godmother, to look after his spiritual needs, religious education and practising virtues...

E E E

In the social service, we might find the same phenomenon.

Our main or sole concern is to look after the poor financially or the unemployment problems or sickness or accommodation, and rarely we give true attention to their spirituality. And if a spiritual meeting is held for them, it could be formal, not caring to unite these people with God or to make sure of their spiritual lives, their confession, repentance and partaking in Holy Communion.

E E E

In the field of service, the same situation applies to prayer, as well as the lives of many servants ... They care about the preparation of the lesson more than caring to prepare themselves spiritually... They care about the hours of service, the meetings, the pictures and presents, the library, the club, the visitation and the activities ... Rarely - by the same measure- they care about their prayers. There are no prayer meetings like the youth meetings.

Activities take the first attention and not prayers.

If we enter into details, we find out that the spiritual work does not take the first attention... For example the club: we care about its location, games, sport activities and entertainment. We may look after the arrangement of cards, timetables , competitions, acting and chorus groups..

In all this, there might be no full spiritual supervision and we find that the clubs in their noise and mistakes do not give the expected spiritual picture. Perhaps such clubs will not differ from the public clubs because of the absence of the spiritual supervisor.

Why? The open answer is: ... because we failed to put God on the top of our interests.

E E E

You, for example, when you wake up every morning, what do you care for?

Do you care about your daily life, wash your face, have breakfast, wear your clothes and get ready to go to work? Or your first concern is how to start your day with the Lord, with prayer, with reading and contemplation? Your action will be according to your interest....

Some apologize saying: “I did not have time to pray”. And I always reject such excuse, which I do not consider as the real cause, and say: If you put prayer and contemplation first, you would make the time... Therefore give God priority in everything...

E E E

At your leisure, do not prefer your bodily relaxation to your spiritual work with God, whether in prayer or service. Do not give in to sleep or slackness but you ought to sacrifice your rest for the sake of God.

Also, in fasting, do not say my health, my need for proteins and amino acids, but say: God is first.

And so let God be first in the question of giving and the tithes...

Do not worry about your other expenses, putting God at the end of your list - if anything is left for him, it is okay. Otherwise, we apologize to God or delay His rights because God is not the first .

E E E

Let God be at the beginning of every work and every day.

The first to talk to is God. Every work you do, put God in it first. Pray in your coming in or going out, in your eating and drinking. In your work, you speak to God first.... If you put God first, you will not sin to Him:

Because you put Him above your worldly desires, above every earthly pleasure... God is always before you and the world is behind you...

Man sins because he does not put God in front of him, does not remember Him before every fall and does not consider His feelings.

Make God the first, with regard to time, importance, desires, love and longing and obedience too ... Let Him be the first in everything.

And when God says: *“My son give me your heart” (Prov 23:26)*, He means that He has the priority in your life, feelings and interests and if anything contradicted with Him, you say from within: *“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul” (Mt 16:26)*. The loss of his soul is its deprivation from God...

E E E

The Spiritual Man does not only put God first and before everything, but his relationship with God is everything in his life...

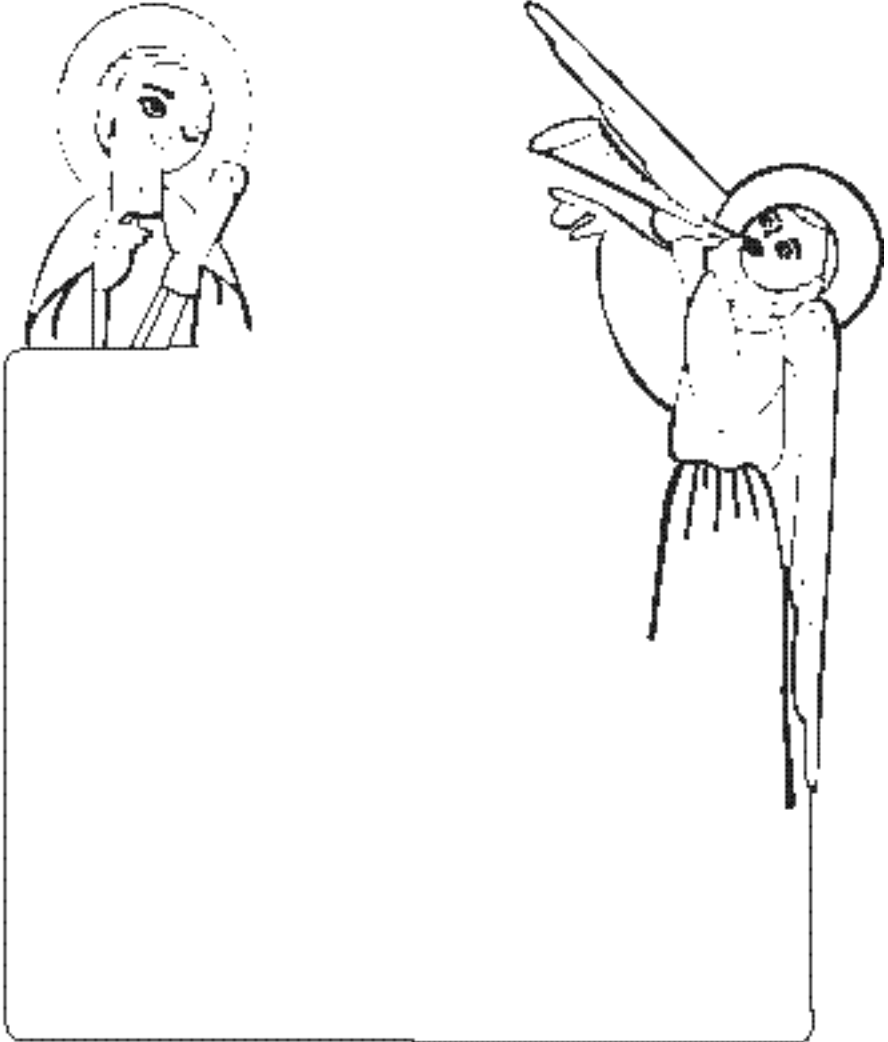
He says with the Apostle: *“For to me, to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21)*. And also says: *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20)*.

Finally, I do not want to overburden you with many advices , but I say to you one advice only, if carried out, you have fulfilled all the commandments:

Make God the prime of your concerns, and do not live separate or away from Him. Begin your day and every work you do with Him.



CHAPTER 3



DEPTH

DEPTH IN PRAYER:

I was really touched by the Psalm 130 in which David the Prophet pleaded, and with which we begin the prayer of the Twelfth Hour, “Compline”:

“ Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!”

Out of the depths I have cried: Out of the depth of the heart and passion, out of the depth of the call for help, as it says in Psalm 119 : *“With my whole heart I have sought You.”* Out of the depth of faith and confidence that You will respond. Indeed, out of the depths I have cried: Out of the depth of my weariness and neediness... Out of the depth of my weakness, frailty and inability... Out of the depth of the bottomless pit where I am..

E E E

It is a deep prayer similar to Jonah’s prayer from the fish’s belly.

Indeed, out of the depths I have cried to You, because there is no one else but You who is sincere and is a saviour... Entirely like the prayer of the people before the moving of Al Mokattam Mountain... A prayer on which the whole future of the church relied.

Or perhaps like the prayer in the heart of Daniel when they threw him in the lions’ den.. Or the prayer of the three young men when they were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace... Out of the depth of the heart, out of necessity... Like the voice of a drowning person calling the rescue boat to hasten to reach him before he drowns...

Like the prayer of Elijah, asking for the water to fall over his burnt offering (1 Kings 18), or the prayer of the people marching around the walls of Jericho (Josh 6).

E E E

It is not important the length of the prayer or the selection of its words, but the depth of feelings in it...

The prayer of the Pharisee was longer than the prayer of the tax collector (Lk 8:14). Why? Because it was a prayer out of the depth: the depth of humility, contrition, feeling of remorse and shame... He stood afar off without daring to raise his eyes to heaven.. His few words were enough because God looked at his depth...

And like the prayer of the tax collector, so was the prayer of the thief on the right hand.

A short prayer but deep. A prayer of a person in his last hours, on the verge of death. Out of his depth he yearned for his eternity, and asked God to remember him. He said to the other criminal before: *"And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds"* (Lk 23:41). Truly, it was a crucial prayer, it was said in depth.. It was heard.

One sentence a man says in depth, like "Lord have mercy", so one of the twenty four elders comes forward and takes this prayer in his golden censor and ascends with it to the throne of God as a smell of incense which are the prayers of the saints (Rev 5:8). Another man says the same prayer tens of times and not one is received, as if he did not pray!

E E E

Then how can we distinguish the deep prayer?

It is a prayer which has a feeling of relation with God, a prayer with passion, understanding, contemplation, concentration, warmth, love, humility, contrition... with faith, confidence and hope... A prayer with a spirit and not mere words... Its length is not important but its depth, as the scribes and Pharisees and the like, were - for a reason- making long prayers (Mt 23:14).

St Paul said: *"I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue"* (1 Cor 14:19)... **And so our prayers ought to come out of our depth; and if we had length with the depth, it would be much better.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEPTH:

How beautiful is the saying of the Psalmist:

“The royal daughter is all glorious within ” (Ps 45:13).

And although her clothing is woven with gold in robes of many colours, but all her glory is in her depth... Within her heart.

Believe me, one single deed a man does in depth, may assess his whole life. Such deed remains and will be recorded in history because of its depth. I will give you an example:

THE DEPTH IN GIVING:

Take the depth by which Abraham took his son to offer him as a burnt offering:

In his offering, he was in depth of love to God... He loved God much more than his son, his only son whom he loved, the son of promise which was fulfilled after many years... Also, in his offering he was in the depth of obedience to God and in the depth of faith, because he believed that despite of his offering, surely his descendants will multiply as the sand which is on the sea shore...

In the offering of Isaac, Abraham was in the depth of giving.

There is no giving more deep than this. Another example is the widow who put the two mites. The Lord praised her and said: *“She has put in more than all those who have given, because she put in all that she had, her whole livelihood ” (Mk 12:41-44).*

Also, among other examples, what the widow of Zarephath offered to Elijah the Prophet: *“Only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar” (1 Kings 17:12).* The depth of this offering is that she gave all what she had at the time of famine... To prepare for herself and her son, that they may eat it and die.. But she gave preference to Elijah over herself and her son...

We can also see the depth of giving in other examples:

The one who presents the tithes of his money while he is in great poverty and need. Or he who gives his first salary, which he was waiting for to pay his debts... Or a servant who gives his time to the service during days of exams while he needs every minute... Or he who donates one of his organs to transplant into a sick person whom he loves... Or he who borrows to give a needy man...

THE DEPTH IN PREACHING:

The history of Christianity began with its depth in the work of preaching which was concentrated in twelve apostles, some of them from the foolish things of the world and things which are despised (1 Cor 1:27-28). But with all seriousness, honesty and commitment, they entered the service with every effort. They endured flogging, imprisonment and persecution to take the word of God to everyone. And so those: *“Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world”* (Ps 19:3-4).

St Paul the Apostle expresses the depth of the work of preaching and says:

“But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings, ...as deceivers;... unknown;... dying;.. as sorrowful” (2 Cor 6:4-10).

Their depth appeared in their holy zeal which never calmed down.

They worked for God at all times, in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2) ,even in prison (Acts 16:24). St Paul wrote some of his epistles while he was in prison; even during their trials... when St Paul stood before Felix the Governor and before King Agrippa. They were , *“preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him”* (Acts 28:31).

This reminds us of the missionaries who carried the faith to countries populated by cannibals...

Here comes out the depth in the love of God and His Kingdom, and the depth in serving the word...

THE DEPTH IN THE SERVICE:

Some servants assess their service with wrong measures which have the formal appearance from the outside but have no depth. Like the one who measures his service by the great number of his students or the quantity of lessons and their varieties, and what the students receive of religious knowledge. Or a servant who evaluates his service by his promotion from primary to secondary or to preparation of servants, or other aspects of organization, preparation books or books of visits. And in all of this, he forgets what concerns the depth of the service and its work in leading the students to repentance and to the love of God.

E E E

There could be a servant without a class, but has a deeper service.

Like the servant who works single handed and whoever he meets, attracts him to the love of God and inflames his heart with the words of grace that come out of his mouth. Each day he brings to the church new members who never came to church before...

Or to serve in solving family problems, with hard work, depth and perseverance. He might spend long days, stay up late at night to persuade and convince, so that God's peace comes to the house, and no one of the church's elderly servants would know anything about his service...

I know a servant who was working with us more than forty years ago. We named his class "The Weird Class" because he used to bring over youth who wander about in the streets, in coffeehouses and in front of amusement centres, and he turned them not only to permanent students at church, but some of them became servants...

Among the examples of the deep service is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch....

Philip was walking along the road, saw the Chariot of the eunuch in which he was reading Isaiah the Prophet. He began to explain to him in depth, to attract him to the faith. When the eunuch declared his belief with all his heart, both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.. How long did this service take, an hour or more or less. But it was deep and fruitful...

Also, the service of John the Baptist and Stephen the Deacon.

In great depth, John the Baptist served about six months or a little more. In this short period, he prepared the way before the Lord with people led to repentance. The Lord said about him, *“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist”*. And also said, *“...and more than a prophet”* (Mt 11:11-9).

Also, Stephen, his service was short but very deep. His tale began in (Acts 6) and was martyred in (Acts 7). He was able to make many multitudes to join the faith. He confuted many of the synagogues: *“And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke”* (Acts 6:10).

E E E

The deep word can bear much fruit.

One sermon with the depth of the Holy Spirit in it, added three thousand souls to the faith and were baptized on the fiftieth day...

A person says a word to you which touches your heart and never leaves your mind, walks with you, accompanies you in your sleep and waking, It does much to you. It is a word which came out of the depth and reached the depth. It had its effect, influence and power and turned into doing a deep work, similar to its depth...

E E E

We move to another point which is the depth in worship:

THE DEPTH IN WORSHIP

Many care about the linear measure in fasting for example, in prayers and the number of psalms and prostrations “metanyas “ without caring about the depth in worship. Man could fast for forty or fifty five days and perhaps exerts pressure on himself with regard to food, but without depth in the spiritual work, to triumph over one’s self in controlling the will, the senses and mind during fasting. As if fasting is an external appearance, and nothing at all inside in the depths. Then he comes out of fasting with the same characters and faults. As for one who fasts with spiritual depth where his soul fasts with his body, combined with contrition, repentance, submission and spiritual practices, he yields many fruits.

Also the prostrations “metanyas”, in their depth and not in the number.

A person whose soul clings to the dust and not just bows his head, without bending his pride from the inside.

E E E

The same applies to reading, its depth and its effect.

It is not important to read many chapters , but the depth and effect that such reading leaves in you.

One verse which the young man Anthony heard and took in depth, managed to change his whole life and set up a great spiritual program followed by thousands of earthly angels and heavenly humans. Its effect spread out for many generations... Do you read with the same depth by which St Anthony listened to this verse?

The scribes and Pharisees used to read much and they were scholars of their time in the Holy Bible, but they had no depth either in the understanding or the application. They did not benefit a thing but they stumbled others.

Consider David the Prophet in the depth of his reading.

He says to God; *“I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad “ (Ps 119:96). And: “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law” (Ps 119:18). His depth in reading brought him joy and delight: “...as one who finds great treasure”, “How sweet are your works to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Ps 119:103)..*

THE DEPTH OF REPENTANCE

Many have repented and returned to the way they were because their repentance was not deep.

But those who deeply repented, they never returned to sin again.

Repentance was a crucial point in their lives, from which they gradually progressed to grow in the life of righteousness, until they reached high degrees of Christian perfection, like David the Prophet in his contrition and tears. And Augustine who became a monk and then a bishop who defended the Christian faith. He had very deep spiritual contemplation. Also Moses the Black, who grew in love and meekness and serving people and became one of the Desert Fathers. And Mary of Egypt who rose high in the life of seclusion and became a hermit and blessed St Zosima the priest.

E E E

Those who have sins which they repeat at every confession, they have not repented yet...

And those whose repentance does not include the feelings of contrition, remorse and unworthiness, they have no depth in their repentance, and how easy they go back to sin. Likewise, those who in their repentance, they hasten to the life of joy, before their repentance fully develops and bears fruit.

THE DEPTH OF FAITH:

The common faith is claimed by all, but not every faithful is deep in it. Peter the Apostle believed for some time. He walked on the water to go to Jesus and when his faith weakened, he fell and the Lord said to him: *“O you of little faith why did you doubt?”* (Mt 14:31). The deep faith does not doubt or fear but it can move the mountains. The best saying about the deep faith is:

“All things are possible to him who believes ” (Mk 9:23).

Faith which has its power, its victory and its effectiveness to contain the whole life.

THE DEPTH IN FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE:

You may have a friend for twenty years and for a certain word or on hearing false news, he turns out and changes and you say to him: *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love”* (Rev 2:4). But, about the deep love, the Holy Bible says:

“Many waters cannot quench love” (Song 8:7) .

“For love is as strong as death.” (Song 8:6). *“Love never fails.”* (1 Cor 13:8). Whether it was love towards God or towards man.

Deep as the love of a mother to her babe... Like the love between David and Jonathan.

Love that follows to the cross, like the love of St John to Jesus. Love: *“Not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”* (1 Jn 3:18).

The deepest love is the one that gives, even itself.

As the love of God on the Cross: *“For God so loved the world that he gave...”* (Jn 3:16).

THE DEPTH OF PERSONALITY:

There are persons who are distinguished for their depth, others for shallowness.

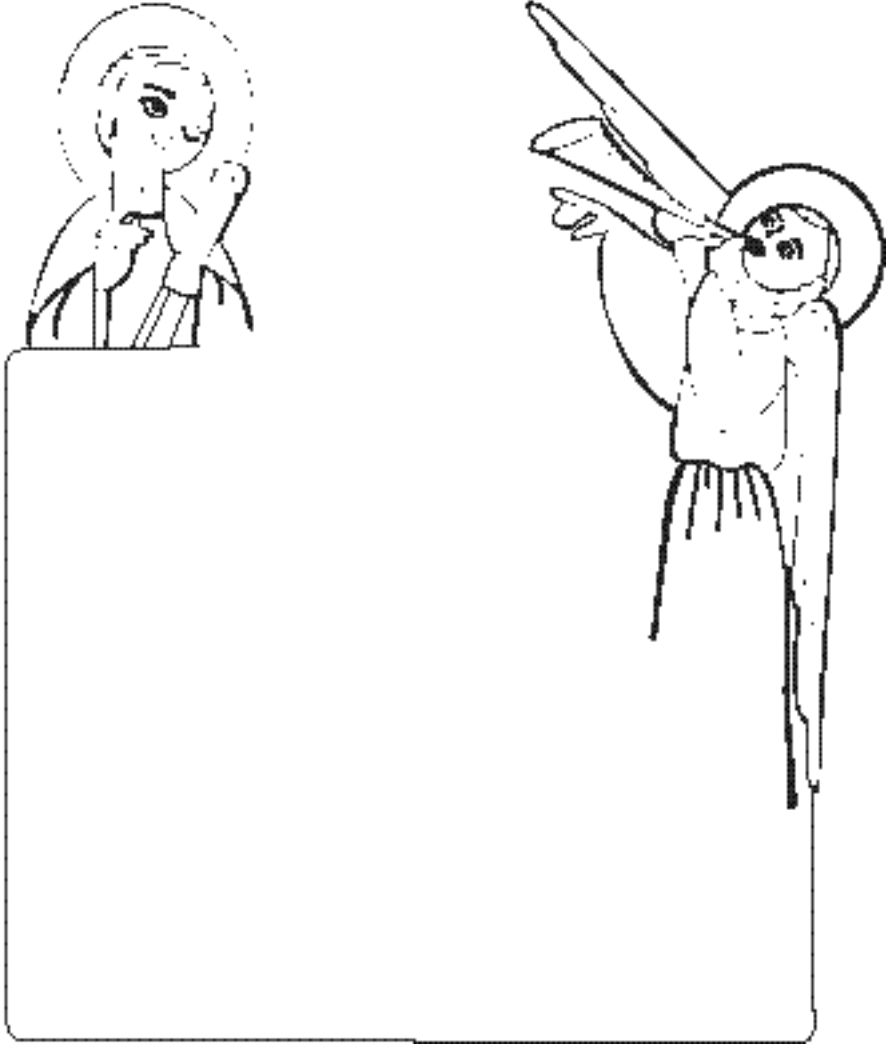
A deep personality has depth in thinking, intelligence and understanding. Such person enjoys expansive intelligence which includes everything. If he discusses a subject, he looks into it from all angles, takes into account all consequences and reactions. When he speaks, he speaks in depth...

Also, at work or post of responsibility, he handles everything in depth, like the Upright Joseph when he was in charge of supplies in Egypt, and like Jochembed the mother of Moses...

For example, the student who studies in depth, with understanding, concentration and a sharp mind, he does not forget. It is not important the number of hours of his study, but the depth of comprehension and memorizing.



CHAPTER 4



HIS HEART IS WITH GOD

The life of the spiritual man is not an external appearance, or mere practices or obligations or mere laws (i.e.. commandments to be carried out literally). But his spiritual life - before anything else- is “The life of the heart with God” as the Lord says:

“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways” (Prov 23:26).

The important thing is to give Me your heart. If you do ,your eyes will observe My ways. The Divine inspiration in the Book of Proverbs says too: “Keep your heart with diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov 4:23)... Man’s spiritual life comes out of this heart. So, man ought to care about his heart and its purity. The Lord said in his beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8).

Indeed, how great is the reward for the pure heart... It sees God! The spiritual life is not words or an external appearance. The chanter says in the Psalm: “The royal daughter is all glorious within “despite” her clothing is woven with gold, in robes of many colours” (Ps 45:13).

E E E

Concerning His commandments, the Lord said:

“And these words, which I command you today shall be in your heart” (Deut. 6:6).

And the Psalmist said: “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11) When God’s commandment is inside the heart, it is also linked to the love in the heart, as David said in the Psalm: “I love your commandments more than gold”. “Your word is very pure; therefore your servant loves it” (Ps 119:127-140). The heart is the centre of feelings, and God wants the feelings of your heart, wants your love, and so He said:

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37).

Also: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”. The Lord said about this love, that by it “*hang all the law and the Prophets*” (Mt 22:40). The phrase (with all your heart) means that there is no one or any thing in the heart to compete with God in the love of the heart for Him.. So, He said: “*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*” (Mt 10:37). All the heart to God, and God asks for it.

He says in The Song of Solomon:

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm” (Song 8:6).

As a seal upon your heart with regard to love, and upon your arm with regard to work. The work which the spiritual man does is a natural result of his love for God and mankind... And the more his heart is deep in its love; his work for God becomes stronger...

E E E

The words of the pure heart are pure and its thought is also pure, because the thought comes from the heart as well as the words. In this, the Lord said:

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil” (Lk 6:45).

So, the heart is important because “*Out of it spring the issues of life*”. It is the spring out of which comes the thought, the words and emotions, even it affects the senses too. Some may defend an angry person who proceeds harsh words out of his mouth, and say: “despite his anger, his heart is white!” No, because the white heart gives out white words. The Lord said:

“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34).

And so, the sin of tongue is a second or a following sin, but the first sin, which precedes it, is in the heart. If the heart holds hypocrisy, hypocritical words come out of it, and if it holds anger, angry words will come out of it. If the heart holds kindness and sympathy... and so on. The Psalmist says:

“My heart is over flowing with a good theme” (Ps 45:1).

That is with those who are good and whose hearts and tongues are in one stream, as we say in the Praise “Eltasbeha” (my heart and tongue praise the holy). Contrary to this are the hypocrites, whose hearts are unlike their tongues! Those whom the Lord rebuked, saying: “...How can you, being evil, speak good things? (Mt 12:34).

This hypocrite who speaks different from what is in his heart, his looks reveal him, as the eye is often the mirror of the heart which shows all his feelings... The features of his face or the tones of his voice could disclose him.

E E E

The spiritual man is simple hearted and does not conceal other than he shows!

He is an open man, what he says is what is in his heart. If he praises someone, he trusts in him in his heart. If he apologizes, his apology truly comes out of his heart. While another may apologize but his apology is not accepted because it does not come out of the heart. He may say to someone “May God forgive you” and he means “May God repay you according to your work!”

God knows what is in the heart because “the Lord weighs the hearts” (Prov 21:2).

The Holy Bible said about God that He is, “...Testing the mind and the heart” (Jer 11:20) “For he knows the secrets of the heart” (Ps 44:21). “The Lord knows the thoughts of man” (Ps 94:11). **It is also said:** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart; I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways... (Jer 17:9-10).

But the spiritual man has an upright heart before God.

The Lord knows the upright and the perverse hearts.

The Holy Bible says: “Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart”. (Ps 97:11) and “Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to thee Lord” (Prov 11:20). **The Holy Bible says about those who are of an upright heart, they “call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2Tim 2:22). David the Prophet in his Psalm of repentance says about this heart:**

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps 51:10).

E E E

This point brings us to repentance and its relation with the heart...

True repentance is not just leaving sin in effect, but leaving sin from the heart, the heart no longer loves it. The perfection of repentance is hatred of sin. If man disliked sin, he will not return to it again, so his repentance becomes a dividing line between a life away from God and a new life that longs for God. One of the saints said, “Repentance is to exchange a desire for a desire, which means leaving the lust of the world and man’s whole desire becomes living with the Lord. The Lord said about repentance:

“Turn to me with all your heart” (Joel 2:12).

“So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God” (Joel 2:13). Repentance is a longing to return to God, hearing His voice, and the work of His grace in the heart. On the other hand, he who does not respond to His voice, is a hard hearted person. The Apostle says:

“If you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb 3:8-15).

And he repeats it in (Heb 4:7). It is the same as said in the Psalm: “Today, if you will hear his voice; do not harden your hearts” (Ps 95:7-8).

Then God looks at non-repentance through the rejecting heart, before the insurgent work. Therefore, when He leads us to repentance He promises us the change of this heart. And if changed, the behaviour changes accordingly. The Lord says:

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” (Ezek 36:26).

“...And take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek 11:19)... He considers that repentance begins from the heart, and the non-contrite heart is a stony heart, a rocky heart, a hard heart, as Pharaoh’s heart.

The Lord repeats the same in the Book of Jeremiah the Prophet, and says: *“Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart”* (Jer. 24:7).

E E E

The return of man means that the will of his heart unites with the will of God.

God works in his heart, and he returns with his heart to God. God says in the Book of Joel the Prophet: *“Turn to Me with all your heart”* (Joel 2:12). And in the Book of Ezekiel: *“Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit”* (Ezek 18:31). And about the outcome of this new heart, St Paul the Apostle says: *“...but by the renewing of your mind:.”* (Rom 12:2). If the heart changes from the inside, his thoughts change too. *“For out of the heart proceed evil thought”* (Mt 15:19). Thus, the heart must change.

The fault of many is that they assume repentance is just confessing the sins, and they keep a desirable sin in the heart.

Because of this sin that they love, they back away from their repentance and fall many times, as the heart is not wholly for God and they did not return to God with their whole hearts... and their minds have not been renewed as the thought is still clinging to sin, and so is the heart. ...Their repentance is from the outside and not from the inside. God looks inside and says: *“My son, give Me your heart”*. Ananias and Sapphira laid the money at the apostles feet but they did not put God in their hearts.... The love of money - even a part of it- was in their hearts (Acts 5:1-4).

E E E

Often we ask children to be modest in their clothes without planting modesty into their hearts!

Although, if God enters their hearts they will be entirely convinced by it, and then modesty in apparel and make up will automatically become natural without any outside pressure.

We ought to rise above the level of visible works, to the heart feelings within.

There is a son who might obey his father because of fear or submission, while his heart is rebellious over his father's orders.. A man might pay his tithes with uncomfortable heart; he paid from his pocket and not his heart...

But the spiritual man, when he gives, he gives from his heart, with content and cheer, according to the saying of the Bible: "*For God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Cor 9:7).

A man might fast by his mouth but his heart is not turning away from such food, so he resorts to tricky means and ways to find vegetarian butter, cheese and chocolate. He also looks for the cooking method which makes the vegetarian food more appetizing !!. Where is the core of fasting here? And what is its relation to the heart?

A man might prostrate (give a metanya) with his body while his heart did not bow like his head.

In his prostration, there is no essence of contrition, submission or repentance. Accordingly, when he apologizes to another with prostration, it is not acceptable...

A man might confess his sins but his heart is not remorseful!

A man might stop talking by his tongue, but has much talk in his mind!

"A man might speak with humble words, but his heart is not modest. His words could be softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords" (Ps 55:21). In all this, the Lord says: "My son, give Me your heart".

E E E

The spiritual man gives the heart to God as the heart contains all feelings and spiritualities.

Take faith, for example: There is a big difference between the faithful by name, and the faithful from the depth of the heart, who shows his faith by all his works. (Jas 2:18)... The faithful who sees God before him all the time, and to him the existence of God is not a mere belief. It is a life which he lives and feels...

The holy zeal is not just works or words but it comes out of the heart.

Meekness, humbleness and other virtues are not mere external works. There is a big difference between the humble by tongue and the humble in heart, who is convinced within that he is a sinner and weak and if it was not for the grace of God which supports him, he could have fallen down like others...

E E E

Also, the heart is the source of dreams, suspicions, thoughts and doubts.... as well as the source of the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22).

For example: Love, joy and peace... They all come out of the heart... And long-suffering, kindness goodness and self-control... They also come out of the heart. Otherwise it will lose its meaning and the righteousness that is in it...

Goodness is not whitewashed tombs (Mt 23:27). But it is the goodness of the heart. Purity is not just escaping from sin, but it is the purity of the heart...

E E E

The spiritual man, in all the work he does, knows that God is looking at his heart, his intention and his objective.

Out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Mt 6:21). **His only treasure is God.. All the time, he says to the Lord: " My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast" (Ps 57:7). Even if he fell asleep, his soul says to God: "I sleep, but my heart is awake" (Song 5:2).**

E E E

The spiritual man, his prayers come out of his heart.

And not like those about whom the Lord said: "*These people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*" (Is 29:13) (Mt 15:8)...

But his heart is in contact with God completely. He speaks and feels his being in the presence of God, and that he talks to God and says: "My heart and tongue praise the Holy" and repeats with David his saying:

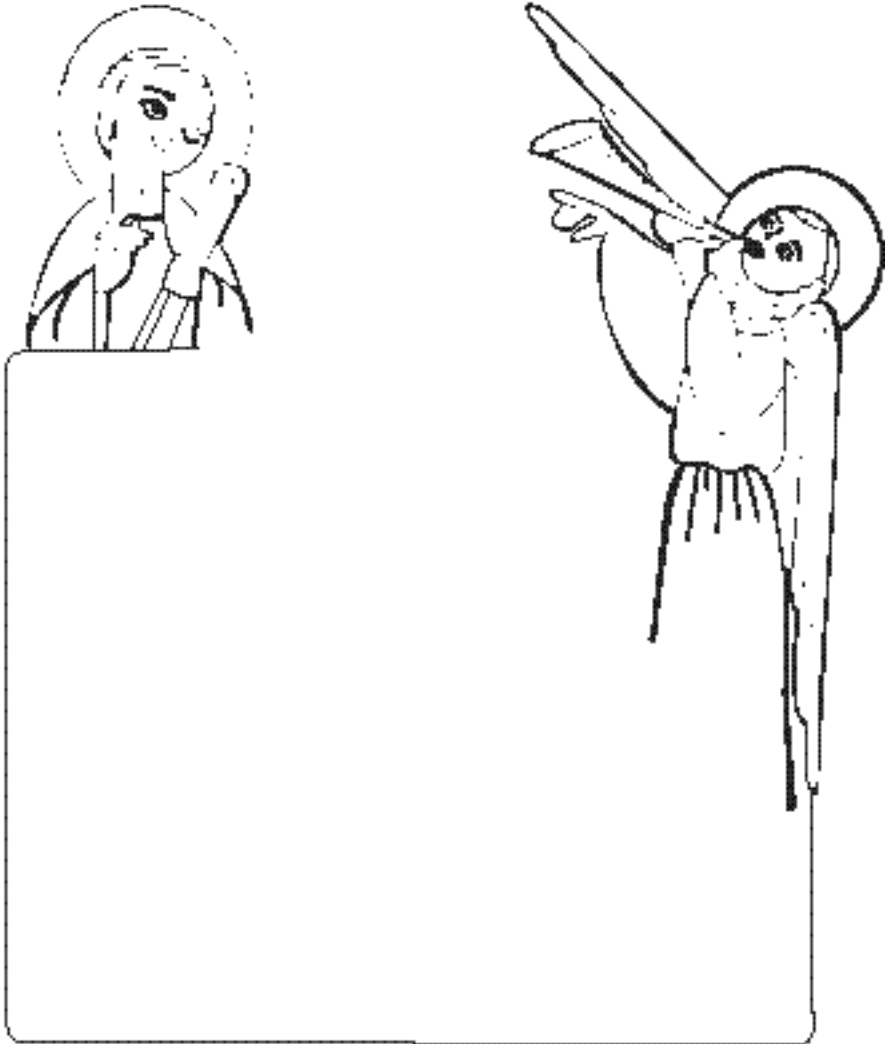
“With my whole heart I have sought you” (Ps 119:10).

Even during Mass or Praise, “Tasbeha”, his prayer is not just a tune or words to repeat, but the feelings of a heart poured before God in contrition, in submission, in faith, in love, in understanding, in contemplation and in warmth.

One of the twenty four elders would advance and take his prayers in his golden censor and ascends up.



CHAPTER 5



A STRONG MAN

The spiritual man is a strong man. We mean spiritual strength., as strength is different from violence.

He is a strong man because he is created in the image of God and to His likeness (Gen 1:27). And God is strong. And being like a son of God, he is supposed to be strong in the spirit..

The spiritual man is the temple of the Holy Spirit, (1 Cor 6:19), and the Holy Spirit dwells in him (1 Cor 3:16). And so he receives strength from the Spirit that works strongly in him. The promise of the Lord Jesus Christ is also fulfilled in him, as He said:

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

And the Lord said about this power that it is power from on high (Lk 24:49). This strength showed in the preaching of our fathers the Apostles. And so it was written in the Acts of the Apostles: *“And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).* And also by that, the Lord’s saying was fulfilled: *“There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mk 9:1).*

E E E

The strength of the spiritual man is from God Himself:

As David the Prophet said: *“The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation” (Ps 118:14).* And as St Paul the Apostle said: *“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10).* And also said: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).* The phrase *“I can do all things”* proves the extent of the power received by the spiritual man in Jesus Christ. Even the Lord says:

“All things are possible to him who believes” (Mk 9:23).

As far as all things are possible to him, then the spiritual man should not suffer from despair, collapse or become faint-hearted. Because with faith

he becomes strong within, with a strong soul and strong spirit. He never gets weak, worried or troubled and he does not stand helpless. He is strong in the Lord who works in him, God who strengthens him...

This strength applies to individuals and groups:

It applies to the spiritual man as a faithful, and to the church as a group of faithful. And so it is written in the Song of Solomon about Solomon's couch, which is a symbol of the church: *"Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with sixty valiant men around it. Of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of the night"* (Song 3:7,8). And also in the Song of Solomon, the characteristic of the strength by which the church and the human soul were described:

***"I have compared you, my love, to my favourite foal among Pharaoh's chariots"* (Song 1:9).**

The horse and also horsemen are symbols of strength (Is 31:1). And prepared for the day of the battle (Prov 21:31). And pharaoh always chose for his chariots the strongest and most firm horses. And by this comparison, the Lord describes the strength of the church which He loves...

Maybe this comparison proves that the Song of Solomon is a Book that has spiritual symbols and not just mere songs exchanged between a lover and the one he loves, as some accuse it to be!! Because no loved one would accept her lover to describe her as a horse in Pharaoh's chariots. And with the same logic, we talk about the Lord's saying about this beloved., the church, in the Song of Solomon:

***"Awesome as an army with banners!"* (Song 6:4).**

And the word "banners" is the plural of "a banner" in the army, which includes a large number of battalions, brigades and vehicles. The same description of the church or the human soul as being awesome as an army with banners has been repeated in the same chapter (Song 6:10). And definitely, it is impossible for a loved one to accept this description from her lover as being "awesome"! Or that she is like an army with banners! Then it is a symbolic talk about the church or the human soul.

E E E

This soul that lived with God and took from His strength, strength for her life.

As the spirit of the spiritual man takes strength from the Holy Spirit that dwells in her. He is a member of the group of conquerors and winners, those who fight the Lord's wars with strength. And the Holy Bible called them: "*Mighty men of Valour*".

We read in the Book of Judges that the angel of the Lord addressed Gideon by saying: "*The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour!*" (Judg 6:12). And it is said about David the Prophet that he is: "*skilful in playing, a mighty man of valour, a man of war, prudent in speech.., and the Lord is with him*" (1 Sam 16:18). And it was said about good children that they are: "*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior*" (Ps 127:4). And it was also said about the men of Joshua whom he took to enter the promised land, that they were: "*Mighty men of valour*" (Josh 8:3)... All these and others are symbols of those who enter spiritual wars "*against spiritual hosts of wickedness. They are the strong in the spirit who put on the whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit*" (Eph 6:11-17).

E E E

The Holy Bible gave us many examples of such strong men.

For example Elijah the Prophet, who cleansed the land from all the prophets of Baal and from the prophets of Asherah (1 King 18:19,40). Likewise John the Baptist, about whom the angel who announced his birth said: "*He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*" (Lk 1:17). And Stephen the Deacon who was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Three synagogues disputed with him: "*And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which spoke*" (Acts 6:9,10).

St Paul listed the names of a chain of these strong men.

And he concluded by saying: "*And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of.. who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Of whom the world was not worthy*" (Heb 11:32-38).

The history of the church gave many examples of strong men.

For example, the martyrs who were strong in their faith, strong in their endurance and also strong in the wonders and miracles that God did through them. And there are other examples of heroes of the faith, who stood with all strength against heresies and heterodoxies. They defended the faith with strength in understanding, conviction and perseverance. An example of such men is St Athanasius the Apostolic. He stood against the heresy of Arius, endured isolation, exile, plots and accusations. And it was said to him: “The whole world is against you, Athanasius”. And he said : “And I am against the world”. Therefore they called him “Athanasius contramondum” which means : “Athanasius against the world”.

E E E

Man was created strong, with authority :

And God said : “*Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; have domination over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*” (Gen 1 :28,26). But man lost his natural strength when he sinned and began to experience fear... Then God returned and gave man strength through the work of His grace in him, through the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthening him by His promises and by being with him...

E E E

The spiritual man reminds us of the spirits of the angels.

Those about whom David the Prophet said: “*Bless the Lord, you his angels, who excel in strength*” (Ps 103:20). Those angels whom Daniel the Prophet said about one of them: “*My God sent his angel and shut the lion’s mouths*” (Dan 6:22). And in the Book of Kings: “*The angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand*” (2 Kings 19:35). The source of the angels’ strength is that they are spirits close to the Spirit of God. Whoever acts in a spiritual manner will be like them and will enter into a fellowship with the Holy Spirit and God will work in him.

Therefore, the spiritual man in whom the Spirit of God works, must be strong.

David the Prophet upon whom the spirit of the Lord came (1 Sam 16:13) was strong. He was stronger than Saul the King. And whenever the evil spirit troubled Saul, David used to take the harp and play it with his hand, then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him (1 Sam 16:23). Because the Spirit of the Lord that was in David is what cast away the distressing spirit. David was even stronger than the whole army who feared Goliath. As for David, he went forward to fight Goliath and said to him: “*This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand.. that all the earth may know that there is a God*” (1 Sam 17:46).

E E E

The spiritual man has no fear because God is with him:

And so David the Prophet said to the Lord, his Shepherd: “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for you are with me*” (Ps 23:4). **And he was able to sing a beautiful song:** “*Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident*” (Ps 27:3). **And also said:** “*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright*” (Ps 20:7).

Here is the strength of the spiritual man’s heart that is derived from God.

He has no fear because God is with him. God who said to Joshua: “*Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*”, “*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage*” (Josh 1:9,5).

He is also the One who said to St Paul the Apostle, in a vision at night: “*Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you*” (Acts 18:9,10). **He is also the One who said to Jeremiah the Prophet:** “*For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, “says the Lord,” to deliver you*” (Jer 1:18,19).

E E E

Therefore it amazes me when good weakens and evil gains strength before it!!

It amazes me when I see men of the world being strong, with a strong personality and confidence, declaring their opinions publicly and achieving their aims without shaking before the storms. While the men of God appear like weak and do not withstand! As if evil is stronger than good! Or evil is the one to prevail! Why then this weakness?! And why does not good withstand, announcing righteousness and calling for it, as the Apostles used to do : *“With all confidence, no one forbidding them” (Acts 28:31).*

E E E

Spiritual strength is not against gentleness and lowliness at all.

Many like gentleness, but they misunderstand it. Gentleness is distinguished by kindness and calmness. But it never stops a man from having a strong personality and still remains gentle and lowly. Here is perfection and virtue with no contradiction.

The Lord Jesus Christ was a model for this perfection. He is the One who said: *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29).* And at the same time, He had a strong personality, strong in His argument with all those who opposed Him from the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, the elders of the people and the Sadducees. And He used to silence them and spread His message with strength...

And He is the One about whom it was said: *“He is clothed with majesty; He has girded Himself with strength” (Ps 93:1)* And it was also said about Him: *“Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One, with your glory and your majesty” (Ps 45:3)... To Him is the power and the glory.*

Then it is possible for one to be gentle and strong. The important thing is: what is the concept of strength? And also, what is the concept of gentleness and lowliness?

E E E

What is the concept of strength? And what is the difference between false strength and true strength?

Strength is the strength of the spirit inside, expressing itself in a spiritual manner on the outside.

Strength is not violence. Christianity is against violence. And it is not the desire to dominate and subjugate others. And it is not rashness, hastiness and boldness with whoever is big. Like a student who challenges his teacher or a son who dares his father. And strength is not a Samsonian strength, in the body and muscles.. and it is not self assertiveness in the wrong way and priding oneself in defeating others, and it is not using authority at the wrong place...

And it is not also pretence by word, like when Peter said: *“Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be”*. *“Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you!”* (Mt 26:33,35)... And when he stepped in the practical reality, this strength did not show!!

E E E

Strength must be at all times and continually.

How easy it is for one to appear strong in a specific situation then before long, he loses his strength in another situation. Just like Samson who proved his strength in several situations, then finally weakened before Delilah (Judg 16).

E E E

Man weakens and loses his strength for many reasons.

He may weaken before the wishes of the one he loves, or weaken before the tears of some. He may also become weak due to much insistence or before emotional or financial pressure. He may also weaken if the temptation intensified, as it happened with David the Prophet. And generally, weakness without happens when one becomes weak within.

The spiritual man withstands all these reasons. And if it happened that he became weak and fell, he quickly arises. And he will repeat what was said in the Book of Micah the Prophet: *“Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise”* (Mic 7:8).

E E E

The strength of the spiritual man is a spiritual strength. And there are various reasons for this strength:

What are these reasons that are a source of his strength?

What also are the elements of this strength that is in his spirit, soul and thought?

What are its aspects in his life, his service and his virtues?

E E E

SOURCES OF THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AND ITS REASONS, ASPECTS AND ELEMENTS

SOURCES OF STRENGTH

There is no doubt that God Himself is the source of spiritual strength.

Therefore the Psalmist says: *“I will love you, O Lord, my strength” (Ps 18:1)*. And says: *“The Lord is my strength and song” (Ps 118:14)*. And also says: *“God is our refuge and strength” (Ps 46:1)*. And as St Paul the Apostle said about strength in the service: *“If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified” (1 Pet 4:11)*. And David chants about God’s strength that works in him and says: *“It is God who arms me with strength, He teaches my hands to make war” (Ps 18:32,34)*

Therefore any strength which is not from God is vain strength and will end up vanishing.

Like Pharaoh’s strength, for example, or the devil’s strength.. and the strength of Ahab who killed Naboth the Jezreelite .. and the strength of the counsel of Ahithophel! And like the strength of Goliath.. and all those who were strong through their slyness or their pride.

As for the spiritual man, his strength is from God who works in him. St Paul the Apostle says about that: *“To this end I also labour, striving according to his working which works in me mightily” (Col 1:29)*. *“According to the power that works in us” (Eph 3:20)*. It is the strength of the Holy Spirit.

As far as the strength is from God, we ask for it through prayer, and we receive it through faith and God's grace.

The spiritual man stands weak before the Lord, asking strength from Him and prays saying: "Lord, give me Your strength", "Without You I can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). And with prayer, God grants him strength, like Samson's last prayer and how God responded to him (Judg 16:28,30).

Faith gives man strength because all things are possible to him who believes. (Mk 9:23).

Even if he became weak at one time, faith will make his strength return to him. Didn't the Lord say: "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain," Move from here to there, and it will move" (Mt 17:20). And if the spiritual man felt that his faith is getting weak, he cries to the Lord saying: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mk 9:24). And so we find that faith and prayer work together, to bring strength to man. And with prayer, God struggles with man and never leaves him till he receives strength from Him. He prays with faith that strength will come to him...

E E E

And the spiritual man receives strength through the Holy Spirit which works in him.

And so the one who works with the Holy Spirit must be strong. Therefore if you find yourself weak at any time, examine your fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The reason for Samson's loss of strength is that the Spirit of God departed from him (Judg 16:20). Hold fast to the best of your ability, to the work of the Spirit in you. Prepare yourself through purity and holiness, till your temple becomes worthy of God's Spirit to dwell in you, and so you continue being strong.

E E E

Man keeps his spiritual strength by keeping God's word firm in him.

As far as God's commandment is placed before you and you love God's word and hide it in your heart and repeat it with your mouth, you'll find that God's word will give you strength and give you shame from sin, because: *"The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). How beautiful is the saying of St John the Apostle to the youth: "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one" (1 Jn 2:14).*

E E E

Man also receives strength from God through humbleness.

Because: *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jas 4:6). The proud thinks that he is going to prevail with his human strength, so he depends on his own strength and fails. As for the humble, because he feels his weakness, he depends on God's strength and God grants him this strength: "That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor 4:7).*

Consider how the devils said to St Macarius the Great: *"It is only with your humility that you defeated us"*. And how St Anthony said: *"I saw the devil's snares spread on the whole ground. So I said, "Lord, who will be saved? And He said: "The humble will be saved from them"...*

The humble who stand before God as weak, are those about whom the divine inspiration said: *"God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1 Cor 1:27). "That no flesh should glory in his presence"...*

The humble does not fear, because God is with him. But when does man truly fear? He fears when his heart becomes haughty and thinks that he is strong and that he has been raised up to heaven and sat on the Lord's throne and the devil became under his feet!!

Look at the saying of the great St Paul the Apostle: *"For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).*

E E E

The spiritual man becomes strong with the purity of the heart.

Because the pure heart is an impregnable fortress, and “*out of it spring the issues of life*” (Prov 4:23). And the pure heart is the one that rises above the lusts of the world. How beautiful is St Augustine’s saying about that: “I sat on top of the world when I felt that I lust for nothing and fear nothing”... Truly, a devoted heart is a strong heart, no desire will overcome it and nothing will make it fear.

With this devotion and absence of fear came the strength of the martyrs and the strength of the monks.

The martyrs experienced all types of temptations, threats and torments but they withstood all that with an amazing strength because there was no lust in their heart to respond to temptations, no fear to be disturbed by threats and also no fear of death. They kept their strength before all the kings, rulers and judges. They were stronger than those who persecuted them.

Likewise the monks because they freed themselves from lusts, they were able to overcome the world. They were strong in enduring their solitude, living in mountains and wilderness, even living in tombs. They were also strong in the diabolic wars. And they were strong in their spiritual effect on others. Princes became monks because they were stronger than the lust of monarchy. The devils tried to frighten St Anthony with all horrific scenes, but he was stronger than them. He was able to overcome them by his humility and faith. St Macarius also did not fear when he slept in a tomb, his head on a skull and the devils talked to him. But his heart was strong with faith and did not fear...

E E E

There are also people who are strong by nature.

God meant them to be born like that, with a strong heart, a strong mind and a strong personality. For example, Samson, John the Baptist, Elijah and David.

We move to another point which is the elements of strength:

ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH

1. The strength of love and sacrifice:

The Song of Solomon talked about the strength of love and said: “Love is as strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it” (Song 8:6,7). And St Paul the Apostle said: “Love never fails” (1 Cor 13:8).

This is true love that is not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn 3:18). Maybe the deepest love is that of the mother for her babe and the love of David for Jonathan (2 Sam 1:26). Even his love for his son Absalom who betrayed him and how he wept bitterly when he heard about his death (2 Sam 18:33).

The strength of love shows in sacrifice and the strongest is self -sacrifice.

This matter became clear in the lives of the martyrs and how they sacrificed everything, even life, for their love of the Lord. The strength of this love also showed in the lives of the fathers the monks and the hermits, who left the world and all that is in it, “who dwelt in the mountains and wilderness because of their great love for Christ, the King”. Also the love of the fathers the Apostles who, because of their love for the Lord and His kingdom, endured flogging, imprisonment, stoning, vagrancy and also death. And they also said to the Lord : “ We have left all and followed you ” (Mt 19:27). And St Paul the Apostle says about that: “ I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ” (Phil 3:8).

The strength of love also shows if it was from the heart.

The Holy Bible said about that: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:5) (Mt 22:37). And the word” all” indicates that there should not be any other love in your heart to compete with the love of God. And the Lord said about that: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt 10:37). Even he who loves his life more than God is not worthy of Him. And the Lord said about that: “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Mt 10:39).

Love leads to sacrifice and the strength of sacrifice has reasons.

There is a sacrifice because of love, as it was said: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16)*. Like the martyrs who sacrificed because of their love for the Lord. There is a strength in sacrifice and its reason is obedience. Like our father Abraham when he raised the knife to sacrifice his only son, a burnt offering for the Lord. And there is a strength in sacrifice and its reason is asceticism, like our fathers the monks.

E E E

We move to the strength of faith:

The strength of faith shows in how it believes in everything. Believes that God is able to make dry ground in the midst of the sea and a spring of water from the rock and to make miracles and wonders. The faith that made Peter walk on the water (Mt 14:29). The faith that the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace (Ex 14:14). Faith that makes you offer life for the Lord and offer your tithes out of your needs. Faith that says: *“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me” (Ps 23)*. Faith that : *“All things work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28)*. The strong faith in eternity that makes man get ready for it with all his might.

E E E

The power of prayer is also among the elements of strength :

May be one of its deepest pictures is what was said about the time of the fathers the Apostles: *“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:31)*. And also the prayer of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who: *“Prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow. She continued praying before the Lord. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk” (1 Sam 1:9-13)*.

And the powerful prayer is also: a prayer with faith, with insistence, with understanding and with warmth. A prayer that the spiritual man says with his heart completely connected to God, and he feels that he is in the presence of the Lord..

It could be a struggle with God, as it was said about our father Jacob that he wrestled with God and with people and prevailed. And that he wrestled with God until the breaking of day, and he took hold of the Lord and said: *“I will not let you go unless you bless me”* (Gen 32:24-29).

E E E

Among the elements of strength is also: the power of repentance:

If the spiritual man sins and repents, the power of his repentance shows in his deep contrition, his regret and his tears. As it happened with David the Prophet who said: *“I am weary with my groaning, all might I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears”* (Ps 6). And the repentance of the spiritual man shows its power in its continuity and how he never turns back to the life of sin. But, more than that, he continues growing in the spiritual life, proceeding towards perfection. An example of that is the repentance of St Augustine, Moses the Black, Mary of Egypt and Pelagia. Their repentance turned them from sinners to saints.

E E E

The strength of the spiritual man shows in his victory over the spiritual wars and temptations.

As the strength of Joseph the Upright showed in his amazing victory over the temptations of the wife of Potiphar (Gen 39:9). And saying in practical determination: *“How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”*

The strength of the spiritual man does not show in prevailing over others but in prevailing over sin, no matter how the perils are fierce, whether from the devil or from evil men or from false brethren (2 Cor 11:26). As for the one who weakens and falls, the saying of the Holy Bible applies to him: *“You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting”* (Dan 5:27).

E E E

The spiritual man, if he sins, has the strength to confess his sin.

Many find great difficulty in confessing their sins. As for St Augustine, he has published his confessions in a book that was read by all his generation and the generations that followed. And the spiritual man also, if he felt

that he has done wrong to anyone, has the strength to apologize to that person and confess his offence without trying to justify it or argue about it...

And if he felt that he is wrong, he is able to easily give up his opinion without stubbornness, like some people do...

E E E

The strength in self control:

+The spiritual man is strong within. He is able to control himself, as the Holy Bible said: *“He who rules his spirit (is better) than he who takes a city” (Prov 16:32)* He controls his thoughts so they would not astray in what is not suitable, following the saying of the Apostle: *“Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:15)*. He also controls his senses so he would not sin by looking, hearing or touching. He also controls his heart’s feelings and emotions. He controls his tongue too, so no sinful word would come out of his mouth and also no unnecessary word. St James the Apostle said about that: *“If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (Jas 3:2)*. Here is the inner strength in controlling the self, the thought, the senses, the feelings and also the tongue.

The spiritual man also controls his instincts and his emotions, and rises above the level of provocation...

The outside provocation does not disturb him within, but he becomes stronger than it. For example, he does not lose his temper if he experienced an offence, and he: *“Repays no one evil for evil” (Rom 12:17)*. He does not answer back a sinful word with one like it. Evil does not overcome him but he overcomes evil with good ((Rom 12:21). He is able to control anger, is strong and does not lose his temper.

E E E

+The spiritual man is distinguished by the strength of endurance:

He can endure hardships and tribulations. And if he was afflicted by a temptation, it would not shake him within, but he withstands. He is capable of enduring it, like Job the Righteous. He also endures the mistakes of others. The mistaken is the weak one who failed to control himself, but he who endures is the strong one. Therefore the Apostle said: *“We then who are strong*

ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom 15:1). The one who is strong within is capable of forgiving the wrong doer, which means that he has the ability, not only to endure, but also to forgive and to do good to those who hate him (Mt 5:44).

The weak man needs the one who will bear him. As for the strong, he endures others. He endures the weak man's bad temper, his faults, words and actions. The spiritual strength shows here, in the ability to turn the other cheek, to walk the second mile and to persevere everything...

+The spiritual man is distinguished by a strong personality:

He is strong in his mind, his understanding, his ability to comprehend and draw a conclusion, strong in his memory, quick intuition, wisdom and good action. He also has a strong will, strong determination, strong in the wisdom of his action and good management of matters. He is also strong as he does not shake before any threat or terrorization. The saying of the Holy Bible applies to him: "*Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!*" (Zech 4:7).

His strength also shows in every work he does and any responsibility that he undertakes.

He is a man capable of bearing responsibilities, no matter how they seem great and dangerous and he does his work with all seriousness, honesty, accuracy and commitment and achieves the anticipated results by correct implementation. He is also firm and does not hesitate. No matter how many obstacles occur, he does not worry, become troubled or fear. But he stands like a fixed mountain, confident in God who works with him and by him...

He has an effect on the society in which he lives and it may extend to generations.

The spirituals are strong and they do not get affected by the environment surrounding them: "*And do not be conformed to this world*" (Rom 12:2). But they have the ability to affect society by the thought, inclination and spirituality, like the early fathers did, till it was said: The Athanasius period, St Anthony's period... They affect others by their example or their writings, the influence of which extends to many generations...

We move to another point, which is:

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Strength in the word, the service and the preaching:

Every word that comes out of the spiritual man is strong, effective and does not return void but it shall accomplish the Lord's work (Is 55:11). His words are strong in their effect on others and his service is aflame and fruitful. St Paul the Apostle was taken captive and in chains before Felix the ruler. When he spoke about righteousness, judgement and self-control, Felix was afraid (Acts 24:25). And when he spoke before Agrippa the king, Agrippa said to him: "*You almost persuade me to become a Christian*" (Acts 26:28). And time will fail us if we talked about the service of St Paul, its strength and how it spread. Also the strength of the service at the time of our fathers the Apostles...

By the strength of the fathers' service, the unarmed Christianity stood before the Roman Empire with all its influence and cruelty.

And before the Jews with all their intrigues and plots. And stood before the philosophies of the period. And with one sermon from St Peter, three thousand joined the faith and were baptized on the same day (Acts 2:41). It is the power of the Holy Spirit that works in the word.

And by the strength of the fathers' service:

"The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). "And the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly" (Acts 6:7). "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

St Paul said about the strength of the service and the servants: "*Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor 15:58).

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The spiritual man is strong in his service, in his sermons, in the spiritual principles that he calls for, in his spiritual effect, in his fruit, striving according to His working which works in him mightily (Col 1:29). He is strong in his witnessing for the Lord, saying with David the Prophet: *“I will speak of your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed”* (Ps 119:46).

TYPES OF WEAKNESS CAUSES AND REMEDIES

We have talked much about strength and about how the spiritual man should be characterized by strength. But in spite of that, we do not deny that there are weaknesses.

Even some of those who are spiritual, despite their general strength - there are weaknesses in their lives.

We have seen that in the life of Elijah the great Prophet (1 Kings 19), and in the life of David the Prophet and the king (1 Sam 25) , (2 Sam 11). We have also seen this weakness in the life of Samson the mighty (Judg 16), and in the life of Solomon the wise (1 Kings 11), and in the life of Peter the Apostle (Mt 26), (Gal 2:11).. and many more.

What are the types of this weakness? How can we get rid of it? What is our look to the weak and in what manner do we deal with them?

TYPES OF WEAKNESS :

1. One may have a weakness that is not a fault of his.

Like a weakness that was inherited, whether in his body or his mentality.

He was born with a weak health or in a low social level or God allowed that for him, as the Lord said about the man who was blind from birth: *“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him”* (Jn 9:3).

The spiritual man may also suffer from the physical weakness. The Lord said about that, to His disciples in Gethsemane: *“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Mt 26:41). The physical weakness may stand as an obstacle for some spiritual practices. The spiritual man should not get annoyed

because of that, but he has to do as much as his body can endure. What is important is having a strong and good spirit...

E E E

2. A man may have weak nerves:

Therefore his endurance is weak. He quickly rages and gets angry. He needs a strong man to bear him. As the Apostle said: *"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of weak" (Rom 15:1)*. Then the strong is the one who can bear. As for the angry who sins against others in his fury, he is the weak...

This angry man needs to treat the weakness that is in him, I mean the anger.

And that is by keeping away from what causes anger and from the dealings that make him fall in nervousness. And to practise spiritual exercises about keeping out of the way of anger. And on the physical side, to strengthen his nerves. He has to slow down in his actions and in his fury, and think about the bad results of anger before he gets angry. And to read much about the gentle and the calm. He should not surrender himself to this weakness. It is not acceptable from him to say: "This is my nature!" He is supposed to overcome his nature.

E E E

3. There is another type of people who are weak in their will.

Weak in doing the good that he wants, like what the Apostle says by their tongue: *"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice". "I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the person who wills to do good" (Rom 7:19,21)*...

Or maybe, it is in the nature of this person to hesitate. His will is unable to decide what he should do. Or if he decided on something, he is unable to stand firm and other thoughts could entice him.

But there are many exercises to strengthen the will. One of them is to consult a trusted spiritual father and to take action without delay. Fasting is also another way to strengthen the will. Also through compulsion, correct

understanding and strong conviction. And if he is controlled by a specific habit, he has to resist it with all his strength without surrendering to it. Because this surrender will add weakness to his own weakness...

E E E

4. Another person is troubled by his weak faith:

He has a theoretical faith, but this faith becomes weak in practicality, and when faced by a problem, he fears and collapses before it. His fear proves his weak faith in the Lord who keeps him and protects him; while the strong man never weakens, collapses or fears before problems. The children of Israel feared before the Red Sea, due to their weak faith. As for Moses, he did not fear but was strong in his faith and made strength enter the souls of those who were weak and frightened. And he said to them: “*Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will accomplish for you today. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace*” (Ex 14:13,14).

Therefore, try to strengthen your faith...

Read much about persons with strong faith. And read about God’s interference in the problems and troubles of His children, His wonders and His miracles. And if you asked a request from God, your faith should not become weak if His response to your prayer was delayed. But be confident that God will work and He will definitely come to save you even in the last watch of the night.

It happened once that the faith of Peter the Apostle weakened when he was walking on the sea with the Lord, because he looked to the fierce waves and not to the Lord, so he became afraid and cried out. The Lord saved him and rebuked him by saying: “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*” (Mt 14:31). And if your faith weakened, cry out to the Lord with that person who said:

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mk 9:24).

E E E

5. Another type of weakness is soul weakness.

There maybe a man whose soul is weak, the type which the Holy Bible calls: “Faint- hearted”. He quickly becomes worried, troubled, collapses and doubts. He cannot endure, and always needs someone to support him. He maybe old in age, but has the moral of the young. Where then do we stand from that type of weakness?

Our Stand From the Weak:

If you are weak, do not despair.

And if you see somebody who is weak, do not despise his weakness, as the Apostle says:

“Comfort the faint hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (1 Thess 5:14).

Open a gap of hope to give light to those who walk in darkness, who are afraid and troubled. Talk to them about hope and about the work of the Holy Spirit and how God interferes, even at the last moment. Tell them stories about those who fell then stood up and were counted among the victorious and conquerors.

The strong spiritual man does not boast before the weak, belittle him or defame him. But, on the contrary, he strengthens him and offers him the strength that is in him, which God gave to him. He supports the weak who fell and give them hope in repentance.. and reminds them that: “ *A righteous man may fall seven times and rise again*” (Prov 24:16).

E E E

God Himself supports the weak who are like the children. And the Psalm says:

“The Lord preserves the children” (Ps 116:6).

And in some translations, it is said : “ Preserves the simple”, no matter how fainthearted they are.

The Lord said about sowing the seed that bears fruit and produces: some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty, that it was good (Mt 13:23). But we may consider the good only the one that produces a hundred fold, ignoring the one that produces sixty. But due to God's kindness to the weak, He considered the one that produces only thirty as good too. It is enough that it produced fruit...

Truly He is the God of the weak, and the God of the poor.

He used to visit the tax-collectors and the sinners, attend their feasts and never despised them like the scribes and Pharisees. But He called one of them, Matthew, and made him one of the Apostles. He also entered the house of Zacchaeus and said: "*Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham*" (Lk 19:9). And after the resurrection, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons (Mk 16:9).

God never stood against the weak but against the proud.

Therefore the Holy Bible says: "*God resists the proud*" (Jas 4:6) "*He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the rubbish heap, that He may seat him with princes - with the princes of his people*" (Ps 113). The Lord even says: "*But on this one will I look, on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word*" (Is 66:2)...

E E E

Truly, every man is subject to weakness.

The Holy Bible told us about the falls of the saints and the weaknesses of the Apostles and Prophets. The one who despises the fall of the weak would be an easy target for the wars of the enemy and will fall. How deep is the advice of St Paul the Apostle when he said: "*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also*" (Heb 13:3).

The spiritual man does not judge his weak brother but prays for him.

He feels pity for him and asks help for him from the Lord. He knows that it is not for every person to reach the high levels of spirituality. And not everyone has received a great amount of grace and that gifts are not all the same: "*For one star differs from another star in glory*" (1 Cor 15:41).

REMEDIES FOR WEAKNESS

Some advices for the weak man who feels his weakness:

1. Keep away from the sphere of sin which weakens your will.

Stay away from the offences and all the causes which lead you to sin, and you cannot resist them. Distance yourself from every bad effect. Do not say to yourself that you are stronger than warfares. It has been said about sin that, "...She has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men" (Prov. 7:26). If you are weak, admit your weakness and look for the cause and avoid it...

The advice to keep away from the causes of sin is laid by the church at the beginning of the Morning Prayer, with the First Psalm: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful".

E E E

2. Seek strength from God and make your weakness a field for your prayers.

As the chanter said in the Psalm: "The Lord is my strength ... and He has become my salvation" (Ps 118:14). And also said: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive" (Ps 124:2,3). "Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Ps 127:1). St Paul the Apostle says: "...but all forsook me, but the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (2Tim. 4:16,17). Therefore, seek strength from above and say: "My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth" (Ps 121:2).

Deepen your prayer. Many are the weak who received strength through prayer and became victorious and sang: "For the battle is the Lord's", "For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few" (1 Sam 17:47 & 14:6).

E E E

3. No matter how weak you are, do not despair.

Never lose hope, as despair destroys the soul and makes you surrender to the enemy, and continue doing wrong, as if there is no use of the struggle!! Set before you examples which were worse than yours and the Lord saved them from their sins. Encourage yourself and say: The Lord who saved Moses the Black, Mary of Egypt, Augustine and Mary Magdalene... surely He will save me too...

This does not mean that you lean on your weakness and keep doing it relying on help from God to arrive!! But try hard.

E E E

4. Strive with all your strength, no matter how little.

And listen to the saying of St Paul the Apostle rebuking the Hebrews: *"You have not resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin"* (Heb 12:4). All David's weapon was stone which he put in the sling and drew near the line. By him God defeated Goliath the champion (1 Sam 17:48-49).

Your strife - no matter how weak you are - means your rejection of sin and your wish to get rid of it.

E E E

5. Concentrate on resisting the repeated, constant sins.

Because they are the points of weakness in you. These which you repeat in every confession and continually complain of them. Concentrate on them in particular with constant exercises to resist them, forcing your morals on yourself, even punish and rebuke yourself in each fall, seeking God's help.

E E E

6. Renewal of the mind, to reach good understanding.

St Paul the Apostle says: *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Rom 12:2). This means changing your perspective in the matters where you do wrong, by renewing your mind.

Many fall because of misunderstanding the meaning of strength, or the meaning of dignity or due to wrong understanding of the meaning of freedom ...etc. They all need renewal of the mind, good understanding of the real meaning of strength, dignity and freedom. Such new understanding and its acceptance keep them from falling.

E E E

7. Your weakness disappears if the love of God enters your heart:

You become weak before sin if you love it more than God and His commandments. If the love enters your heart, it will throw out the love of sin from within. Thus you become strong to resist any temptation... He was right this saint who said that repentance is to exchange a desire for a desire. It means that the desire of the spirit replaces the lust of the flesh, and the love of God replaces the love of the world...

So, follow all the spiritual means that lead you to the love of God. Also associate with those who love Him and read about those who loved Him and follow their example.

E E E

8. Remember that many who were weak became strong and became saints.

Peter the Apostle who feared and weakened before a servant girl and denied Christ (Mt 26:69-70), he himself stood before the high priest and said to him:

"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

He said to the rulers, elders and priests: *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19,20).*

Moses the Black, who at the beginning of his monastic life, was unable to resist the thoughts, and he went eleven times to his confession father, in one night... He became a spiritual guide to many monks...

E E E

9. Whenever you become weak, remember the working grace of God...

The grace that is able to strengthen you... So, remember the saying of St Paul the Apostle: *“But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more”* (Rom 5:20). Grace abounds to protect you against sin...And also remember: *“For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Cor 12:10)... **Weak by myself but strong with the grace of God working with me... which strengthens me.**

E E E

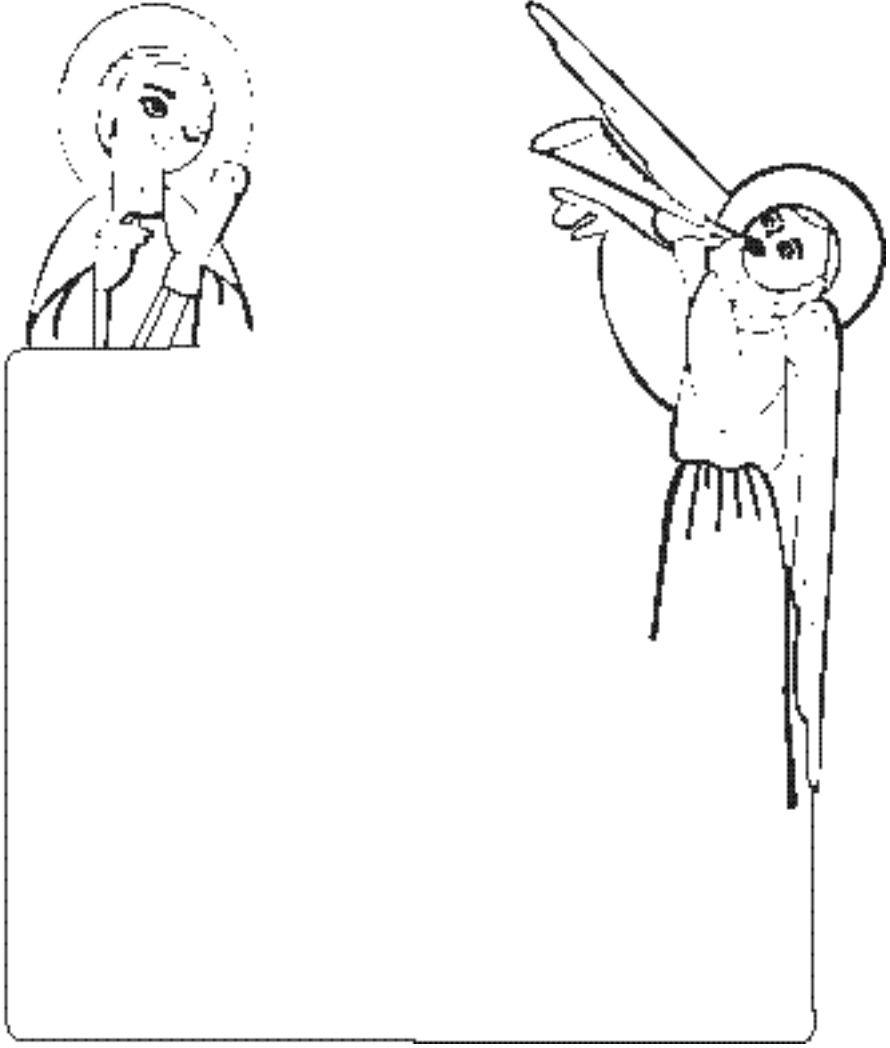
10. Be aware of the fact that God is always with the weak.

“He has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty” (1 Cor 1:27)... **In those, His strength appears.**

I remember once that I wrote in my memoirs: **“The devil said to God: “Leave me the strong as I am capable of them, but the weak I cannot manage, as in their feeling of their weakness, they resort to You and fight me with Your strength...”**



CHAPTER 6



DOES NOT DEPEND ON HIS HUMAN HAND

As some exaggerated the importance of grace till they neglected the side of struggle and work, so did some by exaggerating the importance of work and struggle, till they neglected the importance of GOD'S hand in their life! They depended in their spirituality on their human hand.

As for the spiritual man, he believes deep within him that it is dangerous to depend on his human hand. He tries his best but he does not depend on his effort, rather on God's work in it. And as the Psalmist said:

“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps 127:1).

E E E

It is true that every work done by man alone, without God sharing in it, will definitely end up to vainglory and self conceit. As for the work in which you feel that God is the one who worked in you, and it was His grace that gave you strength to complete it, and you were just a tool in his Divine hands..., that work would be for the glory of God, praising and thanking Him.

The self disappears in that Divine work and God alone appears...

Therefore you must have God in your work, because He says: “Without Me you can do nothing”. Beware of working alone, without God!. Otherwise you'll relate success to your own determination, the strength of your will, your intelligence and ability, your righteousness, godliness, your strong resistance to sin and your success in your exercises. And so you'll become centered around yourself and God will disappear!!

E E E

There is no doubt that there are certain tasks done completely by God, without any interference of the human factor in it. We'll give some examples for that:

+ Miracles of raising the dead:

It is obvious that the dead person did not raise himself but the Lord raised him without the interference of human strength. You too were dead because of the sin and Christ raised you. Another example is incurable diseases, which were symbols of sin, such as the leper, the one with a withered hand, the paralytic, the maimed and the blind. God healed all of them without their human hand.

Therefore the spiritual man says:

“Consider me, Lord, like this one who is dead and is unable to raise himself, and like the leper who is unable to purify himself”.

You, Lord, can raise the dead and heal the leper.

You, Lord, have worked with many, who were helpless and incapable of saving themselves, and you saved them. Like our father Isaac.. The wood was placed on the altar, the fire was ready and the knife was raised above him. But you, Lord, interfered in the most crucial moment and saved Isaac.

E E E

The spiritual man also remembers the examples of the barren who could not bring forth children through her own effort, but through the Grace of God she'll have more than all” (Is 54). And he says to the Lord:

“You opened her closed womb and said to her gently, “Sing, O barren, you who have not borne!. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited. For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you” (Is 54).

Yes, may be your soul is barren and never gave birth to one virtue on her own, but through the Holy Spirit, she'll have many children and God will bless her children in her.

But without the Spirit of God, she'll never give birth or produce fruit. Because: “Children are a heritage from the Lord”, as the Holy Bible said. He only is able to open the womb of the barren, as He did with Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hanna and Elizabeth.

Consider yourself like: The dead who cannot rise on his own, the leper who needs the Lord to purify him, the barren who, on her own, would not give birth, but the Lord is the One to open her womb. Call the Lord then from all your heart.

Consider Samson when he depended on his own strength and when he depended on the Lord...

What was the end of his mighty human power that was able to remove the city's gate, kill the lion and terrify people? It ended by destruction as the enemy caught Samson, put out his eyes and bound him with bronze fetters and he became a grinder in the prison, like an animal. But finally, when he said: "*O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!*" (*Judg 16:28*). Then God gave him the strength and the ones he killed this time were more than the ones he killed all through his life; because the hand of the Lord worked with him.

E E E

Ask then for God's interference in your life. But that does not mean to sleep and get lazy, then ask the Lord. But you have to struggle with all your might, and not to depend only on this might because without the Lord you can do nothing...

Work, but do not work on your own. Do not depend on your human hand, your strength, intelligence and godliness. You must know that without God you cannot succeed. And if you did, your success will be a failure because it will turn into food for the self and for vainglory.

E E E

+ I like the phrase that St Paul the Apostle said when, through him, God healed the lame man at the gate of the temple. So the people were filled with wonder and ran to Peter and John amazed. Then Peter said to them:

"Why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus" (Acts 3:12).

+ Peter said these words because he already tried the human hand before and he profited nothing, at least at two important incidents:

The first was while fishing: After toiling all night with all his craftiness, experience and ability in fishing and the result was what he said to the Lord: **“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing”**.

But when the Lord entered his ship and guided him to where to let down his nets into the deep, according to His wish, they caught a great number of fish so that their net was breaking.

The second experience for Peter was the incident when he denied the Lord. He depended on himself much and on his love for the Lord and on his determination. So he said to the Lord: “Even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble . Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you”...

But Peter who depended on himself, denied Christ before a servant girl...

His good intention and his will did not benefit him, not even his love, determination and enthusiasm that made him cut off the ear of the slave...

Would that he turned his determination into prayer. Would that he said: “Lord, give me strength because I am weak, so I would not deny you. Strength by which I can withstand if I am riddled by the devil”...

E E E

Many struggle on their own. They toil, think, prepare and plan for their spiritual life, without caring about bringing God in with them.

I'll give you examples by which God wanted to prove the failure of the self with all its gifts and strength.

Samson whose eyes were put out is an example of the failure of the human hand in its strength. Solomon who burned incense to foreign Gods is an example of the failure of the human hand in its wisdom. David who committed adultery and killed is an example of the failure of the human hand, in spite of the many gifts. Peter the Apostle when he denied the Lord Jesus Christ is an example of the failure of the human hand despite of his enthusi-

asm, zeal and loyalty. Peter who spent all night and caught nothing is an example of the failure of the human hand in spite of his experience and craftiness.

Therefore, if you experienced the failure of the human hand in all its strength, wisdom, gifts, enthusiasm and zeal, craftiness and experience. If you experienced that, do not live separate from God or struggle without His support.

Bring God in with you in the small and the great.

Many ask God only in great matters. As for the small ones, they trust their own strength, so they fail and fall .

That is why the devil looks after these small matters and concentrates on them to make man fall.

Therefore the saints are always beware of a devil called “the devil of small matters”.

And for that reason, it is said in the Song of Solomon: “*Catch us foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines*” (Song 2:15). As for you, bring God in with you, even in the small matters.

Do not trust your strength, no matter how it seemed a trifle thing.

Many of the saints fell in sins that they thought were “sins of the beginners”. As for you, do not belittle a specific sin and do not think that there is an insignificant sin that does not need help from the Lord. Seek the Lord always to work with you in everything, whether it seemed hard or easy.

Do not say: This is an easy matter. I will do it on my own. And that is a difficult matter, and I will need the Divine help for it. The easy matter is the one where God stands by your side in it. Otherwise it would have been difficult. And the difficult matter is what you do on your own, without God, even if it seemed to be easy.

E E E

I like a fairy tale that was said about Noah’s Ark. Eight members were in it: Noah and his wife, his three sons and their three wives.. But..

It was said that there was a ninth on the Ark, who was steering the wheel. Without Him, the ark would not have been saved. This ninth was God. Yes, would anyone believe that Noah entered the Ark without God entering with him ?!

There is no doubt that the divine providence is what guides us. Without it, our human hand would not be able to work. We plant and we water, but God gives the increase . Then it is “*neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*” (1 Cor 3:7).

Without the two angels who came to Lot, he would have perished with Sodom. They reached out their hands and pulled Lot when he took his time and they hurried him to get out...

If God did not send His angel to shut the lions’ mouths, Daniel would have been lost in the den. And if it was not for God’s angel, Peter would have remained in prison.

E E E

Therefore do not concentrate your thinking on yourself, your gifts, ability and understanding, your will, determination, planning, experience and your chastity. Fear much lest you are depending on a human hand...

Struggle, but not on your own. And work, but do not depend on your work. Think, but: “*Lean not on your own understanding*”. Look at the electric bulbs; they may look strong and beautiful and from the best quality, with good wires and correct connections. But if the electric current does not go through them, they will never give light. The same with you.

There is a verse that I would like you to place always before you, like a slogan, which is:

“*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain*” (Ps 127:1).

It is true, you must work with the Lord. He builds and you pass to Him the bricks, stones and the mortar; or you become a good brick in His hands. But do not think that it is you who is building your life, alone, without Him. Listen to St Paul the Apostle when he says: “*I can do everything, through Christ who strengthens me*”.

He can do everything, but not on his own, rather in Christ who gives him strength. And if Christ does not strengthen him, he would not be able to do anything.

Therefore we say in the hymn: “Take hold of my hand and lead me”. Say to Him : “Lord , without you I can do nothing. Lead me, guide me, show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths”. “Lord, open the boy’s eyes that he may see”. Give me strength and support. Work in my weakness.

E E E

The Lord Jesus Christ said a beautiful phrase to His Disciples whom He trained by Himself:

“Tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Lk 24:49).

And what about all our experience, our knowledge and our spirituality? Or what about our long discipleship to You? ...Do not depend on yourselves. Wait for the Lord’s promise, wait till you are endued with power from on high.” *You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me.” Only at that time and not before...*

The same with you, do not work till you receive power from above. Seek this strength with all your weakness, your prayers, your actions and then you’ll be a witness to Him. ...

Then it is not with your human hand, even if you were one of the twelve Disciples, but with the power that you’ll be endued from on high. It is not with your strength or with your godliness but with the name of Jesus Christ the maimed will be able to walk. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it.

Any sin that faces you, say to it: “I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts”, like David when he met Goliath. Enter for the Lord in the battle, because the war is for the Lord, be certain that the Lord is fighting with you. And if you do not feel Him, struggle until the breaking of day and say to Him: “I will not let you go unless you come with me. And if you do not come with me, I will not go to the war”, like what was said by Barak, the commander of the army, to Deborah the prophetess (Judg 4:8).

Be like the house that is built on the rock “and the rock was Christ” then you will not fall. Do not build your house on yourself because you are dust and ashes, and the house that is built on dust, great will be its fall...

The angels of the seven churches were in the right hand of Christ (Rev 2). “The right hand of the Lord does valiantly”. (Ps 118:16). You, too, remain in the Lord’s right hand. Be like the child who walks on the road peacefully because his father is holding his hand. Say to Him: “Do not leave me to myself and my intelligence. Hold my hand”. “O Lord, if I was left alone with my mind and my intelligence, away from You!” I would have then perished!!

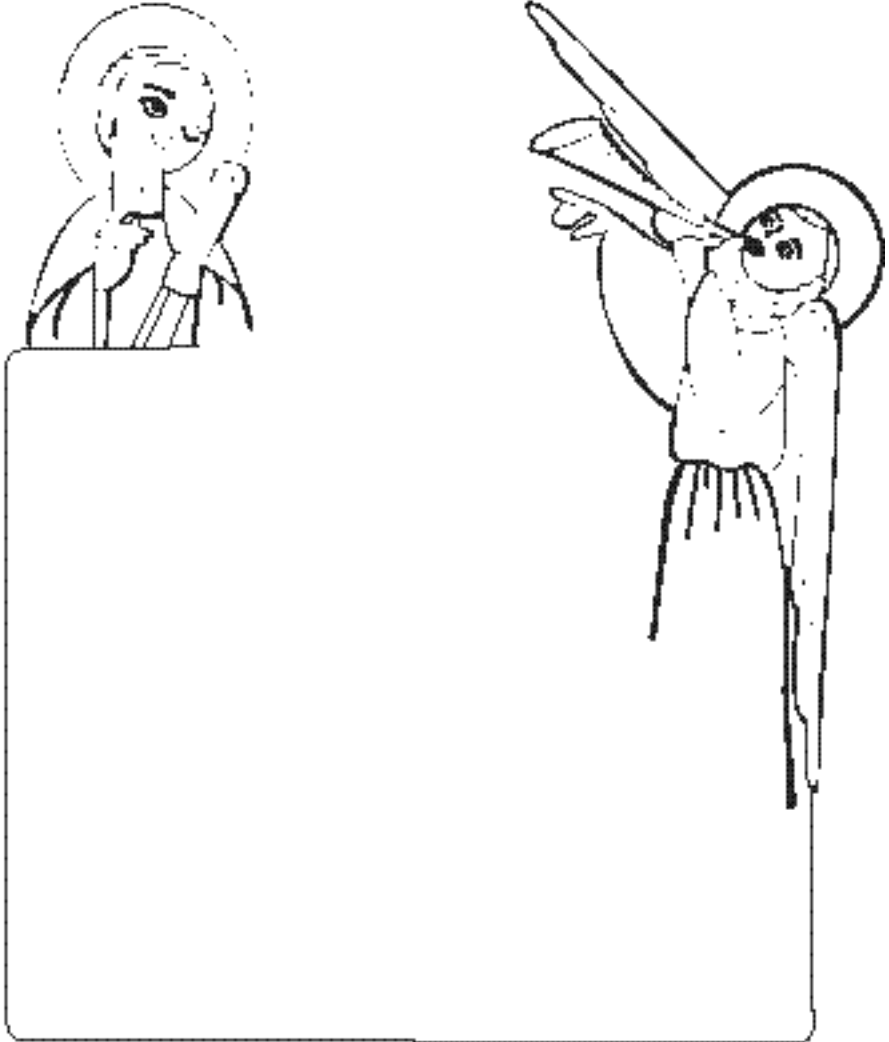
Here is the Apostle saying: “Do not be haughty, but fear” (Rom 11:20). And if you felt fear, say to Him: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Ps 23:4).

This is the spiritual man who progresses on his holy path, depending on the Lord’s strength that supports, guides and protects him and also works in him...

He never depends on his human hand... or any other human hand, away from God..



CHAPTER 7



IN THE CONCEPT OF REST AND LABOUR

There are many types of rest:

Rest of the body, of the soul, of the thought, of the conscience, of the spirit... and rest from problems... And there is real rest and false or sinful rest...

One might find his rest in a specific hobby or a kind of sport for example, or in a type of art like drawing, music or poetry, or he might find his rest in reading or solving puzzles. There is nothing wrong with all that, as far as it is a correct means. But still, it is not the real rest.

Some may find rest in the enjoyment with friends, companions and acquaintances, with the one family spirit, socializing, chatting pleasantly or cooperating together in a public work. This is a correct type of rest, as far as there is nothing wrong in it. But it is a specific level of rest, and there is one that is higher.

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There is a false rest and a sinful rest:

Ahab the king rested when he managed to work out an unjust plot to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. Jezebel, the king's wife, helped him in that as she wanted to fulfil his wish even by committing a number of sins. Both did not find rest as God sent Elijah the Prophet to Ahab the king to tell him: *"In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours"* (1 Kings 21:19). **And the same thing happened to his wife also (2 Kings 9:9:36).**

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One may think that he will find rest by smoking or drinking:

Or he may take some drugs , then the matter could turn to addiction. And he does not realize that neither smoking nor drinking will solve his problem. But it is another problem added to what he already has. Drugs only

distract him and make him forget his problems for a while. But these problems remain with no solution, adding to them a more dangerous problem which is drug addiction...

Another person may see his rest in the fulfilment of a specific desire:

Such as revenging for himself from somebody who insulted him or harmed him. He will then answer the word with two, then he rests! The same if he managed to defeat his rival. All that is false and sinful rest.

One may also feel inner rest if he fulfilled his desire in grandeur, possession, lust of the flesh or spending time in entertainment and frivolity...!! Or practising the rest of his sinful habits. And by doing all that, he would be destroying himself...

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If that is the case, let us then search for the real rest and how it should be:

The first mention of rest in the Holy Bible is the verse that says: “*And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all his work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made*” (Gen 2:2,3). We find here that rest is accompanied by a blessing and sanctification and presents to us an important principle, which is:

The sanctified rest in completing a good deed:

Because God looked at what He had created and saw that it was good (Gen 1:21). And He rested for that. In the same way, we find another type of rest after completing the act of redemption, when the Lord, while on the Cross, said: “*It is finished*” (Jn 19:30). He also found rest in saying to the Father:

“I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (Jn 17:4).

The spiritual man finds rest deep inside himself when he completes every good deed that has been entrusted to him, and when he completes his service. Like St Paul the Apostle when he said: “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good*

fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day” (2 Tim 4:6,8).

The Lord Jesus Christ rested when He completed the act of redemption, raised from Hades all those who died in hope and opened for them the gate of Paradise. Then He defeated death by His Resurrection on the dawn of Sunday.

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Therefore we sanctify Sunday and consider it the day of the Lord, the day of the real rest.

Because in it , the Lord gave Man rest from the punishment of sin and from death. And by His Resurrection, He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 15:20,23). And so we rest on Sunday. The Sabbath was the day on which God the Creator rested, and Sunday is when God the Redeemer and Saviour rested.

Resting on that day does not mean only rest of the body but also of the spirit.

The spiritual man finds his rest on that day in the house of the Lord, in the Holy Mass with all its tunes and blessing, listening to the Holy readings, the sermon and partaking in the Holy Communion. He also finds rest in his service on the Lord’s day. His spirit rests by all that and he does not feel tired in whatever effort his service needs. He remembers what St John the Apostle said in the first chapter of his Revelation:

“I was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10).

There is no doubt that when he was in the spirit, he found a heartfelt rest that made him forget the suffering and exile on the island of Patmos and nominated him for this wonderful, divine revelation.

Resting on the Lord’s Day does not mean laziness and sluggishness and it does not mean that we do nothing at all, as the Pharisees used to interpret the Lord’s commandment (Deut 5:13,14). The Lord’s commandment meant worldly work and not spiritual work. Then it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Mt 12:12).

Our spirits rest in the Lord and the Lord rests in our spirits.

As it was said in the Psalm: *“This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it” (Ps 132:14)*. God truly rests in the pure heart. He rests in His saints and is also glorified in them (2 Thess 1:10). And as God finds rest in the spiritual man, likewise:

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The spiritual man finds rest in giving rest to others:

He finds pleasure and rest when he comforts others. His heart rests and his spirit rests in each labour of love that he does for others. He finds a heart-felt rest whenever he saves a wretched, gives charity to a poor, shows sympathy towards an orphan, solves a problem for one in trouble or comforts a sad person. He finds rest in the spiritual service that he does, no matter how exerting...

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He does not feel the weariness of the body because his spirit finds rest.

A fireman takes risk and jumps in the middle of fire and smoke, then he feels great comfort whenever he saves a man from fire. The same with the one who saves a man from drowning. Also the one who does his utmost to turn a sinner from the error of his way and saves a soul from death and covers a multitude of sins (Jas 5:20).

All his work in visiting, discussing, convincing and enduring this sinner. All this sweat would not be felt, but rather, he finds pleasure as he was able to save a soul. And so he feels great rest.

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There is no doubt that the greatest rest felt by Christ was on the Cross.

In the midst of the unbearable suffering of the crucifixion, He felt a rest that was unutterable because He saved Man from death, satisfying the Divine Justice and offering Himself as a burnt offering to redeem all humanity... It is a type of rest founded on pain which He endured because of His love...

That same type of rest was probably felt by the martyrs, considering the difference.

In the midst of their suffering and pain, they used to feel unutterable rest, as they were about to meet the Lord in paradise, get rid of the bondage of the flesh and the material and be released to the land of the living and the congregation of the saints...

Thus the confessors also and all those who endured pain for the sake of Christ. And so it was said about the saintly fathers, the Apostles, that after they were beaten: *“They departed... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41) .*

The father and mother also feel comfort in all their hard work to bring up their children.

No matter how much physical effort they use in looking after these children, and no matter how they endure exhaustion and waking up at night. Looking after their health and cleanliness, looking after their education and expenses; in all that they feel comfort. It is just like the comfort felt by the mother while carrying a babe in her womb, because God granted her a son, in spite of the discomforts of pregnancy and delivery...

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Rest does not mean only physical rest.

It is also rest of the conscience...

Conscience finds rest when it carries out its message, when it does its duty and completes it in the best possible way, without caring at all about the fatigue of the body in order to complete its job and achieve its good aim. And the higher are the aims, the more one gets tired and finds comfort in that. And as the poet said:

Whenever the souls are great + The bodies toil more for their wishes.

And the opposite of that is the one who gives rest to his body and troubles his conscience.

Like the one who gets lazy and misses going to church or to the service, with the excuse of giving rest to his body. This person will give rest to his body but his conscience will be troubled. Or the servant who neglects visiting those whom he serves, or makes his visits to the sick short because of being tired or ignores comforting the distressed. He gives his body rest but his conscience will be tired.

Likewise the student who does not study and enjoys himself with entertainment and rest. He will be troubled later on when he fails his examinations and his conscience will not be at ease because of neglecting his duties. The same with anyone who neglects his work and leans to rest. He will then fail or his superiors would not be pleased with him.

The labour of endurance also gives rest to the soul.

The trouble of the soul in turning the other cheek, walking the second mile, tolerating those who quarrel with you or giving also your cloak to whoever takes away your tunic and not resisting an evil person (Mt 5:39,41). All these types of endurance, although the soul gets troubled at least at the beginning, but the conscience finds rest in carrying out the commandment.

Likewise the one who spends the night in prayer.

He gets up at midnight to praise the Lord for His righteous judgements. His eyes are awake through the night watches that he may meditate on His word (Ps 119). So his soul finds rest in all the fatigue of the body. It also finds rest in his perseverance and struggle against the spiritual hosts of wickedness (Eph 6:12), and enduring to the end till he is saved (Mt 24:13).

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And in spite of all that, God did not deprive us of the physical rest.

He gave us the Sabbath (Sunday now) to rest in it, physically and spiritually. Because God who created our bodies knows that this body needs a day every week to rest. Therefore the Lord said: "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*" (Mk 2:27).

Then you have the right, it is even your duty, to give your body rest from exhaustion and sickness, and to give it its need of sleep. Do not make it sick because of your negligence to health rules, and give it its need of food. But...

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But giving rest to your body should not be at the expense of troubling your spirit.

You: *“Nourish and cherish your own flesh” (Eph 5:29)*. But at the same time: *“You discipline your body and bring it into subjection” (1 Cor 9:27)*. Do not let it rebel against the spirit. You give the flesh its nourishment but you do not give it its lusts. You give it sleep for rest but you wake it up for prayer, so the spirit will also find rest. And so the spiritual man keeps the balance of rest between the flesh and the spirit.

Many people exhaust their bodies more than what they can endure and stress their nerves also. So they may end up acting wrongly due to their strained nerves which will trouble their spirits. The matter needs wisdom and discretion.

E E E

In giving your body rest, keep it from faults of the soul that would trouble it.

Anger and nervousness are from diseases of the soul and they trouble the body too. The same with restlessness, anxiety, worry and excessive grief. They are all troubles in the soul that also cause trouble to the body. The Lord said as a remedy for that: *“Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things” (Mt 6:34)*. Therefore, the spiritual man whose heart is at ease and his soul is at peace in the life of faith and submission, by giving his soul rest, he will also protect his body from many diseases.

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And the one who troubles his soul by inner struggle, also troubles his body.

The state of inner division that he suffers from and whatever accompanies it of stressing and contradicting thoughts, that will make the body suffer from tension. The same with the one who suffers from excessive grief. By troubling his soul, he also troubles his body. As for the spiritual man whose spirit, thoughts and feelings move in one direction and his spirit and soul are at rest, his body will also find rest.

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The spiritual man, as he gives his soul and body rest, he does more to give rest to his spirit.

He gives her rest from sins, bad habits and bad temper. He also gives her rest from lusts and surrendering to temptations, from resisting the flesh, because the flesh lusts against the spirit (Gal 5:16:17). He also gives her rest by prevailing in the devils' wars by resisting them, steadfast in the faith (1 Pet 5:9). He also gives his spirit rest by offering her the spiritual food that gives her strength and brings her closer to God and deepens His love in her...

He gives his spirit rest by doing nothing that would trouble his conscience.

His spirit will find rest by obeying God and God will find rest in his obedience.

God finds rest in the hearts that believe in Him, that love Him, that do His will and complete His wish, like the angels: *"Who do his word, heeding the voice of his word"* (Ps 103:20).

The spirit of the spiritual man finds rest in the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). So he does not do anything without having the communion of the Holy Spirit in it. The spirit finds comfort when she says to God in every work: "Let it be according to Your will". By that she rests and gives rest. How beautiful is what has been said about the Prophet Moses that he made all things according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain (Heb 8:5).

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We move to the last point which is how does man find rest:

If man found rest within, he will also find rest without. If he is troubled inside, it will definitely show on the outside. His look to matters is what troubles him. Therefore St Paul the Apostle said: “*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom 12:2).

One must be convinced by doing good, and so his actions become good.

One’s heart has to rest fully in acting according to the spirit, without any sinful lust to trouble the will. And as St John Chrysostom said: “Nobody can hurt a man unless this man has already hurt himself”. The one who is at rest on the inside, nothing outside will trouble him. He also does not trouble anyone. Contrary to the non-spiritual man. Trouble is in his nature and his soul is not at ease as the least thing troubles him and he receives it with trouble.

Trouble is within him but it is not due to outside causes.

The spiritual people have been surrounded by many troubling causes, but in spite of that, they were not troubled.

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**DO NOT MAKE YOUR COMFORT
AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS**

Many are the sins of the one who builds his comfort at the expense of others. We will give many examples of that, such as:

1- The one who enjoys mocking and laughing at others.

He makes another person a field for sarcasm, amusement and entertainment, indifferent to hurting his feelings, and making people share with him in turning this person to a laughing stock for them. Especially if he was unable to defend himself or become reserved because the one who is making fun of him is older or superior to him. This sarcastic person is one who finds rest in troubling others psychologically.

2- Another example: The one who holds a noisy party at night with microphones that carry the loud noise across to many streets...

And that carries on till after midnight in clamour, entertainment, singing and uproar. In all that, he does not care about the feeling or the welfare of others. The one who needs sleep would not be able to sleep. The student would not be able to study. The sick will be disturbed by the noise and he might have taken a tablet to help him sleep and will lose its effect. The rest will lose the freedom to speak, read or enjoy their time. But the one holding the party is happy, indifferent to its effect on others.

The same with the one who turns on the radio or a transistor radio while on the bus or the train. He wants to listen but others do not concern him.

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3- Likewise the one who smokes a cigarette and next to him is a person who hates its smell...

He blows the smoke in his face or among those around him. And may be next to him is someone who is about to suffocate because of the smell of the smoke, especially if it was a closed place, a room, a bus or an aeroplane. He wants to enjoy himself, indifferent to the trouble he is causing to others. He may even do that without excusing himself and even if he did, it will only be a formality. And many are the wives who suffer from their husbands who smoke. Under the item of smoking come also the factories that pollute the atmosphere with their smoke, doing harm to people's health, so the factory-owners get richer. Also the cars that discharge smoke while travelling...

E E E

4- Likewise the one who disturbs others by his phone-calls that may get lengthy.

He would ring another person at any time, while the other may be asleep, having a meal, sitting with guests or busy doing something of importance that must be done. And this person will carry on talking without even asking the listener if he has the time to hear him or not, while etiquette requires that! His voice may also be loud, heard by those around the listener and they may hear secrets that they are not supposed to know!

5- The same thing applies to certain visits:

One visits another with no previous appointment, without knowing if that relative or friend is ready to receive him or not! But he gets in, sits and talks. The visit may get long and the host would be too embarrassed to say that he is busy or was about to leave for a business or an appointment ! The guest will be sitting in his friend's house while the friend is sitting on his nerves. How difficult are such visits, especially during the period of exams when the voice gets loud while the students need calmness. But the guests only care about their own comfort, even at the expense of others.

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6- And with the same measure: Some excursions to the monasteries:

All the visitors want is to enjoy the monastery without any consideration of the comfort of the monks or the calmness of the monastery. They may have children who will shout, run and play. Even adults may raise their voice and wander about in the monastery without any discipline. Sometimes groups of visitors would arrive by buses and private cars, bringing the number to hundreds. So the noise will prevail in this holy place while the visitors are having a good time! They do not think about the trouble they are causing to the monks who left the world seeking quietness! The problem gets worse if some members of these excursions insist on visiting the solitaires. They are after their own comfort without thinking about the life-style of others...

The story of Pope Theophilus is known. He wanted to visit Anba Arsanius, the solitary saint. But when he knew that this visit will harm the saint's solitude, he refrained from that...

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7- There are those who want to talk even about matters that would make their listeners uncomfortable.

They might talk about other people's secrets, a specific problem, mistakes of the past or open the minds of their listeners to matters new to them and it is better for them not to hear about them. But they want to talk, even if they troubled the listeners by pouring hurtful information in their ears and spoiling their thoughts. The listeners may try to escape, but they pressure

them as they find pleasure in talking whether the listeners liked it or not! Adding to that is wasting the time...

E E E

8- Every time you pressure others, you are surely looking for your own comfort at the expense of another person...

It may be a pressure on his will to do something that he does not want to do. Sometimes, tiring insistence is used, which puts pressure on his nerves and on his ears. Pressure could be direct or through mediators. It could be pressure on his conscience by threatening him of using wrong methods in matters of his responsibility. The main thing is to achieve his aim by using pressure, indifferent to the feelings of the other person and how that troubles his nerves, his conscience, his thought and his will plus the time wasted in these pressures...

E E E

9- Some people find rest in complaining and crying, making others share in their problems, troubles and sorrow...

If that happens once or on certain occasions, it would be bearable as a social sharing: "*Weep with those who weep*" (Rom 12:15). But what about those who are used to complaining, crying and being unhappy! Whenever they meet a friend, it is like turning on a recorder of complaining, crying, misery, despair and trouble with no end. And no matter how the listener tries to alleviate their misery, he fails and the groaning would increase and probably for nothing, for a trivial matter or a repeated talk with no result! What is important to them is to relieve themselves even if their listeners were troubled. Would that when you talk, watch your listener. Is he getting tired? Weary? And if it is possible to finish your talk or not.

Many are those who lose friends and acquaintances by their repeated complaint and crying.

E E E

10- Another point is the matter of stumbling blocks:

A female who stands for long before the mirror, before going out. She would not leave the mirror till she is very satisfied that she became very attractive. Whoever meets her admires her, indifferent to the fact that she may become a stumbling block for others. The main thing is satisfying herself in becoming the centre of admiration, even if that troubled those who admired her. My advice to you is: Do not let the mirror lead you. But heed not to become a stumbling block to others...

E E E

11- Similar to that are those who adorn themselves at parties:

A female who wants to be number one at a party. She may attend a wedding and tries to be more beautiful and more elegant than the bride herself! She will dress up better than anyone and wear jewellery that no other woman has. She is after attracting everybody's attention, even if she repealed the existence of others, troubled other women and made them feel inferior compared to her! She also searches for her comfort at the expense of others. And if you tried to reason with her, she'll say: "It is a party and I have to look after my elegance" Yes, but in a reasonable way and without stirring the jealousy of others and creating comparisons. At a party, dress-up with the standard of those who are attending it, with acceptable elegance.

E E E

12- Many are the marital problems that are also caused by the one who finds his rest at the expense of others:

For example, the wife who requires from her husband what is above his financial capability. She will either exhaust him financially or force him to borrow and become in debt, or to say he has none! Sometimes she'll embarrass him by talking about her ill luck in marrying a man who cannot afford to pay for her expenses! And so she hurts his feelings. The same applies to the son who demands from his parents what is above their limits and the citizen who asks his country for what is not within its power...

E E E

13- Another example: The migrant who comes to Egypt asking the church to permit his marriage during a fast:

Sometimes it is during the Great Lent! And if it was said that the church does not permit performing the Sacrament of Marriage during a fast, he will continue pressuring, presenting excuses and justifications concerning travelling and holidays. And if these proved to be unacceptable he will protest, get angry, shouts and insists, threatening to get married at another sect. The main thing is finding rest by getting married, indifferent to the conscience of the priest, the church canons or breaking the fast. He is after the church's approval, but not her blessing. He is after his own comfort at the expense of others...!

E E E

14- Another amazing thing is: The one who wants to build his glory on destroying others, thinking that by doing this, he shows his superiority!

Even in the church circle! A writer who wants to destroy all the self-evident truths and postulates that everybody knows, trying to prove them wrong in order to introduce a new opinion, as if he understands more than others. He thinks that he is the only one who understands and all that we inherited from generations is all wrong till God sent him to present to people the correct concepts. That is how the heretics started. Those who invent something new, hoping that it will give them glory, by introducing what nobody else managed to reach. One tries to show his knowledge by declaring the ignorance of some people or the ignorance of all. He might even ask others embarrassing questions, meant to show their lack of knowledge. Then he will answer the questions to show his superiority...!!

E E E

15- An example of that is the one who conceals the talents of others to show his own talent:

He does not allow others to show, so he will remain alone in the picture. Like the professor who does not give a chance or a certificate to a lecturer, except with great difficulty. Many beginners face the same problem, so there is not much of a chance for a beginner in writing, or an inventor in the field of art, because the experienced want to monopolize ingenuity itself! They find rest when the atmosphere is clear for them, even if the begin-

ners were troubled. They monopolize the field and despise others! That also applies to those who monopolize talk during meetings without giving others a chance to express themselves!

E E E

16- Another example of finding rest at the expense of others is also the jealous husband:

Who, because of his jealousy, almost locks his wife in the house so no one will see her and she would not talk to anyone. She wouldn't be able to laugh on hearing a joke said by another person, even if it was hilarious! Otherwise, the husband will turn the whole world upside down. As if he bought a beautiful bird and locked it in a cage. Even if it sang inside the cage, he would not permit it! And so he restrains her in a way that would make her hate life. And if she argued with him or reproached him gently, he would say to her: "It is the only way that gives me rest". But it is the type of rest at the expense of others, indifferent to the wife's feelings...

Likewise, the jealous wife who is grumpy, questioning her husband always, exhausting him with embarrassing questions till she finds rest, no matter how troubling it was for him...

E E E

17- Resting at the expense of others shows also in crowded places:

Everybody wants to beat others or take somebody else's place. Or to reach his goal without caring if others would reach theirs or not! The amazing thing is that it happens sometimes during partaking of Holy Communion, especially on feasts and special occasions, while self-denial and contrition should show at that time. It is not right at all for one to search for his own comfort at the expense of others. It is also like the one who looks for the front places in meetings or the one who reserves seats before arriving. Likewise the one who stands up during meetings, blocking the vision of others. Or the one who parks his car where it will block the traffic for others. It is amazing how congestion also happens while sitting with the confession father. A confessor would enter while a long queue is waiting. But he would not care and still would take his time, even if it troubled those who are waiting. The astonishing thing is that he would not confess this sin while sitting with his confession father!

18- The matter of congestion reminds us of competitions in general:

Some competitions are for jobs and positions, where one wants to remove another from his position to take his place. Or get a promotion or a rise instead of another, even by presenting a complaint against this person or defaming him. He may cause this person's failure, to get rid of him. And in the field of politics, one party competes against another, making people hate the other party, to take its place. Speculation in the market also comes under competitions. We are not saying that competitions are wrong, but we mean competitions where sinful means are being used to trouble others, get rid of them or destroy them...!

E E E

19- The same topic also includes all types of stealing:

The pickpocket wants to take what is in others' pockets to put in his own pocket. The same with all stealing, such as deceit in trade, monopolizing markets or speculating in them. Also extravagant interest, the black market, evading taxes and custom duties. In all that, one is building his comfort at the expense of others. Likewise is the employer who reduces the salary of his employees so he would get richer. It is just like stealing their sweat and their labour. The same with the one who asks for a bribe to do a legal job. It is also another type of stealing that is sometimes done by force. It is a sinful comfort that troubles others. Take for example Ahab the king who wanted to take by force the vineyard from Naboth the Jezreelite (1Kings 21). The same with all types of injustice and exploitation.

Also the one who steals another person's idea and ascribes it to himself or translates the ideas of another writer and ascribe them to himself.

E E E

20- We also mention here the theory of the "Scape-goat".

Where for example stealing will take place by senior members of the staff then the whole responsibility will fall on a junior employee, a manager or a managing director, while the guilty ones find comfort at the expense of others. Just like trying to escape from the responsibility of a wrong deed by fastening the accusation on another. And also the one who accuses another to save himself.

21- Our topic also includes raping and tempting young women.

Like the youth who finds his sexual satisfaction by raping and destroying a young woman. Even by forming a relationship that would engage a young woman's mind and emotions, causing the loss of her reputation, just because he enjoys her friendship, indifferent to the harmful effects on her! It is another type of comfort at the expense of others.

E E E

22- Anger and nervousness also come in this matter:

One whose nerves are tired, finds relief in pouring his anger on others either by oral or written words. He would then find comfort, indifferent to the trouble given to others. It is not their fault that his nerves are tense. And if you reproach him gently, he would say: "I could not have found rest till I said these words". But it is a sinful rest.

E E E

23- Wars and colonialism are also part of this topic:

Where one nation finds comfort in destroying another nation or in blockading this country economically or in colonising it. Individuals sometimes do the same within their narrow limits.

E E E

24- We also mention curious people who like knowing the secrets of others.

Many are the troubles caused by that, though it gives them comfort. They trouble the ones they are after their secrets and the ones they pressure by their questions, till they get all the information they want by pressuring and embarrassing them.

E E E

What is the meaning of rest?

Those who seek rest at the expense of others misunderstand the meaning of the word “rest” and they are after a false one:

True rest is having an easy conscience, man’s rest with God and also eternal rest. As for the type of rest that those people are looking for, it is not a true rest. The spiritual man sacrifices himself for the sake of others and toils to give others rest. The means to achieve rest also should not be sinful. As it was said: “He who lives only for himself, never lived”. And the Holy Bible says: “*In honour giving preference to one another*” (Rom 12:10). Man must keep away from selfishness and self-centeredness.

There is only one exception, that is the necessary punishment for pastoral care, in order to give rest to the community and reinforce the spiritual values.

HOLY LABOUR AND REST BY GIVING REST TO OTHERS

The spiritual man does not run away from labour in search of rest.

But he rejoices much in toiling for God’s sake.

He searches first for the relief of his conscience, for his rest in the Lord. As for the physical rest, it concerns him the least. He would rather toil for the sake of a spiritual gain. He sees his comfort in this toil that would take him to God and in it is the building of the kingdom.

We distinguish here one type of holy toil that has many examples in the Holy Bible:

Among that is toiling in preaching and teaching, in the service generally, and toiling in the spiritual struggle. St Paul, when some thought of him as being less than the other Apostles, said defending his Apostleship: “*I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*” (1 Cor 15:10). **And also said:** “*Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool- I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often*” (2 Cor 11:23). **And also said about his service:** “*A night and day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters*”. **So his main boasting was in labour, and said about its reward:**

“Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Cor 3:8).

He also praised the priests: *“Who labour in the word and doctrine”* and said about them: *“Let them be counted worthy of double honour”* (1 Tim 5:17). **And he said to the Thessalonians:** *“We urge you, brethren, to recognise those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake”* (1 Thess 5:12,13).

And in his Epistle to the Romans, St Paul mentioned the names of saintly women, who laboured in the service and said: *“Greet Mary, who laboured much for us. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have laboured in the Lord Greet the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord ”* (Rom 16:6,12).

Any labour one experiences in the Lord is a loved labour that God will not forget. And that is what the Apostle said:

“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown towards His name” (Heb 6:10).

It is good to say that you love God. But your love has to show in your labour for His sake. And God will reward you for the love and for the labour. And so the Apostle said: *“I have not run in vain or laboured in vain”* (Phil 2:16). **And said to the Corinthians:** *“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor 15:58).

E E E

The one who labours rejoices in the fruit of his labour.

For example: The farmer who labours as he plows the land, sows and irrigates it, clears it from weeds.. till the time comes for harvesting then he rejoices. He realizes that his labour was not in vain, but the Lord rewarded him with a blessing according to all his labour....

All man’s labour for a spiritual aim and in a spiritual manner, for the sake of God, is counted and recorded for him by the Lord. And so the Lord said to the angel of the church of Ephesus:

“I know your works, your labour and your patience” (Rev 2:2)...

It is a comforting matter that God knows all your labour, writes it in the Book of Life and will definitely reward you for it in the happy eternity, and may be in this world also. He will also support you and give you strength in your labour. Or he may say to you, as He said to St Paula of Tamouh in his struggle: “Enough labour, my beloved Paula”. And He always says:

“Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

He will give us rest by lifting up the heavy weight for us, or give us spiritual comfort in our labour, or present to us His beautiful promises, or gives us pleasure in labour till we long to labour more or reminds us that all we do for Him will follow us to the happy eternity. As it has been said in blessing those who departed:

“... That they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them” (Rev 14:13).

E E E

Therefore, the spiritual man when he labours for the Lord, he feels a blessing in this labour. And as there is a crown for each labour, he does not ever lean on comfort in this life, remembering always the Divine inspiration in the Book of Proverbs: “*In all labour there is a profit*” (Prov 14:23).

And as the Holy Bible presented to us examples of those who labour for the Lord...

E E E

The history of the church also presented to us examples of holy labour.

For example, St Athanasius the Apostolic. How much has he laboured for the faith, how many persecutions has he experienced from the heretics, the followers of Arius. How many false accusations, many oppositions issued against him, councils judged him, complaints to the emperor and sentences for exile! Till it was said to him: “The world is against you, Athanasius”. But he endured all this labour in patience and joy, in order to protect the faith, receiving the blessing of this labour...

Likewise and more is the labour experienced by the martyrs.

From threatening to trials ,imprisonment, and horrible types of torment .The suffering they experienced is indescribable. But it was a holy labour for the Lord and they received crowns for it and became worthy of eternal rest.

E E E

The spiritual man rejoices in labour and finds rest in it.

It means that he finds inner rest by this outside labour, or finds rest for his spirit in the labour of the body, or finds eternal rest in this temporary labour. He is willing to labour here in order to rest there.

St John the Baptist experienced hardships in rebuking Herod for marrying his brother's wife and was imprisoned then beheaded. But he put his conscience at ease in order to rest in eternity. And he gave us all a strong example of courage in defending the truth.

E E E

We should not also forget the labour of those who were faithful in the service. They placed before themselves the Lord's saying:

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10).

“Until death”. Would there be labour more than that? But it is an expression of Man's love for God. Look at David the Prophet when he says:

“Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, or go up to the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob” (Ps 132:2,5).

He would not let himself get physical rest, until his duty is completed and his responsibility in serving the Lord has been established. Then he would rest spiritually and physically. He would sleep, comforted within...

E E E

The spiritual man does not escape from labour. The one who escapes from labour, escapes from God.

He who escape from his duty, his responsibility, he is actually escaping from the prepared crowns! While the one who labours, shows by this labour the extent of his love for God, the extent of his care about God's kingdom on earth and his care about serving God in His children...

E E E

Therefore if you want to give your heart rest, labour to give others rest.

All those who gave comfort to others felt inner happiness because of that, even in the field of social life. And many are the examples about that:

The doctor's conscience and heart find rest when he gives comfort to his patient and relieves his pain. The caricaturist finds comfort in making happy those who see his drawings and read his jokes. Likewise any artist, as he finds his comfort when his art gets to the heart of people and gives them rest.

The one who searches for his personal comfort could be selfish.

As for the spiritual man, he always thinks about the comfort of others. There are souls that we may call comforting souls. Whoever mixes with them finds comfort. They are always a source of comfort. We give examples for that:

E E E

+ An example of that is motherhood and fatherhood:

The mother labours much in bringing up her daughter and labours in preparing her trousseau. She also rejoices in her daughter's marriage because she settled down in her life. And although she has been deprived of her company, she still feels happy for her daughter's happiness. She may even sell her jewellery, if necessary, to buy her trousseau. Likewise the father in bringing up his children, looking after their education and their future. He feels that his message in life is to obtain all the means of comfort and happiness for his children. For all that, we find that our Righteous Lord gave Himself the title: The Heavenly Father.

What is important is that the father and mother give comfort to their children on correct basis.

E E E

+ Another example about giving rest to others is the shepherd and what he does for his sheep.

He does not work for his own comfort, but he does his best for his sheep. He brings them to green pastures and still waters, protects them from any attack and any danger. For all that, the Lord assigned shepherds for His people to take care of them and to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The Lord even compared Himself to the shepherd and said: *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep”* (Jn 10:11). **And in the Old Testament, the Lord said in the Book of Ezekiel the Prophet:** *“I will feed my flock, and I will make them lie down”* says the Lord God, *“I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick”* (Ezek 34:15,16). **All is giving, for the comfort of his sheep...**

E E E

+ All that gives us an idea about rest in giving.

The spiritual man finds happiness in giving and finds his comfort in the happiness of the recipient. The nursing babe finds his comfort in the one who nurses him, whether if was his mother or another. And the nurse finds her comfort in his comfort, and if he smiles, she would feel great happiness. Many are the things done for children. It is comfort that comes through giving...

E E E

Many are those who work for the society in all fields.

Such as firemen, ambulance men and life-savers, organizations such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. They all find comfort in comforting others and feel happiness in saving others. Likewise all those who are involved in social work and humanitarian work.

The psychiatrist feels happiness when he cures his patient from anxiety, confusion, fear, illusion or doubt; no matter how much time or exhausting effort it costs him while dealing with an abnormal person...

Likewise are the scientists who work hard for nights to present to people inventions that would make their life comfortable or medication that would save them from diseases and relieve their pain.

Would that you find rest in serving and comforting others... and in solving others' problems or keeping problems away from them

E E E

The spiritual man finds his rest in God, no matter how problems surround him.

He places God between himself and the problems. So he does not think about the problem but about God who will solve it. In every problem that faces him, he says: "The Lord exists". His faith that God will interfere to solve the problem gives him inner comfort and peace in the heart, based on faith in God and in His work.

I remember that near the end of 1967, we had to move to the yard of the Theological College, in the open air, for our meeting. Some said to me: "What are we going to do about rain when it is winter?". And I said to them: "The God of winter will provide for that."

The spiritual man finds rest in the life of submission that he lives.

He leaves all his affairs to God who will provide for them. As the Book says: "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain you" (Ps 55:22). And also: "Cast all your care upon him, for he cares for you" (1 Pet 5:7). And he trusts in the Lord's promise which says: "Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Why then don't you turn to God in all your problems and labour, and He will give you rest?

E E E

The spiritual man finds rest in prayer.

Or he may find it in a comforting verse that makes his heart rejoice, or finds comfort in remembering the Lord's promises. For example, it is enough for him the Divine saying "Be strong and of good courage. I will not leave you nor forsake you" (Josh 1:5,6). Or: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). Or: "See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands" (Is 49:16). He rejoices in all that and finds rest in his heart, relying on God's promises.

E E E

How beautiful is this phrase that St Augustine wrote in his confessions, saying to the Lord:

"Our hearts will remain restless till they find their rest in You".

The one who is far from God lives in trouble, because the real rest is only in God. Therefore it is good what David the Prophet said: "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps 73:28). And also said: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Ps 117:8,9). "You pushed me violently, that I might fall, but the Lord helped me. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly" (Ps 117:13,16).

E E E

As man finds rest in the life of faith, he also finds rest in the life of hope...

The one who loses hope falls in depression and gets close to destruction or loss. As for the spiritual man, through hope, he sees a solution for each problem and a key or a number of keys for locked doors and for each fall, a rise that follows...

Problems have a pyramidal shape. They rise till they reach a peak then slope down to the other side. That is how the problems of Joseph the Upright were, rising up till he was in prison then sloping down to the kingdom. Likewise was the ordeal of Job: it rose till he lost everything then ended by the Lord giving him twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).

That is the comfort of the spiritual man in the life of submission, the life of faith and hope.

E E E

Be confident that if you found rest within , you will also find rest without.

Make sure that your means of comfort are always spiritual means. Because there is one who, when faced by a problem, finds comfort in a lie that covers it or a trick that is all deceit, like David when he fell...! Or the one who turns to pain killers when he is tired. They do not solve his problem...

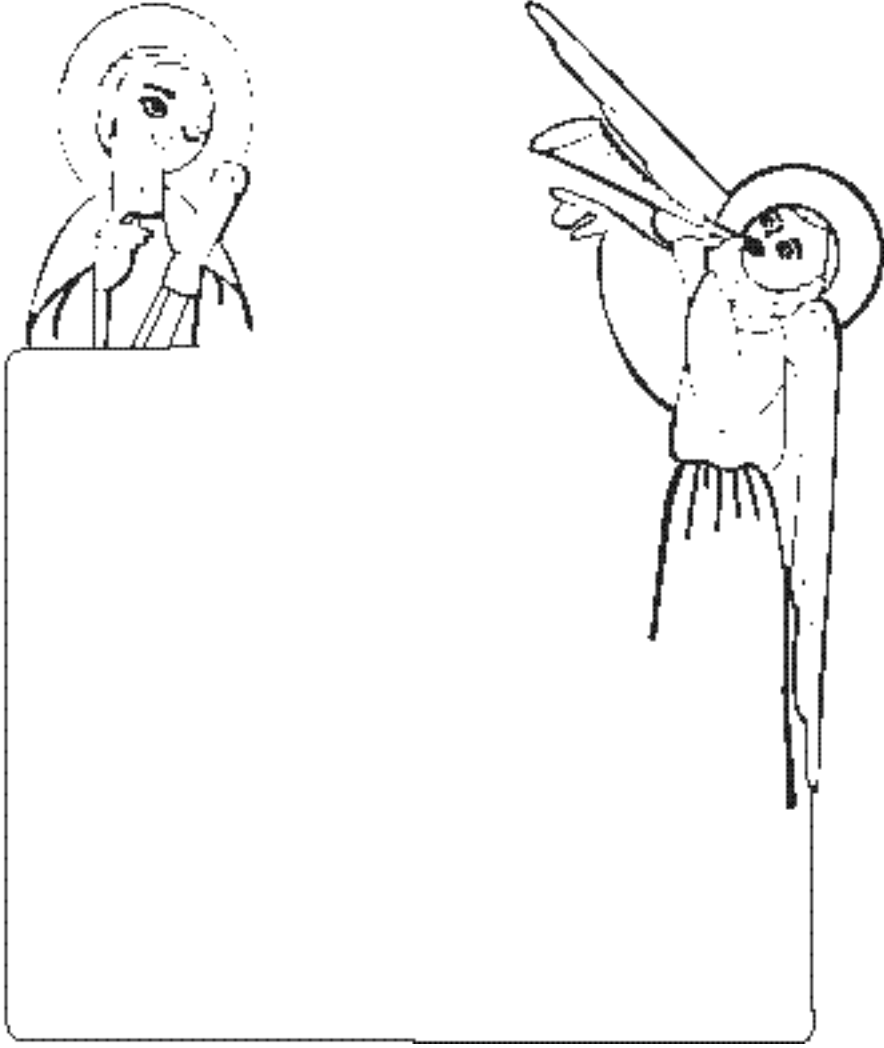
E E E

Rest does not mean to stop work completely, but to avoid exhaustion.

If you get tired worrying about a specific matter, you cannot stop your mind from thinking completely, but you can change the train of thoughts and replace an idea with another, then you'll find comfort.



CHAPTER 8



LIVES BY THE SPIRIT, NOT BY THE LETTER

He always places before himself the Apostle's saying:

"Not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6). This principle involves all his life, because it is in all God's commandments.

He cares about the spirit of the commandment and not its literary meaning...

He is not a Pharisee or a lawyer, but he is a spiritual man. The Pharisees used to stick to the literality of the commandment, as they did with the Lord about the Sabbath, for example. Even when He opened the eyes of the one who was born blind, and it was on a Sabbath, they said: *"This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath"* (Jn 9:16). And they said to the man who was born blind: *"Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner"* (Jn 9:24). And when the Lord healed a man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years, at the pool of Bethesda, the Holy Bible, says that: *"The Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath"* (Jn 5: 16).

It is the letter that kills, because it proves the lack of understanding the spirituality of the commandment.

We'll try to contemplate on some points in the spiritual life, to see how the spiritual man acts according to the spirit and not according to the letter.

FASTING

Many fast and they think that fasting means just eating vegetarian food. They try to prepare for themselves very delicious vegetarian meals that are very nutritious, with all that they add to them of rare and expensive ingredients...! Then they ask about vegetarian fat, vegetarian cheese, vegetarian milk and vegetarian chocolate! They forget the saying of Daniel the Prophet about his fasting:

“In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine come into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself” (Dan 10:2,3).

I would like here to concentrate on the phrase: “I ate no pleasant food”... Because whenever one eats pleasant food during his fasting, how could he control the desires of the body while he is giving it the food that it longs for?!

E E E

The spiritual man knows that fasting, in its reality, is humbling for the body and victory over the desire for food and also an elevation above the level of the material. Fasting then should not be considered as just eating vegetarian food. But in his fasting, he cares about the element of abstaining, that is depriving the body of whatever it longs for, no matter how it is purely vegetarian.

Therefore many fast but they do not benefit, because in their fasting, they acted in a literary and formal way.

They did not enter into the spirituality of fasting or the spirituality of the commandment concerning fasting and the divine aim for it!

And so they fasted by the body while the spirit did not fast.

PROSTRATIONS (METANIAS):

Prostration or (Metania) means kneeling. What is meant then by this kneeling?

The spiritual man does not see kneeling as just bending the body but it is also bending the spirit with the body.

Therefore he says with the Psalmist: “*But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship towards Your holy temple*” (Ps 5).

The phrase “*in fear of you*” proves reverence of the spirit during kneeling. And the phrase “*in the multitude of Your mercy.. I will come into Your house*” shows the feeling of being unworthy. And so the Deacon cries out during the Holy Mass saying:

“Kneel to God in awe and reverence”...

Here, the spiritual feelings accompany the movement of the body.

Sometimes you apologize to a person and prostrate (give him a metania), but he wouldn't accept it as he feels it is a physical action that has no spirit.

You may say to him after that: what else do you want me to do? I have knelt with my head to the ground and prostrated !!

My brother, the important thing is for your spirit to bow.. Do not stick to the literality of prostration, but to its spirit.

As for the spiritual man, in his kneeling, he says with the Prophet David:

“My soul clings to the dust” (Ps 119:25).

And it is not only my head that clings to the dust in its kneeling.

The soul that clings to the dust is acceptable before God and people.

E E E

I read an article written by one of the monks on the feast of the Epiphany where he explained how the Lord Jesus Christ bowed before the Baptist, to fulfil all righteousness, although John the Baptist was far more less than the Lord, and was not worthy to carry His sandals... Then the monk concluded his article by the phrase:

“Give us, O Lord, to bow before those who are less than us; to fulfil all righteousness”...!!!

If you see that they are less than you, what is then the meaning of bowing?! Is it literality without spirit? We want the bowing of the spirit.

PRAYER:

The literary meaning of praying is talking with God

Spiritually, it is: connecting man's soul to God's Soul.

One may pray, or think that he has prayed, while there is no connection between him and God!!

Therefore God rebuked the Jews by saying: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Is 29:13) (Mt 15:8)

It is an unacceptable prayer because God wants the heart.

Do you think you are praying because you are moving your lips before God?!

That could be without understanding, without spirit and without feelings: without love, reverence or humility...!!

Do you want to satisfy your conscience concerning prayer? Even if it was like that! Or you pray with your spirit and you pray with your mind, meaning every word you say in your prayer..

Mar Isaac was right when he said about such a prayer:

“Tell yourself: I stood before God to count words!”

That is because many are concerned about making the prayer long without understanding, or they say many Psalms quickly and without contemplation, and they do not follow the meaning of words during their prayer!!

Psalms are full of spirituality, but some people are limited to the letter.

E E E

They also repeat the words of doxology in the Psalmody with an amazing speed where they do not follow the meaning. The same with many hymns. What is important for them is the letter and not the spirit. The feeling that one has done his “act” in prayer, and his conscience rested by that, while this prayer has not ascended to God. There was not even any connection and the spirit and the heart did not share in it.

As for the spiritual man, he says with the Apostle: “ I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding” (1 Cor 14:15).

“I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding” ...

THE HOLY KISS:

We hear during Mass the phrase: “Greet one another with a holy kiss”. The kiss is a deep expression of love. And the word “holy” means pure and without hypocrisy...

And each of us greets the one next to him, as a symbol of peace among all the people!!

Do we confine to this formality or this literality? While there is no peace in our hearts towards people!!

Judas Iscariot kissed the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the letter but not the spirit, and the letter kills. It is an outside appearance that expresses love while betrayal hides behind it. Therefore the church prohibits kissing from Paschal Wednesday, protesting against Judas' kiss of betrayal.

E E E

And whenever you meet people, you start by greeting them with peace.

Is it the literality of the word peace? Or is it a true peace according to the spiritual meaning? ...How many are the words we say, the greetings and the compliments, just with the letter, but not the spirit.

What then should the spiritual man do? Avoid any compliments? No, but let it be with the spirit and the truth...

To express love, sympathy and good relationship with people, respecting them. He does that from all his heart, with his feelings showing on his face, in the looks of his eyes and the warmth of his words. It is with the spirit, not the letter.

GIVING:

The spiritual man gives first from his heart, with all his love, before he gives from his possessions or from his pocket. His giving is just an expression of his hearty sharing in the needs of people and the needs of the church.

But some people give without feelings, just to literally carry out the commandment...!

They forget the saying of the Holy Bible: “*God loves a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor 19:7) ... Giving starts from the heart, and not just from the hand. The spiritual giver is the one who rejoices when he gives, because he feels that he has shared in making people happy, or took the blessing of sharing in the needs of the church.

E E E

But some settle their accounts with God in a difficult way!!

They stick to the tithes, that is if they paid them! They examine their accounts carefully, so what they are giving would not exceed the tenth. They may even include the tithes in some of their social duties towards relatives or friends or what they were forced to pay on certain occasions for some projects for the service.

And it shows that the heart is not sharing in the giving.

The love of the needy is not connected to giving. It may even be accompanied by some harsh investigation or may be scolding for the poor and may be some haughtiness and pride. This giving may even be delayed for a long time.

We think that we are giving, and we forget the phrase: “*Of Your own we have given You*” (1 Chron 29:14). As if giving was just a tax that we are forced to pay.

THE SERVICE:

Sometimes we take from the service its literality or its formality.

We think that we are sharing in the work of the church, without entering into the spirit of the service. But even from the literal side, we forget the literal meaning of the word “servant”.

We forget humility that is necessary for the service.

The service becomes a field to show the ego, mixed with it is the love of command and authority and competition among the servants, which does not agree at all with the word “servant”. As if in the service, we are centered around our ego and not around the kingdom of Christ, about whom John the Baptist said:

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).

The service becomes a mere information given by the Sunday school servant, or mere administrative and financial tasks done by the church council and its committees, or activities organized by the working groups in the church. In all that, we forget the spirit of the service.

E E E

As for the spiritual person, he serves because of his love for God and His kingdom, and the love of the people whom he wants to take to God and to the kingdom.

He serves with the spirit of the servant and the spirit of the service which is to reconcile those whom he serves with God or deepen their love for Him. Therefore his service is a spiritual service, not just an activity or teaching or formalities or positions!

THE DAY OF THE LORD:

Keeping the day of the Lord holy is an old commandment. The Jews carried it out literally, obeying the Lord's saying: "*but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work*" (Ex 20:10).

Literally, it means that you do no work in it at all.

As for the spirit, it is a Sabbath of the Lord, which means rest for the Lord. In it God rests with you and His children also rest.

E E E

That is what the spiritual man does, as he finds his rest in giving rest to people. He also finds his heart's rest with God by the good deed which makes his conscience rest, concerning himself and others. By doing that, the day becomes a Sabbath, which means rest, according to both the linguistic and the spiritual meaning of the word...

This point was a subject of an argument between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Jews:

"Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" (Mt 12:10,12)

The answer of the Lord was yes, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath because doing good gives people comfort and that is the spirit of the commandment...

Then do not restrict yourself to the letter, which is to do no work at all, even if it was good...!!

By that you give rest to yourself but not to people.

THE RITES:

An ordinary person who is superficial and not deep, may not realize the spirituality that is concealed in each of the church rites...

As for the spiritual man, he enters to the depth of these rites and their symbolism , and shares with his spirit in them.

He follows, by the spirit, the movements of the Deacons and the Priests.

E E E

For example, when the Priest carries the Gospel on top of his head and turns with it around the altar, the spiritual man realises that this round refers to the spread of the Gospel in the whole world. And in his heart, he prays for that...

When the Deacon holds a candle before the Gospel, the spiritual man remembers the saying of the Psalmist: *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105)*. And he prays that God may enlighten his insight with what he hears from His holy words.

And when the most senior among the clergy takes off his crown in reverence and respect during the Gospel reading, the same reverence gets into the heart of the spiritual person while listening...

In general, his spirit shares in all the prayers of the Holy Mass and in all the prayers of the liturgies. It does not stop at sharing by his senses, but by his heart and spirit also, because it is the spirit that gives life...

The same thing happens during feasts...

The spiritual man does not look at the feast as just a joyful day in which fasting ends, as many do. But he enters to the spirituality of the occasion for which the feast is being celebrated. He contemplates on it and lives in it. In the Nativity, he rejoices because it is the practical beginning of the story of salvation. He rejoices for the humility and love that are in it. He also rejoices in Easter with all that it carries of victory over death, opening the gate of Paradise and because the Lord is the first fruits of resurrection for all of us.

THE DOGMA:

For the ordinary person, it could be just theological and intellectual matters that may become for him a subject of argument with other sects. As for the spiritual person, the dogma is faith that runs in his blood and has its effect on his spirituality.

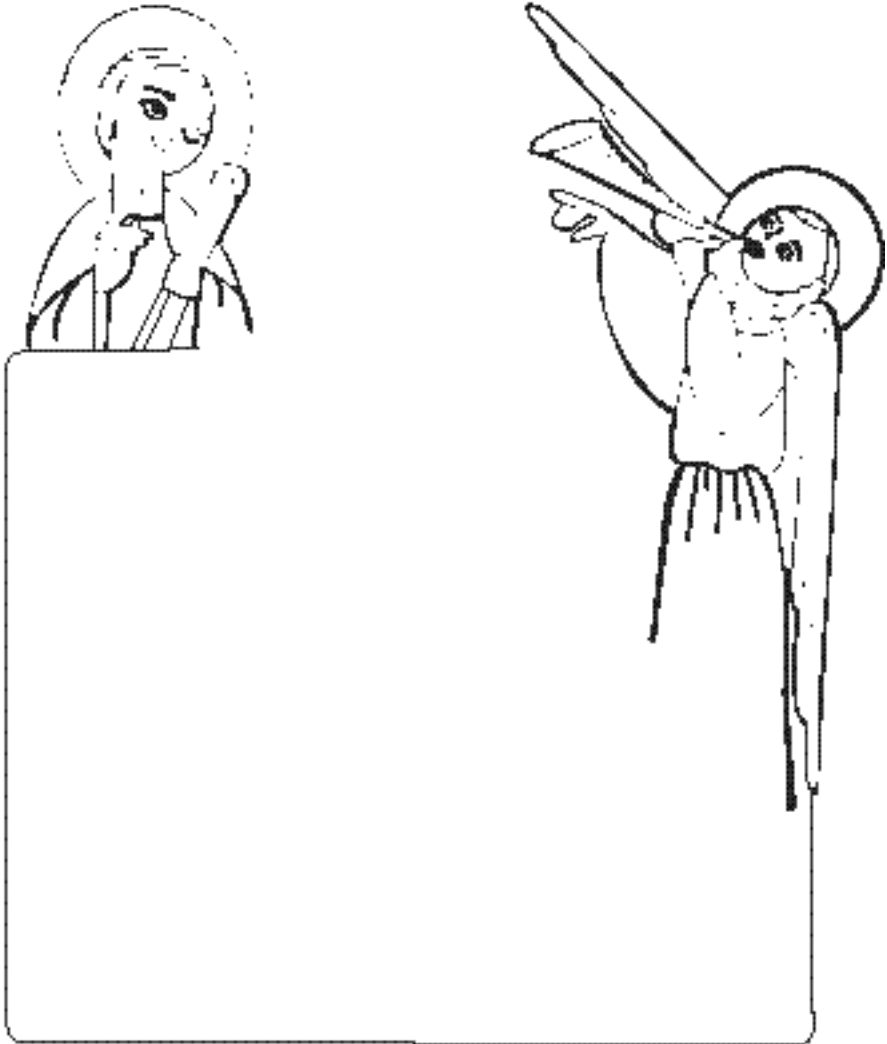
Baptism, for example, as he believes that it is being buried with Christ then life with Him (Rom 6:4,8). In it, the old man is crucified (Rom 6:6,4). He makes sure to keep the old man crucified. And as he knows that Baptism is a new birth (Jn 3:8) (Tim 3:5), he remembers the saying of the Apostle that whoever has been born of God does not sin; and cannot sin because he has been born of God (1 Jn 3:9). So, whenever he sins, he rebukes himself and tries to live in the effectiveness of Baptism...

And so with the other sacraments of the church.

He realizes the grace that is in each sacrament, and lives in it...



CHAPTER 9



BETWEEN THE SPIRIT, THE SOUL AND THE FLESH

The spiritual man is exalted above the flesh and the material things. He does not act according to the flesh.

St Paul the Apostle said about that “ *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit*” (Rom 8:1)

He also said, “ *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*” (Rom 8:12). **And he explained this matter by saying,** “ *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit, the things of the spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace because the carnal mind is enmity against God*” (Rom 8:5-7). **And here we face an important question:**

E E E

Is the flesh a sin? The answer is: No. Why?

*The flesh is not evil in itself, otherwise God would not have created it, as God does not create evil. But God, after creating Man with this flesh, “saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1:31).

* If the flesh was evil, the Lord Jesus Christ to whom is all glory, would not have become flesh (Jn 1:14).

* Also because the flesh can share in worshipping and serving God. It bows and kneels, raises its eyes up and raises the hands up for prayer, fasts and labours in the service.

* That is what many saints did. Their bodies and their souls shared in the spiritual work and they lived, while in the flesh, a righteous life. Their bodies were holy.

* The flesh is not evil, otherwise God would not raise it and grant it a kind of transfiguration so it becomes more spiritual, luminous and heavenly (1 Cor 15:44, 49). It is raised in glory...

* If flesh was evil, we would not have honoured the bodies and relics of the saints, and no miracles would have occurred from their bodies, as it happened with the bones of Elisha the Prophet (2 Kings 14:-21).

We honour the bodies of the saints and keep their bones in our monasteries and churches, we welcome receiving them and rejoice in obtaining them, anoint them with spices and receive blessings from them.

* If the flesh was evil, St Paul the Apostle would not have said: “...glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:20) .Then the flesh could be a means to glorify God.

* The flesh also is not evil because the Holy Bible states: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?... Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you” (1 Cor 6:15, 19). “ For the temple of God is holy which temple you are” (1 Cor 3:16, 17).

E E E

The flesh then is not a sin and is not evil. But the sin is in acting according to the flesh in its lust and earthly desires. The sin is allowing the body to overcome the spirit.

If the flesh is not evil, why then talk about the struggle between the body and the spirit. And why is the Apostle saying “ Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:16, 17).

The Apostle here does not talk about the flesh as it was created by God.

Adam and Eve, before the sin, each of them had a body. They lived in complete innocence: “And they were both naked... and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). Young children and babies have bodies but don’t have the lust for sin. But the Apostle is talking about the sinful body.

E E E

The flesh then is not evil in itself, but...

The flesh is made up of material. And it leans to the material and gets excited about it, gets separated from the control of the spirit and resists it.

And here the struggle starts and the sinful lust starts...

But the body's need for material in a natural and pure way is not wrong. For example, the body needs material food and types of nutrition, and there is nothing wrong in that. But the Apostle says that man: "*nourishes and cherishes it*" (Eph. 5:29). And the Lord blessed those who care about the hungry, the thirsty and the naked...

He considered the care given to them as if given to Him personally. He said to those on His right hand, on the last day: "*Come you blessed of My father... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink... naked and you clothed me*" (Mt 25:35-36). They were all acts done for the benefit of the body.

This is half the truth. What is the other half?

E E E

The spiritual man repeats the saying of the Holy Bible "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor 9:27). Which means curb its lust.

To give the body its natural need from the material, and nothing more. If the body began to lust for the material and love it in a way that will get him out of the spiritual range, then the spiritual man will discipline his body and bring it into subjection. Which means to make him a slave for the spirit and not to be separated from it in conducting itself.

The spiritual man reaches that by asceticism, fasting and crucifying the flesh.

The Apostle St Paul says about this matter: "*And those Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24) ...

They resist: "*The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes*" (1 Jn 2:16). That is what the Apostle called: "*Love of the world*"

We do not kill the flesh because killing the flesh is a sin. Therefore we do not pray over one who has committed suicide, except if he was in a state of insanity where he was not accountable for his deeds... But we try to kill the sinful lust of the flesh. That is restraining the desires of the flesh because of the longing of the spirit to be close to God.

The idea of asceticism in the concept of the spiritual man is to give the spirit a chance to do its work, free from the heaviness of the body.

The spiritual man looks after the flesh, but in a spiritual manner. He refrains from the care that feeds the lust of the flesh, from which the Apostle warned us (Rom 8:6, 7).

And when he leads the flesh in the life of asceticism, he is not satisfied by the negative state, but on the positive side, he makes asceticism a chance to feed the spirit. And he makes the spirit share with the body in this asceticism. So it does not only become just asceticism of the body, but also of the soul.

E E E

The spiritual man establishes a balance in his care about the flesh and the spirit.

While he gives food to the flesh, he also gives the spirit its food. As he gives the flesh daily food by a number of meals and types of nutrition, so he gives the spirit its food from spiritual readings, contemplation, prayer, tunes, hymns and also Holy Communion.

As he treats the flesh when it is sick, he also treats the spirit in its sickness. He even turns more to protection. And as he gives the flesh its share in exercise, he also uses the spiritual exercise. And as the ordinary man takes care of the adornment of the body and its good appearance, so the spiritual man also cares about the adornment of the meek and calm spirit. He makes his spirit adorned by virtues and the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22,23).

E E E

The spiritual man makes his main concern: his spirit and also the spirits of others.

He avoids anything that disrupts the way of the spirit whether of sinning against himself or becoming a stumbling block to others... He cares about the safety of his spirit and his spiritual growth. That is because his spirit is God's breath of life in him, (Gen 2:7), while his flesh is of dust. With the spirit, he becomes like God's angels in heaven and he forms a relationship of love with God, and a relationship with the spiritual world of angels and saints.

By taking care of his spirit, he returns to the divine image in which God created him from the beginning (Gen 1:27).

"God created man in his own image" (Gen 1:26). How Wonderful!

And by taking care of his spirit, he also takes care of his eternity. This eternity, which our material life on earth is nothing when compared to it... Also by taking care of his spirit, he enters into a fellowship with the Holy Spirit and works with God...

E E E

Here we ask an essential question: What is the spiritual life? And we sum up this life in two points:

1- To subdue the flesh for the spirit.

2- To make one's spirit submit to the Spirit of God.

The whole life of the spiritual man is summed up in these two essential matters. The flesh is submitted to the spirit so he does not resist or lust for whatever the spirit longs for. The flesh also does not get into a struggle with the spirit as it happens with the beginners and those who are lacking spiritually. All that is on the negative side. As for the positive side, the flesh shares with the spirit in the spiritual work. And so the flesh is rewarded with the spirit in the eternal life, because it shared in the good work with the spirit and pursued the life of the spirit, so it deserved to become a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44).

E E E

We also say that the spirit of man is submitted to the Spirit of God because the human spirit, on its own, has its sins.

Not all the sins of man are caused by the flesh but there are sins of the spirit. And the Holy Bible says: "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Prov 16:18). And in the prayer of the Third Hour we say "Purify us from the iniquities of the body and soul..." and in the Holy Mass: "Purifying our souls, our bodies and our spirits."

The devil, who is a spirit and has no material body, has his falls and his continuous sins. He has fallen in pride (Is 14:14). And he became the resistant and the rebellious, and the Lord called him: "...a liar and the father of it" (Jn 8:44). We also say in the Holy Mass: "...and death that entered into the world through the envy of the devil". Then the devil has fallen in the sin of envy, although he is a spirit and of course caused many to stumble and misled them... All that while he is a spirit. Therefore, he and his devils are called in the Holy Bible: evil spirits and impure spirits.

E E E

The spirit then could sin, if separated from God. So the spirit needs the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore God granted us the holy anointing, (1 Jn 2:20,27) by which the Spirit of God dwells in us and stays with us till the end and guides us to the truth (Jn 16:3).. He will also teach us all things, (Jn 14:26). And will convict us of sin (Jn 16:8). In brief, our whole spiritual life depends on the work of the Holy Spirit in us, our response to His work and our sharing with Him in the work.

E E E

The spiritual man does not work on his own, but the Spirit of God works in him, with him and by him.

He is a tool in God's hand and a responding tool. He is a branch in the vine (Jn 15:1), He is fed from it and it gives him life. God works in us and without God we can do nothing (Jn 15:5).

Acting in the spirit does not mean only his human spirit but in communion with the Spirit of God. Only on this condition, one is called a spiritual man.

The Spirit of God directs him and guides him. He is the One that gives him spiritual warmth and grants him the gifts and the potentials by which he works. He also grants him the strength and the ability.

E E E

The spiritual man also has the obedient spirit. He does not grieve the Spirit of God or resist Him or quench the Spirit.

He does not claim doing a work on his own, but he kneels before God saying: "Let it be according to Your will, O Lord. I, by myself, did nothing, but: *"all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made"* (Jn 1:3).

THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL COMPARED TO THE SENSUAL AND CARNAL LEVELS.

Spirituality is, first of all, acting according to the spirit.

Much has been said about that in the Epistle of St Paul the Apostle written to the Romans, as he said: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit"* (Rom 8:1). **And also said:** *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit, the things of the spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God... so then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God"* (Rom 8:5-8).

E E E

Then spirituality here means an elevation above the level of acting according to the flesh.

I would like here to tell you that man consists of three elements: The spirit, the soul and the body.

St Paul explained this matter when he said in his First Epistle to the Thesalonians: “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless...” (1 Thess 5:23).

Then man consists of spirit, soul and body. And we say here that the spiritual man does not act according to the body or the soul. To be carnally minded is very clear to all...

Like the one who acts according to the lusts of the flesh such as adultery, craving for food or clothing ...etc. But then, what about the sensual behaviour? We say first:

Our fathers the Apostles fought and condemned the sensual behaviour.

St Jude the Apostle says in his Epistle, “There would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lust. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the spirit” (Jude 18,19). We notice here his saying:

Sensual persons... not having the spirit.

They “walk according to their own ungodly lusts.” By these words, it is probably understood that lusts of the flesh are led by sinful, sensual factors, far from the direction of the spirit...

St James the Apostle also differentiates between the divine wisdom and another wisdom about which he says: “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.” And it causes bitter envy, confusion and every evil thing (Jas 3:14-16)... We notice here that the description of sensual is connected to “earthly, demonic.”... What a harsh description...

May be these details are not often used. People usually talk only about spiritual behaviour and the carnal behaviour. Very rarely do they talk about hateful, sensual behaviour...

E E E

The sensual man is led by the senses with all their instincts and their feelings, not having the spirit.

This is a matter that has mistakes and sins, as we'll see.

And the carnal man is led by the lust of the flesh and its desires.

Then what about the spiritual man?

E E E

The spiritual man is distinguished by two characteristics:

1- He overcomes the flesh and the senses and acts according to the spirit.

2- The second characteristic is that his spirit submits to the Spirit of God

There is a man who has inside him a struggle between the lusts of the flesh and the spirit (Gal 5:16,17). As for the spiritual, his flesh has completely been submitted to the spirit. But this alone is not enough because the sins of man are not caused only by the lusts of the flesh. He may sin only by his spirit... Don't be surprised by that because the devil is a spirit, and in spite of that he has sinned. He is a rebellious and evil spirit.

The Holy Bible talks much about evil spirits.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave His Disciples an authority to cast away the evil spirits, that means the spirits of the devils. Then it is possible for the spirits not to sin and it is possible for man to sin by his spirit...

As for the spiritual man, he does not sin by his spirit because his spirit is completely submitted to the Spirit of God...

E E E

The spiritual man then has: His senses and his body submitted to his spirit, and his spirit is submitted to the Spirit of God.

Therefore we read in the Epistle to the Romans, a very beautiful phrase which is: *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"* (Rom 8:14). These are the spirituals who are submitted to the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God leads them and they are obedient to the leadership of God's

Spirit. In order to be led by God's Spirit, the Spirit of God must be dwelling in you.

For this reason, God made His Spirit dwells in us.

So the Holy Bible said: "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" (1 Cor 3:16). And the Spirit of God that is in you, gives your spirit, knowledge and guidance, leading her on the way..., rebuking her over sin and urging her to do good, bringing to her remembrance all things that the Lord has said and will teach her all things (Jn 14:26).

Therefore the church grants you the Holy anointing, the anointing of the Spirit.

St John the Beloved talked about this anointing twice in his First Epistle and said: "*The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you*" (1 Jn 2:20,27). And we receive this anointing in the Sacrament of the Holy Myron. They used to receive it at the beginning of the Apostolic period by laying hands.

E E E

Then depend on the Spirit of God to lead you and not only on the human wisdom...

The human wisdom on its own is foolishness with God (1 Cor 3:19). And St Paul the Apostle explained this matter in great depth and details, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 2...

EXAMPLES OF THE THREE LEVELS

LUST

There are lusts of the flesh, the senses and the spirit.

The lust of the flesh is a sin such as the lust of the senses, the lust of adultery and the lust of the stomach.

The lust of the senses is sometimes a kind of self-centredness and selfishness. Take for example Solomon the Wise:

He dealt with these lusts and said: *“Whatever my eyes desired I didn’t keep from them” (Eccles 2:10). And he explained that in details and said: “I built my self houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself waterpools... I acquired male and female servants... I also gathered for myself silver and gold... I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds” (Eccles 2:4-8).*

Here is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the other senses... This is the lust of the flesh and he found that all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

What then about the lust of the senses? He says: *“I didn’t withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my reward from all my labour...” (Eccles 2:10) And we say here:*

Solomon’s joy in all his riches and lusts of the flesh was a sensual joy.

It was not a spiritual joy at all. What is then the spiritual joy?

JOY

The sensual joy is a joy in the lusts of the flesh, like Solomon when he rejoiced in all his pleasures and riches. As for the spiritual joy, the Holy Bible says about it:

“Rejoice in the Lord always...” (Phil 4:4).

You read about Solomon’s joy in (Eccles 2) and you wouldn’t find the name of the Lord at all...! It is joy with the gardens and orchards, with herds, gold, silver and female singers..., not with his spirit and its communion with God. It is just a sensual joy, vanity and grasping for the wind. Therefore, in matters of joy, we differentiate between many expressions such as pleasures (which relates to the flesh and the senses), joy and happiness (some relate to the senses and others to the spirit).

Rejoicing in the Lord is a spiritual joy:

You rejoice because you have known God. You rejoice because you have a relationship and a fellowship with God. You rejoice because the Spirit of God dwells in you and guides you. You rejoice because you have tasted the kingdom. You rejoice for the victory of your spirit who has been set free by God (Jn 8:36) .You rejoice because you were able to lead people to God.

Christ's Disciples sometimes fell in the sensual joy.

It is not the same type of joy like that of Solomon but it is more advanced. Nevertheless, it is also unacceptable. The seventy returned with joy after being sent to preach and said to the Lord: "*Even the demons are subject to us in Your name*" (Lk 10:17). The Lord rebuked them for this sensual joy and said to them: "*Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice rather because your names are written in heaven*" (Lk 10:20) . And so the Lord differentiated between the two types of joy: rebuked for one and called for the other.

E E E

Another example is the joy of some in the gift of tongues and the like.

It is rejoicing in something that glorifies one before people and lifts him up!! He wants to be exalted on account of God's gifts... It was better to care about the purity of his heart, filling it with the fruit of the spirit. The Apostle said about that: "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*" (1 Cor 13:1).

E E E

Then rejoice in the fruit of the spirit more than rejoicing in the gifts.

"*The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control*" (Gal 5:22,23).

These will lead you to the kingdom while the gifts, signs and revelations may not...! The Lord says: "*Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you, depart from me you who practise lawlessness!"*" (Mt 7:22, 23).

It was said about St John the Baptist that he never performed one sign... (Jn 10:41). But in spite of that, the Lord witnessed for him and said: “Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist” (Mt 11:11). And when John’s birth was announced to Zachariah, it was said about him: “ He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Lk 1:15). Do not rejoice then in signs.

St Paul the apostle feared because of the many revelations and disclosures of knowledge.

Because they are dangerous and may cause his heart to exalt. Therefore he said: “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor 12:7) .And he prayed three times that God may take away this blow, but his prayers about this matter were not accepted.

E E E

The mother of the two Apostles, James and John, fell in the same vain, sensual joy.

She came to the Lord asking from him to grant that her sons may sit, one on His right hand the other on the left, in His kingdom (Mt 20:20,21). But the Lord did not want this joy to be in greatness but that her sons would have joy in pain. So He said to them: “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptised with?” (Mt 20:22) .

And the Lord answered the request of this saint and her son was the first amongst the twelve Apostles to be martyred, (Acts 12:2) and he sat at the right hand of the Lord...

E E E

Rejoicing in pain is truly part of the spiritual joy.

Therefore after the Disciples were imprisoned and flogged ,the Holy Bible says about them: “...They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Act 5:41).

And St Paul the Apostle says: *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor 12:10)...* **And so was the joy of the saints, the martyrs and the confessors when they faced torment and death. It is a spiritual joy.**

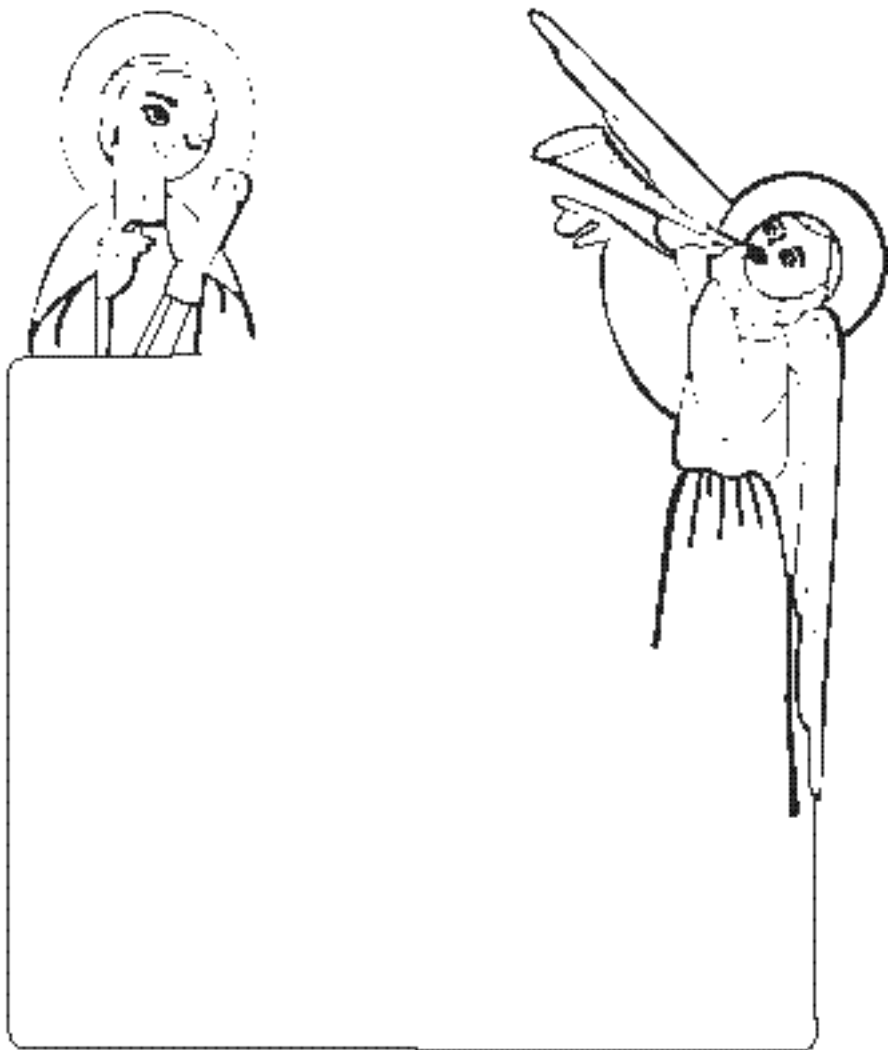
E E E

The one who rejoices in receiving the gift of signs and miracles is still within the level of the sensual joy. As for the spiritual joy, it is rejoicing in the Lord and not in His gifts and the greatness that they bring...

+ Perhaps one of the outstanding examples is that about the great saint whose five sons were slaughtered on her lap while she was encouraging them to be martyred, in order to rejoice with the Lord in His kingdom. She also rejoiced in their martyrdom...



CHAPTER 10



AMONG HIS QUALITIES: SELF-CONTROL

One of the main qualities of the spiritual man is “self-control”.

He does not submit himself to the lust of the flesh and its desires, but whenever he longs for a sinful desire, he controls himself firmly, to the leading of the spirit. And as the Holy Bible says:

“He who rules his spirit (is better) than he who takes a city” (Prov 16:32).

Rules or controls himself means not to give it all that it asks for, but stands against it, according to the Lord’s saying: *“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep for eternal life” (Jn 12:25).*

There is no doubt that self-control consists of many elements:

1. Tongue-control.
2. Thought-control.
3. Heart-control, by controlling desires and lusts.
4. Sense-control.
5. Belly-control, concerning food.

E E E

The one who rules himself makes it submit to values and principles, regulations and rules. Because whoever does not rule himself is in fact surrendering it to loss...

The one who controls himself loves it the true love...

Because the one who pampers himself loses it and makes others get lost with it. As for the one who is firm with himself, he saves it by this firmness and also saves others from it and keeps it on good terms with God... He organizes his concern and his relation as such: God first, people second then himself last...

TONGUE-CONTROL

The spiritual man does not say all that comes to his mind from words or ideas. He weighs each word before he utters it. His scale does not stop at the essence of the word, if it is right or wrong in itself...

But his concern is also about the effect of the word on others, its reactions and the result of that...

The one who knows the result of the faults of the tongue and the fire it kindles and how it defiles the whole body (Jas 3:5,6) ...this man is very careful before he talks, and says:

“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps 141:3).

He knows that the word that goes out of his mouth will never come back once more, because it has reached the ears of the listeners and has been counted on him, no matter how he will try to take it back or apologize for it or mend its results...! But it has become a cause for judgement, according to the Lord's saying that: *“...By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:37).*

THOUGHT-CONTROL

The spiritual man, as he controls his tongue, he also controls his thought. He does not let his mind stray in any thought, and does not accept any sinful thought that comes to him. He quickly casts it away and he never becomes lenient with it...

He also does not accept thoughts that seem simple at first then gradually lead to what is unacceptable... He is firm with these thoughts that come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves... And he says to himself about the devil, like what the Apostle said: *“We are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor 2:11).*

And if he was deceived by a sinful thought then he discovered it, he immediately stops it.

Because to go along with the sinful thought is betrayal to the Lord and it allows this thought to get firmly fixed. It will then grow and develop till it affects the heart and turns into a lust. It is better to get rid of it from the beginning.

The spiritual man does not content himself with controlling the thought and stopping it from sin. But he occupies his mind more with pure, spiritual thoughts. So if the devil came to fight him with a bad thought, he would find his mind occupied with spiritual contemplation... The spiritual atmosphere in his mind is capable of stopping any sinful thought from coming near him... like a strong fortress...

SENSE-CONTROL

The senses are doors for the thought... Therefore, the spiritual man controls his senses, in order to control his thought. He protects his eyes and protects his hearing. And if anything that leads to the thought reached his senses, he quickly casts it out.

He turns to the method of replacement, so he puts a thought in place of another thought.

Just like what St John the Dwarf used to do on hearing a strange thing... Or as Abba Ore who said to his disciple: "Look, my son, no strange word enters this cell"...

CONTROLLING EATING AND DRINKING

Many take interest in controlling themselves concerning food, which is known as a diet, in order to lose weight. Either as a treatment for diabetes, cholesterol, heart-disease or to avoid fatness... etc.

As for the spiritual man, he controls his food and drink for spiritual reasons, which include renunciation and fasting. He uses his self-control as means to suppress the flesh in order to give a chance to the spirit..

E E E

Our mother Eve did not control herself concerning food. So she disobeyed the Lord's commandment and ate from the forbidden tree. And so did our father Adam also... And it was the first sin...

This fall was preceded by failure in controlling the senses, whether by listening to the serpent or looking at the tree, which was: "...good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree desirable to make one wise" (Gen 3:6)... Truly, one sin could lead to another... So it moves from the senses, to the thought, to the heart then to action.

CONCERNING ANGER

Or what we may call "nerve-control".

The spiritual man tries to keep away from anger, according to the saying of the Holy Bible: "*For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*" (Jas 1:20).

If he finds that anger has moved in his heart, he does not let it take control over his tongue or his nerves.

So he does his best to control his words at the time of anger, either by remaining silent or by dominating his talk. Or most of all, he will dismiss anger from his heart... And by all means, he will try to calm himself so he would not blow up, raise his voice or flare up... He will also try to quieten his features ... He will act according to the Apostle's saying: "*Let every man be slow to speak, slow to wrath*" (Jas 1:19). Because the one who is quick to wrath falls in rashness and commits many sins. He may take action that he will regret very much when he is calm. He would feel that in his anger, he lost his divine image and became a stumbling block for many...

E E E

The spiritual man does not write a letter at a time of anger.

He does not take a decision at a time of anger.

And if he wrote a letter while he is angry, he does not rush and mail it, but leaves it for one or two days. He then reads again to revise it, tear it or writes another one, so it would not become a document of sin against him and its results would be unsatisfactory. The same with the decisions that one takes at the time of anger. They are called emotional decisions. Most of them are wrong and unwise decisions. And the Holy Bible says that:

"Anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Eccles 7:9).

IN DOGMA AND TEACHING

The spiritual man controls himself concerning the dogma and teaching:

He does not hasten to spread any thought that gets in his mind, as a result of reading, for example... So he starts teaching it or writing it in an article or publishing a book or giving it to others in a lesson... Many thoughts need a long period of nurturing where one gives and takes with the thought, discusses the idea in his mind before introducing it to people's minds...

The thought inside your mind is under your control. If you spread it, it becomes under the control of people.

It gets out of your sphere to a wider sphere, where judgement will be passed on it and on you. How true is St Macarius the Great when he said: "My brother, judge yourself before they judge you". Maybe he took this phrase from St Paul the Apostle: "*For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*" (1 Cor 11:31)... Therefore the spiritual man controls himself and that is better than being controlled by others...

IN OBEDIENCE AND COMMITMENT

He also controls himself concerning commitment, obedience and submission.

Because there are some people who, in the name of freedom, personal dignity and self-confidence, would do what they want without caring about discipline, tradition or specific rules...! Truly we believe in democracy, but it is also a controlled democracy.

The river is a beautiful example, it runs in its stream but is bordered by two banks. They do not stop its freedom in its stream, but they control it so it would not flood and turn into swamps...

The spiritual man is a man of commitment. He respects discipline and observes rules. He also respects others.

He obeys the Apostle when he says: "*Render therefore to all their due: fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*" (Rom 13:7)... **As for the one who follows**

his own wishes and does not submit to anyone, no superior person and no discipline, but only to his own thought..., this one is not a spiritual man. He also does not obey the teachings of the Holy Bible and is not committed to anything...

The spiritual man controls himself concerning obedience...

Obedying the parents, obeying the confession father, obeying orders, keeping time and obeying God before all... He does not see that submission would lessen his dignity at all. Submission is an evidence of humility and humility is a virtue. The person who does not submit to anyone is definitely submitted to his pride or to his fancies.

IN AMBITION AND SUPERIORITY

The spiritual man controls himself concerning his ambition and the love of exaltation and superiority.

Whenever he finds himself wise in his own eyes or righteous in his own opinion, he tries to control himself, lest he thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think (Rom 12:3). And he does not exalt himself above the measure that God has dealt to him (Rom 12:3).

The devil failed to control himself concerning the love of being exalted because, while he wanted to ascend above the clouds and become like the Most High, (Is. 14:14), he fell and his fall was great...

E E E

The spiritual man controls himself, not only concerning the love of exaltation, but also concerning the gifts.

Or God Himself assigns for him a control so that he would not be exalted. Consider St Paul the Apostle when he says: *“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure”* (2 Cor 12:7).

My brother, whenever your thought exalts, control it. Do not think of yourself above measure. Put limits for the ambitions that may lead you to compare yourself to others. Then when you find that you are more exalted

and more bigger, you lose your obedience, humility, commitment and respect for others... But always place before yourself the saying of the Holy Bible: *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Prov 16:18).

IN THE WHOLE LIFE

Self-control includes the whole life...

The spiritual man controls himself concerning the love of comfort and pleasure. He controls himself concerning time, distributing it well among different responsibilities and also respects appointments... He controls himself concerning revenging for himself if he was insulted or offended. He controls himself concerning financial matters and concerning taking and giving. He controls himself with regard to his relationship with others and to what extent it should be... He controls his heart's emotions and feelings so they would not deviate to the right or to the left... Even with regard to the worship, the service, supervising others and in all his responsibilities, he puts controls for himself.

E E E

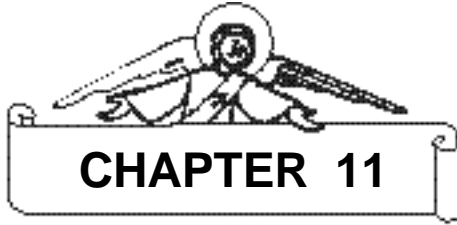
Finally, I would like to say an important remark which is:

The one who does not control himself may get the needed control from outside.

If he is not controlled within, the control would come to him in spite of his will: from the society that watches his behaviour and holds him responsible; from the eyes of people that see and their ears that hear... He would be controlled by fear or shame or controlled by laws and punishments by a higher authority. Or he would be controlled by the spiritual guides or an outside resistance that would stop him within his limits and prohibits him from behaving wrongly... It is amazing how the Prophet David failed to control himself and to stop himself from taking revenge. But control came to him from outside when Abigail rebuked him in wisdom and good manners (1Sam 25).

It is better for one to control himself spiritually and receive a divine reward for that, than to be controlled by an outside force, or to be controlled against his own will...

As for the spiritual man, he controls himself from within. And if he found resistance, he turns to compulsion and to spiritual exercises, always aiming at purity of the heart and holiness of the action...



THE SPIRITUAL MAN:

LIVES:

**ABOVE THE LEVEL OF
WHAT IS SEEN**

LIVES: ABOVE THE LEVEL OF WHAT IS SEEN

Seen matters are temporary while the unseen are eternal.

The material, the world and the flesh are among the seen and perishable matters. Live in the world but do not make the world live in you. What are the unseen things so we direct our attention to them?

St Paul the Apostle said: “ While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4: 18).

THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN

What are then the unseen things? Eternity is one of them!

The one who thinks about his eternity is always thinking about the unseen, because he does not see this eternity with his own eyes. And because this eternity, as St Paul the Apostle said: “ *What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man*” (1 Cor 2: 9).

There is also no doubt that the one who looks for his eternity will not care about the present, but will renounce it and will not hold on to it.

E E E

In eternity, we look at God with the spirit.

The Holy Bible said about God: “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*” (Jn 1:18).

To enjoy God does not come within the range of the senses, therefore it is eternal. It is an inexpressible joy, wonderful and no one can take it away from us...

Would that we get busy with God, who dwells in our midst, the One knocking on our doors, who said to us: “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Mt 28:20)... And also said: “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them*” (Mt 18: 20).

He is then in our midst, and although we don't see Him but we can feel His presence. And in eternity we will see Him “face to face,” as the Apostle said (1 Cor 13:12).

E E E

We will see Him and see His angels and the spirits of His saints whom we do not see now.

The angels of the Lord encamp all around those who fear Him and they fill the church. And they are all: “*Ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation.*” (Heb 1:14) And in spite of that, we do not see them with the material eyes but we will see them in eternity, as well as the spirits of the saints.

As for now, we look at them all with the spirit and see them through faith. We feel ashamed if we commit a sin in their presence.

E E E

The spirit is one of the unseen things.

As for the body, it is one of the seen...

Therefore the spiritual man who loves God, does not live to look after the flesh and its needs, but to look after the spirit which is unseen. He takes care of her spiritual food, her eternal destiny and all that links her to God, the unseen, and makes her attached to Him...

E E E

The one who looks at the unseen cares about the morals, the faith and the good.

Because faith is: “*The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11: 1).

And the spiritual man who lives in faith, lives always looking at the unseen because the seen matters relate to sight and not to faith. And the Apostle said: *“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5: 7).*

By the spirit we live in the morals that are not seen, the peace which we feel but do not see, the good which we follow but do not see.... and so on with all the unseen virtues.

E E E

In all our affairs, we look at God’s unseen strength, which works with us.

We do not look at our visible weakness... to the problems we face... But we look at God’s help, like the Prophet Elisha when he prayed for his disciple Gehazi: *“ Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (2 Kings 6:16,17) .The most important thing with us is God’s help. By faith, we see it working in the universe. With this strength, we rejoice and sing with the Apostle: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4: 13)...*

What are these things that are seen and the spiritual man should not look at them?

E E E

Things That Are Seen

The material is one of the seen things, therefore it is temporary, does not stay forever. If we do not leave it, it will definitely leave us. Therefore the Lord said to the rich fool, concerning his possessions and barns: *“ You fool!... Whose will those things be which you have provided?!” (Lk 12:20) .*

Therefore, happy is he who has treasures in heaven, with unseen things.... His treasures turn from seen to unseen... turn into spirituals...

E E E

The universe is also one of the seen things, the temporary things.

Therefore the Lord said that heaven and earth will pass away. And St John of the Revelation said: *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea”* (Rev 21: 1).

They are all things that will pass away because they are of the seen. Therefore the church repeats for our hearing, in each Mass, the Apostles’ saying:

“Do not love the world or the things in the world... And the world is passing away, and the lust of it” (1 Jn 2: 15,17).

That is why we find that our fathers the saints started their spiritual life by death to the world.

They spent their life on earth as strangers and pilgrims, with no permanent homeland. *“But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.”* (Heb 11:13,16). They do not look at what is seen.

E E E

Perhaps some will ask: What should I practically do? How can I leave the world and the material while I live in them? The Apostle answers this question by saying: *“And those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away”* (1 Cor 7:31).

Then live in the world but do not let the world live in you.

You may possess the material, but do not let the material possess you.

The world belongs to the outside and does not enter into your heart, your thoughts and your feelings to use the material in it. And inwardly you are free from its control and its love.

Do not mourn the loss of anything worldly because it does not accompany you on the last day. Therefore do not long to possess anything of the world, as the Lord said:

“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul” (Mt 16:26).

E E E

And the phrase “not looking” means not caring and not being occupied with anything of the material and the world, because the thought is already occupied with something that is spiritual, something that is unseen. And as the Apostle said: “*I want you to be without care*” (1 Cor 7:32).

The one who does not care about anything seen, no doubt lives happily and free from lust and from fear...

St Augustine said about that: “**I sat on top of the world when I felt in myself that I desire nothing and fear nothing**”.

E E E

The one who has been elevated above the level of the material is a strong fortress that would not be destroyed. He is above the world and also above the flesh.

The material body is also of the temporary things that will pass away because it is controlled by the senses. And the time will come when we will be set free from it. When we take it off and put on a new body that is spiritual, luminous and uncorrupted. That is the glorified body of the resurrection...

As for this body, it will be eaten by worms and turn into dust. And when it is raised, it will be raised as a spiritual body, free from the control of the material with all its needs and its weaknesses.

E E E

You are in the image of God and according to His likeness; and God is Spirit. Live then in the spirit.

The spirit is from the unseen things. And in the life of the spirit, you are free from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. You take hold of things that will remain with you in eternity. As for the seen things, do not pay them any attention or make them cause you grief...

The Lord Jesus Christ was on the mount, with the Father, occupied with unseen things. How was His temptation by Satan in its three forms, united in one aim?

The temptation was an effort to distract Him from what is not seen to the world of the seen...

Satan attracted Him to the stone that could turn into bread to feed the body...; to the scenery that would attract the senses and to the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

As for the Lord, He held fast to the unseen things..., with the spirit that feeds on every word that comes from the mouth of God... Therefore He rejected all these materials and they did not affect Him.

E E E

The temptation that our first parents experienced was from the seen things...

The fruit on the tree that was before them: *“Was good for food ... Was pleasant to the eyes”* (Gen 3:6). Sodom looked like that in the eyes of Lot. It was well watered everywhere: *“Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt”* (Gen 13:10).

Consider the story of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar. She was looking at the seen things; the beauty of the flesh and its lust. As for Joseph, he was looking at the Lord: *“How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Gen 39:9). He never looked at the seen things, the temporary... Therefore he was saved and the woman fell..

In the same way Solomon fell:

The tragedy of his fall was caused by his saying: *“ Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them ”* (Eccles 2:10).

Therefore he said: *“I built myself houses and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards ... I also gathered for myself silver and gold... I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men...”* (Eccles 2:4-10).

And what was the result? It made his heart turn from the Lord (1 Kings 11).

Finally, he discovered that all these seen things are:

“Vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun” (Eccles 2:22).

But he discovered this truth late, after it affected his spirit and made him fall in that which wise men would not fall in!!

Riches spoiled Solomon, made him fall in many lusts and turned his heart to women. The riches also made the young man keep away from Jesus and : *“...he departed very sorrowfully”...*

E E E

But some wealthy people kept their love for God because they did not love the riches. They were not occupied by collecting and storing possessions. But they sold all and gave the poor, like St, Anthony the Great and St Milania. And also like what Job the Righteous used to do.

The problem then is not in the possession itself but in looking at it, relying on it and in becoming proud because of it.

All that is about the seen things.

The monks, the ascetics and the hermits lived by looking at the unseen.

They looked at the seen things and found them temporary and passing away, not worth their attention. So they were elevated above that level and above any desire for such things. They died for the world and for what is seen, looking at the unseen, due to their great love for the King, Jesus Christ.

In the same way lived our fathers, who considered themselves strangers on the earth.

They waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:13,10). Their looks were concentrated on the eternity that was promised by God. They did not see it by the eye, not having received the promises, but they saw it from afar and believed in it. And so David the Prophet used to say: *“I am a stranger with you”, “ A sojourner, as all my fathers were ” (Ps 39:12)...* The same with Moses the Prophet who was a

prince in the palace of the king. But when he came of age, he did not look at this seen greatness, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures in Egypt... (Heb 11:26).

The same thing applies to the martyrs and confessors.

They approached death, without looking at the world and all that is in it. They rejected the temptations presented to them because their eyes were fixed on the unseen, the eternal life that is not seen and on what eyes has not seen... (1 Cor 2:9)... What do we say then about those who do not pay the tithes because they look only at the seen, without seeking the blessing of what is unseen.

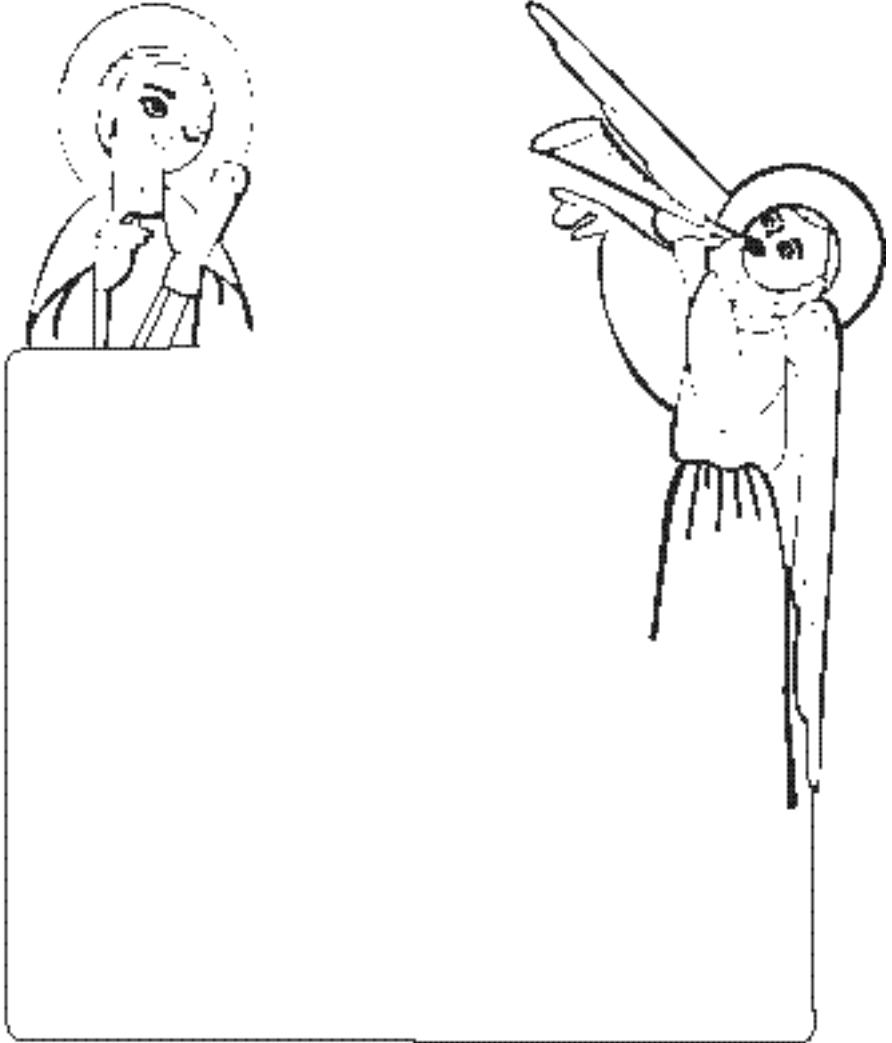
The Lord Jesus Christ was a model of looking at the unseen.

In the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus did not look at the bread that is seen, but he looked up to heaven and blessed it. And in His talk with the Samaritan woman, the Lord did not care about this water that is seen, but He concentrated on the living water that is unseen... The same thing with worshipping, not in the seen Jerusalem, or on that mountain, but in the spirit and truth, which are unseen... And about the kingdom, He did not care about the earthly kingdom that is seen, but about the spiritual kingdom.

Looking at the unseen saves the world from the materialistic beliefs, pornography and immorality, and from existentialism which cares only about the existence in this earthly world.



CHAPTER 12



HAS THE INTEGRAL PERSONALITY

The Importance Of Being Integral

The spiritual man combines between virtues, even the ones that seem contradictory.

With him, virtues have no contradiction or decline, but only perfection.

He does not limit himself to one virtue, but struggles to acquire all, according to the lord's saying: *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father is perfect"* (Mt 5:48).

And the spiritual man does not acquire a virtue at the expense of another.

His virtues do not destroy each other, but go along with each other.

God, blessed be His name, has all the virtues going along with each other. The Lord Jesus Christ showed us this perfect example. In His personality, we see love and firmness, mercy and justice, gentleness and courage, simplicity and wisdom, kindness and strength, service and contemplation... etc.

We will start by talking about perfection among the virtues.

SIMPLICITY AND WISDOM

One of the very common mistakes is to describe a person with simplicity while he does not have wisdom. But his simplicity could be a kind of naivety. He could be blamed for certain actions, but people would try to excuse him by saying that he is simple...

This is not true simplicity because the spiritual person is simple and wise. As the Lord called us to: *"..Be wise ...and harmless"* (Mt 10:16), with no contradiction.

Simplicity is the lack of complications and not the lack of wisdom.

The Christian simplicity is a wise simplicity. And the Christian wisdom is a simple wisdom. One could say very wise words in a simple way.

He would have wisdom in his mind and simplicity in his heart...

He would behave in the depth of wisdom and with all simplicity. It is a wisdom that does not have the complications of philosophers but a simplicity that could be understood by all.

Simplicity also is not to believe in everything without thinking or to give others the chance to deceive you or make fun of you. But in your simplicity with people, you should have open eyes and an alert mind, to recognize the wolves who are in sheep's clothing...

And in his wisdom, the spiritual man does not live in an atmosphere of doubt, caution and suspicions.

He does not mix up matters but organizes them...

He understands the phrase : *"Love believes all things"* (1 Cor 13:7), with regard to God. So in his love for God, he believes in all His promises and in all His miracles. He also believes that the temptations that God permits are for good. But with regard to people, he puts next to the phrase: *"Love believes all things"*, the saying of the Apostle: *"...Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God..."* (1 Jn 4:1). And also: *"Test all things; hold fast what is good"* (1Thess 5:21).

He obeys with simplicity but also mixes obedience with wisdom.

As the Apostle said: *"Obey your parents in the Lord"* (Eph 6:1). And also: *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29).

The integral personality is not led by one virtue.

But he mixes each virtue with wisdom, love and humility.

KINDNESS AND STRENGTH

The Lord Jesus Christ was very kind hearted. *"He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoking flax He will not quench"* (Mt 12:19,20). And at the same time, He

was very strong. His personality was strong. He was strong in His words, in His conviction, in His love and in His effect on others...

He was kind hearted, loved children, embraced them and was compassionate towards them. His Disciple, John, used to lean on His bosom and He defended the sinful woman. At the same time, His dignity never departed from Him.

He allowed Satan to tempt Him. And when he overdid it, He rebuked Him (Mt 4).

He allowed the soldiers to arrest Him. And at the same time, when He said to them : *"I am He"*, they drew back and fell to the ground" (Jn 18:6).

Parents and teachers are supposed to have kindness, but also to have dignity.

It is not good for them to lose their dignity because of their kindness.

Dignity is essential to maintain discipline and to uphold principles. Kindness is essential so people would obey because of their love and not because of fear.

LOVE AND FIRMNESS

It may be said about a monk that he is a kind person, suitable to be a priest, but not suitable to be a bishop because he lacks management. His conscience would trouble him if he took a firm stand!!

As if management and firmness are against spirituality.

The spiritual man can combine between the two qualities: sympathy and firmness, kindness and management, fatherhood and leadership...

Joseph the Upright was very firm to the extent that his brothers feared him and were terrified from him when he said to them: *"I am Joseph; does my father still live?"* (Gen 45:3) .And in spite of that, he could not restrain himself when he revealed himself to his brothers, and he wept aloud (Gen 45:1,2).

The quality of kindness with strength and love with firmness shows in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was said about Him when He cleansed the Temple:

O Strong, who holds a whip in His hand... while love makes Your eyes bleed.

This is the integrity of personality, which is necessary to advance in the virtues.

The Lord Jesus Christ loved His Disciples, but sometimes He used to rebuke them.

It was said about Him that He: *“Loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1)*. And in spite of that, when Peter wanted to stop Him from accepting death on the Cross, the Lord said to him: *“Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me” (Mt 16:23)*. We find firmness clear here. And with the same firmness, the Lord rebuked His two Disciples when they said to Him: *“Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (Lk 9:55)*.

One of the strange things within the family is when parents sometimes divide love and firmness among themselves. So the mother would have love while the father would have firmness!! That is while love and firmness should be for each of them...

If the son did something wrong or tried to do something wrong, the mother would say to him: *“...Lest your father gets angry and punishes you’, without telling him that she ,too, does not agree with this matter!! The son gets confused and would not know where the truth is. All he will do is avoid his father’s anger.*

Sometimes a priest would try to gain the love of his congregation ; or an employer, the love of his employees. For the sake of that love, he would neglect the rights of the job and the commandment of God, so he loses firmness. And that may have very serious results ...

GENTLENESS AND COURAGE

The Lord Jesus Christ was very gentle. He even said: *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly”* (Mt 11:29). And in spite of that, He was very strong and courageous. He stood before the scribes and Pharisees and revealed their hypocrisy. And He stood before the Sadducees and put them to shame; and before the elders and rebuked them.

David the Prophet was gentle and was courageous.

He was courageous as he stood against Goliath the giant and defeated him at a time when the army was afraid (Sam 17). He was gentle as it was said in the Psalm: *“Lord, remember David and all his afflictions”* (Ps 132:1).

Moses the Prophet was also gentle , courageous and strong.

Gentle, as it has been said about him: *“ Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth”* (Num 12:3). And he was courageous and strong as he stood against all the people when they worshipped the golden calf which they made, so he : *“...burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder and he scattered it on the water”* (Ex 32:20).

Abraham, the father of fathers, was gentle and courageous.

He was gentle as he bowed himself down before the sons of Heth, when he bought from them the field and the cave to use as a burial place for Sarah (Gen 23:12). But still, his courage showed as: *“When Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants”* (Gen 14:14). He also rose against four kings, defeated them and rescued Lot and Sodom from captivity. And when the king of Sodom wanted to give him a share in the spoils, he said to him with self-dignity : *“I will take nothing from a thread to a sandal-strap,... lest you should say,” I have made Abram rich”* (Gen 14:23).

The monks were gentle, but they were courageous in defending the faith.

It is wrong to think that the quality of gentleness stops you from being courageous and turns you into a motionless corpse with no sense of honour, no gallantry and no life...! You should acquire the virtues and place before yourself the saying of the Holy Bible:

***“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven”
(Eccles 3:1).***

You use gentleness when gentleness is better and you use courage when courage is needed. Both are in you. You show each at the right time that suits it...

Gentleness does not mean weakness. And strength does not mean violence.

Wisdom and understanding are both mixed with gentleness and strength. A weak person could not be in the image of God and according to his likeness. But in order to be strong, he should not turn to rashness and lose his gentleness and good manners.

Gentleness does not prompt laziness, and kindness does not prompt others to make fun of you.

If a person was kind, it does not mean that people make fun of him and he loses his dignity, his rights and his standing.

Otherwise, some will hate kindness and see that people are using it against them. The problem is not in kindness but in misunderstanding it and the lack of mixing it up with wisdom and strength of personality.

You weigh each virtue with an accurate scale, and you do not practise it separate from other virtues. And if you find that the outcomes are negatives...

You should know that negatives are not the result of the virtue but of misunderstanding it, or misusing it, or the lack of wisdom in it.

You can have a kind heart, but this kindness does not mean to let others lead you or, with a weak personality, you share in the mistakes of others. Or because you fear the anger of another, you share with him in wrong-doing or compliment him in an obvious offence...

LOVE AND FEAR

We love God. But our love does not stop the virtue of fear and dealing with His holy sublimity with all the solemnity and reverence due to Him.

We love Him and bow before Him. We enter the church with love and joy. And at the same time, we say to the Lord: *“But as for me, I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy; in fear of you I will worship towards your holy temple” (Ps 5:7).*

We love His Holy Bible and His commandments and we say to Him: *“I rejoice at your word as one who finds great treasure” (Ps 119:162).* But in spite of that, and before reading the Gospel, the Deacon cries out: *“Stand up in the fear of God and listen to the Holy Gospel”.*

We deal with God as a Father, but One who is in heaven.

Love is mixed with fear... And it turns into a love with reverence.

Because there are many who, in their conviction in God's love, lose their fear of Him and gradually turn to carelessness and underestimation. They even talk to the fathers, the priests, with no respect...

Many are the verses about the fear of God. If we forget them, the Lord will say to us:

“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures” (Mt 22:29).

As for the phrase: *“Perfect love casts out fear” (1 Jn 4:18)*, fear here means horror. But it is not the fear as in reverence. Everyday, in the Prayer of Thanksgiving, we say: *“Grant us to conclude this blessed day and all the days of our life in peace and in Your fear”...*

SERVICE AND CONTEMPLATION

There are some who, due to their care about and involvement with the service, lose the importance of prayer and contemplation in their lives. They neglect these spiritualities. And there is no doubt that this is against perfection in the life of the spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ used to go about towns and villages, preaching the good news about the kingdom. And in spite of that, He used to spend all night in prayer . He also had His contemplation alone on the Mount of Olives (Jn 8:1), and in the garden of Gethsemane.

John the Baptist also had his very successful service by which he prepared the way before the Lord. But still, he spent thirty years of his life in the wilderness till he appeared to Israel.

The Prophet Elijah had his service by which he destroyed the prophets of Baal and of Asherah, and he rebuked Ahab the King . At the same time, he had his solitude on Mount Carmel.

St Paul the Apostle had his life of contemplation by which he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2). And in spite of that, he had his strong service by which he preached in Asia and Europe, and wrote fourteen Epistles. He even wrote while he was in prison.

The integral man combines between the two lives. Service is not to be at the expense of contemplation, and contemplation is not at the expense of service.

TALK AND SILENCE

One may talk much, so he loses the virtues of silence, thinking and contemplating. And one may remain silent and loses the advantage of the word of benefit, the word of consolation, the word of advice and also loses witnessing for the truth. As for the integral man, he knows when to remain silent and when to talk.

He does not remain silent when it is good to talk, and does not talk when it is good to remain silent.

When he is silent, it is by wisdom. And when he talks, it is for a benefit. He controls the two matters together and uses each of them at its good time.

TEARS AND CHEERFULNESS

One may try to acquire the virtue of tears, so you never see him except in much tears; which gives a distorted picture about being religious.

While for the integral man, there is time for tears, usually before God, in his bedroom, in his solitude or before the Altar of God. Nevertheless, you find him cheerful and gentle in his life with people, gaining the love of all. He places before himself the two rules together:

“Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4). And also :

“By a sad countenance the heart is made better” (Eccles 7:3).

He uses each of them at the suitable time and in a spiritual manner.

MERCY AND JUSTICE

These two virtues met on the Cross. The Lord was just and merciful. Just as He paid the price of sin. And merciful as He had pity on mankind, who was condemned to death So He died for us.

There is no contradiction at all between God’s justice and his mercy.

His mercy is full of justice, and His justice is full of mercy.

He is just in His mercy, and merciful in His justice.

There are virtues that integrate with no contradiction. It is different with mankind. The justice of one turns into cruelty with no mercy. Or his mercy turns into underestimation of the rights of justice, encouraging others to err, though unintentionally.

In this integration which we described some of its forms, we notice a very important matter, that is:

THE DANGER OF THE ONE VIRTUE

We also notice the danger of using one virtue in matters relating to theology and dogma. The one virtue is also dangerous in spiritualities...

One may act in humility without wisdom, and he will be troubled because of the way people treat him, the loss of his dignity, and the loss of others' respect... The cause would not be the virtue of humility ! But because it lacked the connection with discretion and good understanding.

The same with the one who is responsible for work and management. He may act in the virtue of forgiveness and excuse those who do wrong, in a way that would make the work lose its management and becomes predominated by carelessness and lack of concern. That is because he lost the virtue of justice and firmness, thinking that punishment is a sin...

The examples about the danger of the one virtue are numerous...

The spiritual man must be integral in his virtues.

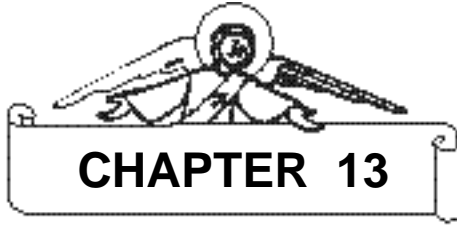
He knows how to use each virtue at the time suitable for it. And how to use the other virtue on another occasion... with no contradiction... but with integration...

He knows when to forgive and when to punish, and how to be spiritual in both cases.

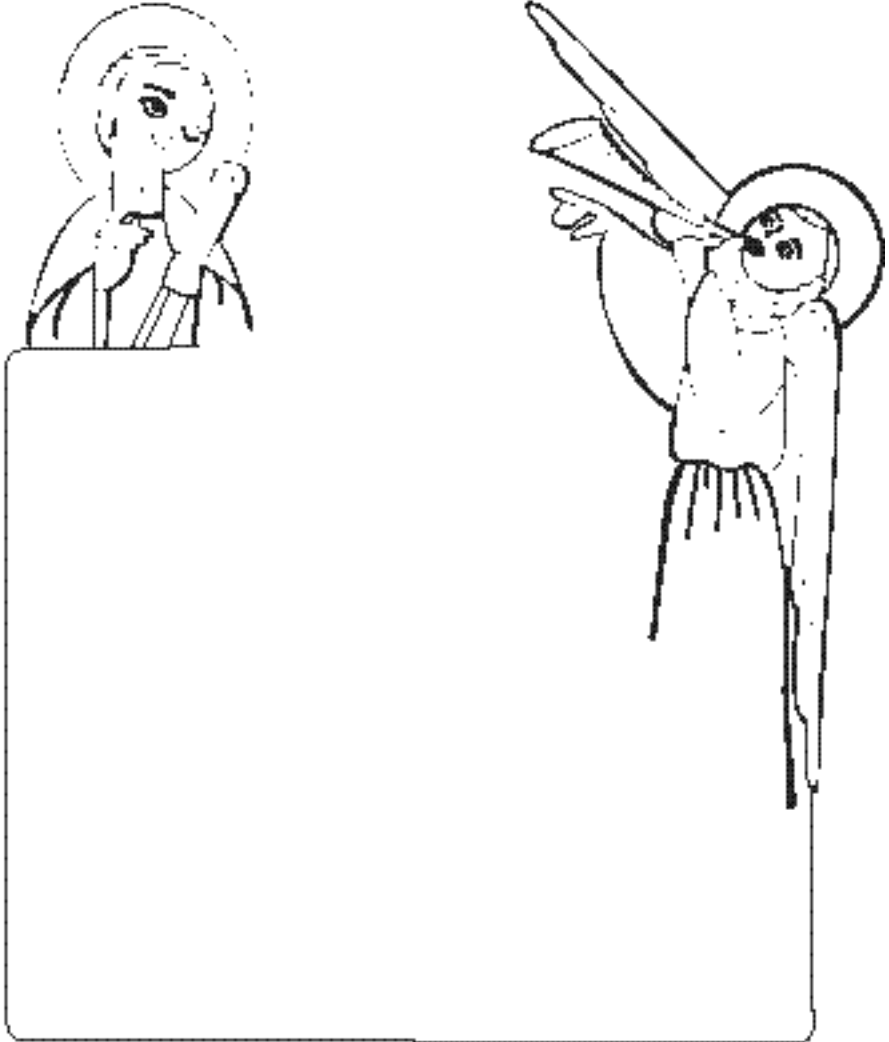
He knows when to mix with people , serve them and smile at their faces; and when to calm down to himself in solitude and privacy where he would meet no one...

He knows when to rebuke and when to preach, and when to say to the sinner: go in peace.

He takes the suitable action at the right time and for the cause calling for it.



CHAPTER 13



AMONG HIS QUALITIES: PROSPERITY

The Importance Of Prosperity and its Qualities

Any prosperity is a cause of joy for many.

Joy for the one who succeeds, joy for his family and his friends, joy for the whole church and may be joy for society in general. Joy for the angels and spirits of the saints and joy for God Himself...

St John the Apostle sent to his disciple Gaius, saying: *“I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers”* (3 Jn 2).

Prosperity is also among the qualities of the spiritual man.

He is the one about whom the Psalm says: *“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper”* (Ps 1:3). **And it has been said about the Upright Joseph:** *“The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man... And that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand”* (Gen 39:2,3).

We notice here that it is prosperity in all things.

“Whatever he does shall prosper” ... “The Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand” ...

The Lord’s grace does not depart from him in any work, so whatever he does prosper. The elements of success are also in his personality, do not leave him in whatever he does. So he becomes prosperous in all things, whether in his spiritual life, his work, his family life or in all his knowledge. We give an example for that:

Joseph the Upright : He was prosperous and popular in every work:

In his family, he was loved by his parents, and his father even made him a tunic of many colours. He was good at missing his brothers. And as a servant in the house of Potiphar, he was very prosperous and popular, so his master: *“ Made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put in his*

hand” (Gen 39:4). And when he was put into the prison, he was the most prosperous among the prisoners and he was favoured by the keeper of the prison : “*And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners... The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s hand... And whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper*” (Gen 39:22,23). Even the prisoners used to consult him in their affairs, as did the chief butler and the chief baker (Gen 40).

And when he became minister of supply in Egypt, he was very prosperous and saved Egypt from the famine and also saved the surrounding countries. He was loved by Pharaoh and so he left everything in the hands of Joseph and made him second in charge of the kingdom (Gen 41:40-44).

The Holy Bible presents prosperity as a kind of blessing.

And so in Deut 28, the chapter of blessings and curses, we find that prosperity is a blessing from God as we see that failure is of His curses and punishments...

The Holy Bible gives us examples of prosperous people:

David, for example, as a youth was prosperous. He was able to defeat Goliath the giant, he was also successful in making the distressing spirit depart from Saul (Sam 16:23). And it was also said about David that he was accepted in the sight of all the people (1 Sam 18:5).

The same prosperity was David’s companion in the land of captivity, so Darius gave him authority over all those who had influence in his kingdom. And Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius (Dan 6:28).

And Nehemiah was prosperous with King Artaxerxes and succeeded in building the wall of Jerusalem. The same with his companion, Ezra the scribe. Zerubbabel was also prosperous, as the Divine inspiration said about him in the Book of Zechariah the Prophet: “*Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!*” (Zech 4:7).

St Paul the Apostle was also one of the greatest who prospered in the service.

Here, some may ask a reversible question :

Are not there some of God's children who were broken in their lives and did not prosper?!

I would say to you that God's children are frequently surrounded by problems, difficulties and weaknesses from the outside (2 Cor 6:5). But in spite of that, they succeed in facing these difficulties. Such things do not shake them from within, do not press them ; and they do not collapse before them. But as the Apostle St Paul said about himself and his fellow-workers: *"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things"* (2 Cor 6:10).

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

I would like here to put an important rule for prosperity, which is:

Do not worry about the beginning if it seemed to be a failure.

The important thing is prosperity at the end.

+ Joseph the Upright, for example, at the beginning of his life he seemed always lost: From being cast into a pit to being sold as a slave, to an unjust accusation against him that ended by putting him in prison... But what is important is the end which was good to the greatest degree... So we should not judge the beginnings...

+ David the Prophet started his life, and after the Holy anointment and defeating Goliath, he lived persecuted by King Saul, a wanderer from one wilderness to another till he thought that one day, he will definitely fall in the hands of Saul... But all these troubling beginnings ended and finally David triumphed..

+ The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, during the period of His incarnation on earth: How was the beginning? Many tribulations such as Herod murdering the children and the flight into Egypt. His service started by harassments from the leaders of the Jews and plots that led to His Crucifixion... The important thing is the end: Resurrection, ascension, sitting on the right hand of the Father and the spread of the faith...

+ Moses with Pharaoh: The beginning brought opposite results as Pharaoh charged more. The people were annoyed and murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said to them: *"Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you*

have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh...” (Ex 5:21)... **And the Lord sent ten plagues against Pharaoh and the man’s cruelty did not soften... The people even grumbled when Pharaoh went after them, and said to Moses: “ Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?”** (Ex 14:11)... **But despite all these troubling beginnings, the faith of Moses never weakened... Finally, he succeeded in saving the children of Israel from the slavery of Pharaoh...**

E E E

For all that, do not ever be troubled when you do not achieve success at the beginning of the road. Remember always the saying of the Holy Bible:

“In your patience posses your souls” (Lk 21:19).

Success needs patience and perseverance. And the one who gets weary, tired, annoyed and does not continue..., he would not be able to prosper... Wait for the Lord till He comes to help you, even in the last watch of the night...

Do not worry about the results of everything you do... Wait till the fruit ripens, then you will find it in your hands with no difficulty...

E E E

The most important quality of the prosperous man is to be prosperous within.

Prosperous in his heart, in his mind, in his nerves and in his will. And before all, to be prosperous in his relationship with God... To have a strong spirit that does not shake, fear or get troubled...

He proceeds on his way like an arrow towards an aim.

No matter how the waves will rage against his ship, even if the mountains overturn in the middle of the seas, he would not weaken or fail within. He does not lose his faith in the possibility of success despite all obstacles that try to block his way...

The prosperous man succeeds in spite of obstacles and hardships.

He enjoys gaining victory over these obstacles, with a grace from God. His prosperity, despite hardships, gives him a greater delight and a deeper spiritual experience in the work of God's hand with him...

St Mark the Apostle faced countless difficulties while preaching in Egypt: There was no church and none of the people believed in Christianity. There were many other religions: The Pharaohnic, the Greek, the Roman, the Eastern, the Jewish and the Pagan philosophy..., plus the harsh Roman government. But in spite of all that, St Mark the Apostle prospered in spreading the Christian faith in Egypt.

THE PROBLEM OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED

This problem may trouble some as it disturbed Jeremiah the Prophet at one time, so he gently reproved God by saying: *“Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; yet let me talk with You about Your judgements. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?”* (Jer 12:1).

Prosperity of the wicked is a false prosperity, temporary and by evil ways.

+ Herod the King thought that he succeeded by putting to death all the children of Bethlehem. But it was a false success. The only One that he wanted to kill was alive and did not die. Herod's means were also sinful.

+ Herod who came after him put to death John the Baptist. Did Herodia, Salome or Herod prosper by killing John, or it was a false and temporary success? Herod's disturbance continued, even after the death of John (Mt 14:1,2). Herod's life ended when an angel of the Lord struck him and he was eaten by worms and died (Acts 12:23).

Ahab managed to destroy Naboth the Jezreelite, plotted and killed him in order to take possession of his vineyard (1 Kings 21). His prosperity was temporary, false and evil. God's wrath came later on Ahab and the Lord said: *“In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours”* (1Kings 21:19).

+ The Jews thought that they got rid of Christ by crucifying Him as their plot worked , and the result was crucifying the Lord. But it was a false and temporary success as it ended by the glory of the Resurrection...

+ Haman thought that he managed to overcome Mordecai, plotted against him and prepared a cross for him. He almost destroyed not only Mordecai, but also all the people. God finally interfered after Queen Esther called for a fasting and the situation was completely reversed. They hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

+ St Augustine said that the evil are like smoke that rises up and its area gets bigger, then all that disappears.

As for the fire, it remains low and does not get high like the smoke. But it keeps its strength, heat and effect without disappearing , like smoke does in its rise...

Their prosperity is also in worldly matters, not a real success. Compare that to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (Lk 16), and the parable of the rich fool whose ground yielded plentifully, so he said: *"I will pull down my barns and build greater... And I will say to my soul," Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat and drink..."* (Lk 12:16-20).

The true prosperity is the spiritual prosperity.

And if it was in the material, it should be in a spiritual manner.

Therefore, do not get jealous when the wicked prosper, especially if the means of their success were far from God... Such as the one who turns to lying, cunningness and tricks... Or to cheating..., bribery... or flattery, hypocrisy, deceit and favouritism... Or the businessman who monopolizes the markets and exaggerates in his profit. He prospers financially and fails spiritually. The saying of the Apostle applies to all of them:

" Whose glory is in their shame- who set their mind on earthly things" (Phil 3:19).

He also said that their end is destruction.

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Among the outstanding examples of false success is : Satan and his soldiers.

+ **When Satan is released from his prison, he will go out :** *“To deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth” (Rev 20:7). And will also try to deceive: “If possible, even the elect” (Mt 24:24)... Did Satan succeed?!*

+ **It was said about the beast that :** *“It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them” (Rev 13:7) . But did the beast prosper after this temporary victory?!*

The Holy Bible settled this matter by saying : *“And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophets are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20 : 10) .*

+ **Satan fought also against Christ, as he:** *“Opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God” (2 Thess 2:4). “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish “ (2 Thess 2:9,10). And that will cause many to depart from the faith. His prosperity is also temporary, false and evil. And the Lord will consume him with the breath of His mouth (2 Thess 2:8).*

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

+ **The first thing is the blessing and obedience to the commandment.**

As it was said about Joseph the Upright in his prosperity : *“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man” (Gen 39:2). And that : “The Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand” (Gen 39:3).*

Search for the prosperity that comes to you from God, from God’s fellowship with you in your work, or from God’s gift for you, or as a reward from God for obeying His Commandments...

Remember the Lord’s saying to Joshua the son of Nun: *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Josh 1 :8).*

+ Concern yourself, before anything, with the spiritual prosperity.

Your success in fighting against the devils and your inner victory over yourself. Also your success in getting rid of your bad habits, and of all your weaknesses, your shortcomings and your falls... Also your success in avoiding facing evil with evil, but as the Holy Bible said: *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12: 21).*

Your success in controlling your tongue, controlling your senses, controlling your feelings and controlling your nerves...

+ Prosperity also needs the strong heart. It needs the personality that is not weak... The one that is not defeated by problems but who overcomes them. The one who does not get disturbed before them or becomes afraid. As David the Prophet said: “Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident” (Ps 27:3)... The calm thought , the calm nerves and the calm soul... all these are the elements of prosperity...

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Prosperity also needs wisdom and intelligence.

Many fail in their spiritual, financial or family life or in their dealings due to lack of wisdom and good behaviour; or due to the lack of discretion in the spiritual conduct. Such people need guidance and submission to a careful and wise fatherhood. They need prayers that God may guide them in His ways and grant them wisdom from above, from the Father of Light...

+ Prosperity is also related to a divine justice that says:

“Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal 6 :7).

+ Prosperity also needs faith and prayers.

And so, as the Lord said: *“All things are possible to him who believes” (Mk 9:23).* And as St Paul the Apostle said: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).* Therefore abide in the Lord, be with Him, so He also will be with you, granting you His blessings. And prosperity is among His blessings...

Ask always for God's help and He will help you to prosper...

+ In order to be prosperous, you have to remain firm till the end.

And if you missed a chance, seek another. And if the devil and all his soldiers waged war against you, plotted all their intrigues to make you fail..., do not fear. Say with the Psalmist: *"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive... Blessed be the Lord who has not given us as prey to their teeth"* (Ps 124).

The prosperous person does not ever despair. Even if he failed in the first steps, he rises again... As it was said that: *"A righteous man may fall seven times and rise again"* (Prov 24 :16) . It means that no matter how many times he may fall, he still rises again.

+ To become prosperous, place before you always the lives of prosperous people.

That is to consider them as models for yourself and to follow their example . Also to know the means of their prosperous life, the manner of their success and its aspects...

These models of prosperity could be in all aspects of life: the spiritual, the social, the family or private ... And do not forget the effect of the lives of the saints.

Remember that you are in God's image, and the one who is in the image of God has to be prosperous.

Therefore, the one who is unsuccessful, the failure or the flunking, is not in God's image, because the one who is in the image of God is...: *"Like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season... And whatever he does shall prosper"* (Ps 1). And so it was said about Joseph the Upright : *"The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man"* (Gen 39 :2).

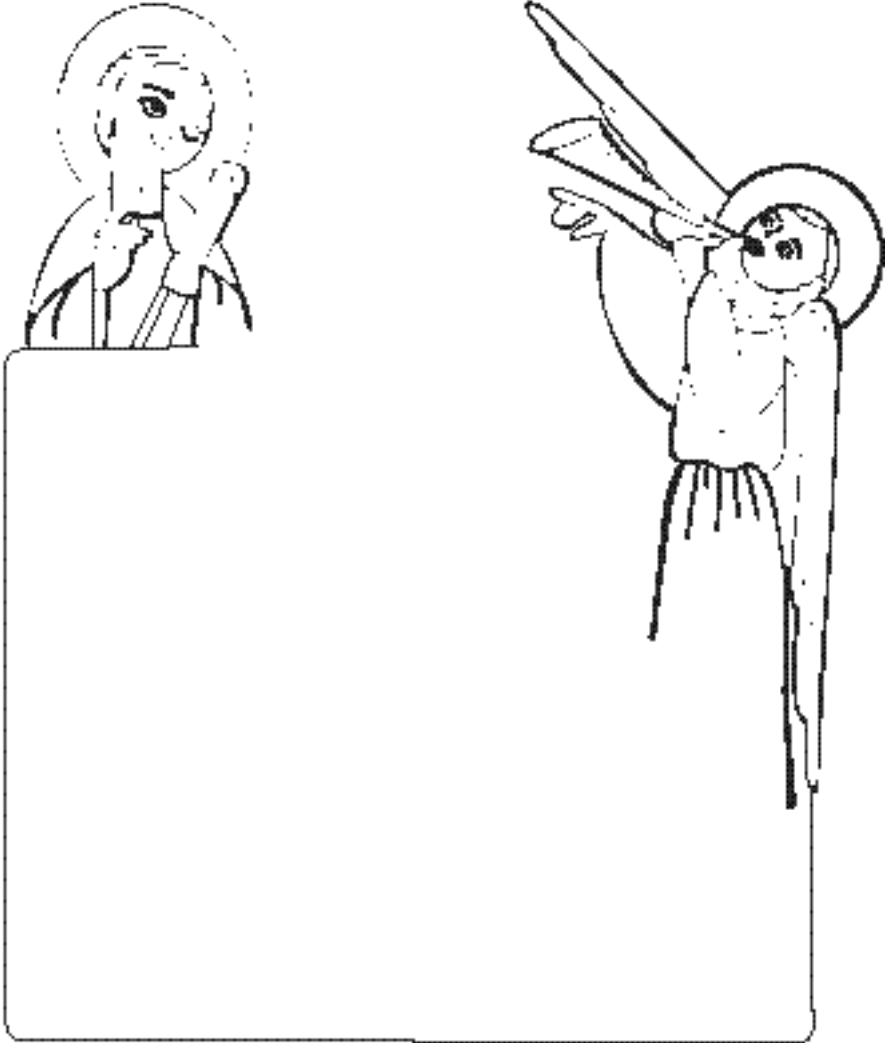
Say to yourself: If I do not prosper in my life, then there is no doubt that I have lost my divine image and also the perfection that God requires from us by saying : *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Mt 5 :48).

That is from the positive side. As for the negative side, do not forget that if you are not successful in your life, you will consequently become a stumbling block in any surroundings you live in, whether the family, the church, the service or the work. You will be a stumbling block to people who will ask in amazement: Is that how God's children are?!

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CHAPTER 14



LIVES ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLE: "IF WE LIVE, WE LIVE TO THE LORD"

St Paul the Apostle wrote to the Romans saying: *"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"* (Rom 14:8).

So it is not important if we live or die, but what is important is that we are the Lord's in our life and in our death.

If we eat, we eat to the Lord, to gain physical energy to enable us to do what pleases Him. And if we fast, we fast to the Lord to strengthen the spirit and form a strong relationship with God. Then the energy of the body is for Him and the strength of the spirit is for Him. Exactly as the Apostle said: *"Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Cor 6:20).

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The same if we speak, we speak to the Lord. And if we are silent, we are silent to the Lord.

For Him we speak and for Him we are silent. For Him we speak witnessing for the truth, the faith and the kingdom. We announce His commandments to people, comfort and strengthen others and utter words of wisdom that are of benefit for edification And as the Holy Bible said: *"The mouth of the righteous is a well of life"* (Prov 10:11) .And we are silent to the Lord, according to the saying of the Holy Bible: *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise"* (Prov 10:19). We speak when the Lord opens our lips, and our mouths shall show forth His praise (Ps 51). We remain silent when we fear sin and say: *"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips"* (Ps 141:3).

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Every work we do is done for the Lord... Done for Him, with Him and by Him...

We do it for Him, for His Kingdom and for the glory of His name. We do it with Him, in the communion of the Holy Spirit who shares the work with us. And we work by Him, that is by His guidance, His strength and His help. And so no work for us is done separate from God... That is because we live to the Lord, not to ourselves and not to the world or to sinful aims, as it happens with some...

SINFUL AIMS

There are people who live for themselves only, and in a sinful way:

Sometimes, all man wants in life is to build and enjoy himself. And if only it was done in a spiritual way, instead of a material, worldly and carnal manner! And to achieve that, he may destroy others, as he would remove them out of his way so he would remain... And what is more amazing is that while he is trying to build himself, he loses and destroys it. As it was said by the Lord, to Him is the glory:

“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Mt 10: 39).

And so the Lord Jesus Christ talked about self-denial: (Mt 16: 24), and about self-sacrifice: (Jn 15: 13). The problem with the rich fool was that he wanted to enjoy himself on earth with “many goods” (Lk 12:19). And the problem with the rich man and Lazarus was that he : “...fared sumptuously every day” (Lk 16:19). Solomon the Wise tried all the world pleasures, and found that all was vanity and grasping for the wind (Eccles 2:11)... The one who lives for himself is a sinful person. How true is the saying :

“He who lived for himself has never lived”.

The self should be placed at the end of the list when we arrange priorities. So we say God is first, followed by others then ourselves. But this arrangement would not be correct if there was separatism. Because both working for others and working for ourselves should be within living for God and not separated from it. And so God becomes all in all (1 Cor 15:28).

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One might say: “I live for my children.”

He works, toils and suffers for them. He accumulates money to leave an inheritance for them. Taking care of one's children is a holy duty. But, it is wrong for one to concentrate on his children and ignore his duties towards others and towards God ! He neglects God's share in his money and also the share of the needy and keeps all for his children. Solomon the Wise says: *"Then I hated all my labour in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labours in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity"* (Eccles 2:18-19).

The good that God counts for you is the good that you yourself do and not what your children do...

Then take care of your children and take care of other people also. Live for your children and live for the whole of society.... So that you love your children, give them from your labour and toil, and you also love the poor and those who are in need and give them from your labour and toil. You love society as a whole by serving and sacrificing and you also love the church and you serve her. Your love for everyone is placed within your love for God...

E E E

You should not have a sinful love, outside the love for God and no pure love more than your love for God..

Here the Lord says: *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me"* (Mt 10:37) . And also all the love should be for God and the whole heart for God. The love of children and the love of people come within the love for God. The first thing in your love for your children is to make them know God and love Him, so you will be able to say to him what the Lord said: *"I have declared to them your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved Me may be in them... I have given them the words which you have given Me"* (Jn 17:26-28).

E E E

There should not be a rival for God in your heart, whether a person or a thing.

Therefore the Lord compared the saints to five wise virgins (Mt 25) That is because the virgins have no connection to another person. And virginity of the heart means that it is not attached to another desire, except to draw near to God. And so St Paul the Apostle said : *“I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (2 Cor 11:2). Consider David the Prophet and the King and how, in spite of all the greatness and luxury that surrounded him, he says:

“But it is good for me to draw near to God.” (Ps 73:28).

And he says to the Lord: *“There is none upon earth that I desire besides You.”* (Ps 73:25). By that he acquires the virtue of satisfaction with God, and says: *“I shall not want”* (Ps 23:1) . And when he expressed the desire that will satisfy his heart, he did not look at the comfort of the Kingdom, but he said: *“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple”* (Ps 27:4) .Therefore he said: *“When You said, “Seek My face” my heart said to You, “Your face, Lord, I will seek.” Do not hide Your face from me”* (Ps 27: 8-9). That was the only request for King David the great...

E E E

The one who lives to the Lord does not care about the outside conditions but he lives to the Lord in any condition and in every situation.

Perhaps one of the clear examples of this matter is Joseph the Upright. He lived to the Lord as a son in a family. Then the situation changed to a slave in the house of a rich man, and he continued to live to the Lord in his new position. Then his situation changed to a prisoner then to a minister. But the outside positions did not affect his relationship with God at all. He lived to the Lord as a son, a slave, a prisoner or a minister. He remained the same. The situation and the position changed, but his sole aim remained: *“to live to the Lord”*. It is an unchangeable aim.

We say that because some people refuse to live to the Lord except when they are in a specific position...!

Either to have a special position in the church, or they get angry, isolate themselves and refuse to serve. Either to receive a special treatment from God, where He pampers them in a specific manner, or they take an antagonistic stand from Him....! And so they stipulate conditions for living to the

Lord...! Otherwise they leave Him. What is that, my brother?! Suppose they even sent you out of the church, would you, for that reason, refuse to live to the Lord?!

Life to the Lord should have great importance in your heart. You should never give it up whatever the reasons, the motives, or the circumstances that surround you.

WHY DO WE LIVE TO THE LORD?

Firstly: Because we are His creation. He is the One who gave us life.

And so we became His, and this life is His. It was possible that we did not exist, but He created us. He granted us this existence, so we became His... If we live, we live to the Lord... And especially because He created us in His image and according to His likeness (Gen 1:26). And we cannot keep this image except if we live to Him and with Him.

E E E

Secondly: Because He saved us and bought us at a price, so we became His.

The Apostle says about that: *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6: 19-20).*

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Thirdly: Because we are His children... and His name has been called upon us.

So we should live to Him, because in this the children of God are manifest (1 Jn 3:10). They live to Him, therefore they do not sin because: *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin." "He cannot sin, because he has been born of God" (1 Jn 3:9)* If we do not live to Him and live to ourselves or to the world, the flesh or the material, then we will sin and we would not be the children of God... Because we live to the Lord in order to keep our affiliation to Him and in order to keep His image. The prodigal son said to Him: *"I am no longer worthy to be called Your son" (Lk 15:19).*

Fourthly: We live to the Lord because this is the real life.

God is life. (Jn 11:25) (Jn 14:6) He who holds fast to Him, holds fast to life and will become truly alive. And whoever is separated from Him is considered dead, no matter how he is really alive. It was said about the prodigal son that when he was in sin, “*He was dead*” (Lk 15:24) And the Lord said to the angel of the church in Sardis: “*You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.*” (Rev 3:1) Then we are supposed to understand the real meaning of life, and that is to live to the Lord. I remember here that, as a youth, I wrote once a poem entitled: “Are We Truly Living?!”

E E E

Would that we taste life with the Lord ...

As the Psalmist said: “*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Ps 34:8) .The one who tastes this life would feel its pleasure and see that when he lives to the Lord, he lives a good, ideal and desired life, which is far better (Phil 1:23) . This life with the Lord is even a guarantee of the happy everlasting life.

We live here to the Lord in order to be worthy of living with Him in the happy eternity.

HOW DO WE LIVE TO THE LORD?

That does not mean the life of complete consecration.

Like the life of monks and nuns, the clergy and all those who are consecrated... Not all are consecrated to the Lord, while the verse: “*If we live, we live to the Lord*”, is for all, all the faithful, every member in the city of the Lord, everyone who is qualified for the Kingdom.

We also do not live to the Lord by formal worship ...

Many are regular in prayer, fasting, reading and attending religious meetings... They have a relationship with the church but they do not have a relationship with God. They do not live with Him and they do not live to Him... As if all their worship is just an outside appearance that does not rise to the level of living with God. The Lord said about such people: “*These peo-*

ple draw near to me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mt 15:8), (Is 29:13). Then you have to live to the Lord with heart and action, in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23). So in your worship, you feel the presence of God in your life, your existence in His presence and your relationship with Him.

He who lives to the Lord shows that in many virtues, which are distinctive in his life:

He lives a life of submission and obedience. Because in his life to the Lord, he submits his life and his will to Him .Consequently, he lives a life of chastity and purity, a life of love where he carries out the Lord's commandments, out of love and not through compulsion.... So he says with the Psalmist to the Lord: *"I rejoice at your word as one who finds great treasure" (Ps 119:162), "I was glad when they said to me: let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps 122:1).* And so he lives a life of joy in the Lord.

E E E

Also the one who lives to the Lord lives in the world as a stranger.

"He is not of the World" (Jn 15:19). He places before himself the Apostle's saying "....And those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away." (1 Cor 7:31) And so lived our fathers: "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13) .They live to the Lord as for the world, it is passing away, and the lust of it. (1 Jn 2:17). What then have they got to do with it?! One of the fathers said:

"It is better for people not to worry about this world and in whose hands it is."

And so the one who lives to the Lord will necessarily reach the stage of renouncing the world (1 Jn 2: 15-16). And people in this renouncement are on different levels... The one who lives to the Lord does not care or worry about many things, like Martha did (Lk 10:41) They are certain that only one thing is needed and that is God. Some who choose that good part may reach the life of consecration.

E E E

Also the one who lives to the Lord does not fear death but faces it with joy.

This point takes us to the second part of the verse, which is : “*And if we die, we die to the Lord*”...

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF : “*WE DIE TO THE LORD*”?

We die to Him in order to meet Him: “*And thus we shall always be with the Lord*” (1 Thess 4:17).

Therefore, the one who lives to the Lord is happy to take off this body and put on incorruption, the spiritual and heavenly body (1 Cor 15:44-49). And he will then be always with the Lord. That is what St Paul the Apostle longed for when he said: “*... Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better*” (Phil 1:23) ... **To be with Him in paradise and in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the Kingdom, according to His true promise.** “*... where I am, there you may be also*” (Jn 14:3).

We die to Him in order to see Him face to face (1 Cor 13:12) .

And as the Apostle said: “*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known*” (1 Cor 13:12).

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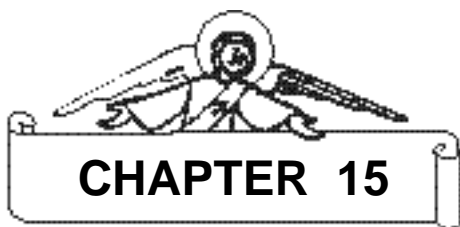
We die to Him also means that we die for Him.

Just like the martyrs and all those who defended the faith. And also as the Apostle said: “*For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us.*” (2 Cor 4: 11-12) . **Or as the Holy Bible said:** “*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like His*” (Num 23:10) ...

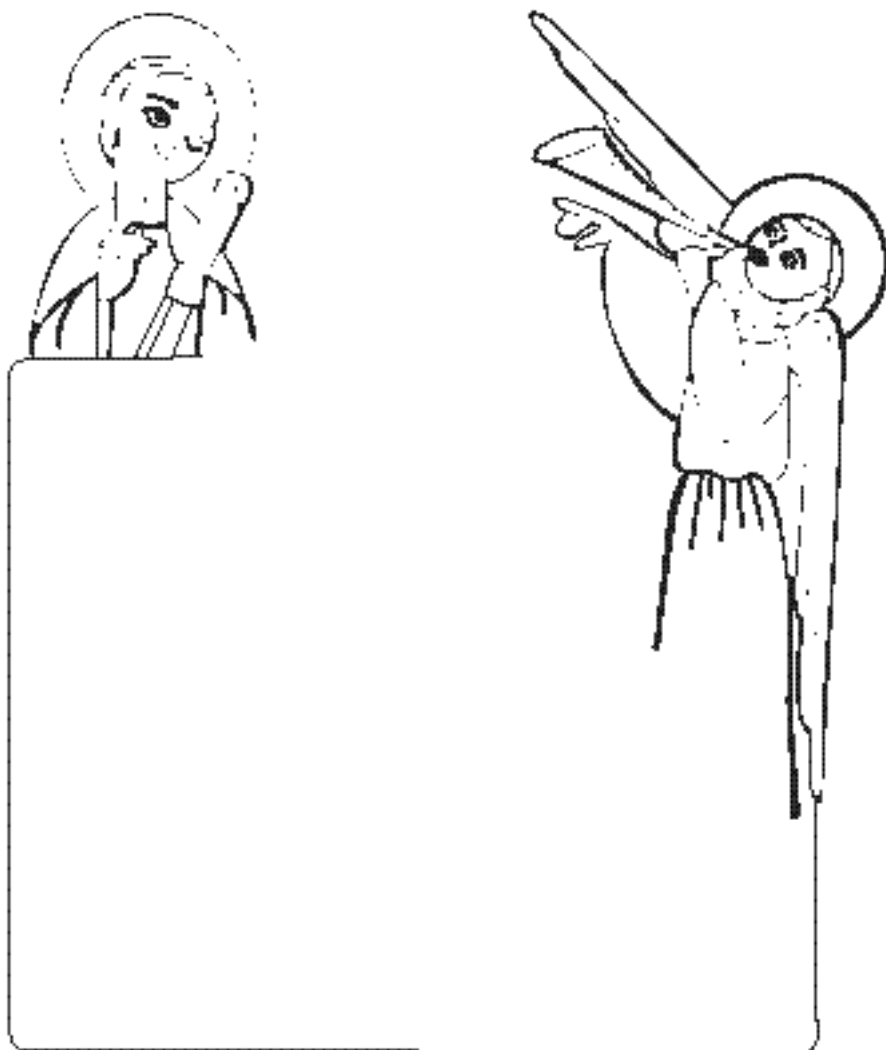
E E E

Finally, would that we try to live to the Lord in order to also die to Him.

We try to live to the Lord even for one day like practising "The ideal day" which used to be given to us as youth... And if we succeed in it, increase it. And we contemplate on the example given by the thief who was on the right hand of the Lord. He lived with the Lord only for hours, then he died with Him and won paradise. St Baeysa is another example. Her life of repentance was even less than hours and she obtained life... Let us then start to live to the Lord.



CHAPTER 15



THE LIFE OF VICTORY AND TRIUMPH

We are members of the struggling church on earth. We pass here a probationary period where we confront many spiritual warfares. St Paul the Apostle explained that and said: *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but... against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Eph 6:12). And he also said that this war needs: *“The whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Eph 6:11).

God wants us to triumph in this war. The whole heaven watches our struggle and rejoices on seeing us winning.

The angels and the spirits of the saints in heaven pray for our victory : *“There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents ”* (Lk 15 :7). The grace of the lord also helps us to win, and the Spirit of God works in us in order to triumph... But if we fell and were defeated, we then : *“Grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we were sealed”* (Eph. 4:30).

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The spiritual man is a victorious man.

Because his spirit has overcome the lust of the flesh, and won the wars of the devils. It has also overcome the world and the material. When his hour comes, the angels will joyfully carry his spirit in a procession to heaven.

And the spiritual man triumphs because he is a strong man and the Spirit of God works strongly in him. His will became in complete submission to the will of God.

The spiritual man does not try to overcome another person.

Because he loves others in honour, giving preference to them (Rom 12:10), while he sits down in the lowest place (Lk 14 :10). He likes to overcome evil but not the evil people. He likes to overcome himself but not others. He does not like overcoming the weak or the mistaken, but rather bears with them. As the Apostle said: *“We who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak”* (Rom 15 :1).

There are many fields where the spiritual man overcomes:

+ **He overcomes himself first.**

First of all, he overcomes within, because his inner victory is what helps him to overcome the wars without.

The prodigal son, (Lk 15), was unable to return to his father till he managed to overcome within and he when lost his lust for the far country, realized the bad state which he was in...

One of the greatest examples of inner victory is Joseph the Upright. The temptations from the outside were very strong, pressing on him day by day (Gen 39:10). Sin was the one seeking him. But in spite of that, he rejected all these temptations because he was triumphant within. So he was able, with the purity of his heart, to say: *"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Gen 39:9). St John Chrysostom was truthful when he said:

"Nobody can harm a man unless he harms himself".

It means that the outside factors would not overcome him, except if he was already overcome from within. Therefore the Lord says: *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life"* (Prov 4:23).

St Augustine lived in the sin when he was overcome by it, that is when he was longing for it. But when he managed to overcome himself from within, then he said his beautiful phrase: "I sat on top of the world when I felt inside myself that I do not long for anything or fear anything".

E E E

So, if you get troubled one day, my brother, be certain that you are troubled from within. There is a hole in yourself through which outside troubles manage to get in. Therefore the Lord said about the triumphant spiritual man that he is: *"A garden enclosed,... a spring shut up, a fountain sealed"* (Song 4:12).

The outside sin searches for a sin inside you to get united with it and opens for her the doors of the heart, and of the thought.

The spiritual man who wants the Spirit of God to be within him, the outside sin wouldn't find a place for her inside him. She knocks on his door but he would not open, so she leaves him and turns away... An enemy, for example, tries to agitate you in order to sin and finds that you are not liable to get agitated because you are strong within. What would he do then? Either feel ashamed and leave you, or apologize to you, or stop acting in such a manner ...

E E E

The spiritual man overcomes sin and the devil...

As far as he managed to overcome the desires of his heart from within, he will definitely overcome sin on the outside with all its wars and its thoughts. The devil's devices will never deceive him, but as St Paul the Apostle said about him: *"Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor 2:11).

And the spiritual man, if fought by sin, he resists it with all his strength.

He benefits from St Paul the Apostle's rebuke to the Hebrews: *"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin"* (Heb 12:4). He also listens to the saying of St Peter the Apostle: *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion,... Resist him, steadfast in the faith"* (1 Pet 5:8-9).

The first Man was deceived by the words of the serpent (Gen 3). He lost his divine image and was defeated by sin. As for the spiritual man, he is not like that. He likes to overcome, learning from lessons of the past.

E E E

The worst thing in the defeat of evil people is their boasting about their sins :

They are the ones, about whom St Paul said: *"...And now I tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things"* (Phil 3:18-19).

As for the spiritual man, his glory is in the torment he endures for God's sake, overcoming this shame in which the sinners rejoice.

E E E

The spiritual man overcomes all the obstacles that stop in the way of his spiritual life.

He also overcomes the obstacles that prohibit his spiritual growth. He does not allow anything to disrupt his fellowship with God, no matter how difficult or disruptive to others.

Look what St Paul said :

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulations, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39).

E E E

The spiritual man does not give excuses if he fails to overcome. But he confesses the sin and repents.

Excuses do not justify defeat before the enemy. Each of Adam and Eve tried to give excuses but they were not acceptable before God. God has placed before us all the means to overcome. He..." Always leads us in triumph in Christ" (2 Cor 2:14).. The weakness then is in our will. Any attempt to justify our defeat in our spiritual wars is another sin added to this defeat...

E E E

The spiritual man also overcomes tribulations and problems.

Problems do not shake him, defeat him, weaken his morals, disturb him or throw him in a whirlpool of anxiety, uneasiness and doubt. But rather, he overcomes the problems and his heart does not get anxious about them or loses his peace because of them.

Through faith, prayer and patience, he overcomes all problems.

One of the outstanding examples in this field is probably Job the Upright. The problems he experienced were more than what an ordinary person's heart could endure. Who is able to bear the loss of all his sons and daughters in one day? With them, he also lost his possessions and riches?! But when this spiritual man heard the sad news, he said: *"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord"* *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there"* (Job 1:21). **Therefore, God praised him by saying:** *"There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man"* (Job 2:3).

E E E

The spiritual man does not only overcome affliction by endurance but he also rejoices even more in it.

As St James the Apostle said : *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials"* (Jas 1:2) And as St Paul the Apostle said: *"Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake..."* (2 Cor 12:9-10).

How beautiful is what has been said about our fathers the Apostles, after they put them in prison, beat them, then they let them go. It was said that: *"They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name"* (Acts 5:41).

E E E

When the spiritual man experiences affliction, he says in faith : It is for good :

Remembering the saying of the Apostle: *"All things work together for good to those who love God"* (Rom 8:28). **Therefore, affliction does not shake him but strengthens his faith because he knows very well that the way that leads to God is narrow (Mt 7:14). Then he expects this tribulation and rejoices in it because it proves that he is on the way of God. Then through faith, he waits for God to interfere and get him out of the tribulation. And in any case, it is a crown for him... With all these feelings, he overcomes the tribulation...**

The spiritual man also does not find his pleasure in the world, but he rejoices in overcoming the world with all its material and lust...

How beautiful is the saying of one of the writers : “Rejoice not because you obtained a desire but because you subjugated a desire”.

And by overcoming desires, the spiritual man proves that he is the son of God because: “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God*” (Rom 8:14) . And as they are led by the Spirit of God, they overcome the sin and they perform good deeds : “*Whoever abides in him does not sin*” (1 Jn 3:6).

E E E

The life of victory is joyful because in it, the spiritual man becomes a model for others.

He presents to people an example of the prospect of the righteous life and that the life of victory is a practical reality that they can see before them. He also gives an example of the strength of God’s children, which helps them to overcome. As St John said to the youth: “*I wrote to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one*” (1 Jn 2:13).

E E E

The life of victory is also joyful because of the Lord’s promises to those who overcome.

It has been recorded in God’s message to the seven churches of Asia (Rev 2,3).

So He said to the angel of the church of Ephesus: “*To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*” (Rev 2:7). And to the angel of the church in Smyrna : “*He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death* ” (Rev 2:11). And it is known that the first death is departure of the spirit from the body. As for the second death, it is eternal death or deprivation from God, and being cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 13:42).

And He said to the angel of the church in Pergamos: “*To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat... And I will give him a new name*” (Rev 2:17).

And He said to the angel of the church in Thyatira: *“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations... as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star”* (Rev 2:26-28).

And to the angel of the church in Sardis, He said: *“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels”* (Rev 3:5).

And He said to the angel of the church in Philadelphia: *“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God”* (Rev 3:12).

And to the angel of the church of Laodiceans: *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”* (Rev 3:21).

E E E

How beautiful it is... The Lord Jesus Christ wants you to overcome and to sit with Him on His throne in the eternal kingdom...

If you were one of those who overcame, you will eat from the tree of life and from the hidden manna; will be clothed in white garments, will become a pillar in the temple of God, will be given power, your name will be written in the book of life and you will even be given a new name...

And if you overcame, you will live in the holy city of God, heavenly Jerusalem, with God, the angels and the saints (Rev 21). You will inherit the kingdom prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34). And where Jesus is, there you may be also (Jn 14:3). And you will enjoy what an eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man (1 Cor 2:9). And the second death will not overcome you but you will be raised in glory, with a heavenly, spiritual body (1 Cor 15:43-45)... All these glories are for those who overcome.

THE LIFE OF VICTORY ...AND THE WAR IS FOR GOD

Procession of the Victorious

The Lord Jesus Christ, by His incarnation, has presented to us the idealistic picture of the life of overcoming and victory, as He overcame in everything:

He overcame all the wars of the devil, as in the temptation on the mount (Mt 4). He also overcame in His arguments with the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and with all the chief priests and the elders of the people (Mt 21:23). He overcame when He was on the Cross, as He was able to offer a sacrifice and save the whole world, as by His death He destroyed death (Heb 2:14,15). He also overcame death by His Resurrection. And He overcame the world, as He said :

“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33).

Concerning righteousness, He also overcame, as he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). He challenged the Jews by saying : “ *Which of you convicts Me of sin?*” (Jn 8:46). He overcame in gaining the love of people, as it was said about Him: “*Look, the world has gone after Him!*” (Jn 12:19). He entered Jerusalem in triumph as a king and the whole city shook (Jn 12:12). And it was said, summing up His triumphs :

“ Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed “ (Rev 5:5).

And it was said that He overcame all the kings who fought Him because: “*He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings*” (Rev 17:14). And as He was always victorious, the Holy Bible promised us that He “*Always leads us in triumph*” (2 Cor 2:14). And in His second coming, He will come in the procession of the triumphant : “ *Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints*” (Jude 14).” *With power and great glory*” (Mt 24:30).

E E E

And as the Holy Bible presented to us the idealism of the triumphs of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Bible and the history of the church also present to us examples of the victory of the saints:

At the head of the victorious, we refer to Abraham, the father of fathers:

His victory was deep and wonderful when he took his only son, Isaac, to offer him as a burnt offering for God(Gen 22). He overcame the paternal feelings and his hopes about the stars of the heaven and the sand which is on the sea-shore (Gen 22:17). He was also triumphant concerning faith : “ *Accounting that God was able to raise up, even from the dead* “ (Heb 11:17-19).

Abraham also overcame the feelings of kinship and nationhood when the Lord said to him : “ *Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you*” (Gen 12:1). So he obeyed : “ *And he went out, not knowing where he was going*” (Heb 11:8).

E E E

We refer to another example of victory, that is our father Jacob:

It is a victory of another kind, which is struggling with God as he wrestled with Him until the breaking of day and said to Him: “ *I will not let you go unless you bless me*” (Gen 32:26). And he actually received a blessing and the Lord said to him: “ *For you have struggled with God and with man, and have prevailed*” (Gen 32:28).

Jacob was scared from his brother Esau, but he did not consider the struggle to be between him and Esau. But he struggled with God, believing that if he prevailed in his struggle with God and received from Him a blessing, a promise and strength, then he will definitely prevail in his relationship with his brother, and it happened...

In his struggle with God, he received the faith by which to face Esau. It is a lesson for us in struggling with God till we receive His promise: “ *They will fight against you but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you*”, says the Lord, “ *to deliver you*” (Jer 1:19).

E E E

A third example of victory is the heroes of faith .

St Paul the Apostle, who said : *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness “ (2 Tim 4:7). St Paul who stood before rulers and kings and came out triumphantly (Acts 21:28).*

St Athanasius the Apostolic also with all strength, overcame Arius and his followers and responded to all their heresies. It was said to him : *“ The world is against you, Athanasius”*. So he said: *“And I am against the world”*.

E E E

A fourth example of victory is the martyrs and confessors:

They overcame all threats, prisons and torments that are above the endurance of man. They were firm in their faith and faced death with amazing courage. They were a wonderful example that attracted many to the faith. Therefore the church honours them greatly and we say that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of faith.

E E E

A fifth example in victory is the saints of monasticism and asceticism:

Take for example St Anthony the Great and how he overcame the love of wealth and distributed all his possessions amongst the poor. He prevailed in the wars of doubts, fears and horrors that the devils put in his way. He prevailed in enduring solitude, poverty and asceticism; remaining in the wilderness without a guide or a companion for tens of years. He also prevailed in leading many to this angelic path, till he became light to the world.

In the procession of the victorious, we place with St Anthony all the elders among the fathers of monasticism, the ascetics, the solitaires, the hermits, the stylites and all the choirs of those: *“ Earthy angels or heavenly men”*, as history called them... Those who prevailed and remained firm in the life of solitude, prayer, contemplation, death to the world and keeping away from positions and fame...

HOW TO PREVAIL

All these and other examples of characters lived the life of victory and triumph, and left for us a model to follow their steps. Now it is time to ask : How can we also prevail and overcome.

We will never be able to overcome except if God fought for us...

If we depend on our will, strength, experience and intelligence, we will never be able to overcome because the enemy has more power, experience and tricks. And the Lord Himself said: “ *Without Me you can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5).

Then He has to fight for us, defend us and prevail. And as the Holy Bible said: “ *The Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few*” (1 Sam 14:6). “ *But deliverance is of the Lord* ” (Prov 21:31).

As for conquering, it is as the Apostle said: “ We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us ”(Rom 8:37).

God triumphs when we commit to Him our wills and the management of our affairs, then He will: “ *Lead us in triumph*” (2 Cor 2:14).

E E E

The Lord Jesus Christ said: “ *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” (Jn 16:33). He did not say: “**Be of good cheer, you will overcome the world**”, but: “*I have overcome*”. What does it mean? It means that I will overcome (in you) this world for a second time, if I dwell in you. And as St Paul the Apostle said : “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*”... (Gal 2:20).

Then if you want to overcome, hold fast to Christ. Let Him fight for you, take from Him the strength needed to overcome the world. Then you will prevail...

“Without Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). Without Me you cannot prevail...

Then hold fast to the Lord, with all your strength. Say to Him: Do not leave me or abandon me. Without You I cannot fight even the youngest among them, as it was said by St Anthony. But with You, I can say with St Paul the Apostle: *“I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me”*.

Then true victory is in holding fast to the Lord all the time.

E E E

Our biggest problem is that we want to prevail by our own strength, will, experience and intelligence; without getting God in the battle...

And in all that, we forget the saying of the Apostle: *“ Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:57)*.

Yes, this is the secret of victory, our Lord Jesus Christ, if He fought with you. Therefore St Paul also says: *“ We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37)*.

E E E

How beautiful is the saying of the Holy Bible : “ For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few” (1 Sam. 14:6).

As far as war is for the Lord, then He will fight and not you. You must then commit to Him the leadership of the battle in your wars with the enemy, the world, sin, yourself...

A wonderful phrase was said about Moses' wars : *“ The Lord will have war with Amalek” (Ex 17:16)*. So it was not Moses who was fighting Amalek, or Joshua, but the Lord... Do not say: Leave me, Lord, to fight Amalek. No, but say in humility : I cannot, You fight him, Lord...

E E E

We have seen the same situation clear in the war between David and Goliath...

David said to that giant : “ *This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand*” (1 Sam 17:46). **It is not me who will defeat you, but the Lord. The Lord will deliver you into my hand. Then I will be able to give your flesh to the birds of the air... This is victory...**

“*You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord*” (1 Sam 17:45). **David understood the secret , so he let God in, to the field of the battle.**

Before David came, people were talking about “the man who has come up”, the giant and his strength, a reward for the man who will kill him. When David arrived, he began to speak about the Lord and letting God in to the field of the battle...

Was David’s victory because his hands were skilled in war or because the Lord delivered Goliath into David’s hand? The whole secret is in the Lord Himself. Therefore, in all his wars, how beautiful is David’s saying: “Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle” (Ps 144:1).

E E E

And you , my brother, do you fight on your own or the Lord fights for you?

How poor you are, if you fight on your own, because the devil has more experience than you. For over seven thousand years he has been fighting man. He also has more tricks, knowledge and strength. So beware of fighting him on your own.

Therefore take up the whole armour of God with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one (Eph 6:13,16). And if the army leader could not go to the war on his own, without Deborah the prophetess (Judg 4:8), then you should not go to the war without God being with you...

And before you fight, ask the Lord to teach you and train your hand for war and your fingers to fight... Be a disciple of the Lord, then your sling will do wonders and with one stone you will win the war. And in all your fighting, listen to the saying of a hero and a prophet like Moses:

“Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord... The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Ex 14:13,14).

The Lord fights for you in all your wars. The wars that are inside the heart, inside the thought and also in all the outside wars... The Spirit makes intercession for you with groaning which cannot be uttered. God will send His angel to you in the lions' den and shut the lions' mouths.

E E E

The spiritual man experiences the strength of prayer and does not know defeat at all...

Because with prayer, he brings the Lord in, lets Him in to the field and hand over the battle to Him. Therefore David said: *“I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved” (Ps 16:8)*. I shall not be moved as far as the Lord is at my right hand...

In all his battles, David used to cry to God: *“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? Make haste, O God, to deliver me!” (Ps 13:70)*.

On your own, you get weary, fighting the enemy with your strength...

But you will prevail if you say: “God will vanquish him, not me” (Job 32:13).

We also see a deep spiritual experience in the story of our father, St Anthony. The devils fought him with strength and violence, shaking the tomb in which he lived at the beginning of his monastic life, so he said to them: *“If God gave you power over me, who am I to resist God? But if God did not give you power, none of you will be able to overcome me”...*

Then the war is not between you and the enemy, but first of all, with God. If you struggle with Him until the breaking of day and receive strength from Him, the enemy will never be able to defeat you...

The war is in your heart first. Are you sure that God is standing with you, fighting and attacking your enemy? If you are confident in that, you may say with David the Prophet: *“Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident” (Ps 26:3)*.

God fights for you, it is true. But you must strive.

E E E

God's working with you does not mean to become lazy. But you have to strive with all your strength. Resist all lust and any sinful desire. As the Apostle said: "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (Jas 4:7). And also: "*Resist him, steadfast in the faith*" (1 Pet 5 : 9). Your resistance proves that you are rejecting sin. By that you become worthy of assistance from the grace...

Resist the points of weakness in you and do not surrender to them...

Be firm in your struggle till God's hand rescues you.

Do not ever despair in your struggle, no matter how the war seemed hard and no matter how the snares around you increased. Be confident that heaven is watching your struggle and many angels and saints are mediating for you... Let your struggle be supported by faith... Faith in God's strong and invincible hand about which David sang, saying: "*You pushed me violently that I might fall, but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly, the right hand of the Lord is exalted*" (Ps 118:13-16).

Struggle then with God and struggle with yourself and struggle with the devil. Be strong in heart. Remember that the Lord used to choose giants for His wars, as He used Gideon, (Judg 6 :12), and David (1 Sam 16:18). And as He said about the church in the Song of Solomon that it is: "*Awesome as an army with banners*" (Song 6:10). So is the human soul also...

E E E

Use all the spiritual means.

Hold fast to your Psalms, your prayers, your readings and your spiritual contemplations with hymns and praises, with exercises, giving account of yourself and with spiritual wake. Hold fast to the church, to the confession father, Holy Communion and spiritual meetings. All these means will kindle warmth in your heart, deepen God's love in you and grant you the strength to overcome. But if you kept away from these spiritual means, how easy it will be to become lukewarm and the enemy will find a way to get in to you...!

Be confident that God's word is a weapon that helps you to prevail.

How true and deep is the saying of David the Prophet about his experience : *"Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction. For by then You have given me life"* (Ps 119:92, 93). Remember how the Lord, in His temptation on the mount, refuted the devil by using verses from the Holy Bible and showed us that the words of the Holy Bible could be used as a weapon to refute thoughts of the enemy. And as David the Prophet said: *"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes"* (Ps 19:9).

E E E

Repeat the Psalms and the verses that give you courage and strength.

For example Psalm 3, Psalm 90 and Psalm 23 of the Shepherd. Also sing with the Apostle in his saying *" We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Rom 8:37). Remember the Lord's promises and encouragement to His children, and how He said to Zerubbabel: *"Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!"* (Zech 4:70). And His saying to St Paul: *"Do not be afraid,... for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you"* (Acts 18:9,10). And what He said before to Jeremiah: *"They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,"* says the Lord, *"to deliver you"* (Jer 1:19). And also what he said to Joshua: *"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life"* (Josh 1:5)...

E E E

Live in God's love and you will prevail. Or at least live in His fear.

And in your struggle, resort to patience and endurance. And if the enemy of what is good made fear, remember the saying of St Paul the Apostle: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Phil 4:13).

Be confident that the more experience you get in your spiritual wars, the more your strength and faith in victory will increase.

Try to live always in a spiritual atmosphere, keeping away from whatever makes God's love in your heart become cold. By doing that, you will keep your spiritual warmth and you will prevail in the wars of the enemy , and may God be with you.

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**In
This Book**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God Amen.

You read in this book about some fundamental qualities of the Spiritual Man which include:

He is an image of God, his heart is with God, he puts God first and lives for the Lord.

He is a spiritual person who lives by the spirit, above the level of the body, soul and what is seen.

He is a strong person and successful, who leads a life of victory and self control. He has his concept of rest and labour.

He lives by the spirit and not by the letter.

He has an integral personality.

This book presents some of the spiritual principles and values which you must qualify to become a spiritual man.

May the Grace of God be with you to strengthen and lead you in this spiritual way.

Pope Shenouda III