

Dobrotolubie

Translated by Theophan the Recluse

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Volume I

Introduction

In offering to lovers of spiritual reading **the** well-known **Philokalia** in Russian translation, with additions to it, we consider it our duty to say a few words about what the Philokalia actually is.

This word is a translation of its Greek title—**Philokalia**—which means “love of what is beautiful, sublime, and good.” In the closest sense, it embodies “an interpretation of the life hidden in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The truly Christian life, hidden in our Lord Jesus Christ, begins, unfolds, and ascends to perfection—each according to his or her own measure—by the good pleasure of God the Father, through the action of the grace of the Holy Spirit inherent in Christians, and under the guidance of Christ the Lord Himself, who promised to be with us always. God’s grace calls everyone to such a life; and for everyone, it is not only possible but also obligatory, for in it lies the very essence of Christianity. However, not all who are called partake of it, and not all who do partake of it do so to the same degree. The elect enter deeply into it and ascend high through its various stages. Its manifestations, as well as the riches of the realm in which it unfolds, are no less abundant and varied than the phenomena of ordinary life.

And if everything that takes place there could be clearly understood and comprehensibly depicted—enemy attacks and temptations, struggles and triumphs, falls and risings, the emergence and strengthening of various manifestations of spiritual life, the degrees of overall progress and the state of mind and heart characteristic of each, the interplay of freedom and grace in all things, the sensations of God’s nearness and distance, the sense of providential omnipotence and the surrender of oneself—final and irrevocable—into the right hand of the Lord, with the relinquishment of all one’s own modes of action, amidst ceaseless, intense activity—if all this, and much else that is inseparable from a true life in the Lord, could be clearly and easily understood, it would present a picture as attractive as it is instructive—a picture resembling a journey around the world.

Travelers write travelogues about everything they encounter along their way that is worthy of attention. God’s chosen ones, too, who have traced all the paths of the spiritual life in various directions, have written their own notes about everything they encountered and experienced on this arduous journey. But the fate and purpose of these two kinds of notes are not the same. Those who lack the means to travel can, without moving from their place, form fairly accurate concepts and ideas about foreign lands by reading the travel notes of other travelers, because the forms of life of all creatures resemble one another to a greater or lesser extent, no matter in which countries they manifest themselves.

This is not the case with regard to the experiences of the spiritual life. Only those journeying along this path can understand them. For those who have not embarked upon it, this is a completely unknown science; yet even among those who have embarked upon it, not all can understand it at once. Their concepts and ideas become clearer as they journey onward and delve deeper into the realm of the spirit. As one’s own

experiences of spiritual life multiply, the insights drawn from the experiences noted by the Holy Fathers in their writings become clear and understandable.

Nevertheless, the description of the various manifestations of the spiritual life contained in the writings of the Holy Fathers is not a gift in vain for all Christians in general. It helps everyone understand that if they have not yet experienced what is described here, it means that the way of life they have established for themselves—even though their Christian conscience is at peace with it—is not the ultimate perfection, beyond which there is nothing better to desire and nowhere higher to go. By making this clear, it cannot help but stir up a zeal for progress; it cannot help but beckon one forward, pointing to something better than what one already possesses.

For those who have set out on the path toward what is better and more perfect, it provides necessary guidance in cases of doubt and confusion, when there is no readily available, experienced guidance, and when even that guidance encounters insoluble problems that prevent definitive decisions from being made—decisions that would eliminate all hesitation in the one who is journeying. It is very important to know how and where to set one's foot in a given situation so as not to make a mistake. And here, some fatherly saying dispels the darkness, shining like a bolt of lightning in the night.

In general, this is a spiritual greenhouse into which the believer, reading instructions on the phenomena of spiritual life, enters with mind and heart; and, being subjected there to the tangible influences of inspired contemplations, feels that in these moments he is soaring in a different atmosphere, one that is luminous and life-giving. These are moments of joy—and it is in the course of these moments that various shoots on the tree of spiritual life usually take root and mature. And so it is no wonder that those who have experienced this, as soon as they find a free moment, rush to seek out descriptions of spiritual life, just as one who loves profit rushes to places that promise profit, and one who loves pleasure rushes to places of delight. In doing so, they often long to breathe in the invigorating and uplifting air of the spirit.

And yet this is not mere idle curiosity. No, it is a matter of vital necessity for the progress and well-being of our spirit. That is why there has always been—and still is—a need among true Christians to have the writings of the Church Fathers on the spiritual life at their fingertips. But as commendable as this need is, it is equally essential that it be met by those who have both the duty and the ability to do so. It has always been met, both through the publication of these writings in their entirety—for example, those of Saints Macarius, Isaac, and Ephrem the Syrian, the Author of **The Ladder**, and many others—and through anthologies drawn from them.

Among such anthologies is the well-known **Dobrotolyubie**, which is considered the finest of them all. It is now clear what **Dobrotolyubie** is. It provides us with the words and principles of holy sobriety—that is, both complete treatises and brief sayings on the inner spiritual life, along with all its characteristic manifestations and practices. This is a book compiled to satisfy the spiritual needs of those zealous for spiritual progress. Those who read it know what treasures of spiritual wisdom are hidden in **Dobrotolyubie**: they read it and take delight in it.

But while taking delight and edification from reading it, they do not hide their sorrowful regret that much of the book remains incomprehensible—not because of the height or depth of its content, but because of the outdated nature of the translation. The need for a new translation of this book is therefore evident. This need has long been recognized and has been met to a certain extent by translations published in **Christian Reading** from its earliest years, as well as by the publication of individual articles included in **Dobrotolyubie**, such as those by St. Maximus (on love; this is found in the Greek edition of **Dobrotolyubie**), Hesychius, and Peter of Damascus.

The compiler of this collection initially intended only to verify what had already been translated, to complete the translation of what remained untranslated, and to provide readers with **Dobrotolyubie** in Russian translation—complete, in the same composition as it appears in Greek. But then he came to the conclusion that it is necessary for us to expand **Agape** beyond the scope it has in Greek. For although the Greek **Dobrotolyubie** is more complete than the Slavonic version, it still does not contain everything that the Holy Fathers have given us as a guide to the spiritual life—and which we would wish to provide for the benefit and comfort of those who love such reading. Hence, the collection we offer is the same **Dobrotolyubie**, only expanded.

Our new collection follows in the footsteps of the earlier **Dobrotolyubie**. However, when it is noted that a particular Father, whose article is included in it, has written other articles as well, the collection turns to

those as well; and if it finds them consistent with its character, it incorporates them as well. Likewise, upon noting that among the Fathers from whom articles were drawn, there were other Fathers who left us writings on the spiritual life, it enriches itself with their works as well. Thus, from St. Anthony, the previous **Dobrotolyubie** included only his instructions in 170 chapters; the new collection incorporates St. Anthony's other writings as well. St. Macarius is omitted there (from him, Metaphrastus's paraphrases of the instructions in 150 chapters were included: our "7 Sayings"). Here, his instructions are presented in a somewhat systematic order, in his own words. From Isaiah the Hermit, only 27 chapters—brief sayings—are included there. Here, all 29 of his known sayings are included in a new translation from the Greek. The same has been done with regard to Evagrius and St. Mark the Ascetic. This will also be the case in the subsequent collection of articles.

Such is the method of compiling the new **Dobrotolyubie**. It will follow the example of the previous edition, supplemented so as not to deprive lovers of this reading of anything that may prove useful in guiding them to a life according to God. Regarding the method of including articles, we feel it is our duty to state that not all writings will be included in their entirety. Much is far more conveniently presented in excerpt form. This will sometimes be done in a systematic order, and sometimes without one, in the form of individual sayings. But the teachings of the Fathers themselves will always be presented in their own words. We present to readers the first volume of **Dobrotolyubie**, in its new edition. It includes:

1) The Writings of St. Anthony; 2) Excerpts from the Discourses of St. Macarius; 3) The Words of Isaiah the Hermit; 4) The Instructions of St. Mark the Ascetic; 5) The Writings of Evagrius the Monk. The articles follow this same order in the Greek edition of **Dobrotolyubie**. In our edition, St. Cassian, who appears there between Evagrius and St. Mark, is deferred to the next volume. We present this collection with the sincere hope that lovers of spiritual reading will find in it what the compiler intended to convey to them.

Saint Anthony the Great

A Few Words on the Life and Writings of St. Anthony the Great

St. Anthony the Great, who pioneered the ascetic life of solitude in the desert, embodies through his life the ideal of this kind of service to God, and at the same time the path that every soul, if it so desires, must follow to attain the perfection possible for us on earth, as taught by Christianity. The life of St. Anthony is described by St. Athanasius the Great (see his works, vol. 3) and is included, almost without abridgment, in our Chety Minei under January 17. Those who wish to know the details should consult that source. Here, only the general features of his life are outlined. God's calling of St. Anthony to the work he accomplished was evident in him even in childhood. His quiet, warm-hearted disposition, inclined toward solitude, kept him away from the boisterous play and pranks of his peers and kept him at home under the watchful eyes of his parents, who guarded him as the apple of their eye. Thus he grew up in this seclusion from others, leaving the house only to go to church. With such a disposition and way of life, the grace of God received at baptism worked unhindered to build up his spirit, without any particular effort on his part. It was only natural that he came to experience the sweetness of a life lived according to God at an early age and was inflamed with a divine desire, as St. Athanasius says. Finding no obstacles to such a life at home—for his parents were of the same spirit—St. Anthony showed no desire to leave it while his parents were alive, and relieved him of the inevitable cares of daily life. But when they passed away to God, he, having become the eldest, had to take upon himself the responsibility of managing the household and providing for his sister. This immediately made him feel the great difference between a life in God and a life full of worldly cares, and laid a firm foundation for his desire to leave everything behind and live only for God. The words of the Lord he heard in church while in this frame of mind—*"If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven"* (Matt. 19: 21)—and then another: *"Do not worry about tomorrow"* (Matt. 6:34)—sealed this desire with the divine seal; for in those words he heard God's answer to the questions of his conscience, and at the same time God's command and blessing for the fulfillment of the secret desires and aspirations of his heart. – He made up his mind with unwavering resolve, and, having given away all his possessions, began to live for God alone. St. Anthony spent the first years of his ascetic life in the same way as other ascetics known at that time, learning everything from them. It is well known that the ascetic life of renunciation—in which, having renounced all worldly cares, one is concerned solely with *"how to please the Lord"* (1 Cor. 7:32), has been established in the Church of God from its very foundation as an essential

necessity in its structure, and received its first fundamental laws from the Holy Apostles. But at first, the ascetics—as those who devoted themselves to this way of life were called, having renounced the world and worldly cares—remained in their homes, merely withdrawing to some secluded corner, where they devoted themselves to prayer, contemplation of God, fasting, vigils, and all manner of spiritual struggles. As time went on, however, as Christianity expanded in both scope and number of believers, many ascetics began to leave their families and, retreating beyond the city or village, lived a solitary life in the wilderness—in some natural cave, a deserted tomb, or a small cell purposefully constructed for that purpose. By the time of St. Anthony, the most zealous ascetics lived primarily in this manner. St. Anthony the Great also sought to imitate them. The beginning of the ascetic life is the period of novitiate. St. Anthony underwent this period in imitation of and obedience to those ascetics. – The essence of the novitiate lies in establishing Christian virtues in the heart and in mastering the practices of the ascetic life under the guidance of the most experienced. St. Anthony had acquired Christian virtues through his upbringing; now he had only to learn what deeds were necessary for those who aspired to live in God, and how to perform them. To this end, he visited the ascetics renowned at the time, inquired how to do various things, learned them, and returned with this knowledge—as if it were a prize—to his hermitage. Thus, as St. Athanasius observes, he, like a wise bee, gathered spiritual honey from everywhere, storing it in his heart as in a beehive. From one, he learned the strictness of abstinence in food, sleeping on the bare ground, and prolonged vigil; from another he learned tireless prayer, attentiveness to his thoughts, and contemplation of God; from a third he took the example of diligence, fidelity to the rules, and patience; and from all of them he drew the same spirit of firm faith in Christ the Lord and brotherly love for all, striving to combine within himself all that particularly distinguished each of the fathers he had encountered. Without measuring his own life against the lives of others and without outside guidance, no one attained the highest degrees of the ascetic life. St. Anthony entrusted his life to these elders, and under their guidance he was led along the unwavering path to perfection. He spent fifteen years in this novice training, living in a tomb outside the village—at first not too far away, and later farther still—where a villager who was sincere toward him would come to bring him bread—St. Anthony’s sole food— —and collecting handicrafts: for St. Anthony lived by the labor of his own hands. He divided all his time between this handicraft work, prayer, and meditation on the divine truths of Scripture—activities in which the Angel of God, who appeared to him, had confirmed him when his spirit was once overcome by despondency. As for how his life unfolded during this time, we cite the testimony of Sozomen (Church History, Book 1, Chapter 13), who writes about St. Anthony: “Having learned that a virtuous life becomes pleasant through habit, though it may be difficult at first, he devised increasingly rigorous ascetic practices, becoming more abstinent with each passing day; and as if always just beginning anew, he infused fresh vigor into his zeal; he curbed bodily pleasures with labor and armed himself against the passions of the soul with a godly hatred for them. His food was bread and salt, his drink was water, and his mealtime was sunset; not infrequently, however, he went without food for two days or more; he stayed awake, one might say, all night long and greeted the day in prayer, and if he did sleep at all, it was for but a single minute; he lay mostly on the bare ground, and had only the earth as his bed. He did not allow himself to anoint himself with oil, wash, or enjoy other comforts, since these would make the body soft and weak. He could not tolerate idleness, and work never left his hands for almost an entire day.” St. Anthony walked this arduous path. But, as is well known, such a life does not pass without struggle, just as there is no light without shadow. If there were no sin in us, and if we had no enemy, goodness alone would unfold within us and grow unhindered. But since both exist and both lay claim to us, no one has been able to avoid struggling against them. – We must weaken them and defeat them in order to move forward freely. Without this, they will all hinder the progress of anyone who wishes to walk the right path, whoever they may be. This is why God’s grace, which worked within the spirit of St. Anthony, led him into battle—to test him, like gold in a crucible, to strengthen his moral fortitude and give free rein to its power. The enemy was granted access, while the ascetic was sustained by hidden help. St. Athanasius describes this struggle at length. The enemy’s arrows, he said, were very potent; but the courageous warrior repelled them without the slightest hesitation. At first, the enemy attempted to shake his resolve by making him regret having left the world, reminding him, on the one hand, of his noble lineage—seemingly despised despite his wealth—his considerable riches—seemingly squandered in vain—and all the comforts of life—seemingly rejected for no good reason— —and especially his sister, left with nothing in the hands of strangers, without his own support, care, and comfort—and on the other, the hardship and cruelty of the bleak life he had begun, the unaccustomed nature and fragility of his body, which seemed unable to withstand such privations, and the length of this life,

—so that there seemed to be no end in sight—far from people, without any consolation, in ceaseless self-mortification. With these suggestions, the enemy stirred up a violent storm of thoughts; but he was not only repelled by the steadfastness of St. Anthony, who stood unshakable in his intention and resolve, but also overthrown by his great faith that all that he had forsaken and endured was nothing compared to the endless blessings prepared by God for those who renounce the world, for whom it is easier to please Him when free from all worldly and material bonds—and was even cast into the dust by his ceaseless prayers, which drew the sweetest spiritual consolations into his heart. Defeated on this front, the enemy attacks the young warrior from another—one from which he was already accustomed to bringing down the young—and begins to wrestle with him through carnal lust, troubling him at night and disturbing him by day. The struggle was so fierce and protracted that it did not go unnoticed even by outsiders. The enemy instilled impure thoughts, but St. Anthony repelled them with prayer; the enemy inflamed his limbs, but he cooled them with fasting, vigil, and every kind of self-exhaustion; the former took on the form of women at night, devising every means to arouse seductive desires, while the latter delighted in sorrow and, through contemplation of the beauties of the hereafter, as well as through the keenest awareness of the nobility to which our nature is made worthy in the Lord Jesus Christ, dispelled the deceptive allure; The accursed one evoked a sense of sweetness from pleasure, while the blessed one set against it the terrible bitterness of torment in the eternal fire and from the ceaseless worms—and remained unharmed. The persistence and ugliness of the attacks finally instilled in the one who was struggling a loathing for all impure impulses and anger toward them, accompanied by intense irritation, which deprived the enemy of any opportunity to approach him or even to tempt or disturb him from afar in this regard. For the feelings of revulsion and hatred toward passionate impulses are fiery arrows that scorch the enemy. Thus was the all-cunning one defeated even in this instance by the youth, who bore a passionate flesh, and he retreated in disgrace, because the Lord Himself assisted the servant of God, having taken on flesh for our sake and crushed all the enemy's power within it, as every true ascetic confesses, speaking with the Apostle: "It is not I, but the grace that is with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). But the enemy of mankind had not yet exhausted all his arrows. Seeing God's protection over the young fighter, and knowing that it covers only the humble, the enemy devises a plan to deprive him of this protection by stirring up pride and conceit within him. To this end, he appears in the form of a small boy—a black one—and speaks to St. Anthony with feigned humility: "You have defeated me"—believing that, having claimed victory for himself, he would become conceited and thereby provoke the wrath of God, who was helping him. But St. Anthony asked him, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am the spirit of fornication, whose task is to stir up lust and lead people into carnal sin." I have seduced many who had vowed chastity; I have led many who had long mortified their flesh to fall; but through you, all my snares have been torn apart, my arrows broken—and I have been cast down." Then St. Anthony, giving thanks to God, his Savior, cried out: "The Lord is my helper—I will look upon my enemies" (Ps. 117:7), and then, looking fearlessly at the enemy, he said: "My God has allowed you to appear to me in black form to reveal the darkness of your evil intentions—and as a youth to expose your powerlessness. Therefore, you are worthy of every contempt. At these words, that spirit, as if burned by fire, fled and never again approached the blessed Anthony. Victory over the passions brings one closer to dispassion; and to the extent that dispassion is established, it brings with it peace of mind: and inner peace, with the sweet sensations bestowed by prayer and contemplation of God, stirs up spiritual warmth in the heart, which, gathering to itself all the powers of the spirit, soul, and body, leads a person inward, where, having settled there, he feels an irresistible need to be alone with the one God. This irresistible drawing inward toward God is the second stage of spiritual growth; and it is to this stage that St. Anthony has now arrived. Until then, he had spent most of his time alone; but his sincere friend from the village would often visit him, and he himself would go, sometimes to the elders, sometimes to the village church for worship, especially the Liturgy. All of this was accompanied by a certain kind of distraction, however much one might try to cut it off. St. Anthony's spirit, having grown weary within, began to demand complete seclusion, so that he might see and hear nothing. As noted, the soul arrives at this state of its own accord, through the direct path of asceticism; but certain strong impulses of self-denial accelerate this turning point and give it a decisive push. An opportunity for such an impulse presented itself to St. Anthony in the form of a clear attack by demons. Having lost the ability to act through thoughts upon a purified soul, the demons begin to act from the outside; they appear visibly and present the ascetic with whatever they hope will harm him or shake his good intentions. — Yet God's grace permits this for the sake of the ascetic's spiritual growth, thereby opening for him the path to a higher degree and at the same time granting him a certain right to subsequently exercise authority over the

tempting spirits themselves. This is precisely what happened to St. Anthony. The most important moment in this circumstance is when St. Anthony, having regained consciousness in the narthex of the village church and barely still breathing, said to his friend: “Carry me back to my hermitage.” For by this he expressed his surrender to death for the sake of the life which he knew, in his own person, to be the only one pleasing to God. This meant the same thing as actually dying for the Lord’s sake: for his readiness for it was complete. Readiness to die for the Lord and to please Him is an all-conquering weapon: for by what else can one who possesses it be tempted or intimidated? It is considered the starting point of asceticism and a source of strength throughout its entire course. The Lord and Savior—our Model of Asceticism—saw death before Him throughout all the days of His earthly life, but in the Garden of Gethsemane, during His prayerful struggle, He finally conquered it through His humanity; His sufferings and death on the cross fulfilled what was spoken there. This was followed by three days of rest, preceding the glorious Resurrection. All souls who follow in the footsteps of the Lord walk this path. The first step in this is self-denial; but no matter how small its beginnings may be, it always contains a measure of readiness for death. Then self-denial grows—and so does this readiness, or rather, this readiness is the very essence of self-denial. Whoever reaches the degree of readiness that the Savior possessed in the garden will immediately ascend in spirit to the cross, and then experience a spiritual Sabbath, followed by a spiritual resurrection in the glory of the Lord Jesus. – This is precisely what has now been accomplished in the spirit of St. Anthony. By telling his friend not to take him back to the very place where he had been so tormented, he showed that his spirit was the same as that of the Savior when, after praying in the garden, He said to His disciples: “*Let us go; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!*” – This was immediately followed by his retreat into the remote wilderness and his twenty-year sojourn there in silence—just as his crucifixion and observance of the Sabbath—in spirit. As soon as St. Anthony had recovered from the torments inflicted by the demons, he set out for the desert, two or three days’ journey from inhabited areas—and there he shut himself away in an old, abandoned temple, which had a well with water, while a friend of his brought him bread every six months. No one saw what hardships and feats he endured there, nor what happened to him. But judging by the state in which he emerged from his seclusion, one must conclude that this was a time when his spirit was being formed by the Holy Spirit. What happened here was similar to what happens to a caterpillar when it wraps itself into a chrysalis. No one sees what happens to it during this time: it seems as if it has frozen in place. But meanwhile, the life-giving power of nature is at work within it—and in due time, a beautiful, multicolored butterfly emerges from the chrysalis. So it was with St. Anthony. No one saw what was happening to him; but the Spirit of God—invisible to all, unknown for the most part even to Anthony himself—was creating within him a new man, in the image of the One who created him. When the time of creation was complete, he was commanded to go out and minister to the faithful. And he went out, clothed with the manifold gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit. Just as Christ rose from the dead in the glory of the Father, so St. Anthony now emerged into a life renewed by the Spirit. This marked the completion of St. Anthony’s spiritual formation. His entire life thereafter was nothing other than the bearing of fruit from what had been sown during the first two periods of his life. This was the third period—the time of his ministry for the good of the Church—as if it were his apostolate. Just how fruitful and far-reaching this ministry was, anyone can see from St. Athanasius’s account of his life. He served with all the gifts of grace. And what gifts did he not possess? —There was the gift of working miracles, the gift of authority over demons, over the forces of nature, and over animals; the gift of discerning thoughts; the gift of seeing what was happening at a distance; the gift of revelations and visions. But of all these gifts, the most fruitful and far-reaching in its application was the gift of the word. —And it was with this gift that he served his younger brothers more than with any of the other gifts. St. Athanasius writes that God gave St. Anthony a powerful word that penetrated to the depths of the heart. And he knew how to speak with such power for the benefit of everyone that many noblemen—both military and civilian, men of great wealth—cast off the burdens of worldly life and became monks. And who, coming to him in sorrow, ever returned without finding comfort? Who, coming to him in tears over the dead, did not immediately cease weeping? Who, coming in anger, did not transform that anger into meekness? What monk, having fallen into sloth, did not, after visiting him, become zealous and steadfast in his spiritual struggles once more? What young man, upon seeing St. Anthony and listening to him, did not renounce worldly pleasures and begin to love chastity? How many maidens, already betrothed, upon merely catching a glimpse of St. Anthony from afar, joined the ranks of Christ’s brides? From this testimony, it is clear that St. Anthony did not withhold the source of his God-given wisdom. Indeed, people came to him primarily to listen, to receive the word of truth, and to find proper guidance. And

he taught, rebuked, and exhorted everyone, following the example of the Apostle. Sometimes his words flowed in a torrential stream, such as those preserved by St. Athanasius in his biography; sometimes he spoke in less lengthy discourses, such as his 20 brief sayings; but more often he confined himself to concise aphorisms, full of meaning and power. These brief sayings, in countless numbers, were then passed down by word of mouth, forming, as it were, a living code of asceticism, and were finally included in collections of the Fathers' memorable sayings. At times, St. Anthony also wrote letters to his spiritual children, the monks of various monasteries, in which he would either describe the general features of life in Christ Jesus or remedy the specific weaknesses of the brethren. Everything that came from the lips of St. Anthony and was committed to writing, as well as everything he wrote, provides rich nourishment for the soul seeking edification. In addition to the lengthy discourse included in his biography, 20 letters to monks have come down to us, 20 brief discourses on virtues and vices, 170 chapters on moral conduct, his Rule for Monks with two appendices, and a multitude of his sayings and stories about him—always edifying and instructive—scattered throughout various patristic works. His epistles and sayings, translated into Russian, were published in the early years of *Christian Reading*—the chapters are included in *Dobrotolyubie*, while the sayings and accounts make up the first section of *Memorable Tales*. In the original, all of this can be found and read in *Patrologiae graecae*, vol. 40—Migne, from which everything included in this collection has been translated. Here, we present the following to the attention of those who enjoy such reading:

1. Excerpts from Epistles and Sayings. Sections 1–15 are taken from St. Athanasius's Life of St. Anthony. Instructions 16–68 are taken from the Holy Father's letters. Instructions 69–82 are taken from his 20 Sayings to Monks.

2. 170 chapters on good morality.

3. The Rule of the Hermit's Life. In volume 40 of Migne's *Patrologiae graecae*, on page 1065, the *Praecepta Antonii* are presented in 80 points. Following these are his own *Spiritualia documenta regulae adjuncta* and *Admonitiones et documenta varia*, both of which are evidently supplements to the preceding rule. Since all the sayings contained under these headings are of the same nature, both in content and in style, they are gathered together here and arranged under specific headings, following the natural course of the hermit's life, under the title "The Rule of the Hermit's Life."

4. Sayings of St. Anthony the Great and accounts about him. A large number of such sayings and accounts are included in the *Dostoyapam*. Tales; but in addition to these, there are others cited in the same 40th volume of the *Patr. graec.* and in our *Alphabetical Paterikon*; still others are cited by Cassian; and there are several found in various sections of patristic collections. Rather than presenting them haphazardly as they were found, they are arranged here in a certain order, similar to the preceding rules. The section begins with sayings concerning the withdrawal from the world, which marks the beginning of the ascetic life, followed by all the other sayings and stories in the order of the hermit's life.

5. Questions from the disciples and the elder's answers regarding some sayings of St. Anthony the Great.

The Instructions of St. Anthony the Great.

1. Instructions on Life in Christ, drawn from his words in the hagiography of St. Athanasius, from his 20 epistles, and from his 20 sayings

1. Let it be the common concern of all, above all else, that once we have begun, we do not grow weak or lose heart in our labors, nor say: "We have already been engaged in this struggle for a long time"; but rather, as if beginning anew each day, let us increase our zeal. A whole human life is very short compared to the ages to come, and all that we have is nothing compared to eternal life; so, whereas in this world every thing is sold for its value, and everyone exchanges like for like, the promise of eternal life is purchased for a mere trifle. For it is written: "*The days of our years are seventy years; or, if by reason of strength, eighty years; yet their span is but labor and sickness*" (Ps. 89:10). Thus, even if we persevere in our struggle for eighty or even a hundred years, we will not reign for a time equal to a hundred years, but instead of a hundred years, we will reign forever and ever; moreover, having striven on earth, we have the promise that our inheritance will not be on earth but in heaven; and furthermore—having laid aside this mortal body—we will receive an immortal one. Let us not lose heart, then, nor think that we have endured for a long time (in our struggle) or

accomplished something great; *“for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18).

2. Likewise, when we look at the world, let us not think that we have renounced anything great, for this entire earth is very small compared to the whole of heaven. Therefore, even if we were lords over the whole earth and renounced the whole earth, even in this there would still be nothing comparable to the kingdom of heaven. For just as one who casts aside a single copper drachma to acquire a hundred drachmas of gold, so too does one who, being lord of the whole earth, renounces it—leaving behind very little, yet receiving a hundredfold in return. But if the whole earth is not equal to heaven, then one who leaves behind a few tithes leaves behind, as it were, nothing at all. Even if he were to leave behind a house and much gold as well, he should neither boast nor lose heart. On the other hand, we must consider that if we did not leave behind what we have for the sake of virtue, we would in every way, upon dying, leave it behind just as we often do—even to those to whom we would not wish to leave it, as Ecclesiastes also mentioned (Eccl. 4:8). Why, then, should we not give up these things for the sake of virtue, so that we may inherit the kingdom (of heaven) in return?

3. For this very reason, none of us should harbor a desire to acquire possessions. For what benefit is there in acquiring what we cannot take with us? Why is it better for us to acquire what we can take with us, such as: prudence, justice, chastity, courage, discernment, love, charity toward the poor, faith in Christ, patience, and hospitality? Having acquired these (virtues), we will find them awaiting us there, preparing for us a dwelling place on earth for the meek.

4. Let everyone convince himself with such thoughts not to be faint-hearted, especially if he considers that he is a servant of the Lord and is obligated to work for his Master. Just as a servant would not dare to say, “Since I worked yesterday, I will not work today”—and, reckoning the time that has passed (in labor), does not cease (to labor) in the days that follow, but every day, as it is written in the Gospel, shows the same zeal to please his master and avoid trouble—so too shall we persevere in our labors each day with patience, knowing that if we spend even one day in idleness, the Lord will not forgive us for the sake of our past labor, but will be angry with us for this idleness. Likewise, we have heard in Ezekiel (Ezek. 18:26): *“When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and commits sin and dies—he will die because of the sin he has committed.”* Likewise, Judas destroyed in a single night the labor of all the time that had passed.

5. Therefore, let us set about our labors and not lose heart. For in this we have the Lord as our helper, as it is written: *“God works all things together for good for those who love God”* (Rom. 8:28). For this very reason—that is, so that we may not lose heart—it is good to keep in mind the following saying of the Apostle: *“I die every day”* (1 Cor. 15:31). For if we live as though we were dying every day, we will not sin. This saying means the following: that each day when we wake up, we should think that we will not live to see the evening, and again, as we prepare to go to sleep, we should think that we will not wake up; for just as the limit of our life is unknown by nature, so too is it unknown what measure Providence assigns to it each day. Adopting this attitude and living this way every day, we will neither sin nor lust after anything, nor be inflamed with anger toward anyone, nor store up treasures for ourselves on earth; but, as those who expect death every day, we will be unworldly and forgive everyone everything; as for the lust for a wife, or any other impure pleasure, we will not harbor it within ourselves for even a moment—but we will immediately turn away from it, as from something fleeting, remaining always in a sort of “ ” (pre-death) struggle and looking forward to the Day of Judgment. For intense fear and dread of torment destroy the pleasantness of pleasure and restore the soul that is inclined to fall.

6. Therefore, having begun (the work of salvation) and having already set out on the path of virtue, let us press on toward the goal, so that we may attain it (Phil. 3: 14), and let no one look back, like Lot’s wife, especially since the Lord said: *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of heaven”* (Luke 9:62). To look back, however, means nothing other than to regret (having left the world) and to begin once again to act according to worldly wisdom.

7. Do not be daunted when you hear of virtue, and do not be puzzled by this name. For this matter is not far from us, nor outside of us, but within us; and it is within our reach, if only we so desire. The Greeks travel to foreign lands and cross the sea to study the sciences; but we have no need to travel to foreign lands for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, nor to cross the sea for the sake of virtue: for the Lord has made this clear, saying, *“The kingdom of heaven is within you”* (Luke 17:21). Therefore, the only thing required for virtue is that we desire it, since it is within us and arises from us. For as soon as the rational soul is in its

natural state, virtue is present within us at the same time. (The soul) is in its natural state when it remains as it was created; and it was created to be very good and righteous. This is why Joshua, when giving the commandments, said to the people, “*Set your hearts right before the Lord, the God of Israel*” (Josh. 24:23); and John said, “*Make straight paths for the Lord*” (Matt. 3:3). The soul is righteous when its reason is in its natural order. But when it strays from this and distorts the order required by nature, this is called evil in the soul. Therefore, this is not a difficult task (virtue); for if we remain as we were created, we are in a virtuous state; but if we harbor evil intentions, we are rightly called evil. If we had to acquire this virtue from outside ourselves, it would certainly be difficult; but if it is within us, then we need only guard ourselves against evil thoughts and keep our soul to the Lord, as a pledge received from Him, so that He may recognize it as His creation, seeing that it is as He created it.

8. Let us struggle (against ourselves) so that anger does not tyrannize us and lust does not rule over us; for it is written: “*The anger of a man of God’s righteousness does not produce righteousness.*” And: “*Lust, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death*” (James 1:20, 15). But as we lead such a life, let us remain firmly sober, and, as it is written: “*Guard your heart with all diligence*” (Prov. 4:23).—For we have terrible and all-cunning enemies, the evil demons.

9. And it is against them that we wage our battle, as the Holy Apostle said: “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Eph. 6:12). There is a great multitude of them in the air surrounding us, and they are not far from us. There is also great diversity among them. But to speak of their nature and differences would take a very long time, and moreover, it is more fitting for those above us to speak of this than for us. For us, however, there is an urgent need—one that brooks no delay—to know only their schemes against us.

10. First, then, we know that demons were not created in the state that gives them their name. For God created nothing evil. They, too, were created good; but having fallen from heavenly wisdom and now circling the earth, they have deceived the Greeks with apparitions, and, envying us Christians, they set everything in motion in their desire to hinder our ascent to heaven, so that we might not ascend to the place from which they fell. Therefore, it is necessary to pray much and to strive, so that, having received from the Spirit the gift of “*discernment of spirits*” (1 Cor. 12:10), we may come to know concerning them which are less evil and which are more so, what task each of them is concerned with, and how each of them can be overthrown and cast out. For they have many schemes, and their slander is full of subtleties. – The Blessed Apostle and his followers knew this, saying: – “*For we do not understand his thoughts*” (2 Cor. 2:11). – We, too, must warn one another about the very things in which we have been tempted by them. – And so I, having myself experienced (their schemes) to some extent, speak to you about this as to children.

11. As soon as they see any Christian—and all the more so a monk—who is diligent in his labors and making progress, they first of all attempt to place temptations in his path: and their temptations are evil thoughts. – But we must not fear these suggestions of theirs; for through prayer, fasting, and faith in the Lord, the enemies are immediately cast down. However, even when cast down, they do not rest, but immediately attack again with deceit and cunning. When they are unable to deceive the heart with openly impure desires, they attack in another way, namely: they conjure up various apparitions to instill fear; for this purpose, they take on various forms and assume the likenesses of women, beasts, reptiles, giants, and multitudes of warriors. But one must not fear even such apparitions; for they are nothing—and vanish immediately as soon as one protects oneself with faith and the sign of the cross. – Nevertheless, they are bold and utterly shameless. – Why, even if they are defeated in this way, they attack in yet another manner: – they take on the appearance of soothsayers and predict what will happen in a few days; they also present themselves as exalted, so that they might not deceive anyone with their thoughts, or ensnare them even through such apparitions. But let us not listen to the demons as if they were strangers to us; let us not obey them, even if they urge us to pray, even if they speak of fasting; but let us look more closely at the goal of our asceticism—and let us not be deceived by them, who do everything with cunning. – We must not fear them, even if they seem to be attacking us, even if they threaten us with death; for they are powerless and can do nothing more than threaten.

12. We must devote all our care more to the soul than to the body, and give the body only a little time as necessary, while devoting all the rest above all to the soul and seeking its benefit, so that it may not be carried away by bodily pleasures, but rather subjugate the body to itself. This is what the Savior meant when He said: “*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear*” (Matt.

6:25).—“*And do not seek what you will eat or what you will drink; nor be proud. For all these things the Gentiles of this world seek; but your Father knows that you need them. But seek*” first of all “*His kingdom, and all these things will be added to you*” (Luke 12:29–31).

13. Believe in the Lord and love Him; guard yourself against impure thoughts and carnal pleasures, and as it is written in Proverbs—“*Do not be enticed by the fullness of the belly*” (Prov. 24:15); flee vanity, praying unceasingly; sing psalms before and after sleep; study the commandments given to you in Scripture; keep the deeds of the saints in mind, so that your soul, mindful of the commandments, may take the zeal of the saints as its model. Make a special effort to follow the Apostle’s instruction: “*Do not let the sun go down on your anger*” (Eph. 4: 26)—and consider that this is said generally regarding every commandment, so that the sun may not set not only on our anger but also on any other sin of ours. For it is good and necessary that we not be condemned—neither by the sun for a daytime transgression, nor by the moon for a nighttime sin, nor even for an evil thought.

14. To guard oneself against this, it is good to heed and keep the Apostle’s word: “*Examine yourselves*” (2 Cor. 13:5). Therefore, let each person daily take stock of his or her actions, both by day and by night. And if one has sinned, let him cease from sinning; if he has not sinned, let him not boast of it, but let him continue in what is good and not give in to negligence—neither condemning his neighbor nor considering himself righteous—“*until the Lord comes*” (1 Cor. 4:5), who examines what is hidden. – It is not uncommon for even we ourselves to be unaware of what we do. But even though we do not know this, the Lord sees everything. – Therefore, leaving judgment to the Lord, let us be compassionate toward one another, let us “*bear one another’s burdens*” (Gal. 6:2), and not be too hard on ourselves; and where we fall short, let us strive to make up for it.

15. To guard ourselves against sin, let us also observe the following. Let each of you observe and record your actions and inner thoughts as if with the intention of sharing them with one another; and be assured that, out of shame at being known, we will certainly cease to sin and even to harbor anything evil in our thoughts. For who, when sinning, wants others to see it? Or who, having sinned, would not rather lie just to conceal the sin? Just as we refrain from committing adultery when we watch over one another, so too, if we write down our thoughts with the intention of sharing them with one another, we will more easily guard ourselves against impure thoughts, out of shame at being exposed. – Let writing, then, serve as the eyes of our fellow believers, so that, feeling the same shame while writing as we do when others are watching us, we will not harbor any evil thoughts. If we discipline ourselves in this way, we will be able to subdue our bodies, please the Lord, and trample the enemy’s schemes underfoot.

16. I believe that the grace of God’s Spirit fills those who wholeheartedly embark on this struggle and resolve from the very beginning to stand firm and under no circumstances yield ground to the enemy in any battle until they have defeated him. However, the Holy Spirit, who has called them, first makes everything easy for them, so as to make their entry into the struggle of repentance pleasant, and then shows them the path in all its truth (with all its difficulties). – Helping them in everything, He impresses upon them the nature of the labors of repentance and sets for them boundaries and a pattern, both in regard to the body and in regard to the soul, until He brings them to a perfect conversion to God, their Creator. – To this end, He constantly urges them to discipline both their bodies and their souls, so that, having been equally sanctified, both may become equally worthy of the inheritance of eternal life: (to discipline) the body—through constant fasting, labor, and frequent vigils; and the soul—through spiritual exercises and diligence in all acts of service (and obedience), performed through the body. We must strive to do this—that is, to do nothing carelessly, but everything with diligence and the fear of God—in every physical task we perform, if we wish for it to bear fruit.

17. Guiding the penitent on his journey, the Spirit of God, who called him to repentance, grants him His consolations and teaches him not to turn back nor to cling to anything of this world. – To this end, He opens the eyes of the soul and enables it to behold the beauty of purity attained through the labors of repentance, and thereby kindles within it a zeal for the complete purification of itself along with the body, so that both may become one in purity. – For this is the purpose of the Holy Spirit’s instructive guidance: to purify them completely and restore them to that original state in which they were before the Fall, eradicating from them everything tainted by the devil’s envy, so that nothing hostile remains within them. – Then the body will in every way submit to the commands of the mind, which will authoritatively direct it in eating and

drinking, in sleep, and in every other action, constantly learning from the Holy Spirit, following the example of St. Paul the Apostle, *“to put to death the body and bring it into subjection”* (1 Cor. 9:27).

18. It is well known that there are three kinds of carnal movements in the body. – The first is a natural movement, inherent in the body, which, however, produces nothing (sinful, weighing on the conscience)—without the soul’s consent—but merely makes one feel that it is present in the body, – Another movement in the body arises from an excess of food and drink, when the heat of the blood generated by this stirs up strife within the body against the soul and inclines it toward impure desires. – That is why the Apostle says: *“Do not get drunk with wine, for in it there is debauchery.”* Likewise, the Lord commands His disciples in the Gospel: *“Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with gluttony and drunkenness”* (Luke 21:34). Those who have set their hearts on attaining the full measure of holiness and purity in the monastic life, in particular, must always conduct themselves in such a way that they may say with the Apostle: *“I discipline my body and bring it into subjection”* (1 Cor. 9:27). The third temptation comes from evil spirits, who, out of envy, tempt people in this way and attempt to weaken those who have sought purity (monks, that is), or to lead astray those who wish to enter the gate of purity (that is, those who are only just beginning their monastic life).

19. However, if a person arms himself with patience and unwavering fidelity to the commandments that come from God, then the Holy Spirit will teach his mind how to purify his soul and body from such impulses. But if he becomes lax in his feelings and allows himself to be negligent toward the commandments and instructions he has heard, then evil spirits will begin to overcome him, will take hold of his entire body, and will defile him with that impulse to the point that his tormented soul will not know where to turn, unable, in its despair, to see from where any help might come; and only after it has come to its senses, returned to the side of the commandments, and—having accepted their yoke (or recognized the power of the obligation)—surrendered itself to the Spirit of God, is it once again filled with a saving disposition. It is then that it realizes that it must seek peace solely in God, and that only in this way is peace possible for it.

20. It is necessary to bear the labors of repentance equally and in harmony, both in soul and body, striving for perfect purity. And when the mind is granted such grace as to enter into the struggle against the passions without self-pity or leniency, then it is endowed with the promptings, guidance, and strengthening of the Spirit, through which it successfully begins to repel from the soul all impure inclinations arising from the lusts of the heart. This Spirit, uniting with the mind (or the human spirit) for the sake of the resolve to strictly fulfill the commandments that have been learned, guides it to drive away from the soul all passions—both those mingling with it from the body and those that are its own, existing within it independently of the body. It teaches him to keep his body in order—everything from head to toe: his eyes, so that they may look with purity; his ears, so that they may listen to what is peaceful and not take delight in slander, gossip, and insults;—the tongue, so that it speaks only what is good, weighing every word, and not allowing anything impure or passionate to enter into speech; the hands, so that they are moved first and foremost only for the purpose of prayer and acts of mercy and generosity; a stomach that is kept within proper limits in the consumption of food and drink, taking only what is necessary to sustain the body, and not allowing lust or gluttony to lead one beyond this measure; feet that walk upright and follow God’s will, directed toward the service of good deeds. In this way, the body becomes accustomed to every kind of good and is transformed, submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that it ultimately partakes, to some extent, of those qualities of the spiritual body that it is to receive at the resurrection of the righteous.

21. The soul, as has been pointed out, has its own passions, which are: pride, hatred, envy, anger, despondency, and others like them. When the soul surrenders itself to God with all its strength, then the All-Merciful God grants it the spirit of true repentance and purifies it from all these passions, teaching it not to follow them and giving it the strength to overcome them and to triumph over the enemies who ceaselessly place obstacles in its path, striving through temptations to snatch it back to themselves. And if she remains steadfast in her conversion and in her willing obedience to the Holy Spirit, who teaches her repentance, then the merciful Creator will have compassion on her, for the sake of her labors—endured with every hardship and need—in long fasts, frequent vigils, and instruction in the Word of God, in unceasing prayer, in renunciation of all worldly pleasures, in serving all with a pure heart, in humility and poverty of spirit—if she remains steadfast in all this, the All-Generous One, looking upon her with a merciful eye, will deliver her from all temptations and rescue her from the hands of her enemies by His mercy.

22. God the Father, in His goodness, *“did not spare”* (Rom. 8:32) His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up to save us from our sins and iniquities. And the Son of God, having humbled Himself for our sake, healed us of our spiritual infirmities and provided for our salvation from our sins, I therefore urge you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to know and always keep in mind this great work of God—namely, that God the Word, for our sake, became like us in every way except sin. It is fitting, then, for those who are endowed with reason to understand this wisely, striving earnestly to become truly free (from sin) through the power of the Lord’s coming to us. Those who have made proper use of this arrangement are His servants. But this title is not yet perfection. Perfection leads to sonship—and is sanctification, which comes in its own time. Thus, when our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that His disciples had already attained sonship and had come to know Him Himself, having been taught by the Holy Spirit, said to them: *“I no longer call you servants, but friends and brothers, for I have told you everything I heard from the Father”* (John 15:15). And those who realized what they had become in Christ Jesus raised their voices, saying: *“We have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’”* (Romans 8:15). Whoever does not show complete and earnest readiness to rise up (from sin) should know that the coming of the Lord and Savior will be a judgment against him. For even at the beginning, Simeon sang: *“Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that will be spoken against”* (Luke 2:34). And later the Apostles proclaimed: *“For to one we are the smell of death leading to death, and to another the smell of life leading to life”* (2 Cor. 2:16).

23. It is no secret to you that the enemies of the truth are constantly striving to destroy the truth. But God has always visited His creation, from the very beginning of the world, and has taught those who approached their Creator with all their hearts how to honor Him. But when, due to the passions of the flesh and the malice of the enemies who fight against us, the good aspirations of the soul lost their strength, and people could not even comprehend what is proper to them by their very nature and purpose—let alone rid themselves of sins in order to restore themselves to their original state— then God showed them mercy and taught them true worship of God through the written law. When even this did not help, God, seeing that the wound was spreading and required decisive healing, determined to send His Only-Begotten Son, Who is our sole Healer.

24. Overcome by love for Jesus Christ, as I look upon our times, I experience at times joy, at times lamentation and weeping. Very many among our people have clothed themselves in the garment of piety (the monastic habit). But only some of them did so with all their heart and were deemed worthy to receive the salvation brought by the coming of the Lord Jesus. And these are the ones for whom I rejoice. Others, however, having despised the power of their vow, act according to the will of the flesh and the inclinations of their hearts—whereby the coming of the Lord has become a condemnation to them. And these are the ones for whom I lament. Still others, finally, thinking of the length of time required for their struggle, have lost heart; therefore, they have cast off the garment of godliness and have become, as it were, speechless. And these are the ones for whom I weep, since the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ has become a condemnation to them.

25. I pray earnestly to God for you, that He may kindle in your hearts the fire that our Lord Jesus Christ came to bring to the earth (Luke 12:49), so that you may rightly govern your intentions and feelings and distinguish good from evil.

26. When the wind blows steadily, any sailor may think highly of himself and boast; but it is only when the winds suddenly change that the skill of experienced helmsmen becomes apparent.

27. Whoever fears the Lord and keeps His commandments is a servant of God. But this servitude, in which we too find ourselves, is not slavery, but righteousness that leads to sonship. Our Lord chose the Apostles and entrusted them with the Gospel message. The commandments they gave us have established for us a glorious servitude, so that we may rule over all our passions and perform the glorious service of virtue. But when we draw nearer to grace, our Lord Jesus Christ will say to us as He said to His Apostles: *“I no longer call you servants, but My friends and brothers; for everything that I have heard from My Father, I have told you”* (John 15:15). Those who have drawn near to grace come to know through experience the movements of the Holy Spirit and come to understand their own spiritual constitution; and having understood and come to know this, they cry out, saying: *“We have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but a spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’”* (Rom. 8:15).

28. God guides everyone through the workings of His grace. Therefore, do not be slothful or lose heart, but cry out to God day and night, imploring the goodness of God the Father to send you help from above so

that you may know how to act. Do not let “*your eyes sleep nor your eyelids slumber*” (Ps. 131: 4), but be zealous to offer yourselves as a pure sacrifice to God, so that you may see Him; for without purity no one can see God (Heb. 12: 14), as the Apostle says.

29. All the saints, when they see that we are lazy and negligent, grieve, weep, and lament; but when they see that we are becoming upright and growing in perfection, they rejoice, and in joy and gladness many of them ceaselessly pour out prayers for us to the Creator. And the Lord is then comforted by our good deeds, as well as by the testimonies and prayers of the saints—and He bestows upon us all manner of gifts.

30. Whoever does not wholeheartedly hate what is characteristic of material and earthly flesh, along with all its movements and actions—and whose mind is not stirred by sorrow toward the Father of all—cannot attain salvation. But whoever does this, our Lord will have mercy on his labors and grant him an invisible and incorporeal fire, which will consume all the passions within him and completely purify his mind. Then the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ will dwell within him and remain with him, teaching him to worship the Father as is fitting. But as long as we indulge in our material flesh, we remain enemies of God, His angels, and all the saints. I therefore implore you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: do not be careless about your life and your salvation, and do not allow this fleeting moment to rob you of eternity, which has no end, nor this fleshly body to deprive you of the kingdom of the lights, which is boundless and beyond words. Truly, my soul is troubled and my spirit is numb because, although we have been given the freedom to choose and to do the works of the saints, we, intoxicated by passions as if drunk with wine, do not wish to lift our minds on high to seek the higher glory; we do not wish to imitate the deeds of the saints or follow in their footsteps, so that, having become heirs to their deeds, we might receive with them the eternal inheritance.

31. You have been granted great blessings, having received the grace that dwells within you. You must, however, strive diligently for the sake of the One who is “*the Dawn from on high*” who has “*visited*” you (Luke 1:78), so that you may become a holy and blameless sacrifice to Him. We know how our nature fell from its heights into the depths of humiliation and poverty, and how the merciful God visited it with His laws through the hands of Moses and the other prophets; but in recent times He has done so through His Only-Begotten Son, Who is the supreme Head of our high priests and our true Physician, the One alone who is powerful enough to heal our infirmities, and Who took on our flesh and gave Himself up for us and for our sins; by His death we are saved. Therefore, ponder and carefully examine the decrees of our Creator and His visitations to us, both in our outer and inner selves, after we—though we were once rational—became irrational because of our inclination toward the will of the enemy, the evildoer, the father of lies.

32. How many myriads of evil demons there are, and how innumerable are the kinds of their wiles! Even after seeing that we, having come to recognize our passions and our shame, are already striving to avoid the evil deeds to which they lead us, and do not incline our ears to the evil counsel they instill in us—they have not desisted, but have set to work with desperate effort, knowing that their fate has already been definitively sealed and that their inheritance is hell, because of their extreme malice and aversion (to God). May the Lord open the eyes of your hearts, so that you may see how numerous are the schemes of the demons and how much evil they cause us every day—and may He grant you a vigilant heart and a spirit of discernment, so that you may offer yourselves as a living and blameless sacrifice to God, guarding against the envy of the demons at all times and their evil counsel, their hidden schemes and veiled malice, their deceptive lies and blasphemous thoughts, their subtle suggestions which they plant in our hearts every day, the anger and slander to which they incite us, so that we may slander one another while justifying only ourselves, while condemning others so that they may slander one another, or, speaking with a sweet tongue, hide bitterness in our hearts, so that they may condemn the outward appearance of their neighbor while harboring a predator within themselves, so that they may quarrel among themselves and go against one another, in the desire to have their own way and appear the most righteous. Every person who delights in sinful thoughts falls of his own accord when he takes pleasure in (sympathizes with) what is instilled in him by his enemies, and when he seeks to justify himself only by outward deeds, while inwardly serving as a dwelling place for an evil spirit that teaches him every kind of evil. The body of such a person will be filled with shameful disgrace—for whoever is like this is overcome by demonic passions, which he does not drive away from himself. Demons are not visible bodies; but we become bodies for them when our souls accept dark thoughts from them; for, having accepted these thoughts, we accept the demons themselves, and make them manifest in the body.

33. The rational and immortal nature is hidden within our mortal body so that it may reveal its workings in and through it. Therefore, having made this body an altar of incense, offer upon it all your thoughts and

your evil counsels, and, placing them before the face of the Lord, lift yourselves up to Him with heart and mind, imploring Him to send down upon you from on high His incorporeal fire, which will consume all that lies upon this altar and purify it. And your enemies, the priests of Baal, will tremble and perish by your hands, just as they did by the hands of the Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:25 ff.). Then you will see a man emerging from the Divine waters, who will cause a spiritual rain to fall upon you—that is, the sprinkling of the Spirit of the Comforter.

34. The devil, who fell from his heavenly rank because of pride, ceaselessly strives to lead into ruin all those who wholeheartedly desire to draw near to the Lord—by the very same path by which he himself fell, that is, through pride and love of vain glory. It is with these things that the demons fight against us; it is through these and other similar means that they seek to distance us from God. Moreover, knowing that whoever loves his brother also loves God, they instill hatred toward one another in our hearts—to the point that some cannot even bear to look at their brother or speak a word to him. Many truly great people have undertaken the labor of virtue, but through their own lack of understanding have ruined themselves. It would not be surprising for this to happen among you as well, if, for example, having grown cold toward good works, you come to think that you possess virtue within yourselves. For you have already fallen into this devilish disease (conceit), thinking that you are close to God and dwell in the light, when in reality you are in darkness. What prompted our Lord Jesus Christ to lay aside His garments, gird His loins with a towel, and, having poured water into a basin (John 13:4 ff.), wash the feet of those beneath Him, if not to teach us humility? Yes—He illustrated this to us by the example of what He did then. And indeed, all who wish to be accepted into the first rank can achieve this only through humility; for in the beginning, it was pride that cast him out of heaven. Therefore, unless a person possesses the utmost humility—humility with all his heart, all his mind, all his spirit, all his soul, and all his body—he will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

35. If we sincerely desire to draw near to our Creator, we must strive to free our souls from passions, in accordance with the spiritual law. For because of our evil deeds, our indulgence in passions, and the multitude of devilish temptations, our intellectual power has weakened, and the good impulses of our souls have ceased; we can no longer perceive the beauty (and demands) of our spiritual nature because of the passions into which we fall; and there is no salvation for us from anyone except our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle Paul wrote: *“Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”* (1 Cor. 15:22). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the life of all rational creatures, created in His image.

36. We are called by the names of the saints and clothed in their garments, of which we boast before the unbelievers; yet we lack the zeal to imitate their deeds. I fear that the words of the Apostle might apply to us: *“Having a form of godliness, but denying its power”* (2 Tim. 3:5). May the Lord grant you to understand what the life you have embraced truly is, so that by acting in its spirit, you may become worthy to receive the invisible inheritance; to do, to the best of our ability, our deeds in accordance with the Lord’s will—this is what we must do! For this is proper to our nature, and nothing more should be demanded of our virtue. —Whoever serves God and seeks Him with all his heart acts in accordance with his nature; but whoever commits any sin is worthy of rebuke and punishment, because this is foreign to his nature.

37. Ever since my Lord, by His grace, awakened my mind from its mortal slumber, my weeping has been excessive and my sighing inconsolable. I ask myself: What can we give the Lord in return for all that He has done for us? He has commanded His angels to serve us, the prophets to prophesy— —and the apostles to proclaim the Gospel. But above all this, He sent His Only-Begotten Son for our salvation. Therefore, stir up your hearts to the fear of God. Know that John the Baptist and Forerunner baptized with water for repentance, in preparation for the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire—which is the fire of zeal for good deeds. Let us, then, show eager readiness to purify ourselves in body and spirit, and, having received the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us be zealous for good deeds, so that we may offer ourselves to Him as a pleasing sacrifice. The Spirit of the Comforter, received in baptism, gives us the strength to act in a holy manner, so that He may restore us to our former glorious state and make us worthy to receive an everlasting inheritance. Know that those who are baptized into Christ are clothed with Christ, as the Apostle says (Gal. 3: 27, 28)—receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, whether slave or free, man or woman, as soon as they receive this grace, these bodily distinctions immediately cease to have any power over them. And the Holy Spirit, at the very moment He becomes for them the pledge of their inheritance in the eternal kingdom of heaven, teaches them how to worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23).

38. I have prayed for you, that you too may receive that great Spirit of fire which I have received. If you wish to receive Him so that He may dwell within you, first offer up bodily labors and humility of heart, and, lifting your thoughts to heaven day and night, seek this fiery Spirit with a righteous heart—and He will be given to you. In this way, Elijah the Tishbite and Elisha, along with the other prophets, received Him. Whoever cultivates himself through this cultivation (the feats described) will be given this Spirit forever and ever. Remain in prayer with fervent seeking from the depths of your hearts—and it will be given to you. For that Spirit dwells in righteous hearts. And when He is received, He will reveal to you the highest mysteries; He will drive away from you the fear of people and beasts—and you will have heavenly joy day and night; and you will be in this body like those who are already in the kingdom (of heaven).

39. If a person desires to attain God's love, he must have the fear of God; and fear gives birth to weeping, and weeping gives birth to courage. When all this matures in the soul, it will begin to bear fruit in everything. And God, beholding these beautiful fruits in the soul, draws it to Himself, as the fragrance of chosen incense; He rejoices over it with the Angels at all times, filling it with joy, and guards it on all its paths, so that it may safely reach its place of rest. Then the devil does not attack her, seeing the Most High Guardian surrounding her; indeed, he is afraid even to approach her at all, because of this great power. Acquire this power for yourselves, so that the demons may fear you, so that the labors you undertake may be made easier for you, and so that the Divine may be sweet to you. This sweetness of divine love is far sweeter than a honeycomb. Many of the monks and virgins living in communities, having not tasted this sweetness of divine love in the least, and having not received divine strength, thought they already possessed it; but since they made no effort to acquire it, God did not grant it to them. Whoever strives to acquire it will surely attain it by God's grace; for with God there is no partiality. When a person, desiring to have within himself the light of God and His strength, despises the reproaches of this world as well as its honors, hates all that is worldly and the repose of the body, and purifies his heart of all evil thoughts, ceaselessly offering to God fasting and tears day and night, as well as pure prayers, then God bestows that strength upon him. Strive to acquire such strength—and you will accomplish all your deeds calmly and easily, gain great boldness before God, and He will grant all your requests.

40. God hears those who love Him and seek Him with all their hearts, and He grants them all their requests. But He does not hear the requests of those who do not approach Him with all their heart, but are double-minded, and who, whatever they do, do so to gain human glory and praise—rather, He is angry with them; for their deeds are done for show. And the words of the Psalm are fulfilled in them, which say: "*God has scattered the bones of those who seek to please men*" (Ps. 52:6). For this reason, the power of God does not work in them—since they are not steadfast in heart in all the deeds they undertake. And they do not know divine sweetness, its gentleness and joy. There are many among us who have not received that power which brings sweetness to the soul, fills it day by day with ever-increasing joy and gladness, and kindles divine warmth within it. They are deceived by the evil spirit because they perform their deeds for show before others. But you, bringing the fruits of your labors before the Lord, strive to turn away from the spirit of vanity, and wage unceasing battle against it, so that the Lord may accept the fruits you bring before Him and bestow upon you the strength given to His chosen ones. Do not cease to resist this evil spirit; for when a person sets out to perform good deeds and undertake noble endeavors, this spirit rushes in to share in his efforts—or to divert him entirely from such undertakings. It cannot bear to see anyone act righteously and opposes all who desire to be faithful to the Lord. He prevents many from attaining virtue altogether, while with others he interferes with their deeds and destroys their fruits, teaching them to practice virtue and perform acts of mercy while mixing vanity into them. People think such individuals are enriched by these fruits, whereas they possess none at all—and they resemble a fig tree that, when viewed from afar, was thought to bear many sweet fruits; but upon drawing nearer, nothing was found on it. God withers them because He finds no good fruit on them, and not merely because He deprives them of the incomparable sweetness of His Divinity. But you, having embarked on this spiritual struggle, strive to resist the spirit of vanity—oppose it and overcome it. The power of God will come, bring you help, and remain with you, and at all times will bestow upon you zeal and warmth, which are more precious than anything else. If any of you find that you are not endowed with this warmth, let him strive to seek it—and it will come to the one who seeks it. It is like a fire that people, when they wish to boil a little oil on it, fan until it blazes; and once it blazes, it draws on its natural power and boils, rising upward and burning. Likewise, when you see that your souls are growing cold due to neglect and laziness, hasten to rekindle them by shedding tears over them. Without a doubt, that fire will come and unite with your souls—

and those who have acquired it will boil over with good deeds. Take David, for example—when he noticed that his soul had grown heavy and cold, he said: *“I recall the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I ponder the works of Your hand. I lift up my hands to You, and my soul, like a parched land, longs for You”* (Ps. 142: 5, 6). You see—when David’s heart grew heavy, he was deeply troubled by it until the fire in his heart was kindled anew, to the point that he cried out: *“My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready”* (Ps. 107: 2). And he was restored to his former state through this constant care and concern. Do the same, and may you be of one mind in preparing your hearts, with the help of divine light and fire.

41. Pray—may God grant you the grace to see and understand everything clearly, so that you may faithfully discern what is good and what is evil. It is written in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul that *“solid food is for the mature”* (Heb. 5:14). These are the ones who, through long and diligent effort, have trained their senses and intentions regarding good and evil, have become sons of the kingdom, and have been adopted as children of God. And God has granted them wisdom and discernment in all their deeds, so that neither man nor the devil may deceive them. You must know that the enemy tempts the faithful with the appearance of good, and succeeds in deceiving many because they lack discernment and wisdom. Therefore, when the blessed Paul came to know these riches of the mind—which are destined for the faithful and whose greatness knows no bounds—he wrote to the Ephesians: *“May God grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation, enlightening the eyes of your heart, so that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His glory toward the saints”* (Eph. 1:17–18). He did this out of his boundless love for them, knowing that if they attained this, nothing would be difficult for them, and they would fear nothing; rather, the joy of the Lord would comfort them day and night, and their labors would be sweet to them at all times. Many of the monks and virgins living in monastic communities do not attain this level. And you, if you wish to attain this level—which is the pinnacle of perfection—turn away from all those who bear such titles, that is, monasticism and virginity, yet lack clear insight and discernment; for if you associate with them, they will not allow you to prosper, but will even extinguish your zeal, because there is no zeal in them, only coldness, since they follow their own desires. Therefore, if they come to you and engage you in worldly conversation, in accordance with their own desires, do not consent to it. For it is written by the Apostle Paul: *“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophecies”* (1 Thess. 5:19–20). Know that nothing quenches the Spirit as much as idle chatter.

42. In every rational creature—whether man or woman—there is an organ of love, by which they are able to embrace both the divine and the human. Those who are of God (spiritual) love the divine; those who are carnal love the carnal. Those who love the divine purify their hearts of all impurities and the deeds of this passing world; they hate the world and their own souls, and, bearing their cross, follow the Lord, acting in all things according to His will. That is why God dwells within them and grants them sweetness and joy, which nourish, satisfy, and renew their souls. Just as trees cannot grow unless they are watered with natural water, so too the soul cannot grow unless it receives heavenly sweetness. Only those souls that have received the Spirit and are filled with heavenly sweetness grow.

43. Confess that you are sinners, and mourn over all the wrongs you have committed through your negligence. For this, the Lord’s favor will be with you and will work within you; for He is good and forgives the sins of all who turn to Him, whoever they may be, so that He will no longer remember them. However, He wants those (who have been forgiven) to remember the forgiveness of their sins committed thus far, so that, by not forgetting this, they may avoid doing anything in their conduct that would compel them to give an account even for those sins that have already been forgiven,—as happened to the servant whose master had forgiven him the entire debt he owed. For when, having forgotten this mercy, he treated his fellow servant unjustly, his master demanded from him the entire debt that had been forgiven him,—because he had not shown mercy to his fellow servant and had not forgiven him the hundred denarii—a sum that was insignificant compared to the one that had been forgiven him (Matt. 18:23, etc.). Let us consider the Prophet David. When, after he had sinned with Uriah’s wife, the Prophet Nathan rebuked him for this and for what he had done to her husband—he, having heard the rebuke, immediately repented and humbled himself. Why did the prophet Nathan tell him, *“God has already forgiven your sins”* (2 Sam. 12:13)? But David, having received forgiveness of his sins, did not forget them, and he passed down the memory of them to future generations. This was done as a memorial for all generations, from generation to generation. *“I will teach the wicked Your ways”* (Ps. 50:15), he says, so that all sinners might learn from his example, repent of their sins as he did, and, once forgiven, not forget them but always remember them. God Himself said something similar through the prophet

Isaiah: *"I am the one who blots out your sins, and I will not remember them. But you, remember them"* (Isaiah 43:25–26). He also said through the prophet Jeremiah, *"Turn to Me, O house of Israel, ... and I will not set My face against you, for I am merciful, and I will not be angry with you forever. But consider your iniquity, for you have transgressed against the Lord your God and have perverted your ways"* (Jer. 3:12–13). Thus, when the Lord forgives our sins, we must not forgive them ourselves, but always remember them by renewing our repentance for them.

44. Spiritual asceticism is glorious, but it has many enemies. Whoever wishes to be perfect in it must not be enslaved to anything evil. Whoever is enslaved to anything evil is far from the goal of perfection.

45. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His unfathomable humility, veiled His Divinity with His humanity, so that all regarded Him as a man, whereas He was not merely a man, but God incarnate, as it is written: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* (John 1:14). However, the Lord did not cease to be God through His incarnation, which was necessary for Him to bring about our salvation.

46. Many, in their foolishness, say: "We, too, have seen the Lord Jesus Christ, just as the Apostles did"; yet they are deluded and deceived, and they do not have eyes to see the Lord as the Apostles saw Him. The Apostle Paul saw the Lord just as the Apostles saw Him—those who were with Him and who believed in Him at the time when He walked the earth, surrounded by crowds who regarded Him as merely a man. When the woman with the issue of blood, seeing Him with the eyes of her heart, believed that He was God and touched the hem of His garment in faith—she was immediately healed. He asked, "Who touched Me?"—not because He did not know, but because He wanted to reveal her faith. Although the Apostle Peter said, "The crowd is pressing against You, and yet You ask, 'Who touched Me?'" she herself came forward and confessed how she had been healed. Then the Lord said to her, *"Go—your faith has saved you"* (Luke 8:45–48). Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas also saw the Lord, but like the rest of the crowd, they looked at Him without faith—unlike the way the Apostles looked at Him—which is why they derived no benefit from seeing Him. But the Apostle Paul saw Him with the eyes of his heart and through his most steadfast faith, just as the woman with the issue of blood saw Him—she touched Him in faith and was healed.

47. When the kingdom of sin ceases within a person, then God appears to the soul and purifies it along with the body. But if the kingdom of sin dwells in the body, a person cannot see God, for his soul is within the body, and there is no room in it for the light that is the vision of God. David says: *"In Your light we see light"* (Ps. 35: 10). What, then, is this light in which a person sees the light? It is the light mentioned by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel—that is, that the whole person may be full of light, and that there be no part of him that is dark (Luke 11: 36). The Lord also said: *"No one knows the Father except the Son, and whoever the Son chooses to reveal Him to"* (Matt. 11:27). But the Son does not reveal His Father to the sons of darkness, but to those who abide in the light and are sons of light, whose eyes of the heart He has enlightened with the knowledge of His commandments.

48. It is written in the Psalm: *"I will go to the place of the wonderful dwelling, even to the house of God"* (Ps. 41: 5). This "I will go" signifies further progress and points to the soul's perfect maturity; for here it has already drawn near to God, whereas before its path was still very far from God. Let us not be surprised that our path is very distant, for we are still in spiritual infancy. We see that even the great Prophet Elijah was told: "Arise, eat, drink, and be strengthened; for your journey is still long" (1 Kings 19:7), (and he was on his way to the vision of God). David also spoke of this very same length of the journey: *"Who will give me wings like the depths, that I may fly away and rest?"* (Ps. 54:7). That is why this path must be traveled not with carelessness, laxity, or laziness, but with attention and zeal. Paul, the teacher of the universe, advises us, *"Run in such a way that you may win"*—and he adds: *"I discipline my body and bring it into subjection"* (1 Cor. 9:27). Let us therefore run while we still have time in this body, so that we may attain perfection, just as St. Paul himself did, who says: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness"* (2 Tim. 4:7–8).

49. Just as the body, while the soul dwells within it, passes through three stages—namely, youth, maturity, and old age—so too does the soul, hidden within the body, pass through three stages: the beginning of faith, growth in faith, and perfection. In the first stage, when the soul begins to believe, it is born again in Christ, as is stated in the Gospel. St. John the Apostle gave us the signs of this new birth, as well as of the middle stage and of perfection, when he said: "I wrote to you, young men; I wrote to you, children; I have written to you, fathers" (1 John 2:12–14). He wrote this not to his earthly friends, but to believers, describing

the three stages that those striving toward the spiritual realm go through in order to attain perfection and be made worthy of full grace.

50. He who loves the spiritual life must imitate Joseph's purity and self-control; he must begin to discipline himself through contemplation and arm himself against all evil desires, which are strengthened by the support of the cunning enemy, speaking of him in the words of Job: "*For his strength is in his loins, and his power is in the belly of his womb*" (Ch. 40:11). Therefore, everyone who strives and arms himself against these carnal desires—which are usually aroused by excessive food and drink—must gird his loins with strict self-restraint in order to stand firm in purity. It is written that the Angel who wrestled with Jacob gripped the sinew of his thigh tightly, causing his flesh to wither and weaken, and he was named Israel, that is, "he who sees God" (Gen. 32:25, 32). In the same way, we too must cause our bodies to wither in order to put to death and extinguish lust. For the withering of the flesh enables us to attain perfection in the virtue of purity. The soul is strong when the body is exhausted. Therefore, let us refine our bodies so that we may have the strength to keep ourselves in order; for if we subdue the body and subject it to the soul, then carnal thoughts—the love of which is enmity against God—will be put to death through the mortification of the flesh. Then the soul will be enlightened and become a temple to God. Whoever strives to be pure in all his members is a truly spiritual ascetic. And he is the one who has trained all his senses, not allowing them to rule over him, but restraining them and subjecting them to the yoke of the Lord through great purity. He does not allow his eyes to see anything evil, or to gaze with lust upon women; he does not allow his ears to hear gossip, or the devil's counsel, or the thoughts instilled by the devil; he seals his lips and does not give his tongue free rein to speak idle words; he extends his hands to perform noble deeds of mercy and assistance; his feet are swift to fulfill the Lord's words: "*If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two*" (Matt. 5:41); he keeps his belly and chest in check so that he does not fall because of them or begin to crawl on the ground, like a serpent crawling on its belly and chest. Such, brothers, is the way of life of an ascetic.

51. Anyone who desires to be a truly spiritual ascetic must strive to keep himself aloof from the noisy crowd and not draw near to it, so that he may remain—in body, heart, and mind—free from the turmoil and turmoil of the world; for where there are people, there is turmoil. Our Lord showed us an example of withdrawal from people and solitude when He went up alone to the mountain to pray. In the wilderness, too, He defeated the devil, who dared to engage Him in battle. Of course, He was not powerless to defeat him even in the midst of a crowd; but He did so to teach us that in solitude and silence we can more easily defeat the enemy and attain perfection. Likewise, the Lord did not reveal His glory to His disciples in the midst of people, but led them up the mountain, and there He revealed His glory to them. John the Baptist, too, was in the wilderness until the day of his appearance before Israel. In the world, it is easier for the enemy to oppress us with his weapons, both external and internal; there, by drawing certain people to himself as accomplices and henchmen who are obedient to him, he wages war against the faithful through them: some shameless woman can be a very powerful weapon for him, spreading her deceptive nets far and wide. When Ezekiel saw the four living creatures, each with four faces, all revealing the glory of God, he was not in a city or a village, but outside—in the field; for God had said to him, "*Go out into the field, and you will see My glory*" (Ezek. 3:22). In general, visions and revelations of this kind were revealed to the saints only on mountains and in deserts. The prophet Jeremiah, too, knowing how much God values solitude, said: "*It is good for a man to take the yoke upon himself in his youth, to sit alone and be silent*" (Lamentations 3:27–28). He, too, knowing full well how much harm human gossip brings to those who wish to please God, could not help but say: "*Who will give me a final refuge in the wilderness, that I may leave my people and depart from them?*" (Jer. 9:2). Likewise, the prophet Elijah was granted food by angels; and this did not happen amid a crowd of people, nor in a city or village, but in the wilderness. All these and similar events that happened to the saints are recorded to persuade us to imitate those who loved solitude, because it can lead us to the Lord as well. Therefore, strive to establish yourselves in it as you ought, so that it may lead you to the vision of God, which is the most spiritual contemplation.

52. I also want to tell you what a soul into which the fire of God has entered is like. It is like a two-winged bird soaring high through the heavenly air. Of all creatures, only birds possess wings as their distinctive feature; and the wings of the soul that obeys God are the impetus of God's fire, by which it can soar upward toward heaven. But if it is deprived of these wings, it will be unable to rise upward, as it is unpartaking of that fire that lifts it up, and will become like a bird deprived of its wings, which can no longer fly. Furthermore, the human soul resembles a bird in that warmth is the cause of a bird's coming into being:

for if a bird does not warm (incubate) its eggs, living chicks will not hatch from them, because they cannot be brought to life except through warmth. In the same way, God, embracing and warming the souls that are submissive to Him, stirs them to spiritual life. Having thus understood that the soul, clinging to God and submissive to Him, is like a bird whose source of existence is warmth—do not allow yourselves to be deprived of the power of this fire. Know that because of this fire, which God has given you, the devil has prepared many trials for you in order to deprive you of it; for he knows full well that as long as this fire burns within you, he cannot overcome you.

53. Resist the devil and strive to discern his wiles. He usually hides his bitterness under the guise of sweetness so as not to be exposed, and devises various illusions that appear attractive—but which, in reality, are quite the opposite—in order to seduce your hearts with a cunning imitation of the truth, which is truly appealing: all his craft is directed toward this: to oppose with all his might every soul that serves God faithfully. He instills many and varied passions into the soul to extinguish within it the divine fire, in which all strength lies; in particular, he seizes upon the repose of the body and all that is connected with it. But when he finally sees that they guard against all such things and accept nothing from him, and give him no hope that they will ever listen to him—he withdraws from them in shame. Then the Spirit of God takes up residence in them. And when the Spirit of God dwells within them, He grants them peace—or allows them to experience peace in all their deeds—and makes the bearing of God’s yoke sweet to them, as it is written in the Gospel: *“You will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:29), even though they have taken upon themselves and bear His yoke. Then they become tireless, both in the practice of virtue and in the fulfillment of obedience and in night vigils; they do not become angry at human slander, and they fear no one—neither man, nor beast, nor spirit—because the joy of the Lord abides with them day and night, enlivening their minds and nourishing them. Through this joy, the soul grows and becomes fit for all things, or perfect, and through it ascends to heaven.

54. We see that a child grows, first by receiving its mother’s milk, then some other kind of food, and finally all the kinds of food that people usually eat. Thus it becomes strong, matures, and its heart boldly faces enemies if they seek to attack it. But if some illness seizes it in childhood, its nourishment and strengthening are not successful; it grows up weak, and every enemy overpowers and defeats it. In order for it to become healthy and gain the strength to overcome enemies, it must seek the help and care of an experienced physician. So too is the human soul: if it lacks the joy of God, it becomes weak and sustains many wounds. If it strives to find a person—a servant of God skilled in spiritual healing—and clings to him, he will first heal it of its passions, then revive it and teach it how, with God’s help, to obtain that joy which is its nourishment. Only then will she resist her enemies—who are evil spirits—and overcome them, trample their counsel underfoot, and rejoice with even greater joy.

55. Beware of the counsel of the evil devil when he comes in the guise of one who speaks the truth, to deceive you and lead you astray. Even if he were to come to you in the form of a bright angel, do not believe him or listen to him; for he usually enchants the faithful with the alluring appearance of the Truth. The imperfect do not know these wiles of the devil, nor what he constantly instills in them; but the perfect know, as the Apostle says: *“But solid food is for the perfect, those whose senses have been trained by long instruction to discern good and evil”* (Heb. 5:14). The enemy cannot deceive these; but the faithful, who pay little attention to themselves, he easily entices with his seemingly sweet bait, and catches them, just as a fisherman catches a fish by covering the hook with bait. The fish does not know that the hook is concealed by this bait; therefore, it swims up, swallows the bait, and is immediately caught. If the fish knew that it would be caught by this bait, it would undoubtedly not approach it but would flee from it. In the same way, as we have said, imperfect believers are caught by the enemy for reasons that are entirely similar, as Solomon says: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end leads to the depths of hell”* (Prov. 16:25); it is also written in the Prophet Amos: *“What do you see, Amos?”* He replied: *“A birdcatcher’s snare”* (8:2). Fearing capture on the ground, the bird flies through the air and builds its nest—for rest and sleep—in the highest places: there it sleeps carefree, knowing that no one can reach or catch it. But we know how the birdcatcher manages to deceive it: he comes to that spot, spreads out his nets, and scatters seeds in plain sight; with this food he lures the bird down from that height, and it flies down and falls into the trap. The devil acts in a similar way, ensnaring imperfect Christians with his wiles and casting them down from their heights. This is how he acted when he disguised himself as a serpent and said to Eve: *“You will not surely die... but on the very day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God”* (Gen. 3:4, 5). Upon hearing these words, Eve was drawn to him in her heart and thought there was truth in them, because she did not judge the matter properly.

But when she tasted it herself and gave some to Adam, then that great misfortune befell them: they both fell from their exalted state. In the same way, the devil acts toward imperfect Christians when, not knowing how to distinguish good from evil, they follow their inclinations, content with their own judgment and opinion; when they do not consult their perfect spiritual fathers, who know how to distinguish good from evil with certainty, but instead follow the desires of their own hearts, thinking that they themselves have already attained perfection and received the blessing of their fathers. Such people are like birds that built their nests high up but flew down to the ground, fell into the birdcatcher's net, and were caught. Something similar happens to them because, in their self-confidence, they always act according to the promptings of their hearts and fulfill their desires, without listening to their fathers or consulting with them. Therefore, the devil arranges visions and apparitions for them and inflates their hearts with pride; sometimes he gives them dreams at night, which he fulfills for them during the day, so as to plunge them deeper into delusion. Not content with this, he sometimes shows them light at night, so that the place where they are becomes bright; and he does many things of this kind, even as if they were signs. He does all this so that they may remain at ease regarding him, thinking that he is an angel, and accept him. As soon as they accept him in this sense, he casts them down from their heights because of the spirit of pride that takes hold of them. He strives to keep them convinced that they have become great and glorious in spirit, surpassing many others, and have no need to turn to their fathers or listen to them. Yet, according to Scripture, they are indeed brilliant clusters of grapes, but unripe and tart. The fathers' instruction is burdensome to them, for they are convinced that they already know everything themselves.

56. Know for certain that you cannot prosper, grow, or become perfect, nor will you be able to distinguish rightly between good and evil, unless you obey your fathers. Our fathers themselves acted in this way: they obeyed their fathers and listened to their instruction; and because of this, they prospered, matured, and became teachers themselves, as it is written in the Wisdom of Sirach: *"Do not depart from the teaching of the elders, for they have learned it from their fathers; for from them you will learn wisdom, and in due time you will be able to give an answer"* (Sir. 8:11–12). Therefore, you must imitate those who were obedient to their fathers and obeyed them in everything, and whom their fathers, with God's help, taught everything they themselves had learned from their own fathers and passed on to their obedient sons. Thus, Isaac obeyed Abraham; Jacob—Isaac; Joseph obeyed Jacob; Elisha obeyed Elijah; Paul obeyed Ananias; Timothy obeyed Paul. All these and others like them obeyed their fathers, carried out their will, and followed their counsel; and thus they came to know the truth, learned righteousness, and were finally deemed worthy of the Holy Spirit—and in this way became heralds of the truth in all things, as it is written in the Prophet Ezekiel: *"I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel, that you may hear the word from My mouth and warn them on My behalf"* (3:17). Therefore, if you wish to prosper and grow more fully, to become unshakable in your hearts and not be mocked by the devil in anything, obey your fathers and listen to them in everything—and you will never fall.

57. I will show you the one thing that makes a person steadfast in goodness and keeps him that way from beginning to end, namely: love God with all your soul, with all your heart, and with all your mind, and serve Him alone. Then God will give you great strength and joy, and all of God's works will be as sweet to you as honey; all physical labor, intellectual pursuits, and vigils—indeed, the entire yoke of God—will be light and sweet to you. Out of His love for people, however, the Lord sometimes sends trials their way, so that they may not become proud but may persevere in their struggle; and instead of courage, they experience heaviness and lethargy; instead of joy, sorrow; instead of peace and stillness, agitation; instead of sweetness, bitterness; many other such things happen to those who love the Lord. But by struggling against this and overcoming it, they grow stronger and stronger. And when they have finally overcome all of this completely, then the Holy Spirit will be with them in everything, and they will no longer fear anything evil.

58. The Holy Spirit constantly exudes a fragrance that is most pleasant, sweetest, and indescribable to the human tongue. But who knows this pleasantness of the Spirit and His sweetness, except those who have been deemed worthy of His indwelling? The Holy Spirit dwells in the souls of the repentant only after much toil. We see much of the same in this world: precious stones, for example, are obtained only with great effort. Having sought this Spirit, the saints found Him; and He is the true pearl of great price mentioned in the Holy Gospel (Matt. 13, 45–46), in the parable of the merchant seeking fine pearls, who, having found one pearl of great value, went and sold all he had and bought it. He is, of course, also the subject of another parable about a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and in his joy, he went and sold all he had and bought

that field (Matt. 13:44). Temptations assail no one as much as those who have received the Holy Spirit. And our Lord, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove at His baptism, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, who tested Him with all his temptations, but found no way to prevail against Him, as it is written in the Gospel of Luke: *“And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him for a time”* (Luke 4:13). The Lord Jesus, then, returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Likewise, the Holy Spirit strengthens all who receive the Spirit—those who struggle and overcome—and gives them the power to overcome every temptation.

59. The seraphim seen by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:4, 9) is a symbol of faithful souls who strive to attain perfection. He had six wings full of eyes; he also had four faces looking in four directions: one face like that of a man, another like that of a calf, a third like that of a lion, and a fourth like that of an eagle. The first face of the seraphim, which is the human face, signifies the faithful who, while living in the world, fulfill the commandments incumbent upon them. If any of them enters monastic life, he becomes like the face of a calf, because he bears heavy labors in fulfilling the monastic rules and performs more physical feats. Whoever, having perfected himself in the rules of communal life, withdraws into solitude and enters into battle with invisible demons, becomes like the face of a lion, the king of wild beasts. When he defeats these invisible enemies, overcomes his passions, and subjugates them, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit and behold divine visions; then he will resemble the face of an eagle: his mind will then perceive everything that may befall him from all six directions, likened to those six wings full of eyes. Thus he will become a true spiritual seraphim and inherit eternal bliss.

60. Purity, unceasing and unchanging peace, perfect mercy, and other noble virtues, which are crowned with blessing—these are the essence of God’s commandments. Strive to fulfill these commands of the Spirit, through which your souls will be enlivened and by means of which you will receive the Lord into yourselves: they are the safe path. Without purity of body and heart, no one can be perfect before God; that is why it is said in the Holy Gospel: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matt. 5:8). Perfection is born of purity of heart. In the heart there is natural goodness and unnatural evil. From evil arise the passions of the soul, such as condemnation, hatred, pride, and others like them. Goodness, however—the natural goodness of the heart—gives rise to the knowledge of God (the fear of God) and holiness, or the purity of the soul from all passions (conscience). If a person resolves to reform and begins to avoid all evil, arming himself against it with spiritual struggles—weeping, contrition, sighs, fasting, vigils, poverty, and many prayers to God—then the Lord, by His grace, will help him and, through, deliver him from all the passions of the soul. Many, having lived for a long time in monasticism and chastity, have not learned this science of purity, because, having disregarded the instructions of their fathers, they followed the desires of their own hearts; for this reason, evil spirits—the destroyers of souls—have gained the upper hand over them, striking them with hidden arrows night and day and giving them no rest anywhere, so that their hearts are occupied now by pride, now by vanity, now by ungodly envy, now by condemnation, now by anger and fury, now by quarrels, and by many other passions. – Such ones will share the fate of the five foolish virgins because they spend all their time unwisely—they do not restrain their tongues, do not keep their eyes and bodies pure from lust, nor their hearts pure from impurity, and other things worthy of weeping, because they are impure, – content with a single linen garment, which is merely a symbol of virginity: therefore they are deprived of the heavenly oil to light their lamps; and the Bridegroom will never open the doors of His palace to them, and will say to them, as He said in the parable to the foolish virgins: *“Truly I tell you, I do not know you”* (Matt. 25). I write this out of a desire for your salvation, so that you may become free and faithful—and a pure bride for Christ, Who is the Bridegroom of all souls, as the Apostle Paul says: *“I have betrothed you to one husband, a pure virgin, to present you to Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:2).

61. Gold is purified many times by fire so that, through the most intense purification, it may become better. In the same way, our Lord, in His goodness, purifies a person through many trials, tests him, and makes him experienced in waging the battles of the heart, so that he no longer returns in thought or memory to the injustices and humiliations to which people subjected him; but humbles himself before God and places all his hope in Him, always being ready for every good work before God, as the Prophet David said: *“My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready; I will sing and make music to my glory”* (Ps. 107:2). Keep in mind that you may be tested by some brothers through slander and injustice, or that you may be subjected to humiliation by your coworkers. Therefore, when something like this happens to you, stand firm; do not be afraid, do not lose heart; but give thanks to the Lord for all of this, because without Him nothing like this happens, and He allows

it for the reason that it is necessary for God's servants to be tested: for whoever is not tested by God's goodness through trials, labors, sorrows, and calamities—until he learns to stand firm in goodness with patience in all circumstances—will not receive honor from Him.

62. Bear with patience the misfortunes and sorrows that befall you; and give thanks to the Lord for them with great humility, so that you may taste joy from your labors, —like the blessed Susanna, valiant in battle, who overcame the lustful advances of those two lawless old men and endured many misfortunes and sorrows from their false slander, but whom God, for her patience and steadfastness, exalted at the end of her struggle and humbled her enemies, like Thecla, even more courageous in spirit, who feared neither the wounds inflicted upon her by her parents, nor fire, nor the tearing of her flesh, nor wild beasts, and to whom God finally granted joy of heart and the reward of her labors when her courageous faith extinguished the blazing fire, shut the mouths of bloodthirsty lions, and put all her enemies to shame; and like Joseph—humble before God and man—whom, when his brothers, driven by envy and hatred because of the preference their father had shown him, sought to shed his blood, divine help preserved from death. Overcome by envy, they sold him into slavery, where the wife of the master whom he served caused him great suffering and brought it to the point that he was cast into prison; but God did not forsake him. For he was self-controlled, meek, pure, and blameless in soul and body, and, by God's favor toward him, he did not succumb under the weight of all those misfortunes, but endured them patiently, placing his hope in the Lord. And God finally exalted him, making him ruler over Egypt and all its provinces; and He subdued all his brothers, who had hated him, under his feet. These individuals and others like them did not receive honor from God at the very beginning of their struggles and trials, but only after He had tested them, purified them through calamities and sorrows, and taught them how to stand firm in the midst of battle. And only then, when He saw that they were courageously enduring misfortunes and sorrows and placing all their hope in the Lord, did He bestow honor upon them through His divine help, while He put their enemies to shame and subjected them to them.

63. Remain steadfast and do not let your hearts grow slack during your trials, but give thanks for them, so that you may receive your reward from the Lord. May there be among you all—peace, truth, love for God, and mutual goodwill—and may there be among you no strife, no slander, no discord, no malicious envy, no disobedience, no pride, no resentment toward anyone, no mockery, no vanity, no hatred, and no mutual hostility. Wherever such actions occur in a monastery, the wrath of God descends upon it. Moreover, know that our life in this world is very short; therefore, cherish it and do not squander it in idleness, lest the hour of your departure from this life find you angry with one another, and consequently be counted among murderers, according to Scripture: *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer"* (1 John 3:15). Be merciful to one another, that the Lord may have mercy on you. For He Himself inspires this when He says, *"Forgive, and you will be forgiven"* (Luke 6:37). If any of you suffers slander, let him accept it with joy and entrust everything to the Lord, who is the righteous Judge and Rewarder... And whoever slanders his neighbor, let him hasten to humble himself before the Lord and ask forgiveness from his neighbor, so that the Lord may have mercy on him. Do not let the sun go down on your anger, as Scripture teaches us (Eph. 4: 26); but root out from your hearts the evil thoughts that torment you—those you harbor toward one another—so that you may thus nip in the bud every seed of hostility, the root of which is hatred and envy. These two passions are the most evil, detestable to both God and people; and it is utterly unbecoming for them to be found in any believer or servant of God. Therefore, let none of us, in our utter folly, boast and say, "I have gained the upper hand over my brother, and there will be no mercy for him." Let the one who speaks and thinks such things know that he has delivered his soul into the hands of death, and his inheritance will be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of the worm that never dies and the fire that is not quenched.

64. Let us awaken from our slumber while we are still in this body; let us lament over ourselves and mourn with all our hearts, day and night, so that we may be delivered from that terrible torment, groaning, weeping, and anguish that will have no end; let us be careful not to enter through the wide gate and walk the broad path that leads to destruction, even though very many take it, but let us enter through the narrow gate and walk the narrow path that leads to life, even though very few take it. Those who walk this latter path are the true workers, who will receive the reward of their labors with joy and inherit the kingdom. As for those who are not yet fully ready to enter there—I implore them not to be negligent until the time has passed, lest they find themselves without oil at the appointed hour, and with no one willing to sell it to them. For this is what happened to those five foolish virgins, who found no one from whom to buy it. Then they cried out, weeping, *"Lord, Lord, open to us!"* But he answered and said to them, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, I do not*

know you” (Matt. 25:11–12). And this happened to them for no other reason than their laziness. Later, though they did wake up and begin to make a fuss, it was already too late, because the master of the house had risen and shut the door, as it is written. I will give you another example similar to this one. When Noah entered the ark, alone with his sons and their wives, and with everything else that was with him, and shut the door of the ark because of the floodwaters sent down upon those who did evil, he did not open the door of the ark again, nor did he allow his sons to see that terrible spectacle, which was the punishment of the wicked; Moreover, once the door was shut, these wicked people could not enter to be with the righteous, but they all perished in the floodwaters because of their laziness and disobedience. For Noah, throughout those one hundred years during which he built the ark, ceaselessly called them to a better life, but they paid him no heed and did not obey him; therefore, they perished.

65. Keep the brotherhood united in one place and organize it in peace, unity of mind, humility, the fear of God, and prayer. Then the blessings of God’s house will be fully manifested in you, and you will enjoy them with joy and gladness. May faith, hope, love, humility, reverence, discernment, piety, peace, and love for your brothers and sisters adorn you even more. For whoever possesses all these things is clothed in wedding garments and walks in the commandments of the Spirit. Remain in all humility and patience, so that your passions may depart from you.

66. Whoever walks according to the will of God—which is sweeter than honey and filled with every joy—will be helped and strengthened by it, and it will enable his soul to perform wondrous deeds and prepare before him all the paths pleasing to the Lord; and then no enemy will be able to stand against him, because he walks according to the will of God. But whoever walks according to his own will, God will not help him in anything, but will leave him to the demons, who will hover in his heart day and night, and will not allow him to find any peace in anything, and will make him powerless and feeble in all matters, both external and internal, and they will bring upon him many other things that are ruinous and harmful. The devil sometimes instills joy and merriment in them; but there can be no joy in this, only sorrow and grief. Even if something resembling joy occurs, there is no truth in it, but only a phantom, for it is not from God. True joy comes from God and is given only to those who constantly strive to reject their own will and to fulfill God’s will in all things. The will that acts in the human heart is of three kinds: the first is from the devil; the second is from man; the third—from God; God does not favor the first two, but (favors) only that which comes from Him. Examine yourselves, then, and, having rejected all that is foreign, love God’s will alone. For it is of great importance for a person to constantly discern God’s will in all things. I assure you that if a person does not surrender the entire will of his heart, and does not deny himself in everything, and does not cast aside all his wealth and possessions, and does not submit to the Lord through obedience to his spiritual fathers—then he will neither be able to know God’s will nor fulfill it, and he will be deprived of the final blessing.

67. The Lord did not tell us that there would be a reward here; but that here there would be temptations, hardships, needs, and sorrows, and there a reward. This life is a path of struggles and temptations.

68. If you are patient, obedient, and submissive to your fathers, the Lord will reward you richly; and this is the work that will be remembered before the Lord. Whoever obeys his fathers obeys the Lord, and whoever obeys the Lord also obeys his fathers.

69. Above all, let us believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, let us worship Him and submit to Him, and let us do His will at all times and in every moment.

70. Let us walk in the fear of the Lord, as we are commanded—to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). The fear of the Lord roots out all deceit and sin from the soul. Whoever does not fear God falls into many evils. The fear of the Lord protects and guards a person until he casts off this body, as it is written: *“For your fear we conceived in the womb, and we labored and gave birth to the Spirit of salvation”* (Isaiah 26:18).

71. Whoever is free from malice is perfect and godlike. He is filled with joy and is the resting place of the Spirit of God. Just as fire consumes vast forests when neglected, so malice, if you allow it into your heart, will destroy your soul, defile your body, and bring you many unrighteous thoughts; it will stir up strife, discord, slander, envy, hatred, and similar evil passions that weigh down the very body and cause it illness. Hasten to acquire the gentleness and simplicity of heart of the saints, so that our Lord Jesus Christ may receive you into His presence, and each of you may joyfully say: *“You have received me because of my gentleness, and You have established me before You forever”* (Ps. 40:13).

72. God says through the Prophet: *“Whom shall I look upon? Only the meek and quiet, who tremble at My words”* (Isaiah 66:2). And our Lord says in the Gospel: *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:29). Therefore, acquire humility for yourselves and do not walk with pride of heart, which is characteristic of the devil. Whoever walks with pride of heart is a partner of the devil. A haughty person is hated by all, because his deeds are boastful; and from this he falls into many sins. All sins are abominable before God, but pride of heart is the most abominable of all. Whoever admonishes or gives counsel to the proud is like one pouring water into a leaky vessel, or like one speaking to a passing bird. People who are proud of heart are despised before God; but God will not humiliate hearts that are humble and contrite. God’s own love, having come down to us from on high, became humble to the utmost degree. Let us therefore love humility, so that we may cry out: *“Behold my humility and my toil, and forgive all my sins”* (Ps. 24:18).

73. Do not follow the lusts of your eyes, and do not let your heart grow lax. For evil lust corrupts the heart and clouds the mind. Turn away from it, lest the Spirit of God dwelling within you be angered against you. Let us strive for purity even unto death and guard ourselves in every way against impure desires: to this end, let us be careful not to gaze upon the beauty of women. Let us not be slaves to impure passions and shameful desires, which God hates. Write the name of God before the eyes of your hearts, so that within you there may be a constant cry: *“You are the living temple of God”* (2 Cor. 6:16) and *“a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.”* Whoever is carried away by impure desires is, before God, like beasts devoid of all reason, according to the words of the Psalmist, St. David the Prophet (Ps. 48:13). Therefore, let us hate that impure eye with all our hearts and seek purity, for it is the glory of God’s angels. But if, led astray by the devil, we fall, let us rise again through repentance and turn to Him who came to seek the sheep that had gone astray in sin (Luke 15:4).

74. Whoever cannot guard his lips and tongue should at least take care *“not to be too talkative”* (Job 11:3). Be careful, man; take control of your tongue, and do not multiply your words, lest you multiply your sins. Place your finger on your lips and a bridle on your tongue, for a talkative person leaves no room within himself for the Holy Spirit. If anyone, still a novice, asks you something that is salvific for his soul while conversing with you, answer him; but if he asks about something that is of no benefit to him, be like a deaf person who does not hear, and like a mute who does not speak.

75. Let us force ourselves to keep a strict guard over our lips, so that we do not say anything bad about anyone, for evil speech is worse than any poison. All wounds heal, but a wound from the tongue has no cure. The tongue of a thoughtless slanderer, driven by the devil, is more poisonous than a serpent’s tongue, for it stirs up strife and bitter enmity among brothers, sows discord and wickedness among the peaceful, and scatters large gatherings. Therefore, avoid condemning others, and cling to silence. He who loves silence abides close to God and His angels, and his place is in the heights. The Lord says that He will then preserve your ways—when you yourself guard your lips (Prov. 13:3).

76. Holy Scripture attests that there are two kinds of shame: one from which sin is born, and the other from which glory and grace arise (Sirach 4:23–25). The shame of committing sin is true and salvific shame; but the shame from which sin is born is the shame that hinders the fulfillment of God’s commandments. Do not be ashamed to do anything that is in accordance with God’s will, and do not hide the truth; do not be afraid to proclaim the Lord’s teaching or words of wisdom, and do not be ashamed to confess your sins to your spiritual father.

77. Our Lord, moved by compassion for our souls, says in the Holy Gospel: *“Woe to you when people speak well of you and praise you, yet you do not seek the glory of God”* (Luke 6:26; John 5:44). Therefore, let us strive even unto death, resisting vanity and cutting off its most evil offshoots, so that we may not be led to destruction. Flee from pride; for many have perished because of it. It drives a person to many labors—fasts, prayers, frequent all-night vigils, alms given in public, and many similar things; but through all this, he will achieve nothing but shame and reproach. Let us not strive to display anything in ourselves—especially anything great—lest we perish because of it and become entangled in the many branches of vanity, for the demons of vanity are exceedingly numerous. Let us instead strive more zealously to attain the glory of the saints, as well as their poverty, so that we may receive that sweet praise from God: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:3).

78. Our Lord Jesus Christ said in His Gospel: *“By your endurance you will save your souls”* (Luke 21:19). Also: *“Whoever endures to the end will be saved”* (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). With what zeal, then, must

we truly labor and endure in order to attain what is prepared for us in heaven? However, before we reach the point of shedding blood, let us not boast; for no artist boasts of his work before it is finished. He who has won the victory through patience should be called blessed. In due time, he will be glorified in the heavens, like Lazarus.

79. The psalmist David said: *“Your words are sweeter to my throat than honey to my mouth”* (Ps. 118:103). Also: *“The Lord’s ways are more desirable than many precious stones”* (Ps. 18:10–11). Truly blessed is the one who remains vigilant and fulfills the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ until he attains true knowledge of Him, so that he may say: *“Your mind marvels at Me”* (Ps. 138:6). Fear being unfaithful, lest the One who created us be angered against you. Whoever preaches the truth to an unbeliever, rebukes him, or instructs him is like a man who casts the most precious pearls into the depths of the sea. On the contrary, just as water flows down a sloping surface and rushes there swiftly, so the word of the Lord flows into the soul of the believer.

80. Let us remain vigilant and constantly kindle holy zeal in the temple of our mind, lest we be called negligent and lazy. Passions will never gain the upper hand over one who is zealous and vigilant. And if he should ever fall, through the wiles of the tempter, that zeal and vigilance will immediately restore him. But the negligent and careless person, who lacks zeal for pleasing God, if he falls to the devil’s temptations, does not even notice the sin he has committed, because his heart is hard as a stone, and he is like a subdued and bridled mule, upon which anyone can mount without any resistance on his part. In such people, the devil carries out all his lusts and his utter corruption, leading each of them wherever he pleases until his iniquities are fulfilled, and he dies amid groans and weeping. The careless person is like a house that has fallen into ruin and been abandoned by its inhabitants—a house that is of no value to anyone, but is loathed by all, as if cursed, like a dwelling place for vipers, scorpions, and wild beasts; no one cares for it, as it lies in ruins and desolation. Such is the condition of the careless person! Take care to maintain zeal and never set it aside, lest you fall under the enemy’s power. When a person possesses this beautiful zeal and care, it restores him from all falls and harms and warns him, so that such a person becomes a place of rest for the Holy Spirit and, having happily completed his journey, is deemed worthy in this world to enter into the rest of the saints.

81. We have heard that the blessed Paul, when he came to discuss virginity, said of it: *“I have no command from the Lord”* (1 Cor. 7:25). He had no command because not everyone can bear this heavy yoke; therefore, it is left to the free choice of those who are able to bear it. Let no one who is celibate boast of his or her celibacy, for it is a grace from God Himself. Celibacy drives away feminine sentiments, carnal thoughts, pride of heart, and love for all that is of the devil; it also drives far from oneself impatient grumbling, hatred of people, and worldly glory; it devotes itself to divine worship, restrains the tongue, and disciplines the stomach through fasting. When it is adorned with all these things, it becomes a sacrifice without blemish or defilement. If you, O virgin soul, concern yourself with many delicacies and walk in self-admiration (preoccupied with yourself), you will be put to shame in all your deeds. If you do not guard your tongue, you will be empty throughout your entire life, and you will have undertaken great labors in vain.

82. Let us walk righteously along the path trodden by the saints, of whom it is written: *“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord”* (Ps. 118:1). That is, in purity of body, purity of speech, purity of eyes, purity of hands, purity of ears, purity of feet, in righteous thoughts before God, and in a pure heart toward one another, as we say in our prayers: *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me”* (Ps. 50: 12).

2. On Good Morals and a Holy Life, in 170 chapters

1. People are usually called wise, though this word is used incorrectly. It is not those who have studied the sayings and writings of the ancient sages who are wise, but those whose souls are wise—those who can discern what is good and what is evil; who flee from what is evil and harmful to the soul, and who wisely seek out what is good and beneficial to the soul, doing so with great thanksgiving to God. These alone should truly be called wise people.

2. A truly wise person has but one concern: to obey and please God wholeheartedly in every way. Therefore, and for this reason alone, he instructs his soul on how to please God, giving thanks to Him for His providential care, no matter what circumstances he may face in life. For it is inappropriate not to thank doctors—even when they prescribe bitter and unpleasant remedies—for the healing of the body, yet to remain ungrateful toward God because of what seems to us to be a cause for sorrow, failing to understand that

everything happens according to His providence and for our benefit. In such understanding and in such faith in God lie the salvation and peace of the soul.

3. Self-control, kindness, chastity, steadfastness, patience, and other such great virtues are, as it were, (battle) strengths we have received from God, so that they may resist and withstand the afflictions we encounter and help us during them: so that if we exercise these strengths and keep them ever at the ready, nothing that befalls us will be burdensome, painful, ruinous, or unbearable, for all such things will be overcome by the virtues that dwell within us. Those whose souls lack wisdom do not consider this, for they do not believe that everything happens for our benefit, so that our virtues may shine forth and we may be rewarded by God for them.

4. If, recognizing that wealth and the full enjoyment of it are but a fleeting, illusory vanity, and knowing that a virtuous and God-pleasing life is better than wealth, and you stand firm in this conviction and keep it in mind, then you will neither sigh nor lament nor grumble against anyone, but you will thank God for everything when you see that those worse than you are praised for their eloquence, learning, or wealth. An insatiable desire for wealth and pleasure, a love of fame, and vanity—all born of ignorance of the truth—are the most evil passions of the soul.

5. A wise person, upon examining himself, comes to know what is right and beneficial for him to do, what is natural to his soul and salvific, and what is foreign to it and destructive. And in this way, he avoids what harms the soul, as it is foreign to it.

6. The more moderately one lives, the more at peace one is, because one does not worry about many things—such as servants, farmhands (wage laborers), and the acquisition of livestock. But when we become attached to these things, we are subjected to the misfortunes that arise from them, to the point where we even grumble against God. Thus, our own uncontrolled desire (for many things) fills us with confusion, and we wander in the darkness of a sinful life, unaware of ourselves.

7. One should not say that it is impossible for a person to lead a virtuous life, but rather that it is not easy. And certainly, this is not easily attainable for everyone without distinction; but only those people who are pious and have a God-loving mind partake of the virtuous life. The common (ordinary) mind is worldly and fickle; it gives rise to both good and evil thoughts, is changeable, and is inclined toward material things; but the God-loving mind is the executioner of the evil that arises in people from their willful carelessness.

8. The uneducated and the simple-minded regard the sciences as a ridiculous pursuit and refuse to listen to them, because they expose their ignorance—and they want everyone to be like them; likewise, those who are intemperate in their lives and morals earnestly desire that everyone be worse than they are, thinking to exonerate themselves by the fact that there are many who are evil. The soul perishes and is corrupted by the evil of sin, which is multifaceted and encompasses fornication, pride, greed, anger, insolence, rage, murder, grumbling, envy, extortion, predation, impatience, lies, sensuality, sloth, sorrow, timidity, hatred, condemnation, indolence, delusion, ignorance, seduction, and godlessness. The poor soul, turning away from God, is tormented by these and similar things.

9. Whether someone truly leads a virtuous and praiseworthy life as an ascetic should not be judged by a character feigned for appearances' sake, nor by the false appearance of their way of life; but by whether one, like skilled painters and sculptors, demonstrates one's virtuous and God-pleasing life through one's very deeds, turning away from all pleasures as from snares.

10. A man who is wealthy and of noble birth but lacks spiritual cultivation and a virtuous life is unhappy in the eyes of sensible people; on the contrary, a poor man or a slave by status is happy if he is adorned with education and virtue. Just as travelers lose their way on the roads (and perish), so do those who do not care for a virtuous life, being carried away by their desires.

11. One who succeeds in softening the character of the uneducated and inspires them to love learning and education should be called a "maker of men." Likewise, those who lead people living dissolute lives to a virtuous and God-pleasing life should also be considered "makers of men," for they are, as it were, recreating human beings. Meekness and self-restraint are happiness and a blessed hope for human souls.

12. Truly, people must properly order their lives and morals. When this is corrected, then God is easily known. Those who honor God with all their heart and with all their faith providentially receive from Him help to subdue anger and lust. For lust and anger are the cause of all evils.

13. A person should be called either one who is wise (according to the first point) or one who has set out to reform himself. One who is incorrigible should not be called a person; for this (i.e., incorrigibility) is

not a human trait. One should flee from such people. Those who live in harmony with evil will never be numbered among the immortal (i.e., those blessed with immortality).

14. It is only by virtue of the wisdom that dwells within us (as stated in the first point) that we are worthy of being called human beings; without such wisdom, we differ from animals only in the arrangement of our limbs and the gift of speech. Therefore, let the rational person know that he is immortal; and let him abhor every shameful lust, which is the cause of death for people.

15. Just as every artisan demonstrates his art by shaping the appropriate material he has chosen into beautiful forms—such as one with wood, another with bronze, and yet another with gold and silver—so too must we demonstrate that we are human not by the way our bodies are constituted, but by the fact that we are truly intelligent in our souls, —by submitting to the law of virtuous living, that is, a life of virtue and devotion to God. A truly wise and God-loving soul knows everything that ought to be in life, lovingly appeases God, and thanks Him sincerely, turning to Him with all its desire and all its thoughts.

16. Just as helmsmen carefully steer a ship forward so as not to run aground on a submerged rock or some other obstacle, so too should those who are zealous for a virtuous life carefully consider what they ought to do and what they ought to avoid, regarding as beneficial for themselves only what the true and divine laws inspire, and cutting off wicked thoughts from their souls.

17. Just as helmsmen and coachmen, through prudence and diligence, succeed in performing their duties well, so too must those who are zealous for a righteous and virtuous life carefully consider and take care to live a life that is worthy and pleasing to God: for whoever desires this and is convinced of his ability to attain what he desires attains, through faith, an imperishable (of a pure life).

18. Do not regard as free those who are free by status, but those who are free in their way of life and character. For example, the noble and the wealthy should not be called truly free when they are wicked and intemperate, because such people are slaves to their sensual passions. True purity and contempt for the transitory constitute the freedom and bliss of the soul.

19. Remind yourself that you must constantly show yourself to be wise, but do so through a virtuous life and your very actions. In the same way, the sick find and recognize doctors as saviors and benefactors—not by their words, but by their deeds.

20. A soul that is truly wise and virtuous reveals itself in its gaze, demeanor, voice, smile, conversations, and manner of address. Everything in it has been transformed and taken on the most noble form; its God-loving mind, like an alert gatekeeper, bars the entrance to evil and shameful thoughts.

21. Observe your surroundings and know that rulers and authorities have power only over the body, not over the soul—and always keep this in mind. For when they command, for example, to kill or to do something else that is inappropriate, unjust, and harmful to the soul, you must not obey them, even if they torment the body. God created the soul free and self-governing, and it is free to act as it wishes—for good or for evil.

22. A wise soul strives to rid itself of debauchery, arrogance, pride, delusion, envy, theft, and the like, for such deeds are the work of demons and evil will. Yet, through diligent effort and careful reflection, a person whose desires are not directed toward base pleasures is able to accomplish this.

23. Those who spend their lives engaged in small and humble deeds avoid danger and have no need for special precautions. By overcoming all their desires, they easily find the path that leads to God.

24. Wise people need not listen to every kind of conversation, but only to those that are beneficial, those that lead to the knowledge of God's will; for it is the path by which people return to life and eternal light.

25. Those who strive to live virtuously and with love for God must turn away from conceit and all empty and false glory, and strive for the proper reform of their lives and hearts. A God-loving and steadfast mind is the guide and the path to God.

26. There is no benefit in studying the sciences if the soul does not lead a good and God-pleasing life. The cause of all evils is delusion, deception, and ignorance of God.

27. Deep reflection on the good life and care for the soul produce good and God-loving men. He who seeks God finds Him, overcoming every desire through unceasing prayer to Him. Such a person fears no demons.

28. Those who are deluded by earthly goods and know in detail exactly what one must do to lead a good life are like those who have acquired medicines and medical instruments but do not know how to use

them and do not even care to do so. Therefore, for the sins we have committed, let us blame neither our birth nor anyone else, but only ourselves; for if the soul willingly gives in to sloth, it cannot help but be overcome.

29. It is not fitting for one who cannot distinguish between good and evil to judge which people are good and which are evil. A person who knows God is good; and when he is not good, it means he does not know (God) and will never be known (by Him): for the only way to know God is through goodness.

30. Good and God-loving men rebuke people for any wrongdoing when they are present, but they not only refrain from rebuking those who are absent themselves, but also do not allow others who attempt to speak ill of them to do so.

31. There should be no rudeness in conversation; for intelligent people are usually adorned by modesty and chastity more than virgins. A God-loving mind is a light that illuminates the soul, just as the sun illuminates the body.

32. Whenever any of the passions of the soul rise up against you, remember that those who are truly wise and desire to establish their own destiny on a proper and lasting foundation find their delight not in the acquisition of perishable wealth, but in true glory (in heaven). This is what makes them blessed. Wealth is both stolen and taken away by the strongest, but spiritual virtue alone is a secure and unstealable possession—and one that saves its possessors after death. Those who reason thus are not enticed by the illusory glitter of wealth and other pleasures.

33. The fickle and the untrained should not put wise men to the test. Wise is the one who pleases God and remains mostly silent; or, if he speaks, he speaks sparingly—and only what is necessary and pleasing to God.

34. Those who strive for a virtuous and God-loving life are zealous for the virtues of the soul, regarding them as a possession that constitutes their inalienable property and eternal consolation. As for temporal things, they enjoy them only as much as is necessary and as God provides and wills, using them with joy and all thanksgiving, even if they are very modest. For a rich table nourishes the body, as do material things, but the knowledge of God, self-control, kindness, charity, piety, and meekness—these ennoble the soul.

35. Rulers who compel people to do inappropriate and soul-damaging deeds do not rule over the soul, which is created self-governing. They bind the body, but not the will, over which the wise person reigns by the gift of his Creator—a will stronger than any authority, compulsion, or power.

36. Those who regard the loss of money, or children, or slaves, or other property as a misfortune should know that, first of all, one must be content with what God provides, and then, when it is necessary to give it back, one should do so willingly and cheerfully, without tormenting oneself with grief over the loss of it—or, better yet, its return—just as those who, having made use of what is not theirs, return it again.

37. It is the duty of a person of good character not to sell his freedom for the sake of acquiring wealth, even if what he stands to gain were very substantial. For worldly goods are like a dream, and wealth has only an illusory luster—unreliable and fleeting.

38. People of truly human virtue (as defined above) should strive so earnestly for a God-loving and virtuous life that their virtuous life may shine among others, just as a small piece of purple cloth draped over white garments to adorn them stands out and is noticeable to all. For in this way, their zeal for spiritual virtues will be more reliable.

39. Prudent people should assess their strength (army) and keep the virtues within their souls in good order, so that they may always be ready to resist attacking passions with the strength (army of virtues) inherent in their souls, naturally bestowed upon them by God. These are as follows: against beauty and every soul-corrupting lust—self-restraint; against need and poverty—patience; against vexation and anger—goodness of heart and the like.

40. One cannot suddenly become a good and wise person; but this is achieved through careful reflection, practice, experience, sustained effort, and (most importantly) a strong desire to do good. A good and God-loving person, who has truly come to know God, gives himself no rest, doing everything without exception that is pleasing to God. But such men are rarely found.

41. People who lack a natural inclination toward goodness should not, in despair over themselves, give up and neglect a God-loving and virtuous life, no matter how inaccessible and unattainable it may seem to them; rather, they too must reflect and do their best to take care of themselves. For although they may not be able to reach the heights of virtue and perfection, by reflecting on themselves and taking care of themselves

in every way, they will either become better or, at the very least, will not become worse—and this is no small benefit for the soul.

42. Man, in his mind, comes into contact with the ineffable Divine power, while in his body he is akin to animals. But few are those who, as true and intelligent human beings, strive to turn their thoughts toward God and the Savior and to be united with Him, and who demonstrate this through their deeds and virtuous lives. The majority of people, however, whose souls are foolish, having abandoned that divine and immortal adoption, incline toward a dead, poor, and fleeting kinship with bodies; and, like the speechless, preoccupied only with carnal matters and inflamed by lust, they cut themselves off from God and cast their souls down from heaven into the abyss of carnal torments.

43. A wise man, meditating on his coexistence and communion with the Divine, will never cling to anything earthly or base, but directs his mind toward the heavenly and eternal, knowing that God's will—the source of all good and the fountain of eternal blessings for humanity—is that man may be saved.

44. When you encounter a person who, out of a love of argument, engages you in a struggle against truth and the obvious, then, having ended the dispute, turn away from him, for his mind has become completely hardened. For just as bad water renders even the finest wines unfit for anything, so too do evil conversations corrupt people who are virtuous in life and character.

45. If we use every effort and every means to avoid physical death, then all the more should we strive to avoid spiritual death: for whoever wishes to be saved faces no obstacle to it—except perhaps the indifference and sloth of the soul.

46. Of those who do not wish to learn what is good for them and what should be regarded as good, it can be said that they are not in good health; as for those who, having come to know the truth, shamelessly argue against it, their reason has been deadened: their nature has become bestial; they do not know God, and their souls are not illuminated by the light.

47. God created various kinds of animals by His word for our benefit: some for food, others for service. But God created man to be an observer and a grateful interpreter of His works. This is what people must strive for, lest they die without having seen or understood God and His works, like speechless animals. Man must know that God can do all things. No one can resist Him who can do all things. Just as He created everything He willed by His word, so (even now) He creates all things for the salvation of mankind.

48. Heavenly beings are immortal by virtue of the goodness inherent in them; but earthly beings have become mortal because of the spontaneous evil within them, which in the unwise is multiplied by their indolence and ignorance of God.

49. Death, for those who understand it, is immortality; but for the simple-minded, who do not understand it, it is death. And this death is not to be feared, but one must fear the ruin of the soul, which is ignorance of God. That is what is truly dreadful for the soul!

50. Sin has found a foothold in the material world, and the body has become its seat. But the intelligent soul, having understood this, casts off the burden of the material world; and, rising from beneath this burden, comes to know the God of all and watches over the body attentively, as an enemy and adversary, trusting it not. And in this way, the soul, having conquered evil passions and the material world, is crowned by God.

51. When sin is understood by the soul, it is hated by it as the most foul-smelling beast; but when it is not understood, it is loved by those who do not understand it, and, enslaving its lover, it holds him captive. But the wretched and poor soul does not see what is salvific for it, nor does it even think about it; rather, believing that sin adorns it, it rejoices in it.

52. A pure soul, being good-natured, is sanctified and illuminated by God, and then the mind contemplates what is good and gives rise to God-loving intentions and deeds. But when the soul is defiled by sin, then God turns away from it—or rather, the soul itself separates itself from God—and the wicked demons, having entered the mind, instill in the soul unseemly deeds: adultery, murder, theft, and similar demonic evil acts.

53. Those who know God are filled with all manner of good thoughts and, longing for the heavenly, despise worldly things. But such people are not liked by many; so for this reason they are not only hated but also subjected to ridicule by many of the foolish. They are prepared to endure extreme poverty, knowing that what appears to many as evil is, in fact, good for them. Whoever contemplates the heavenly realm believes in God and knows that all creation is the work of His will; but whoever does not contemplate this will never believe that the world is God's work and was created for the salvation of humankind.

54. Those who are full of sin and revel in ignorance do not know God, for their souls are not sober; God, however, is spiritual (that is, He can be known only through a sober mind). Although He is invisible, He is very clearly present in the visible, just as the soul is in the body. Just as the body cannot live without the soul, so all that is visible and exists cannot stand without God.

55. For what purpose was man created? So that, by coming to know God's creations, he might behold God Himself and glorify the One who created them for man; the mind, united to God by love (a lover of God and pleasing to God), is an invisible blessing, bestowed by God upon the worthy as a reward for a good life.

56. Free is the one who is not enslaved by sensual pleasures but rules over the body through reason and self-control, and with complete gratitude is content with what God provides, even if it is very modest. When the God-loving mind and soul are in harmony with one another, then the body is subdued and at peace, for then the soul, through the action of the mind, extinguishes every carnal impulse.

57. Those who are not content with what they have to sustain their lives, but who covet more, enslave themselves to passions that agitate the soul and instill in it thoughts and dreams that grow worse and worse—that everything is unsatisfactory and that, consequently, they must acquire something new and better. Just as excessively long garments hinder travelers from walking, so too does an excessive desire for possessions prevent the soul from striving and being saved.

58. Whatever situation one finds oneself in against one's will and unwillingly is a prison and a punishment. Therefore, be content with what you have; otherwise, by enduring your circumstances without gratitude—with discontent and reluctance—you will be a tyrant to yourself without even realizing it. But there is only one path to this: contempt for worldly goods.

59. Just as we have received sight from God to discern what is visible—what is white and what is black—so too has God granted us reason to distinguish what is beneficial (and what is harmful) to the soul. — Desire, when it turns away from reason, gives rise to a passion for sensual pleasures, and this prevents the soul from being saved or entering into communion with God.

60. It is not a sin to act in accordance with the law of nature, but it is a sin to do evil of one's own free will. Eating food is not a sin, but it is a sin to eat it without giving thanks, irreverently, and without self-control; it is not a sin simply to look, but it is a sin to look with envy, pride, or insatiability; it is not a sin to listen peacefully, but it is a sin to listen with anger; it is not a sin to compel the tongue to give thanks and pray, but it is a sin to allow it to slander and condemn; it is not a sin to labor with one's hands in charity—by giving alms—but it is a sin to allow theft and murder. Thus, every member sins when, by our free will, it does evil instead of good, contrary to God's will.

61. If you doubt that every deed of yours is seen by God, then consider this: you yourself—a human being and dust—can, at a single moment, mentally survey all the places known to you and reflect upon them; does not God, who gives life to all and sustains all according to His will, see everything all the more clearly, as clearly as a mustard seed?

62. When you close the door of your dwelling and are left alone, know that you are accompanied by the Angel appointed by God to every person, whom the Greeks call the household spirit. He never slumbers; always being with you, He sees all things. He cannot be deceived, and darkness does not hide anything from Him. Along with him, be mindful that God is present everywhere. For there is no place or substance of any kind where God is not present—He who is greater than all and holds all in His hand.

63. If soldiers remain loyal to their king because he provides them with food, how much more should we strive, giving thanks to God with unceasing lips, to please Him continually—He who created everything for humankind?

64. Gratitude toward God and a good life are the fruits of a person that are pleasing to God. But just as earthly fruits do not ripen in a single hour but require time, rain, and care, so too do human fruits require effort, reflection, a time of waiting, self-restraint, and patience before they appear in all their splendor. However, even if, for their sake, you sometimes appear to someone as a godly man, do not trust yourself while you are still in this body, and do not consider anything of your own to be entirely pleasing to God. For know that it is difficult for a person to remain sinless to the very end.

65. There is nothing more honorable among people than the word. The word is so important that it is through words and thanksgiving that we honor God. By using indecent or dishonorable words, we expose the depravity of our own souls. It is characteristic of a foolish person to blame his birth or something else for his sins when he spontaneously utters a bad word or does a wicked deed.

66. If we strive to heal various physical illnesses so that those with whom we happen to be will not laugh at us, it is far more necessary for us to take every care to heal the illnesses of the soul, lest we be found dishonorable and worthy of ridicule—before God, in whose presence we are to stand for judgment. For, having self-control, we can, if we wish, refrain from doing evil deeds even when we desire them; it is also within our power to live in a way pleasing to God, and no one will ever force us to do anything evil if we do not want to. By striving in this way, we will be people worthy of God, living like the angels in heaven.

67. If you wish, you can be a slave to your passions, and if you wish, you can remain free, not submitting to the yoke of your passions; for God created you self-ruling. He who overcomes carnal passions is crowned with incorruption. If there were no passions, there would be no virtues, nor the crowns bestowed by God upon worthy people.

68. Those who do not see what is beneficial for them and do not know what is good are spiritually blind, and their reason is clouded. We must not look upon them, lest we too, by necessity, be subjected to the same fate unexpectedly, like the blind.

69. We must not be angry with sinners, even if their transgressions deserve punishment. For the sake of truth itself, the guilty must be guided (back to the true path) and punished, if necessary, either by us personally or through others; but we must not be angry with them or hold a grudge, because anger acts solely out of passion, not out of judgment and truth. One should not approve of those who are overly merciful, but one must also punish the wicked for the sake of goodness and justice themselves, and not for the sake of one's own passion of anger.

70. Only one kind of spiritual acquisition is safe and free from theft: namely, a virtuous and God-pleasing life, the pursuit and performance of good deeds. Wealth is a blind guide and a foolish counselor. Whoever misuses wealth, using it solely for his own pleasure, destroys his own deluded soul.

71. People should either refrain entirely from acquiring anything superfluous, or, if they do possess such things, be firmly convinced that all worldly things are by nature transitory—they can be taken away, lost, or destroyed—and that, therefore, when misfortune strikes, they must not lose heart.

72. Know that physical illnesses are naturally inherent in the body, as it is perishable and material. Therefore, in the event of such illnesses, a soul trained in virtue should show courage and patience with gratitude, and not reproach God for having created the body.

73. Those who compete in the Olympic Games are crowned not when they defeat one, or another, or a third, but when they defeat all who compete against them. Likewise, anyone who desires to be crowned by God must train his soul to be chaste—not only with regard to bodily passions, but also when tempted by greed, the desire to steal what belongs to others, envy, sensuality, vanity, reproaches, the dangers of death, and the like.

74. Let us strive for a good and God-loving life, not for the sake of human praise, but let us choose a virtuous life for the sake of the soul's salvation, for death is seen daily before our eyes, and all that is human is unreliable.

75. It is within our power to live chastely, but it is not within our power to become rich. So what, then? Should we not condemn our souls for desiring the fleeting and illusory splendor of wealth, which we have no power to acquire? Oh, how foolish we are to desire all this wealth! Do we not know that above all virtues is humility, just as the greatest of all passions is gluttony and the insatiable desire for worldly goods?

76. People of sound judgment must constantly remember that by undertaking small and temporary labors in this life, after death we will receive the greatest consolation and eternal bliss. – He who struggles against his passions and desires to be crowned by God, if he falls, let him not lose heart or remain in that fall, despairing of himself, but let him rise and struggle again, striving to obtain the crown, rising from his occasional falls until his last breath. Physical labor is an instrument of virtue and salvific for the soul.

77. The deprivation of worldly comforts makes courageous people and those who struggle worthy of crowns from God. Therefore, in this life one must put to death one's members with regard to all worldly things; for the dead will no longer concern themselves with anything worldly.

78. A wise and striving soul must not immediately lose heart or be terrified when something sorrowful happens, lest it be mocked for its timidity. A soul carried away by worldly splendor strays from its proper course. The virtues of the soul make us worthy of eternal blessings, while spontaneous human sins are the cause of eternal torments.

79. A wise person is often overcome by the passions of the soul through the (bodily) senses, which are common to rational beings. There are five bodily senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Through these five senses, succumbing to its four inherent passions, the poor soul is taken captive. These four passions of the soul are: vanity, the lust for pleasure, anger, and fear. But when a person, with wisdom and reason, having fought the good fight, overcomes and conquers these passions, then he is no longer overcome, but finds peace in his soul and is crowned by God as a victor.

80. Among those who stay at inns, some are given beds, while others, having no bed, lie down on the floor and sleep just as soundly as those who sleep on beds. When the night is over, in the morning both groups leave their beds and all depart from the inn alike, carrying with them only their own belongings. In the same way, all who journey along the path of this life—both those who lived modestly and those who lived in glory and wealth—depart from this life as from an inn, taking with them none of life's pleasures or riches, but only their own deeds, those they have performed in this life, —whether good or evil.

81. Even if you hold great power, do not immediately threaten anyone with death, knowing that by nature you too are subject to death, and that every soul casts off its body as if it were a final garment. Understanding this clearly, strive to be meek, do good, and always give thanks to God. Whoever is unmerciful has no virtue within himself.

82. Death cannot be avoided, and there is no way to escape it. Knowing this, truly wise people—who are well-versed in virtue and God-loving thought—face death without lamentation, fear, or weeping, keeping in mind that, on the one hand, it is inevitable, and on the other, it delivers us from the evils to which we are subjected in this life.

83. Those who have forgotten a good and God-pleasing life and who do not act in accordance with righteous and God-loving doctrines should not be hated, but rather pitied, as those who are lacking in reason and blind in heart and mind; for, mistaking evil for good, they perish through ignorance. And they, who are impious and foolish in spirit, do not know God.

84. Do not speak with just anyone about piety and the good life. I say this not out of envy, but because, I think, you will appear ridiculous to the most unwise. Like minds sympathize with one another, and there are few listeners for such conversations—or rather, they are very rare. It is therefore better not to speak of these things, for this is not what God desires for the salvation of man.

85. The soul sympathizes with the body, but the body does not sympathize with the soul. Thus, when the body is cut apart, the soul suffers with it, and when the body is strong and healthy, the soul's faculties share in that well-being. – But when the soul reflects (repents), the body does not reflect (repent) along with it, but remains on its own, lagging behind (unmoved): for reflection (repentance) is a painful sensation of the soul; just as ignorance, pride, unbelief, greed, hatred, envy, anger, cowardice, vanity, ambition, discord, insensitivity to goodness, and the like—are all produced by the soul.

86. When thinking of God, be pious, free from envy, kind, chaste, meek, generous according to your means, sociable, non-contentious, and the like: for in all these things, pleasing God is the imperishable wealth of the soul; likewise, do not condemn anyone, nor say of anyone that he is bad or has sinned, but rather seek out your own evil deeds and examine your own life within yourself—whether it is pleasing to God. What business is it of ours if someone else is bad?

87. A true person strives to be godly. Godly is the one who desires nothing foreign to him; and all creation is foreign to man. Therefore, despise all things, for you are the image of God. A person becomes the image of God when he lives righteously and in a manner pleasing to God, and this is impossible unless he turns away from all that is passionate. Whoever has a God-loving mind is skilled in all that is salvific for the soul and in every form of piety required of him. A God-loving man does not reproach anyone else, because he knows that he himself sins, and this is a sign of a soul that is being saved.

88. Those who strive with all their might to acquire temporary wealth, and, having forgotten about death and the perdition of their own souls, love the desire for evil deeds, yet do not care about what is salvific for them—these poor souls do not even imagine what suffering people endure from evil after death.

89. God is not the cause of evil. He has granted man reason, the ability to distinguish between good and evil, and self-control; but evil passions arise from human negligence and carelessness. God is by no means to blame for them. By their own free will, demons became evil, just as did the majority of people.

90. A person who lives a godly life does not allow evil to enter the soul. And when there is no evil in the soul, then it is safe and unharmed. Neither a malicious demon nor chance has power over such people;

God delivers them from evil, and they live safely protected, as if they were godlike. If someone praises such a person, he inwardly laughs at those who praise him; if someone defames him, he does not defend himself against those who slander him, nor does he take offense at what they say about him.

91. Evil clings to nature as rust clings to copper and filth to the body. But just as it is not the coppersmith who produced the rust, nor the parents who produced the filth, so God did not produce evil. He endowed man with a conscience and reason, so that he might avoid evil, knowing that it is harmful to him and brings him torment. So look carefully: when you see some fortunate person in power and wealth, do not flatter him under any pretext, lest you be beguiled by a demon. But let death be ever before your eyes; and you will never desire anything evil or worldly.

92. Our God has granted immortality to those in heaven, while He created those on earth to be subject to change; He has granted life and movement to all else—and all for the sake of man. Therefore, do not let the allurements of this world carry you away when the devil instills evil thoughts into your soul; but immediately remember the heavenly blessings and say to yourself: if I wish, it is within my power to overcome even this rebellion of the passions; but I will not overcome it if I choose to satisfy my desire. Strive in this way with a struggle capable of saving your soul.

93. Life is the union and combination of the mind (spirit), soul, and body; and death is not the destruction of these combined parts, but the dissolution of their union; God preserves all of this even after the dissolution.

94. The mind is not the soul, but a gift from God that saves the soul. A God-pleasing mind leads the way before the soul and counsels it to despise what is temporary, material, and perishable, and to love what is eternal, imperishable, and immaterial, so that a person, while living in the body, may with the mind imagine and contemplate what is heavenly and divine. Thus, the God-loving mind is the benefactor and savior of the human soul.

95. The soul, by indulging the body, is clouded by pleasure and perishes. The God-loving mind acts contrary to this: it causes sorrow to the body and saves the soul, like a physician who cuts into and cauterizes the body.

96. Those souls that are not restrained by reason and are not governed by the mind—which would temper, restrain, and direct (where appropriate) their passions, that is, sorrow and pleasure—such souls perish like irrational animals, because their reason is carried away by passions, just as a coachman is carried away by horses that have broken free from his control.

97. The greatest illness of the soul, its ultimate misfortune and ruin, is not to know God, who created everything for man and endowed him with reason and speech, through which, by ascending on high, he may enter into communion with God, contemplating and glorifying Him.

98. The soul is in the body; in the soul is the mind; in the mind is speech—through which God, when contemplated and glorified, grants the soul immortality, bestowing upon it incorruptibility and eternal bliss. For God has granted existence to all that is through His sole goodness.

99. God, having created man as a being with free will—as one who is not envious (all-merciful) and good—has given him the opportunity, if he so desires, to please God. It is pleasing to God that there be no evil in man. For if people praise the good deeds and virtues of a holy and God-loving soul, and condemn shameful and evil deeds, does not God, who desires man's salvation, do so all the more?

100. A person receives good from God, as a source of good; but a person is subjected to evil by his own hand, from the evil within him, from lust and insensitivity.

101. The reckless soul, by nature immortal and mistress of the body, becomes a slave to the body because of sensual pleasures, not realizing that the gratification of the body is ruin to the soul. But falling into insensitivity and becoming depraved, it diligently seeks this gratification of the body.

102. God is good, but man is evil. There is no evil in heaven, and there is no true good on earth. But a wise person chooses the better path: he comes to know the God of all, gives thanks to Him, and sings His praises; yet he despises the body even before death and does not allow its evil inclinations (demands, desires) to be fulfilled, knowing their destructiveness and harmful effects.

103. A sin-loving person loves the accumulation of wealth but cares little for righteousness, giving no thought to the unreliability, transience, and fleeting nature of life, and forgetting the inevitability and inescapability of death. If, even in old age, anyone is so shameful and foolish, then he, like a rotten tree, is unfit for any purpose.

104. We feel pleasure and joy only after we have experienced sorrow: for one who has not been tormented by thirst does not find drink sweet; one who has not been hungry does not find food sweet; one who has not been overcome by drowsiness does not find sleep sweet; and one who has not previously been in sorrow does not feel joy deeply: —and so we will not enjoy eternal blessings unless we despise the fleeting ones.

105. The word is the servant of the mind. Whatever the mind desires, the word expresses.

106. The mind sees everything, even what is in heaven, and nothing clouds it except sin. For the pure, however, nothing is incomprehensible, just as nothing is for its word—the ineffable.

107. In body, man is mortal; in mind and word, he is immortal. In silence you reason, and as you reason, you speak within yourself: for in silence the mind gives birth to the word. And the word of thanksgiving, offered to God, is salvation for man.

108. He who speaks thoughtlessly lacks reason, for he speaks without thinking. But consider what is beneficial for you to do for the salvation of your soul.

109. A wise and soul-nourishing word is a gift from God; on the contrary, a vain and empty word, which seeks to determine the measure and distance of heaven and earth, and the size of the sun and the stars, is the invention of a man who toils in vain, who, out of empty conceit, seeks that which brings him no benefit whatsoever, as if desiring to scoop up water with a sieve, for it is impossible for people to find such things.

110. No one sees heaven, and no one can know what is in it, except a person who is zealous for a virtuous life, who knows and glorifies the One who created it (heaven) for the salvation and life of humankind. Such a God-loving man knows without a doubt that without God there is nothing, but that He is everywhere and in everything, as God, unlimited by anything.

111. Just as a person emerges from the mother's womb, so the soul emerges from the body naked; some are pure and radiant, some are stained by their downfalls, and others are blackened by many transgressions. That is why a wise and God-loving soul, remembering and reflecting on the misfortunes and extremes of the afterlife, lives piously so as not to be condemned or subjected to them. But the unbelievers, being foolish in spirit, are unaware and sin, despising what is to come.

112. Just as, having come forth from the womb, you do not remember what was in the womb, so, having come forth from the body, you will not remember what was in the body.

113. Just as, having emerged from the womb, you became better and larger in body, so, having emerged from the body pure and unblemished, you will be better and imperishable, dwelling in heaven.

114. Just as the body, when fully developed in the womb, must be born, so the soul, when it reaches the limit of its life in the body as ordained by God, must leave the body.

115. Just as you treat the soul while it is in the body, so will it treat you after it has left the body. He who has served his body well here, providing it with every kind of pleasure, has done himself a disservice after death (as is known from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus), for he has brought condemnation upon his soul, like a fool.

116. Just as a body that emerges from the womb imperfect cannot live, so too a soul that departs the body without having attained the vision of God through a good life cannot be saved or be in communion with God.

117. The body, uniting with the soul, emerges into the light from the darkness of the womb; but the soul, uniting with the body, is confined to the darkness of the body. Therefore, one must not indulge but rather restrain the body, as an enemy and adversary of the soul; for an abundance of food and delicacies stirs up evil passions in people, whereas a temperate stomach pacifies the passions and saves the soul.

118. The organ of physical sight is the eye, and the organ of spiritual sight is the mind. Just as a body without eyes is blind, cannot see the sun that illuminates the entire earth and sea, and cannot enjoy its light, so too is the soul without a sound mind and a good life blind: it neither knows nor glorifies God, the Creator and Benefactor of all (creatures), and cannot enter into the enjoyment of His incorruptibility and eternal blessings.

119. Ignorance of God stems from the soul's insensitivity and folly: from this ignorance evil is born, while from the knowledge of God, good comes to people and saves the soul. Therefore, if, while remaining sober and mindful of God, you strive not to fulfill your desires, then your mind is turned toward virtue; but if, intoxicated by ignorance of God, you strive to fulfill your evil desires for your own pleasure, then you will perish like the speechless, unaware of the misfortunes that await you after death.

120. It is also part of divine providence that things occur according to an unchanging order established by God for the world—such as the sun rising and setting every day and the earth bearing fruit. Yet all things were created for the sake of man.

121. What God creates, as the Good One, He creates for humankind; but what a person does, he does for himself—whether good or evil. Lest you be perplexed by the prosperity of wicked people, know that just as cities employ executioners not to praise their most wicked whims, but to punish those who deserve it through them, so God allows the wicked to prevail in this life in order to punish the ungodly through them. But He will eventually bring them to judgment, because, instead of serving God, they slavishly indulged their own malice and caused harm to others.

122. If those who worship idols knew and saw with their hearts what they are worshiping, they would not have strayed from the path of piety, wretched as they are; but by contemplating the beauty, order, and providence in all that is created and comes from God, they would have come to know the One who created all these things for man.

123. Man, being evil and unrighteous, can kill, but God ceaselessly grants life even to the unworthy. Being generous (toward all) and good by nature, He willed that there be peace, and it came to be and continues to be for man and for his salvation.

124. A (true) human being is one who has understood what the body is—namely, that it is mortal and fleeting. Such a person also understands the soul (as one ought to)—namely, that it is divine and immortal, and, being a breath of God, is united with the body for the purpose of trial and ascension to the likeness of God. But one who has understood the soul as he ought lives righteously and in a manner pleasing to God, neither trusting nor indulging the body. Contemplating God with his mind, he perceives with wisdom the eternal blessings bestowed by God upon the soul.

125. God, being good and generous, has granted man freedom with regard to good and evil, endowing him with reason so that, by contemplating the world and all that is in it, he might come to know the One who created all things for man. But an unrighteous person may desire this yet fail to understand it; he may, to his own misfortune, disbelieve and think contrary to the truth. Such is the freedom man possesses with regard to good and evil!

126. It is God's design that, as the body matures, the soul be filled with reason—so that a person may choose from good and evil that which is pleasing to reason (i.e., good); but a soul that does not choose good lacks reason. This is why, although all bodies have a soul, it cannot be said that every soul possesses reason. A God-loving mind is found in the chaste, the pious, the righteous, the pure and good, the merciful, and the devout. The presence of reason is helpful to a person in his relationship with God.

127. There is only one thing impossible for a person—to be immortal (to escape death). He can enter into communion with God if he understands how this is possible. For through desire and understanding (of the matter) for the sake of faith and love, attested to by a good life, a person becomes a conversational partner with God.

128. The eye sees what is visible, but the mind comprehends what is invisible. A God-loving mind is the light of the soul. Whoever has a God-loving mind is enlightened in heart and beholds God with his mind.

129. No one who is good is shameful. Whoever is not good is, of course, evil and self-indulgent. The primary virtue of a person is contempt for the flesh. Renouncing temporary, perishable, and material goods—by choice, not out of poverty—makes us heirs to eternal and imperishable blessings.

130. Whoever has understanding knows about himself exactly what he is—namely, that he is a mortal human being. And whoever has come to know himself also knows that everything is God's creation and was created for the salvation of humankind. It is within a person's power to understand all this and to believe rightly. Such a man knows for certain that those who despise worldly goods have very little toil, and receive eternal comfort and peace from God after death.

131. Just as a body without a soul is dead, so a soul without reason is inactive (barren) and cannot have God as its possession.

132. God listens to one person; God appears to one person; for God is a lover of mankind, and wherever a person is, there God is as well; one person is a worshiper worthy of God; God transforms Himself for the sake of man.

133. God created the heavens, adorned with stars, for man; He created the earth for man, and people cultivate it for themselves. Those who do not perceive such divine providence are senseless in spirit.

134. Good is invisible, just as what exists in heaven is invisible, while evil is visible, just as what exists on earth is visible. Good is something beyond comparison, but a person of understanding chooses what is best. Only a person is capable of knowing God and His creations.

135. The mind acts in the soul, and nature acts in the body. The mind ennoble the soul, while nature corrupts the body. Nature acts in every body, but not every soul possesses a mind; that is why not every soul is saved.

136. The soul exists in the world as something born, while the mind is above the world as something unborn. The soul that understands what the world is and desires to be saved has an urgent duty to reflect within itself every hour that here and now is the (mortal) struggle and the torment (of deeds) that one cannot bear the Judge's gaze, and that it is as if the soul were already perishing. Thinking thus, it guards itself against trivial and shameful pleasures.

137. On earth, God has ordained birth and death, while in heaven there is the fullness of all things and immutability. Yet all things were created for man and for his salvation. Though in need of no good things Himself, God arranged heaven, earth, and the elements for man, providing him through them with every delight in good things.

138. The mortal is subject to the immortal and serves it—that is, the elements serve man—by virtue of the Creator God's love for humanity and His essential goodness.

139. The poor, who lack the power to harm, are not counted among the actively pious. But whoever is capable of causing harm yet does not use their power for evil, but spares the lowly, is, by piety before God, a partaker of good rewards even after death.

140. Through the love of God who created us, there are many paths to salvation that turn souls toward Him and lift them up to heaven. Human souls receive rewards for virtue and punishments for sins.

141. The Son is in the Father, the Spirit is in the Son, and the Father is in both. Through faith, a person comes to know all that is invisible and beyond the reach of the mind. Faith, however, is the soul's free conviction in what is revealed by God.

142. Just as those who, compelled by some need or circumstance, are forced to cross large rivers—if they are sober, they preserve their lives; for even if the current is strong, even if water is scooped up by the boat, they are saved by clinging to whatever is usually found near the banks; but if they are drunk, even if they attempt to reach the shore countless times, overcome by wine, they are swept away by the waves and perish: in the same way, if the soul, having fallen into the waves and the whirlpool of the current of life, does not rise above carnal desire and come to know itself—namely, that it, being divine and immortal, is united with a material body, which is faithless, passionate, and mortal only as a test—and allows itself to be carried away by carnal passions to its own ruin; then, as one who despises herself, intoxicated by ignorance and heedless of her own welfare, she perishes and remains outside the circle of the saved. For the body, like a river, often draws us toward unseemly pleasures.

143. The wise soul, standing unshakable in its good intention, reins in anger and lust—these most unwise of its passions—like a horse; and because it struggles against them, taming and overcoming them, is crowned and deemed worthy to dwell in heaven, receiving this as a reward for its sowing and labors from the God who created it.

144. A truly wise soul, looking upon the happiness of the wicked and the prosperity of the unworthy, is not disturbed by thoughts of their pleasures in this life, as happens with foolish people; for such a soul clearly knows both the transience of happiness and the uncertainty of one's stay here, and the brevity of this life, and the impartiality of judgment; and it believes that God does not neglect what is necessary for its sustenance.

145. A carnal life and the enjoyment of great wealth and power in this life are death to the soul; on the contrary, toil, patience, poverty accompanied by gratitude, and the mortification of the body are the life of the soul and the path to eternal consolation.

146. A wise soul, despising material gain and this fleeting life, chooses heavenly consolation and eternal life, which it will receive from God for living a good life.

147. Those who wear soiled clothing defile the garments of those who touch them. In the same way, people who are wicked in character and corrupt in conduct, when they associate with the simple and speak inappropriate words to them, defile their souls through the sense of hearing, as if with filth.

148. The beginning of sin is lust, through which the rational soul perishes. Love, however, is the beginning of salvation and the kingdom of heaven for the soul.

149. Just as copper, cast aside in neglect and left without proper care, is damaged by rust that forms on it from lying in bundles for a long time and not being put to use, and thereby becomes defective and unfit for use, so too the soul, remaining idle and neglecting a good life and turning to God, deprives itself of God's protection through its evil deeds, is consumed by the evil that springs from such neglect within the body, and thereby becomes defective and unfit for salvation.

150. God is good, impassive, and unchanging. If anyone, while acknowledging as blessed and true that God does not change, nevertheless wonders how He (being such) rejoices in the good, turns away from the wicked, is angry with sinners, and when they repent, shows mercy toward them—then it must be said that God neither rejoices nor becomes angry, for joy and anger are passions. It is absurd to think that the Divine Nature could experience good or evil because of human deeds. God is good and does only good; He harms no one, remaining always the same; but when we are good, we enter into communion with God, by our likeness to Him, and when we become evil, we separate ourselves from God, by our dissimilarity to Him. By living virtuously, we belong to God, but by becoming evil, we are cast out from Him; this does not mean that He is angry with us, but rather that our sins prevent God from shining within us and instead bind us to the tormenting demons. If, then, through prayers and acts of charity we obtain forgiveness for our sins, this does not mean that we have appeased God or changed Him, but that through such actions and our turning to God, having healed the evil within us, we once again become capable of partaking in God's goodness; so that to say, "God turns away from the wicked," is the same as saying, "The sun hides from the blind."

151. A godly soul knows God in every respect: for to be godly is nothing other than to fulfill God's will, and this means to know God—that is, when one strives to be free from envy, chaste, meek, generous according to one's means, sociable, not partial, and to do whatever pleases God's will.

152. The knowledge of God and the fear of God are the remedy against the passions of the flesh. For when there is ignorance of God in the soul, the passions, remaining unhealed, corrupt the soul. It is then corrupted by the evil dwelling within it, as by a long-standing affliction. But God is not to blame for this, because He has granted people knowledge and reason.

153. God endowed man with knowledge and reason, striving to purify him of passions and spontaneous evil, and, in His goodness, desiring to transform what is mortal into immortality.

154. The mind dwelling in a pure and God-loving soul truly beholds God—the Unborn, the Invisible, the Ineffable—the One who is Pure for pure hearts.

155. The crown of incorruption, virtue, and human salvation lies in bearing misfortune with gratitude. The restraint of anger, the tongue, the belly, and sensual desire is a most great help to the soul.

156. That by which the world is sustained is God's providence, and there is not a single place that this providence does not touch. Providence is the self-fulfilling Word of God, the creator of the matter that constitutes this world, the Organizer and Artist of all that comes to be. It is utterly impossible for matter to attain a perfect order without the discerning power of the Word, which is the image, mind, wisdom, and providence of God.

157. Lust aroused by memory is the root of passions akin to darkness. While caught up in this lustful memory, the soul is unaware that it is a breath of God and rushes headlong into sin, without giving thought to the utter misery in which it will find itself after death, in its madness.

158. The greatest and most incurable disease of the soul, and its ruin, is forgetfulness of God and vanity. The desire for evil is the deprivation of good; our good, however, consists in willingly doing every good deed that is pleasing to the God of all.

159. Only one being is capable of receiving God. For it is with this one living creature that God converses—at night through dreams, and by day through the mind—and in every way He foretells and signifies future blessings to those who are worthy of Him.

160. It is not at all difficult for the believer and the one who desires to know God. If you wish to behold Him, look at the order of all things and the providence over everything that has been and is by His word. And all this is for the sake of humankind.

161. A saint is one who is pure of evil and sin. For the greatest perfection of the soul and the deed most pleasing to God is when there is no evil in a person.

162. A name is a designation of one among many (a common noun). But it is unreasonable to think that God, Who is One and the Only One, has any namesakes: for the word “God” signifies the One without beginning, Who created all things for humankind.

163. If you are aware of evil deeds within yourself, cut them off from your soul in the hope of good things; for God is righteous and loving toward humanity.

164. The person who strives to remain ever inseparable from God knows God and is known by God; and the person who remains inseparable from God is one who is good in all things and abstains from every sensual pleasure—not because of a lack of means to indulge in them, but by his own will and out of free self-restraint.

165. Give thanks to the one who wrongs you, and you will have God as your friend. Do not speak ill of your enemy to anyone. Strive in love, chastity, patience, self-restraint, and the like, for this is the knowledge of God—to follow God through humility and similar virtues. But such deeds are not characteristic of everyone, but only of the wise soul.

166. I have written this chapter for the benefit of the simplest of people, against those who dare to say that plants and grasses have a soul. Plants have physical life, but they do not have a soul. Man is called a rational animal because he possesses reason and is capable of acquiring knowledge. Other animals—both terrestrial and aerial—that have a voice, breath, and a soul. Everything that grows and decays can be called alive because it lives and grows, but it cannot be said that all such things possess a soul. There are four distinct kinds of living beings: some are immortal and animated, such as the angels; others possess a mind, a soul, and breath, such as humans; still others possess breath and a soul, such as animals; and still others possess only life, such as plants. Life in plants persists without a soul, without breath, without a mind, and without immortality, but everything else cannot exist without life. Every human soul is perpetually in motion.

167. When you conceive a desire for some sensual pleasure, be careful not to be immediately carried away by it, but, setting it aside for a moment, remember death and consider how much better it is to realize that you have thereby conquered this allure of sensuality.

168. God has most fittingly set a barrier against evil in people by endowing them with intellect, knowledge, reason, and the ability to distinguish between good and evil, so that by recognizing evil—and knowing that it harms us—we may flee from it. But a foolish person pursues evil and even takes pride in it; and, as if caught in a net, he struggles, entangled by it from within, lacking the strength to ever rise above it to see and know God, who created all things for the salvation and deification of humankind.

169. Mortals must take care of themselves, knowing in advance that death awaits them. For blessed immortality is the lot of a virtuous soul when it is good, and eternal death meets it when it is evil.

170. When you lie down on your bed, recall within yourself, with gratitude, God’s blessings and providence. Then, filled with this good thought, your spirit will rejoice fully, and the sleep of your body will be a sobering of the soul; the closing of your eyes—a true vision of God; and your silence, being filled with a sense of goodness, will offer from all your heart and strength an ascending hymn—a heartfelt praise to God, the Lord of all. For when there is no evil in a person, then thanksgiving alone—more than any precious sacrifice—is pleasing to God. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

3. The Rule of the Hermit’s Life

1. I give these rules, as the Lord shall speak them through my lips, for those who wish to take upon themselves the heavy yoke of the hermit’s life. One must obey these commandments, and whoever breaks even one of them “*will be called small in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 5:19).

a) The outward course and external order of such a life

a) Withdrawal from the world and from living among people.

1. Whoever wishes to be saved (through a life of renunciation) must not remain in his own home or live in the city where he once sinned; nor must he visit his parents or his flesh-and-blood relatives: for this causes harm to the soul and destroys the fruits of life.

2. Do not return to the city where you once sinned before God.

3. Do not go to see how your relatives live, and do not allow them to come and see how you live; indeed, do not see them at all.

b) The Choice of the Desert Life.

4. Our spiritual fathers affirm that the desert is the most suitable place for meditating on death and a sure refuge from the allure of worldly things that soothe the flesh.

5. Whoever lives in the desert and remains silent is spared three kinds of strife: strife through hearing, strife through speech, and strife through seeing what might wound his heart.

6. Be careful that a thought does not deceive you by suggesting that the desert is a place of coolness.

c) Solitude in the Cell

7. Withdraw from the clamor of daily life, seek solitude, and you will be a pilgrim. Sitting in your cell will be for you the same as setting out for a foreign land.

8. When you go out somewhere, do everything you can to return as quickly as possible to your place of solitude so that you may devote yourself to your prayers.

9. When you go out to harvest, do not linger there, but return quickly to your place of solitude.

10. When you visit a brother, do not linger too long in his cell.

d) Cell Activities and Routines.

11. While in your cell, engage in the following three activities: handicrafts, reading the Psalms, and prayer.

12. While in your cell, occupy yourself with the following: reading the Scriptures, praying to God, and manual labor.

13. Fast every day until the ninth hour, except on Saturdays and the Lord's Day. When the ninth hour comes, go to your inner cell (¹), and say your prayer before eating. After eating, alternate between reading and praying.

d) Prayer and kneeling.

14. Perform your prayers at the appointed times, without missing a single one, so that you will not be held accountable for it.

15. Offer your prayer at night before you go to church².

16. (And always) before you go to church, pray in your cell.

17. (In general) before and after communal prayer with the brothers, always pray in your cell as well; and never be lazy about doing so.

18. Kneel often, and do not be lazy about it, lest you die a wicked death.

19. When you pray, do not allow yourself to be lazy; for the prayer of the lazy is empty words.

20. When you pray and remember God, be like a bird, soaring lightly and high, in keeping with your monastic vow and the significance of your garments.

e) Reading and Contemplation of God

21. Devote yourself to reading the Scriptures, and they will deliver you from impurity (or: they will drive away impure thoughts).

22. If you constantly and diligently read the Scriptures and keep the commandments, God's mercy will be with you.

23. Meditate on the works of God and do not be lazy in prayer.

24. A monk who sits in his cell with his lips sealed and does not remember God is like a ruined house outside the city, which is always full of all kinds of filth; for whoever thinks to remove the filth from his house only brings it there. (That is to say: he is silent with his lips, but his mind wanders, he indulges his thoughts, and his heart is carried away—all of which is sinful dross cast into the soul by demons.)

g) Handicrafts and labor in general.

25. The body must be subjugated and wearied by long labor.

26. Set for yourself some moderate work as a cell activity—and your heart will be humble.

27. Compel yourself to engage in manual labor, and the fear of God will take root within you.

28. Be diligent in manual labor, and the fear of God will come upon you.

29. As you sit in your cell, devote yourself to manual labor, but do not let the name of the Lord depart from you; instead, keep Him constantly in your mind, meditate on Him in your heart, and praise Him with your tongue, saying: "My Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me"; or: "Lord Jesus Christ, send me Your help"; or: "I praise You, my Lord, Jesus Christ."

¹ Until then, work was done under a canopy or in the vestibule, which was sometimes called the outer cell.

² At the Monastery of St. Savva, an hour before Matins, the bell rings, and everyone in their cells performs the prescribed 1,500 waist bows and 150 prostrations with the Jesus Prayer.

g) Food.

30. Set aside a specific time (always the same) for your meals, and eat to sustain your body, not for pleasure.

31. Eat the simplest and cheapest food.

32. Eat your bread in silence and with moderation, and see to it that your seating arrangement (at the table) is modest.

33. Do not eat until you are full.

34. Do not be greedy or gluttonous, lest your former sins be revived within you.

35. Do not break your fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

36. Do not eat meat at all.

37. Do not go near a place where wine is being poured.

38. Do not rush to gatherings or communal meals.

39. If you come to a place where a communal meal is being held³, taste the food and give thanks to God.

40. Do not add a fourth cup of wine to the three, unless it is due to some serious illness⁴.

41. Do not immediately reach for what is offered to you.

42. If you are young, do not reach out your hand before others, for this is not modest.

i) Sleep.

43. Sleep little and in moderation, and the angels will visit you.

44. When you are healthy, do not remove your belt.

45. When you go to bed, do not put your hands inside (perhaps in your bosom), lest you sin without realizing it.

i) Clothing.

46. Day and night, wear your tunic, your cloak, and all your clothing, as if you were a prisoner or a convict.

47. Do not wear clothing with which you might boast or take pride.

48. Take care of your clothes, lest you find yourself naked among the multitude of others on the Day of Judgment⁵.

k) All content whose main feature is poverty.

49. Do not save anything beyond what you need.

50. Poverty is nothing other than moderation in all things, or a state in which one is content with little.

51. Love reproach more than honor, physical toil more than rest, and a lack of (necessary) things more than abundance.

l) Church Worship⁶.

52. The affairs of the church (the care of the church and worship) should be entrusted to a faithful and God-fearing man.

53. As soon as the bell rings, do not delay in going to church.

54. Do not neglect worship, lest it become a stumbling block or a snare to you.

55. Do not speak at all in church.

56. Do not behave in church as you would in a place where many people gather (i.e., let there be no noise or commotion of scattered thoughts in your heart).

57. Do not bury your dead in church (i.e., do not concern yourself with managing your worldly affairs).

m) Relationships:

aa) First and foremost, turn to the abbot, your spiritual father, the elders, and, in general, those who have succeeded in the spiritual life.

³ That is, when someone would gather all the hermits and treat them to a meal at the church.

⁴ This does not take place in the cell, but at communal meals. The wine is usually grape wine, homemade, and of low alcohol content.

⁵ This instills in them the idea of living in a manner befitting their attire.

⁶ The hermits lived scattered throughout the desert; in the midst of the space occupied by their cells stood a church where they gathered for communal prayer. The church was entrusted to one or more chosen individuals. Macarius the Great, upon returning to the skete after visiting St. Anthony, replied to the brothers' question about what the great Abba had commanded them: "It is not good," he said, "that we have no offering"—that is, no Liturgy. They then hastened to establish a church. This is an example of how St. Anthony organized the lives of the hermits.

58. Do not undertake any task, whatever it may be, without first consulting the abbot of the monastery⁷.
59. Do not speak at length before your abbot or those of higher rank than yourself.
60. Always hold fast in your heart the resolve to obey your father, and the fear of God will take root in you.
61. The perfection of your spiritual struggle lies in obedience; and it is good for a person to bear the yoke of the Lord from youth—to serve and obey.
62. Do not be disobedient, or you will become an instrument and vessel of all evils and injustices.
63. With humility and tears, ask your father to instruct you in what you do not yet know, so that you will not be put to shame.
64. Always remember the one who instructs you with sound teaching, and strive to learn from him the life-giving commandments—and you will lead a successful life according to the will of the Lord, as it is written by the blessed Apostle Paul: *“Study these things; give yourself over to them, so that your progress may be evident to all”* (1 Tim. 4:15).
65. If you have sincerely submitted yourself to the yoke of obedience, listen attentively to what is said to you, and then carry it out conscientiously with all the strength required by the commandment.
66. Do not hide from your father any sin you have committed.
67. Learn good manners daily from your elders.
68. Love your spiritual fathers more than your earthly parents, for they care for you for God’s sake.
69. Live in such a way that the fathers of the monastery, who gave you spiritual birth, may rejoice in your glory among the host of saints.
70. Do everything in your power to ensure that the blessing of the monastery’s elders rests upon you.
71. Do not reveal your thoughts to everyone, but only to those who can heal your soul.
72. Do not reveal your thoughts to everyone, lest you become a stumbling block to your brother.
73. Be friendly toward everyone, but do not take everyone as a counselor.
- bb) Mutual—everyone toward everyone.
74. Strive to ensure that all people bless you.
75. Show concern for your brother and demonstrate your goodwill toward him.
76. If a brother earnestly asks you to help him, work with him all day long.
77. Test your friends first, and do not make everyone close to you; do not trust everyone, for the world is full of deceit. But choose for yourself one brother who fears the Lord, and be friends with him as a brother to a brother. And best of all, cling to God as a son to a father, for all people have fallen into deceit, with the exception of a few. The earth is full of vanity, misfortune, and sorrow.
- bb) Elders toward others.
78. If you have ceased to serve sin, then speak in the name of the Lord and instruct those for whose sake the name of the Lord is blasphemed: and since they are dead and cut off from the living Lord, strive to ensure that they turn away from their dead works, be revived, and become worthy to receive glory.
79. Rebuke (and correct) your (spiritual) children without mercy, for you will be held accountable for their condemnation (that is, if they prove worthy of condemnation at the Last Judgment).
80. Rebuke without mercy, but with the fear of God. Show no partiality to anyone, whoever they may be, and rebuke them with the words of truth.
81. If a brother comes to you and confides his thoughts to you, take care not to repeat them to anyone, but pray for yourself and for him, that the Lord may save you both.
82. Do not reject anyone who is seeking faith in Christ.
83. To those who do not accept your counsel, do not offer it to them.
84. Do not propose anything to anyone as a rule before you yourself have put it into practice.
85. The greatest of all misdeeds is to command another to do what you yourself do not do, for we derive no benefit from the deeds of others.
- gg) To the Sick.
86. When you get up every morning, take care of the sick among you.
87. Go to the sick and fill their vessels with water.

⁷ The hermits lived separately from one another, but their entire scattered community was a single entity and had one leader, as was the case, for example, with both Macarius, Ammon, in the skete, in the cells, and in Nitria.

88. Give whatever you can—all that is surplus—to the sick in the monastery.

89. If your abbot assigns you to serve the sick, serve them with all your heart, so that you may receive a double reward from God—that is, for obedience performed with love.

dd) To the travelers.

90. If a brother comes to you, even at an inopportune time, welcome him with joy, so that he may give thanks to God and not grieve over you.

91. If any brother comes to you, humble yourself in everything before him, show him kindness for the Lord's sake, and be careful not to become proud.

92. Your countenance should always be somber, except when wandering brothers come to you; then put on a joyful expression.

n) *Mutual Conduct.*

93. Be humble in all your actions.

94. In all your conduct and interactions with others, adopt the manner of a poor beggar: do not act haughtily, neither when you are conversing nor when you are singing a hymn or a song of praise to God. And when you gather with the brothers, let your words be unpretentious.

95. Do not engage in conversation with a boy or a young man, much less form friendships with them, and do not take such people into your household, lest you give the devil a foothold.

96. Do not speak at all with a boy, for otherwise he will be a stumbling block to you.

97. Do not take the hand of a brother standing next to you, and do not touch his cheek, whether he is older or younger than you.

98. Do your utmost to keep away from people who lack reason and sound judgment.

99. If you love a peaceful life, do not enter the circle of those whose sole concern is vanity; and if you happen to find yourself among them, act as if you were not there.

o) *Conversation and the Use of Speech in General.*

100. Do not raise your voice (remain silent in your cell), except for the prayers prescribed by the rule.

101. Avoid harsh speech (keep your tongue in check).

102. Do not be verbose, lest the Spirit of God depart from you.

103. It is a glorious thing to keep silence, imitating the Lord, who remained silent despite Herod's authority.

104. When you gather with fellow believers like yourself, choose rather to listen and understand what others will say, and be ready to carry out what is salvific. This will be far better than speaking yourself.

105. When you come to someone, let the fear of God be in your heart, and guard your lips, so that you may return to your cell in peace.

106. A wise man knows well how to conduct himself; therefore, he does not rush to speak, but weighs when to speak and when to listen; on the contrary, a man who has not been disciplined does not keep this secret of self-control and restraint of the tongue.

107. When you sit among your brothers, do not speak too much, and if you ask them about something, say it briefly and with humility.

108. Let your words be gentle and edifying. Remember that both glory and humiliation come from words.

109. Do not speak in anger, but let your words be spoken with wisdom and reason, just as your silence is. Imitate our most wise fathers, whose words were always full of wisdom and reason, just as their silence was.

110. Let your tongue always follow reason, for words devoid of reason are like sharp thorns and needles.

111. Flee from lies, or else they will drive the fear of God away from you.

112. Your lips must always speak the truth.

113. Let the blessings of the Most High God be the subject of your conversations; by doing so, you will make yourself worthy to receive even greater blessings from Him.

114. Do not inquire about evil deeds, but keep your attention far from them.

115. Do not engage in idle talk, and do not lend an ear to those who do, lest your soul draw evil from it.

116. Detest idle talk about everything that belongs to this world.

117. Refrain as much as possible from jokes and amusing remarks.

118. Do not shout or speak loudly or quickly, for it is written: “Whoever multiplies words is not safe from sin” (Compare Ecclesiastes 10:14).

119. Do not be stubborn, and do not insist on your own words, lest evil (anger, wrath) enter into you.

120. Do not be afraid at all—neither in matters that are certain nor, all the more so, in matters that are uncertain.

p) In case of absences.

121. If necessity compels you to go into town, do not go alone.

122. When you go to fetch water or are traveling, recite (Psalms from memory) and reflect.

123. When traveling with your brothers, keep a little distance from them so that you may maintain silence.

124. As you walk along the road, do not look to the right or to the left, but carefully reread your psalms and pray to God with your mind. Then, wherever you may find yourself, do not fraternize with the locals.

125. Do not mingle with crowds of worldly people, but do not imitate the Pharisee, who did everything for show.

126. Do not allow a woman to come near you, and do not permit her to enter your dwelling (room), for a storm of thoughts follows in her wake.

127. Do not eat together with a woman, and never form a partnership with a young man.

128. When you have to spend the night somewhere, be careful not to share the same blanket with anyone else.

129. Do not lie down on the same mat with someone younger than you.

130. Do not sleep together on the same mat, unless absolutely necessary. Even if it is your father or brother, do so only with great caution.

131. Do not linger in monastic guesthouses.

b) The Structure of the Inner Life

a) The fundamental principle of life is zeal.

1. Be zealous in acquiring virtues, lest you otherwise invite negligence upon yourself.

2. Fear the cooling of divine love.

3. Do not turn back from the good deeds you have begun.

4. Do not turn back from the path of your solitude.

5. Do not abandon the labors you undertake for the sake of virtue—lest you become lazy and negligent, and sin in your final hour; but love the Lord to the very end, and you will receive mercy.

6. Just as the ruins outside the city serve as a dumping ground for foul refuse, so the soul of one who lives a life of solitude lazily and listlessly becomes a receptacle for all passions and sinful impurities.

b) The rule of life is God’s will as expressed in the commandments.

7. If you have surrendered yourself to God, keep all His commandments, and whatever is commanded of you, do it diligently, omitting nothing; for if you intend to omit anything, your past sins will not be forgiven; but if you firmly resolve to fulfill everything (even to the point of self-denial), then be assured that your past sins are already forgiven.

8. Your thoughts must be constantly occupied with God’s commandments, which you must strive to fulfill with all your strength, leaving none out, lest your soul become a receptacle for all impurities.

9. If you set out to do something and do not see God’s will in it, do not do it under any circumstances.

c) The goal is the glory of God.

10. Do everything in your power to ensure that your Father in heaven is glorified (through you) (Matt. 5:16).

d) Remembrances—they stir up and sustain zeal.

aa) Regarding your vow and your initial zeal.

11. Do not turn away from God for the sake of fleeting things, but remember what you promised when the fervor of your desire to please God burned within you.

12. Strive not to forget the significance of the garment with which you were clothed at the beginning; remember also the tears of your repentance that you shed then—and quickly turn away from the (evil) thoughts that creep up secretly, lest you be led by them into overt deeds.

13. Offer constant and sincere repentance—and do not give in to carelessness or laziness even for a single moment.

bb) On exemplary zealots.

14. Do not follow the example of those who are weaker than you, but of those who are more perfect than you.

15. Let those who have loved the Lord with all their hearts and who constantly devote themselves to good deeds be your model and example; do not be ashamed to ask them for lessons in life, for they are perfect in virtue.

16. Do not imitate those who seek worldly pleasures; otherwise, you will succeed in nothing. Instead, compete with those who, for the Lord's sake, wandered (and still wander) in the mountains and deserts (Heb. 11:38), so that strength from above may come upon you.

bb) On the promised blessings.

17. If you fulfill all that is commanded, you will receive an inheritance that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived (1 Cor. 2:9).

18. Use the light of knowledge to become worthy of being counted among the righteous, while there is still time.

gg) On Death and Judgment.

19. Remember that your youth has passed (your strength has waned), your frailties have increased, and the time of your departure is already near, when you must give an account of all your deeds; and know that there neither a brother will redeem a brother, nor a father deliver his son.

20. Always keep in mind your departure from this body and never let the thought of eternal condemnation slip from your mind; if you do this, you will never sin.

21. Reflect within yourself and say: "I will not remain in this world beyond this very day"—and you will never sin before God.

22. Every day, tell yourself that this is the only day left to you in this world—and you will keep yourself from sin.

23. Turn your cell into a prison by keeping in mind that everything is already over for you and that the hour of your separation from this world is about to strike.

24. Guard yourself lest you be cast out in the age to come. Woe to the careless, for their end is near, and they have neither helper nor hope of salvation.

d) *The sources of success are God's gracious help and one's own efforts and deeds.*

aa) Help from above, drawn down through prayer.

25. May our Lord Jesus Christ grant us the strength to do everything for His pleasure.

26. Above all, pour out unceasing prayer, and always offer thanksgiving to God for whatever happens to you.

27. Strive unceasingly to pour out prayers with tears, so that God may have mercy on you and strip away the old self from you.

28. Do not cease to shed (prayerful) tears—and God will have mercy on you and ease all your afflictions (everything that pains your soul).

29. If you wish to please God, surrender yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will deliver you and protect you.

bb) Your deeds and efforts in general.

30. Strive to practice the following virtues that I propose to you: hard work, poverty, wandering, deprivation (having nothing), and silence. They will make you humble, and humility will bring you the forgiveness of sins. Humility consists in a person considering himself a sinner and believing that he does nothing good before God; in being devoted to silence and regarding himself as nothing; in not being stubborn before anyone, not insisting on his own words; in setting aside his own will, keeping his eyes downcast, keeping death before his eyes, guarding against lies, not utter empty words, not contradict the abbot, patiently endure insults, and force oneself to bear all manner of hardships and sorrows with good grace. Strive, brother, to observe these rules, so that your life may not be fruitless.

31. Let us set aside everything that brings comfort to our flesh; let us value this life little, so that we may live in God, Who on the Day of Judgment will ask of us whether we were hungry for His sake, whether we were thirsty, whether we endured nakedness, whether we were contrite, whether we groaned from the

depths of our hearts, and whether we tested ourselves to see if we are worthy of God. Therefore, let us devote ourselves to contrition and lamentation over our sins, so that we may find God; let us despise the flesh, so that we may save our souls.

32. Choose for yourself labor, and it, together with fasting, prayer, and vigils, will deliver you from all defilement, for physical labor brings purity of heart, and purity of heart causes the soul to bear fruit.

33. Love mercy; clothe yourself in faith; do not allow your heart to devise evil, but compel it to repay evil with good; seek goodness and peace, and be zealous for all noble deeds.

e) The dispositions of the soul that determine success.

aa) Abiding in God with reverence, alert attention, and aversion to sin and the world.

34. Let your soul be with the Lord at all times, while your body remains on earth like a statue or an idol.

35. Stand always before the face of the Lord with righteousness.

36. The fear of God must always be before our eyes, as well as the remembrance of death and a hostile aversion to the world and all worldly things.

37. Die every day in order to live, for whoever fears God will live forever.

38. Be vigilant at all times, lest you fall into laziness and indifference.

39. Detest all worldly things and cast them away from yourself; otherwise, they themselves will separate you from God.

40. Hate everything that is harmful to your soul.

bb) Patience.

41. Whatever you do, do it with patience, and God will help you in all your deeds and in whatever may happen to you.

42. Be careful not to lose heart.

43. Be content in everything you do according to God's will.

44. Do not be disheartened by the thoughts that assail you in your cell, knowing that the Lord will not let any of your labors (for His sake) go unremembered: this will lead to your success, and God's grace will help you.

45. Courage is nothing other than steadfastness in the truth and resistance to enemies: when you do not yield to them, they will retreat and will not appear again at all.

bb) Contrition and weeping.

46. Day and night, grieve over your sins.

47. Light your lamp with the oil of your tears.

48. Weep ceaselessly over your sins, as if you had a dead person in your cell⁸.

49. Your face must always be sorrowful, so that the fear of God may dwell within you.

50. Do not consider yourself to be anything, but give yourself over to weeping over your sins.

gg) Humility.

51. Love humility, and it will cover all your sins.

52. Be humble all the days of your life and devote yourself to all that is good.

53. Consider one who is weaker than you in virtue to be your equal; but regard one who is your equal in virtue as far surpassing you in perfection.

54. Do not envy those who rise above you, but consider yourself superior to all people, so that God Himself may be with you.

55. Do not walk with the proud, but walk with the humble (this concerns imitation and fellowship).

56. Be humble in everything—in your posture, in your clothing, when sitting, when standing, in your gait, in bed, in your cell, and in all its furnishings.

57. If people begin to praise you for your deeds, do not rejoice in it or take pleasure in it: conceal them as much as you can, do not allow yourself to speak of them to anyone, and do everything in your power to ensure that people do not praise you.

58. Be careful not to become known for any of your deeds.

59. If anyone accuses you unjustly of a sin, humble yourself, and you will receive a crown.

60. Train your tongue to say, "Forgive me," and humility will come to you.

⁸ In another instance: how one weeps when there is a dead person in the house.

61. Train yourself so that your tongue, in all circumstances, at all times, and to every brother, says, “Forgive me.” For if you always say, “Forgive me,” you will soon attain humility.

62. Be ready, whenever you hear a word of rebuke, to say, “Forgive me,” for such humility thwarts all the enemy’s schemes.

63. Know that humility is nothing other than regarding all people as better than yourself. Keep firmly in mind that you are guilty of many sins—keep your head bowed low, and let your tongue be ready to say to the one who offends you: “Forgive me, my lord!” Let death be the constant object of your thoughts.

64. Love hard work, submit yourself to everyone, keep your lips sealed—and you will attain humility; and humility will bring about the forgiveness of all your sins.

65. Above all, do not consider yourself to be anything, and this will give rise to humility within you; humility will give rise to wisdom (experience and sound judgment); wisdom will give rise to faith; faith will give rise to hope; hope will give rise to love; love will give rise to obedience; and obedience will give rise to unwavering constancy (steadfastness in goodness).

g) The struggles against sin.

aa) First and foremost, with thoughts.

66. Cast away evil thoughts from yourself by entrusting yourself to God, and He will shield you with His right hand.

67. Do not follow every thought that comes to mind.

68. Do not act on your own thoughts and desires.

69. Be careful not to let your mind dwell on memories of past sins, lest they be renewed within you.

70. Do not dwell in your mind on sins you once committed, lest they be renewed. Be assured that they were forgiven you at the time you surrendered yourself to God and to repentance, and do not doubt this in the least.

71. Do not recall the pleasures and comforts to which you gave yourself over during your time of negligence, nor speak of them, saying, “I did this” or “I broke that rule,” for this may serve as a stumbling block to you.

72. Do not mention at all the passions you indulged in while in the world, lest you stir up those desires again, and this become a temptation to you.

bb) With various wicked desires.

73. The Apostle John summarizes all human lusts in three things, saying: “*Everything in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (1 John 2:16). The lust of the flesh is the satiation of the stomach with a multitude of different foods, followed by the impurity of fornication. The lust of the eyes has as its object material goods; when one possesses them, the eye either becomes exalted or implants impure images in the heart. Pride is worldly love of vain glory (a high opinion of oneself, self-praise, and a thirst for praise from others), which takes root in our minds because of some vain and fleeting external merits.

74. Flee from self-indulgence and disobedience, and above all from gluttony, lest you become entangled in the nets of your own lusts; for they drive the fear of God from the heart and shame from the face, deliver their lover into lowly and shameful deeds, and alienate him from God.

75. Cast off anger and clothe yourself in meekness; cast aside the corrupt eye and take for yourself a simple (childlike, pure) eye.

76. Stay far from anger and guard yourself against lust, as well as against all sinful desires.

bb) In particular, from sensuality.

77. A pleasure-seeker (one who seeks only what is pleasant) is unfit for any task.

78. Do not be a lover of pleasure, for God does not listen to those who love pleasure.

79. Hate the body and its pleasures, for they are full of evil.

80. Exhaust your body so that it resembles a body lying on a sickbed.

gg) With anger and its offspring.

81. If anger assails you, drive it away from yourself as quickly as possible, and you will rejoice all the days of your life.

82. Do not be angry with anyone, and forgive everyone.

83. If anyone unjustly reproaches you, do not lose your temper.

84. Be wise, and silence the mouths of those who speak ill of you.

- 85.** Do not be surprised if someone speaks ill of you, for this is one of the tricks of our worst enemies, which they use to prevent people from learning the truth.
- 86.** Do not be quick to anger, and do not hold a grudge against the one who provoked you.
- 87.** If you are insulted, do not harbor ill will toward the one who insulted you, but say: “I am worthy of being despised by all my brothers.”
- 88.** Do not grumble, and do not insult anyone.
- 89.** Do not repay evil with evil, nor insult with insult, for in this way the Lord Himself humbles you, seeing that you do not humble yourself.
- 90.** Let both the young and the old pray, that they may not be allowed to fall prey to the tyranny of anger.
- 91.** Whoever turns the other cheek to the one who strikes him on one is glad in his humiliation. Our Lord Jesus Christ will never forsake him, for He is good and helps souls who suffer for His sake and seek Him, granting them strength and fortitude until they are established in peace (from the passions). So rejoice when sorrows and trials come, for sweet fruits follow them.
- 92.** Do not fear reproach from people.
- dd) Among other sinful inclinations of the heart that undermine success: condemnation.
- 93.** If you see that a brother has sinned, do not despise him, do not turn away from him, and do not condemn him; for otherwise you yourself will fall into the hands of your enemies.
- 94.** Do no harm to anyone, and do not condemn anyone.
- 95.** Do not lend your ear to hear evil (about others), but be forgiving and merciful toward people, and you will live.
- 96.** Do not condemn anyone, for in this lies your downfall.
- 97.** Do not rebuke your brother, even if you see him breaking all the commandments; otherwise, you yourself will fall into the hands of your enemies.
- 98.** Do not condemn any mortal, lest God be disgusted by your prayers.
- 99.** Do not point out anyone’s faults to anyone else, for any reason whatsoever.
- 100.** Do not reproach anyone for their weaknesses.
- e) Vanity and conceit.
- 101.** When you give alms, do not make a show of it.
- 102.** If you engage in spiritual disciplines, do not boast about them.
- 103.** Do not tell anyone in advance about a good deed you intend to do; just do it.
- 104.** When you perform acts of virtue, do not act as if you are wiser than others, and do not say to yourself, “I did such-and-such,” because if you act this way, you will not be wise.
- 105.** Do not be glory-seeking, and do not harbor self-praise in your heart, saying, “I did such-and-such; I succeeded in this and that.” Such thoughts are filled with vanity, and whoever is filled with them has become a dwelling place for unclean spirits.
- zz) By people-pleasing and hypocrisy.
- 106.** Do not set aside God’s will in order to fulfill the will of men.
- 107.** Do not break God’s commandments out of respect for human friendship.
- 108.** Do not be a hypocrite or a pretender, much less a liar.
- 109.** Do not merely appear righteous before others; rather, be wise, gentle, good-natured, patient, zealous, and compassionate within yourself.
- zz) Pride.
- 110.** Do not boast about your deeds, whatever they may be.
- 111.** Do not be proud or boastful.
- 112.** Cast pride far from yourself, but regard your neighbor and all people as better than yourself.
- 113.** There is no greater wickedness than causing sorrow to someone and exalting yourself above others.
- 114.** Do not consider yourself wise, or else your soul will be lifted up by pride, and you will fall into the hands of your enemies.
- 115.** Do not consider yourself all-knowing and wise (that is, do not say, “I know this myself; I can do this myself”), or your labor will be lost, and your ship will have sailed in vain until now.

Conclusion

1. Whoever fails to fulfill all that is prescribed will provoke God's wrath. I, Anthony, speak the truth to you. Therefore, incline your ear to my words and treasure them in your heart, and know that by these commandments I entrust you to the Creator. If you keep them, you will rejoice with all the angels, and you will strike all evil spirits with sorrow. Walk, then, in these commandments, and God will be with you, and His angels will descend upon you; and your soul will be filled with the fragrance of the saints, and your face will shine with the light of the blessed, and you will become a sanctuary to God, just as all the saints are, and you will finally meet the Lord with joy and gladness, and you will hear His voice saying: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord"* (Matt. 25:21).

2. Do not stray from any of these instructions, and our Lord Jesus Christ will grant you peace and bring to completion in peace the work you have begun. Our perfect fathers, and those who imitated them, became perfect through their obedience.

3. If you wish to add any good deeds to what has been said, do so, and offer unceasing thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Every night, let your tears wash over your bed and wet your pillow, and humble yourself before Christ the Lord, that He may blot out your sins and renew you anew, that He may grant you help in doing good deeds, and bestow upon you His eternal kingdom as an inheritance. To Him be praise, honor, glory, and worship, together with the all-good Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

4. Sayings of St. Anthony the Great and Stories About Him

On Renouncing the World

1. Whoever wishes to successfully undertake the monastic life must completely break with the world, forsake all its goods, withdraw from it in deed, and cut off every attachment to its things. St. Anthony impressively impressed this truth upon a certain brother who, having renounced the world and given everything he had to the poor, had kept a small amount for himself in case of need, and came to St. Anthony. The elder, looking at him, saw what was in his heart and said to him: "If you want to be a monk, go to such-and-such a village, buy some meat, cut it into thin slices, take off your robe, drape the meat over your shoulders and arms—and come back here like that." The brother did as the elder had instructed, and immediately dogs, birds, and hornets surrounded him and covered his entire body with wounds. When he returned to the elder, the latter asked him if he had done as he was told; the brother, complaining, showed him his wounds. Then St. Anthony said to him: "This is what happens to anyone who, upon leaving the world, retains even the slightest portion of his possessions for himself: the demons will cover him with wounds, and, torn apart, he will fall in the midst of strife" (Dost. Skaz. 20; Patr. Graec. vol. 40, p. 1099).

2. The following account, preserved by Cassian (Coll. 24, ch. 11. 10), also concerns the same subject. A brother came to St. Anthony, believing that there was no need to leave the world, and began to say: "One who labors in a city or village, doing all that is required to attain spiritual perfection, is of greater value." St. Anthony asked him, "Where and how do you live?" The man replied, "I live in my parents' house, and they provide me with everything I need." This frees me from all worries and cares, and I am constantly occupied only with reading and prayer, without any distraction of the mind by anything else." St. Anthony asked him again: "Tell me, my son, do you grieve with them in their sorrows, and do you rejoice in their joys?" He admitted that he experienced both. Then the elder said to him: "Know, then, that in the age to come you will share the fate of those with whom you share joy and sorrow in this life." And the way of life you have chosen is harmful to you not only because, due to the almost daily changes in the vicissitudes of life, it plunges your mind into ceaseless thoughts about earthly things, but also because it deprives you of the fruit you would have received had you, by the labor of your own hands, earned your own livelihood, following the example of the Apostle Paul, who, even amid the labors of preaching the Gospel, provided for himself and those with him by the work of his own hands—as he said to the Ephesians: *"You yourselves know that these hands of mine have provided for my needs and for those who were with me"* (Acts 20:34). He did this for our edification, to set an example for us, as he wrote to the Thessalonians: *"We did not act disorderly among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread for free, but with labor and toil, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you—not that we have no right to do so, but to set an example for you to follow"* (2 Thess. 3:8–9). That

is why we, too, although we have the opportunity to rely on support from our relatives, prefer to earn our own living by the sweat of our brow rather than have it provided by our relatives. We would gladly choose the latter if we could consider it more beneficial. Moreover, know that if, while healthy, you live at the expense of others, you are consuming the livelihood of the poor and the infirm.

General Answers to the Question: What Should One Do?

One who has left the world enters a completely new realm of life, which, although certainly not entirely unfamiliar to him, nevertheless presents many aspects that inevitably raise the question: What should one do, and how should one live? St. Anthony was asked this question more than once, and here are his answers:

1. Abba Pamvo asked him about this, and he replied: “Do not trust in your own righteousness; truly repent of your past sins; and keep your tongue, your heart, and your stomach in check” (Patr. Graec. vol. 40, p. 1093. Dostoyevsky, note 6).

2. This is what he said on the same subject to Abba Pimen: “The most glorious of all deeds a person can perform is to confess one’s sins before God and one’s elders, to condemn oneself, and to be ready to face every temptation until one’s last breath” (Patr. ib. 1084: Dostoevsky, vol. 4).

3. Someone else asked him: “What must I do to please God?” St. Anthony replied: “Wherever you go, always keep God before your eyes; whatever you do, let it be supported by Scripture; and wherever you live, do not leave that place too soon.” Keep these three commandments, and you will be saved (Dost. sk., 3; Patr. ib. 1083).

4. To another disciple he advised: “Develop an aversion to your belly, to the demands of this age, to evil lusts, and to human honor; live as if you did not exist in this world, and you will find peace” (Patr. Lat. vol. 73, p. 1049).

5. This is what, as St. Athanasius writes, Abba Anthony said to the brothers who came to him: “Always keep fear before your eyes; remember Him who kills and gives life” (1 Sam. 2:6). Hate the world and all that is in it; hate every carnal comfort; renounce this life so that you may live for God; remember what you have promised to God: for He will demand this of you on the Day of Judgment. Be hungry, be thirsty, go naked, keep vigil, weep, wail, sigh in your hearts, examine yourselves to see if you are worthy of God, despise the flesh, so that you may save your souls (Dost. sk. 33 and in the Life).

6. St. Cassian provides a similar detailed instruction on what a monk ought to do. “From time immemorial,” he says, “there has been a wonderful teaching of the blessed Anthony has long been in circulation, stating that a monk, striving for the highest perfection, should not limit himself to imitating any one of the successful fathers, because in no one can all kinds of virtues be found in perfection. But one is distinguished by knowledge, another by sound judgment, a third by unshakable patience; another is distinguished by humility, another by self-restraint, another by the grace-filled simplicity of heart; one surpasses others in generosity, another in mercy, one in vigilance, and another in silence or diligence. Therefore, a monk who wishes to build spiritual honeycombs must, like a wise bee, draw every virtue from the one most skilled in it and store it in the vessel of his heart, paying no attention to what others lack, but observing that virtue and zealously striving to make it his own, whatever it is that distinguishes each person (Inst. c. V. 1. 4).

The Force That Drives One to Feats and Sustains One in Them

If we were to list all that has been mentioned, it would reveal a rather broad field for feats of virtue. The question arises: what force drives the laborer toward them and sustains him in his labors? This force is zeal for salvation, for the glory of God’s name, ready for anything. When this zeal is present, all the monk’s feats of virtue proceed smoothly. Without it, everything comes to a standstill.

1. Why, when a brother who lacked this zeal once came to St. Anthony and asked him to pray for him, did the great elder reply: “Neither I nor God will have mercy on you if you do not take care of yourself and pray to God” (The Life of St. Anthony, ch. 16)?

2. For this very reason, he advised maintaining constant attention to God and vigilance, praising as a great virtue the one who, throughout his entire life, works tirelessly for the Lord and, until his last breath, stands guard against the wiles of the tempter (Patr. Graec. vol. 40, p. 1083).

3. Therefore, he urged people not to slacken in anything, but to patiently maintain the same spirit of zeal at all times, saying: A monk who strives for a few days, then slacks off, then strives again, and then slacks

off once more—such a monk is as good as doing nothing, and he will never attain the perfection of the monastic life, due to a lack of constancy in zeal and patience (Patr. Lat. vol. 73, p. 1049).

4. He called those who sought ease “those who do not understand their calling and their goals,” and attributed all the monks’ failures to a lack of zeal for hard work. “We do not succeed,” he said, “because we do not know our calling and do not understand what the task we undertake requires, but we want to attain virtue without effort.” That is why, as soon as we encounter temptation in our place, we move to another, thinking that there is some place where the devil is not present. But whoever has come to know that there is a battle does not allow himself to slacken, but constantly wages war, with God’s help (Patr. Gr. vol. 40, p. 1093).

5. St. Anthony’s words on this subject to those who neither want one thing nor can do another are remarkable. Once, some brothers came to St. Anthony and said to him, “Give us instruction on how to be saved.” The elder replied to them, “Have you heard the Scriptures?” And that is quite enough for you.” But they said, “We also want to hear something from you, Father.” Then the elder said to them, “It is written in the Gospel: *‘If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also’* (Matt. 5:39).” They said to him, “We cannot do that.” The elder said, “If you cannot offer the other cheek, at least endure the blows on one cheek.” “We cannot do even that,” they replied. “If you cannot do even that,” said the elder, “at least do not repay a blow with a blow.” The brothers said, “We cannot do even that.” Then St. Anthony said to his disciple, “Prepare a little food for them; they are sick.” If you cannot do one thing and are unwilling to do the other, what can I do for you? You must pray (either yourselves or have others pray for you) so that the spirit of zeal—moral energy—may be awakened in you (Dost. sk. 19).

Guides of Zeal

But zeal in and of itself is sometimes blind and can take directions inconsistent with the goals of the life one has begun. That is why it must be guided by leaders. Who, then, are these leaders? St. Anthony points to two: one’s own reason and the counsel of the experienced.

a) My own reasoning.

1. Once, the fathers gathered at St. Anthony’s to discuss which virtue was the most perfect of all and which could protect a monk from all the snares of the enemy. Each of them spoke what seemed right to him. Some praised fasting and vigil, since they bring order to one’s thoughts, refine the mind, and make it easier for a person to draw near to God; others favored poverty and contempt for earthly things, because through this the mind becomes calmer, purer, and freer from worldly cares, and thus one’s approach to God becomes easier; some wished to give charity precedence over all other virtues, because the Lord will say to the merciful: *“Come, you who are blessed by My Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matt. 25:34), while others held a different view. And St. Anthony said: All the virtues you have mentioned are very salvific and extremely necessary for those who seek God and who burn with a strong desire to draw near to Him. But we have seen that many exhausted their bodies through excessive self-mortification, vigils, and retreats into the desert; they also zealously devoted themselves to labors, loved poverty, and despised worldly comforts to the point that they did not keep for themselves even what was necessary for a single day, but gave everything they had to the poor; and yet it happened that, after all this, they were led astray and fell, and, having lost the fruit of all those virtues, became worthy of condemnation. The reason for this is none other than that they lacked the virtue of discernment and prudence, and could not make use of its guidance. For it is this very virtue that teaches and guides a person to walk the straight path, without straying at the crossroads. If we walk the royal path, we will never be led astray by our detractors—neither to the right, toward excessive abstinence, nor to the left, toward indifference, carelessness, and idleness. Discernment is the eye of the soul and its lamp, just as the eye is the lamp of the body: so if this eye is clear, then the whole body (of our deeds) will be clear; but if this eye is dark, then the whole body will be dark, as the Lord said in the Holy Gospel (Matt. 6:22–23). Through discernment, a person examines his desires, words, and deeds, and turns away from all those that lead him away from God. Through discernment, he thwarts and destroys all the enemy’s schemes directed against him, faithfully distinguishing between what is good and what is evil. (Patr. Gr., vol. 40, p. 1096; Dostoevsky, p. 8).

2. The following saying also points to this same subject: a blacksmith, taking a piece of iron, considers in advance what to make of it—a sickle, a sword, or an axe. So too must we consider in advance which virtue to pursue, so as not to labor in vain (Dost. sk. 35). Of course, it would be best to be guided by one’s own

judgment, if only it were always sufficient for everything and for everyone. But since this cannot be said to be the case, there is a more reliable and safer guide:

b) *The advice of those with experience.*

3. In this sense, St. Anthony says: I know monks who, after much toil, fell into madness because they relied on their own efforts and disregarded the commandment of the One who said, “*Ask your Father, and He will tell you*” (Deut. 32: 7). (The Life of St. Anthony, ch. 37).

4. And furthermore: Holy Scripture says, “*Those who lack guidance fall like leaves*” (Prov. 11:14), and commands that nothing be done without counsel, so much so that it does not even permit the spiritual drink that gladdens the human heart to be consumed without counsel, when it says, “*Do nothing without counsel*” (Sirach 32:21), and: “*Drink wine with counsel.*”—A person who goes about his business without counsel is like an unfortified city, into which anyone who wishes may enter and plunder its treasures (Patr. Gr. vol. 40, p. 1098).

5. St. Anthony considered asking others for advice such a salvific act that even the teacher of all turned to his own disciple—who had, however, already achieved success—with a question, and acted exactly as the disciple advised. For it is said that when Abba Anthony received a written invitation from Emperor Constantius to come to Constantinople, he turned to Paul the Simple with the question: “Should I go?” And when the latter replied, “If you go, you will be Anthony; if you do not go, you will be Abba Anthony”—thus implying that such a journey was not approved—he calmly remained where he was (The Life of St. Anthony, 32).

6. He advised everyone else to do the same, saying: “A monk, if possible, should consult the elders about every step he takes in his cell and every drop of water he drinks.” I know of some monks who fell because they thought, on their own, that they could please God (Patr. Gr., vol. 40, p. 1082; The True Tales, 38).

7. Thus, St. Anthony did not approve of relying on one’s own judgment. Is this not why he spoke so highly of Abba Joseph, who, when asked a question from Scripture, replied, “I do not know”—for in this, besides humility, he also expressed distrust of his own mind? It happened as follows: some elders came to St. Anthony, and Abba Joseph was with them. The elder, wishing to test them, presented them with a passage from Scripture and began asking each one, starting with the youngest, what this passage meant. Each spoke to the best of his ability, but the elder replied to each: “No, you have not understood it.” After they had all spoken, he said to Abba Joseph: “What do you say about this passage?” “I do not know,” Joseph replied. Abba Anthony said: “Abba Joseph was on the right path when he said, ‘I do not know’” (Orth. Sayings 17).

8. However, he advised trusting others only with certain limitations. One must first ascertain the elder’s soundness of mind and experience—and only then trust his word and accept his counsel without question. The sign by which this can be recognized is the harmony of his words with the Word of God. One must look, he said, at what is commanded. If anyone instructs you in anything that is in accordance with the commandments of our Lord, accept it with humility and strive to observe it, so that the words of the Apostle may be fulfilled in us as well: “*Obey one another out of reverence for God*” (Gal. 5: 13; Eph. 5:21). On the other hand, if anyone instructs you in something contrary to the divine commandments, then say to the one giving the instruction: “*Is it right to obey you rather than God?*” (Acts 4:19). “*We must obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). Let us also remember the Lord’s words: “*My sheep hear My voice, and they do not follow a stranger, for they do not know the voice of strangers*” (John 10:5). Likewise, the blessed Paul exhorts us, saying: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). (Patr. gr. vol. 40, p. 1083). The reason for this restriction was likely provided by the Arians, who attracted others to themselves with a veneer of piety and then poisoned them with their false teachings. Or perhaps it was also due to the fact that some undertook to guide others without having gained much experience themselves. In this regard, he was in the habit of saying: The ancient Fathers went into the desert, and there, having healed their own souls through their many labors, they came to understand how to heal others as well. That is why, upon returning from there, they became healing physicians for others. But if any of us should happen to go out into the desert, before we have healed ourselves, we take on the care of others, which causes our former weakness to return to us, and our final condition becomes worse than our initial one. For this reason, the saying applies to us: “Physician, heal yourself first” (Luke 4:23). (Patr. lat. vol. 73, p. 1053).

How can jealousy be stoked?

Nothing in a person remains constant; some things grow stronger, others grow weaker. So too does zeal—sometimes it blazes, sometimes it fades. In the latter case, it must be stoked so that it does not die out completely. How, then, and with what? First, by the memory of death. St. Anthony repeatedly urged everyone to imprint upon their minds and hearts that the day we are living is our last.

1. Second, by bringing to mind what will happen after death. To impress this thought upon the souls of his disciples, he told them what had been revealed to him personally, as Athanasius the Great recounts in his biography. Once, before a meal, around nine o'clock, having risen to pray, St. Anthony felt his mind being lifted, and—most astonishingly—he saw himself as if from the outside, and as if someone were lifting him up through the air, while in the air stood some gloomy and terrifying figures who attempted to block his path upward. Anthony's guides resisted them, but the figures pressed forward as if they had the right to do so, demanding an account of whether Anthony was subject to their authority in any way. They had to yield, and they prepared to take stock. But when they wanted to take stock from the very birth of St. Anthony, his guides objected, saying: "What was from birth, the Lord has wiped away when he took his monastic vows; take stock from the time he became a monk and made his vows to God; but in this regard, his accusers could find no fault with him; therefore, they backed down—and the path to Anthony's ascetic life became free and unhindered. After this, St. Anthony began to feel that he was regaining his composure, and soon he was once again his former self. But he had already forgotten about food, and he spent the rest of that day and the entire night in sighs and prayers, marveling at how many enemies we must fight and with what difficulties a person must journey through the air. Then the words of the Apostle Paul about "*the prince of the power of the air*" (Eph. 2: 2) came to his mind. For the enemy has power in the air to engage in battle with those passing through it, striving to block their path. That is why the Apostle especially advised: "*Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm on the day of evil*" (Eph. 6:13) and that the enemy may be put to shame, "*having nothing bad to say about us*" (Titus 2:8).

2. This is how St. Athanasius recounts it, and although there is no subsequent mention anywhere that St. Anthony told others about it, there is no reason to doubt this, because knowing what he had seen was necessary not so much for himself as for others. Regarding another vision on the same subject, it is noted that he did tell others about it. St. Athanasius writes: St. Anthony was once conversing with the brothers who had come to him about the state of the soul after death and about where it would dwell. The following night, someone called to him from above, saying, "Arise, go out, and look." Anthony went out (for he knew who had commanded him) and, lifting his gaze, saw a giant, hideous and terrifying, whose head touched the clouds, and from the ground, some birds were rising; the giant blocked the path of some, while others flew over him, and having passed him, soared safely upward. He gnashed his teeth at the latter, but rejoiced over the former. An invisible voice then said: "Anthony, understand what you have seen!" Then his mind was opened, and he understood that this was the passage of souls from the earth, and that this giant was our ancient enemy, who holds back the negligent and those who have yielded to his suggestions, forbidding them to go further, but cannot hold back the zealous and those who have not listened to him, and they pass above him. St. Anthony took this vision as a reminder to himself, so to speak, and began to apply even greater effort to succeed in the struggle against all that is hostile. For the same purpose—that is, to inspire greater zeal for a pure life—he recounted this vision to others as well. Abba Cronius says that once St. Anthony recounted this vision before a large gathering. He added that, prior to this vision, St. Anthony had prayed for an entire year that it might be revealed to him what happens to the souls of the righteous and the sinful after death; that the giant's arms were outstretched toward the sky, and beneath him lay a lake as vast as the sea, into which birds fell as he struck them with his hand (Lavsaiik, ch. 24). In the Latin Patristic Collection, the account of this event suggests that the birds were struck by the giant and fell into the lake only when they paused in the air below his hands, lacking the strength to rise above them; but those that were strong enough to rise above his hands and head, at those he merely gnashed his teeth, watching as they soared toward the heavens and were received by the Angels (Patr. Lat. vol. 73, p. 1044).

3. What a stirring fear filled the souls upon hearing of this! But here is a comforting vision, one that strongly revives zeal through "*hope*" for a glorious state. This vision concerns St. Ammon, not so much a disciple as a friend and companion of St. Anthony. St. Athanasius writes that St. Anthony, sitting once on a mountain, looked up at the sky and saw someone ascending through the air toward heaven in a streak of fire, while from above a host of rejoicing angelic beings descended to meet him. Amazed by this, he began to pray

that the Lord would deign to reveal to him what this meant. And a voice spoke to him, saying that it was the soul of Ammon, a monk from Nitria. This Ammon had lived a life of strict asceticism until old age. He used to visit St. Anthony, and St. Anthony used to visit him. The distance from the Nitrian Mountains to Mount St. Anthony is a 13-day journey (650 versts). When the brothers who were with him asked him why he was so amazed, he said that he had seen and heard about Ammon. When, thirty days later, the brothers from Nitria arrived, they asked about Ammon— —and learned that he had indeed passed away on that very day and at that very hour when the elder had seen his soul ascending to heaven.

4. The following vision, recounted by St. Anthony himself, is no less effective in dispelling sloth and stirring up energy. “I prayed to God,” he says, “to show me what kind of protection surrounds and guards a monk!” And I saw a monk surrounded by fiery lamps, and a multitude of angels guarding him as the apple of their eye, shielding him with their swords. Then I sighed and said, “This is what is given to a monk!” And yet, despite this, the devil overcomes him, and he falls. And a voice came to me from the merciful Lord, saying: “No one can be brought down by the devil; he has no power whatsoever after I, having taken on human nature, crushed his authority. But man falls of his own accord when he gives in to negligence and indulges his lusts and passions.” I asked, “Is such protection granted to every monk?” And I was shown a multitude of monks shielded by such protection. Then I exclaimed, “Blessed is the human race, and especially the host of monks, who have a Lord so merciful and so loving toward humanity!” Let us, then, be zealous for our salvation and, having cast aside all negligence, diligently carry out our labors, so that we may be made worthy of the kingdom of heaven, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (Patr. Graec. vol. 40, p. 1083).

5. On another occasion, St. Anthony revealed to his disciples how a decline in zeal causes monastic life to weaken and its glory to fade. Some of his disciples, seeing the countless multitude of monks in the desert, adorned with such virtues and zealously striving with such fervor to excel in the holy life of a hermit, asked Abba Anthony: “Father, how long will this zeal and this love for solitude, poverty, humility, abstinence, and all the other virtues—to which this great multitude of monks is now so earnestly devoted—endure?” The man of God replied to them with a sigh and tears: “The time will come, my beloved children, when monks will leave the deserts and flock instead to wealthy cities, where, in place of these desert caves and cramped cells, they will erect proud buildings capable of rivaling the palaces of kings; instead of poverty, the love of accumulating wealth will grow; humility will be replaced by pride; many will take pride in knowledge, but knowledge that is bare and devoid of good deeds befitting that knowledge; love will grow cold; instead of self-restraint, gluttony will multiply; and very many of them will be concerned with sumptuous feasts, no less than the laity themselves, from whom the monks will differ in nothing but their robes and headdresses; and even though they will live among the world, they will call themselves hermits (a monk is, in fact, a hermit). Moreover, they will boast, saying, *‘I am of Paul, I am of Apollos’* (1 Cor. 1:12), as if the entire strength of their monasticism lay in the dignity of their predecessors: they will boast of their fathers, just as the Jews boast of their father Abraham. But there will also be those at that time who will prove to be far better and more perfect than we are, for “blessed is the one who could have sinned but did not—and could have done evil but did not” (Sir. 31:11)—rather than the one who was drawn to goodness by the multitude of zealots striving for it. Why are Noah, Abraham, and Lot—who led zealous lives among wicked people—so rightly praised in Scripture (Patr. Graec. vol. 40, p. 1095)?

6. Both of these reminders—that is, of death and of what comes after death—stir up *the “fear of God,”* which is the third stimulus to zeal. St. Anthony called for the fear of God, as we have already seen, in a profound saying: “Always have the fear of God; fear Him who gives death and gives life” (see point 7 above). In another brief saying, he points to the fear of God as the source of readiness and fitness for all virtues. The fear of God, he says, is the beginning of all virtues and the beginning of wisdom. Just as light, entering a dark house, dispels its darkness and illuminates it, so the fear of God, when it enters the human heart, drives out darkness and kindles within it a zeal for all virtues (Patr. gr. t. 40, p. 1084).

7. Therefore, he warned against losing this fear in every possible way. “Do not leave your cell,” he said, “or you will lose the fear of God.” For just as a fish taken out of the water dies, so the fear of God dies in the monk’s heart if he leaves his cell to wander outside (ibid.).

8. But all these supports for zeal act coercively, drawing from without, even though they are established within. One must acquire internal motivators for zeal, so that it springs forth from the heart of its own accord, like a spring of water. The heart is brought to this state by: 1) *“the sensation of the sweetness”* of life in God. Until this sensation is formed, our zeal remains unreliable. Why, when one brother asked St. Anthony: “Why

is it that, although God, throughout all Scripture, promises the soul the highest blessings, the soul is not constantly steadfast in seeking them, but strays toward the transitory, the perishable, and the impure?” —he replied: “Whoever has not yet tasted the sweetness of heavenly blessings has not yet clung to God with all his heart; that is why he returns to what is perishable.” But until one attains such perfection, one must serve God out of submission to His holy will, so that one may say with the Prophet: “I was like a beast before You” (Ps. 72:23), that is, “I served You like a yoked animal” (Patr. lat. t. 73, p. 1056).

9. Hence, 2) “love” for God is an even stronger stimulus to zeal. St. Anthony himself knew that love is stronger than fear, and he said: “I no longer fear God, but I love Him” (i.e., I am not motivated by fear in how I conduct myself, but by love); for “*love drives out fear*” (1 John 4:18). (Dost. sk. 32).

10. He also urged others to cultivate above all else a love for God within themselves, as an indestructible and enduring strength. Thus, when his brothers once asked him, “How can one best please God?” he replied, “The deed most pleasing to God is the deed of love.” It is performed by one who ceaselessly praises God in his pure thoughts, stirred by the remembrance of God, the remembrance of the promised blessings, and all that He has been pleased to accomplish for us. From the remembrance of all this, perfect love is born, as prescribed: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength*” (Deut. 6:5)—and as it is written: “*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God*” (Ps. 41:2). This is the work by which we must please God, so that the words of the Apostle may be fulfilled in us as well: “*Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?*” Nothing at all (Rom. 8:35, 38). (Patr. gr. vol. 40, p. 1094).

11. From this, or together with it, comes 3) the “joy” of doing good and abiding in God’s ways, which in turn becomes a source of zeal. The following saying of St. Anthony pertains to this. He was asked: What is joy in the Lord? He replied: “To fulfill any commandment with joy, for the glory of God—that is what joy in the Lord is. For when we fulfill His commandments, we ought to rejoice; conversely, when we do not fulfill them, we ought to grieve. Therefore, let us strive to fulfill the commandments with joy in our hearts, so that we may comfort one another in the Lord; but in doing so, let us be careful in every way not to let our joy lead to pride, but to place all our hope in the Lord (Patr. gr. vol. 40, p. 1095. A similar thought is found in Basil the Great’s Brief Rules, question 193).

Virtues and good deeds, in particular

Thus, zeal guided and kindled in this way is directed toward ascetic practices—both physical and spiritual—and toward every good deed.

1. St. Anthony indicated the extent to which one must “*exhaust the flesh*” in his general instruction on ascetic feats (see § 7) and in his enumeration of the causes of lustful impulses (see excerpt § 18), among which is the ample nourishment of the flesh—he points to the exhaustion of the body through fasting (Dost. sk. 22) as a remedy against such stirrings. St. Anthony commanded us to be very strict with the body (see point 7 above) and condemned any indulgence. That is why he did not look favorably upon those who go to the bathhouse. “Our fathers,” he said, “never even washed their faces—yet we go to worldly bathhouses” (Alphab. Pater., Art. 4).

2. After subduing the flesh, he attached great importance to “*restraining the tongue*.” He placed this feat on a par with wandering, saying: “Our wandering consists in keeping our mouths shut” (ibid., p. 4).

3. Those who speak whatever comes to mind are like a courtyard without a gate, into which anyone who wishes may enter, approach the manger, and untie the donkey. Although this thought was not expressed by St. Anthony himself, it was voiced in his presence and was certainly approved by him (Dost. sk. 18).

4. He also attached great importance to “*sitting in the cell*.” Just as fish, he says, die when left on dry land for too long, so too do monks, when they remain outside their cells for too long or spend time with laypeople, lose their love for silence. Therefore, just as a fish longs for the sea, so must we hasten to our cell, lest, while remaining outside it, we forget about inner vigilance (Dost. sk. 10).

5. In general, he advised maintaining such strict discipline within the cell that the cell would be for the monk like the Furnace of Babylon, burning away all impurity within him (Patr. gr. t. 40, 1086).

6. He did, however, allow for some relaxation in the rigor of their ascetic practices, as is evident from his reply to the hunter. It is said that a certain man, while hunting wild animals in the desert, saw Abba Anthony joking with the brothers and was led astray. The elder, wishing to assure him that it is sometimes necessary to

give the brothers some leeway, said to him: "Place an arrow on your bow and draw it back." He did so. The elder said to him: "Draw it back further." The man drew it back further. Again he said: "Draw it back further." The hunter replied: "If I draw the bow beyond its limit, it will break." Then the elder said to him: "So it is in the work of God: if we strain the brothers' strength beyond measure, they will soon become disheartened. Therefore, it is necessary to give the brothers at least some respite from time to time."—Upon hearing this, the hunter was deeply moved and departed from the elder, having been edified. And the brothers, strengthened by this, returned to their place (Dost. sk. 13). Moreover, there have been preserved such sayings and stories that point to spiritual feats or dispositions of the heart that determine success. These are:

7. *Patience.* It is so essential to the ascetic that, if he lacks it, he himself is of no value. Thus, the brethren praised a certain monk to St. Anthony. When this monk arrived, St. Anthony wished to test him to see if he could endure an insult, and seeing that he could not, he said to him: "You are like a village that is beautiful from the front but has been plundered by robbers from behind" (Dost., ch. 15).

8. *Patience is necessary because we need temptations.* And St. Anthony said: "No one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven without temptations; were it not for temptations, no one would be saved" (Acts of St. Anthony, ch. 5).

9. *Prayer.* He taught this by example, for everyone knew how long he prayed. "We know," his disciples said, "that the blessed elder would sometimes become so absorbed in prayer that he would remain in it all night long, and when the rising sun interrupted his fervent prayer, in which his mind was filled with rapture, we heard him say: 'Why do you disturb me, O sun? It is as if you rise just to distract me from the divine light of the mind'" (Patr. lat. vol. 73, p. 848).

10. *Tears.* Thus, when a brother asked St. Anthony, "What should I do about my sins?" he replied, "Whoever wishes to be freed from sins will be freed from them through weeping and groaning; and whoever wishes to be attuned to virtue will be attuned to it through tearful weeping." Psalm singing itself is weeping. Remember the example of Hezekiah, king of Judah, who, as written in the Book of Isaiah (ch. 38), not only received healing from his illness through his weeping but was also granted an extension of life by 15 years; and when an enemy army of 185,000 men found him, the power of God struck them dead because of the tears he had shed. St. Peter the Apostle received forgiveness through his weeping for having sinned against Christ by denying Him. Mary, for having washed the Savior's feet with her tears, was granted to hear that this would be proclaimed everywhere along with the preaching of the Gospel (Patr. lat. vol. 73, p. 1055).

11. *St. Anthony found no place for laughter in the life of a monk, and when his disciples asked him, "May we ever laugh?" he replied, "Our Lord condemns those who laugh when He says, 'Woe to you who laugh now, for you will weep and mourn'" (Luke 6:25). Therefore, a faithful monk must not laugh; rather, we must weep for those who blaspheme the name of God, because they transgress His law and spend their entire lives wallowing in sin. Let us weep and mourn, ceaselessly imploring God that He may not allow them to harden their hearts in sin and that death may not overtake them before they repent (Patr. gr. t. 40, p. 1096. A similar teaching is found in Basil the Great's Brief Rules, 31).*

12. *Humility,* which draws down protection from above and safeguards one from all falls. "I saw," said St. Anthony, "all the enemy's nets spread out across the earth, and with a sigh I said, 'Who then will escape them?' But I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility'" (Dost. sk. 7).

13. *Why did he then teach: if we undertake a good deed, we must humble ourselves greatly before the Lord, so that He, who knows our weakness, may cover us with His right hand and protect us; for if we become proud, He will remove His protection from us, and we will perish (Patr. gr. t. 40, p. 1090).*

14. *On another occasion he said: just as pride and the exaltation of the mind cast the devil down from the heights of heaven into the abyss, so humility and meekness lift a person up from the earth to heaven (Ibid., p. 1081).*

15. *To ensure that a spiritual practice—such as silence—does not lead to pride, he advised giving it a self-deprecating meaning. If anyone, he said, undertakes the practice of silence, let him not think that he is practicing some virtue, but let him keep in his heart that he remains silent because he is unworthy to speak (Patr. lat. vol. 73, p. 1051).*

16. *St. Anthony also taught that the Lord Himself guides us inwardly in such a way that He hides our good deeds from us in order to keep us humble. He used to say: if a miller does not blindfold the animal turning the wheel, his work will not go smoothly. The animal's head would spin, and it would fall, unable to work. "So too, by God's providence, we are granted a veil so that we may not see our own good deeds, lest,*

by taking pleasure in them, we become proud and lose the fruit of all our labors! This happens when we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by impure thoughts, in which we cannot help but condemn ourselves and our own thoughts. And in such a state, reflection on our goodness cannot take place; consequently, our small acts of goodness are concealed and remain unseen because of these impure thoughts (Paraphrase, *ibid.*, p. 1037).

17. How destructive is pride—this was strikingly illustrated by the downfall of a young ascetic after he had performed a miracle. Passing by the place where this young man was practicing asceticism, some elders were on their way to St. Anthony and had become extremely weary. He called some wild donkeys and commanded them to carry these elders on their backs to St. Anthony. When the elders told St. Anthony about this, he replied: “This monk, it seems to me, is a ship fully laden, but I do not know if he will reach the harbor.”—And indeed, having become conceited, he fell a short time later. Realizing this, St. Anthony said to his disciples: “At this very hour, that young ascetic has fallen.” Go and see.” They went and found him sitting on a mat, weeping over the sin he had committed (Deeds of the Saints, 94).

18. But just as much as pride is destructive, so too is humility salvific. This is illustrated by the example of the shoemaker, about whom St. Anthony received a revelation from above. St. Anthony was praying in his cell when he heard a voice saying to him, “Anthony, you have not yet reached the level of a certain shoemaker in Alexandria!” St. Anthony went to Alexandria, found this shoemaker, and persuaded him to reveal what was special about his life. He said: “I do not know of ever having done any good deed, yet why, when I rise from bed in the morning, before I sit down to work, do I say: ‘Everyone in this city, young and old alike, will enter the Kingdom of God because of their good deeds, but I alone, because of my sins, will be condemned to eternal torment’?” I repeat this very same thing with all the sincerity of my heart in the evening as well, before I go to sleep.” Upon hearing this, St. Anthony realized that he certainly had not yet reached that level (Patr. lat. vol. 73, p. 785).

19. Was this not the reason why he later often repeated this admonition: we must always reproach and blame ourselves in everything, and do so sincerely, for whoever reproaches himself is justified and glorified by God (*Ibid.*).

20. *Mutual service and assistance.* The brothers asked St. Anthony: “If someone were to say, ‘I will take nothing from my brothers, nor will I give them anything myself—what I have is enough for me,’ is that right?” St. Anthony replied: “My children! Such a person is hard-hearted, and his soul is the soul of a lion. He must be considered estranged from the community of all good people” (Patr. Graec. vol. 40, p. 1095).

21. On another occasion, he was asked: “How should one serve the brothers?” He replied: “Brothers who wish to serve the brothers should serve them as servants serve their masters, and as the Lord served Peter, to whom He rendered the final service, even though He was his Creator.” By this, the Lord showed that if those who reject the service offered to them are not blameless, then all the more so are those worthy of condemnation who consider it beneath them to serve their brothers. If the former will have no part with the Lord, as the Lord said to Peter, what then can be said of the latter? (*Ibid.*)

22. And in general, he used to say: “Life and death come from our neighbor.” For if we win over a brother, we win over God, but if we lead a brother astray, we sin against Christ (Dost. sk. 9).

23. *Compassion and forbearance toward those who fall.* At the monastery of Abba Elias, a certain brother faced a temptation. He was expelled from there, and he went up to the Mountain to Abba Anthony. Abba Anthony, after keeping him with him for some time, sent him back to the monastery from which he had come. But the brothers drove him away again. He returned to Abba Anthony and said to him, “The brothers would not accept me, Father!” Then the elder sent him away with these words: “A storm caught a ship at sea; it lost its cargo and barely managed to save itself, yet you wish to sink even what has been saved near the shore.” When the brothers heard that Abba Anthony had sent the brother to them, they immediately accepted him (Dost. sk. 21).

24. In one monastery, a brother was falsely accused of fornication, and he came to Abba Anthony. Brothers from the monastery also came to counsel him and take him back. They began to reproach him, asking why he had done such a thing, but the brother defended himself, saying that he had done nothing of the sort. Abba Paphnutius Kefalos happened to be there as well. He told them this parable: “On the bank of a river, I saw a man who was stuck knee-deep in mud. Some people came to help him, and they pulled him in up to his neck.” Abba Anthony said afterward: “Behold, this is truly the kind of person who can heal and save souls!” — The brethren, moved by the elders’ words, bowed before their brother, and, following the fathers’ advice, accepted him back into their midst (Deeds of the Saints, ch. 29).

25. St. Anthony's thought on who can possess true brotherly love is remarkable. He said: A person can never be truly good, no matter how much he may desire it, unless God dwells within him, for no one is good except God alone (Patr. lat. vol. 73, p. 785).

The Ultimate Goal of All Things and the Summit of Perfection

1. This indwelling of God—or life in God—is the ultimate goal of all ascetic labors and the summit of perfection. God Himself revealed this to St. Anthony when he was granted such a revelation in the desert: “There is someone in the city like you, a physician by trade, who gives his surplus to the needy and sings the Trisagion with the Angels every day” (i.e., through the perfection of love for one's neighbor, he lives in God and walks before God). (Life of St. Anthony, ch. 24).

The Perfection of St. Anthony and His Glory in Heaven

1. It was said of Abba Anthony that he was a seer, but, shunning worldly gossip, he did not wish to make this known; both present and future events of the world were revealed to him (Acts of the Saints 30).

2. An elder asked God to let him see the fathers (in glory), and he saw them all except Abba Anthony. He asked the one who was showing him: “Where, then, is Abba Anthony?” The one replied: “Anthony is where God is!” (Life of St. Anthony, ch. 28).

5. An explanation of some of the sayings of St. Anthony the Great, given after his death by an elder

1. *The monks' question:* How should we understand the words of St. Abba Anthony, which he spoke to his disciple Paul when the latter, having left the world, asked to live with him: “If you want to be a monk, go to a monastery where there are many brothers who can support your weakness”?

The Elder's Answer. From this we learn that we must accept into the monastery the frail, the sick, the blind, and the paralyzed—and love them when they devote themselves with joy and zeal to the pursuit of virtue, even though, due to their infirmities, they cannot undertake all the labors. Therefore, those abbots who do not accept frail elderly men—even though it is known that they are of very good character—but willingly accept strong young men to perform various duties in the monastery and to run errands, even though they are insolent and shameless, deserve no small amount of reproach. The blessed interpreter⁹ severely rebukes such abbots in his book on “*the perfection of governance*” (of monasteries), saying: they allow their disciples to remain negligent in matters of virtue, while strongly urging them toward physical and worldly affairs. To those who have taken monastic vows to devote themselves to virtue, they grant no rest or respite from worldly affairs, constantly forcing them to perform such tasks, and they rebuke them, reprimand, ridicule, and condemn them if they do not perform the tasks assigned to them with particular haste—whether due to weakness or, at times, a waning of zeal—even if they are very diligent and zealous in spiritual matters; on the contrary, they lavish great praise on those who devote all their labor and care to worldly affairs, even though they are indolent in the pursuit of virtues. And this diligence on their part does not stem from the virtue of obedience, but from the fact that they love to engage in worldly matters. But worst of all—whether they are lazy or diligent—they are treated as slaves. Abba Pimen, however, said: if, among three cenobites, one observes silence perfectly, another is sick but gives thanks to God, and the third willingly fulfills his obedience, then all three are united in the same spiritual struggle. With these words, this saint showed that in a monastery where many cenobites are gathered, there must be not only those who are physically strong—necessary for carrying out various tasks—but also the infirm brothers who devote themselves to unceasing silence; otherwise, all their labor is in vain.

2. *Question.* Why did Abba Anthony tell Paul, his disciple, “Go and sit in solitude to learn about the battles waged by demons”?

Answer. (Desiring his perfection.) For the perfection of a monk consists in his ability to govern his entire being with his spirit. But such spiritual self-governance comes together with purity of heart; and purity of heart occurs when the mind governs the heart, and the mind is governed by unceasing prayer. The battle against demons, however, takes the form of thoughts and visions, which are more strongly stirred up in solitude and silence.

⁹ True, sayings or rules in general... The book in question has not come down to us.

Note: The Power of Response. Solitude provides constant opportunities for battle against the subtlest thoughts instilled by demons. This battle is waged by the mind in prayer to God, who is present and attentive to the heart, and who governs it. The continuity of this spiritual struggle, amid the variety of experiences in battle, teaches spiritual self-control and cultivates the habit of it; in this lies all the spiritual perfection of the monk and of every Christian.

3. Question: What does Abba Anthony mean when he says, “Just as fish taken out of the water die, so it is with a monk who lingers too long outside his cell”? In what way does a monk die like a fish?

Answer. The life of the soul consists in ceaseless, loving contemplation of God, which is rightly called the life of the soul, embracing and uniting within itself both the mind and the heart. Thus, if a monk wanders about the cities, distracted by sights and conversations, he is deprived of spiritual life and dies, because he turns away from God and forgets Him, and drives from his heart the love for Christ that he had cultivated within himself through much toil while keeping silence in his cell. Moreover, his love for privations and hardships wanes, and he gives himself over to the repose of the flesh and to pleasures—and the purity of his heart is disturbed by the restless movement of images that enter and exit through the senses—sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell—and through speech; all of which then lead him into fornication and other passions, which are the true death and ruin of a monk. Thus, Blessed Anthony spoke well: just as fish die when pulled onto dry land, so does a monk who, having left his cell, spends his time in cities and villages.

4. Question. Abba Anthony says: “Whoever lives in solitude is free from the three battles—that is, the battles of the tongue, sight, and hearing; does only the battle of the heart remain for him?” Please explain these words of the blessed one to us.

Answer. He did not say this to imply that the strife experienced in silence and solitude is less than the strife that arises in communities, where the mind is distracted by sight, hearing, and speech; rather, he shows with these words that those living in solitude are free from the strife caused by the senses—by which others are tormented more than by the strife of the heart stirred up within them by demons. Our fathers withdrew into silence for this very reason—so that the struggles of the heart would not be intensified by the struggles arising from sight, speech, and hearing. For how easily do the brothers (who live in community) fall—those who go out and come in, leaving the monastery and returning to it—because the turmoil of the senses is added to the turmoil of the heart, and so easily do monks who live in silence fall, being troubled only by the strife of the heart, even if strife from the bodily senses should come upon them as well. This is quite fully justified by those brothers (hermits) to whom, while they were living in seclusion, women came for some reason, and for whom, as a result, the struggle of the heart was compounded by the sight of the body and the beauty of the face: they were immediately overcome by the intensifying struggle of the heart and fell. That the battle waged by the emotions of the soul is indeed stronger and more fierce for those who live in solitude than the battle waged by the bodily senses—this can also be seen from the words of Blessed Evagrius, who says that with those monks who live in solitude, the demons wage battle directly on their own, without any intermediary; whereas against those who live in monasteries and are zealous for progress in virtue, they incite and stir up dissolute monks, who are more cruel, more vexing, and more treacherous than anyone else.

5. Question. What is the meaning of the following saying by St. Abba Anthony: “The monk’s cell is the furnace of Babylon, the place of the three youths, among whom was the Son of God, and it is the pillar of fire from which God spoke to Moses”?

Answer. Just as fire has two properties—one being a painfully scorching heat, and the other a joyful light—so too does patient dwelling in the cell have two effects: one burdens and troubles novices in silence, sometimes through extreme exhaustion, sometimes through rebuke, and the other brings joy through success, bringing peace to those who, having overcome their passions, are perfected in purity and are granted luminous visions. The meaning of what was said to them about the three youths—that they saw the Son of God—is as follows: just as Ananias, Azariah, and Misael, when cast into the fiery furnace in Babylon, were not burned or even scorched, because the Angel of God was sent to them to remove their bonds and deliver them from the destructive power of the fire—so too for the brothers living in solitude, the struggle against the passions, stirred up against them by demons, is at first very difficult; yet they are never forsaken by the gracious help of our Lord, the Son of God, who visibly visits them and dwells with them, so that, when with this help they overcome their passions and enemies, He may grant them the grace of perfect love and His radiant glory.

6. Question. What is the meaning of the following saying of Abba Anthony: “One must not repay evil with evil, and if a monk has not yet attained this level, let him keep silence and stillness”? How can one attain this (lack of anger) through silence?

Answer. If a weak brother, who insults his brother with his tongue and harbors hatred for him in his heart, confines himself to his cell and refrains from speaking with people, while at the same time suppressing evil thoughts and constantly devoting himself to prayer and the reading of Scripture, then the grace of peace will come upon him, —his heart will be enlightened, and his spirit will rejoice in God, having been freed from passion. For this man, gazing upon the Cross of the Lord, will be set ablaze with love for Him, and, kissing it, will begin to reflect on how God, according to Scripture, so loved the world that He gave up His only-begotten Son to death for it (John 3: 16), so that, of course, God demonstrated His love for us by the fact that “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5: 8). — If God did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up to death for us—and to such a shameful death on the cross—“*how will He not also graciously give us all things with Him?*” (Romans 8:32)—or what else will He withhold from us? Christ’s great mercy and love toward us urge us not only to realize that we should by no means live for our own desires, but for the One who died for us (2 Cor. 5: 14, 15), but also to look to Jesus—who bore the death of the cross for us and, having endured such humiliation, has again taken His seat at the right hand of God on high—as the source and model of endurance. Therefore, if we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17), and if we endure with Him, we will also reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12). Why does the Apostle Paul exhort us, saying, “Let us fix our eyes, brothers, on the cross of our Lord” (Heb. 12:2)? Look at how much He endured for sinners who were enemies of their own souls! Do not lose heart, then, or let your spirits grow weak simply because you must endure hardship, insults, abuse, and death—which are your due for your love of Him. Ask in your prayers for forgiveness for those who cause you distress, just as the Lord prayed for His crucifiers, saying: “*Father, forgive them*” (Luke 23:34), and just as the blessed Stephen asked our Lord to forgive those who were stoning him, saying, “*Lord, do not hold this sin against them*” (Acts 7:60). If a monk, sitting alone in his cell, reflects in this way, he will be strengthened in spirit, he will master all his passions in the Lord, and not only will he refrain from offending anyone, or being angry with anyone, or repaying evil for evil, but he will rejoice greatly and count it an honor if he happens to suffer insult and injury. This is the level of moral strength a monk attains in his cell through silence, self-examination, and the patient observance of Christ’s commandments—namely, fasting, prayer, contemplation of God, and other virtues practiced in silence. Thus, the blessed Abba Anthony spoke very well: if a monk cannot restrain his tongue from insults, grumbling, and loquacity, and is not strong enough to keep his heart from such lapses, let him at least, as much as he can, devote himself to silence and stillness.

7. Question. Once, some brothers came to Abba Anthony and said to him, “Give us a commandment that we might keep.” He said to them, “It is written in the Gospel: ‘If anyone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other to him’ (Matt. 5:39).” They replied to him, “We cannot possibly fulfill this.” The elder said to them, “If you cannot turn the other cheek, bear the blow to one cheek patiently.” They said, “We cannot do even that.” He said to them again, “If you cannot do even that, at least do not strike back at the one who strikes you.” They said, “We cannot do even that.” Then the great elder said to his disciple, “Prepare a little food for these brothers, for they are sick.” What do these words of the holy father mean?

Answer. He meant to say that there is nothing to be done with such people except to feed them and send them on their way. But since the elder concluded by saying, “You need prayer,” we may infer that by “food” he meant the prayers of the elders, as if to say: “If you can do neither this nor that, then you need prayer for yourselves.” For just as the sick need special food because of the weakness of their stomachs, which cannot tolerate all kinds of food, so too do you, whose minds are so feeble that they cannot fulfill even a small part of our Lord’s commandments, need healing and restoration of your souls—namely, the prayers of the fathers, who could intercede for you.

8. Question. St. Abba Anthony said: “I saw the devil’s nets spread out across the whole earth; I groaned at this and said, ‘Woe to the human race! Who can escape them?’ And they said to me, ‘Humility saves one from them, for they cannot ensnare him.’ Did the saint see these nets—sensually or mentally?” And who were those who told him, “Humility saves one from them, for they cannot ensnare him”?

Answer: Abba Macarius the Great of Egypt, a disciple of Abba Anthony, also saw all the enemy’s wiles in the innermost part of the Scetian Desert, at the same time that Abba Anthony saw them, though in a different form. Saint Macarius saw demons in the form of two men, one of whom was dressed in tattered

clothes with patches of various colors; while the other's body was entirely covered with worn-out clothing, over which was draped a kind of net hung with little bubbles; another figure approached them, covered with wings like a cloak. Abba Macarius saw these with his physical eyes, while St. Abba Anthony saw with the eye of the mind—as one sees a vision—all those snares of the devil that he constantly sets for monks, with which he tries to entangle them, capture them, and prevent them from safely completing their journey along the path of virtue, as it is written: *“The snare of the proud is spread against me, and the snare of the wicked is set against my feet”* (Ps. 139: 5). Thus, he saw that the devil's snares are laid out on the earth in the same way that hunters set theirs. Seeing this, he was astonished and horrified by the multitude of snares and nets; if any beast were to be caught in them, it could not free itself, due to the multitude of different snares and bonds. In this way, the visions of all the bodily and spiritual passions with which the demons battle the monks were revealed to Abba Anthony. And he saw the holy angels, who pointed out to him by name the net of each passion—namely: the net of gluttony or overindulgence, the net of greed, the net of fornication, vanity, pride, and other passions. Moreover, they showed him all the arts and wiles by which the enemy sets his snares and ambushes to hinder the brothers, entangle them, and halt their progress along the great path of God's love. When, struck with horror at the sight of the snares, he groaned and said, “Woe to us, the monks!” “How can we free ourselves and be saved from these snares, so as not to become entangled in them?” The angels said to him, “Humility saves one from all of them, and whoever possesses it will never become entangled in them or fall.” But they did not say that passions and demons are overcome by humility alone: other deeds and feats are also required alongside humility. Humility alone, by itself, will bring no benefit, just as deeds without humility mean nothing: for without it, they are like meat seasoned with earth rather than salt, which spoils easily and perishes. Thus, physical labor, the inner struggle of the mind, silence, and unceasing prayer, combined with perfect humility, overcome all passions and demons, so that the latter are powerless to harm the monk who possesses these virtues, as the angels told Abba Anthony.

9. Question. Abba Anthony said: If we engage in good deeds, we must fear God deeply and humble ourselves greatly before Him, so that He, who knows our weakness, may cover us with His right hand and protect us; for if we become proud, He will remove His protection from us, and we will perish. What is the meaning of this saying of the blessed one?

Answer: We must always be humble, both in times of hardship, sorrow, and strife, and in times of peace and rest from strife. We need humility at all times, for during times of strife it brings us help and gives us the strength to bear the burden of suffering, and during times of peace and rest from strife it protects us from pride and keeps us from falling. Likewise, because of our sloth and the godlessness that ensnares us, we must humble ourselves, for our obvious weakness in this regard will naturally lead to humility and compel us to cast aside all pride. God does not want us to be constantly in danger and distress, but, in His goodness and love for humanity, He shields us and puts an end to the battles of the passions and the ferocity of the demons. Therefore, if during times of struggle and trial we resort to humility because of danger and hardship, but in times of peace and safety from strife we forget God and become puffed up with pride, then He will undoubtedly remove His protection from us, and we will perish in ruin and despair. For there is no time when we do not need humility, since in every place and in all our actions we certainly have a need for it.

10. Question. One of the elders prayed to God to show him all the fathers, and he was granted a vision of them all except St. Abba Anthony. The one who showed them to him said, “Where God is, there is Abba Anthony.” How did he see all the fathers, and why did he not see Abba Anthony?

Answer. Either the elder's mind was raptured into paradise, where he saw the Fathers, or the Fathers themselves came to him, or an angel showed them to him through a vision. Abba Anthony, however, was not visible to him for two reasons: to demonstrate the greatness of St. Abba Anthony's glory, and to humble the elder so that he would not become puffed up with pride at having seen all the Fathers. For in granting his request, God, through this vision of the fathers, obliged him to imitate them; and the fact that he was not deemed worthy to see St. Anthony was meant to suggest—that the elder did not possess sufficient strength to imitate him, thereby providing him with an incentive to suppress his pride and humble himself.

11. Question. Once Abba Ammon the Virgin came to Abba Anthony and said to him, “I see that I have more work to do than you; how is it, then, that your name is more renowned among people than mine?” Saint Anthony replied to him, “It is because I love God more than you do.” With what intention was this said?

Answer. Neither Abba Ammon was boasting of his deeds, nor Abba Anthony of his love, but the intent of their words was this: Since these saints were the first founders of the monastic order and the pioneers of the

desert life, they intended, by mutual agreement, to affirm and show to all monks that the inner order of the mind is superior to physical feats. For this inner order of the mind directs and inspires the monk's soul toward the most perfect love of God, making him worthy of visions and revelations of God's glory. Physical feats free the monk from bodily passions, strengthen him in virtue, give him the power to drive away lusts, and bring purity to the body. And the spiritual struggle arms the soul against demons and the thoughts they instill, and brings purity to the heart, which gains strength from love and becomes worthy of being governed by the Spirit. Not everyone who excels in virtue and loves the Lord needs to be celebrated among people: for behold, Abba Paul, the forefather of the desert fathers and the firstborn among the monks (whom Abba Anthony sometimes called the Prophet Elijah, sometimes John the Baptist, and sometimes the Apostle Paul), was not at all known among people while he was alive. But, as I have already said, those two fathers wished to mutually affirm and teach us which form of asceticism is superior to the other—the physical or the spiritual, consisting in the inner, secret struggle of the mind, in unceasing prayer and contemplation of God, which, when perfected, elevate the monk's mind to a spiritual state consisting of spiritual prayer, wonder at God, contemplation of Him, and the manifestation of the glory of our Lord and God, to whom be praise forever and ever. Amen.

12. Question. St. Abba Anthony said that God does not allow the devil to wage fierce battles against this race, because it is weak. — How so?

Answer. God has compassion on this generation and does not allow it to be too severely oppressed by the devil, since we lack sufficient fervor in our love for God and zeal for good deeds. Therefore, the devil attacks us more weakly because of our weakness and sloth.

13. Question. What do the following words of Abba Anthony mean: "If the mule did not cover the mule's eyes, he would gain nothing; for the mule would fall from dizziness, and the work would cease." In the same way, we too are veiled by divine providence. For we, too, initially do good without seeing it, so that we might not consider ourselves blessed and thus cause our labors to be lost; which is why we sometimes fall into shameful thoughts, so that, upon seeing them, we may reproach ourselves. It is precisely these shameful thoughts that serve as a covering for the small good we do, since a person who reproaches himself will not lose his reward. — Explain to us what is useful in this saying?

Answer. Not all saints are granted visions; they do not even see the good they do or the promises prepared for them, even though they are filled with good deeds and virtues. This is not because God does not rejoice in their virtues or take comfort in their good deeds. That the All-Good One should diminish anything from the reward prepared for the righteous—far be it from Him! But He does this so that virtuous people may not become puffed up with pride, and so that the value of their virtue may not be entirely lost as a result, lest they be deprived of the blessings prepared for them and become estranged from God's grace. Why, then, even though they are doers of good and devoted to virtue—and God protects them—does He nevertheless sometimes allow demons to mock them, to sow shameful thoughts within them, or to instill fear, or to inflict wounds, so that they may recognize their own weakness and always remain cautious and vigilant: for as long as they remain in this world, their life is changeable and fickle. But just as the thought of the good that is prepared for them because of their good deeds sustains in them a zeal for constant good works in order to obtain it, so the awareness of their shortcomings and their weakness turns them away from pride and makes them ready for every kind of humility, and they take every precaution lest they lose their virtue at the very time when they are to receive abundant joy from our Lord Jesus Christ in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

14. Question. When Abba Hellenius of Syria came to Abba Anthony, Abba Anthony, upon seeing him, said, "Welcome, dawn rising in the morning." And Abba Hellenius replied to him, "Greetings to you as well, O radiant pillar who has adorned the universe." — Who is this Hellenius? And why did the blessed one call him that?

Answer. This Hellenius lived during the time of Abba Anthony and was his equal in both spiritual perfection and deeds. Emperor Constantine the Victor praised him, saying: "I thank the Lord Jesus Christ that in my days there are three divine luminaries—the blessed Abba Anthony, Abba Hellenius, and Abba Euchinus." He said this because they far surpassed all the monks who lived and were known at that time. Abba Anthony called him the Morning Star because, just as the Morning Star surpasses all other stars in size and brightness, so Abba Hellenius surpassed all the other monks of his time with the light of grace. And for his part, wishing to show Abba Anthony that he was well aware of the height of his perfection and the greatness of the light of grace bestowed upon him, he called him a luminous pillar that adorned the universe.

15. Question. Abba Anthony said: “We do not succeed because we do not know our own rank and station, and we do not understand what the task we are undertaking requires, yet we wish to attain virtue without effort.” Why, as soon as we encounter temptation where we live, do we move to another place, thinking that there is somewhere where the devil is not present? But whoever has come to realize that there is a battle wages war constantly (everywhere) with God’s help, for our Lord said, “*The kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17:21).—What is He pointing out with these words?

Answer. The meaning of His words is this: People move from one place to another, hoping to find a place where the devil is not present, but when they encounter temptations even where they have moved, they flee to yet another place. But whoever knows that there is a battle fights with God’s help right where he lives and does not seek another place. The meaning of what our Lord said—“*The Kingdom of God is within you*”—is that we, monks who have left the world, taken up our cross according to the commandment of our Lord, and followed Him, must remain in one place and, concerned solely with the salvation of our souls, endure every kind of struggle we encounter there. Out of love for God and for the sake of fulfilling His will—which consists in keeping His commandments—we must, wherever we may be, patiently endure all trials and temptations, whether they come from passions, from demons, or from people. But these people, unskilled in the struggle and unaccustomed to enduring any hardship, rush off to other places, hoping to find rest from the struggle and refuge from their thoughts, moving from one place to another and from one country to another. Why, then, should we remain where we are? And if strife or temptation assails us, let us fast, pray, kneel, and beat our breasts before the cross of our Lord, with tears and a sorrowful heart, asking Him for help and salvation—for He is always with us and dwells within us, as it is written: “*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and He will save those who are humble in spirit*” (Ps. 33: 19), and as the Lord Himself said: “*The Kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17: 21), that is, I dwell within you. For the Kingdom of God is Christ, Who always dwells within us. Blessed Paul also says: “*Do you not know that Christ dwells in you?*” (1 Cor. 3:16). And not only does He dwell in us, but we also abide in Him, as He Himself says: “*Abide in Me, and I in you*” (John 15:4). Therefore, if we dwell in God and are ourselves His dwelling place, let us not forsake our Lord during times of temptation, misfortune, and strife; and when we move to other places, let us not seek help or refuge from foreign lands or places, but let us remain in our own places, imploring the Lord who dwells within us to grant us help and deliver us. At the same time, let us open our hearts to our spiritual fathers and ask for their prayers to help us. Enduring in our places, let us always take refuge in the protection of our Savior, and He will undoubtedly make us victorious in all our battles.

Saint Macarius the Great

Information on the Life and Writings of St. Macarius

The closest successor to St. Anthony’s teaching gift was St. Macarius of Egypt. The accounts preserve only two instances of St. Macarius visiting St. Anthony, but we must assume that these were not the only occasions. It is likely that St. Macarius often had the opportunity to listen to the lengthy discourses of St. Anthony, who, emerging from his solitude, would sometimes speak all night long to the brothers gathered to be edified by him and awaiting him in the monastery, as Cronius attests (Lives, ch. 23). That is why certain instructions of St. Anthony can be heard almost word for word in St. Macarius’s discourses. Anyone reading both in succession will notice this immediately. And one cannot help but acknowledge that this lamp—St. Macarius—was kindled by that great luminary—St. Anthony. The accounts of St. Macarius’s life have not come down to us in their entirety. Everything that could be learned about him is gathered in his biography, included in the edition of his conversations. The most remarkable episode in it is the slander he endured while he was still living not far from the village. What humility, what self-denial, what devotion to God’s will! These traits later characterized the entire life of St. Macarius. Even Satan openly admitted that he was ultimately defeated by St. Macarius’s humility. It also served as a ladder to those lofty degrees of spiritual perfection and gifts of grace that we ultimately see in St. Macarius. From the writings of St. Macarius, we have 50 discourses and an epistle. They have long been published in Russian translation, and there is no need to include them in our collection as they are. We will make a selection from them that would present, in a certain order, the teachings of St. Macarius. For they form a coherent whole and are remarkable in that they explain in detail the central task of Christianity—the sanctification of the fallen soul through the action of the grace of the Holy

Spirit. This is the main point toward which nearly all of his lessons are directed. This is also the approach taken by *Greek Philanthropy*. From St. Macarius, it includes not his discourses but 150 chapters extracted by Simeon Metaphrastes from his discourses, which in our collection comprise seven volumes. But what Metaphrastes did, anyone can do. That is what we are doing as well. St. Macarius does not address the specifics of asceticism. Those to whom he addressed his discourses were already zealous laborers. Therefore, he was primarily concerned only with giving proper direction to these labors, pointing out to them the ultimate goal toward which they should strive, thereby elevating such labors and efforts. This, as already mentioned, is the sanctification of the soul by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Spiritualization is the very essence of the soul. Without it, there is no life. It is the pledge of a future state of light. St. Macarius deals with the fallen soul and teaches it how to emerge from this state of darkness, corruption, and lifelessness into the light, to be healed, and to come alive. Therefore, his teachings are important not only for ascetics but for all Christians in general: for Christianity consists precisely in rising from the fall. This is why the Lord came, and all His salvific institutions in the Church are directed toward the same end. Although he consistently makes a life of renunciation a prerequisite for success in this endeavor, a certain kind of renunciation is also obligatory for the laity. For the desires of the world are enmity toward God. And under such circumstances, what salvation is there? In selecting these teachings, we will follow the order that naturally forms in our minds as we read the discourses of St. Macarius. St. Macarius often traces our thoughts back to our very beginning and depicts the luminous state in which the first man found himself; he does this so that the already gloomy image of the fallen man—which he portrays in the most unattractive terms—may appear all the more bleak. He does both of these things so that God’s boundless mercy—revealed to us in our salvation through the Incarnation of God’s Only-Begotten Son—and the grace of the Most Holy Spirit may appear all the more evident. Yet he presents these three subjects with the aim of stirring in everyone the desire to work out their own salvation and inspiring them with the courage to patiently walk and complete the entire path. This path begins with the formation of a firm, resolute determination—as firm as one’s own life—to follow the Lord; it proceeds through the toil of self-discipline and self-denial; but having thereby attained the tangible working of grace—or, as he says, to the point where the grace of the Holy Spirit is finally revealed in the heart with power and efficacy, it leads to the perfection possible on earth in Christ Jesus our Lord and culminates in a twofold state of the soul in the life to come. Thus, we will gather all the thoughts of St. Macarius the Great under the following headings:

1. The luminous state of the first man.
2. The dark state of the fallen man.
3. Our only salvation—the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Forming a firm resolve to follow the Lord.
5. The state of spiritual struggle.
6. The state of those who have received a sense of grace.
7. The possibility of Christian perfection on earth.
8. The future state after death and resurrection.

Throughout, the words of St. Macarius are quoted verbatim. The compiler adds only the titles. In the quotations, the first number indicates the discourse, and the second indicates the chapter or paragraph of the discourse. It should be noted that there are paragraphs containing more than one idea, which is why they are sometimes quoted more than once.

The Teachings of Saint Macarius the Great on the Christian Life, Selected from His Discourses

1. The Luminous Primordial State

a) The ultimate goal and supreme good of man lies in communion with God. God is pleased to dwell within him, and man finds rest nowhere else but in God. Such is the kinship between man and God according to the original purpose of creation.

1. There is no other such closeness and mutuality as that which exists between the soul and God and between God and the soul. God created various creatures; He created the heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon, water, fruit-bearing trees, and all kinds of animals. But the Lord does not rest in any of these creatures. Every creature is under His authority; yet He has not established a throne within them, nor has He established communion with them. Instead, He took a special delight in a single human being, entered into communion

with him, and dwells within him. Do you see in this the kinship between God and man, and between man and God? (45, 5).

2. Just as God created heaven and earth for man to dwell in, so He created man's body and soul as a dwelling place for Himself, so that He might dwell and find rest in his body as in His own house, having as His beautiful bride the beloved soul, created in His image. Why does the Apostle say, "*We are His house*" (Heb. 3:6)? (49, 5).

3. The High Dignity of Man. Consider the heavens, the earth, the sun, and the moon: the Lord did not choose to rest in any of them, but only in man. Therefore, man is more precious than all creatures—dare I say, not only the visible ones, but also the invisible ones, that is, the ministering spirits. For God did not say of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, "*Let us make them in our image and likeness*" (Gen. 1: 26), but He said this of the rational human essence—that is, the immortal soul. It is written: "*Angelic hosts surround those who fear Him*" (Ps. 33: 8). (15, 20, 41).

4. Therefore, the sensible and prudent soul, having surveyed all creation, finds rest nowhere except in the One Lord. And the Lord favors no one except a single human being (45:5).

5. Just as a wealthy maiden betrothed to marriage, no matter what gifts she receives before the wedding, finds no peace until the marriage union is consummated, so too the soul finds no peace in anything until it attains perfect communion with the Lord. Or just as a hungry infant pays no heed to pearls or expensive garments, but focuses all its attention on the nourishing breasts to taste the milk, so too should you consider the soul (that is, that, setting everything else aside, it seeks to taste God—and only then does it find peace) (45:7).

b) Having such a purpose, man was adapted to it from the very moment of creation. In creation, he was placed at the goal.

6. The soul is a great and wondrous thing. When God created it, He fashioned it in such a way that no vice was implanted in its nature; on the contrary, He created it in the image of the Spirit's virtue, imbuing it with the laws of virtue, discernment, knowledge, prudence, faith, love, and other virtues, in the image of the Spirit (46, 5).

7. He endowed it with understanding, will, and a sovereign mind; He established within it another great refinement; He made it agile, light of foot, and tireless; He granted it the ability to come and go in an instant and to serve Him in thought whenever the Spirit wills. In short, He created her so that she might become His bride and partner, so that He might be united with her, and she with Him in one spirit, as it is said: "*Whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit with the Lord*" (1 Cor. 6:17) (46:6).

8. Just as a husband carefully gathers all kinds of good things into his home, so the Lord gathers and stores up the heavenly riches of the Spirit in His home—the soul and the body (49:4).

c) As a result, the first-created were in God and possessed great advantages and blessings.

9. Before the fall, they were clothed in God's glory... As long as Adam kept the commandment, he was God's friend—and dwelt with God in paradise (12:8).

10. The Word dwelt in Adam, and he had the Spirit of God within him (12:6).

11. The mind, originally pure and abiding in its proper order, contemplated its Lord; and Adam, abiding in purity, reigned over his thoughts and was blessed, enveloped in divine glory (45:1, 15, 23, 1.2, 6).

12. The Word, dwelling within him, was everything to him: knowledge, the sensation of bliss, inheritance, and teaching. And from without, glory rested upon the first-created, so that they did not see their own nakedness (12:7, 10).

13. Man was in honor and purity; he was the ruler of all things, beginning with the heavens; he was able to discern passions; he was alien to demons; he was pure from sin or vice—he was in the image of God (26:1).

d) But this abundance of grace was in no way coercive. Man was free to remain with God and grace or to separate himself from them. He separated himself and fell, just as the spirits had fallen.

14. The Creator fashioned all rational beings—that is, angels, souls, and demons—pure and exceedingly simple. And the fact that some of them turned to evil happened of their own accord: for of their own free will they strayed from right thought (16:1).

15. Visible creatures are bound by a certain immutable nature; they cannot depart from the state in which they were created, and they have no will. But you were created in the image and likeness of God. Just

as God is free and creates whatever He wills, so too are you free. By nature, you are easily changeable (15:20, 21).

16. Our nature is receptive both to good and to evil, to God's grace and to the opposing power. It cannot be compelled (15:23).

17. So too did Adam, of his own free will, transgress the commandment and listen to the deceiver (12:8).

18. Great wealth and a great inheritance were prepared for him. But as soon as he harbored evil thoughts and intentions, he was lost to God (12:1).

2. The Bleak Condition of the Fallen

a) By heeding the deceiver, Adam sold himself to him, and the deceiver, having taken possession of him, filled him with every kind of evil.

1. Adam, having transgressed God's commandment and heeded the wicked serpent, sold and surrendered himself into the devil's possession, and the wicked one took possession of his soul—that beautiful creature. The soul is called the body of deceitful darkness as long as spiritual darkness dwells within it, for it lives and is held there throughout the evil age of darkness, just as the Apostle, speaking of the body of sin and the body of death, says: "*Let the body of sin be put to death*" (Rom. 6:6), and again: "*Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" (Rom. 7:24). The soul is neither of God's nature nor of the nature of wicked darkness, but is a rational creature, filled with beauty, great and wondrous, a perfect likeness and image of God; and the wickedness of dark passions entered into it as a result of sin (1:7).

2. The Evil Prince—the kingdom of darkness—first captivated man, then encircled and clothed the soul with the power of darkness, just as one would clothe a man to make him a king and give him all the royal garments, so that from head to toe he might wear everything royal. Thus the Evil Prince clothed the soul in sin, defiled its entire nature and all of it, enslaved it entirely to his kingdom, leaving not a single part of it free from his power—neither its thoughts, nor its mind, nor its body—but clothed it in the purple of darkness. Just as in the body (when sick) it is not just one part that suffers, but the whole body is entirely subject to suffering, so too has the entire soul suffered from the infirmities of vice and sin. The Evil One has clothed the whole soul—this essential part of man, this essential member of his being—in his malice, that is, in sin; and in this way the body has become suffering and mortal (2:1).

3. When the Apostle says, "*Put off the old man*" (Col. 3:9), he refers to the perfect man, in whom the eyes correspond to the eyes, the head to the head, the ears to the ears, the hands to the hands, and the feet to the feet. For the evil one has defiled and drawn to himself the entire old man—defiled, unclean, godless, and disobedient to God's law—into sin itself, so that he would no longer see as is proper for a human being, but would see with deceit, and hear with deceit, and his feet would hasten to do evil, and his hands would commit lawlessness, and his heart would devise deceit (2:2).

4. The old man has cast off the perfect man and wears the garments of the kingdom of darkness—garments of blasphemy, unbelief, fearlessness, vanity, pride, greed, lust, and other garments of the kingdom of darkness, unclean and vile rags (2:4).

5. This is precisely what the enemy sought to achieve: to wound and darken the inner man—the ruling mind that beholds God—through Adam's transgression. And when heavenly blessings became inaccessible to him, his eyes were opened to vices and passions (20:4).

6. The spirits of malice bind the (fallen) soul with the chains of darkness; therefore, it cannot love the Lord as much as it desires, nor believe as much as it desires, nor pray as much as it desires, because ever since the first man's transgression, opposition—both open and hidden—has taken hold of us in everything (21:2).

b) Seeing this ruinous state, God and the angels took pity on the fallen one.

7. On the day Adam fell, God came and, walking in Paradise and seeing Adam, took pity on him, so to speak, and said: "With such blessings, what evil have you chosen! After such glory, what shame do you now bear! Why are you now so darkened, so disfigured, so frail? After such light, what darkness has covered you!" When Adam fell and died to God, the Creator had compassion on him; the angels, all the powers, heaven, earth, and all creatures mourned his death and fall. For the creatures saw that the one set over them as king had become a slave to the hostile and deceitful darkness. Thus, he clothed his soul in darkness—bitter and deceitful darkness—because the prince of darkness had taken dominion over him. He (Adam) was the one who was wounded by robbers and left half-dead as he traveled from Jerusalem to Jericho (30:7).

c) Yet the truth subjected him to righteous punishment, and he was left like a desolate house.

8. Adam, having transgressed the commandment, was cast out of paradise and brought God's wrath upon himself. Just as God, having once been angered at the Jews, delivered Jerusalem to the shame of its enemies, and those who hated them came to rule over them, and there was no longer any feast or offering there, so, having been angered at the soul for transgressing the commandment, He delivered it to its enemies, the demons and the passions, and they, having deceived it, utterly humiliated it, and there was no longer any feast, incense, or offering presented by the soul to God, because the paths leading to what is noble within it were filled with wild beasts, and reptiles—the deceitful spirits—made their nests there. And just as a house, if its master does not dwell in it, is shrouded in darkness, disgrace, and desecration, and is filled with filth and pus, so too the soul, if its Lord does not rejoice in it with the Angels, is filled with sinful darkness, shameful passions, and all manner of disgrace (12:10, 28:1).

9. Since man, in his disobedience, accepted one oath after another: *"The ground will yield thorns and thistles for you"* (Gen. 3:18), and furthermore: "You shall till the ground, and it will not yield its fruit to you," thorns and thistles have sprung up and grown in the ground of his heart. His enemies have deceitfully stolen his glory and clothed him in shame. His light has been stolen, and he is clothed in darkness. They have slain his soul, scattered and divided his thoughts, and brought his mind down from on high; and the man of Israel has become a slave to the true Pharaoh, who has set over him overseers and inspectors—those who are deceitful in spirit—who compel him, willingly or unwillingly, to do his wicked deeds, to produce rubbish and debris. Having turned man away from the heavenly way of thinking, they brought him down to wicked deeds—material, earthly, and fleeting—and to words, thoughts, and vain reasoning—for the soul, having fallen from its height, encountered a misanthropic kingdom and cruel princes who compel it to build for them sinful cities of vice (47:6).

d) As a result of the Fall, all creation and the entire human race have been subjected to the tyranny of the enemy and the passions.

10. Imagine a king who possesses wealth, and whose servants are ready to serve him, and it so happened that his enemies captured him and took him into captivity. As soon as he is captured and led away, his servants and officials must necessarily follow him. So too was Adam created pure by God to serve Him, and these creatures were given to Adam for his service, because he was appointed lord and king over all creatures. But as soon as the deceitful word found its way to him and spoke to him, Adam first received it with his outward hearing; then it penetrated his heart and took hold of his entire being. And thus, through his captivity, the creatures that served and obeyed him were also taken captive along with him, for through him death reigned over every soul, and as a result of his disobedience, the entire image of Adam was so obliterated that people changed and came to worship demons. For even the fruits of the earth, beautifully created by God, are offered to demons. Bread, wine, oil, and animals are laid upon their altars. They even sacrificed their own sons and daughters to the demons (11:5).

11. Since the time of Adam's transgression, the thoughts of the soul, having turned away from God's love, have scattered throughout this age and become mingled with material and earthly thoughts. But just as Adam, having transgressed the commandment, took into himself the leaven of evil passions, so too those born of him and the entire line of Adam, by inheritance, became partakers of this leaven, and as they gradually matured and grew, sinful passions multiplied in people to such an extent that they extended to adultery, debauchery, idolatry, murder, and other absurd deeds, until all of humanity was corrupted by vices. Evil had grown so much in people that they came to think there was no God; they began to worship lifeless stones and could not even form a concept of God in their minds. To such an extent did the leaven of malicious passions leaven the race of the old Adam (24:2).

12. After man strayed from the commandment and was subjected to the judgment of wrath, sin took him into its dominion and, like a certain abyss of bitterness—both subtle and deep—entered within and took possession of the pastures of the soul down to its deepest recesses. Thus, both the soul and the sin mingled with it are likened to a great tree with many branches and roots in the depths of the earth. Likewise, the sin that entered the soul took hold of its innermost recesses, turned into habit and prejudice, and from infancy onward grows within each person, nurturing and teaching them evil (41:1).

13. Lazarus, whom the Lord raised from the dead—this Lazarus, who was so filled with a terrible stench that no one could approach his coffin—was a likeness of Adam, who had taken into his soul a terrible stench and was filled with darkness and gloom. But when you hear about Adam, about the man wounded by

robbers, and about Lazarus, do not let your mind wander as if over the mountains, but turn inward to your own soul, for you, too, bear the same wounds, the same stench, the same darkness. We are all sons of this tainted race; we all share in that same stench. Whatever infirmity befell Adam has also befallen all of us who are descended from Adam's seed. For, as Isaiah says, the same infirmity has befallen us: "*No scab, no sore, no burning wound—there is no bandage to apply, no ointment, no dressing to make*" (Isa. 1:6). We are afflicted by such an incurable sore (30:8).

14. Just as in Egypt, during the three days of darkness, a son did not see his father, a brother did not see his brother, nor a friend his true friend, because darkness covered them, so too, after Adam transgressed the commandment, he fell from his former glory and submitted to the spirit of the world, and the veil of darkness descended upon his soul, from him until the last Adam, the Lord, man did not see the true Heavenly Father, the merciful and kind Mother—the grace of the Spirit—the sweetest and most longed-for Brother—the Lord—nor his friends and his faithful holy angels, with whom he once rejoiced and celebrated. And not only until the last Adam, but even now, for those upon whom the sun of righteousness—Christ—has not shone, and whose spiritual eyes have not been opened by the true light, —all such are shrouded in the same darkness of sin, are subject to the same influence of sensuality, are liable to the same punishment, and have no eyes with which to see the Father (28:4).

d) The most palpable consequence of the Fall is the confusion that reigns throughout the world.

15. The children of this age are likened to wheat poured into the sieve of this earth, and they are sifted amid the fickle thoughts of this world, amid the ceaseless turmoil of earthly affairs, desires, and the intricate web of material concepts. Satan shakes the souls, and with the sieve—that is, earthly affairs—he sifts the entire sinful human race. Ever since the Fall, when Adam transgressed the commandment and submitted to the crafty prince who took dominion over him, Satan has been sifting all the children of this age with ceaseless, seductive, and turbulent thoughts, bringing them into conflict within the sieve of the earth (5:1).

16. Just as wheat in a winnowing basket is tossed about by the winnower and, being constantly thrown up, is tossed about within it, so the prince of deceit occupies all people with earthly affairs, wavers them, leads them into confusion and anxiety, compels them to indulge in vain thoughts, vile desires, and earthly and worldly ties, ceaselessly ensnaring, bewildering, and capturing the entire sinful race of Adam. And the Lord foretold to the Apostles the future rebellion of the wicked one against them: "*Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed to My Father that your faith may not fail*" (Luke 22:31–32). For this word and declaration, spoken plainly by the Creator to Cain: "*You will be restless and trembling,*" in distress, "on the earth" (Gen. 4:12), secretly serves as a model and likeness for all sinners, because the race of Adam, having transgressed the commandment and become sinful, secretly took upon itself this likeness. People are tossed about by the fickle thoughts of fear, dread, and all manner of confusion, as well as by desires and a multitude of pleasures of every kind. The prince of this world stirs up every soul not born of God, and, like wheat constantly swirling in a winnowing basket, he stirs up human thoughts in various ways, causing everyone to waver and ensnaring them with worldly deceptions, carnal pleasures, fears, and confusion (5:2).

17. And the Lord, showing that those who follow the deceptions and desires of the evil one bear the likeness of Cain's wickedness, and exposing them, said: "*You wish to carry out the desires of your father; he was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth*" (John 8:44). Therefore, the entire sinful race of Adam secretly bears this condemnation: groaning and trembling, you will be tormented in the sieve of the earth by Satan, who sows you there. Just as the entire human race spread across the earth from one Adam, so too has a single passionate corruption permeated the entire sinful human race, and the prince of malice alone is capable of sowing in all of us fickle, materialistic, vain, and rebellious thoughts. And just as a single wind can set all plants and seeds in motion and make them sway, and just as the darkness of night spreads over the entire universe, so the prince of deceit—being a kind of mental darkness of sin and death—storms and whirls the entire human race on earth with a secret and cruel wind, capturing human hearts with fickle thoughts and worldly desires, and filling every soul—not born from above and not having migrated in thought and mind to another age—with the darkness of ignorance, blindness, and forgetfulness, as it is said: "*Our citizenship is in heaven*" (Phil. 3: 20). (5: 3).

e) Everyone has experienced this, but no one knew what this evil was or where it came from, regarding such a state as natural.

18. The visible world, from kings down to beggars, is entirely in turmoil, in disorder, and in strife, and none of them know the reason for this—that is, this manifest evil that arose as a result of Adam's transgression,

this sting of death—because sin, having come as a certain rational power and the very essence of Satan, has sown every kind of evil: it secretly acts upon the inner person and the mind and battles against it with thoughts, yet people do not know that they are being driven by some foreign force; on the contrary, they think that this is natural and that they are acting according to their own reasoning. But those who have the peace of Christ and the illumination of Christ in their very minds know where all this originates (15:47).

19. How many kings from the line of Adam have appeared, who ruled over the whole earth and thought much about their royal dominion! And not one of them, in the midst of such prosperity, was able to recognize the damage that the first man's sin had wrought in the soul and had darkened it; therefore, the soul does not recognize the change that has taken place within it—namely, that the mind is now clothed in shame because of its fall, and, because the eyes of the heart have been blinded, it does not see the glory that our father Adam saw before the fall (45:1).

20. There were idle sages in the world: some of them demonstrated their superiority in philosophy, others amazed with their skill in sophistry, still others displayed their power in rhetoric, and still others were grammarians and poets who wrote histories according to established rules. There were also various artists who practiced the secular arts... And all of these, possessed by the serpent that had taken up residence within them and unaware of the sin dwelling within them, became captives and slaves to the deceitful power and derived no benefit whatsoever from their knowledge and art (45:2).

g) No matter how great the evil resulting from the Fall, it did not completely kill man. Manifestations of spiritual life remained within him.

21. We do not say that man has been entirely lost, destroyed, or dead: he is dead to God, yet lives by his own nature (12:2).

22. Man perished because of his transgression; he became corrupt, and Satan clouded his mind. And in one sense, man is truly dead, but in another, he lives, reasons, and possesses a will (26:1).

23. And after the sin, knowledge remains. (This is clearly evident in the workings of the conscience.) When a robber is brought to court and the trial begins, the prince asks him: "When you committed evil, did you not know that you would be caught and put to death?" And the robber does not dare to say that he did not know, because he was aware of it. Does the adulterer not know that he is doing wrong? Does the thief not know that he is sinning? — So do people, even without Scripture, by their natural understanding, not know that God exists? On that day, it will be impossible for them to say, "We did not know that God exists." For through the thunder and lightning from heaven, it is proclaimed to them: "Do you not know that God exists, who governs all creation?" (12:8–9).

24. It is unjust for some, led astray by false teaching, to claim that man is utterly dead and incapable of doing any good at all (46:3).

25. Man still possesses the freedom that God gave him in the beginning. Just as the perfect are not bound to good by any necessity, so too are those who are mired in sin and have made themselves vessels of the devil not bound to evil (15:38).

26. You are free, and if you wish to perish, your nature is easily changeable. Whoever wishes to do so submits to God, walks the path of righteousness, and masters his desires, for the mind is an adversary and, with a firm resolve, can overcome vicious inclinations and vile desires (15:21).

27. It is in vain, however, to think that one can use one's own freedom to remove the causes of sin from oneself. The freedom available to a person extends to resisting temptation, not to necessarily having power over one's passions when that opportunity arises. For it is said: "*Unless the Lord builds the house and guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain,*" and the builder labors *in vain* (Ps. 126:1). (25:1).

28. Evil acts within us with all its strength and intensity, instilling all manner of impure desires; yet it is not mingled with us in the way that others speak of mixing wine with water, but rather as wheat and tares grow side by side in the same field, or as a robber and the master of the house dwell together in the same house (16:1).

29. When the sun shines and the wind blows, the sun has its own body and its own nature, and the wind has its own nature and its own body. So too has sin mingled with the soul, yet both sin and the soul have their own distinct nature (2:2).

30. A spring pours out clear water, but at its bottom lies silt. If someone stirs up the silt, the entire spring becomes murky. So too, when the soul is disturbed, it merges with vice. And Satan becomes one with the soul; during fornication or murder, the two spirits form a single entity. That is why "*Do not be joined*

together with an idolatrous body” (1 Cor. 6:16). At other times, however, the independent soul acts on its own and repents of its deeds, weeps, prays, and recalls God. And if the soul were always mired in evil, how could it do this? Because Satan, being hard-hearted, does not want people to turn to repentance (16:2).

3. The Lord, the Architect of Salvation

a) The Lord is the only salvation for the fallen. The Lord had mercy and came in the flesh for our salvation. With His blood He washed away our sins; through the grace of the Holy Spirit He renewed our decayed nature and thus made us fit for His heavenly kingdom.

1. The world is likened to a rich man who owns magnificent and vast houses, abounds in silver and gold, various possessions, and all manner of servants, but is suddenly stricken with sickness and infirmity; all his relatives stand before him, and, despite all his wealth, cannot deliver him from his illness. So no worldly prudence, no wealth, nor anything else can deliver a soul steeped in sin from sin; only the coming of Christ can purify the soul and the body (45:3).

2. Since the human race, conceived in lawlessness and born in sin, was estranged from the mother’s womb and remained in error from the mother’s womb after sin began to reign through Adam, the Lamb of God came in His mercy to take away the sins of the world by His own power, first binding the strong one and then plundering the vessels he had gathered as spoils, as it is said: *“You have taken captives captive”* (Ps. 67:19). (Epistle, p. 433).

3. From the time of the transgression of the commandment, Satan and the princes of darkness took up residence in Adam’s heart, mind, and body, as if on their own throne. Why did the Lord finally come and take upon Himself a body from the Virgin? Because if it had pleased Him to come as uncreated Divinity, who could have endured this? Instead, through this instrument—the body—He turned to humanity. And finally, the Lord deposed the evil spirits dwelling in the body from their thrones—that is, from the concepts and thoughts through which they ruled—and purified the conscience, making the mind, the thoughts, and the body a throne for Himself (6:5).

4. God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent, to raise it up, and to fasten it to the top of a tree; and all who had been bitten by serpents were healed by looking at the bronze serpent. The dead serpent overcame the living serpents, for it was a symbol of the Lord’s body. For the Lord took His body, which He had received from Mary, and lifted it up on the cross, stretched it out on the tree, and nailed it there; and the dead body conquered and put to death the serpent that lives and crawls within the heart. Here is a great miracle (11:8–9).

5. No one—neither among the righteous, nor among the fathers, nor among the prophets, nor among the patriarchs—could heal the soul, which was initially afflicted with the incurable wound of harmful passions. Moses came, but he could not provide complete healing. There were priests, offerings, tithes, observance of the Sabbath, new moons, ablutions, sacrifices, burnt offerings, and every other act of righteousness performed according to the law; yet the soul could not be healed or cleansed of the impure flow of evil thoughts, and all its righteousness was powerless to heal man until the Savior came, the true Physician, who heals instantly and gives Himself as the ransom for the human race. He alone accomplished the great and saving redemption and healing of the soul; He freed it from bondage and brought it out of darkness (20:5–6).

6. Human remedies derived from the earth—that is, one’s own righteous deeds alone—could not heal the soul from such an invisible affliction; only through the power of the heavenly and divine nature, the gift of the Holy Spirit—by this one remedy alone—could a person be healed and attain life through the purification of the heart by the Holy Spirit (20:7).

7. Just as a farmer, when he goes out to till the land, must take the tools and clothing suitable for cultivation, so too did Christ, the Heavenly King and true Worker, when He came to humanity, which had been laid waste by vices, clothed Himself in a body and, carrying the cross instead of a tool, cultivated the desolate soul, removed the thorns and thistles from it, uprooted the weeds of sin, and burned all the remnants of its sins with fire. And in this way, having cultivated it with the tree of the cross, He planted within it the most beautiful spiritual garden, which bears every kind of sweet and desirable fruit for God, the Lord (28:3).

8. Christ the Lord renewed the New Covenant, shattering the gates of hell and sin through the cross and His death, delivering the faithful souls, imparting the Comforter within them, and bringing them into His kingdom (38:3).

9. The Law prescribed that a priest take two doves: to slaughter one, and to sprinkle the living one with its blood and let it fly free. This act was a symbol and foreshadowing of the truth. For Christ was slain, and His blood, having sprinkled us, has set us free, because it has given us the wings of the Holy Spirit to soar unhindered in the air of the Godhead (47:2).

10. Our Lord Jesus Christ came precisely to transform, renew, and restore our nature, and to recreate this soul—which had been brought low by passions as a result of sin—by dissolving it anew with the Divine Spirit. He came to make those who believe in Him a new mind, a new soul, new eyes, new ears, a new spiritual tongue—in a word, new people (44:1).

11. Just as the enemy, having taken a person who had submitted to him, made that person new for himself by burdening him with harmful passions, anointing him with the spirit of sin, and pouring into him the wine of every lawlessness, so too the Lord, having delivered man from sin, made him new by anointing him with the Holy Spirit (44:2).

12. Just as in the visible world no one can by himself swim across or cross the sea unless he has a light and maneuverable ship—one made of wood that can glide over the waters—for whoever sets out across the sea will drown and perish, so too it is impossible for the soul by itself to cross, overcome, and swim across the bitter sea of sin, the impassable abyss of wicked forces and dark passions, unless it receives into itself the agile, heavenly, and light-winged Holy Spirit, who tramples upon and overcomes all wickedness (44, 6).

b) Having provided salvation, the Lord desires that those who wish to be saved may be saved, but He compels no one.

13. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having taken upon Himself the care for the salvation of mankind, accomplished the entire plan of salvation and from the very beginning provided for it through the Fathers, the Patriarchs, the Law, and the Prophets; and finally, having come Himself and disregarding the shame of the cross, He endured death. And all His labor, all His care, was so that from Himself, from His own nature, He might beget children by the Spirit, deeming it good that they might be born from above through His Divinity. And just as earthly fathers grieve if they do not have children, so too the Lord, having loved the human race as His own image, desired to beget them from His divine seed. And if some do not wish to accept such a birth and be born of the loins of the Spirit of God, then this is a great sorrow to Christ, who suffered and endured for them in order to save them (30:2).

14. The Lord desires that all people be made worthy of this birth, for He died for all and called all to life. And life is birth from God from above. For without this birth, it is impossible for the soul to live, as the Lord says: *“Unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3). Therefore, all those who have believed in the Lord and, having come forward, have been granted this birth, bring joy and great gladness in heaven to the parents who gave them birth, and all the angels and holy powers rejoice over the soul born of the Spirit and made spirit (30:3).

15. A farmer sows seeds everywhere and desires that they all bear fruit; but then he comes with his sickle and grieves if he finds no fruit. So too does the Lord desire that His word be sown in human hearts. But just as a farmer grieves over a barren field, so the Lord grieves over a heart that is barren and bears no fruit (32:11).

16. Just as if a king, finding a poor and sickly man, were not ashamed of him, but began to heal his wounds with medicinal ointments, brought him into his palace, clothed him in purple and a diadem, and made him a companion at his table—so too the heavenly King, Christ, having come to the sickly man, healed him and admitted him to His royal table; moreover, without coercing his will but acting upon him through persuasion, He raised him to such honor (15:28).

17. It is written in the Gospel that the Lord sent servants to summon those who were willing and to announce to them: *“My supper is ready”* (Matt. 22: 4), but those who were invited refused and said: one—*“I have bought a yoke of oxen,”* another—*“I have married a wife”* (Luke 14: 19–20). You see—the one who invited them was ready, but those invited turned away, and, of course, they were to blame for themselves. You see, the Lord has prepared a kingdom for them; He calls them to enter, but they do not want to (15:29).

18. The Lord ceaselessly knocks at the doors of our hearts, so that we may open them to Him, and He may enter and rest in our souls, and make His dwelling within us. For He says: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him”* (Rev. 3:20). For this reason, He was pleased to suffer greatly, delivering His body to death and redeeming us from bondage, so that, having come to our soul, He might make His dwelling there. For His food, drink, clothing, shelter, and rest are all

found in our souls. Therefore, He constantly knocks at the door, desiring to enter us. Let us, then, receive Him and bring Him into our innermost being, for to us, too, He is food, drink, and eternal life. And every soul that has not received Him into itself and has not given Him rest within itself now—or rather, has not found rest in Him—has no inheritance with the saints in the kingdom of heaven and cannot enter the heavenly city. You Yourself, Lord Jesus Christ, bring us into it! (30:9).

4. Forming a Firm Resolution to Be Saved in the Lord

The soul's journey toward salvation begins with the formation of a desire for salvation and a firm resolve to achieve it in the Lord. The Lord has accomplished our salvation, has prepared everything for it, and desires that everyone be saved. All that is required is for a person to take the first step and begin the process of salvation.

a) Our desire is required as a necessary condition.

1. Human beings are by nature endowed with a purpose, and it is this that God seeks. And so He commands that a person first understand, and upon understanding, love and choose by their own will. But to put a thought into action, to undertake a task, or to accomplish a deed—this is the grace of the Lord, given to those who desire it and believe. Therefore, the human will is, as it were, an essential condition. If there is no will, God Himself does nothing, even though He is able to do so by His own freedom. Therefore, the accomplishment of a deed by the Spirit depends on the will of man. Again, if we give our full will, then the God who is wondrous in all things and utterly incomprehensible attributes the entire deed to us (37, 10).

2. Just as the woman with the issue of blood, though she could not be healed and remained afflicted, nevertheless had legs to come to the Lord and, having come, receive healing—so too the blind man, though he could not come and approach the Lord because he could not see, nevertheless sent out a cry that traveled faster than messengers: *"Son of David, have mercy on me"* (Mark 10:47)—and in this way, having believed, he received healing when the Lord came to him and gave him sight. So too, the soul, though scarred by the sores of shameful passions, though blinded by the darkness of sin, nevertheless has the will to cry out to Jesus and call upon Him, that He may come and grant the soul eternal salvation (20:7).

3. Just as the blind man, had he not cried out, and the woman with the issue of blood, had she not come to the Lord, would not have been healed, so too, if anyone does not approach the Lord of his own free will and with all his heart, and does not implore Him with the certainty of faith, he will not receive healing. For why were they healed immediately, while we have not yet been healed of our hidden passions? Because of our unbelief, because of our wavering, because we do not love Him with all our hearts and do not believe in Him sincerely, we have not yet received spiritual healing and salvation. Therefore, let us believe in Him and truly draw near to Him, so that He may soon bring about true healing within us. For He has promised to give *"the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him"* (Luke 11:13), to open the door to those who knock, and to be found by those who seek Him (Matthew 7:7). And *"He who promised"* is not a liar (Titus 1:2). (20:8, cf. 45:2).

4. Although an infant is powerless to do anything or cannot walk on its own to its mother, it nevertheless moves, cries out, and weeps as it seeks its mother. And the mother takes pity on it; she is glad that the child is seeking her with effort and cries. And since the infant cannot go to her, the mother herself—overcome by love for the infant after its long search—approaches it and, with great tenderness, takes it up, caresses it, and feeds it. The same does the philanthropic God with the soul that comes and seeks Him. But driven even more by His inherent love and His own goodness, He draws near to the rational soul and, according to the words of the Apostle, becomes *"one spirit"* with it (1 Cor. 6:17). (46, 3).

5. The Lord is merciful and long-suffering, awaiting our conversion; and if we sin, He bears with it in the hope of our repentance; and if we fall, He is not ashamed to receive us again, as the Prophet said: *"Does not one who falls rise again? Or does not one who turns away return?"* (Jer. 8:4). As soon as we come to our senses and acquire a good disposition, let us turn to Him quickly and in the right way to seek His help; and He is ready to save us, for He awaits the fervent striving of our will toward Him—to the best of our ability—a striving born of the free choice of faith and zeal, while He Himself brings about all progress within us. Therefore, having cast off all prejudice, indifference, and laziness, let us strive to become courageous and ready to follow in His footsteps; let us not put this off day after day, led astray by vice, for we do not know when our departure from this life will come (4:17).

b) How desire is formed.

aa) Awakening from God. The Lord instructs the soul invisibly, sometimes through misfortunes, sometimes through His direct influence, as with the Apostle Paul; but the universal herald of conversion is the Word of God.

6. (A person who is in sin) God is pleased to bring back to life, and He exhorts him to weep and repent. And if a person continues to do this (to mourn over himself), then God persuades the one who repents of his past transgressions to weep again and offer repentance (so that he may mourn over his entire life in detail). (15:15).

7. When, for the sake of God's building, you find yourself in sorrows, sufferings, and afflictions, then what you consider unpleasant for yourself actually serves the good of your soul. If misfortunes befall you, you begin to reason with yourself: "I am unhappy in the world; I will renounce the world and serve God." It may happen that, having reached this thought, you hear the command: "*Sell your possessions*" (Matt. 19:21), hate worldly fellowship, and serve God. Then you begin to give thanks for your misfortune in the world, for the fact that, because of this, you find yourself obeying Christ's command. Finally, if you have changed your mind to some extent regarding the visible world and have withdrawn from the world and from carnal fellowship, then you must also change in your mind, transforming carnal wisdom into heavenly wisdom. Then you begin to reflect on that very commandment you have heard, and you still find no rest, but take upon yourself only the care and labor of acquiring what you have heard (32:7).

8. How was St. Paul captured by God? Just as a rebel, having taken someone captive, leads them away to himself, and is then himself captured by the true King, so too did Paul, when the rebellious spirit of sin was at work within him, persecute and plunder the Church; but since he did this out of ignorance, not out of opposition to God, but as if striving for the truth, the Lord did not spurn him but caught him. The heavenly and true King, having graced him in an ineffable way, enabled him to hear His voice and, striking him on the face as a servant, granted him freedom. Behold the Lord's goodness and how, in the blink of an eye, He can transform souls that are attached to vice and hardened, and bestow upon them His goodness and peace (18:8).

9. Just as a king, having written letters to those to whom he wishes to grant his decrees and gifts, makes it known to all: "Hurry to come to me and receive my royal gifts"—and if they do not come and do not receive them, then reading the letters will be of no benefit to them, but rather they will become liable to death for not having wished to come and receive honor from the king's hands; so too, God the King has offered the Divine Scriptures to people as letters, proclaiming to them that those who call upon God and believe may ask for and receive the heavenly gift from the Hypostasis of His Divinity. For it is written: "*that we may become partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4). But if a person does not come, does not ask, and does not accept, then he will derive no benefit from reading the Scriptures; on the contrary, he will become liable to death for refusing to accept from the Heavenly King the gift of life, without which it is impossible to obtain immortal life (39).

bb) The struggle within oneself to incline the will toward the call.

10. A person does not immediately become worthy of this blessed honor the moment he hears the word of God. By asserting the opposite, you deprive a person of his free will and deny the existence of a countervailing force that opposes the mind. We, however, say that the one who hears the word is brought to contrition, and then begins to train and learn the art of battle; he struggles and strives against Satan, and after a long contest and struggle, he emerges victorious and becomes a Christian (that is, he resolves to be a strict follower of Christ). (27, 20).

bb) Ideas and convictions that influence the inclination of the will. In this struggle with oneself, the mind gathers various motivating and compelling ideas of truth and convictions—capable of stirring and inspiring. St. Macarius places foremost here the ideas of what God has done for our salvation and the promises with which He has surrounded this work. He returns to this very often in various turns of phrase.

11. Delve into the rational essence of the soul, and do so with all your heart. The immortal soul is a precious vessel. Behold how vast are heaven and earth, yet God does not favor them, but only you. Behold your nobility and dignity, for He did not send angels, but the Lord Himself came as your advocate to call back the lost and wounded, and to restore to you the original image of the pure Adam. God Himself came to intercede for you and deliver you from death. So stand firm, and imagine what providence God has in store for you (26, 115. 28).

12. Imagine that a king, having found some poor young girl dressed in rags, was not ashamed, but removed her filthy clothes, washed away her darkness, adorned her with bright robes, and made her a

companion and participant in the king's banquet and feast. So too did the Lord find a soul that was wounded and crushed; He healed her, stripped her of her blackened garments and the shame of vice, clothed her in royal, heavenly robes—divine, radiant, and glorious garments, placed a crown upon her, and admitted her to the royal banquet for joy and gladness (27:3).

13. Therefore, Christianity is not something trivial; it is a great mystery. Recognize, then, your nobility—namely, that you are called to royal dignity, that you *are* “*a chosen race and a holy nation*” (1 Peter 2:9). The mystery of Christianity is extraordinary to this world. The visible glory and wealth of a king are earthly, perishable, and transient, but that kingdom and that wealth are divine, heavenly, glorious, never passing away, and never ceasing. For in the heavenly Church, we reign with the heavenly King, and just as He Himself is the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), so too are those who reign with Him firstborn (27:4).

14. The promises made to Christians are great and inexpressible, and so great that all the glory and splendor of heaven and earth, along with their other adornments, diversity, riches, beauty, and the delights of the visible world, cannot even compare to the faith and riches of a single soul. So, with so many incentives and promises from the Lord, how can we not desire to devote ourselves entirely to the Lord, to consecrate ourselves to Him, having renounced all else according to the Gospel, and to love Him alone with our whole soul, loving nothing else besides? All this has been granted to us—what a glory indeed! How many times has the Lord looked upon us since the days of the Fathers and the Prophets! How many promises have been proclaimed! How many exhortations! How gracious the Lord has been toward us from the very beginning! Finally, at His coming, He demonstrated His ineffable goodness toward us through the Cross, so that He might lead us who have turned to Him into life. Yet we still cling to our own desires, to our love for the world, to our evil inclinations and habits, and through this we prove ourselves to be of little faith or even faithless! Yet even with all this, the Lord remains merciful toward us, invisibly protecting and comforting us; He does not abandon us to the vices and deceptions of the world because of our sins, and through His great goodness and long-suffering, He does not allow us to perish, still hoping that we will turn to Him someday (4:17–18).

15. What do the words mean: “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the human heart what God has prepared for those who love Him*” (1 Cor. 2:9)? At that time, the great righteous ones, kings, and prophets knew that the Savior would come, but they did not know, nor had they heard, nor had it ever occurred to them that He would suffer and be crucified, that blood would be shed on the cross, that there would be baptism by fire and the Holy Spirit, that bread and wine would be offered in the church, a symbol of His flesh and blood, that those partaking of the visible bread would spiritually partake of the Lord's flesh, that the Apostles and Christians would receive the Comforter and be clothed with power from on high, and be made partakers of unity with the Holy Spirit. The prophets and kings did not know this, nor did it ever occur to them (27, 17).

16. Since such blessings have been prepared for us, such promises have been given, and such has been the Lord's favor toward us, let us not delay or falter in hastening toward eternal life, and let us devote ourselves entirely to pleasing the Lord (49:5).

17. Hearing about the dignity of the soul and how precious this rational being is, do you understand that heaven and earth are passing away, but you are called to sonship, to brotherhood, and to be the bride of Christ? In the visible world, everything that belongs to the bridegroom also belongs to the bride; so everything that belongs to the Lord is entrusted to you. For He Himself came to intercede for you, to call you. But you have no conception of yourself and do not understand your nobility; therefore, a spiritual man rightly laments your fall, saying: “*Man, though exalted, does not understand; he is like senseless cattle and becomes like them*” (Ps. 48:21). (16:13). Following *this*, he offers other exhortations: that our goal is to be with our kindred, that is, with the Lord; and especially, that we are well only when we follow the Lord, and that there is no worse state than when we do not follow Him.

18. If you lift your eyes to the sun, you will find that the sun's disk is in the heavens, while its light and rays descend upon the earth, and all the power of its light and splendor is directed toward the earth. So too, the Lord sits at the right hand of the Father, above every principal and authority, yet His eye is fixed on the hearts of people dwelling on earth, so that He may lift up those who await His help to the place where He Himself dwells. For He says, “*Where I am, there shall My servant be also*” (John 12:26). But speechless animals are far wiser than we are, for each of them associates with its own kind: wild animals with wild animals, and sheep likewise with their own kind. Yet you do not return to your heavenly kinship—that is, to the Lord—but in your thoughts you agree with and incline toward evil thoughts, becoming an accomplice to

sin, waging war alongside it against yourself and thus delivering yourself as prey to the enemy, just as a bird caught by an eagle is devoured, or a sheep by a wolf, or as a child dies after reaching out its hand to a snake and being bitten by it (45, 6).

19. The soul belongs to the one with whom it is in communion and unity through its desires. Therefore, either—having within itself the light of God, living in it, and adorning itself with every virtue—it partakes of the light of rest, or—having within itself the darkness of sin—it is subject to condemnation. A soul that desires to live with God in eternal rest and light must die to its former deceitful darkness and pass into another life for divine formation. Hearing this, examine yourself to see if this has taken place within you. And if not, then you must grieve, weep, and be in anguish unceasingly. As one who is still dead to the kingdom, cry out to the Lord and ask with faith that you may be made worthy of true life. God, having created this body—not from His own nature, nor from the body itself—did not grant it the ability to derive life, food, drink, clothing, or shoes; on the contrary, having created the body naked in and of itself, He arranged for it to draw everything necessary for life from the outside, and it is impossible for the body to live without what exists outside of it—that is, without food, without drink, without clothing. But if it were limited to what is inherent in its nature, without deriving anything from the outside, it would be destroyed and perish. In the same way, the soul, which does not possess the light of God within itself, though created in the image of God (for God so ordained and willed that it might have eternal life), receives spiritual food and spiritual drink not from its own nature, but from His Divinity, from His own Spirit, from His own light, and heavenly garments, which constitute the true life of the soul (1:8, 10).

20. Just as in the body, as stated earlier, life does not come from the body itself but from that which is outside it—that is, from the earth—and without what exists outside it, the body cannot live; so too, if the soul is not yet reborn into that land of the living, and you do not there receive spiritual nourishment and grow spiritually, flourishing before the Lord, and do not clothe its Divinity in the ineffable robes of heavenly beauty, then without that nourishment it is impossible for it to live by itself in delight and rest. For the nature of God possesses the bread of life, He who said, *“I am the living bread”* (John 6:35), *“and living water”* (John 4:10), *“and wine that gladdens the heart of man”* (Ps. 103:15), and *“the oil of joy”* (Ps. 44:8), and the manifold nourishment of the heavenly Spirit, and the light-bearing heavenly garments bestowed by God. This is what constitutes the heavenly life of the soul. Woe to the body when it remains confined to its natural state, for it decays and dies. Woe also to the soul if it remains confined to its natural state alone, without communion with the Divine Spirit, for it dies, having failed to partake of eternal divine life. Just as people despair over the sick when their bodies can no longer take in food, and all their loved ones—friends, relatives, and those dear to them—weep for them, so too do God and the holy angels regard as worthy of tears those souls who do not partake of the heavenly food of the Spirit and do not live in incorruption (1:11).

21. Therefore, if your inner self has experienced and unquestionably come to know all this, then you are truly living eternal life, and your soul even now rests with the Lord; you have indeed acquired and received this from the Lord so that you may live the true life. But if you do not recognize any of this within yourself, then weep, mourn, and lament, for to this day you have not yet acquired eternal and spiritual riches; to this day you have not yet received true life. Therefore, be contrite over your poverty, imploring the Lord day and night, for you are in a terrible state of sinful destitution. Oh, if only someone would acquire even this sorrow over their poverty! Oh, if only we did not spend our time in carelessness, as though we were already sated! Whoever grieves and seeks, and persistently asks the Lord, will more quickly receive deliverance and heavenly riches, as the Lord said, concluding His parable about the unjust judge and the widow: *“How much more will God bring about justice for those who cry out to Him day and night? I tell you, He will bring about justice for them speedily”* (Luke 18:7–8). (1:12).

22. The entire coming of the Lord was for the sake of a person lying dead in the tomb of darkness, sin, an unclean spirit, and evil powers, so that the Lord might now, in this age, raise this person from the dead and give him life, cleanse him of all darkness, enlighten him with His light, and clothe him in His heavenly garments of Divinity. At the resurrection of the bodies—whose souls have already been raised and glorified—these bodies too will be glorified; they will be enlightened by the soul, which is already enlightened and glorified, and will be clothed in a heavenly dwelling not made by human hands, in the glory of the Divine light. See how inexpressible and incomprehensible are the glories of God! It is impossible to express or describe the immeasurable, boundless, and incomprehensible riches of Christians. Therefore, one must

approach the Christian life with the utmost care and accept that wealth, for the inheritance and portion of Christians is God Himself. For it is said: *"The Lord is my portion and my cup"* (Ps. 15:5). (34, 2. 3).

23. Just as meat without salt rots, becomes filled with a terrible stench, and because of the unbearable stench everyone turns away from it, and worms crawl in the rotten meat, finding food there, devouring it, and nesting in it, but as soon as salt is sprinkled on it—the worms that fed on the meat are exterminated and perish, and the foul odor ceases, because it is the nature of salt to exterminate worms and destroy foul odors; in the same way, every soul that is not salted by the Holy Spirit, that has no part in the heavenly salt, that is, God's power, rots and becomes filled with the great stench of wicked thoughts; therefore, the face of God turns away from the terrible stench of vain thoughts, darkness, and passions dwelling in such a soul, and evil and dreadful worms—that is, wicked spirits and dark forces; they feed, nest, and crawl there, devouring and corrupting it. For it is said: *"My wounds have become foul and festering"* (Ps. 37:6). But as soon as the soul turns to God, believes, and asks for the salt of life—the good and benevolent Spirit—the heavenly salt that has descended exterminates the dreadful worms within it, destroys the harmful stench, and purifies the soul through the power of its action. And thus, when the true salt has made it healthy and unharmed, it is once again put to use and service for the heavenly Lord. That is why, in the Law, to signify this, God commanded that every offering be seasoned with salt (Lev. 2:13) (1:5).

24. Just as in the visible world, whoever is naked suffers great shame and disgrace, and friends turn away from friends, and relatives from their own, if they are naked, and children, upon seeing their father naked, averted their eyes so as not to look at their father's naked body, approached, *"looking backward,"* and covered him, averting their eyes (Gen. 9:23); so too does God turn away from souls who are not clothed with full assurance in the robe of the Spirit, who have not clothed themselves in the Lord Jesus Christ in power and truth (20:1).

25. The very first man, seeing himself naked, was ashamed. Such dishonor lies in nakedness! If even physical nakedness brings such shame, how much more is the soul—which is stripped of divine power and does not wear, nor is it clothed in all truth, the ineffable, imperishable, and spiritual garment of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—covered with shame and dishonor by the passions. And everyone who is stripped of that divine glory must be just as ashamed of himself and aware of his dishonor as Adam was when he was physically naked: and although he made himself a garment of fig leaves, he nevertheless bore shame, aware of his poverty and nakedness. Therefore, let such a soul ask of Christ, who gives the garment and clothes it with glory in unspeakable light, and let it not make for itself a garment out of vain thoughts, nor, deluding itself with its own righteousness, think that it possesses the garment of salvation (20:2).

26. Just as a house in which the master himself is present is filled with every kind of adornment, beauty, and splendor, so too is the soul that has its Lord within it—and in which He dwells—filled with every kind of beauty and splendor, for the Lord, with His spiritual treasures, is its inhabitant and ruler. But woe to that house whose master is absent and in which there is no lord, for as it falls into ruin and becomes desolate, it is filled with all manner of impurity and disorder; there, according to the word of the Prophet, *"syrini and demons"* will take up residence (Isa. 13: 21), for in a deserted house wild cats, dogs, and all manner of filth find a place for themselves. Woe to the soul that does not rise from its grievous fall and harbors within itself those who persuade and compel it to remain at enmity with its Bridegroom, intending to corrupt its thoughts and turn it away from Christ (33:3).

gg) Through these suggestions, the soul is ready to yield to the call to follow the Lord, but thoughts arise that we still have time to do so, and they undermine the desire. Saint Macarius wards them off with powerful warnings of the danger of postponing the work of salvation. God's long-suffering may run out—and then destruction is inevitable.

27. I fear that for us, who live neglecting everything and are led by prejudices, the Apostolic saying may eventually come true, namely: *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's goodness leads you to repentance"* (Rom. 2: 4)? But if, in the face of His long-suffering, kindness, and gentleness, we multiply our sins and, through our negligence and disregard, bring upon ourselves the most severe condemnation, then the words of the Apostle will be fulfilled in us: *"But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"* (Rom. 2:5). For God's goodness is great and unfathomable, and His long-suffering toward the human race is inexpressible—provided only that we wish to come to our senses and strive to turn wholly to God, so that we may attain salvation (4:19).

28. And if you wish to know God's long-suffering and His great goodness, we can learn this from the divinely inspired Scriptures. Look at the Israelites, from whom came the fathers to whom the promises were made—"from whom Christ came according to the flesh, and the law and the covenant" (Rom. 9:4-5)—how often did they sin? How many times did they stray? And God did not abandon them forever, but for a short time, for their own good, He subjected them to punishment, desiring to soften their hard-heartedness through suffering; He turned them back, urged them on, sent prophets to them, and how long was He patient with them when they sinned and offended Him? He welcomed those who repented with joy, and when they fell away again, He did not abandon them, but through the prophets called them to repentance; and although they repeatedly turned away from Him and returned to Him, He welcomed them graciously each time, receiving them with love, until they finally fell into a great sin, laying hands on their own Lord, whom, according to the tradition of the fathers and the holy Prophets, they had been expecting as their Redeemer, Savior, King, and Prophet. For when He came, they did not accept Him, but rather subjected Him to great humiliation and ultimately condemned Him to death on the cross. And by this great insult and egregious crime, their sins, having multiplied, reached their fullness; therefore, they have been utterly forsaken, with the Holy Spirit having withdrawn from them when the temple curtain was torn. Therefore, their temple, handed over to the pagans, was destroyed and laid waste, according to the Lord's decree: "*Not one stone will be left upon another that will not be thrown down*" (Matt. 24:2). And thus, they were decisively handed over to the Gentiles and scattered throughout the earth by the kings who had taken them captive at that time, and they were commanded never to return to their own land (4:20).

29. So too today, God—who is merciful and good toward each of us—shows His long-suffering, even though He sees repeated offenses from each of us; yet He remains silent, waiting to see if a person will come to their senses in time and change their ways so as no longer to offend Him, and with great love and joy He receives those who turn away from sin. For He says: "*There is joy over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:10), and also: "*It is not the will of My Father that even one of these little ones should perish*" (Matthew 18:14)—the very least among them. But if anyone, in the face of God's great mercy and long-suffering—when God does not subject him to punishment for every sinful transgression, whether secret or open, but seeing it remains silent, as if awaiting repentance—has himself fallen into great negligence, begins to add sin upon sin, adding carelessness to carelessness, building one transgression upon another, and filling up the measure of sins, then he finally falls into such a sin from which he cannot escape, but is crushed and, having surrendered to the evil one, perishes completely (4:21).

30. This was the case with the people of Sodom. Having sinned greatly and refusing to repent, they finally, through their evil intent against the angels, fell into such a sin that there was no longer any room for repentance; rather, they were utterly rejected, because they had filled and even exceeded the measure of sin. And so, by God's judgment, they were consumed by fire. So it was in the time of Noah as well; having fallen into sin repeatedly and failing to repent, they went so far as to corrupt the entire earth. Likewise, toward the Egyptians, who greatly offended God and sinned against His people, God was still merciful; He did not inflict such punishments upon them as to utterly destroy them, but only as a lesson to prompt them to conversion and repentance, He dealt them light blows, revealing His long-suffering and awaiting their repentance. But they, having sinned greatly against God's people—sometimes turning back, sometimes repenting of that, and then becoming entrenched in their ancient unbelief born of wicked willfulness, and having burdened God's people with hard labor—finally, when God, through Moses and by means of many miracles, led the people out of Egypt, committed a great sin by pursuing God's people. Therefore, divine judgment finally destroyed and annihilated them, drowning them in the waters, having deemed them unworthy of visible life (4:22).

31. We have expounded on this, beloved, confirming it with thoughts drawn from Scripture, that we must turn to the Lord as soon as possible and hasten to Him, Who is merciful toward us and waits for us to completely turn away from all deceit and evil prejudice; and He receives those who turn to Him with great joy—we have expounded on this, I speak of this all the more so that our neglect may not increase day by day, nor our sins multiply within us, and through this we may not bring God's wrath upon ourselves. Therefore, let us strive, turning to Him with a sincere heart, to draw near to God; and since despair is a suggestion of malice and deceit, let us not despair of salvation when recalling past sins—for it is precisely these that lead a person to despair, inaction, carelessness, and complacency—so that, having turned and come to the Lord, he might not receive salvation through the Lord's great mercy toward the human race (4:24).

dd) Meanwhile, just as the soul is thus approaching the resolve to begin the work of salvation, the enemy hurls at it his final, fiery arrows of despair and hopelessness.

32. It happens that Satan speaks to you in your heart: “Look at all the evil you have done; look at the madness that fills your soul; you are so burdened with sins that you can no longer be saved.” He does this to plunge you into despair, because your repentance is displeasing to him. For as soon as sin entered through transgression, it converses with the soul at every moment, just as one person speaks to another. Answer him, too: “You have the testimony in the Lord’s Scripture: ‘I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he should repent, turn from the way of the wicked, and live’ (Ezek. 33:11). For this is why He came down—to save the sinful, to raise the dead, to give life to those who were dead in their sins, and to enlighten those who are in darkness.” And indeed, having come, He called us to sonship, to the holy and peaceful city, to life that never ends, to imperishable glory—provided only that we bring our beginning to a good end, abide in poverty, wandering, and suffering, and never cease to ask God, persistently knocking at the door. Just as the body is close to the soul, so too is the Lord near and ready to come and open the locked doors of the heart, and to grant us heavenly riches. He is good and loving toward mankind, and His promises are not false, provided only that we seek Him with patience until the end (11:15). 99.

33. Imagine the Persian camp and the Roman camp, and behold, two young men, both equally strong and filled with courage, have come forth from them and are engaged in battle. So the opposing forces of strength and reason are equally matched and possess equal power: just as Satan tempts and entices the soul into his will through flattery, so too does the soul resist and disobey him in everything, because both forces can only incline, not compel, toward evil or good. It is to such a will that God’s help is given, and through this struggle it can obtain weapons from heaven, with which it will defeat and eradicate sin; for the soul can resist sin, but cannot defeat or eradicate evil without God. But those who claim that sin is like a mighty giant, while the soul is like a youth, speak wrongly. For if such a disparity existed—if sin were likened to a giant and the soul to a youth—then the Lawgiver would be unjust, He who gave man the law to wage war against Satan (27:22).

34. If, however, it seems to us as though it were impractical and impossible to turn away from the multitude of sins that have overcome us—(and such a thought, as we have already said, is a suggestion of malice and serves as an obstacle to our salvation)—then let us remind ourselves and not overlook the fact that how the Lord, having come to us in His goodness, gave sight to the blind, healed the paralyzed, cured every disease, raised the dead—whose bodies had already begun to decay and disintegrate—restored hearing to the deaf, cast out a legion of demons from a single man, and restored sanity to one who had fallen into such demonic possession. All the more so will He transform the soul that turns to Him, seeks His mercy, and asks for His help; He will lead it to the chastity of dispassion, the cultivation of every virtue, and the renewal of the mind, granting it health, spiritual insight, and peace of mind—freeing it from the blindness, deafness, and the deadness of unbelief, ignorance, and fearlessness—and will raise it up to chastity, virtue, and purity of heart. For He who created the body also created the soul. And just as, while on earth, through His goodness, He—as the good and only Physician—generously provided whatever anyone needed to all who came to Him seeking help and healing, so He is generous in spiritual matters as well (4:25).

35. And through all this, He urged us to ask Him for His gracious intercession unceasingly, ceaselessly, and tirelessly, because He came for the sake of sinners, so that they might turn to Him, and to heal those who believe in Him. If we only turn away from evil prejudices to the best of our ability, hate our wicked pursuits and worldly deceptions, and turn away from deceitful and vain thoughts, then we will always, to the best of our ability, cling to Him—and He is ready to grant us His help, for He is most merciful, gives life, heals incurable passions, and grants deliverance to those who call upon Him, turn to Him, and of their own free will and without compulsion withdraw, to the best of their ability, from all worldly love, turn their minds away from the earth, and are directed toward Him by their desire and seeking (4:27).

e) When all contrary thoughts are removed, the inner struggle to incline the will comes to an end, and a resolve is formed to serve the Lord for the sake of one’s own salvation—a resolve as firm as death. Its expression is: “I would rather die than indulge in sin any longer.”

36. Saint Macarius speaks of the soul that possesses true resolve: no matter what is inflicted upon it, amid a thousand temptations, enduring it all, it says, “Even if I die, I will not forsake Him” (that is, the Lord, for the sake of sin and the enemy) (26:8).

(zz) But more often he expresses this resolve through the sacrifice of the soul, just as animals were slaughtered as offerings: for this resolve is indeed self-sacrifice to the Lord as a whole burnt offering.

37. If a carnal person resolves to set out to transform himself, he first dies and becomes barren of that former deceitful life (46:2).

38. (Regarding sacrifices, it was prescribed) that the priest first slaughter the animal so that it would die, and then, after it was cut into pieces, it would be salted and, finally, placed on the fire. For if the priest does not first subject the sheep to slaughter and death, it is not salted nor offered in full to the Lord. So too our soul, approaching the true High Priest, Christ, must be slain by Him and die to its own wisdom and to the wicked life it has lived—that is, to sin—and just as life leaves the sacrifice behind, so must it leave behind the deceitfulness of the passions. Just as the body, when the soul departs from it, dies and no longer lives the life it once lived—it no longer hears or walks—so too, when the heavenly High Priest, Christ, by the grace of His power, delivers the soul to slaughter and puts to death within it the life devoted to the world, the soul dies to the deceitful life it once lived, and no longer hears, speaks, or lives in sinful darkness, because the deceitfulness of the passions, like its soul, departs from it by grace. And the Apostle exclaims, saying, *“The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”* (Gal. 6:14). (1:6).

zz) To impress this truth more deeply upon the mind, St. Macarius explains at length that all failures in the spiritual life, all falls and backslidings, and all moral dispositions stem from a lack of self-sacrificing resolve to serve the Lord with detachment from all things.

39. Very few are those who have combined a good beginning with a good end, who have reached their goal without stumbling, who have a single love for the One God, and who have renounced everything. Many are moved to devotion, many become partakers of heavenly grace, and are touched by heavenly love; but, unable to endure the various struggles, trials, toils, and temptations from the evil one—since everyone has a desire to love something in this world and cannot entirely renounce their love—they return to various worldly desires. Whether out of weakness and inactivity, or out of fear of their own will, or out of love for something earthly, they remain in the world and sink into its depths. But those who are truly intent on living a good life to the very end must, in the presence of that heavenly love, neither voluntarily take upon themselves nor mix in any other love or attachment, lest they thereby create obstacles to their spiritual progress, turn back, and, ultimately, lose their lives. Just as God’s promises are great, inexpressible, and unfathomable, so too do we need faith and hope, as well as toil, great feats, and long-term trials. The blessings that a person who longs for the heavenly kingdom hopes to receive are by no means insignificant. Since he desires to reign with Christ for all eternity, will he not resolve, with zeal, to endure struggles, labors, and temptations throughout the brief span of this life, right up until his death? The Lord calls out: *“If anyone wishes to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me, rejoicing daily”* (Matt. 16:24). And again: *“If anyone does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:26). But very many people, although they intend to obtain the kingdom and desire to inherit eternal life, nevertheless do not renounce living according to their own desires and following these desires—or rather, following the one who sows vanity within them—and, without denying themselves, they wish to inherit eternal life, which is impossible (5:7).

40. Truly, the word of the Lord is true. Those who walk blamelessly are those who, according to the Lord’s commandment, have completely renounced themselves, have abhorred all worldly desires, ties, entertainments, pleasures, and pursuits, keep the One Lord before their eyes, and long to fulfill His commandments. Therefore, everyone is led astray by their own will if they have not truly chosen to renounce themselves and, even while loving Him, still love something else, take pleasure in any of the pleasures or desires of this age, and do not have complete love for the Lord, as far as this is possible for the free will and desire (5, 8).

41. Sometimes undertakings that appear to be good come to nothing for the sake of glory and human praise, and this is, before God, equivalent to unrighteousness, theft, and other sins. For it is said: *“God scatters the bones of those who please men”* (Ps. 52:6). And even in deeds that appear to be good, the evil one sees an opportunity to serve his own ends; he is extremely versatile and deceptive in worldly desires. For any earthly and carnal love to which a person binds himself of his own free will, sin seizes him, becoming for him chains, bonds, and a heavy burden that drowns and oppresses him in this deceitful age, preventing him from gathering his strength and returning to God. Whatever a person loves in the world burdens his mind, takes possession

of it, and prevents him from gathering his strength. On this depend both balance and inclination, as well as the prevalence of vice; by this the entire human race is tested, as are all Christians living in cities, or in the mountains, or in monasteries, or in the fields, or in desert places—because when a person, ensnared by his own will, begins to love something, his love becomes bound to something and is no longer wholly directed toward God. For example, one has come to love wealth, another gold and silver, yet another the worldly wisdom of the learned for the sake of human glory; one has come to love authority, another glory; one loves frivolous gatherings, some spend the whole day in distraction and pleasures, some are deluded by idle thoughts, some, for the sake of human glory, love to act as if they were teachers of the law, some take delight in idleness and neglect, others are attached to clothing, some give themselves over to earthly cares, and others love sleep, or jokes, or foul language. Whatever a person is attached to in this world—whether small or great—that is what holds him back and prevents him from gathering his strength. Whatever passion a person does not courageously fight against, that is what he loves; and it takes hold of him and burdens him, becoming for him a set of chains and an obstacle preventing his mind from turning to God, pleasing Him, and—having served Him alone—becoming fit for the kingdom and attaining eternal life (5:9).

42. But the soul that truly strives toward the Lord extends its love wholly and entirely to Him and, with all its strength, binds itself by its own will to Him alone; in this it receives the help of grace, denies itself, and does not follow the desires of its own mind, for because of the evil that is ever present with us and deceives us, the mind walks craftily. Thus, as soon as the soul has come to love the Lord, it is delivered from its own snares through its faith and great diligence, and, together with help from above, becomes worthy of the eternal kingdom; and, having truly come to love it, by its own will and with the Lord's help, it will no longer be deprived of eternal life (5, 10).

43. To demonstrate more clearly to us through a concrete example how many perish of their own free will—drowning at sea or being taken captive—imagine that a house is on fire: one person, determined to save himself, runs out as soon as he learns of the fire, leaving everything behind and resolving to care only for his own soul, and thus saves himself; another, intending to take some household goods or other items with him, entered the house to retrieve them, and while he was gathering them, the fire gained the upper hand over the house and trapped him inside, burning him to death. Do you see that this man perished in the fire of his own free will out of love—specifically, by loving something other than himself for a time? Similarly, others are sailing across the sea and, caught in a violent storm, one, having stripped naked, throws himself into the water with the intention of saving only himself; and so, driven by the waves and bound by nothing but concern for his own soul, floating on top of the waves, he found a way to escape the bitter sea, while another, intending to save some of his clothes, thought that even with them—if he took them along—he could swim and escape the sea; but the clothes he took weighed him down and drowned him in the depths of the sea, and so, for the sake of a small gain and without caring for his own soul, he perished. Do you see how, of his own free will, he became a victim of death? Imagine, too, that a rumor spread about foreigners; one man, as soon as he heard it, immediately took to his heels, without the slightest delay, and set out with nothing; another, however, either not believing that enemies were coming or wishing to take some of his belongings with him and having decided to do so, delayed his flight, and so the enemies arrived, captured him, took him captive to a foreign land, and forced him to live there in slavery. Do you see that this man, too, by his own will, because of his inaction, his lack of courage, and his attachment to certain possessions, was taken captive (5:11).

44. Similar to them are those who do not follow the Lord's commandments, have not renounced themselves, and have not loved the one Lord, but have willingly bound themselves with earthly ties. If you wish to learn the righteousness of perfect love for the Lord from the holy, God-inspired Scriptures, then consider how Job was stripped, so to speak, of everything he possessed—his children, his property, his livestock, his servants, and all his other possessions. He was regarded as having acquired much, but when the Lord tested him, it turned out that Job had acquired nothing except the one God. Likewise, when the Lord commanded Abraham, "*Leave your native land, your relatives, and your father's house*" (Gen. 12:1), he immediately, so to speak, gave up everything—his homeland, his land, his relatives, and his parents—and obeyed the Lord's word. Later, amid the many trials and temptations he faced—whether when his wife was taken from him or when he lived and endured hardship in a foreign land—in all these instances he proved that he loved the One God above all else. Finally, when, according to the promise, after many years had passed, he already had his only-begotten son, so dearly desired, and God demanded that he willingly offer this son as a sacrifice, Abraham renounced everything and truly denied himself. For by this offering of his only son, he

proved that he loved nothing else but God. And if he gave up his son with such readiness, how much more so, had he been commanded to give up the rest of his possessions, or to distribute them all at once to the poor, would he have done so with complete readiness and utmost zeal. Do you now see the righteousness of perfect and voluntary love for the Lord? (5:12).

45. Likewise, those who wish to become co-heirs with these righteous ones must love nothing but God, so that when they are put to the test, they may prove themselves worthy and skilled, perfectly preserving their love for the Lord. Only those who have always loved the One God of their own free will and renounced all worldly love will be able to persevere to the end. But very few people are found who would embrace such love, turn away from all worldly pleasures and desires, and magnanimously endure the rebellion and temptation of the evil one. A great many people wish to attain the kingdom without toil, without feats of virtue, without the sweat of their brow, but this is impossible (5:13).

46. Just as in the world some people go to a wealthy man to work for him during the harvest or on other tasks, in order to obtain what they need for their sustenance, and some of them are lazy and idle, do not labor like the others, and do not work as they should, yet without toiling or exhausting themselves in the rich man's household, they wish—as if they had already done all the work—to receive the same wages as those who labor patiently, diligently, and with all their strength. In the same way, when we read the Scriptures—whether about a righteous person, how he pleased God, how he became a friend and companion of God, or about all the fathers—how they became friends and heirs of God, how much sorrow they endured, how much they suffered for God's sake, how many valiant deeds and feats they accomplished—then we praise them and wish to be deemed worthy of gifts and honors equal to theirs, we eagerly desire to receive those glorious gifts, setting aside only their labors, feats, sorrows, and sufferings, and we fervently desire to obtain the honors and dignities they received from God, yet we do not accept their hardships, labors, and feats upon ourselves. But I tell you that every person desires and craves all of this: even fornicators, tax collectors, and the unrighteous would like to obtain the kingdom so easily, without toil or feats of valor. That is why temptations, many trials, sorrows, struggles, and the shedding of sweat lie in the path—so that those may be revealed who truly loved the One Lord with all their will and all their strength, even unto death, and who, with such love for Him, no longer desired anything else for themselves. That is why, in truth, they enter the Kingdom of Heaven, having renounced themselves, according to the Lord's word, and having loved the One Lord even more than their own breath; therefore, for their great love, they will be rewarded with great heavenly gifts (5:14).

5. The State of Labor

a) Resolve is the starting point. One must set a goal for it, so that its labors may not be fruitless. What, then, is the goal? It is to achieve the renewal of one's nature through the grace of the Holy Spirit. One who has resolved to do so must direct all one's efforts toward this end, so that the Holy Spirit may overshadow one with power and efficacy and, like fire, begin to burn away all that is impure. When this is accomplished, it is as if the soul enters into the soul; the person comes alive spiritually—or, rather, only then does he truly become a human being. This is the central idea of St. Macarius, around which all others are grouped.

1. Whoever comes to God and truly desires to be a follower of Christ must come with the aim of being transformed, of presenting himself as a better and new person, having retained nothing within himself that is characteristic of the old man. For it is said: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"* (2 Cor. 5:17). (44. 1).

2. A soul that truly believes in Christ must pass from its present corrupt state to a different, good state, and transform its present debased nature into a different, divine nature, becoming a new nature through the assisting power of the Holy Spirit; only then can it become fit for the kingdom of heaven. But this is possible only for us who believe, truly love Him, and fulfill all His holy commandments. If, in the case of Elisha, a tree—which by nature is light on water—when thrown into the water, carried iron, which is heavy by nature, then all the more will the Lord send here His light, agile, good, and heavenly Spirit, and through Him He will lighten the soul mired in the waters of deceit, give it wings, lift it up to heavenly heights, transform it, and restore its true nature (44, 5).

3. Just as a body without a soul is dead and cannot do anything, so too, without a heavenly soul—without the Spirit of God—the soul is dead to the kingdom and, without the Spirit, cannot do what is of God (30:3).

4. Therefore, whoever strives to believe and come to the Lord ought to pray that the Spirit of God may be given to him even here, for He is the life of the soul, and the purpose of the Lord's coming was to give life to the soul—the Holy Spirit—even here (30:6).

5. God has shown you such favor that He descended from the holy heavens and took upon Himself your rational nature and earthly flesh, infusing it with His Divine Spirit, so that you, a mortal, might receive a heavenly soul within yourself. And when your soul is in communion with the Spirit, and the heavenly soul enters your soul, then you will be a perfect human being in God—an heir and a son (32:6).

6. Therefore, we must love the Lord, strive in every way to excel in all virtues, and ask tirelessly and unceasingly that we may receive the promise of His Spirit wholly and completely, so that our souls may be enlivened while we are still in the flesh. For if the soul does not receive within itself the sanctity of the Spirit in this present age through abundant faith and prayer, and does not become a partaker of the divine nature by being transformed by grace—through whose assistance you can fulfill every commandment blamelessly and purely—then it is unfit for the heavenly kingdom (44:9). 119.

7. As a result of the first man's disobedience, we have taken into ourselves what is foreign to our nature—harmful passions—and through habit and long-term assimilation, we have, as it were, turned them into our very nature; and once again, by the extraordinary gift of the Spirit, this foreign element must be driven out of us, and we must be restored to our original purity. And if now, with much supplication, entreaty, faith, prayer, and detachment from the world, we do not receive within ourselves that heavenly love of the Spirit, and our nature, defiled by vice, does not cling to love—that is, to the Lord—and is not sanctified by that love of the Spirit, and we do not remain blameless to the end, living in complete accordance with the Lord's commandments, then we will not be able to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (4:8).

b) Whoever has turned to the Lord in repentance already possesses grace upon receiving the sacrament. But it does not manifest itself equally in everyone. It immediately descends upon some, while others are subjected to long trials, and only then does it reveal its efficacy.

8. God's boundless and incomprehensible wisdom, in an unfathomable and inscrutable way, bestows grace upon the human race in many different ways to test free will, so that those who love God with all their hearts and endure every danger and every hardship for His sake may be revealed. For some, as soon as they approach Him with faith and prayer—while they are still living in the world, without having endured toil, sweat, or exhaustion—receive the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in advance. Yet God grants grace not without reason, not untimely, and not by chance, but according to some ineffable and incomprehensible wisdom, so that the volition and free will of those who quickly receive God's grace may be shown to be well-directed, namely, in that they feel the beneficence, the mercy shown to them, and the sweetness of God in proportion to the grace communicated to them without their own labor; having been deemed worthy of this grace, they are obliged to demonstrate diligence, diligence, perseverance, and the fruit of love—all of their own free will and volition—and to repay these gifts, that is, to surrender themselves entirely, consecrating themselves to the Lord's love and fulfilling only the Lord's will, while completely turning away from every carnal desire (29:1).

9. But to others, even though they have withdrawn from the world, renounced this age according to the Gospel, and with great patience excel in prayer, fasting, diligence, and other virtues, God does not readily grant grace, rest, or spiritual gifts, but delays and withholds the gift. And this is not without reason, not untimely, and not by chance, but according to some ineffable wisdom, to test free will—to see whether they truly and faithfully honor God, who has promised to give to those who ask and to open the door of life to those who knock on it; to see whether they have truly believed in His word, whether they will persevere to the end in unshakable faith and will seek and ask with all diligence, whether they will turn away from God in suffering and fear, whether they will succumb to sloth, falling into unbelief and despair, and fail to endure to the end, due to the delay of time and the testing of their will and free choice (29:2).

10. For whoever is not quick to accept, when God delays and postpones, becomes even more ardent and desires heavenly blessings all the more, and daily applies greater desire, diligence, tirelessness, effort, and the sum of all virtues, hunger and thirst, just to obtain that blessing—and does not grow weak from the sinful thoughts dwelling in the soul, will not fall into sloth, impatience, and despair, nor, under the pretext of delay, give in to laxity, led by such a thought: "When will I receive God's grace?"—and thereby being cunningly led into indifference. On the contrary, to whatever extent the Lord Himself delays and postpones, testing the faith and love of his will, to that same extent must he, all the more earnestly and diligently, without slackening

and without growing weary, seek God's gift, having once believed and become convinced that God is true and not false, who has promised to bestow His grace upon those who ask for it with faith and with all patience to the end (29:3).

11. Faithful souls revere God as faithful and true, and, based on the true word, have come to the conviction *that "He is true"* (John 3:33). And in accordance with this, based on the above-mentioned concept of faith, they examine themselves to see where, as far as they are concerned, they fall short—whether in labor, in effort, in diligence, in faith, in love, or in other virtues—and having examined themselves with the utmost precision, to the best of their ability, they compel and urge themselves to please the Lord, having once believed that God, being true, will not deprive them of the spiritual gift if they remain before Him in service and patience to the very end with all diligence, and that while still in the flesh, they will be made worthy of heavenly grace and attain eternal life (29:4).

12. Thus, they direct all their love toward the Lord, having renounced everything, awaiting Him alone with intense longing, hunger, and thirst, always hoping for the rest and comfort of grace, yet finding no comfort or rest in anything in this world, voluntarily binding themselves, while ceaselessly resisting worldly thoughts, they await only God's help and God's intercession; they await the moment when, in such souls who have embraced self-discipline, diligence, and patience, the Lord Himself will already be secretly present, helping them, guarding them, and sustaining within them every fruit of virtue. For there are limits, a measure, and a weight to free will and free love, and to a disposition, according to one's ability, toward all His holy commandments. And in this way, souls who fulfill the measure of their love and duty become worthy of the kingdom and eternal life (29:5).

c) Saint Macarius explains—using many examples from Sacred Scripture and drawing lessons from them regarding what this requires of every believer—that the general law of grace is not to force oneself suddenly.

13. The spiritual work of God's grace in the soul is accomplished through great long-suffering, wisdom, and the mysterious insight of the mind, as a person strives with great patience over time and throughout the years. And the work of grace is then found to be complete within him when his free will, after repeated testing, proves pleasing to the Spirit and, over time, demonstrates experience and patience. We will present clear examples of this order from the divinely inspired Scriptures (9:1).

14. What I am asserting is similar to what happened to Joseph. How much time and how many years passed before God's will concerning him was fulfilled, and the visions were realized! And before that, through how many labors, sorrows, and hardships was Joseph tested! And when he had endured all this with courage, proving himself in every way to be a skillful and faithful servant of God, only then did he become king of Egypt and sustain his family; and the prophecies concerning the unseen were fulfilled, as was God's will, which had long ago been foretold through divine revelation (9:2).

15. Something similar happened to David. God anointed him as king through the prophet Samuel. And when he was anointed, he was persecuted by Saul and had to flee for his life. Where, then, was God's anointing? Where was the prompt fulfillment of the promise? For as soon as he was anointed, he began to endure severe tribulations, retreating into the wilderness, lacking even daily bread, and fleeing to the Gentiles to escape Saul's malicious plots against him. And the one whom God had anointed as king endured such tribulations! Later, after being tested and tempted for many years, enduring tribulations and bearing them with magnanimity, he entrusted himself resolutely to God and affirmed to himself: "What God has done for me through the prophetic anointing, and what He has spoken, must undoubtedly be fulfilled," —then, at last, after much long-suffering, God's will was fulfilled, and after many trials, David reigned; and God's word became evident, and the anointing performed by the Prophet proved to be firm and true (9:3). Something similar happened with Moses, Abraham, and Noah (9:4, 5, 6).

16. We have cited these examples from Scripture to demonstrate that the work of God's grace is revealed in a person, and that he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit—a gift to which a faithful soul is made worthy only after a long struggle, after trials of great patience and magnanimity, after temptations and trials, when free will has been tested by all manner of afflictions. When it offends the Spirit in no way, but by grace is in all things in accordance with the commandments, then it is deemed worthy to attain freedom from the passions, to receive the fullness of spiritual adoption proclaimed in the sacrament, as well as spiritual riches and a understanding that is not of this world, and of which only true Christians become partakers. This is why

such people differ in every way from all those who are prudent, knowledgeable, and wise, yet possess within themselves the spirit of the world (9:7).

17. Therefore, let us prepare ourselves, of our own free will and with all eagerness, to go to the Lord and become Christ's followers, to fulfill Christ's will and to remember and keep all of Christ's commandments, having completely turned away from the love of the world; let us entrust our souls to Christ alone, and let us keep in mind to concern ourselves with Him alone, to care for Him alone, and to seek Him alone. But if, because of the flesh, we fail to apply the proper diligence to fulfilling the commandments and obeying God, then at least let our mind not turn away from love for the Lord, from seeking Him and striving toward Him. And as we strive with such a mind, with a right disposition of thought, walking in the way of righteousness and always remaining mindful of ourselves, may we attain the promise of His Spirit, and by grace be delivered from destruction in the darkness of the passions that afflict the soul; and through this, may we become worthy of the eternal kingdom and be granted to rejoice with Christ for all eternity, glorifying the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen (9, 13).

d) Consequently, anyone who resolves to serve the Lord must first endure a period of struggle—a state in which, by the power of his rational will alone, he compels himself to every good deed and restrains himself from everything disapproved by his conscience, even though his heart does not sympathize with this. So, have you made up your mind? Begin to compel yourself to do every good deed and to resist yourself in every evil deed.

18. Whoever wishes to draw near to the Lord, to be made worthy of eternal life, to become a dwelling place of Christ, to be filled with the Holy Spirit so as to bear the fruits of the Spirit, and to keep Christ's commandments purely and blamelessly, must begin by first and foremost believing firmly in the Lord, and to devote himself entirely to the teachings of His commandments, renouncing the world in every respect, so that his whole mind may not be occupied with anything visible. And he must remain constantly in prayer, with faith, in expectation of the Lord, always awaiting His visitation and help, keeping this alone as the goal of his mind at every moment. Then, because of the sin that dwells within him, he must compel himself to every good deed, to the fulfillment of all the Lord's commandments. For example: he must compel himself to humility before every person, considering himself lower and worse than everyone else, seeking from no one honor, praise, or glory, as it is written in the Gospel, but always keeping before his eyes the One Lord and His commandments, desiring to please Him alone with a meek heart, as the Lord says: "*Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls*" (Matt. 11:29). (19:1).

19. In the same way, let him train himself, as much as possible, to be gracious, kind, merciful, and good, as the Lord says: "*Be kind and good, just as your heavenly Father is merciful*" (Luke 6:36). Above all, let him keep in unforgettable memory, as a model, let him keep in mind the Lord's humility and His life, His meekness, and His dealings with people; let him abide in prayer, always believing and asking that the Lord may come and dwell within him, perfecting and strengthening him in the fulfillment of all His commandments, and that the Lord Himself may become the dwelling place of his soul. And in this way, what he now does under compulsion—against the will of his heart—he will one day do of his own free will, constantly training himself in goodness, always remembering the Lord, and ceaselessly awaiting Him with great love. Then the Lord, seeing his willingness and good resolve, seeing how he compels himself to remember the Lord, and how his heart—even against his will—is constantly led toward goodness, toward humility, toward meekness, toward love, and is led, as much as he is able, with all his strength—then, I say, the Lord bestows His mercy upon him, delivers him from his enemies and from the sin dwelling within him, and fills him with the Holy Spirit. Then, without effort or toil, he fulfills all the Lord's commandments in all truth; or rather, the Lord Himself fulfills His commandments in him, and he then bears the fruits of the Spirit in purity (19:2).

20. But one who draws near to the Lord must, therefore, compel himself to every good deed, compel himself to love—if he lacks love—compel himself to meekness—if he lacks meekness—compel himself to be merciful and to have a merciful heart, compel himself to endure contempt, and when disregarded, to be magnanimous; when humiliated or dishonored, not to become indignant, as it is said: "*Do not take revenge, beloved*" (Rom. 12:19); one must compel oneself to pray if one lacks spiritual prayer. In such a case, God, seeing that a person strives so hard and, against the will of his heart, restrains himself with effort, grants him true spiritual prayer, true love, true meekness, "*a heart full of generosity,*" true kindness, and, in a word, fills him with spiritual fruit (19:3).

21. But if anyone, lacking prayer, compels himself to pray alone in order to receive the grace of prayer, yet does not compel himself to meekness, to humility, to love, or to the fulfillment of the Lord's other commandments—and does not care, nor apply labor or effort to succeed in them—then, to the extent of his own will and free choice, in accordance with his request, he is sometimes granted a measure of the grace of prayer; yet in character he remains the same as he was before. He lacks meekness because he did not make the effort or prepare himself to become meek; he lacks humility because he did not ask for it or compel himself toward it; he lacks love for all because, while asking for prayer, he did not concern himself with this or show any effort (19:4).

22. But whoever lacks these virtues, and has not trained or prepared himself for them, even if he receives the grace of prayer, loses it upon receiving it and falls into pride, or does not prosper or grow in the grace granted to him, because he does not surrender himself entirely to the fulfillment of the Lord's commandments. For humility, love, meekness, and the other commandments of the Lord serve as a dwelling place and rest for the Spirit (19:6).

23. Therefore, whoever wishes to truly please God, to receive from Him the heavenly grace of the Spirit, and to grow and be perfected by the Holy Spirit, must compel himself to fulfill all of God's commandments and subdue his heart, even against his will, as it is said: *"For this reason I have set my face toward all Your commandments; I have hated every path of unrighteousness"* (Ps. 118:128). (19:7).

e) Compelling oneself to do good is one aspect of spiritual struggle. The other is resisting oneself in evil. This latter is spiritual warfare. St. Macarius teaches about it as follows.

24. Whoever wishes to truly please God and genuinely hate the opposing side of wickedness must wage war in two kinds of struggles and battles, namely: in the visible affairs of this world, to turn away from earthly pleasures, from the love of worldly ties, and from sinful habits; and in the hidden affairs of the heart, to fight against the very spirits of wickedness, of which the Apostle said: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Eph. 6:12). (21:1).

25. Having transgressed the commandment and been expelled from paradise, man is bound in two ways and by two kinds of bonds: in the world—by worldly affairs, by love for the world, that is, for carnal pleasures and passions, for wealth and glory, for possessions, for a wife, for children, for relatives, for one's homeland, for one's dwelling and clothing; in a word, for all that is visible, from which the Word of God commands us to renounce of our own free will (for everyone becomes attached to all that is visible of their own free will), so that, having renounced and freed himself from all this, he might become a perfect fulfiller of the commandment; yet, in secret, the spirits of malice entangle, entrench, and fortify the soul, binding it with the chains of darkness (21:2).

26. Therefore, when someone, having heard the word of God, embarks on this struggle, casts aside the affairs of daily life and worldly ties, renounces all carnal pleasures and detaches himself from them, then, with steadfastness directing his thoughts toward the Lord, he may come to realize that there is another struggle within his heart, a different secret resistance, a different battle of thoughts waged by deceitful spirits, and that a different struggle lies ahead for him. And thus, with unshakable faith and great patience, ceaselessly calling upon the Lord and awaiting His help, one may still attain inner liberation here from the bonds, snares, obstacles, and darkness of the evil spirits—that is, from the influence of hidden passions (21:3).

27. This struggle, however, can be brought to an end by God's grace and power, for man is not able by himself to free himself from opposition, from the wandering of his thoughts, from invisible passions, and from the wiles of the evil one. But if anyone is attached to visible things in this world, entangles himself in many different earthly bonds, and is carried away by harmful passions, he will not realize that within him there is another struggle, another battle, and another war. And, oh, if only a person, after striving to free himself from these visible worldly bonds, material cares, and carnal pleasures, and beginning to cling constantly to the Lord while withdrawing from this world, might then come to recognize the struggle of passions taking root within him, the inner battle, and the deceitful thoughts! But if, as we said before, he does not renounce the world with effort, does not turn away from earthly desires with all his heart, and does not desire to cling wholly to the Lord, then he will not recognize the deception of the hidden spirits of malice and the secret, pernicious passions, but remains alien to himself, because his own wounds are unknown to him, and, though he harbors secret passions within himself, he is unaware of them, but still willingly clings to the visible and attaches himself to worldly cares (21:4).

28. But whoever has truly renounced the world, strives in the struggle, has cast off the earthly burden, has freed himself from vain desires, from carnal pleasures, from glory, authority, and human honors, and with all his heart turns away from these, when the Lord secretly assists him in this manifest struggle, in proportion to the renunciation of his will from the world, and when he himself is wholly—that is, in body and soul—established and constantly abides in the service of the Lord, he finds within himself resistance, hidden passions, invisible bonds, a secret battle, a secret struggle, and a secret struggle. And thus, having asked the Lord and received from heaven the spiritual weapons enumerated by the blessed Apostle—the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the spiritual sword (Eph. 6:14–17)—and having armed himself with them, he will be able to resist the devil’s secret wiles in the deceptions he devises, having acquired these weapons through prayer, patience, supplication, fasting, and above all by faith—he will be able to wage war against the principalities, powers, and rulers of this world; and thus, having defeated the opposing forces with the help of the Spirit and through his own diligence in all virtues, he will become worthy of eternal life, glorifying the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To Him be glory and power forever! Amen (21:5).

29. Some say that the Lord demands only visible fruits from people, while God Himself accomplishes what is hidden. But this is not the case; on the contrary, to the extent that one guards oneself in the outward life, to that same extent one must struggle and wage war against one’s thoughts, because the Lord requires of you that you be angry with yourself, wage war against your own mind, refuse to consent to wicked thoughts, and not take pleasure in them (3:3).

30. The soul must resist, oppose, and repel. Your will, by opposing, enduring toil and sorrow, finally begins to gain the upper hand; it falls and rises again; sin once more overthrows it; in ten or twenty struggles, it triumphs and overthrows the soul, but the soul, in time, triumphs over sin in some way. And again, if the soul stands firm and does not falter in anything, it begins to gain the upper hand, settle the matter, and win victories over sin. This is how people overcome sin and become its victors (3, 4, 5).

31. A horse, as long as it grazes in the forests with wild animals, remains untamed by humans. But once it is captured, a heavy bridle is placed on it to tame it, until it learns to walk properly and in a straight line. Then an experienced rider trains it to make it fit for battle. At that point, they equip it with armor—that is, a breastplate and a visor—and hang the old bridle before its eyes, shaking it slightly so that the horse becomes accustomed to it and is not frightened. And a horse trained in this way by a rider, if it does not become accustomed to it, cannot be used in war; but as soon as it becomes accustomed and grows used to battle, as soon as it senses and hears the sounds of battle, it willingly charges at the enemies on its own, and by its very neighing strikes fear into the hearts of the foes (23:2).

32. In the same way, the soul, having become wild and rebellious since the time of the fall, draws near to the beasts—the deceitful spirits—in the wilderness of the world, continuing to serve sin. But when it hears the word of God and believes, then, restrained by the Spirit, it casts aside its wild nature and carnal reasoning, guided by Christ the Rider. Then she enters into sorrow, humility, and hardship—all necessary for her testing—so that the Spirit may gradually tame her, as sin within her is progressively diminished and eradicated. And in this way, the soul, clothed in the armor of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith, and having taken up the spiritual sword, learns to wage war against its enemies; and, armed with the Spirit of the Lord, it fights against the spirits of wickedness and extinguishes the fiery arrows of the evil one. But without spiritual weapons, it does not join the ranks; as soon as it possesses the Lord’s weapons, the moment it hears and senses fierce battles, it goes forth “*leaping and neighing*,” as it is said in Job (Job 39:25), because its enemies fall at the very sound of its prayer. Having accomplished such a feat and, with the help of the Spirit, won the battle, she will receive her victory crowns with great boldness and will rest together with the Heavenly King (23:3).

33. As soon as you withdraw from the world and begin to seek God and reflect on Him, you will already have to struggle against your own nature, your former habits, and the habits that are second nature to you. And while struggling against this habit, you will encounter thoughts that oppose you and battle your mind, and these thoughts will draw you in and cause you to circle back to the very things from which you fled. It is then that you will begin the struggle and the battle, setting thoughts against thoughts, mind against mind, soul against soul, and spirit against spirit (32:9).

34. For a certain hidden and subtle power of darkness, dwelling in the heart, is revealed. And the Lord is near your soul and body; as He watches your struggle, He instills in you hidden, heavenly thoughts and secretly begins to bring you rest. But for now, He still leaves you under training, and even in the midst of your

sorrows, He provides grace for you. And when you come to rest, He will let you know Himself, and show you that it was for your own good that He allowed you to be in the struggle. Just as the son of a rich man, who has a tutor, finds the tutor's discipline—the instruction, the wounds, and the blows—to be harsh while he is being disciplined; and this continues until he becomes a man, at which point he begins to thank his tutor: so too does grace providentially instruct you until you reach full maturity (33. 10).

e) Since such labor is required of one who has resolved to work for the Lord, in addition to a resolute determination to undertake any toil without pity for oneself, one must also possess prudence, attentiveness, and caution.

35. Whoever wishes to lead the Christian life with great precision and in perfection is obliged, with all his strength, to care first and foremost for the meaning and reason of the soul, so that, having acquired the ability to distinguish precisely between good and evil, and recognizing in every case what is foreign to our pure nature, we may live correctly and without stumbling, and so that, using reason as an eye, we may be able to refuse to associate with or yield to the promptings of vice, and thereby, having received the divine gift, become worthy of the Lord (4:1).

36. The body has the eye as its guide; it sees and leads the whole body along the proper path. Imagine, then, that someone is walking through wooded areas, overgrown with thorns and muddy, where fire blocks the path and swords are thrust into the ground, and where there are also rapids and abundant waters. If the traveler is resourceful, cautious, and fearless, then, with the eye as his guide, he passes through these difficult places with great care, using his hands and feet in every way to hold back his tunic so that it is not torn among the trees and thorns, soiled by the mud, or cut by the swords, and the eye, serving as a light for the whole body, shows him the way so that he may not be crushed on the rapids, or drown in the waters, or suffer harm in any difficult place. Thus, a resourceful and shrewd traveler, having carefully gathered up his tunic, walks straight ahead as guided by his eyes, keeping himself unharmed and preserving his tunic from being burned or torn. But if a careless, lazy, reckless, clumsy, or inactive person passes through such places, his tunic, fluttering this way and that, because the traveler lacks the resolve to adjust his garment in every way, will be torn by twigs and thorns, or set ablaze by fire, or slashed by drawn swords, or soiled in the mud; in short, his beautiful and new tunic will soon be ruined by his inattention, inactivity, and laziness. And if the traveler does not pay full and due attention to the guidance of the eye, he himself will fall into a ditch or drown in the waters (4:2).

37. In the same way, the soul, clothed as it were in a beautiful tunic—the garment of the body—and possessing reason, which guides the entire soul and body as it travels along the wooded and thorny paths of life, amid mud, fire, and rapids—that is, desires and pleasures and other follies of this age—must restrain and protect itself everywhere with sobriety, courage, prudence, and attentiveness. And so that the bodily tunic, on the wooded and thorny paths of this world, may not be torn anywhere by cares, distractions, and earthly amusements, nor be consumed by the fire of desire, the soul clothed in it turns away its eyes so as not to see deceit, and likewise turns away its ears so as not to hear slander, restrains the tongue from idle talk, and the hands and feet from evil deeds; for the soul has been given the will to turn away the members of the body and keep them from evil sights, from hearing anything deceitful or shameful, from indecent words, and from worldly and deceitful pursuits (4:3).

38. As soon as the Lord sees that someone is courageously turning away from worldly pleasures, from material amusements and cares, from earthly bonds, and from the whirlwind of vain thoughts, He grants that person His gracious help and unfailingly protects that soul, which beautifully carries out its course in this present evil age. And in this way, the soul receives heavenly praise from God and the angels for having beautifully preserved both itself and the garment of its body, as much as was possible for it, by turning away from every worldly desire, and, aided by God, having beautifully completed its course on the field of this world (4, 4).

39. But if anyone, through idleness and carelessness, walks in this life without heed, and of his own free will does not turn away from every worldly desire, nor seeks the One Lord with all his heart, then the garment of his body is torn by the thorns and thistles of this world, scorched by the fire of desire, and defiled by the mire of pleasures, and therefore, on the Day of Judgment, the soul finds itself lacking boldness, because it was unable to keep its garment unstained, but defiled it amid the deceptions of this age. For this, it is cast out of the kingdom. For what will God do with one who, of his own free will, surrenders himself to the world, is beguiled by its pleasures, or wanders, spinning in the material realm? He extends His help to the one who

turns away from material pleasures and former habits, who with effort always directs his thoughts toward the Lord, renounces himself, and seeks the One Lord. God also protects those who, in the wilderness of this world, guard against snares and traps at every turn; those who, with fear and trembling, work out their own salvation (Phil. 2: 12), carefully avoids the snares, traps, and lusts of this age, seeks the Lord's help, and, by the Lord's mercy, hopes to be saved by grace (4: 5).

g) The laborer must draw inspiration for his labors from the hope and unshakable confidence that the Lord will see how diligent the labor is, will be convinced of the soul's faithfulness, and will grant it the Holy Spirit and unite Himself with it. St. Macarius frequently addresses this subject, and he bases nearly every lesson on labor on instilling this hope.

40. Every visible endeavor in the world is undertaken in the hope of reaping the benefits of one's labor. And if anyone is not fully confident that he will enjoy the fruits of his labor, then his labor is of no benefit to him. A farmer sows in the hope of reaping a harvest and, in anticipation of it, endures the toil; it is said, *"The one who plows must do so in hope"* (1 Cor. 9:10). And whoever takes a wife does so in the hope of having heirs, and a merchant sets sail for the sake of profit, exposing himself to certain death. So too in the kingdom of heaven, a person, in the hope that the eyes of his heart will be enlightened, devotes himself to withdrawing from worldly affairs, spending his time in prayer and supplication, awaiting the Lord when He will come and reveal Himself to him, and purify him from the sin that dwells within him (14:1).

41. A Christian must have hope, joy, and anticipation of the coming kingdom and deliverance, and say, "If I am not delivered today, I will be delivered by morning." One who plants a vineyard, before setting to work, has joy and hope within himself; and even when there is no wine yet, he vividly imagines the winepress in his mind, calculates the profits, and with such thoughts sets to work; hope and expectation compel him to labor diligently, and for the time being he incurs great expenses in his household. In the same way, a builder and a farmer first spend much of their property in the hope of future profit. So it is here: if a person does not have joy and hope before his eyes—that he will receive deliverance and life—he will not be able to endure sorrows, take up the burden, or walk the narrow path. But the hope and joy that accompany him enable him to labor, to endure sorrows, to take up the burden, and to walk the narrow path (26:11).

42. A believer must pray to God for himself, that his will may be transformed by the renewal of his heart. You must lift your mind and thoughts to Him, and hold nothing else in your thoughts but the hope of beholding Him. And so, like a mother gathering her lively children, let the soul gather and calm the thoughts scattered by sin; let it bring them into the house of its body, ceaselessly fasting and lovingly awaiting the Lord, when He will come and truly gather it together. Since the future is unknown, let it hope all the more, placing its hope firmly in the Helmsman. It is said, *"Do not fear, for I will go before you; I will , and level the mountains; I will shatter the gates of bronze and break down the bars of iron"* (Isa. 45:2). And it is also said, *"Take heed to yourself, lest there be a word of lawlessness hidden in your heart"* (Deut. 15:9); do not say in your heart, *"This language is numerous and powerful"* (Deut. 2:21). (31:1, 2).

43. If we do not grow slothful and do not allow unruly, wicked thoughts to take root within us, but instead draw our mind toward Him by our own will, compelling our thoughts to turn toward the Lord, then, without a doubt, the Lord will come to us by His own will and will truly gather us to Himself, for all pleasing service depends on our thoughts. Therefore, strive to please the Lord, always awaiting Him inwardly, seeking Him in your thoughts, and urging and compelling your will and your desire to turn toward Him unceasingly. For to the extent that you direct your mind toward seeking Him, to that extent—and even more so—He is moved by His own benevolence and goodness to come to you and give you rest. He stands and observes your mind, your thoughts, and the movements of your thoughts; He watches to see how you seek Him—with all your heart, or perhaps with laziness or neglect (31:3).

44. And when He sees your diligence in seeking Him, then He will appear and reveal Himself to you, offer you His help, and prepare victory for you, delivering you from your enemies. Therefore, let us lift up this body, build an altar, lay upon it all our thoughts, and implore the Lord to send down from heaven an invisible and mighty fire, that it may consume both the altar and all that is upon it. And all the priests of Baal—that is, the opposing forces—will fall, and then we will see heavenly rain, like a human footprint (3 Kings 18:44), descending into the soul; thus God's promise will be fulfilled upon us, as it is said through the Prophet: *'I will raise up and rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David, and I will repair its breaches'* (Amos 9:11). (31:4–5).

g) Saint Macarius does not go into the details of ascetic practices, because they were all already in practice among those to whom he addressed his discourses. On occasion, he merely lists them, such as: fasting, vigil, solitude, physical labor, obedience, mutual assistance, and patience. He speaks in greater detail only about prayer, because it is the center of all virtues and ascetic practices, and especially because it is the channel through which the Holy Spirit is received.

45. Regarding outward asceticism and which way of life is the highest and foremost, know this, beloved: all virtues are interconnected, like the links of a spiritual chain; they depend on one another: prayer on love, love on joy, joy on meekness, meekness on humility, humility on service, service on hope, hope on faith, faith on obedience, and obedience on simplicity. Likewise, on the opposite side, evil deeds depend on one another: hatred on irritability, irritability on pride, pride on vanity, vanity on unbelief, unbelief on cruelty, cruelty on negligence, negligence on laziness, laziness from despondency, despondency from impatience, impatience from sensuality; the other parts of vice are likewise interconnected, just as, on the side of virtue, the virtues are interconnected and depend on one another (40, 1).

46. The chief element in every good endeavor and the crown of merit is diligent perseverance in prayer. Through it, by asking God, we can acquire the other virtues daily. Hence, in those who are deemed worthy, there arises communion in God's holiness, in spiritual efficacy, and a union of the mind, as it were, in ineffable love for the Lord. For whoever compels himself daily to remain in prayer is kindled by spiritual love for God to divine devotion and ardent desire, and receives the grace of spiritual, sanctifying perfection (40, 2).

47. We must not pray out of physical habit or the custom of crying out, remaining silent, or bowing our knees, but, listening soberly with our minds, we must wait for God to come and visit the soul in all its paths and ways and in all its senses. Thus, sometimes it is necessary to be silent, and at other times it is necessary to cry out and pray with a cry, so long as the mind is fixed on God. For just as the body, when engaged in some task, is wholly absorbed in it, and all its members help one another, so too should the soul devote itself entirely to prayer and the love of the Lord, without being distracted or wandering in its thoughts, but placing all its hope in Christ. And in that case, the Lord Himself will enlighten it, teaching it true supplication, granting it a pure, spiritual prayer worthy of God, and worship in spirit and truth (33:1–2).

48. Those who approach the Lord must offer their prayers in silence, peace, and deep tranquility, and listen to the Lord—not with unseemly and confused cries, but with a contrite heart and sober thoughts. It behooves the servant of God to abide not in disorder, but in all meekness and wisdom, as the Prophet said, *"Whom shall I look upon? Only the meek and quiet, who tremble at My words"* (Isa. 66:2). We also find that in the time of Moses and Elijah, when God appeared to them, trumpets and mighty forces served in great numbers before the Lord's majesty ; but the Lord's coming was distinguished and revealed by what is described above—that is, by peace, silence, and stillness. For it is said, *"Behold, a still, small voice, and there the Lord"* (1 Kings 19:12). And this shows that the Lord's rest consists in peace and tranquility (6:1–2).

49. The true foundation of prayer is this: to be attentive to one's thoughts and to pray in profound silence and peace. A person who prays must direct all his effort toward his thoughts, cutting off whatever serves as food for wicked thoughts, directing his mind toward God, and not fulfilling the desires of his thoughts, but gathering his wandering thoughts from all directions into one, distinguishing natural thoughts from wicked ones. Under the power of sin, the soul is likened to a great forest on a mountain, or reeds by a river, or some thicket of thorns and trees; therefore, those intending to pass through such a place must stretch out their hands and, with effort and difficulty, push the branches aside before them. Likewise, the soul is surrounded by a whole forest of thoughts instilled by the opposing force; therefore, great care and attentiveness are required for a person to distinguish foreign thoughts instilled by the opposing force. Those who are attentive to their thoughts perform the entire work of prayer inwardly. Such people, through their understanding and discernment, can succeed, repel rising thoughts, and walk in the will of the Lord (6:3–4).

i) Among the precautions a spiritual warrior must take, St. Macarius emphasizes above all that one must not stop at mere outward discipline. The purpose of spiritual labor, from an external standpoint, is to accustom oneself to all spiritual struggles and all virtues, but not in order to stop there; rather, this very process should be directed toward the development of the inner life and the acquisition of the Spirit's power. But others stop at this alone, achieving only proper conduct, while paying no attention to the heart and seeking not the Spirit of grace. Consequently, they labor but bear no fruit. St. Macarius urges us to guard against this above all else.

50. Many, strictly observing outward conduct, practicing the disciplines, and striving for a righteous life, think that such a person is perfect, without delving into the heart or noticing the vices there that hold the soul captive. Meanwhile, within the body lies the root of vice, commensurate with the inner corrupt thought, and a robber lurks within the house—that is, a force that is opposed, and therefore antagonistic and at the same time mental. And if anyone does not fight against sin, then inner vice, spreading gradually and multiplying, draws a person into obvious sins and leads them to commit them in deed, because evil, like the opening of a spring, always pours forth a stream from within itself. Therefore, strive to stem the flow of vice, lest you fall into a thousand evils (15:46).

51. The world suffers from the disease of vice and does not realize it. There is an impure fire that inflames the heart, runs through all the limbs, and drives people to debauchery and to thousands of evil deeds. And those who get angry and indulge in pleasure commit adultery inwardly, in their hearts; and when evil thus finds its nourishment, they fall into open adultery as well. Understand the same regarding greed, vanity, pride, jealousy, and irritability. Just as when someone is invited to a meal and offered a variety of dishes, so too does sin tempt one to taste everything, and then the soul that indulges becomes burdened (15:48).

52. Can anyone say, “I fast, I lead a life of pilgrimage, I give away my possessions—therefore, I am already holy”? For abstaining from evil is not yet perfection in itself, unless you have already entered into a humble mind and slain the serpent that lurks beneath the very mind, in the depths of your thoughts, where it nests and kills you in the so-called hiding places and storehouses of the soul, because the heart is an abyss; so have you put it to death and cast out from yourself every impurity that was within you? All the wise, the Law, the Apostles, and the coming of Christ have purification as their goal. Every person, whether Jew or Greek, loves purity but cannot become pure on their own. Therefore, we must seek to discover how and by what means purity of heart can be attained. This is possible only through the One who was crucified for us. He is the way, the life, the truth, the door, the pearl, the living and heavenly bread. Without this truth, it is impossible for anyone to know the truth and be saved. Therefore, just as—in regard to the outward man and visible things—you have renounced everything and distributed your possessions, so too, if you possess knowledge and the power of the word and, in worldly wisdom, must cast everything aside, and regard everything as nothing, only then will you be able to edify yourself in the fervor of preaching, which is true wisdom, consisting not in the beauty of words but in the power that works through the holy cross (17:15).

53. The most important weapon for the warrior and ascetic is this: having entered the heart, he must wage war against Satan, hate himself, renounce his own soul, be angry with it, rebuke it, resist his habitual desires, contend with his thoughts, and struggle against himself (26:12).

54. And if you outwardly guard your body against corruption and fornication, but inwardly you have committed adultery and committed fornication in your thoughts, then you are an adulterer before God, and your chaste body will be of no benefit to you. Just as a young man who, by cunning, seduces a maiden and defiles her becomes abhorrent to his bride because of his fornication, so too does the incorporeal soul, entering into communion with the serpent dwelling within—the deceitful spirit—commit fornication before God. And it is written, “*Anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt. 5:28). For there is fornication committed in the flesh, and there is fornication of the soul, which enters into communion with Satan. The same soul can be either a partner and sister of demons or of God and the angels; and by committing adultery with the devil, it becomes unfit for the heavenly Bridegroom (26:13).

55. We have repeatedly cited the parable of the farmer who, after laboring and sowing seeds in the ground, must still wait for rain from above. But if no clouds appear and no winds blow, the farmer’s labor will be of no benefit to him, and the seed will lie barren. Apply this to the spiritual realm as well. If a person limits himself to his own efforts alone and does not accept what is extraordinary for his nature, he cannot bear worthy fruit for the Lord. What, then, is a person’s own work? It is to renounce the world, withdraw from it, abide in prayer and vigil, love God and his brothers—to abide in all of this is his own work. But if he limits himself to his own work and does not hope to receive something else, and the winds of the Holy Spirit do not blow upon his soul, and the heavenly cloud does not appear, and rain does not fall from heaven to water his soul, then a person cannot bear worthy fruit for the Lord (26:19).

i) Among those who appear outwardly upright, Saint Macarius singles out the scribes, who have learned from books and conversations what the matter is and expound upon it, but do not undertake the work itself; therefore, they lag behind even the ignorant in spiritual knowledge, and their very exposition is frivolous.

56. Whoever speaks of spiritual matters without having tasted them himself is like a man who, when the heat of the day sets in, walks through an empty field and, tormented by thirst, describes a spring water gushing forth, pretending to drink, even though his lips and tongue are parched by the thirst that scorches them; or to a man who says that honey is sweet but has not tasted it himself and does not know the power of its sweetness. Thus, if those who have not experienced their effectiveness or found confirmation of them within themselves speak of perfection, joy, or dispassion, then in reality things do not turn out as they say. For when such a person is eventually able, even in part, to put these things into practice, he will reflect to himself: “It turned out differently than I had supposed. I reasoned one way, but the Spirit acts another” (17:12).

57. It is one thing to speak about bread and a meal, and quite another to eat and take in the nourishment of the bread and be strengthened in every limb. It is one thing to speak in words about the sweetest drink, and quite another to go and draw from the very source and be satisfied by tasting the sweet drink. It is one thing to speak of war, of valiant fighters and warriors, and quite another for a person to join the ranks of the army and engage in battle with enemies, to advance and retreat, to receive and deliver blows, and to achieve victory. So it is in spiritual matters: it is one thing to explain what has been said to oneself through knowledge and reason alone, and quite another to possess—in reality, without a doubt, within one’s inner self and mind—the treasure, grace, inspiration, and working of the Holy Spirit. Those who utter mere words are deluding themselves and puffing themselves up with their own intellect (27:12).

58. Just as in the world, when war is declared, the wise and the nobles do not go to the battlefield but, fearing death, remain at home; instead, the newly emerged, the poor and the common people, are called to war; and it happens that they win victory over the enemies, drive them from the borders, and for this receive rewards and crowns from the king, attain honors and dignities, while those great men remain behind them—so it is in the spiritual realm as well. The uninitiated, hearing the word for the first time, carry it out in deed with a truthful intention and receive spiritual grace from God; but the wise, who delve deeply into the subtleties of the word, avoid battle and do not succeed, but remain behind those who took part in the battle and were victorious (43:8).

k) Therefore, one must strive in every way to acquire the Spirit of grace. For if He is not within you, all your sacrifices and labors are nothing, and at the hour of departure, the demons will seize you and drag you into their abyss. But whoever has the Spirit will burn them up.

59. If anyone, for the Lord’s sake, leaves his own, renounces this world, forsakes worldly pleasures, possessions, father, and mother, crucifies himself, and becomes a wanderer, a beggar, and one who possesses nothing—yet fails to find divine rest within himself instead of worldly peace, fails to feel spiritual delight in his soul, fails to clothe himself in the robe of divine light instead of perishable garments, according to the inner man; instead of his former, carnal communion, he will not know with certainty in his soul communion with the heavenly; instead of the visible joy of this world, he will not have within himself the joy of the spirit and the consolation of heavenly grace, nor will he receive into his soul, as it is written, divine satisfaction, “*when the glory of the Lord is revealed to him*” (Ps. 16: 15). In short, instead of this temporary pleasure, he will not yet acquire in his soul the longed-for, imperishable delight; thus, he has become salt that has lost its flavor; he is more pitiful than all people, deprived of the things of this world and having not enjoyed the divine; he has not come to know, through the working of the Spirit in his inner man, the divine mysteries (49:1).

60. And whatever the soul does, seemingly of its own accord—whatever it undertakes and strives to accomplish, relying solely on its own strength and thinking that it can bring the matter to perfection on its own, without the assistance of the Spirit—in that it errs greatly, for it is unfit for the heavenly abodes, a soul that thinks it can succeed in perfect purity by itself and by its own strength alone, without the Spirit, is unfit for the kingdom. If a person, under the influence of passions, does not draw near to God by renouncing the world, and does not believe with hope and patience that he will receive a blessing extraordinary to his own nature—that is, the power of the Holy Spirit—and does not receive divine life from the Lord above into his soul, then he will not experience true life, will not awaken from material intoxication; the illumination of the Spirit will not shine in the darkened soul; the holy day will not dawn within it; and it will not awaken from the deepest sleep of ignorance to truly know God through God’s power and the working of grace (24:5),

61. Therefore, whoever strives to believe and come to the Lord ought to pray that he may receive the Spirit of God even here, for He is the life of the soul, and the purpose of the Lord’s coming was to give life—the Holy Spirit—to the soul even here. For it is said, “*While you have the light, believe in the light*” (John 12:36), “*The night is coming, when you will no longer be able to work*” (John 9:4). Therefore, if anyone here

has not sought and received life for the soul—that is, the divine light of the Spirit—then at the time of departure from the body, he is cast away into the realm of darkness, without entering the Kingdom of Heaven, and will meet his end in Gehenna with the devil and his angels. Or, just as gold or silver, when cast into the fire, becomes purer and more refined, and nothing—neither wood nor grass can alter it, for it itself becomes like fire and consumes everything that approaches it; so too, the soul, abiding in the spiritual fire and in the Divine light, will not endure any evil from any of the wicked spirits, and if anything should approach it, it is consumed by the heavenly fire of the Spirit. Or, just as a bird, when flying high, has no cares, fears neither hunters nor cunning beasts, and, soaring high above all, laughs, so too the soul, having taken on the wings of the Spirit and soaring to the highest heavenly heights, laughs at everything (30:6).

62. But if anyone does not yet have God's grace planted and established within them, then day and night, as if it were something natural, let their soul cling to that which, from time to time, guides them, moves them, and directs them toward the good. Let there be within him, at the very least, as something natural and unchanging, care, fear, concern, and a contrite heart that is always firmly established within him (16:6).

6. The State of Those Who Have Received the Power of the Spirit

a) For those who conscientiously and without self-pity pursue the labors of asceticism, the power and efficacy of grace are ultimately revealed. It manifests itself as a special spiritual warmth in the heart, the stilling of thoughts, the loss of desire for all created things, and the diminishing of the value of everything considered precious on earth. This is the very seed of the spiritual life. From here begins the spiritualization of the soul, its purification from passions, and the healing of the wounds caused by those passions.

1. Imitate Mary, thinking of nothing else but gazing only upon Him who said, *"I have come to bring fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"* (Luke 12:49)? For the burning of the Spirit revives the heart. The incorporeal and divine fire sanctifies souls and refines them, just as pure gold is refined in the crucible, while vice is scorched away like thorns and straw, for *"our God is a consuming fire"* (Heb. 12:29). Seeking the power of this fire, blessed David said, *"Test me, O Lord, and try me; examine my kidneys and my heart"* (Ps. 25: 2). (25: 9).

2. This fire warmed the hearts of Cleopas and his companion when the Savior spoke to them after His resurrection. And the angels and ministering spirits partake of the radiance of this fire, as it is said: *"He makes His angels spirits, and His servants a burning fire"* (Heb. 1: 7). This fire, by burning away the chaff from the inner ocean, purifies the mind so that, having regained its natural clarity, it may ceaselessly behold the wonders of God, like one who says, *"Open my eyes, and I will understand the wonders of Your law"* (Ps. 118: 18). Therefore, this fire drives out demons and destroys sin (25: 10).

3. Just as iron, or lead, or gold, or silver, when placed in fire, lose their hardness, transforming into soft substances, and while they remain in the fire, by the power of the fire's heat, they melt and lose their natural hardness—so too the soul, having renounced the world and loved the One Lord, with great longing of the heart, through labor and ascetic endeavor, ceaselessly awaits Him with hope and faith; and having received within itself that heavenly fire of the Godhead and the love of the Spirit, it truly renounces all worldly love, frees itself from every harm of the passions, casts everything aside, transforms its natural disposition and its sinful hardness, and regards everything as superfluous in the one heavenly Bridegroom whom it has received into itself, finding rest in fervent and ineffable love for Him (4:14).

4. I tell you, however, that even the most beloved brothers whom she has before her eyes—if they hinder her in that love—the soul, so to speak, turns away from them, because her life and peace lie in the mysterious and ineffable communion with the heavenly King. For even love for carnal communion separates one from one's father, mother, and brothers, and everything pertaining to them becomes foreign to the mind. And if a man loves them, he loves them as an outsider, yet he still has affection for his wife. For it is said, *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"* (Eph. 5:31). Therefore, if carnal love thus detaches one from all other love, how much more will those who have truly been deemed worthy to enter into communion with the heavenly and longed-for Holy Spirit detach themselves from all love for the world, and everything will seem superfluous to them, because they are overcome by heavenly desire and are in close dependence upon it—there their desires, there their thoughts are, there they live, there their thoughts wander, there their mind always dwells, overcome by Divine and heavenly love and spiritual desire (4, 15).

5. People upon whom the dew of the Spirit of divine life has fallen, piercing their hearts with divine love for Christ, the heavenly King, are drawn to that beauty, to that indescribable glory, to that imperishable splendor, to the inconceivable riches of Christ, the true and eternal King. They surrender themselves to longing and love, turning wholly toward Christ, and yearn to obtain those indescribable blessings which they contemplate in spirit; and for this reason, they regard as nothing all earthly beauty, glory, splendor, and honor, and the wealth of kings and princes, for they have been captivated by divine beauty, and the life of heavenly immortality has entered their souls. Therefore, they desire the one love of the heavenly King, keeping Him alone before their eyes with great longing; for His sake, they renounce all worldly love and withdraw from all earthly bonds, so that they may always keep this one desire in their hearts and mix nothing else with it (5, 6).

6. Those Christians who have truly tasted grace are the only ones who can understand that the entire earthly world—royal treasures, wealth, glory, and words of wisdom—is all but an illusion, something without a firm foundation but fleeting; and if there is anything under heaven, it is, in their eyes, worthy of utter contempt. Why is this so? Because what is above the heavens is wondrous and marvelous—something found neither in royal treasures, nor in words of wisdom, nor in worldly glory. And the dignity, or wealth, that they have acquired—having the Lord and Creator of all things within their innermost being—is an acquisition that is not fleeting, but abides forever (15:40, 41).

7. Through communion with and participation in the Holy Spirit, the minds and understanding of Christians attain steadfastness, steadfastness, serenity, and peace; they are no longer scattered or agitated by fickle and vain thoughts, but abide in the peace of Christ and in the love of the Spirit, just as the Lord, speaking of such people, said that they have passed “*from death to life*” (John 5:24). Through the renewal of the mind, the mortification of thoughts, love, and heavenly devotion to the Lord, the new creation—the Christian—is distinguished from all people in the world. For this very purpose did the Lord come, so that those who truly believe in Him might be made worthy of these spiritual blessings (5:4–5).

8. Just as the woman with the issue of blood, having truly believed and touched the hem of the Lord’s garment, was immediately healed, and the flow of the impure source of blood dried up, so every soul, having an incurable wound of sin—a source of impure and wicked thoughts—if it comes to Christ and, truly believing, asks, will receive saving healing from the flow of passions, and by the power of Jesus alone that source, which pours forth impure thoughts, will dry up and cease; but no one else can heal this wound (20:4).

9. Just as when the sun rises over the earth, all its rays are upon the earth, and when it sets in the west, as it returns to its home, it gathers all its rays back to itself, so too the soul, not reborn from above by the Spirit, is wholly on the earth with its thoughts, and its thoughts extend to the ends of the earth; but as soon as it is deemed worthy to receive heavenly birth and communion from the Spirit, having gathered all its thoughts together and keeping them within itself, it enters into the presence of the Lord, into the heavenly dwelling not made by human hands, and all its thoughts, entering the divine atmosphere, become heavenly, pure and holy, for the soul, having been freed from the bondage of the evil prince—the spirit of the world—attains pure and divine thoughts, since God was pleased to make man a partaker of the divine nature (49:3).

b) This becomes evident from the very first moments of grace’s influence, but it is very dangerous to think that there is already some kind of perfection here. This is only the beginning. Grace, having made itself felt, gradually takes hold of the heart until it fills everything and transforms the entire inner being.

10. When the action of Divine grace descends upon the soul in proportion to each person’s faith, and the soul accepts help from above, then grace descends upon it only in part. And do not think that anyone’s entire soul is illuminated; within it there still remains a vast expanse of vice, and a person requires great labor and effort, in harmony with the grace acting within him. That is why Divine grace—which in a single moment can purify a person and make them perfect—begins to visit the soul gradually, in order to test human free will: whether it preserves wholehearted love for God, making no compromise with the evil one, but surrendering itself entirely to grace. Thus, the soul, which over time and many years proves to be well-disposed, causing no grief or offense to grace, finds help for itself through this very gradual process. And grace itself takes possession of the pasture within the soul, and as the soul remains well-disposed and in harmony with grace for many years, it takes root down to the soul’s deepest faculties and thoughts, until the whole soul is embraced by heavenly grace, which already reigns within this vessel (41, 2).

11. Thus, many were led astray by the very workings of grace within them; they thought they had attained perfection and said, “We have had enough; we lack nothing.” But the Lord is infinite and

incomprehensible. And Christians dare not say that they have comprehended Him, but humble themselves day and night. The soul has many parts, and its depth is great; and the sin that has crept into it has taken hold of all its pastures and the faculties of the heart. Then, when a person seeks grace, it comes to him and takes hold of perhaps two faculties of the soul. But the inexperienced person, comforted by grace, thinks that the grace that has come has taken hold of all the faculties of the soul, and that sin has been eradicated. Yet the greater part of the soul remains in the power of sin, while only one part is under grace. And the person is deceived and does not realize this (26, 17, 50, 5).

12. Even in one who is afflicted with an illness, some members may be healthy—for example, the organ of sight, the eye, or some other member—while the rest are impaired. The same is true in spiritual matters. A person may have three spiritual members in good health, but this does not yet make him perfect. You see how many spiritual degrees and measures there are, and how evil is purified and expelled gradually, part by part, rather than all at once (15, 7).

13. Just as a fetus in the womb does not instantly become a human being, but gradually takes on human form and is born—albeit as a human still of an imperfect age—and first grows for many years before becoming a man, so too do the seeds of barley or wheat not take root immediately upon being sown in the ground, but only after the cold and the winds have passed do they produce stalks in due time; and whoever plants a pear tree does not immediately harvest its fruit. So too in spiritual matters, where there is so much wisdom and subtlety, a person grows gradually and comes *“to the measure of the full man, according to the measure of his stature”* (Eph. 4:13), and not, as others claim, as if this were the same as undressing and dressing (15:39).

14. But just as a bee secretly builds its honeycomb in the hive, so too does grace secretly produce its love in our hearts, transforming bitterness into sweetness and hard-heartedness into compassion. And just as a silversmith and engraver, carving a design on a platter piece by piece, covers the various animals he is carving on it, and when he finishes his work, he reveals the platter in all its splendor, so too does the true Artist (Christ) the Lord adorn our hearts with His carvings and renews them mysteriously until we depart from this body, and then the beauty of the soul will become visible (16:7).

c) Therefore, those who have tasted grace constantly long more and more to taste it.

15. Souls who love righteousness and goodness, who with great hope and faith desire to be completely clothed in Christ, do not so much need reminders from others nor do they tolerate even the slightest diminishing of their heavenly desire and love for the Lord within themselves; rather, having nailed themselves entirely to the cross of Christ, they daily experience within themselves a sense of spiritual growth in their attachment to the spiritual Bridegroom; and, being pierced by heavenly desire and thirsting for the truth of the virtues, they strongly and insatiably desire spiritual enlightenment. And if, by virtue of their faith, they are deemed worthy to receive knowledge of the divine mysteries, or become partakers of the joy of heavenly grace, they do not rely on themselves or consider themselves to be anything special; rather, to the extent that they are deemed worthy of spiritual gifts, to that same extent—due to the insatiability of their heavenly desire—they seek them with even greater intensity; the more they sense spiritual progress within themselves, the more they hunger and thirst for the communion and multiplication of grace; the more they are enriched spiritually, the more they seem to become impoverished in their own estimation of themselves, because of the insatiability of the spiritual desire to strive toward the heavenly Bridegroom, as Scripture says, *“Those who eat of Me will still hunger, and those who drink of Me will still thirst”* (Sir. 24:23). (10:1).

16. A soul that truly loves God and Christ, even if it has performed thousands of righteous deeds, because of its insatiable longing for the Lord, considers itself as though it had done nothing yet; even if it has exhausted its body through fasting and vigils, it remains with the feeling that it has not yet begun to labor for virtue; even if it has been deemed worthy to attain various spiritual gifts, revelations, and heavenly mysteries, because of her boundless and insatiable love for the Lord, she finds within herself that she has not yet acquired anything; on the contrary, hungering and thirsting daily, abiding in prayer with faith and love, she cannot be sated by the grace-filled mysteries and the cultivation of herself in every virtue. Pierced by the love of the heavenly Spirit, with the help of grace she ceaselessly stirs within herself a fervent longing for the heavenly Bridegroom; she desires to be made wholly worthy of the mysterious and ineffable communion with Him in the sanctuary of the Spirit; with the unveiled face of her soul, she beholds the heavenly Bridegroom face to face, in spiritual and ineffable light, enters into union with Him with complete certainty, conforms to His death, and with great longing ceaselessly awaits death for Christ’s sake; she believes without a doubt that through the Spirit she will receive complete deliverance from sin and the darkness of the passions, and, having

been purified by the Spirit and sanctified in soul and body, will be deemed worthy to become a pure vessel for receiving the heavenly kingdom within itself and a dwelling place for Christ, the heavenly and true King. And it is then that it becomes worthy of heavenly life, having already become here a pure dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (10:4).

17. But it is not possible for the soul to reach such a state suddenly or without trials. On the contrary, through many labors and struggles, over time, with diligence, after trials and various temptations, it attains spiritual growth and progress even to the perfect state of dispassion, and then, having willingly and courageously withstood “every temptation of sin,” it will be deemed worthy of great honors, spiritual gifts, and heavenly riches, and in this way will become an heir to the heavenly kingdom of Christ Jesus, our Lord (10:5).

18. Christianity is food and drink. And the more one tastes of it, the more the mind is stirred by its sweetness, becoming uncontrollable and insatiable, demanding and partaking more and more. Or, just as when someone is thirsty and is given a sweet drink, upon tasting it, their thirst is kindled even more intensely, and they draw closer to the drink—so too does the tasting of the Spirit produce an almost unquenchable thirst, which is rightly likened to the thirst of such a person. And these are not mere words, but the work of the Holy Spirit, mysteriously assisting the mind (17:13).

19. Imagine a spring, and suppose some thirsty person begins to drink from it; then, while he is drinking, someone distracts him and prevents him from drinking as much as he wants; then, having tasted the water, his thirst is kindled even more, and he seeks the drink with greater intensity. So it is in spiritual matters as well: one has already begun to taste and partake of the heavenly food, and suddenly, at that very moment, he is stopped, and no one allows him to be satisfied (27:7).

20. The Lord knows human weakness—that a person quickly becomes arrogant—and so He stops him and allows him to remain in constant discipline and agitation. For if, even when you receive only a little, you become unbearable to everyone and grow haughty, how much more will you become intolerable if you are allowed to be satisfied even once. But God, knowing your weakness, sends you trials according to His will, so that you may become humble and seek God more earnestly (27:8).

d) Longing more and more for the Lord, such people feel poor and lacking in everything; therefore, humility is a deeply rooted feeling within them. It is also the prerequisite for all further progress.

21. How can a person be poor in spirit, especially when he feels within himself that he has changed, made progress, and attained knowledge and understanding that he did not have before? Until a person has acquired this and made progress, he is not yet poor in spirit, but thinks highly of himself. But when this understanding and progress come, then grace itself teaches him to be poor in spirit; and although he is righteous and God’s chosen one, he must not regard himself as anything, but must acknowledge his soul as worthless and humbled, as if he knew and possessed nothing, even though he does know and possess. And such a thought becomes, as it were, innate and deeply rooted in the human mind. Do you not see that our forefather Abraham, being God’s chosen one, called himself dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27)? And David, anointed as king, had God before him, and what does he say? *“I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people”* (Ps. 21:7). Therefore, those who desire to be their co-heirs, fellow citizens in the heavenly city, and to be glorified with them, must possess the same humility and not think of themselves as anything special, but have a contrite heart (12:3–4).

22. One who has received grace considers himself more lowly than all sinners, and such a thought is instilled in him as something natural; the deeper he enters into the knowledge of God, the more he considers himself ignorant; the more he learns, the more he acknowledges that he knows nothing. This is what grace working within produces in the soul as something natural (16:12).

23. Those who are skilled in the ways of God acknowledge themselves to be very small and utterly unskilled, and it has become natural and indispensable for them to regard themselves as lowly, or even as nothing. Do such people not know that they have been given what they did not have, and have acquired something extraordinary for their nature? I tell you that they do not consider themselves virtuous or successful; they do not realize that they have acquired what they did not have. But the grace that descends upon such people teaches them that, even as they prosper, they should not regard their souls as precious, but should naturally consider themselves worthless. And though they are precious in the sight of God, they do not see

themselves that way; even as they flourish and are guided by God, they consider themselves, as it were, to know nothing, and though they are rich in the sight of God, they seem poor in their own eyes (27:4–5).

24. But if you see someone boasting and taking pride in being a partaker of grace—even if he were to perform miracles and raise the dead—yet if he does not acknowledge his soul to be dishonorable and humbled, and himself to be poor in spirit and wretched, he is consumed by malice without even realizing it. Even if he performs miracles, he should not be believed, for the mark of Christianity—even for one who is pleasing to God—is to strive to hide this from people; and even if he possesses all the king’s treasures, he should conceal them and always say: “This treasure is not mine; another has entrusted it to me, and I am a beggar; when the one who entrusted it wishes, he will take it from me.” But if anyone says, “I am rich; I have enough of what I have acquired; I need nothing more”—such a person is not a Christian, but a vessel of delusion and of the devil. For the delight in God is insatiable, and to the extent that one tastes and partakes of Him, one becomes all the more eager. Such people possess fervor and an unquenchable love for God; the more they strive to succeed and acquire, the more they acknowledge themselves to be beggars, lacking in everything and having acquired nothing. They say, “I am unworthy that this sun should shine upon me.” This is a sign of Christianity; this is humility (15:35).

25. If anyone fails to observe great humility, he surrenders himself to Satan and is stripped of the divine grace given to him; then his pride is revealed, for he is naked and poor. Therefore, one who is enriched by God’s grace must abide in great humility and heartfelt contrition, consider himself a beggar and one who possesses nothing, and think: “Everything I have is not my own; another has given it to me, and when he wills, he will take it from me.” Whoever humbles himself in this way before God and people can preserve the grace given to him, as it is said, “*Whoever humbles himself will be exalted*” (Matt. 23:12). Being God’s chosen one, let him condemn himself; and being faithful, let him consider himself unworthy. Such souls please God and are brought to life by Christ (41:3).

e) Nevertheless, they are warned above all to guard against conceit, pride, and judgmentalism, for grace departs because of these, and without grace comes immediate downfall.

26. If a king entrusts his treasure to a beggar, the one who has received it for safekeeping does not consider this treasure his own property, but acknowledges his poverty everywhere, not daring to squander another’s treasure, because he always reasons with himself: “This treasure is not only someone else’s, but it has also been entrusted to me by a mighty king, and he will take it from me whenever he wishes.” And those who possess God’s grace must think the same of themselves, be humble in wisdom, and acknowledge their poverty. If a beggar, having received from the king the treasure entrusted to him and relying on this treasure that belongs to another, begins to boast of it as his own wealth, and his heart is filled with pride, then the king takes his treasure back, and the one who had it in his care remains just as poor as he was before. So, if even those who possess grace become boastful, and their hearts grow proud, then the Lord will take His grace away from them, and they will remain just as they were before receiving grace from the Lord (15:25).

27. For, having received the grace of the Spirit and finding for themselves gracious comfort in rest, desire, and spiritual sweetness, and having relied on this, they become proud, give themselves over to carelessness, without contrition of heart, without humility of mind, and without having attained the perfect measure of dispassion, having failed to be completely filled with grace through all diligence and faith, they are satisfied with this and rest, and come to rest with a small measure of grace-filled consolation; such souls, having prospered more in pride than in humility, even if they were granted some gift, are deprived of it because of their careless negligence and the vain boastfulness of their conceit (10:3).

28. I tell you, however, that I have seen people who possessed all gifts and became partakers of the Spirit, yet, having failed to attain perfect love, they fell. A certain noble man, having renounced the world, sold his estate, set his slaves free, and, as a prudent and sensible man, had already become renowned for his virtuous life; yet, having succumbed to conceit and arrogance, he ultimately fell into debauchery and a thousand evils (27:14).

29. Another, during the persecution, sacrificed his body, and, having been a confessor, was later, upon the restoration of peace, set free and held in high esteem; his eyelids were damaged from having been tormented in thick smoke. And he, though glorified, when called to prayer, took some bread and gave it to his servant, and his mind was in such a state as if he had never heard the word of God (27:15).

30. Another, a certain ascetic who lived with me in the same house and prayed together with me, was so rich in grace that, while praying beside me, he would be moved to deep emotion, for grace was overflowing

within him. He had been given the gift of healing and not only cast out demons but also healed those bound hand and foot who suffered from severe illnesses by the laying on of hands. Then, having become conceited, glorified by the world, and taking pleasure in himself, he grew proud and fell into the very depths of sin. Behold, even he who possessed the gift of healing fell. Do you see how those who have not attained the measure of love fall? But whoever has attained love, bound and enraptured by it, is immersed and led away as a captive into another world, as if no longer feeling his own nature (27:16).

31. A faithful and truly loving soul, beholding the eternal blessings prepared for the righteous and the ineffable beneficence of God's grace about to descend, acknowledges that it—along with its own care, labor, and deeds—is unworthy of the ineffable promises of the Spirit. Such is the poor in spirit whom the Lord blesses. Such is the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness. Such is the one who is broken in heart. Those who have embraced such a disposition, such devotion, such labor, and such love for virtue—and who have remained so to the end—will truly be able to receive life and the eternal kingdom. Therefore, let none of the brothers exalt himself above his brother, and let no one, deceived by the evil one, become puffed up with pride, saying, "Behold, I already possess a spiritual gift." For it is unworthy of Christians to think this way. You do not know what tomorrow will bring for your brother; you do not know what your end or his will be. On the contrary, let everyone, being attentive to himself, constantly examine his conscience and test the work of his heart—with what care and effort his mind strives toward God—and, keeping in mind the perfect goal—freedom, dispassion, and spiritual peace—let it flow unceasingly and diligently, relying on no gift or justification whatsoever (29:7).

32. How do even those upon whom God's grace has worked fall? Even the purest thoughts by nature can become corrupt and fall. A person begins to boast, to condemn another, and to say, "You are a sinner"—while considering himself righteous. Do you not know what Paul says? "*A thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to torment me, so that I might not become conceited*" (2 Cor. 12:7). And even in a pure nature, there is the potential for pride (7:4).

33. Therefore, Christians themselves must make every effort not to condemn anyone at all—neither an obvious harlot, nor sinners, nor lawless people—but to look upon everyone with a simple-hearted disposition, with a pure eye, so that it may become, as it were, something natural and inevitable to a person—not to belittle anyone, not to condemn anyone, not to despise anyone, and not to make distinctions between people (15:8).

34. Can a person fall while possessing the gift of grace? If he becomes complacent, he falls, because the enemies never remain idle and wage war without succumbing to laziness. All the more reason, then, should you not cease your quest before God. For much harm will come to you if you give in to negligence, even if, outwardly, you appear to have been tested in the very mystery of grace (15:14).

35. The dignity of Christians is great; it is incomparable to anything else. But if anyone is led into distraction and robbed by malice, he becomes like a city without walls, into which robbers enter unhindered from wherever they please, and lay it waste and burn it. Thus, if you, too, are careless and inattentive to yourself, then evil spirits come, reduce your mind to nothing, and lay it waste, scattering your thoughts in this world (15:45).

e) Therefore, just as much as they rejoice, realizing what a treasure they have received, they are equally afraid of losing it, and they strive to perform their spiritual service in such a way as not to offend the Spirit of grace, lest He depart.

36. The laborer does not place his hope in his labors or in his life until he receives what he desires, until the Lord comes and dwells within him in every sensation and action of the Spirit. And when he tastes the Lord's grace and delights in the spiritual fruits, the veil of darkness will be lifted, and the light of Christ will shine forth and work with indescribable joy; then he will be assured of the great love of having the Lord with him. Like a merchant who has made a profit, he rejoices, yet at the same time he grieves and fears harm from robbers and deceitful spirits, lest, growing weak, he should in any way squander his labor before he is deemed worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem (14:2).

37. Just as merchants sailing the sea, even though they may find a favorable wind and calm waters, remain in constant fear—until they enter the harbor—that a contrary wind might suddenly arise, the sea might become rough, and the ship will be in danger; so too, Christians, though they feel within themselves the favorable breath of the Holy Spirit, still live in fear that a contrary wind might arise and blow, stirring up rebellion and turmoil in their souls. Therefore, great care is needed to enter the harbor of rest, into perfect

peace, into eternal life and eternal joy, into the city of the saints—the heavenly Jerusalem, into the Church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23). But for those who have not yet passed through these stages, there are many reasons to fear that the evil one might cause them to stumble in some way during this journey (43:4).

38. A certain wealthy man, a most illustrious king, will turn his favor toward a poor woman who has nothing but her own body; he will become her lover and resolve to take her into his home as a bride and companion. And if she finally shows her affection for her husband, then, while remaining faithful to him, this poor, destitute woman, who had nothing of her own, becomes the mistress of all her husband's possessions. But if she acts contrary to her duty and obligation and behaves improperly in her husband's house, she is then cast out in disgrace and humiliation, and she goes, placing both hands on her head, just as the Law of Moses prescribes for a wife who is disobedient and displeasing to her husband (Deut. 24:1), and then she suffers and weeps bitterly, reflecting on the wealth she has lost, the glory she has been deprived of, and the disgrace she has brought upon herself through her own folly (15:2).

39. Likewise, the soul whom Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, betroths to Himself as a bride for a mystical and divine communion with Him—and who will partake of heavenly riches—must, with great care, sincerely please Christ, her betrothed, and fulfill the spiritual ministry entrusted to her in a proper and fitting manner, so as to please God in all things, not to offend the Spirit in any way, to preserve perfect chastity and love for Christ in the proper manner, to conduct herself well in the house of the heavenly King, with complete devotion to the grace bestowed upon her. And so, such a soul is set as mistress over all the Lord's blessings, and her very body receives glory from the Divinity of Christ. But if she sins in any way, and in her service acts contrary to her duty, fails to do what is pleasing to Christ, and does not follow His will, nor does she cooperate with the grace of the Spirit inherent in her, then she is subjected to shameful disgrace and is cut off from life, having become unfit and incapable of communion with the Heavenly King. And regarding this soul, there is already sorrow, grief, and weeping among all the holy and wise spirits; the Angels, the Powers, the Apostles, the Prophets, and the Martyrs lament over her (15:2).

40. Therefore, we must strive and conduct ourselves with all prudence and caution, so that, as it is written, we may work out our own salvation with fear (Phil. 2:12). Therefore, all of you who have become partakers of the Spirit of Christ, in nothing—whether small or great—act with contempt or offend the grace of the Spirit, lest you lose the life of which you have already become partakers (15:4),

41. And I present the same idea in another context. If a servant enters the royal chambers and serves the king by presenting what has been entrusted to him, he takes it from the royal treasury; and though he enters with nothing of his own, he serves the king using royal vessels. But here great prudence and discernment are required, so that while serving he does not do anything improper, does not serve one dish instead of another at the king's table, but presents all the dishes, from the first to the last, in the proper order. And if, through ignorance and lack of judgment, he serves the king improperly, he will be exposed to danger and death (15:5).

42. Likewise, the soul, having dedicated itself to the service of God by grace and by the Spirit, needs great discernment and guidance so as not to err in any way regarding God's vessels—that is, regarding spiritual service—by acting according to its own will, which is at odds with grace. For the soul can serve the Lord through spiritual service, which is performed in secret by the inner man, and through its own vessels—that is, the spirit of the inner man—but without His vessels—that is, without grace—no one can serve God, that is, please Him by fulfilling God's will in all things (15:5).

43. And when the soul receives grace, it then requires much prudence and discernment. Yet God Himself grants all this to the soul that asks of Him, so that it may serve Him acceptably by the Spirit He bestows, not being overcome by vice in anything nor sinning by straying from the path through ignorance, carelessness, and negligence, and by transgressing the Lord's will against one's duty; for such a soul will be punished with death and weeping, as the Divine Apostle also says, "*Lest, while I am preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified*" (1 Cor. 9:27). Do you see what fear he had, being God's Apostle? Therefore, let us pray to God that all of us who have received God's grace may, above all, carry out our spiritual ministry in accordance with His will, and not become accustomed to a mindset that disregards everything, but rather, by living a life pleasing to God and, in accordance with His will, serving Him through spiritual ministry, inherit eternal life (15:6).

44. Just as the komiti, or provincial governors, who enter the King's palace are filled with great fear about how to answer Him and avoid reproach and punishment for giving the wrong answer, while the villagers and common people, who have never seen the prince, behave carefree—so too the entire world under heaven,

everyone, from kings down to beggars, not knowing the glory of Christ, is preoccupied with the affairs of this life, and few ever remember the Day of Judgment; but those who enter in spirit into the judgment seat of Christ, where the throne of Christ stands, and always standing before Christ, remain in constant fear and trembling, lest they sin in any way against His holy commandments (15, 17).

45. Just as a servant, when he is near his master, lives in fear the entire time he is near him and does nothing without him, so too must we lay bare and reveal our thoughts before Christ, the Lord and the Knower of Hearts, and place our hope and trust in Him, for He is my glory, He is my Father, He is my wealth. Therefore, you must always have care and reverence in your conscience (16:6).

46. Just as those entrusted with the chief administration of a province or the royal treasury are constantly concerned not to offend the king in any way, so too are those entrusted with spiritual matters always concerned; and even when they have peace, it is as if they do not have it, because they are still driving out of their souls the kingdom of darkness, which has invaded the city—that is, the soul—and the barbarians who have taken possession of its pastures (16:12).

g) For this very purpose, they strive in every way not to let their minds stray from the Lord, and to keep their inner selves in such order as a helmsman keeps his ship's crew, or a charioteer his horses.

47. God is indescribable and incomprehensible; He reveals Himself everywhere—in the mountains, in the sea, and in the depths of the abyss—without moving from one place to another; just as the angels descend from heaven to earth, so He is in heaven, and He is here. If you seek the Lord in the depths, you will find that He performs miracles there. If you seek Him in the den, you will find that there, between two lions, He protects the righteous Daniel. If you seek Him in the fire, you will find that there He helps His servants. If you seek Him on the mountain, you will find that He is there—with Elijah and Moses. The Lord is everywhere—beneath the earth, above the heavens, within us, and everywhere (16:5, 12).

48. A Christian is obligated to always keep God in mind, for it is written, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart*” (Deut. 6:5)—that is, love the Lord not only when you enter a house of prayer, but also while traveling, conversing, and eating; keep God in mind, and maintain love and devotion to Him. For He says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). Whatever a person's heart is attached to, and whatever his desires draw him toward, that becomes his god. If the heart always seeks God, then God is the Lord of his heart. Just as twigs thrown into the fire cannot resist the power of the fire but are immediately consumed, so too, when demons seek to attack a person who has been graced with the gifts of the Spirit, they are scorched and destroyed by the divine fiery power—provided that the person himself remains constantly attached to the Lord and places his trust and hope in Him. And even if demons are as strong as solid mountains, they are set ablaze by prayer, just as wax is by fire (43:3).

49. And it happens that the saints of the Lord sit in the theater of the world and watch its deceptions, but in their inner being they converse with God, while outwardly they appear to be gazing at what is happening in the world. Worldly people are subject to a different influence—the spirit of flattery—by which they seek earthly wisdom; but Christians have a different will and a different mind; they are people of a different age and a different city, because the Spirit of God dwells in communion with their souls (15:8–9).

50. The Apostle says, “*I want men to pray without anger or selfish motives*” (1 Tim. 2:8), because, according to the Gospel, thoughts come from the heart (Matt. 15:19). Therefore, when you begin to pray, pay attention to your heart and your mind; desire that a pure prayer may flow from you to God; and above all, see if there is anything hindering your prayer, whether your prayer is pure, whether your mind is occupied with the Lord just as a farmer's is with farming, a husband's with his wife, and a merchant's with trade; and when you kneel down to pray, do other thoughts distract you (15:12).

51. It is written, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart*” (Deut. 6:5). And you say, “I love Him, and I have the Holy Spirit.” But do you truly have remembrance of the Lord, love for Him, and fervor toward Him? Are you devoted to the Lord day and night? If you have such love, then you are pure. But if you do not, then when earthly cares and wicked and deceitful thoughts arise, examine whether you are truly steadfast in this, whether your soul is always drawn to God's love and devoted to God. For worldly thoughts distract the mind with earthly and transitory things, preventing one from loving God or remembering the Lord. Often even an uneducated person begins to pray, bends the knee, and his mind enters into peace; and to the extent that he undermines the opposing wall of malice and burrows beneath it, so is it destroyed, and the person attains to a vision and wisdom that the strong, the wise, or the eloquent cannot reach, and they cannot comprehend or fathom the subtlety of his mind, for he is absorbed in the divine mysteries (15:13).

52. When there is a fire outside a copper vessel, and you then begin to add firewood, the vessel heats up, and whatever is inside it boils and bubbles from the fire kindled outside the vessel. But if someone is lazy and does not add firewood, the heat will begin to diminish and, as it were, die out. So too, grace is a heavenly fire within you. If you pray and surrender your thoughts to love for Christ, it is as if you have added firewood, and your thoughts will become a fire and be immersed in God's love. Although the Spirit withdraws and seems to be outside of you, He nevertheless abides within you and manifests Himself outside of you. But if anyone becomes distracted, even slightly, by worldly affairs or distraction, sin returns, takes hold of the soul, and begins to oppress the person. The soul recalls its former peace and begins to grieve and suffer more frequently (40, 7).

53. Once again the mind turns to God; once again the former peace begins to draw near; once again it begins to seek God more earnestly, saying, "I beseech You, O Lord!" Gradually, a fire grows that both inflames and soothes the soul, just as a hook gradually draws a fish from the depths. And if this were not so, and the soul had not tasted bitterness and death, how could it distinguish the bitter from the sweet, death from life, and give thanks to the Life-giving Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever! (40, 8).

54. Just as on a ship—if it is fully equipped—the helmsman directs and controls everything, rebuking some and instructing others what to do, so too does the heart have a helmsman—the mind—as well as a conscience that convicts, and thoughts that condemn and justify; for the Apostle says: "*They are convicted or acquitted by their own thoughts*" (Rom. 2:15). (15, 31).

55. If the chariot, the reins, the animals, and everything else needed for it are in the hands of a single charioteer, then whenever he wishes, he races along in the chariot at full speed, and whenever he wishes, he restrains the chariot; and again, wherever he wishes to turn it, there it goes—the entire chariot is under the charioteer's control. Likewise, the heart has many natural thoughts that are closely connected to it, while the mind and conscience provide guidance and direction to the heart and quell the natural thoughts that arise within it, for the soul has many components, even though it is one (15:32).

56. People, having harnessed their horses, steer their chariots and rush against one another, each striving to overthrow and defeat his opponent. So the heart of the ascetic presents a spectacle: there, evil spirits struggle against the soul, while God and the angels gaze upon the struggle. Moreover, every hour many new thoughts are produced by the soul, and malice also instills them. For the soul has many hidden thoughts, and at this very moment it produces and gives birth to them; and malice has many thoughts and designs, and every hour it generates new thoughts against the soul, because the mind is a charioteer, who harnesses the chariot of the soul, holding the reins of thoughts, and rushes against the satanic chariot, just as Satan has prepared it against the soul (40:5).

g) From this it is clear that the battle against sin and the enemy does not cease here either; hence the unceasing struggle against the thoughts and movements of the heart. Here it is more subtle.

57. Many, though grace is inherent in them, do not realize that they have been robbed by sin. Just as if a young woman and a young man were living in a house, and the woman, seduced by the man, finally consents to him, commits adultery, and becomes despised, so too does the dreadful serpent of sin dwell with the soul, tempting and persuading it; and if she consents, the incorporeal soul enters into communion with the incorporeal malice of the spirit—that is, spirit enters into communion with spirit—and the one who accepts the thought of the wicked one into himself and consents to it commits adultery in his heart. Therefore, the measure of your spiritual struggle lies in not committing adultery in your thoughts, but in resisting with your mind and waging an inner battle, fighting against vice and disobeying it, and not taking pleasure in it in your thoughts. And if the Lord finds this readiness in you, He will receive you into His Kingdom on the last day (15:26).

58. It is human nature that even one who is deep in vice and engaged in sin can turn to good, and even one who is bound by the Holy Spirit and enraptured by heavenly things has the power to turn to evil. And even those who have tasted God's grace and have already become partakers of the Spirit, if they are not careful, grow cold and become worse than they were when they lived in the world. And this happens not because God is changeable or powerless, or because the Spirit fades away, but because people themselves are not in harmony with grace, which is why they are led astray and fall into countless evils (15:34).

59. Others, having already tasted the sweetness of God, are still subject to the enemy's influence within them, and, out of inexperience, are surprised that even after God's visitation, their thoughts continue to exert their influence even during the Christian sacraments. But those who have grown accustomed to this state are

not surprised by it, just as experienced farmers, through long-standing practice, do not remain completely carefree when there is a bountiful harvest, but anticipate both famine and scarcity; and conversely, when famine or scarcity befalls them, they do not lose all hope, knowing that times change. So it is in the spiritual realm: when the soul is subjected to various temptations, it is neither surprised nor despondent, for it knows that, by God's permission, the evil one is allowed to test and punish it; and conversely, in the midst of its great wealth and peace, it does not become complacent, but anticipates change (16:3).

60. When a person is deeply immersed in grace and enriched by it, there is still a seed of vice within him, but he also has an intercessor who helps him. If a spring flows, the surrounding areas remain damp and moist. But as soon as the heat sets in, both the spring and the surrounding areas dry up. So it is with the servants of God, in whom grace abounds: it dries up both the desires stirred up by the evil one and their natural desires, because now God's people have risen above the first Adam (16:4).

61. Some find such rest in God's grace that they become stronger than the vice dwelling within them; and though they possess prayer and great peace before God, at times they fall prey to the influence of wicked thoughts and are ensnared by sin, even while they still abide in God's grace. But frivolous and ignorant people, when grace is at work in them to some extent, think that there is no longer any sin in them, whereas those who are discerning and prudent do not presume to deny that, even while possessing God's grace, they are not subject to the influence of shameful and impure thoughts (17:5).

62. We often find among the brothers that some, having attained great joy and grace, would say of themselves for five or six years: "Lust has withered away in us"—and afterward, when they considered themselves completely freed from lust, the vice lurking within them was set in motion, and they were inflamed with lust, at which they marveled within themselves and said, "How is it that, after such a long time, such a vice has arisen in us?" Therefore, no one of sound mind would dare to say, "Since grace dwells in me, I am completely free from sin." On the contrary, two forces are at work in the mind. Those inexperienced in this matter, as soon as grace has had even the slightest effect on them, think that they are already victorious and have become perfect Christians. But in my view, it is like this: when the sun shines in the clear sky, and clouds come and cover it, thickening the air, the sun, though hidden behind the clouds, suffers no loss either in its light or in its very essence. So it is with those who have not yet attained perfect purity. While abiding in God's grace, yet still possessed by sin in the depths of their souls, they possess within themselves natural impulses and thoughts that strengthen them in their striving toward God, even though they are not entirely established in goodness (17:6).

63. Conversely, even those who, in the depths of their souls, cling to the good—that is, are dominated by grace—remain slaves and captives of wicked thoughts and find themselves on the side of vice. Therefore, great discernment is required for a person to know by experience how things stand within us. I tell you, however, that even the Apostles, though they had the Comforter within them, were not entirely carefree. Along with joy and gladness, they also experienced fear and trembling—not because of vice, but because of the very workings of grace itself; grace itself warned them lest they stray, even in the smallest matter. Just as someone who throws a stone fragment at a wall does not damage it in the least, nor does he move the wall from its place, or, just as one who shoots an arrow at a man wearing armor does no harm to either the iron or the body—because the armor deflects the arrow—so too, even if a portion of evil drew near the Apostles, it did them no harm, for they were clothed in the perfect power of Christ, and they themselves, being perfect, had the freedom to perform righteous deeds. Since some claim that, with grace, the soul has nothing left to worry about, God requires even the perfect to exercise their free will in service to the Spirit, so that they may act in accordance with grace. For the Apostle says, "*Do not quench the Spirit*" (1 Thess. 5:19). (17, 7–8).

64. In the visible world, the earth of its own accord most often produces thorns; the farmer plows the ground, cultivates it diligently, and sows seeds, yet thorns and weeds still grow and multiply, because Adam, after his transgression, was told: "*The ground will yield thorns and thistles for you*" (Gen. 3: 18). The farmer labors again, pulling up the thorns, yet they multiply even more. Understand this spiritually: because of sin, the earth brings forth thorns and thistles from the heart; man cultivates the earth and labors, yet the thorns of the evil spirits still spring up. Then the Holy Spirit Himself comes to the aid of human weakness, and the Lord sows heavenly seed into this soil of the heart and cultivates it. And when the Lord's seed falls, thorns and thistles still spring up. The Lord Himself and man once again cultivate the soil of the soul, and the seven evil spirits and thorns still appear and multiply there, until summer comes, grace abounds, and the thorns wither in the heat of the sun (26:21).

65. Although vice dwells in nature itself, it prevails only where it finds fertile ground. The tender stalks of wheat can be choked by weeds. But when summer comes and the plants wither, the weeds do no harm whatsoever to the wheat. Suppose there are thirty measures of pure wheat, but there is an admixture of chaff in it—for example, a few handfuls—the chaff will be imperceptible amid the abundance of wheat. So it is with grace: when God’s gift and grace increase within a person, and he grows rich in the Lord, then vice—though it remains in him to some extent—cannot harm him and has no power over him, nor any share within him. For this is the purpose of the Lord’s coming and providence: to free us—who are enslaved, guilty, and subject to vice—and to make us victors over death and sin (26:22).

66. Could the apostles have sinned if they had wanted to, or was grace stronger even than their own will? They could not have sinned, because, dwelling in the light and possessing such grace, they did not become proud. However, we do not say that grace was weak in them; rather, we affirm that grace allows even perfect spiritual men to have their own free will and the ability to do as they please, and to incline toward whatever they wish. And human nature itself, being weak, has the capacity to turn away from the good that dwells within it. Just as those clothed in full armor—with armor and other weapons—are already secure within, and enemies do not attack them, or even if they do, it is up to them to use their weapons, resist the enemies, engage them in battle, and win the victory, or, while possessing weapons, not to wage war against their enemies but to rejoice with them and live in peace—so too Christians, being clothed in perfect power and possessing heavenly weapons, if they so desire, can revel together with Satan and live in peace with him rather than wage war, because human nature is easily changeable, and man, by virtue of the free will he retains, may, if he so chooses, become a son of God, or likewise a son of perdition (27:11).

67. Do the perfect face sorrow or strife? Or are they entirely carefree? There is no person whom the enemy has ceased to attack. Satan is merciless and misanthropic; therefore, he does not hesitate to attack every person, though apparently he does not attack everyone with equal intensity. Some endure severe trials and torment from sin, yet they are strengthened and grow wiser through these trials, disregarding the opposing force, and face no danger in this regard, for they are unshakable and confident in their salvation, having often practiced and gained experience in the battle against evil, and God Himself is with them. They are guided by God and find rest. Others, however, not yet having practiced this, if they fall into sorrow alone and a battle arises against them, are immediately plunged into trouble and destruction (15, 16, 17).

68. Some, having fortified themselves and under the powerful influence of God’s grace within them, found their members so sanctified that they concluded that in Christianity there was no longer any place for lust, but that a chaste and pure mind was acquired, and that the inner person was already soaring in the divine and heavenly. Therefore, such a person thinks that he has undoubtedly attained perfection, and just when he considers himself to have entered a safe harbor—waves rise up against him, and once again he finds himself in the midst of the sea, swept away to a place where there is only water and sky, and certain death. Thus, the sin that has entered us produces every kind of evil lust. But when such a person is once again granted a certain grace—as if, so to speak, having received a tiny drop from the very depths of the sea—he finds in this very thing a miracle taking place every hour and every day; and, having been subjected to such an extraordinary, new, and divine action, he marvels and is astonished at how he had been deceived. Finally, grace, being divine and heavenly, enlightens, guides, and pacifies him, arranging all things for the good (38:4).

69. Practice righteousness within your inner being, where Christ’s altar stands together with the undefiled sanctuary, so that the testimony of your conscience may boast in the cross of Christ, which purifies your conscience from dead works, and you may serve God with your spirit, knowing Whom you worship, as it is written: *“We worship the One we know”* (John 4:22). Entrust yourself to God, who guides you; may your soul enter into communion with God, as a bride with her bridegroom. For it is said: *“This mystery is a great one, but I speak in reference to Christ”* (Eph. 5:32) and *“into a blameless soul”* (38:5).

70. Imagine a garden with fruit-bearing trees and other fragrant plants; the entire garden is beautifully arranged and adorned, and for protection—instead of a fence—it is surrounded by a low wall, and a swift river happens to flow through it. If the water strikes the wall, even slightly, it will damage its foundation, find a way through, gradually erode the foundation completely, and, once it enters the garden, break and uproot all the plants, destroy all the labor, and render the garden barren. So it is with the human heart. There are beautiful thoughts within it, but the torrents of sin are constantly drawing near to the heart, ready to overthrow it and draw it to their side. And if the mind, though somewhat frivolous, gives in to impure thoughts, then the spirits

of flattery have already found a pasture there; they have burst in and overthrown all beauty, reduced good thoughts to nothing, and brought the soul into desolation (43:6).

i) In addition to this battle, another—an external one—arises. As God’s grace begins to manifest itself in the heart of the laborer, hostile attacks against him from other people begin. The enemy, driven out from within, arms himself from without. This has become an inevitable condition for a Christian’s spiritual perfection.

71. God’s people must prepare themselves for struggle and heroic deeds. Just as a courageous young man endures the struggle and responds to the blows struck against him with blows of his own, so too must Christians endure afflictions and both external and internal struggles, so that by bearing the blows, they may triumph through patience. Such is the path of Christianity. Where the Holy Spirit is, persecution and strife follow like a shadow. Do you see how the Prophets, though the Spirit worked within them, were always persecuted by their own people? Do you see how the Lord, who is the Way and the Truth, was persecuted not by a foreign people, but by His own? His own people—the Israelites—both persecuted and crucified Him. And something similar happened to the Apostles, because from the time of the Cross the Spirit, the Comforter, came and dwelt in the Christians; none of the Jews were persecuted anymore, but only the Christians were martyred. Therefore, they should not be surprised by this, for the truth must be persecuted (15:11).

72. Nor is it simple what is written about Job, whom Satan asked to be given to him, for Satan could do nothing on his own without permission. What, then, does the devil say to the Lord? “Deliver him into my hands, *‘unless he blesses You to Your face’*” (Job 1:11)? So it is even now: Job is the same, God is the same, and the devil is the same. At the very moment when Job saw God’s help, was zealous and fervent in grace, Satan asked for him and said to the Lord: “Since You help him and protect him, he serves You. Abandon him and hand him over to me, *‘lest he bless You to Your face’*?” Finally, as if precisely because the soul is comforted, grace withdraws from it, and the soul is given over to temptations. Therefore, the devil comes, inflicting upon it a thousand calamities, along with hopelessness, despair, and wicked thoughts, and crushes the soul in order to weaken it and turn it away from hope in God. But the prudent soul, even in misfortune and sorrow, does not lose hope; rather, it holds fast to what it possessed, and no matter what may be inflicted upon it—amidst a thousand temptations, enduring it all—it says: “Even if I die, I will not forsake Him” (26:7–8).

73. Yet all the righteous, walking the narrow and difficult path, pleased God to the very end. Abraham was rich in God, yet in relation to the world he called himself dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27), and David says of himself: “*The scorn of men and the contempt of people, a worm and not a man*” (Ps. 21:7). Likewise, all the Apostles and Prophets suffered afflictions and were rebuked. The Lord Himself, Who is the Way and God, having come not for Himself but for your sake, to become for you the image of all that is good—behold in what humiliation He came: God, the Son of God, King and Son of Kings, took on the form of a servant, He offers healing remedies and heals the afflicted, yet outwardly He appears, as it were, to be one of the afflicted (26:25).

74. But do not disregard God’s majesty when you see Him outwardly humbled and, as it were, like one of us: He appeared this way for our sake, not for His own. Consider: was He not most humbled of all at that hour when they cried out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”—and the crowd surged forward! Just as in the world, when a prince pronounces a sentence on some villain, the whole people despise him and humiliate him, so too the Lord, at the time of the crucifixion, as a man condemned to death, was deemed worthless by the Pharisees. And when they spat in His face, placed a crown of thorns upon Him, and struck Him on the cheeks, did this not exceed the measure of all humiliation? For it is written: “*I offered My back to those who struck Me, and My face to those who pulled out My beard; I did not hide My face from insults and My cheeks from being struck*” (Isa. 50:6). If God endured so much mockery, suffering, and humiliation, then no matter how much you humble yourself—being by nature frail and mortal—you will never do anything comparable to your Lord. God humbled Himself for your sake, yet you do not humble yourself even for your own sake, but instead exalt yourself and boast. He came to take upon Himself sorrows and hardships, and to give you His peace, yet you are unwilling to endure toil and suffering so that your wounds might be healed through them. Glory to His suffering and long-suffering forever (26:26).

75. If God walked this path on earth, then you too must follow His example. This is how the Apostles and the Prophets walked. And we, if we wish to be built upon the foundation of the Lord and the Apostles, must follow their example. For the Apostle says by the Holy Spirit: “*Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 4:16). But if you love human glory, desire to be worshiped, and seek ease for yourself, then you have

strayed from the path. You must be crucified with the Crucified One, suffer with the Suffering One, so that afterward you may be glorified with the Glorified One (Rom. 8:17). For the bride must suffer with the Bridegroom and, through this, become a partner and co-heir with Christ. And no one is permitted to enter the city of the saints—without suffering, not by a smooth, broad, or wide path—to rest and reign with the King for all eternity (12:5).

76. Is Satan permitted to attack us only to a certain extent, or as much as he wishes? His aim is not only at Christians, but also at idolaters and the whole world. Therefore, if he were allowed to attack as much as he wished, he would destroy everyone. Why is that? Because this is his work and such is his will. But just as a potter, when placing vessels in the fire, stokes the kiln in moderation—not too much, lest the vessels, fired longer than necessary, crack, and not too little, lest they remain unburned and they are not wasted, and likewise the one who crafts silver and gold objects applies the fire in moderation; for if he intensifies the fire, the gold and silver melt, become liquid, and are lost, and just as the human mind is able to match loads to the type of pack animal—whether a camel or some other animal—and determine exactly what weight it can bear, so much more does God, Who knows the strength of human vessels, allow opposing forces to act in varying degrees (26:3).

i) By enduring all this patiently and yielding nothing to the enemy, the soul becomes increasingly purified and opens itself to the most powerful influences of the Holy Spirit's grace, which is ultimately manifested in flashes of insight, in special states of moral joy, in visions, and in divine guidance. It becomes evident that the soul is approaching perfection.

77. If anyone loves God, then God also bestows His love upon him; to whoever has once believed in God, He grants heavenly faith, and the person becomes truly spiritual. Therefore, just as you offer Him a gift from your own members, so too will He, in the same way, bestow upon your soul from His own members, so that you may do all things, love, and pray with purity (15:20).

78. Mary left everything, sat at the Lord's feet, and blessed God all day long. Do you see how sitting at His feet surpasses love? But so that God's word may shine more clearly, listen further. If anyone loves Jesus and listens to Him as they should—and not merely listens, but abides in love—then God already desires to reward that soul in some way for this love, even though the person does not know what they will receive or to what extent God will bestow upon the soul. For even to Mary, who loved Him and sat at His feet, He did not merely give a reward, but from His very essence He bestowed a certain hidden power. The very words that God spoke to Mary were spirit and a certain power. These words entered her heart, became a soul within her soul, a spirit within her spirit, and divine power filled her heart; for wherever that power takes root, it necessarily remains there as an inalienable possession. That is why the Lord, knowing what He had bestowed upon her, said, "*Mary has chosen the better part*" (Luke 10:42). But in time, even what Martha did out of a desire to serve led her to the same gift, for she, too, received the divine power into her soul (12:16).

79. And what is so surprising about those who came to the Lord and were physically united with Him receiving power? Sometimes the Apostles spoke a word, and the Holy Spirit came upon the believers (Acts 10:44). Cornelius received power from the word he heard. All the more so when the Lord spoke to Mary, or to Zacchaeus, or to the sinful woman who, with her hair loose, wiped the Lord's feet, or to the Samaritan woman, or to the thief—then power was manifested, and the Holy Spirit entered into union with their souls. And now, those who love the Lord, having left everything behind and abiding constantly in prayer, are secretly learning what they did not know before. Truth Itself, according to their will, reveals Itself to them and teaches them: "*I am the Truth*" (John 14: 6). The Apostles themselves, having remained with the Lord until the cross, witnessed great miracles—such as lepers being cleansed and the dead being raised—but they did not know how the Divine power dwells and acts within the heart; they did not know that they themselves would be spiritually reborn, enter into union with the heavenly soul, and become a new creation. They loved the Lord for the miracles He performed. Finally, the Lord said to them: "Why are you amazed at the miracles? I give you a great inheritance, the like of which the whole world does not possess" (12:17).

80. The Lord's words were still strange to them until He rose from the dead and, for our sake, ascended bodily into heaven. And then the Spirit of the Comforter descended upon them and entered into union with their souls. Truth Itself reveals Itself in the souls of the faithful, and the heavenly man comes to your man, and there is a single communion between them. Therefore, for those who remain in service and do everything diligently out of zeal for the faith and love for God, this eventually leads to the knowledge of the Truth itself, because the Lord reveals Himself to their souls and teaches them to dwell in the Holy Spirit (12:18).

81. It is said: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Ps. 33: 9), and this tasting is undoubtedly the active power of the Spirit, performing its ministry in the heart. For those who are sons of light and ministers of the New Covenant in the Holy Spirit learn nothing from people, but are taught by God. Grace itself inscribes the laws of the Spirit upon their hearts. Therefore, they must find confirmation not only in the Scriptures, written in ink, but also on the tablets of the heart, where God’s grace inscribes the laws of the Spirit and the heavenly mysteries, for the heart reigns sovereignly and royally over the entire bodily constitution. And when grace takes possession of the innermost recesses of the heart, then it reigns over all the members and thoughts, for there lie the mind, all thoughts, and the soul’s hope. This is why grace permeates all the members of the body (15:18).

82. Such a one, as it is written (1 Cor. 2:14), discerns every person. He knows about each one—from what source they draw their words, where they have stopped, and at what stage they are—yet no one among those who have the spirit of the world within them can know or judge him. Only those who have within themselves this heavenly Spirit of God know those like themselves, as the Apostle says: “*The spiritual judge the spiritual*” (9:8).

83. Those who have been deemed worthy to become children of God and to be born from above by the Holy Spirit, having within themselves Christ who enlightens and comforts them, are guided by the Spirit in many and varied ways, and grace works invisibly in their hearts during spiritual repose. But let us draw on images from the visible pleasures of this world to illustrate, in part, how grace works in the souls of such people. At times they are joyful, as if at a royal banquet, and rejoice with indescribable joy and gladness. At other times, they are like a bride, comforted by divine peace in communion with her bridegroom. And at times, like incorporeal angels, even while still in the body, they feel within themselves the same lightness and soaring spirit. At other times, they are as if in the ecstasy of a feast, cheered and enraptured by the Spirit, in the ecstasy of divine spiritual mysteries (18:7).

84. But at other times they seem to weep and lament over the human race, and, praying for Adam as a whole, they shed tears and weep, inflamed by spiritual love for humanity. At times, the Spirit kindles them with such joy and love that, if it were possible, they would embrace every person in their hearts, making no distinction between the wicked and the righteous. At times, in the humility of the Spirit, they humble themselves so much before every person that they consider themselves the very last and least of all. At times, the Spirit constantly keeps them in indescribable joy. At times they are like a mighty warrior who, having donned the king’s full armor, goes out to battle against enemies and fights valiantly to defeat them. For in the same way, the spiritual person puts on the heavenly armor of the Spirit, advances against enemies, and wages war against them to subdue them under his feet (18:8).

85. At times, the soul finds rest in a kind of great stillness, silence, and peace, dwelling in pure spiritual delight, in inexpressible repose and bliss. At times, by grace, it is enabled to comprehend something, to attain inexpressible wisdom, and to know the unfathomable Spirit—things that cannot be expressed by tongue or lips. At times, a person becomes like any ordinary person. Thus, grace acts in diverse ways among people and guides the soul in many ways, bringing it to rest according to God’s will, and trains it in various ways so that it may be presented to the heavenly Father as perfect, blameless, and pure (18:9).

86. These very works of the Spirit that we have listed reach a greater degree in those who are close to perfection. For the various forms of the soul’s repose through grace are expressed in different ways through the word and are continually accomplished in people, so that one work follows another. When the soul ascends to the perfection of the Spirit, having been completely purified of all passions, and, in ineffable communion, having come into unity and union with the Spirit, the Comforter—and, being united with the Spirit, having herself become spirit—then she becomes entirely light, all eye, all spirit, all joy, all peace, all gladness, all love, all mercy, all goodness and kindness. Just as a stone in the depths of the sea is surrounded on all sides by water, so too are these people, being united in every way with the Holy Spirit, made like Christ, possessing within themselves the virtues of spiritual strength, and remaining inwardly blameless, spotless, and pure. For how can those renewed by the Spirit produce the fruit of vice outwardly? On the contrary, the fruits of the Spirit always and in everything shine forth in them (18:10).

87. Another enters to bow the knee—and his heart is filled with divine power; his soul rejoices with the Lord, like a bride with her bridegroom, according to the words of the Prophet Isaiah, who says: “*As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall the Lord rejoice over you*” (Isa. 62:5). And sometimes, after being occupied with something all day, he devotes a single hour to prayer—and his inner self, with great delight, is

carried away into a state of prayer, into the infinite depth of that age, so that his mind, soaring and enraptured, is wholly absorbed there. During this time, earthly concerns fade from his thoughts, for his thoughts are saturated and captivated by the Divine, the heavenly, the boundless, the incomprehensible, and something wondrous that human lips cannot utter. At this hour, a person prays and says, “Oh, if only my soul would depart along with my prayer” (8:1).

88. Does a person always enter this state? It is true that grace abides ceaselessly, takes root, and acts like leaven within a person from a young age, and this abiding grace becomes, as it were, something natural and inseparable, as if one essence with the person; yet, as it pleases, it varies its actions within the person for his benefit. Sometimes this fire flares up and burns more intensely, and sometimes it seems weaker and quieter; at other times this light shines more brightly, while at times it dims and fades; and this lamp, always burning and shining, sometimes becomes clearer, blazing more brightly from the rapture of God’s love, while at other times it emits its radiance sparingly, and the light inherent in a person becomes weaker (8:2).

89. Furthermore, to some, the sign of the cross appeared in the light and was imprinted upon the inner person. Sometimes, too, during prayer, a person would fall into a kind of ecstasy; it seemed as though he were standing in a church before the altar, and three loaves of bread—as if leavened with oil—were offered to him; and to the extent that he tasted them, the loaves grew and rose. At times, a certain luminous garment would also appear—one unlike any found on earth in this age and one that human hands could not make. For just as the Lord, having ascended the mountain with John and Peter, transformed His garments and made them gleam like lightning, so it was with this garment, and the person clothed in it was filled with wonder and amazement. At other times, however, this light, appearing in the heart, unveiled the innermost, deepest, and most hidden light; therefore, a person, wholly absorbed by such sweetness and such contemplation, no longer had control over himself, but was, as it were, a wild man and a barbarian to this world, because of the abundance of love and sweetness and because of the hidden mysteries, so that a person, having received freedom at that time, attains the perfect measure, becoming pure and free from sin. But after that, grace diminished and a veil of opposing power descended, while grace remained visible, as it were, only in part, and at some lower degree of perfection (8, 3).

90. A person must, so to speak, pass through twelve steps and then attain perfection. At other times, he does indeed reach this measure and attain perfection. Then grace begins to act more weakly again, and a person descends one step and stands on the eleventh. But another, rich in grace, always stands day and night at the highest measure, being free and pure, always rapt and exalted. And now, a person to whom these wonders have been revealed and who has experienced them firsthand—if this were always the case with him—would no longer be able to take upon himself the stewardship of the Word, or any other burden; he would refuse to listen or to care, as is customary, for himself and for the coming day, but would simply sit in a corner, in awe and ecstasy. That is why the perfect measure is not given to him so that he might be able to care for the brethren and serve the Word, unless the middle wall of separation has already been torn down and death has been conquered (8:4).

91. In reality, however, it is like this: like thickened air, a kind of gloomy force lies upon a person and slightly veils him. The lamp burns and shines unceasingly; yet a veil, as it were, lies over the light, and therefore a person acknowledges that he is still imperfect and not entirely free from sin; thus, it can be said that the dividing wall has already been torn down and shattered, yet in some other respect it has not been torn down entirely or forever. For there are times when grace more strongly inflames, comforts, and soothes a person, and there are times when it diminishes and fades, as grace itself arranges this for the person’s benefit. Who, then, has ever, even for a time, attained perfect measure, tasted, and experienced that state? To this day, I know of not a single Christian who is perfect or free. On the contrary, even if someone finds rest in grace, attains the mysteries and revelations, and experiences the great sweetness of grace, sin still dwells within him. Such people, because of the abundance of grace and light within them, consider themselves free and perfect, but they are mistaken in this, being led astray by their inexperience by the very grace that is at work in them. But I have not yet seen a single free person, and since at other times I myself have partly reached that level, I have come to understand and know why there is no perfect person (8:5).

92. Tell us, at what stage are you?—Now, after the sign of the cross, grace works in such a way and pacifies all the members and the heart that the soul, out of great joy, becomes like a harmless infant, and a person no longer condemns either a Greek, or a Jew, or a sinner, or a layperson, but the inner man looks upon all with a pure eye and rejoices over the whole world, and desires in every way to honor and love both Greeks

and Jews. At another time, he, the son of kings, trusts so firmly in the Son of God as in a father. Doors open before him, and he enters many dwellings; and as he enters, doors open before him again in equal number—for example, from one hundred dwellings into another hundred—and he is enriched; and to the extent that he is enriched, new wonders are revealed to him. To him, as a son and heir, is entrusted that which cannot be expressed by human nature, nor uttered by lips or tongue (8:6).

7. *The Highest Degree of Christian Perfection*

1. The prophet Ezekiel recounted that divine and glorious apparition and vision which he beheld, and described it as an apparition filled with inexpressible mysteries. For he saw in the field a cherubic chariot, drawn by four spiritual creatures. Each living creature had four faces: one was the face of a lion, another the face of an eagle, another the face of a calf, and another the face of a human. And each face had wings, so that it was impossible to distinguish which side was front or back. *“Their sides were full” of “eyes,”* and their chests were also full of eyes; there was no place that was not filled with eyes. Beside each face were three wheels, as if a wheel within a wheel, and there was a spirit within the wheels. And the Prophet saw what appeared to be the likeness of a man, and his feet were like sapphires. This chariot (that is, the cherubim and the living creatures) carried the Lord seated upon it. Wherever He wished to go, the living creatures turned their faces in that direction. And the Prophet saw, beneath the wings of the cherubim, what appeared to be a *“human hand”* that supported and carried them (Ezek. 1:5–28 and ch. 10). (1:1).

2. What the Prophet saw in his vision was true and beyond doubt, but it pointed to something else; it foreshadowed something mysterious and divine—a mystery truly hidden from the ages but revealed in the last days, at the coming of Christ. The prophet contemplated the mystery of the soul destined to receive its Lord and become the throne of His glory. For the soul, which the Spirit—having prepared it as His seat and dwelling place—has made worthy to partake of His light and has illuminated with the beauty of His ineffable glory, becomes entirely light, entirely a face, entirely an eye; there is not a single part of it that is not filled with the light of spiritual eyes—that is, there is nothing in it that is darkened, but it is entirely made of light and spirit, wholly filled with eyes, and has no back or reverse side; rather, it appears as a face from every angle, because the ineffable beauty of the glory of the Light of Christ has descended upon it and dwells within it. And just as the sun is everywhere alike, having no final or deficient part, but, consisting of identical parts, shines entirely with light, and is all light—or like fire, that is, the very light of fire, entirely like itself and having within itself neither a first nor a last, nor a greater nor a lesser part—so too the soul, completely illuminated by the ineffable beauty of the glory of the light from the face of Christ, and having fully entered into communion with the Holy Spirit and been deemed worthy to become the dwelling place and throne of God, becomes entirely an eye, entirely light, all a face, all glory, all spirit, just as Christ has prepared, arranged, and adorned her with spiritual beauty—He who bears her, guides her, sustains her, and lifts her up. For it is said that *“the hand of a man”* was beneath the cherubim (Ezek. 1:8). Christ Himself both bears the soul and guides it (1:2).

3. The four living creatures bearing the chariot represented the sovereign mental powers of the soul. Just as the eagle reigns over the birds, the lion over the wild beasts, the ox over the gentle animals, and man over all creatures, so too in the soul there are more regal mental powers—namely, the will, the conscience, the intellect, and the power of love. The chariot of the soul is governed by them, and God dwells within them. According to another interpretation, of course, this refers to the heavenly Church of the Saints. And just as the Prophet speaks there of the animals, saying that their height was immeasurable, that they were full of eyes, and that no one could count the number of their eyes or measure their height—because knowledge of this has not been given—just as every person is given to see the stars in the sky and marvel at them, yet no one can know their number, in the same way, it is granted to all who desire to strive to enter the heavenly Church of the Saints and find joy in it, but to know and comprehend the number of the Saints—this belongs to the One God. He who sits upon the chariot and upon the throne of the aforementioned living creatures—or within every soul that has become His throne and seat, that has become His eye and light—marches and moves about, seated upon it, governing with the reins of the Spirit and directing it as He Himself knows. Just as the spiritual beasts did not march where they themselves wished to go, but where the One seated upon them and guiding them knew and willed, so here too He Himself rules and leads, pointing the way through His Spirit. Thus, souls do not ascend to heaven of their own will, whenever they please, but God directs the soul—having cast off the body—to strive in thought toward heaven; and again, whenever it pleases Him, it walks in the flesh and in its thoughts, and by His very will passes to the ends of the earth, and He reveals to it the mysteries. O

truly excellent, good, one, and true Ruler! Thus, if the soul is now glorified and has entered into union with the Spirit, then the bodies will also share in the resurrection (1:3).

4. And concerning the fact that the souls of the righteous become heavenly light, the Lord Himself said to the Apostles: *"You are the light of the world"* (Matt. 5:14). Having made them light Himself, He commanded that the world be enlightened through them, and He says: *"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but on a stand, so that it gives light to all who are in the house (). In the same way, let your light shine before others"* (Matt. 5:15–16). This means: do not hide the gift you have received from Me, but share it with all who desire it. And again: *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (Matt. 6:22–23). Just as the eyes are the light of the body—and when they are healthy, the whole body is illuminated, but when something enters the eyes and they are clouded, then the whole body is in darkness—so the Apostles are appointed as the eyes and the light for the whole world. Therefore, the Lord, commanding them, said: "If you, being the light of the world, stand firm and do not fall away, then the whole body of the world will be enlightened. But if you, the light of the world, are darkened, then what is darkness—that is, the world?" Thus, the Apostles, having become light, served as light for those who believed, enlightening their hearts with that heavenly light of the Spirit by which they themselves had been enlightened (1:4).

5. Those who cast off the old, earthly man—and from whom Jesus stripped away the garments of the kingdom of darkness—put on the new, heavenly man, Jesus Christ. And the Lord clothed them in the garments of the kingdom of ineffable light—the garments of faith, hope, love, joy, peace, mercy, and kindness—and likewise in all the other divine, life-giving garments of light, life, and inexpressible rest, so that, just as God is love, joy, peace, goodness, and mercy, so too the new man might become such by grace (2:4–5).

6. Perfect Christians, who have been deemed worthy to enter into the measure of perfection and to become those who draw near to the King, always consecrate themselves as a gift to the cross of Christ. Just as in the time of the Prophets the anointing was most honorable—for kings and prophets were anointed—so now spiritual people, anointed with the heavenly anointing, become Christians by grace, so that they may be kings and prophets of the heavenly mysteries. They are both sons and lords and gods—bound, taken captive, cast down, crucified, and offered as a gift. If the anointing with oil—such as that derived from an earthly plant, from a visible tree—had such power that the anointed unquestionably received their office (for it was acknowledged by all that they were set up as kings, and the anointed David immediately faced persecution and tribulation, but after seven years became king), how much more so do those whose minds and inner beings are anointed with the heavenly and spiritual oil of joy—which enlightens and brings gladness—receive the seal of that imperishable kingdom and eternal power, the pledge of the Spirit, —the Holy Spirit Himself and the Comforter (understand, then, that the Comforter both comforts and fills with joy those who are in sorrow). (17:1).

7. Those anointed with the oil of the heavenly planting, the tree of life—Jesus Christ—are deemed worthy to enter into the measure of perfection, that is, the kingdom and sonship; for while still in this world, they already share in the mysteries of the heavenly King, have boldness before the Almighty, and enter His palace, where the angels and the spirits of the saints dwell. For even though they have not yet received the full inheritance prepared for them in the age to come, by the pledge they have now received, they have secured themselves as though already crowned and reigning; and, through the abundance and boldness of the Spirit, they do not find it surprising that they will reign with Christ. Why is that? Because, while still in the flesh, they already possessed within themselves that sense of sweetness and that working of power (17:2).

8. Just as at the end of the world, when this firmament ceases to exist, the righteous will already be living in the kingdom, in light and glory, seeing nothing else but Christ abiding forever in glory at the right hand of the Father, so too do these, who are now already raptured and taken captive into that age, contemplate all the beauties and wonders there. For while we are still on earth, we have a dwelling in heaven, as inhabitants and citizens of that world in our minds and in our inner selves. Just as the visible eye, when pure, always sees the sun clearly, so too the mind, having been completely purified, always beholds the glory of Christ's light and abides with the Lord day and night, just as the Lord's body, having been united with the Godhead, always abides with the Holy Spirit. But people do not attain this state all at once, and even then only through toil, sorrow, and great effort (17:4).

9. Just as the Lord, having laid aside all dominion and authority, clothed Himself in the body, so too do Christians clothe themselves with the Holy Spirit and abide in peace. Even if conflict arises from without, and Satan inflicts wounds, they are inwardly protected by the Lord's power and remain unperturbed by Satan's attacks. When Satan tempted the Lord in the wilderness for forty days, did he harm Him in any way by attacking His body from the outside? God was in that body. So too, Christians, even if tempted from the outside, are inwardly filled with the power of the Godhead and suffer no harm. But if anyone has reached this level, he has attained perfect love for Christ and the fulfillment of the Divine. And whoever is not like this still wages a battle within. At one moment he finds rest in prayer, and at another he is in sorrow and in battle. For it is the Lord's will—since man is still an infant—that the Lord guide him through these battles. And within, as it were, two aspects appear: light and darkness, peace and sorrow; at one moment they pray in peace, and at another they are in turmoil (26:15).

10. Don't you hear what Paul is saying? "*If I have all gifts, and if I give my body to be burned, and if I speak with the tongues of angels, but have not love, I am nothing*" (1 Cor. 13:1–3). For these gifts lead only to perfection, and those who have attained them, though they are in the light, are still infants. Many of the brethren ascended to this level and possessed the gifts of healing, revelation, and prophecy; but since they had not yet attained to perfect love, in which lies "*the bond of perfection*" (Col. 3:14), strife arose within them, and they, having become disheartened, fell. But whoever attains perfect love becomes a prisoner and captive of grace. And whoever gradually approaches the perfect measure of love but has not yet reached the point of becoming a prisoner of love is still under fear; strife and falling threaten him, and if he does not protect himself, Satan will cast him down (26:16).

11. Everyone must know that there are eyes that are within these eyes, and there is hearing that is within this hearing. And just as these eyes see with the senses and recognize the face of a friend or a beloved, so the eyes of a worthy and faithful soul, enlightened by the Divine light, spiritually see and recognize the true friend, the sweetest and most longed-for Bridegroom of the Lord, as soon as the soul is illuminated by the Spirit worthy of worship. And in this way, the soul, mentally contemplating the longed-for and unique, ineffable beauty, is pierced by divine love, is attuned to all spiritual virtues, and as a result acquires boundless and inexhaustible love for the Lord whom it longs for (28, 5).

12. Under the shadow of the law given through Moses, God commanded that on the Sabbath everyone should rest and do no work. And this was a foreshadowing and a shadow of the true Sabbath granted to the soul by the Lord. For the soul that has been deemed worthy to be freed from shameful and impure thoughts observes the true Sabbath and rests in true rest, remaining idle and free from all dark deeds. For in that prototypical Sabbath, although they rested physically, their souls were bound by deceit and vices; but this true Sabbath is the true repose of the soul, which remains idle and purified of satanic thoughts, resting in the Lord's eternal peace and joy (35:1).

13. For the Lord calls man to rest, saying, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt. 11:28). And those souls who submit and come to Him, He gives rest from these heavy, burdensome, and impure thoughts; they become free from all lawlessness, observe the true, pleasant, and holy Sabbath, celebrate a spiritual feast of inexpressible joy and gladness, and perform, from a pure heart, a service that is pure and pleasing to God. And this is the true and radiant Sabbath. Therefore, let us also implore God that we too may enter into this rest, be freed from shameful, deceitful, and vain thoughts, and thus be enabled to serve God with a pure heart and celebrate the feast of the Holy Spirit. And blessed is the one who enters this rest (35:1, 3).

14. When the soul clings to the Lord, and the Lord, in His mercy and love, comes and clings to her, and her mind abides ceaselessly in the Lord's grace, then the soul and the Lord become one spirit, one union, one mind. The body of the soul remains cast down upon the earth, while its mind dwells entirely in the heavenly Jerusalem, ascending to the third heaven, cleaving to the Lord, and serving Him there (46:3).

15. And He Himself, who sits in the heavenly city upon the throne of majesty on high, abides entirely with the soul in her body, for He has placed her image on high in the heavenly city of the Saints—Jerusalem—and has placed the very Image of the ineffable light of His Divinity within her body; He serves her in the city of the body, and she serves Him in the heavenly city. The soul has become His inheritance in heaven, and He has accepted her as His inheritance on earth. For the Lord becomes the soul's inheritance, and the soul becomes the Lord's inheritance. Even the thoughts and minds of darkened sinners can be very far from the body; they have the power to traverse great distances in the blink of an eye, to journey to distant lands, and it is not

uncommon for the body to be cast down to the earth while the mind remains in another realm with a beloved—whether male or female—and sees itself, as it were, living there. And if the soul of a sinner is so subtle and swift-winged, and nothing hinders its mind from being in distant places, how much more so the soul from which the veil of darkness has been removed by the power of the Holy Spirit, when its discerning eyes are enlightened by heavenly light, and is completely freed from the passions of wickedness, having become pure by grace—it serves the Lord wholly in heaven with the spirit, and serves Him wholly with the body, and its thoughts expand so much that it is everywhere and, wherever and whenever it wishes, serves Christ (46, 4).

16. This is what the Apostle says: *“That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3:18–19). Contemplate the ineffable mysteries of the soul, from which the Lord removes the darkness that lies upon it, reveals it, and reveals Himself to it. See how He expands and extends the thoughts of its mind—in breadth, in length, in depth, and in height—throughout all visible and invisible creation (46:5).

8. The Life to Come

1. When the human soul departs from the body, a great mystery is then accomplished. For if it is guilty of sins, multitudes of demons and evil angels come, and the dark powers seize that soul and take it into their own realm. And no one should be surprised by this, for if the soul, in this life and in this age, was subject to them, obeyed them, and was their slave, then all the more will it be held by them and remain under their power when it departs from the world. As for the good part, you must imagine that the matter is as follows. Angels still dwell with the holy servants of God, and holy spirits surround and guard them. And when they depart from the body, the angels receive their souls into their own realm, into the pure age, and in this way bring them to the Lord (22).

2. True death is within—in the heart—and it is hidden; it is through this that the inner person dies. Therefore, if anyone has passed from death to the hidden life, he truly lives forever and does not die. Even if the bodies of such people are temporarily destroyed, they will be raised again in glory, because they have been sanctified. That is why we call the death of Christians “sleep” and “departure” (15, 37).

3. Just as a merchant, returning from afar after having multiplied his profits many times over, sends word to his household to purchase for him a home, gardens, and necessary clothing, and when he arrives in his homeland, he brings great wealth with him, and his household and relatives welcome him with great joy—so it is in spiritual matters. When others acquire heavenly riches for themselves, their fellow citizens—that is, the spirits of the holy angels—learn of this and marvel, saying, “Our brothers on earth have acquired great riches.” Such people, upon their departure, having the Lord with them, ascend to the heavens with great joy, and those who dwell with the Lord receive them, having prepared for them there dwellings, gardens, and garments that are radiant and of great value (16:8).

4. If a person, while still in the midst of the struggle—when both sin and grace are at work in his soul—departs from this world, where does this person, who is possessed by both, go? He goes to the place where his mind has its goal and its favorite abode. If sorrow or spiritual struggle overtakes you, you must simply resist and hate them. For it is not your business to bring about the struggle, but it is your business to hate it. And then the Lord, seeing your mind—because you strive and love the Lord with all your soul—will in a single hour remove death from your soul (this is not difficult for Him) and receive you into His bosom and into the light; in a single moment He will snatch you from the jaws of darkness and immediately bring you into His kingdom. It is easy for God to accomplish everything in a single moment, provided only that you have love for Him. God requires a person’s deeds, because the soul is deemed worthy to be in communion with the Divine (26:18).

5. A pregnant woman carries her child within her in darkness, so to speak, and in an unclean place. And when the baby finally emerges from the womb at the proper time, she sees a new creature under the sky, on the earth, and in the sunlight—one she has never seen before—and immediately friends and relatives, with joyful faces, take the baby into their arms. But if, due to some complication, the baby should die in the womb, then it becomes necessary for doctors specially trained for this to resort to sharp instruments, and then the baby passes from death to death, from darkness to darkness. The same applies to the spiritual realm. Those who have received the seed of the Divine within themselves possess it invisibly, and because of the sin dwelling within them, they hide it in dark and dreadful places. Therefore, if they protect themselves and

preserve the seed, they will bring it forth openly at the proper time; and finally, with their bodies, the angels and all the heavenly hosts will receive them with joyful faces. But if one who has taken up the armor of Christ to fight valiantly grows lax, he will soon be delivered into the hands of his enemies and, upon parting from his body, will pass from the darkness that now holds him into another, even more dreadful darkness and into perdition (43, 5).

6. Just as tax collectors, sitting in narrow passageways, stop and torment those passing by, so too do demons watch over and detain souls; and if the souls have not been completely purified, then upon their departure from the body they do not receive permission to enter the heavenly abodes and appear before their Lord, but are carried away downward by aerial demons. But those who remain in the flesh, through toil and great effort, can still obtain grace from above from the Lord, and they, together with those who have attained rest through a virtuous life, will depart to the Lord, as He Himself promised: *“Where I am, there also will My servant be”* (John 12:26)—and for all eternity they will reign with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and always, and forever and ever! (43:9).

7. Everyone must strive and endeavor, by progressing in all virtues, to acquire this temple and believe that it is acquired here. For if our earthly temple is destroyed, we have no other temple in which our soul might dwell, *“for,”* as it is said, *“even if we are clothed, we will not be found naked”* (2 Cor. 5:3)—that is, we will not be deprived of communion and unity with the Holy Spirit, in whom alone a faithful soul can find rest. Therefore, those who are Christians in every reality and in full strength firmly hope and rejoice, as they depart from this flesh, that they possess that *“temple not made with hands”*; and this temple is the power of the Spirit dwelling within them. And if the earthly temple is destroyed, they do not fear it, because they have a heavenly, spiritual temple and that imperishable glory which, on the day of the resurrection, will restore and glorify the temple of the body as well; as the Apostle says: *“He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in us,”* and again: *“so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh”* (2 Cor. 4:11), and, *“let our mortal body be consumed,”* as it is said (2 Cor. 5:4). (15, 16).

8. Therefore, let us strive through faith and a virtuous life here on earth to acquire for ourselves such a garment, so that we, clothed in the body, may not be found naked, and so that on that day nothing will glorify our flesh. For to the extent that each person has been deemed worthy, through faith and diligence, to become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, to that same extent his body will be glorified on that day. What the soul has now gathered into its inner treasury will then be revealed and manifested outside the body, just as trees, when, after the passing of winter, they are warmed by the invisible power of the sun and the winds, produce and shed leaves, flowers, and fruits; and just as at that time wildflowers emerge from the earth’s depths, covering and clothing the earth and the grass, like the lilies of which the Lord said, *“Not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these”* (Matt. 6:29). For all this serves as an example, a model, and a likeness of the Christian on the day of the Resurrection (5:17).

9. Thus, for all God-loving souls—that is, for true Christians—there is the first month of Xanthikos, also called April, and this is the day of the Resurrection. On that day, by the power of the Sun of Righteousness, the glory of the Holy Spirit will be revealed from within, covering and clothing the bodies of the saints—the very glory they had hidden within their souls. For what the soul now possesses within itself will then be revealed in the body. This month is the first of the summer months (Ex. 12:2); it brings joy to all creation; it, opening up the earth, clothes the bare trees; it brings joy to all animals; it spreads joy among all; for Christians, it is the first month of Xantikos, that is, the time of the Resurrection, in which their bodies will be glorified by an ineffable light, still hidden within them today—that is, by the power of the Spirit, Who will then be their garment, their food, their drink, their joy, their gladness, their peace, their attire, and their eternal life. For the Spirit of the Godhead, whom they have already been deemed worthy to receive within themselves (5:18), will then become for them the very essence of heavenly radiance and beauty.

10. Therefore, each of us must strive and labor, diligently practicing all virtues, believing and asking the Lord that the inner person may even now become a partaker of such glory, and that the soul may partake of such holiness of the Spirit, and that, having been cleansed of the defilement of vice, we may have, at the resurrection, something with which to clothe our resurrected naked bodies, something with which to cover their shame, something with which to give them life and grant them eternal rest in the heavenly kingdom; for, according to the Holy Scriptures, Christ will come from heaven and raise all the tribes of Adam, all who have slept since the beginning of time, and divide them into two parts; and those who bear His own sign—that is, the seal of the Spirit—He will place at His right hand, proclaiming them as His own. For He says: *“My sheep*

hear My voice” (John 10: 27), “and I know My own, and My own know Me” (John 10: 14). Then their bodies will be clothed with divine glory because of their good deeds, and they themselves will be filled with that spiritual glory which they already possessed in their souls. And thus, glorified by the divine light and caught up into heaven “to meet the Lord in the air,” as it is written, “we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17), reigning with Him for all eternity! Let us therefore strive in advance to bear the Lord’s mark and seal, for at the time of judgment, when God will make the separation and all the tribes of the earth—the whole of Adam—will be gathered together, when the Shepherd calls His flock, then all who bear the mark will recognize their Shepherd, and the Shepherd will recognize those who bear His own seal and will gather them from all nations; His own will hear His voice and follow Him. The world will be divided into two parts: one part will be the dark flock, departing into eternal fire, and the other—the flock filled with light, being raised to the heavenly inheritance. What we have now acquired in our souls will shine forth and be revealed then, and will clothe our bodies in glory (5, 21, 12, 13).

11. Will all members be raised on the Day of Resurrection? Nothing is difficult for God. Such is His promise. To human weakness and human reason, this seems, as it were, impossible. Just as God, taking dust and earth, fashioned, as it were, a different kind of nature—namely, bodily nature, unlike the earth—and created many kinds of beings, such as: hair, skin, bones, and sinews—and just as a needle, when thrown into fire, changes color and is transformed into fire, while the nature of iron is not destroyed but remains the same, so too in the resurrection all members will be raised, and, as it is written, “*not a hair will perish*” (Luke 21:18), and everything will become luminous; everything will be immersed and transformed into light and fire, but it will not be destroyed or become fire itself, so that its former nature would cease to exist, as some claim. For Peter remains Peter, and Paul remains Paul, and Philip remains Philip; each, filled with the Spirit, abides in his own nature and being. But if you claim that their nature has been destroyed, then there is no longer a Peter or a Paul, but God is in all things and everywhere; and those who go to Gehenna do not feel punishment, while those who go to the kingdom experience blessings (15:10).

12. Imagine a garden containing all kinds of fruit-bearing trees—there were pear trees, apple trees, and grapevines with fruit and leaves—but the garden, all the trees, and all the leaves were transformed and took on a different nature, and everything that was before became luminous. So too will people be transformed at the Resurrection, and their members will become holy and radiant (15:11).

13. Just as the Lord’s body, when He ascended the mountain, was glorified and transformed into divine glory and infinite light, so too will the bodies of the saints be glorified and become radiant. For just as Christ’s inner glory was so fully manifested and shone forth upon Christ’s body, so too, in the same way, the power of Christ dwelling within the Saints will be poured out outwardly upon their bodies on that day—because even now they partake of Christ’s essence and nature through their minds. For it is written: “*Both the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are of one origin*” (Heb. 2:11), and: “*The glory that you have given me I have given to them*” (John 17:22). Just as many lamps are kindled by a single flame, so too must the bodies of the saints—these members of Christ—become one and the same with Christ Himself (15:36).

14. And even the perfect, while they remain in the flesh, are not free from cares because of their freedom and live under the fear of judgment; that is why temptations are allowed to come upon them. But when the soul enters that city of the saints, only then will it be able to dwell without sorrows or temptations, for there is no worry, sorrow, toil, old age, Satan, or strife there, but there is rest, joy, peace, and salvation. There, in their midst, is the Lord, who is called the Savior because He saves the captives, and is called the Physician because He bestows heavenly and divine healing and cures the passions of the soul, which to some extent rule over man. In short, Jesus is King and God, while Satan is a tormentor and an evil prince (26:23).

15. Since some sell their possessions, set slaves free, and keep the commandments, yet do not strive to receive the Spirit in this world, will they not, by living in this way, enter the Kingdom of Heaven? This is a subtle matter for discussion. For some assert that there is only one kingdom and only one Gehenna, but we say that there are many degrees, distinctions, and measures within the same kingdom and within the same Gehenna. Just as there is one soul in all the limbs—which acts in the brain above and sets the legs in motion below—so too does the Divinity encompass all creatures, both those in heaven and those below the abyss, and dwells wholly within all creation, even though, by virtue of its immeasurability and immensity, it also exists outside of creation. Therefore, the Divinity itself listens to people and governs all things with wisdom. And since some pray without knowing what they are asking for, others fast, and still others devote themselves to

service, God, the righteous Judge, rewards each according to the measure of their faith. For whatever they do, they do out of fear of God, yet not all of them are sons, kings, or heirs (40:3).

16. Some in the world are murderers, others are adulterers, still others are plunderers, and some also distribute their wealth to the poor. The Lord looks upon both groups, and to those who do good He grants rest and reward; there are measures that overflow and there are small measures; even in light itself and in glory itself there is a difference. In Gehenna itself and in punishment there are poisoners, robbers, and others who have sinned in small ways. But those who claim that there is only one kingdom, only one Gehenna, and no degrees of punishment—they speak wrongly. How many worldly people are there today who are devoted to spectacles and other debauchery? And how many more are there who pray and fear God? God looks upon both groups, and as a righteous Judge, He prepares rest for some and punishment for others (40:4).

The Venerable Abba Isaiah

A Brief Account of Our Reverend Father Isaiah, Abba of Nitria, and His Writings

Our venerable father Isaiah the hermit lived in the second half of the fourth century A.D. (d. 370)—a contemporary of Abba Macarius the Great. The scene of his ascetic labors was Lower Egypt—specifically the Skethos Desert (*Skethos*), commonly known to us as Skete, not far from Alexandria, where monks led a contemplative life in profound silence (*sige*). It is unknown at what age he chose the monastic life; we know only that he was the son of poor and humble parents, as is evident from his lament and from the insults hurled at him by his disciple Elisha, who, during his own time of temptation, called him a man of lowly birth. The Venerable Isaiah enjoyed the esteem of the monks of his time, many of whom followed his counsel and willingly showed him complete obedience. He was also known to the Patriarch of Alexandria at that time, who, when his disciple Elisha slandered the venerable one, said: “Let the flattering lips be silenced, those who speak of the righteous as wicked, with pride and contempt” (Ps. 30: 19). The Venerable Isaiah was exceedingly humble and possessed the grace of deep weeping, as is evident from his meek response to his disciple Elisha during a time of temptation, when Elisha was reviling and slandering him, and from his “14 Words”—a practice of weeping, the careful reading of which can soften and bring even a heart of stone to contrition. Following the custom of the Fathers who lived in silence in the Skete, the Venerable Isaiah had two disciples—Peter and Elisha. For the former, he wrote an edifying discourse (No. 26), and regarding the latter, there is a soul-saving account in the *Gerondika*¹⁰. In addition to these two disciples, many other monks were guided by his counsel and instruction, with whom he conversed not only in person but also in writing. Studying the Divine Scriptures day and night, and drawing abundant streams of spiritual wisdom from these salvific sources, he became the author of many exquisite writings that cover various soul-saving topics and comprise an entire book. The Venerable Isaiah is called a hermit because of his love for deep solitude and his ascetic withdrawal from everyone, so that in the last years of his life not even his closest disciples lived with him, but only visited him from time to time, as is evident from the 27th Discourse. The Venerable One’s writings are mentioned by: Bishop Ammon in his epistle to Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria; Nikiforos the Monk in his discourse on the preservation of the heart; Barsanuphius the Great; John of Damascus; Gregory of Sinai; and others. The Orthodox Church commemorates our Venerable Father Isaiah on the Saturday of Cheese Week. The collection of Abba Isaiah’s sayings that has come down to us contains 29 of them, but it is very likely that not all of Abba Isaiah’s sayings are included here. For in excerpts from his sayings there are certain instructions that are not found in this collection. In addition to these sayings, there are also rules from this Abba for novice monks, preserved by Abba Benedict of Anian (early 9th century) in his collection of monastic rules, *¹¹ *. Regarding these rules, the aforementioned collection notes that they are excerpted from Abba Isaiah’s sayings. However, not all of them can be found in the sayings themselves. Therefore, we must assume that many of them were either taken from the Abba’s extant writings or were taught by him separately from his writings to various individuals at different times—and were then passed down by word of mouth and compiled by someone, not in the order of his train of thought, but exactly as they were heard, and thus included in the general collection. They are of the same spirit and content as the rules of St. Anthony the Great. Some are identical to them word for word. It must be assumed that Abba Isaiah was the closest successor to the

¹⁰ In our Prologue for February—under the 27th.

¹¹ Patr. Lat. vol. CIII

teaching gift of Abba Anthony the Great, along with Abba Macarius the Great. The book **Dobrotolyubie** includes Abba Isaiah's treatise on the guarding of the mind, in 27 chapters. The preface there states that it is an excerpt from the words of this Abba, and * * contains a brief instruction on how to ward off the promptings of the mind, keep one's conscience unblemished, hold the secret teaching in one's heart, and wisely preserve the threefold nature of the soul in all tranquility. In volume 40 of **Patrol. graec.**, following these words, a similar article is printed under the title: "On Asceticism and Silence," in 19 chapters with the Greek text. These chapters are also excerpts from his words, as indicated in the publication itself by citations specifying the source of each chapter. Some of them are word-for-word identical to those found in the article by Dobrotolyubiy. However, both among these 19 chapters and among the 27 chapters of **Dobrotolyubie** there are teachings that are not found in the **Words**. This, among other things, served as the motivation for including both of these articles in the present edition of Abba Isaiah's writings. So as not to omit anything that came from this Abba, we include here his sayings—in addition to those cited in the Memorable Sayings—that are contained in our Alphabetical Paterikon, translated, however, only from the Slavonic, for there is no such Paterikon in Greek. This is the work of our zealous ascetics. Everyone will see for themselves that even among these sayings there are quite a few that are not found in the text. Thus, the following are presented here:

1. The Words of Abba Isaiah. It should be noted that in the first edition, these words were presented in a translation from Latin, the only language in which they have been published. But later, when the elders of Mount Athos discovered the Greek text of these words on Mount Athos and sent a copy of it to Moscow, a new translation was made from that text, and it is in this translation that they are now presented to those who enjoy reading such books. – In preparing this translation, we took into account the translation of these words by the German elder Paissios, a translation for which the elders of the Optina Hermitage were greatly indebted. References to it are provided in footnotes where necessary.

2. His Rules for Novice Monks.

3. His sayings.

4. An article from **Dobrotolyubie** on guarding the mind, in 27 chapters.

5. Chapters on asceticism and silence.

1. The Words of the Venerable Abba Isaiah to His Disciples

1. The Commandments of Abba Isaiah to the Brothers Living with Him

1. If you wish to remain with me, listen for the sake of Jesus.

2. Let each of you sit in your cell in the fear of the Lord, and do not neglect your manual labor, as commanded by God.

3. Do not neglect your spiritual instruction and unceasing prayer, and guard your heart against foreign thoughts, so that you may think of nothing—neither of any person nor of anything in this world—but always examine where you stumble and strive to correct yourselves, imploring God with a contrite heart, tears, and suffering (the weariness of the flesh), that He may forgive you and preserve you from falling into the same sin again.

4. Keep death before your eyes every day and carefully reflect on how you are to depart from the body, pass by the powers of darkness that meet us in the air, and appear unhindered before God, fixing your gaze on the dreadful day of His final judgment and the recompense given to each person for their deeds, words, and thoughts. For "*everything is naked and exposed before the eyes*" of Him to whom we must give an account (Heb. 4:13).

5. Unless it is absolutely necessary, say nothing either at meals or in church, and do not correct anyone who is singing unless they ask you about it themselves.

6. Serve in the kitchen for one week with the fear of God, without neglecting your spiritual instruction.

7. Let no one enter his brother's cell, and do not seek to see one another before the appointed time.

8. Do not keep track of each other's work—whether a brother has worked more than you, or you more than him.

9. When you go out for your daily work, do not engage in idle talk or allow yourselves to be careless, but let each one, in the fear of God, pay attention to himself and his spirit, as well as to his instruction and prayer, in secret (in the innermost part of his heart).

10. When the church service is over, or when you rise from the meal, do not sit down to talk with one another—not even about the words of God—but let each of you go to your cell and weep over your sins.

11. If, however, you need to speak with someone, speak as little as possible, with humility and reverence, for God is always listening to you.

12. Do not argue with one another about anything, and do not speak harshly to anyone; do not judge anyone or belittle anyone—neither with your lips nor in your heart—and do not grumble against anyone at all, so that no falsehood may come from your lips, and do not desire to say or hear anything that is not beneficial to you.

13. Do not harbor in your heart any malice, hatred, or envy toward your neighbor, and let there not be one thing on your lips and another in your heart, for “*God is not mocked*” (Gal. 6:7), but He sees everything—both what is hidden and what is open.

14. Do not keep any thought, sorrow, desire, or suspicion hidden within yourselves; confide them freely to your abbot, and whatever you hear from him, strive to do it in faith.

15. Take care not to grow weary of keeping my commandments, for—forgive me—in that case I will not allow you to remain with me. If you keep them, I will intercede for you before God; but if you do not keep them, He will hold you accountable—both for your negligence and for my fruitlessness. Whoever keeps my commandments, both in secret and openly, the Lord God will preserve from all evil and protect in every coming temptation—whether secret or open.

16. I beg you, my brothers, remember why you left the world, and take care of your salvation, so that your renunciation of it may not be in vain, and so that you may not be put to shame before God and before the saints who have renounced the world for His sake and have striven well.

17. Disdain for worldly things, self-mortification (feats of self-denial and deprivation to the point of physical exhaustion), humility, and the practice of wisely subduing one’s will in all things—while not trusting in one’s own righteousness but always keeping one’s sins before one’s eyes—will bring forth virtues in you. Know this (everyone): that rest (of the flesh), broadness (*platysmos*—the broad path, not restricting oneself in any way, one’s own will), and vanity destroy every fruit of the monk.

2. On the Natural Law

1. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that in the beginning, when God created man, He placed him in Paradise, and he then possessed sound senses, standing in their natural order; but when he listened to the one who deceived him, all his senses were transformed into unnaturalness¹², and he was then cast out of his glory. But our Lord showed His mercy toward the human race, out of His great goodness, “*the Word became flesh*” (John 1:14)—that is, He became a perfect human being in every respect, except for sin, in order to transform our unnatural state into a natural one¹³ through His Holy Body. Having shown such mercy to man, He restores him once more to paradise, —by restoring the fallen through following in His footsteps and keeping His commandments, which He gave us so that we might overcome those who cast us out of our glory—and by showing us holy worship (*latreia*) and a pure law, so that man might stand in his natural order, in which God created him.

2. Therefore, whoever desires to return to his natural state must cut off all his carnal desires in order to place himself in the state of the mind by nature (the spiritual state). There is within us, by nature, a longing (for God)—and without this longing for God, there is no love either: for this reason, Daniel is called “*a man of desires*” (Dan. 9: 23), but the enemy has transformed it (this natural longing) into shameful lust, so that we may lust after every kind of impurity. In the mind, by nature, there is zeal for God—and without zeal for God there is no progress, as it is written in the Epistle: “*Strive for the greater gifts*” (1 Cor. 12:31); but this zeal for God has been transformed in us into an unnatural zeal—so that we may be jealous of one another, envy one another, and lie to one another. In the mind there is anger by nature—and without anger, a person cannot have purity unless he is angry at everything instilled in him by the enemy, just as Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, in his anger, killed a man and a woman, and the Lord’s anger ceased against His people (Num. 25: 7–9); but in us, such anger has been transformed into another kind, so that we become angry with our neighbor over all manner of things that are unnecessary and useless. There is a natural hatred in the mind, as follows: when it took hold of Elijah, he slew the wicked prophets (3 Kings 18: 40), and likewise Samuel acted upon it toward

¹² *Eis ten parafysin*—into the supernatural.

¹³ *Ten ten hatafysin*

Agag, king of Amalek (1 Kings 15:33)—and without hatred for one’s enemies, the honor (value and dignity) of the soul is not revealed; but this (natural) hatred has been transformed within us into an unnatural one, causing us to hate our neighbor and loathe him with disgust—and this very hatred drives all virtues out of us. — It is natural for the mind to be wise and noble in the face of its enemies, as follows: when this wisdom came upon Job, he rebuked his enemies, saying to them: “*You are dishonorable and despicable, lacking in every good quality; I do not consider you worthy to be the dogs of my flocks*” (Job 30:1, 4), but this haughtiness toward enemies has changed in us: we have humbled ourselves before our enemies and become haughty toward one another, wounding one another, and considering ourselves more righteous than our neighbors—and for such haughtiness, God becomes an enemy to men. This is what was created in man (implanted in him at creation), and what, when he tasted it through disobedience, was transformed within him into such terrible passions.

3. Let us therefore strive, beloved, to take care to cast them (these passions) aside, and to attain what our Lord Jesus Christ has shown us in His Holy Body: for He is “*Holy and dwells among the saints.*” Let us take care of ourselves, so that we may please God to the best of our ability, exercising our active powers and balancing (as on a scale) all our members until they are restored to their natural order, so that we may find mercy in the hour of temptation, “*which is to come upon the whole world*” (Luke 21:26),—imploring His goodness unceasingly, that His help may come forth with our humility for our salvation from our enemies, for His strength, and help, and power are forever and ever. Amen.

3. On the Condition of Novices and Cellites

1. First and foremost, we need humility, so that at every word we hear or every deed we perform, we may be ready to say, “Forgive me,” for humility thwarts all the enemy’s schemes.

2. Do not judge yourself in any of your deeds, so that you may be at peace in your thoughts.

3. Let your face bear the mark of sorrow and contrition (when you are alone), but with strangers, let it be cheerful and pleasant, so that the fear of God may dwell within you.

4. When you set out on a journey with your brothers, keep a little distance so that you may be silent; and as you walk, do not look this way and that, but reflect in your mind, or pray to God in your heart. Wherever you stop for the night, do not act freely, but be modest and humble in everything. When something is offered to you, extend your hand reluctantly, as if you were being forced to do so. As the youngest, do not dare to extend your hand to place¹⁴ (a piece of food) into another’s mouth. Wherever you happen to lie down for the night, do not share a blanket with another, but before you lie down, offer many prayers in your heart. If you are weary from the journey and wish to anoint yourself with a little oil to ease the fatigue of the journey, allow only your feet to be anointed—being ashamed to uncover them—and do not allow your entire body to be anointed with oil except in cases of extreme necessity or illness.

5. If, while you are sitting in your cell, a stranger comes to you, do the same for him—rub his feet and tell him: “Out of love, take a little oil and anoint the rest of your body.” If he is reluctant to accept it, do not press him; but if he is an active elder, urge him until you have anointed his entire body.

6. When you sit at the table with brothers who are younger than you, do not say to yourself, “¹⁵”: eat, but remember your sins, so that you do not eat with relish. Reach only for what is in front of you; do not reach for what is in front of others. Let your clothing cover your feet and your knees; let them be closely joined together. If there are travelers among those eating, offer them what they need with a welcoming gaze, and when they have finished eating, say to them two or three times: “Show love; eat a little more.” When you eat, do not lift your face toward the one next to you; do not look this way and that; do not speak idle words; do not reach out your hand for what you desire without first saying, “Bless this”; and when you drink water, do not let your throat make a gurgling sound, as ordinary laypeople do.

7. If, while sitting with your brothers, phlegm rises, do not spit it out in their presence, but stand up and spit it out outside; do not stretch your body in full view of others: if you feel a yawn coming on, do not open your mouth, and it will pass; do not open your mouth to laugh at all, for this is recklessness.

8. Do not covet anything belonging to a brother when you see it—whether clothing, a belt, or a headband—and do not act on your desire to make something similar for yourself.

¹⁴ *Balien eis stoma*—a custom still practiced in the East: to take a piece of food from the table and place it in another person’s mouth as a sign of special favor.

¹⁵ In Paissius: “im.”

9. If you acquire a book, do not embellish its binding (or decoration), for this is a passion.

10. If you sin in any way, do not lie out of shame (to admit it), but bow down, saying, “Forgive me”—and your sin will pass.

11. If someone speaks harshly to you, do not let your heart rise up against him, but hasten to bow down to him before displeasure toward him (or a sense of offense) takes root in your heart, for anger quickly follows.

12. If you are unjustly accused by someone in any matter, do not take up arms against them, but bow down, saying, “Forgive me; I will not do this again,” whether you know the matter or not, for all such things are a stepping stone to a new beginning.

13. When you are¹⁶ working on your craft, do not be careless, but attend to it with the fear of God, so that you do not sin through ignorance.

14. When you are learning a craft, speak to your teacher, and do not be ashamed to ask him often: “Please be kind and check whether I am doing this well or not.”

15. If your brother calls you while you are engaged in your craft, hurry to find out what he wants, and attend to him, setting aside your work.

16. After the meal, go into your cell and say your prayers (*lietorgias*), and do not sit down to talk with those from whom you expect no benefit for yourself. But if they are elders speaking the word of God, ask your abbot: “Should I sit down to listen, or should I go to my cell?” And do whatever he tells you.

17. If he (the abbot) sends you out on some errand, ask him, “Where do you instruct me to stay?” And whatever you need, do exactly as he says—neither adding to it nor taking away from it.

18. If you hear any words outside, do not carry them with you, and when you return, do not repeat them to anyone else. If you guard your ears, your tongue will not sin.

19. When you desire something, but the one with whom you live does not desire it, give up your desire for his sake, so that no argument may arise and he may not be grieved.

20. When you move into a cell to live with a brother as a fellow resident, do not give him orders in any matter, and do not desire to be his superior.

21. If you live with other brothers, do not seek to be equal to them in their glory. If they ask you to do something you do not wish to do, overcome your own will and do it so as not to grieve them or violate the humility (modesty, the restraint required of you) and peaceful coexistence with them.

22. If you live with a brother and he says to you, “Cook something for me,” ask him, “What would you like me to prepare for you?” And if he leaves it up to you, saying, “Whatever you want,” prepare whatever is available, with the fear of God.

23. If you live together (in mutual support or in a communal setting) and there is a task to be done, do it yourself as well; join in with everyone else, and do not spare your own body, for the sake of everyone’s conscience.

24. Every day, in the morning when you get up, before you begin your work, study the Word of God; and if there is anything that needs to be put in order—whether a mat, a vessel, or something else—do it quickly without laziness.

25. When there is a task involving payment, let your brother join you in it—and do not show pride before him; but if there is a small task and one says to the other, “Go do your work, brother, and I will do this one myself,” obey him: whoever obeys is great.

26. If a traveling brother comes to you, greet him with a cheerful face, and carry whatever burden he is carrying yourself—and do the same again when he leaves you. Let your greeting to him be proper and with the fear of God, so that he may not suffer harm. Be careful not to ask him anything that is not beneficial to you, but ask him to pray. When he sits down, say to him, “How are you?” and leave it at that; then give him a book—and let him read and learn from it; but if he has come weary, let him rest, and wash his feet. If he uses inappropriate words in conversation with you, ask him lovingly, “Forgive me—I am weak, and I cannot bear this.” If he is infirm and his clothes are soiled, wash them. If he is simple and his ragged clothes are torn, mend them. If he is one of those who wander idly, and you have some faithful ones, do not bring him among them, but show him mercy in God’s love. But if he is a brother traveling for God’s sake and has come to rest with you, do not turn your face away from him, but welcome him joyfully along with the faithful who have come

¹⁶ Or this: when you have completed your handiwork, do not neglect it, but take care of it so that it is not lost in vain—and so on.

to you. If he is poor, do not send him away empty-handed, but give him from the blessings with which God has blessed you, knowing that what you have is not your own, but a gift from God.

27. If a brother leaves something with you, do not open it in his absence to see what is inside; but if what he has left with you is something of great value, say to him, “Give it to me in my own hands.”

28. If you go to someone’s house as a guest, and that person leaves you alone after going out, do not look up to see what is in the house, and do not open anything—neither a door, nor a vessel, nor a book—but say to him when he is leaving: ‘Give me something to do until you return’—and whatever he gives you, do it without hesitation.

29. Do not praise what you have not seen, and do not speak of what you have heard as if you had seen it.

30. Do not despise anyone because of their clothing (*shema*).

31. Whether you are standing to draw water or sitting out of necessity, do not be careless, but remember that God is watching you.

32. When you rise in your cell to offer your prayer, do not be careless or negligent; and instead of giving honor to God, do not provoke His wrath, but stand in the fear of God; do not lean against the wall, and do not spread your legs apart, standing on one and tucking the other in, as the foolish do; but keep your heart in check so that it does not wander in your desires, that God may accept your offering.

33. When several of you are singing together, let each one offer his own prayers (his portion, in turn); if there is a stranger among you, ask him also with love to offer a prayer. Tell him this two or three times, without quarreling.

34. At the hour of the offering (of the bloodless sacrifice), resist your thoughts, fixing your mind on the fear of God, so that you may be deemed worthy of the Holy Mysteries and the Lord may heal you.

35. See to it that you do not leave your body in filth and disarray, lest vanity deceive you; but let the novice allow himself to be in a state of disarray with regard to his body, for this is beneficial to him.

36. Let the novice never wear fine clothing until he has reached manhood: this is a remedy for him. As for wine, let him set for himself a rule: no more than three cups when necessary. When laughing, let him by no means bare his teeth; rather, let him bow his head downward in reverent modesty. When going to bed, let him remain girded with his belt, and in every way strive not to put his hands inside (under his clothes), for the body has many passions, with which the heart also becomes entangled. When he needs to go outside, let him put on his sandals; but while he is in his cell, let him strive not to wear sandals. When walking, let him tuck his hands into his belt (or hold them pressed against his belt), and not swing them about like laypeople.

37. When walking with those older than you, do not by any means go ahead of them. When an elder stops to speak with someone, do not be presumptuous or sit down, but stand until he gives you a sign as to what to do.

38. When you walk through a town or village, keep your eyes cast down so as not to invite reproach upon yourself (when you are) in your cell.

39. When traveling, do not spend the night in anyone’s house where your heart fears you might fall into sin.

40. When, having been invited to eat somewhere, you learn that a woman will also be eating there, do not sit down under any circumstances; it is better for you to disappoint the one who invited you than to sin secretly in your heart. If you can, do not even glance at women’s clothing. If, while traveling, a woman says to you, “Peace be with you,” answer her in your heart, but keep your eyes downcast.

41. When you set out on a journey with an elder, do not under any circumstances allow him to carry the bag you have with you; but if you are both novices, carry it in turns; yet let the one who is carrying it walk ahead.

4. On the journey of those living in cells, and on conscience¹⁷

1. When you are traveling on the road, and one of you is weak, let him walk ahead of you so that, if he wishes to sit down, he may do so.

¹⁷ Greek: “*peri syneideseos*”—it should, I think, be read as “*peri synodeyseos*”—as the context requires. The Latin version correctly reads it this way, with the title: *Quid in itinere observandum est*. But since toward the end there is also mention of conscience, this is added.

2. If you are beginners and are traveling together, establish for yourselves, once and for all, a set order of conduct—whether approaching the washbasin or sitting down at the table—so that when the time comes, you will not be at a loss; but if one goes first this time, let another go first the next time.

3. When you ask an elder about a thought, freely reveal that thought to him, if you know that the elder is trustworthy and will keep your word.

4. When you hear of your brother's sin, do not repeat it to anyone, for this is death to you.

5. When some people speak of the thoughts that trouble you, do not wish to listen to them, lest this become a cause of strife for you.

6. Compel yourself to pray often, for prayer is light for your soul.

7. Every day, reflect on where you have sinned, and if you pray about it, God will forgive you.

8. If a brother persistently begins to speak ill of another brother in your presence, do not be ashamed to stop him, and do not believe him, lest you sin before God; but say to him humbly: "Forgive me, brother; I am wretched—what you are saying is my own doing—and I cannot bear it."

9. If a brother does you wrong, and someone speaks ill of him to you, guard your heart so that malice does not arise in you again, but remember your own sins before God—and if you wish for Him to forgive you for them—do not repay your neighbor in kind.

10. If you go out with brothers whom you do not know, and it turns out that they are younger than you, give them the honor of precedence in everything. If you happen to visit a friend, let them go before you in everything—whether approaching the washbasin or sitting down at the table—and do not pretend that they are being welcomed for your sake, but give them this honor, saying, "It is for your sake that he has shown me kindness."

11. If you are traveling with a brother and stop to see a friend of yours to speak with him about a matter of need, telling your brother, "Wait here"—and your friend insists that you eat some bread—let nothing enter your mouth until you call your brother so that he, too, may be refreshed with you.

12. If you are traveling with many brothers and are ashamed to take them to your friend because there are so many of them, take care not to despise them; and do not secretly slip away to eat bread alone, leaving them behind, but consider with them what is proper—and whatever they tell you, listen to them with humility; and as you walk along the road with them, do not assume a higher rank for yourself, and do not shirk the duties of a novice.

13. If you go out and wish to visit a brother, but he does not wish to receive you, then when you see him later on the road, or if he comes to you unannounced, show him the greatest kindness.

14. If you hear that someone has spoken ill of you, then when you meet him somewhere, or if he comes to see you, show him a cheerful, welcoming, and friendly face to the best of your ability, without saying anything to him about what you heard: "Why did you say that?" For it is written in Proverbs: "Whoever remembers evil is a transgressor."

15. If you, brothers, visit a poor brother, do not burden him with any needs, but buy for yourselves whatever food you need to sustain yourselves, so that there will be plenty left over for him—the lodging you find there will be enough for you.

16. If you visit some elders whom you know, and there are others with you whom the elders do not know—do not show particular boldness toward the elders in their presence, but give the floor to those who have come with you to speak their minds.

17. When brothers live with you, watch over them strictly, provided they listen to you, knowing that you will give an account of them to God.

18. If you go somewhere as a pilgrim for God's sake, do not seek to associate with those in that place, and do not become entangled with them through your words, because (in such a case) it is more beneficial for you to be with your flesh-and-blood relatives.

19. If you go up the mountain to visit the brothers in the monasteries, stay with whoever you visit first, and do not move on to another without first asking this one: "Should I go or not?" If he is displeased by this, do not grieve him until you have left that place.

20. If (while traveling) you take a cell to live in, do not allow yourself to have many friends—one is enough for you in case of illness, and you will not undermine the power (significance, weight) of your pilgrimage.

- 21.** When you do a good deed for a poor (brother), do not invite him to share in your provisions, lest you destroy the good deed you have done for him.
- 22.** If you enter a monastery (hermitage) that you do not know, live wherever its inhabitant allows you to live, and do not enter another cell until he himself calls you.
- 23.** If you are keeping silence in your cell and a brother asks you for something he needs, do not keep that thing for yourself, for otherwise you will violate the commandment concerning your brother. But if you have only what you need and nothing superfluous, do not squander it to your own ruin; for it is better to lose one of your limbs than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna.
- 24.** If you have separated yourself from your flesh-and-blood relatives to be a pilgrim for God's sake, do not allow a sweet attachment to them (the pleasant feeling of being with them) to take hold of you, and, sitting in your cell, do not be troubled by regret for your father or mother, or by memories of a brother or sister, or by compassion for your children, or by longing for your wife in your heart—for you have left all these behind—but remember your departure in the hour of death. Since none of them will help you then, why not leave them behind for the sake of virtue?
- 25.** When, in silence in your cell, you remember someone who has wronged you, rise and pray to God with all your heart that He may forgive him—and the thought of revenge will depart from you.
- 26.** When you go to partake of the Sacraments of the Offering, guard your thoughts in every way (or guard yourself against any extraneous thoughts), lest you partake to your own judgment.
- 27.** If you are tempted by shameful dreams at night, guard your heart so that you do not dwell on the faces that appeared in your dream during the day, lest you defile yourself with their allure and bring down upon yourself fierce wrath; but cling to God with all your heart—and He will help you, for He is merciful toward human weakness.
- 28.** If you practice strict asceticism, let not your heart rely on it, thinking to yourself that it is what preserves you; but tell yourself that, for the sake of the body's weariness, God hears my supplication (and preserves me).
- 29.** If anyone reviles you, do not contradict him until he falls silent; then, if, upon examining yourself, you find within yourself what you heard from him, repent that you have sinned—and God's grace will receive you again.
- 30.** When you travel with the brethren, and there is among them one for whom you have love for God's sake, do not show special closeness to him in front of the others; lest there be a weak one among them who might die of jealousy—and you will bear his sin, because you gave him cause to sin.
- 31.** When you go to visit certain people, do not expect them to be overjoyed to see you, so that when they welcome you, you may give thanks to God.
- 32.** If weakness overtakes you while you are in silence in your cell, do not lose heart, but give thanks to God; if you see that your soul is troubled by this, say to it: "Is not this weakness better for you than the hell into which you are destined to go?"—and it will be calmed within you.
- 33.** If you go to the brothers, and one of them says to you, "I find no peace here, but I want to live with you," do not give him a place, so as not to cause others to stumble. But if he says to you, "My soul is dying because of some hidden matter," give him a way to flee, but do not allow him to live with you.
- 34.** As you sit in silence in your cell, set for yourself a rule regarding food: to give your body only what it needs so that it may sustain you and enable you to perform your prayer services, and so that you will not be tempted to go to others; eat nothing for pleasure, to satisfy the cravings of the palate, whether the food is wholesome or not; if you need to visit—whether a brother or a monastery—do not give your body its fill of any sweet food you find there, so that it will long to return to your cell as soon as possible and not become a traitor to itself.
- 35.** If demons begin to incline your heart toward feats beyond your strength, do not listen to them, for they usually incite a person to undertake any task for which he is not strong, so that he may fall into their hands and they may rejoice over him. Eat once a day and give your body only what it needs to get up when you still feel like (to eat). Perform your vigil devoutly, and do not deprive your body of what it needs, but offer your prayers with wisdom and moderation, lest your soul be clouded by too much vigil and stray from the path. Half the night is enough for your prayers, and half for the body's rest; before going to sleep, spend two hours in prayer and psalm-singing, then lie down to rest, and when the Lord awakens you, offer your prayers again with zeal. If you see, , that your body is slacking off, say to it: "Do you want rest for this brief

time, only to be cast into utter darkness afterward?” And if you gradually discipline yourself in this way, strength (for alertness) will come to you.

36. Do not befriend people whom your conscience fears to see as different (from what they appear to be, and from what is desirable to you—or fears that through them you will come to know others), lest you cause a stumbling block in your spiritual life.

37. If you are in a monastery and, having a slave, keep him with you, you bring disgrace upon the monastic order; but if you give him to a brother, you sin before God. Either let him go, or set him free. If he wishes to become a monk, he will see for himself (or as he knows). Do not keep him with you, for this is not beneficial for your soul.

38. If, while living in a city, you mortify your body for God’s sake, and the people there, out of envy, begin to honor you for it, leave that place and settle elsewhere—so that your labor may not become fruitless; but if you have already conquered vanity, pay no heed to people, knowing that God, together with you, approves of what you are doing.

39. If you have renounced the world, keep absolutely nothing for yourself; and if you feel the desire to go out, then occupy your body more with manual labor, so that you may remain silent in your cell, peacefully eating your bread.

40. If you go into town to sell your handiwork, do not haggle over the price like laypeople, but sell it as it happens, so as not to undermine the power (significance) of your cell.

41. When you buy something you need, do not haggle, saying, “I will not pay more than so much for this,” but if you desire that item, force yourself a little to pay the asking price; if, however, you cannot afford it, leave it alone in silence. When thoughts later begin to torment you about where you will get the money, tell them: “I have now become like all the saints whom God tested with poverty until He knew that their will was true, and only then did He lead them to abundance.”

42. If a brother leaves something with you, and you come to need it, do not touch it without him, unless you have told him (about it beforehand).

43. If a brother, taking you aside, says to you, “Buy this or that from me,” then, if you can afford it, buy it from him. However, if you live with others, do not do this without their knowledge and consent; otherwise, you will offend those who live with you.

44. If you need to visit your village for any reason, be careful not to take too many liberties with your blood relatives, and do not interfere in their conversations.

45. If you borrow something from your brother for temporary use, do not be negligent, but make every effort to return it to him as soon as possible. If it is a tool, return it immediately after you finish your work. If it breaks while in your possession, repair it or make a new one; do not neglect this.

46. If you lend anything to a poor brother in need and see that he cannot repay you, do not pester him or pressure him, whether it be money or clothing—whatever you gave him according to your means.

47. If, upon coming to a certain place to live, you take a cell and, while furnishing it with everything necessary, spend money on it, and in time you leave it, and some brother comes to live there, and you later return there—do not drive him out, but find yourself another cell, so that you do not sin before God. But if he leaves of his own accord, you will be free from all blame. If you left any belongings in the cell and he used them up, do not demand them back from him.

48. When you leave your cell, be careful not to take with you the things needed there, but leave them for a poor brother, and God will provide for you wherever you go.

49. Do not be ashamed to confide any thought that troubles you to your superior, and you will be relieved of it; for the spirits find no greater foothold in anyone than in a person who conceals his thoughts, whether they be good or bad.

50. Be careful, when approaching Holy Communion, not to harbor ill will toward your brother, for in that case you are deceiving yourself.

51. If any figurative (allegorical) meaning is revealed to you in the words of Scripture, interpret them allegorically, but do not disregard the literal meaning, lest you trust your own reason more than Holy Scripture, for this is a sign of pride.

52. If your brother, deceived by the words of heretics, strays from the faith out of ignorance and then returns, do not despise him, for it was a matter of ignorance on his part.

53. Be careful when speaking with heretics, seeking to defend the faith, lest the poison of their wicked words wound you (yourself) in any way.

54. If you come across a book that is reputed to be heretical, do not seek to read it, lest you fill your heart with deadly poison, but hold fast to what you have been taught, adding nothing to it and taking nothing away from it.

55. Guard yourself against false wisdom that opposes sound doctrine, as the Apostle said (1 Tim. 6:20; 1:10).

56. If you are young and have not yet subdued the flesh, then, hearing of the lofty virtues of the fathers and aspiring to them, do not imagine that you will attain them by indulging in idleness: they will not come to you unless you labor diligently to cultivate them, but if you do, they will come to you of their own accord.

57. Guard yourself against despondency, for it destroys the fruit of the monk's labor.

58. When you are struggling against a passion, do not lose heart, but humble yourself before God, saying with all your heart: "I cannot overcome this; help me, a wretched one"—and you will find peace.

59. If shame takes root in your heart while you are sitting in your cell, be careful to resist your soul so that it does not get the better of you; hasten to remember God, that He is watching you closely, and that everything you think in your heart is open before His face, and say to your soul: if you fear sinners like yourself, lest they see your sins, how much more (should you fear) God, who watches over everyone? From such an exhortation, the fear of God will be revealed within your soul—and if you abide in it, you will remain unshaken by passions, as it is written: "*Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever in Jerusalem*" (Ps. 124:1).

60. If, in battle, you stand against the enemy's forces and see that they have faltered before you in exhaustion and are fleeing backward—let not your heart rejoice at this, for the wicked scheme devised against you by these spirits lies behind them, and they are preparing for you a battle even more terrible than the first. They leave a special battle force in ambush—behind the city—and command it not to move. Then, when you march against them and oppose them, they will flee before you as if in exhaustion; but when your heart is lifted up because you have driven them away—and you leave the city—then some of them from behind will rise up against you, while others will stand against you from the front, trapping the poor soul in their midst, so that she will have no refuge left.—This city is to humble yourself with all your heart before God, who saves you from all the battles of your enemies.

61. If you pray to God about a battle, asking Him to take it away from you, and He does not hear you, do not lose heart, for He knows better than you what is good for you. But when you pray to God for any of your requests during battle, do not say, "Take this away from me and give me that," but pray, saying this: Lord Jesus Christ, help me, and do not let me sin against You, for I have gone astray; do not let me follow my own will; do not let me perish in my sins; have mercy on Your creation; do not despise me, for I am weak; do not forsake me, for I have taken refuge in You; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You; all who persecute me are before me—and I have no refuge except in You, O Lord; Lord, save me for the sake of Your mercy; may all who rise up against me be put to shame, those who seek my soul to destroy it; for You, O Lord, are mighty in all things, and through You be glory to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen. – Then your conscience will secretly tell your heart the reason why God is not heeding you, and your duty will be not to disregard that, but to do whatever it tells you to do. It cannot be that God does not hear a person when that person does not heed God. He is not far from us, but our own desires prevent Him from hearing us. Let no one deceive you: just as the earth cannot bear fruit on its own, without sowing and watering, so it is impossible for a person to bear fruit (good deeds) without self-denial (self-mortification, self-sacrifice) and humility.

62. Let us therefore stand, beloved, in the fear of God, preserving and observing the practice of the virtues (*to praktikon*—"the practice"—"*ton areton*"), *without causing our conscience to stumble, but heeding ourselves in the fear of God, until it too is set free along with us, so that there may be unity between us and it. Then it will serve as a guardian for us, showing us everything from which we must cut off*¹⁸ *(our will). But if we do not listen to it, it will turn away from us and abandon us, and we will fall into the hands of our enemies, from whom there will be no mercy for us, as our Lord taught us, saying: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary, while you are still on the way with him, lest your adversary hand you over to the judge, and the*

¹⁸ *Ekkoptomen*. In Paissios: it is in this that we stumble.

judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the last penny” (Matt. 5:25–26). – They say that conscience is an adversary because it opposes a person when he desires to fulfill the will of his flesh, and if a person does not heed it, it delivers him over to his enemies. Why did Hosea, lamenting Ephraim, say: *“Ephraim has overcome his adversary; he has trampled the law underfoot”* (Hosea 5:11): He sought Egypt, and was taken captive to the Assyrians against his will (Hosea 7:11). Egypt signifies that the heart sought its own fleshly desires, and “was taken captive to the Assyrians against his will” means that, though reluctantly, he serves his enemies.

63. Let us therefore take care of ourselves, beloved, lest we fall into the hands of our own carnal will—and it deliver us against our will to the Assyrians. Let us heed this bitter word: The king of Assyria came into the land of Israel, and carried away Ephraim and Israel to Assyria, and settled them by the rivers of Huzan, in the lands of Elah and Amor, and they remain there to this day. Then the king of Assyria sent some of his people and commanded them to live in the land of Israel, and each of them made an idol for himself and worshiped it. And they remain there to this day (2 Kings 17:6, 24, 25, 29). This happened to Ephraim because he *“overpowered his rival and trampled on justice.”*

64. Do you now understand, brothers, the fate of those who follow their evil desires and trample on their conscience—what has befallen them?—Let us not envy them, beloved, but let us emulate the saints, who did not yield to sin even unto death, but obeyed their holy conscience and inherited the kingdom of heaven. Each of them died in righteousness according to their own generation, but their names have become indelible throughout all generations. – Let us take as an example the beloved Jacob, who obeyed his parents in everything according to God’s will; having received a blessing from them, he desired to go to Mesopotamia to acquire children there, for he did not wish to have them from the daughters of Canaan, who were disobedient to their parents. Then, taking his staff and a jar of oil, he came to the place called Bethel—which means “the house of God”—and rested there; and in a vision by night he saw a ladder reaching from heaven to earth, with the angels of God ascending and descending on it. – The Lord was standing upon it. This is a sign for those who are to serve God in the future—that although the face of virtue is revealed to them at the beginning, if they do not labor for its sake, they will not attain God. Jacob rose and made a covenant with God that he would be His servant—and God confirmed it, saying, *“I will be with you and will keep you”* (Gen. 28:1–15). So he went to Mesopotamia to take a wife there, and when he saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother’s brother, he fell in love with her and worked for her for seven years, but she was not given to him until he had first taken Leah. And Rachel remained barren until he had worked another seven years for her. This is the meaning of this saying.

65. That land is called Mesopotamia because it lies between two rivers: the first is called the Tigris, and the second, the Euphrates; the first flows opposite the Assyrians, while the second has no enemy (obstacle), but is said to flow across the open plain. The Tigris, it is interpreted, represents reason, and the Euphrates represents humility. Leah is taken as a symbol of physical labor, while Rachel represents true contemplation. This is fulfilled in a person living in Mesopotamia who, performing physical labor with reason, resists the hostility of the Assyrians, and through humility ascends to true contemplation. – But Rachel did not bear him any children until Leah had given birth to all her children, and he had worked another seven years for Rachel. This is what it means: that unless a person completes the entire course of active life, true contemplation does not find freedom (or free expression) within him. Although both wives were his, he loved Rachel more than Leah, because Leah *“had weak eyes”*—*“but Rachel was very beautiful in appearance”* (Gen. 29:17). This is what is meant by the statement that the first wife had weak eyes—that is, as long as a person remains engaged in physical labor, he does not yet see the glory of true contemplation, for the enemy, as is his custom, mingles the desire to please others with his work, but he should not heed this. – When Leah stopped bearing children for a time, she gave her husband Zilpah, her maidservant, and later gave birth again and named the child Assir, which means “wealth.” When Leah stopped bearing children, then God remembered Rachel (Gen. 30:22). This means that when physical labors purify the senses, and they are freed from passions, then true contemplation reveals its glories to the mind (or—reveals itself to the mind in full glory). – Although Leah’s sons were a help to Jacob, he loved Joseph more than all the rest. This means that although physical labor protects a person from the enemy, it is true contemplation that unites him with God. – Why, as soon as Jacob saw Joseph, did he immediately desire to return to his parents (Gen. 30: 25)? Because he saw that a King over his brothers had been born to him. When, furthermore, Jacob led his entire retinue (camp, caravan) across the stream of Yamoch (in Slavonic and Russian – Yavok), and remained alone on the

other side, he then received the joy of God's blessing, who said to him: "*Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel*" (Gen. 32: 28), He was called Jacob because he wrestled with the enemy—and was called by that name—until he was deemed worthy of such a blessing and rescued (from captivity) his senses, which had been in the enemy's grasp. When they were set free within him, he was then renamed Israel, that is, "the mind that beholds God." For when the mind attains the ability to behold the glory of the Godhead, then hostile animosity fears it. Why, although Esau comes out to meet him in bitterness, Jacob's humility extinguishes his malice, and it is no longer Jacob himself who overcomes him (Esau), but his own defeat before the face of God. Although the enemy may envy a person upon seeing the great glory he has attained, he cannot harm him, for God is his helper, as it is written: "*Return to the land of your birth, and I will be with you*" (Gen. 31: 3). — Finally, he came to Salem, bought a field there, and built an altar to the Lord, who had heard him on the day of his distress (Gen. 33:19–20). The name "Salim" means "peace," that is: when a person passes through a battle in which God protects him, he then attains a state of peace. And Jacob set up an altar of twelve stones and offered upon it, in the land of promise, a sacrifice to God from the fruits of the labor he had performed in Mesopotamia.

66. Such was also the beloved Moses, who, having led the people out of Egypt, saved them from the hand of Pharaoh, led them across the Red Sea, and witnessed the death of all his enemies; he sent Joshua to destroy Amalek, while he himself remained standing on the mountaintop (in prayer), and his hands were held up by Aaron and Hur so that they would not stray from the sign of the cross. When Joshua later returned joyfully after defeating Amalek, Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain out of twelve stones and named that place "*The Lord Is My Refuge*" (Ex. 17:15), because God fights against Amalek with an invisible hand. — The name Amalek means despondency. For when a person begins to flee from his desires, forsakes his sins, and turns to God, then despondency—the first to arise—wars against him, seeking to draw him back to his sins. This despondency is driven away by diligent devotion to God; abstinence fosters this devotion; abstinence is maintained through physical labor; and it is through this labor that Israel is set free. Then a person gives thanks to God, saying: "I am weak, but You are my helper from generation to generation."

67. Such was also the great prophet Elijah. He could not destroy all the false prophets who opposed him until he had built an altar of twelve stones, laid logs of wood upon it, placed the holy sacrifice on them, and poured water over it all; and God became for him a fire that consumed the altar and everything on it. Only then, at that very moment, did he boldly confront his enemies (3 Kings 18:40 ff.).—And when he had destroyed them, so that not a single one remained, he gave thanks to God, saying: "You are in all this, for it is written that he placed his face between his knees" (3 Kings 18:42). Thus, if the mind carefully maintains control over its senses, it attains immortality (or eternal life), and immortality (eternal life) leads it to these words, which God reveals to it. When, then, Elijah's "*young man*" "*looks*" and sees none of the seven passions aroused, he beholds "*a small cloud, like the footprint of a man, bringing up water from the sea*": which is the rest (3 Kings 18:43, 44) of the Holy Comforter. — Immortality is this: to keep one's works sound (whole and intact), and not to return to that for which one prays for forgiveness. For when God accepts a person's works, and what he does remains whole, preserved from the enemy's power, then his enemies will not be able to stand against him; when they see that their will has no hold on him, they will vanish of their own accord, as it is written: "*Call upon the names of your gods, and I will call upon the name of the Lord my God; and the God who answers by fire—that is the God*" (1 Kings 18:24). ("*They called... but there was no voice, nor any answer*"—26). This is how it is with everything that is sown into a person by the enemy's power: the enemies cannot carry out their will in one who is unwilling; they exert all their strength (to win him over to their side), but the man of God does not listen to them, because his heart—which is in accordance with God's will—does not desire it, as it is written: "Call upon the name of your God, and I will call upon the name of the Lord my God," but since their will was not in Him, He did not hear them in anything.

68. All this happens to everyone who follows God's will and keeps His commandments. For the men of that time, these were types; but it is written for our edification, we who have resolved to walk in their footsteps, striving to attain the immortality that preserved them from all the enemy's arrows. They placed themselves under the shelter of God, praying for His help, because they did not rely on any of their own efforts, and God's protection was a wall of defense for them. They believed that without God's help they could do nothing, and in humility they spoke with the Psalmist: "*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain*" (Ps. 126: 1). And when God sees that a person's mind has submitted to Him with all its strength, and has no help in anyone but Him, He

fills that person with strength, saying: *“Do not fear, O Jacob, O little one of Israel”* (Isa. 41:14)—and again: *“Do not fear, for I have delivered you; I have called you by name; you are Mine. And when you pass through the waters, I am with you, and the rivers will not overwhelm you; and when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, who saves you”* (Isa. 43:1–3). When the mind hears such an inspiring word, it boldly rises up against the enemy’s power, saying: *“Who will contend with me? ... Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord, the Lord, will help me; who will harm me? Behold, all of you will wear out like a garment, and like a rag you will be consumed”* (Isa. 50: 8:9). But God is powerful enough to ensure that we, too, may be numbered among those who, through humility, were preserved by Him, for humility served as a helmet for them and protected them from all the enemy’s arrows—by the grace of God, to whom be power, glory, and dominion, forever and ever. Amen.

5. On the Commandments for the Faithful, and on the Conduct of Those Who Desire to Live Together in Peace

1. When you walk together along the road, be mindful in all things of the weakest among you, whether he needs to rest a little or to eat a little before the appointed time.

2. When you go out together to do some work, let each of you attend to himself, not to his brother: let him neither instruct him nor command him to do anything.

3. When you are dividing tasks in the cell, or setting something up—a hearth, for example, or something else—let the one doing the work proceed as he wishes. But if he says, “Show me love, teach me, because I don’t know how (to do this or that),” and there is someone among you who does know how (to do it), let him not be deceitful and say, “I don’t know how either”—such humility is not of God.

4. If your brother is doing something (not as he should) and you see it—do not say to him, “You’ve ruined it.” But if he says, “Show me love; teach me,” and you do not teach him but remain silent, then there is no love of God in you, because you harbor deceit in your heart.

5. If your brother cooks a meal and it does not turn out well, do not say to him, “You cooked it poorly,” for in this lies death for your soul. But rather, consider how sad you would be if you had to hear this yourself from another—and you will be comforted.

6. When you sing together, and someone makes a mistake with a word, do not point it out to him or embarrass him; if he misses a word, let it be (overlooked). But if he says in advance, “Show love,” and asks, “Tell me (if I make a mistake or miss a word),” then tell him.

7. When you are eating a meal, and any of you does not care for a particular dish, let him not say, “I cannot eat this,” but for God’s sake, even unto death, let him force himself—either to remain silent or to eat as the others do—and God will set his heart at ease.

8. When you are working together on a task, and any of you, out of cowardice, stops (working), do not rebuke him, but rather be kind to him or be lenient with him.

9. When brothers come to visit you, by no means question them about anything that might be harmful to you, so that you may not be left with a burden (embarrassment, a wound in your heart) from them in your cell. But if a visitor, unable to restrain himself, says something to one of you that, as noted, could be harmful to you, then the one who hears it must not repeat it to any of the brothers, but must remain silent—so that this distress (just as it came) may pass from him alone—and so that he does not fill their hearts with deadly poison.

10. When you go out for any necessity, do not ask anyone about anything unbecoming to you, so that you may return to your cell whole (unharmful). If, however, you happen to hear something unintentionally, do not repeat it to your brothers upon your return.

11. When you are out and about, do not allow yourselves any license, wherever you may go, so that those who witness the propriety of your conduct may benefit from you; especially (do not relax) in both secret and outward silence: for all those passions (failings in conduct arising from self-indulgence) manifest themselves in another weak (brother), due to the inactivity (or emptiness) of his heart—for he does not see his own sins. (Know that) God’s help, hope, gentleness, conscientiousness, the relinquishment of one’s own will, and self-discipline in all things—these dwell in the heart of the humble; whereas pride, contention, regarding oneself as more knowledgeable than one’s brother, trampling on one’s conscience, and indifference to the fact that your brother grieves over you—saying, “What does that have to do with me?”—are found in a hard heart.

12. When you are sitting at your work, and your brother enters your cell, do not wonder whether you have worked more than he has, or he more than you.

13. If you are working alongside someone who is weak, do not be proud in your heart, desiring to accomplish more than he has.

14. If your brother, while doing any work, messes it up, say nothing to him about it unless he himself says to you, “Show me love, brother; teach me.” And if you, knowing (how to do it), remain silent, then in this lies your death.

15. When you are doing your work, whatever it may be, make an effort not to keep track of how much you have accomplished compared to your brother, for this is a sign of inexperience.

16. When you go to work with your brothers, do not wish for them to know that you have accomplished more than they have. This is what God requires of a person: that every deed he does, he do in secret.

17. If your brother, out of weakness, responds to you with a word of discontent, bear with him joyfully; for if you examine what has happened by God’s judgment—which is righteous and impartial—you will find that you have sinned (and not your brother).

18. If you live with the brethren, and your thoughts prompt you to restrict yourself (more than usual) in your eating, say to your thoughts: “The weak brother who lives here is my master.” If you earnestly desire to increase your self-restraint, take a small, separate cell for yourself, and do not trouble your weak brother.

19. If a wandering brother comes to you—one about whom you have previously heard that he is a show-off (*filoshematikos esti*), loves to put on airs, and presents himself as knowledgeable, ascetic, and so on—do not question him about this verbally until this flaw of his reveals itself on its own; but (even afterward) be careful not to act on what you have learned, because if the brother realizes this, he will be offended.

20. If you wish to take something because you need it, do not grumble against your brother (saying to yourself), “Why didn’t he think to give it to me of his own accord?” but tell him boldly and simply: “Show me love; give me such-and-such, because I need it.” This is the holy purity (or straightforwardness) of the heart. But if you do not speak up, and instead grumble and reproach him in your heart, then you are in the wrong.

21. If a discussion arises among you regarding any passage of Scripture, let the one who knows and understands it, to the best of his ability, set his own will aside (or yield to his brother)—and bring his brother peace and joy. The word that must be sought above all else is this: to humble oneself before one’s brother.

22. Whoever keeps in mind the dreadful judgment before which he must appear will strive in every way to ensure that his mouth is not silenced, finding nothing to say in his defense at that dreadful hour.

23. Do not inquire into the affairs of this world, lest you become like those places where everyone goes to relieve themselves, and where, for that reason, there is a great stench. But rather be a pure altar to God, establishing within yourselves a (spiritual) priest who would always offer incense (on this altar). Never leave this altar without incense, but compel yourselves ceaselessly to stand before the face of the Lord with every prayer, that He may grant you simplicity and childlike innocence and take from you what is contrary to these—namely, all cunning, demonic wisdom, curiosity (wandering everywhere to see this and hear that), self-love, and malice; for all such things destroy the labors of those who act in this way. The conclusion of all this is this: if a person fears God with wisdom and listens with humility to his conscience as guided by God, then he will teach himself all that has been said in secret. But when there (within) is no master of the house (the fear of God), then the (inner) house of such a poor person is left to the mercy of others, and anyone who wishes may say whatever they want within it, because his heart is not under his own control, but under the control of his enemies.

24. If you are about to go out to do some small task, let no one look down on another, nor go out alone, leaving his brother to suffer pangs of conscience in the cell, but let him say to him with love: “Do you want to go? Let’s go.” – And if he sees that his brother has no peace (is not at peace in spirit) at that moment, or is physically weak, let him not argue, insisting on going at all costs, but let him postpone it for a while and return to his cell with compassionate love for his brother. Be careful not to oppose your brother in anything, lest you offend him.

25. Whoever lives with his father or brother should not consult with anyone outside the household about anything, but should discuss everything with the one who lives with him: in this lies peace and obedience.

26. If you live with your father or brother, be careful not to be found to have a secret friendship with anyone, or to write letters to anyone in secret, not wanting those who are with you to know about it: by doing this, you will ruin both yourself and them.

27. If you live with someone older than you, be careful not to perform any act of charity for the poor without first asking him—do not do this in secret.

28. When asking about your thoughts, do not ask after you have acted on them, but speak of what is troubling you at the present moment. Whether it concerns a change of residence, learning a craft, a change in one's craft, entering into a living arrangement with someone, or ending such an arrangement—ask freely about all these things, but do so before you take any action. Likewise, ask about spiritual weaknesses and bodily passions while these thoughts are still tempting you—and when you ask, do not say that you have not yet acted on these promptings, but ask about the wound, saying that you are already wounded, so that you may receive healing for the wound.

29. When you ask about your thoughts, do not be a hypocrite, and do not say one thing instead of another, or (do not use such a turn of phrase) as if someone else had acted in such and such a way, but speak the truth, and prepare yourself to do whatever you are told. If you act otherwise, you are mocking yourself, not the elders whom you are asking.

30. When you ask the elders about a quarrel, do not listen to those inner voices that tell you more than the elders do, but first pray to God, saying: "Have mercy on me, and whatever pleases You concerning me, inspire my fathers to tell me; and then, whatever the fathers tell you, do it with faith, and God will give you peace."

31. When you live with your brothers and find no peace for whatever reason—whether because of manual labor, or because of the constraints (and cramped conditions) of life, or because of the monotony of life, or because you cannot bear (the hardships you encounter), or because of despondency, or because you wish to withdraw into silence, or because you cannot bear the yoke (of submission), or because you are unable to do what you desire, or because you lack everything you need, or because you wish to subject yourself to great privations, or because you are weak and cannot bear the labor (they require), —or, in general, whatever the reason that prompts your heart to turn away from them—be careful not to agree to leave, do not cast off the yoke, and do not depart in sorrow—nor flee secretly out of a sense of offense (toward them), or at a time when within you (still) dwells reproach and condemnation of them, without remembering, because of the bitterness toward them that has overtaken you, your brotherhood with them—but rather seek peace at this time, so that your heart may be at rest wherever you go, and take their reproach upon yourself, without condemning in any way the brothers with whom you have lived; do not listen to your enemies (if they try to persuade you) to turn their (your brothers') good deeds into evil deeds, so as to avoid reproaching yourself and to use your brother's reproach to cover your own; for this, you will fall by the hand of your enemies, wherever you settle to live.

32. When you come to a place to settle, do not take a cell for yourself before you learn the customs of life there—whether there is some stumbling block for you there, whether because of excessive concern (that you will have many worries), or because you will see certain people (who are not for your benefit), or because of fame (for you or that place), or because of too much peace and comfort, or because of stumbling blocks from your friends. If you are wise, you will learn everything in a few days—whether it will mean death or life for you there.

33. If you give your cell to a brother so that he may stay there for a few days, do not treat him as if he were under your authority.

34. If you take a cell from someone to live in for a time, do not destroy anything, and do not make any changes to it without first asking the one who gave it to you whether he approves or disapproves; otherwise, it will not be in accordance with your conscience.

35. When you are living with someone or staying with them temporarily, and they give you a commandment, be careful for God's sake not to disregard it or to violate this commandment, whether openly or in secret.

36. If, while living alone in your cell, you resolve to eat at a certain hour, or to abstain from cooked food, or from something else, and then go out into the world, be careful not to say to anyone while sitting at a meal (anywhere), "Forgive me, I do not eat this," because through this all your labor will fall into the hands

of your enemies in vain. Your Lord and Savior said: “Do your deeds in secret, so that your Father may reward you openly.” Whoever loves his labors guards them so that they are not lost in vain.

37. When you live with someone, no matter what work you do together—inside or outside the cell—when your brother calls you to it, be careful not to say, “Wait a moment; let me finish this little thing”—but obey him immediately.

38. When you work together with one another, if you are wise, whatever fault you may see in others, do not dwell on it, lest it slip from your tongue and you speak of it to the brothers (living with you), for in this lies the death of your soul.

39. If brothers live with you, and it happens that they sometimes labor all day, comfort them by letting them taste some food before the appointed hour. Do not think only of yourself, but be mindful of God’s judgment. Keep God before your eyes in every task, whatever you may be doing.

40. If you come to a place to live there—whether alone or with those who settled there before you—and you see something harmful to the soul or unmonastic, whether some craft or other activities, do not open your mouth to denounce it; but if you do not feel at ease staying there, go to another place, and guard your tongue so as not to denounce them; for in this lies your death.

41. If you are weak in the face of passions, be careful not to allow anyone to reveal their passionate thoughts to you as if to a confidant, for such a thing is ruin for your soul.

42. If a ridiculous remark slips out among you, be careful not to let your laughter rise to the point of being heard; for this is a sign of lack of discipline and fear of God, because there is no guard within you.

43. Since in our days the wrath of God has befallen the entire universe, do not be troubled by whatever you may hear, but say this in your hearts: What is this compared to that place (hell) into which we are destined to fall because of our sins?

44. Cultivate love for God’s sake; read what is written here so that you may also observe it, for it is no small matter for the faithful to regard this as a trivial (insignificant) matter. – If you observe this with simplicity and wisdom, you will enter into the rest of the Son of God with joy; but if you do not observe it, you will suffer hardship even here, and when you depart from the body, you will be led to hell according to the Scriptures. Our Lord Christ came for the reason stated above (that is, to grant rest to those who keep His commandments), but our hard-heartedness blinds us with the desires of our hearts, because we love them more than God, and we do not love Him as much as we love our passions.

45. Behold, I have compelled myself to write this to you as well, since what I wrote before was not enough for you. Therefore, cultivate love, and from now on take up the struggle; do not remain with an uncircumcised heart, but help yourselves (strive for your own salvation) in the few days you have left. If you observe these things—that is, humility, peace, patience, the subjugation of your own will, and love—you will live your life for your own good; but if you do not observe them, on the contrary, you will have: envy and zeal, strife and pride, grumbling and disobedience; then you will have wasted your time, and in truth you will go to hell when you depart from this body. Love your brothers with holy love, and guard your tongue so as not to utter an unseemly word that might wound a brother. For our Lord God is mighty to enable us *to “do and keep”* these things, so that through His grace we may obtain mercy, together with all the saints who have pleased Him. To Him be glory, honor, and worship, now and always, and forever and ever. Amen.

6. On Those Who Desire to Observe a Good Silence

Those who desire to observe a virtuous silence—let them be mindful to cast off the thieves who rob them, and not to waste their time in bondage and bitter labor, devoting their hearts to deeds unbecoming to them, and forgetting their own sins .

1. A love of scrutinizing Scripture gives rise to disputes and enmity, whereas lamenting one’s sins brings peace. It is a sin for a monk sitting in his cell to abandon his sins and give himself over to scrutinizing Scripture. Whoever devotes his heart (to scrutinizing) —why Scripture said this or that—before he has disciplined himself (gained self-awareness, or self-control, or freed himself from passions), has a restless heart and is in the utmost bondage; but whoever vigilantly guards against being enslaved by anything loves to humble himself before the face of God.

2. Whoever seeks to find a way to imitate God blasphemes against God, but whoever seeks how to honor Him (more perfectly) loves purity in the fear of God.

3. Whoever keeps God's words has come to know God (1 John 2:3)—and such a person fulfills them as one who is indebted (with a sense of urgent duty).

4. Do not seek God's highest (gifts) while you are praying to Him for help; may He come and save you from sin. God's grace comes of its own accord when a place that is unblemished and pure is prepared for it.

5. Whoever relies on his own reason and clings to his own will draws multitudes of demons to himself¹⁹ and cannot be of the Spirit (of God), who brings sorrow (or contrition) to the heart.

6. Whoever, seeing the words of Scripture, interprets them according to his own reason and relies on it, asserting that this is so (by relying on it, he assumes that this is how those words should be understood)—such a person does not know the glory of God or His riches; but whoever, upon seeing them, says, "I do not know—I am but a man," and gives glory to God—in such a person dwells the riches of God, according to his strength and his understanding.

7. Do not be eager to reveal your thoughts to everyone, but only to your spiritual fathers, lest you bring sorrow upon your own heart.

8. Guard your lips, so that your neighbor may be honorable in your sight (respect for your neighbor should keep your lips from condemning him).

9. Train your tongue to speak God's words wisely, and falsehood will flee from you.

10. The love of human glory gives rise to lies, but humbling yourself—with even greater humility—instills the fear of God in your heart.

11. Do not desire to be a friend of the glorious ones of this world, lest their glory (the sense of the harmfulness of their glory) be dulled within you.

12. If anyone speaks ill of his brother in your presence, belittles him, and shows malice (toward him), do not take his side, lest what you do not desire befall you.

13. Simplicity and humility (not thinking highly of oneself) purify the heart from deceit. Whoever acts deceitfully toward his brother (deals with him deceitfully) will not escape sorrow of heart. Whoever says one thing but harbors another in his heart through deceit—all his worship (*leitorgia*—prayers) is in vain. Do not associate with anyone like this, lest you be defiled by the poison of his defilement. Walk with the harmless, and you will share in their glory and purity.

14. Do not harbor malice toward anyone, lest you render your labors fruitless. Be sincere with everyone, and you will see the peace of God within yourself. Just as when someone is stung by a scorpion, its venom spreads throughout the body and damages the very heart, so too is malice toward one's neighbor in the heart: its venom wounds the soul, and the soul suffers from this evil. Therefore, whoever wishes to spare his labors, so that they are not wasted in vain, let him hasten to cast out this scorpion from within himself—that is, deceit and malice.

7. On Virtues

1. There are three virtues that the mind always prudently guards and of which it stands in need: its natural inclination, courage, and diligence.

2. There are three virtues which, if the mind perceives within itself, lead it to believe that it has attained immortality (renewal, or the perfection of the immortal heavenly beings): discernment that accurately distinguishes one thing from another, foresight of all things before they happen, and indifference to anything foreign.

3. There are three virtues that always shed light on the mind: not perceiving deceit in any person, doing good to those who do you harm, and enduring everything that befalls you without distress. These three virtues give rise to three others, greater than themselves: not seeing deceit in a person gives rise to love; doing good to those who do you harm brings peace; enduring whatever comes your way without disturbance brings meekness.

4. There are four virtues that purify the soul: silence, keeping the commandments, self-restraint (restricting oneself in all things so that the path may be narrow), and humility.

5. The mind always needs the following four virtues: to pray to God, clinging to Him unceasingly; to prostrate oneself before God; not to be troubled by any person (regarding who they are and what they do—

¹⁹ *ktatai ehthran*. – In St. Isaiah, "*ehthra*" means the enemy's power—hordes of demons. To acquire them is to amass, to attract.

which is the same as not questioning them), so as not to judge them; and to be deaf to what one's passions tell them.

6. These four virtues surround the soul like a wall and allow it to breathe easily, free from the anxieties caused by its enemies: mercy, lack of anger, long-suffering, and the casting out of every seed of sin that takes root; and resistance to forgetfulness preserves them all.

7. Four virtues, according to God, help the young (the novice): constant instruction, diligence, vigilance, and humility (not considering oneself anything).

8. Four things defile the soul: wandering through the city without guarding one's eyes, friendship with a woman, friendship with the world's celebrities, and a fondness for conversations with blood relatives.

9. Four things increase lustful passion in the body: sleeping to one's heart's content, eating until one is full, frivolous idle talk, and adorning the body.

10. Four things darken the soul: hatred of one's neighbor, belittling him, envying him, and grumbling against him.

11. Four things make the soul empty (Esmpt): moving from place to place, a love of entertainment, materialism, and stinginess.

12. Anger is multiplied by four things: giving and receiving (transactions), insisting on one's own will, the desire to teach, and considering oneself wise (a wise person).

13. There are three things that are difficult for a person to acquire—and through them all virtues are preserved: contrition, weeping over one's sins, and keeping death before one's eyes.

14. There are three things that exert power over the soul until it reaches a high degree—and it is these that prevent virtues from dwelling with the mind: captivity (attachment to anything other than God), sloth, and forgetfulness. Forgetfulness wages war against a person until his last breath, plunging him into barrenness; it is stronger than all thoughts, and is the mother of all evil, and the destroyer of what a person builds within himself every hour.

15. These are the deeds of the new man and the deeds of the old man! He who loves his soul and does not wish to destroy it observes the deeds of the new man, but he who loves the comfort of the flesh in this brief time performs the deeds of the old man and destroys his soul. – And our Lord Jesus Christ, revealing the new man in His own body, said: *"Whoever loves his soul will lose it"* (John 12:25); *"But whoever loses his soul for My sake will find it"* (Matt. 10:39). He is the Lord of the world; through Him the dividing wall of hostility has been torn down (Eph. 2: 14). He also said: *"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"* (Matt. 10: 34), and further: *"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"* (Luke 12:49). That is to say, in those who followed His holy teachings, the fire of His Divinity was (tangibly present), and as a result, they possessed within themselves a spiritual sword with which they cut off all the desires of their flesh. And the Lord gave them joy, saying, *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you"* (John 14:27).

16. Thus, those who took care to save their souls in this age and cut off their desires became His holy sheep, offered as a sacrifice to Him. And when He appears in the glory of His Divinity, He will call them to His right hand, saying: *"Come, you who are blessed by My Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me food..."* and so on (Matt. 25:34–35). This is how those who sacrifice their souls in this brief time will find them in times of need, receiving a reward far greater than they ever expected. But those who follow their own wills certainly preserve their souls in this sinful age; yet, since they, beguiled by the vanity of their wealth, do not keep God's commandments, hoping to remain in this age forever, the shame of their blindness will be revealed at the hour of judgment, they will appear as accursed goats and hear the terrible verdict of the Judge, Who will declare: *"Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For you were hungry, and you did not give Me food..."* and so on (41 and 42). Their mouths will be silenced—and they will find nothing to say, remembering their unkindness and their poverty (both past and present). True, they will then say: *"Lord, when did we see You hungry... and did not serve You?"* (44). But He will silence them, saying: *"Whoever did good to one of these who believe in Me has done it to Me."*

17. Let us test ourselves, beloved, to see whether each of us is keeping the Lord's commandments to the best of our ability, or not; for we all have a duty to keep them to the best of our ability—the small according to their smallness, the great according to their greatness. Those who cast their gifts into the treasury were rich, but the Lord was more pleased with the poor widow because of her two mites, for God looks upon our

willingness. Let us not, then, give room in our hearts to discouragement (that we can do little), lest envy (of others) separate us from God, but let us perform our acts of service according to our poverty. For just as the Lord showed mercy to the daughter of the chief synagogue official, by raising her from the dead; just as He had mercy on the woman with the issue of blood, who had spent all she had on doctors before she came to know Christ; just as He healed the centurion's servant because the centurion believed—so He had mercy on the Canaanite woman, healing her daughter; and just as He raised Lazarus, His beloved, from the dead, so He raised the only son of the poor widow, for the sake of her tears; and just as He did not despise Mary, who anointed His feet with perfume, so He did not turn away the sinful woman who anointed His feet with perfume, weeping; and just as He called Peter and John from their boat, saying, *“Follow Me”* (Matt. 4:19), so He also called Matthew, who was sitting at the tax office; and just as He washed the feet of the other disciples, so He washed Judas's feet as well, making no distinction; and just as He sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, upon the Apostles, so He sent Him upon Cornelius with boldness; and just as He compelled Ananias in Damascus for Paul's sake, saying that he was *“a chosen vessel of Mine”* (Acts 9:15), so He moved Philip in Samaria for the sake of the Ethiopian eunuch. For with Him there is no partiality toward the small or the great, the rich or the poor, but He seeks a (good) will, faith in Him, the fulfillment of His commandments, and love for all. This is what will serve as the seal for the soul (its distinguishing mark) when it departs from the body, just as He commanded His disciples, saying: *“By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35).

18. Of whom is He speaking when He says that people will recognize you, if not of the powers of the right and the left? (And it will be that) when the adversaries see the sign of love accompanying the soul, they will retreat from it in fear, while the holy powers will rejoice with it. Let us therefore strive, beloved, to the best of our ability, to obtain such a seal that our enemies may not seize us. The Lord said: *“A city set on a hill cannot be hidden”* (Matt. 5:14). Of what mountain is He speaking, if not of His holy word? Let us therefore, beloved, apply ourselves with zeal and wisdom to fulfilling His word, which says: *“Whoever loves Me will keep My commandments”* (John 14:23), so that such labors may be for us an indestructible and fortified city, preserving us by the Word of the Lord from the hand of all our enemies until we meet Him (appear before His face). For if we find boldness, all our enemies will be scattered by the power of His Holy Word, which is that mountain from which a stone was cut out without hands and struck down the four-part image of gold—made of silver, bronze, iron, and clay—as the Apostle said: *“Put on the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil; for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph. 6:11–12). These four principalities are that four-part image, which is enmity (the power of the enemy). The holy Word of God has destroyed them (the principalities), as it is written that the stone which struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34–35).

19. Let us therefore take refuge, brothers, under His (the Lord's) shelter—may He be our refuge and save us from these four evil powers, so that we too may share in the joy (or taste, or hear His comforting word) with all His saints, when they gather before His face from the four corners of the earth, and each of them will hear his own blessing (the bestowal of blessing, or what blessing is bestowed specifically upon him) according to his deeds. — For His holy name is mighty—to abide with us and strengthen us—and not to allow our hearts to be deceived by the enemy's forgetfulness (induced by the enemy), but He will preserve us (and grant us) the strength to endure all that befalls us, for the sake of His Holy Name, so that we may find mercy along with all who have been deemed worthy to attain His bliss. To Him be glory, honor, and worship—to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

8. Sayings

1. Abba Isaiah said: I sometimes see myself as a horse wandering without an owner—one upon whom anyone who happens upon him mounts—and when one lets him go, another catches him and mounts him.

2. He said again: “I am like someone whom his enemies have seized, bound, and thrown into a muddy ditch; and if he cries out to his Lord, they beat him mercilessly to silence him.”

3. He said again: I am like a bird tied by the leg by a young boy: when the boy loosens the string, the bird immediately soars upward, thinking it has been set free, but when the boy pulls on the string, he drags it back down again. This is how I see myself, and this is what I wish to say: that no one should give in to carelessness, until their very last breath.

4. He said again: if, having lent something to someone, you forgive him, you will be imitating the nature of Jesus; but if you demand repayment, you will be imitating the nature of Adam; and if you take interest, that will not even be in accordance with Adam's nature (that is to say, it will be inferior to or contrary to it).

5. When someone accuses you of something you have done or failed to do, if you remain silent, this is in accordance with the nature of Jesus; if you reply, "What have I done?" this is not in accordance with His nature; but if you argue back word for word, this is contrary to His nature.

6. If, while performing your services (*leitorgias*—prayer services), you do so with humility, as one unworthy, they are pleasing to God; but if, while doing so, a thought arises in your heart and you recall how another is sleeping (at this very moment) or is neglectful (of this matter), then your labor is fruitless.

7. He spoke again of humility, saying that it has no tongue to say of anyone that he is negligent, or of another that he is contemptuous; nor does it have eyes to observe the faults of others; nor does it have ears to listen to what is unbeneficial to its soul, and it cares for nothing but its own sins; yet it is at peace with all people, according to God's commandment, and not out of any friendship. Whoever fasts for six days and subjects himself to great labors and ascetic practices (feats) apart from this path—all his labors are in vain.

8. He said again: If anyone acquires something for his own need, but cannot find it when he needs it, then he has acquired it in vain. Such is the one who says, "I fear God," but when placed in circumstances where this fear would be needed—when, for example, he finds himself in a situation where he must speak to someone, and at that moment feels either outbursts of anger and insolent lack of self-control, or the urge to teach another what he himself has not attained, or the impulse to seek the approval of others, or the desire to become famous among people, or the manifestation of other passions—if at that moment he does not find the fear of God within himself, then all his labors are in vain.

9. If our Lord Jesus Christ had not first healed all the infirmities of the man for whom He came to earth, He might not even have reached the cross. Before the Lord's coming in the flesh, man was blind, mute, paralyzed, deaf, leprous, lame, and deadened by all manner of unnatural conditions. But when He showed mercy and came to us, He raised the dead and made the lame walk, the blind see, the mute speak, and the deaf hear—and He created a new man, free from every infirmity. And then He ascended the cross. Two thieves were crucified with Him; the one on His right glorified Him and prayed to Him, saying, "*Lord, remember me in Your kingdom*" (Luke 23:42), while the one on His left reviled Him. – This is what it means. Before being roused from sloth, the mind is in league with the enemy's forces. But when our Lord Jesus Christ rouses it from its sloth and grants it sight to discern all things clearly—and it is thus able to ascend the cross—then the enemy's power begins to revile it with harsh words, in the hope that, perhaps, the mind, having been weakened by this, will turn away from its labors and return once more to its former idleness. Such is the significance of the two thieves, whom our Lord Jesus Christ separated from one another, and of whom one reviled Him, hoping that perhaps he might turn Him away from His hope, while the other did not cease to implore Him until he heard: "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43). This one proved to be the conqueror of Paradise and now partakes of the tree of life.

10. He spoke again about Holy Communion, saying that it is called union with God. But if we are overcome by passions—whether anger, envy, the desire to please others, vanity, hatred, or any other passion—then we are far from God. Where, then, is our union with God?

11. When you perform your services (prayer services) and, after completing them, any of these (mentioned passions) stirs up in your heart, then all your efforts are in vain: God does not accept them.

12. One of the elders said to him, "Why then do they not push (*oy kroyoyisi*), Father²⁰?" The elder replied, "When rain falls on sown ground, it produces a crop; but when the ground is unsown, how can it produce a crop?" If anyone takes the trouble to cast out from his heart what is unnatural (i.e., passions), then they will no longer stir within him. God wants man to be like Him in every way. For this reason, He came to earth and suffered—to transform our hardened nature, to cut off our desires, and to remove the false knowledge that has taken hold of our souls. Speechless animals have retained their nature, but man has altered his own. Now, just as livestock is subject to man, so every person must be subject to his neighbor for God's sake: for this is why the Lord came. See, then, how much the animals surpass you, who rely on your illusory knowledge. Therefore, if I wish to return to my natural state, just as animals have neither their own will nor knowledge,

²⁰ They do not push—perhaps toward the door of God's mercy—so that prayer may bear fruit.

so must I act—not only toward those who are with me, but also toward those who oppose me: for such is the will of God. Whoever wishes to enter into the peace of the cell and not be devoured by enmity (by the enemy's power, not to become its prey) must withdraw from people in every way (freeing oneself from concern for them, not getting involved in their affairs), so as not to rebuke anyone, not to praise, not to justify, not to flatter, not to affirm their righteousness, not to grieve them in any way, not to pay attention to their shortcomings, not to harbor in one's heart a thorn of hostile thought against them, and not to waste one's knowledge on the unwise, nor one's will on the foolish. Then you will come to know yourself and understand what is harmful to you. One who trusts in his own righteousness and clings to his own will cannot escape enmity (the wiles of the enemy), nor find peace, nor see what he lacks. And when he departs from this body, it is difficult for him to find mercy. The end of it all, however, is to dwell with God (to meditate on Him, to cling to Him, and to seek to please Him) with all one's heart and all one's strength, to show mercy to all, to weep, and to beseech God for His help and mercy.

13. He spoke again regarding teaching one's neighbor God's commandments: How do I know that God has accepted me, so that I might tell another, "Do this or that," when I myself am in a state of repentance because of my sins? – For a person who has ever fallen is in a state of repentance. And you cannot have firm assurance (of your salvation) until you know that the forgiveness of your sins has been accomplished within you. The sign of this is that nothing of what you have sinned against stirs in your heart—or, if someone speaks to you about it and you do not even recognize that such a thing has happened, then it is clear that mercy has been granted to you. But if this still lives within you, suppress it and weep over it; for fear, trembling, and mortal anguish—to be unconcerned about this—will remain until you stand before the throne of God. – If someone asks you to teach him something, and you, risking your very life, tell him how he can be set free (from what oppresses him), yet he returns to you saying the same thing, having made no progress whatsoever in what you told him, then it is clear that he has not put it into practice. Therefore, turn away from him, for he is killing your soul. It is a great thing for a person to set aside his own truth—which he thinks is according to God—and to keep the word of the one who teaches him according to God. Here is a man of God, Abba Nisteros, who saw the glory of God—though his sister's sons lived with him, he gave them no commands whatsoever, but left each to his own will, not caring whether they were good or bad. They also spoke of Cain and Abel: Who taught them to do this or that, when there was yet neither Law nor Scripture? (God, of course), because if God does not teach a person, he labors in vain.

14. He said again: When someone begins to speak unwholesome words to you, do not listen to them, lest he destroy your soul. Do not be ashamed of his face, and, for fear of saddening him, do not tolerate such speech directed at you, thinking, "After all, I do not accept this in my heart." No, do not speak that way. You are no greater than the first man, whom God created with His own hand—and evil talk did him no good. So flee and do not listen. But take care: as you flee with your body, do not wish to know (or hold in your memory) what was said; for even if you heard only a little, the demons will not let what was said and what you heard go to waste, but will kill your soul with it. As you flee, flee to the very end.

15. He said again: From what I see, I conclude that profit, honor, and peace torment a person to the point of death.

16. He said again: To instruct one's neighbor is a fall of the soul (from its proper station)—and to desire to lead him to a good state is a great ruin of the soul. Why? Because every time you instruct your neighbor—'Do this or that'—think of yourself this way: that you, having taken a crowbar, are destroying your own house while seeking to build his.

17. He said again: "Woe to the soul that has sinned after holy baptism!" Such a person cannot be carefree about himself while under repentance—whether he has fallen in the flesh (into carnal sins), or stolen, or slipped into any other sin, or looked at someone's body with lust, or eaten something in secret, looking around to make sure no one saw, or when another placed his alms²¹, you were curious about what was inside it—for whoever acts this way dishonors Jesus.

18. Then someone asked him, "Is this matter really so important, Father?" And he said, "Just as one who breaks through a wall and takes money is deceived by the enemy, so too is this one (deceived by the same enemy): for whoever has overcome that one has also overcome this one—and whoever is overcome in small matters is overcome in great ones as well."

²¹ *Melotarion*—Milot—monastic clothing (a belt), according to the rule of St. Pachomius—made of goatskin.

19. If a person performs great miracles and healings, and acquires all knowledge—even if he raises the dead—yet as soon as he falls into sin, he cannot be carefree about himself, for he is under the obligation of repentance. Likewise, if he bears many (penitential) labors, but upon seeing someone in sin or abiding in negligence, he humiliates that person—all his repentance is in vain, since he has rejected a member of Christ by condemning him, rather than leaving the judgment to God the Judge.

20. He said again: We are all as if in a hospital—one suffers from an eye ailment, another from a hand ailment, yet another has a boil or some other infirmity. It happens that some wounds have already healed, but if one eats something harmful, they open up again. So it is with one who is in a state of repentance: when he condemns or humiliates someone, he once again destroys his own repentance. — Among those lying in a hospital with various illnesses, if one cries out because of his pain, would another say, “Why are you crying out?” Doesn’t everyone think about their own illness? So too, if the pain of my sins were before my eyes, I would not look upon another sinner—just as, among those lying in the doctor’s infirmary, each one is careful not to eat anything that might reopen his wound.

21. Woe to the soul that does not wish to avoid all sin²² ! It suffers much sorrow from (enemies) who envy it and oppose it. That is why it needs great patience and gratitude for everything. Thus, when the people (of Israel) were in Egypt, they all drank and ate to their fill, yet they worked for Pharaoh as slaves. But when the Lord sent them help—that is, Moses, to free them from Pharaoh, they were subjected to hard labor and grievous afflictions; and even amid all the plagues that God brought upon Pharaoh, Moses still did not dare to speak with confidence of their deliverance from destruction until the time came and God said to him: “I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh, and you shall say to him, ‘Let the people go, or I will strike down your firstborn.’” Then at last Moses found the courage. And God said to him: “*Tell the people to ask their neighbors—and every woman to ask her neighbor—for silver and gold vessels and clothing; and put them on your children—and plunder the Egyptians*” (Ex. 11:1–2). Some of these items were later used in the construction of the Tabernacle.

22. (After this, Abba) said: “This is what the elders say about this.” The silver and gold vessels and the garments are the senses that serve the enemy: what is said means that if a person does not wrest them from the enemy so that they may bear fruit for God, the covering of God’s rest will not descend upon him; but if he wrests them from the enemy and offers them as fruit to God, then God’s covering will come upon him. And the cloud did not cover the tabernacle as long as it was lacking in any way, but when it was completely finished, then the cloud covered it. So it was with the temple that was built afterward: as long as anything was lacking in it, the cloud did not cover it; but when it was completely finished, and the blood and fat of the burnt offerings were brought into it, and God smelled their fragrance, then the cloud covered that house. That is to say, until a person loves God with all his strength and with all his mind, and clings to Him with all his heart, the covering of God’s rest will not come upon him.

23. He said again: if the mind, before the senses cease to be weak (to be at the mercy of the passions), wishes to take up the cross, then God’s wrath comes upon it for having undertaken a task beyond its capacity without first healing its senses.

24. If the miasmas (the stench of the passions) are at work within you, and you sympathize with them and contribute to what gives rise to them, yet do not grieve over this in the sickness of your heart, then this is beneath the nature of Adam.

25. If your heart has conquered sin and turned away from what gives rise to it, and you have set before yourself the torments of hell, and, desiring to have your (the one) Helper always by your side, you do not offend Him in any way, but weeping before Him, you say: “It is the work of Your mercy to deliver me, O Lord”—for I myself am powerless to escape from the hands of the enemy without Your help; and at the same time you heed your own heart, so as not to grieve the one who instructs you in the ways of God: for this is in accordance with the nature of Jesus—and He will preserve you from all evil. Amen.

9. Commandments for Those Who Have Renounced the World

1. If you have renounced the world and surrendered yourself to God in repentance, do not allow your thoughts to trouble you with sorrow over your past sins, as if they were not forgiven you in this, but do not neglect the Lord’s commandments either, for otherwise He will not forgive you your past sins.

²² Based on the context of the passage, it seems to mean: one who desires, intends, or sets out to do so. But according to Paissius: one who does not desire.

2. Here is what you must observe even unto death, and do not neglect this: do not eat together with a woman; do not befriend the very young; when you are young, do not lie down on the same mat with anyone except your brother and your abbot—and do so with reverence, not carelessly; do not let your eyes wander, and be mindful when you put on your clothes.

3. If necessary, drink up to three cups of wine, and do not break this commandment for the sake of friendship.

4. Do not live in the place where you have sinned against God, and do not neglect your devotions (prayers), lest you fall into the hands of your enemy.

5. Compel yourself to study the Psalms—and this will preserve you from being enslaved by the miasmas (passions). Love every affliction of the flesh—and your passions will be subdued.

6. Take care not to measure yourself in any matter whatsoever—and you will gain the freedom to weep over your sins.

7. Guard yourself against lies; otherwise, they will drive the fear of God away from you.

8. Do not reveal your thoughts to everyone, lest you cause your neighbor to stumble, but reveal your thoughts to your spiritual fathers, so that God's grace may cover you.

9. Apply yourself to your work—and the fear of God will dwell within you.

10. If you see your brother stumbling—but not to the point of death (1 John 5:16)—do not humiliate him, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.

11. Guard yourself from being ensnared by the sins you have committed, lest they be renewed within you.

12. Love humility—and it will cover you from your sins.

13. Do not show favoritism, lest all deceit take root in you.

14. Surrender your heart to the guidance of your fathers, and God's grace will dwell within you.

15. Do not consider yourself wise, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.

16. Train your tongue to say, "I forgive"—and humility will come upon you.

17. As you sit in your cell, always be mindful of these three things: manual labor, study (reading and contemplation of God), and prayer.

18. Reflect daily: "I have only this day to spend in this world"—and you will not sin before God.

19. Do not be gluttonous in your eating, lest your former sins be revived within you.

20. Do not lose heart (do not grow weary) in any labor, lest the enemy's influences take hold of you.

21. Compel yourself to study (reading and meditation on God), and God's peace will come to you soon: for just as a dilapidated house outside the city becomes a place of stench—so the soul of a lazy beginner becomes a receptacle of every dishonorable passion.

22. Compel yourself to pray often with tears: perhaps the Lord will have mercy on you and strip away from you the old sinful man.

23. Make these your companions: labor, poverty, wandering, mortification of the flesh, and silence; for from them humility is born, and humility brings forgiveness of every sin.

24. Our Good Lord and God is mighty to grant us the strength to know what is right and to do it, so that we may find mercy with the saints who have kept His commandments. Amen.

10. Another Word (to Those Who Have Renounced the Faith)

1. God showed Saint Peter the Apostle that no person should be considered unclean or impure (Acts 10:15). Since his heart was sanctified, every person became holy in his sight. But for those whose hearts are ruled by passions, no one is holy in their eyes; rather, based on the passions within their hearts, they think that every person is just like them. Even when someone tells them that a certain person is a good person, they immediately become angry about it in their hearts. Therefore, be careful not to belittle anyone—not only with your lips, but also in your heart.

2. As long as a person does not take care of himself, he continues to think in his heart that he is a friend of God. But when he is freed from passions, he is ashamed to lift his eyes to heaven before God, seeing himself as extremely far from God.

3. A certain man had two servants and sent them out to his field to reap wheat, ordering each of them to reap seven sheaves a day. One of them exerted all his strength to fulfill what his master had commanded him, but he did not manage to do so, because the task was beyond his strength; the other, having despaired of

success, said to himself in despondency: “Who can do such a task in a single day?” And, disregarding his master’s command, he paid no heed to the task but went to sleep—now yawning, now sleeping, now tossing and turning from side to side, like a door pivoting on its hinge—and thus wasted the entire day in idleness. When evening came, they went to their master. And he, after considering both of them, commended the diligent servant’s work—even though he had not quite managed to complete what he had been ordered to do—but he drove the lazy, negligent one out of his house. So we, too, should not lose heart in any labor, nor in any sorrow, but should use our strength, working with all our heart. And I believe that God will accept us on a par with His saints.

4. Every person ought to offer many prayers to God, with great humility of heart and body, not to consider himself to have done anything good, not to trust in praise for any of his deeds, not to be offended by rebukes, to remember his sins, to keep his heart at peace with his enemies, and not to allow a bitter word to come from his lips to speak to them or rebuke them, even in the presence of his loved ones (friends).

5. In conclusion, a monk must shut all the doors of his soul and guard all his senses, lest he fall through them, and protect himself from those who bring worldly talk to him. Blessed is he who is content with his own sins (that is, with the awareness of them and lamenting them, without prying into the sins of others).

11. On the Mustard Seed

(There is) a mystery (in the words) about the mustard seed, as the Fathers have said, to (encourage us) to explore its meaning based on what is written (about it): “*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field—the smallest of all seeds—but when it grows, it is the largest of all herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches*” (Matt. 13:31–32). Such is the mustard seed, and such are its good qualities! (And the Lord, by highlighting them) desires that man imitate it in all its aspects (in everything He said about it). By saying that it is “*the smallest of all seeds*,” He instills in us humility—that we may place ourselves below every person; (by saying) that it has grown to its full size, He reminds us of meekness and long-suffering; that it is fiery in color, —reminds us of purity, so that we may have no defilement in the flesh; that its interior is bitter—instills a hatred of the passions, for it is bitter to those who desire peace; that its pleasant taste is not revealed unless it is chewed and ground, this speaks of the suffering caused by adversity (the embitterment of the flesh through privations); when one grinds it, it stings the eyes—this reminds us of the sorrowfulness of deeds (or ascetic labors); it is used to anoint (with mustard made from it) dead limbs, so that they do not rot. Let us, then, understand its meaning and follow its properties—and let us anoint our damaged limbs with it, so that they do not rot or become infested with worms. For this is what it means to become like Christ, to embody the Lord Jesus within ourselves, so that we may strive, to the best of our ability, to prepare ourselves for Him in accordance with His nature (the nature of the mustard seed), testing ourselves to see whether we are of that seed or not, —whether we share its nature and its humility—whether we share its ground-up state (into powder), its bitterness, or its taste. —It is by God’s grace that we are empowered to do this, according to His will. To Him be glory—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—forever and ever. Amen.

12. On Wine

1. *The sacrament of wine.* (It is a symbol) of human nature (or of man), desiring to meet God (to please God), and for that purpose keeping his work whole in purity, so that God may accept it (his work) with joy.

2. The vessel (for wine) is properly sealed with pitch. This is a symbol of the purity of the body, every member of which is sound (and pure) from shameful passions, for it is impossible for one who indulges in any of the (carnal) pleasures to serve God.

3. Just as it is impossible to pour wine into a vessel that is not completely sealed or that has a crack, so it is impossible for us to please God while harboring hatred and enmity within ourselves. Let us therefore examine ourselves (to see if these are present in us), for they hinder a person in the work of repentance.

4. Wine ferments at the beginning of its formation. This is a metaphor for the beginner, who is restless until he matures and settles down.

5. Wine does not become (true wine) unless gypsum is added to it, just as leaven must be added in the proper measure. Likewise, a beginner cannot succeed by relying on his own will unless he receives the leaven from his spiritual fathers according to God, and they show him the way (and lead him along it), until God Himself grants him the ability to see it.

6. (Wine) is left in the house (where it is made) until it settles. Likewise, without silence, suffering for the sake of God, and every kind of labor according to God, it is impossible for a novice to attain a state of (steadfast well-being).

7. If wine is left with grains or twigs in it, it will turn sour. Likewise, a novice, if he mingles with his fleshly relatives or with other people who do not share in the same work and asceticism as they do, loses the character he received from his spiritual fathers.

8. Earth is placed on top of wine so that it does not lose its aroma or spoil. Likewise, if a novice does not acquire humility in all things, all his labors are in vain.

9. If wine is tasted frequently, it loses its aroma and flavor. The same often happens to a person who flaunts his deeds, for in such a case, vanity ruins all his work.

10. If a vessel of wine is left open, hateful mosquitoes spoil the wine. So too do excessive talk, jokes, and idle chatter (spoil the good disposition of young monks).

11. If wine is left exposed to the wind, it spoils its appearance and taste. So pride spoils every fruit of a person's labor.

12. Wine is hidden in cellars and covered securely. So too, silence and humility in every endeavor (hide and protect) the servant of God. And it is impossible for a person to preserve the fruit of his labor without this silence and humility.

13. All this is done with wine until it proves pleasing to its maker—and he rejoices in his fruit. All this a person must do until his work proves pleasing before God.

14. Just as it is impossible to believe what a wine is like without opening it and tasting it, so it is impossible for a person to take courage in his heart and not fear for himself until he stands before God, and God acknowledges his work as perfect.

15. Just as when a vessel begins to leak, the wine will spill onto the ground before its owner even notices—if he is careless—so too does any small and insignificant (unworthy) deed destroy a person's fruit if he is careless.

16. Let us therefore use our strength, my brothers, to guard ourselves against everything harmful to us—and may the Lord's mercy and grace give us the courage on that day to say: "In our weakness, we made the effort to keep what our conscience dictated, but the strength (for that) is Yours—and Your mercy, and Your help, and Your protection, and Your forgiveness, and Your patience. For who am I? Until now I have been in the hands of the wicked, from whom You have saved me, and I have nothing to give You. I am a sinner and unworthy of Your gifts, but You have preserved me from the hands of my enemies. You are my Lord and my God. And Yours are the glory, the mercy, the protection, the help, and the power, forever and ever. Amen.

13. To those who have striven and accomplished their work well

1. These are the signs that the Lord Jesus performed before He was crucified. "Go," He says, "and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is the one who is not offended by Me" (Luke 7, 22–23)²³.

2. Thus, the Lord Jesus performed many signs. (But we must know that each of them, besides its literal meaning, has an allegorical meaning.) That "*the blind see*"—this is what it means: one who is attentive to the hope of this world is blind; but if he, having abandoned it, fixes his gaze on the hope that is to be revealed, then he has seen; likewise: "*the lame walk*"—this is what it means: one who desires God yet loves the carnal thoughts of the heart is lame; but if he abandons the latter and loves God with all his heart, then he will begin to walk upright. In the same way again: "*the deaf hear*"—this is what it means: one who is in a state of distraction (living in entertainment) is deaf, because his attention is captivated by external things and he has forgotten what is proper; but if he detaches himself from everything, he will begin to hear. And this: "*the lepers are cleansed*"—this is what it means: in the Law of Moses it is written, "Let no one who is unclean enter the house of the Lord," that is, one who harbors enmity toward his neighbor, or hatred, or envy, or condemnation; but if anyone abandons these things, he will become clean.

²³ John, who baptized the Lord Jesus, embodies what is described in this passage, for the one being baptized must confess (to the baptizer) what he is doing.

3. Thus, when the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the lepers are cleansed, then the person who was dead because of this (the moral corruption signified by these conditions) during a time of neglect is restored and renewed, and then proclaims the good news through his own senses—which had been lacking in holy virtues—that he has received his sight, begun to walk and hear, and been cleansed. You must present this justification to the one who baptized you.

4. This is what baptism is: suffering for the sake of evil (the embitterment of the flesh) with humility and silence. For it is written of John—that his clothing was made of camel’s hair, and a leather belt was girded about his loins—and he was in the wilderness (Matt. 3:4). This is a sign of self-denial. It is the first thing that purifies a person, and if anyone strives for it, he attains it; and when he has attained it, he then opens the way for himself to ascend the cross (The cross is a sign of future immortality), having first silenced the Pharisees and Sadducees (the Sadducees represent unbelief, and the Pharisees—cunning, hypocrisy, and vanity), as it is written: *“From that day on, no one dared to ask Him any more questions about that”* (Matt. 22:46).

5. Finally, the Lord sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover. This is a symbol of how, when the mind sees that it possesses nothing, it prepares itself for immortality by gathering its faculties together and uniting them into a single body through nourishment by the Lord’s Communion.

6. Again, when Jesus prayed, saying, *“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me at this hour”* (Matt. 26:39)—this is a word about us. For when the mind is moved to ascend the cross, it needs much prayer and many tears, and a complete surrender of itself to God, asking for help from His goodness, that it may be its strength and protector until He raises it up in holy and inexhaustible renewal, because there is great danger at the hour of the cross. And as he prays, he needs Peter, John, and James to be with him—who are: sound faith, a heart strengthened by hope, and love for God.

7. This is also the significance of what happened to the Lord Himself, our beloved Lord and God Jesus, for our sake—He who was for us an example in all things, as the Apostle said: *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share in His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead”* (Phil. 3:10–11): – The gall that He tasted for us inspires us to root out every evil desire within ourselves (and to keep our mouths shut), and not to allow any of them to leave the body and be carried out in deed; *“the vinegar”* that He tasted for us inspires us to extinguish every self-will and every vain rebellion; *the “spit”* with which they spat upon Him for our sake inspires us to suppress all desire to please men and all desire for the glory of this world; *the “crown of thorns,”* which they wove and placed upon His head, inspires us to endure reproaches, even constant ones, and to bear all reproaches without confusion; *the “reed”* with which they struck His head for our sake inspires us, always wearing the helmet of humility, to quell all the enemy’s pride; the Lord Jesus’ delivery over to *“scourging”* before the crucifixion inspires us to regard all human reproach and shame as nothing; *“the dividing of His garments”* by casting lots, while He Himself remained unperturbed—inspires us to despise all worldly things before we ascend the cross, according to the words of the Apostle: *“You joyfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possess a better inheritance in heaven”* (Heb. 10:34).

8. A person must do all this in order to be able to ascend the cross. And if you do not do what He did, to the best of your ability as a human being, then you will not be able to ascend the cross. That it was the sixth hour when the hard-hearted crucified Him for our salvation is an example to us to arm ourselves with strength against all despondency and faintheartedness, until sin dies, as it is written, that He put to death the enmity through the cross. That when it was the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice: *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani”* (Matt. 27:46)—this is an example for us that, after patiently enduring the painful struggles against our passions until they are extinguished, we may finally find the boldness, in humility, to cry out to God. That He gave up His spirit after the sun had set is an indication to us that if the mind is freed from all hope in this visible world, this serves as a sign that sin has died within you. That the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom is a symbol that, if the mind is freed (from passions), the partition between it and God is removed. That the rocks were split and the tombs opened—this is a symbol for us that when that death (to sin) is accomplished within us, when every burden and blindness, and everything opposed to the soul, is dissolved, and the senses—which were dead and bore the fruit of death—begin to thrive, rising up invincible. That He was wrapped in a pure shroud with spices—this is a symbol for us that after that death (to sin), holiness is wrapped and incorruptibility gives it rest. That He was laid in a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid, and a great stone was set against its entrance—this is a symbol for us that when the mind is freed from all things and enters the Sabbath, it enters a new age, attains new wisdom, attends to that in which there

is nothing corruptible, and meditates on the incorruptible. – Furthermore, “*where the body*” (the corpse) “*is, there the vultures will gather*” (Luke 17:37). – That He rose again in the glory of His Father, and that He ascended into heaven and sat “*at the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (Heb. 1: 3)—is an example to us, according to the words of the Apostle: “*If, then, you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above,*” (a) “*not on earthly things, for you will die*” (Col. 3: 1 – 3).

9. May His holy Name, which works mercy and has been a model for the saints in all things, powerfully intercede for our weakness and, in view of our poverty, forgive us our sins, so that we too may find mercy along with all who are worthy of it. Amen.

14. Acts of Lamentation

1. Woe is me, woe is me—for I have not yet been freed from Gehenna! Those who drag me into it still bear their fruit within me, and all its works stir within my heart; those who plunge me into the fire still act within my flesh, desiring to bear its fruit; I have not yet known where I shall go from here; the right path has not yet been prepared for me; I have not yet been freed from the influences in the air (the forces of darkness) that seek to block my path, because of their evil deeds within me; I have not yet seen the Deliverer who has come to save me from them, because their malice still bears fruit within me; I have not yet seen bold intercession between me and the Judge; no testimony has yet been given on my behalf that I am not worthy of death; I have not yet separated myself from the evildoers.

2. The wicked man does not rejoice while imprisoned; bound in iron, he cannot do as he pleases; confined in a stocks, he cannot teach others; in his painful labors, he does not remember rest; bound by his own sins, he does not enjoy any pleasure; and he does not plot to do any further evil, for he has sinned in every possible way, but with a heart torn apart, he mourns all his evil deeds and all the torments that await him, saying of them: “Yes, I deserve them.”

3. He who constantly ponders what his final end will be, and who sees the torments (which he deserves) for his sins, needs no great effort to refrain from condemning anyone in his heart; the anguish over (the expected) torments consumes his heart; this bitterness—alas! is the constant subject of his inner meditation; he does not encourage others not to lose heart; concern for food is not among his cares; he acknowledges the kindness of those who show him kindness, but because of his sorrow he finds no pleasure in it, for he has sinned in every way²⁴; He does not respond angrily to those who revile him, and he patiently endures painful labors, saying, “I am worthy of them”; the mocking laughter (Sirach 19:27) has departed from him; He bows his head in lamentation, recalling the judgment seat before which he must appear; when he hears the words of others, he does not say, “Good,” or “Bad”; whether they are good or bad, his ears do not accept them; his eyelids pour forth streams of tears because of the afflictions that overwhelm him. If he is of noble birth, he grieves all the more, recalling the shame he will face before those who are to see him condemned at the judgment. Keeping in mind the judgment prepared for him, he pays no attention to people, whether they are good or bad. If there are others connected to him, he pays them no attention, nor does he discuss with them what lies ahead; for each bears his own burden, dragged toward death. His face is gloomy. No one dares to speak in his defense, for fear of torture. He himself confesses what he has done and that he deserves to be judged for his sins.

4. How long must I remain intoxicated without wine? How long must I be carefree, with such a fate ahead of me? The hardening of my heart has dried up my eyes—and the intoxication of vain anxiety has dried up my head, and the passions of my heart have led me into oblivion until I am clouded. Physical need has bound me, and despair torments me, urging me to abandon the path of life. I have not gained a friend who would speak on my behalf, nor do I have a gift to send to my fellow citizens. News of my misdeeds prevents them from acknowledging me. If I ask them, they pay no attention to me, for they see that I have not yet been freed from my (moral) infirmities, and I do not ask them with an open heart (2 Cor. 6:11).

5. The thorns of my sins have not yet begun to pierce my heart unceasingly (i.e., the painful contrition over my sins has not yet come). The burden of my sins has not yet weighed heavily upon me (it does not overwhelm me with its weight; I do not feel the weight of my sins). I have not yet fully come to know the power of the fire as I ought; otherwise, I would strive not to fall into it. A voice is heard in my ears that hell

²⁴ The wording is somewhat obscure. The Latin omits this point. Paissius translates it as follows: “The mercy of those who act with him is mercy; they have no sense of sorrow, for they sin in every way.”

lies before me, for in truth I have not yet purified my heart. The wounds on my body have become dangerous, but they have not yet become gangrenous enough to seek medical treatment. I hide the arrow wounds from people, and I cannot bear for a doctor to touch them. He offered to apply poultices (or compresses) to the wounds, but I am not strong of heart enough to endure their bitterness. The doctor is kind and asks no payment from me, but my laziness prevents me from going to him. He comes to me himself to treat me, and finds me eating things that corrode my wounds. He begs me to stop from now on (from eating such foods), but the sweetness of their taste beguiles my heart. When I eat, I repent, but my repentance is not sincere. He sends me (the doctor's) food (saying), "Eat this to get well," but my bad habit prevents me from accepting it. "In the end," I do not know what to do.

6. Weep with me, all my brothers who know me, that help may come to me beyond my own strength and prevail over me, so that I may become worthy to be His (my Lord's) disciple: for His power endures forever and ever. Amen.

15. On Renouncing the World

1. Beloved! Let us take care of ourselves, "*for the time has been shortened*" (1 Cor. 7:29). One cannot care for the soul while at the same time caring for the body. Just as one cannot look at the sky with one eye and at the earth with the other, so too the mind cannot care for both the things of God and the things of the world. It is shameful to care about anything that will not be of help to you when you leave this body.

2. Keep in mind that God is watching you in every deed you do. Keep in mind that God sees you in every thought you have.

3. What you are ashamed to do in front of others, be ashamed to even think of in secret (in your heart). Just as a tree is known by its fruit, so the mind, by its contemplation (by what its eye is fixed upon), knows its own thoughts, and the rational soul, by its contemplation (by what the mind attentively considers), knows itself.

4. Do not consider yourself dispassionate as long as sin entices you. To whom freedom (from passions) has been granted, it no longer occurs to them to do what is contrary to their nature. Do not, then, consider yourself free as long as you offend your Lord, for freedom does not come until your heart no longer desires anything of this world.

5. Take care of your body as the temple of God—take care of it as one who is to rise again and give an account to God; fear God as one who must give Him an account of all that you have done; just as, when your body receives a wound, you take care to heal it, so take care that it may appear dispassionate at the resurrection.

6. Examine yourself daily to see which passion you have overcome before you offer your petitions to God.

7. Just as the earth cannot bear fruit without seed and water, so a person cannot repent without humility and physical labor.

8. When the weather is favorable, seeds blossom; so too does a person blossom through the commandments when his mind is set on keeping them. This is what faith in God and the fear of God are—so as not to offend one's conscience.

9. If lustful desires arise within you while you are sitting in your cell, be careful to resist your thoughts so that they do not carry you away. Strive to keep in mind that God is watching you, and that everything you think in your heart is open before Him. Say to your soul: if you are ashamed before sinners like yourself (and strive) so that they do not see you sinning, how much more (should you fear sinning) before God, who hears the secrets of your heart. Through such reflection in your mind, the fear of God will be restored in your soul—and if you follow the fear of God, you will be steadfast against your passions and will no longer be overcome by them, as it is written: "*Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever in Jerusalem*" (Ps. 124:1).

10. One who believes that there is a judgment when he departs from the body cannot judge his neighbor in any matter, since he must give an account to God for all his deeds, as it is written that we must appear "*before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil*" (2 Cor. 5:10).

11. A believer who knows that there is a kingdom for the saints takes care to keep himself blameless even in small and insignificant matters, so that he may be a chosen vessel; for it is written: "*The kingdom of*

heaven is like a net cast into the sea, which gathered fish of every kind. When it is full, they drag it ashore, sit down, and sort the good into containers, but throw the bad away" (Matt. 13:47–48).

12. A believer who holds that his body is to rise in its natural state on the day of the resurrection must take care of it and purify it from every defilement; for it is written: "*Who will transform the body of our humiliation to be like His glorious body, according to the power that enables Him to do so*" (Phil. 3: 21).

13. In whom the love of God has taken root, nothing in this world can separate him from God, as it is written: "*Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?*" (Rom. 8:35).

14. God is powerful enough to ensure that we, too, may be numbered among those who have not allowed anything in this world to separate them from the love of Christ, so that together with them we may receive grace through the power of our Lord, Jesus Christ; for to Him be glory, with the Father without beginning and the life-giving Spirit, now and always, and forever and ever. Amen.

16. On the Joy Found in the Soul That Desires to Serve God

1. First of all, I greet you in the fear of God, and I implore you: be perfect, as is pleasing to God, so that your labor may not be fruitless, and so that God may accept it whole and in joy from you. A merchant, if he makes a profit, rejoices, regarding the labor he has expended as nothing, because he has seen (how useful it has proved to be); a man who has taken a wife, if she brings him peace and serves him well, rejoices in her with all his heart, relying on her in everything; one who has entered military service, if, having fought for the king with contempt for his own life, he receives a crown, (rejoices) that he has such success. Such are the affairs of this passing world, and those who do them rejoice when they succeed in them. What, then, do you think, will be the joy of the soul of one who, having begun to work for God, successfully completes this work of his? Upon his departure from this world, such a work will cause the angels to rejoice with him, seeing that he has been freed from the powers of darkness. For when the soul departs from the body, the angels descend to meet it; but all the powers of darkness come out to meet it, desiring to seize it and searching to see if there is anything of theirs within it. Then it is not the angels who fight against them, but the deeds performed by the soul shield it like a wall and guard it from them, so that they may not touch it. When its deeds prevail, the angels, walking ahead of it, sing until it stands before God in joy. At that moment, it forgets every matter of this world and all its toil.

2. Let us therefore use our strength to work well during this brief time, keeping our deeds pure from all evil, so that we may be saved from the hands of the princes of darkness who seek to confront us, for they are evil and merciless. Blessed is the one in whom nothing of theirs is found: there is no measure to that person's joy and gladness, rest, and crown. But all worldly things are fleeting, whether one is engaged in trade, or in marriage, or in anything else I have mentioned before. Beloved brother! Let us draw our strength from our tears before God; perhaps His goodness will have mercy on us and send us the power to overcome, through the good deeds we do, the rulers of wickedness who are set to confront us (upon our departure from the body).

3. Let us take care of ourselves with a strong heart (without self-pity) and cultivate a longing for God, which will save us from the hands of malice when it comes out to meet us. Let us love the poor, so that this may save us from the (spirit of) greed when it comes out to meet us. Let us love peace with everyone, both small and great, for it will preserve us from the (spirit of) hatred when it comes to meet us. Let us love everyone as our brothers, harboring no ill will in our hearts toward anyone, and repaying no one evil for evil; this will deliver us from envy when it comes upon us. Let us love humility in all things, bearing with our neighbor's words, whether he rebukes us or slanders us: this will protect us from pride when it comes upon us. Let us seek the honor of our neighbor, not allowing him to be belittled in our estimation when he is slandered, whoever he may be: this will protect us from slander when it comes our way. Let us despise the benefits of the world and its honor, so that we may be freed from envy when it comes our way. Let us train our tongues in God's teaching, truth, and prayer, so that this may protect us from lies when they come to meet us. Let us purify our hearts and bodies from lust, so that we may be rid of impurity when it comes to meet us. — All these things seek to seize the soul when it departs from the body, but virtues will aid it if it has acquired them.

4. Who among the wise would not be willing to give up his soul to death in order to be freed from all this? Therefore, let us do what we can, for the power of our Lord Jesus Christ is great to aid our humility. He knows that man is a poor creature, and has granted him repentance while he is still in the body, until his last breath. Let your one thought be toward God, that He may preserve you. Do not pay attention to the goods of

this world, as if you could place your hope in them—so that you may be saved. You will leave behind everything that belongs to this world and depart; whatever you do for God, in that you will find a good hope in the hour of need.

5. Abhor the words of the world, that your heart may behold God. Love to pray often, that your heart may be enlightened. Do not love idleness, lest you regret it when you join the righteous in the resurrection. Guard your tongue, that your heart may be enlightened. Do not love idleness, and the fear of God will dwell within you. Give now to the needy with a generous eye, lest you be put to shame before the saints and their good deeds. Abhor the lust for food, lest Amalek block your path. Do not rush through your devotions (prayer rules), lest the beasts devour you. Do not love wine to the point of intoxication, lest you be deprived of God's joy. Love the faithful, that through them you may receive mercy. Love the saints, that their zeal may lift you up.

6. Remember the kingdom of heaven, so that the longing for it may gradually draw you in. Meditate on Gehenna, so that you may hate its deeds. When you wake up each morning, remember that you will give an account to God for every deed, and you will not sin before Him, and the fear of Him will take root in you. Prepare yourself to meet Him, and you will fulfill His will. Examine yourself here every day to see where you fall short, and you will not be at a loss in the hour of mortal need. Let your brothers see your deeds, and your zeal will lead them to repentance. Examine yourself every day to see which passion you have overcome—yet do not think too highly of yourself, for it is God's grace and power. – Do not consider yourself faithful until your very last breath. – Do not be presumptuous, as if you were good, for you cannot entrust yourself to your enemies. – Do not rely on yourself while you are in this life—and until you have passed beyond all the powers of darkness.

7. Be vigilant, brother, against the spirit that brings sorrow to a person, for it has many snares until it renders you powerless. Sorrow for God's sake is joyful when you see yourself standing in God's will. Who, then, tells you, "Where should you flee?" You have no repentance; he is from the enemy's side (and speaks thus) to persuade a person to abandon the intention of leading a life of abstinence. But sorrow for God does not weigh down a person (with an oppressive burden), but says to him: "Do not be afraid; come back (to God)," for He knows that a person is weak, and He gives him strength.

8. Have a discerning heart; when thoughts arise—they will be lightened for you. Those who fear them are weighed down by their heaviness. One who fears (the enemy's) influences reveals that he has no faith in God.

9. Humility and regarding oneself as ignorant reveal a person who does not indulge his passions to do their will, but does the will of God. But the one who desires to speak his mind in the presence of many reveals that the fear of God is not within him. The fear of God is a guardian and helper for the soul, a protector of the inner ruler (the mind), in the work of destroying all its enemies.

10. He who seeks God's honor strives to drive away impurity from himself. Prudent self-care cuts off the passions, for it is written: "Prudence will be found by the wise man" (Prov. 17:12). *"Care falls upon the wise man, but fools devise evil."* The sick person comes to appreciate the value of health. The one who is crowned is crowned because he has defeated the king's enemies. There are passions, and there are virtues. But if we are despondent (lazy), then it is clear that we are like traitors. Courage of heart is a help to the soul, after God; just as despondency (sloth) is a help to evil. The strength of those who desire to acquire virtues lies in this: that if they fall, they should not lose heart, but once again take up the care (of salvation). The instruments of virtue are bodily labors performed with reason. The outbursts of passions arise from negligence. Not condemning one's neighbor is a wall (a barrier) for those who wage battle wisely, while condemning him tears down this wall in folly. Care for one's speech makes it clear that a person is among the active, while unbridled speech signifies that he lacks virtue within himself. Almsgiving, when done with reason, gives rise to contempt for wealth and leads to love, while stinginess indicates that a person lacks virtue. Kindness gives rise to purity; indulgence (spending on entertainment and pleasures) gives rise to passions, and cruelty gives rise to anger. To hate frivolity is a spiritual feat, while frugality is a physical one. A love of frivolity is the downfall of the soul, while silence accompanied by reason is its restoration. Excessive sleep stirs up the passions in the body, while moderate wakefulness is the salvation of the heart. Excessive sleep dulls the heart, while moderation in wakefulness refines it. It is better to sleep in silence with reason than to stay awake in idle chatter. Weeping drives out all evils (kakias) without anxiety. Sparing (not harming, not wounding) the conscience of one's neighbor gives rise to humility. Human glory gradually gives rise to pride.

A love of spaciousness (not restricting oneself with privations) drives out knowledge, while abstinence from the belly subdues the passions. A craving for food stirs them up without effort. Adornment of the body is the ruin of the soul, but caring for it in the fear of God is good.

11. Attention to God's judgment gives rise to fear in the soul, while trampling on one's conscience uproots virtues from the heart. Love for God drives away indolence, while fearlessness stirs it up. Restraining one's speech directs the mind toward God, if one remains silent with wisdom, while loquacity breeds despondency (sloth) and madness (*mania*). Yielding one's will to one's neighbor signifies that the mind is focused on virtues, while insisting on one's own will (in dealings) with one's neighbor reveals ignorance. Instruction in the fear of God preserves the soul from passions, while speaking worldly words darkens the soul, turning it away from virtues. Love of possessions disturbs the mind and the soul, while renunciation of all things renews them. Silence—if you remain silent so as not to express your thoughts—shows that you seek the honor of the world and its shameful glory; but whoever boldly (without sparing himself) expresses his thoughts before his fathers drives them away from himself.

12. Just as a house without doors or windows, into which any creeping creature may enter freely, so is a man who labors but does not preserve the fruit of his labor. Just as rust corrodes iron, so does human honor corrode the heart if it gives in to it. Just as ivy, entwined with the vine, destroys its fruit, so does vanity destroy a monk's labor if he becomes carried away by it. Above all virtues stands humility, and above all passions stands gluttony. The end of virtues is love, and the end of passions is self-justification. Just as a worm, gnawing away at a tree, destroys it, so malice in the heart darkens the soul.

13. The soul's submission to God (surrendering oneself to God's will) gives rise to the unperturbed endurance of insults, and its tears are (then) preserved from all that is human. Failure to discipline oneself also results in an inability to endure (or subdue) anger. Mixing one's speech with that of laypeople (conversing with them in a worldly manner) disturbs the heart and shames it during prayer, for afterward it lacks boldness. Love for worldly gains darkens the soul, while contempt for them in all things brings knowledge. Love for labor is hatred of passions, while laziness gives rise to them without effort.

14. Do not associate with the city's inhabitants—and your thoughts will remain silent within you. Do not rely on your own strength—and God's help will come to you. Do not harbor enmity toward anyone, or your prayer will not be accepted. Be at peace with everyone, so that you may have boldness in prayer. Guard your eyes—and your heart will not see evil. He who looks at anyone with lust commits adultery. Do not desire to hear of the harm suffered by the one who has offended you, lest you repay him in your heart (evil for evil). Guard your ears, lest you gather insults through them. Labor at your craft, so that the poor may find bread (from you), for idleness is death and the downfall of the soul.

15. Diligent prayer frees one from bondage (addiction to anything), but neglect of it, even if slight, is the mother of forgetfulness. One who expects death soon does not sin much, but one who expects it many years from now will become entangled in many sins. Whoever prepares to give an account to God for all his deeds, God Himself takes care to purify his entire path from every sin; but whoever is negligent about this, saying, "I will get there someday," is a neighbor of the evil one. – Before doing anything, every day, remember where you are and where you must go once you have left your body—and do not neglect your soul for a single day. Reflect on the glory the saints have received, and emulating them will gradually draw you along in their footsteps; reflect also on the humiliations the sinners have endured—and this will always protect you from evil.

16. Always follow the counsel of your fathers, and you will spend your entire life in peace. Be mindful of yourself—and if a thought troubles you because your brother is grieving over you, do not despise that thought, but go and bow before your brother with a pleading voice, and do not withdraw until you have convinced him to be reconciled. Be careful not to be hard-hearted toward your brother, (remembering that) we are afflicted by the enemy. When you live with your brothers, do not order them alone to do anything, but work alongside them, so as not to forfeit your reward. When demons begin to trouble you regarding food, clothing, or widespread poverty (among all), suggesting to you how you are reviled for this, do not answer them in opposition to this, but entrust yourself to God with all your heart—and He will comfort you. Take care not to neglect the proper performance of your services (prayers), for they bring enlightenment to the soul.

17. If you have done something good, do not boast about it; (but on the other hand, if you have done much evil, let not your heart grieve over it beyond measure, but take control of your heart so that it no longer dwells on it)—and you will guard yourself against pride, if you are wise. If you suffer attacks of lust, keep

your body constantly in sorrow and humility before God, not allowing your heart to be convinced that your sins have been forgiven—and you will find peace. If envy begins to crush you, remember that we are all members of Christ, and that the honor and disgrace of your neighbor are (the honor and disgrace) of all of us,—and you will find peace. If gluttony has waged war against you with a craving for food, then remember their foul odor—and you will find peace. If you are troubled by the urge to condemn your brother, remember that he will be grieved if he hears it—and you will be ashamed to meet him afterward—and you will find peace. If pride begins to overwhelm you, remember that it destroys all your labor, and that there is no repentance for those who have allied themselves with it—and you will find peace. If your heart is torn by the desire to humiliate your neighbor, remember that for this God will deliver you into the hands of your enemies—and you will find peace. If physical beauty entices your heart, remember its stench—and you will find peace. If the sweetness of women is the sweetest thing to you, remember those who have already died and where they have gone—and you will find peace.

18. By gathering and pondering all these things, reason destroys (strife). But you cannot attain reason unless you first cultivate silence (withdrawal from the noise of the world) as a foundation for it. Silence gives birth to asceticism; asceticism gives birth to weeping; weeping gives birth to the fear of God; the fear of God gives birth to humility; humility gives birth to insight; insight gives birth to love; love makes the soul free from pain and dispassion. Then a person comes to know how far he is from God.

19. After all this, let the one who desires to attain all these praiseworthy virtues be unconcerned about any person, and let him prepare himself for death. And it will be that in every prayer he will begin to understand what separates him from God, and he will begin to destroy it, hating every such way of life (i.e., one that separates him from God), and God's goodness will soon grant him these (specified virtues).

20. Know this, however: anyone who eats and drinks indiscriminately and loves anything of this world will not attain these virtues, nor will he achieve them, but will only deceive himself. I therefore implore every person who desires to repent before God to guard against gluttony, for it renews all passions and drives the fear of God from the soul. On the contrary, strive with all your might to implore God to send you His fear, so that, through your strong desire for God (communion with Him), He may destroy within you all the passions that oppose your poor soul and seek to separate it from God in order to make it their own. The enemies, too, exert every effort toward this end, opposing man.

21. Therefore, brother, do not pay attention to any respite (from the struggle) while you are in this body, and do not trust yourself if you find yourself temporarily free from passions, for they sometimes subside for a time with a deceitful hope that perhaps a person will let his heart grow lax, thinking that he has completely rid himself of them; and then suddenly pounce upon the poor soul and snatch it away like a little bird; and if they prove to be more powerful than it in every sin, they humble it without mercy, plunging it into sins more destructive than the previous ones, for the forgiveness of which it had already prayed.

22. Let us therefore stand in the fear of God and keep Him in mind as we go about our business, observing all the virtues that ward off the malice of our enemies. The labors and efforts of this brief time not only preserve us from all evil, but (they also) prepare crowns for the soul before it departs from the body.

23. Our Holy Teacher, the Lord Jesus, knowing the great cruelty of our enemies and having compassion on the human race, commanded us to be steadfast in heart, saying: "Be ready at all times, for you do not know at what hour the thief will come, so that when he comes suddenly, he may not find you sleeping" (Matt. 24, 43, 44). And on another occasion, teaching His disciples, He commanded them, saying: "*Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with gluttony, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly*" (Luke 21:34). Knowing, however, that the evil ones (spirits) far outnumber us, and showing His disciples that the power to resist them is His work—and that they therefore have nothing to fear—He said to them: "*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves*" (Matt. 10:16), but at the same time He commanded them not to take anything for the journey (Luke 9:3), for since they possessed nothing that belonged to those wolves, the wolves could not devour them. When they returned safe and sound, having kept His commandment, He rejoiced with them, giving thanks to God the Father for them, and, strengthening their hearts, He said to them: "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you*" (Luke 10:18–19). Thus, His message was one of fear and caution; but when they fulfilled His commandment, He gave them authority with power.

24. These words apply not only to them but also to all who keep the commandments. Loving them with perfect love, He said to them: *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms; make for yourselves purses that do not wear out, a treasure in heaven that never fails”* (Luke 12:32–33). And when they had fulfilled this word as well, He said to them: *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you”* (John 14:27). Assuring them of this, He said: *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”* (John 14:23). Encouraging them not to fear the world, He said to them: *“In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Strengthening them so they would not lose heart in their tribulations, He said to them, filling their hearts with joy: *“You have stood by Me in My trials; and I bestow upon you, just as My Father has bestowed upon Me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom”* (Luke 22:28–30).

25. He said this—not to everyone, but to those who had endured His trials. But who are those who have endured Jesus’ trials, if not those who stand against their passions until they have cut them off? He said this to them as He was going to the cross. Therefore, whoever wishes to eat and drink at His table must follow Him to this cross: for the cross of Jesus is the subduing of every passion until they are all cut off. And the beloved Apostle, having cut them off, dared to say: *“I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”* (Gal. 2: 19–20). Thus, Christ lives in those who have put the passions to death. Therefore, in teaching his children, this same Apostle said: *“Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5: 24). And writing to Timothy, his spiritual son, He said: *“If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us”* (2 Tim. 2: 11–12).

26. Who, then, are these who reject Him, if not those who follow their carnal desires and thereby bring shame upon Holy Baptism? In His name, our sins are forgiven, but the enemy, out of envy, enslaves us again through sin. That is why our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing from the beginning how great the enemy’s malice is, has provided us with repentance until our very last breath. If there were no repentance, scarcely anyone would be saved. And the Apostle, knowing that there are those who sin even after baptism, said: *“Let the thief no longer steal”* (Eph. 4:28).

27. Therefore, having the seal of Holy Baptism upon us, let us strive to forsake our sins, that we may find mercy on that day. For the Lord is near and is coming, seated on the throne of His glory. And all the tribes will gather before Him. Then each one will be revealed (for what he is) by his own lamp, held in his hand. Whose lamp has no oil, his lamp will go out, and he will be cast into darkness; but whoever has a bright lamp will enter the kingdom together with the Lord.

28. Let us therefore strive, beloved, to fill our vessels with oil while we are still in the body, so that our lamp may shine and we may enter the kingdom of the Lord. The vessel is repentance; the oil within it is the practice of all virtues; and the shining lamp is the holy soul. Therefore, whatever soul becomes radiant through its deeds will enter the kingdom together with the Lord, but whatever soul is darkened by its own malice will go into darkness.

29. Strive, then, brothers, for our time is near. Blessed is the one who cares about this. The fruit is ripe, and the time of harvest has come. Blessed is the one who has preserved his fruit, for the angels will gather it into the eternal storehouse. But woe to those who are tares, for fire awaits them.

30. The inheritance of this world is gold and silver, houses and clothing. They only lead us into sin; when we depart from here, we leave them behind. But God’s inheritance is immeasurable—something no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived. And it is this that the Lord has granted to those who obey Him in this brief time, and to those who receive it in return for the bread, water, and clothing they provided to the needy—for their love of humanity and purity of body, for doing no harm to their neighbor, for a heart free from malice, and for keeping the other commandments.

31. Those who observe these things—and in this life have peace and are honored by people—will receive eternal joy when they depart from this body. But those who act on their sinful desires and do not repent, but instead satisfy their evil inclinations through sensual pleasures and self-deception—through loquacity and idle chatter, quarrelsomeness and contentiousness, unkindness toward the poor while fearing not God’s judgment, and other sins—such people will be filled with shame in this age, and people will despise them; and when they depart from the body, shame and disgrace will accompany them into Gehenna.

32. But God is able to enable us to succeed in His works, keeping us from every evil deed, so that we may be saved in the hour of trial that is to come upon the whole world. For our Lord Jesus will not delay, but will come, bringing with Him the reward, and He will send the wicked into eternal fire, and give His own their reward. And they will enter with Him into His kingdom—and rest in Him forever and ever. Amen.

17. On the Thoughts Accompanying Renunciation of the World and Pilgrimage

1. The first and foremost feat is wandering, especially when, having withdrawn into solitude, you leave behind your own (your home, family, homeland—Ed.) and go to another place, carrying perfect faith, hope, and a steadfast heart against your own desires. For then (enemies) will surround you on all sides, and they will begin to terrify you with temptations, severe poverty, and illnesses, suggesting that if you succumb to them, what will you do, having no one to care for you or even know you? This is God’s goodness testing you, so that your zeal and love for God may be revealed.

2. If you finally resolve to live in solitude in a cell, then (your enemies) will begin to instill in you even more distressing thoughts of fear, saying: “It is not mere wandering that saves a person, but the fulfillment of the commandments”; they will also remind you of certain relatives (by blood) and say: “Well then? Aren’t these people servants of God?” They will also plant in your heart thoughts about the poor air quality (in that place) and the physical hardships, until your heart grows weary from faintheartedness. But if love and hope remain inseparable in your heart, then the malice of those (who instill such thoughts) will do you no harm. Thus your devotion to God will be revealed, as well as the fact that you love Him more than the comfort of your own body.

3. For those who endure the sorrow of exile (life in a foreign land), sorrow leads to hope, and hope preserves them from those (temptations) that are of the flesh. For you have not merely gone into a foreign land, but to prepare yourself to take up the struggle against your enemies and to learn to repel each one in due time, until, having attained the peace of dispassion, you are freed (from them), having defeated each one in battle in due time.

4. I believe it is both a great and noble thing to overcome vanity and to succeed in the knowledge of God. He who falls into the shame of this deceitful passion of vanity becomes estranged from the world and hardens his heart toward the saints; and in the end, through his own evils, he will fall into wicked pride and into the habit of lying (in word, and even more so through hypocrisy). But you, faithful servant, keep your labors hidden, and with heartfelt sorrow as you restrain your tongue, take care that your tongue does not steal them away or betray them to your enemies. Whoever is a worker (a laborer in God’s work), having cast aside fleshly passions and all his sins through repentance, makes his soul pure before God, preparing it for Him as a spotless offering, so that he may be deemed worthy to be His temple. But whoever loves human glory cannot be dispassionate; rather, jealousy and envy dwell within him. Such a person has exposed his soul to many temptations, and his heart is hardened by demons, because he rarely finds an opportunity to satisfy his desires. His end, however, is ruin.

5. To those who have acquired humility, God reveals their sins so that they may acknowledge them (confess them and repent). If this is then accompanied by weeping, and both of these—the acknowledgment of sins and weeping—abide within him, they will drive the demons from his soul and nourish it with their own glory and their holy virtues (the virtues that are inherent in them and those born of them). Such a person has no concern for human reproach. His own sins, which he remembers (unceasingly), serve as a shield for him, protecting him from anger and vengeance, and he patiently endures whatever befalls him. For what reproach can touch him (and wound his heart) when he considers himself so shameful before God, holding his sins before his face?

6. If you cannot bear the words of your neighbor and take revenge on him, then strife will arise in your heart, causing pain to your heart because of what you have heard and forcing you to grieve over what you yourself have said. And you will be tormented by this captivity (to this passion), forcing you to seek solace in silence and solitude, and hardening your heart toward your neighbors as though they lacked love. But take up the task of cultivating long-suffering, and it will overcome anger; love will heal the insult, and prayer to God will preserve these virtues within you. Love and long-suffering destroy natural anger, and if they abide in you, then instead of being angry with your neighbor, you will be angry with the demons, and toward your neighbor you will be peaceful, possessing within yourself sorrow and humility.

7. He who is able to endure the harsh words of a rude and foolish person, for God's sake and for the sake of peace of mind—he shall be called a son of peace. Such a one is strong enough to always preserve the peace of soul, body, and spirit. In whom these three come into harmony with one another, in whom the thoughts that rise up against the law of the mind cease, and the bondage of the flesh is abolished—that person will be called a son of peace, and the Holy Spirit will dwell within him; for He has made him His own, and will not depart from him.

8. Blessed are those whose labors are wisely ordered, for in this way they have freed themselves from every burden and have avoided the cunning of the demons, especially the demons of fear, who set up obstacles for a person in every good deed he undertakes, plunging the mind into sloth when he devotes himself to unceasing attention to God, in order to somehow divert him from this path of labor. But I believe that if we possess love, patience, and self-restraint, they (the enemies) will not succeed in this in the least, especially if the mind, realizing that laziness corrupts everything, despises it.

9. If you have renounced all visible things, then guard yourself against the demon of sorrow, lest, because of scarcity (in all things) and the misery of life, you be deprived of the opportunity to excel in the great virtues, which are: self-effacement (regarding oneself as nothing), endurance of insults, and a refusal of fame in any worldly regard. If you strive to acquire such dispositions, they will prepare crowns for your soul. It is not only those beggars who, having renounced everything, have become destitute in the visible sense, but those who have become destitute of every evil and always hunger for the remembrance of God. And it is not those who endure visible suffering who attain dispassion, but those who care for the inner person and cut off their own desires: these will receive the crown of virtues.

10. Watch over your heart, paying attention to your feelings. And if the remembrance of God dwells peacefully within you, you will see the thieves who seek to rob it. By paying close attention to your thoughts, you will recognize those who wish to enter and defile it.

11. If you care for the commandments with a fervent heart, you will understand in what ways those who stir up rebellion (in your thoughts) disturb you, instilling a lack of courage to choose another place that offers nothing in itself (as to why it should be chosen), and (in case of a poor choice) suggesting: "If we repent, we will settle here again." They disturb the mind so that it wanders (flitting here and there like a meteor) and remains idle. But those who have recognized their malice remain unperturbed, giving thanks to the Lord for the place in which He has granted them to spend their days in patience. For patience, courage, and love are rewarded for toil and effort, while laziness, timidity, and a love of ease seek a place where they can be glorified. And it happens to them that, because of the glory they receive from many, their senses become weak; as a result, they are oppressed by the bondage of passions and lose the inner teaching due to a scattered mind and contentment with everything.

12. The saint also said: if the mind, before the senses have recovered from their weakness (from the sickness of the passions), desires to ascend the cross, then God's wrath will come upon it for having undertaken a task beyond its strength—without first healing its own senses.

13. If your heart is wandering, and you do not know how to tame it, then (know that) your conduct is such that, whether you want it or not, it draws your heart into wandering. This is the unnaturalness of Adam.

14. If your heart, with its whole being, has come to hate sin and has turned away from that which gives rise to it, and you, having set before yourself (eternal) torment with a clear mind, have turned away from everything that leads to it (sin), and pray with your mind to your Creator, that He may abide with you, grieving Him in no way, but weeping before Him and saying, "It is the work of Your mercy to deliver me, for without Your help I have no strength to escape from their hands (my enemies)," —and (at the same time) be mindful in your heart not to grieve even the one who instructs you in accordance with God; for this is in accordance with the nature of Jesus. For even if a person accomplishes everything, yet fails to attain obedience, humility, and patience, he strays into that which is contrary to nature. But commit your whole heart to obedience to God, praying to Him in truth and saying: "Lord! I stand before You; grant me (knowledge of) Your will, for I myself do not know what is good for me. Overcome (my enemies), for I do not understand their wicked schemes." And if you do what is in accordance with the nature of Jesus, He will not allow you to go astray in anything. But if you keep only one commandment without surrendering yourself entirely to Him in obedience, He will not care for you in the least.

15. Just as a field does not resist its cultivator when he clears it of weeds and sows true seeds in it, so should you be toward the Lord. And just as natural seeds cannot grow alongside unnatural ones, being choked

by them—for the weeds are their shameless rivals—so if you do not purify yourself of carnal desires, you cannot keep yourself from sin.

16. (You cannot protect yourself from sin) unless you first protect yourself from that which gives rise to it. And this is what it is: cowardice is the evil mother of sin; despondency (sloth) gives birth to the will (one's own); one's own will and expansiveness (that which tolerates no restrictions or constraints, loves to expand) give birth to contempt (for all that is proper—"Well, I'll just do this"); a heart that desires to rule (having come to love expansiveness) gives rise to a love of worldly conversations, gives rise to the desire to seek what is unbecoming and unhelpful to you, gives rise to lending an ear to one who condemns (a brother), gives rise to the habit of listening to the words (one person) and passing them on to another; it gives rise to the pursuit of what belongs to this world; it gives rise to the desire to teach when not asked; it gives rise to the desire to sting one's neighbor; it gives rise to many other evils as well. Therefore, whoever has succeeded or desires to succeed should guard himself wisely against everything that gives rise to sins, and the sins themselves will subside.

17. The one who strives sees them (sins) and their bitterness, but the one who is careless (about salvation) prepares hell for himself. The one who fears the weariness of the body (from striving) will not attain the state that is natural, but if he clings to God in all his labor, then God is powerful enough to comfort him. If Gideon had not crushed the water carriers (Judg. 7: 19), he would not have seen the light of the lamps: so, if a person does not despise his own body, he will not see the light of the Divine. Likewise, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, if she had not pulled out the tent peg, would not have crushed the pride of Sisera (Judg. 4:21).

18. When the mind gains strength and prepares itself to follow the love that extinguishes all passions of the flesh and the body (for it is patient, kind, hates envy and pride, conceives nothing in its heart that is beneath nature, and does not allow anything unnatural to take hold of the mind), then it uses this power to combat unnaturalness until it completely separates it from what is natural. When, in this way, the mind assumes dominion, it becomes the head of the soul, (and teaches it) not to accept anything that is unnatural, revealing to it all the injustices that the unnatural has inflicted upon it throughout the time it was mingled with the natural.

19. Our Lord Jesus, when He bestowed mercy upon His saints (and accomplished the building of salvation), separated the thieves on the cross. Two were crucified, and He was in the midst of them. The one on the left was indignant, seeing that his impure friendship with the one on the right would be severed. But the one on the right turned to Jesus and, with humility and fear, said, "*Remember me when You come into Your kingdom*" (Luke 23:42).

20. From this it is clear that they are no longer the same, and the one on the left cannot sway the one on the right to his side with his deceitful suggestions. But those who have not yet reached this stage of the path fall and rise again until God's mercy comes upon them, and they cannot be saved unless this mercy comes upon them. Therefore, one must strive with fear and humility to attain the state of mind of the one on the right. Humility will give one the strength to endure humiliation.

21. When someone separates himself from the evil one, then he will truly recognize all his sins, which he has committed before God; for he does not see his sins unless he separates himself from them with bitter separation (with a sorrowful heart). But those who have attained this measure have found weeping and prayer, and the ability to be ashamed before God, remembering their wicked association with the passions. God is powerful to strengthen those who labor in secret with humility. To Him be honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen.

18. On Forgiveness

1. The Most Holy Apostle commanded his children: "*The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God*" (Phil. 4:5–6); "*and let the peace of God rule in your hearts*" (Col. 3: 15). And (the Lord) says to His disciples in the Gospel of Mark: "Forgive your debtors all their sins, so that your Father may also forgive your sins" (Mark 11: 25, Matt. 6: 14). This word of the Lord is awesome: (according to it) if you see that your heart is not pure toward everyone, then do not ask anything of God, because you bring offense to Him when, being sinful and harboring resentment toward a fellow human being, you say to the One who searches the hearts: "Forgive me my sins" (as I forgive). Such a person does not pray with the mind, but only with the lips, in

ignorance. For whoever truly desires to pray to God with the mind, in the Holy Spirit, with a pure heart, examines his own heart before he begins to pray, to see whether it is free from worry toward every person or not. And if it is not (at peace), then he deceives himself (in prayer), for there is no one to hear him (praying). Then your mind is not praying, but the established hours are merely being observed out of habit.

2. Therefore, desiring to perform the act of prayer with purity, first examine your mind to see what is within it, so that when you say, “Have mercy on me,” you yourself may have mercy on the one who asks of you; when you say, “Forgive me,” you yourself, though poor, may forgive; —when you say, “Do not remember my transgressions,” and you yourself have not remembered the sins of your neighbor—when you say, “Do not remember the evils I have committed, willingly or unwillingly,” and you yourself have not remembered (them on the part of your neighbor). If this is what is required, then you must not even think ill of any person. If you have not reached the point of doing so, then your prayer is in vain: God will not hear you, according to all the Scriptures—forgive me.

3. The Lord also said in the Gospel of Matthew, in prayer: “*And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors*” (Matt. 6:12). And in the Gospel of Luke He said: “*If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you (your sins)*” (Matt. 6:14. In St. Luke’s Gospel it reads: “*Forgive, and you will be forgiven*”—Luke 6:37). (As it were): I have given you all my love so that whatever you desire for yourself from God, you may first do that yourself (for your neighbor), and then you will be freed (from sins) to the extent that you have succeeded in doing the same toward others. If you have purified your heart toward every (rational) creature of God, so as not to hold a grudge against anyone, then you must keep this: for God is truth, and not merely the words of the tongue. Thus, every person binds himself to Gehenna and frees himself from it. There is nothing more powerful than the will, whether it strives toward death or toward life.

4. Blessed are those who have loved eternal life, when they do not stumble. Therefore, you must strive with toil and sweat, secretly in your heart, against the thought that torments you (feelings of offense), so as not to allow its arrow to wound your heart. But it will be difficult for you to heal it if you do not always keep your sins before your eyes. When you hear that someone has done you some wrong, counter it with your own good intention—not to retaliate in your heart, not to revile him, not to condemn him, and not to make it public by putting it on everyone’s lips—and think afterward: there is nothing evil in me. If you have fear of Gehenna, it will overcome the evil (thoughts) within you that urge you to retaliate against your neighbor, telling you: “Wretched one! You pray for your sins, and God has borne with you until this day, not revealing them (to everyone); yet you, in your anger toward your neighbor, cast him into the mouths of all. Is it not clear that you are not repentant of your sins, when you have no forbearance (toward your neighbor) in your heart?”

5. Therefore, if your heart softens and you guard yourself against all malice (toward your brother), you will receive mercy from God. But if your heart remains deceitful and harsh toward your neighbor, then (know that) your remembrance has not yet come before the face of God (you do not remember God). Forgive me; I am poor and humbled by my sins, and as I write this, I cover my face with shame in my heart.

6. If a person does not attain the state of the Son of God by nature, all his labors are in vain. A farmer, sowing his seeds, hopes to reap them in far greater abundance, but if a destructive wind should arise, there is unceasing sorrow in his heart, for both the seeds and the labor of tilling the land have been lost in vain. St. Peter the Apostle, crucified in Rome, asked to be hung upside down, thereby symbolizing the unnaturalness that has taken hold of every human being. He (through this) said (as it were) that every baptized person is obligated to crucify the evil unnaturalness that befell Adam and cast him down from his glory into evil reproach and eternal shame. Therefore, the mind must strive courageously to hate everything visible to man (as unnatural to him) and to wage war against it with the bitterest hatred until the end.

7. These are the principal (passions, unnatural to man) that have taken hold of all the sons of Adam: gain, honor, peace, pride in what one leaves behind (in the end), the adornment of the body so that it may be clean and well-presented, and the pursuit of fine clothing.

8. All of this nourishes the lustful sweetness that the serpent placed in Eve’s mouth, from which we also know that we are the sons of Adam—from these evil thoughts that have made us enemies of God.

9. Therefore, blessed is he who has been crucified, died, been buried, and risen in renewal, when he sees himself as being of the nature of Jesus and following in His holy footsteps, by which He walked while He was a man (on earth), for the sake of His holy servants. His characteristics are: humility, poverty, destitution, non-covetousness, forgiveness, peace, endurance of insults, disregard for the body, and fearlessness in the face of slander from the malicious; but the greatest of all is the foreknowledge of all events

and long-suffering toward people in meekness. Whoever has attained this and has cast out all that is unnatural within himself clearly shows that he is of Christ, the Son of God, and is a brother of Jesus, to whom be glory and worship forever and ever. Amen.

19. On Passions

1. It is fitting for me, too, to say with the Prophet Isaiah: *"I have endured as a woman in labor"* (until) *"I dry them up and destroy them"* (all of them) *"together"* (Isa. 42:14). If you realize that the fountain of the Holy Spirit is flowing within you, this is a sign that they have dried up and perished (who? the passions), just as our Savior said that *"the kingdom of God is not here or there,"* but is *"within you"* (Luke 17:21). There are some who speak of the works of the kingdom but do not perform them; there are others who perform the works of the kingdom but not with vigilance (attention) and understanding; in whom, however, the Savior's word has been fulfilled—that it *"is within you"*—such people are few: they are rare and hard to find. Upon such people the Holy Spirit of God has descended, and the word of the Evangelist John has been fulfilled in them: *"To those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God"* (John 1: 12–13). These have been delivered from the sorrow that befell Eve: *"In pain you shall bring forth children"* (Gen. 3:16). These have been delivered from the bitter judgment that fell upon Adam: *"Cursed is the ground because of you"* (Gen. 3:17). These are the ones who have received the joy that Mary received: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you"* (Luke 1:35). Just as sorrow befell Eve and (befalls) all her offspring even to this day, so again joy has embraced Mary and (embraces) her offspring even to this day. And just as we were once children of Eve and experienced her curse as being upon us through our dishonorable thoughts, so again we must recognize that we are born of God through the thoughts of the Holy Spirit and through the sufferings of Christ, if indeed they are present in our bodies; for it is written in the Epistle: *"Examine yourselves to see whether Christ is in you—unless, of course, you are unqualified"* (2 Cor. 13:5).

2. Thus, when we bore the image of the earthly one, we knew that we were his sons, born of the dishonorable substance of his thoughts dwelling within us, which are the passions. But those who have clothed themselves with the image of the Heavenly One know that they are His sons through the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Thus Isaiah cried out, saying: *"For the sake of Your fear, O Lord, we conceived in the womb, and we labored, and we gave birth to the Spirit of salvation, by whom we are conceived on earth"* (Isa. 26:1–8); and it is also written in Ecclesiastes: *"Just as the bones are in the womb of the one who gives birth, so is the way of the Spirit"* (Eccl. 11:5). For just as the Holy Virgin bore Him in the flesh, so those who have received the grace of the Holy Spirit bear Him in their hearts, according to the words of the Apostle, who says: *"May the heavenly Father grant you to be strengthened by His Spirit in your inner being, to have Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, to be rooted and grounded in love, so that you may be able to present yourselves with all the saints"* (Eph. 3: 16–18); and again: *"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us"* (2 Cor. 4:7),

3. Therefore, if you have reached the point described by the following words: *"We are being transformed from glory to glory in the same way"* (2 Cor. 3: 18), and the Apostle's words have been fulfilled in you, which say: *"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts"* (Col. 3: 15)—and: *"If Christ is in you"*²⁵, *"the flesh is dead because of sin"* (Rom. 8: 10); if you have reached the point where the following word also applies to you: *"the light of the knowledge of God has shone in your hearts out of darkness"* (2 Cor. 4:6)—and the word has been fulfilled in you: *"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning; and be like men who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast"* (Luke 12:35–36), so that your mouth may not be silenced, having nothing to say in your own defense among the saints; if you know that there is oil in your vessel, as with the wise virgins, so that you may enter the wedding hall and not be left outside; if you have felt that your spirit, soul, and body have been united flawlessly, and will rise on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ unblemished; if you have become blameless and beyond reproach in conscience; if you have become a child, according to the word of the Savior, Who says: *"Let the little children come to Me: 'for such is the kingdom of heaven'"* (Matt. 19:14): then you have truly become His bride, and the Holy Spirit has brought you into your inheritance while you are still in the body. But if this is not so, then expect sorrow and bitter lamentation; shame and disgrace will precede you before the Saints.

²⁵ In Paissius's version: "in your mind."

4. Know this, too: just as a maiden, rising every morning, she attends to no other task before adorning herself for her bridegroom, frequently looking in the mirror—lest there be some blemish on her face that might displease her bridegroom—so great is the care of the Saints to examine their deeds and thoughts day and night, to know whether they are under the yoke of God and the Holy Spirit or not.

5. Therefore, strive earnestly, brother, in the afflictions of heart and body, with wisdom, to attain that eternal joy, for few are those who have been deemed worthy of it—those who have acquired the spiritual sword and freed their souls and senses from every defilement of the passions, as the Apostle said (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 6:17). God is powerful enough to help us in our weakness, so that we may be deemed worthy to be with His saints. Amen.

20. On Humility

What is humility? Humility is to think of yourself as a sinner who does nothing good before God. The works of humility are: silence, not measuring oneself in anything, not seeking favor, obedience, looking down at the ground, keeping death before one's eyes, guarding oneself against falsehood, refraining from idle talk in conversation, not contradicting one's superiors or insisting on one's own opinion, enduring one's circumstances, hating ease, compelling oneself to labor, and causing no grief to anyone. Take care, then, brother, to fulfill these things exactly, so that your soul may not become a dwelling place for every passion, and you may not end your life fruitlessly for all eternity. Amen.

21. On Repentance

1. They asked Abba Isaiah: What is repentance, or what is turning away from sin? And he answered, saying: There are two paths: one path leads to life, and the other path leads to death. Whoever walks on one does not tread on the other. But whoever treads both paths has not yet been counted among either—neither among those who are led to the kingdom nor among those who are led down to hell. However, if such a person dies, judgment is the matter of God, who is also merciful.

2. But whoever desires to enter the kingdom keeps His commandments: the kingdom is the eradication of all sin. The enemies certainly sow, but their thoughts do not take root. For if the mind attains to the contemplation of the sweetness of the Divine, their arrows no longer pierce it, since it is then clothed in the full armor of virtues, which protects it, cares for it diligently, and prevents it from being troubled (by thoughts or passions), but occupies it with its own contemplation, so that it may know and distinguish between the two paths, pursuing one and loving the other.

3. Thus, whoever has come to know the glory of God has come to know the bitterness of the enemy; whoever has come to know the kingdom has come to know Gehenna; whoever has come to know love has come to know what hatred is; whoever has come to know the longing for God has come to know the hatred that is directed toward the world; whoever has known what purity is has known the impurity of foul odors (of lustful passions); whoever has known the fruit of virtues has known what the fruit of evil is; whoever is rejoiced over by the angels in his deeds has known how the demons rejoiced over him when he did their deeds. For unless you flee²⁶ from them, you will not know their bitterness. How can anyone know what the love of money is unless he renounces everything and lives in great poverty for God's sake? How can one know the bitterness of envy unless he acquires meekness? How can one know the rebelliousness of anger unless one acquires long-suffering in all things? How can one know the shamelessness of pride unless one acquires the gentleness of humility? How can one know the stench of fornication unless one knows the sweet fragrance of the purest innocence? How can one know the shame of condemnation unless one knows one's own shortcomings? How can you recognize the ignorance of mockery unless you experience weeping over your sins? How can you recognize the confusion of despondency unless your senses are settled and you come to know the light of God?

4. All these (evil passions) have one head, which is called the malice of the enemy's power; but all virtues have one mother, which is called the fear of God, which, in those who have acquired it, gives birth to virtues in purity and cuts off the branches of evil, as I said before. Acquire it for yourself, my beloved, and you will spend your entire life in peace. For the fear of God is the mother of all virtues. As long as one has not attained this, he is not yet a son of the kingdom of heaven; but he must strive little by little until he has cut

²⁶ "*Fages*"—according to the Greek; but the flow of the text requires "*fuges*." The Latin omits it; in Paissius's version: "unless you bear it."

off each of the passions mentioned. If anyone wishes to know whether he is laboring at this or not, here is the sign: as long as the left side exerts its influence, sin has not yet died within him, and the virtues of the right side do not coexist with him. For it is written: *“Do you not know that if you present yourselves as slaves to obedience, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether of sin, leading to death, or of obedience, leading to righteousness?”* (Rom. 6:16). And again: *“Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you; are you so lacking in understanding?”* (2 Cor. 13:5)? And again, James says: *“If anyone among you thinks he is righteous but does not bridle his tongue... his faith is worthless”* (James 1:26).

5. The Holy Spirit teaches us all this, showing us how to turn away from unnaturalness and guard ourselves against it. For repentance consists in turning away from sin. But sin is not a single thing; rather, the entire old man is called sin. Why does the Apostle say: *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize?”* (1 Cor. 9:24)? Who is this, if not the one who stands firm and fights valiantly (against all)? For the same Apostle also said—that *“the one who competes in all things will abstain”* (ibid., v. 25). Let us therefore take care of ourselves, brothers. But what is this true care, if not to humble ourselves before the goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ (imploing Him for protection from our enemies)? And He is mighty against them, to thwart their evil designs against us, whereas man is but flesh and blood.

6. They asked him (this Abba) again: What does it mean to keep silence in the cell? And he answered, saying: To keep silence in the cell is to humble oneself before God and to exert all one’s strength to resist every wicked thought instilled by the enemy; for this is what it means to flee from the world. They asked him yet again: “And what is the world?” And he answered, saying: “The world is a realm of sin; the world is a workshop of unnatural things; the world is the fulfillment of one’s carnal desires; the world is the belief that one will always remain in this age; the world is caring more for the body than for the soul; the world is boasting that one will leave (eventually). I do not say this of my own accord, but the Apostle John says this: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and its desires; but whoever does the will of God abides forever”* (1 John 2: 15–17). *“Little children, let no one deceive you: whoever does what is right is righteous; whoever does what is sinful is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning”* (1 John 3:7–8). *“The desire for the things of this world is enmity against God”* (James 4:4). Again, the Apostle Peter, desiring to make his children strangers to the sins of the world, said: *“I urge you, brothers, as sojourners and exiles, to abstain from the fleshly desires that wage war against the soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). And our beloved Lord Jesus, knowing that the sinful world is a burdensome yoke until a person leaves it behind, encouraged His own, saying: *“The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me”* (John 14: 30); and again: *“The whole world lies in wickedness”* (1 John 5: 19). He also said of His own that He had taken them out of the world (John 15: 19). From what world did He take them, if not from the widespread corruption of sin?

7. Therefore, whoever wishes to be a disciple of Jesus must flee from the passions. For if he does not cut them off, he cannot be a dwelling place for God. Nor will he see the sweetness of His Divinity unless he turns away from them, for He Himself said: *“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness”* (Matt. 6: 22–23). Therefore, take heed: if the mind is not free from evil, it cannot perceive the light of the Godhead, for evil then becomes a dark wall to the mind and renders the soul empty, as it is written in the Gospel: *“No one, having lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light”* (Luke 8:16). It is said that the bed here refers to the falsehood of the world. Thus, as long as our mind remains in a state of unnaturalness, the lamp of the Divine cannot dwell within it. But when the mind becomes a lofty lamp, then the light of the Divine shines upon it, and it discerns those who are in the house; those it must cast out, it casts out, and those with whom it must live in peace, it leaves. Why did the Lord teach those whose minds had been enlightened by His divine commandments, saying: *“I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also; and from the one who takes your cloak, do not withhold your tunic. And to everyone who asks of you, give; and from the one who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away; and do not refuse the one who takes from you”* (Luke 6:27–30; cf. Matt. 5:42).

8. He said this to those who had fled from the world, since they had left everything and prepared themselves to follow Him, their Savior. Therefore, having loved them with perfect love, He said to them,

“Arise, let us go from here” (John 14:31). Where, then, is He taking them when He says, *“Get up, let us go from here”*? He is turning their minds away from the affairs of this age and giving them rest in His kingdom. That is why, encouraging them, He said: *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Abide in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me”* (John 15:4–5). He says this to those who have left the world, because the Spirit is in them and dwells in their hearts. *“I will not leave you as orphans,”* He says, *“I will come to you”* (John 14:18). Therefore, whoever loves God and desires Him to dwell within him—and does not wish to remain an orphan—let him first take care to keep what Jesus has commanded him, and He will dwell within him, for He is not far from us, and there is nothing between us and Him except our passions.

9. If, my brother, you call yourself one who has renounced the world, yet you are found to be doing the works of the world, then you have not renounced it, but are deceiving yourself. The Lord gave this sign to those who have renounced the world, saying: *“Whoever loves his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will save it”* (Matt. 10:39). How, then, does one lose one’s life, if not by cutting off all its fleshly desires? And again: *“Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:27). What kind of cross, does He say we are to carry, if not the one that requires the mind to remain ever vigilant and steadfast in virtue, so as not to fall from the cross? That is, abstaining from passions until they are cut off—and the mind finally rises up invincible. For to those who were stirred up, He gave a sign, saying: *“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”* (John 12:24). And as a consolation to those who have died like a grain of wheat, He said: *“If anyone serves Me, My Father will honor him; and where I am, there My servant will be also”* (John 12:26). How, then, do they serve Jesus, if not by hating the world of passions and fulfilling His commandments? Having kept them, they gained the boldness to say before Him: *“We have left everything and followed You; what, then, will be ours?”* (Matthew 19:27). And He showed them what would become of them, saying: *“You who have followed Me—in the age to come, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who leaves a house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or fields, for My sake, will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life”* (Matthew 19:28–29).

10. Our Lord, the sweetest Jesus, knowing that if a person does not attain freedom from all cares, his mind cannot ascend to the cross, commanded us to leave behind everything that, through habit and encounter, draws the mind down from the cross. Why, when someone approached Him and said, *“I will follow You, Lord,”* but first let me go and settle the affairs *“that are in my house”* (Luke 9:61)—did our beloved Jesus, knowing that if he saw those things, his heart would again be drawn toward them, and that various circumstances there would, as it were, rightfully hold him back, forbid him from going, saying: *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of heaven”* (Luke 9:62). (After the parable of the king’s son’s wedding, in which He recounted) how (the king) prepared a feast for his son and sent his servants to summon those who had been invited, but they, because of the love each one had for the world, could not come, He said with sorrow: *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:16–26). He says this to teach us that whoever desires to enter His kingdom, unless he first resolves within himself to hate everything that draws the heart toward the world, cannot enter the kingdom he desires. And in urging us not to rely on faith alone without acting upon it, the Lord said that the king, upon entering *“to see those reclining at the table, saw that one man was not dressed in wedding garments”* and commanded that he be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 22:11–13). They enter by virtue of their Christian name, but are cast out for lack of (Christian) deeds. Likewise, the Apostle, knowing that no one can love both what belongs to God and what belongs to this world, wrote to Timothy, his son, saying: *“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, so that he may please his commander. But if anyone suffers, he is not crowned, unless he is persecuted unjustly”* (2 Tim. 2:4–5). Encouraging him to hope that his labors would not be in vain, he said to him: *“The laborer is worthy to receive his share of the harvest first”* (2 Tim. 2:6). And writing to certain others, he said: *“The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord—but the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife”* (1 Cor. 7:32–33). Such a person will hear a terrible voice saying, *“Cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt. 22:13).

11. Let us therefore, brothers, use our strength to clothe ourselves in the garments of virtue, so that we may not be cast out, for there will be no partiality on that day. That is why the Apostle said to his children, *“Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Gal. 5:21). Knowing, then, that those who have been deemed worthy to rise from dead passions no longer have an adversary, he showed them the fruit of the Spirit, which is—*“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things,”* he says, *“there is no law”* (Gal. 5, 22–23). And our beloved Lord Jesus, showing us that on that day the fruit of our deeds will be revealed, said: *“Many will seek to enter, but will not be able.”* For the Master of the House, after He *“rises and shuts the door,”* will say to those who knock, *“I do not know you”* (Luke 13:24–25). Can we really say of God that He does not know something? By no means. But just as those who knock and say, *“Lord, Lord, open to us,”* did not know the virtues, so He says to them, *“I do not know you.”* And He also showed us concerning those who have faith but do not have works, saying, *“I am the vine, and you are the branches; whoever abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. But whoever does not abide in Me is cast out like a branch and withers; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned”* (John 15: 5, 6). (The branches), however, that bear good fruit, the Father prunes so that they *“may bear much fruit”* (John 15:2). Again, showing us that He does not love those who act according to their own carnal desires, He said in prayer: *“I do not pray for the whole world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours”* (John 17: 9). And I have taken them out of the world (John 15:19): for the world loves its own. Finally, He says: *“Father, keep them from the evil one, for they are not of the world”* (John 17:15–16).

12. Let us examine ourselves, brothers, to see whether we are of the world or not. If we are not of the world, then He protects us from evil, for He said: *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as We are one.”* And again: *“That where I am, there they also may be with Me”* (John 17:20–24). See now, then, with what love He has loved us, since those who have striven in this world and hated their own fleshly desires will reign with Him for all eternity? And John the Apostle, beholding that great glory, said: *“We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him”* (1 John 3:2), if we keep His commandments and do what is pleasing to Him. And again he says: *“Do not be surprised,”* beloved, *“if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers”* (1 John 3:13–14). And further: *“Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother”* (ibid., v. 11). Also: *“Whoever practices righteousness has been born of God”* (1 John 2:29), *“but whoever commits sin is of the devil”* (1 John 3:8). And again: *“Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”* (1 John 3:9).

13. Let us therefore do what we can, brothers, finding comfort in such testimonies. Perhaps the goodness of our Lord will have mercy on us, and He will send us the strength to cast off the burden of this impure world. For our enemy does not slumber, but constantly lies in wait for us, desiring to steal our souls. But our Lord Jesus is with us, and He restrains the enemy by the power of His holy words, if we keep them. For who can stand against the enemy, or who is strong against him, if not the words that God has spoken against him? They oppose him and crush him by their power, even when a person is unaware of it.

14. The Apostle Peter, teaching us and showing us that deeds save a person, said: *“Add to your faith virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever lacks these qualities is blind and shortsighted, having forgotten the cleansing from his past sins”* (2 Peter 1:5–9). Again, John the Baptist says: *“Produce, then, fruits worthy of repentance. For the ax is already laid to the root of the trees; every tree, therefore, that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire”* (Luke 3:8–9). And our Lord Jesus says: *“A tree is known by its fruit”* (Matt. 12:33). *“Do people gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?”* (Matt. 7:16). And again: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). James also says: *“Faith without works is dead. Even the demons believe—and tremble. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead”* (James 2:20, 19:26). Likewise, the Apostle Paul, affirming to his children that faith requires works, strictly commanded them, saying: *“But sexual immorality and all impurity must not even be named among you, as is proper for saints—but rather thanksgiving. For this you must know: no fornicator, or impure person, or covetous*

person—that is, an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5: 3–5). And again, further confirming this word, he said to them: “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the disobedient. Do not, therefore, be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth” (Eph. 5:6–9). And again: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph. 4:31). “Be imitators of me,” he also said, “just as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

15. Let us therefore examine ourselves, brothers, to see whether we have put on Christ or not. Christ is recognized by purity, for He is pure and dwells among the pure. And how does one become pure? Only by ceasing to do the evil that one used to do. For such is the goodness of God that whenever a person turns from his sins, He receives him with joy, not counting his former sins against him, as is written in the Gospel about the younger son, who, having squandered his inheritance, ended up tending pigs and wishing to fill himself with pig food; but finally, repenting of what he had done, realized that there is no satisfaction in sin, but that the more one commits them, the more one is inflamed by them. So when repentance touched his heart (literally: knocked upon him), he did not delay, but (immediately) returned to his father with humility, leaving behind all his carnal desires. For he trusted his father to be merciful and not to hold his deeds against him. That is why his father immediately ordered that he be given the robe of purity and the token of sonship (a ring) (Luke 15:11–32). Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words (wishing to impress upon us) that if we turn to Him, we must first forsake the food of swine, and then He will accept us, having become pure. He said this so that the soul might not lose heart, saying, “When will God hear me?” For He knows the time when the one who asks is worthy of being heard, and then He will hear him quickly.

16. Let us therefore turn to Him with all our hearts and, as we implore Him, let us not “lose heart” (Luke 18: 1), and He will hear us soon. For He Himself said: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7). Therefore, brothers, if we ask, or seek, or knock, we will receive what we seek or what we ask of Him. Just as the man who came to his friend at midnight urged him, saying, “Give me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey” (Luke 11:5)—and since he did not stop knocking, the friend gave him what he had asked for. Let us, then, brothers, cast aside our laziness and prepare ourselves for such perseverance; and God, seeing our patience, will grant us what we ask for. For He is merciful and desires that people turn to Him, as it is written: “Truly I tell you, there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:7).

17. Therefore, brothers, having such mercy from Him and such a wealth of His bounties, let us strive before Him with all our hearts while we are still in this body; for the time of our life is fleeting. If we strive, we will inherit eternal and inexpressible joy; but if we turn back, we will be like the young man who asked the Lord Jesus how to be saved. He replied to him, “Sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and”—taking up his cross—“follow Me,” showing us that to deny one’s own will is to be saved. But when the young man heard this, he became very sad and went away (Luke 18: 22, 23). For he knew that giving his possessions to the poor was not as difficult as carrying the cross. Giving one’s possessions to the poor is but one virtue, and a person performs it in order to make it easier to carry the cross; but the cross is the eradication of every sin—and it gives birth to love; without love, there is no cross. Why did the Apostle, knowing that there are also false virtues in which there is no love, nor the perfection of virtues, say: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am like a clanging gong or a clanging cymbal. And even if I give away all my possessions, and even if I surrender my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind; love does not envy; love does not boast, is not proud, does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil” (1 Cor. 13:1–5).

18. Therefore, let anyone who wishes to embark on the path of love set aside all concern for all people, whether they are good or evil. Then, at last, a single desire—that for God—will remain in his heart, and this desire will give birth to a wrath proper to his nature; and this wrath will oppose everything instilled by the enemy. Then God’s “law” (²⁷) finds a place to dwell within him, and through fear, love is revealed in him. Then such a person speaks with boldness, like the Apostle: “I am not only willing to be bound, but I am also

²⁷ In Paissius’s version, in the margins opposite the law, it is written: “fear”—as required by the meaning of the following words.

ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 21: 13). Blessed is the soul that has attained such love, for it is then free from passion.

19. We have left the world, brothers; we know what station we occupy, and that the Lord Jesus is merciful, so that He may give rest to each of us according to our deeds, and to the small according to their smallness, as He said: *"In My Father's house are many mansions"* (John 14:2). For although there is one kingdom, each one finds his own place in it and his own task. Let us therefore strive, brothers, against sloth; let us cast off the veil of darkness—that is, forgetfulness—and behold the light of repentance. Let us take for ourselves Martha and Mary, who represent suffering and weeping—those who weep before the Savior, asking Him to raise Lazarus, that is, the mind bound by the many bandages of its own desires. Although He works mercy and stirs them to action, it is their task to untie him and let him (to go). When Lazarus is set free, then the diligence of Mary and Martha becomes evident. After this, here is what is seen: Lazarus reclines carefree with Jesus, Martha performs her service with zeal and joy, and Mary, having brought an alabaster jar of myrrh, anoints the Lord's feet.

20. Let us, then, brothers, strive to the best of our ability, and God will help us through His abundant mercy. If we have not kept our hearts pure, as our fathers did, let us at least strive to keep our bodies sinless, as God requires; and let us believe that during this famine that has befallen us, He will show us mercy, just as He has shown to all His saints. For although the glory of the sun is one thing, and the glory of the moon another, and one star differs from another in glory, yet they all dwell in the same firmament, and their glory and honor belong to Him, from now until eternity. Amen.

22. On the Conduct of the New Man

1. My beloved brothers! A Jew is recognized by three things: circumcision, the Passover, and the Sabbath. For it is written in the Book of Genesis: *"Every male child among you, whether born in your household or bought with money, shall be circumcised on the eighth day. But the uncircumcised shall be cut off from his people, for he has not kept My covenant"* (Gen. 17:12, 14). Abraham was the first to be circumcised, which is a sign that his "side" had died—that is, a foreshadowing in the ancient times of the new man whom the Lord Jesus revealed in His holy body, so that the ancient "corruption" covering the male sex might be cut off and separated. The Apostle also spoke of this: *"In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, by putting off the body of the sinful flesh, in the circumcision of Christ: having been buried with Him in baptism; in Him you were also raised up through faith in the working of God"* (Col. 2: 11, 12). And again: *"Put off, in regard to your former way of life, the old self, which is corrupted by deceitful desires; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness"* (Eph. 4:22–24). And again: *"Die to sin, but live in righteousness"* (1 Peter 2:24).—This (regarding the first duty of a Jew) refers to circumcision. Whoever does not have this is uncircumcised and not a Jew, because he has not kept the covenant that the Lord Jesus established with His holy blood.

2. Much remains to be said about the holy Passover. (First—circumcision; second—the Passover; third—the Sabbath.) For Moses says: *"This is the law of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it. And every slave or one who has been bought—you shall circumcise him, and then he may eat of it. No uncircumcised person shall eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house"* (Ex. 12:43, 46). *"Your loins shall be girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staffs in your hands"* (Ex. 12:11). The "Passover"—this bread baked in the fire—must be eaten only with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. He did not say, "Gird your loins," lest anyone say that he is speaking here of a belt, but rather, "Gird your loins," to show that he is speaking of purity, sound from every passion that arises from sexual union in impurity. "Sandals"—referring to readiness to speak and to flee from any wounding that harms the conscience and prevents the mind from seeing its own contemplation in purity. "Staff"—this is manly hope, to walk fearlessly along the path and enter the land of promise: these are the ones who have kept the Sabbath. "Blood" is a sign of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the fact that when He comes in His own coming and brings the sons of Israel into His inheritance, then those who are prepared and anointed with His sign in their souls will be made manifest. To take a *"bundle of hyssop"* signifies suffering, for it is said: *"Eat (the Passover) with bitter herbs."* Examine yourself, then, brother: have you been circumcised? Have you anointed the doorposts of your house with the blood of the spotless Lamb? Have you emptied yourself of every earthly thought? Have you prepared yourself to walk without fear and enter the Promised Land?

3. And there is much to be said about the Sabbath—and this is the work of those who have been deemed worthy of true circumcision, who partake of the Holy Passover, who have been delivered from the Egyptians, who have seen them all drowned in the Red Sea, and who have observed the Sabbath after being freed from their bitter slavery. For (God) to Moses: *“Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day it is a Sabbath to the Lord your God”* (Ex. 20: 9, 10). *“Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off”* (Ex. 31: 14). Our Lord Jesus Himself observed the true Sabbath, and taught His own how to observe it, having ascended (to the cross) on Friday, after having made every preparation for it before His ascension, —that is, the insults to which He was subjected and which He endured for our sake, nailing Himself to the cross and refusing to allow Himself to be released or to slacken in any way while He still had breath. When He cried out, *“I thirst,”* they held out a sponge with vinegar to Him, and He, having tasted it, said: *“It is finished,” and bowing His head, He gave up His spirit* (John 19:28–30). Then they took Him down (from the cross) to the ground, where He lay motionless, truly resting. Thus, at last, the Lord Jesus rested on the seventh day and blessed it, for on that day He rested from all His works, by which He abolished human passions, as the Apostle also said: *“Having entered His rest, He Himself also rested from His works, just as God did from His”* (Heb. 4:10). This is the true Sabbath! Therefore, one who does not observe the Sabbath is not a Jew. Why did Jeremiah, weeping over his people, say to them: *“Do not carry burdens on the Sabbath day, and do not go out through the gates of Jerusalem carrying burdens on the Sabbath day”* (Jer. 17:21)?

4. Woe to me, a wretched man, who have transgressed such holy commandments and bear heavy burdens on the Sabbath, even though I have died with Him (Christ), been buried with Him, and observed the Sabbath! What, then, are these heavy burdens I carry? (They are the passions) that drive my actions: anger is a heavy burden, zeal, hatred, vanity, condemnation, hurt feelings and insults, pride, self-righteousness, bossiness, quarrelsomeness, self-love, and envy. These are the passions of the soul; as for those of the body—gluttony, sensuality, the passion for finery, hedonism, lust, and hardness of heart (perhaps heartlessness). The Lord Jesus abolished all these and similar passions in the bodies of the saints and put them to death in His holy body, according to the words of the Apostle, that He *“put to death the enmity by the cross, and abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances”* (Eph. 2:16, 15)—which is the holy Sabbath. So, whoever bears these heavy burdens (of passions) and acts (according to them), indulging in them on the Sabbath, how can he say, *“I am a true Jew”*? Such a one deceives himself, for only the name rests upon him. For he will receive nothing from the Lord Jesus, since he denies Him by his deeds, having resurrected what the Lord had put to death and restored what He had buried. Clearly, such a one is not a true Jew but a false one—and he is neither circumcised nor has he observed the Sabbath. Therefore, when the Lord Jesus comes in His glory, He will bring into His eternal kingdom only the true sons of Israel—all those circumcised in Him—whom He has gathered from all nations, as the Apostle says: *“A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in”* (Rom. 11: 25)—and further: *“If anyone lives by these rules, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God”* (Gal. 6: 16). Do you see who the Israelites of God are?—They are those who have circumcision of the heart, and the observance of the Sabbath, and the putting away of sin. Again, the same Apostle says: *“A Jew is not one who is merely visible, nor is circumcision merely physical; but a Jew is one in secret, and circumcision is that of the heart by the Spirit, not by the letter”* (Rom. 2:28–29).

5. Let us therefore be mindful of ourselves, brothers! How long will we labor and then destroy our work through negligence, not knowing that within us is our enemy, who flatters us and ceaselessly distracts us (from what is right), preventing our eyes from beholding anything of the light of the Godhead? Examine yourself, poor one, who was baptized into Christ and into His death. What kind of death was it that He died? If you follow in His footsteps, then show me this through your conduct. He was sinless, and presenting Himself to you as a model in all things, He lived in poverty, yet you cannot endure poverty. He *“had nowhere to lay His head”* (Matt. 8:20), yet you cannot bear the life of a stranger (being a stranger everywhere) with joy. He endured every kind of insult, yet you cannot bear even a single insult. He did not repay evil with evil, yet you cannot bear to refrain from repaying evil. He did not grow angry while suffering, but you, even while being a burden to others, grow angry. He remained serene while being reviled, but you become agitated even when you are not being reviled. He was humble and called sinners to Himself, but you wound even those who love you with your words. He joyfully endured all that was inflicted upon Him, yet you become agitated at even the slightest insult. He was gentle toward those who had fallen into sin, yet you act haughtily even toward those far greater than yourself. He gave Himself up for those who had sinned before Him, to redeem them, yet

you cannot even give yourself up for those who love you. This is what He gave you—but what have you given Him in return? Know Him by His deeds, and know yourself by your own deeds. If you have died with Him, then who is committing such sins (within you)?

6. Beloved! Let us truly heed His holy commandments, subdue our own will, and behold the light of the commandments. If we love only those who honor us, what are we doing that is any different from a pagan? If you pray for those who do you good, even the tax collector does the same. If you rejoice with those who praise you, even a Jew does the same. What, then, are you doing that is extra, you who have died to sin and come to life in Christ Jesus? If you love only those who obey you, what are you doing that is any better than a sinner? He does that too. If you hate those who cause you trouble, disobey you, and quarrel with you, then you are no better than a pagan. But you ought to pray for such a person, that he may be forgiven (for the wrong he has done to you). If you grieve over those who slander you, then even the tax collector does the same.

7. Consider yourself, then, you who have been baptized in the name of the Lord: Are your deeds such as those in which He revealed Himself? Or how will you appear on the day of His glory and be crowned, if you do not possess the crown of victory over the passions you have conquered—passions that your King has already conquered, setting an example for you in Himself? For when He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, appears in glory, He will appear visible to every nation in His great glory, bearing the mark of His suffering for us; but you must appear having none of His passions in your body, and He will say to you, “I do not know you.” There you will see all the saints who died for His name, bearing His mark, and you will be ashamed to stand before them. Consider the lives of all the saints, and you will find that they endured evil but did not retaliate: (only) the blood of all of them cried out (to God), “Vengeance for us from those living on earth.” As for me, who love peace, what shall I say on that day when I see there the Prophets, the Apostles, the martyrs, and the other saints, who, though persecuted, were long-suffering, not retaliating, and not even becoming angry, for they knew that it was not human will but the devil’s wickedness that compelled them to do this to them; whether they were put to death, stoned, burned, or drowned, they did not grow angry with their persecutors but prayed for them, that they might be forgiven, knowing who was compelling them to do this to them.

8. Consider, then, beloved brother, yourself—what you yourself are doing—and examine your own thoughts—what you have before the face of God. For at that hour you will be unable to hide anything; it will not be within a person’s will to say one thing (and not another), but when the resurrection takes place, then everyone will rise clothed in their deeds, as in a garment—whether sins or righteousness. These deeds will speak, and everyone will know for themselves where their place is. Blessed is the one who has striven and cast off that which would drag him into Gehenna, and clothed himself in that which would lead him into the Kingdom. The Apostle says: “*We know that if our earthly tent, this body, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*” (2 Cor. 5:1). The time of our life is fleeting, and we deceive ourselves (by thinking otherwise) until our hour comes—and then we will grieve in eternal weeping.

9. Let us not, then, weaken our hearts, but let us do everything in our power, caring for it and guarding it, and imploring God’s goodness at every moment to help us. Let us not be angry with our neighbors for words spoken in folly, not of their own will but under influence from elsewhere; for, serving as instruments of the enemy, they are alienated from God until they are called to repentance and flee from this (evil) path. Take care, beloved, to be humble in all things; endure reproach and whatever else you must suffer, and constantly practice subduing your own will, for clinging to your own will destroys all virtues. Whoever has upright (benevolent) thoughts subdues his will with meekness, fearing strife as one would a serpent, for it corrupts the entire inner order of the soul and darkens the soul, so that it sees nothing of the light of the virtues. Take greater care, then, to guard against this accursed passion, which mingles with the virtues in order to destroy them. So too, our Lord Jesus Christ did not ascend the cross until He had cast Judas out from among His disciples. And every person, unless he cuts off this dishonorable passion, cannot prosper in God: for all evil follows in its wake—impatience comes from it, vanity comes from it; everything that God hates dwells in the soul of the self-indulgent and the haughty—and everything of which they convince their own hearts is divine is false according to all the Scriptures.

10. Condemning oneself first brings humility, and wisely setting aside one's own will for the sake of one's neighbor is humility. Purity is praying to God, "²⁸ ." Not condemning is love. Long-suffering is not harboring any ill thoughts toward one's neighbor. A God-loving heart is not repaying evil with evil. Silence is not prying into matters that do not concern you. Poverty is a heart free from malice. Mastering one's emotions is peace. To endure (all things) is meekness. Almsgiving is forgiveness. All this arises from the mortification of one's own will. It brings harmony among the virtues. It makes the ruling mind serene.

11. The conclusion of all this is: as I see in all the Scriptures, God desires nothing else from man but that he humble himself before his neighbor in all things, renounce his own will in regard to everything, pray to Him always for the gift of a helping hand to man, and for the preservation of his eyes from the sleep of forgetfulness and from the allure of captivity, for human nature is cunning and fickle. It is His (God's) work to preserve us. It is His power to grant us the strength to preserve ourselves. It is His protection to shield us from our poverty. It is His turning—to turn us toward Himself. It is His thanksgiving—to grant it to us. It is His grace—to grant us the grace to thank Him. It is His protection—to preserve us from the hand of our enemies. To Him be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

12. However, here is what gives rise to strife and what unmercifully corrupts the soul: verbosity, idle talk, twisting words (misinterpretation) to suit one's own purposes, lack of self-control, double-tonguedness, and insisting on one's own opinion. Whoever possesses these things has a soul barren of virtues. After all this, if the soul does not labor diligently at every virtue, it will not be able to attain the rest of the Son of God. Do not be careless about your life, brothers, and let not your mind devise all manner of excuses for wicked sloth, lest all your time be wasted before you attain the rest of the Son of God: that is, humility in all things, freedom from malice, hatred toward no one, attachment to nothing that is not of God, keeping one's sins before one's eyes, and putting to death every evil deed. And "*God is not false*" (Titus 1:2)—so that He may help our weaknesses through His bounty. Amen.

23. On Perfection

1. One of the Fathers said that unless a person acquires faith in God, an unceasing longing for God, a lack of malice, refraining from repaying evil with evil, suffering for the sake of God, humility, purity, love for humanity, renunciation of everything, meekness, long-suffering, and unceasing prayer to God with a sorrowful heart, true love—so as not to look back, not to regard anything that befalls him, not to rely on his own good deeds or service (prayerful labor—*leitorgia*), and to seek God's help against everything that befalls him daily—then he cannot be saved.

2. Your enemies, O man, do not slumber. Do not be negligent, do not neglect your conscience, and by no means believe yourself to have attained anything worthy of God while you still find yourself in the land of your enemies. Suffering for the sake of God (ascetic bodily privations), when undertaken with reason, makes up for previous negligence; the weeping of the soul heals the wounds inflicted by inner adversaries; perfect love for God, according to His will, stands against invisible warriors; and hidden purity, which conquers invisible enemies, prepares one for the rest of the Son of God, while visible purity preserves the virtues.

3. If knowledge is the parent (of all that has been said), then it is also the guardian (of it). The discovery (in the heart) of gratitude during temptation turns the temptations themselves back upon themselves. Doubting that your labor is pleasing to God prepares God's help to protect you. One who has devoted his heart to the godly pursuit of God in truth cannot think that he has pleased God. For as long as his conscience accuses him of anything unnatural, he remains alien to freedom. Because as long as there is an accuser, there is also a judge, and as long as there is judgment, there is no freedom. If, at last, during prayer, you see that absolutely no evil accuses you, then you are truly free, and you have entered into His holy rest, according to His will.

4. If you see that the good fruit has taken root within you, and the enemy's tares no longer choke it; if the adversaries—since you no longer struggle with your own passions—have retreated not of their own accord but through their own deceit; if a cloud has overshadowed your tabernacle, and neither the sun burns you by day nor the moon by night (Ps. 120: 6), if you have within you all the preparations (all the furnishings) of the tabernacle, so that you may set it up and preserve it according to God's will, then (know that) victory has been accomplished in you by God, and from now on He will already overshadow (your) tabernacle, because it is

²⁸ In Paissius's version it reads here: "not to regard oneself causes one to be consumed by weeping"; this is not found in the Greek manuscript. In the Latin version it reads: "He who hates his own passions remains in weeping and tears."

His, He will go before it and prepare a place for it (rest, peace). For if He does not first come to rest in the place He desires, then it, as Scripture says, cannot come to rest (have peace) (Num. 9:16–23).

5. There is great danger as long as a person does not remember himself and does not see clearly that there is no longer anything within him from (the part of the enemies) who strive to disrupt the monastic life by teaching unnatural practices. We must therefore ensure that the fear of His goodness (God's, or of the Good God) reigns over us, that the remembrance (of death and judgment) constantly strikes us, and that holy humility reigns over our hearts at all times, by God's grace, (and for this we need) not to be negligent about what prepares and preserves all of this (those holy feelings and dispositions), but to remain in that state of mind even until the end—to see our sins unceasingly, and to trust ourselves in nothing, as long as we remain in the bondage of evil.

6. When someone condemns a neighbor, rebukes and humiliates a brother in his heart, reviles him at every opportunity, instructs him with anger, or slanders him before others, this alienates him from the grace that the saints receive and from virtuous qualities. For this destroys the labors a person undertakes, annihilating their good fruits. Whoever says, "I mourn my sins," yet does nothing of what is said, is foolish. Whoever says, "I weep over my sins," yet gains nothing from it, deceives himself.

7. One who seeks silence but does not strive to cut off the passions is blind in the pursuit of virtue. One who neglects his own sins and is concerned only with correcting others is alien to wholehearted prayer and to a reasonable supplication to God. This is true courage—when a person struggles against his past sins, for the forgiveness of which he asks, always imploring that he may not fall into them again, neither in his heart, nor in his actions, nor in his feelings.

8. Unless the memory of his sins constantly reigns over his heart and turns him away from all that is in the world—so that it does not overwhelm him—he cannot put an end to his sins; and, content merely to worry about them, he will remain subject to the condemnation of God's creation. Blessed is he who has been deemed worthy of this in truth, and not hypocritically or with deceit. However, this is the task of those who truly mourn: through this visible act, to focus their mind and emotions on not condemning their neighbor. For if you are content with concern for your own sins, this will alienate you from—or cause you to forget—the sins of your neighbor.

9. Retaliating for evil is far from true sorrow. Adapting to anything worldly out of vanity is also far from it, even in thought. Grieving that your opinion regarding this adaptation was not accepted—this, too, is far from it. Doing as one pleases is far from it. To say of someone that he is good or bad is a source of shame for him, because he knows full well that he himself is worse than that person. To desire to know about a matter that is not his own is a source of shame for him, as well as ignorance and an evil bondage that prevents him from seeing his own sins.

10. If someone slanders you and you are distressed by it, then in truth there is no weeping here. If you have any worldly dealings and, having suffered a loss, you grieve over it, then there is no fear of God here. If people say something about you that you do not even know about, and you become agitated, there is no (fear of God) here. If someone praises you, and you accept it, there is no (fear of God) here. If someone rebukes you, and you are hurt by it, there is no (fear of God) here. If you seek out the world's famous people, desiring their friendship, then there is no (fear of God) here. If someone, while speaking with you, argues with you, and you want to insist on your own words, then there is no (fear of God) here. If your words are despised and you grieve over it, then there is no (fear of God) here. All this reveals the old man, that he is still alive and exercising his power, because there is no one there (within) to oppose him—(there is no fear of God)—nor is there true lamentation.

11. One who acts according to God must have discerning eyes to know himself (and realize) that he becomes an enemy of God (when he indulges) his own will. If you, as a keeper of God's commandments and doing all your deeds wisely for God, keep in mind that you cannot please God in a manner befitting His glory, and set your sins before your eyes, you will find them resisting the evil one (the spirit) who seeks to bring you down with the notion of your own righteousness, —and they will preserve the structure that your weeping has built for you. Then you will realize that you have come to know yourself and where you dwell (in what state you find yourself), and you will not believe your own heart that you have won a victory. For until a person stands before the judgment seat, hears the (final) verdict concerning himself, and learns what his place is, he cannot believe this, since the fear remains as to whether he has pleased God. Sorrow for God, which gnaws at the heart, can restrain the emotions, and resistance (to thoughts), combined with sober-mindedness, preserves

the faculties of the mind. But a person is dissatisfied with this and cannot believe that he must constantly be in toil as long as he remains in the body.

12. Blessed are those who do not boldly trust in their own deeds, as if they were pleasing to the Lord, and who are ashamed to meet God because of such a lack of confidence in their own deeds, who have come to understand His glory and strive first and foremost to do His will, according to His desire; who have recognized their own weakness and are content with sorrow for themselves, so as to mourn for themselves, without concern for the rest of God's creation, which He Himself is to judge. The victory of the one who labors (for God) will be revealed when, having united himself wholly with God, he passes away according to His will. He is to be inscribed in the Book of Life—when the heavenly angels bear witness that he has passed by the rulers of this world²⁹. From then on, his memory will be with the heavenly (inhabitants). But as long as the battle rages, a person lives in fear and trembling, victorious today and defeated tomorrow—or defeated today and victorious tomorrow.

13. Struggle constricts the heart, but dispassion is unyielding. It has already received its crown and is unconcerned about the fate of our three distinct parts, once they have attained peace with one another in God. These three parts are: the soul, the body, and the spirit, according to the Apostle, who speaks of them in a passage of his epistle (1 Thess. 5:23). Thus, when these three are made one by the action of the Holy Spirit, they can no longer be separated (from one another). So Christ, having died and risen, *“no longer dies; death no longer has dominion over Him”* (Rom. 6:9). His death was our salvation, for by His death He put sin to death, and His resurrection was life for all who firmly believe in Him. He healed (His own) from their passions so that they might live in God and bear the fruit of righteousness.

14. Do not consider yourself dead (to sin) as long as you endure the torments (of sinful temptations) from your enemies, whether while awake or asleep; for as long as a poor man remains on the racecourse, he has no boldness, and, looking from afar (at the finish line), he does not believe in his own efforts. Only the foolish, though he falls daily, thinks of himself as victorious, because there is no struggle on the field of battle.

15. That is why the Lord said to His disciples, when sending them out to preach: *“Do not greet anyone along the way”*; but greet those who are in the house. And *“if there is a son of peace there,” “stay with him”* (Luke 10:4 ff.). And there your peace will rest. Again, Elisha said to Gehazi as he sent him: *“If you meet a man, do not greet him,”* and do not accept a greeting from anyone (2 Kings 4:29). For he knew that the boy would not be revived, and that he did not have the power to raise him. When the man of God entered—and saw the boy lying on the bed, he closed the door behind him and, with every sense, performed the feat and the actions of ascending to the boy's bed, descending, and pacing back and forth seven times. When his senses were warmed, by the will of the Spirit of God, the boy's eyes were opened.

16. What, then, are we—poor souls who love the glory of this world, more so than the glory of God, who do not know how to wage battle, but are eager to enter into rest, and do not understand God's long-suffering—that He leaves the tares along with the good fruit, and until the good fruit has reached maturity and is fully formed, He does not send anyone to gather the tares? And Giezius completed his journey, but did not manage to raise the boy, because he loved human glory more than the glory of God.

17. Blessed are the eyes that, with wisdom, are ashamed to reach out to God, and that strive to heal their wounds with wisdom, acknowledging their sins and praying for their forgiveness. But woe to those who waste their time, thinking themselves sinless, who trample on their conscience, unwilling to be brought to repentance by it, and who do not acknowledge that it is no small thing to be the least.

18. Just as a farmer who has sown seeds, if they bear no fruit, considers them lost in vain and grieves over his labor because of this failure to bear fruit, so too a person, even if he knew all mysteries and possessed all kinds of knowledge, performed many miracles and healings, endured various sufferings, and went so far as to be stripped of his clothing, is still in danger, not trusting his conscience, and still surrounded by treacherous enemies and slanderers, until he hears these words: *“Love never fails; but it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”* (1 Cor. 13:8, 7).

19. Oh, how difficult is the way of God, as He said, *“For narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”* (Matt. 7:14)! And we, who are idle and lustful, take comfort in the fact that we cannot (as it were) bear the yoke of which He spoke: *“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and*

²⁹ In Paissios' version: “ethereal.”

My burden is light” (Matt. 11:29–30). And who among those who are wise according to God and who fear Him does not strive with all his strength to bear suffering in every labor and separation (from the world), in silence, in guarding (the heart), and in caring (for salvation)? Yet even he will find himself unworthy to utter the name of God with his lips. Because of the passions at work within us, O Lord, Jesus Christ came (to us on earth) so that in us—who “walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8: 1–4)—He might put them to death, revealing to us the full will of the Father. Teaching His disciples, He said to them: “When you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; for we have done what we ought to have done’” (Luke 17:10–11). He said this to those who had undertaken the work and kept it up, because they knew there were thieves ready to steal their labor. Anyone who sees something poisonous flees from it in fear—whether it be a snake, a viper, a scorpion, or anything else possessing deadly venom. But our poor, shameless soul accepts everything that kills it; it does not flee from it, nor does it even retreat, but delights in it and becomes one with it in heart, which is why it wastes its time in vain, remaining barren and fruitless.

24. On Detachment

1. On the path of virtue there are stumbles, for there are enemies, there is deception, there is change, there is abundance, there is moderation, there is scarcity, there is sorrow, there is joy, there is heartache, there is grief, there is peace of heart, there is prosperity, there is need: for this is a journey to attain hope.

2. Detachment, however, is far removed from all this and lacks nothing: for it is in God, and God is in it. It has no enemies; it no longer experiences failure, nor unbelief, nor the toil of self-control, nor fear of passion, nor desire for any thing, nor anxiety about anything hostile.

3. Its glorious virtues are great and innumerable. As long as there is any fear of passion within a person, so long is he far from it (apathy); as long as condemnation springs from a person’s heart, so long is he alien to it (apathy).

4. This is the body that the Lord Jesus took upon Himself. It is love, which He taught His disciples to manifest in their deeds with joy.

5. Many ignorant people thought they had attained it while passions still dwelt in their souls and their bodies were not yet fully purified—and thus strayed from the right path. Forgive me, for God’s sake.

25. To Abba Peter, His disciple

1. You wrote to me: “I wish to repent before God for my sins; if the Lord delivers me from the bitter worldly cares I have, then I have spoken well.” You said correctly: “If I am delivered from the affairs of this age, for it is impossible for the mind to be concerned with both one thing and another, just as the Lord said, ‘You cannot serve both God and Mammon’ (Matt. 6:24). Mammon refers to every activity of this world. Therefore, if a person does not renounce it, he cannot serve God.

2. What other kind of service to God is there, if not this: to have nothing in our minds that is foreign to Him when we bless Him, no lust when we pray to Him, no malice when we sing to Him, no hatred when we worship Him, and no evil jealousy which places obstacles in our way when we sit before Him, nor shameful lust in our members when we remember Him: for all these are dark walls that surround the poor soul, and it cannot serve God purely while harboring these things within itself. This places obstacles in her path, preventing her from encountering God, from blessing Him in secret, and from praying to Him in the sweetness of love, in the joy of the heart, and in the holy desire to be enlightened by Him.

3. Because of this, the mind is always clouded and cannot prosper in God, since it does not take care to cut this off wisely. Yet it is impossible for it to concern itself with cutting this off unless it becomes carefree regarding the affairs of this world³⁰. One concern is directed outward—toward the things of this world, for the repose of the body—while the other is directed inward, toward the satisfaction of the passions, and erects obstacles to the virtues. But the soul does not perceive this inner, passionate concern unless it is freed from the outer one. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said that anyone who has not renounced his entire will cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:26).

4. External concern stems from one’s own will, while internal concern arises from external influences. Our Lord Jesus, knowing that the will reigns over one or the other, commanded that it be cut off. Since the

³⁰ Paissius states here: “For there are two things that occupy the soul”—two objects occupy the soul, or two concerns.

mind becomes dead while the soul is preoccupied with external matters, the internal passions then exert their influence without hesitation (without restraint). Thus, if the soul obeys Jesus' word—to cut off all its desires—it begins to hate every deed of this world. And then the mind is stirred and remains vigilant until it has cast them out of its home, listening ceaselessly to the soul and guarding it, lest it turn back to that which caused it distress.

5. The soul is like a young married woman who, when her husband is away, without fear or shame, does not take care of the household with the diligence (as she ought to). But when her husband returns to his home, she immediately, out of fear, ceases what she had been doing and begins to attend to everything according to her husband's will. And he, having returned, attends to the household affairs in every way that is needed. So it is with the mind. When it is stirred, it cares for the soul and guards it unceasingly until she gives birth through him, and he raises her children. And finally, they become of one heart; the soul submits to the mind, and she submits to him, as it is written in the Epistle: *"The husband is the head of the wife."* And again: *"A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but a woman is the glory of her husband. For a man does not come from a woman, but a woman from a man; nor was a man created for the sake of a woman, but a woman for the sake of a man."* For this reason, a wife ought to have authority over her head, because of the angel. Yet neither is the husband without the wife, nor the wife without the husband, in the Lord. For just as the wife is from the husband, so also the husband is from the wife; but all things are from God" (1 Cor. 11:3, 7–12).

6. This word applies to those who have been deemed worthy to become one with the Lord and no longer have their former nature. These are the ones who pray to God in purity. These are the ones who bless God with a holy heart. These are the ones enlightened by God. These are the true worshippers whom God seeks. These are the ones of whom He said, *"I will dwell in them and walk among them"* (2 Cor. 6:16). What He said applies to them: that if two agree (among themselves), whatever they ask for in His name will be granted to them (Matt. 18:19). Thus, He desires that His own be pure from all material things—both outwardly and inwardly in the soul—and from everything that He abolished in His own body through His Incarnation, as He said: *"Abide in Me, and I in you"* (John 15:4). You see, brother, that He first desires us to be in Him through our deeds; then He will be in us, for the sake of purity to the best of our ability.

7. But someone will say: I have come to be in Him through baptism, yet I cannot live a life (consistent with that). Listen, beloved! Certainly, whoever receives baptism receives it for the abolition of sin, as the Apostle said: *"For we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"* (Rom. 6:4, 6). For it is impossible for Christ to dwell together with sin. Therefore, if Christ has taken up residence in you, then sin has died, *"but the Spirit lives for righteousness,"* as the Apostle also said (, Rom. 8:10). For *"a married woman is bound by law to her living husband; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. Therefore, while her husband is still alive, she is an adulteress if she belongs to another man; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is not an adulteress if she belongs to another man"* (Rom. 7:2–3).

8. Therefore, whoever wishes to know whether Christ has taken up residence within him will recognize this from his own thoughts. As long as sin draws the heart, God has not yet taken up residence in him, and His Spirit has not yet found rest within him. For it is fitting for God to dwell in a person when he performs deeds (consistent with this), and for a person to be in God when his soul is freed (from passions), as the Apostle said: *"Whoever is joined to an adulterer is one body with the adulterer; but whoever is joined to the Lord is one spirit with the Lord"* (1 Cor. 6:16–17). For every form of unnaturalness is called a harlot.

9. Thus, when the soul is set free and passes beyond all that obstructs its path in the air (that is, in its ascent to God), then it begins to be in God and receives from His Spirit—as it is said, *"If anyone is joined to the Lord, he is one spirit with the Lord,"* —and He teaches her how to pray—she who worships Him unceasingly and clings to Him. And He dwells within her, guiding her and giving her rest unceasingly, revealing to her His ineffable honors and gifts. For she is reborn of Him through baptism and through the breathing of His Spirit, as it is written: *"Whoever is born of God does not sin, and the evil one does not touch him"* (1 John 5:18), *"for he is born of God"* (1 John 3:9). As He said in the Gospel: *"Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 18:3). And again: *"Be like newborn infants, longing for the pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up"* (1 Peter 2:2).

10. What, then, are the characteristics of a child? A child, if beaten, cries, and rejoices with those who rejoice with him; if scolded, he does not get angry, and if praised, he does not become arrogant; if his friend

is honored more than he is, he does not feel jealous; if something belonging to him is taken away, he does not get upset; if they leave him a small inheritance, he does not inquire about it, does not enter into a dispute with anyone, does not take offense over what is his, and does not hate anyone; if he is poor, he does not grieve; if he is rich, he does not act haughtily; if he sees a woman, he does not lust after her; sensual pleasure or excessive worry do not rule over him; he does not condemn anyone, nor does he lord it over anyone; he does not envy anyone; he does not speak boastfully about what he does not know; he does not mock his neighbor because of his appearance; he has no enmity toward anyone; he does not pretend; he does not seek the honors of this world; he does not seek to amass wealth; he is not a lover of money; is not insolent; is not self-indulgent; does not teach with passion, nor does he worry about anyone; if stripped of his clothes, he does not grieve; does not insist on his own way; fears neither hunger nor evildoers; fears neither wild beasts nor strife; when persecution comes, he does not waver.

11. Such is the one of whom our Lord Jesus spoke (holding him up as an example): *“Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* But when a child grows up a little and evil begins to dwell within him, the Apostle rebukes him, saying: *“Let us not continue as infants, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by the cunning craftiness of deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, let us grow up in every way into Him”* (Eph. 4:14–15). And again he says: *“As infants, I fed you with milk, not with solid food; for you were not yet ready for it, nor are you ready even now”* (1 Cor. 3:2–3). And He also says: *“For as long as the heir is a child, he is in no way superior to a slave, though he is the master of all. But he is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were enslaved under the elements of the world”* (Gal. 4:1–3). And again: *“Flee the desires of youth”* (2 Tim. 2:22). Teaching us to reject such childishness, he said: *“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; but be infants in evil, while in your thinking be mature”* (1 Cor. 14:20). So, what is the nature of (true) childlikeness in Christ? Here is what it is, according to the words of the Apostle Peter: *“Put away all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander, as newborn infants”* (1 Peter 2:1). Do you see, brother, what the words spoken by our Lord Jesus mean: *“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 18:3)? These words are full of awe, because our Lord spoke them with an oath: *“Amen, Amen, I say to you”*: He Himself is the Amen. Why did the Apostle say: since there is no one greater than God, *“He swears by Himself, saying, ‘Truly’ (amen), ‘I will surely bless you’”* (Heb. 6:13–14).

12. Let us, then, understand this word clearly and strive in every way, with fear and trembling, to fulfill it at every moment, as soon as the opportunity arises. When the enemy strikes us with an arrow of hostility toward our neighbor—or because someone insults us, dishonors us, slanders us, or argues with us—so that we might yield to him, or when an impure distress begins to gnaw at us, stirring up a bitter memory of what our neighbor has done to us—intending to darken our soul with anger and hatred—when anything of this sort approaches our soul, let us then hasten to recall the word of our Lord, which He spoke with an oath, saying: *“Amen, Amen, I say to you: unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Who would not be afraid upon hearing these words? Or which of the wise, desiring to save his soul, would not cast out of his heart every grudge he holds against his neighbor? Or who among those who fear falling into Gehenna will not root out from his heart all hatred, lest he be cast out of the kingdom? For our Lord said with decisive words: *“Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* This word is hard for those who cling to their own will, who love the world, and who have not known (or received) the gift of the Holy Spirit; for upon whomever He descends, He grants the forgetting of all evil and teaches him His own ways: — meekness instead of anger, peace instead of enmity, humility instead of strife, love instead of hatred, and patience instead of faintheartedness. Such are those who have been granted rebirth.

13. Let us therefore strive to cut away from our hearts what the great Apostle has told us, and let us set it aside so that we may become like little children. The Apostles, having taken care of this and cut it off from their souls (in order to become infants in Christ), later returned to holy maturity and perfection. For the Lord, after breathing on them, said, *“Receive the Holy Spirit”* (John 20:22); and when He appeared to them on the Sea of Galilee, He said, *“Children, do you have anything to eat?”* (Luke 24:41), reminding them that through the breathing of the Spirit, He had made them children—even though in the flesh they were not children. Again it is written: *“Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me. “Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise truly shared in the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who*

holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and deliver them” (Heb. 2: 14–15). Whose flesh and blood did He truly share, if not those who have abandoned all deceit and attained the measure of holy childhood? And they, too, have once again become perfect, according to the words of the Apostle: *“Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13). And again, *“the restoration of the body brings about the creation of itself through love”* (v. 16). Thus writes the Apostle John, saying: *“I am writing to you, little children, because you have known the Father... I have written to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one”* (1 John 2:13–14). You have now come to understand that those who were once consumed by malice have themselves become warriors against the enemy, because they have been stripped of his full armor, which is malice, and they themselves later became fathers and attained the measure of perfection, so that revelations and mysteries are entrusted to them until they attain wisdom, unity, goodness, gentleness, and purity, for these are the attributes of gentleness. They are the ones who have glorified Christ in their bodies.

14. Let us therefore be encouraged, beloved brother, by the great famine (it seems, a spiritual one), let us not lose heart in anything, but let us ceaselessly implore God’s goodness, that He may not allow us to be deceived by the wiles of the enemy and the envious one, who works evil without mercy and shamelessly insists and says, “If not now, then tomorrow,” but I will not yield until³¹ I overcome him. Why should we pray unceasingly, saying, as Saint David did: *“Look upon me and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I fall asleep in death; lest my enemy say, ‘I have prevailed against him.’ Those who hate me will rejoice if I stumble”* (Ps. 12:4–6). If our enemies begin to overcome us, let us cry out, saying: *“O God, who is like You? Do not be silent, nor be gentle, O God”* (do not be gentle toward our enemies). *“For Your enemies, O God, have raised a clamor”* (they have cried out... they have proclaimed), *“and those who hate You have lifted up their heads. They have acted treacherously against Your people by their own will,”* saying, “We will blot out the memory of Israel” (Ps. 82: 2–5). But the one who was empowered by the Holy Spirit said: *“O God, set me like a stake, like a reed before the wind. Fill their faces with shame, that they may know that You alone are the Most High over all the earth”* (Ps. 82:14, 17, 19). Thus, those who strive in their faith strengthen their hearts against their enemies, and before the enemies come to fight them, they establish themselves on the holy rock, which is Christ, saying with a steadfast heart: *“They surrounded me like a swarm of bees, and they blazed like a fire among thorns; but by the name of the Lord I withstood them”* (Ps. 117: 12).

15. When we see that our enemies have surrounded us with their cunning—which is despondency (sloth)—or are lulling our souls with the sweetness of lust, or are preventing us from feeling anger toward our neighbor when he does something wrong, or are weighing down our eyes with the desire for carnal pleasures, or seek to entice us to savor sweet delicacies, or make our neighbor’s words a poison to us, or urge us to disparage another’s words, or instill division among the brethren, saying: ‘this one is good, but that one is bad’—so, when such things surround us, let us not lose heart, but rather let us cry out with a steadfast heart, like David, saying: *“The Lord is the defender of my life! Though an army march against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, in Him I will trust. One thing I have asked 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 visit His holy temple. For He has hidden me... and lifted me up; and now He has lifted up my head above my enemies”* (Ps. 26: 1, 3–6). This is characteristic of those who have lifted their minds from dead works, which the Apostle calls “night,” saying: *“We are not of the night, nor of darkness”* (1 Thess. 5: 5). Rebuking those who are careless about themselves, He said: *“For those who sleep, sleep at night; and those who get drunk, get drunk at night”* (v. 7). And again: *“The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, and they will not escape”* (vv. 2–3), because they are in the night. But to those who have lifted their minds above the passions—which are the night—He said: *“As children of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation”* (v. 8).

16. Let us therefore do everything with a sober mind, free from dead works, and be watchful with our souls at all times, so that we do nothing but what is natural, for our nature is changeable, according to the words of the Prophet Isaiah, who said: *“The Lord is gracious to you, O humble and wavering one; you have had no comfort”* (Isa. 54:10–11). For the soul is like iron: if left neglected, it rusts; but when it is kindled by fire, the fire purifies it, and while it is in the fire, it becomes like fire itself, and no one can take it (in their hands), because it is fire. So it is with the soul: as long as it abides with God and sits before Him, it remains a

³¹ This passage has been corrected according to Paissios.

fire and consumes all its enemies who caused it to rust during its neglect, and (this fire) purifies it in renewal, like iron, and it no longer takes pleasure in anything worldly, but finds rest in its own nature, which it has been deemed worthy of, since it was originally its own. But when it abandons its nature, it dies. For just as an animal dies if it is submerged in water, because it is of an earthly nature, so too do fish die if they are cast onto the land, because they are of a watery nature; likewise, birds, while in the air, remain at peace, but when they descend to the ground, they fear being caught: so too does the perfect soul, dwelling in its own nature, die immediately upon leaving that nature.

17. This is why those who have become worthy and have been granted these gifts regard the world as a prison for themselves and do not wish to mingle with it, lest they die. Such a soul can no longer love the world, even if it wished to, remembering its former state—in which it found itself before it began to dwell in God—and recalling what the world did to it and how it rendered it empty. For just as when an enemy of the king enters a city, and the men of the city, out of fear, surrender to him, he immediately hastens, in his malice, to destroy the king's images and abolish his laws; then he introduces other harsh laws and sets up his own image there, and finally compels the entire multitude of the people to labor for him. But when the citizens secretly send word to the true king, saying, "Come, help us," and he, enraged at his enemy, comes with his army, then the citizens, upon hearing this, joyfully open the gates to him, and he enters and slays his enemy, destroys the image that had been forcibly set up, and repeals the laws; the city rejoices, and the true King, having restored his image and his laws, dwells within it, fortifies it so that no one may ever again take possession of it, and teaches those who live there to fight, so that they may stand fearlessly against any enemy. Such is the soul which, after holy baptism, was once again forcibly seized by the enemy, who humbled it with all manner of shameful wiles, overthrew the image of the King and set up his own image and his own laws, forced it to concern itself with the affairs of this world, taught it to act carelessly and wickedly, and in general made it whatever he wished—but to which, at last, the goodness of the holy and great King Jesus sent repentance—and the soul rejoiced. Repentance opened the way, and the great King Christ, entering into it, destroyed her enemy, erased his image and his ungodly laws, and, having set her free, established His holy image within her, imparted His laws to her, taught all her faculties to wage war, and finally rests in that soul, for she has become His. Thus it is with the soul by the grace of God!

18. Therefore, it is impossible for a soul to enter into the rest of the Son of God unless it bears the image of the King. Just as no merchant accepts or gives a coin unless it bears the king's image, nor does the weigher weigh it, nor does the king admit it into his treasury: so, if the soul does not bear the image of the Great King Jesus, the angels will not admit it, and the King Himself will cast it out, saying, "How did you enter here without bearing My image?" The sign of this image is love. For He Himself said: "*By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:35). But His love cannot dwell in us when the soul is divided, seeking God while also loving the world. Just as a bird cannot fly with one wing, or while carrying a burden, so too the soul cannot prosper in God while bound by anything of this world. Just as a ship, lacking something necessary, cannot sail, so too the soul cannot cross the waves of the passions unless it possesses some virtue. Just as sailors do not wear fine clothes, gloves, or boots, and (in case of need) cannot sail unless they are naked, so too the soul cannot cross the waves of the opposing spirits of malice unless it is stripped of all worldly things. Just as a warrior, going out to battle against the king's enemies, cannot stand against them unless he possesses some part of his full armor: so it is impossible for a monk to resist passions without possessing some virtue. Just as when a small section of a wall in a walled city is destroyed, the enemies, wishing to enter it, focus all their attention on that ruined section in order to enter through it—and even though there are guards at the gates, they cannot withstand the enemies unless the ruined section is rebuilt—so too, an ascetic monk, when possessed by any passion, cannot withstand the enemies and attain the measure of perfection.

19. It is not I who say this, but Divine Scripture itself. Thus it is written in the Book of Genesis: "*And God said to Noah, 'I have found you to be righteous in this generation'*" and perfect (Gen. 7:1). Again, He said to Abraham: "*Be blameless before Me, and I will establish a covenant with you... an everlasting covenant*" (Gen. 17:1, 7). Isaac, meanwhile, when blessing his son Jacob, said to him: "*May my God strengthen you, so that you may fulfill all His will*" (Gen. 28:1–). Again, in the Book of Numbers it is written: "*Anyone who has made a vow shall abstain from drinking wine, wine vinegar, strong drink, and anything derived*" (from grapes) "*even to the pith*" (Num. 6:1–4). And in Deuteronomy: "*When you go out to war against your enemies, keep yourself from every evil word until your enemy is delivered into your hands*"

(Deut. 23: 9–). *“As for these seven nations, do not leave any of them alive, lest they teach you to sin against Me”* (Deut. 20: 16, 18). Teaching those of us who say, “How soon will you destroy them, when there are so many of them?” not to lose heart, He said: *“You will not be able to destroy them in a single year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you; but little by little, until you multiply and grow strong... and God will enlarge your borders”* (Deut. 7:22). God also commanded them many times, saying: *“Take care not to make a covenant with the Canaanites, whom I intend to destroy from before you”* (v. 2).

20. Also, when Joshua went and surrounded Jericho and destroyed it, God said, *“Curse it and everything in it”* (Joshua 6:16). Furthermore, when Joshua wanted to fight the people of Gibeon, Israel fled from them, unable to stand against their enemies, because of a small item under a curse that Achar had stolen. Then Joshua fell on his face and wept before God, saying, *“Turn away Your wrath from Israel against their enemies”* (Joshua 7:8), and *“What shall I do?”* And the Archangel of the Lord’s power said to him, *“Since you are bound by an oath, Israel, you cannot stand against your enemies”* (–13). And (Joshua) did not go out to battle again until he had put Achar to death. We also see that God took the kingdom away from Saul because of the oath he had made concerning the Amalekites. And furthermore, because Jonathan dipped *“his staff (into a honeycomb) and put it to his mouth, God did not hear Israel on that day”* (1 Sam. 14:27, 37). Again, Ecclesiastes, teaching us that even the slightest passion destroys the power of virtues, says: *“Dead flies spoil the sweetness of the oil”* (10:1). Ezekiel also says: on the day *“the righteous turns away from the path of his righteousness and commits iniquity, I will bring a disease upon him, and I will not remember his righteousness”* (Ezek. 18:24). Again, the Apostle says: *“A little leaven leavens the whole lump”* (Gal. 5:9). Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, when they took part of the proceeds from the sale of a field and lied, immediately fell at the apostles’ feet and breathed their last, for this small offense. Again, James says: *“Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it”* (James 2:10).

21. Encouraging us to turn to Him, God says through Ezekiel: *“On the day the wicked man turns from his wicked ways and does what is just and right, I will not remember his wickedness, but he will live”* (18:21); *“For I take no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn and live; turn, then, and live, all you of the house of Israel”* (33:11). Again, Jeremiah says: *“Turn to Me, O house of Israel, and I will have mercy on you, says the Lord”* (Jer. 3: 12; 36:3). And again: *“Does a fallen man not rise again? Or does one who turns away not return? Why then have these people of Mine in Jerusalem turned away with a stubborn heart, and set their hearts on their own will, and refused to return, says the Lord”* (Jer. 8: 4, 5)? *“Return to Me, and I will return to you”* (Mal. 3: 7). And the Lord Jesus said: *“If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father forgive you”* (Matt. 6: 14–15). Likewise, the Apostle says: *“If anyone among you falls into any kind of sin, you who are spiritual should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness”* (Gal. 6: 1). Again, James says: *“Brothers, if anyone among you strays from the way of truth, and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings a sinner back from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins”* (James 5:19–20).

22. All these testimonies from Scripture urge us to examine ourselves to see if, while laboring (to do what is right), we harbor malice toward our neighbor, or if we hold a grudge against him, refusing to forgive him (for anything), lest this ruin our labor. In such a case, even our Lord Jesus Christ will not help us at the hour when our enemies attack us. For He Himself severely rebuked certain such people, saying: *“You wicked servant! I forgave you the entire debt because you begged Me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant? And in anger... he handed him over to the torturer, until he had paid back the entire debt. So also will my heavenly Father do to you, if you do not forgive each of your brothers their transgressions from your hearts”* (Matt. 18: 32 – 35). Examine yourself, brother, every day, if you wish to know your own heart—what is in it before God: is it condemnation (of your brother), or hatred (toward him), or envy, or contempt? If such poison takes root in your heart, remember (then) the Word of the Lord Jesus, spoken by Him: *“So also your heavenly Father will do to you, unless you forgive each of your brothers their offenses from your hearts.”* Whoever fears falling into Gehenna, let him cast out all malice from his heart, lest that terrible judgment fall upon him. Pay attention, then, to your heart, brother, and be on guard against your enemies, for they are all cunning in their wickedness. Be convinced in your heart of the truth of this saying: that it is impossible for a person to do good while doing evil, but it is possible for a person to do evil under the guise of good.

23. Therefore, our Savior taught us to be on guard against them (the enemies), saying: *“For narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it. But the gate is wide and the*

road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. 'Take heed,' He says, 'of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 'By their fruits you will recognize them'" (Matt. 7:14, 13, 15, 16). What, then, are these fruits of theirs, if not every kind of unnaturalness with which they press upon us, seeking to incline our hearts toward it? But false prophets cannot persuade those who love God with all their hearts to believe anything they say, according to the words of the Apostle: "*Who will separate us from the love of God? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? For I have come to know 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 will be able to separate us from the love of God.*" Do you see, my brother, what those who love God with all their hearts are like—that nothing worldly can separate them from His love?

24. Take care, then, that nothing harmful may separate you from the love of God—whether gold, or silver, or dwellings, or the sweetness of pleasure, or hatred, or slander, or a wound to the heart caused by a word, or any other poison poured into our hearts by the serpent. Do not be troubled (when you see such things within yourself), but rather hasten to fix your gaze on the bronze serpent that Moses made at the Lord's command. He set it on a pole at the top of the mountain so that anyone bitten by a serpent might immediately look upon it and be healed. Our Lord Jesus Christ became like this bronze serpent. (The serpent) is the enemy; by listening to him, Adam became an enemy of God. Our Lord Jesus became a perfect man, in every way—except for sin—like Adam, for our sake; but the bronze serpent, though similar (in appearance) to the one who was God's enemy, has no evil thoughts, no venom, no malice; it does not crawl or hiss, and it has no breath of the enemy. Our Lord Jesus fulfilled this type in order to neutralize the poison that Adam tasted from the serpent's mouth. And nature, which had become unnatural, was restored to its natural state. God spoke similarly to Moses: "*What is this in your hand?*" And he said, "*A staff.*" And He said to him, '*Cast it on the ground.*' So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, '*Stretch out your hand and take it by the tail.*' So he stretched out his hand, took it by the tail, and it became a staff in his hand" (Ex. 4:2–4). After this, God spoke to him on various occasions, saying: "Take the staff (which had turned into a serpent) and strike the river of Egypt with it in the presence of Pharaoh, and its water will turn to blood"; then: "Strike the Red Sea with it, and it will dry up"; and then: "Take the staff that is in your hand, with which you struck the sea, and strike the rock, and it will pour out water" (Exodus 7:19; 14:16; Numbers 20:8).

25. Do you see how, by following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, one who was once an enemy and a serpent is transformed into a staff, and none of his enemies can stand against him? This mystery is indeed great. Why, then, if the serpent sows its venom within us, do we hasten to look upon Him who was lifted up on the cross? All of this—the sufferings, the cross, and death—was done to Him for our sake. And He endured it all without changing, without taking offense at those who maligned Him, without uttering a harsh word, but remained steadfast, like the bronze serpent. Therefore, if we heed Him and follow in His footsteps, we will be spared from the bites of hidden serpents. His strength and help come from Him who said: "*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:14–15). This is what it means to follow in His footsteps—to be healed through Him. How, then, are we healed? If we believe that He is powerful (to do so). For those bitten in the wilderness, it was not the bronze serpent itself that came to heal them, but the one bitten by the serpent, looking upon it with faith, was healed. Many died there from the serpents because they did not believe the Word of God, as the Apostle said: "*Let us not test Christ, as they tested Him, and perished by the serpents*" (1 Cor. 10: 9).

26. Do you know, brother, that even to this day there is a serpent in the soul that desires to tempt Jesus? And what else is tempting Him but to question His commandments and not to keep them, as it is written: "*And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him, testing Him, and said, 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'*" (Matt. 22:35–40). Do you see that those who ask questions but do not act are called tempters? Because they do not want to believe in the bronze serpent, which can save them from the venom of the invisible serpent. So guard your heart and do not lose heart, saying, "How can I keep the virtues, being a sinful person?" For when a person forsakes his sins and turns to God, repentance renews him, as the Apostle says: "*Just as we have put on the image of the earthly, so let us also put on the image of the heavenly*" (1 Cor. 15: 49). Do

you see that God has given man the ability to be transformed through repentance and to be made completely new through it?

27. As long as a baby is in its mother's womb, she protects it at every moment from all evil. If he cries, she gives him her nipple and gently taps him on the cheek, warning him so that he will drink her milk with reverence and not be bold. If he cries because of this, she takes pity on him as on the fruit of her womb, comforts him, kisses him, and cherishes him until he takes her nipple. If you show a baby gold, or silver, or pearls, or any other treasure in the world, he may glance at it, but while in his mother's arms, he scorns it all in order to enjoy her nipple. His father does not scold him for not working or for not going to war against his enemies, because he is still too young and unable to do so: he has legs but cannot stand on them; he has arms but cannot hold a weapon. So his mother patiently endures him until he grows up little by little. When he grows a little older and tries to wrestle with someone else, and that person throws him to the ground, his father does not get angry with him for this, knowing that he is still a child. But when he becomes a man, his true character is revealed—whether he is an enemy to his father's enemies. Then his father entrusts his affairs to him, since he is his son. But if, after all the efforts his parents have made on his behalf, he, having grown up, becomes a scourge to them, hates his parents, refuses to heed their guidance, and befriends their enemies, then they, having withdrawn their favor from him, will cast him out of their home, (resolving) not to give him an inheritance.

28. And we, brother, will take care of ourselves, (compelling ourselves) to remain under the shelter of repentance; we will drink the milk from its teats, so that it may nourish us. Let us despise all that is visible, so that its milk may be sweet to our lips. Let us bear the yoke of his instruction, so that it may care for us more earnestly. If we engage in battle against our enemies, and they cast us down like little children, let us weep before him, so that he may implore our Father to avenge us against those who have wronged us. Let us cut off every desire of our hearts and love to be strangers, so that it may save us, as it saved Abraham. Let us submit to his hand, like Jacob, so that we may receive a blessing from our Father. Let us hate the desires of our hearts, just as Moses hated them, and, having been preserved under its shelter, let us rise up against those who sought to kill him (repentance), as one free from every sensual delight. Let us not despise it, lest it come to hate us, as Esau did. Let us preserve its purity, so that it may exalt us in the land of our enemies. Let us always have it as a good shelter, just as Jesus, the son of Nun, *the "Servant,"* says, "*Jesus, the son of Nun, the young man, did not leave the tabernacle*" (Ex. 33:11). Let us not give place to despondency in our hearts, lest it render us heirless in the Promised Land. Let us love humility in all things, and let us long to enter the land flowing with milk and honey, like Caleb. Let us not covet anything harmful, lest we be destroyed, like Ahar. Let us love his (repentant) conscience, so that it may humble us every hour and save us in the hour of temptation, like Rahab. Let us not love the pleasures of the palate from any delicacy, lest it destroy us, as it did the sons of Elijah. Let us guard ourselves against all unrighteousness, like Samuel, whose conscience was unblemished, so that we might not do anything evil to our neighbor. Let us not love malicious envy toward others, lest it (repentance) reject us, as it did Saul. Let us love not to repay evil to our neighbor, so that it (repentance) may preserve us from evil, as it did David. Let us not love self-praise and vanity, lest it cast us away from the presence of our Father, as it did with Absalom. But let us love humility and honesty, so that it may make us avengers against all the enemies of our Father, as it did with Solomon. Let us love complete renunciation of all things, restraining our members from every dead work, so that we may receive a courageous heart against our enemies, like Elijah the Tishbite. Let us not be pleasure-seekers or lustful, lest repentance destroy us as it did Ahab. Let us strive until death, so as not to lose His holy inheritance, like Nahab the Israelite. Let us be obedient in all things to our Fathers in God, cutting off every will of our own, so that, through perfect submission to them, their blessing may remain upon us, as it did upon Elisha. Let us not be lovers of money or deceitful people-pleasers, lest punishment befall us as it did to Gehazi. Let us love the faithful in all things (men) more than ourselves, so that it (repentance) may bless us, as it did the Shunammite. Let us not be passionate lovers of shameful deeds, lest it destroy us from its presence, as it did to Ahijah and Zedekiah, who were burned in the fire by the king of Babylon. Let us hate sin for the sake of our souls, even unto death, so that it may help us in our hour of need, as it did for Susanna. Let us not crave various delicacies, lest it forsake us, just as it did not forsake those who received food from Nebuchadnezzar's table. Let us love suffering in all things, so that it may rejoice over us, as it did over those who were with Azariah. Let us not be deceitful, like the Babylonians who grumbled against the faithful. Let us perform our (prayerful) services without indulging the sloth of the body, like Daniel, who preferred to die rather than abandon the prayers he offered

daily. For God is powerful to preserve those who love Him from temptations and to destroy the wicked. Thus, the faith of the righteous (Daniel) toward God turned the beasts into lambs and sheep. Blessed is the God of repentance, and blessed is he who loves Him (repentance) and submits his neck to the yoke of His will (repentance), until he is reborn from above by the will of God.

29. Therefore, brother, a person needs great discernment, the cutting off of every carnal desire, and vigilance in all his ways, so that he may not go astray or fall into the hands of his enemies (of repentance). Thus, a tendency toward self-righteousness hardens him, the condemnation of sinners drives him away, and the humiliation of the negligent cuts him off. It is written about him in Proverbs: *“The paths to her house are narrow; the sluggard’s bread he does not eat. She makes fine garments for her husband. She is like a merchant ship trading from afar: she gathers wealth for herself”* (Prov. 31: 27, 22, 14). Let us therefore seek to understand this from these words. A merchant, when loading a ship, places in it not just one kind of goods, but everything from which, as he knows, he will make a profit. When he sees someone suffering a loss, he does not compete with that person, but rather with those who have grown rich and are living in peace in their homes. He turns away from anything that brings a loss, and he acquires anything that brings a profit until he can buy it for himself. His unchanging rule is this: whatever brings him profit, he must strive to purchase more of the same, and ask those who do not envy him—those who have grown wealthy and rest in their homes—how much to sell this for and how much to buy that for. Such is the soul that desires to meet God without hindrance. It is not satisfied with a single venture, but seeks out every venture that is profitable (for salvation); and if it learns of a venture that is unprofitable, it flees from it so as not to suffer a loss.

30. Now, my brother, have you called yourself a merchant of Jesus? Then take care to be one. The King’s trade is far removed from anything that brings loss. Here are the things that are unprofitable to Him: human glory, pride, self-righteousness, arrogance, hurtful words, self-indulgence, boasting, and a love of entertainment. All these things are unprofitable to the merchants of Jesus, and it is impossible for them to please Him if they have such things in their shop. Examine yourself, brother: what is within you? Let your mind scrutinize your emotions—which of them bear fruit for God, and which are drawn toward sin. Are your eyes not captivated by the sweetness of pleasure? Is your tongue not overcome by insolence? Do you not see your heart delighting in human honor? Do your ears not delight in slander? All of this is detrimental to the mind. In the Book of Leviticus it is written: *“Thus you shall say to Aaron: ‘You shall not bring to My altar any of the clean animals that has a blemish, lest you die’”* (Lev. 22:18, 20). Aaron is a symbol of the mind. Since the enemy (usually) mingles his evil with righteous undertakings, God commanded that they be examined before being offered to Him, lest one die. To die, however, means to descend from contemplation and enter into agreement with those who seek to defile one’s senses.

31. Such are the words of those who have loved Jesus and placed their trust in Him! And their souls became a bride adorned with every virtue, possessing her own holy mirror, according to the words of the Apostle: *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Cor. 3: 18). For *“now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we shall see Him face to face”* (1 Cor. 13:12). Thus, those who have become His brides through purity look within themselves, as in a mirror, to see if there is any blemish on their faces that might displease their Bridegroom. For He seeks virgins, pure souls without blemish, as it is written of Rebekah, that she was very fair and had never known a man (Gen. 24:16). And the Prophet says: *“Virgins will be brought to the King in her wake; her faithful ones will be brought to You”* (Ps. 44:15). *“Will be brought”* points to His holy humanity, and *“her faithful ones”* points to their attachment to Him. Since rebirth through holy baptism has renewed them from all corruption, and repentance purifies them and makes them holy virgins who have forgotten all corruption and no longer remember it, as the Prophet said to them: *“Hear, O daughter, and see; incline your ear, and forget your people and your father’s house. Then the King will desire your beauty”* (Ps. 44:11–12). And all the heavenly powers will marvel at her because of the purity with which repentance has cleansed her and made her one body with the Lord, and they will say: *“Who is this coming up, white and beautiful, supported by her brother?”* (Song of Songs 8:5)?

32. Let us therefore devote all our strength, with tears, to striving little by little until we cast off the deeds of the old man, and to guard ourselves against every harmful act, until His love comes to us and, having taken away from us the image of the earthly, places in our hearts His holy, heavenly image, so that we may be worthy of Him, pure from every vice, as the Apostle said: *“Just as we have put on the image of the earthly, so shall we put on the image of the heavenly”* (1 Cor. 15:49). Since the Apostle knew that there is no man

without sin since the time of the Fall, and that repentance can restore a person to sinless renewal, he therefore said that we should abandon the deeds of one who has transgressed the Commandment and perform the deeds—that is, the holy Commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, who created mercy and bore the bondage of man in order to lead him into the hidden paradise and bestow upon him all His holy virtues, allowing him to taste of the tree of life, which is the purity manifested by Him in Himself, and having pacified the Cherubim with their flaming weapons, which were set to guard the way to the tree of life—which is the knowledge of His holy words, protecting them (the faithful) at all times—and shielding their ears from every word of the serpent, reminding them of the bitter bondage into which they had previously fallen, so that they might not return to it, and teaching them to give thanks unceasingly to Him who redeemed them with His precious blood. He blotted out the record of their bondage by the Cross (Col. 2: 14) and made them brothers and friends (John 15: 14; 20:17), having poured out His Spirit upon them by grace and comforted their hearts, He said, *“I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God”* (John 20:17). Furthermore: *“Father, I desire that wherever I am, they also may be with Me, for I have loved them as You have loved Me”* (John 17: 24, 23). He also showed us that He did not say this about everyone, but about those who, having set aside their own wills, followed His holy will and cut off from themselves every desire for this world. For He said: *“I have chosen them out of the world; therefore the world hates them, because they are not of the world”* (John 15:19; 17:9, 14). Do you see that those who have forsaken worldly things—they are the ones who have been deemed worthy to be the brides of the Lord Jesus? They abide in union with Him, as the Apostle said: *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am speaking in reference to Christ and the Church”* (Eph. 5: 31, 32). And again he said: *“to be a co-heir, a fellow member of the body, and a partaker of His promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”* (Eph. 3: 6). Do you see that His Holy Spirit dwells in those who have been deemed worthy to become one body with the Lord? And He helps them; He cares for them, as the Lord said: *“It is not you who will speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”* (Matt. 10:20). Likewise, the Apostle says: *“But God has revealed these things to us through His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”* (1 Cor. 2:10). *“We,”* he says further, *“have the mind of Christ”* (v. 16). How, then, is it possible for the mind of Christ to think of any sin?

33. Consider this mystery with your heart, brother: every kind on earth gives birth to its own kind, not to a different kind—whether it be livestock, a wild animal, a reptile, or a bird. Why did God bring them all to Adam—to see if there was anything like him? And none was found, because they were not of his nature. Then God, taking one of Adam’s ribs, created her as his wife, just as He had taken her from the man. This great mystery is also found in those who become brides of Christ, since they are of His very essence through rebirth and of His holy body, as the Apostle says: *“We are all one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”* (Rom. 12:5). And again: *“For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph. 5:30). Do you see what He desires? That a person be like Him in every way, just as Eve came from Adam and is like him in every way. Why, if we possess something of the foolishness of beasts, or the greed of wild animals, or the fickleness of birds, or the venom of reptiles, then such souls cannot be virgins and brides to Him, because they are not in accordance with His deeds. Do you see, brother, how He desires that a person be like Him, free from all unnaturalness, so as to be deemed worthy to be His bride? The soul recognizes its own thoughts through its deeds. If it performs the works of the Spirit, then (it is clear that) the Holy Spirit dwells within it, since the works of the Spirit regenerate the soul, making it dispassionate. And it is impossible for the Holy Spirit not to dwell in such a soul, as the Lord said: *“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter—the Spirit of truth”* (John 14: 15–17). And the Apostle also says: *“Or do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless, of course, you are unwise?”* (2 Cor. 13: 5).

34. Do you see that if anyone does not possess the works of Jesus, he is unwise and is not His bride? All the virgins prepared their lamps, but those who lacked the works were left outside the door. A net cast into the sea gathered [all kinds of fish], but [only the good ones] were accepted into the kingdom. The weeds grew up with the wheat, but when the harvest came, they were bound in bundles and thrown into the fire. All the branches remained on the vine, but those that bore no fruit were cast into the fire. The sheep grazed together with the goats, but He brought only the sheep with Him, while the goats were cast out. The sower sowed all his seeds equally, but was pleased only with those that grew in good soil. The one who gave silver (talents, mnás) gave it without partiality, but only the one who doubled it brought him joy. All were invited to the

wedding, but the one who did not have wedding clothes (the king) commanded to be cast into eternal darkness. These words apply to us, because we all say we believe, but those who do not have the works of His divinity, He will cast out, as He said: *“For many are called, but few are chosen”* (Matt. 22:14).

35. Let us examine ourselves, brothers, and consider our deeds before we meet the Lord. Let us not look to those who follow the carnal desires of their hearts, lest we lose the great wealth we are to find in the hour of need. Let us strive to acquire it, and let us despise what we have to leave behind as an enemy. Let us think of those who spent all their labor on the pursuit of perishable (goods), who abandoned them and departed, and for that reason inherited Gehenna, because they did not wish to follow in the footsteps of the Lord, so as to be deemed worthy to be His brides. Let us therefore strive before God with tears, with a sorrowful heart and secret groaning, so that (He may not allow us) to fall into such disgrace as theirs. For when a storm rages at sea, and many ships are lost while others remain intact, they do not say, *“We too will sink into the abyss like them,”* but rather they encourage one another not to lose heart and implore God to help them. Truly, a great storm is raging on earth. Let us, then, compel ourselves in every way to labor, and cry out to the Lord, lest we perish: just as when a storm arises at sea, the captain of the ship always finds, among both the sailors and the passengers, those who encourage him. (Let us know that) if a person does not rid himself of every thing that leads to destruction, he cannot be saved from this stormy sea. And Moses could not sing a song to the Lord until he had crossed the sea and seen the death of those who had sought to keep his people in Egypt, so that they might remain there as slaves. And when he had already led them across, when they had become completely free, only then did he cry out: *“Let us sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; He has cast horse and rider into the sea”* (Ex. 15:1).

36. Thus, when the mind rescues the soul’s senses from the desires of the flesh and transcends them, then the pillar of contemplation will separate the soul from the desires of the flesh. Then, if God sees the shamelessness of the passions as they rush upon the soul, seeking to keep its senses in sin, while the mind sits unceasingly with God in secret, He sends Him His help and destroys them all at once, as it is written: *“The Lord said to Moses: ‘Why do you cry out to Me? Command the sons of Israel to prepare themselves. And you, take the staff that is in your hand and strike the water of the sea—and it will become dry’”* (Ex. 14:15–16). God is faithful to extend His hand (of help) to Moses even now, to save Israel (the people) from the hands of the Egyptians—whose desires we once fulfilled—so that we too may be deemed worthy to sing a new song to Him, saying, *“Let us sing to the Lord, for He has glorified Himself.”* But how can we say, *“For He has been glorified,”* if we cling to our enemies and turn to Egypt of our own free will, craving the food there, and urging Aaron: *‘Make us gods’* who would lead us back to Egypt (Ex. 32:1)—and if we are so humbled by our faintheartedness that we despise spiritual food? But God is mighty enough to bring Moses back to us from the mountain to destroy the goring calf, by which we have provoked God to anger. God, who has granted us repentance, is able to bring us back to Himself once more, and to strengthen Moses to pray for us, saying: *“If You will forgive their sins, forgive them; but if not, blot me out of the book of life”* (Ex. 32:32), and to clothe Jesus with power, in due time, to destroy the seven nations who, through their envious deceit, have made the Promised Land their own—so that Israel may receive its inheritance, living in it without envy forever and ever. Amen. His is the power, His is the help, His is the protection, His is the wisdom, His is the guardianship. He is in us, O Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory and honor of God the Father and the Holy Spirit, “ ” before the ages, now, and forever and ever. Amen. When you read this, brother, take care to put it into practice, so that the Lord may cover you in the hour of temptation. Amen.

26. The words passed down by Abba Peter, a disciple of Isaiah

1. My father said: Be courageous in restoring what needs to be corrected. Purity prays to God. The fear of God and self-restraint (in all things) put away sins. If a person harbors a spirit of vengeance in his heart, his prayer is in vain. Do not seek advice or words (about matters) of this age, and do not give it yourself to those who ask you. Keep your ears constantly open to those who speak within you, and pray to God to grant you the gift of knowing whose words to obey. Exert your strength—do not say one thing with your lips while harboring another in your heart.

2. He said again that humbling oneself before God with reason, and obeying the commandments with humility, bring about love, and love brings about dispassion.

3. He also said that one who practices silence must examine himself every hour to see if he has passed beyond those who are meant to hold him aloft, and if he has been freed from them while still remaining here.

For as long as he remains subject to their bondage, he has not yet been freed (from them). That is why toil lies before him until grace is with him.

4. He said again: A person who harbors condemnation in his heart is far from God's grace. When I asked him about this, he said: If you wish to follow our Lord, Jesus Christ, keep His word; if you wish to crucify the old man with Him, you must cut off those who lead you away from the cross, prepare yourself to endure humiliation, soothe the hearts of those who embitter you, humble yourself, rule over your desires, keep your lips silent, and not condemn anyone in your heart.

5. He also said that one who is in silence must have such a fear of encountering God that it anticipates even his breath; for as long as sin draws his heart toward itself, the fear has not yet been perfected in him, and mercy is still far from him.

6. He said again: "This is what is pitiful—that we have dispassion on our lips, yet lawlessness and evil in our hearts."

7. He also said that if a person does not strive, even unto death, to make his body like that which the beloved Jesus bore, he will not meet Him with joy, nor will he yet be freed from bitter bondage.

8. And this is what he said further: "Have mercy! Have mercy! Have mercy! To what state has the soul come! In what purity was it created, and under what power does it now stand, and by what vanity is it bound!"

9. He also said: "As long as you are in this body, I beg you, do not let your heart slacken, for just as a man cannot expect any fruit from his faith while it is still sprouting in his field—because he does not know what will become of it before it is stored in his granaries—so a man cannot let his heart slacken *'as long as there is breath in his nostrils'* (Job 27:3), and just as a man does not know what affliction will befall him until his last breath, so a man must not let his heart slacken as long as he has breath, but he must always cry out to God for His help and mercy.

10. I asked him, saying, "Father, what is humility, and what gives rise to it?" And he said to me, "Obedience, the cutting off of one's own will in humility without effort, purity, bearing insults, and enduring the words of one's neighbor without burden—this is what humility is."

11. He said again: "Blessed is he who has acquired the new man before meeting Christ." The Apostle also said that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50), and he further said: *"If there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not acting like mere mortals and walking according to the flesh?"* (1 Cor. 3:3)?

12. He also said: We find ourselves in such tribulations from our enemies because we have not properly recognized our sins and have not experienced sorrow with understanding; for if sorrow were revealed in us, it would lay bare our sins before us. But when we are granted to see our sins in truth, then we will be ashamed even to look upon the faces of those standing before us, or even upon shameless women, because they are more honorable than we are; for they commit their sins with such boldness because they do not know God, whereas our hearts are filled with sin, even though we are believers.

13. He said again: Enduring reproach and yielding one's will to one's neighbor according to God, so as not to allow the enemy to enter among us, reveals a person of action; for if anyone has an alert mind and stands with reason at the feet of the Lord Jesus, he will take care to cut off his own will—so as not to be separated from his beloved Lord. But the one who holds fast to his own will in everything is not at peace even with the faithful, because timidity, anger, and resentment toward his brother accompany his heart everywhere. The one who says, "Nothing will happen to me if I speak or listen," is like a blind man who, whether being led in or led out, does not see the light. Understand this from what happens to the sun: even a small passing cloud can obscure its brightness and warmth. But this is not evident to everyone, only to those who possess knowledge.

14. He said again: A person who is always looking at his own sins has no tongue with which to speak to anyone.

15. He said again: "Hate everything in the world, and the rest of the flesh, because they make you an enemy of God. Just as a person who has an enemy wages war against him, so we must wage war against our own body, so as not to give it any rest."

16. He said again: A practitioner who loves God must pay attention to every thought of his own, and examine and discern them to see whether they originate from his body or not. For as long as unnatural desires have power over any of his members, to that extent he is not yet considered a virgin.

17. I asked him: What is the meaning of the words of the Gospel prayer, "*Hallowed be Thy name*"? And he said: This applies to the perfect, for it is impossible for the name of God to be hallowed within us, who are possessed by passions.

18. He said again: "Our ancient fathers said that withdrawal (from the world) is flight from the body (renunciation of the body) and contemplation of death."

19. He spoke again about peace with one's neighbors, saying that where there is no peace, God does not dwell. But whoever sees his own sins also sees peace. For it is not sin that leaves no room for God's dwelling, but humility. David, he says, having sinned with Uriah's wife, found nothing to offer to God as a sacrifice for his sins except the following words: "*A broken spirit is a sacrifice to God; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise*" (Ps. 50:19).

20. He said again that cowardice and the condemnation of others fill the mind with rebellion and prevent it from seeing the light of God.

21. He said again: "Strive with all your strength to avoid the following three passions that corrupt the soul: greed, ambition, and the love of ease; for when they gain the upper hand over the soul, they prevent it from prospering."

22. He said again: "If, while you are sitting in your cell, a thought comes to you to judge your neighbor, then judge him by measuring your own sins, concluding that your sins are greater than those of your neighbor. Likewise, if it occurs to you that you are doing righteous deeds, do not assume that they are pleasing to God." Every healthy part of the body cares for the sick part, saying, "I have something in common with it," and sympathizes with it until it recovers. The hard-hearted person says in his heart, "I have never sinned," but the one who has acquired humility bears his neighbor's reproach, saying, "It is I who have sinned." He who despises humility holds in his heart that he is wise and has never hurt anyone, but he who fears God cares for the virtues, lest even one of them be lost.

23. He said again: "If, while sitting in your cell, you perform the service (*leitorgian*) to God, and your heart is drawn to anything that is not of God, yet you think that this is not a sin—that these are merely thoughts and not sin—then (know that) the service you perform in silence is not true. If you say, "God accepts the service of the heart that I have performed in silence," then (you must agree that) even when your heart is in league with evil in silence, that silence is counted as a sin against God.

24. I asked him, and he told me that one who finds no help in times of war and peace cannot believe.

25. He spoke again about teaching, saying that fear is inherent in this matter, lest one sin against what one teaches; for as soon as one sins, one can no longer teach.

26. He spoke again about Holy Communion: "Woe is me! Woe is me! For if I associate with the enemies of God, what kind of communion can I have with Him? Thus, I partake of the Eucharist to my own judgment and condemnation. For this is the word we speak: "Holy things for the holy," that is, the holy (should receive) these holy (mysteries). But if I am holy, who then are those who act within me?"

27. I asked him, saying, "What is the fear of God?" And he told me that a person who is drawn to anything that is not of God does not have the fear of God.

28. I asked him again, "What is a servant of God?" And he told me that as long as a person is enslaved to his passions, he cannot be considered a servant of God; rather, he is a servant of whatever possesses him.

29. I said again: "Woe is me! Woe is me! For I have not striven to purify myself in order to receive grace. Woe is me! Woe is me! For I have not striven to triumph over my enemies in battle, so that I might reign with Christ; for how can one who is enslaved to others draw near to his King? Woe is me!" Woe is me! For Your name, O Lord, rests upon me, yet I serve Your enemies. Woe is me! Woe is me! For I partake of food that my God abhors, and because of this He does not heal me.

30. I visited him when he was sick and found him suffering greatly. Seeing the sorrow in my heart because of his suffering, he said to me: "Only when subjected to such infirmities can I barely recall that bitter hour; but the health of the flesh is of no use (for such pursuits)." It seeks robust health in order to wage war against God, but the tree that is watered daily does not wither and does not cease to bear fruit (according to its kind).

31. He said again: "A person needs a courageous and noble heart to care for the observance of God's commandments."

32. He said again: “Woe is me! Woe is me! For I have accusers before me—some I know, and some I do not know—and I cannot renounce them. Woe is me! Woe is me! For I have accusers, and how can I meet my Lord and His saints when my enemies have left not a single part of me sound before His face?!”

33. I asked him, “What must a person of silence do?” And he said to me, “A person of silence needs the following three [virtues]: constant fear, unceasing prayer, and unrelenting vigilance over his own heart.”

34. He said again that a man of silence must guard himself so as not to hear a single word that is unprofitable to him, for this destroys his labor.

35. He also spoke of Abba Serapion, recounting that when an elder asked him, “Out of love, tell me, how do you see yourself?” he replied, “I am like one who, standing on a tower and looking out, waves to those passing by so that they will not approach him.” And the elder who had asked him said: “I see myself as having built a fence around myself and locked it with iron bolts, so that when someone knocks, I do not know who is there, or where they came from, or what they want, or what they are like, and I do not open the door for them until they leave.”

36. He said again: “Whoever seeks the Lord with a contrite heart, He hears that person if he asks for it with understanding, and diligently seeks Him with a contrite heart, and is not bound by anything worldly, but cares for his soul with fear, so that he may present it blameless before God’s judgment seat by his own strength.”

27. On “Take heed to yourself” (Deut. 15:9)

1. Pay close attention to yourself, daring and believing that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, and possessing ineffable glory and greatness, became an example for us, “*that we may follow in His footsteps*” (1 Peter 2:21), and for our sake humbled Himself with the greatest and most immeasurable humility, taking the form of a servant, becoming poor, regarding disgrace as nothing, enduring many shameful insults, and as it is written, “*Like a sheep led to the slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He did not open His mouth. In humility His judgment was taken away*” (Isaiah 53:7–8)—and (finally) He endured death with great reproach for our sake: so that we too, in accordance with His commandment and because of our own sins, might willingly endure it, whether anyone, justly or unjustly, reviles us or slanders us, and—what can we say—even if they drive us to death, let us be led like a lamb to the slaughter, and let us be, like senseless cattle, not resisting at all, but rather, if we can, praying, or at least remaining silent, with great humility.

2. Pay close attention to this, believing that it is most beneficial and salvific for the soul to endure insults and dishonor for God’s sake, and to bear them willingly and serenely, reflecting that, because of my sins, I deserve to suffer even more, and that in every way I am deemed worthy to suffer and bear something for the Lord, so that, perhaps, through many sufferings and humiliations, I may, even if only in a small way, become an imitator of the sufferings of my God. And whenever you remember those who have insulted you, pray for them from the heart and sincerely, as for those who have brought you great blessings, without complaining against them in the least.

3. Take great care to regard as a great death, as the ruin of your soul and eternal torment, and thus to despise and utterly hate self-seeking and the love of glory—the desire for glory, or honor, or human praise—and also the thought that you are something, or that you have accomplished some virtue, or that you are better than anyone else; and cut off every shameful desire and carnal pleasure, even the slightest; likewise, do not allow yourself to socialize with anyone unnecessarily, or to touch another’s body, or to eat even a little out of turn; so that, by keeping yourself in this way and guarding yourself in small matters, you may not fall into grave sins, and, by despising the small things, may not gradually sin in greater ones.

4. Take great care to consider yourself, from the bottom of your heart and in truth, the least and most sinful of all Christians, and always keep your soul weeping, humbled, and groaning; and, as one unworthy and foolish, always remain silent, and in general do not speak unless necessary.

5. Take care to always remember and keep before your eyes the eternal fire, the eternal torments, and those condemned to it, and consider yourself more one of those there than one of the living.

6. Pay close attention to yourself, knowing that our Lord died and rose again for us, so that you may no longer live for yourself but for the Lord, *who “died and rose again”* for us (2 Cor. 5:15), taking courage and believing that you are always in His presence, and that He sees your heart.

7. Pay close attention to yourself, always being ready to obey God's will—whether it be death, life, or any kind of suffering—with all your desire and faith, and always expecting the great and terrible trials that will come upon you, along with sorrows, torments, and the most bitter death.

8. Be very careful that, as one who stands before God, you do nothing without His will, not even the smallest thing. Whatever you wish to do—whether to speak, act, visit someone, eat, drink, go to sleep, or do anything else—first ascertain whether it is according to God, and confess the reason why you desire it; then do it as is fitting before God. In this way, in all your deeds and words, confess yourself to God, so that you may gain greater familiarity with Him and greater boldness before Him.

9. Pay close attention to yourself so that, if anyone offends you in any way and you feel sorrow or anger, you remain silent and say nothing except what is proper until you have first calmed your heart through prayer; only then should you finally speak with your brother. If you need to rebuke a brother, and you find yourself in a state of anger and agitation, then by no means say anything to him, lest you become even more upset. But when you see that both you and he are in a good frame of mind and gentle disposition, then speak to him—not as one who rebukes, but as one who reminds, with all humility.

10. Be very mindful to expect daily the temptation that is coming upon you—whether it be death, or great sorrows and misfortunes—and (when it comes) endure it willingly and without confusion, remembering that *“we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22).

11. Be very careful, in everything that lies before you—whether in word, deed, or thought—not to seek your own will or your own peace, but to discern God's will carefully, and carry it out perfectly; and even if it seems difficult, endure it and do it for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, believing with all your heart that it is beneficial to you, more so than all human wisdom: for His commandment is eternal life, and *“those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing”* (Ps. 33:11).

12. Be mindful at all times, as if you were always in the presence of God, so that you expect nothing from anyone but everything from Him alone, with faith. And whatever you may need, pray to God that you may receive what you need according to His will. Give thanks to God always for all that you have, as He has granted it all to you. If you lose something, do not place your hope in any person; likewise, do not grieve or complain against anyone, but bear it cheerfully and without distress, thinking to yourself: “I deserve even greater sorrows because of my sins; however, if God wishes to have mercy on me, He can.” If you maintain this attitude, He will provide for all your needs.

13. Pay close attention to yourself: do not agree to accept anything unless you are certain that God is sending it to you as a reward for your righteous labors; and then accept it with complete peace of mind. But when you see that it comes from injustice, strife, deceit, or hypocrisy, reject and cast it aside, remembering that *“better is a small portion with the fear of the Lord than great treasures without fear”* (Prov. 15:16).

14. Pay close attention to yourself, and compel yourself to remain silent, so that God may grant you the strength to struggle and strive. But if someone needs to speak with you, and you first discern for yourself that this need is blessed, and that in this case it is better before God to speak than to remain silent—then finally open your mouth with the fear of God and trembling, keeping your face downcast and your words respectful and appropriate. When you speak with someone, speak sparingly out of love, and fall silent as soon as possible. If you are asked about something, say only what is necessary, and say nothing more.

15. Take great care to abstain not only from sexual immorality but also from lust of the eyes, the ears, the tongue, and the touch; keep your eyes focused only on yourself and your work, and do not turn them toward another person, unless you see that there is a blessed need for it. As for a woman or a man of attractive appearance, do not look at them at all unless it is necessary. Do not allow your ears to hear anything against anyone, nor idle conversations. Let your lips remain silent and speak only when necessary.

16. When you read this, my beloved, do your utmost to ensure its fulfillment, so that God may protect you in the hour of temptation. Amen.

28. On the Branches of Evil

1. It is necessary to speak of the branches of evil so that a person may know what passion is and what separates him from God, and may pray for His grace regarding each of them—that His help may be with him and that He may give him the strength to fight against them until he is able to cast them off entirely. For they are wounds in the soul and separate it from God.

2. Blessed is the one who has cast them off, for he will be a wise sheep, fit for God's altar, and will hear the joyful voice of the Lord: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord"* (Matt. 25:21). But those who wish to follow their fleshly desires and refuse to heal themselves with the holy medicine of repentance in order to become pure—in the hour of need they will be found naked, lacking the garment of virtue, and will be cast into utter darkness, where the devil dwells, clothed in the garments of the passions, which are: fornication, lust, greed, slander, anger, envy, vanity, and pride. These are the very branches (of evil), and there are many like them, such as: intemperance, adornment of the body, entertainment, sloth, frivolous speech, shameless glances, the desire for expansion, unscrupulousness, disregard for God's judgment, envy of one's neighbor, lying against a brother, seeking to please men, false testimony, false knowledge, the desire to teach, love for the customs of the world, faintheartedness, impatience, hatred of one's neighbor, failure to reproach oneself (unself-awareness and complacency), love for human glory rather than the glory of God, flaunting one's deeds to be glorified by people, a love for exquisite delicacies, indulging in carnal passions in the heart, regarding self-denial (or self-abasement) as a temptation, boasting of one's knowledge, quarrelsomeness, insisting on one's own will, regarding oneself as intelligent and wise, regarding one's brother as foolish, and humiliating him.

3. All this takes place in a poor soul until it separates it from God. These are the heavy burdens that Adam took upon himself when he ate from the tree. It is of these that it is said: *"He took our infirmities and bore our diseases"* (Isa. 53:4...). It is these that our Lord Jesus Christ put to death on the cross. They are the old wineskins into which no new wine is poured. They are the grave clothes with which Lazarus was bound. They are the demons whom Christ sent into the herd of pigs. This is the old man, whom the Apostle commanded us to put off. This is what he said: *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50). This is what he says: *"For if you live according to the flesh, you will die"* (Rom. 8:13). These are the tares that sprang up from the soil of Adam when he was cast out of Paradise.

4. But Christ's yoke is light: anger-free purity, kindness, meekness, joy of the spirit, self-control over passions, love for all, holy reasoning, unshakable faith, endurance of afflictions, regarding oneself as a stranger to the world, and the desire to depart from the body and meet Christ. These are the light burdens that Christ has commanded us to bear. This is the path on which the saints undertook many labors until they completed it. This is what no one can attain unless they cast off the old man, free themselves from him, and acquire love—and love makes them carefree regarding everything. But this love cannot be kindled within us as long as we love anything of this world, as it is written: *"You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons"* (1 Cor. 10:21). And Isaiah says: *"Who will tell you that fire is burning? Who will tell you of the eternal place? (unless) he walks in righteousness, speaks the right path, hates lawlessness and injustice, and shakes his hands free from bribes: he who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from seeing injustice—he will dwell in the heights of a cave in a strong rock: "Bread will be given to him, and his water will be sure"* (Isa. 33: 14–16).

5. Do you see what honor God bestows upon those who strive in this brief time and have cast off the burden of the world by enduring their sorrows? Do you see how God's help comes upon those who have cut off their own desires and erases all passions within them, because they have followed God's will? But those who cling to their own desires and wish to fulfill them—though they *"begin in the Spirit"*—are unable to stand firm against their enemies because of their desire to fulfill their own will, and so they *"end in the flesh"* (Gal. 3: 3), rendering their labor vain and fruitless. For this, the prophet Jeremiah rebukes them, saying, *"Cursed is the one who does the work of the Lord carelessly"* (Jer. 48:10).

6. Do you see that if some, desiring to serve God, are enslaved to their passions, God does not dwell with them, but, leaving them to their own will, delivers them into the hands of those who hate them? And instead of the honor they seek from people, they receive reproach for not having stood up to their enemies until God came to their aid and humbled them (the enemies). Thus, without toil, sweat, and suffering, a person is not heard by God, according to all the Scriptures.

7. Let us therefore implore God's mercy with all our hearts, with tears and sorrow, submitting to every person for the Lord's sake, humbling ourselves even before our brothers, as though they were wiser than we are, repaying no one evil for evil, and harboring no evil thoughts in our hearts toward anyone, but remaining united in heart, saying nothing about the needs of the world or about anything: *"This is mine,"* but examining our minds daily to see how far they have progressed, and guarding them so that they do not entertain impure

thoughts, —depriving our body of satiety, so that it may not demand from us the satisfaction of its passions—so that the body may humble itself before the soul, and the soul may submit to the mind and become a bride, pure from every defilement, and call out to her bridegroom, saying: *“Let my brother come down into his garden, and let him eat of its fruit”* (Song of Songs 5:1).

8. Let us therefore strive, brothers, so that, having gained such boldness toward Him, we too may hear the word He spoke: *“I desire that wherever I am, they also may be with Me”*; for I have loved them as You have loved Me, Father. *“You are in Me, and I am in them”* (John 17:23–24). May the Holy Trinity, consubstantial and without beginning, show mercy to us, that we may find rest, together with all His saints, on the Day of Judgment. To Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

29. Lamentations

1. Woe to us, fleeting and transient beings, that because of our temporary, lawless, carnal lusts, we will not behold the glory of the Lord!

2. Woe to us, for although “the perishable must put on the imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:50), we, having despised the imperishable, are irresistibly drawn to the perishable!

3. Woe to us, for we nourish our flesh—which is destined to decay into worms and putrefaction—in sin, fearing neither the fire that will torment us eternally nor the worm that never sleeps!

4. Woe to us, for our bodies—defiled by impurities—are honored with bows and kisses by Christ-loving people, while we are like whitewashed tombs, harboring deadly sin within us!

5. Woe to us, for through intemperance in food and delicacies we store up within ourselves the seeds of lust, and through this we are stirred up to lawless carnal union!

6. Woe to us, for we do not compare corruption with incorruption, nor do we fear God’s divine and terrible justice!

7. Woe to us, for we are faint-hearted in doing good, yet zealous and quick to do evil!

8. Woe to us, for we have made our body—which is capable of being a dwelling place of eternal light—a dwelling place of eternal darkness!

9. Woe to us, for He who became the Son of Man, consubstantial with God the Father, has no place to lay His head within us—though He became incarnate for our sake—while evil foxes and deceitful spirits have made their dens within us!

10. Woe to us, for those who are righteous in heart will present their souls to the Judge as blameless and their bodies as holy and unstained, while we, having defiled souls and unclean bodies, must await nothing but condemnation to eternal torment!

11. Woe to us, for though we are lovers of injustice and all impurity, we demand for ourselves the honor due to the saints!

12. Woe to us, for though we are the condemned, guilty of many sins, we mingle among the saints and the meek as if we were pure and free!

13. Woe to us, for though we are full of transgressions, we admonish and instruct those who are far better than we are!

14. Woe to us, for having a log in our own eye, yet acting as if we were blameless, we pass judgment and take offense at the slightest (like a splinter) faults of our brothers!

15. Woe to us, for we bind heavy and unbearable burdens upon others, yet we ourselves, as if we were the weakest in body, refuse even to touch them with a finger!

16. Woe to us, for though we are lacking in the divine monastic life, we rush without shame to teach others active virtue!

17. Woe to us, for having forgotten our past sins, we neither agonize over nor weep for our new ones!

18. Woe to us, for having begun well with God’s help and grace, we have now become carnal!

19. Woe to us, for we have become so mired in impure thoughts that, as if we did not see our own sins, we ask whether we have committed them!

20. Woe to us, for when we eat and drink, we do not remember the battle raging within us because of our gluttony!

21. Woe to us, for as soon as the demons stir up lustful memories within us, they find us already ready for them, in harmony with our thoughts!

22. Woe to us, for having abandoned divine prayers and thoughtful readings, we spend our days in empty daydreams and idle chatter!
23. Woe to us, for our hearts are so hardened that, though we often strive earnestly for contrition and tears, we fail to achieve it because of our extreme negligence and sloth!
24. Woe to us, for when God said, "*The soul that sins shall die*" (Ezek. 18:4), we do not care about it in the least, even though it sins ceaselessly.
25. Woe to us, for while our body is prone to sin because of satiety and pleasures, we stir up impure and vile thoughts to the point of lust, receive the arrows of the Evil One into our hearts through our eyes, and through physical contact become lustful beasts, neither considering our rational dignity nor fearing eternal torment!
26. Woe to us, for we groan and worry much about the sufferings and illnesses of the flesh, yet we remain insensitive to the wounds and incurable diseases of the soul!
27. Woe to us, for the sovereign power of the soul is subject to its slave—the flesh—and the worse prevails over the better, rather than both working in a single desire for the God who created them!
28. Woe to us, for our sins are renewed by evil and impure thoughts, and we fail to distinguish between God's withdrawal from us and the invasion of impure spirits within us!
29. Woe to us, for, being foolish and unwise, we love and admire the praise of the saints rather than their feats and deeds.
30. Woe to us, for in keeping God's commandments we show neither the fear of servants, nor the zeal and prudence of hired men, nor the love of sons!
31. Woe to us, for in order to please people, we do not refuse to say and do everything, without caring about what is righteous!
32. Woe to us, for we are ashamed before men when we sin, yet pay no heed to eternal shame.
33. Woe to us, for though we were born of poor and obscure parents, we did not know ourselves—we did not think of ourselves—yet having vowed before God a life of poverty and obscurity, we have become so conceited that we demand to be placed on a par with the rich and the famous!
34. Woe to us, for in the world we were abstinent because of poverty, but now, having been called to abstinence, we are very concerned with satisfying our stomachs and the comfort of the flesh!
35. Woe to us, for while the angels gather around those who fear God, and the demons around those who do not fear Him and transgress His commandments, we place ourselves in the ranks of the demons!
36. Woe to us, for when we meet and converse with the rich and powerful, we strive to please them, yet when the poor approach us as supplicants, we turn away from them as if they were a nuisance!
37. Woe to us, for we do not treat every person as our duty requires, but act as we see fit and as we please.
38. Woe to us, for we precisely define our rights (our claims), judge them, and teach about them, yet we have strayed far from doing good!
39. And woe to us, for we carefully clear the land of thorns and thistles and other plants harmful to the fruit, yet we do not carefully purify our souls with the fear of God from the evil and impure thoughts that corrupt the holy virtues!
40. Woe to us, for even though we are to depart from this earth, where we live as strangers, we spend many years preoccupied with earthly and perishable things, yet at the time of our imminent departure from here, we will not be granted any authority over any of them!
41. Woe to us, for we must give an account to the dreadful Judge of every deed of our earthly life, every idle word, and every evil and impure thought and memory of our soul—yet we are so carefree about our souls as if we were not to be held accountable for the entirety of our lives!
42. Woe to us indeed, not only because of our wickedness and lawlessness, by which we have sinned, but also because of our contempt for God's promises and our unbelief in them!
43. Woe to us, for like fools we have clung to corruption, and though we had the opportunity, through a life according to the Gospel, to be united with incorruption, because of our love for earthly things, we have remained strangers to eternal incorruption!
44. Woe to us, for we have preferred loathsome corruption to incorruptibility!
45. Woe to us, for though we had the opportunity to overcome every form of sensuality, out of self-indulgence we chose instead to be overcome by our passions!

46. Woe to us, for we are ashamed and afraid to sin in the sight of people, yet before the eyes of Him who sees what is hidden, we neither tremble nor fear to blaspheme and sin!
47. Woe to us, for we do not season our words with divine salt, but always speak to our neighbor words that are useless and far from godliness!
48. Woe to us, for we speak to people with flattery, deceit, and pretense, without fear of condemnation for it!
49. Woe to us, for our sloth and despondency allow demons to steal the tenderness from our hearts!
50. Woe to us, for having renounced the world, yet we surpass the laity in our passions!
51. Woe to us, for though we ourselves are in need of much teaching and instruction, we correct others when they err in trivial matters!
52. Woe to us if the Lord tests us on earth and brings us to judgment while we remain unrepentant!
53. Woe to us, for we do not look into the depths of our own hearts, and therefore we are overcome by sensuality and pride!
54. Woe to us, for while we constantly defile our souls with impure thoughts, we nevertheless desire that others regard us as saints and honor us with such titles!
55. Woe to us, for having given ourselves over to vanities, we have forgotten the struggle against the devil!
56. Woe to us who sin here without fear! For there we will be met by the unquenchable fire of Gehenna, pitch-black darkness, the never-sleeping worm, weeping and gnashing of teeth, and eternal shame before creatures both higher and lower than ourselves.
57. Woe to our unwise and unrepentant soul! For at the resurrection of the dead, with wailing and gnashing of teeth, it will weep and groan in its sinful body, struck with despair by the bitter and agonizing torments of the eternal fire.
58. Woe to us, for in this land of exile and sojourn we love accursed revelry, yet we do not remember the sweetness of paradise and we despise the Kingdom of Heaven!
59. Woe to us, for we are like the foolish virgins in our lack of mercy, and we do not purchase oil here through acts of charity toward our neighbors to light the lamps (there)!
60. Woe to us, for day and night we send up prayers to God, saying, “*Lord! Lord!*” yet we do not do what He has commanded!
61. Woe to the one who wrote these lamentations, for though I am guilty of everything written here, I have not even uttered a single sigh of repentance!
62. Woe to the one who grieves for others while neglecting his own sorrows (and does not grieve for himself)!
63. Woe to us, for though we have accusations in our consciences—accuses that ceaselessly condemn us and testify against us—we are not ashamed; and though we are subject to condemnation and torment for all we have done, we do not tremble at the dreadful Judgment Seat of God!
64. Woe to us, for while our deeds stink, we rejoice in human praise!
65. Woe to us, for our wandering thoughts, our distraction, and our forgetfulness rob our hearts of the fear of God!
66. Woe to us, for our preoccupation with worldly vanities turns our hearts into barren ground and dulls our sensitivity to spiritual matters!
67. Woe to us, for though we are sustained by God’s long-suffering, we are not struck down by death for our deeds; and yet, having been granted such mercy, we do not strive to become merciful ourselves!
68. Woe to us, for we do not now remember our sins, but when our soul is separated from the body, then all of them—in word, deed, and thought—will be revealed to us at once, imprinted and written in the memory of our hearts, amid excruciating and bitter repentance!
69. Woe to us, for despite the Apostle’s declaration to all that “*whoever eats (the bread) and drinks (the Lord’s cup) unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon himself, not discerning the Lord’s body*” (1 Cor. 11:29)—we, being filled with our own impurities, approach the awesome mysteries of God, excusing ourselves for what we have done in our nighttime fantasies and wicked thoughts! Whoever approaches God with impure thoughts, with eyes that are not blameless, with a body that is not chaste, with the desires of soul and body that are not untainted—to how many bodily diseases and infirmities of the soul does he make himself liable? And then—to eternal torment and boundless shame.

70. Woe is me, that I write this while shedding bitter tears, yet have not even begun the work of repentance!
71. Woe is me, for I speak the truth but do not perform good deeds!
72. Woe to me, who teaches well but acts badly!
73. Woe to those who sin in the pleasures of the flesh! For their end will be bitter, with eternal shame.
74. Woe to those who grieve over useless things! For they have deprived themselves of the soul-saving sorrow that leads to repentance.
75. Woe to the slanderers and the abusers! For they have alienated themselves from blessed love.
76. Woe to the ill-wishers and the envious! For they have made themselves strangers to God's goodness and mercy.
77. Woe to those who seek to please men! For they cannot please God.
78. Woe to the flatterers! For they have fallen away from God's truth.
79. Woe to the proud! For they stand on the side of the apostate devil.
80. Woe to those who do not fear the Lord! For they will become entangled in countless sins and will be chastised both here and there.
81. Woe to us, for we cannot tolerate (and protect ourselves from) the stings and bites of fleas, nits, lice, flies, mosquitoes, and bees, yet against the jaws of the great dragon—which stings us and devours us as if at a feeding trough, and pierces us with all manner of deadly stings—we provide ourselves with no help or refuge!
82. Woe to us, for the devil exhausts us with pleasures and illnesses, hardships, and all manner of worldly allurements, yet we refuse to turn away from our evils!
83. Woe to us, for while the apostasy has lasted so many years and so many have abandoned the Orthodox faith, we shed no tears, our hearts do not ache, nor do we restrain ourselves from our passions, but we add sin upon sin, so that for our evil deeds and for our unbelief, we may immediately receive bitter eternal torment in Gehenna!
84. Woe to us who have written these lamentations, for as our end has already drawn near, we—having neither repented of the evil deeds of our youth nor mourned them—have added in our old age great and unbearable evils and the gravest sins.
85. Woe to us, for we are not even ashamed of the gravest sufferings and various bodily ailments, but we revel in sin, and with contempt for what is right, with complete intemperance and licentiousness, we feed our vile and sinful bodies!
86. Woe to us, for we must pass through a fire that rages more fiercely than the waves of the sea, “*so that each one may receive what he has done in the body, whether good or evil*” (2 Cor. 5:10).
87. Woe to us, for we do not give thought to that dark and incorporeal burning, nor to the eternal bitter weeping and gnashing of teeth there! For God will take away the brightness from the flame, yet leave the burning and the darkness in the fire for the ungodly and sinners.
88. Woe to me, poor soul! “*For I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart*” (Rom. 9:2)! For, lamenting over myself, I must say: evil has clouded my mind and obscured the truth; death has conquered life; the earthly, perishable, and temporary has replaced the heavenly, imperishable, and eternal; what is vile and hateful has seemed sweeter and more pleasing than the true love of Christ and honor; delusion, having condemned the truth to exile, has cast it out of my soul; I have chosen sorrow instead of joy, shame and reproach instead of boldness and praise; I preferred bitterness to sweetness; I loved the earth and its ashes more than heaven and its kingdom; the darkness of the evil-hating enemy entered my heart and obscured the light of knowledge in my mind.
89. Woe is me! Woe is me! What snares of the devil have ensnared me and, tripping me up, cast me down from such a height! I have grown weary, and my sweat has drenched me in vain. Who will not weep for me? Who will not weep bitterly for me, who am exhausted by vain labors and have suffered shipwreck at the harbor? “*Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O friends*” (Job 19:21), and plead earnestly with my good and merciful Lord Christ, that He may have mercy on me and dispel this dreadful darkness of the devil, the enemy of goodness, from my mind, so that I may see the mire in which I lie and, though able to rise, refuse to do so. Or has my shortened time already cut off all hope for me?! There is no sickness greater than mine; there is no wound like mine; there is no tearing like the tearing of my heart; “*for my iniquities have overtaken my head*” (Ps. 37: 5). My wounds are not wounds from a sword, and my dead are not the dead of

battle, but the enemy's fiery arrows have pierced me and blinded my inner self, and "*I have sunk into the depths of darkness, and there is no standing*" (Ps. 68:3), —"*the fear of which I was terrified has come upon me*" (Job 3:25),—"*and the shadow of death has covered us*" (Ps. 43:20).

90. Woe is me! Soul, look and see the present, which is fleeting, and which, in a little while, will pass away with bitterness and sorrow, and the future—which is most dreadful. Consider, soul, how many blessings and hopes you are forsaking, and what torments you will soon inherit, without end and without consolation! Therefore, before the light fades from above your head, come forward in advance, and, falling down, pray and beseech the Giver of eternal light to deliver you from the all-consuming flame and from lightless darkness. For it is His to forgive sins and bestow blessings upon us, who are unworthy of His mercy. To Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

2. Rules and Advice for Novice Monks³²

Beloved brother! If you have already left this vain world and dedicated yourself to God, repent of your sins and keep the resolution you have made. Do not listen to your own thoughts when they begin to torment you, saying, "Your past sins will never be forgiven." But observe the following rules:

1. Do not eat with a woman; do not form a close bond with a young man; do not sleep in the same bed with a youth. When you take off your clothes, do not look at your own body.

2. If you are urged to drink wine, do not drink more than three small cups. Do not break this rule, even for the sake of friendship.

3. Do not neglect the prayers prescribed for specific times, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies. Strive as much as you can to meditate on the Psalms, for this will keep you from an impure life.

4. Love hard work and self-denial, so that your passions may be subdued. Do not consider yourself anything special in any respect, and you will never cease to weep over your sins.

5. Guard yourself against lies, for they will drive the fear of God from you. Do not reveal your good deeds to everyone, lest your enemy steal them.

6. Confide your afflictions to your spiritual fathers, so that you may find help through their counsel.

7. Compel yourself to engage in manual labor, and the fear of God will be renewed within you.

8. Do not judge your brother who sins, and do not despise him, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.

9. Do not be argumentative, insisting on your own way, lest evil take root in you.

10. Love humility and do not rely on your own counsel. Train your tongue to say, "Forgive me," and humility will come upon you.

11. When you sit in your cell, be mindful of three things: unceasing prayer, deepening your understanding of the Psalms, and manual labor.

12. Tell yourself: "I will not remain in this world beyond today," and you will be delivered from sin.

13. Do not be talkative, lest your former sins be renewed within you. Do not be lazy in your work; strive to delve deeply into the Psalms—and the peace of God will come upon you.

14. Compel yourself to weep in prayer, and God will have mercy on you and strip away your old self.

15. Know that labor, poverty, self-denial, and silence lead to humility, and humility brings forgiveness of all sins. Humility consists in a person considering himself a sinner and unrighteous, not insisting on his own words, cutting off his own desires, lowering his eyes, enduring insults, hating honor and peace, and saying to everyone, "Forgive me." By the power of humility, enemies are put to flight.

16. Always be sorrowful, but when the brothers come to you, rejoice with them—so that the fear of God may be renewed in you.

17. If you are going somewhere with the brothers, keep a little distance from them so that you may remain silent. Do not look this way and that, but immerse yourself in the psalms and pray to God in your mind. Wherever you go, do not be too trusting with the locals. Maintain modesty and shyness in everything, and do not reach out for what is offered to you until you are asked.

18. Do not sleep with another person under the same blanket. Pray at length before going to sleep, even if you are weary from your journey.

19. Do not allow anyone to anoint your body with oil, unless you are seriously ill.

³² Patr. Lat. vol. CIII, pp. 427, 434.

20. When you sit at the table with your brothers, do not eat with relish, and reach only for what is in front of you. Keep your knees folded. Do not raise your eyes to look at another. Do not drink water greedily or with a gurgling sound in your throat.

21. If you need to clear your throat while sitting among your brothers, stand up and do so away from them. Do not stretch or yawn when you are in the company of others, and if a yawn comes over you, do not open your mouth, and it will pass.

22. Do not open your mouth wide to laugh, for this will show that you lack the fear of God.

23. Do not covet another's possessions. If you acquire a book, do not decorate it, for this will reveal your attachment to it.

24. If you sin in any way, do not be ashamed to admit it, and do not make excuses with lies; instead, kneel down, confess your sin, and ask for forgiveness, and it will be granted to you.

25. If someone lies to you, do not be angry, but say, "Forgive me."

26. Do not be ashamed to ask your mentor questions.

27. If someone knocks on the door of your cell while you are sitting and busy with your work, set aside your work and attend to them.

28. Do not speak to anyone, nor listen to another's words without good reason.

29. If your spiritual father sends you on a journey, ask him how you should conduct yourself, and then act according to his instructions. Do not take his words out of context. If you guard your eyes and ears, you will not sin with your tongue either.

30. If you live with a brother, be with him as a stranger; do not command him to do anything, and do not act as if you are superior to him. If he commands you to do something you do not want to do, set aside your own will and do not offend him (by refusing), so that the peace between you is not disturbed. Know that whoever obeys is the greatest.

31. If you live with a brother and he tells you, "Cook something," ask, "What would you like?" And if he gives you a choice, cook whatever comes to hand, with the fear of God.

32. When you wake from sleep, offer a prayer before you set about any task; then immerse yourself in the Word of God, and only then set to work diligently.

33. Welcome the traveler joyfully and greet him, lest your meeting be harmful to both of you. When he enters, do not ask him any idle questions, but first ask him to pray; then, when he sits down, say to him, "How are you, my brother?"—and then give him a book to read. If he is weary from his journey, let him rest and wash his feet. If he begins to speak idle words, say to him, "Forgive me, my brother; I am weak and cannot bear to hear this." If his clothes are torn, mend them. If he is infirm and his clothes are soiled, wash them. But if he is a vagrant and you have holy guests with you at that time, do not let him in; instead, greet him properly and send him on his way. If, however, he is poor, do not send him away without comfort; give him whatever God has provided.

34. If a brother leaves something with you, do not examine what has been left, unless he is present.

35. If someone leaves you in his cell and goes out, do not look up to see what is in it, but when he is leaving, say to him, "Give me some work to do, and I will work until you return," and whatever he gives you, do it with diligence.

36. Do not pray lazily or carelessly, for by doing so, instead of pleasing God, you will provoke His wrath. Stand in prayer with fear and trembling, without leaning against the wall or spreading your legs, so that you stand on one foot and keep the other set back. Resist your own thoughts and do not allow them to be preoccupied with carnal matters, so that your prayer may be accepted.

37. When you attend the Liturgy, guard your thoughts and feelings, and stand in awe before God the Most High, so that you may worthily receive the Body and Blood of Christ and thereby heal your passions.

38. While you are young, do not wear fine clothing until you reach old age.

39. When traveling with someone older than you, do not walk ahead of him. If your elder stands up to speak with someone, do not remain seated; stand up with him and remain standing until he tells you to sit down.

40. When you enter a city or village, lower your gaze, lest what you see become a cause for strife in your cell.

41. Do not sleep in a place where you fear you might sin in your heart. Do not eat with a woman, and do not look at her—not even at her clothes—if you can help it.

42. If you are traveling with an elder, do not let him carry anything himself. If you are young, each of you should carry your own share. If the load is light, take turns carrying it by the hour. Let the one who is carrying go ahead, as should the one who is weak, and when he sits down to rest because he is exhausted, sit down with him as well.

43. When you ask an elder about your thoughts, reveal them freely, just as they are, to one whom you trust to keep your secrets. In choosing an elder, do not prefer one who is advanced in years, but one who is seasoned with spiritual knowledge and experience, lest you suffer harm or your passions multiply.

44. Compel yourself to pray long into the night, so that your mind may be enlightened. Reflect on your sins and pray to God about them, and He will forgive you.

45. If anyone begins to judge his brother in your presence, even if the one judging is among those who judge you yourself, say to him humbly: "Forgive me, my brother; I am sinful and weak, and I myself am guilty of what you are speaking of, which is why I cannot bear to hear it."

46. In everything, put your fellow brothers before yourself, and if a friend shows you honor in their presence, say: "It is for your sake that he has shown me such honor."

47. If anyone asks to borrow something from you, do not refuse.

48. Do not dwell often in your heart on the memory of those whom you have left behind for the sake of God's love, but remember death and judgment, and that none of them will be able to help you at that time.

49. If, while sitting in your cell, you remember someone who has wronged you, rise immediately and pray for him in your heart, that God may have mercy on him; in this way, the passion you harbor toward him will soon fade.

50. If you wish to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, make sure that no anger or hatred toward anyone remains in your heart; and if you know that someone is angry with you, ask him for forgiveness first, as our Lord has commanded.

51. If at night (in a dream) you suffer attacks of lust, be careful not to dwell on those shameful images in your thoughts during the day, lest your heart be defiled by sensual pleasure; but fall down before the Lord, and He will have mercy on you, for He knows human weakness.

52. If you impose extreme fasting upon yourself and begin to offer prolonged prayers, do not think that they will save you, but believe that God will be appeased by the affliction of your body and will help you in your weakness.

53. If illness overtakes you, do not lose heart or become discouraged, but give thanks to God that He is working to bring you this blessing through your illness.

54. While living in your cell, establish a fixed amount and a set time for your meals, and do not deviate from this. Give your body only as much as it needs to remain strong enough to perform prayers and the service of God. If, outside your cell, you are offered delicacies, do not eat your fill.

55. If the devils tempt you to undertake a task that you are not strong enough to handle, do not listen to them, for they usually lead a person's heart toward such tasks that he is powerless to overcome, so that they may later plunge him into despondency and mock him. And all their undertakings are without measure and without order.

56. Eat once a day, but do not eat until you are full. Give your body as much as it needs according to nature's demands (based on your constitution).

57. Set aside one half of the night for prayerful vigil, and the other for the rest of your body. Before going to bed, stay awake for about two hours in prayer and praise of God (psalm singing), then let your body rest. If your body grows lazy when the time comes to rise for prayer, say to it: "Do you really want to take a little rest at this time, only to face endless torment later? Wouldn't it be better to labor a little here, so that there you may enjoy eternal rest with the saints?" Then laziness will depart from you, and divine help will come to you.

58. When you take monastic vows, set your servant free; if he wishes to follow you and enter monastic life, do not allow him to live with you.

59. If you go to sell handicrafts, do not haggle over the price, as laypeople do. Do the same when you buy something; know that having few possessions brings you closer to God.

60. If a brother leaves something with you and you need it, do not touch it unless he gives you permission.

61. If a brother asks you to buy something for him when you go into town, do so; but if other brothers are with you, do it in their presence.

62. If an item is given to you, return it after using it as much as necessary, but do not keep it until it is asked back from you; if anything in it is damaged, repair it. If you yourself lend an item to someone, do not demand it back if you see that the person cannot return it to you for any reason, especially when you have no need for it at all.

63. If, after leaving your cell, you return and find that another brother is already living there, look for another one for yourself, but do not drive him out under any circumstances, lest God be angry with you. But if he himself voluntarily wishes to leave it, then you are in the right. If, in doing so, he takes any of its belongings, do not demand them back from him.

64. If you wish to leave your cell entirely, take nothing of its belongings with you, but give it to some poor brother, and God will have mercy on you wherever you go.

65. Nothing delights the demons more than when someone hides his thoughts from his spiritual father. Do not think to be like the fathers unless you imitate their labors.

66. Guard yourself against wealth and the love of it, for it corrupts the fruits of monastic life.

67. If you are struggling with a temptation that is pressing upon you, do not grow weak, but prostrate yourself before God and say: “Help me, Lord, for I am weak and cannot withstand this battle”—and He will help you if your prayer comes from a pure heart. If, after struggling, you overcome it, do not boast about it or rely on yourself, but be even more vigilant, for the enemy will not delay in bringing you a new battle, stronger than the previous one.

68. When you pray to God, do not say, “Lord, take this away from me and give me that”—but say, “Lord, my God, You know what is salvific for me; help me and do not allow me to sin before You or perish in my sins, for I am a sinful and weak person; do not deliver me to my enemies, for I have taken refuge in You; deliver me, Lord, for You are my strength and my hope.—To You be glory and thanksgiving forever. Amen.

3. Sayings of Abba Isaiah³³

1. Abba Isaiah said³⁴ : Since the same misfortunes befall both the sinful and the righteous, one should not think that all who suffer misfortunes do so because of any previous sins.

2. Those who do everything solely for themselves are serving their own pride—the greatest of all evils—from which arise isolation, unsociability, unfriendliness, falsehood, and wickedness. Man was not created to be isolated, but to live in communion with his fellow human beings, and even more so with God, the Creator of all things. Therefore, a wise person must be sociable and God-loving, so that he may also be pleasing to God.

3. Abba Isaiah said³⁵ : “From the love of human glory comes falsehood. Whoever repels falsehood with humility will find the fear of God growing in his heart. Do not, therefore, love the glory of this world, lest the glory of God depart from you.”

4. When, in performing your service, you do so with humility, as one unworthy, it is acceptable to God. But if, while doing so, a proud thought arises in your heart and you accept it, and, recalling another who is slumbering and neglectful, you condemn him in your thoughts, then know that your labor is in vain.

5. When and how does one become humble? When he has no tongue—to tell anyone that he is negligent, or to respond to one who has offended him; no eyes—to see the transgressions of another; no ears—to hear what is not beneficial to his soul; no hands—to overcome anyone, and he does not lay the blame for anything on anyone else, but attributes everything to his own sins.

6. A person must first and foremost acquire faith in God and unwavering love for Him, as well as kindness, refraining from repaying evil with evil, a life of hardship, humility, purity, and love for humanity—love and obedience toward all.

7. Detest all worldly things and bodily comfort, for they have made you an enemy of God. But just as a person who has an enemy wages war against him, so too must we wage war against the body, so as not to give it rest.

³³ Cited as a supplement to those included in the “Exalted Sayings.”

³⁴ Quoted by St. Damascene. *Patr. graec.*, vol. 40, p. 1212.

³⁵ Taken from the Alphabetical Paterikon.

8. A brother asked what the words “*Hallowed be Thy name*” mean. The elder replied: This is proper to the perfect, for it is impossible for the name of God to be hallowed within us as long as passions rule over us.

9. He said again: “It is better to remain silent than to speak, for silence gathers, while talkativeness scatters.”

10. It is a great feat to overcome vanity. One who falls into this deceitful passion becomes alien to compassion, is hard-hearted toward all, and ultimately falls into conceit and pride—this is the ultimate evil, the mother of destruction. Keep your deeds secret, then, and take care of this sickness of the heart, lest, for the sake of pleasing others, you forfeit the reward of your self-control. For whoever does anything to be seen by others deprives himself of his reward, as the Lord said.

11. Whoever desires to be honored by people cannot be free from envy, and whoever is envious cannot attain humility. Such a person has surrendered his soul to his enemies, and they lead it into many sins and destroy it. Flee, then, from vain glory, and you will be deemed worthy of God’s glory in the age to come.

12. If a thought comes to you to condemn your neighbor for any transgression, consider within yourself that you have sinned more than he has; and as for the good that you seem to be doing, do not believe that it is pleasing to God, and do not condemn your sincere brother. Self-abasement is the place of inner peace.

13. Abba Isaiah, having once seen a brother committing a shameful sin, did not rebuke him, but said: “If God, who created him, seeing this, does not consume him with fire, who am I to rebuke him?”

14. He also said: “Let us remember the One who had nowhere to lay His head.” Understand this, man, and do not pretend to be wise. It is He—and what has He become for your sake? The Lord of all is a stranger and has no home. O how ineffably great is Your love for mankind, O Lord! How greatly have You humbled Yourself for my sake? But if He who created all things by His word has nowhere to lay His head, why do you, wretched man, dwell so much on the vain? Why are you blinded by insatiability?

15. He who has acquired humility takes upon himself the fault of his brother, saying, “I have sinned.” He who considers himself wise despises and rebukes his brother, but he who humbles himself will never rebuke his brother.

16. Wisdom does not lie in speaking, but in knowing the right time to speak. Be silent with wisdom, and speak with wisdom. Before you begin to speak, think about what to say so that you may give a fitting answer. Do not boast of your wisdom. The one who says, “I know nothing,” knows the most. The crown of wisdom is to reproach oneself and place oneself below everyone else.

17. Idle talk is fueled by five causes: idle chatter, vanity, oversleeping, dandyism, and overeating. If you wish to avoid slander, do not give in to these passions, but instead of idle talk, arm yourself with psalm-singing; instead of vanity, love the humility of Christ; instead of sleeping too much, guard yourself with vigilance; instead of fine clothes, wear rags and tatters; instead of overeating, bind yourself with abstinence and fasting. For passions, like the links of a chain, are bound together, one after another.

18. A wise rich man hides his treasures within his house, for a treasure displayed in plain sight stirs up envy and invites slander from the ruler. So too does a virtuous yet humble monk conceal his virtues, just as that rich man conceals his treasures. Such a monk does not act on his own desires, but constantly reproves himself and trains himself in secret instruction, according to the word of Scripture: “*My heart is hot within me, and a fire is kindled in my meditation*” (Ps. 38: 4). What kind of fire is this? Hear the word of Scripture that says, “*Our God is a consuming fire*” (Heb. 12:29). Just as wax melts and the sludge of vile impurities dries up in the presence of fire, so too are vile thoughts dried up by the secret teaching, the passions of the soul wither away, the mind is enlightened, thought becomes clear, and the heart is filled with joy. Secret instruction strikes at demons and drives away evil thoughts, for it enlightens the inner person. Whoever arms himself with secret instruction is strengthened by God, receives power from the angels, and is glorified among people. Secret instruction and reading are the home of the soul, into which there is no entry; they are an unshakable pillar, a quiet and serene refuge, in which the soul will undoubtedly be saved. The demons are greatly agitated and murmur when a monk arms himself with secret instruction—that is, with the prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”—and with the solitary reading of the Holy Scriptures. This secret instruction is the mirror of the mind and the lamp of conscience. Secret instruction dries up fornication, tames fury, drives away anger, removes pride, dispels vanity (the sorrowful feeling of futility), and extinguishes despondency. The secret teaching enlightens the sovereign mind, drives away sloth, gives rise to tenderness, instills the fear of God, and brings tears. The secret teaching grants the monk unpretentious

humility, a devout vigil, and unhindered prayer. It is a treasure of prayer that drives away unworthy thoughts, strikes down demons, and purifies the body. Secret instruction teaches long-suffering, makes one a partaker of self-control, and proclaims Gehenna. Secret instruction keeps the mind free from idle thoughts, directing it to think only of death. The secret teaching is filled with every good deed and adorned with every virtue, and is far removed from every evil deed: it is nowhere near such things.

4. On Guarding the Mind: 27 Chapters³⁶

1. Anger against the passions is natural to the mind. There can be no anger or purity in a person—that is, unless he becomes angry at everything instilled in him by the enemy. Whoever wishes to attain this natural anger of the mind must cut off all his own desires until he places himself in a state characterized by the mind (a rational, spiritual state in which the soul and body are entirely subject to the spirit).

2. If, while confronting the enemy, you see that his horde, having weakened, is fleeing from you, let not your heart rejoice at this, for these enemies have set a cunning trap for you behind them. And it is there that they are preparing the most vicious attack against you. When they marched against you, they left a significant portion of their army in ambush outside the city, ordering them not to move. And now, when you resisted them and marched against them, they fled from your presence as if powerless; but if your heart is lifted up because you have driven them away, and you thus leave the city, then those who remained behind in ambush will rise up, and those fleeing ahead of you will stop—and they will surround your poor soul on all sides, so that it will have no refuge left. The city is prayer; standing against enemies is a conflict of thoughts in Christ Jesus; and rising up against them is wrath.

3. Let us therefore, beloved, stand in the fear of God, preserving and observing the practice of virtues, giving no offense to our conscience, but heeding ourselves in the fear of God, until it too is set free along with us, so that there may be unity between us and it, and it may finally become our guardian, showing us everything that might cause us to stumble. But if we do not obey it, it will turn away from us and abandon us. Then we will fall into the hands of our enemies, who will never let us go, as our Lord taught us, saying: “*Settle matters quickly with your adversary while you are still on the way with him,*” and so on (Matt. 5:25). It is said that this adversary is the conscience, because it opposes a person who desires to follow the will of his flesh. If he does not listen to it, it will deliver him into the hands of his enemies.

4. When God sees that the mind has submitted to Him with all its strength and expects help from nowhere but Him alone, then He strengthens it, saying: “*Do not be afraid, for I have delivered you, and I have called you by My name; you are Mine. And when you pass through the waters, I am with you, and the rivers will not overwhelm you; and when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, who saves you*” (Isaiah 43:1–3).

5. When the mind hears such encouragement, it boldly turns to its enemies and says: “Who wants to fight against me? Let him stand against me! And who wants to contend with me? Let him come near to me! Behold, the Lord is my helper; who will harm me? Behold, you will all wear out like a garment eaten by moths.”

6. If your heart, having come to utterly hate sin, strives to overcome it and, having turned away from everything that gives rise to sin, has set before your eyes the torment (of eternity), then know that your Helper dwells with you—and you, without offending Him in any way, but weeping before His face, say, listening to your heart: “May Your mercy, O Lord, deliver me, for I am not strong enough to escape the enemy’s hands without Your help!” And He will preserve you from all evil.

7. A monk must shut all the doors of his soul—that is, his senses—so as not to fall through them. When, in this way, the mind sees that nothing is intruding to take possession of it, it prepares for immortality, gathering all its senses together and making them one body. (Thought: The mind, undistracted by the external world through the senses, focuses inward and enters into that age. A thought also attributed to Basil the Great.)

8. When the mind becomes free from all hope in anything visible and worldly, this is a sign that sin has died within you.

9. When the mind becomes free from passions, then the barrier that stood between it and God falls away.

³⁶ From Dobrotol. Graec., p. 33.

10. When the mind is freed from all its enemies and rests, then it is in another, new age, beholding what is new and imperishable. *“For wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather”* (Matt. 24:28).

11. Sometimes demons lie in wait with cunning, hoping that a person will let his heart down, thinking he has already rested (from the battle). (If this happens), they suddenly pounce on the poor soul and seize it like a little bird. And if they prove stronger than it and overcome it, they will mercilessly humble it with every kind of sin, worse than the previous ones, for which it had begged forgiveness. Let us therefore stand unceasingly in the fear of God and strictly guard our hearts, performing our ascetic practices with unwavering diligence and preserving the virtues—that is, a sound mind and heart—which serve as a barrier against the malice of our enemies.

12. Our Teacher Jesus Christ, knowing the extreme unmercifulness of our enemies and having compassion on the human race, commanded how strictly we must guard our hearts, saying: “Be ready at all times, for you do not know at what hour the thief will come, so that when he comes, he may not find you sleeping” (Matt. 24: 43 ff.). And again: *“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with gluttony, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly”* (Luke 21: 34). So keep watch over your heart, paying attention to your feelings. And if the remembrance of God is with you, you will easily catch the enemies who creep up to steal it. For the one who watches his thoughts closely will immediately recognize those who wish to enter and defile him. They confuse the mind so that it becomes distracted and idle (falls behind in its work). But those who know their cunning remain unperturbed, praying to the Lord.

13. Unless a person hates everything that happens in this world, he cannot serve and worship God as he ought. For what is the service of God, if not to have nothing foreign in one’s mind when praying, no (sensual) pleasure when blessing God, no anger when singing to Him, no hatred when glorifying Him, and no malicious zeal or envy when sitting before Him and remembering Him? For all these dark things are a wall surrounding the poor soul, and while it harbors them within itself, it cannot serve God purely. For they keep it suspended in the air and prevent it from encountering God (from standing before Him with a clear mind), from secretly blessing Him and praying to Him with a sweet heart, so that it may be enlightened by Him. The mind is always clouded and cannot succeed in a life according to God precisely because it does not take care to cut off all of this wisely.

14. When the mind strives to free the soul’s faculties from carnal desires and to guide them (carry them across, as in a boat) to dispassion, and to separate the soul itself from carnal desires, then, if shameless passions rush upon the soul to take possession of its faculties and draw them into sin, and the mind begins to cry out to God secretly and unceasingly, God, seeing this, will send His help and drive them away in an instant.

15. I implore you, while you are still in the body, do not let your heart grow lax. For just as a farmer cannot rely on any grain growing in his field—since he does not know what will become of it until he has gathered it into his granaries—so a person cannot let his heart grow lax as long as there is breath within him (Job 27:3). He does not know what trials will befall him until his last breath, and therefore he must not let his heart grow weak as long as he has breath. But he must always cry out to God for His help and mercy.

16. He who finds no help in the midst of battle cannot trust in peace either.

17. When someone turns away from the evil side, then he truly recognizes all the sins he has committed before God; for usually he does not see his sins unless he turns away from them with bitter repentance (that is, with contrition and sorrow of heart). Those who have reached this stage weep, multiply their prayers, and cover themselves with shame before God, remembering their unseemly association with the passions. Let us therefore strive, brothers, to the best of our ability, and God will assist us through the abundance of His mercy. If we have not preserved our hearts as our fathers did, let us at least strive to keep our bodies sinless, as God requires. And let us believe that during this time of famine that has befallen us, He will show us mercy, just as He does to His saints.

18. One who has devoted his heart to seeking God in true piety cannot immediately conclude that his labor is pleasing to God. For as long as his conscience accuses him of anything unnatural, he remains alien to freedom. For where there is an accuser, there is also a judge; and where there is judgment, there is no freedom. Therefore, when, while praying, you see that absolutely nothing accuses you of evil, then you may say that you are free and have entered into His holy rest by His good pleasure. When you see that the good fruit has taken root and is no longer choked by the enemy’s weeds, that the warriors who relied on their own cunning, though not of their own accord, have retreated so as no longer to wage war against your senses; that a cloud

has cast its shadow over your tabernacle, and the sun no longer scorches you by day, nor the moon by night; that everything within you is now ready for the tabernacle, to erect it and preserve it according to God's will—then know that you have won the victory by the power of God. Then, at last, He Himself will cast His shadow over the tabernacle, for it is His. But as long as the battle rages, a person lives in fear and trembling, wondering whether he will triumph today or be defeated, and whether tomorrow he will be defeated or triumph. The struggle weighs heavily on the heart, but dispassion is free from strife: for it has already received what is due and has ceased to concern itself with the three parts of man that were once separated, because they have attained mutual reconciliation in God. These three parts are: the soul, the body, and the spirit. When they become one through the action of the Holy Spirit, they can no longer be separated. Do not think that you have died to sin as long as you are still being tormented by enemies, whether during wakefulness or during sleep. For as long as the poor man is still running the race, he has no boldness.

19. If the mind is inspired and resolves to follow willingly the love that extinguishes bodily passions, and by its power refuses to allow anything unnatural (passions, sin) to take hold of the heart, then, by resisting what is unnatural in this way, it finally achieves that which completely separates it from what is natural.

20. Examine yourself daily, brother, and as you look into your heart before God and see what is passionate within it, cut it off from your heart, lest a terrible fate befall you (before you are purified).

21. Pay attention to your heart, brother, and watch your enemies vigilantly, for they are cunning in their malice. Be deeply convinced of the truth that one cannot do good to a person who does (loves) evil. That is why the Savior teaches us to be vigilant, saying, *“Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it”* (Matt. 7:14).

22. Be mindful that nothing destructive may turn you away from the love of God; guard your heart and do not lose heart, saying, “Where can I preserve it, I who am a sinner?” For when a person forsakes his sins and turns to God, then his repentance renews him and makes him entirely new.

23. Divine Scripture, both the Old and the New Testaments, speaks everywhere of guarding the heart. A monk must understand the purpose of Scripture—to whom it speaks, what it says, and for what purpose. He must also constantly persevere in the work of asceticism and, heeding the wiles of the adversary, like a skilled helmsman, be able to navigate the waves of the mind, guided by grace, so that in this way—without straying from the path but focusing solely on himself—he may converse with God in silence, without scattered thoughts or a restless mind.

24. The times demand prayer from us, just as the winds, turbulence, and storms of the air demand a helmsman. We are capable of receiving the promptings of both good and evil thoughts. A pious and God-loving thought is called—and truly is—, the master of the passions. We, the silent ones, must carefully and soberly distinguish and classify virtues and vices: which virtue to maintain in the presence of the brethren and the fathers, and which to practice when we are alone; and which virtue is first, which second, and which third; as well as which passion is spiritual and which is physical, and which virtue is spiritual and which is physical; furthermore, because of which virtue pride strikes the mind, because of which vanity takes root, because of which anger arises, and because of which gluttony attacks. For we must *“cast down every argument and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God”* (2 Cor. 10:5).

25. The first virtue is detachment, that is, mortification of every person and every deed; from this is born a desirable longing for God, and this naturally gives rise to anger, which rises up against everything instilled by the enemy. Then the fear of God finds a dwelling place within a person, and through the action of this fear, love is subsequently revealed.

26. During prayer, one must turn away stray thoughts from the heart through pious opposition, lest we find ourselves praying to God with our lips while our hearts are occupied with inappropriate thoughts. God does not accept from the silent one a prayer that is distracted by thoughts and careless. And Scripture commands us everywhere to guard the feelings of the soul. If the monk's will submits to God's law, and the mind begins to govern its subordinates according to this law—that is, all the emotions of the soul, especially anger and lust, for they are subject to the mind—then virtue is accomplished in us and righteousness is fulfilled; our desire is directed toward God and His will, and our anger is directed against the devil and sin. What else is needed?—Secret instruction.

27. If shame takes root in your heart while you sit in your cell, take care to resist evil, lest it otherwise take hold of you: strive to remember God, that He is listening to you, and that everything your heart thinks is open before Him. Say to your soul: If you fear sinners like yourself, lest they see your sins, should you not all

the more fear God, Who hears everything? From this exhortation, the fear of God will be revealed in your soul, and if you abide in it, you will remain steadfast against passion (passions will not carry you away), as it is written: *“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever in Jerusalem”* (Ps. 124:1). And in every deed you do, keep in mind that God sees your every thought, and you will never sin. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

5. Chapters on Asceticism and Silence³⁷

1. Three virtues are the constant guardians of the mind: its natural inclination, courage, and lack of sloth.

2. There are three virtues which, when the mind perceives them within itself, assure it that it has attained immortality: *“discernment,”* which subtly distinguishes one passion from another; *“foresight,”* which anticipates everything in advance; and *“detachment,”* which refuses to associate with any foreign thought.

3. There are three virtues that always bring light to the mind: to harbor no malice toward anyone, to endure all that happens without distress, and to show kindness to those who do evil. These three virtues give rise to three others that are superior to them: not harboring malice toward anyone gives rise to love; enduring all that happens without distress brings meekness; and showing kindness to those who do evil brings peace.

4. There are four virtues that purify the soul: silence, observance of the commandments (obedience), self-denial, and humility.

5. Abba Isaiah said: I regard myself as a stray horse with no master: whoever finds it mounts it and rides it; and when one lets it go, another takes it and likewise mounts it and rides it.

6. Guard yourself so that you do not take pleasure in what you once sinned in, lest your former sins be renewed within you. Love humility, and it will cover you from your sins. Give your heart in obedience to your fathers, and the grace of God will dwell within you. Do not consider yourself wise, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies. Train your tongue to ask for forgiveness, and humility will come upon you. While sitting in your cell, devote yourself to three things: manual labor, contemplation of God, and prayer. Think daily that today we must labor in this world, but tomorrow is unknown; and you will not sin before God.

7. Do not be gluttonous in your eating, lest your former sins be revived within you. Do not lose heart in any labor, lest you fall prey to the enemy’s attacks. Compel yourself to (secret) instruction, and soon you will find rest in God (the peace of God). Force yourself to pray for a long time with weeping, and perhaps God will have mercy on you and strip away from you the old, sin-loving man.

8. Labor, poverty, wandering, suffering, and silence give birth to humility, and for humility all sins are forgiven.

9. If lust torments you, wear yourself out ceaselessly with vigil, hunger, and thirst, and humble yourself before everyone; if someone’s physical beauty begins to draw your heart, or if you lust after a woman, remember the stench (that will be in the grave)—and calm yourself.

10. Brother! As long as you are in this life, give your body no rest, and do not trust it when you see that it is free from passions. For demons often lie in wait for a time, and if a person ceases to care about his salvation, they suddenly attack the poor soul and seize it like a little bird; and if they overcome it, they mercilessly subdue it with every kind of sin. Let us therefore stand in the fear of God and guard ourselves, continuing to do our works and observe all the virtues that serve as a barrier against the malice of our enemies. The labors and struggles of this brief time not only preserve us from evil deeds but also prepare crowns for the soul before its departure from the body. Let us, then, who bear the seal of holy baptism, strive to turn away from our sins, so that we may find mercy on the day of judgment. Let us strive, beloved, for the time is near. Blessed is the one who has this concern day and night.

11. If your heart is wandering, and you do not know how to control it, know that some action of yours is leading it astray, whether you intended it or not. If Gideon had not commanded that the water jars be smashed, the light of the lamps would not have been seen (Judg. 7:19 ff.): so, if a person does not despise his own body, he will not see the light of the Divine.

12. If, in a walled city, even a small section of the wall is breached, the enemies, if they wish to enter the city, direct all their attention to this breach in order to enter through it. Although guards stand at the gates,

³⁷ Patr. graec., vol. 40, after the words.

they cannot withstand the enemies unless the damaged section is repaired. Likewise, it is impossible for a monk to withstand his enemies when he is overcome by any passion, and he cannot attain the proper degree of perfection.

Saint Mark the Ascetic

Information on the Life and Writings of Saint Mark

Saint Mark the Ascetic is counted among the most renowned Fathers of Egypt. Yet little is known about the circumstances of his life. Palladius (*Lives*, ch. 20), who saw him in person, says that he was of an exceedingly quiet and meek disposition, so much so that no one could compare to him in this regard, and that from a young age he loved to study the Holy Scriptures and became so well-versed in them that he knew the Old and New Testaments by heart (Sozomen repeats the same account in **Church History**, Book 6, Chapters 29 and 30). The austerity of his life and the purity of his heart elevated him to a high degree of spiritual perfection. St. Macarius of Alexandria testifies to God's special grace toward him during the reception of the Holy Mysteries, which points not only to the great strength of St. Mark's faith but also to the fervor of his love for the Lord and to his extreme humility. St. Mark lived for more than a hundred years and, it is believed, passed away at the beginning of the fifth century. But he lived among and interacted with the first successors to the life and teachings of Saint Anthony, and perhaps even with Anthony himself. God's grace, life experiences, and the study of the Word of God made him deeply knowledgeable about the mysteries of the spiritual life. Without concealing this gift, he taught and wrote extensively, but only some of his writings have survived to the present day. Ten of his sayings have been published in Russian translation. Patriarch Photius cited only eight of them, while Nikephoros Kallistos, in addition to these eight, attributes another thirty-two sayings to him (*Church History*, Book 13, Chapters 53 and 544). In this collection, we have included what is found in **Dobrotolyubie**, adding to it instructions drawn from all his other sermons, and have arranged everything in the following order:

1. A Letter to the Monk Nicholas. It is placed first because it contains an account of the ascetic life from its beginning to its end. It will be followed by:
2. Instructions drawn from the other writings of St. Mark, as a continuation of the lessons given in the epistle and a preparation for understanding the brief sayings contained in the chapters that follow immediately.
3. Two hundred chapters on the spiritual law.
4. 226 chapters for those who think they can be justified by their deeds. The following sources were used in the translation: the Greek edition of **Dobrotolyubie**, the works of St. Mark as published in Migne's **Patrologiae graecae**, vol. 65, and the manuscript from the Monastery of St. Sava in Palestine, which is more complete and accurate than the others.

Instructions of Mark the Ascetic on the Spiritual Life

1. Epistle to the Monk Nicholas

1. You have long been deeply concerned for your own salvation, and out of great care for a life according to God, you have told us everything about yourself—with what ardent zeal you resolved to cleave to the Lord through an austere life, abstinence, and every other form of self-denial, striving in vigils and diligent prayer; you also described the battles and the multitude of carnal passions that are kindled within your body and rise up against your soul from the law of sin, which opposes the law of our mind; especially, you lamented that the passions of anger and lust torment you greatly, and you sought some method or verbal instruction regarding what efforts and struggles you must undertake to gain the upper hand (rise above) these destructive passions.

2. At that time, as much as possible, in the spirit of my love for you, I offered you soul-saving thoughts and wise counsel, showing by what labors and what ascetic efforts the soul—with discernment and enlightened guidance, living wisely according to the Gospel—can, aided by grace for the sake of faith, overcome the evil (thoughts and feelings) that gush forth within the heart, especially the passions mentioned. For whatever passions the soul has become characterized by—due to a predisposition toward them and familiarity with them—and by which it is particularly stirred, against those very passions must it undertake a ceaseless and

most diligent struggle until it subdues the carnal and inarticulate influences (temptations) of sin, by which it was previously subjugated, carried away and led captive through an inner union with them in thought—compelled by frequent recollection of (evil) thoughts and passionate discourse with them.

3. Now, however, since I have distanced myself from you in body and in person—though not in heart—by going into the desert to the true workers and warriors of Christ, so that I too, by striving and fighting—even if only a little—alongside the brothers who struggle against the enemy’s influences and valiantly resist the passions, might cast off sloth, cut off laxity, cast off indifference, and embrace zeal and every kind of care, striving toward the pleasure of God, I have taken the trouble to write down for your sincerity a brief instruction and soul-saving counsel, so that what I have told you in person, when you read it attentively and concisely in this brief exhortation of mine, may bring you spiritual benefit, just as if we were together with you in person.

4. This, my son, is where you must begin the God-given, salvific ordering of your life. You must keep in your mind, unforgettably and ever-memorable, with ceaseless reflection, all the providential acts of the God who loves mankind—both past and present—and all His blessings for the salvation of your soul; and you must not allow yourself, whether because of the clouding of evil forgetfulness (instilled by the enemy), or because of sloth, to forget His many and great blessings and thus spend the rest of your life in a useless and ungrateful manner. For such memories, like a thorn, pierce the heart and constantly move it to confess (God’s bounties), to humility, to giving thanks with a contrite heart, to rejoicing in all that is good, and to acquiring, as a reward (for His blessings), good character and customs and every virtue according to God, as a result of delving deeply with a conscientious mind into the following prophetic word: “*What shall I render to the Lord for all He has given me?*” (Ps. 115:3). When the soul recalls all the blessings bestowed upon it from birth by the God who loves mankind, as well as how many times it has been delivered from misfortunes, or how many times, having fallen into lawlessness and having wilfully slipped into transgressions, it was not, by righteous judgment, delivered over to the spirits that had deceived it for destruction and death, but the loving Lord, long-suffering and overlooking her transgressions, preserved her, awaiting her conversion; and even as she willingly served the enemies and evil spirits through her passions, He nourished her, sheltered her, and provided for her in every way; and finally, by a gracious gesture, He set her on the path to salvation, instilled in her heart a love for the ascetic life, inspired her with joy to leave the world and all the allure of its carnal pleasures, adorned her with the angelic image of the ascetic life, and arranged for her to be warmly received by the holy fathers into the brotherhood at (when the soul brings all this to mind), then who, having thoughts guided by a good conscience and reflecting on all this, will not remain forever in heartfelt contrition? Having such a foundation in the blessings received earlier, when he himself had done nothing good, will he not take hold of a firm and everlasting hope, saying to himself: If then, when I did nothing good but, on the contrary, sinned greatly before His face, wallowing in carnal impurity and in many other sins, He did not treat me according to my sins nor repay me according to my iniquities, but showed me mercy with such gifts and graces, then when I finally devote myself entirely to His service through a completely blameless life and the cultivation of every virtue, what blessings and what spiritual gifts will He bestow upon me, strengthening, guiding, and enabling me in every good work?” Thus, whoever, never forgetting God’s blessings, harbors such a thought, inclines, directs, and compels himself toward every good deed of virtue and every act of righteousness, being always zealous and always ready to do God’s will.

5. Therefore, beloved son, having a natural mind by the grace of Christ, always preserve within yourself such conduct and such good reflection; do not allow yourself to be covered by a dark cloud of pernicious forgetfulness, nor hindered in your progress by sloth—which renders the mind futile and diverts it from the proper way of life—nor clouded in thought by ignorance—the cause of all evils—nor carried away by all-corrupting indolence, nor seduced by carnal pleasures, nor overcome by gluttony, nor enslaved in your mind by desires and defiled within yourself by association with lustful thoughts, nor conquered by anger that breeds hatred toward your brother, if, under some pitiful and accursed pretext, grieving and being grieved, you begin to harbor evil thoughts against your neighbor in your memory, nor by one who is led astray from pure prayer to God, nor by one whose mind is taken captive to spy on a brother of one mind with beastly thoughts. (For if all this is allowed to continue,) because of such a senseless disposition, full of carnal reasoning, and bound in conscience, you will be delivered for a time to the instructive punishment of the evil spirits to whom you yielded, until your mind, having become utterly impoverished and consumed by sorrow and despondency, due to the loss of spiritual progress in God because of past sins, will once again begin to embrace the beginning of the path to salvation with all humility, having, after much toil in prayer and all-night

vigils, received forgiveness for his sins through their humble confession before God and his neighbors. Thus he begins to come to his senses again and, enlightened by the light of the Gospel, comes to know by God's grace that whoever does not surrender himself entirely to the cross in humble reflection and self-abasement, and does not subject himself before all to trampling, humiliation, contempt, justification, ridicule, and mockery—and to endure all this with joy for the Lord's sake, seeking nothing human—neither glory, nor honor, nor praise, nor sweet food and drink, nor (fine) garments—cannot be a true Christian.

6. Therefore, if such feats, struggles, and crowns await us, how long will we allow ourselves to be mocked by a false appearance of piety and to serve the Lord with deceit, while at the same time being honored by people and appearing to the One who sees all as something else? For though we are honored by many as saints, we are still beasts in our nature, possessing only the outward appearance of godliness but having not acquired its power before God (2 Tim. 3: 5), though honored by many as virgins and blamelessly pure, we are defiled inwardly before Him who sees what is hidden by the impurities of our desires and lustful thoughts, and we are tainted by the influences of our passions; yet, because of our utterly hypocritical asceticism, and also because of human praise, we are negligent in this matter, blinded in our minds. How long will we walk in the vanity of the mind, failing to assimilate the wisdom of the Gospel and failing to embrace a life of integrity, with the resolve to diligently follow its path so that we may also find boldness in our conscience, yet still rely on the mere apparent righteousness of the outward person, and deceive ourselves with outward virtues due to a lack of true understanding of the matter, desiring to please people and seeking from them glory, honor, and praise?

7. Truly, He who reveals the secrets of darkness and brings to light the thoughts of the heart (1 Cor. 4:5), the Judge who cannot be deceived, will come—He who is not ashamed of the rich nor shows partiality to the poor. He will strip away the outward veil and reveal the truth hidden within, and He will crown those who live conscientiously—the true ascetics and warriors—before His Father in the presence of the angels; but the hypocrites, who merely clothe themselves in the appearance of piety and only outwardly display a “blameless” life before others, vainly relying on it and deceiving themselves with it, He will solemnly expose them before the entire Holy Church and before the whole heavenly host, and send them into utter darkness with the most striking shame.

8. (Such people are like) the holy virgins who preserved their outward virginity (for they were not at all condemned for this) and, moreover, had some oil in their vessels—that is, they possessed certain outward virtues and good qualities, as well as certain gifts—which is why their lamps burned for a time; but, due to negligence, ignorance, and sloth, they paid no attention to their inner lives and did not properly understand a multitude of passions stirred up by evil spirits lurked within, causing their thoughts to be corrupted by hostile influences; and they (the virgins) associated with these passions in their thoughts, being secretly carried away and overcome by the worst kind of envy, malicious jealousy, defiance, rivalry, hatred, anger, grief, vindictiveness, hypocrisy, irritability, pride, vanity, people-pleasing, self-indulgence, greed, negligence, carnal lust, sensuality in their thoughts, unbelief, fearlessness (before God), fear (of something external), sorrow, backbiting, all manner of self-indulgence, sleep, conceit, self-justification, arrogance, vanity, insatiability, luxury, greed, despair—the most calamitous of all—and other subtlest influences of sin. They (the virgins) not only performed good deeds and led the virtuous life they outwardly displayed before people—for which they received praise from them— and even the spiritual gifts, if they had any, they sold to the spirits of vanity and the desire to please men; carried away by other passions, they mingled cunning and carnal schemes with their good endeavors, thereby rendering them impure and displeasing to God, like Cain's offering. For all this, they are deprived of rejoicing with the Bridegroom and have been left outside the heavenly palace, which is shut to them.

9. Reflecting on this with strict discernment and self-examination, let us understand and recognize the state in which we find ourselves, and, while there is still time for repentance and conversion, let us correct ourselves, taking care that our good deeds, being performed with purity, may be truly good, without any admixture of carnal reasoning, lest they be rejected as a flawed offering because of recklessness, negligence, and a lack of true knowledge: otherwise, we will bear the toil of chastity, abstinence, vigil, fasting, and every form of self-denial, and we will spend our days—and yet what seems to us to be such righteousness will not be accepted by Christ, the Heavenly Priest, having been found to be a defiled sacrifice because of the passions mentioned.

10. Therefore, my son, above all else, one who wishes to take up the cross and follow Christ must be concerned with knowledge and understanding, constantly examining one's own thoughts, with great concern for salvation and deep devotion to God, seeking counsel from the united and like-minded servants of God who are striving in the same endeavor, so that, not knowing where or how to direct one's path, one does not walk in darkness without a bright lamp. For the self-willed person, walking without the guidance and direction of the Gospel, often stumbles and falls into the many pits and snares of the evil one; he often goes astray and is subjected to great misfortunes, and does not know where he will ultimately end up. Many have performed great acts of self-denial and endured great toil and sweat for God's sake, but their self-will, lack of discernment, and failure to deem it necessary to seek saving counsel from their neighbor have rendered such labors displeasing to God and in vain.

11. But you, beloved son, as I said at the beginning of this exhortation, do not forget the blessings bestowed upon you by the worshiped, Philanthropic God, even as you are led astray from them by the theft of the enemy's malice and by sloth; but, keeping before your eyes all whether spiritual or physical, the blessings bestowed upon you from the beginning of your life until now, reflect on them and learn from them, as it is said: *"Do not forget all His rewards"* (Ps. 102: 2). In this way, your heart will be readily moved toward the fear of God and love, and you will be able to give thanks to God through a disciplined life, virtuous conduct, a godly conscience, proper speech, true faith, humble wisdom, and, simply put, you will devote your whole self to God. This is what the remembrance of the blessings you have received from the Good and Philanthropic Lord will lead you to! Through such remembrance of His blessings—especially with the help of a divine prompting—your heart will be involuntarily pierced by love and longing for God, for He has not bestowed upon anyone else, even those more worthy than you, the marvelous grace He has bestowed upon you through His ineffable love for humanity.

12. Therefore, strive to keep in constant remembrance all the blessings you have received from God; above all, recall that great grace and wondrous blessing which He bestowed upon you—as you told me—at the time when you were sailing with your mother from the Holy Places to Constantinople, when a terrible and unbearable storm arose at night, with the sea in great turmoil, and all who were on the ship—, the sailors, and your own mother—perished in the depths, while you alone, along with two others, were saved by the glorious divine power and cast ashore; (remember) also how the Lord arranged your journey to Ancyra, where you were received with fatherly kindness by a certain generous man and were united in love with the most devout son Epiphanius, with whom you both, under the guidance of a certain reverend man, embarked on the path of salvation (in renunciation of the world), and were accepted as sincere children by the holy servants of God.

13. For all these blessings bestowed upon you by God, what can you offer in return to Him who has called you to eternal life? As justice demands, you must no longer live for yourself, but for Christ, who died for you and rose again; you must strive for every righteous virtue and the fulfillment of every commandment, always seeking *"what is the will of God—what is good, pleasing, and perfect"* (Rom. 12:2), and striving with all your might to fulfill it. Above all, my son, submit your youth to the word of God, as this word requires: *"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual worship"* (Rom. 12:1). Cool and dry up every moisture of carnal lust through eating sparingly, drinking sparingly, and all-night vigils, so that you too may say from your heart: *"I was like a wineskin on the ground"* (³⁸), *"I have not forgotten Your righteous deeds"* (Ps. 118: 83). Realizing that you belong to Christ, *"crucify your flesh,"* as the Apostle says, *"with its passions and desires"* (Gal. 5:24), and *"put to death the members that are on the earth"* (Col. 3:5)—that is, not only acts of fornication, but also the impurity stirred up in the flesh by evil spirits. And the one who desires to be deemed worthy of the crown of true, undefiled, and all-perfect virginity does not limit his struggle to this alone, but, following the Apostolic teaching, strives to put to death the very movement of this passion. Even this is not enough for one who, out of a strong love (for purity), has set his heart on instilling in his body an angelic and most pure virginity; rather, he prays that even the simplest, fleeting thought of lust—which is suggested to the mind as a passing vision, without the movement or influence of carnal passion—might vanish. But this can be achieved only through help from above, by the sole power and gift of the Holy Spirit, if indeed there are any deemed worthy of such grace.

14. Thus, one who desires to attain the crown of pure, incorporeal, and undefiled virginity crucifies his flesh through ascetic labors, *"putting to death the members which are on earth,"* through arduous and patient

³⁸ "On the frost"—in the cold. Fur shrinks in the cold and becomes stiff and hard.

self-restraint, causing the outer man to wither away, thinning him out and making him aged and skeletal, so that the inner man may be renewed more freely by the action of grace for the sake of faith and spiritual deeds, progressing day by day toward the better, growing in love, adorning himself with meekness, rejoicing in spiritual joy, receiving from Christ the pledge of peace, being guided by kindness, clothed in benevolence, embraced by the fear of God, enlightened by knowledge and (spiritual) understanding, adorned with wisdom, and guided by humble wisdom. Through these and similar virtues, the mind, renewed by the Holy Spirit, receives within itself the imprint of the God-like image, is clothed in the intellectual, ineffable beauty of the Lord's likeness, and is made partaker of the riches of spiritual wisdom.

15. Therefore, my son, temper your youthful flesh, nourish your soul, and renew your mind with the virtues mentioned above, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Youthful flesh, fattened by various delicacies and wine, becomes like a boar ready for slaughter. The soul is thus hardened by the burning of carnal pleasures, and the mind is captivated by the inflaming of evil lust, unable to resist the flesh's allure. Thus, the rush of blood is the ebb of the spirit. As for wine, let youth not even smell its scent, lest the carnal pleasure, flared up by a double fire—internally from the influence of passion and externally from wine-drinking—drive out the spiritual sweetness of painful contrition and produce confusion and hardening in the heart. Let youth not even drink water to the point of satiety, so as to preserve spiritual desire (a good disposition), for moderation in water greatly contributes to the chastity of the body. When you put this into practice, you will confirm it through your own experience. For I prescribe and establish this for you, not in the sense that I wish to impose some involuntary yoke upon you, but I lovingly advise and offer this as a good means for preserving true virginity and strict chastity, leaving it to your free will to do as you please.

16. Now let us speak a little about the irrational passion of anger, which, in its course and effect, devastates the entire soul, throws it into confusion and darkens it, and makes a person like a beast—especially one who is easily tempted and quickly given to it. This passion is strengthened, sustained, and made insurmountable by pride; and as long as this devilish tree of bitterness (Heb. 12:15)—that is, of anger and irritability—is watered by the evil water of pride, it continues to grow and flourish, bearing abundant fruit of lawlessness. Thus, this edifice of the evil one in the soul remains indestructible as long as it has strength and support in the foundations of pride. Therefore, if you want this tree of lawlessness (by which I mean the passion of grief, anger, and irritability) to wither in the body and become barren, so that the axe of the Spirit may come and cut it down, and it may be cast into the fire, according to the Gospel, and disappear along with all malice, —if you want this house of lawlessness, which the evil one builds in the soul for evil, gathering in his thoughts from everywhere, like stones, well-founded and unfounded pretexts from deeds or words, and preparing a structure of malice in the soul, laying thoughts of pride as its firm foundation—if you want this house to be destroyed and torn down, then take up the humility of the Lord, never forgetting it in your heart. Who is He, and what did He become for our sake? From what height of the light of the Godhead—revealed in measure even to the heavenly beings and glorified in heaven by every rational creature—Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers, Cherubim, Seraphim, and all other unnamed intelligent powers whose names have not come down to us—and to what depth of human humility did He descend by His ineffable goodness, becoming in every way like us, who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, held captive by the enemy because of Adam's transgression, and possessed by him through the passions at work within us.

17. Thus, the Lord of all visible and invisible creatures was not ashamed of us, who were suffering in such bondage and were subject to a bitter death, but humbled Himself and took upon (upon Himself) the Man, upon whom, by the Lord's decree, it was decreed to bear sorrows as penance, and became like us in every way except sin—that is, except for the passions of wickedness. All that was imposed on man by divine decree as penance for the sin of the (progenitor's) transgression—such as death, toil, hunger, thirst, and the like—He took upon Himself, becoming what we are, so that we might become what He is: *"The Word became flesh"* (John 1:14), so that the flesh might become the Word; *"Though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, so that through His poverty we might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9). Out of His great love for humanity, He became like us, so that we too might become like Him in every virtue. For ever since Christ came, man—who was (even from the beginning) created in the image and likeness of God—is truly renewed by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, attaining to the measure of perfect love, which drives out fear and can no longer be subject to falling away, for *"love never fails"* (1 Cor. 13:8), because, as John says, *"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God"* (1 John 4:16). The Apostles and all those who, like them, labored in virtue and

presented themselves to the Lord as perfect—having followed Christ with complete devotion throughout their lives—were deemed worthy of this measure.

18. Therefore, if you always keep in mind, without forgetting, the humility that the Lord showed us out of His ineffable love for us—that is, the incarnation of the Word of God in the womb, His assumption of human nature, His birth of a woman, the stages of His physical growth, the dishonor, the hardships, the insults, the mockery, the reproaches, beatings, spitting, mockery, insults, the scarlet cloak, the crown of thorns, the rulers' condemnation of Him, the cries against Him from the lawless Jews, His own people: *"Take Him away, take Him away, crucify Him"* (John 19: 15), the cross, the nails, the spear, the vinegar and gall He was given to drink, the rejoicing of the pagans, the mockery of those passing by who said, *"If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in You"* (Matt. 27: 42)—and the other sufferings He endured for our sake: crucifixion, death, a three-day burial, descent into Hades—and then the fruits of His sufferings: resurrection from the dead, the emptying of Hades and death through the delivery of the souls gathered to the Lord, ascension into heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father, above every principal and authority and every name that is named (Eph. 1: 21), honor, glory, and worship from all the angels to the Firstborn from the dead, because of His sufferings, according to the Apostolic word, which says: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—in heaven, on earth, and under the earth—and so on"* (Phil. 2:5–10)... Behold to what glory and exaltation, according to God's truth, the Lord's sufferings mentioned above have raised the Son of Man!

19. Therefore, if you keep such thoughts in your heart with warm affection and without neglect, the passions of grief, anger, and irritability will not prevail over you. For when the foundation is removed from beneath them—that is, when the passion of pride is eradicated by immersion in the humility of Christ—then the entire edifice of lawless anger, fury, and sorrow will easily crumble of its own accord. What cruel and stony heart would not be broken, moved to compassion, and humbled if it always kept in mind such humility of the Only-Begotten Son of God on our behalf and remembered His sufferings described above? Will it not, on the contrary, willingly become dust, ashes, and a footstool for all people, according to Scripture? When the soul, beholding Christ's humility, is thus humbled and broken, what irritability can take hold of it? What anger and what grief can take root?

20. But it seems that the neglect of these thoughts—which are salvific and life-giving for us—and its sister, sloth, along with their accomplice and equal, ignorance—these are the gravest and most inward diseases of the soul, which are difficult to recognize and even more difficult to heal, as they carry away and darken the soul with unbridled curiosity (by probing into everything external except oneself)—are the cause of all other evil passions acting within and hiding there: they produce fearlessness (before God) and indifference toward all that is good, and grant every passion the freedom to enter the soul and act within it without shame. When the soul is covered (as by some gloomy veil) with all-pervading forgetfulness, ruinous sloth, and—the mother and nurturer of all evil—ignorance, then the pitiful, blinded mind readily attaches itself to every thing visible, conceivable, or heard: it sees, for example, a woman's beauty and is immediately wounded by carnal lust. Memory, having thus passionately and with delight received what has been seen, heard, and touched, then paints images of these things within, through the imagination of thoughts and wicked conversation with them, and thereby defiles the still-passionate, wretched mind through the influence of lustful spirits.

21. Finally, the flesh—whether it is plump, very young, or excessively moist—is swiftly aroused by such memories and acts in its natural way, moving toward lust, sometimes in sleep, sometimes while awake, emitting impurity, even without actual intercourse with a wife. Such a person may be regarded by many as chaste, a virgin, and pure, or may even lay claim to holiness; but before the One who sees what is hidden, he is a vile fornicator and adulterer, and on that day he will be justly condemned unless he weeps and wails before God, in whose presence he thought and did evil, and does not offer worthy repentance—having mortified the flesh through fasting, vigils, and unceasing prayers, and having healed and corrected the mind through holy remembrances and instruction in the Word of God. For the living voice that said is not a lie: *"Anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:28). Therefore, it is very beneficial—especially for the young—to avoid seeing women altogether, even if they are

considered holy, and, if possible, to live apart from all people: in this way, he will make the spiritual struggle much easier for himself and will more tangibly feel his progress, especially if he strictly watches over himself and abides in prayer, striving to eat sparingly, drink little—even water—and engage in prolonged vigils, as well as consulting with experienced spiritual fathers, striving to be with them and benefit from their guidance. For it is extremely dangerous to live in isolation, according to one's own will, without witnesses, or to live with those who are inexperienced in the spiritual battle. Malice (Satan) has many wiles, many hidden ambushes, and a variety of snares spread by the enemy everywhere. Therefore, as much as possible, one must strive in every way to live together and converse frequently with men who are knowledgeable in spiritual matters, so that even if one lacks the light of true knowledge due to one's spiritual infancy and imperfection, by walking alongside those who possess it, he may not walk in darkness, nor be endangered by snares and traps, nor fall prey to the beasts of the mind, which, lurking in the darkness, captivate and corrupt those who walk in it without the intelligent lamp of the Divine Word.

22. But if you wish, my son, to acquire and possess within yourself your own lamp of spiritual light and guidance, so that you may walk unhindered in the deepest night of this age "*and your steps may be guided by the Lord*" (Ps. 118: 133), and according to the prophetic word, "*you have greatly desired*" the way of the Gospel—that is, to fulfill the most perfect Gospel commandments with the most ardent faith and to become a partaker in the Lord's sufferings through longing for them and prayer—then I will show you a wonderful way to achieve this, consisting of a moral, inner disposition of the spirit, which requires not physical labor or feats, but rather the painstaking labor of the soul, the mastery of the mind (over everything within), and attentive thought, aided by the fear and love of God. With this disposition, you can easily put the ranks of enemies to flight, just like the blessed David, who, with faith and hope in God, by slaying a single foreign giant, thereby put the darkness of the enemies and their people to flight.

23. My words are directed at three strong and mighty foreign giants, upon whom rests the entire opposing power of the mental Holofernes; if they are overthrown and slain, then the entire power of the wicked spirits will be utterly exhausted. These three giants of the evil one, who appear to be strong, are those we have already mentioned—ignorance, the mother of all evils, forgetfulness, her sister, accomplice, and helper; and, weaving a dark garment and covering for the soul from the gloom—indolence (apathy)—which upholds and strengthens the first two, gives them stability, and causes evil to become, as it were, ingrained and embodied in the most negligent soul. For from indifference (apathy), forgetfulness, and ignorance, the foundations of all other passions grow stronger and multiply. Being mutual helpers to one another and unable to exist without one another, they (together as a whole) constitute the powerful forces of the adversary and the chief commanders of the evil one. Through them, the host of deceitful spirits weaves its snares in the soul and succeeds in carrying out its schemes.

24. If you wish to triumph over your passions and easily put to flight the hordes of mental enemies, then—through prayer and God's assistance—gather your thoughts within yourself and descend into the depths of your heart, and seek out within yourself these three mighty giants of the devil: namely, forgetfulness, indifference, and sloth, and ignorance—for it is by feeding on these that all other passions act, live, and grow stronger in self-indulgent hearts and unpunished souls. With strict self-examination and a vigilant mind, aided from above, you will certainly find (discern within yourself, seize) these passions—unknown to others and even unimaginable, most destructive of all evil passions—with the opposing weapons of truth: a good memory, the source of all that is good; enlightened knowledge, by which a soul kept alert drives away the darkness of ignorance; and a living zeal that stirs and leads the soul to salvation. Then, having clothed yourself in these very weapons of virtue, with every prayer and supplication, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will valiantly and courageously defeat (completely drive away) the aforementioned three giants—the mental foreigners—namely: with a mind set on things above, always meditating on "*whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise*" (Phil. 4:8), you will drive away the most pernicious forgetfulness; with enlightened heavenly guidance, you will destroy the ruinous darkness of ignorance; and with a lively zeal ready for every good deed, you will banish godless indifference (sloth), which causes evil to take root in the soul. You can acquire these virtues not by your own will alone, but by the power of God and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, through much attention and prayer; and having acquired them in this way, you can, through them, rid yourself of the three mighty giants of the evil one mentioned above. When, through the power of active grace, the (threefold) union of true knowledge, remembrance of God's words, and

godly zeal is formed in the soul and carefully preserved there, then even the slightest trace of forgetfulness, ignorance, and indifference will vanish from the soul. They will turn to nothing, and grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom be glory and power forever and ever, will finally reign in the soul. Amen.

2. Monk Nicholas's Response to the Writing of Mark the Ascetic

Thanks be to God, thanks be to Him! Thanks be to His surpassing and ineffable gift, that He, out of love for the soul—tormented by fierce passions and deprived of all strength—visited it with a merciful will wholly entrusted to God; I say, through your virtuous and God-united soul, by which a radiant spark, filled with divine light and bearing a spiritual lure, was sent to me—and through the lamp of words of labor and love, born of a mind united with God, the Lord has snatched my soul from the deepest darkness and storm and has done this, so that my thought arose vigorously from the three giants revealed to me. Truly, these giants are great and fierce, and they never cease to attack the human race. Whom do they hold so fiercely and savagely on earth as me, who am still possessed by them of my own free will? But He Who never rejoices in the destruction of the living, has had mercy on [me] and shown His long-suffering and compassionate mercy toward me; and, having stirred up that pious thought, He awakened my will, which had been sleeping the deepest sleep, and pointed out and revealed to me the aforementioned giants. I say, first of all, forgetfulness, which drove Adam out of paradise; for if he had not forgotten the Lord's commandment, he would not have fallen from such glory; and despondency, to which he succumbed and thereby obeyed his wife; and ignorance, through which he did not realize what he was and what he had become. The Lord Jesus made these three spirits clear to me through the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you. For truly He sent a double-edged sword, which is the Word of God, and cleaved my mind in two with great stillness. He did not stop there, but truly instilled a certain spiritual sweetness into my will through your words. So, with how many mouths and how many tongues can I worthily give thanks to the true Lord God for His blessings, which you have reminded me of, or, again, for sending me skillful and loving words that stir the soul to seek the truth and keep God's commandments, and, finally, for the great benefit [brought about by this] to those who desire to walk in the Lord's way, which leads to eternal life? For your words have brought such benefit not only to me but also to all who have heard them—their minds have been greatly enlightened, and they have received great benefit from these clearly expressed words. Therefore, these words proved to be as true as reality itself, and they were heard not merely as words, but as an evident reality before our very eyes; for immediately this word instilled great vigilance in our wills. And since this word was effective, it did not remain idle, but immediately bore ears of grain and brought forth ripe fruit; yet it did not stop there, for none of us is ever satisfied with it, as God knows: no matter how many times I read it, my poor soul is never sated. Therefore, through the prayer of your holiness, may this gift be granted to me, so that the heavenly spark may abide in me and utterly destroy, to the very end, the aforementioned giants; lest I ever forget myself and, through the treachery of my own willful caprice, plunge myself into the aforementioned evil and become food for my enemies. But I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who dwells within you, that for the sake of your piety and those who strive like you, He will not despise me nor deliver me into the mouths of the aforementioned giants; but, always reminding me through His holy servants, He will show me, the wretched one, His way through your holy prayers. Therefore, I ask and implore your kind-hearted and venerable soul not to look down on me for having dared, with hope, to compose this reply to Your Holiness; but, seeing the Father's mercy open wide, though my writing is poor, I ask and implore you to remember me at every hour; for the Lord always visits [His] steadfast and unceasing servant—that is, the mind of your blessed soul, worthily purified—so that through your holiness I too, having been delivered from my evils, may find a happy outcome, by the grace of the philanthropic Christ God, to whom, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honor and power forever. Amen.

2. The Teachings of Saint Mark, drawn from his other writings

1. Faith consists not only in being baptized into Christ, but also in keeping His commandments. Holy Baptism perfectly bestows perfection upon us, but it does not make perfect those who do not keep the commandments.

2. If, even after baptism, we remain subject to sin, it is not because the baptism was imperfect, but because we are negligent in keeping the commandments and remain self-indulgent according to our own will. Neither God nor Satan compels our will even after baptism. In baptism, we were mysteriously freed from the

bondage of sin, as it is written: “*For the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death*” (Rom. 8:2); but because of our neglect to keep the commandments of the One who cleansed us, we have fallen under the power of sin, and since we have not kept the commandments, we have once again become captives of the enemy.

3. A person, by his own will, remains where he chooses to be, even if he has been baptized, because self-determination cannot be compelled. When Scripture says, “*The poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 11:12), it speaks of one’s own free will, so that each of us may compel ourselves after baptism not to turn toward evil, but to abide in what is good. To those who have received the strength to fulfill the commandments as believers, the Lord commands them to strive in them, so that they may not turn back.

4. Spiritual deeds are not something separate from the commandments. They are the commandments. Show me spiritual practices other than the commandments. If you point to prayer—that is a commandment; if you speak of subduing thoughts—that too is a commandment (“Be sober and watchful”); if you speak of fasting and vigil—that is also a commandment; if you point to self-denial, that is a commandment (let him deny himself), and whatever act of ascetic virtue you might mention—all of them are commandments. (The goal of asceticism is the most precise fulfillment of the commandments.)

5. Holy Baptism grants complete freedom (from the bondage of sin, just as repentance does); but to bind oneself again with passion or to remain free by keeping the commandments is a matter of self-willed choice. If a thought strays toward any sinful pleasure, it is due to self-willed passion, and not out of any compulsion. According to Scripture, we have the power to “*cast down arguments*” (2 Cor. 10:4). A wicked thought, for those who cast it down within themselves, is a sign of love for God, not of sin; for it is not the arising of the thought that is sin, but the mind’s friendly conversation with it. If we do not love it, why do we linger in it? It is impossible for anything that we hate from the heart to converse with our heart for any length of time without our own evil participation in it.

6. When, after holy baptism, being in a state where we are able to keep the commandments, we fail to keep them, then—even without desiring it—we are held captive by sin (we fall back into the bondage of sin) until, through repentance, we implore God, turning to all His commandments, and He destroys the sin of our self-will.

7. You have been clothed with Christ through baptism (Gal. 3:27) and possess the power and weapons to demolish strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). But if, having the power over them, you do not cast them down at the first sign of their attack, then it is evident that you indulge in them out of unbelief, consenting to them and becoming their ally. You yourself are to blame for such conduct.

8. Sometimes, without our consent, some wicked thought—one we detest—like a robber, suddenly attacks us and forcibly holds our mind captive. However, know for certain that even this thought originated from ourselves, for either after baptism we gave ourselves over to such an evil thought—though we did not act upon it—or, of our own free will, we harbor within ourselves certain seeds of evil, which is why the evil one takes root in us, and he, having held us captive with these wicked seeds, will not depart until we cast them aside; but the evil thought that dwells within us through the commission of evil will be driven out when we offer God works worthy of repentance. Thus, you yourself are to blame for the involuntary, troubling thought, because, having the power to drive it away and purify your mind of it at the very first stirrings, you did not do so, but conversed with it willingly, even though you did not act upon it. (It comes to a warm place, to an old acquaintance, a friend.)

9. When you see in your heart the help that is given to you, know for certain that this grace did not come from outside, but was mysteriously given to you at baptism and has now taken effect to the extent that, having come to hate the thought, you have turned away from it.

10. Christ the Lord, having delivered us from all violence (through the grace of baptism), did not forbid the thoughts that arise in our hearts, so that some, being hated from the heart, might be immediately eradicated, while others, to the extent that we love them, might remain, so that both the grace of Christ and the human will—whether it loves works for the sake of grace or thoughts for the sake of self-indulgence—might be revealed.

11. Like some kind of evil kinship, our lusts and the inclinations of our thoughts act in concert with one another. Every thought, having taken root in its lover, passes it on to his neighbor, so that a person, strongly drawn by habit to the first, is already carried away by the second even against his will. For who can escape pride when filled with vanity? Or who, having indulged in sleep and given themselves over to pleasure, will

not be overcome by thoughts of fornication? Or who, having given themselves over to greed, will not be bound by lack of mercy? And those who delight in all these things—how will they escape irritability and anger?

12. And once we have received grace, it is up to our free will to walk according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. But it is impossible to walk according to the Spirit while loving human praise and indulging the body, and it is impossible to live according to the flesh while inwardly preferring the future over the present. Therefore, we must hate human praise and the comfort of the body, through which wicked thoughts take root in us even against our will, and sincerely say to the Lord: *“I have hated them with perfect hatred; they have become my enemies”* (Ps. 138:22).

13. To those baptized in the Catholic Church, grace is mysteriously bestowed through baptism and dwells within them in secret; then, as they keep the commandments and maintain mental hope, it is revealed in the believer, according to the Lord’s word: *“Whoever believes in Me, rivers of living water will flow from within him. He said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in His name were to receive”* (John 7: 38, 39).

14. Because of their lack of faith, everyone falls under the power of sin, *“being drawn away and enticed by their own lust; and when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death”* (James 1:14–15). From one’s own lust arises sin of the mind, and from this comes the commission of an act in accordance with it. As soon as anyone falls away (from the obligation of baptism), he is immediately held captive by sin.

15. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe firmly at the very moment of baptism, but we ourselves grieve and quench Him within ourselves. That is why the Apostle commands: *“Do not quench the Spirit”* (1 Thess. 5:19), *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”* (Eph. 4: 30). This does not mean that every baptized person who has received grace thereby is unchangeable and no longer requires repentance, but that through baptism, by Christ’s gift, we have been granted God’s perfect grace to fulfill all the commandments; yet afterward, anyone who has received this grace sacramentally but fails to keep the commandments—to the extent that they neglect them—remains under the power of sin because, through negligence, having received the power to act, they fail to perform the works. Whether we wish to be made perfect, quickly or slowly, we must believe in Christ completely and keep all His commandments, having received from Him the power to do so. To the extent that we, by faith, keep God’s commandments, to that extent does the Holy Spirit produce His fruits within us. The fruits of the Spirit, according to St. Paul, are: *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”* (Gal. 5:22).

16. Therefore, if any of the faithful, living according to the commandments, has attained a certain spiritual effect commensurate with that, let him believe that he has already received the power to do so, for in baptism he received the grace of the Spirit—the source of all that is good, not only of the hidden and spiritual virtues, but also of the manifest ones. And let no one who is virtuous presume to do anything good by his own strength alone, for a good person *“brings forth good things from the good treasure of the heart”* (Matt. 12:35), says the Word, meaning by “treasure” the Holy Spirit hidden in the hearts of the faithful.

17. Having come to know with certainty that, according to the Apostle’s word, he possesses Christ hidden within him from baptism, he leaves behind all the things of this world and dwells in his heart, *“guarding it with all diligence”* (Prov. 4:23). For *“it is God who works in us both to will and to act according to his good pleasure”* (Phil. 2:13). By the phrase “to will and to act”—“to will and to act”—the Apostle shows that the will to practice virtues depends on our self-control, but that it is impossible to practice them or to root out sins without God. The saying, *“Without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5), has the same meaning. But we also have a part to play in all this.

18. The royal mind of each person first receives good and beneficial counsel from Christ, who dwells within, in the secret temple of the heart, and puts it into practice through a virtuous life, which in turn brings glory to Christ—the One who granted this counsel—through good thoughts.

19. The blessings that the righteous will receive at the resurrection are found on high, while their betrothal and the firstfruits of these blessings are already at work spiritually in the hearts of believers, so that, being assured of the future, we may despise all that is present and love God unto death. Therefore, the Apostle did not say, *“You are to approach,”* but *“You have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”* (Heb. 12:22); for we have all been made capable of this through baptism, but only those who are steadfast in faith are deemed worthy to receive it—those who die daily for the sake of Christ’s love,

that is, those who stand above all thought of this earthly life and think of nothing else but how to attain perfect love for Christ. Seeking this above all else, Saint Paul said: *"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me,"* that is, to love as I was loved by Christ (Phil. 3: 12). And when he attained this love, he no longer wished to think about anything—neither the sorrows of the body nor the wonders of creation—but he clearly left everything behind and said, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"* (Rom. 8:35–39). He no longer wished to think about anything, but only to abide there (in the heart, in the love of Christ).

20. The Apostle said that we have the firstfruits of the Spirit within us (Rom. 8:23), indicating the measure of our capacity, for we cannot contain the full work of the Spirit except through perfect obedience. Just as the sun, being perfect, pours out from itself a grace that is perfect, simple, and equal to all, yet each person receives the sunlight only to the extent that their eye is purified—so too has the Holy Spirit, through baptism, made those who believe in Him capable of receiving all His works and gifts: however, His gifts do not operate in everyone to the same degree, but are given to each according to their observance of the commandments, insofar as they bear witness through good deeds and demonstrate the measure of their faith in Christ.

21. Satanic temptation consists solely in a thought—a perception of a wicked thing (deed)—which finds an opening to approach our mind only through our lack of faith. For when, having received the commandment to have no concern for anything but to *"guard your heart with all diligence"* (Prov. 4:23) and to seek within ourselves the kingdom of heaven that exists, the mind will turn away from the heart and from the aforementioned pursuit, immediately giving way to the devil's temptation and becoming susceptible to his wicked counsel. But even then, the devil has no power to set our thoughts in motion, otherwise he would not spare us, forcibly instilling every evil thought and not allowing us to think of anything good; but he has only the power to instill what is perverse in the very first thought, in order to test our inner disposition—toward which it inclines, toward his counsel or toward God's commandment—since they are opposed to one another.

22. When a hateful thought takes root within and becomes entrenched, this depends not on a new disposition of ours, but on a previous perception. Such a thought remains fixed in a single-minded state; the indignation of the heart prevents it from turning into rambling thoughts and passion. A single-minded (bare) thought, hated by one who is attentive to oneself, lacks the power to draw the mind into rambling thoughts. This happens only when the heart sympathizes with it. Therefore, if we completely renounce all sympathy, the appearance (in the mind) of previously accepted images will always remain single-minded, and will no longer be able to harm us or condemn our conscience.

23. When the mind recognizes the futility of its resistance to previously accepted images (impressions) and confesses its past guilt to God, this very temptation is immediately dispelled, and the mind once again has the power to heed the heart and guard it *"with all diligence"* through prayer, striving to enter the innermost and safest chambers of the heart, where there are no longer the winds of deceitful thoughts, raging violently and casting the soul and body into the rapids of sensuality and the torrent of impurity, there is no broad and spacious path, paved with the words and images of worldly wisdom, which beguiles those who follow it, even if they are very wise; for the purest innermost chambers of the soul and the house of Christ receive into themselves our mind, stripped bare and bringing nothing from this age, whether it be justified by reason or not, except for *"these three,"* as named by the Apostle: *"faith, hope, and love"* (1 Cor. 13). Therefore, whoever loves the truth and desires to labor wholeheartedly may, as stated above, not be carried away by previously formed impressions, but listen to his heart, to progress toward the inner life and draw near to God—provided they do not neglect the labors of prayer and a life lived according to God; for one who carefully restrains themselves every day—not only outwardly but also inwardly—from mental flights of fancy and carnal pleasures cannot help but labor with their heart.

24. To be free from the temptations of evil is a characteristic of the Unchanging Nature alone, not of human nature. And Adam was subject to Satan's temptation, yet he had the power to obey it or to disobey it. A temptation of thought is neither sin nor righteousness, but a revelation of our self-willed nature. That is why it is permitted to tempt us, so that those who incline toward the commandment may be deemed worthy of victory crowns for their faithfulness, and those who incline toward self-indulgence may be shown to be worthy of condemnation for their unfaithfulness. But we must also know this: judgment is not rendered immediately after every change in us, as to whether we have proven ourselves capable or worthy of rejection, but when, throughout our entire sojourn in this life, we are tested by trials—winning and being defeated, falling and rising, straying and being guided back to the right path—only then, on the day of our departure, after all has

been taken into account, will we be judged or commended accordingly. Therefore, a trial is not a sin. Not at all! For although temptation involuntarily (without our consent) presents things to us in a single thought, we have received from the Lord the power of spiritual action, and it is within our own power, at the very first thought, having discerned what is harmful and what is beneficial, to reject or accept these thoughts, which multiply not out of necessity but from the disposition of the soul.

25. Since our soul, clouded by sensuality and vanity, has fallen into the depths of folly, it heeds neither the commandments of Scripture, nor natural reason, nor the counsel of the wise, but follows only its own designs. Therefore, harboring within itself these causes of evil, it cannot be free from the actions characteristic of them. To the extent that each person believes in the Lord regarding future blessings, having despised human glory and pleasures, to that extent does he keep his thoughts in check, and to that extent is he more at peace than one who loves pleasures; this is why we differ from one another both in our thoughts and in our way of life.

26. Know for certain that the Lord sees into the hearts of all people: He immediately intercedes, as He has promised, for those who hate the first appearance of wicked thoughts, and does not allow the multitude of their wandering thoughts, once aroused, to defile their minds and consciences; but those who do not suppress the first stirrings of such thoughts with faith and hope in God, but rather take pleasure in them, He leaves as unbelievers without help, to be struck by the subsequent thoughts, which He does not remove, for He sees that we love their first allure rather than hating them at their first appearance.

27. No power compels us by force to either good or evil, but whoever we serve of our own free will—God or the devil—that one then encourages us toward everything that falls within his domain.

28. The origins of our actions are two inclinations of thought, unnoticed by the mind: human praise and the gratification of the body, which, when they involuntarily take hold of us before our will consents to them, constitute neither vice nor virtue, but serve only as a revelation of our will's inclination—toward which we are drawn. The Lord desires that we endure insults and afflict ourselves, while the devil desires the opposite; and therefore, when we rejoice in the aforementioned inclinations, it is evident that, having disobeyed the Lord, we are inclining toward a spirit of sensuality; but when we grieve over these inclinations, it is evident that we are turning toward God, having chosen the narrow path. That is why these temptations are permitted to assail people, so that those who love God's commandment and find delight in it may submit their will to Christ, and He, finding an opening in them, may direct their minds toward the truth. Understand the opposite as well: those who, on the contrary, love human glory and the gratification of the flesh, give the devil an opening, and he, having found his way in, offers us his evil suggestions; and as we take delight in thoughts of them, he never ceases to add to them until we come to hate the two aforementioned passions from the heart. But we love them so much that not only do we forsake virtue for their sake, but we also, when the opportunity arises, exchange one of these passions for the other: sometimes we mortify the body for the sake of vanity, and sometimes we endure dishonor for the sake of sensual pleasure. And when we carelessly consent to them, we begin to seek the means of satisfying them. The means of vanity and bodily pleasure is the love of money, which, according to Divine Scripture, is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

29. The Lord did not say to Adam, *"On the very day you eat of it, I will put you to death,"* but, warning them, He foretold to them the law of righteousness, saying, *"On the very day you eat of it, you will surely die"* (Gen. 2:17). And in general, the Lord has ordained that for every deed, whether good or evil, a fitting recompense should follow naturally, and not by special decree, as some who are ignorant of the spiritual law suppose.

30. We must remember that if we hate any of our fellow believers as evil, then God will hate us as evil; and if we reject anyone from repentance as a sinner, then we too will be rejected (by God) as sinners, and if we do not forgive our neighbor's sins, then in the same way we ourselves will not receive forgiveness for our sins. Proclaiming this law, our Lawgiver Christ said to us: *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven"* (Luke 6:37). Knowing this law, the Holy Apostle Paul clearly stated: *"For when you judge another, you condemn yourself"* (Rom. 2:1). And the Prophet, not knowing this, cried out to God: *"For You will repay each one according to his deeds"* (Ps. 61:13), and another Prophet, speaking on behalf of God, says: *"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord"* (Deut. 32:35).

31. The Prophet Daniel says: *"Atone for your sins with alms, and for your iniquities with acts of generosity (toward the poor)"* (Dan. 4:24). But perhaps you will say: I have no money; how can I be generous

to the poor? You have no money, but you have desires; renounce them and use them to do good. Can you not give alms with your physical hand? Give alms with a righteous will: *"If your brother sins against you, forgive him"* (Luke 17:3), according to the Lord's word, and this will be a great act of charity for you. If we seek the forgiveness of sins from God, we must act in this way with every sin, toward everyone, so that what is said (in the Gospel) may come true: *"Forgive, and you will be forgiven"* (Luke 6:37). It is a great deed for someone who has money to give alms to the poor; but to show mercy to one's neighbors for their sins (committed against us) is all the more important for the forgiveness of sins, inasmuch as the soul, by its very nature, is nobler than the body. But if we ask God for forgiveness (of sins) and have received what we asked for many times over, so that we have not suffered any harm here because of it, yet refuse to let our neighbors share in this gift, then by this very act we become like that wicked servant who, having received forgiveness of a debt—ten talents—from his Master, did not forgive his neighbor, who owed him only a hundred denarii; to whom the Lord, as if judging according to the law, said: *"You wicked servant! I forgave you the entire debt because you begged Me—should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant and forgiven his debt, just as I forgave you?"* *"And he was angry,"* it is said, *"and handed him over to the torturers until he paid back the entire debt."* And he draws a conclusion from this, saying: *"So also will My heavenly Father do to you, if you do not forgive each of your brothers their trespasses from your hearts"* (Matt. 18: 32 – 35).

32. The Lord said, *"Woe to you who are rich"* (Luke 6:24). But in saying this, He does not condemn all who have become wealthy, for among them are those who truly know how to manage their wealth according to the will of God, who gave it, and who, as Scripture says, receive a hundredfold in this life, such as: Blessed Abraham and the righteous Job, who, being merciful, became even richer both here and in the age to come, but He rebukes (as we said above) those who, having a greedy disposition, appropriate God's gifts for themselves—whether in regard to material possessions or His various acts of generosity—and refuse to be merciful toward their neighbor. For it is not wealth not given by the Lord that causes harm to its possessor, but the greed arising from injustice and its mother, —unmercifulness—which, by avoiding entirely, the steadfast believers have wholly renounced these present blessings, not because they have recklessly come to hate God's creation, but out of faith in Christ, who commanded them to act thus, receiving from Him the fulfillment of their daily needs. Another may grow rich even without property, possessing in his wealth a word or knowledge, or some other means of showing mercy, granted to all, for he receives it in order to impart it to the poor.

33. Those who have sinned should not despair. Let this not be so. For we are condemned not for the multitude of our sins, but for our refusal to repent and to come to know the wonders of Christ, as Truth Himself testifies: *"Do you think,"* says the Lord, *"that these Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, were more sinful than all the people on earth? No,"* I tell you, *"but unless you repent, you too will perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and crushed them—do you think they were more sinful than all the people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well"* (Luke 13:2–5). Do you see that we are condemned for lacking repentance?

34. Repentance, however, as I understand it, is not limited by time or by any particular deeds, but is accomplished through Christ's commandments, in accordance with them. Some of the commandments are more general, encompassing many of the specific ones, and cutting off many aspects of vice at once, as, for example, it is said in Scripture: *"Give to everyone who asks of you, and do not demand your own back from the one who takes it"* (Luke 6:30), and: *"Do not turn away anyone who wants to borrow from you"* (Matthew 5:42)—these are specific commandments. The general commandment, however, which encompasses them all, is: *"Sell your possessions and give to the poor,"* and: *"Take up your cross and follow Me"* (Matthew 19:21), where "cross" refers to the endurance of the afflictions that befall us. For whoever has given everything to the poor and taken up his cross has fulfilled all the aforementioned commandments at once. Likewise: *"I want,"* says the Apostle, *"men to pray in every place, lifting up holy hands"* (1 Tim. 2:8), and the general principle of this (the Lord): *"Go into your inner room and pray to your Father, who is in secret"* (Matt. 6:6), and again: *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thess. 5:17): he who enters his inner room and prays without ceasing has thereby fully fulfilled the prayer offered in every place. It is also said: *"Do not commit adultery, do not commit fornication, do not murder,"* and the like, and the general principle of all this is: *"casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God"* (2 Cor. 10:5). He who subdues his thoughts has erected a barrier against all the aforementioned vices. That is why those who love God and have firm faith compel themselves to observe the general commandments, without neglecting the specific ones that

arise as circumstances require. And so I believe that the work of repentance is accomplished through the following three virtues: the purification of thoughts, unceasing prayer, and patience in the afflictions that befall us; and all this must be accomplished not only outwardly but also in the mind, so that those who have labored long may thereby become dispassionate. And since the work of repentance, as we have stated, cannot be accomplished without the three virtues mentioned above, I believe that repentance is always appropriate for all who desire salvation, both sinners and the righteous, for there is no such level of perfection that does not require the practice of the aforementioned virtues; through them, beginners gain an introduction to piety, those of intermediate standing—progress in it, and the perfect—confirmation in it.

35. The Lord commands everyone: “*Repent*” (Matt. 4:17), so that even the spiritual and those who are making progress may not neglect this command, paying attention even to the most subtle and minor transgressions, for it is said: “*He who despises a small matter will fall little by little*” (Sirach 19:1). And do not say: How can a spiritual person fall? As long as he remains as he is, he does not fall; but when he allows even a small thing from the enemy to enter him and remains in it without repenting, that small thing, having taken root and grown, will no longer tolerate remaining separate from him, but draws him into union with itself as if by a chain— —a long-standing attachment, drawing him by force. And if, having entered into a struggle with it (this evil) through prayer, he rejects it, he will remain at his current level of spiritual maturity. But if, of course, he is led astray (from his usual level) by the increasing pressure of that which possesses him, thereby diminishing the struggle and the effort of prayer, he will inevitably be seduced by other passions as well. And so, gradually being led astray—each according to the extent of their own deviation—they are deprived of divine help, and finally are led into even greater sins, sometimes unwillingly, under the compulsion of the evil that had previously taken hold of them. But you will say to me: Could he not, at the beginning of his fall, have implored God not to fall into ultimate evil? And I tell you that he could have, but, having despised the small thing and, of his own free will, accepted it into himself as insignificant, he no longer prays for this, not knowing that this small thing is the beginning and cause of a greater one: so it is with both good and evil! But when the passion grows stronger and, with the help of his own will, finds a place within him, it then rises up against him by force, against his will. Then, realizing his misfortune, he prays to God, waging war against the enemy whom, out of ignorance, he had previously defended, arguing on its behalf with others. Sometimes, however, even when heard by the Lord, he receives no help, because it comes not as a person thinks, but as God ordains for our benefit. For He, knowing our weakness and contempt, helps us greatly through afflictions, so that, having been delivered without suffering, we may not eagerly commit the same sins again. And that is why we affirm that it is necessary to endure what befalls us and to remain in repentance, as is most fitting.

36. You will object to this: What further repentance is required of those who have truly pleased God and attained perfection? I acknowledge with you that such people have existed and still exist, but listen carefully and you will understand that even they have a need for it. The Lord has equated looking at a woman with lust to adultery, likened anger toward a neighbor to murder, and shown that we will give an account even for idle words (Matt. 5:28, 29; 12:36). Who, then, has never felt lust at the sight of another, has never been angry with a neighbor without cause, and has never even been guilty of a thoughtless word, so as to have no need for repentance? For even if one is not like this now, one was once like this; and therefore, with regard to repentance, one remains in debt until death. But let us suppose that there are some who are free from these weaknesses, as they say, and who have been free from every vice from birth—though this is impossible, according to the words of Saint Paul: “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace*” (Rom. 3: 23, 24). However, even if such people existed, they are still descended from Adam; all were born under the sin of transgression and are therefore, by God’s judgment, condemned to death and cannot be saved without Christ.

37. Consider those who have lived since the beginning of the world, and you will find that for those who pleased God, the mystery of godliness was accomplished through repentance. No one was condemned unless they despised it, and no one was justified unless they sought it. Samson, Saul, and Eli, along with his sons—having already attained a measure of holiness but having grown weary of repentance—first lost it, and then, when the time of reprieve had passed, died a terrible death. If the devil never ceases to fight against us, then repentance must never be abandoned. The saints compel themselves to offer it also for their neighbors, since they cannot be perfect without active love,

38. If repentance is a plea for mercy, then those who have must take care not to hear, “*You are full*” (1 Cor. 4:8); all the more so must the poor ask according to their need, for “*everyone who asks receives*” (Matt. 7:8). If the one who shows mercy (to others) is himself shown mercy, then, as I believe, the whole world is sustained by repentance, when one is providentially helped by another. Through repentance, God saved the people of Nineveh, but destroyed the people of Sodom, who were indifferent to Him.

39. Even if we strive in repentance until death, we will still not have fulfilled our duty, for we have done nothing worthy of the kingdom of heaven. For just as we eat, drink, speak, and hear, so naturally must we also repent. Sometimes one who is worthy of death according to the law is put to death, but whoever lives does so by faith for the sake of repentance; even if not from one’s own sins, then from the sin of transgression—we have been cleansed through baptism, and having been cleansed, we have received the commandments; but whoever fails to fulfill the latter has defiled the former, “*forgetting the cleansing of your former sins*” (2 Peter 1:9), from which no one is free at any time, even if they have never neglected any of the commandments. Therefore, repentance is necessary for all: for it reveals sins that were once committed willfully but now occur involuntarily, when we come to hate our passions and turn away from them. He who restricts it turns back to the past and renews his old transgressions.

40. As for our active life, we cannot do anything worthy without repentance, but (the Lord) shows us great mercy because of our intention. One who disciplines himself and remains steadfast in repentance until his very death—even if he sins in some way—will be saved because of his self-discipline, for the Lord has promised this in the Gospel. Whoever says that he has no need of repentance considers himself righteous and is called in Scripture a child of evil; for through his belief in his own righteousness, appearing as if he had already repented without even knowing it, instead of being crucified, he consorts with the passions: for conceit and pride are passions. One who is conceited cannot be saved, for it is said in Scripture: “*The scornful and the arrogant man, the haughty one, will come to nothing*” (Habakkuk 2:5). If humility does no harm whatsoever to the perfect, then let him not forsake its cause—repentance. Faithful Abraham and righteous Job, in their humility, called themselves dust and ashes, and these words are a sign of humility. The three youths, truly magnanimous and great martyrs, confessed their faith in the midst of the burning flames, and speaking of themselves—“We have sinned and transgressed”—repented of past evils even though they were already perfect, and the essence of nearly their entire song consists of repentance. So, if even those who were most pleasing to God and who proved themselves perfect in their deeds resorted to the help of repentance right up until their death, who can rely on themselves and despise repentance under the pretext of righteousness?

41. We must forgive those who have wronged us, knowing that the reward for forgiving wrongs surpasses the reward for any other virtue. And if we are unable to do this because of the sin that has taken hold of us, then we must, through vigil and suffering, pray to God that He may have mercy on us and grant us such strength. At the same time, at all times, in every place, and in every endeavor, we must have a single intention: to rejoice rather than grieve in the face of various offenses from others—not simply or without reason, but because we have the opportunity to forgive those who have sinned (against us) and to receive forgiveness for our own sins. For in this lies true knowledge of God, which is vaster than all other knowledge and through which we can implore God and be heard; this is the fruit of faith; by this our faith in Christ is proven; through this we can take up our cross and follow Christ, this is the mother of the first and greatest commandments, for through this we can love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves; for this we must fast, remain vigilant, and mortify our flesh, so that our heart and inner disposition may be opened, accept this within themselves, and no longer reject it. Then, because we forgive our neighbor’s sins, we will find that the grace secretly given to us at Holy Baptism will act within us no longer imperceptibly, but tangibly to our consciousness and senses.

42. Those who are wise in the letter of the law consider only those who wrong others to be guilty, but those enlightened by the Spirit, even when wronged by others, reproach themselves—unless they willingly endure the wrongs with joy—and they reproach themselves not only for this but also because their sorrows stem from their own past sins, even though one sin may be lighter than another. Whoever takes vengeance on his own account is, as it were, accusing God of a lack of justice; but whoever endures the suffering that has come upon him as if it were his own confesses the evil he has previously committed, for which he suffers, bearing the hardship.

43. Two passions hinder the virtue of forgiving offenses: pride and sensuality—and therefore, one must first renounce them in one’s mind and only then strive to acquire this virtue. Therefore, engage in a

struggle with your own will to overcome these passions. This is an internal struggle, not an external one (for we are not to wage war against our neighbors), but an internal one, and no one among men will come to our aid. We will have only one Helper, mysteriously hidden within us since the time of our baptism—Christ, Who is invincible and from Whom nothing is hidden. He will assist us in this struggle if we fulfill His commandments to the best of our ability. As for our enemies, as mentioned above: sensuality, which is bound up with the flesh, and pride, which possesses both you and me. They deceived Eve and seduced Adam: sensuality pointed to the tree, “*which is good for food,*” “*and pleasing to the eyes,*” while vanity added to that: “*You will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Gen. 3:5–6).

44. (From where did the monks derive their way of life?) Monks do not adhere to a way of thinking opposed to the Church, but strive to follow the mind of Christ, according to the words of the Apostle: “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant*” (Phil. 2:6–7). Know, then, that such a way of thinking and living is granted by God and gives rise to a great virtue—humility. The Lord commanded the Church to do this work, saying: “*Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life*” (; John 6:27). What is this work? It is to seek, through prayer, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, which is within us, as the Lord said (Luke 17:21), promising that He will provide all that is necessary for the body to those who seek Him (Matthew 6:33). To call those who have heard this from the Lord, who have believed (His word), and who fulfill it to the best of their ability “acting contrary to nature” is to reproach God, Who commanded this.

45. How do monks who follow this rule fall? It is not those who adhere to it who fall, but those who abandon it and, having been ensnared by vanity and concern for worldly matters, neglect what is most important in monastic life—I am speaking of prayer and humility. That is why the devil does not prevent us from thinking about and doing all worldly matters, so long as he can draw us away from prayer and humility, for he knows that whatever is done without these two (virtues), even if it is good, he will eventually take away. By prayer, I mean not only that which is performed with the body, but also that which is offered to God with an undistracted mind. For if one of these two—the body or the mind—is prematurely separated, then the other, left alone, does not stand before God but before its own will.

46. Blessed Paul, desiring that we by no means be negligent in prayer, says, “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess. 5:17), and at the same time, pointing to the undistracted state of the mind, he said: “*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect*” (Rom. 12:2). Since God, in view of our lack of faith and weakness, has given various commandments so that each person, according to his or her own effort, might avoid torment and attain salvation, the Apostle instructs us toward the perfect will of God, desiring that we might not be judged at all; and knowing that prayer contributes to the fulfillment of all the commandments, he never ceases to command and speak of it in many ways and on many occasions: “*Praying at all times in the Spirit, and keeping alert in this regard with all perseverance and prayer*” (Eph. 6: 18).

47. Prayer takes various forms: for it is one thing to pray to God with an undistracted mind, and another to stand in prayer with the body while the mind wanders; and yet another is to set aside time and, having put aside worldly conversations and activities, to pray; and yet another is to prefer and prioritize prayer above all worldly concerns as much as possible, according to the words of the same Apostle: “*The Lord is near; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God*” (Phil. 4:6). As the blessed Peter says: “*Be self-controlled and alert in your prayers, casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you*” (1 Peter 4:7 and chapter 5:7). First of all, the Lord Himself, knowing that everything is established through prayer, said: “*Do not worry about what you will eat or drink, or what you will wear; but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*” (Matt. 6:31, 33). But perhaps the Lord is also calling us through this to greater faith: for who, having set aside concern for the temporal and not suffering want in it, will not trust God regarding eternal blessings? Revealing this, the Lord said: “*Whoever is faithful in a little is faithful also in much*” (Luke 16:10).

48. The Lord, knowing that daily care for the body is inevitable for us, has not cut off our daily concerns, but has permitted us to care for the present day in a very proper manner. He commands, in a godly and loving way, not to worry about tomorrow, for it is impossible for people clothed in the body to completely disregard what pertains to bodily life: through prayer and self-restraint, one can reduce much to little, but it is impossible to completely disregard everything (pertaining to the body). Therefore, whoever desires, according

to Scripture, *“to grow up into a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13), must not give preference to various ministries over prayer, nor, without need, as it happens, take them upon himself; nor should he, when they arise out of some necessity and by God’s providence, shy away from or reject them under the pretext of prayer, but he must discern the difference (between prayer and other activities) and serve God’s providence without hesitation. Whoever reasons otherwise does not believe that, according to Scripture, one commandment is higher and more important than another, and does not wish, in the words of the Prophet, *“to be guided by all the commandments”* (Ps. 118:128) that come his way according to God’s providence.

49. Necessary and prudent undertakings are unavoidable, but we must reject untimely pursuits, preferring prayer to them—and especially those that lead us into great expenditures and the accumulation of excessive wealth. For to the extent that one limits these matters for the Lord’s sake and cuts away their superfluous elements, to that extent the mind is kept from distraction; and to the extent that the mind is kept from distraction, to that extent it makes room for pure prayer and demonstrates sincere faith in Christ. If, however, anyone—whether through lack of faith or some other weakness—is unable to do this, let him at least recognize the truth and, to the best of his ability, strive forward, acknowledging his own immaturity.

50. Let us strive, through hope and prayer, to cast aside all worldly cares; but if we cannot accomplish this perfectly, let us confess our shortcomings to God, and let us by no means neglect our diligence in prayer, for it is better to be rebuked for frequent lapses than for complete abandonment. In all that we have said about prayer and indispensable service, we greatly need God’s guidance to discern when and which activity we should give priority to over prayer. For everyone, while engaged in their favorite activity, thinks they are performing the proper service, not realizing that all our deeds must be directed toward pleasing God, and not toward pleasing ourselves. It is even more difficult to discern that even these necessary and unavoidable duties are not always the same, but that one of them must be given priority over another at the appropriate time: for each of these duties is not performed constantly, but at the appropriate time, whereas the duty of prayer is ordained to be unceasing; therefore, we must give it priority over activities in which there is no pressing necessity. And all the Apostles, teaching the people about this distinction—the people who wished to enlist them in service—said: *“It is not fitting for us, having forsaken the word of God, to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, look out for seven men among you who are well-respected, whom we will appoint to this service. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* And this proposal was approved by the whole assembly” (Acts 6:2–5). What, then, do we learn from this? That people who cannot devote themselves to prayer are well-suited to serve, so that we may not be deprived of either, and that those who are better able should not neglect what is better.

51. Let us begin the work of prayer, and as we progress gradually, we will find that not only hope in God, but also firm faith, sincere love, forgiveness, love for the brethren, self-control, patience, inner guidance, and deliverance from temptations—these are the gifts of grace, heartfelt confession, and fervent tears are granted to the faithful through prayer; and not only these (things listed above), but also endurance of the sorrows that befall us, and pure love for one’s neighbor, and knowledge of the spiritual law and the attainment of God’s truth, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the bestowal of spiritual treasures, and all that God has promised to give to the faithful here and in the age to come—(all these they receive through prayer). In a word—it is impossible to restore the image of God within oneself in any other way than by God’s grace and faith, if a person, with great humility, keeps his mind focused in undistracted prayer.

52. There are three kinds of piety: the first is to avoid sin; the second is, having sinned, to endure the sorrows that befall us; and the third consists in weeping over our lack of patience if we are unable to endure these sorrows. For what is not corrected here by appropriate means of reconciliation (with God) will necessarily bring upon us judgment there, unless God, seeing us weeping and humbled, as He Himself knows, erases our sins by His almighty grace.

53. Oh, how insidious and how imperceptible is the passion of seeking human approval—it even takes hold of the wise! For the actions of other passions are easily discerned by those who commit them and therefore lead those possessed by them to weeping and humility, whereas the desire to please men is concealed by words and appearances of piety, so that it is difficult for the people it deceives to discern its various forms.

54. Listen to how Scripture condemns the desire to please men. First, the Prophet David says: *“God has scattered the bones of those who please men; they have been put to shame, for God has humbled them”* (Ps. 52: 6), and the Apostle says: *“Do not work merely to please men, as those who please men”* (Eph. 6:6)

and further: *“Or am I now seeking to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (Gal. 1:10). And you will find much of this in the Holy Scriptures if you read them.

55. What are the various forms of seeking to please people? The mother of these forms—and the first among them—is unbelief, and following it, as its offspring, are: envy, hatred, flattery, jealousy, quarrels, hypocrisy, partiality, service only for show, slander, lies, a pretense of false piety rather than true piety, and similar, hard-to-detect, and obscure passions. But worst of all is that some praise all of this with skillful words as good, while concealing the harm that lies within them. If you wish, I will reveal some of their deceit: a cunning people-pleaser, while advising one person, plots against another; while praising one, he condemns another; while teaching his neighbor, he praises himself; he takes part in a trial not to judge fairly, but to take revenge on an enemy; he accuses with flattery until, by rebuking his enemy, he is accepted by him; he slanders without naming names to conceal his calumny; he persuades the poor to tell him what they need, as if wishing to provide it for them, and when they do, he publicizes them as beggars; boasts before the inexperienced, but speaks humbly before the experienced, seeking praise from both; when the virtuous are praised, he resents it and, by starting another story, deflects the praise; he condemns rulers when they are absent, but when they are present, praises them to their faces, mocks the humble and wise, and spies on teachers to rebuke them; he belittles simplicity to appear supremely wise; he ignores the virtues of all his neighbors but keeps their misdeeds in mind. In short: he seizes every opportunity and fawns on people, (unwittingly) revealing a multifaceted passion for pleasing others: he attempts to conceal his own evil deeds by inquiring about those of others. True monks, however, do not act this way; on the contrary, out of a spirit of mercy, they overlook the evil deeds of others, while openly confessing their own before God. For this reason, they are slandered by people who do not know their intentions, since they seek to please God rather than people. Thus, sometimes pleasing Him, sometimes humbling themselves, they expect a reward from the Lord for both, for He said: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 18:14).

56. Of the sorrows that befall us, nothing comes upon us unjustly, but everything happens according to God’s righteous judgment. Some suffer for their own evil deeds, and others for their neighbor’s. Take, for example, the three youths, who, having been cast into the furnace, teach us this way of thinking, saying that they were cast in because of their own fault (Dan. 3:28, 31) and by God’s command, even though they had taken on the appearance of others at that time. And Saint David, when he was reviled by Shemei, confessed that he had been subjected to revilement because of his own fault and by God’s command (2 Chronicles 16:11). Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets foretold to the people (of Israel) and to the nations (of the Gentiles) that tribulations would befall them in future times, commensurate with the sins of each, declaring to them both their sins and their calamities, for they say: *“Because they spoke this and did that and that, such-and-such befell them.”* And the blessed David, explaining this, says in the Psalm: *“I have understood, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, and You have truly humbled me”* (Ps. 118: 75) and further: *“You have delivered me to the scorn of fools. I was struck dumb and did not open my mouth, for You have done this”* (Ps. 38:9–10).

57. Let us accept those who rebuke us as accusers sent by God to expose the evil thoughts hidden within us, so that, having carefully examined our thoughts, we may correct ourselves—even though we are unaware of much of the evil lurking within us, for only a perfect man is capable of remembering all his shortcomings. If even our obvious shortcomings are not easily noticed by us, how much less so are our thoughts; and since we are unaware of most of the evil hidden within us, we are perplexed by the sorrows that befall us. Let us recognize, as people of reason, that the Lord allows sorrows to come upon us for our own good and thereby does us much good: first, through this, the (evil) thoughts that secretly control us are revealed; and once they are revealed, the Lord grants us true and sincere humility, and then bestows upon us deliverance from vain pride and the complete exposure of all the evil hidden within us. Know for certain that if we do not endure the sorrows that befall us with faith and gratitude, we cannot recognize the evil hidden within us; and if we do not clearly recognize it, we cannot reject our present evil thoughts, nor seek purification from past evils, nor gain firm assurance regarding the future.

58. The sorrows and rebukes that befall us may not seem to correspond to our sins, but in a spiritual sense they retain all truth. We can see this from Holy Scripture as well: did those who perished when the Tower of Siloam collapsed bring the tower crashing down upon others? Or did the captives, taken to Babylon for seventy years as a punishment, take others captive as a punishment? Such are not the cases of punishment, but just as soldiers, if found guilty of any crime, are subjected to corporal punishment, yet do not suffer the

very same evil they committed—so too are we all punished by the afflictions that befall us at the proper time and in a manner conducive to repentance, but not in the same way, nor at the same time, nor by the same means. It is precisely this—that is, the delay in time and the dissimilarity between the afflictions that befall us and our sins—that leads many to disbelieve in God’s truth.

59. The cause of every sorrowful event (that befalls us) lies in the thoughts of each of us: I might say that words and deeds are also causes, but since they do not precede thought, I therefore attribute everything to thoughts. Thought comes first, and then, through words and deeds, communion is formed between us (and our neighbors). Communion, however, is of two kinds: one arises from malice, and the other from love. Through communion, we accept one another, even those we do not know, and accepting our neighbor necessarily entails suffering, as the Holy Scriptures say: *“He who stands surety for his friend gives his hand to the enemy”* (Prov. 6:1). Thus, everyone endures what befalls them not only for themselves but also for their neighbor—insofar as they have taken that burden upon themselves.

60. Accepting one’s neighbor’s suffering, when it stems from malice, happens involuntarily. And it happens this way: one who deprives another (his neighbor) of something, even though he does not wish to, takes upon himself the temptations of the one deprived; likewise, one who slanders takes upon himself the temptations of the one slandered; one who extorts takes upon himself the temptations of the one extorted; one who wearies takes upon himself the temptations of the one wearied; one who speaks ill of another takes upon himself the temptations of the one spoken ill of; the one who despises—the one who is despised; the liar takes upon himself the temptations of the one he has slandered; and so as not to list everything separately, I will say briefly: whoever wrongs his neighbor takes upon himself, in proportion to the wrong, the temptation of the one he has wronged. Divine Scripture also testifies to this, saying: *“Whoever digs a pit for the upright will fall into it, and whoever heaps a stone upon himself will bring it down upon himself”* (Prov. 26: 27), and also: *“All the plans of the wicked come to nothing, but all the plans of the righteous come from the Lord”* (Prov. 16:33). *“Is God unjust when He inflicts wrath”* (Rom. 3:5)—not only upon those who are chastened by afflictions, but also upon those who recklessly rebel against these afflictions.

61. Taking upon oneself one’s neighbor out of love is what the Lord Jesus has entrusted to us in every way, first by healing our spiritual infirmities, then by *“healing every disease and every sickness, taking away the sin of the world,”* renewing those who firmly believe in Him and purifying their nature, granting them deliverance from death, bequeathing the fear of God, teaching piety, showing that we must suffer for love’s sake even unto death; moreover, He has granted us patience through the communion of the Spirit and future blessings, *“which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the human heart”* (1 Cor. 2:9). Therefore, He endures temptations for us, suffers insults, mockery, and bondage; He is betrayed, struck on the cheeks, made to drink vinegar and gall, nailed to the cross, and pierced with a spear. Thus, having united Himself with us in both flesh and spirit, and having taken upon Himself our sufferings, He then handed down this law to the holy Apostles and disciples, the Prophets, the Fathers, and the Patriarchs—teaching some beforehand through the Holy Spirit, and revealing it to others through His Most Pure Body. Demonstrating this self-sacrifice, He said: *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). That is why Saint Paul, imitating the Lord, said: *“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church”* (Col. 1: 24), alluding to this acceptance out of love.

62. Do you wish to understand more clearly how all the Apostles, in thought, word, and deed, entered into communion with us and, through this communion, bore our trials? (They did this) in thought: by presenting the Scriptures to us, citing prophecies, exhorting us to believe in Christ as our Savior, assuring us that we must serve Him as the Son of God by nature, praying for us, shedding tears, and doing everything that can be done by one who is faithful in thought. In other words: by pleading with us, warning us, teaching us, rebuking us, and reproaching us for our lack of faith, rebuking our ignorance, explaining the Scriptures, revealing the times, confessing Christ, and proclaiming that He was crucified for us, affirming that the Word made flesh is one, not two, even though we understand Him to consist of two natures, united inseparably and without confusion, at all times, in every place, and in every deed, cutting off wickedness, refusing to agree with falsehood, not conversing with those who boast in the flesh, not associating with the vain, not fearing the proud, destroying the wicked, receiving the humble, taking the godly as our own, and teaching us to do the same. And in their deeds: being persecuted, reviled, deprived, insulted, cast into prisons, killed, and suffering similar things for our sake. Thus, having entered into fellowship with us, they also accepted our trials, for they

say: *"If we are afflicted, it is for your salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort,"* having received the law from the Lord, who said: *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15: 13). And they passed this on to us, saying: *"For if the Lord laid down His life for us, we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers"* (1 John 3:16), and also: *"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2).

63. And so, if we have come to understand these two kinds of fellowship with one another—that is, acceptance, out of necessity and that which springs from love—then, in accordance with these, we will not be curious about the temptations that befall us—how, or when, or through whom they come upon us—for only God knows how each of them corresponds to the spiritual forces, the time of their inevitable occurrence, and the cooperation of all creation in this. And we must only believe in God's truth and know that everything that befalls us involuntarily happens to us either for the sake of love or because of malice; and therefore we must endure it, not reject it, lest we add yet another sin to our sins.

64. The will of the flesh is the natural movement of the body, followed by a passion arising without thought—which is strengthened by sleep and the body's rest; of these, the blessed Peter speaks: *"Do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you"* (1 Peter 4:12). And the blessed Paul said of them: *"The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh"*; that is why he commands, saying: *"Walk by the Spirit, and do not fulfill the desires of the flesh"* (Gal. 5:16–17). The Apostles said this, desiring that we not consent to such impulses.

65. Those who strive for virtue must, having begun their endeavor, see it through to the end. As for the young and the old—those who are in good health and fear neither toil nor hostility—it is more beneficial to embrace constant fasting with all their zeal: to eat bread in moderation and to drink water from time to time (in moderation as well), so as to finish a meal while still feeling some hunger and thirst, lest the enjoyment (of food and drink) become an obstacle to the necessary service of God. If, by partaking of the aforementioned food, we become fully satisfied, we will soon desire other delicacies. But if we do not become satisfied, then, always being hungry, even if we desire satisfaction, we will desire to be satisfied even with just bread.

66. It is not easy to master a shameless stomach: for it is a god to those it overcomes, and it is impossible for one who obeys it to remain blameless. And I see misfortune arising not only from overindulgence but also from abstaining from food; for when we go without food for many days, despondency, having found a foothold within us, will rise up and fight against us, and our nightly vigil will be cast into sleep, and our daytime prayer into carnal thoughts, so that we derive no benefit whatsoever because of sleep and suffer greater harm from carnal thoughts; for, as those who fast more than others, we begin to be presumptuous and to look down on those who are lesser, and such an attitude (toward ourselves and our neighbors) is heavier than any sin.

67. Just as a foolish farmer, having tilled his field at great expense and left it unseeded, has labored to his own loss, so too, if we, having disciplined our bodies with great self-control, fail to sow the seeds of prayer, it will turn out that we have labored against ourselves. But perhaps someone will say: if prayer is the main work of righteousness, what need is there for fasting? It is of the utmost importance: for just as a poor farmer, if he sows in a field overgrown with weeds without first tilling the soil anew, will reap thorns instead of wheat—so too, if we sow the seed of prayer without first mortifying our bodies through fasting, we will bear the fruits of sin instead of righteousness. For this body is of the same earth, and if it is not cultivated with the same diligence as the earth, it will never bear the fruit of righteousness.

68. Fasting, just as it benefits those who approach it wisely, so does it harm those who undertake it unwisely. Therefore, those who seek the benefits of fasting must guard against its harm—that is, pride—and the bread we eat after completing the fast we have set for ourselves must be divided into days of abstinence from food, so that, by eating a small portion each day, we may subdue the desires of our flesh and keep our hearts steadfast in the most beneficial prayer, so that, being preserved by God's power from pride, we may take care throughout all the days of our lives to remain in humility, without which no one can ever please God.

69. If we were to strive for humility, there would be no need to punish us, for all the evil and sorrow that befalls us comes upon us because of our pride. If an angel of Satan was sent to the Apostle *"to torment him"* so that he would not become proud, how much more will Satan himself be sent to trample us when we become proud, until we humble ourselves. Our forefathers owned homes, possessed wealth, had wives, cared for their children, and yet, because of their insatiable humility, conversed with God; but we have withdrawn from the world, despised wealth, left our homes, and, thinking that we dwell with God, are mocked by demons

because of our pride. The one who exalts himself does not know himself, for if he saw his own folly and weakness, he would not exalt himself; and how can one who does not know himself come to know God? If he could not recognize the folly in which he dwells, how could he possibly come to know the wisdom of God, from which he is far removed and to which he is a stranger? He who knows God contemplates His greatness and, reproaching himself, speaks like the blessed Job: *"I had heard of You by hearsay before, but now my eye has seen You. Therefore I despised myself and melted away; I considered myself dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5–6). Thus, those who imitate Job know Him. Therefore, if we too desire to see God, let us reproach ourselves and be humble and wise, so that we may not only see Him before us, but, having Him living and resting within us, may delight in Him; for in this way our folly will be made wise by His wisdom, and our weakness will be strengthened by His power through our Lord Jesus Christ.

70. Fasting, vigil, and the life of a pilgrim are good (deeds); however, these are merely the outward labors of a virtuous life, but the Christian life is more internal than these (bodily virtues), and no one should place their hope (solely) in them. For it happens to some that, while they partake of grace, the malice (of the enemy)—still lurking within them—sets a trap: it willingly yields to them and remains dormant, but leads a person to think that his mind has been purified, and then lures him into the conceit that he is a perfect Christian, and then, when a person ceases to be vigilant (assuming he is free and becomes careless), the malice attacks him like a robber, secretly lying in ambush, tempting him, and casting him into the depths of the earth. For if robbers or soldiers, being men of twenty years of age, know how to set traps for their enemies, lay ambushes, lie in wait for them, and attack them from the rear, surrounding them on all sides and beating them, how much more so does malice—which has lived for so many thousands of years— and whose purpose is to destroy souls. It knows how to set a secret ambush in the heart and, at certain times, to remain inactive, in order to lull the soul into a false sense of its own perfection. The foundation of Christianity is this: that a person, no matter how many righteous deeds he may perform, should not rest on them or consider himself great, but should remain humble in spirit. And if he becomes a partaker of grace, let him not think that he has achieved anything, nor let him imagine himself to be a great man, nor let him begin to teach; and even while leading a good life marked by great humility, asceticism, and prayer—and being a partaker of grace—let him not think highly of his own soul. But in truth, this beginning of grace was given to him then especially so that he might endure the toil, hunger and thirst, so that he might not be sated in his longing nor consider himself righteous and rich in grace, but might weep and mourn as a mother weeps who had an only son who, after she had raised him, died unexpectedly.

71. Whoever fulfills the law in outward life and conduct is free only from the consequences of wickedness, offering up to God as a sacrifice the senseless actions of the passions; and such a person, because of spiritual infancy, is content with this way of life for the sake of salvation.

72. He who has truly come to love the Gospel life has eradicated both the beginning and the end of his wickedness; through deed and word, he surpasses every virtue, offering a sacrifice of praise and confession, having been freed from all anxiety (arising) from the workings of the passions, and being free in mind from the struggle against them, finds in the hope of future blessings an insatiable delight that nourishes the soul.

73. The fear of Gehenna encourages beginners to avoid wickedness, while the desire for a reward of good deeds inspires those who are making progress to strive to do good, and the mystery of love elevates the mind above all creation, making it blind to everything other than God. It is from among those who have become blind to everything other than God that the Lord enlightens (11c. 145.8), revealing to them the Most Divine.

74. *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until the whole was leavened"* (Matt. 13:33). This signifies that the mind, having received the Lord's word into itself, hid it within its threefold nature—that is, according to the Apostle, the body, the spirit, and the soul—and gathered all their subtleties in thought, like flour scattered in many ways, into a single leaven of faith, awaiting to become in every way like the word at work within it. In the same way, the Lord likened the word of truth to a mustard seed, which, though small, when sown in the hearts of those who hear, grows through appropriate action and becomes—according to Scripture—like a great tree standing on high ground, serving as *"a refuge for approaching thoughts."*

75. The spiritual law consists of Christ's commandments, of which the first and greatest is love; it thinks no evil, but loves all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor. 13:5, 7), according to the word of Scripture. It is by this love that we are distinguished from one another, yet none of

us attains the fullness of its worth; rather, we hope that Christ's grace will make up for our shortcomings, provided we do not cease to act to the best of our ability, for God knows how much we are unable to do because of our weakness, and how much we fail to perform acts of love through negligence. But since love is strengthened not only by voluntary efforts but also by the trials that befall us, we therefore need much patience and meekness, with God's help. The Divine Apostle says: "*Let anyone who thinks he is wise in this age become a fool, so that he may become wise*" (1 Cor. 3:18).

76. The land of the Chaldeans (Acts 7:4) is a life of passions, in which the idols of sin are created and worshiped. Mesopotamia (ibid., v. 2), on the other hand, is a life that embraces both opposing vices. But the Promised Land (Heb. 11:9) is a state filled with every good thing. Thus, anyone who, like ancient Israel, returns to his old ways, is once again cast down into the slavery of the passions, losing the freedom that has been granted.

77. Whoever has valiantly conquered bodily passions and has striven sufficiently against the evil spirits, driving their designs out of the land of his soul, must pray that he may be granted a pure heart, and that a righteous spirit may be renewed within him (Ps. 50: 12)—that is, that he may be completely rid of evil thoughts and, by the gift of grace, be filled with divine thoughts, and thus become God's mental world, bright and great, consisting of moral, natural, and theological contemplations.

78. A pure heart (Ps. 50: 12) is one that has presented to God a memory that is completely formless (pure of impressions) and devoid of images, and is ready to receive only God's impressions, from which it is usually made luminous.

79. Whoever has overcome the soul's inclination toward the body through divine desire has become unlimited, even though he remains in the body. For God, who draws the desire of the one who desires, is incomparably superior to all things and does not permit the one who desires to attach his desire to anything that comes after God. Therefore, let us desire God with all the strength of our desire, and let us ensure that our free will is not possessed by anything bodily; let us set our disposition (of the soul) truly above all sensory and mental things, and (then) we will not, of our own free will, accept any harm from natural life, insofar as it concerns being with God, who is indescribable by nature.

80. The great Moses, having set up his tabernacle outside the camp—that is, having established his thought and mind beyond the visible—begins to worship God (Ex. 34: 8), and having entered into darkness (Ex. 20: 21), into the invisible and immaterial realm of knowledge, he remains there, initiated into the most sacred mysteries.

81. Until we completely free our minds from the habitual attachment to our own being and to everything that comes after God, we do not attain constancy in virtue. But when we attain this dignity through love, then we will come to know the power of God's promise: for the worthy must believe that there is unshakable assurance where the mind first establishes its power through love. For unless the mind has stepped outside of itself and of all that can be conceived, and has established itself in the silence that transcends thought, it cannot be free from the changeability inherent in all things.

82. Those who, "*out of fear of the Jews,*" were sitting in an upper room in Galilee, "*with the doors locked*" (John 20: 19)—that is, out of fear of evil spirits, living safely in the land of revelations, at the height of divine contemplation, having shut off their senses like doors—they receive the Word of God, which comes to them in an incomprehensible way, appearing to them without sensory perception; and through the proclamation of peace, it grants them dispassion, and through the breath—the division of the Holy Spirit—grants them authority over evil spirits and reveals to them the signs (John 20: 20) of His mysteries.

83. One who observes the sixth day according to the Gospel, having first put to death the initial stirrings of sin, attains through virtues a state of dispassion, pure from all evil, keeping the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29–30) with the mind even from the subtlest conception of passions in the imagination. And having crossed the Jordan (Gen. 32:22, 30), one is transported to the land of knowledge, where the mind, mysteriously created by the world, dwells in the Spirit of God.

84. The Sabbath of Sabbaths (Lev. 16, 31) is the peace of the rational soul, which, by diverting the mind even from all the divine words secretly contained in created beings, in the rapture of love has wholly clothed it in the one God and, through mysterious theology, has made the mind utterly inseparable from God.

3. 200 Chapters on the Spiritual Law

1. Since you have repeatedly expressed a desire to know how, according to the Apostle, “*the law is spiritual*” (Rom. 7: 14) and what is the disposition of the mind and the conduct of those who strive to observe it, we will speak of this to the best of our ability.

2. First, God, as we know, is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all good. But good³⁹ can neither come into being nor be assured except in Christ Jesus and in the Holy Spirit.

3. Every good thing is given to us by the Lord with a specific purpose. Whoever believes this will not lose it.

4. Firm faith is a strong tower⁴⁰. For the believer, Christ is everything.

5. May the One who presides over all good things preside over all your endeavors, so that your endeavors may be according to God.

6. The humble and spiritually minded person, when reading the Holy Scriptures, will apply everything to himself and not to another.

7. Call upon God to open the eyes of your heart so that you may see the benefit of prayer and of reading, understood through experience.

8. One who possesses any spiritual gift and shows compassion toward the needy preserves his gift through this compassion, but the proud will lose it, being struck down by thoughts of pride.

9. The lips of the humble speak the truth, and whoever contradicts it is like a servant who strikes the Lord on the cheek.

10. Do not be a disciple of self-praise, lest you learn pride instead of humility.

11. Do not exalt yourself with knowledge from Scripture (borrowed), lest your mind fall into a spirit of blasphemy.

12. Do not attempt to resolve a dark and confusing matter through argumentation, but rather through what the spiritual law commands—patience, prayer, and unshakable⁴¹ hope.

13. One who prays in the flesh and does not yet possess a spiritual mind is like the blind man who cried out, saying, “*Son of David, have mercy on me*” (Mark 10:48)!

14. This same man, who had previously been blind, when he received his sight and saw the Lord, no longer called Him the Son of David, but confessed Him to be the Son of God and worshiped Him (John 9:35–38).

15. Do not become arrogant while shedding tears in your prayer, for it was Christ who touched your eyes, and you have received spiritual sight.

16. Only he who, following the example of the blind man, casts off his garments⁴² and draws near to the Lord becomes His (true) follower and a preacher of the most perfect doctrines (Mark 10:50–51).

17. Evil (sin), when indulged in one’s thoughts (with pleasure), hardens the heart (petrifies it), while self-restraint coupled with hope, by eradicating evil, softens the heart (reduces it to dust).

18. There is a proper and beneficial grinding down of the heart—leading to its softening—and there is another, disorderly and harmful one—leading only to its destruction⁴³.

19. Vigilance, prayer, and patience in the face of (adversities, misfortunes, and sorrows) are a form of grinding (crushing) that does not merely inflict wounds, but is beneficial to the heart—provided we do not hinder their integration through self-indulgence⁴⁴. He who abides in them, and in other things as well, will be aided; but he who disregards them and divides them (separating one from the other) will suffer unbearably at the hour of departure⁴⁵.

³⁹ Of course, this does not refer to good deeds done by people, but to blessings from God.

⁴⁰ A pillar in the East is not a pile of stones, but a tall residential building, providing safety from evil people.

⁴¹ *Monologistos* means “one-word”—in other words, resolute. Many elders, when faced with confusion, would pray and receive guidance.

⁴² Of course, this is selfless resolve.

⁴³ Whether one torments oneself needlessly or is chastised by a spiritual father, the heart only sustains wounds: it is struck—and it hurts, but there is no benefit. It is like giving a patient the wrong medicine.

⁴⁴ A solution is a mixture of different elements, such as water and wine. The three virtues mentioned must always be intertwined. Self-indulgence disrupts their union.

⁴⁵ Then one will realize that one has acted wrongly without meaning to.

20. A pleasure-seeking heart (one that seeks only pleasures) becomes, at the hour of departure, a prison and bonds for the soul, while a hardworking heart (one that loves to mortify and weary itself against its own will, for the Lord's sake) is an open door (to the next life).

21. *The iron gates leading into the city* (Acts 12:10) are a hard heart; for the afflicted and the contrite, they "*will open of themselves*," just as they did for Peter⁴⁶.

22. There are many forms of prayer, each distinct from the other. However, no form of prayer is harmful, except for that which is not prayer but a work of Satan.

23. One man, intending to do evil, first prayed in his mind as was his custom, and, having been providentially prevented (from doing evil), afterward gave much thanks (for that)⁴⁷.

24. David, intending to kill Nabal of Carmel, was turned away from this intention by the memory of divine retribution and gave much thanks for it afterward. We also know what he did when he forgot God, and he did not cease (to be godless and unrepentant) until the prophet Nathan brought him back to remembrance of God.

25. As you remember God, increase your prayers so that the Lord may remember you when you forget Him.

26. As you read the Holy Scriptures, understand what is hidden within them (specifically for you): "*For whatever was written in former times was written for our instruction*" (Rom. 15: 4).

27. Scripture calls faith "*the assurance of things hoped for*" (Heb. 11:1) and describes those who do not know that Christ is in them as unskilled (2 Cor. 13:5).

28. Just as thoughts are revealed through deeds and words, so too are future rewards foreshadowed by the actions of the heart (what it is drawn to, what it finds pleasing).

29. A generous heart will clearly be shown generosity, and a merciful heart will likewise encounter mercy; but the opposite evokes the opposite and its consequence.

30. The law of freedom teaches all truth; many read it with their minds, but few understand it by living out the commandments accordingly.

31. Do not seek its perfection in human virtues, for there is nothing perfect in them: its perfection is hidden in the cross of Christ.

32. The Law of Liberty is read with true understanding, understood through the practice of the commandments, and fulfilled by the bounties of Christ.

33. When our conscience compels us to follow all of God's commandments, then we will understand that the Lord's law is blameless, and that although it is made possible by our own goodness (our natural moral and religious feelings and dispositions), it cannot be fully realized in people without God's grace.

34. Those who do not consider themselves bound by every commandment of Christ interpret God's law carnally, "*not understanding either what they say or the things about which they make assertions*" (1 Tim. 1:7), and therefore think they can fulfill it through their deeds.

35. One deed is clearly performed as good, yet the intention of the one performing it is not for good; another is in itself seemingly evil, yet the intention of the one performing it is for good. And it is not only deeds that are done this way, but some also speak in this manner: some present a deed in a different light out of inexperience or ignorance; others do so maliciously; and still others do so under the guise of piety.

36. One who conceals slander and defamation within expressions of praise—unrecognizable to the simple-minded—is similar to one who is vain while appearing humble. They manage for a long time to hide the truth within lies, but eventually, carried away by their true nature, they are exposed by their deeds.

37. It happens that one person, while seemingly doing something good for a neighbor, suffers harm in his soul, and it happens that another, precisely because he does not do such an outward service for his neighbor, receives benefit in his soul.

38. There is condemnation born of malice and vengeance, and there is another kind, born of the fear of God and the truth.

⁴⁶ It is not a heart lacking in mercy, but one that is completely petrified, suffering from insensitivity. Here, the opening of the closed gates before St. Peter is interpreted spiritually. Miserable suffering is self-embitterment caused by external deprivations, while contrition—erasure—is the intelligent beating of the heart by the contemplation of crushing truths. These two remove the stone from the heart.

⁴⁷ This, of course, refers to some actual event, such as what is called "unexpected joy."

39. Do not rebuke one who has ceased to sin and is already repentant. But if, as you say, you wish to rebuke him for God's sake, first confess your own sins before him.
40. God reigns over every virtue, just as the sun reigns over the light of day.
41. Having performed a virtuous deed, remember the One who said, *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).
42. It is so arranged that sorrow is good for people, while vanity and pleasure are evil.
43. One who endures slander from others avoids sin and, in the midst of sorrow, finds intercession.
44. The believer in Christ, trusting in the reward commensurate with his faith, willingly endures every injustice.
45. He who prays for those who wrong him strikes down demons, but he who resists the former is wounded by the latter.
46. It is better to suffer unjust treatment from people than from demons, but the one who pleases the Lord has triumphed over both.
47. Every blessing comes providentially from the Lord, but it departs secretly from the ungrateful, the insensitive, and the idle.
48. Every sin ends in forbidden pleasure, and every virtue in spiritual consolation. And just as the former stirs up (sets in motion, provokes) its kindred spirits, so the latter stirs up its kindred spirits.
49. Human reproach causes sorrow to the heart, but it becomes a cause of purity for the one who endures it.
50. Ignorance provides an excuse and the freedom to oppose what is beneficial, and, having become bolder, multiplies the objections (or proposals) of evil.
51. Lacking nothing, accept the sorrows that come your way, and, as one who must give an account, set aside all self-importance.
52. Having sinned in secret, do not attempt (even before God) to conceal it—(do not think that what is hidden remains so)—for *"every thing is naked and laid bare before the eyes of the Lord; to Him we must give an account"* (Heb. 4:13).
53. Present yourself mentally to the Lord: *"For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Sam. 16:7).
54. Think and do nothing without a purpose in God, for he who travels aimlessly wastes his labor in vain.
55. It is difficult for one who sins without necessity to repent, for it is impossible to hide from God's truth.
56. A sorrowful event reminds the wise of God, but it grieves the one who forgets God in proportion to that forgetfulness.
57. Let every involuntary sorrow be your teacher in such remembrance, and may your impulse toward repentance never fail.
58. Forgetfulness in and of itself has no power, but it is sustained by our negligence and is proportional to it.
59. Do not say, "What am I to do? I do not even want it, yet it (forgetfulness) comes." This is because you neglected what was required of you when you remembered it.
60. Do the good deeds you remember, and then those you do not remember will also be revealed to you; do not recklessly surrender your thoughts to forgetfulness.
61. Scripture says: *"Hell and destruction are evident before the Lord"* (Prov. 15:11). This refers to ignorance and forgetfulness of the heart.
62. Hell is ignorance, for both are dark. Ruin, however, is forgetfulness, for in both, something of what once was is lost.
63. Be concerned with your own evil deeds, not those of your neighbor, and your mental sanctuary will not be plundered.
64. Negligence leaves no room for any good that is within one's power (it is not accepted for anything). Almsgiving and prayer restore those who have become negligent to their duty.
65. Sorrow for God is an integral part of piety, for true love is tested by adversity.
66. Do not think that you can acquire virtue without sorrow: such virtue is unreliable (untested) because of the peace (you experience while acquiring it).

67. Consider the outcome of every involuntary sorrow, and you will find in it the removal (purification) of sins.

68. Much advice from others is helpful, but for each person, nothing is more suitable than their own decision.

69. When seeking healing, take care of your conscience; do what it tells you, and you will benefit.

70. God and one's conscience know everyone's secret deeds, and through them may they find correction.

71. A person does as much as he can of his own free will, but God arranges the outcome of his deeds according to justice⁴⁸.

72. If you wish to accept praise from people without being condemned, first love the rebuke for your sins.

73. Whatever reproach anyone may suffer for the sake of Christ's truth, he may be glorified a hundredfold by the people. But it is far better to do every good deed for the sake of the future (reward).

74. When one person benefits another through words or deeds, both should acknowledge God's grace in this. The one who does not understand this will be overcome by the one who does⁴⁹.

75. One who praises a neighbor out of hypocrisy will later rebuke him, and he will be put to shame.

76. One who is unaware of the enemies' ambushes is easily hardened, and one who does not understand the causes of passions (their roots and triggers) easily falls.

77. From self-indulgence (acting for one's own pleasure) comes negligence, and from negligence comes forgetfulness. For God has granted everyone knowledge of what is beneficial to them.

78. A person offers (a word) to his neighbor to the extent of his knowledge, but God acts in the listener to the extent of his faith.

79. I have seen simple people who humbled themselves through their deeds, and they became wiser than the wise⁵⁰.

80. Another simple person, upon hearing them praised, did not imitate their humility but merely boasted of his simplicity, and from this he became proud.

81. He who belittles knowledge and boasts of his ignorance is an ignoramus not only in word but also in mind.

82. Just as there is wisdom in words and there is wisdom itself, so there is ignorance in words and there is ignorance itself.

83. Ignorance in speech does no harm whatsoever to the most devout, just as verbal wisdom does no harm to the humble and wise.

84. Do not say, "I do not know what is right, and therefore I am not at fault if I do not do it." For if you were to do the good that you know, then everything else would gradually be revealed to you, one thing being understood through another, just as members of the same family come to know one another (Proverbs 48). It is of no benefit to you to know the second (what you do not know) before fulfilling the first (what is known). For "*the mind boasts*" because of inactivity (a lack of deeds), "*but love builds up, since it bears with all things*" (1 Cor. 8:1, 13:7).

85. Read the words of Divine Scripture through deeds, and do not dwell excessively on words, puffing yourself up with mere mental concepts.

86. He who has abandoned deeds and is content with knowledge alone holds, instead of a double-edged sword, a reed staff, which, in battle, according to Scripture (Isa. 36:6), will wound his hand and, having pierced it, will pour the poison of pride into his enemies first.

87. Every thought has its own measure and weight before God. Thus, it is the same thing before Him to think with bias or in only one way (that is, only with the mind without deeds, or only with one's own mind without consulting those with experience).

88. Let the one who has fulfilled a commandment expect temptation because of it. For love for Christ is tested by adversities (cf. ch. 65).

⁴⁸ Chapter 71 in the Savv. manuscript, as published by Migne, reads as follows: He who labors aimlessly (without purpose or order) is poor in all things, but he who proceeds with hope is doubly rich.

⁴⁹ Perhaps the only thought is that, of the two, the one who understands this is the greater.

⁵⁰ Paul the Simple.

89. Do not despise (do not neglect) any thought out of carelessness. For no thought is hidden from God.

90. When you notice that a thought promises you human glory, know for certain that it is preparing a humiliation for you.

91. The enemy knows the demands of the spiritual law and seeks only to deceive the mind (through suggested thoughts, not deeds, in those who lead a spiritual life). In this way, he either succeeds in making his accomplice (when someone agrees to the suggestion) submit to the labors of repentance (if he acknowledges his guilt), or, if he does not repent (having failed to acknowledge his guilt), he burdens him with involuntary, painful afflictions (and hardships, which God usually sends upon such people for their instruction). It sometimes happens that he incites people to rebel against such promptings (sorrows, through grumbling, disobedience to God's decree, and ignorance that he has deserved them), so as to thereby multiply the painful afflictions even here (for God sends them again and again so that he may come to his senses) and, at the time of his departure, to expose him as unfaithful (to expose his unbelief in Providence and the fact that he himself was at fault).

92. Many have successfully resisted the misfortunes that occur (in life), but without prayer and repentance, no one will escape the fierce (extremes after death).

93. Evil draws its strength from one another, just as good grows (matures, strengthens) from one another. Both stir and guide their adherents to press forward further.

94. The devil makes small sins appear insignificant in our eyes, for otherwise he cannot lead us into greater sins.

95. The root of shameful lust is human praise, just as the root of chastity is the conviction of our sinfulness—not merely when we hear it, but also when we accept it upon ourselves.

96. There is no benefit to one who, having renounced the world, lives a life of self-indulgence (for his own pleasure, always doing only what pleases and is agreeable to his heart). For what he did before through his wealth, he does now as well, having nothing.

97. Again, the ascetic, if he acquires money, is a brother to the first in inner disposition, since he, too, is born of the same mother—the pursuit of what is sweet to the heart—only of a different father, due to a change in passion.

98. It sometimes happens that a person suppresses his passions for the sake of greater pleasure (because life is more peaceful without being enslaved by them), and others, unaware of his purpose, praise him; yet perhaps he himself realizes that his efforts are in vain.

99. The cause of all sin is vanity and the desire for pleasure. One who has not come to hate these will not overcome his passions.

100. *The root of all evil is the love of money* (1 Tim. 6:10), but it is evident that this love of money itself is formed for the sake of these passions (it is required by them, is established by them, and depends on them).

101. The mind is blinded by these three passions: the love of money, I say, vanity, and the desire for pleasure.

102. The *three daughters of the leech*, of whom Scripture speaks, are the *“love of the beloved”* born of the mother, folly (Prov. 30: 15).

103. Reason and faith—the companions of our nature—have been dulled by nothing other than these passions.

104. Rage, anger, quarrels, murders, and the entire rest of the catalog of evils have intensified greatly among people because of them.

105. Thus, we must hate the love of money, vanity, and the passion for pleasure as the mothers of vices and the stepmothers of virtues.

106. Because of them, we have received the commandment not to love the world or the things in the world—not (in that sense) so that we might recklessly hate God's creations, but so that we might cut off the causes of those passions.

107. *“No one,”* says Scripture, *“who is a soldier gets entangled in the affairs of this life”* (2 Tim. 2:4). For whoever, having become entangled in them, wishes to conquer the passions is like a man who tries to extinguish a fire with straw.

- 108.** Whoever becomes angry with his neighbor because of money, glory, or pleasures has not yet realized that God rules over all with righteousness.
- 109.** When you hear the Lord's words: *"If anyone does not renounce all his possessions, he is not worthy of Me"* (Luke 14:33, Matt. 10:38), understand that this refers not only to possessions but also to all the inner sources of evil.
- 110.** One who does not know the truth cannot truly believe. For knowledge, by its very nature, precedes faith.
- 111.** Just as God has assigned to each of the visible creatures that which is proper to it, so too will He reward human thoughts according to their nature, whether we want it or not.
- 112.** If anyone, sinning openly and without repentance, has not suffered any afflictions until the very end, know that his judgment will be without mercy.
- 113.** The one who prays with a pure heart endures the afflictions he faces, but the one who holds a grudge has not yet prayed with a pure heart.
- 114.** When suffering harm, insult, or persecution from someone, do not think of the present, but of what lies ahead in the future, and you will find that he has become the source of many blessings for you, not only in the present but also in the age to come.
- 115.** Just as bitter wormwood is beneficial to those with indigestion, so too is it beneficial for the wicked to endure bitter trials: for these remedies serve to restore health to the former and to bring about repentance in the latter.
- 116.** If you do not wish to suffer evil, do not wish to do evil either; for the latter is inevitably followed by the former. *"For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"* (Gal. 6:7).
- 117.** **Since** we sow evil of our own free will and reap it against our will, we must marvel at God's justice.
- 118.** There is bound to be a certain interval of time between sowing and reaping. But for this reason, we must not doubt that there will be a reward.
- 119.** When we sin, do not blame the body but the mind; for if the mind had not led the way, the body would not have followed.
- 120.** A secret villain is more malicious than those who wrong others openly; therefore, he is more wicked and is punished.
- 121.** He who weaves intrigues and secretly does evil is a serpent, according to Scripture, *"sitting in ambush on the path and biting the horse's heel"* (Gen. 49:17).
- 122.** Whoever praises a neighbor for one thing and rebukes him for another at the same time is possessed by vanity and envy: with praise, he attempts to conceal his envy, and with rebuke, he sets himself up as better than his neighbor.
- 123.** Just as it is impossible to shepherd sheep and wolves together, so it is impossible for one who acts deceitfully toward his neighbor to receive mercy.
- 124.** Whoever secretly mixes his own will with the commandment is an adulterer, as shown in Wisdom, and *"because of his lack of understanding, he will suffer sickness and disgrace"* (Prov. 6:32–33).
- 125.** Just as water and fire do not mix because they are opposites, so self-justification and humility are opposed to one another.
- 126.** He who seeks the forgiveness of sins loves humility, but he who condemns another seals (fixes upon himself) his own evil deeds.
- 127.** Do not leave any sin unatoned for, no matter how small, lest it later lead you to greater sins.
- 128.** If you want to be saved, love the true word (the word of truth about yourself) and never recklessly reject rebuke.
- 129.** The word of truth transformed the offspring of the viper and showed them how to avoid future wrath (Matt. 3:7).
- 130.** Whoever receives the words of truth receives God the Word, for it is said, *"Whoever receives you receives Me"* (Matt. 10:40).
- 131.** The paralytic, lowered through the roof, is a sinner, rebuked by the faithful in the name of God and, for the sake of their faith, receiving forgiveness (of sins) (Luke 5:19).
- 132.** It is better to pray for one's neighbor with reverence and goodwill than to condemn him for every sin.

133. The truly repentant is subjected to ridicule by the unwise. But this is a sign to him that his repentance is pleasing to God.

134. *Strive to abstain from everything* (1 Cor. 9:25) and do not cease (from this struggle) until the Lord has destroyed the seed of Babylon.

135. Imagine that there are twelve passions of immorality. If you willingly embrace even one of them, it will take the place of the remaining eleven.

136. Sin is a burning fire. To the extent that you remove fuel, it will die down; and to the extent that you add fuel, it will blaze all the more.

137. If you are puffed up with praise, expect dishonor, for, as Scripture says, “*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled*” (Matt. 23:12).

138. Only when we have rejected every sin—even those committed in thought—will we begin the true battle against the recollections of the passions that preoccupy us.

139. A remembrance is an involuntary recollection of past sins. Whoever is still struggling (with the passions) strives to prevent (such a thought) from developing into a passion, but whoever has already conquered them cuts off its very first stirrings.

140. A stir of the heart is an involuntary movement of the heart, unaccompanied by images⁵¹. It is like a key (that opens the door to the heart for sin); therefore, the experienced strive to seize it at the very beginning.

141. Where images of thoughts take root, there (presumably) was a predisposition: for that movement, which is an innocent (involuntary) impulse, is not accompanied by images. It happens that one flees from them like a burning ember from the fire (either having been burned or fearing to be burned), while another does not turn away from them until the flame ignites⁵².

142. Do not say, “I do not even want it, yet it (the thought) comes.” For, certainly, if not this very thing, then you surely love the causes of it.

143. The one who seeks praise is in the grip of passion, and the one who laments the sorrow that has befallen him certainly loves consolation.

144. Like pans on a scale, the mind of one who loves pleasure cannot rest on one side. At times he weeps and laments his sins; at other times he struggles and argues with his neighbor, chasing after pleasures.

145. He who tests all things and holds fast to what is good will, by that very fact, certainly keep himself from every kind of evil (1 Thess. 5:21–22).

146. *A patient man is rich in understanding* (Prov. 14:29), just as is one who inclines his ear to words of wisdom.

147. Without remembrance of God, knowledge cannot be true. Without the former, the latter is false.

148. For the hard-hearted, the word of the most subtle knowledge is of no use, for without fear (such a person) does not take upon himself the labors of repentance.

149. For the meek, the word of faith (concerning the consolations of faith) is fitting, since he does not test God’s long-suffering and is not struck down by frequent transgressions (against God’s will or commandments).

150. Do not rebuke a strong-willed man for his pride, but rather point out to him the burden of future disgrace, for in this way a wise man will more readily accept rebuke (within himself).

151. Whoever does not love rebuke surely wallows in passions on purpose, but whoever loves it clearly shuns their temptations.

152. Do not desire to hear about the deceitfulness of others, for in doing so, the traits of that deceitfulness are inscribed within us as well.

153. After hearing evil words, be angry at yourself, not at the one who spoke them; for the wicked have a deceitful ear, and the one who responds is also deceitful⁵³.

154. If by chance someone finds themselves among idle talkers, let them consider themselves guilty of such talk—if not regarding the present, then regarding the past (because they themselves once chatted with them).

⁵¹ A paraphrase, due to the conciseness of the Greek phrase.

⁵² This resembles the elder’s answer to the question: Should one allow thoughts to enter? “Let them in,” he said, “and then fight them and drive them out.”

⁵³ True, this is a proverb, but the idea is clear. The Latin paraphrase: **pravarum enim rerum aviditor, pravus evadit nuntius.** The listener of evil things is himself evil, and so is the messenger.

155. If you see someone hypocritically praising you, expect him to rebuke you at another time.
156. Consider present hardships as equivalent to future blessings, and apathy will never weaken your resolve.
157. If you praise a person as good for a material gift, apart from God (forgetting that this is done by God's Providence), then later that same person will turn out to be evil to you.
158. Every blessing comes from the Lord according to His will, and those who bring it to us are the servants of blessings.
159. Accept the intertwining of good and evil with an even mind; for this, God will ultimately avert the anomalies of events in your life.
160. The inequality of (involuntary) thoughts involuntarily brings about changes in one's own thoughts as well. And in the external realm, God balances the involuntary with the voluntary.
161. The sensory (external state) is a product of the intellectual (internal order), bringing, by God's decree, what is due (according to one's worth).
162. When the heart is full of desire for pleasure, then harmful thoughts and words arise. Just as we recognize the burning of matter (within) by its smoke.
163. Remain in your heart with your mind, and you will not be troubled by temptations; but if you stray from there, endure whatever befalls you.
164. Pray that temptation may not come upon you, but when it does, accept it as your own, not as something foreign.
165. Turn your mind away from all self-love, and then you will be able to see the devil's schemes.
166. Whoever claims to see all the devil's schemes without knowing how does so to present himself as perfect.
167. When the mind is freed from concern for the body, it sees the wiles of the enemy in proportion to that freedom.
168. One who is carried away by thoughts is blinded by them and sees the acts of sin, but cannot see their causes.
169. It happens that a person, while outwardly fulfilling a commandment, is (inwardly) enslaved to passion and ruins a good deed with evil thoughts.
170. Having allowed the seed of sin to take root within you (by accepting a thought), do not say, "It will not overcome me"—for to the extent that you have allowed it in, you have already been overcome by it.
171. Everything that is born begins small and, being nourished little by little, grows.
172. The snare of sin is a multi-layered net. Whoever becomes even partially entangled in it and fails to take heed will soon be completely ensnared by it.
173. Do not desire to hear of the misfortune of your enemies, for whoever willingly listens to such talk reaps (immediately) the fruits of his own will.
174. Do not think that every affliction befalls people because of their sins. For it happens that some please God, yet still suffer trials. And it is written not only that "*the wicked and the lawless will be driven out*" (Ps. 36:28), but likewise that "*those who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*" (2 Tim. 3:12).
175. In times of sorrow, beware of the allurements of sensual pleasure. For since it promises comfort in sorrow, it is easy to be tempted to accept it.
176. Some call those prudent who know how to manage their sensual desires wisely, but the truly prudent are those who master their own desires.
177. Before you have eradicated the evil (passions), do not listen to your heart, for whatever is planted within it, such are the inclinations it demands.
178. Just as some snakes are found in the woods while others lurk secretly in houses, so too are passions: some are merely imagined (formed in thought), while others actively influence (enter into actions and hide within them), though it happens that they transform from one form to another.
179. When you see that what lies within you has been stirred into intense motion and draws your silent mind toward passion, know that at some earlier time the mind itself was occupied with it, set it in motion, and implanted it in the heart.
180. A cloud does not form without the breath of the wind, nor is passion born without the (movement of) thoughts.

181. If, according to Scripture, we no longer act by the will of the flesh, then, with the Lord's help, even what was previously implanted within us (passions of the soul and evil habits) will easily cease to trouble us.

182. The images that have taken root in the mind are more evil and more powerful than those that are purely mental, but the latter precede them and are their cause.

183. There is evil that, proceeding from the heart, takes hold of us because of long-standing attachment and the heart's alignment with it, and there is evil that battles in our thoughts because of daily occurrences.

184. God judges deeds according to their intentions. "*May the Lord grant you,*" He says, "*according to your heart*" (Ps. 19:5),

185. Whoever does not remain conscientiously in contemplation will not accept even physical labor for the sake of piety.

186. Conscience is a natural book (of God's commandments): whoever reads it diligently receives experiences of divine intercession.

187. Whoever does not willingly undertake labors for the truth (in its defense) will be punished much more severely through involuntary circumstances.

188. Whoever, having come to know God's will, fulfills it to the best of their ability, will avoid great hardships through small ones.

189. Whoever seeks to overcome temptations without prayer and patience will not repel them but will become even more entangled in them.

190. The Lord is hidden in His commandments and is found by those who seek Him in proportion to their fulfillment of them.

191. Do not say, "I have kept the commandments, and yet I have not found the Lord." All who seek Him in truth will find peace.

192. Peace is deliverance from the passions, which cannot be attained without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

193. The fulfillment of a commandment is one thing, and virtue is another, though each draws its motivation for good from the other.

194. Keeping the commandments means performing the acts commanded, while virtue is that state of heart through which what is done is truly pleasing to God.

195. Just as material wealth, though one in essence, is manifold in terms of the objects of acquisition, so too is virtue one in essence but manifests itself in manifold deeds.

196. Whoever, having no deeds, pontificates and speaks words (discourses on how to live) is rich in unrighteousness, and "*his labors,*" according to Scripture, "*enter into the houses of strangers*" (Prov. 5:10).

197. "*Everything is subject to gold,*" says Scripture (Ecclesiastes 10:19). But by God's grace, the life of the mind (the spiritual life) will be governed.

198. A good conscience is acquired through prayer, and pure prayer through a good conscience. By their very nature, they are mutually dependent.

199. Jacob made Joseph a multicolored tunic. And the Lord grants the meek the knowledge of the truth, as it is written: "*The Lord will instruct the meek in His ways*" (Ps. 24: 9).

200. Always do good to the best of your ability, and when an opportunity arises to do more, do not settle for less, for "*whoever turns back,*" says the Lord, "*has no part in the Kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62).

4. To Those Who Think They Can Be Justified by Their Works, 226 chapters⁵⁴

1. In the following chapters, the weakness of faith in those who merely live righteously outwardly is exposed by those who truly believe and know the truth faithfully.

2. The Lord, wishing to show that while every commandment is binding, adoption as sons is nevertheless granted to people through His blood, says: "*When you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; for we have done what we were bound to do'*" (Luke 17:10). Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is not a reward for deeds, but the grace of the Lord, prepared for His faithful servants.

3. A servant does not demand freedom as a reward, but serves willingly, as one who is in debt, and awaits it as a gift of grace.

⁵⁴ Opposed to this is not faith, but the disposition of the heart, which serves as the source of actions.

4. “*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*” (1 Cor. 15:3), and He grants freedom to those who serve Him faithfully. For He says: “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord*” (Matt. 25:23).

5. He is not yet a faithful servant who relies solely on mere knowledge, but he who believes through obedience to Christ, who gave the commandments.

6. He who honors the Lord does what is commanded, and if he sins in any way or disobeys Him, he accepts as his due whatever punishment he receives for it.

7. Be both inquisitive and diligent, for mere knowledge puffs a person up.

8. Temptations that befall us unexpectedly, by God’s providence, teach us to be diligent and unwittingly lead us to repentance.

9. The afflictions that befall people are the result of their own evil deeds. But if we endure them with prayer, we will once again receive an increase in blessings.

10. Some, having been praised for their virtue, took pleasure in it and thought that this sweetness of vanity was a comfort (from above). Others, having been convicted of sin, were pained, and they regarded this beneficial pain as the work of the enemy.

11. Those who, because of their deeds, exalt themselves above those who are not quite as zealous, rightly think they can justify themselves by their outward deeds; but we, who, relying solely on mere knowledge, look down on the uninformed, are far more foolish than they are.

12. Knowledge without corresponding deeds is not yet firm, even if it is true. Deeds serve as confirmation of everything.

13. Often, knowledge (regarding a matter) is obscured by neglect of the deed itself. For those deeds that are completely neglected will gradually fade from memory.

14. Scripture inspires us to know God through reason so that we may rightly serve Him through our deeds.

15. When we fulfill the commandments openly, although we receive something special from the Lord in return, we derive benefit according to the purpose of our will.

16. One who desires to do something but is unable to do so is, as it were, considered by God, the Knower of Hearts, to have done it. This must be understood both in relation to good and in relation to evil.

17. The mind, even without the body, does much good and much evil, while the body, without the mind, cannot do either. For the decisions of free will precede action.

18. Some, while failing to keep the commandments, think they believe rightly; others, while keeping them, expect the kingdom as a just reward. Both groups err against the truth.

19. A master is not obligated to reward his servants, but then again, those who do not serve rightly do not receive freedom.

20. If Christ died for us, and we “*no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us and was raised*” (2 Cor. 5:15), then it is clear that we have committed ourselves to serving Him until death. How, then, can we consider adoption as the due reward?

21. Christ is Lord by nature and Lord by the economy of salvation, for He created us—the living—and redeemed those who had died in sin with His blood, and granted grace to those who believe in this way.

22. When you hear the words of Scripture that the Lord will repay each person according to his deeds (Ps. 61:13), do not think that deeds (in and of themselves) are worthy of Gehenna or the Kingdom, but that Christ will reward each person according to their deeds of unbelief in Him or faith, as God our Creator and Redeemer, and not as the One who weighs things (i.e., deeds and rewards).

23. We, having been deemed worthy of the bath of rebirth, perform good deeds not for the sake of reward, but to preserve the purity given to us.

24. Every good deed that we perform by our own natural powers, though it removes us from its opposite (the evil deed), cannot bring about our sanctification without grace.

25. The temperate person abstains from gluttony, the non-covetous from greed, the silent one from loquacity, the pure one from attachment to sensual pleasures, the chaste one from fornication, the content one from avarice, the meek one from agitation (anger), the humble from vanity, the obedient from defiance, the self-reproaching from hypocrisy; likewise, the one who prays turns away from despair, the voluntary beggar from the accumulation of wealth, the confessor from apostasy, and the martyr from idolatry. Do you see how

every virtue, even one practiced unto death, is nothing other than a turning away from sin, and this turning away from sin is a matter of nature, not something for which the kingdom may be rewarded?

26. Man barely preserves what is natural to him, but Christ grants adoption as sons through the cross.

27. There is a specific commandment and there is a general (all-encompassing) commandment. For in one instance, one is commanded to give to the needy in portions, while in another, one is commanded to renounce (at once) all one's possessions.

28. There is the work of grace, unrecognizable to a child (in spiritual age), and there is the work of malice (the enemy), which resembles the truth. It is good not to dwell too much on such actions⁵⁵, lest one be deceived, and not to condemn them, lest there be truth in them, but to bring everything to God with hope, for He knows the benefit of both.

29. He who wishes to cross the sea of the mind must be patient, humble and wise, vigilant, and self-restrained. But if he forces himself to embark on this endeavor without these four qualities, he will only torment his heart and will not be able to cross over.

30. Silence is the cutting off of all evil. If, moreover, it is combined with those four virtues in prayer, there is no better aid or shorter path to dispassion than this (arrangement).

31. One cannot achieve silence of the mind without the body, nor can one purify the space between them without silence and prayer.

32. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 6:17), but those who walk by the Spirit do not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

33. Prayer is not perfect without a mental invocation. The Lord hears the mind that cries out with undivided attention.

34. A mind that prays with undivided attention breaks the heart. "*A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise*" (Ps. 50:19).

35. And prayer is called a virtue, though it is the mother of virtues, for it gives birth to them through union with Christ.

36. Whatever we do without prayer and good hope will ultimately prove harmful and (at the very least) imperfect.

37. When you hear that "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 19:30), understand this to refer to those who possess virtue and those who possess love. For although love is last in order among the virtues, in worth it is first among them all, leaving behind all those that came before it.

38. When despondency takes hold—whether during prayer or because of the enemy's manifold attacks—recall the Exodus and the fierce sufferings. It is better, however, to cling to God through prayer and hope than to dwell on external matters, even if they are beneficial.

39. No single virtue by itself opens the door of our nature (cf. Chapters 224 and 225), unless they all depend on one another in sequence.

40. He who feeds on thoughts is intemperate, for even if they are useful, they cannot be more useful than hope.

41. Every sin leads to death unless it is cleansed by repentance. Even if a saint prays for another on account of such a sin, the prayer will not be heard.

42. One who repents properly does not defend his labor against past sins, but appeases God through them.

43. We ought to have done every good deed that our nature is capable of doing every day. What, then, shall we give to God in return for the evil we have done in the past?

44. No matter how much we increase our virtues today, this is merely a condemnation of our former negligence, not a recompense (to God for it).

45. One who is contrite in spirit (who grieves over sins) but at ease in the flesh (who satisfies the body in every way) is like one who torments himself physically (who denies the body everything) but whose mind is scattered.

46. Voluntary affliction on both sides (that is, of the body and of the soul) mutually reinforces one another: the soul's affliction reinforces the body's, and the body's affliction reinforces the soul's; but their separation is worse and more burdensome (than their afflictions).

⁵⁵ A Greek saying captures the idea: how people gaze at their own finery in the mirror.

47. It is a great virtue to endure what befalls us and, according to the Lord's word, to love the neighbor who hates us.
48. The sign of sincere love is the forgiveness of offenses. Thus did the Lord love the world.
49. It is impossible to forgive someone's transgressions from the heart without true knowledge, for it reveals to everyone that what befalls them is their own doing.
50. You will lose nothing of what you have set aside for the Lord, for in due time it will return to you many times over (multiplied).
51. When the mind forgets the goal of piety, then the outward act of virtue becomes useless.
52. If bad counsel (not that of others, but one's own lack of prudence) is harmful to every person, it is all the more so for those who have embraced a life of austerity.
53. Prove yourself a wise man through your deeds, for no word is wiser than a deed.
54. Ascetic labors for piety will be followed by intercession. This can be known from God's law and from conscience.
55. One person accepted a thought and held onto it without examining it, while another, having accepted it, tested it against the truth. The question is, which of them acted more piously?
56. To endure suffering and not blame others for one's misfortunes is true wisdom.
57. One who does good and seeks reward does not serve God, but his own will.
58. One who has sinned cannot escape retribution except through repentance commensurate with the sin.
59. Some say that we cannot do good until we have effectively received the grace of the Holy Spirit (and this is false).
60. Those whose will is always inclined toward self-indulgence refuse to do even what is within their power, under the pretext that there is no help from above.
61. Those baptized into Christ have already been mysteriously granted grace, but it takes effect (tangibly) as we keep the commandments. Although this grace never ceases to help us secretly, it is up to us to do or not do good according to our own will.
62. First, it divinely stirs the conscience, and it is through this that even evildoers, having repented, have found favor with God.
63. Again, it is often hidden in the instruction of a neighbor; sometimes it follows a thought while reading and instructs the mind in the truth through a natural consequence (of that thought). Therefore, if we do not hide this gift in such and similar specific instances when it is given (that is, if we follow what grace inspires), then we will truly enter into the joy of the Lord (we will be granted active grace).
64. One who seeks (hopes to receive) the active grace of the Holy Spirit before keeping the commandments is like a slave bought with money who, the moment he has just been purchased, seeks to have his freedom signed for him along with the payment for him.
65. Whoever has come to understand that external misfortunes occur according to God's justice, having sought the Lord, has found knowledge along with righteousness.
66. If, in accordance with Scripture, you "*keep in mind that the Lord's ways are throughout the earth*" (Ps. 104:7), then every event will be a teacher of the knowledge of God for you.
67. Everyone receives what is due (what they have earned) according to their inner disposition, but only God knows the details of how external circumstances correspond to each person's inner state.
68. When you suffer any dishonor from people, quickly bring to mind the reward of "*the glory that comes from God*" (John 5:44), and in this way you will remain free from sorrow and confusion even in dishonor, and faithful and blameless in glory when it comes.
69. When you are praised by the people, by God's grace, do not intentionally add anything ostentatious to the Lord's judgment, lest everything change and you experience the opposite (shame).
70. A seed will not sprout without soil and water, and a person will not benefit without voluntary effort and divine intercession.
71. Rain cannot fall without a cloud, nor can one please God without a clear conscience.
72. Do not refuse to learn, even if you are very wise. For God's order is more beneficial than our wisdom.
73. When, driven by some form of self-indulgence, the heart strays from the path of self-discipline, it becomes unstoppable, like a very heavy stone that has begun to roll down a slippery slope.

74. Just as an inexperienced calf, running from blade of grass to blade of grass, stumbles upon a place where the slope is steep on both sides (to the right and to the left), so it is with the soul, which is gradually led astray by thoughts (from its proper order and focus).

75. When the mind, having been strengthened in the Lord, diverts the soul from a long-standing bad habit, then the heart is, as if by executioners, put to death by the mind and passion, which drag it this way and that.

76. Just as those sailing the sea in hope of a profit willingly endure the scorching heat of the sun, so those who hate evil love rebuke. The former struggle against the winds, and the latter against their passions.

77. Just as *"fleeing into winter or on the Sabbath"* (Matt. 24:20) causes illness to the body and defilement (literally, humiliation) to the soul, so too does the uprising of the passions in a decaying body and a sanctified soul (in the person of the priesthood).

78. No one is as good and merciful as the Lord, but He does not forgive the sins of those who do not repent.

79. There are many of us who grieve over our sins, yet willingly cherish their causes within ourselves.

80. The mole, burrowing beneath the earth and being blind, cannot see the stars; and the unbeliever (in God) regarding the temporal cannot believe in the eternal either.

81. As a grace before all other graces, God has granted people the knowledge of the truth, which first and foremost teaches its recipients to believe in the One who bestowed it.

82. When a sinful soul does not accept the afflictions it encounters (does not learn from them), then the angels say of it: *"We have tried to heal Babylon, but she is not healed"* (Jer. 51:9).

83. The mind that forgets true knowledge wages war against people, regarding what is harmful to itself as beneficial.

84. Just as fire cannot burn in water, so too can no evil thought take root in a God-loving heart. For every God-loving person is diligent, and voluntary labor is by its very nature the enemy of lust.

85. A passion, willingly nurtured in the soul through action, later rises up violently within its lover, even if he does not wish it to.

86. We love the causes of involuntary thoughts—that is, the things from which they arise—but we obviously love the very objects of voluntary thoughts.

87. Conceit and boasting are the causes of slander, while greed and vanity are the causes of unmercifulness and hypocrisy.

88. When the devil sees that the mind has begun to pray from the heart, he then brings about great and cunning temptations. But he will not hinder small virtues with major attacks.

89. A stubborn thought reveals a person's bias, while its swift eradication signifies struggle and resistance.

90. There are three states of mind into which the mind enters, changing within itself: the natural, the supernatural, and the unnatural. When it enters its natural state, it finds itself to be the source of evil thoughts and the cause of passions, and confesses its sins to God; but when it is in the unnatural state, it forgets God's truth and wages war against people as if they were wronging it unjustly. And when he is exalted to a supernatural state, he finds within himself the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which the Apostle described—*"love, joy, peace,"* and so on (Gal. 5: 22), and knows that if he gives preference to carnal concerns, he cannot remain there; and having departed from there, he falls into sin and the sorrowful misfortunes that follow it—though not immediately, but in due time, as God's truth decrees.

91. A person's knowledge is true to the extent that it is confirmed by their gentleness, humility, and love.

92. Everyone who has been baptized in the Orthodox faith will mysteriously receive all grace, but will ultimately receive tangible confirmation of this as they fulfill the commandments.

93. Christ's commandment, when faithfully observed, grants comfort amid the many afflictions of the heart; however, both come in due time.

94. Let prayer be an integral part of everything you do, for you can do nothing without God's help.

95. There is nothing more powerful than prayer for obtaining God's assistance, and nothing more useful than prayer for pleasing God.

96. The fulfillment of all the commandments lies in prayer: for there is nothing higher than love for God.

97. Unceasing prayer is a sign of love for God in the one who abides in it, whereas neglect of it and distraction (during it) are signs of worldly love (the captivity of the heart by anything other than God).

98. Whoever performs vigils without sorrow, endures patiently, and prays shares in the power of the Holy Spirit; but even the one who, though feeling sorrow during these acts, willingly endures them by an act of the will will soon receive intercession from above.

99. Just as one commandment, as has been said, is higher than another, so too is one faith firmer than another.

100. *There is faith that comes from hearing* (Rom. 10:17), according to the Apostle, and *“there is faith that comes from the message of the things hoped for”* (Heb. 11:1).

101. It is good to respond to those who ask with words, but it is better to assist them through prayer and virtue; for through these, the one who offers himself to God helps his neighbors, while himself becoming worthy of help.

102. If you wish to offer a brief word to the inquisitive, point them toward prayer, true faith, and patience in all sorrowful circumstances, for every other good is attained through these.

103. In whatever matter a person has placed all his hope in God, he will no longer quarrel with his neighbors over that matter.

104. If, according to Scripture, everything involuntary has its cause in the voluntary, then no one is as much an enemy to a person as he is to himself.

105. The leader of all evils is ignorance; second only to it is unbelief.

106. Flee from temptation through patience and prayer. But if you resist it by means other than these, it will attack you with greater force.

107. The meek are the wisest of the wise in the eyes of God, and the humble of heart are the strongest of the strong, for they bear the yoke of Christ wisely.

108. Whatever we say or do without prayer subsequently turns out to be either sinful or harmful, and without our knowledge, our deeds expose us.

109. In deeds, words, and thoughts, only One is righteous, but through faith, grace, and repentance, there are many righteous people.

110. Just as it is not characteristic of one who repents to be haughty, so it is impossible for one who sins willfully to be humble.

111. Humility is not a condemnation of conscience, but a confession of God’s grace and His benevolence.

112. Just as a physical house is to the air that fills it, so is the mind to divine grace: to the extent that you cast out material things, so much will enter; and to the extent that you bring them in, so much will depart.

113. The material things of a house are vessels and food; the material things of the mind are vanity and self-indulgence.

114. A generous heart is one that trusts in God, while a narrow heart is one preoccupied with worldly concerns.

115. The grace of the Spirit is one and unchanging, but it works in each person as it wills.

116. Just as rain, pouring down upon the earth, nourishes and sustains the inherent qualities of plants—sweetness in the sweet ones, tartness in the tart ones—so too does grace, dwelling in the hearts of believers, adapt its effects to their virtues, without changing in itself.

117. To those who hunger for Christ’s sake, it becomes food; to those who thirst, a sweet drink; to those who shiver, clothing; to those who labor, rest; to those who pray, the assurance that their prayer has been heard; and to those who weep, comfort.

118. Therefore, when you hear the words of Scripture about the Holy Spirit—that He *“rested upon each of the Apostles”* (Acts 2:3), or that He *“descended upon the Prophet”* (1 Sam. 10:10), or that He acts (1 Cor. 12:11), we are sometimes offended (Eph. 4:30), quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), or provoked (Acts 17:16), and likewise that some have the firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23), while others are filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 4)—do not think of the Spirit as though there were any division, alteration, or change within Him, but believe, as we have said before, that He is unchanging, immutable, and almighty. Therefore, in His workings, He remains one and the same, and He grants to each person what is fitting in a godly manner. He is like the sun, which has poured itself out entirely upon the baptized; yet each of us is enlightened to the extent that,

having come to hate the passions that darken us, we root them out within ourselves; and to the extent that we are found to love them, we are darkened.

119. Whoever hates the passions cuts off their causes as well; but whoever is inclined toward these causes is, even unwillingly, overcome by the passions.

120. When evil thoughts arise within you, let us blame ourselves for them, and not original sin.

121. The roots of these thoughts are the obvious sins that each of us commits with our hands, feet, and mouths.

122. It is impossible for one who hates the causes of a passion to converse with that passion in his mind.

123. Who would converse with vanity if he despises disgrace? Who would be ashamed of dishonor if he loves humiliation? Who would consent to the indulgence of the flesh if he has a contrite and humble heart? Who would concern themselves with the transitory or wage war over it if they believe in Christ?

124. One who is rejected by another, yet does not enter into a dispute with the rejecter—neither in word nor in thought—has attained true knowledge and demonstrates steadfast faith in the Lord.

125. *“The sons of men are deceitful in their measures; they are not truthful”* (Ps. 61:10), whereas God preserves for each person what he truly deserves.

126. If there is neither excess for the one who wrongs (in wronging) nor deprivation for the one who is wronged (in enduring), *“for man walks about in a circle, yet he is in vain agitated”* (Ps. 38: 7).

127. If you see that someone is deeply distressed over insults, know that he is filled with thoughts of vanity and is now reaping, with displeasure, the fruits of the seeds he himself sowed in his heart.

128. Whoever has indulged in bodily pleasures beyond what is proper will pay for this excess with a hundredfold of suffering.

129. A spiritual father is obligated to speak the truth to his disciple; and when the disciple does not listen, he must warn him of the misfortunes that will befall him as a result.

130. Whoever is wronged by another and does not seek due retribution from the wrongdoer thereby demonstrates faith in Christ and will receive a hundredfold in this life, and will inherit eternal life.

131. The remembrance of God is accompanied by a heart that yearns for piety; but whoever forgets God becomes self-indulgent and insensitive.

132. Do not say that the dispassionate cannot grieve, for if not for himself, then he must do so for his neighbor.

133. When the enemy has gathered many records of sins committed in forgetfulness, he then compels the debtor to commit the same sins without forgetfulness, blasphemously abusing the law of sin.

134. If you wish to remember God unceasingly, do not reject misfortunes as though they were unjust, but endure them as if they were justly befalling you. For patience (in this spirit) awakens the memory (of God) at every turn, while refusal (to endure in this way) diminishes the heart’s spiritual contemplation (cutting off its striving toward God and turning it toward the earth) and, through the joy (of having cast off the burden), brings about forgetfulness.

135. If you want the Lord to cover your sins, do not boast before others if you possess any virtue. For just as we treat our virtues, so does God treat our sins.

136. Having concealed a virtue, do not become proud in your mind, as if you had done something good. Righteousness requires not only concealing what is good, but also not thinking about anything that is forbidden.

137. Do not rejoice when you do good to someone, but rather when you endure the resistance that follows (from the one you have helped) without holding a grudge. For just as nights follow days, so does evil follow good.

138. Vanity, greed, and self-indulgence will not leave good deeds untainted unless they themselves first fall away out of fear of God.

139. In involuntary, painful afflictions, God’s mercy is hidden, which draws those who endure them to repentance and delivers them from eternal torment.

140. Some, in keeping the commandments, expect that this will serve as a counterweight to their sins on the scales (of God’s justice), while others think by doing so they can appease the One who died for our sins. The question is: Which of these views is correct?

- 141.** The fear of Gehenna and the love of the Kingdom give us patience in tribulations. And this does not come from ourselves, but from the One who guides our thoughts.
- 142.** The believer in the future turns away from earthly pleasures without hesitation (or without argument), while the unbeliever is self-indulgent and insensitive.
- 143.** Do not say that a poor person cannot indulge in pleasures without the means to do so, for one can indulge in sensual pleasures even more intensely in one's thoughts (than in action).
- 144.** Knowledge of deeds (practical wisdom) is one thing, and knowledge of the truth is another. Just as the sun is superior to the moon, so the latter is more beneficial than the former.
- 145.** Knowledge of deeds (active prudence) increases as one fulfills the commandments, while knowledge of the truth increases as one places one's hope in Christ.
- 146.** If you wish to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, strive always to rise above the sensory realm and, through hope, cling to the One God. By turning inward in this way with self-compulsion, you will encounter the principalities and powers that wage war against you through the delusions of your thoughts; but by overcoming them through prayer and remaining steadfast in hope, you will receive God's grace, which delivers you from the wrath to come.
- 147.** Whoever understands the mysterious words of Saint Paul, who said that "*our struggle is against the spiritual forces of evil*" (Eph. 6:12), will also understand the Lord's parable, in which He taught that we must always pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1).
- 148.** The Law figuratively commands us to work for six days and to rest from our labors on the seventh. The work of the soul consists in doing good with one's possessions—that is, through deeds—while its rest, or peace, lies in selling all one's possessions and giving to the poor, as the Lord said, and, having found peace through such detachment from worldly goods, rejoicing in spiritual hope. It is into this very rest that St. Paul encourages us to enter with diligence, saying, "*Let us strive to enter that rest*" (Heb. 4:11).
- 149.** We have said this without precluding the future or determining that all reward will be here, but (we merely imply) that one must first receive the true grace of the Holy Spirit in one's heart and then, in accordance with this, enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Revealing this, the Lord also said: "*The Kingdom of Heaven is within you*" (Luke 17:21). The Apostle said the same thing: "*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for*" (Heb. 11:1), and also: "*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Or do you not know that Jesus Christ lives in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?*" (2 Cor. 13:5).
- 150.** One who has come to know the truth does not resist sorrowful trials. For he knows that they lead a person to the fear of God.
- 151.** Past sins, when recalled in detail, harm the person of good faith. For if they arise anew in the soul, accompanied by sorrow, they drive one away from hope; and if they are imagined without sorrow, they once again instill within the soul the defilement of the past.
- 152.** When the mind, through self-denial, embraces unshakable hope, then the enemy, under the pretext of confession, paints a picture before him of past sins, so as to rekindle the passions—which, by God's grace, had already been forgotten—and secretly harm the person. For in such a case, even a mind that has already been enlightened and hates the passions is necessarily darkened, troubled by what has been done; and if it is still veiled as by a mist and sympathetic to the passions, it will stray in every way (into such thoughts) and begin to converse passionately with their promptings, so that such a recollection will not be a confession but a passionate indulgence.
- 153.** If you wish to offer God a blameless confession, then, without recalling in detail your past transgressions, bear their consequences courageously.
- 154.** Severe afflictions come as punishment for sins committed in the past, each bringing with it a punishment commensurate with the specific transgression.
- 155.** The one who is knowledgeable in these matters and has come to know the truth confesses to God not by recalling what has been done, but by enduring what befalls him.
- 156.** Having cast aside the heart's sorrow over sins and dishonor, do not promise to achieve repentance through other virtues, for vanity and insensitivity usually serve sin as well.
- 157.** Just as virtues are usually born of painful afflictions and dishonor, so sins arise from pride and pleasures.
- 158.** Every carnal pleasure arises from a prior state of repose (of the body), and unbelief predisposes one to this repose.

- 159.** One who is under the power of sin cannot overcome carnal reasoning on his own, because a constant inflammation is ingrained in his members.
- 160.** Those who are passionate must remain in prayer and obedience, for it is only through them—or for their sake—that one can barely struggle against the passions.
- 161.** Whoever fights against his own desires with obedience and prayer is a skilled warrior, clearly demonstrating his inner struggle by withdrawing from the sensual.
- 162.** Whoever does not align his will with God’s will stumbles in his own endeavors and falls into the hands of his enemies.
- 163.** When you see two sinners who love one another, know that they are helping one another in self-indulgence.
- 164.** The self-righteous (proud) and the vain get along well with one another: for the former praises the vain one, who bows down slavishly before him, while the latter extols the self-righteous one, who often praises him.
- 165.** The God-loving listener benefits in both cases: when his virtues are spoken of with praise, he becomes even more zealous for them, and when his evil deeds are exposed, he is compelled to repentance. We ought to live in accordance with our progress, and in accordance with our way of life, we ought to offer up prayer to God.
- 166.** It is certainly good to hold fast to the chief virtue and not to worry about anything in particular, nor to pray about anything in particular, but only to seek the Kingdom of God according to the Lord’s word (Matt. 6:33). But if we still concern ourselves with every need, then we must pray for each one as well; for whoever does anything or worries about anything without prayer does not bring his work to a successful conclusion. And this is precisely what the Lord meant when He said, “*Without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).
- 167.** Whoever neglects the commandment to pray falls into the most inappropriate disobedience, one of which leads him to another, like a prisoner.
- 168.** Whoever accepts present afflictions with equanimity, inspired by the hope of future blessings, has attained the knowledge of the truth and will easily be freed from anger and sorrow.
- 169.** Whoever accepts scorn and dishonor for the sake of the truth walks the Apostolic path, having taken up the cross and being bound by its chains. But whoever, without this, attempts to heed the heart is deceived by the mind and falls into the devil’s temptations and snares.
- 170.** One who struggles cannot overcome either thoughts without their causes or these causes without thoughts. For if we reject one of these separately, shortly thereafter we will be cast back into both by the other.
- 171.** Whoever fights against others out of fear of suffering some evil or insult will either suffer evil in abundance here, or be tormented without mercy in the age to come.
- 172.** Whoever wishes to cast off every burden must entrust everything to God in prayer and, keeping a firm hope in Him, despise concerns for the sensual as much as possible.
- 173.** When the devil sees that a person is unduly preoccupied with bodily matters without need, he first seizes the prey of knowledge (plunders the mind), and then (having succeeded in this), cuts off hope in God as the head.
- 174.** When you reach the secluded place of pure prayer, do not entertain at that time the thoughts the enemy instills, lest you lose what is best. For it is better to strike him with the arrows of prayer—he who is confined below—than to converse with him when, by presenting trivial matters to our attention, he devises ways to distract us from praying against him.
- 175.** Knowledge of things is useful to a person during times of temptation and despondency, but during prayer it is usually harmful.
- 176.** If you have been called to teach about the Lord but are not being listened to, grieve over this in your heart, but do not show your distress openly. For such grief will not lead to your condemnation along with those who do not heed you, whereas if you show your distress openly, you will be tempted by the very same ones.
- 177.** During a conversation, do not conceal what is necessary and beneficial for those present; express only what is pleasant in plain language, and what is harsh (strict) in a veiled manner.
- 178.** Do not rebuke to their face those who are not under your authority, for this is a matter of authority rather than counsel.

- 179.** What is said generally to many is beneficial to all, but each person's conscience guides them individually.
- 180.** The one who speaks the truth must also give thanks to God, as one who receives from God what ought to be said. For truth is not the work of the speaker, but of God acting (within him or upon him).
- 181.** Do not enter into a dispute with those who have not made a vow of obedience to you when they oppose the truth, lest (instead of edification) only enmity arise, according to Scripture (see 2 Tim. 2:23).
- 182.** Whoever indulges a novice when he contradicts where he should not is leading him astray in this matter and encouraging him (in general) to disregard his vows of obedience.
- 183.** Whoever, with the fear of God, admonishes and instructs a sinner acquires for himself a virtue opposite to the transgression. But the resentful and ill-willed critic, according to the spiritual law, falls into the same passion as the one he criticizes.
- 184.** One who teaches the law well fears the Lawgiver and, out of fear of Him, shuns all evil.
- 185.** Do not be two-tongued—that is, saying one thing with your words but feeling another in your conscience. For Scripture places such a person under an oath (Sirach 28:15).
- 186.** One speaks the truth and is hated by fools for it; another acts hypocritically and is loved for it; yet neither of these rewards lasts. In due time, the Lord will give each his due.
- 187.** Whoever wishes to be spared future sorrows must willingly endure the present ones. For by mentally exchanging one for the other in this way, he will, through small sorrows, avoid great torments.
- 188.** Refrain from boasting with your words and from conceit in your thoughts, lest you be led to do the opposite, for good deeds are not accomplished by a single person but by the help of the all-seeing God.
- 189.** The all-seeing God assigns us fitting fates not only according to our deeds but also according to our thoughts and voluntary intentions.
- 190.** Involuntary thoughts arise from a preceding sin, while voluntary ones arise from a self-willed mind. That is why the latter are the cause of the former.
- 191.** Evil thoughts that are not in accordance with the heart are accompanied by sorrow, which is why they quickly disappear; but those that are in accordance with the heart are accompanied by joy, which is why it is difficult to shake them off.
- 192.** The self-indulgent person grieves over reproaches and deprivations, while the lover of God grieves over praise and abundance.
- 193.** One who is ignorant of God's judgments walks (inwardly) along a path flanked by rapids on both sides, and is easily cast down by any wind: when praised, he becomes conceited; when criticized, he becomes irritated; when feasting in abundance, he indulges in lust; when experiencing scarcity, he weeps; when he knows something, he puts on a show; when he does not know, he pretends to be knowledgeable; when he is rich, he boasts; when he is poor, he hypocritically pretends; when he is sated, he becomes insolent; when he fasts, he becomes vain; he quarrels with those who rebuke him, and regards those who excuse him as foolish.
- 194.** Until one, through the grace of Christ, attains knowledge of the truth and the fear of God, he will continue to suffer severe wounds not only from his passions but also from external circumstances.
- 195.** When you wish to resolve a perplexing (confusing) matter, seek what is pleasing to God in it, and you will certainly find a beneficial solution.
- 196.** Whatever matters God favors, all creation assists in; and whatever He turns away from, all creation opposes.
- 197.** Whoever resists adverse circumstances, without realizing it, is opposing God's command; but whoever accepts them with true understanding, according to Scripture, endures the Lord.
- 198.** When temptation comes, do not seek the cause or purpose of it, but (take care) to endure it with gratitude, without sorrow, and without holding a grudge.
- 199.** The evil of others does not add to our sin unless we accept it—that is, adopt it or make it our own—with evil thoughts.
- 200.** Since there is no person who can please God without temptations, we must thank God for every sorrowful event.
- 201.** If Peter had not given up his nightly fishing, he would not have been granted the daytime catch; and if Paul had not been blinded physically, he would not have gained spiritual sight; and if Stephen had not been slandered as a blasphemer, the heavens would not have opened to him, and he would not have beheld God.

202. Just as an act in accordance with God is called a virtue, so too is unexpected sorrow called a trial.

203. God tested Abraham—that is, He sent him sorrows for his own good—not to find out what kind of man he was, for the One who knows all things before the beginning of time already knew him, but to give him an opportunity for perfect faith (to come to know it and be established in it).

204. Every sorrow reveals the inclination of our will—whether it leans to the right or to the left. A sudden sorrow is therefore called a temptation because it puts the one who experiences it to the test regarding his inner dispositions.

205. The fear of God compels us to fight against sin, and when we fight, God’s grace destroys it.

206. Wisdom consists not only in knowing the truth in its natural sequence, but also in enduring the evil inflicted upon us by others as if it were our own (as if we deserved it). (’s experience showed that) those who remained with only the first kind of knowledge were lifted up by pride, while those who attained the second acquired humility.

207. If you want to keep evil thoughts from tormenting you, cultivate humility of soul and bodily suffering—not just in part, but at all times, in every place, and in every endeavor.

208. Whoever voluntarily trains himself through afflictions will not be overcome by involuntary thoughts; but whoever does not take upon himself the former will inevitably be enslaved by the latter.

209. When, as a result of an offense, your gut and your heart become agitated, do not grieve that what had previously lain dormant within has been stirred to life; but joyfully cast aside the thoughts that have arisen within, knowing that as they are eradicated at the first stir, the evil lying beneath them and setting them in motion is usually eradicated as well; but if you allow these thoughts to take root and appear frequently, then evil usually gains strength.

210. Without contrition of the heart, it is impossible to be completely rid of evil; the heart, however, is contrite through threefold abstinence, namely: from sleep, food, and bodily rest. For contentment in these things nourishes self-indulgence (satisfaction), multiplying evil thoughts and instilling a reluctance to pray and to fulfill proper obedience.

211. Having been chosen to lead the brethren, maintain your authority and do not remain silent about what ought to be said or commanded because of opposition from some. In matters where they obey you, you will receive a reward because of their virtue; in matters where they do not obey, forgive them, and for that you will receive an equal reward from the One who said, *“Forgive, and you will be forgiven”* (Luke 6:37).

212. The events of life are like a marketplace. Those who know how to trade make a profit, while those who do not suffer a loss.

213. If someone does not listen to you from the very first word, do not coerce them with argumentation, but rather draw them to your side by highlighting the benefit they have rejected. For kindness is more beneficial to you than their obedience.

214. When the corruption of one person (who has harmed himself through disobedience or by some other means) spreads to many, then one should not be long-suffering, *“seeking not one’s own benefit, but that of many, so that they may be saved”* (1 Cor. 10:33). For the common good is more beneficial than the private good.

215. If anyone falls into any sin and does not grieve over it in proportion to the offense, he will easily fall again into the same (enemy’s) snare.

216. Just as a lioness does not approach a calf in friendship, so shamelessness does not accept *“godly sorrow”* (2 Cor. 7:10).

217. Just as a sheep does not mate with a wolf to bear offspring, so too does a heart filled with satiety prevent the conception of virtues.

218. No one can experience godly sorrow and grief unless they first love their causes.

219. The fear of God and reproof welcome sorrow into their fellowship, while self-restraint and vigilance are in harmony with sorrow.

220. Whoever is not instructed by the commandments and exhortations of Scripture must be driven on with *“a horse’s whip and a donkey’s goad”* (Prov. 26: 3)⁵⁶ ; but if he rejects even this, *“then you will pull his jaw with bit and bridle”* (Ps. 31: 9).

⁵⁶ Donkeys are not driven with a whip, but are pricked in the flanks with an awl attached to a stick.

221. Whoever is easily overcome by small temptations will inevitably be enslaved by greater ones, but whoever despises the small ones will rebel against the Lord even in the face of greater ones.

222. Do not attempt to correct with rebukes one who boasts of his virtues, for the same person cannot be both a lover of ostentation and a lover of truth.

223. Every word of Christ reveals God's mercy, truth, and wisdom, and through hearing instills their power into the souls of those who willingly listen to Him. Therefore, the unmerciful and the unrighteous, who listened to Him reluctantly, not only failed to recognize God's wisdom but also crucified the One who taught it. So we, too, must examine whether we listen to Him willingly. For He said: *"Whoever loves Me will keep My commandments, and he will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him"* (John 14:15, 21). Do you see how He has concealed His manifestation within the commandments? Yet the most comprehensive of all the commandments is love for God and neighbor, which is born through detachment from all material things in the stillness of the mind.

224. Knowing this, the Lord commands us, saying, *"Do not worry about tomorrow"* (Matt. 6:34). And so it should be. For how can one who has not detached himself from material things and from concern for them be freed from evil thoughts? But when one is overwhelmed by thoughts, how will he see the fundamental sin hidden beneath them—which is the darkness and gloom of the soul, and from which all wicked thoughts and desires originate—when the devil, tempting through a gentle enticement, points out the sin, and the person, driven by vanity and self-indulgence, joins forces with him? Even if, upon reflection, he did not resolve to commit it, he nevertheless took pleasure in the impulse and became entangled with it. But if he does not recognize this principal sin—when and how, having prayed about it, will he be cleansed of it? And without being cleansed, how will he find a place of pure nature (Ezek. 37: 27)? And if he does not find this, how will he see the inner house of Christ?—if we are the house of God, according to the words of the Prophets, the Gospel, and the Apostles (Zech. 2:10, John 14:23, 1 Cor. 3:16).

225. Therefore, we must strive, in the manner described above, to find this house and, while abiding in prayer, knock at the door (Matt. 7:7), so that either here or at the time of our departure, the Lord may open it to us and not say, if we are found wanting: *"I do not know where you come from"* (Luke 13:25). We must not only ask and receive, but also preserve what has been given to us, for some have lost it even after receiving it. A mere knowledge of the subjects mentioned above, or even some casual experience (regarding them), may be possessed even by those who began their studies late, and the young, but even the elders—the devout and highly experienced—hardly possess the constant and patient practice of this, having often lost it through inattention and then, through deliberate effort, sought it out and regained it. Let us, then, not cease to do the same until we have mastered this practice, so that it may remain in us inseparably.

226. Of the many, we have come to know only a few of the justifications of the spiritual law—which we must continually learn and put into practice—as the great Psalmist inspires those who often sing in the Lord Jesus, to whom be glory, power, and worship, now and forever. Amen.

Abba Evagrius of Pontus

Information about the Life of Abba Evagrius

It is known that Evagrius of Pontus, a hermit monk and abbot, was born around the middle of the 4th century in the town of Ivor, near Pontus Euxinus (the Monastery of St. Basil was not far from this town). His lineage or talents drew the attention of the great saints who flourished at that time: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Theologian. Under their guidance, he grew and developed in spirit and in his understanding of the faith and life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Basil the Great ordained him a reader; Gregory of Nyssa ordained him a deacon and left him in Constantinople while he attended the Second Ecumenical Council there. A certain circumstance that endangered his purity forced him to leave Constantinople. And so, after staying briefly in Jerusalem, he set out for Egypt, where he lived the ascetic life first in Nitria, then in the cells, and finally in the Skete, under the guidance of and in fellowship with the great abbots of that time. Palladius, his disciple through Socrates, writes about him in **Laudatoria**, chapter 73: "Finding it unjust to remain silent about the deeds of Evagrius, the renowned deacon of Christ, a man of the Apostolic life, and, on the contrary, deeming it just to commit them to writing, for the edification of readers and the glorification of the grace of our Savior, I will first describe how he entered the monastic life and how, having labored in a

manner worthy of his vow, he passed away in the desert at the age of 54, according to the words of Scripture: *'He died at a young age, having fulfilled the years of his duty, for his soul was pleasing to the Lord.'* He was a native of Pontus, from the city of Ivora, the son of a presbyter; St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, ordained him a reader at the church in Argos. After the passing of St. Basil the Bishop, St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa—the brother of Bishop Basil, who had attained apostolic glory, and who was most wise, most dispassionate, and highly renowned for his learning—noting Evagrius's aptitude, ordained him a deacon. Later, having accompanied him to the great Council of Constantinople, St. Gregory the Bishop left him there with the blessed Bishop Nectarius, as the most skilled in refuting all heresies. And he became renowned in the great city, courageously defeating every heresy with his words. It so happened that this man, who was respected throughout the city for his exemplary moral integrity, was afflicted by a passionate love for a woman, as he himself later told us after he had been freed from this temptation. The woman loved him in return, and she was of noble birth. Evagrius, since he feared God, was ashamed before his own conscience, and envisioned the filth of vice and the schadenfreude of the heretics, earnestly prayed to God to thwart the woman's intentions, for she, inflamed by passion, was striving to draw him into sin. He wanted to distance himself from her, but could not, held captive by the bonds of favors. Shortly after the prayer with which he had prevented himself from committing sin, an angel appeared to him in a vision, dressed as a provincial military officer; taking him, the angel led him as if to a court of law and cast him into a dungeon, placing iron shackles around his neck and binding his hands with iron chains. Those who came to see him did not tell him the reason for his imprisonment, but he himself, tormented by his conscience, thought he had been subjected to this because of that affair, and believed that the woman's husband had reported it to the judge. Moreover, it seemed to him that others were being tried right there for the same crime. Because of this, he was in extreme distress and fear. Then an angel took the form of one of his sincere friends and came as if to visit him. He entered, appearing deeply shocked and saddened that his friend was suffering the disgrace of chains and was imprisoned among forty criminals, and said to him: "Father Deacon! Why are they holding you so dishonorably with criminals?" He replied, "Truly, I do not know, but I suspect that a certain eparch has denounced me out of mad jealousy, and I fear that the city governor may have been bribed by him and that they might subject me to severe punishment." The one who appeared in the form of a friend said to him, "If you are willing to listen to your friend, I would advise you to leave this city, for, as I see it, it is not good for you to live here." Evagrius said to him, "If God delivers me from this trouble, and you later see me in Constantinople, let me be subjected to an even greater punishment." The friend said to him, "If so, I will bring the Gospel; swear to me on it that you will leave this city and become a monk, and I will deliver you from this calamity." Evagrius said, "I swear, as you wish, only deliver me from this dark cloud." After that, his friend brought the Gospel and demanded an oath. Evagrius swore to him on the Gospel that he would not remain in the city for more than one day, and that was only to load his belongings onto a ship. With that, the vision ended. Rising, filled with anxiety, he reasoned: "Even if the oath was given in a fit of passion, I have nevertheless sworn it." Therefore, without the slightest delay, he transferred everything he owned to the ship and sailed to Jerusalem. There he donned the monastic habit and was received by the blessed Melania the Roman. But the devil once again clouded his heart and shook his resolve to such an extent that he changed his clothes yet again, and his mind was overcome by the vanity of oratory. But God, who preserves us all from destruction, brought upon him yet another affliction here, sending a fever upon him and, through a severe illness lasting six months, exhausting his body, which had been hindering him from continuing on the path he had already begun. When the doctors gave up on him, finding no way to cure him, the blessed Melania said to him: "It seems to me that your illness is not a simple one, my son; tell me, is there something weighing on your heart?" He confessed to her everything that had happened to him in Constantinople. The blessed woman said to him, "Give me your word before God that you will resolve to lead a monastic life, and though I am a sinner, I will pray to the Lord that He may grant you continued life for repentance and the reformation of your heart." When he gave his word, she prayed, and Evagrius recovered within a few days. After his recovery, she herself brought him a monastic robe, and, having put it on, he set out for Egypt, where, after living for two years on Mount Nitrian, he withdrew into the desert in the third year. He lived for fourteen years in the so-called cells, subsisting only on bread and water, with occasionally a small amount of oil, and allowing himself no comfort in this regard. He ate neither greens nor fruit nor grapes; he drank no wine and did not wash his body. Thus did this man, who had previously lived in comfort, torment himself, yet even here the temptations did not leave him. At times, the demon of lust would assail him fiercely, as he himself recounted; and then, during the winter, he would sit naked in a well all night

long, until his body grew numb. At other times, the spirit of blasphemy tormented him, and then he would not enter under a roof for forty days, afflicting himself. In general, he endured so many temptations from various demons that it is difficult to list them all; he was even beaten by demons. But by mortifying his body in this way and enduring such trials, the blessed one was inwardly enlivened by the Holy Spirit, and, having purified his mind, was granted the gift of discernment and the ability to distinguish between spirits. This valiant ascetic of Christ told us before his death: “For three years now, carnal lust has not troubled me.” If, after such an austere life, after such tireless ascetic labors and unceasing vigilance in prayer, the enemy of goodness and the destructive demon attacked this righteous man so fiercely, how much more must careless people suffer at the hands of this unclean demon—or because of their own negligence! He composed one hundred prayers and wrote three books, namely: “*iera*”—or rather, “*stihira*” (brief sayings in the form of verses or parables), “*monahon*”—monk or practical lessons, and “*antirritikon*”—the struggle—on the battle against demons and passions. In Socrates (Book 4, Chapter 23), we also find that Evagrius was a disciple of both Macarius—the Egyptian and the Alexandrian—under whose guidance, having previously been a philosopher in name only, he acquired practical philosophy. Having come to Egypt from Constantinople, he met the aforementioned men and began to imitate their way of life. Below, Socrates cites two incidents from Evagrius’s life, in his own words, from which it is evident what kind of relationship he had with Macarius the Great. The first is that Abba Macarius asked Evagrius about the difference in the effects on the soul between the memory of insults from people and the memory of insults from demons; the second is how, upon arriving at Abba Macarius’s dwelling, Evagrius—exhausted from his journey in the heat—asked for a little water and was refused. Both of these accounts are cited in his letters to Anatolius (Chapters 93, 94). Further on, Socrates mentions that Evagrius, in his book **The Gnostic**, writes about himself: “We learned from the righteous Gregory that there are four virtues and corresponding concepts: prudence, courage, temperance, and justice.” Who is this Gregory? According to Palladius, it is Gregory of Nyssa, but according to Socrates, it is Gregory of Nazianzus, who is said to have ordained him as a deacon in Constantinople. Did Socrates confuse Gregory of Nazianzus with Gregory of Nyssa? Palladius was better positioned to know the truth. Finally, we find the following account in Socrates’ work. The wonderful Ammonius, who had been in Rome with Athanasius the Great and wished to see nothing there except the Church of Peter and Paul, was later called to the episcopate in Egypt by Theophilus of Alexandria; fleeing from this, he cut off his own right ear so that the disfigurement of his body might deter his ordination. Some time later, Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, appointed Evagrius to the episcopate; he, too, fled, but did not mutilate any part of his body. Upon meeting Ammonius, Evagrius said kindly to him: “You did wrong to cut off your ear; you will answer to God for such an act.” “And will you not be held accountable, Evagrius, for cutting off your own tongue and, out of pride, failing to make use of the grace granted to you?” replied Ammonius. Regarding Evagrius’s works, Socrates writes: “He wrote very good books.” One of them is titled “*The Monk*,” or On Activity; another, “*The Gnostic*,” or To the Man Who Has Attained Knowledge, divided into fifty chapters; and the third, “*The Antirritikos*” (*antirritikos*), or a selection from the Divine Scriptures against the tempting demons, divided into eight parts, corresponding to the number of the eight thoughts. In addition, he compiled 600 questions about the future and two more books written in verse: one addressed to monks living in cenobitic communities, or communal monasteries, and the other to a maiden. Those who read these books will discover how remarkable they are. Sozomen (Book 6, Chapter 30), having said of the aforementioned Ammonius that he was one of the “long-robed” monks, had attained the height of wisdom, and was highly learned—so much so that he had read through the works of Origen, Didymus, and other spiritual writers—adds: “The wise Evagrius, a most learned man, strong in mind and speech, and especially capable of distinguishing between thoughts (intentions) that lead to virtue and those that lead to vice, and of disposing himself to cultivate the former and guard against the latter, was a friend of Ammonius. However, his writings will reveal what kind of scholar he was. His character, they say, was marked by moderation and displayed so little vanity and pride that neither well-deserved praise inflated his ego nor undeserved reproaches caused him distress. He studied and learned the Holy Scriptures under Bishop Gregory of Nazianzus, under whom he served as archdeacon during the latter’s tenure as primate of the Church of Constantinople. He was a handsome man and took pleasure in dressing elegantly. One of the nobles, noticing his acquaintance with his own wife, was consumed with jealousy and resolved to kill him. When the plot was already being put into action, God sent him a terrifying yet salvific dream while he slept.” Sozomen adds nothing further of note. It is impossible not to notice that Socrates, as cited by Sozomen, disagrees with Palladius regarding which Gregory patronized Evagrius and contributed to his education. Palladius names

Gregory of Nyssa, while Sozomen names Gregory of Nazianzus. One can reconcile their accounts as follows: Evagrius was ordained a deacon by Gregory of Nyssa, but he was also under the guidance of Gregory of Nazianzus and benefited from his teachings. When Gregory the Theologian was called to Constantinople to serve as patriarch, Gregory of Nyssa arrived at the Council convened under his leadership, accompanied by Evagrius. There, Evagrius may have served as protodeacon under Nazianzen and, after the Council, remained in Constantinople on the advice of both Grigories. Socrates and Sozomen speak of him as having been in Constantinople, while Palladius describes what happened prior to that. Palladius, as a disciple of Evagrius, deserves greater credence, for he surely heard what he reports directly from Evagrius himself. The *Patrologia* (vol. 40, p. 1215) dates Evagrius's death to the year 399. The same source also includes reviews of Evagrius's writings. Incidentally, Blessed Jerome wrote (Epist. 135 ad Ctesiph) that "Evagrius's books are read not only by the Greeks throughout the East, but also in the West by the Latins in the translation by Rufinus, his disciple." The *Patrologia* contains all that has survived of Evagrius's writings. Foremost among them are *the chapters on the active life* addressed to Anatolius. This, as one might surmise, is what remains of the book that the historians we have cited title **The Monk**. The chapters of * * are preceded by a brief letter to Anatolius, serving as an introduction to them. This is followed by 71 chapters of **logos praktikos**—teachings on the ascetic life. After these come 100 chapters. However, since the majority of these chapters are among the 71 mentioned earlier, only the text of those chapters not included there is presented here. In total, however, there are 100 chapters. We will also title this section: "One Hundred Chapters on the Active Life, Addressed to Anatolius." Next, in the **Patrologia**, there follows an article which, in our **Dobrotolubie**, is more clearly titled: "The Model of Monastic Life, Teaching How One Should Strive and Remain Silent." The same is true in the Greek **Dobrotolubie**. The title of **Patrologia** is difficult to convey even by paraphrase. We will retain our title. Next come 33 chapters titled **kat anoloythian** (not **kat analogian**?); their content: the reflection of the spiritual in the visible; 25 chapters arranged alphabetically; these are aphoristic sayings on spiritual matters. Appended to these last are another 26 sayings, not arranged alphabetically. Following this is a section on the eight vicious thoughts, part of the ancient book **Antirritikon**. Finally, there are brief rules for the Kinuit monks and for virgins. All of this is presented here in translation.

The Monk Evagrius's Instructions on Asceticism

1. Chapters on the Active Life, Addressed to Anatolius

You previously wrote to me, my most beloved brother Anatolius, from the Holy Mountain (presumably Mount Nitrian) to my skete, asking me to explain to you the symbolic meaning of the Egyptian monastic schema, believing that it is not without good reason that it differs so greatly from all other forms of human attire. I will gladly recount to you what I myself have learned about this from the Holy Fathers. The kukulli is a symbol of the grace of our Savior God, which overshadows the minds of the monks and, with its covering, protects their childlikeness in Christ from those who ceaselessly seek to strike them and inflict wounds. Those who wear it on their heads sing with firm and active faith: "Unless the Lord builds the house and guards the city, the builder labors in vain, and the watchman stays awake in vain" (Ps. 126:1). Such cries instill humility and uproot pride, that ancient evil which cast Lucifer, the morning star, down to earth. The fact that their hands are bare⁵⁷ shows the sincerity of their lives. For vanity knows how to disguise itself and cast a shadow of virtue, always seeking glory from people and driving away faith, as the Savior says: "*How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one God?*" (John 5:44). Goodness must not be for the sake of anything else; on the contrary, everything else must be for its sake. If this is not acknowledged, it will become clear that what drives us to do good is more valuable to us than goodness itself, and this would be the height of absurdity—to imagine something higher than God and to speak in such a way. The analav (our paraman), crisscrossing their shoulders like a cross, is a symbol of faith in Christ, who receives (αναλαμβάνεσης) the meek, always removes obstacles, and ensures that our actions proceed unhindered. The belt that binds their loins repels all impurity and proclaims: "It is good for a man not to touch his wife" (1 Cor. 7:1). They possess grace, as *they* always "*bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*" (2 Cor. 4:10), as they subdue all irrational bodily passions, root out evil in the soul through the practice of goodness, and as they love poverty and flee from the love of wealth, which is idolatry. The staff is

⁵⁷ Cassian writes that their sleeves reached only to their elbows.

the tree of life, obliging all who take it in their hands and lean on it to be established in Christ. Here, in brief, are the things symbolized by the schema! (When clothing them in it), the Holy Fathers always speak these words to them: Children! The fear of God strengthens faith, and self-restraint strengthens the fear of God; patience and hope make it unwavering, and from them springs dispassion; the fruit of dispassion is love, and love is the gateway to physical knowledge, which leads to theology and supreme bliss. And this is enough for now regarding the holy schema and the teachings of the elders. Now let us speak of the active and contemplative life—not merely what we saw (in the elders) and heard (from them), but also what we were commanded by them to pass on to others, dividing what pertains to the active life into one hundred chapters, and what pertains to the contemplative life into 650, concealing some things and veiling others, lest we give what is holy to the dogs or cast our pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6)—though this is clear to those who follow in their footsteps along the same path.

1. Christianity is the law—(*dogma*)—of our Savior Jesus Christ, combining, as far as life is concerned, knowledge of things and the knowledge of God.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven is the dispassion of the soul through true knowledge of the One Who Is.

3. The Kingdom of God is the knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity, which extends in accordance with the state of the mind and fills it with an endless life of bliss.

4. Whoever loves something naturally desires it, and whatever one desires, one strives to attain. Every pleasure is preceded by desire, and desire is born of sensation. That which is unrelated to sensation is free from passion.

5. Demons personally engage in battle with the hermits, but against those who lead a virtuous life in monasteries or communities, they arm the most negligent brothers. Yet the latter struggle is far easier than the former, for one cannot find people on earth who are more wicked than demons or who embody all their malice.

6. A wandering mind is steadied by reading, vigil, and prayer. A burning lust is quenched by fasting, labor, and asceticism. A surging anger is calmed by psalm-singing, magnanimity, and mercy. All of this proves effective when practiced at the right time and in the proper measure. Everything that is untimely and excessive is short-lived (unstable), and what is short-lived is more harmful than beneficial.

7. When the soul craves various delicacies, let us satisfy it with bread and water, so that it may be grateful even for a thin slice. For satiety craves varied delicacies, but hunger regards even being sated with bread as bliss⁵⁸.

8. Scarcity of water greatly contributes to the temperance of the body. Let those three hundred Israelites who, with Gideon, defeated Midian convince you of this.

9. Just as it is impossible for death and life to coexist in a person at the same moment, so too is it impossible for love and money to coexist in anyone. Love not only consumes money but also sacrifices our very temporary life.

10. The pursuit of worldly pleasures is a tower impregnable to the demon of sorrow. For sorrow is the deprivation of pleasure—whether present or anticipated. We cannot rid ourselves of this enemy as long as we are attached to anything earthly. There he sets his snare to stir up sorrow, targeting whatever he sees us most attached to.

11. Anger and hatred multiply the irritation of the heart, while charity and meekness extinguish it.

12. May the sun not set while we are still angry, lest the demons, attacking at night, frighten our souls and make our minds more timid for the struggle the next day. Terrifying dreams usually follow angry agitation, and nothing else compels our mind to break ranks (desert) as much as anxious anger.

13. When, for whatever reason, the irritable part of our soul becomes agitated, the demons offer us solitude as a good thing, so that, by removing the causes of our distress, we might not be freed from our confusion⁵⁹. But when lust flares up, they try to make us sociable (to keep us among people), calling us cruel and savage for withdrawing, so that, lusting after bodies, we might encounter bodies (by remaining in society). We must not believe them, but rather do the opposite of what they suggest.

14. Do not give yourself over to thoughts of anger, waging a mental war against the one who has grieved you, nor—again—to lustful thoughts, lingering on sensual fantasies. The former darkens the soul, while the latter stirs up passion; both defile the mind, and when you pray, filling your imagination with passionate images as if they were idols and thus failing to offer God a pure prayer, you immediately fall prey

⁵⁸ This chapter is cited by St. John Climacus, Ladder 14, Chapter 12.

⁵⁹ So that, in overcoming our sorrows, we do not dull our sense of indignation and anger while living among others.

to the demon of despondency, who usually attacks in such states and, like a dog, snatches the soul as if it were carrion.

15. Anger is by nature intended to wage war against demons and to fight against every sinful delight. Therefore, the angels, by stirring up spiritual delight within us and allowing us to taste its bliss, incline us to direct our anger against the demons; whereas the demons, by drawing us toward worldly lusts, compel us to wage war with anger against people, contrary to our nature, so that the mind, having become clouded and devoid of reason, may become a traitor to the virtues.

16. Be careful not to drive away a brother in your anger. For this, you will never escape the demon of sorrow throughout your life, who will always hold this against you during prayer.

17. Resentment is extinguished by gifts. Let Jacob convince you of this—he who appeased Esau with gifts, even as Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men (Gen. 32:6, 33:1). But we, the poor, can fulfill this need (as a substitute for gifts) with a meal.

18. When you are attacked by the demon of despondency, then, dividing your soul in two and making one part the comforter and the other the one being comforted, let us instill in ourselves good hopes, singing the following verses of David: *“Why are you downcast, O my soul?” “Why are you troubled, O my soul?” “Trust in God, for I will confess to Him; He is the salvation of my face and my God”* (Ps. 41:6).

19. During times of temptation, one must not leave one’s cell by inventing some pious excuse, but must remain inside and endure, bravely facing all attackers—especially the demon of despondency, which is truly the most burdensome of all, yet also the one that makes the soul the most experienced. If one runs away or avoids the struggle, the mind will remain inexperienced, timid, and quick to flee.

20. It is difficult to avoid the thought of vanity, for whatever you do to drive it away becomes the beginning of a new surge of vanity. Not every righteous thought of ours, however, is opposed by demons; rather, these evil creatures favor some of them, in the hope of deceiving us.

21. One who has touched upon knowledge and tasted its sweetness will no longer trust the demon of vanity, even if it were to offer him all the pleasures of the world. For what more could it promise than spiritual contemplation? But until we have tasted knowledge, let us diligently lead a life of active service, declaring to God our purpose—that we do everything for the sake of His knowledge.

22. Remember your former life and your past sins, and how, having been a man of passions, you passed over to a life that does not indulge the passions, and how you once again withdrew from the world, which in many ways often humbled you greatly. Reflect also on the One who protects you in the desert and drives away the demons who gnash their teeth at you. Such reflections instill humility and prevent the demon of pride from gaining a foothold.

23. Whatever we remember with passion was first perceived with passion in reality; and likewise, whatever we perceive with passion in reality, we will later remember with passion. For one who has conquered the demons that stir up passions, the things with which they stir them up are now worthless. For the spiritual warrior is mightier than the material one.

24. The passions of the soul take their impetus (for their activity) from people, while those of the body take it from the body. The activity of bodily passions is curbed by self-restraint, and that of the soul’s passions by spiritual love.

25. The demons that preside over the passions of the soul persist stubbornly until death itself, tormenting the soul, while those that preside over the passions of the body depart more quickly. Moreover, some demons, like the rising or setting sun, affect only a particular part of the soul, whereas the midday demon usually engulfs the entire soul and overwhelms the mind. Why is the life of a hermit sweet after the passions have been subdued? Because then only bare memories of them remain, and, as for the struggle, it is not so much the struggle itself that remains as the contemplation of it.

26. It is worth considering whether thought sets the passions in motion, or whether the passions set thought in motion. Some accept the former, while others accept the latter. Usually, the passions are set in motion by the senses, but when one possesses love and self-restraint, they do not move; when one lacks them, they do. Anger requires greater remedies than lust, and love is called great precisely because it is the bridle of anger. St. Moses symbolically called it “ophiokhom” (one who fights serpents) when he listed what may and may not be eaten (Lev. 11:22).

27. Because of the well-known and never-ceasing malice of demons, the soul flares up against the thoughts (implanted by them) as soon as it senses their approach, and defends itself by adopting the passionate quality of the attackers (anger).

28. It is not always possible to follow the usual rules, but one must pay attention to the circumstances and strive to do what is possible within them to the best of one's ability. Even the demons themselves are unaware of this law of timeliness. That is why, always hostile toward us, they prevent us from doing what is possible and compel us to do what is impossible. Thus, they dissuade the sick from giving thanks to God for the afflictions that have befallen them and from generously bearing with those who serve them; they incline the weak toward the strictest abstinence and compel those burdened (by age or labor) to sing psalms while standing.

29. When necessity compels us to stay for a short time in a city or village, then, in our dealings with laypeople, let us observe the strictest self-restraint, lest our mind, having grown complacent and having abandoned its usual vigilance, do something rash or flee, driven by demons.

30. During times of temptation, do not begin prayer until you have first spoken a few angry words against the tempter. For when the soul is tainted by evil thoughts, its prayer cannot be pure. But if you say anything in anger against them, you will thereby throw your adversaries into confusion and destroy their suggestions. Anger usually has a similar effect on good thoughts as well.

31. Whoever wishes to test malicious demons and acquire the skill to discern their schemes, let him observe his thoughts and note what they insist upon and where they yield, under what circumstances and at what times which of them is particularly active, which follows which, and which does not agree with which, and let him seek from Christ the Lord the resolution to all this. Demons are very angry at those who actively pursue virtues with knowledge of the matter (and bring everything to light), desiring "*to shoot down the upright in heart in the darkness*" (Ps. 10: 3).

32. In this observation, you will find two demons to be extremely swift, almost outpacing the movement of our mind—the demon of fornication and the demon that entices us to blasphemy. But the latter is short-lived, while the former, if it does not stir up passionate thoughts, does not prevent us from progressing in the knowledge of God.

33. Only the One who united them can separate the body from the soul, while the soul can be separated from the body by one who strives for virtue (in asceticism). For our fathers call asceticism the remembrance of death and flight from the body (that is, so as not to indulge the flesh in lust).

34. Those who lavishly nourish their flesh and extend their care for it to the point of lust (Rom. 13:14) do themselves no good; let them complain about themselves afterward, and not about her. On the contrary, those who have attained spiritual dispassion through this very body and diligently strive (through its very means) to contemplate the Existent confess the grace of the Creator (who gave us the body).

35. When the mind begins to offer prayers without distraction, then the entire daily and nightly struggle is reduced to a struggle against the irritable part of the soul.

36. A sign of dispassion is when the mind begins to see its own light, becomes at peace with sleep-induced reveries, and understands things easily (and correctly).

37. When the mind does not imagine anything worldly during prayer, it means that it has grown strong.

38. The mind, having, with God's help, completed the course of an active life and attained contemplation, feels little and no longer feels the stirrings of the irrational part of the soul: contemplation elevates it above sorrow and separates it from the sensual.

39. A soul is not impassive merely because it is not captivated by things, but because it remains unperturbed even when recalling them.

40. It is not strictly speaking said of the perfect man that he "restrains himself," nor of the dispassionate man that he "endures," for endurance belongs to one who suffers, and restraint to one who is driven by desire.

41. It is a great feat to pray without distraction, but to sing without distraction is even greater.

42. One who has established virtues within himself and is completely governed by them no longer remembers the law, or the commandments, or punishment, but speaks (as if naturally) and acts in accordance with what his well-established, noble character inspires him to do.

43. Demonic songs stir up our lust and plunge the soul into shameful fantasies, whereas psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs always draw the mind to the remembrance of virtues, thereby cooling the heat of anger and quenching lust.

44. Just as those engaged in combat strike blows—and mutually receive them—so too do the demons, who are at war with us; when they strike us, they certainly receive blows from us in return. *“I will strike them down, and they will not be able to stand”* (Ps. 17: 39). And again: *“Those who insult me and my enemies—they are overcome and fall”* (Ps. 26:2).

45. Wisdom goes hand in hand with peace, and prudence with toil. One cannot acquire wisdom without struggle, nor can one successfully wage that struggle without prudence. It is entrusted to prudence to resist the anger stirred up by demons, just as it is to compel the powers of the soul to act as is proper to their nature, and thus to pave the way to wisdom.

46. The temptation of a monk is a thought which, having entered through the passionate part of the soul, clouds the mind.

47. A monk’s sin is the consent of the mind to a forbidden, sinful passion.

48. Angels rejoice when sinful evil is diminished, and demons rejoice when virtue is diminished. For the former are servants of mercy and love, while the latter are slaves of wrath and hatred. The former, drawing near to us, fill us with spiritual contemplation, while the latter, drawing near, plunge the soul into shameful imaginings.

49. Virtues do not stop the demons’ attacks against us, but they keep us unharmed by them.

50. An active life (the practice of virtue) is a spiritual method for purifying the passionate part of the soul.

51. For the complete healing of the soul’s faculties, merely performing the commandments is not enough if the mind does not simultaneously maintain the corresponding contemplations.

52. Just as one can accept the good thoughts implanted in us by the angels, so one can repel the evil thoughts instilled by demons. The former thoughts are followed by a peaceful state of the soul, while the latter are followed by turmoil.

53. The source of dispassion is love; dispassion itself is the flower of an active life, and an active life consists in the fulfillment of the commandments. The guardian of this fulfillment of the commandments is the fear of God, which is the fruit of true faith; faith, in turn, is an inner good of the soul, which is usually found even in those who have not yet believed in God.

54. Just as the soul, acting through the body, senses which members are weak, so the mind, acting through its own activity, recognizes its strengths and, noticing which one hinders it (due to its corruption), seeks out the commandment that will heal it.

55. The mind, waging a passionate war, does not see the enemy’s schemes; for at such a time it is like one fighting at night (in darkness). But, having attained dispassion, it readily discerns the enemies’ wiles.

56. The ultimate goal of the active life is love, and the end of knowledge is theology. The beginning of both, however, is faith and the contemplation of things. Those demons that attack the passionate part of the soul are called the adversaries of the active life; those that attack the very power of thought are called the enemies of all truth and the adversaries of contemplation.

57. Nothing that purifies the body remains with the purified person afterward, but virtues, having purified the soul, remain within it thereafter, along with the purified soul itself.

58. The rational soul acts in accordance with its nature when its desiring part strives for virtue, its impulsive part strives for it, and its thinking part is devoted to the contemplation of being.

59. One who excels in the active life diminishes the passions, while one who excels in contemplation diminishes ignorance. Regarding the passions, it is said that their complete eradication will never come to pass; regarding ignorance, it is said that it will come to an end in part, but not entirely.

60. The good and the bad that we encounter in life can contribute to both virtues and vices. The task of prudence is to use them to foster the former and counteract the latter.

61. The soul is tripartite, according to our wise teacher (meaning Gregory of Nyssa). When virtue resides in the rational part, it is called prudence (fronesis); discernment (synesis), and wisdom (sofia); when it resides in the volitional part, it is called chastity, love, and self-restraint; when it resides in the emotional part, it is called courage and patience; and when it pervades the entire soul, it is called righteousness. The task of prudence is to wage war against forces opposed to us, to protect virtues, to drive out vices, and to manage neutral (indifferent) matters appropriately according to the time. The task of discernment is to arrange everything that contributes to our goal in a fitting manner, and the task of wisdom is to contemplate corporeal and incorporeal beings in every respect. The task of chastity is to view dispassionately those things that usually

arouse in us irrational dreams and desires; the task of love is to show ourselves toward every person bearing the image of God in the same way that love relates to the original image, even if demons attempt to degrade others in our sight; the task of self-restraint is to joyfully reject everything that delights the throat. The work of patience and courage is to fear no enemies and willingly endure all manner of hardships. The work of righteousness is to keep all parts of the soul in agreement and harmony with one another.

62. The fruit of sowing is the harvest, and that of virtue is knowledge. Just as tears accompany the sowing of seeds, so joy accompanies the harvest (Ps. 125:6).

63. A person will not rid himself of passionate memories unless he takes care to heal the covetous and irritable parts of himself, weakening the former through fasting, vigil, and sleeping on the bare ground, and taming the latter through long-suffering, forgiveness, and almsgiving. Almost all demonic thoughts, which plunge the mind into every kind of trouble and ruin, are composed of these two passions. But it is impossible for anyone to rid themselves of the passions unless they completely despise food and drink, possessions and glory, and even their own body, for the sake of those who often attempt to strike them through these things (i.e., demons). Therefore, we must imitate those in distress at sea, who cast off their belongings because of the force of the winds and the towering waves. At the same time, however, we must take great care that, in casting off our belongings in this way, we do not do so merely to be seen by others. For by doing so, we will lose our reward and suffer a shipwreck even more bitter than before, when the demon of vanity blows its wind upon us. That is why our Lord, in the Gospels, instructs our ruler—the mind—saying: *“Take care not to practice your acts of charity before men, so that you may be seen by them; otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven”* (Matt. 6:1). And again: *“When you pray,”* He says, *“do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the marketplaces and on the street corners so that people may see them; truly I tell you, they have received their reward”* (v. 5). And again He says: *“But when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces to show others that they are fasting; truly I tell you, they have received their reward”* (v. 16). But listen here to the Physician of souls, as He heals irritability through almsgiving, purifies the mind through prayer, and mortifies lust through fasting—from which the new man is formed, renewed in the image of the One who created him (Col. 3: 10–11), in whom, because of dispassion, *“there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus; and there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all”* (Gal. 3: 28).

64. Impure thoughts, taking root in us because of our passions, lead the mind to utter destruction and ruin. For just as the thought of bread takes root in the hungry person because of hunger, and the thought of water in the thirsty person because of thirst, so too the thought of money and other possessions takes root because of the love of money, and shameful thoughts because of lustful passion. In the same way, our fixation on thoughts of vanity and other such things is explained. It is impossible for a mind, submerged and drowning in such thoughts, to stand before God and be crowned with the crown of righteousness. That threefold-corrupted mind was plundered by these thoughts; according to the Gospel parable, it refused the supper of the knowledge of God. Likewise, the one bound hand and foot and cast into utter darkness wore a garment woven from these thoughts, which the Inviter deemed unworthy of such a wedding feast. The wedding garment is the dispassion of the rational soul that has renounced worldly desires. The reason why thoughts of sensual things, when they become entrenched, corrupt knowledge will be discussed in the chapters on prayer.

65. A demonic thought is opposed by three thoughts, which cut it off when it becomes entrenched in the mind: the angelic thought; our own thought, arising from our free will when it is directed toward the good; and another of our own thoughts, prompted by human nature, by which even pagans love, for example, their children and honor their parents. A good thought, however, is opposed by only two thoughts: a demonic one, and one of our own arising from our will, which has strayed toward the worse. For no evil thought arises from nature: since from the beginning we were not evil, because the Lord sowed good seed in His field. There was a time when there was no evil, and there will be a time when there will be none. The seeds of virtue are indelible. I am convinced of this by the rich man in the Gospel who, even after being condemned to hell, showed mercy to his brothers—and mercy is the finest seed of virtue.

66. Some of the impure demons always sit beside those who are reading and devise all manner of ways to distract their minds and lead them astray. Often, taking their cue from the Divine Scriptures themselves, they lead them into evil thoughts; it happens that they cause them to yawn contrary to their usual habit, or induce a heavy sleep, very different from the ordinary kind. I have experienced this myself, but did not fully

understand the reason, even though I was often subjected to it. From Saint Macarius, however, I heard that both untimely yawning and sleep come from demons; as proof of this, he cites the custom of making the sign of the cross over one's mouth when yawning, according to an ancient, time-honored tradition. We endure all this from them because, while reading, we do not maintain sober attention and do not remember that we are reading the holy words of the Living God.

67. There are instances among demons of succession and handover, when one of them grows weary in battle but has managed to set his beloved passion in motion. Having observed this, I found the following: When thoughts of a certain passion rarely come to us for a long time, and then it suddenly and unexpectedly stirs and begins to burn—even though we gave no cause for it through any negligence—then know that a demon more wicked than the previous one has taken hold of us and, taking the place of the one who departed, has filled us with his evil. Seeing this, let the mind take refuge in the Lord, and, having taken up the helmet of salvation, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having drawn the spiritual sword, having raised the shield of faith (Eph. 6:14–17), and looking up to heaven with tears, let it say: Lord Jesus Christ, *“the strength of my salvation”* (Ps. 139: 8). *“Incline Your ear to me; hasten to deliver me; be to me a God of defense and a house of refuge, that You may save me”* (Ps. 30: 3). Let him, especially through fasting and vigils, make his sword gleaming. After this, even if he suffers for some time yet, beset and pelted by the fiery arrows of the evil one, this demon too will eventually, little by little, become just as his predecessor was, and will subside until another, even more wicked one arrives to take his place.

68. Impure thoughts often take root and extend to many things; they cross great seas and do not shrink from traveling long distances, driven by a burning passion. But when they are somewhat purified, they become much more restrained than these (unbridled ones) and cannot spread widely to many things because of the weakness of their passion. That is why they move mostly within the bounds of what is natural, and, as the wise Solomon said, at certain times they mock (Prov. 7:12), gathering reeds for lawless idolatry (Exod. 5:12, 7), without touching the tares. Therefore, one must guard the heart with all diligence, so that it may be saved *“like a gazelle from a snare, and like a bird from a net”* (Prov. 6:5). For it is easier to purify an impure soul than to restore to health a soul that, having been purified, has once again become covered with wounds—due to the intensified barriers erected by the demon of sorrow, who constantly leaps into the pupils of the eyes and, even during prayer, exposes the idol of sinful passion.

69. Christ awakens the rational nature, which has been deadened by sin, to repentance through the contemplation of all ages (that is, the past, the present, and, above all, the future), while His Father resurrects this soul—which is then dying the death of Christ, the death of sin—through the knowledge of God. This is what the Apostle's words mean: *“If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him”* (2 Tim. 2:11).

70. When the mind casts off the old man and puts on the one who is of grace, then during prayer it will behold its own state, resembling a sapphire or the color of the sky—which in Holy Scripture is called the place of God, as the elders saw it on Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:10).

71. The mind will not perceive the place of God within itself unless it rises above all thoughts of the material and the created; nor will it rise above them unless it casts off the passions that bind it to sensory objects and give rise to thoughts about them. It will cast off these passions through virtues, and simple thoughts through spiritual contemplation; but it will set even these aside when that light appears to it which, during prayer, imprints the place of God.

2. Evagrius the Monk on the Active Life: One Hundred Chapters

1. Our holy and most experienced teacher said: A monk should be disposed within himself as if he were to die tomorrow, and yet treat his body as if he were to live many years. For, he says, this cuts off thoughts of despondency and makes the monk most zealous, while this keeps the body healthy and compels him to observe constant self-restraint.

2. I have learned that the demon of vanity, pursued by almost all the demons, shamelessly stands upon the corpses of those who pursue him and flaunts the greatness of his virtue before the monk⁶⁰.

3. One must discern the differences among demons and recognize their times. From our thoughts (and thoughts arise from deeds), we come to know which demons are rare but severe, which are constant but lighter, and which suddenly pounce and carry the mind away into blasphemy. We must also be vigilant so that, when

⁶⁰ Perhaps, after all the demons have been driven out and defeated, one stands upon the corpses of those they have defeated, and so on.

thoughts begin to shift their focus, before we depart from our usual state, we may manage to say something against them and discern who is present within them. For in this way, with God's help, we ourselves will succeed, and we will force them to fly away in sorrow, marveling at us.

4. When demons grow weary from battling the monks, they retreat a short distance to observe which virtue will be neglected during this interval; then, suddenly attacking from that side, they plunder the poor soul.

5. Evil demons sometimes call upon demons even more wicked than themselves for help, and, having devised a plan, begin to wage war against one another, united in a single purpose—the destruction of the soul.

6. May the demon who steals the mind away to blasphemy and to the most depraved imaginings—which I am ashamed even to put into writing—not confuse us or stifle our righteous zeal. God, the Knower of hearts, knows that even while living in the world, we did not succumb to such madness. This demon's aim is to force us to cease praying, so that when we stand before the Lord our God, we dare not lift our hands to Him against whom we have harbored such thoughts.

7. Signs of the passions at work in the soul include either a spoken word or a physical movement, by which our enemies discern whether we harbor their thoughts within us and are afflicted by their kind, or whether, having rejected them, we are concerned for our own salvation. God alone, who created us, knows all things and has no need of any visible signs to discern what is hidden in the heart.

8. Demons wage war against laypeople more through material things themselves, but against monks mostly through thoughts, because in the desert they have no material things. But since it is easier and quicker to sin in thought than in deed, the mental battle is more severe than the one waged through material things. The mind is something extremely swift and uncontrollable, prone to sinful imaginings.

9. We are not commanded to work ceaselessly, to stay awake (not to sleep), or to fast (not to eat), but we are commanded to pray unceasingly. For those ascetic practices aimed at healing the lustful part of the soul require the body in order to be active, and the body, without support, cannot endure ceaseless labor and deprivation. But prayer purifies and strengthens the mind for battle; the mind is created to pray even without this body and to wage war against demons in defense of all the powers of the soul.

10. When the demons waging war against the lustful part of the soul show us, in our sleep, encounters with acquaintances, feasts with relatives, a chorus of women, and other such things—the very things on which lust usually feeds—and we become carried away by them, it means that we are afflicted by this part of ourselves, and this passion is strong within us. But when they take possession of our irritable part, they force us (in our sleep) to walk along terrifyingly precipitous places, and they bring upon us armed men, or poisonous snakes and carnivorous beasts. If now (in a dream) we are terrified by those places and, pursued by beasts and people, take to flight, then we must take care of our irritable part and, invoking Christ the Lord during our waking hours, make use of the remedies indicated earlier.

11. Natural bodily movements in a dream, without shameful fantasies, indicate that the soul is, in a certain sense, healthy; whereas the interweaving of such fantasies is a sign that it is sick. Know, moreover, that the vision of indistinct faces points to the remnants of a long-standing passion, while the vision of distinct faces points to new wounds of the heart.

12. We shall determine the signs of dispassion by day through our thoughts, and by night through our dreams. We shall call dispassion the health of the soul, and self-control its nourishment, because it alone usually unites us with the holy powers, since union with the incorporeal is possible only when we are in harmony with them.

13. There are two peaceful states of the soul: one is the result of the depletion and drying up of natural juices, and the other occurs when demons withdraw. The first is accompanied by humility and contrition of heart—tears and boundless devotion to God—while the second is followed by vanity and pride, which take hold of the monk after the other demons have departed. Whoever keeps within the bounds of the first state will more readily recognize demonic attacks and schemes.

14. The demon of vanity is opposed to the demon of lust, and for both of them to attack the soul together is an impossibility, for one of them promises honor, while the other plunges one into dishonor. Therefore, when any one of them approaches and begins to trouble you, generate within yourself the thoughts of the demon opposed to it; and if you are able, as the saying goes, to drive out a wedge with a wedge, then know that you are close to the limits of dispassion, for your mind has proven strong enough to drive out demonic suggestions with human thoughts. But of course, to drive away a thought of vanity through humility,

or a thought of lust through chastity, would be a sign of the deepest dispassion. Try to act this way toward all demons that are opposed to one another. At the same time, you will discover which passion fills you most. However, ask God with all your strength to teach you and help you drive away your enemies in a second way.

15. The more a soul prospers, the stronger its adversaries become. I do not think that the same demons always remain with it. Those who keenly observe the temptations that assail them know this best, seeing that their usual dispassion is shaken more strongly than before by new demons, the successors of the former ones.

16. Perfect dispassion arises in the soul upon overcoming all the demons that oppose an active life; imperfect dispassion, however, is when the soul, by its own strength and without making concessions, still struggles against the demon attacking it.

17. The mind will not pass through, will not safely traverse that path of passions (trials), and will not enter the realm of the incorporeal unless it puts its inner self in order. This internal disorder will inevitably turn it back toward those from whom it originated.

18. Both virtues and vices blind the mind: in the case of the former, it fails to see vices; in the case of the latter, it fails to see virtues.

Sayings of the Holy Elders

1. It is necessary to inquire about the paths followed by the elders of old and to guide oneself along them. One can find much that they have said and done well. One of them says that constant dry fasting, practiced with love, quickly leads a monk to the haven of dispassion. He also freed a brother, who was troubled by dreams at night, from them by commanding him to visit the sick while fasting. For, he said in response to a question on this matter, nothing extinguishes the passions as effectively as charity.

2. One of the wise men of that time approached the righteous Anthony and said: “How do you endure, Father, such a life, deprived of the comfort that books provide?” He replied: “My book, O philosopher, is this created nature. It is always with me, and whenever I wish, I can read the words of God in it.”

3. Once, a chosen vessel, the Egyptian elder Macarius, asked me: “What is the reason that, when we hold a grudge against people, we disrupt the soul’s power of remembrance⁶¹, yet when we hold a grudge against demons, we suffer no harm?” When I, at a loss for an answer, asked him to explain this to me, he said: “It is because the former is contrary to nature (the irritable faculty), while the latter is in accordance with it.”

4. Once, during the intense midday heat, I came to the holy Father Macarius and, burning with thirst, asked him for a drink of water. But he said: “Be content with the shade, for many travelers and sailors at this time are deprived even of that.” Later, when I brought up the subject of self-restraint in connection with this incident, he said: “Believe me, my son, for twenty whole years I have not allowed myself to have my fill of bread, water, or sleep. I ate my bread by weight and drank water by measure, and, leaning against a wall, I would catch a little sleep.”

5. A monk⁶² received news of his father’s death, but he said to the one who brought him the news: “Stop blaspheming, for my Father is immortal.”

6. A brother once asked an elder if he should eat with his mother and sisters when he returned home. The elder replied, “Do not eat with a woman.”

7. One brother had only the Gospel, but later he sold even that, gave the money to feed the hungry, and uttered these memorable words: “I have sold the very word that tells me, ‘Sell your possessions and give to the poor’ (Matt. 19:21).”

8. Near Alexandria, at the northernmost part of the bay called Mary’s Bay, there is an island where a monk lived who was most experienced in spiritual matters. He said that whatever monks do, they do for five reasons: for God’s sake, out of natural necessity, out of custom, out of need, and for the sake of manual labor. He also said that virtue is essentially one, but it takes on different forms in the powers of the soul, just as sunlight has no shape of its own but usually takes the shape of the openings through which it passes.

9. Another monk said: “I deprive myself of pleasures in order to cut off the causes of anger. For I know that anger always stirs up strife over pleasures, disturbing the mind and driving away knowledge.” One of the elders said that love does not know how to preserve stores of bread or money. He also said: “I do not know of any instance where the demons have deceived me twice in the same matter.”

⁶¹ In the “Valuable Sayings”: we lose our remembrance of God.

⁶² According to Palladius—Evagrius himself. But Evagrius here quotes the sayings of earlier elders, not his own.

10. It is impossible to love all the brothers equally, but one can treat everyone impartially, being free from ill will and hatred. After God, we must love most of all the priests, who purify us through the Holy Mysteries and pray for us; as for our elders, we must honor them as angels. But for now, let this be said to you by me, beloved brother Anatoly: this is how much we have found and gathered from the branches of our vine, ripening by the grace of the Holy Spirit. If, however, the sun of righteousness continues to shine upon us and the grape becomes fully ripe, then we will drink from it the wine *that “gladdens the heart of man”* (Ps. 103: 15), through the prayers and supplications of the righteous Gregory, who planted me, and of the venerable Fathers here who nourish me, and by the power of Christ Jesus our Lord, who restores me, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

3. The monastic treatise by Evagrius, in which he teaches how one ought to strive and observe silence

1. It is written in Jeremiah: *“And you shall not take a wife for yourself in this place. For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters born in this place: they shall die of a painful death”* (16:1, etc.). This passage points to the same truth that the Apostle speaks of: *“A married man is concerned with worldly matters, how to please his wife... And a married woman is concerned with worldly matters, how to please her husband”* (1 Cor. 7:33–34), if we understand that the Prophet is not speaking only of those sons and daughters who are born of marital life when he says: *“They will perish by a painful death,”* but also of the sons and daughters born in the heart—that is, of carnal thoughts and desires—since they, too, die in the painful, feeble, and enfeebled reasoning of this world and do not attain heavenly and eternal life. *“But the unmarried,”* it says, *“is concerned with the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord”* (1 Cor. 7:32), and always produces evergreen and immortal fruits of heavenly life.

2. Such is the monk, and such a monk ought to be—that is, that by separating himself from a wife, he may not father sons or daughters in the aforementioned place; and not only that, but that he may also be a soldier of Christ, not attached to material things, free from cares, and alien to the thoughts and deeds of this restless world, as the Apostle says: *“No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but strives to please his commanding officer”* (2 Tim. 2:4). In these things, above all, let the monk abide, having left behind all the things of this world and striving for the beautiful and good trophies (signs of victory) of silence. How beautiful and good is the struggle in silence—how truly beautiful and good! *“His yoke is easy and His burden is light”* (Matt. 11:30): sweet is the life, pleasant is the deed.

3. Do you wish, my beloved, to truly embrace the life of solitude and strive for the rewards of silence? Leave behind worldly cares, with their principles and powers; that is, be as if you were immaterial, dispassionate, and free from all desire, so that, being free from the restless vicissitudes associated with them, you may remain in silence. For if anyone does not detach himself from all this, he will not be able to lead this kind of life properly. Choose food that is simple, easily obtained, and requires little effort to prepare, rather than food that is varied and leads to distraction. If a thought of sumptuous dishes comes to you—as if out of a love of novelty—dismiss it, paying it no heed whatsoever. For through this the enemy will tempt you, tempting you to turn you away from silence. You have the Lord Jesus in the person of Martha, rebuking the soul that is anxious about these things and saying, *“You are anxious and troubled about many things. “One thing is needed”* (Luke 10:41)—namely, to listen to the word of God; the rest will follow without difficulty. That is why He immediately adds: *“But Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her”* (42). You also have the example of the widow of Zarephath, who showed hospitality to the Prophet (1 Kings 17:10). Even if you had only a single loaf of bread and some water, you could still properly perform the act of hospitality with them and receive a reward for it. But even if you lacked these things, simply welcome the traveler with a willing heart and speak a kind word to him; in this way, you can still earn the reward for hospitality. For it is said: *“A kind word is better than a gift”* (Sirach 18:16–17).

4. You must also reflect on almsgiving. Do not desire to have wealth in order to distribute it to the poor. For this, too, is a snare of the evil one, who often comes in the guise of vanity and plunges the mind into restless (busy) pursuits. In the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you have the widow who has received a good testimony, who with two mites surpassed the will and power (the worth of the offerings) of the rich. *“For,”* said the Lord, *“they all gave out of their abundance into the treasury, but she out of her poverty put in all she had”* (Luke 21:4). As for clothing, do not desire to have extra garments; provide for yourself only those that are sufficient to meet this bodily need. *“Cast your burden upon the Lord”* (Ps. 54: 23), and He will provide for you. *“For He cares for us,”* says the Word of God (1 Pet. 5: 7). If you are in need of food or clothing, do

not be ashamed to accept them if others offer them to you . For this is a form of pride. Even if you yourself have an abundance of these things, give to those who do not have them. God wants His children (or servants) to manage their household affairs (or finances) in this way. That is why the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, speaks of those who suffer want in their necessities: “*Your abundance in these things is their lack, and their abundance will be your lack, so that there may be equality, as it is written: ‘He who has much has not increased, and he who has little has not decreased’*” (2 Cor. 8:14–15). Therefore, having what you need for the present, do not worry about the future—about tomorrow, for example, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year. When tomorrow comes, that time itself will provide you with what you need, if you seek first the kingdom of heaven and God’s righteousness. For the Lord says: “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*” (Matt. 6:33).

5. Do not take in a young servant, lest the enemy use him to set up some temptation and disturb your mind with concerns about fine food, for then you will no longer be able to care for yourself alone. Let this thought (of having a young disciple) come to you as a means of physical comfort (as if it were necessary), but seek what is better—that is, spiritual peace—for spiritual peace is by far better than physical comfort. Even if the thought suggests that this must be done for the boy’s benefit, do not believe it: for this is not our concern, but that of the other holy fathers living in the monastery. Be concerned only with your own benefit, observing the rule of the silent life as it should be. Do not love to live with people who are worldly and restless. Either live alone, or with brothers who are detached from worldly things and of one mind with you. One who lives with people who are attached to worldly things and full of cares will, of course, become involved in their cares and begin to engage in worldly customs, empty talk, and all other evil deeds—anger, sorrow, unbridled attachment to worldly things, fear, and turmoil. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by parental concerns and family ties. Refrain from frequent visits with them, lest they rob you of your cell’s silence and drag you into their usual troubles. “*Leave,*” says the Lord, “*the dead to bury their own dead; but you, come after Me*” (Matt. 8:22). Even if the cell in which you live is full of noise, flee; do not spare it either, lest you be led astray by your love for it. Thus, do everything and strive for everything so that you may attain silence, freeing yourself from all things, and focus on one thing alone: how to abide in God’s will and successfully wage war against the unseen forces.

6. If it is impossible for you to maintain true silence in your own country, resolve to find silence in a foreign land and direct all your thoughts toward this end. Be like a shrewd merchant, trying everything to secure true silence for yourself and accepting whatever is necessary and beneficial for that purpose. Moreover, I tell you, love the life of a pilgrim, for it frees you from the hardships that are inevitable in your own country, and it alone allows you to taste all the blessings of the silent life. Avoid staying in the city and sit patiently in the wilderness. “*For,*” says Saint David, “*I fled far away and took up residence in the wilderness*” (Ps. 54:8). If possible, do not go into the city at all; for there you will see nothing wholesome, nothing useful, and nothing conducive to the ascetic life you have chosen. “*I have seen,*” says the same saint again, “*iniquity and strife in the city*” (Ps. 54:10). Seek out secluded and undisturbed places, and do not be afraid to settle there. Even if you see demonic apparitions there, do not be frightened and do not flee from this field of labor, which is our salvation. Endure without fear, and you will behold the greatness of God (Exod. 14:13), His intercession, His protection, and every other sign of salvation. “*I wait,*” says that blessed man, “*for God to save me from faintheartedness and from the storm*” (Ps. 54:9). Do not let the desire to go out for entertainment overcome your resolve (to live in silence). For such wandering, driven by lust, corrupts a mind that is free from malice (1 Thess. 4:12). Many temptations arise from this. Fear falling into sin and remain steadfast in your cell.

7. If you have friends, avoid meeting with them frequently. Seeing them at long intervals will be more beneficial both for you and for them. But if you feel that they are causing you any harm, do not go near them at all. You should have friends who are beneficial to you and who support your way of life. Avoid meeting with deceitful and unrighteous people; do not live with any of them, and reject their wicked proposals: for they do not serve God nor live for His sake. Let your friends be peace-loving men, spiritual brothers, and holy fathers. For the Lord called such people by this name, saying: “*My mother, and my brothers, and my sisters are those who do the will of my Father in heaven*” (Matt. 12:50, Mark 3:35). Do not associate with the restless and the fussy, and do not go to their meals, lest they draw you into their deceptions and lead you away from the discipline and art of the silent life; for they have such a passion (to entice). Do not incline your ear to their words, and do not accept the designs of their hearts. For they are truly harmful. Let your soul rest with the faithful of the earth, and let your heart ache in sympathy with their weeping, following the example of David,

who says : “*My eyes are on the faithful of the earth, that they may dwell with me*” (Ps. 100: 6). If anyone walking in the way of God’s love comes to you and invites you to partake of bread and salt, and you wish to go, go; but return quickly to your cell. If possible, never spend the night outside your cell, so that the grace of silence may always remain with you and you may perform the cell ministry you have established without hindrance.

8. Do not indulge your craving for fine foods, nor be enticed by the allure of luxurious pleasures; for, as the Apostle says, “*she who lives in luxury is already dead*” (1 Tim. 5:6). Do not fill your stomach with food from others, lest you become addicted to it and get into the habit of frequently dining out. For it is said: “*Do not be enticed by the fullness of the stomach*” (Prov. 24:15). If you find that you are often called out of your cell, refuse, for being outside the cell too often is harmful. It robs you of grace, clouds your thoughts, and extinguishes the warm desire (to dwell in silence with God). Consider wine: if it stands undisturbed in one place for a long time, it settles well, becoming clear and fragrant; but if it is moved from place to place, it becomes cloudy, dark, and unpleasant to the taste because of the sediment and yeast that have risen to the surface. Comparing yourself to it, try to be like it in the first case: cut off contact with many people, so that your mind is not scattered by thoughts and your silence is not disturbed. Take up some kind of craft and devote yourself to it, if possible, day and night, so that not only will you not be a burden to anyone, but you will also be able to provide for others, as St. Paul the Apostle commands (2 Thess. 3:12, Eph. 4:28). In this way, you will overcome the demon of despondency and cut off all other enemy temptations. For the spirit of despondency usually attacks the idle person, of whom the Wise One says that he “*lives in idleness*” (Prov. 13:4). You cannot avoid sin in giving and receiving. Therefore, whether you sell or buy, accept a small loss compared to the true value, so that, in seeking the true value, you do not get carried away by the schemes of the greedy and fall into deeds harmful to the soul—greed, perjury, breaking your word, and thereby not dishonor or bring shame upon the honorable dignity of our calling. Keeping this in mind, conduct yourself with caution in your giving and receiving⁶³. If, however, you wish to choose the better path—and this is possible for you—entrust the care of yourself to another, a faithful person, so that, having thus become serene (free from vexing cares, at peace within yourself), you may then live a good and joyful life, filled with hope.

9. The rule of silence obliges you to such wholesome deeds. I will now suggest to you other things that must also be observed within it. Listen to me, then, and put into practice what I command you. Sitting in your cell, recall the day of your death; imagine the lifelessness of your body at that time; picture the extreme state (in which your soul will find itself); and be deeply moved by this. In this way, you will strengthen within yourself a contempt for the vanity that disturbs the world, kindle love for the humble lot you have chosen for yourself, and yearn steadfastly and unceasingly to remain in your silence. Recall, too, the present condition of the souls in hell. Consider what it is like for them there—in what bitter silence, in what agonizing groans, in what fear and dread as they await the Last Judgment—what their ceaseless mental anguish is like, and what their boundless tears are like. Remember also the Day of Resurrection and the standing before God. Imagine that dreadful and terrifying judgment; bring to mind what awaits sinners there—shame before the face of God and His Christ, before the Angels, archangels, the powers, and before all people; picture all the torments—eternal fire, the worm that never sleeps, Tartarus, darkness—and above all this, the gnashing of teeth, fears, and agonizing sufferings. Also bring to mind the blessings reserved for the righteous: the bold communion with God the Father and His Christ, with the angels, archangels, powers, and the entire host of saints; the kingdom with its treasures, joy, and delight. Bring both of these to mind. And for the fate of sinners, groan and weep; clothe yourself in the garment of lamentation, fearing as it were that you yourself might be among them; but for the blessings prepared for the righteous, rejoice, exult, and be glad. Strive to be made worthy of these (blessings) and to avoid those (torments). See to it, then, that you never forget this—whether you are in your cell or elsewhere—and do not let this thought slip from your mind, so that, at least through this, you may avoid impure and destructive thoughts.

10. Let your fasting be as much as your strength allows before the Lord. It will purify your sins and transgressions, make your soul dignified and noble, sanctify your mind, drive away demons, and bring you closer to God. Once you have eaten once a day, do not desire to eat again, so as not to have too many needs and not to disturb your mind. From this, you will always have something to use for acts of charity, and your bodily passions will be put to death. But if the brothers happen to be present and you need to eat a second or

⁶³ “Giving and taking”—a phrase expressing all worldly transactions and all relationships with others. In giving and receiving lies the same as in your dealings and transactions with others.

third time, do not frown or be disheartened, but rather rejoice that you were able to serve the brothers' needs. For when you eat a second or third time, give thanks to God that you have fulfilled the law of love, and that because of this, God Himself will be the Guardian of your life. It happens that sometimes illness strikes, and physical weakness requires you to eat twice, three times, or even many times; do not be troubled by such thoughts. For there is no need to strictly observe the ascetic practices of our life even during illness, but in some cases to make concessions so that you may recover your health as quickly as possible and resume the same ascetic labors. As for which foods to abstain from, the Word of God has not forbidden eating anything, but has declared: *"I have given you everything, like the green plants. Eat, and do not be in doubt"* (Gen. 9:3; 1 Cor. 10:25, 27). And again: *"What goes into the mouth does not defile a person"* (Matt. 15:11). Therefore, abstaining from certain foods should always be a matter of our own free will and a voluntary act of the soul.

11. Endure sleeping on the bare ground, vigils, and all other hardships willingly, looking forward to the glory that is to be revealed to you with all the saints. *"For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us,"* says the Apostle (Rom. 8:18). When you begin to lose heart, pray as it is written (James 5:13), but pray with fear and trembling, with a sorrowful heart, soberly and alertly. We must pray in this way, especially for the sake of our malicious and cunning invisible enemies, who are always attempting to hinder us in this endeavor. When they see us standing in prayer, they swiftly approach us and plant in our minds things we should not recall or think about during prayer, in order to take our minds captive and render our supplications and prayers fruitless, vain, and useless during the time of prayer. For prayer, supplication, and petition are vain and useless when, as has been said, they are not offered with fear and trembling, nor with sobriety and alertness. If, when approaching a king or any person, everyone presents their petition with fear and trembling and with full attention, should we not all the more stand before God, the Lord of all, and Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, in the same manner and offer our prayers and supplications to Him in the same way? To our God be glory forever and ever. Amen.

4. Evagrius the Monk's 33 Chapters on Analogies, or Similes

- 1.** Jaundice is an evil condition of the soul in which it views God and all creation incorrectly.
- 2.** Turning backward is a vice of the rational nature, by which it becomes unyielding toward virtue and the knowledge of God.
- 3.** Gangrene is the inflammation and agitation of anger that afflicts the rational part of the soul.
- 4.** Blindness is the ignorance of the mind, which makes no effort toward either the active virtues or the knowledge of reality.
- 5.** Paralysis is the immobility or sluggishness of the rational soul in regard to active virtues.
- 6.** Discharge is the laxity of the rational soul due to negligence, in which it habitually rejects the words of spiritual instruction.
- 7.** Numbness is the de-sensitization of the rational soul, by which it rejects the virtues through which Christ is made present within us.
- 8.** Leprosy is the unbelief of the rational soul, in which it does not come to faith, even while seemingly perceiving the truth of the words.
- 9.** Fainting is the rational soul's tendency to turn back to evil after having made progress in virtue and the knowledge of God.
- 10.** Concussion is an evil state of the rational soul, in which it clings to virtues not for the sake of goodness itself.
- 11.** A runny nose is the loss of the virtue through which the fragrance of Christ was perceived.
- 12.** Deafness is the hardening of the rational soul, by which it shuns spiritual instruction.
- 13.** A cataract is a fall from the state of spiritual contemplation, or the adoption of a false view of reality.
- 14.** Stuttering is an illness of the rational soul, in which, led astray by chance occurrences, it is unable to give thanks to God in all things.
- 15.** Lameness is the inability of the rational soul to practice true virtue.
- 16.** Hydrops is the irrational straying of the soul from the path, when, with virtues silenced, evil and ignorance reign within it.
- 17.** The ant is a hardworking creature that prepares food for the future in this life.

18. The Hirogrills (a species of pig) are unclean pagans who have accepted the commandments of Christ our Savior.

19. Locusts are intelligent souls whom death does not touch and who feed on seeds (perhaps: unafraid of death, they enjoy earthly blessings).

20. The Askalavotis (a species of lizard that runs freely along walls and ceilings) is a practical mind which, relying on virtues, soars in the knowledge of the heavenly powers.

21. Skimen of the lions (a lion cub) is a dispassionate person who has reigned over the beasts (passions) that once dwelt within him.

22. Kochet is a spiritual person, filled with knowledge, who proclaims to other souls the day that comes from the wise sun.

23. The deer is an active man who rightly governs his disordered thoughts.

24. The leech is an impure force that sucks the blood of righteousness from rational souls.

25. Hell is the darkness of ignorance that envelops a rational being after it has lost the vision of God.

26. A wife is folly that plunges rational souls into impurity.

27. The earth is an evil state, composed of wickedness and lawlessness.

28. Fire is the evil that destroys God's virtues within rational beings.

29. Water is false knowledge that extinguishes true knowledge.

30. A mocking eye is an impure force that mocks God's knowledge and dishonors God's wisdom in all that exists.

31. Crows are holy forces that destroy evil.

32. Abysses are rational souls, ravaged by ignorance and evil.

33. Eaglets are holy forces entrusted with striking down impure demons.

5. His Sayings on the Spiritual Life, in Alphabetical Order

1. It is inappropriate for one who seeks honors to pursue labors for which one is honored.

2. Do you wish to know God? Know yourself first.

3. A true friend is one who hastens to share joyful news.

4. It is completely incongruous to think highly of oneself while performing base deeds.

5. In every case, conceit hinders self-knowledge.

6. The demon of an unwise life is Hegemon (the ruler).

7. The nobility of the soul is revealed in its good disposition.

8. A godly person is one who does not contradict themselves (lives in accordance with the demands of a rational nature).

9. The temple of God is a blameless person.

10. The worst form of greed is a dissolute life.

11. Say what ought to be said and when it ought to be said. And you will not hear what ought not to be said.

12. The best possession is a faithful friend.

13. The sickness of the soul is a vain disposition.

14. The stranger and the poor are God's collyrium (Rev. 3:18). "*Anoint your eyes with collyrium, that you may see.*" Collyrium is mercy toward those in need.

15. Whoever welcomes them will soon see clearly.

16. It is good to do charity toward all, but especially toward those who cannot repay you.

17. A truthful orator is a glass of cold water.

18. Chastity and meekness of soul are like a cherub.

19. Honor in old age is proof of diligence before old age.

20. Prudence in youth is the guarantee of honor in old age.

21. The upper chamber (mezzanine) of the soul is true contemplation.

22. If you love what you shouldn't, you will not love what you should.

23. It is better to accept counterfeit gold than a (counterfeit) friend.

24. A soul pure before God is God Himself.

25. Woe to the self-centered, who hates everyone!

6. Other Sayings by the Same Author

1. The beginning of love is “ypolefis doxes”—the mutual bestowal of honor (or a favorable opinion of one another, or the recognition of the other’s noble virtues).
2. It is good to grow rich in meekness and love.
3. A proud thought—a breath of virtue.
4. The path is made smooth by charity.
5. An unjust judge has a defiled conscience.
6. It is shameful to be a slave to carnal passions.
7. If you want to be free from sorrow, strive to please God.
8. God cares for those who take good care of themselves.
9. A chaste heart is a refuge for contemplation.
10. If you want to know who you are, do not look at who you were, but at how you were created in the beginning.
11. A vain soul is a dry pit.
12. A proud soul is a den of robbers; it does not tolerate the voice of instruction.
13. The greatest error of a true man is not to know the Scriptures.
14. If you fear God, learn through tears.
15. The humility of the soul is an indestructible weapon.
16. A virtuous man is a tree of paradise.
17. Jesus Christ is the tree of life. Use Him as you should, and you will never die.
18. Give alms to the truly poor, and you will taste Christ.
19. To partake of the Body of Christ is true strength.
20. If you love Christ, do not forget to keep His commandments.
21. For this is how one knows who, after God, is a doer of good.
22. A friend in God pours out honey and milk in words of truth.
23. A careless soul will not have such a friend.
24. A pleasure-seeking mind is a cruel tyrant.
25. To keep the truth to oneself is like burying gold in the ground.
26. He who fears God does everything according to God.

7. On the Eight Thoughts, to Anatolius

1. There are eight principal thoughts from which all other thoughts arise. The first is gluttony, followed by fornication; the third is greed, the fourth is sorrow, the fifth is anger, the sixth is despondency, the seventh is vanity, and the eighth is pride. Whether these thoughts trouble the soul or not does not depend on us, but whether they remain within us for a long time or not, whether they set the passions in motion or not—that depends on us.

2. The thought of gluttony urges the monk to abandon his ascetic practice as soon as possible, presenting him with images of illnesses of the stomach, liver, or spleen; dropsy or some other prolonged illness; a scarcity of medical supplies; and a lack of doctors. At the same time, it brings to mind certain brothers who had indeed suffered from such illnesses. Sometimes the enemy even inspires the afflicted brothers themselves to go to the fasting monks and tell them what happened to them, adding that it was caused by overly strict abstinence.

3. The demon of fornication stirs up carnal lust and violently attacks those who practice abstinence, so that they may cease their abstinence, thinking that it brings them no benefit. Defiling the soul, he compels it to engage in such acts and makes it seem as though it is speaking and hearing certain words, as if the act itself were taking place before its eyes.

4. Greed implies advanced old age, inability to work with one’s hands, hunger, illness, the sorrow of poverty, and the hardship of having to accept from others what is necessary for bodily needs.

5. Sorrow sometimes arises from the deprivation of what is desirable, and sometimes accompanies anger. When it arises from the deprivation of what is desirable, it occurs as follows: certain thoughts come to mind in advance and remind the soul of home, loved ones, and its former way of life. When they see that she does not resist but follows them and mentally indulges in those pleasures, then, seizing her, they plunge her into sorrow—both because those objects do not exist and because, according to the established order of life,

they cannot possibly exist. And the poor soul—the more passionately she had given herself over to her initial thoughts, the more she is struck and crushed by the second.

6. Anger is the swiftest of passions. It springs into action and flares up against the one who has wronged, or who seems to have wronged. It embitters the soul more and more; especially during prayer, it seizes the mind, vividly presenting the face of the one who has caused sorrow. It happens that sometimes, having taken root in the soul and turned into enmity, it causes nighttime anxieties, physical torment, the terrors of death, and attacks by venomous reptiles and beasts. These four phenomena, which arise from the formation of enmity, are accompanied by many thoughts, as any observer will find.

7. The demon of despondency, also called the “midday demon” (Ps. 90:6), is the heaviest of all demons. It attacks the monk around the fourth hour (which is ten in the morning by our reckoning) and torments his soul until the eighth hour (two in the afternoon), and at first compels him to observe with displeasure that the sun moves slowly, or does not move at all, and that the day seems to have become fifty hours long. Then he compels him to glance out the window frequently, or even to leave his cell—to look at the sun to see how much time remains until nine o’clock—and in doing so, he does not fail to prompt him to look here and there to see if any of the brothers are present. At the same time, he stirs up resentment in him toward the place, toward the very way of life, and toward his manual labor, adding that love among the brothers has dried up and there is no one to comfort him. If, in those days, someone had offended the monk, the demon brings this to mind as well to increase his resentment. Then it leads him to desire other places where it is easier to find what is necessary to meet his needs by taking up a trade that is less difficult but more profitable. To this it adds that pleasing the Lord does not depend on one’s location; God can be worshiped anywhere. It links this to memories of family and former contentment, and here it prophesies a long life, paints a picture of the hardships of asceticism, and employs all manner of tricks so that the monk will finally leave his cell and flee from the path of asceticism. Another demon does not immediately follow this one. But whoever fights and prevails will, after the struggle, experience a certain state of peace, and the soul will be filled with inexpressible joy.

8. The thought of vanity is the most subtle. It appears before those who live virtuously and begins to proclaim their feats and gather praise for them from people, depicting how the cast-out demons scream, how women are healed, how crowds of people jostle to touch his garments; finally, it predicts the priesthood for him, leads him to the doors of those seeking him, who, upon his refusal, carry him away bound against his will—and thus, having stirred up empty hopes within him, departs, leaving him to be tempted further either by the demon of pride or by the demon of sorrow, who immediately instills in him thoughts contrary to those hopes. It happens that he hands this man—who until recently was a venerable and holy priest—over to the demon of fornication.

9. The demon of pride is the cause of the soul’s most disastrous downfall. He instills in it the refusal to acknowledge God as its Helper, but rather to attribute its own righteousness to itself, and to look down on its brothers as ignorant, because not everyone thinks the same way about it. Pride is followed by anger and sorrow, and the ultimate evil—mental delirium and madness, and the vision of many demons in the air.

8. His thoughts on this subject, combined with the treatise on the eight thoughts

1. There are five practices through which God’s favor is obtained. The first is pure prayer; the second is singing psalms; the third is reading the Holy Scriptures; the fourth is reflecting with contrition on one’s sins, on death, and on the Last Judgment; the fifth is manual labor.

2. If you wish to serve God in the flesh, just as the incorporeal beings do, strive to keep prayer constantly hidden in your heart. For in this way, even before death, your soul will draw near to the likeness of the angels.

3. Just as our body, when separated from the soul, becomes dead and foul-smelling, so too is the soul in which prayer does not dwell dead and foul-smelling. But that the absence of prayer must be considered more bitter than any death is clearly taught to us by the Prophet Daniel, who was ready rather to die than to deprive himself of prayer at any hour. One must remember God more often than one breathes.

4. Accompany every inspiration with a sober invocation of the name of Jesus and a humble meditation on death. Both of these actions bring great benefit to the soul.

5. Do you wish to be known by God? Make sure that you are as little known to people as possible. If you always remember that God is the Witness of everything you do, in soul and body, then you will not sin in any matter, and you will have God as your Companion.

6. Nothing makes a person more like God than doing good deeds for others. But when performing acts of kindness, one must be careful in every way not to turn them into a means of self-promotion.

7. Ultimately, what will make you worthy of God is if you do nothing unworthy of Him.

8. You will glorify God most beautifully when, through virtue, you imprint His likeness upon your soul.

9. People become better when they draw closer to God.

10. A wise person who honors and worships God is recognized by Him. Therefore, he is not the least bit troubled if he remains unknown to all people. The task of prudence is to stir up that part of the soul where anger resides to wage an inner battle. The task of wisdom is to stir the mind to constant, attentive vigilance. The task of truth is to direct that part in which desire resides solely toward virtue and toward God. Finally, the task of courage is to govern the five senses and not allow them to defile our inner self—that is, the spirit—or our outer self—that is, the body.

11. The soul is a living, simple, incorporeal substance, invisible to the physical eye, as well as immortal and endowed with intellect and reason. Just as the eye is to the body, so is the intellect to the soul.

12. Among the rational creatures that exist under heaven—some fight, others defend, and still others attack. People fight, the angels of God defend, and the unclean forces attack. But it is not because of any lack on the part of those who defend, nor because of any excess of strength in those who attack, but because of the carelessness of those who struggle that the knowledge of divine things and of God Himself does not take root within us.

13. Evil is not, in itself, a substance, but rather the absence of good: just as darkness is nothing other than the absence of light.

14. Simplicity is not very cautious or prudent, and those who are free and safe from evil do not suspect it.

15. In truth, debauchery is senseless, and one can think of nothing that might prompt dissolute people to come to their senses.

16. Pure and blessed souls are remarkably perceptive; they immediately recognize the devil and drive him away, even though he is otherwise very cunning and extremely malicious in his attacks.

17. Nothing pleases God more than self-denial of the flesh.

18. One of the Holy Fathers said that whoever cannot embrace the strict and arduous monastic life may attain salvation by other means. If they have faith in the monks, comfort them, and provide for their needs, then this, among other things, will be one of the most important deeds leading to their salvation.

19. Spend the night in prayerful labor, and your soul will soon find comfort.

20. Engage in reading with a calm spirit, so that your mind may be constantly drawn to the contemplation of God's wondrous works, as if lifted up by a hand reaching out to it.

21. Sleeping during the day indicates either a physical illness, or despondency of the soul, or its carelessness, or inexperience.

22. Every soul, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and through its own labor and diligence, can gather and combine within itself the following qualities: speech with wisdom (perhaps eloquence combined with intellectual cultivation), action with contemplation, virtue with knowledge, faith with understanding free from all forgetfulness—and in such a way that none of these qualities is greater or lesser than the others. For then it is united with the true and good God, and with Him alone.

23. There are eight thoughts from which every sin arises: for those who lead a solitary life—thoughts of despondency, vanity, pride, stinginess, and sorrow; and for those who live under the authority of others (in monastic communities)—gluttony, anger, and fornication.

9. Instructions to the Brethren Living in Monasteries and Hospices

1. Heirs of God, listen to the word of God! Co-heirs of Christ, heed the commandments of Christ!

2. Faith is the beginning of love, and the end of love is the knowledge of God.

3. The fear of God preserves the soul, while sobriety strengthens it.

4. A man's patience gives birth to hope, and good hope will glorify him.

5. Whoever keeps his flesh in strict submission will attain dispassion; whoever indulges it will suffer because of it.
6. The spirit of fornication dwells in intemperate bodies, while the spirit of pure modesty dwells in the souls of the chaste.
7. Solitude with love purifies the heart, but withdrawal from others with anger disturbs it.
8. It is better to be among a thousand with love than to hide alone in caves with hatred.
9. Whoever harbors resentment in his soul is like one who hides fire in chaff.
10. Do not give your body too much food, and you will not see evil dreams, for just as water extinguishes fire, so does hunger extinguish evil dreams.
11. A hot-tempered man is fearful, but a gentle man is unafraid.
12. A strong wind drives away the clouds, and a grudge drives away good feelings from the soul.
13. Whoever prays for his enemies will not remember evil, and whoever guards his tongue will not insult his neighbor.
14. If your brother offends you, invite him into your home; do not be too lazy to visit him; share your bread with him; and by doing this, you will free your soul (from rebellion), and you will have no stumbling block during prayer.
15. A rich man does not gain wisdom, nor can a camel pass through the eye of a needle, but nothing is impossible for God.
16. Whoever loves money will not see wisdom, and whoever hoards it will be blinded (by ignorance).
17. The Lord dwells in the tents of the humble, but in the homes of the proud, the curse will multiply.
18. Whoever transgresses God's law dishonors Him; whoever keeps it glorifies his Creator.
19. The souls of the righteous are led away by angels, but the souls of the wicked are taken by demons.
20. Where sin enters, there also enters ignorance; but the hearts of the righteous are filled with knowledge.
21. Better is poverty with knowledge than wealth with ignorance.
22. The greatest adornment of the head is a crown; the greatest adornment of the heart is the knowledge of God.
23. Whoever is merciful to the poor uproots anger, and whoever feeds them will be filled with blessings.
24. Wisdom rests in a meek heart, and the seat of equanimity is a virtuous soul.
25. Whoever prays often will avoid temptation, but the heart of the careless will be troubled by thoughts.
26. Do not indulge in wine, lest the flesh entice you.
27. Do not feed your flesh to excess, and evil thoughts will diminish within you.
28. Do not say, "Today is a feast (Passover); I will drink wine," or "Tomorrow is Pentecost; we will eat meat." For monks, there is no feast to fill the belly.
29. Christ's Passover is the transition from sin (to virtue and repentance), while Pentecost is the resurrection of the soul.
30. The Lord's feast is the forgetting of evil; but those who remember evil will be overcome by weeping.
31. The feast of God is true knowledge; but whoever listens to lies and delusion will die a wretched death.
32. Fasting with a pure heart is better than satiety in the impurity of the soul.
33. Whoever eradicates evil thoughts from his heart is like one who smashes infants against a rock.
34. A monk who loves sleep will fall into every kind of evil, but one who loves vigil will soar like a bird.
35. During your vigils, do not give in to idle talk, and do not reject the words of the spiritual, for God observes your heart and will not acquit you of your sin.
36. Long sleep brings temptation, but vigil drives them away.
37. Excessive sleep coarsens the heart, but watchfulness sharpens the mind.
38. Just as fire melts wax, so does good vigil melt away evil thoughts.
39. But it is better to sleep than to spend time in idle talk.
40. An angelic dream gladdens the heart, but a demonic one disturbs it.

41. Repentance and humility restore the soul, while almsgiving and meekness strengthen it.
42. Always remember your Heavenly Father, and never forget the Last Judgment, and your soul will not fall into sin.
43. If a spirit of despondency assails you, do not leave your cell, and do not turn away (or, in other words, do not leave) in times of sorrow; for just as silver is purified by rubbing, so will your heart become radiant if you stand firm.
44. The spirit of despondency wipes away tears, but the spirit of sorrow stifles prayer.
45. Just as you would not keep a scorpion in your bosom, so do not harbor evil thoughts in your heart.
46. Just as gold and silver are tested by fire, so is a monk's heart tested by temptation.
47. Whoever does not attain the glory he seeks becomes sorrowful, but whoever receives it becomes proud.
48. Do not let pride enter your heart, and do not say before God, "I am capable on my own"—lest the Lord forsake your soul and evil demons subdue it. Then your aerial enemies will overwhelm you, and the terrors of the night will overtake you.
49. A pure soul is a chosen vessel, but an impure one will be filled with sorrows.
50. A child cannot be weaned without milk, and the soul cannot rejoice without dispassion.
51. Detachment precedes love, and love precedes knowledge.
52. The fear of God gives birth to wisdom, and faith in Christ gives the fear of God.
53. A fiery arrow sets the soul ablaze, but a man of virtue extinguishes it.
54. Listen, monk, to the words of your father, and do not render his instruction futile. In this way, you will avoid evil thoughts, and evil demons will not overcome you.
55. A poor steward (in the monastery) disturbs the souls of the brothers, and whoever squanders the monastery's goods commits sacrilege.
56. Whoever speaks ill of his brother will be destroyed, and whoever despises the needy will not see the light.
57. Do not say, "I will stay today, but tomorrow I will leave (the monastery)," for you have not conceived this in wisdom.
58. A wandering monk invents false words, and (upon returning) he deceives his elder.
59. Whoever dresses in fine clothes and fills his belly harbors shameful thoughts and will not enter the company of the saints.
60. When you go to the village, do not approach women or engage in conversation with them; otherwise, like a fish that has swallowed a hook, your soul will be drawn after them.
61. A magnanimous monk will attain dispassion; but whoever grieves his brothers will be hated.
62. The Lord loves the meek monk, but drives the quarrelsome one away from Himself.
63. If a brother is sad, comfort him; if he is grieving, grieve with him: by doing this, you will gladden his heart and gather for yourself a great treasure in heaven.
64. Do not lend an ear to words spoken against your elder, and do not stir up the spirit of one who does not honor him against him, lest the Lord be angered by your deeds and blot you out of the book of life.
65. A lazy monk will suffer much harm, and if he persists in his ways, he will even cast off his monastic habit.
66. A double-tongued monk stirs up discord among the brothers, but a faithful one brings peace.
67. Whoever relies on his own strength will fall, but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
68. Do not give in to the fullness of your stomach, and you will not be overcome by sleep at night; in this way, you will soon become pure, and the Spirit of the Lord will descend upon you.
69. Singing psalms calms anger; and generosity drives away fear.
70. Whoever frequents feasts will see his light dim, and darkness will cover his soul.
71. Eat bread by weight and drink water by measure, and the spirit of debauchery will flee from you.
72. Do not set a trap for your brother, and do not rejoice at his fall, for the Lord sees your heart and will hold you accountable for this on the day of your death.
73. Whoever leads laypeople astray will not go unpunished, and whoever insults them dishonors his own name.
74. Whoever loves peace will taste its honeycomb, and whoever multiplies it will be filled with honey.

75. Honor God, and you will come to know the incorporeal ones; serve Him, and He will reveal to you the wisdom of the ages.

76. The flesh of Christ consists of active virtues: whoever partakes of them will become dispassionate.

77. The blood of Christ is the discernment of deeds; whoever drinks it will be enlightened by it.

78. The Lord's bosom is the knowledge of God: whoever rests upon it will become a theologian.

79. The one filled with knowledge and the doer of good have met; and in their midst is the Lord.

80. Do not forsake the faith of your baptism, nor destroy the spiritual seal, so that the Lord may abide with your soul and protect you in days of evil.

81. The words of heretics are messengers of death; whoever accepts them will destroy his soul.

82. And now, listen to me, my son: do not approach the doors of the unfaithful, and do not walk over their snares, lest you become entangled.

83. Turn your soul away from false knowledge: I have often spoken with them (those who are led astray) and examined their dark words, and I have found in them the venom of vipers. Whoever accepts them will perish, and whoever loves them will be filled with evil.

84. I have seen the wisdom of their fathers, yet I have not seen the light of truth in their words.

85. The ways of Providence are shrouded in darkness, and His destinies are beyond the grasp of the mind, but the virtuous man understands them.

10. His Instructions to Virgins

1. Love the Lord, and He will love you; serve Him, and He will enlighten your heart.

2. Honor your Mother (the abbess) as the Mother of the Lord, and do not insult the gray hair of the one who gave birth to you (in spirit).

3. Love your sisters as the daughters of your Mother, and do not stray from the path of peace.

4. Let the rising sun find a prayer book in your hands, and after the second hour, let your hands be occupied with needlework.

5. Pray unceasingly and remember Christ, who has reborn you.

6. Avoid gatherings of men, lest an idol remain in your soul and become a stumbling block to you during your prayer.

7. Since you have Christ as your Beloved, reject all men, and your life will not be open to reproach.

8. Cast away irritation and anger, and let no resentment take root in your heart.

9. Do not say, "Today I will feast, and tomorrow I will fast," for you do not know what the coming day will bring.

10. Eating meat is not good, and drinking wine is improper. Both are permitted only to the sick.

11. A restless maiden will not be saved, and she who lives in pleasure will not see her Bridegroom.

12. Do not say, "The servant girl has grieved me; I will repay her," for there is no servitude among the daughters of God.

13. Do not lend an ear to idle talk, and flee from the gossip of idle old women.

14. Do not look upon the feasts of drunkards, and do not attend worldly weddings; every maiden who does these things is unclean before the Lord.

15. Open your mouth to speak the word of God, and restrain yourself from speaking too much.

16. Humble yourself before God, and His right hand will exalt you.

17. Do not turn away from the poor in their time of need, and the oil in your lamp will not run out (when you need it).

18. Do everything for the Lord's sake and do not seek human glory; human glory is like the flower of the field, but the Lord's glory endures forever.

19. The Lord loves a gentle maiden, but a quarrelsome one is detestable to Him.

20. An obedient maiden will find favor, but a rebellious one is utterly foolish.

21. The Lord will destroy a grumbling maiden, but He will deliver the grateful one from death.

22. Laughter is shameful, and shamelessness (of the eyes) is reprehensible; anyone who is foolish will fall into them.

23. She who adorns herself with fine clothes loses even the modesty of her gaze.

24. Do not become too familiar with laypeople, lest they turn your heart away and render the counsel of the righteous futile.

25. Pray with tears at night, so that no one will realize you are praying, and you will find grace.
26. Pleasant walks and visits to others' homes disturb the state of the soul and shake the resolve of its will.
27. A faithful virgin is not fearful, but an unfaithful one fears even her own shadow.
28. She who despises a weak sister will be separated from Christ.
29. Do not say, "This is mine, and that is yours," for in Christ Jesus all things are shared.
30. Do not pry into how another lives, and do not rejoice in your sister's downfall.
31. Serve the needy virgins, and do not exalt yourself because of your high status.
32. In the church of God, do not let words escape your lips, and do not look down on anyone, for the Lord knows your heart and observes all your thoughts.
33. Drive every evil desire from yourself, and your enemies will not overcome you.
34. Sing in your heart, and do not utter the words of the psalms with your tongue alone.
35. Just as a raging fire is hard to extinguish, so the wounded soul of a maiden is scarcely healable.
36. Do not surrender your soul to evil thoughts, lest they defile your heart and drive pure prayer away from you.
37. Sorrow is heavy, and despondency is hard to bear, but tears to the Lord are stronger than they.
38. Hunger and thirst quell evil desires, while righteous vigilance purifies the mind.
39. Anger and irritation drive love away, while holding a grudge puts a stain on God's gifts.
40. She who secretly slanders her sister will remain outside the Bridegroom's wedding chamber; she will cry out at the door, but no one will hear her.
41. The lamp of the unmerciful maiden will go out, and she will not see the coming of her Bridegroom.
42. A glass that falls on a stone shatters into pieces; so a maiden who clings to a husband will not be innocent.
43. A meek married woman is better than a hot-tempered and angry maiden.
44. A woman who laughs and is carried away by her husband's words is like a person who has allowed her enemies to put a noose around her neck.
45. Just as a pearl in a golden setting is precious, so is virginity surrounded by honor.
46. Demonic songs accompanied by the harp relax the soul and undermine the firmness of its resolve; guard this above all else, lest you be found wanting.
47. Do not take pleasure in mockery, and do not join in with the gossipers, for the Lord will forsake them.
48. Do not condemn a sister who indulges in food, and do not boast in your own self-restraint, for you do not know what the Lord has planned for you, nor which of you will stand before His face.
49. She who laments that her eyes have grown dim and her flesh has withered will not find joy in self-denial.
50. Abstinence is hard, and purity is difficult to maintain, but there is nothing sweeter than the Heavenly Bridegroom.
51. I have seen men who corrupt virgins with their teachings and render their virginity futile.
52. But you, O virgin, listen to the teaching of the Church of God, and let no one else dissuade you.
53. God created heaven and earth and provides for them; there is no angel who cannot sin, and there is no demon that is evil by nature: God created both with free will.
54. Just as a human being consists of a mortal body and a rational soul, so our Lord was truly born as a sinless human being, truly ate, and was truly crucified; He was not a phantom in the eyes of men.
55. There will be a resurrection of the dead; this world will pass away, and we will receive spiritual bodies. The righteous will inherit the light, and the wicked will dwell in darkness.
56. The eyes of the virgin will behold God, and her ears will hear His word.
57. Virgin purity is pleasing to the Lord, and the pure virgin will receive a crown from the hands of her Bridegroom.
58. She will be given a wedding garment, and she will rejoice with the angels in heaven.
59. Her lamp will burn unceasingly, and the oil in her lamp will never run out; she will receive eternal riches and inherit the kingdom of God.
60. Remember Christ, who protects you, and do not forget the Consubstantial Trinity, to whom all worship is due.

11. On Various Sinful Thoughts, Chapter⁶⁴

1. Among the demons who oppose an active life, the first to take up arms are those entrusted with lusts or the cravings of gluttony, those who instill in us the love of money, and those who incite us to seek human glory. All the others, following behind them, take in turn those whom they have already wounded. For one cannot fall into the clutches of fornication unless one has first fallen from gluttony; one cannot be overcome by anger unless one stands and fights for food, money, or glory; one cannot escape the demon of sorrow unless one has suffered some loss in all this; nor can one avoid pride—that first offspring of the devil—unless one has uprooted “*the root of all evil—the love of money*” (1 Tim. 6: 10), for, in the words of the wise Solomon, “*Poverty humbles a man*” (Prov. 10:4), and, to put it briefly, a person cannot fall prey to any demon unless he has first been wounded by these primary ones. Why, then, did the devil present these three thoughts to the Savior: the first, when he asked that stones be turned into bread; the second, when he promised even the whole world if He, having fallen, would worship him; and the third, when he assured Him that if He obeyed him, He would be glorified by suffering no harm, having thrown Himself from such a height (from the church’s roof). But the Lord, rising above all this, commanded the devil to depart, thereby teaching us that we cannot drive the devil away unless we despise these three thoughts.

2. All demonic thoughts introduce images of sensory things into the soul, and the mind, having received their imprint, turns them over within itself. Consequently, by the subject of the thought, one can recognize which demon has approached us: for example, if the face of someone who has harmed me or dishonored me appears in my thoughts, this reveals that the demon of rancor has approached; if, on the other hand, money or fame comes to mind, one cannot fail to recognize, by this subject, who is troubling us; likewise, with other thoughts, by their subject you can determine who stands before you and instills them. I am not saying, however, that all memories of these things come from demons, because the mind itself, when a person sets it in motion, usually reproduces images of what has been; but only those memories come from demons that simultaneously arouse irritation or desire, which is unnatural. Because these forces are disturbed, the mind engages in mental fornication and quarrels, and is no longer able to hold within itself thoughts of God, its Lawgiver, since this radiance (i.e., undisturbed contemplation of God) appears in the sovereign mind only when thoughts that revolve around worldly matters during prayer are suppressed.

3. Chapter 63 on the Active Life, addressed to Anatolius.

4. On “*Dreams*.” It is worthy of investigation how demons imprint and reproduce images in our sovereign mind through sleep-induced visions. Something similar usually happens to the mind (even while awake) when it either sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, or perceives something from the outside through some other sense, and retains it in memory; and memory, setting in motion what it has received through the body, brings these images into the ruling mind. Thus, it seems to me that demons (in dreams) introduce images into the mind by setting memory in motion, because the sense organs are kept inactive by sleep at that time. But the question arises again: how do they set memory in motion? Is it through the passions? Yes, (if we consider passionate dreams), and this is evident from the fact that the pure and dispassionate do not experience anything of the sort. But there is also a simple (dispassionate) movement of memory, originating from ourselves or from the holy powers, through which (it seems that) we converse and dine with the saints. However, one must bear in mind that just as the soul perceives certain images through the body, so too does memory reproduce them without the body (that is, with or without passion). The same thing happens during sleep, when the body is at rest. For just as one can think of water both when thirsty and when not thirsty, so too can one think of gold both with greed and without greed. The same applies to other objects as well (both in waking life and in sleep). And when the mind encounters (or becomes aware within itself during sleep) such and such dreams, recognize in this distinction the malice of the demons (who seek our ruin in everything). It is also necessary to know that demons make use of external things to produce dreams, for example, the sound of waves when someone is swimming.

5. Our irritability, when stirred up contrary to its natural disposition, greatly contributes to the manifestations of demons and proves very useful for all their evil schemes. That is why not one of them refrains from provoking it day and night. But when they see that it is restrained by meekness, they try in

⁶⁴ This treatise is included in the works of St. Nilus. But since there are chapters among these that are word for word similar to chapters in other treatises by Evagrius, it is reasonable to believe that this treatise, like the others, was included in St. Nilus’s work by mistake. The compilers of *Dobrotolyubie* evidently took it from the complete collection of Evagrius’s writings.

advance to loosen it under some seemingly righteous pretexts, so that, once it becomes strained, it may become susceptible to the arousal of their beastly thoughts. That is why, whether for just or unjust causes, we must not allow her to be provoked, so as not to thus place a dangerous sword in the hands of those who instill evil in us—which, as I know, many do for the most trivial reasons, becoming more inflamed than is proper. Tell me, then, why do you so quickly find yourself in a state of strife, if you have renounced food, money, and glory? Why do you feed the dog, having vowed to possess nothing? If it barks and lunges at people, it is clear that you harbor something within and wish to preserve it. I am certain that such a person is far from pure prayer, knowing that anger is the destroyer of such prayer. Moreover, I am amazed at how he has forgotten the saints: David, who cries out, *“Cease from anger and forsake wrath”* (Ps. 36: 8), and Ecclesiastes, who commands: *“Put away wrath from your heart, and cast away deceit from your flesh”* (Eccl. 11:10), and the Apostle, who commands us to lift up *“holy hands without anger or doubt”* at all times and *“in every place”* (1 Tim. 2:8). The ancient custom—to drive dogs out of the house during prayer—teaches us precisely this, for it implies that there should be no anger in those who pray. One of the pagan sages even claimed that the gods do not partake of bile or thigh meat, though he himself did not understand, I think, what he was saying: for I believe that bile is a symbol of anger, and thigh meat—of bestial lust. As for the idea that one should not concern oneself with clothing or food, I think it is superfluous even to write about it, since the Savior Himself forbids this in the Gospels, saying: *“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or what you will wear”* (Matt. 6:25). For this is fitting for pagans as unbelievers who reject Divine Providence and deny the Creator, but it must be completely foreign to Christians, since they have once and for all come to believe that even two sparrows sold for a single assarius are under the care of the holy angels. Meanwhile, it is the custom of demons, following impure thoughts, to instill thoughts of excessive worry, so that Jesus might be led astray from the “people” of thoughts “existing in” the mind, and so that the word, suppressed by anxious thoughts, might remain “barren” (Matt. 13: 22). Having cast them aside, let us “cast our cares upon the Lord” (Ps. 54:23) and be “content with what we have” (Heb. 13:5), so that, by living a frugal life and wearing humble clothing, we may, day by day, cast off these sources of vanity. Whoever feels ashamed to wear humble clothing should look to St. Paul, who endured “cold and nakedness” (2 Cor. 11:27), inspired by the certain hope of receiving “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8). But since St. Paul called this world a spectacle and a race (1 Cor. 9:24), let us see whether it is possible for one who is burdened with thoughts of “striving toward the honor of the higher calling” (Phil. 3:14) of God and to fight against the powers, the principalities, and the rulers of the darkness of this age (Eph. 6:12)? I, at least, do not affirm this, having been taught by this very sensational story (by what happens in the theaters), because this (fighter) will certainly be hindered by his clothing, which entangles him, just as anxious thoughts entangle the mind—if the saying is true that the mind remains inseparably with its treasure. For it says: *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matt. 6: 21).

6. Among thoughts, some strike, while others are struck down; sometimes the good are struck down by the evil, and sometimes the evil are struck down by the good. The Holy Spirit heeds the firstborn thought (which takes precedence and dominance) and judges or accepts us according to it. What am I saying? This is what it is! I have a certain thought, for example, hospitality, and I have it for the Lord’s sake; but when the tempter comes, it is cut down by the fact that he inspires me to practice hospitality for the sake of glory. And again, I have a thought of hospitality to appear good before people, but when a better thought comes along, it is transformed by that thought, which directs our virtue more toward the Lord and compels us to do it not for the sake of people. Thus, if in our very deeds we ultimately remain with our first thoughts—being tempted by the second only in that regard—then we will receive our reward based on those first-born thoughts alone; for as human beings and as those engaged in a struggle against demons, we do not have the strength to always keep a righteous thought uncorrupted, —just as, conversely, an evil thought cannot remain within us without there being an attempt to resist it with a good thought, because within us there are seeds of virtue (which cannot be stifled). However, if any of these competing thoughts takes hold, it takes the place of the one being tempted (that is, it completely supplants the first thought), and the person begins to act, driven finally by this thought.

7. As we have learned through long observation, the difference between angelic thoughts, human thoughts, and those that come from demons is as follows: Angelic thoughts seek to understand the nature of things and explore their spiritual significance—such as: for what purpose was gold created, and why is it scattered like sand in distant parts of the earth, where it is sought out with great effort and toil? how, once

found, it is washed with water and subjected to fire, and thus comes into the hands of artisans who fashion from it for the Tabernacle a lampstand, a censer, “*cups and bowls*” (2 Chr. 4:21), from which, by the grace of the Savior, the king of Babylon no longer drinks (Dan. 5:3). Cleopas, however, brings a heart set ablaze by these mysteries. The demonic mind knows nothing of this and does not seek to understand it, but only shamelessly instills a desire for the acquisition of sensual gold and foretells the pleasure and glory that are to come from it. But the human mind seeks neither acquisition nor is it curious about what gold symbolizes; rather, it introduces into the thought a single simple image of gold, without passion or greed. A similar line of reasoning must be applied to other objects as well, if anyone were to secretly exercise their mind according to this model.

8. There is a thought that may rightly be called a wanderer. It appears to the brethren mostly in the early morning and leads the mind from city to city, from town to town, from house to house; at first it engages in simple conversation, and then, after engaging in lengthy conversations with certain acquaintances, it corrupts its own state; in accordance with the qualities of those it has met, it gradually drifts away from the awareness of God and virtue and forgets its calling and vow. Therefore, the hermit must watch out for this demon, observing where he comes from and where he settles, for it is not by chance or accident that he makes such a wide circuit, but does so with the intention of disrupting the hermit’s state, so that the mind, inflamed by all this and intoxicated by many conversations, may immediately fall prey to the demon of lust, or anger, or sorrow, which most severely damage the clarity of his disposition. But if we intend to understand more clearly the wiles of this demon, we will not suddenly contradict him, nor will we immediately reveal (to the fathers) how he mentally constructs conversations within us and by what means he gradually drives the mind into the realm of death; for he will immediately flee at this, not tolerating that anyone see how he does all this, and thus we will learn nothing of what we wished to know. But it is better to allow him, on the second or third day, to carry out his drama to the end, so that, having learned his cunning twists and turns with precision, we may then put him to flight with a single word of rebuke. But since during the time of temptation the mind is sometimes agitated and fails to see clearly what is happening within us, once the devil has departed, here is what you must do: Sit down and reflect on your own what happened to you—where you began and where you went, at what point you were seized by a spirit of lust, or sorrow, or anger, and how everything else unfolded afterward: examine all of this and commit it to memory, so that when it comes again, you will be able to expose it; note even the very place it hides in, and you will no longer follow in its footsteps. After this, if you wish to drive it to fury, expose it immediately as soon as it appears, and name the first place you entered (mentally, during your first tempting wandering), then the second and the third, for it becomes greatly irritated, unable to bear being put to shame. The proof that it is timely (beneficial) to address him in this way is that the thought will flee from you, for it is impossible for him to stand firm in the face of such a clear exposure. The defeat of this demon will be followed by a deep sleep, numbness of the eyelids accompanied by great chill, excessive yawning, and heaviness in the shoulders—all of which the Holy Spirit dispels through fervent prayer.

9. Hatred of demons greatly aids us in our salvation and is very useful in the practice of virtues; yet we are unable to cultivate it within ourselves as some kind of good quality, because the spirits of sensuality dispel it within us and again call the soul to fellowship and familiarity with them. But the Physician of souls heals this fellowship—which is worse than gangrene that is difficult to cure—by abandonment, allowing us to suffer something terrible from them both night and day. As a result, the soul returns to its original (normal) hatred of them, learning to speak to the Lord with the words of David: “*With perfect hatred I have hated them; they were my enemies*” (Ps. 138: 22). For he hates his enemies with perfect hatred who sins neither in deed nor in thought—which is a sign of the greatest and first (as it was in Adam) dispassion.

10. As for the demon that renders the soul insensitive, is there even any need to speak of him? I, at least, am afraid to write about him. For just as the soul departs from its own nature, so he takes hold of it, casting aside both the fear of God and all reverence, does not regard sin as sin nor lawlessness as lawlessness, remembers the dreadful judgment and eternal torment as mere (empty) words, and mocks that fiery, truly earth-shattering upheaval—and though he confesses God, he does not wish to know His commandments. You beat your breast when she moves toward sin, and she feels nothing; you speak to her from the Scriptures, and she, as if blinded, does not see, and, as if deaf, does not hear; you present to her the reproach of others, yet she attaches no importance to it, nor does she feel shame before them—just like a pig that, having closed its eyes, broke through its own fence. This demon is incited by thoughts of vanity, if we allow them to take root within

us for too long; and because of it, *“unless those days had been cut short, no flesh would have been saved”* (Matt. 24:20). It is one of the demons that rarely attacks the brethren (i.e., the Kinovites, those living in community). The reason for this is obvious, for at the sight of others’ misfortunes—whether someone is struck by illness or struck down by sudden death—he immediately flees, since the soul, filled with compassion at such times, is overcome with contrition, and the blindness imposed upon it by the demon falls from its eyes. We (hermits) are deprived of this, due to the desert and the rarity of the infirm among us. Providing a means to put this particular demon to flight, the Lord in the Gospels commanded us to visit the sick and to visit those in prison, when He says: *“I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me”* (Matt. 25:36). At the same time, it is important to know that if any of the hermits, having been attacked by this demon, did not entertain lustful thoughts or abandon his dwelling out of despondency, this means that he has received from heaven the patience and chastity bestowed upon him. Blessed is he who has been deemed worthy of such dispassion! As for those who, having vowed to live an ascetic life in reverent service to God, prefer to settle among the laity, let them beware of this demon. But I am ashamed even before people to speak or write any more about him.

11. On the spirit of sorrow. All demons teach the soul to love pleasure; the demon of sorrow alone does not do this, but rather disturbs the thoughts of those entering the desert, cutting off all spiritual pleasure and drying up the soul with sorrow, for *“the bones of a sorrowful man are parched”* (Prov. 17:22). Attacking with moderation, however, he makes the hermit well-trained: for he inclines him to despise all the goods of this world and to turn away from every comfort. But when he torments him long and intensely, he then gives rise to thoughts that advise the hermit to destroy his own soul, or compel it to flee far from that place; having entertained such thoughts, Job once suffered while being tormented by him, for he said: *“If it were possible, I would kill myself, or I would beg another to do so for me”* (Job 30:24). The symbol of this spirit is the viper, whose venom, when administered in small quantities, neutralizes other poisons, but when taken in excess, kills the living creature that ingests it. Paul delivered the lawless man in Corinth to this demon; that is why he soon wrote to them again, saying: *“Restore him to full fellowship, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow”* (2 Cor. 2:7–8). Thus, this spirit that torments people is also the cause of true repentance. That is why St. John the Baptist called those whom he had rebuked and who had fled to God “brood of vipers,” saying: *“Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Bear fruit worthy of repentance, then, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones”* (Matt. 3:7–9). However, anyone who, following the example of Abraham, left his homeland and his family (Gen. 12:1), thereby became stronger than this demon.

12. Whoever has conquered anger has conquered the demons; but whoever has become a slave to it is alien to the monastic life and far from the ways of our Savior, for the Lord, as it is said, teaches the meek His ways (Ps. 24: 9). That is why the minds of the hermits are so elusive—they flee to the valley of meekness. For the demons fear no other virtue nearly as much as meekness. That great Moses, called “meek,” possessed it more than any other man (Num. 12:3). And St. David spoke of it, saying that it is worthy of God’s remembrance, when he said: *“Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness”* (Ps. 131: 1). But the Savior Himself commanded us to imitate His meekness, saying: *“Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:29). But if anyone abstains from food and drink yet stirs up anger within himself through evil thoughts, he is like a ship crossing the sea with a demon at the helm. Therefore, to the best of our ability, we must keep an eye on this dog of ours and train him so that he torments only the wolves and does not bite the sheep, showing all gentleness toward all people (Titus 3:2).

13. On vanity. Of all thoughts, only the thought of vanity is multifaceted, encompassing almost the entire universe and opening the doors to all demons, like some evil traitor to a city. It robs the hermit’s mind and, filling it with a multitude of words and things, destroys his prayers, through which he strives to heal the wounds of his soul. This thought is fostered by all the demons who have already been defeated; through it, they gain entry into the soul once more, thus making *“the last the first”* (Luke 11: 26). From this thought is born the thought of pride, which cast down from heaven to earth *“the seal of likeness and the crown of goodness”* (Ezek. 28: 12). But turn away from it, without becoming entrenched in it, lest we betray our lives to others and make our lives unmerciful (Prov. 5:9). Earnest prayer puts this demon to flight, as does refraining from doing or saying anything of one’s own accord that leads to accursed vanity.

14. When the mind of a hermit has acquired a measure of detachment, he then, mounting the steed of vanity, begins to gallop through the cities, reveling uncontrollably in his own praise and glory. But, by God’s

providence, the spirit of waywardness meets him and, confining him to some stable, teaches him this: not to leave his bed before he has recovered, and not to imitate those impatient patients who, while still harboring remnants of their illness, set out on a journey or begin to visit the baths, and thereby relapse into their former ailments. Therefore, while sitting in our cell, let us pay closer attention to ourselves, so that, by excelling in virtue, we may become unshakable in the face of evil; by being renewed in knowledge, we may be deemed worthy of a multitude of diverse contemplations; and, by rising in prayer, we may more clearly behold the light of our Savior.

15. I am unable to describe all the demonic wickedness, and I am ashamed to enumerate all their evil schemes, fearing even for the simplest of my readers. However, listen to the wicked schemes of the spirit of fornication. When someone attains a certain dispassion in the lustful sphere, and his foul thoughts grow somewhat cold, then it introduces (into his thoughts) men and women and presents them playing with one another, making the hermit a spectator of their shameful acts and bodily movements. But this temptation is not one of those that take root (in the mind), because attentive prayer and an extremely austere diet, combined with vigil and practice in spiritual contemplation, drive it away like a cloud without water. But it happens that this deceiver even touches the flesh, stirring up in it an irrational decay, and devises thousands of other schemes, which need not be made public or committed to writing. A surge of anger directed at the demon behind these thoughts is a powerful remedy against them, for the demon fears this anger greatly when it flares up in response to such thoughts, since it thereby disrupts all his schemes. And this is the meaning of the words: *“Be angry and do not sin”* (Ps. 4:5). A beneficial remedy applied to the soul during times of temptation. The demon of anger imitates this demon by presenting (in the mind’s visions) to the hermit the image of one of his parents, friends, or relatives suffering wrongs at the hands of insignificant people, thereby stirring up his anger and prompting him to say something malicious or to act against those who appear to him in his mind (as the offenders). One must be mindful of this and quickly root out such imaginings, lest, by becoming entrenched in them, they become a smoldering ember during prayer. Such temptations most often afflict hot-tempered people, who are easily incited to act (against others) and who are far from pure prayer and from the knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ.

16. The Lord has entrusted the thoughts of this age to man, as a good shepherd does to his sheep, giving him desire and fury as helpers, so that with fury he might put the thoughts of wolves (demonic ones) to flight, and with his desire, he might love the sheep (good thoughts) with all his heart and tend them, enduring time and again the winds and rains that knock him off his feet. He also gave him the law on how to tend the sheep, and *“a place of rest and still waters”* (Ps. 22: 2), and a psaltery and a lyre, and a staff and a rod (and decreed) that from this flock (and pastures) he should feed himself and clothe himself, and gather *“mountain hay”* (Prov. 27: 25). *“For who,”* he says, *“tends a flock and does not eat the milk of the flock?”* (1 Cor. 9:7). Therefore, the hermit must watch over this flock day and night, so that no offspring (of the sheep—a lamb) is snatched away by wild beasts or falls into the hands of robbers; and if such a thing happens somewhere in the wilderness, he must immediately rescue (the captive) from the mouth of a lion or a she-bear (1 Sam. 17:34, 35). There are also thoughts that are like ravenous beasts: thoughts about a brother, if they dwell within us with hatred; thoughts about a woman, if they revolve within us with shameful lust; thoughts about silver and gold, if they take root with greed; and even thoughts about holy gifts, if they dwell in the mind with vanity. The same must be said of other thoughts, if they are carried away by passions. One must not only guard [one’s flock] by day, but also watch over it at night, staying awake. For it happens that some, lost in shameful and deceitful reveries, lose what is theirs. This is what St. James meant when he said: *“I have not brought you any of the sheep that were torn by wild beasts; I myself have made up for them—the ones stolen by day and the ones stolen by night. I was in the scorching heat by day and in the cold by night, and sleep fled from my eyes”* (Gen. 31: 39–40). If despondency befalls us from overwork, then, having taken refuge in the rock of knowledge, let us begin a conversation with the Psalter, striking the strings of knowledge with virtues. Let us, then, tend the sheep once more beneath Mount Sinai, so that the God of our fathers may call us out of the bush (Ex. 3:1, 4) and grant us the power of signs and wonders.

17. Christ awakens the rational nature, which has been deadened by sin, (to repentance) through the contemplation of all ages (that is, the past, the present, and, above all, the future), and His Father resurrects this soul—which is dying through Christ’s death (turning away from sin in baptism or repentance)—resurrects through the knowledge of Himself. And this is precisely what the Apostle Paul meant when he said: *“If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him”* (Rom. 6:8).

18. When the mind, having cast off the old man, is clothed in the one who is of grace, then during prayer it will behold its own nature, like a sapphire or a heavenly flower, which Scripture also calls the place of God, as the elders saw on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24: 10).

19. Among the unclean demons, some tempt a person as a human being, while others disturb a person as a speechless animal. The former, upon coming, instill in us thoughts of vanity, or pride, or envy, or condemnation, which do not concern any of the speechless creatures, while the latter, when they approach, stir up anger or lust contrary to their nature, for these passions are common to us and to the irrational, and are hidden from us beneath our rational nature (i.e., they lie below it, or beneath it). Why, then, does the Holy Spirit, referring to the thoughts that occur in people as human beings, say: *"I said: 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High; yet you die like mortals, and fall like one of the princes'"* (Ps. 81: 6–7)? But considering the thoughts that move within a person, as in a speechless being, what is there to say? *"Do not be like a horse or a mule, which have no understanding; you must bridle their jaws with a bit and a bridle, lest they come near you"* (Ps. 31: 9).

20. When an enemy comes and strikes you, and you wish, as it is written, to turn his sword against his own heart (Ps. 36: 15), then do as we tell you. Analyze within yourself the thought he has planted in you: who it is, what it consists of, and what exactly in it strikes the mind. What am I saying? Here is what it is. Let the thought of the love of money be sent to you by him. Break it down into the mind that received it, into the thought of gold, into the gold itself, and into the passion for money. Finally, ask: what of all this is sin? Is it the mind? But how can it be the image of God? Or is it the thought of gold? But who, possessing a mind, can say this? Is not gold itself, then, the sin? But why, then, was it created? Thus, it remains to attribute the sin to the fourth (that is, to the passion for money), which is neither a thing independent in its essence nor a concept of a thing, but rather a certain misanthropic delight, born of free will and compelling the mind to misuse God's creatures for evil purposes—a delight that God's law commands us to suppress. When you examine this, the thought will vanish, having been broken down into what it truly is, and the demon will flee as soon as your mind is uplifted by sorrow, inspired by such insight. But if you do not wish to turn his own sword against him, and instead desire first to strike him down with your sling, then take a stone from your shepherd's bag, and enter into this contemplation: how is it that angels and demons are drawn to our world, while we are not drawn to theirs? For it does not occur to us to bring the angels any closer to God, nor to make the demons any more impure. Also (and meditate on this), how *"the morning star, rising in the morning, will fall to the earth"* (Isaiah 14: 12), *"and the sea is like a boiling cauldron, and the abyss of Tartarus like a captive; it sets the abyss ablaze like a furnace of bronze"* (Job 41: 22–23), stirring up everyone with his malice and desiring to rule over all? Contemplation of these matters greatly wounds the demon and puts his entire host to flight. But such action is possible only for those who have purified themselves to some extent and perceive, to some degree, the causes of what has come to pass. But the impure are unable to maintain such contemplation; even if they have been taught by others to cast spells, they will not be heard when, during the inner battle, dust rises like a pillar within them and everything is in turmoil because of their passions. For it is absolutely necessary for the entire host of foreign invaders to stand still so that a single Goliath may step forward against our David. Likewise, in the case of other impure thoughts, we will employ both the (previously mentioned) analysis of the thought and this (second) form of battle.

21. When any impure thoughts flee too quickly, let us seek the reasons why this happened. Whether it is due to the rarity of such things—that is, because the object of the thought is difficult to attain—or to the dispassion inherent in us, the enemy was unable to do anything to us. For example, if one of the hermits imagines that he has been entrusted with the spiritual governance of the foremost city and does not dwell on such fantasies, it is obvious that this is due to the first reason (the unattainability of the object); but if someone dreams of becoming the ruler of some city (and consequently the matter is quite likely to come to pass), and he also regards the thought (with contempt), then this blessed one is imbued with dispassion. Likewise, with other thoughts, it will become clear (why the thoughts fled so quickly) if we apply the same method of examination. We need to know this to invigorate our zeal and efforts, for through this we will learn whether we have crossed the Jordan and are near *the "city of palm trees"* (Deut. 34:3), or whether we still dwell in the wilderness and are being attacked by foreigners. The demon of avarice, it seems to me, is highly skilled and inventive in his deceptions. Often, having been driven to the extreme of renouncing everything, he takes on the guise of a steward and a lover of the poor; he warmly welcomes travelers who do not even exist, sends what is needed to others in need, visits the city's dungeons, ransoms those who are being sold, attaches himself

to wealthy women, and tells them whom they should show compassion toward, while to others, whose hearts are already full, he instills a renunciation of the world; and in this way, little by little, having beguiled the soul, he burdens it with thoughts of greed and leads it into vanity. He leads many to praise the Lord for such actions of the hermit, while causing some to quietly discuss the priesthood among themselves; he foretells the death of the current priest and adds that the hermit himself cannot escape (election), no matter what he does to prevent it. Thus, the poor mind, entangled in such thoughts, argues with those who do not accept him; to those who do accept him, he eagerly distributes gifts and, with gratitude, warmly receives them; but he hands over some of the stubborn (opponents) to the judges and demands that they be expelled from the city. Meanwhile, as such thoughts swirl within, the demon of pride appears, furrows the air of the cell with frequent flashes of lightning, sends in winged serpents, and—as the ultimate evil—robs one of one’s mind. But let us pray that such thoughts may vanish, and let us strive, in a spirit of gratitude, to live in harmony with our meager circumstances. *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is clear that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content”* (1 Tim. 6:7–8), remembering what St. Paul went on to say: *“The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil”* (6:10).

22. All impure thoughts take root in us because of the passions that plunge the mind into ruin and destruction. For just as the thought of bread becomes ingrained in the hungry person because of hunger, and the thought of water in the thirsty person because of thirst, so too do thoughts of money and shameful thoughts arising from abundant food become ingrained in us because of (corresponding) passions. Something similar is revealed with regard to thoughts of vanity, as well as other thoughts. But it is impossible for a mind overwhelmed by such thoughts to stand before God and be adorned with the crown of righteousness. That threefold-sinful mind was consumed by these thoughts; according to the Gospel parable, it refused the supper of the knowledge of God (Luke 14:18–20). Likewise, the one bound hand and foot and cast into utter darkness wore a garment woven from these very thoughts, which the Inviter deemed unworthy of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:11–13). The wedding garment is the dispassion of the rational soul that has renounced worldly desires. As for the reason why thoughts of sensual things that linger within us for a long time corrupt our knowledge, this is discussed in the chapters on prayer.

23. Among the demons who oppose the active life, there are three principal ones, followed by the entire host of these foreign invaders, who stand at the forefront of the battle and, through impure thoughts, entice the soul into sin: first, those entrusted with the desire for gluttony; second, those who instill the love of money; and third, those who urge us to seek human glory. Therefore, if you desire pure prayer, guard yourself against anger; if you love chastity, restrain your stomach by not allowing it to be sated with bread and by afflicting it with scarcity of water. Be vigilant in prayer and cast resentment far from yourself; may the words of the Holy Spirit never fail you, and may you knock at the door of Scripture with the hands of virtue. Then dispassion of the heart will shine within you, and you will see your mind shining like a star in prayer. The selection from St. Nilus of Sinai extends up to Chapter 27. We will include those as well. The preceding 23 chapters comprise his 24 chapters.

24. When the demon of gluttony, after frequent and intense struggles, is unable to undermine your established self-restraint, he then instills in your mind a desire for the strictest asceticism; to this end, he brings to mind the story of Daniel—that meager life and the seeds (which served as his sole food) (Dan. 1:16), reminds him of certain other hermits who always lived this way—even in their early days—and compels him to imitate them, so that, in pursuing excessive abstinence, he may fail to achieve even moderate abstinence when his body, due to its weakness, proves incapable of it. I believe it is right not to heed such suggestions and not to deprive oneself of bread, oil, and water. For the brethren have learned through experience that such a diet is the very best, provided one eats and drinks only sparingly and once a day. And it would be surprising if anyone, eating and drinking to their fill, could attain the crown of dispassion. By “detachment,” I do not mean abstaining from sinful deeds—for that is called “abstinence”—but rather the cutting off of passionate thoughts from the heart, which St. Paul called the “spiritual circumcision of the inner Jew” (Rom. 2:29). If anyone’s spirit falters upon hearing such words, let him recall *the “chosen vessel”* (Acts 9:15), the Apostle who completed his course amid hunger and thirst. The spirit of despondency also imitated this demon; this enemy of the truth instills in the patient soul the thought of retreating into the deepest wilderness, urging him to emulate John the Baptist and the first hermit—Anthony—so that, unable to endure the long-term and superhuman solitude, he would flee in shame, abandoning his place; and this one, boasting afterward, would say, *“I have been strengthened by him”* (Ps. 12: 5).

25. Same as Chapter 68—Evagrius the First.

26. Demons do not know our hearts, as some people think. For the Knower of Hearts alone “*knows the human mind*” (Job 7:20) “*and has formed their hearts alone*” (Ps. 32:15). But whether from the words we speak or from certain bodily movements, they discern many of the stirrings that take place in the heart. Suppose, for example, that in conversation we denounce those who have slandered us. From these words, the demons conclude that we regard them with hostility, and they take this as an opportunity to instill in us evil thoughts against them ; once we accept these thoughts, we fall under the yoke of the demon of malice, and this demon then ceaselessly stirs up vengeful thoughts against them within us. Therefore, the Holy Spirit rightly rebukes us, saying: “*While sitting, you slandered your brother, and you set a snare for your mother’s son*” (Ps. 49:20)—that is, you have opened the door to thoughts of malice and disturbed your mind during prayer by constantly picturing the face of your enemy, thereby treating him as a god. For whatever the mind constantly fixates on during prayer must rightly be acknowledged as a god. Therefore, let us avoid the disease of slander; let us not speak ill of anyone or distort our faces when recalling any neighbor. For evil demons watch our every movement with curiosity and leave nothing unexamined that might be used against us—whether rising, sitting, standing, our actions, our words, or our gaze—they are curious about everything, “*learning from us all day long with flattery*” (Ps. 37: 13), so that during prayer they may shame the humble mind and extinguish its blessed light.

12. Sayings of Abba Evagrius the Monk⁶⁵

1. Abba Evagrius said: Avoid conversation about worldly matters, so that your mind may not be disturbed and your rule of silence may not be broken.

2. He also said: It is very important to pray without distraction, and even more so to sing (psalms) without distraction.

3. He also said: Always remember your final destination; do not forget the eternal judgment, and you will preserve your soul from every sin.

4. He also said: If there were no temptations, no one would be saved.

5. Abba Evagrius said: The beginning of salvation is self-reproach.

6. He also said: “If you fall into despondency, pray—but pray with fear and trembling; pray earnestly, with alertness, and with a clear mind.”

7. At the beginning of his monastic life, Abba Evagrius went to a certain elder and said to him, “Abba! Give me a word that saves the soul.” The elder said to him, “If you want to be saved, then whoever you go to, do not speak until he asks you, “⁶⁶ ”

8. Once, for some reason, there was a gathering in the cells, and Abba Evagrius was speaking there. A presbyter said to him, “We know, Abba, that if you were on your own side, you could have been a bishop long ago and presided over many, but now you sit here as a stranger.” Abba Evagrius, though moved by this, was not flustered; nodding his head, he said, “That is true, Father, but *‘I have spoken once, and I will not speak a second time’* (Job 39:35).”

9. Evagrius says in his *Gnostics*: We have learned from the righteous Gregory that there are four principal virtues: prudence (*fronesis*), courage, chastity, and justice. The task of prudence, he said, consists in contemplating the intelligent holy powers; the task of courage is to stand firm in the truth and, even if opposition arises, not to turn toward what is false; having received the seeds from the first farmer, to turn away from the sower (the enemy) is, in his view, characteristic of chastity⁶⁷. And the work of justice is to give each person their due.

10. In the same work, he says: the pillar of truth, Basil of Cappadocia, says: knowledge that comes from people is perfected through constant study and practice, while that which comes from grace is perfected through truth, meekness, and mercy; the former can be acquired even by passionate people, but the latter can be received only by the dispassionate, who during prayer behold the light that illuminates their minds.

11. He also said there: Serapion, the angel of the Church of Tmuita, said that the mind is purified by delighting in spiritual knowledge, love heals anger, and self-restraint curbs lust and desire.

⁶⁵ From the Memorable Tales, the Collection of His Eminence Ignatius, and the Alphabetical Paterikon.

⁶⁶ For the scholar Evagrius, this was no small feat.

⁶⁷ From the parable: the sower is the devil.

12. Furthermore, Didymus said: “Constantly converse with yourself about Providence and judgment, and strive to keep these matters in mind. Providence is especially evident in lifting us from sin and ignorance to virtue and knowledge.”

Volume II

Preface

In selecting the articles for this volume, it was necessary to follow the order **of the** Greek ***Dobrotolubie***. This is what has been done. Having selected from St. Cassian—who was omitted previously—specifically his ascetic teachings, while omitting his monastic rule, we present the ascetic instructions of the Venerable Hesychius of Jerusalem and Nilus of Sinai. But here we had to stop following **the** Greek ***Dobrotolubie***; for it omits many holy ascetic Fathers—the foremost interpreters of the ascetic life from its primarily inner perspective—such as St. Ephrem the Syrian, John Climacus, Barsanuphius, and John, Abba Dorotheus, and Isaac the Syrian. To deprive our collection of their teachings would be a great injustice. That is why we have decided to draw upon them. Including the writings of these Fathers in their entirety would be inappropriate, and there is no pressing need for it, since all of them have already been translated into Russian. They have all been translated; but not everyone has them at their fingertips. In our desire to overcome this obstacle and convey the holy teachings of these Fathers to all souls who thirst for them, we have selected from them what is most essential for the spiritual life, confident that here, not infrequently, a single word can replace entire volumes. St. Cassian served as a guide in selecting these excerpts; having set the purification of the heart from passions as the goal of asceticism, he directed all his ascetic discourses toward this end. The excerpts from his writings were compiled with this in mind; it also guides the arrangement of the material taken from St. Nilus of Sinai; it determined the selection from St. Ephrem; and it guided the inclusions from St. Barsanuphius and John, St. Abba Dorotheus, and St. Isaac the Syrian, although the contributions from the latter three are not indicated by separate headings. Thus, the entire second volume of our ***Dobrotolyubie*** will constitute a collection of the godly teachings of the Fathers, primarily concerning the struggle against the passions for the purification of the heart—the ultimate goal of asceticism.

Editor's Note for the HTML Version (2005)

The main text of the second through fifth volumes **of *Dobrotolyubie*** has been edited to bring it in line with modern Russian spelling and pronunciation. Quotations from Holy Scripture have been left unchanged. Their meaning can be clarified, if necessary, by referring to the modern Russian edition of the Old and New Testaments. The distinction in the spelling of the words “mir” (society, sometimes—the created universe as a whole), “mir” (peace, order, harmony), and “mvpo” (a fragrant mixture for sacred anointing) has also been left unchanged.

Saint John Cassian the Roman

A Brief Account of Him

St. John Cassian the Roman was born (around 350–360), likely in the region of Gaul, near Marseille, to noble and wealthy parents, and received a good scholarly education. From a young age, he loved the God-pleasing life and, burning with the desire to attain perfection in it, set out for the East, where he entered the Monastery of Bethlehem and took monastic vows. There, having heard of the glorious ascetic lives of the Egyptian Fathers, he wished to see them and learn from them. To this end, having agreed with his friend Herman, he set out for Egypt around the year 390, after a two-year stay at the monastery in Bethlehem. They spent seven full years there, living in sketes, cells, monasteries, and among hermits in seclusion; they observed everything, studied it, and practiced it themselves; and they became thoroughly acquainted with the ascetic life there, in all its nuances. They returned to their monastery in 397; but in the same year they set out again for the same Egyptian desert regions and remained there until 400. Leaving Egypt this time, St. Cassian and

his friend traveled to Constantinople, where they were warmly received by St. Chrysostom, who ordained St. Cassian as a deacon and his friend, as the elder of the two, as a priest (in the year 400). When St. Chrysostom was sentenced to exile, his loyal followers sent (in 405) several intercessors to Rome to Pope Innocent regarding this matter, among whom were St. Cassian and his friend. This mission came to nothing. After this, St. Cassian did not return to the East, but went to his homeland, where he continued his ascetic life according to the Egyptian model; he became renowned for both the holiness of his life and his wisdom as a teacher, and was ordained a priest. Disciples began to gather around him one after another, and soon they formed an entire monastery. Following their example, a women's monastery was established nearby. In both monasteries, the rule was adopted according to which monks lived and found salvation in Eastern—and especially Egyptian—monasteries. The reorganization of these monasteries in a new spirit and according to new rules, along with the evident successes of those who labored there, attracted the attention of many hierarchs and abbots of monasteries in the Gallic region. Wishing to establish such practices in their own monasteries, they asked St. Cassian to write for them Eastern monastic rules that would reflect the very spirit of asceticism. He willingly fulfilled this request, setting forth everything in 12 books of decrees and 24 discourses. St. Cassian passed away in 435. His feast day is celebrated on February 29. From these ascetic writings of St. Cassian, the former **Dobrotolyubie** included eight books (5–12) on the struggle against the eight principal passions and one (the second) discourse on reasoning—both in abridged form. We, too, follow this example. The main texts included will be the eight books on the struggle against the passions, in the most complete translation, with the addition in some places of passages from the treatises and the dialogues where appropriate. But in addition, we have deemed it necessary to place before them several excerpts from the dialogues, which demonstrate the significance of the struggle against the passions in the spiritual life, or its place in the course of asceticism; clarify the necessity of this struggle; and present a general outline of the passions and the struggle against them; and following these, to append further excerpts describing two other struggles—namely, the struggle against thoughts and the sorrow arising from misfortunes and calamities—as a supplement to the previous description of the struggle against the eight thoughts. At the very end, necessary instructions on several subjects are appended; although these address the spiritual life in general, they are closely related to the spiritual struggle, namely: on grace and free will, as the agents in the formation of the spiritual life; on prayer, in which they converge; on the degrees of perfection in the spiritual life, according to the motivations for it; and on the conclusion of penitential labors. – Why do these additions not prevent us from titling all the excerpts from the writings of St. Cassian as follows: “*An Overview of the Spiritual Struggle*”? Thus, the excerpts from St. Cassian will be organized under the following headings:

1. The Purpose and Goal of Asceticism.
2. In view of this goal, we must also determine what our renunciation of the world should be like.
3. The Struggle Between the Flesh and the Spirit.
4. A General Overview of the Passions and the Struggle Against Them.
5. Combating the eight principal passions: a) gluttony, b) the spirit of lust, c) the spirit of greed, d) the spirit of anger, e) the spirit of sorrow, f) the spirit of despondency, g) the spirit of vanity, h) the spirit of pride.
6. The struggle against evil thoughts and, through them, against evil spirits.
7. The struggle against all kinds of afflictions.
8. On Divine Grace and Free Will as the Sources of Spiritual Life.
9. On prayer.
10. On guidance in the spiritual life.
11. On the degrees of perfection in the spiritual life according to the motivations for it.
12. On the end of penitential works.

An Overview of the Spiritual Struggle

1. The Purpose and End of Asceticism

1. All sciences and arts have their own purpose (scopton) and their own end (telos)—and with these in mind, a diligent lover of the arts willingly endures all toil and expense. So the farmer, enduring now the heat, now the cold, tirelessly plows and loosens the soil, having as *his* “*purpose*” to clear it of all foreign debris and make it more fertile; convinced that otherwise he will not attain *his* “*end*,” that is, a bountiful harvest, to

sustain himself and increase his wealth. So too, our asceticism has its own purpose and its own end, for the sake of which we tirelessly and joyfully undertake all labors, —for the sake of which the meager fare of fasting does not weigh us down, the weariness from vigils brings us joy, the constant reading of the Scriptures with reflection knows no satiety, and we are not daunted by ceaseless labor, nor by being stripped of everything and living in poverty in all things, nor even by the horrors of this boundless wilderness.

2. The end of our ascetic life is the Kingdom of God, and the goal is purity of heart, without which it is impossible to attain that end. With our gaze fixed on this goal, we must direct our course as straight as possible, as if along a straight line; and if our thoughts stray from it even slightly, we must immediately return to contemplating it and correct them, as if following a standard.

3. This is what St. Paul teaches when he says to those who have taken upon themselves the good yoke of Christ: *“You bear fruit in holiness, and the end is eternal life”* (Rom. 6:22). By this he is saying, as it were: your goal is purity of heart, and the end is eternal life. Therefore, whatever can lead us toward this goal—that is, purity of heart—we must pursue with all our strength, and whatever distracts us from it, we must avoid as destructive and harmful. For it is for this purpose that we undertake and do everything; for this purpose we leave behind our parents, our homeland, our positions, our wealth, the joys of this world, and all pleasures—so that we may safely maintain the constant purity of heart. If, therefore, we always keep this goal in mind, then all our actions and thoughts will be directed straight toward its attainment. But if it does not remain constantly before our eyes, then all our labors and efforts, not being directed toward this one thing, will be expended in vain.

4. Therefore, we must do everything and desire everything for the sake of this purity; for its sake, we must go into the desert, fast, keep vigils, labor, practice bodily poverty, read Scripture, and cultivate other virtues—that is, to make our hearts free from any destructive passions and to keep them that way. We ought to undertake fasting, vigils, solitude, and the study of Scripture for this primary goal—that is, purity of heart—and because of them, we must not allow ourselves to disturb this chief virtue. For when this principal virtue remains preserved and unharmed within us, there will be no harm if, in any case, we are compelled by necessity to omit any of the aforementioned ascetic practices; but if we persevere in all of them while violating this one, there will be no benefit in it; for everything must be done for its sake. These deeds are not perfection itself, but rather means to perfection. Therefore, it would be in vain for anyone to labor who, content with them alone as if they were *the “supreme good,”* were to stop the striving of his heart at them, rather than extending it until he reaches the end for which they themselves are desirable.

2. With this goal in mind, we must also determine what form our renunciation should take

1. There are three kinds of renunciation of the world: the first is that in which we physically abandon all the riches and possessions of the world; the second is that in which we abandon our former habits, vices, and passions, both spiritual and physical; the third is that in which, turning our minds away from all that is present and visible, we contemplate only the future and desire what is invisible. The Lord commanded Abraham to accomplish all three of these renunciations together when He said to him: *“Go forth from your land, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house”* (Gen. 12:1): *“from your country,”* that is, from worldly wealth and earthly possessions; *“from your kindred,”* that is, from your former way of life, former habits, and vices, which, having clung to us from birth, are as close to us as blood relatives; *“from your father’s house,”* that is, from every memory of the world and everything in it that meets our eyes. This happens when, having died with Christ to the elements of the world, we look, according to the Apostle, no longer at what is seen, but at what is unseen; *“For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal”* (2 Cor. 4:18)—and, having departed in our hearts from this temporary and visible home, we turn our eyes and minds to that home in which we are to dwell forever; —when *“though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh”* in the Lord (2 Cor. 10:3), proclaiming through our deeds and our lives the blessed Apostle’s words: *“Our citizenship is in heaven”* (Phil. 3:20).

2. It will be of little benefit to us if, having made the first renunciation with all the warmth of faith, we do not carry out the second with the same zeal and fervor—so that, having thus succeeded in attaining this as well, we may also attain the third, in which, having left the house of our former father according to the old self, we direct the gaze of our mind entirely toward the heavenly. Therefore, if we wish to attain true perfection, we must strive to leave behind—just as we have physically left our parents, our homeland, our wealth, and worldly pleasures—all of these things in our hearts as well, and never again turn our desires toward what we

have rejected with contempt: just as the Israelites, led out of Egypt, who, after tasting the heavenly manna, longed for the unclean and vile foods of Egypt, saying, *“It was good for us in Egypt, when we sat by the pots”* (Exod. 16: 3; Num. 11:5). And anyone who, having renounced the world, returns to former cares and is carried away by former desires, speaks in deed and thought the same thing as they did: *“It was good for me in Egypt”* (the world). Merely leaving the world behind in body, and merely moving away from this “Egypt,” will be of no benefit to us if we are likewise unable to attain renunciation of the heart, which is higher and more beneficial. Regarding that renunciation which we have called bodily, this is what the Apostle proclaimed: *“If I give away all my possessions, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing”* (1 Cor. 13:3). That is to say, even if I renounce everything to the point of leaving nothing for myself, and add to this total self-giving the martyrdom and burning of my own flesh—so that I may give up my body for Christ—yet if I am impatient, angry, envious, or proud, if I am inflamed by the offenses of others or seek my own interests, if I dwell on what is evil, or if I bear everything that is done to me with impatience and reluctance—then my renunciation and the burning away of the outer self will be of no benefit to me, since the inner self is still burdened by the same old passions.

3. Therefore, with all earnestness, we must hasten to ensure that our inner self, too, casts off and dispenses with all the wealth of passions it has accumulated in its former life—passions which, clinging to the body and soul, are essentially our own; and if, while we are still in this body, they are not cut off and cast aside, they will not cease to accompany us even after death. For just as virtues—or love itself, which is their source—when acquired in this age, make their lover beautiful and radiant even after the end of this life; so too do vices, having covered the soul with repulsive hues, carry it, stained by them, into that eternal abode. The beauty or repulsiveness of the soul arises from the nature of virtues or vices, from which a certain hue is drawn that makes it either so radiant and beautiful that it becomes worthy to hear the prophetic word: *“The King will desire your goodness”* (Ps. 44: 11)—or so utterly black, foul, and hideous that it itself, confessing the stench of its own corruption, will say: *“My wounds have become foul and festering because of my folly”* (Ps. 37: 6). Therefore, they (virtues and passions) are, in fact, our true wealth, which remains inseparable from the soul, and which no king can give us, nor any enemy take from us. They are, in fact, our true wealth, which even death itself is powerless to tear away from the soul. (To disperse the evil wealth of the passions means to put them to death—which cannot be achieved without struggling against them. This is why those who have renounced the world inevitably face a struggle with the passions, which they must undertake from the very beginning. St. Cassian offers general reflections on this struggle in his **Conversations**—the fourth, *“On the Struggle Between the Flesh and the Spirit,”* and the fifth, *“On the Eight Principal Passions”*—and provides, in particular, a detailed description of the struggle against each of the eight principal passions in the books of his **Orders**. – We will draw on the most essential points from all of this.)

3. The Struggle Between the Flesh and the Spirit

1. There is a conflict within our members, as we read in the Apostle: *“The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are opposed to one another, so that you do not do what you wish”* (Gal. 5:17). By God’s providential design, it has, as it were, become ingrained in our very nature. And can it be regarded as anything other than a natural attribute of human nature after the fall of the first man, if it is common to all without exception? We must, however, believe that it exists within us by God’s will, for our good and not for our harm, since it is natural to all. It has been left within us to stir up in us a zeal for the highest perfection.

2. The word *“flesh”* in this passage should not be understood in the sense of a human being as a creature, but in the sense of the carnal will, or evil desires; likewise, the word *“spirit”* should not be understood as referring to any personal being, but to the good and holy desires of the soul. The Apostle himself defined this meaning, saying: *“Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh; for the flesh lusts against the Spirit,”* and so on (ibid., vv. 16–17). Since both kinds of desires exist within the same person, a constant internal struggle rages within us. Whereas the lust of the flesh, which primarily seeks what is sinful, finds pleasure solely in what pertains to the satisfaction of the needs of this present life; the spirit, on the contrary, desires entirely to cling to spiritual matters, setting aside even the most necessary needs of the flesh, and wishes to devote itself exclusively to those alone, without giving even the slightest thought to this mortal flesh. The flesh delights in abundance and all manner of pleasures; the spirit takes no pleasure even in attending to matters of natural necessity. The former desires to be sated with sleep and filled with food; for the latter, vigils

and fasting are so nourishing that he would not even allow himself sleep or food in the amount necessary for life. The former desires to abound in all manner of riches; the latter is not satisfied even with having a small amount of bread for daily consumption. She desires to live in luxury and be surrounded by a crowd of flatterers; for him, a harsh life and the vastness of an inaccessible desert are more delightful, and the presence of mortals is not pleasant. She is captivated by human honors and praise; for him, persecution and insults are a source of joy.

3. When our will is guided by self-love and worldly wisdom, it devises a certain middle ground—one worthy of every condemnation—between these two inclinations, seeking to abstain from carnal passions in such a way as to avoid, at the same time, the hardships that are inevitable when fulfilling the demands of the spirit, —desiring to attain bodily purity without mortifying the flesh, to acquire purity of heart without the toil of vigils, to abound in spiritual virtues while giving rest to the flesh, to obtain the grace of patience without bitter slander, to display the humility of Christ without loss of worldly honor, to follow the simplicity of piety while maintaining the arrogance of this age, to serve Christ while seeking human glory and favor, to speak the decisive truth without encountering any insult, however slight—in short, to attain the blessings of the future without losing those of the present. Such a will does not lead to true perfection, but, by placing one in a state of lukewarmness, makes one like those of whom the Lord speaks reproachfully in the Book of Revelation: “*I know your deeds; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of My mouth*” (Rev. 3:15–16). But when grace comes, it stirs up the energy of the spirit and restores within it the highest aspirations, which detach it from all that is earthly. Under their influence, the will can no longer remain indifferent and lukewarm, but is filled with zeal for what is best and sacrifices all that is lower to it. Meanwhile, however, a tendency toward its former state of indifference remains within it, and it is very ready to fall back into it. To prevent this from happening, movements hostile to the higher aspirations remain in the flesh; the will, having tasted the higher goods, cannot condone them, and as soon as it senses them, it is immediately stirred to life with all its zeal and valiantly defends its higher goods. And it happens that as soon as the will slips into God-opposing lukewarmness, the struggle of the flesh rises up and rouses it to action. From this it is clear that we would remain forever in the state of the aforementioned God-opposing lukewarmness if the struggle rising up within us did not lead us out of it. For in that state, when—slaving to self-indulgence—we wish to grant ourselves some indulgence, the flesh immediately rises up and, wounding us with the stings of sinful impulses and passions, does not allow us to stand in the desired, joyful purity, but draws us toward a cooling pleasure—one that is not pleasing to God— —it draws us, as it were, onto a path overgrown with thorns. But this stirs the slumbering zeal for God; it rises up and drives away the encroaching enemies. Acting within us daily, this struggle leads us to a beneficial resolve, —to reject a life of idleness and carelessness, to attain purity of heart through much toil and contrition of spirit, —to preserve the purity of the body through strict fasting, hunger, thirst, and sleeplessness, —to ascend to a good state of mind through reading, reflection, and unceasing prayer.

4. Something similar is mysteriously depicted in God’s plan concerning the nations hostile to Israel, as we read in the Book of Judges: “*The Lord left these nations to test Israel through them... so that He might teach them the ways of war*” (Judg. 3:1–2). — The Lord arranged such warfare not because He did not want peace for Israel, or because He did not care for its welfare, but because He saw how beneficial it was for Israel. Subjected to almost constant attacks by those nations, Israel could not help but feel a constant need for God’s help, and therefore had to remain in constant, hopeful reliance on Him and in prayer. Unable to abandon the business of war, they had no time to give themselves over to carelessness or to slacken through laziness and idleness. For often safety and happiness bring down those whom misfortunes could not defeat.

5. And from what else do we find the soul asleep in those who are castrated in the flesh, if not from the fact that, through delusion, having freed themselves from this carnal need, they think they have no need either for the labor of bodily abstinence or for contrition of the heart? Lulled by such carelessness, they do not concern themselves with attaining true perfection or with purifying the heart from the passions of the soul. Such a state, rising above the carnal state, remains merely spiritual—a state which the Lord Himself has called worthy of rejection—because, having passed from coldness to warmth, it has come to rest in this repulsive warmth.

6. Thus, at the very beginning of renunciation, as we cease to be carnal—that is, as we begin to separate ourselves from worldly customs and abstain from overt carnal impurity— we must hasten and strive with all our might to immediately assimilate the spiritual state as well; otherwise, simply because we have renounced

the world in our outward being, or have ceased to defile ourselves with carnal immorality, while imagining ourselves to have already attained perfection, we might later become negligent and careless in eradicating the causes of the passions and, thus remaining halfway between the flesh and the spirit, fail to attain the degree of spiritual perfection, believing that for this perfection it is sufficient merely to separate ourselves outwardly from the life and pleasures of the world and to refrain from carnal debauchery and promiscuity. For if we remain in this state of lukewarmness (indifference), which is considered the worst, we will be spewed out of *the Lord's* mouth, as He says: "*Because you are lukewarm... I will spew you out of My mouth*" (Rev. 3:16). The Lord has rightly declared concerning those who, having been received by Him into the womb of love, later grew cold, that they will be spewed out by Him with a certain abhorrence. For a carnal person—that is, a worldly or pagan person—turns more readily to salvation and ascends to the heights of spiritual perfection than one who, having taken up the yoke of Christ, has not set out on the path to perfection and has allowed the initial fire of spiritual zeal to grow cold. For when such a person, humbled by sensual passions and aware of his own impurity due to carnal defilement, comes to contrition and turns to the source of all purity and perfection, he will, abhorring that cold state of unbelief and carelessness in which he once found himself, and burning with zeal, more easily ascend to perfection. On the contrary, whoever sets out to do God's work with coldness and enters the path of this calling without humility and due zeal—once struck by this calamitous contagion—can no longer improve on his own or accept counsel from others. For, in the words of the Lord, he says in his heart, "*I am rich; I have prospered, and I lack nothing*"; whereas it is more fitting to apply to him what follows: "*and do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked*" (Rev. 3:17). Thus, he becomes worse than a worldly person in that he loses awareness of how poor, blind, and naked he is, of how much he needs correction, and of how greatly he needs instruction and admonition from others; therefore, he does not accept any word of salvation, not realizing that in the age to come he will inevitably be subject to the strictest judgment and punishment.

4. A General Overview of the Passions and the Struggle Against Them

1. **There are** eight principal passions: gluttony, lust, greed, anger, sorrow, despondency, vanity, and pride.

2. Passions are of "*two kinds*": natural ones, arising from natural needs—such as gluttony and fornication—and unnatural ones, not rooted in nature—such as avarice. Their "*manifestations*," however, take "*four forms*": some act only in the body and through the body, such as gluttony and fornication—while others manifest even without the body's involvement, such as vanity and pride; furthermore, some are aroused from without, such as avarice and anger—while others arise from internal causes, such as despondency and sorrow. This manner of manifestation of the passions' effects gives reason to recognize two further categories among them—dividing them into carnal and spiritual: the carnal arise in the body and nourish and delight the body; while the spiritual stem from the soul's inclinations and nourish the soul, though they often have a destructive effect on the body. The latter are cured by a simple, internal healing of the heart; the carnal, however, are cured by a twofold remedy—both external and internal.

3. Let us clarify some of what has been said with a more detailed discussion. The passions of gluttony and fornication, rooted in the body, are sometimes aroused without the soul's involvement, merely by the stimulation of the desires from which they arise; yet they also draw in the soul because of its connection to the body. To curb them, it is not enough to arm oneself against them with mental resolve alone; one must also subdue the body itself through fasting, vigil, and exhaustion through labor; temporary seclusion is sometimes necessary, and often complete asceticism. For just as they arise from the depravity of both soul and body, so they can be overcome only through the labor of both. – Vanity and pride arise in the soul without the mediation of the body. For what need does vanity have of anything bodily, when, through a single desire for praise and glory, it leads the soul it has captivated to ruin? Or what bodily action took place in Lucifer's pride, when he conceived it solely in his soul and thoughts, as the Prophet says: "*You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven... and I will be like the Most High'*" (Isa. 14:13–14). He certainly had no instigator in such pride; it was conceived and matured entirely within him.

4. Although these eight passions have different origins and different effects, the first six—namely, gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, sorrow, and despondency—are linked by a certain special affinity, whereby the excess of one gives rise to the next. For from the excess of gluttony, lust necessarily arises; from lust, avarice; from avarice, anger; from anger, sorrow; and from sorrow, despondency. Therefore, one must

combat them in the same order, proceeding in the struggle from the preceding to the subsequent: to overcome despondency, one must first suppress sorrow; to drive away sorrow, one must first suppress anger; to extinguish anger, one must trample on avarice; to root out avarice, one must subdue lust; to subdue lust, one must curb the passion for gluttony. And the remaining two passions, vanity and pride, are linked in the same way—that is, the intensification of the first gives rise to the other; excessive vanity gives birth to the passion of pride; victory over them is achieved in the same order; that is, to eradicate pride, one must suppress vanity. But these two passions are not connected to the other six in a generative sense; for they are not born from them, but rather arise after their eradication. We fall into these two passions especially after victory and triumph over the other passions. – However, although these eight passions stand in the relationship to one another as has now been shown, they are more specifically divided into four pairs: lust is united in a special pair with gluttony, anger with avarice, despondency with sorrow, and pride with vanity.

5. Each of the passions manifests itself in more than one way.

6. Thus, gluttony comes in three forms: either it gives rise to the desire to eat before the appointed hour; or it seeks to eat in great quantities until one is stuffed, without regard for the quality of the food; or it demands delicacies. Hence come disorderly eating, eating on the go, gluttony, and sensual indulgence. From these three arise various evil afflictions in the soul: from the first comes resentment toward the monastic rule; from this resentment grows dissatisfaction with monastic life to the point of intolerability, which is usually soon followed by flight from the monastery; the second gives rise to carnal lust and sensuality; and the third plunges one into the love of money and leaves no room for the poverty of Christ.

7. There are three kinds of lust: the first is committed through sexual intercourse between one sex and another; the second occurs without sexual intercourse with a woman—for which Onan, the son of the Patriarch Judah, was struck down by the Lord (Gen. 38:9–10), and which is called “uncleanness” in Scripture; the third is committed in the mind and heart, of which the Lord says in the Gospel: *“Whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matt. 5:28). The blessed Apostle pointed out these three kinds in the following verse: *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, and lust,”* and so on (Col. 3: 5).

8. There are three kinds of love of money: in the first, it prevents one who has renounced the world from divesting himself of all possessions; in the second, it compels one who has already given everything to the poor to acquire such possessions again; in the third, it stirs up a desire for acquisitions even in one who previously had nothing.

9. There are also three kinds of anger: the first is that which burns within; the second is that which bursts forth in word and deed; the third is that which smolders for a long time and is called rancor.

10. There are two kinds of sorrow: the first is that which comes after anger has subsided, or is caused by losses and damages suffered, and by the unfulfillment of desires; the second arises from fears and anxieties about one’s own fate, or from unreasonable worries.

11. **There are** two kinds of despondency: one plunges one into sleep, while the other drives one from the cell.

12. Though vanity takes many forms, it has two main kinds: in the first, we boast of physical advantages and visible things; in the second, we are inflamed by a desire for vain glory because of spiritual matters.

13. There are two kinds of pride: the first is carnal, and the second is spiritual, which is more destructive than the first. It especially tempts those who have excelled in certain virtues.

14. Although these eight passions tempt the entire human race, they do not attack everyone in the same way. For in one person, the spirit of lust takes precedence; in another, anger prevails; in yet another, vanity reigns; and in another, pride reigns supreme: so that although all passions assail everyone, each of us succumbs to them in a different way and order.

15. Therefore, we must wage war against these passions in such a way that each person, having discovered which passion is particularly harmful to him, directs his struggle primarily against it, using every effort and care to watch over it and suppress it, directing against it the spears of daily fasting, throwing at it, moment by moment, the arrows of the heart’s groans and sighs, and ceaselessly shedding tears in prayer to God for an end to the turmoil that agitates him. For no one can triumph over any passion until he is convinced that he cannot defeat it through his own diligence or effort; although it is necessary for him, in order to purify himself of it, to devote himself day and night to every effort and every concern in this regard.

16. When such a warrior feels that he has been freed from his foremost passion, he must then once again examine the recesses of his heart with full attention, so that, having seen which passion within him is still the strongest compared to the rest, he may direct all his spiritual weapons specifically against it. By overcoming his foremost passions in this way each time, he will more quickly and easily achieve victory over the remaining, lesser ones.

17. When you have triumphed over one or more passions, you must not become proud of this victory. Otherwise, the Lord, seeing the pride of your heart, will cease to shield and protect it—and you, abandoned by Him, will once again begin to be troubled by the very passion you had conquered—by the grace of God. And the Prophet would not have prayed, *“O Lord, do not deliver the soul that confesses to You to the beasts”* (Ps. 73:19), had he not known that those who are haughty in heart once again fall prey to the very passions they had conquered, so that they might be humbled.

5. The Struggle Against the Eight Principal Passions

1. In describing the struggle against the eight principal passions, we will outline their characteristics, identify their causes, and propose suitable remedies against them.

1. The Struggle Against Gluttony

1. The first struggle we must undertake is the struggle against gluttony, or the passion of overindulgence.

2. Regarding the practice of abstinence from food, or fasting, no single rule can be established that applies to everyone; for not all bodies have the same strength, and this virtue is observed not by the strength of the soul alone, but must also be commensurate with the strength of the body. It is not possible for everyone to fast for weeks at a time; some cannot go without food for more than two or three days, while others find it difficult to go without food until sunset. Nor are vegetables, herbs, or dry bread nourishing for everyone. Furthermore, one person may need two pounds to feel full, while another feels heavy after eating a pound or half a pound. But all who practice abstinence must have one goal: to eat according to their capacity without indulging in gluttony. For not only the quality of food but also its quantity relaxes the soul, kindling within it a harmful, sinful fire.

3. No matter what delicacies the stomach is filled with, this gives rise to the seeds of carnal lust, and the mind, weighed down by the burden of food, is no longer strong enough to steer the rudder of reason. It is not only the excessive consumption of wine that intoxicates the mind, but the overindulgence in all kinds of food usually makes it unsteady and wavering, and deprives it of pure and blameless thoughts. For the people of Sodom, the cause of their corruption and destruction was not only drunkenness, but also the overindulgence of the belly. Listen to how the Lord rebukes Jerusalem through the prophet (Ezek. 16:49). In what way did your sister, Sodom, sin, if not by eating her bread to the point of satiety and overindulgence? Since such satiety with bread inflamed them with the unquenchable fire of carnal lust, they were burned by sulfuric fire from heaven according to God’s judgment. If, in this way, their mere excess in the consumption of bread—driven by the passion for satiety—cast them into the turbulent abyss of depravity, what then can be said of those who, while in the prime of physical health, allow themselves to eat meat and drink wine in excessive quantities, consuming them not so much as their physical needs require, but as their self-indulgent lust dictates?

4. The Fathers defined moderation in food as this: that we should cease eating the food that necessity compels us to take to sustain the body’s life while we still feel like eating. Judging by this, even one who is physically frail can perfectly demonstrate the virtue of moderation, on a par with the strong and healthy, if by force of will he restrains his desire for food when the frailty of the flesh does not require it. For the Apostle also says: *“Do not gratify the desires of the flesh”* (Rom. 13:14). He did not entirely forbid caring for the body, but merely forbade doing so out of lust—he rejected lustful concern for the flesh, yet did not exclude reasonable care for it that is necessary for life; he forbade the former so that, by indulging the flesh, we might not fall into ruinous acts of lust, and he permitted the latter so that the body, being weakened by unreasonable severity, might not become powerless to carry out our spiritual pursuits and labors.

5. Thus, the degree of abstinence must be determined by the judgment of each person’s conscience. Everyone must set for themselves the degree of abstinence required by the struggle against the rebellion of the flesh. — Fasts prescribed by the canons must certainly be observed; but if abstinence in the consumption of food is not maintained afterward, observing them will not lead to perfect purity. Fasting during prolonged

periods will result only in temporary weakness and exhaustion of the body at that time, and not in the purity of chastity, if it is followed by the body being sated to the full: for the purity of the soul is inseparably linked to the fasting of the stomach. Those who are not content with maintaining a constant and even level of abstinence do not possess lasting purity of chastity. Strict fasts, if followed by excessive indulgence in food, are of no value, and their fruit is soon supplanted by the passion for gluttony. Why is it better to nourish oneself sensibly and in moderation with food every day than to observe long and extremely strict fasts from time to time? Excessive fasting not only undermines the steadfastness and firmness of the soul but also renders prayer lifeless due to the body's exhaustion.

6. To preserve the purity of soul and body, abstinence from food alone is not enough unless it is accompanied by other spiritual virtues. First and foremost, one must learn humility through the virtue of obedience, contrition of heart, and weariness of the body. One must not only avoid money and possessions but also root out the very desire for them. For it is not enough merely not to have them—which is usually the case out of necessity—but one must not allow the very desire to possess them, even if they were to be offered by chance. We must suppress the fury of anger, overcome the heaviness of sorrow, despise vain glory, trample the arrogance of pride, and also rein in the mind's fickle and wavering wanderings by constantly remembering God. We must always turn our hearts back from restless wandering to the contemplation of God, as soon as the crafty enemy, seeking to distract our minds from this contemplation, creeps into the recesses of the heart.

7. No one can ever suppress the stirrings of lust once it flares up unless they are strong enough to rein in the urges of gluttony. The purity of the inner person is recognized by the perfection of this virtue. For you would never believe that one whom you see overcome by the weakest in a light skirmish could contend in battle against the strongest opponents.

8. Therefore, first we must trample underfoot the lust for gluttony—and refine our minds not only through fasting but also through vigils, as well as through reading and constant contrition of heart, as we recall all that has tempted or overcome us, sometimes groaning in horror at the multitude of sins, sometimes burning with a desire for perfection and purity. And we must bring it to the point where, being occupied and, as it were, absorbed in such ascetic labors and thoughts, he regards the very act of nourishing himself with food not so much as a permitted source of pleasure as a burden imposed as punishment, and approaches it more as something unavoidably necessary for the body than as something desirable for the soul. If we constantly keep ourselves in such spiritual vigilance and contrition, we will soon subdue the lust of the flesh, which reaches extreme frenzy when stoked by food, and blunt its destructive sting. Thus, through an abundance of tears and unceasing weeping of the heart, we can extinguish the furnace of our body—kindled within us by the king of Babylon, that is, the devil—who sets us up for occasions of sin and stirs up our passions, by which we then, like the addition of oil and pitch to a furnace, burn even more fiercely (toward immorality); until, by God's grace, through the breath of His dewy Spirit in our hearts, the flames of carnal lust are completely extinguished within us. And here is our first struggle—to quench the lust for gluttony and self-indulgence with the desire for perfection! For this reason, we must not only suppress the desire for excessive food through contemplation of the virtues, but also consume the food necessary for our nature—which is unfavorable to chastity—only with careful and thoughtful attention of the heart. And we must organize the course of our lives in such a way that we are never distracted from spiritual pursuits, except when the weakness of the body compels us to attend to its necessary care. But even when we submit to this necessity—satisfying the needs of life rather than enslaving ourselves to the soul's desires—we must hasten as quickly as possible to set it aside, as a matter that distracts us from our salvific pursuits. And even during the meal itself, we must not fall behind in these pursuits. For we cannot in any way refrain from taking pleasure in the food set before us unless the soul, having fixed its attention on the contemplation of the Divine, takes even greater delight at the same time in the love of virtues and the beauty of necessary things. Indeed, everything in this world begins to be despised as transitory—when one keeps the gaze of the mind constantly fixed on imperishable and eternal goods, already tasting with the heart, even while still in the body, the bliss of the life to come.

9. Having conquered, through such a disposition, the lust for gluttony and overindulgence—no longer slaves to the flesh—we will be deemed worthy to enter into the highest battles: to fight against the impure forces, which usually engage in personal combat only with those who have already triumphed. Thus, the suppression of carnal desires proves to be the most solid foundation of all battles. Without conquering one's own flesh, no one can fight lawfully; and whoever does not fight lawfully is not crowned.

10. Do you want to hear a true warrior of Christ, fighting according to the legitimate rules of combat?—Listen carefully.—“I,” he says, “*run not as one who has no goal; I fight not as one who beats the air; but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:26–27). Do you see how he has established the main task of the struggle within himself—that is, in his own flesh—as if on the firmest foundation, and has combined the entire success of the struggle in the single act of exhausting the flesh and subduing his own body? “I,” he says, “*run in such a way, not aimlessly.*” He does not run aimlessly who, beholding the heavenly Jerusalem, has in it an unshakable goal toward which he must unwaveringly direct the swift course of his heart. He does not run toward uncertainty who, forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what lies ahead, strives for “*the honor of the higher calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3: 13–14), toward which he always directs the gaze of his mind and toward which he hastens with all the readiness of his heart, crying out with confidence: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*” (2 Tim. 4:7). And since he was aware of how tirelessly, with the keenest zeal of his whole conscience, he ran “*in the fragrance of Christ’s anointing*” (Song of Songs 1:3), and by mortifying the flesh had successfully won the victory in the spiritual battle; therefore, with unquestionable hope, he declares: “*There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day*” (2 Tim. 4:8). And in order to reveal to us as well this hope of reward, if we imitate him in the same course of struggle, he added: “*Not only to me, but to all who have loved His appearing*”, proclaiming that on the day of judgment we too will share in his crown if, by loving the coming of Christ—not only the coming in which He will appear even to those who do not wish it, but especially the coming in which He always descends to holy souls—we achieve victory in the spiritual struggle by mortifying the flesh. The Lord speaks of this last coming in the Gospel: “*I and the Father will come to him and make our home with him*” (John 14:23). And again: “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and I will dine with him, and he with Me*” (Rev. 3:20).

11. Moreover, the Apostle does not merely describe the feat of running that he accomplished, saying: “*I run in this way, not aimlessly*”: [which refers in particular to the aspiration of his mind and the fervor of his spirit, with which he followed Christ with all his passion, singing with the Bride: “*We follow You in the fragrance of Your peace*” (Song of Songs 1:3); and again: “*My soul clings to You*” (Ps. 62:9)]; but he also testifies that he won the victory in another kind of struggle when he says: “*Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air, but I mortify my body and bring it into subjection*”: which specifically refers to the painstaking labors of self-restraint, to bodily mortification, and to the exhaustion of the flesh. Here he presents himself as a vigilant wrestler against his own flesh, indicating that he did not strike it with the blows of self-restraint in vain, but that by mortifying his body he succeeded in securing the triumph of victory—when, having subdued it with the whips of self-restraint and exhausted it with the blows of fasting, he bestowed upon the victorious spirit the crown of immortality and the palm of incorruption. Do you see the lawful order of the battle, do you discern the outcome of the spiritual contests—how Christ the Warrior, having won victory over the rebellious flesh and cast it down at his feet, is carried as a great triumphant victor on the chariot of victory?! – He does not run in vain, for he is certain that he will soon enter the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. “*Thus he strives*” in fasting—that is, in mortifying the flesh—“*not as one striking the air,*” that is, not as one who strikes in vain with the blows of self-restraint, for by them he strikes not empty air, but the spirits of malice swirling within it, through the mortification of his body. For whoever says, “*not as one who beats the air,*” implies that it is not empty or void air that is struck, but also certain beings within it. Since he, having overcome these kinds of battles (i.e., with the body), now emerged adorned with many victory wreaths, he naturally began to face attacks from the strongest enemies; and, having triumphed over the first of them—the envious ones—he began to proclaim with confidence: “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Eph. 6:12).

12. For the warrior of Christ, as long as he is in the body, opportunities to win laurels for his battles never run out; but the more he is exalted by the successes of his victories, the more formidable a series of battles lies ahead of him. For after he has conquered and subdued his own flesh, what multitudes of adversaries, what hordes of enemies rise up against this victorious warrior of Christ, provoked by his victories! This is so that the warrior of Christ, basking in the peace of the world, may not forget the glorious battles of his struggle, and, having grown complacent from inactivity and a false sense of security from enemies, may

not lose the zeal and courage to display victorious valor worthy of the highest rewards. Therefore, if we wish to achieve the highest triumphs—not by diminishing but by growing in strength and courage—then we too must undergo the trials of battle in the same order: first, we must accomplish that which enables us to say with the Apostle, *“Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air; but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection,”*—and then, when we have prevailed in this battle, to enter into another, in the success of which we might again say with the Apostle: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”* For we cannot engage in battle against these in any other way than after victory over the flesh—and we will never be deemed worthy to experience the struggle against spirits if we are constantly defeated in the struggle against the flesh and overcome in the contest with the belly. And justly will the Apostle rebuke us, saying: *“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind”* (1 Cor. 10:13).

13. A monk who desires to achieve the feat of inner battles let him set this for himself in advance and take care that, before the hour for taking food—as determined by the rule and common to all—and especially outside of mealtimes, he by no means allow himself to partake of any food or drink, no matter how pleasant or sweet they may seem. Nor, even after the meal has ended, should he allow himself to indulge in anything of the sort, even in the slightest degree. Likewise, he must strictly observe the time and duration of sleep, as prescribed by the rule. And desires of this kind must be cut off with the same zeal with which we must cut off the stirrings of lustful passion. For whoever has been unable to suppress the excessive desires of the stomach—how will he be able to quench the fire of carnal lust? And whoever has been unable to subdue the obvious and minor passions—how will he be able to overcome the secret ones that arise without any witnesses?

14. It is not an external enemy we must fear; our enemy lies within ourselves. That is why an unceasing internal war rages within us. If we triumph in it, all external strife will become insignificant, and everything will be peaceful for the soldier of Christ, and all will be subject to him. We will have no reason to fear an enemy from without once what is within us, having been conquered, submits to the Spirit. We must not believe that, for the perfection of the heart and the purity of the body, the fast consisting solely of abstaining from visible foods is sufficient. No, to this we must also add the fast of the soul. For it, too, has its own harmful foods, from which, having become unaccustomed, it falls into the abyss of sensuality, even without an abundance of physical nourishment. — Self-condemnation is its food, and a most pleasant one at that. Anger, too, is its food, though not so light, and at times harmful, even deadly. Envy is the soul’s food, poisonously corrupting its vital juices and ceaselessly tormenting it—the wretched soul—with the happy successes of others. Her vanity is food that temporarily delights her with a pleasant taste, but afterward leaves her empty, stripped bare, and deprived of all virtue, rendering her barren and incapable of bearing spiritual fruit—and consequently not only deprives her of the reward for her immeasurable labors but also brings upon her severe punishments. Every lust and wandering of the fickle heart is a kind of grazing of the soul in a pasture of its own kind, feeding it with harmful fare, while depriving it of heavenly bread and solid food. Therefore, by abstaining from all this to the best of our ability in our holy fasting, we will make the observance of bodily fasting meaningful and fruitful. For the mortification of the flesh, when united with the contrition of the spirit, will present a most pleasing sacrifice to God and establish a dwelling place worthy of His holiness in the pure and beautifully adorned recesses of the heart. But if, while fasting physically, we become entangled in the most destructive passions of the soul, then the exhaustion of the flesh will be of no benefit to us, since we remain defiled in our most precious part—that is, when that part of our nature which is actually made the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit remains corrupt. For it is not the perishable flesh, but the pure heart that becomes a dwelling place for God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when our outer self fasts, we must also keep our inner self from harmful temptations. The Holy Apostle exhorts us to present it to God as pure, so that we may be deemed worthy to receive Christ as a guest within us, when he says: *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”* (Eph. 3:16–17).

15. We must choose food that tempers, rather than stirs up, the heat of carnal desire, and that is readily available and in accordance with the general custom and practice of the brethren. Gluttony manifests itself in three ways: one person is driven to eat before the hour set by the rule; another leads one to fill and overfill the stomach with food, whatever its nature; the third is satisfied only with the most pleasant and exquisite delicacies. Therefore, a monk must observe a threefold rule against this: first, to wait for the prescribed time when food is permitted; second, not to indulge in overindulgence; third, to be content with some simple and inexpensive food. And whatever is permitted in this regard that is not in accordance with common custom and

practice, the most ancient tradition of the Fathers does not approve of, as defiled by vanity, pride, and boastfulness. Nor have we seen anyone among those distinguished by the gift of knowledge and reason, nor have we known anyone among those whom God's grace has set forth as the most brilliant luminaries to be emulated, who would abstain from eating bread, which is considered simple and of little value. Conversely, we have never seen anyone among those who ate only greens, vegetables, and tree fruits who was counted among the most experienced men, or who was graced with discernment and knowledge.

16. Works of love should be preferred to fasting. We learned this from the Egyptian Fathers. For when we, desiring to learn the rules of these elders, came from Syria to Egypt, we were received there with astonishingly warm and heartfelt hospitality—and wherever we went, nowhere, for our comfort, did they insist on observing the fixed meal times prescribed by the rule, as we were accustomed to seeing in the monasteries of Palestine—but everywhere they allowed us to eat before that time, except on Wednesdays and Fridays. One of the elders, when we asked him why the rule of daily fasting was observed so loosely among them, replied: “Fasting is always with me, but I cannot keep you with me forever. Moreover, although fasting is very beneficial and always necessary, it is a voluntary sacrifice; whereas the practice of love is an urgent requirement of the commandment.” Therefore, by receiving Christ within you, I must nourish Him. But when I send you on your way, I can make up for the leniency shown for His sake by observing the strictest fast. For *“the wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast”* (Luke 5:34–35).

17. Extremes, as the Holy Fathers say, are equally harmful on both sides—both excessive fasting and overindulgence. We know of some who, though not overcome by gluttony, were brought down by excessive fasting and fell into the very same passion of gluttony because of the weakness resulting from excessive fasting.

18. We must be careful both not to eat before the appointed time or beyond moderation out of a desire for carnal pleasure, and to eat at the appointed hour even if we do not feel like it; for both an excessive desire for carnal pleasure and an aversion to food are stirred up by our enemy. Moreover, immoderate abstinence is more harmful than overindulgence; for from the latter, through repentance, one can return to proper conduct, whereas from the former, one cannot.

19. Our early Fathers often discussed how to navigate between these two extremes while observing reasonable moderation; they preferred bread to all other kinds of food and established the proper measure of its consumption as two small loaves weighing about a pound.

20. The general rule of moderation in abstinence is that each person, in accordance with their strength, physical condition, and age, should eat only as much food as is necessary to maintain physical health, and not as much as the desire for satiety demands. Whoever does not observe a consistent measure—fasting excessively at one time and overeating at another—and thereby harms both prayer and chastity: prayer, because without food one cannot be alert in prayer, but rather, overcome by weakness, drifts off to sleep; and chastity, because the fire of carnal lust, which is kindled by excessive eating, continues to burn even during strict fasting.

21. Moderate eating, according to the Fathers, consists in consuming just enough food each day so that one still feels hungry after eating. Such moderation will keep the soul and body in balance and prevent a person from falling into either excessive fasting, which weakens the body, or overindulgence, which stifles the spirit.

22. We offer one more salvific instruction from Blessed Macarius, so that we may edifyingly conclude our book on fasting and abstinence with the opinion of such a man. He says that a monk must practice fasting so wisely as if he were to remain in the body for a hundred years; and he must restrain the movements of the soul—forgiving offenses, casting aside sorrow, and attaching no importance to griefs and losses—as if he were capable of dying every day. In regard to the first—that is, fasting—he advises a prudence beneficial to the soul, which would compel the monk to always walk the path of steady rigor in abstinence, not allowing him, even in the event of physical exhaustion, to shift from rigor to excess; and with regard to the second—that is, the restraint of the soul's movements—a saving magnanimity that would be strong enough not only to despise what seems prosperous in this world, but also to remain unshaken by misfortunes and sorrows, and to disregard them as insignificant, keeping the gaze of one's mind constantly fixed on the place where one expects to be called every day and every minute.

2. The Struggle Against the Spirit of Lust

1. According to the tradition of the Fathers, our second struggle is against the spirit of lust—a struggle longer and more constant than any other, and one that very few have completely overcome—a fierce battle that begins at the first stage of maturity and does not cease until the other passions have been conquered. Since the rebellion here is twofold, armed with two kinds of weapons for battle, it must also be opposed with two kinds of weapons in hand. Physical fasting alone is not enough to attain perfect purity of chastity; it must be surpassed by contrite repentance of the spirit and unceasing prayer against this most impure spirit; then unceasing study of the Scriptures combined with intellectual reflection, as well as physical labor and manual work, which keep the heart from wandering and bring it back to itself; and above all, deep and true humility, without which victory over any passion can never be attained.

2. The transformation of this passion depends *on the* complete purification *of the* heart, from which, according to the Lord's word, *the* poison of this disease flows. "*For from the heart,*" He says, "*come evil thoughts... adultery, fornication,*" and so on (Matt. 15:19). Therefore, one must first purify that from which the source of life and death flows, as Solomon says: "*Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*" (Prov. 4:23); for the flesh is subject to its will and power. The law of fasting and frugal eating must certainly be followed with all diligence, so that the flesh, sated by an abundance of food, does not, in defiance of the soul's commands, cast down its ruler—the spirit—in its wild excess. But if we reduce the whole essence of our endeavor to mere physical exhaustion, without at the same time fasting with our soul from other passions, and without engaging it in either instruction in the divine or other spiritual activities; then we will by no means be able to ascend to the very heights of true purity; for in such a case, that which is dominant within us will defile our body, even if it were pure. Therefore, we must, as the Lord instructs, "*first cleanse the inside of the cups and dishes, so that their outside may also be clean*" (Matt. 23:26).

3. Other passions are usually purified, among other things, through interaction with people and daily activities and tasks with them, and are healed, in a way, by the very unpleasantness and annoyance caused by succumbing to them. For example, outbursts of anger, insults, and impatience—in addition to heartfelt instruction and vigilant attention—are also cured by visiting the brethren and frequently bringing these passions to light. Since they are more readily revealed when one is thus provoked, they are more frequently exposed and, consequently, more quickly healed. But this illness, when the body is exhausted and the heart is crushed, also requires solitude and withdrawal from people, so that, with the causes of its destructive, feverish agitation thus removed, one may more quickly attain a state of complete recovery. Just as it is beneficial for those suffering from any illness that foods harmful to them not even be brought before their eyes, lest a deadly desire arise in them at the sight of them: so too do silence and solitude greatly contribute to the expulsion of this particular disease (lust), so that the ailing soul, not being distracted by various people and things, may more freely ascend to the purest intellectual contemplation, and through this may more easily uproot the contagious stirrings of lust.

4. It is one thing to be abstinent, and another to be pure, having attained a serene state of chaste integrity and virginal innocence. Such a virtue is attributed solely to those who are virgins in both soul and body, such as, for example, both Johns (the Forerunner and the Evangelist) in the New Testament, and Elijah, Jeremiah, and Daniel in the Old Testament. It is not unjust to honor, on the same level as them, those who, after a fall, through long ascetic labors and zealous pursuit of what was lost, have attained a state of purity and integrity of soul and body similar to theirs, and who feel the stirrings of the flesh not so much as an attack of shameful lust as merely a natural impulse. And so, we say, it is extremely difficult to attain such a state among the masses—is it not even impossible?—Let no one, however, expect to learn this from our reasoning, but let each one arrive at this conclusion through the examination of his own conscience. — We have no doubt that there are many who practice self-restraint, who drive away and suppress the assaults of the flesh—whether experienced rarely or daily—either through fear of Gehenna or through the desire for the Kingdom of Heaven. Regarding them, the elders hold that although they may not be completely overwhelmed or defeated by passionate stirrings, they cannot, however, be safe from attacks or entirely invulnerable. For one who is in the position of a fighter, even though he often defeats and overcomes his opponent, will inevitably sometimes experience anxiety and wounding himself.

5. If, in our hearts, we are rightfully called, along with the Apostle, to engage in spiritual struggle (2 Tim. 2:5), then—not relying on our own strength (for human efforts are not sufficient to accomplish this)—but trusting in the Lord's help, let us strive with all zeal to overcome this most impure spirit. For this passion

will not cease to contest the soul's victory until the soul realizes that successfully waging such a struggle is beyond its strength, and that by its own labors and efforts it cannot possibly achieve victory unless it is strengthened by the Lord's help and intercession.

6. And indeed, if every success in virtue is a work of the Lord's grace, and the overcoming of every passion is His victory, then this work in particular (i.e., the attainment of purity and the overcoming of lustful passion) is a special grace and gift, as confirmed by the teachings of the Holy Fathers and the experiences of purification from this passion, according to the testimony of those who have been deemed worthy to attain it. For to feel no sting from the flesh is, in a certain sense, the same as, while remaining in the body, to step outside the flesh; to be clothed in the flesh yet to be outside of nature. And therefore it is impossible for a person to soar on his own—so to speak, on his own wings—to such a heavenly height of perfection, unless the Lord's grace, through the gift of purity, lifts him out of the mire of the earth. For no virtue brings carnal people so close to the heavenly angels, in imitating their way of life, as the attainment of the grace of purity, through which they, while still living on earth, have, according to the Apostle, *"a dwelling in heaven"* (Phil. 3: 20), and here, in their mortal flesh, already possess what is promised to the saints in the life to come, after they have laid aside their mortal bodies.

7. Listen to what the Apostle says: *"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things"* (1 Cor. 9:25). He holds up the athlete in the arena as a model for us in our spiritual struggle. To succeed in the contests, the athlete not only abstains from all forbidden food, drunkenness, and intoxication, but also from inactivity, idleness, and laziness, striving through constant practice and dedication to the task to develop his strength and acquire skill; he sets aside all worry and sorrow regarding worldly and marital affairs, preoccupying himself solely with the concern of how to achieve success and obtain the victor's wreath; Above all, he takes care to keep himself pure from carnal defilement, so that even in his sleep he might not be led astray by shameful dreams, and thereby diminish the strength acquired through long time and no small effort. Here you see everything that a spiritual ascetic ought to do; you also see that, for success in your spiritual endeavor, you too must above all preserve purity and chastity. For if purity is so essential in worldly, external contests for fleeting crowns, how much more essential is it in our spiritual, inner striving for heavenly crowns? We are required not only to maintain external purity from carnal sin or involuntary defilement, but above all to maintain the inner purity of thought and feeling. We must guard the very depths of our hearts with every means of preservation. What those (competitors in the arena) desire to possess only physically, we must possess in the depths of our conscience, where our Lord, the Judge of our deeds, beholds every movement of our will down to the smallest detail. We must, therefore, prevent from arising within us even the careless thought of what we fear to do openly, and avoid defiling ourselves—even by secret consent in our hearts—with what we are ashamed to reveal before others. For although this may be hidden from people, it cannot be concealed from the angels or from Almighty God Himself, from whom no secrets are hidden.

8. A sign and measure of the perfection of purity we have attained is this: when we are at rest or indulging in deep sleep, no seductive image arises within us; or if one does arise, it is not strong enough to stir up any lustful desires. For such an impulse, though not counted as full guilt in sin, nevertheless serves as a sure sign that the soul has not yet attained perfection, and shows that passion has not yet been completely eradicated, when dreamlike images manage to produce this kind of defilement.

9. The quality of one's thoughts, which is not entirely carefully guarded amid the distractions of the day, is revealed during the night's rest; and therefore, when the aforementioned transgression occurs, it is not the dream that should be held responsible, but rather the failure to maintain vigilance in the preceding time, and one should see in this a manifestation of an illness hidden within, which the night did not bring into being for the first time (as if it had not existed before), but which—hidden in the inner fibers of the soul—was brought to the surface of the skin while the body was being strengthened by sleep, revealing the inner feverish heat of passion that we ourselves had kindled by feeding on unwholesome thoughts throughout the day. Likewise, physical illnesses are not generated at the very moment they become apparent, but are acquired in the time preceding that, when a person, eating carelessly and consuming all manner of food harmful to health, accumulates disease-causing fluids within themselves.

10. God Himself, the Creator and Maker of the entire human race, knowing the nature of His creation better than anyone, directs the cure to the very source from which the causes of this passionate disease primarily arise, when He says: *"Anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:28). In remarking on the lust of the eyes, He condemns not so much

the eyes themselves as that inner feeling which misuses their service in seeing. This heart, sick and wounded by the arrow of lust, looks with desire—the gift of sight, granted by the Creator for good, is turned by its own passion to serve evil deeds, and the disease of lust hidden within it is brought to light through the act of looking. That is why the saving commandment is prescribed to the one whose passion causes evil wounding through sight. For it is not said, “Guard your eyes with all diligence,” but rather, “*Guard your heart with all diligence*” (Prov. 4:23).

11. Let our first and foremost act in preserving the purity of our hearts be this: whenever, through the subtle wiles of the devil’s malice, a thought of any woman—be it our mother, sisters, relatives, or even holy women—creeps into our minds, let us hasten to banish it from our thoughts as quickly as possible; lest, if we linger too long in such thoughts, our enemy, the deceiver, might imperceptibly divert our minds from these women to others through whom he could sow thoughts harmful to the soul. Therefore, in striving to fulfill the commandment, “*Guard your heart with all diligence*,” we must, according to God’s original command, carefully “*guard*” the venomous “*head*” of the serpent (Gen. 3)—that is, the beginnings of evil thoughts through which the devil attempts to creep into our soul; so that, if its head were to penetrate our heart through our negligence, its entire body would not creep in as well—that is, impure thoughts and consent to sinful pleasure would not arise. For once the enemy is let in, having captured the soul, he will inevitably kill it with his poisonous torment. We must also “*strike down the sinners arising in our land*”—that is, our carnal desires—“*at the very dawn of their birth*” (Ps. 100:8), and “*smash the sons of Babylon against a rock*” while they are still infants (–136:9). For if they are not crushed while they are still tender and weak, then, having grown up through our indulgence, they will rise up against us with great strength, and—either destroy us, or, if they are defeated, certainly not without great sighs and toil. For “*when the strong man*”—that is, our spirit—“*has armed himself and guards his house*,” that is, protects the peace of our heart with the Fear of God, then “*his possessions are at peace*” (Luke 11:21), that is, the fruits of his labors and virtues, acquired over a long period of time. “*But when one stronger than he comes and overcomes him*,” that is, the devil through consent to the thoughts he instills, then “*he will take away all his weapons, on which he relied*,” that is, the remembrance of the Scriptures, or the fear of God, “*and will scatter his plunder*” (Luke 11: 22), that is, his skills in virtue will be scattered by all manner of vices opposed to them.

12. “*This*,” says St. Paul, “*is the will of God—your sanctification*” (1 Thess. 4:3). And so as to leave us with no doubt or obscure misunderstanding as to what exactly he means by holiness—whether truth, or love, or humility, or patience—for holiness is attained through all these virtues—he goes on to specify directly what he actually meant by holiness: “*This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God*” (1 Thess. 4:3–5). See how he extols chastity, calling it the honor of the vessel—that is, our body—and a sanctuary. Consequently, on the contrary, whoever remains in lustful passion is in a state of dishonor and impurity and lives far from holiness. – A little further on, St. Paul adds, again calling chastity “*”*”: “*For God did not call us to impurity, but to holiness. Therefore, whoever rejects this does not reject a human being, but God, who has given His Holy Spirit within us*” (ibid., vv. 7–8). He gave his commandment unbreakable power and importance when he said—that whoever rejects this, that is, what I have said, does not despise a person, that is, me who commands this, but God, speaking through me, Who has appointed our hearts as a dwelling place for His Holy Spirit. Do you see how, in simple words, he extolled this virtue! First, he actually attributes holiness to it; second, he asserts that through it the vessel of our body is freed from all impurity; third, that by casting out shameful impurity, this vessel will be held in honor, like a sanctuary; and finally, that its greatest advantage is that through it the Holy Spirit will dwell in our hearts.

13. I will also cite another testimony similar to this one from the same Apostle. —Writing to the Hebrews, he says: “*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*” (Heb. 12:14). Here, too, he clearly affirms that without holiness—which he usually refers to as the purity and chastity of soul and body—it is utterly impossible to see God.

14. The higher and more heavenly the dignity of chastity is, the more intense are the slanders it provokes from the enemy. That is why we must all the more diligently observe not only bodily abstinence but also contrition of heart, with ceaseless sighs of prayer, so that the furnace of our flesh—which the King of Babylon ceaselessly attempts to kindle with the embers of carnal temptations— may be constantly extinguished and cooled by the dew of the Holy Spirit descending into our hearts.

15. We can maintain this state of mind constantly if we always remember that God is the Watcher of night and day and the Knower not only of our secret deeds but also of all our thoughts—and believe that we must give Him an account for everything that turns in our hearts, just as for all our deeds and actions.

16. So that even during sleep impure dreams may not defile us, we must always observe a consistently moderate fast. For whoever violates a reasonable measure of strictness in abstaining from food will inevitably go beyond the proper measure of leniency in this matter as well. And as the measure of our nourishment changes, so too must the quality of our purity inevitably change. – But in this we must maintain constant humility of heart and patience, as well as careful self-guard against anger and other passions throughout the day. For as soon as the fire of anger takes hold within us, the heat of lust will easily follow. Above all, it is necessary to remain vigilant and watchful over oneself at night. For just as purity and self-discipline during the day prepare the way for purity at night, so too does nighttime vigilance provide the heart—as well as our self-awareness—with the strength and fortitude to resist all that is impure during the day.

17. Is it possible to completely extinguish the fire of lust, the heat of which our flesh seems to feel as if by nature?—Let us first consider what Blessed Paul has to say on this matter. “*Put to death*,” he says, “*your earthly members*” (Col 3:5). Which members, then, does he command us to put to death? – Certainly not to cut off hands and feet or any other parts; but to destroy the sinful body, of which he speaks elsewhere: “*Let the sinful body of the flesh be put to death*” (Rom. 6:6)—and which, like any other body, has its own members. It is these that the Apostle commands us to put to death. And he immediately lists exactly which ones they are. – For after saying, “*Put to death your members that are on earth*,” he continues: “*sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry*.” The first member is “*fornication*”: this is the sin of unlawful carnal union; the second member is “*impurity*,” which sometimes occurs without any physical contact with a woman, either during sleep or while awake; the third element—“*passion*”—which, lying in the depths of the soul, can be kindled even without the influence of physical desire; the fourth element—“*evil lust*”—which may refer not only to the aforementioned impure passion but also, in general, to all pernicious desires, and which is nothing but a disease of a depraved will; The Apostle identifies “*greed*” as the final element of the sinful body, suggesting that one must not only abstain from desiring the possessions of others but also generously despise one’s own, as the early community of believers mentioned in the Book of Acts indeed did (Acts 4:32, 35). From all that has been said, I draw the following conclusion: if many, for Christ’s sake, renounced their possessions—so that they cut off from their hearts not only the possession of money but also the desire for it—then it follows that lustful passion can be extinguished in the same way. For the Apostle would not have combined the impossible with the possible. But recognizing both as possible, he commanded that both be put to death. – And so confident was the blessed Paul in the possibility of eradicating the lustful passion from our members that he not only commanded that it be put to death, but also decreed that not even its name be uttered among us, saying: “*But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place*” (Eph. 5:3–4). Therefore, there can be no doubt that the passion of fornication can be eradicated from our members—since the Apostle commanded that they be cut off just as covetousness, idle talk, and mockery are, all of which are easily cut off.

18. However, we must know that even if we observe the strictest form of abstinence—namely, hunger, thirst, vigil, and constant labor—and devote ourselves with unwavering zeal to reading books that save the soul; we cannot, however, by these efforts alone, attain the unceasing purity of chastity unless the special grace of God comes to our aid. Let everyone know that he must tirelessly practice these ascetic exercises solely so that, through the sorrow they patiently endure, and thereby draw God’s mercy upon himself, so that he may be deemed worthy of the divine gift of deliverance from the battle of the flesh and from the dominion of prevailing passions—and not in the hope that, by his own efforts through these deeds, he might attain the unshakable purity of bodily chastity which he so desires and seeks.

19. Desires for these things cannot be suppressed or rejected unless they are replaced by other, salvific desires. Therefore, if we wish to eradicate carnal desires from our hearts, we must quickly replace them with spiritual desires, so that our spirit, always striving toward their objects, may have neither the inclination nor the time to pay attention to the allure of fleeting earthly joys. And when our spirit, through daily practice in spiritual endeavors, becomes established in this mindset of detachment from all things, then it will understand through experience the power of the following verse, which we all often repeat, but whose power is known only to a few who are experienced: “*I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I*

shall not be shaken” (Ps. 15: 8). Only those who have attained the purity of body and spirit of which we speak truly comprehend the power and meaning of this verse—those who realize that they are guarded by the Lord at every moment so that they do not stray back to their former ways, and that His right hand—that is, their holy deeds—is constantly protected by Him. For the Lord is always present with His saints, not on the left side—since a holy man has nothing on the left, that is, nothing evil—but on the right. But to sinners and the impure, He remains invisible, because they lack the right side, where He is usually present.

20. There are many degrees of chastity by which one ascends to unshakable purity. I will divide the ladder of such perfection in chastity into six degrees, which, however, are in reality traversed imperceptibly, just as our bodies imperceptibly grow each day and, without our knowledge, reach their perfect form. – The “*first*” degree of chastity is when a monk is not troubled by carnal lust while awake; – the “*second*” is when the mind does not linger on lustful thoughts; the “*third*” is when, at the sight of a woman, he is not in the least disturbed by desire; the “*fourth*” is when, while awake, he does not allow even the slightest physical movement; the “*fifth*” is when even the subtlest consent to a physical act does not disturb the mind when reasoning or reading brings to mind human birth; “*the sixth*”—if one is not disturbed even in sleep by seductive dreams about women.

21. Complete chaste purity, beginning with abstinence from lustful thoughts and movements, is distinguished by the perfect stilling of carnal stirrings and peace from them. Fully matured chastity always preserves the unshakable and steadfast purity of body and soul, and is nothing other than holiness. This occurs when the “*flesh*,” having ceased to “*lust after the spirit*,” begins to harmonize with the spirit’s desires and virtue, and when the two are united by a firm bond, and, as the Psalmist says, come to dwell together as brothers (Ps. 132: 1). – Then God is with them; for it is said that “*His dwelling place is in peace*” (Ps. 75:3)—that is, not in the clamor of strife and the struggle against passions, but in the peace of chastity and in the constant tranquility of the heart. For when someone, by subduing carnal passions, is deemed worthy to attain this place of peace, he simultaneously becomes a dwelling place of God.

3. The Struggle Against the Spirit of Greed

1. The third struggle we face is against the spirit of avarice, —a passion foreign and uncharacteristic of our nature, and one that arises in a monk from nothing other than the faintheartedness of a weak-willed soul that is not properly disposed, and for the most part from a poorly conceived beginning of renunciation of the world, the foundation of which was not a fervent love for God. Other movements of the passions seem to have their origin within us, as if implanted in human nature and somehow ingrained in the flesh. Since they are present from the moment of our birth, their activity precedes the manifestation in us of the ability to distinguish between good and evil—and they can be overcome only through long and arduous effort. But this disease (greed) comes later than they do and is imposed on the soul from without; therefore, it may be more easily prevented and cast out. But if, through carelessness, it is neglected and once admitted into the heart, it becomes the most destructive of all and the most difficult to expel: for it becomes the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10), serving as a source of various passions.

2. If this passion gains a hold on a monk’s faint-hearted and cold soul, it first prompts him to seek small gains, painting vivid pictures of certain reasons—seemingly just and reasonable—why he must either set aside some money for himself when renouncing the world or acquire it afterward. “What is provided in the monastery,” it complains, “is insufficient and barely tolerable for a healthy and strong body. What will you do if you fall ill and have nothing set aside for such an occasion to help yourself in your infirmity? Monastic provisions are meager, and the neglect of the sick is great.” If you have nothing of your own that you could use to restore your physical health, you will be forced to die a miserable death. — And even the clothing provided by the monastery is insufficient unless you manage to set aside something with which to buy yourself another set. Finally, it is not possible to live in the same monastery forever; and in that case, if you do not set aside money for travel expenses and the sea crossing, you will not be able to move on from there whenever you wish, and thus, constrained by extreme poverty, you will constantly lead a miserable, labor-filled life without any success. – When a monk entangles his mind with such thoughts, he begins to devise ways to acquire even a single denarius; and to this end, he seeks out some private work, which he performs with the utmost care, without his Abba’s knowledge. After secretly selling it and receiving the coveted coin, he frets and fusses over it, wondering where to put it or to whom to entrust it for safekeeping; meanwhile, an even more acute concern has already begun to gnaw at him: how to double that coin—and he

intently devises elaborate plans for what to buy with it and what financial maneuvers to employ to achieve this. And when he succeeds in this, as he desires, a most insatiable greed for gold arises within him, which then flares up ever more intensely the greater the profit he reaps: for as his money multiplies, so does the frenzy of his passion for it. Other anxious thoughts further fan the flames: the prospect of a long life, advanced old age, and various prolonged infirmities—which will be impossible to endure in old age unless one accumulates a large amount of money in one's younger years. – Thus, the wretched soul, bound by the chains of this serpent (the love of money), is drawn farther and farther along, in a desire to multiply—with unseemly anxiety—a fortune that was ill-gotten from the start, thereby breeding within itself a poison that devours her ever more cruelly, like a flame. Consumed entirely by greedy thoughts, she turns her heart's gaze to nothing but the source from which she might obtain money, so that with it she might flee as quickly as possible from the yoke of monastic austerity. As soon as any hope of obtaining money flashes before her, she no longer values anything: for its sake, she will not shrink from lying, breaking an oath, stealing, or betraying her fidelity. In short, gold and the hope of gain are her god in all things, just as the belly is for others. That is why the blessed Apostle, foreseeing the destructive poison of this disease, called it not only the root of all evil but also idolatry, saying: *“and covetousness”* (—put to death), *“which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5).

3. There are three kinds of this affliction, which all the Fathers condemn with equal abhorrence: one is the one whose destructiveness we have described above—which, by deceiving certain unfortunate souls, persuades them to accumulate what they did not even possess before, when they lived in the world; the second is that which prompts them to desire again and reclaim what they left behind at the beginning of their renunciation of the world; the third is that which, arising from the very ill-conceived beginning of monastic life—accepted with an imperfect renunciation of all things—prevents those whom it manages to infect with this spiritual coldness from completely divesting themselves of all worldly possessions, by frightening them with the prospect of future deprivation and weakening them through unbelief: and then, because they have retained money and other property—which they were supposed to have left behind upon renouncing the world—it no longer allows them to attain Gospel perfection in any way— And in Holy Scripture we find examples of the condemnation of these three kinds of downfall, accompanied by severe punishments for them. Thus, Gehazi, desiring to obtain what he had not possessed before, not only failed to receive the grace of prophecy—which he was to have received from his teacher, as it were by hereditary succession—but was also struck with leprosy by Elisha's curse (2 Kings 5:21, 27). Judas, on the other hand, desiring to reclaim the money he had previously rejected when he followed Christ, not only fell into the betrayal of the Lord and lost his apostolic office, but was also not granted a natural end to his life, bringing it to a close by suicide (Matt. 27:5); and Ananias and Sapphira, having withheld a portion of what they owned, were sentenced to death by the Apostles (Acts 5:1–11).

4. Concerning those who have renounced the world but were later overcome by unbelief and fear to remain stripped of all earthly possessions, Deuteronomy mysteriously prescribes: *“Any man who is fearful and fainthearted”* (let him not go out to war) *“shall go and return to his home; so that he may not strike fear into the heart of his brother, as he has done to his own heart”* (Deut. 20: 8). What, one might ask, could be more evident than this prophecy? Does not Holy Scripture clearly desire that they should rather not even aspire to such a calling, nor take its name upon themselves, than to weaken others with their words and bad example through their unfounded fear, and lead them away from Gospel perfection? Therefore, they are commanded to withdraw from the battle and return to their homes, for no one with a divided heart can fight in the Lord's war. For *“a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:8). And upon reflecting on the meaning of that Gospel parable—in which it is said that a king, having gone out with ten thousand men against another who was marching against him with twenty thousand, and not hoping to succeed in battle against him while the other was still far off, sent to ask for peace (obviously not wishing to begin the battle at all)— we come to the same conclusion: that it is better for the persons mentioned above not to begin renouncing the world at all than, having begun, to fail to persevere in it earnestly and with complete precision, thereby exposing themselves to great danger. For, as the Wise One says, *“It is better for you not to make a promise than, having promised, not to fulfill it”* (Eccl. 5: 4). It is well said here that one goes forth with ten thousand, while the other with twenty. For the number of passions that assail us is greater than the number of good dispositions fighting on our behalf. But *“no one can... serve both God and mammon”* (Matt. 6:24), and: *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:62).

5. Such people usually try to justify their continued greed by appealing to the authority of Holy Scripture. By misinterpreting it, they are only too happy to distort and alter at will the meaning of the Apostle and even the Lord Himself, failing to adapt their own lives or understanding to the meaning of Scripture, but instead twisting Scripture to suit their own self-indulgence. Wishing to demonstrate in this instance as well that Scripture agrees with their opinion, they say: “It is written: *‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’* (Acts 20:35).” By interpreting these words in the most perverse manner, they believe that they completely nullify the force of the saying that states: *“If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me”* (Matt. 19:21). They think that, based on such a plausible argument, they should not give up their wealth, and they proclaim themselves to be even more blessed than those who have given it up, when, being themselves secure through their former possessions, they share the surplus with others; whereas they are ashamed to embrace, with the Apostle, glorious poverty for Christ’s sake, and do not wish to be content with the labor of their own hands and the meager monastic sustenance. They are left with one of two options: either to acknowledge that they have deceived themselves and have never renounced the world, since they are so attached to their former wealth; or, if they wish to test the monastic calling through deeds and labor, to reject and disperse everything, so that, retaining nothing for themselves of what they have renounced, they may boast with the Apostle of hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:27).

6. There is a saying attributed to St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, which he addressed to a senator who was frozen in the kind of—who, while claiming to have renounced the world, retained some of his property, unwilling to support himself by the labor of his own hands or to learn true humility through poverty in all things, arduous labor, and monastic obedience. “And,” he said to him, “you have lost your status as a senator and have not become a monk.”

7. Therefore, if we wish to lawfully engage in spiritual struggle, let us drive this destructive enemy from our hearts—for while it is no great feat to defeat him, to be defeated by him is dishonorable and disgraceful. For to be defeated by a strong opponent, though painful because of being cast down, and regrettable because of the loss of victory, yet in such a case the defeated derive some consolation from the awareness of their opponent’s strength. But if one must endure this when the opponent is weak, and the nature of the struggle is not difficult, then the humiliating shame will cause far greater pain than the pain of being cast down, and the disgrace will be a far heavier burden.

8. Final victory and complete triumph over this enemy can be expected only when the monk’s conscience is not stained by the possession of even the smallest coin. For whoever, having been carried away by even a small monetary gift, has once taken root in his heart the seed of covetous desire, it is impossible not to be immediately consumed by the fire of desire for greater things. And a soldier of Christ will remain victorious, will be beyond all danger, and will be immune to the assault of this passion, only as long as this most vile spirit has not sown the seeds of its lust in his heart. Just as, in all kinds of passions, one must primarily guard against the head of the serpent, so too, with regard to this one, one must take the most meticulous precautions to ensure that its head does not penetrate inward in any way. For if it is allowed to enter, nourished by its own substance and growing in strength, it will of its own accord kindle an excessive fire. And therefore, one must not only fear the possession of money, but the very desire for it must be completely eradicated from the soul; and it is not so much a matter of avoiding acts of greed as of cutting off its passion at the root: for the lack of money will bring us no benefit if the desire to have it remains within us.

9. Even one who lacks money may not be free from the disease of avarice; and it will be of no benefit to strip oneself of all possessions if one has failed to cut off the passion of greed, having taken pleasure in the act of becoming destitute rather than in the virtue of poverty itself, and having come to terms with the harsh necessity (of doing so) not without a heavy heart. For just as the Gospel proclaims some who are not defiled in body to be unclean in heart (Matt. 5:28), so too those who are not in the least burdened by the weight of money may be condemned along with the avaricious, in heart and mind. They lacked only the opportunity to acquire wealth, not the will, which in God’s eyes always carries more weight than necessity. That is why we must take every possible care to ensure that the fruits of our labor are not lost in vain: for it is truly regrettable to suffer the consequences of stripping oneself of everything and falling into poverty, only to lose the fruits of this due to the barren, sinful desires of the will.

10. Do you want to know what pernicious fruits this passion bears and what offshoots of other passions it gives rise to, to the ruin of whoever embraces it—if it is not thoroughly eradicated? Look at Judas, who was

counted among the Apostles! How did it—since he did not wish to crush the deadly head of this serpent—destroy him with its poison, entangling him in the snares of its lust, and cast him into what a precipitous abyss of crime, when it taught him to sell the Redeemer of the world and the Author of human salvation for thirty pieces of silver? He would never have been driven to such a godless act of betrayal had he not been infected with the disease of greed, nor would he have become the sacrilegious instigator of the Lord's murder had he not previously grown accustomed to stealing from the treasury entrusted to him.

11. Here is the most striking example of the tyranny of this passion, which, as we have said, once it has taken hold of his soul, no longer allows him to observe any rule of honesty, and no amount of profit can ever satisfy it. For the end of its frenzy lies not in becoming rich, but in stripping oneself of everything. Take this very Judas, for example: having been given control of the funds set aside for distribution to the poor—so that, having sated himself with the abundance of this money, he might at least temper his passion—he, on the contrary, was so inflamed by an unbridled passion that he not only secretly stole from the funds but also desired to sell the Lord Himself. For the frenzy of this passion cannot be sated by any amount of wealth.

12. That is why St. Peter the Apostle, knowing that it is impossible for one who possesses anything out of passion to keep the love of money within proper bounds, and that the end of this passion is not determined by a sum—whether small or large—but by complete detachment from all things, punished Ananias and Sapphira with death for having withheld something for themselves from their possessions. And they perished because of a lie born of greed, just as Judas destroyed himself through the sin of betraying the Lord. What a similarity there is between them in both crime and punishment! There, the love of money led to betrayal; here, to lies. There, the truth is betrayed; here, the sin of lying is committed. Although the act of sin there and here may not appear similar, they both converge on the same goal. The former, in order to escape poverty, coveted once again what he had rejected; and the latter, in order not to become poor, attempted to keep for themselves a portion of their possessions, which they were obliged either to bring faithfully to the Apostles or to distribute entirely to the brethren. That is why, in both cases, the same punishment of death ensued: for both sins sprang from the same root—the love of money. — If, then (to take this further), such a severe sentence was passed on those who did not covet the possessions of others but sought to keep their own and had no desire to acquire more, but only a desire to preserve what they had, what then can be said of those who covet to amass money they never possessed, and who, while appearing poor before people, are revealed before God to be rich in the passion of greed?

13. Those who are greedy must be regarded as lepers of spirit and soul, like Gezuius, who, coveting the perishable money of this world, was struck by a contagious and unclean leprosy. Through this, he left us a clear indication that a soul defiled by the sinful passion of greed is afflicted by the spiritual contagion of the passions and stands before the eyes of the Lord as unclean, under eternal condemnation.

14. Therefore, if, striving for perfection, you have left everything and followed Christ, heeding His word: *“Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me”* (Matt. 19: 21), then why, having already put your hand to the plow, do you look back, only to be declared unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven by the very words of the Lord Himself (Luke 9: 62)? Having been placed on the roof—the height of Gospel perfection—why do you go back into your house to take from there anything that you had so willingly despised before (Luke 17:31)? Having been placed in the field of virtuous deeds, why do you once again strive to burden yourself with worldly possessions, from which you stripped yourself when you renounced the world?—If, warned by poverty at that time, you had nothing to leave behind, then all the more so should you now refrain from acquiring what you did not previously possess. It was by God's special favor toward you that you were thus prepared (through poverty to renounce the world)—so that, unhindered by any bonds of worldly possessions, you might hasten all the more to Him. However, let none of the poor feel humiliated because of this (that they have nothing to leave behind); for there is no one who does not have something to leave behind. He who has cut off at the root the very passion for acquiring worldly possessions has renounced all worldly possessions.

15. We cannot preserve this virtue of non-possessiveness whole and unharmed except by living in a monastery, if, as the Apostle says, *“having food and clothing, we will be content with these”* (1 Tim. 6:8).

16. Therefore, keeping in mind the condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira, let us be afraid to hold on to anything that we have vowed to abandon completely, intending to renounce the world. Fearing also the example of Gehazi, who was punished with incurable leprosy for the sin of greed, let us be careful not to acquire what we did not previously possess. Equally horrified by both Judas's wickedness and his fate, let us

do our utmost to avoid accumulating money again, which we have renounced once and for all. – Above all else, reflecting on the mortality of our nature and the uncertainty of the hour of our death, let us take care that when the Day of the Lord comes, like a thief in the night, it does not find our conscience stained by greed, even for a single olive; for even that alone, by nullifying all the fruits of our renunciation of the world, will cause what the Lord said to the rich man in the Gospel to be turned against us: *“You fool! This very night your soul will be required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”* (Luke 12:20)? And without giving the slightest thought to tomorrow, let us not allow ourselves to deviate from the rules of communal life. Undoubtedly, we will be unable to fulfill this, nor will we be able to live peacefully under the rules of the monastic charter, unless the virtue of patience is first firmly established within us on a solid foundation—a virtue whose source is none other than humility.

4. The Struggle Against the Spirit of Anger

1. In the fourth battle, we must root out the deadly poison of anger from the depths of our souls. For as long as it lodges in our hearts and blinds the eye of our mind with pernicious darkness, we cannot acquire a correct discernment of good and evil, nor the acuity of virtuous contemplation; nor can we possess the maturity of counsel, nor share in life, nor hold fast to the truth, nor even perceive true spiritual light; for it is said: *“My eye is troubled by wrath”* (Ps. 6: 8); we cannot become partakers of wisdom, even if we were proclaimed wise by the opinion of all, since *“wrath rests in the bosom of fools”* (Eccl. 7: 10); nor can we attain eternal life, even if by human standards we were considered wise, for *“anger destroys even the wise”* (Prov. 15:1); we cannot always uphold the scales of justice according to the dictates of our hearts, for *“the anger of a man does not bring about the righteousness of God”* (James 1:20); nor can we in any way possess the dignity so common even among the people of this age, even if, by virtue of birth, we were regarded as noble and honorable, since *“a hot-tempered man is not respectable”* (Prov. 11: 25), nor can we possess the wisdom of counsel, even if we appear to have acquired extensive knowledge, for *“a hot-tempered man acts without counsel”* (Prov. 14: 17); we cannot be at peace from anxieties and disturbances, nor free from sin, even if others caused us no trouble at all, for *“a wrathful man”* (himself) *“stirs up strife; but a hot-tempered man reveals”* (discloses without shame) *“sins”* (Prov. 29: 22).

2. Some, striving to excuse this destructive disease of the soul, attempt to downplay its (indecent) by means of the most indecent interpretation of Scripture, saying: it is no harm to be angry with our brothers who sin, since God Himself is inflamed with anger and fury against those who either do not wish to know Him or, knowing Him, do not honor Him as they ought—as, for example: *“And the Lord was angry with His people”* (Ps. 105: 40), or as in another passage where the Prophet prays, saying: *“O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chastise me in Your anger”* (Ps. 6: 2). – And they do not realize that, while thereby granting people the freedom to act according to this passion to their own ruin, they also impute an impure, carnal passion to God, who is infinite and the source of all purity.

3. If these and similar passages of Scripture are understood literally, in a crude, sensory sense, it would follow that God sleeps and wakes, sits and walks, turns toward someone and turns away from them, draws near and moves away—and that He has bodily parts—a head, eyes, hands, feet, and the like. — Just as all this cannot be understood literally—without the utmost sacrilege—of the One who, according to Scripture itself, is invisible, indescribable, and omnipresent, so too can we not attribute to Him, without blasphemy, outbursts of anger and fury. The terms “limbs” and “movements” denote divine attributes and providential actions toward us, which we can more easily understand under these figurative names: “eyes” signify God’s omniscience and omnipotence; “hands” and “feet”—His creativity and providence; “muscles”—His strength and omnipotence, and so on. Likewise, when we read about God’s anger or fury, we must understand it not in a human sense, but in a manner befitting God, who is free from all agitation; —that is, we must understand that He is the Judge and the righteous avenger of all that is done unjustly in this world; and, fearing God’s righteous punishment when reading such sayings, we must in every way guard against doing anything contrary to His will.

4. Let the monk, striving for perfection and desiring to engage in spiritual struggles in accordance with the law, be free from every stirrings of the passions of anger and fury, hearing what the chosen vessel commands him: *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice”* (Eph. 4:31)—who, in saying, *“Let all anger be put away from you,”* did not exclude from this command any movement of anger, as if it were necessary or beneficial. Therefore, when a monk hastens, if

necessary, to heal a sinning brother, let him do so in such a way that, while seeking to administer a remedy to one suffering—perhaps from a very mild fever—he does not, in his anger, plunge himself into the worse disease of blindness. For whoever wishes to heal another’s wound must himself be healthy and free from all illness, lest the words of the Gospel be spoken to him: *“Physician, heal yourself”* (Luke 4:23)—and likewise: *“Why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye,’ when there is a log in your own eye?”* (Matthew 7:3–4)!

5. Whatever the cause that kindles the flame of anger, it blinds the eyes of the heart, and by casting a veil over the sharpness of intellectual vision, it prevents us from seeing the Sun of Righteousness. It makes no difference whether a sheet of gold, lead, or some other metal is placed over the eyes; the value of the metals makes no difference in the blindness they cause. – Yet anger can also serve us very well when we become indignant, resenting the lustful impulses of our heart and taking offense that something is rising up in the recesses of our breast—something we should not do or even speak of— we are ashamed before others, trembling with fear at the thought of the presence of the Angels and God Himself, who is everywhere and all-pervading, and of the all-seeing Eye of God, from which no secrets of our conscience can possibly be hidden. Or when we grow angry at this very anger itself, wondering why it has crept in, stirring us up against our brother, and with anger we cast out its pernicious promptings, not allowing it to hide in the recesses of our hearts to harm us. Thus the Prophet teaches us to be angry; he so resolutely cast this passion out of his own feelings that he did not even wish to render retribution to his obvious enemies, even those whom God had delivered into his hands. Thus, when Semei, throwing stones at King David, slandered him to his face before everyone, and Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, wanted to cut off his head in retaliation for such an insult to the King, blessed David, moved by godly indignation against such a suggestion, preserved his unshakable meekness, and set an example of humility and steadfast patience, saying: *“What is this to me and to you, son of Saruina? Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to curse David; and who will ask, ‘Why have you done this?’ My own son, who came from my own body, seeks my life—how much more so the son of Jemini! Let him curse me, for the Lord has told him to do so. Perhaps the Lord will look upon my humility and restore my good fortune in place of his curse this very day”* (2 Sam. 16:10–12).

6. Thus, we are permitted to be angry, but in a way that leads to salvation—that is, toward ourselves and toward the evil thoughts that arise—to *“be angry”* at them, and *“not to sin,”* that is, not to put them into practice to our own ruin. The following verse expresses this very same meaning more clearly: *“Repent in your hearts, O you who dwell in your beds”* (Ps. 4:5), that is, whatever you think in your hearts due to the sudden intrusion of tempting suggestions, once you have managed, through calm reflection, to quell all the noise and turbulence of anger—and, as it were, to lie down on a peaceful bed—correct and atone for it with saving contrition. And the blessed Paul, drawing on the instruction of this verse, after saying, *“Be angry, yet do not sin,”* added: *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger, nor give the devil a foothold”* (Eph. 4:26–27). If it is harmful to allow the sun of righteousness to set while we are still angry, and if, when we become angry, we immediately give the devil a foothold in our hearts, then how could he have previously commanded us to be angry, saying, *“Be angry, but do not sin”*? Does He not clearly express the following: be angry at your own passions and at your very anger itself, so that otherwise—if you give in to it—the Sun of Righteousness—Christ—will not begin to set in your minds darkened by anger, and with His departure, you will not have given the devil a foothold in your hearts.

7. In an allegorical sense, the sun can be understood as the mind, which is rightly called the sun because it illuminates all the thoughts and desires of our heart—and the prohibition against anger can be seen as the commandment not to extinguish this light with the passion of anger; so that, when it sets, the darkness of turbulent confusion—along with its originator, the devil—does not take over our entire heart, and we, enveloped in the darkness of anger, do not remain, as it were, in the dark of night, unaware of what to do. It is in this sense that the Apostles’ passage is to be understood, as handed down to us in the teachings of the elders, who do not permit us to allow anger to creep into our hearts even for a single moment, taking every possible care to avoid falling under the punishment decreed for this in the Gospel: *“Whoever is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment”* (Matt. 5:22). – Moreover, if it were permissible to continue being angry until sunset, the passion of anger, taking advantage of such permission, would always rush to satisfy its vengeance, as if lawfully, before the sun sets.

8. What, then, are we to say of those whose relentlessness knows no bounds—not even at sunset—but who harbor resentment for many days against those with whom they have quarreled? Let them sometimes say in words that they are not angry; yet their actions often clearly reveal their deep resentment when, for example, they do not address others with proper speech or speak with their usual kindness. They imagine that they are not sinning in this, because they do not seek retribution for their irritation. But they simply do not dare, or are unable, to reveal it; yet it boils within their hearts, and they silently endure it, thereby turning the poison of anger to their own ruin; they do not immediately expel the bitterness of resentment through the strength of their soul, but digest it over many days, and only gradually, with time, do they somewhat subdue it.

9. It is as if one who, driven by anger, does only what he can, is still not satisfied with his vengeance and resentment! This is exactly what those do who restrain their angry impulses not out of a desire for peace, but out of an inability to take revenge, venting it nonetheless however they can. For, having no way to inflict anything more on those at whom they are angry than to refuse to speak to them with their usual kindness, they vent their anger on them in this way. As if it were enough to temper anger by restraining its outward expression, and there were no need to root it out from the recesses of the heart—lest, darkened by its gloom, we lose sound judgment and the light of knowledge, and cease to be a temple of the Holy Spirit while the spirit of anger dwells within us. For anger hidden in the heart, though it does not offend those present, drives out the brightest radiance of the Holy Spirit just as much as anger that is revealed.

10. And how can we think that God would allow us to hold onto anger for even a single moment, when He does not permit us to offer the sacrifice of our spiritual prayers if we are aware—not that we are angry with another, but that another has something against us—saying: *“If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar; first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matt. 5:23–24)? – How, then, can we think that we are permitted to hold a grudge against a brother—not for many days, but even until sunset—if, as states, while he holds a grudge against us, we are not permitted to offer our prayers to God—we who are commanded by the Apostle: *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17), and: *“I want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing”* (1 Tim. 2:8)? – Therefore, if we harbor such poison in our hearts, we are left with only two options: either never to pray at all, and thus be guilty of violating the Apostolic and Gospel commandment that enjoins us to pray without ceasing and in every place, – or—if, somehow deluding ourselves, we dare to offer our prayer despite the prohibition against it—to know that in such a case we are not offering prayer to the Lord, but expressing proud disobedience, in a spirit of rebellion against Him.

11. But why should we dwell any longer on the Gospel and Apostolic commandments, when even the Old Law—which seems to make some allowance for our weaknesses—also warns against it, saying, *“You shall not hate your brother in your heart”* (Lev. 19:17)—and again: *“The way of the malicious leads to death”* (Prov. 12:28)—and further: *“Your hand shall not take vengeance, nor shall you bear a grudge against the sons of your people”* (Lev. 19:18)? —You see that even there, ill will toward one’s brothers is cut off not only in action but also in secret thoughts, when we are commanded to root out hatred from the heart and, regarding an offense, not only to refrain from retaliation but even to forget it.

12. Sometimes, overcome by pride or impatience, when we feel a particular inner compulsion to correct our disorderly and chaotic disposition, we complain to ourselves that we lack a desert—meaning, in other words, the hope that there, undisturbed by anyone, we would immediately acquire the virtue of patience, thus evidently excusing our own negligence (in curbing our outbursts of anger) and attributing the cause of their arousal not to our own impatience but shifting the blame onto our brothers. But if we continue to shift the blame for our shortcomings in this matter onto others, we will never be able to attain the proper measure of patience and perfection. Do not place the task of correcting and pacifying our hearts in the hands of another’s will, over which we have no control whatsoever, but keep it within the good disposition of our own will. That we may not become angry should depend not on the perfection of another, but on our own virtue, acquired not through someone else’s patience, but through our own magnanimity.

13. Moreover, one should seek the desert only after being perfected and purified of every passion, or after having thoroughly purged all passions in the community of the brethren, and one should enter it not out of cowardly flight, but out of a desire to attain the heights of divine contemplation, which even the perfected cannot attain except in the desert. For whatever passions we carry into the desert that have not been healed will be felt as hidden within us, not as having been eradicated. And just as the desert reserves the purest contemplation for those whose hearts are purified and reveals the knowledge of spiritual mysteries in the most

sincere vision, so too does it usually not only preserve but even intensify the passions of those who have not purified themselves of them. In such a case, a person may seem patient and humble to himself as long as he does not see anyone or interact with others; but immediately returns to his former disposition as soon as any circumstance prompts him to act: then the passions that had been hidden within him immediately surge forth and, like unbridled horses fattened by long inactivity, burst from their stalls with great eagerness and fury, leading to the ruin of their rider. For passions, not having been purified beforehand, become even more frenzied within us when the opportunities to reveal and restrain them among people are cut off. And we lose even the shadow of patience—which we imagined we possessed while living among our brothers, and which we displayed, at least out of respect for them and out of shame at appearing cowardly before everyone—in the carefree wilderness of carelessness.

14. This is similar to how all kinds of poisonous snakes or beasts, as long as they remain hidden in the desert and in their burrows and lairs, do no harm—and yet they are not declared harmless simply because they do not harm anyone in such cases: for this is not due to their benign nature, but because the desert compels them to be so; but as soon as they find an opportunity to harm, they immediately reveal the venom and savagery hidden within them. – So, too, for those seeking perfection, it is not enough simply not to be angry at people (when there is no interaction or conflict with them. Anger remains alive in such cases; it is merely concealed and ready to pounce on anything at a moment's notice). I recall how, while living in the desert, I would sometimes get angry at my writing cane if I didn't like its thickness or thinness—sometimes at a small knife if, when cutting with it, it had become dull and wouldn't cut quickly—sometimes at a flint if a spark of fire didn't fly from it quickly enough when I was in a hurry to read; and the surge of indignation would sometimes be so intense that a curse would involuntarily escape my lips against the lifeless object, or inevitably against the devil: which would dispel my confusion—and my soul would be calmed. Thus, in the pursuit of perfection, the absence of people who might provoke anger is of little benefit, since—if patience is not acquired beforehand—the passion of anger can exert its power even on mute objects and trivial matters; for as long as it remains in our hearts, it prevents us both from attaining a peaceful state of mind and from freeing ourselves from other passions.

15. Why, then, if we desire to attain that supreme divine good of which it is said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8), must we not only cast this passion out of our actions but also uproot it from the depths of our soul? For it will be of little use to suppress the fury of anger in speech and not reveal it in action, if God—from whom the secrets of the heart are not hidden—sees it in the innermost recesses of the heart. The Gospel commands us to cut off the roots of passions rather than their fruits, for once the roots are uprooted, the fruits will certainly no longer sprout, – and the soul will thus be able to abide constantly in all patience and holiness, when anger is not only removed from the surface of our actions and deeds but also uprooted from the innermost recesses of our thoughts. And that is why we must put to death anger and hatred, so as not to fall into the sin of murder, which cannot be committed without them. “*For whoever is angry with his brother without cause will be subject to judgment*” (Matt. 5:22); and—“*whoever hates his brother is a murderer*” (1 John 3:15). Since in his heart he desires the destruction of the one against whom he is angry; then, although people do not consider him to have shed blood with his own hand or by the sword, the very passion of anger declares him a murderer before the Lord, Who will reward or punish each person not only for the act itself but also for the intention of the will, as He Himself says through the Prophet: “*I know their deeds and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all the nations...*” (Isa. 66:18). And the Apostle: “*They condemn or justify one another in their own minds on the day when God, who is hidden, will judge men*” (Rom. 2:15–16).

16. Therefore, a disciple of Christ who is striving lawfully must uproot the passion of anger from within himself. For the complete healing of this disease, the following treatment is necessary: first of all, to believe that it is not fitting to be angry under any circumstances, whether for just or unjust reasons—knowing that as soon as our inner light, the light of our heart, is darkened by the darkness of anger, we will immediately lose the light of discernment, the steadfastness of prudence, propriety, and the standard of truth; second, to hold fast to the conviction that if the spirit of anger takes root within us, the purity of our spirit will inevitably be clouded as a result, and it can no longer serve as a temple of the Holy Spirit; finally, to reflect on the fact that, as long as we remain in anger, we will be utterly unable to pray or pour out our petitions before God. Above all, bearing in mind the uncertainty of the limits of human life, let us constantly bear in mind that we may depart from this body at any moment, and that neither the observance of chastity, nor the renunciation of

all possessions, nor the contempt for wealth, nor the labors of fasting and vigils will help us in the least when, for a single act of anger and hatred, the Judge of the universe threatens us with eternal torment.

5. *The Struggle Against the Spirit of Sorrow*

1. In the fifth battle, we must fend off the barbs of all-consuming sorrow—which, if it somehow gains possession of our heart, cuts off the vision of divine contemplation, and, having cast the entire soul down from the heights of holy serenity, ultimately weakens and oppresses it: it prevents it from offering prayers with its usual heartfelt fervor, nor does it allow it to devote itself to the reading of the Holy Scriptures—that spiritual weapon and remedy—nor does it permit it to live in peace and quiet with the brethren, —it makes her impatient and grumbling toward all the obligatory duties of obedience; and, having taken away all sound judgment and agitated the heart, it renders her as if mad and intoxicated, and crushes and overwhelms her with ruinous despair.

2. Why, if we wish to labor lawfully in the spiritual battle, must we treat this illness with no less care? For *“as moths in a garment and worms in a tree, so sorrow harms a man’s heart”* (Prov. 25:21)—as the Divine Spirit has clearly and unequivocally expressed the power of this pernicious and most destructive passion. Just as clothing eaten away by moths is no longer of any value and is no longer fit for honorable use—and just as a tree hollowed out by worms is no longer worthy of being set aside for the construction or decoration of any building, even a modest one, but is destined to be burned by fire: so too the soul, devoured by the pangs of the most crushing sorrow, is no longer fit for that high-priestly vestment which the Holy Spirit, descending from heaven first upon Aaron’s beard, then takes upon its hem, as depicted in the prophecy of Saint David—in the following words: *“For the myrrh on the head, descending upon the beard, the beard of Aaron, descending upon the hem of his garments”* (132:2)—nor for the building and adornment of that spiritual temple whose foundation was laid by Paul, the most wise Architect, when he said: *“You are God’s temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you”* (1 Cor. 3:16), and for which certain kinds of trees are used, as the Bride describes in the Song of Songs, saying: *“Let the cedars be the beams of our house, and our planks of cypress”* (Song of Songs 1:16). And so these kinds of trees are chosen for the temple of God—fragrant and rot-resistant, which would be subject neither to decay from age nor to the gnawing of worms.

3. Sometimes this illness tends to arise from a preceding passion—whether anger, lust, or greed—when a person experiences the loss of a hope preconceived in the mind that their affairs or possessions would bring satisfaction according to their nature; at other times, however, without any apparent cause, that could have plunged us into this abyss, under the influence of the crafty enemy, such sorrow suddenly seizes us that we are unable to receive even the most dear and necessary people with our usual warmth, and whatever they may say in appropriate conversation is then regarded by us as inappropriate and superfluous; and we offer them no pleasant reply, because every corner of our heart is filled with bitter sorrow.

4. This most clearly proves that the pangs of sorrow within us are not always aroused by the fault of others, but rather by our own; for we ourselves carry within us the causes of all our sorrows, namely in the seeds of the passions, which, as soon as the rain of temptations waters our soul, immediately burst forth into their sprouts and fruits. No one is ever compelled to sin—even if the bad example of others were to incite him to it—unless he has the substance of that sin hidden in his heart. And one cannot possibly believe, for example, that someone would suddenly be seized by the passion of lustful desire (having been unaware of it before) merely by glancing at a beautiful woman and being struck by her beauty; rather, one must assume that if he lusted after her in that moment, it was because the sight of her brought to the surface a disease hidden within. That is why we must direct all our attention primarily toward purifying our eyes of passion and correcting our feelings and dispositions.

5. There is also another kind of sorrow—the most pernicious—when it instills in a sinful soul not the intention to reform one’s life and purify oneself of passions, but the most destructive despair. It was this very sorrow that prevented Cain from repenting after the fratricide, and did not allow Judas, after his betrayal, to seek a means of atonement, but rather led him, through the despair it instilled, to hang himself.

6. We should regard sorrow as beneficial to us only when we accept it, having been moved either by repentance for our sins, or by a fervent desire for perfection, or by the contemplation of future bliss. Blessed Paul speaks of it as well: *“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, but the sorrow of this world produces death”* (2 Cor. 7:10).

7. But that sorrow which brings about repentance leading to salvation is undoubtedly faithful, submissive, gracious, humble, gentle, pleasant, and patient; for, springing from love for God, although it tirelessly strives toward bodily mortification and the brokenness of spirit out of a desire for perfection, it is at the same time constantly comforted and enlivened by the hope of success, and therefore retains all the pleasantness of friendliness and good-naturedness, possessing within herself all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which the same Apostle enumerates: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*” (Gal. 5:22). But this one—the sorrow of this world—is extremely grumbling, impatient, harsh, filled with repulsive stubbornness, fruitless lamentation, and ruinous despair; it upsets and distracts those it overtakes from every pursuit and from salutary self-examination, and not only stifles the power of prayer but also devastates all the spiritual fruits mentioned above, which are usually brought about by that “*sorrow according to God.*”

8. Why, apart from that sorrow which is received either through saving repentance, or through zeal for perfection, or through the desire for future blessings, every other kind of sorrow—being worldly and death-bringing—must be rejected and completely cast out, just as the spirit of fornication, the love of money, and anger must be.

9. We can drive this most destructive passion from ourselves if, by constantly nourishing our soul with spiritual instruction, we revive and strengthen it with hope and the contemplation of future bliss. In this way, we can overcome all kinds of sorrows—those arising from prior anger, those resulting from the loss of profit or the incurrance of a loss, those born of the wrongs done to us, and those arising from irrational emotional distress, and those that plunge us into mortal despair: for, being constantly comforted by the contemplation of eternal future blessings and remaining steadfast in this state of mind, we will neither lose heart in times of misfortune nor become elated in times of happiness, viewing both as insignificant and fleeting. (To soothe a sorrowful spirit, read also Section 7 of the excerpts from St. Cassian—on the struggle against calamities and sorrows.)

6. The Struggle Against the Spirit of Despondency

1. The sixth struggle we face is against the passion which the Greeks call *αχθία*, and which we may call despondency, boredom, or heartache. It is akin to sorrow, is experienced most acutely by monks wandering in the deserts, and is a hostile enemy of those living in solitude; it troubles every monk, especially around the sixth hour, (which is 12 o'clock at noon in our time), like some kind of fever that strikes the afflicted soul at certain hours with its all-disrupting effects. Some elders (Evagrius, Volume I, p. 631) call it the “midday demon,” which is mentioned in Psalm 90.

2. When despondency assails the poor soul of a monk, it gives rise to dread of the place, aversion to the cell, and contempt for the brothers living with him or at some distance from him, regarding them as negligent and entirely unspiritual; it also makes him completely lazy and deters him from any work he usually engages in at his dwelling. It also robs him of the desire to sit in his cell, prevents him from taking up reading, and compels him to sigh and complain that, having lived here so long, he has made no progress whatsoever and has reaped no spiritual fruit; it instills in him the painful realization that he remains in this place in vain and that, when he could have guided others and been of benefit to many, he has not trained anyone here, nor has he spiritually nurtured anyone through his guidance and teaching. Then it extols distant monasteries to him, describing those places as more conducive to spiritual progress and more likely to contribute to salvation, and portrays fellowship with the brothers there as delightful and full of spiritual edification; in contrast, it portrays his present situation as unbearable, reminding him that there is no edification to be gained from the brothers residing here, and that everything necessary for the sustenance of the body is obtained only with immense effort. Finally, it instills in the hermit the conviction that, by remaining in this place, he cannot be saved unless—leaving the cell in which, if he lingers any longer, he will perish—he moves from here to another place as soon as possible. After this, around the fifth and sixth hours, it reduces his body to such exhaustion and stirs up such hunger that he feels as if he were weary and exhausted from a long journey and the hardest labor, or as if he had endured a two- or three-day fast without any food. And so he looks around anxiously from side to side, sighs that none of his brothers is coming to him, frequently leaves his cell and returns to it, and gazes at the sun, as if it were not in such a hurry to set. In such senseless confusion of mind, as if shrouded in darkness, he becomes incapable of any spiritual activity and begins to think that there is no other remedy for such a affliction except to visit a brother or to find solace in sleep. Then this destructive spirit

begins to suggest to the one it is tormenting that he must offer the necessary greetings to the brethren or visit the sick, whether near or far; it also instills in him, as a duty, the idea that he ought to find such-and-such male or female relatives here, and to visit them more often—that it would be a great act of piety to visit such-and-such a devout woman, who has dedicated herself to God but is deprived of any support from her relatives, more often and to provide her with everything she needs, since her own relatives neglect her, —and that one should labor more in such acts of piety than sit idly in one’s cell without any fruit or success.

3. Thus the poor soul, beset by such hostile wiles, is in such turmoil that the monk, weary in spirit from despondency, either tries to throw himself into bed or, leaving the seclusion of his cell, attempts to seek deliverance from such a scourge by visiting a brother. But this very remedy, which he now uses as a cure, will soon be turned by the enemy into a means of causing him even greater distress. For the enemy will attack more frequently and more fiercely the one whom he has learned, through experience, immediately turns his back on him as soon as the struggle begins, and who seeks his salvation not in victory or in resistance, but in flight; until, having gradually drifted away from the cell, he begins to forget the primary purpose of his calling, which consists in the pursuit of divine, all-surpassing purity—a purity that can be attained nowhere else but through constant, silent abiding in the cell and unceasing divine instruction. Thus, the soldier of Christ eventually flees from his army, becomes entangled in worldly affairs, and ceases to be pleasing to the Commander (2 Tim. 2: 4), under whom he promised to serve.

4. Blessed David expressed all the pernicious consequences of this disease most beautifully in the following verse: *“My soul slumbers from despondency”* (Ps. 118:28). And indeed, it is not the body but the soul that slumbers at this time. For the soul, wounded by the arrow of this destructive passion, truly falls asleep to every striving for virtue and to the watchfulness over its spiritual sensibilities.

5. Therefore, the true warrior of Christ, desiring to strive lawfully in the struggle for perfection, must also strive to drive this disease from the recesses of his soul and boldly arm himself against this most unseemly spirit of despondency—so that he may neither fall from being struck by the arrow of sleep nor flee from the confinement of his hermitage, even under the specious pretext of piety.

6. For whoever he begins to overcome from any angle, he will either leave that person to remain in the cell without any progress, as one who is lazy and careless—or, having driven him out of there, will make him idle and lazy in every endeavor, forcing him to constantly wander around the brothers’ cells and monasteries, and to think of nothing else but where and under what pretext to find an opportunity to have his next meal. For the mind of an idler thinks of nothing else but food and the belly, until, having encountered somewhere a fellowship of men or women frozen in the same indifference, he becomes entangled in their affairs and needs. Once he has gradually become entangled in such pursuits, which are so harmful to his soul—as if squeezed in the coils of a serpent—he will never again be able to free himself from them in order to return to the neglected duties of his former calling.

7. Thus, the main thing that the spirit of despondency produces in us is that it makes us lazy, deters us from our work, and teaches us idleness. Therefore, the main way to counteract it is: do not give in; keep at your work. In this regard, we can take as a remedy for despondency what St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about labor: *“I urge you, brothers... to be diligent, to be quiet, and to attend to your own affairs and work with your own hands”* (1 Thess. 4:10–11). – He says: *“I urge you to be diligent and to remain quiet”*—that is, remain quietly in your cells so that, amid the various rumors that are unavoidable for one who idles about here and there, you do not lose your inner peace, and do not then begin to cause the same disturbance to others; *“attend to your own affairs”*—that is, do not, driven by curiosity, seek to learn about worldly matters or pry into the conduct of various brothers—so that, instead of caring for your own self-improvement and zealously pursuing virtue, you do not become accustomed to wasting your time on condemning and slandering your brothers; *“and work with your own hands”*—that is, while sitting in your cell, devote yourself to manual labor. By this, he cut off the very possibility of what he had previously warned against. Whoever loves to sit at work has no time to wander here and there, prying into others’ affairs, meddling in them, and gossiping about them. In his second epistle to the same Thessalonians, he adds to this: *“We command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from any brother who walks in disorder, and not according to the tradition that you received from us”* (2 Thess. 3:6). Here he is no longer asking, but commanding—and not with mere words, but in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—making it clear that this is an urgent command. From the rest of his discourse, it is evident that this is a command regarding work, and that those who shun it must not be tolerated in the Christian community. – Thus, he commands us to withdraw from those who do not wish to

work and to cut them off, as members corrupted by destructive idleness, so that the disease of inactivity, like a deadly contagion, does not spread to the healthy members of the body. This in itself was already a strong incentive to diligence, but he reinforces it even further by setting himself as an example for them to follow (ibid., v. 7). “We,” he says, “*while living among you, did not eat anyone’s bread for free*” (v. 8), even though “*the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel*” (1 Cor. 9:14). If, then, even the one who preached the Gospel and performed such a lofty spiritual work did not accept food for free, what can we say in defense of our own laziness—we who are not only not entrusted with any preaching of the Word, but are also commanded to have no other concern except the care of our own soul? By what right do we dare, with idle hands, to eat bread for free—bread that the chosen vessel, burdened with the cares of preaching the Gospel, did not allow himself to eat unless it was the fruit of his own labor? – Lest it seem, however, that his own example is exceptional and is not offered as a model for all to imitate, the Apostle makes it clear that he was not alone in doing so, but that all who were with him—that is, Silas and Timothy, who are writing this with him—also engaged in manual labor. – Lest anyone be tempted to deviate from following his example, imagining that they all worked in silence without intending to set an example that obligates us to labor as well, he states that they had the freedom not to work, yet they worked, “*so that we might set an example for you, that you may imitate us*” (2 Thess. 3:9)—so that, even if you forget the verbal teaching so often imparted to your ears, you might at least retain in your memory our examples, which have been set before your eyes. Finally, after so many exhortations, the Apostle no longer addresses them with the counsel of a teacher or a physician, but with the authority of the Apostolic office, saying: “*If anyone is unwilling to work, let him not eat*” (v. 10)! This is a verdict against those who are presumed or foreseen to despise this commandment, pronounced from the seat of the Apostolic judgment.

8. And in his epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle prescribed this very labor, saying: “*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with those in need*” (Eph. 4:28). – We also find in the Acts of the Apostles that he not only taught this but also acted accordingly himself. For when he came to Corinth, he did not wish to stay elsewhere but with Aquila and Priscilla, because they were masters of the same trade in which he himself was usually engaged—with the clear intention of working alongside them (Acts 18:1–3). – Later, while sailing to Jerusalem, he stopped in Miletus; from there he sent word to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the Church in Ephesus. As he instructed them on how to govern the Church of God in his absence, he said that he had asked neither money nor clothing from them; that his own hands had provided for his needs and those of his companions—and that he did this to show that, by working in this way, one ought to help the needy, remembering the commandment of the Lord Himself: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20: 33–35). Thus, by setting an example of diligence, he also teaches that it is better to help those in need with what has been earned through hard work than with what comes into one’s hands by other means. If a monk acts in this way, he is then adorned with a twofold virtue: by renouncing all things, he attains the perfect poverty of Christ; and through his labor and disposition, he displays the generosity of the rich—honoring God through his righteous labors and offering Him a sacrifice from the fruits of his righteousness.

9. The Egyptian Fathers do not in any way permit monks to be idle, especially the young ones, measuring the state of the heart and the degree of progress in patience and humility by their diligence in work. Not only do they accept nothing for their own sustenance, but they also feed visiting brothers and travelers from the fruits of their labor, and send large quantities of food of every kind to the regions of Libya, which are afflicted by barrenness and famine, and they also deliver large quantities of food of every kind to the cities where people are languishing in filthy dungeons, believing that through such offerings from the fruit of their hands they are presenting a sacrifice pleasing to the Lord. – On this subject, the ancient Fathers of Egypt also coined the following saying: a working monk is tempted by a single demon, but an idle one is attacked by a countless multitude of demons.

10. When I began living in the desert, I told Abba Moses (of Libya; see his Conversations 1 and 2) that yesterday I had been utterly overcome by the affliction of despondency and could not free myself from it except by going to Abba Paul: “No,” he told me, “you did not free yourself from it, but rather showed yourself to be devoted and submissive to it.” For afterward it will attack you even more fiercely, as it would a coward and a fugitive, having seen how you allowed yourself to be defeated from the very first engagement and immediately fled the battlefield—unless you resolve on other occasions to engage this enemy in battle, not by repelling its fierce attacks by leaving your cell or sinking into sleep, but by overcoming it with patience and

resistance. Thus, experience has shown that one must not flee from the onslaught of despondency, shying away from the struggle against it, but must overcome it by courageously resisting it.

7. *The Struggle Against the Spirit of Vanity*

1. The seventh battle we face is against the spirit of vanity—a spirit that is multifaceted, changeable, and subtle, so that even the most keen-eyed can scarcely not only guard against it, but also discern and recognize it. Other passions are simple and monotonous, but this one is multifaceted and varied; it assails the warrior from all sides and in every direction, both while he is still fighting and when he has already emerged victorious. For it seeks to wound the warrior of Christ through his clothing, his bearing, his gait, his voice, his work, his vigils, his fasts, his prayer, his solitude, his reading, his knowledge, his silence, his obedience, his humility, and his good nature, —and, like a most dangerous underwater rock, covered by surging waves, will suddenly cause a disastrous shipwreck to those sailing with a favorable wind, while they remain unawares.

2. Therefore, whoever desires to walk the Royal Path with *“the weapons of righteousness in both hands”* must, according to the Apostolic teaching, walk with equanimity through *“honor and dishonor, slander and praise”* (2 Cor. 6: 7–8), and with the utmost caution direct their journey along the path of virtue, amid the surging waves of temptation, guided by reason and the breath of the Spirit of the Lord, knowing that as soon as we deviate even slightly to the right or to the left, we will immediately be dashed against the deadly underwater rocks. That is why we hear the exhortation from the wise Solomon: *“Do not turn to the right or to the left”* (Prov. 4:27), —that is, do not flatter yourself because of your virtues, and do not exalt yourself because of your spiritual successes; likewise, when straying onto the crooked path of passions, do not, as the Apostle says, seek glory from them in your shame (Phil. 3:19). — The devil, in those whom he could not instill with vanity through the beauty of stately and dazzling clothing, attempts to sow it in them through clumsy, untidy, and beggarly attire; those whom he could not plunge into this passion through honor, he entices toward it through humiliation; whom he could not compel to boast of his learning and eloquence, in that person he provokes it through self-importance in silence. If someone fasts openly, he is troubled by vain glory; but if, out of contempt for such glory, someone conceals his fast, he suffers an attack of self-exaltation. To avoid being tainted by the disease of vanity, some avoid offering long prayers in full view of their brothers; but once they begin to practice them in secret, with no one to witness such deeds, they cannot help but boast to themselves. Our elders beautifully illustrate the nature of this affliction by comparing it to onions and garlic, which, once one layer is peeled away, are found to be covered by another just like it; and no matter how many times you peel away the layers, they are always found to be covered.

3. It does not cease to pursue even those who, fleeing glory, take refuge in the desert, away from all contact with mortals; and the farther one flees from the world, the more fiercely it attacks him. As for those living in monasteries, it attempts to lead one into pride by the fact that he is more patient than anyone else in work and labor; another by the fact that he is more eager than anyone else to obey; and yet another by the fact that he surpasses all others in humility. One is tempted by this because of the breadth of his knowledge; another, because of the long hours spent reading; yet another, because of the length of his vigils. And for each, this affliction seeks to wound him through his very virtues, setting up stumbling blocks to his ruin precisely where the fruits of life are reaped. Likewise, for those who wish to walk the path of piety and perfection, the enemies—the slanderers—do not fail to hide snares of delusion, just as on the very path along which they themselves walk, according to the words of the blessed David: *“On this path, which I have walked, they have hidden a snare for me”* (Ps. 141:3)—so that we, on that very path of virtue along which we journey, striving for the honor of a higher calling, might become puffed up by our own successes, stumble, and, entangled in the snare of vanity, fall, with the feet of our souls bound. Thus it happens that, while we remain unconquered by the enemy’s attack, we are overcome by the height of our triumph over him.

4. All other passions, when overcome, fade away, and as they are conquered, they grow weaker with each passing day; likewise, under the influence of place or time, they are exhausted and subside; or in every way, because of their conflict with the virtues opposed to them, it is easier to guard against them and avoid them. But this one, when struck down, rises up to fight with even greater ferocity, and when it is thought to have breathed its last, through its own death it becomes even more alive, healthy, and powerful. Other passions tyrannize only those whom they have defeated in battle; but this one presses down on its conquerors even more fiercely, and the more severely it has been struck down, the more excessively it fights back with the thought of exaltation on the occasion of its victory over itself. It is especially evident here that the enemy’s

cunning lies in the fact that, through his schemes, the soldier of Christ falls by his own arrows, after the enemy himself was unable to defeat him with his own weapons.

5. Other passions, as we have said, are calmed by the influence of a different environment; they also subside and fade away when the object of sin, or the opportunity for it, or the occasion for it, is removed; but this one penetrates even into the desert with those who flee there to escape it, and fears no environment, just as it does not weaken even when the object is removed from sight; for it draws its strength from nowhere else but from the successes in virtue of the very person it attacks. — Other passions, as we said earlier, sometimes soften and disappear with the passage of time; but for this one, the passage of time not only does no harm, but gathers even more fuel for its vanity.

6. Finally, other passions—since they are at odds with their opposing virtues and wage war openly, as in broad daylight—are easier to overcome and easier to guard against; but this one, having squeezed itself between the virtues and mingled with our ranks, fights as if in the dark of night, and deceives all the more cruelly because we neither expect nor fear its attack.

7. We read that Ezekiah, King of Judah, a man of perfect righteousness in all things, was brought down by a single arrow of pride; and he who, by a single prayer, could have obtained the defeat of 185,000 Assyrian troops, was defeated by vain love of glory, —he who, after God had determined the limit of his life and the day of his death, was granted an extension of life for another 15 years through his own prayer, confirmed by the sun's retreat by 10 degrees; he, after such a testimony to his virtue and such a sign of God's favor toward him, lost everything because of a single act of pride and self-aggrandizement, lost everything—and not only himself, but also exposed his entire people to God's wrath—a wrath so great that, when he humbled himself and began to implore God along with all his people, he could only ask that this wrath not come in his own lifetime (2 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 32). So ruinous and grievously sinful is the passion of pride!

8. Uzziah, the great-grandfather of the aforementioned king, also praised in the testimony of Holy Scripture, after many virtues and many praiseworthy deeds and institutions for the good of the people, became puffed up with vain pride and *"offended the Lord his God"* by a deed displeasing to Him, he immediately fell from the heights of his glory and was struck down with leprosy (2 Chr. 26). Here is another example of a grievous fall! See from this how pernicious happy successes can be when, in their midst, one fails to guard oneself against vanity and pride, and how, in such a case, those who do not heed or guard themselves, not having been humbled by difficult circumstances, are struck even more severely by their very triumphs, and, having escaped the danger of death in battle, fall because of their triumphs and victories.

9. Why does the Apostle exhort us: *"Let us not be conceited"* (Gal. 5: 26)? And the Lord, rebuking the Pharisees, says: *"How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the one God?"* (John 5: 44). It is of such people that blessed David speaks with a warning: *"God will scatter the bones of those who please men"* (Ps. 52:6).

10. The vanity of beginners and of those who have not yet made much progress in virtue and spiritual knowledge usually leads them to boast either about the tone of their voice—that is, that they sing more pleasantly than others—or about being thin of body, or handsome in appearance, or having wealthy and noble parents, or having spurned military service and honors. To others, it suggests that if they had remained in the world, they would have easily attained both honors and wealth—even though they could never have achieved them—thus inflating their pride by sacrificing them to vain hopes and causing them to take pride in renouncing what they never possessed.

11. In others, it instills a desire for the priesthood or the diaconate, painting a picture in their minds that they would then perform their duties with such holiness and rigor that they could serve as an example of holiness to other priests; moreover, they would benefit many through their conduct and the delivery of their sermons. Sometimes it even causes one who lives in the desert or in seclusion in a cell to dream in his mind that he is visiting the homes of various people and monasteries and, through the power of his imagined convictions, is leading many onto the path of a righteous life. And so this poor soul is led hither and thither by such vanity, rambling as if in a deep sleep, and, carried away by the sweetness of such thoughts and filled with such dreams, is for the most part unable to notice either its own actions or the presence of the brothers, even if they were actually before its eyes, being sweetly immersed, as if in something truly happening, in what it, while awake, fantasizes about as if in a dream, wandering in the meanderings of its thoughts.

12. I recall that when I lived in the Skete Desert, an elder, having come to a brother's cell to visit him, heard him speaking inside and paused, wishing to know what he was reading from Holy Scripture or what he

was reciting from memory, as is the custom there to do while working. Leaning in closer, the pious observer heard that the brother, as if in church, was delivering a sermon to the people: this meant that, deluded by a spirit of vanity, he imagined himself to be a priest and was carrying out the task he had long dreamed of. After waiting a little longer, the elder heard that the brother had finished his sermon, and, assuming a different role—as if he were now a deacon—began to proclaim, “Let the catechumens depart.” The elder knocked on the door. The brother came out, greeted him with his usual respect, and, ushering him inside, asked how long ago he had arrived, pretending to be concerned about whether he had had to stand outside for too long and whether he had suffered any discomfort as a result—though in reality his conscience was gnawing at him for his fantasies and for what he had done as a result of them. The elder replied kindly: “I had just arrived when you announced, ‘Let those who have been catechized come forward.’”

13. I have deemed it necessary to include this here so that, by having before our eyes a complete picture of the force and order with which the passions—by which the poor soul is tormented—assault us, we may be more attentive to ourselves and thereby more easily avoid the enemy’s snares and traps. This is precisely how the Egyptian Fathers proceed. Without hesitation, they bring all such matters out into the open, and through their stories about others and about themselves—as if they themselves were still experiencing what they describe— they reveal and lay bare before the young monks the struggles of all passions, both those the young monks are already enduring and those they are yet to endure, so that, through this exposition of the deceptions of all passions, the novices, burning with zeal, may come to know the secrets of their true battles, and, seeing them as in a mirror, they might understand both the causes of the passions that torment them and the remedies against them; and as for future battles, before they arise, they might know in advance how to guard against them, how to stand up to their attackers, and how to fight them. Just as the most skilled of physicians are in the habit not only of treating present illnesses but also, through their perceptive experience, of counteracting future ones, preventing them with cautionary instructions or healing potions: so too do these truest physicians of the soul, through their spiritual instruction—which serves as a sort of antidote—preemptively destroy the diseases of the heart that might arise, preventing them from taking root in the souls of young monks, while revealing to them both the causes of the passions’ attacks and the remedies against them.

14. A soldier of Christ who desires to lawfully engage in true spiritual struggle must strive by every means to defeat this multifaceted and varied beast. And first of all, we can avoid encountering this multifaceted beast—which is ready to pounce on us from all sides with its depravity—if, keeping in mind that saying of David: “*The Lord has scattered the bones of those who please men*” (Ps. 52:6), and we do not allow ourselves to do or undertake anything with the vain intention of gaining empty glory. Furthermore, we must strive to uphold and preserve what we have done with good intentions through the same—good vigilance—so that the disease of vanity does not creep in afterward and destroy the fruits of all our labors. Likewise, whatever is not customary among the brethren and is not practiced by all must be rejected with all diligence as a boastful act; and we must avoid at all costs anything that might make us stand out among others or, since we alone do it, might earn us glory among people. It is through such displays of self that it becomes most evident that the deadly contagion of vanity has taken hold of us: which, however, we could avoid if we kept in mind that not only will we completely lose the fruit of our labors—which we undertake with a vain intention—but we will also be guilty of a greater crime and, like sacrilegious offenders, will have to endure eternal torment; since, to the offense of God, we desired to do for people what we ought to have done for Him, and thereby preferred people to God, and the glory of the world to the glory of God—as the God who searches the hearts will then convict us.

8. The Struggle Against the Spirit of Pride

1. The eighth and final battle lies before us: the battle against the spirit of pride. Although this passion is listed last in the order of the struggle against the passions, it is the first in origin and in time. It is the fiercest and most untamable beast, attacking especially the perfected and devouring them with savage bites when they have almost reached the very summit of virtue.

2. There are two kinds of pride: the first is that which, as we have said, afflicts men of a high spiritual life; the other seizes the beginners and the carnal. And although both these kinds of pride are fueled by pernicious exaltation both before God and before men, the first pertains directly to God, while the second pertains specifically to men. We will examine the origin of the latter and the remedies against it, God willing,

in the final chapters of this book; but for now, we intend to discuss briefly the former, by which, as we said above, the perfected are primarily tempted.

3. There is no other passion that so utterly destroys all virtues, and so strips a person of all righteousness and holiness, as this evil pride: like a pervasive contagion, it is not content with weakening a single limb or part, but inflicts a fatal disorder upon the entire body, and seeks to bring down and destroy even those who already stand on the heights of virtue through an exceedingly grievous fall. Every other passion is content with its own limits and its own goal, and although it disturbs other virtues as well, it is directed primarily against one, which it predominantly oppresses and attacks. Thus, gluttony—that is, the passion for overeating or indulging in sweets—corrupts strict abstinence; lust defiles chastity; and anger drives out patience. Thus, a person enslaved by a single passion is not entirely devoid of other virtues; but after the destruction of that one virtue—which falls to the opposing passion that has zealously armed itself against it—he may still retain the others, at least in part: but this one, as soon as it takes hold of a poor soul, like some ferocious tyrant, having captured the highest stronghold of virtue (humility), destroys and ravages their entire city to the ground. Having razed the once-lofty walls of holiness and mingled them with the dust of vice, it allows no sign of freedom to remain in the soul it has subjugated. The richer the soul it captures, the heavier the yoke of slavery it imposes upon it, stripping it of all its virtuous possessions through the most brutal plunder.

4. If you wish to know more precisely the extent of this most cruel tyrant's power, let us recall how a certain angel—who, because of the excess of his splendor and beauty, was called Lucifer—was cast down from heaven for no other reason than this passion, and how he, pierced by the arrow of pride, fell from that highest rank of the blessed angels into the abyss. Thus, if such an incorporeal being, endowed with such remarkable advantages, could be cast down from heaven to earth by a single surge of pride, then the magnitude of that destructive fall shows just how vigilantly we, clothed in mortal flesh, must guard against it. – And how we may avoid this most pernicious contagion of passion, we can learn by tracing the origin and causes of the aforementioned fall. For it is impossible to cure any infirmity or prescribe remedies for any disease unless their origins and causes have first been examined through careful investigation. – This (Archangel), clothed in divine radiance and shining more brightly than the other higher powers by the Creator's generosity, came to believe that this splendor of wisdom and this beauty of virtue, with which he was adorned by the Creator's grace, were possessed by him through his own natural powers rather than through God's bountiful gift. And having become exalted for this reason, he considered himself equal to God, as one who, like God, lacked nothing—as if he had no need of divine assistance to remain in such purity. Thus, he relied entirely on the power of his free will, believing that it alone would abundantly provide him with everything necessary for complete perfection in virtue and for the continuity of supreme bliss. This single thought became for him the primary cause of his ruinous fall. Having been forsaken by God because of this—in Whom he considered himself to have no need—and having immediately become unstable and vulnerable as a result, he felt the weakness of his own nature and lost the bliss he had enjoyed as a gift from God. Thus, since he *"loved"* *"boastful words,"* in which, exulting, he said, *"I will ascend to heaven"* (Isa. 14: 13), *"and a flattering tongue,"* with which, deceiving himself, he said, *"I will be like the Most High,"* just as he later deceived Adam and Eve by suggesting to them, *"You will be like gods"*—behold, this is his sentence: *"For this reason, God will utterly destroy you, uproot you, and remove you from your dwelling. The righteous will see this and be afraid; they will laugh at him and say: 'This is the man who did not make God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his wealth and in the power of his vanity'"* (Ps. 51: 6–9). The last words ("this is the man") can quite rightly be applied to those who hope to attain the highest good without God's protection and help.

5. This is the cause of the first fall and the beginning of the principal passion—which, having crept into the first man through the one who was first afflicted by it, gave rise to the whole multitude of passions. And he—the first man—believing that by the power of his free will alone and through his own efforts he could attain the glory of the Godhead, lost even that which he had received through the Creator's goodness.

6. Thus, the examples and testimonies of Holy Scripture most clearly demonstrate that the passion of pride, although it is the last in the order of spiritual battles, is nevertheless the first in origin, and is the source of all sins and transgressions. Unlike other passions, it does not destroy only the virtue opposed to it—that is, humility—but is the destroyer of all virtues together; and it tempts not just any mediocre or insignificant virtues, but especially those that stand at the height of power. For the Prophet speaks of this spirit as follows: *"His chosen ones are his food"* (Hab. 1: 16). Therefore, even the blessed David, though he guarded the recesses of his heart with such care that from to Him from whom the secrets of his conscience were not hidden,

boldly proclaimed: *“O Lord, my heart has not been haughty, nor have my eyes looked with pride; I have not walked in the matter of the mighty, nor in the matter of those more excellent than I”* (Ps. 130: 1)—and again: *“Let there be no pride in the midst of my house”* (Ps. 100: 7); yet knowing how difficult it is even for the perfect to guard against any stirrings of this passion, he did not rely solely on his own efforts in this matter, but sought the Lord’s help in prayer, that He might grant him to avoid being wounded by the arrow of this enemy, saying: *“Let not the foot of pride come upon me”* (Ps. 35: 12), (i.e., do not let me, O Lord, take any step prompted by pride)—fearing and dreading that he might fall into what is said of the proud: *“God opposes the proud”* (James 4:6)—and also: *“No one who is haughty is pure in God’s sight”* (Proverbs 16:5).

7. How great an evil is pride, when even the angels and other forces opposed to it are insufficient to resist it, but God Himself rises up against it! It should be noted that the Apostle did not say of those who are ensnared by other passions that God opposes them—that is, he did not say: “God opposes the gluttonous, the sexually immoral, the angry, or the greedy,” but only the proud. For those passions either affect only the individual who commits them or, apparently, are directed against their accomplices—that is, other people; but this one is directed specifically against God, and therefore it particularly deserves to have Him as its adversary.

8. We can avoid the snares of this most vile spirit if, regarding each of the virtues in which we feel we are succeeding, we say with the Apostle: *“Not I, but the grace of God that is with me,”* and: *“By the grace of God I am what I am”* (1 Cor. 15: 10), — and: *“It is God who works in us both to will and to act for His good pleasure”* (Phil. 2:13),— as the Author of our salvation Himself says: *“Whoever abides in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing”* (John 15: 5),—and the Psalmist echoes: *“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain”* (Ps. 126: 1). And the will of none who desire and strive is sufficient for one clothed in flesh—which wars against the spirit—to attain perfect purity and innocence without the special protection of divine mercy, and thereby be deemed worthy to receive that which he so strongly desires and toward which he so earnestly strives. For *“every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights”* (James 1:17). *“What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?”* (1 Corinthians 4:7).

9. I say this not to belittle human effort or to discourage anyone from diligent and strenuous labor. On the contrary, I firmly affirm—not in my own opinion, but that of the elders—that perfection cannot be attained without them, and that through them alone, without God’s grace, it cannot be brought to the proper degree by anyone. For just as we say that human efforts alone, without God’s help, cannot attain it, so we affirm that God’s grace is bestowed only upon those who labor in the sweat of their brow, or, in the words of the Apostle, is given only to those who desire and strive for it—judging also by the fact that in Psalm 88 it is sung from God’s perspective: *“I have set my help upon the mighty; I have exalted the chosen one from among men”* (v. 20). Although, according to the Lord’s word, we say that to those who ask it is given, to those who knock it is opened, and to those who seek it is found; yet asking, seeking, and knocking are not in themselves sufficient for this, unless God’s mercy grants what we ask for, opens what we knock on, and enables us to find what we seek. He is ready to grant us all this as soon as we give Him the opportunity to do so by offering our good will; for He desires and awaits our perfection and salvation far more than we do. And Blessed David was so deeply aware of the impossibility of succeeding in his endeavors and labors by his own efforts alone that he pleaded twice for the grace that the Lord Himself might set his works aright, saying: *“Set aright the works of our hands for us, and set aright the works of our hands”* (Ps. 89: 17)—and again: *“O God, establish what You have done in us”* (Ps. 67: 29).

10. Therefore, we must strive for perfection by devoting ourselves to fasting, vigils, prayers, and the mortification of heart and body, so that, puffed up with pride, we do not render all this in vain. We must believe that not only can we not attain perfection itself through our own efforts and labors, but also that the very things in which we exercise ourselves to attain it—that is, ascetic deeds and various spiritual practices—we cannot perform properly without the help of God’s grace.

11. We must always give thanks to God not only for the fact that He created us rational beings, endowed us with free will, bestowed the grace of baptism, and provided us with the guidance of the Law, but also for the fact that He sustains us daily through His providence, namely: He delivers us from the enemy’s slanders, helps us overcome carnal passions, shields us from dangers without our knowledge, protects us from falling into sin, helps us and enlightens us in the knowledge and understanding of the requirements of His law, secretly instills in us contrition for our negligence and transgressions, salvifically corrects us, granting us

special grace, and sometimes even against our will draws us toward salvation. – Finally, He directs our freest will—which is more inclined toward passions—toward the best actions beneficial to the soul, and turns it onto the path of virtue through the grace of His influence upon it.

12. This is what humility before God truly consists of; this is the faith of the most ancient Fathers, which remains unblemished even to this day among their successors. The apostolic powers they displayed—not only among us but also among the unbelievers and the faint of faith—bear undeniable witness to this faith of theirs.

13. Joash, King of Judah, at first led a praiseworthy life; but later, having become proud, he was given over to dishonorable and impure passions, or, as the Apostle says: “*It is unnatural for an untrained mind to devise such things*” (Rom. 1:26, 28). Such is the law of God’s righteousness: whoever is unrepentantly puffed up with prideful arrogance of heart is given over to the shame of the most vile carnal disgrace, so that, being humbled in this way, he might realize that if he now finds himself so defiled, it is because he previously refused to acknowledge the deepest and most serious impurity arising from prideful exaltation, and so that, having realized this, he might be moved to purify himself of both passions.

14. It is therefore evident that no one can attain the ultimate limit of perfection and purity except through true humility, which, while visibly demonstrating it before his brothers, he also manifests before God in the innermost recesses of his heart, believing that without His protection and help, which visit him at every moment, he can in no way attain the perfection he desires and toward which he strives with all his might.

15. Thus far, as far as our limited gifts have allowed, with God’s help we have spoken sufficiently about spiritual pride, by which, as has been said, even the perfect are tempted. This kind of pride is known to few and experienced by few, because not many strive to attain perfect purity of heart in order to reach such trials. It usually assails only those who, having conquered all other passions, are already nearly at the very summit of virtue. Our most cunning enemy, since he could not overcome them by luring them into carnal sin, now attempts to trip them up and bring them down through a spiritual fall, plotting thereby to deprive them of all the fruits they had previously attained with great effort. As for us, who are still ensnared by carnal passions, he does not even deign to tempt us in this way, but trips us up with crude, so to speak, carnal pride. And therefore, regarding this—which we, or people of our standing, are most in danger of falling into, and especially the souls of young or novice monks—I consider it necessary to say a few words, as we promised.

16. This carnal pride, as we have said, if—after the proper beginning of renunciation of the world has been made, yet without due zeal—remains in the monk’s soul, prevents him from descending from his former worldly arrogance to the true humility of Christ, and first makes him disobedient and stubborn; then it prevents him from being meek and courteous, as well as from conducting himself on an equal footing with all his brothers and living like everyone else, without standing out; in particular, it does not allow him, in accordance with the commandment of God and our Savior, to divest himself of all earthly possessions; and yet, since renunciation of the world is nothing other than a demonstration of the death of the self to all things and of the cross, and cannot truly be begun or built upon any other foundation than the awareness that one is spiritually dead to all the affairs of this world, and the belief that one must also die bodily every day,—it, on the contrary, tempts him to hope for a long life, presents various prolonged illnesses ahead, unsettles him with shame and embarrassment if, having been left with nothing, he begins to support himself from others’ rather than his own resources, and instills the idea that it is far better to obtain food and clothing by one’s own means than by others’, reminding him, in confirmation of this, the following saying: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35)—the true meaning of which these people, whose hearts have grown dull and cold, can never comprehend.

17. A monk who has begun his renunciation of the world in such an unwholesome way can never embrace the true and simple humility of Christ. He will not cease either to boast of his noble birth, or to take pride in his former worldly life—which he has left behind only in body, not in heart—or to take pride in the money he has kept for himself to his own ruin, because, because of it, he can no longer bear the yoke of monastic discipline with peace of mind, nor submit to the instructions of any elder. Whoever is overcome by pride considers it humiliating to observe any rules of submission or obedience; he even is reluctant to listen to the general teaching on the perfection of the spiritual life, and at times even harbors a complete aversion to it, especially when, reproached by his conscience, he suspects that it is deliberately directed against him. In the latter case, his heart becomes even more embittered and flares up with anger. Afterward, he speaks in a loud voice, uses coarse language, gives a defiant and bitter reply, walks with a proud and restless gait, and

talks incessantly. Thus, it happens that spiritual conversation not only brings him no benefit whatsoever, but on the contrary proves harmful, becoming for him a cause of greater sin.

18. I have heard that one of the young monks, when Abba rebuked him for “why, having abandoned the humility he had shown for some time after renouncing the world, he had begun to swell with devilish pride,” replied to him with extreme arrogance: “Did I humble myself for some time just to be subordinate forever?” – At this utterly unrestrained and criminal reply, the elder was so stunned with astonishment that his speech faltered, as if he had heard such words not from a human being but from the ancient Lucifer himself, and he could not utter a single sound from his lips against such audacity, but only let out sighs and groans from his heart, silently repeating in his mind what was said about our Savior: “*Who, being in the form of God... humbled Himself by becoming obedient*”—not for a time (as this man, possessed by the devilish spirit of pride, says), but “*even unto death*” (Phil. 2:6, 8).

19. This carnal pride manifests itself in the following ways: in speech, it takes the form of loudness; in silence—irritability; in joy—loud, boisterous laughter; in sorrow—meaningless gloom; in reply—sharpness; in speech—lightness, with words bursting out haphazardly without any involvement of the heart. It knows no patience, is alien to love, is bold in inflicting insults but faint-hearted in enduring them, is reluctant to obey unless preceded by its own desire and will, unyielding to exhortation, incapable of renouncing her own desires, extremely stubborn when it comes to submitting to others, always striving to have her way, and never willing to yield to another; and thus it happens that, having become incapable of accepting salutary counsel, she trusts her own opinion more than the judgment of the elders.

20. Through these stages of decline, the one who is once seized by pride, having sunk to the depths, recoils in horror from strict communal discipline, and, – believing that if he makes little progress on the path to perfection, it is because his communion with the brethren slows him down, and that if he succeeds little in acquiring patience and humility, it is the fault of others, due to obstacles on their part, —he develops a desire to live in a secluded cell, or even undertakes to establish a separate monastery, with the aim of drawing many to a strict way of life, and hastens to gather those who are to follow his teaching and instruction, thus transforming himself from an unworthy disciple into the most unworthy of teachers.

21. Therefore, if we wish for our edifice to rise to the very top and be pleasing to God, let us strive to lay its foundation not according to our self-serving will, but according to the precise teaching of the Gospel, according to which such a foundation can be nothing other than the fear of God and humility, born of meekness and simplicity of heart. Humility, however, cannot be attained without stripping ourselves of everything without which it is impossible to be established in good obedience, steadfast patience, unshakable meekness, or perfect love; and without these, our heart can by no means be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, as the Lord proclaims through the Prophet: “*Whom shall I look upon? Only the meek and quiet, who tremble at My words*” (Ps. 66:2).

22. Why must the soldier of Christ, who, lawfully striving in spiritual battles, desires to be crowned by the Lord, make every effort to exterminate this most ferocious beast—the devourer of all virtues—being certain that as long as it remains in his heart, not only will he be unable to free himself from all passions, but that even if he acquires any virtue at all, it too will perish from its poison. For the edifice of virtues cannot be erected in our soul unless the foundations of true humility are first laid in our heart; and this humility, being most firmly established, alone is capable of strongly supporting the edifice of perfection and love raised to its highest point. To this end, we must, first of all, manifest true humility toward our brothers and sisters with sincere disposition, without allowing ourselves in any way to grieve or offend them—which we cannot possibly accomplish unless, out of love for Christ, true renunciation of all things is deeply rooted within us, consisting in the complete stripping away of all worldly possessions; second, we must accept the yoke of obedience and submission with a simple heart and without any pretense, so that, apart from Abba’s command, “,” no other will should dwell within us at all; this can be observed by no one except one who has not only considered himself dead to this world but also regards himself as foolish and senseless, and without any hesitation carries out whatever the elders command, believing that all of it is sacred and proclaimed by God Himself.

23. When we maintain this attitude, then without a doubt a state of humility so unshakable and unchanging will follow that, considering ourselves the lowest of all, we will endure with the utmost patience whatever is inflicted upon us, however groundless, offensive, or even harmful it may be, —as if it were imposed upon us by our spiritual fathers (as an act of obedience or a trial). And not only will we bear all such

things easily, but we will also regard them as small and insignificant, if, at the same time, we constantly keep in mind and feel the sufferings of our Lord and all the Saints; for then the slanders we endure will seem all the lighter to us, in proportion to how far we fall short of their great deeds and fruitful lives. The inspiration to endure that flows from this will be even stronger if, at the same time, we reflect that we too will soon depart from this world and, at the end of our lives, will immediately become partakers of their bliss and glory. Such reflection is destructive not only to pride but also to all passions. After this, we must firmly and steadfastly maintain such humility before God: this will be accomplished if we hold fast to the conviction that, on our own, without His help and grace, we can do nothing that pertains to the perfection of virtue, and if we sincerely believe that even what we have managed to comprehend is His gift.

6. The Struggle Against Thoughts, and Through Them Against Evil Spirits

1. *Question.* We see no success in maintaining our focus, despite all our efforts. We cannot keep the mind from wandering. Even when we feel that the heart is empathetically drawn toward a particular contemplation, the mind, insensitively drifting away from it, plunges with immeasurable speed into its usual wanderings. Thus, countless times each day, it is carried off captive by its own flights of fancy here and there. Consequently, one even begins to despair of ever achieving the desired remedy for this weakness, and it seems that focusing one's attention on this matter is a futile effort, when one sees that the soul, despite everything, still sets out to wander with swift flights every minute. You draw it toward spiritual contemplation through the fear of God, but before it can settle into it, it instantly vanishes from view again. And then, as if anticipating its intention to flee, you seize it at the very beginning and draw it back to the contemplation from which it had begun to stray, intending, as it were, to bind it with the most intense attention of the heart—yet even as you labor over it, it manages to slip away from the inner sanctuary faster than an eel from a fisherman's hands. Striving in this way every day with all diligence to keep my thoughts in check, and seeing no success in it, I involuntarily come to the conclusion that such wanderings of the mind do not come from us, but are surely simply our nature (– Collected Works 7, 3).

2. It is unwise to jump to conclusions so quickly without properly investigating the matter. It is unfair to assume, simply because of one's own inability or lack of skill to succeed at something, that such success is impossible for anyone. It is as if someone who cannot swim and cannot stay afloat were to conclude that, since his body, due to its weight, cannot stay afloat, and since everyone's body is the same as his, then no one's body can stay afloat, and consequently no one can swim—that it is simply the nature of bodies that they cannot swim. No matter how correct such a conclusion might seem to him, his experience does not support it. Such is your judgment as well. Our mind, by its very nature, cannot remain idle; why is it inevitable that, if it does not possess objects prudently prepared in advance upon which to exercise its movements and with which to constantly occupy itself, it will—by virtue of its agility—dart here and there and fly everywhere, until, through long-term practice and constant habit—what you call futile labor—it learns from experience what materials he must store in his memory so that he may revolve around them in his tireless flights, and through unceasing devotion to this labor acquire the strength to repel the enemy's opposing suggestions—by which he was previously distracted—and thus remain unshakably in that state (of equanimity and inner peace) which he desires. Therefore, we should not attribute the fickleness of the mind's aimless wandering to human nature, nor to God—its Creator. For the word of Scripture is true: *“God made man upright, but they”* (people) *“have sought out many thoughts”* (Eccl. 7:30). Consequently, the quality of our thoughts depends on us. And the Psalmist says: *“Blessed is the man who has his refuge in you; set his heart on ascending”* (Ps. 83:6). You see that it is within our power to set in our hearts either “ascents”—that is, thoughts that reach up to God—or “descents”—that is, thoughts that fall down to earthly and carnal things. If thoughts were not within our power, would the Lord not have rebuked the Pharisees, saying, *“Why do you harbor wicked thoughts in your hearts?”* (Matt. 9:4)? Nor would He have commanded through the Prophets: *“Remove your evil thoughts from My sight”* (Isa. 1:16)—and: *“How long will your wicked thoughts linger within you?”* (Jer. 4:14). (—Col. 7:4).

3. It is true that many vain thoughts trouble us even against our will and deceive us almost without our knowledge, entering us so imperceptibly and cunningly that we not only cannot prevent their entry but also perceive them with great difficulty; but to accept or reject them is possible for anyone who, with God's help, applies their diligence and effort to this end. Just as their arising does not depend on us, so their rejection or acceptance lies within our will. Moreover, even in the very arising of thoughts, not everything should be attributed to the onslaught of thoughts or to those spirits that seek to instill them; rather, it is up to us to correct

the nature of our thoughts and to ensure that spiritual and holy thoughts arise in our hearts in place of carnal and earthly ones—if not always, then for the most part. When someone studies Holy Scripture wisely and diligently, practices the psalms and singing, abides in fasting and vigil, and constantly remembers the future—the Kingdom of Heaven and the fiery Gehenna—as well as all of God’s works, then evil thoughts diminish and appear less frequently. But when, on the contrary, someone is preoccupied with worldly cares and carnal affairs, and indulges in vain and idle talk, then evil thoughts multiply within us (—Collect 1:16–17).

4. The activity of our mind is well compared to a millstone, which spins rapidly in a circle due to the swift current of water. It cannot stop spinning at all, being driven by the water; but it is up to the miller whether to grind wheat, rye, or chaff. Likewise, our mind throughout this present life, being constantly set in motion by streams of impressions rushing at it from all sides, cannot be free from the agitation of thoughts; but which of these to accept or assimilate depends on our will and discretion. If, as has been said, we constantly engage in the study of Holy Scripture, fill our memory with spiritual subjects, and nurture a desire for perfection and hope for future bliss, then spiritual thoughts will arise from this, and our mind will be kept in constant reflection on those subjects in which we have delved deeply. But if, out of carelessness and negligence, we occupy ourselves with the objects of the passions and idle conversation, or indulge in worldly concerns and vain cares; then, by their very nature, thoughts will spring up like weeds and give our hearts harmful work, according to the saying of the Lord and Savior: “*Where your treasure is*”—that is, your deeds and your attention—there “*your heart will be also*” (Matt. 6:21). (Col. 1. 18).

5. We must know that there are three sources of our thoughts: from God, from the devil, and from ourselves. From God—when He deigns to visit us with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, stirring within us either a zeal for the highest achievement, or contrition over our lack of success and our indulgence in laziness and carelessness; or when He reveals heavenly mysteries to us and directs our intentions toward better deeds. Thus the Lord inspired Artaxerxes to ask for the records; and when he learned from them of Mordecai’s good deeds, he immediately revoked his previous cruel decree to destroy the Jewish people (Esther 6). So too was it promised to the Apostles: “*It is not you who will speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you*” (Matt. 10:20). – Thoughts originate from the devil when he attempts to lead us astray, arousing through them passionate delight, or with cunning deceit presents evil under the guise of good, “*transforming himself*” before us “*into an angel of light*” (2 Cor. 11:14). Thus, he “*put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord*” (John 13:2)—and into the heart of Ananias—“*to lie to the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 5:3). – Thoughts arise from within us when we naturally recall what we have seen, heard, or done (— Sob. 1:19).

6. We must always keep this threefold cause of thoughts in mind, so that we may not judge the thoughts arising in our hearts based on them, but rather treat them accordingly. In this regard, we must imitate skilled coin examiners (money changers)—who know how to accurately determine whether a coin is gold and whether it is pure gold, or whether it is copper that resembles gold in luster; whether it bears the image of the king, and if so, whether it is lawfully depicted; and whether the coin also has the lawful weight. We must do the same spiritually with regard to our thoughts. First, we must examine whether what has entered our hearts is truly or not. For example, if a certain teaching is presented, we must consider whether it has been purified by the divine fire of the Holy Spirit, or whether it belongs to Jewish superstition, or whether it stems from the arrogant philosophy of the world and merely wears the mask of piety. By doing so, we will fulfill the Apostolic instruction: “*Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God*” (1 John 4:1); and we will be safe from straying from the truth. But those who did not take care to heed this warning were subjected to a disastrous apostasy from the faith. Smooth-tongued deceivers first drew them to themselves with certain pious sentiments and arguments consistent with the Holy Faith, as if with the glitter of gold; and then taught them doctrines contrary to the faith, which—deceived by the initial appearance of piety—they did not think to subject to scrutiny; and, having thus accepted a counterfeit copper coin for gold, they fell into heretical errors. – Second, we must carefully discern whether we are hearing a false interpretation of Holy Scripture, which, masquerading as the pure gold of a true understanding of the divine words, attempts to deceive us with the appearance of this precious metal—so that we might accept it along with the admixture of copper that is falsely attributed to it. This is how Satan attempted to tempt Christ the Savior Himself. And this is how he tempts all of us, already with some success, just as he did with our Lord. – Third, – we must be vigilant in every way, lest the enemy, by distorting the precious sayings of Holy Scripture through cunning interpretation, succeed in leading us to apply and use them improperly, deceptively cloaking this with a tradition supposedly originating from the elders, as if unlawfully affixing the royal seal to a counterfeit coin.

He succeeds in doing this when he entices us into excessive and burdensome labor, into excessive vigils, disorderly prayers, and inappropriate reading, and, luring us with the promise of good, leads us to a soul-destroying end; or when he advises us to make unnecessary visits, so that, by driving us from our seclusion, he may deprive us of blessed silence; or when he instills the idea of taking on the care of pious, helpless women, so as to entangle one in ruinous concerns; or when he incites the desire for holy orders, under the pretext of edifying many, thereby distracting one from our humble calling. All such suggestions, cloaked in the guise of mercy, piety, and supreme success, deceive the inexperienced. Outwardly, they resemble the coins of the true King; but they are not minted by true spiritual coin-makers—not by experienced Orthodox Fathers—but are forged by the cunning of demons for harm and ruin. The saying of the Proverb writer applies perfectly to them: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end leads to the gates of hell”* (Prov. 16:25). – The final (fourth) observation of the experienced coin-maker, concerning the examination of weight, will be fulfilled by us in our spiritual work if, whenever a thought prompts us to do something, we place it on the scales of our conscience and, with the utmost rigor, examine whether it has true weight—whether it is heavy with the fear of God, whether it contains everything—in terms of its meaning and significance—whether ostentation and novelty make it light, whether vanity would later diminish its weight, and whether human glory would erode it. Having weighed all this and determined it by the testimonies of the Apostles and Prophets, we must then either accept it as consistent with them, or reject it with the utmost rigor as contrary to them and harmful to us (—Col. 1:20–21).

7. Thus, we must ceaselessly examine all the recesses of our hearts and, with keen vigilance, observe the traces of those who enter, lest some mental beast—or even a lion or a dragon itself—sneak in there as well, and, secretly imprinting its destructive marks there, it might not also pave the way for others to enter the recesses of our hearts, should we be inattentive to our thoughts. By cultivating the soil of our heart in this way, hour by hour and minute by minute, with the Gospel plow—that is, through unceasing remembrance of the Lord’s cross—we will easily be able to destroy the lairs of pernicious beasts and the dens of venomous serpents—and drive them out of ourselves (—Collect 1, 22).

8. The image of the perfect mind (one that exercises control over its own thoughts) is beautifully exemplified in the figure of the centurion in the Gospel. In the account of him, moral strength—which enables one not to be carried away by every passing thought, but to accept good thoughts according to one’s own judgment and to cast aside those contrary to it without any difficulty—is described in the following words of his, if understood allegorically: *“For I, too, am a man subject to authority, but having soldiers under my command, I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it”* (Matt. 8:9). If we, too, were to fight courageously against disorderly inner impulses and passions, gaining the strength to subject them to our authority and our reason, to quell the lusts waging war within our flesh, to keep the disorderly crowd of our thoughts under the yoke of the mind’s authority, and drive away from the confines of our hearts, under the saving banner of the Lord’s cross, the gathering of the most wicked enemy forces, then for such triumphs and victories we would be elevated to the rank of a centurion in its spiritual sense. And in this way, having risen to the height of such dignity, we will possess the same commanding authority and power as he does, by which we will no longer be carried away by whatever thoughts we do not desire, but in those by which we find spiritual delight, we will have the opportunity to abide and cling to them, imperiously commanding the evil temptations: “Depart”—and they will depart; and inviting good thoughts: “Come,” and they will come; and to our servant—the flesh—we will command what is necessary for chastity and self-restraint, and it will carry it out without any objection, no longer arousing vices contrary to the spirit, but showing it complete submission (—Sob. 7:5).

9. But how can this be achieved? It will come of its own accord when we unite so sincerely with God that He will act within us. The Apostle confirms this when he says: *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God”* (2 Cor. 10:4). Whatever we undertake to overcome these thoughts will be ineffective until God Himself acts through us in union with us. Then our feeble means will become strong and all-conquering—they will demolish the enemy’s strongholds and strike down and drive out every kind of thought. And the prophetic word will be fulfilled in us: *“Let the weak say, ‘I am strong,’”* *“and let the meek be mighty”* (Joel 3:10–11)—and what St. Paul says of himself: *“When I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Cor. 12:10). For then *“the power of God”* will be made perfect *“in our weakness”* (v. 9). Therefore, with all the desire of our hearts, let us strive for union with the Lord, until what Blessed David

experienced: *“My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me”* (Ps. 62: 9)—and each of us, together with him, will begin to sing: *“It is good for me to cling to God”* (Ps. 72: 28). Of course, this requires constant effort and toil; but without this, there is no success in any endeavor. All the more so, one cannot expect it in such an important matter. No virtue attains perfection without effort—and no one can attain the stilling of the mind without extreme exertion of the heart. The Lord’s words apply directly here: *“The kingdom of God is taken by force, and those who use force seize it”* (Matt. 11:12). In order for our spirit to *“reach the measure of the full stature of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13)—and to become *“one spirit with the Lord”* (1 Cor. 6:17)—it must always remain vigilant with great intensity and labor at this with unceasing zeal. Having attained this, it can then join the Apostle in solemnly exclaiming: *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:13). (—A paraphrase from The Collects, Book 7, Chapters 5 and 6).

10. Why must all our attention always be directed toward that one thing—to swiftly bring our thoughts back to the remembrance of God from their wandering and circling? Just as one who wishes to erect and join the dome’s vault correctly at the top constantly traces a circle around the structure with a cord from the center, thereby giving its curvature a uniform direction throughout; so too, anyone who attempts such a task without this aid—even if he possesses great skill—cannot infallibly maintain the correct roundness, nor can he determine at a glance how far he has deviated from it without resorting to the aforementioned guide to correctness: so too is our spirit: if, having established within ourselves the loving remembrance of God as a kind of immovable center, we do not then, proceed from it and, with it as a guide, examine all its actions and labors at every moment, using it as a standard to determine the quality of thoughts and undertakings—accepting some and rejecting others—and using it as a faithful compass to direct everything it does; then he will by no means build, as he ought, that spiritual edifice of which Paul is the architect (1 Cor. 3:10), nor will he impart to it the beauty of that house which, desiring to build for the Lord in his heart, the blessed David cried out: *“O Lord, I love the beauty of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells”* (Ps. 25: 8), but will senselessly erect in his heart an ugly house, unworthy of the Holy Spirit and always ready to collapse, destined not to receive glory for it from the One he awaits, but to be deemed unworthy of the visitor who has not been granted entry into such a dwelling (i.e., the Holy Spirit), but rather to be pitifully crushed under the ruins of his own structure (—Discourses 24:6).

11. Dark forces act upon us primarily through our thoughts, and of course it would be easier for us to cope with them if we were not constantly and in great numbers surrounded by these enemies who wish us ill—but there is no need to be terrified by this. These enemies do indeed constantly slander us, but they only sow and stir up evil within us; they do not compel us to commit it. If they were given the power not only to instill evil but also to forcibly draw us toward it, then whatever sinful desire they might wish to kindle in our hearts, not a single person would be able to avoid sinning because of it. But we see that just as they are permitted to incite us, so too are we granted both the strength to resist such incitements, and the freedom to yield to them. What, then, is there to fear?—However, if anyone fears their violence and attacks, to that person we, on the other hand, offer God’s protection and God’s help, which is more powerful than theirs, as it is said: *“The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4), — Whose intercession overcomes for us with incomparably greater power than that with which the enemy’s side rises up against us. For God not only inspires good deeds but also protects them and brings them to completion; so that sometimes, without our will or our knowledge, He draws us to salvation. It is therefore settled that no one can be deceived by the devil except the one who himself chooses to consent to him. Ecclesiastes clearly expressed this in the following words: *“For there is no dispute against those who do evil quickly; therefore the hearts of the sons of men are set on doing evil”* (Eccl. 8:11). It is therefore evident that everyone sins because, when evil thoughts assail him, he does not immediately resist them with opposition. For it is said: *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). (—Conversations 7:8).

12. Some may wonder how these evil spirits enter into communion with the soul—how they converse with it imperceptibly, instill in it whatever they wish, see its thoughts and movements, and use them to its detriment. — But there is nothing strange about this. A spirit can enter into communion with another spirit and secretly influence it, suggesting what is desirable to it. For between them, just as between people, there is a certain similarity and kinship by nature. But for them to enter into one another and take possession of one another is utterly impossible. This can truly be attributed only to the Divine (—Collects 7, 9, 10).

13. What has been said above is in no way contradicted by what happens to the possessed when, under the influence of unclean spirits, they say and do things they do not want to, and are compelled to utter words

they do not understand. It is well known that not everyone is affected by spirits in the same way in such cases. Some are so completely taken over by them that they are completely unaware of what they are doing or saying, while others are aware and recall it afterward. Both of these occur due to the influence of an unclean spirit—not, however, in such a way that it penetrates the very substance of the soul and, as if merging with it and somehow clothing itself in it, utters words and speech through the lips of the afflicted person. They are in no way capable of doing this. What happens is that the unclean spirit, dwelling in those members through which the soul acts and imposing an unbearable burden upon them, shrouds the soul's rational faculties in a terrible darkness and suppresses their activity (by such suppression of the organs of this activity). As we see, this sometimes happens due to wine, as well as from fever, excessive cold, and other illnesses arising from external causes. Lest the devil, having gained power over his flesh, should devise to do the same to the blessed Job, the Lord forbade him by a special command, saying: "*Behold, I deliver him into your hands; only spare his soul*" (Job 2:6), that is, do not drive him mad by disrupting the seat of the soul, invading his reason, and damaging the faculty of understanding, by means of which he (Job) must resist you (— Own 7:12).

14. However, although the spirit thus blends seamlessly with this coarse and solid matter—that is, with the flesh—which may be very convenient, it does not follow from this that it can also unite with the soul, which is likewise spirit, in such a way as to make it, like the body, a receptacle for its being. This is possible only for the One Trinity, Who not only encompasses every rational being but also penetrates it. The one God is wholly present everywhere and in everything, so that He sees all our thoughts, all our inner movements, and all the secrets of our souls. "*There is no creature hidden from Him; but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him*" (Heb. 4:13)—and "*He tests the hearts and minds with righteousness*" (Ps. 7:10). (—Col. 7:13).

15. But how do unclean spirits know our thoughts?—They do not read them directly in the soul, but discern them from their manifestation in external, sensory signs—that is, from our words and actions. But they cannot in any way penetrate those thoughts that have not yet emerged from within the soul. Even whether and how the thoughts they instill are accepted, they do not learn from the soul itself, nor from the innermost movements that occur secretly within it as a result, but rather from the manifestations of those thoughts outside the soul. For example, if, having planted a thought of gluttony, they see that a monk has begun to gaze out the window and at the sun, or to ask what time it is, they know from this that a gluttonous desire has been implanted in him. And it is not surprising that the aerial powers recognize this and similar things, since we see that even intelligent people are able to discern a person's inner state through their eyes, face, and other external signs. Certainly, those who, like spirits, are undoubtedly much more subtle and perceptive than humans can discern this even more accurately (— Collected Works 7, 15).

16. It must be understood that not all demons kindle all passions in people, but certain spirits are assigned to each passion; for some of them delight in impure and shameful lusts, others love blasphemy, others anger and fury, others find comfort in sorrow, and others in vanity and pride—and each sows into human hearts the passion in which he himself particularly delights; but they do not all stir up their passions at once, but in turn, depending on what the time, place, and receptiveness of the one being tempted require (— Collect. 7, 17).

17. And one must know that not all of them are equally evil or equally strong. The weakest spirits set out to attack the beginners and the feeble, and when these are defeated, then the strongest are sent—and in this way, the soldier of Christ must gradually endure ever stronger battles, in proportion to his own progress and the increase of his spiritual strength. And none of the saints could in any way have withstood the malice of such and so many enemies, or stood firm against their slanders and fierce rage, if Christ—the most merciful intercessor and helper—had not always been present with us in our battle, who does not equalize the strength of the combatants, who does not repel and restrain the disorderly raids of the enemies, and *who "does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear"* (1 Cor. 10:13). (—Col. 7, 20).

18. That demons have no power to harm every person is most clearly demonstrated by the example of the blessed Job, whom the enemy did not dare to tempt beyond what was permitted by God's will—as is also attested by the confession of the evil spirits recorded in the Gospel accounts: "*If you cast us out, send us into the herd of pigs*" (Matt. 8:31). All the more reason, then, to believe that they cannot enter any person created in the image of God at will, since without God's permission they did not even have the power to enter unclean and speechless animals. Indeed, if they had been given the power to tempt and embitter any person at will, then no one—not to mention young monks, but even men of perfect virtue—would be able to live in the desert, surrounded by such a horde of such evil enemies (— Collects 7:22).

19. It is also known that unclean spirits do not enter the bodies of those possessed by them unless they have first taken possession of their minds and thoughts. Having first stripped them of the fear of God, the remembrance of God, and spiritual instruction, they then boldly attack them as if they were defenseless and deprived of God's help and protection—and therefore easily conquered—and finally establish their dwelling within them, as in a domain granted to them. – However, it is also true that those who are tormented by them most severely and excessively are those who, though not possessed by them physically, are most ruinously possessed by them in their souls—namely, those who have become ensnared by their passions and lusts; for, in the words of the Apostle, “*whoever is overcome by something is its slave*” (2 Peter 2:19), (– Sermon 7, 24, 25).

20. Scripture testifies that two angels—one good and one evil—are ever present with each of us. Of the good ones, the Savior says: “*Take care not to despise even one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My heavenly Father*” (Matt. 18: 10)—and Blessed David: “*The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them*” (Ps. 33: 8); further evidence of their existence is found in the Book of Acts, where it is said of Peter: “*He has an angel*” (– 12: 15). Both angels are discussed at length in the book *The Shepherd*. – If we also consider the one who sought access to Blessed Job, we will clearly understand that it was the one who had always slandered him but could never induce him to sin; that is why he asked the Lord for authority over him—confessing that until then he had been defeated not by Job's virtue but by the Lord's intercession, who had always shielded him with His protection. And it is also said of Judas: “*Let the devil stand at his right hand*” (Ps. 108: 6). (– Collection 8, 17).

7. The Struggle Against All Kinds of Sorrows Arising from Misfortunes and Calamities

1. In Palestine, in the deserts between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, barbarians suddenly attacked the monks—and beat many of them severely. How could God have allowed such wickedness to be committed against His servants? – This question usually troubles the minds of those who, having little faith and knowledge, think that the virtues and deeds of the saints are rewarded during the brief span of this life—the temporal one. But we, who *do not “set our hope solely on this present life in Christ,”* so that, according to the Apostle, “*we may not be the most wretched of all men*” (1 Cor. 15: 19), must not be led astray by such opinions; lest, through ignorance of the true definition of the truth regarding such events, we—falling into terror and confusion from the temptations to which we find ourselves subjected—be led astray from the path of righteousness (Ps. 72: 2), —or, to put it in even more alarming terms, not to attribute to God injustice and indifference toward human affairs, on the grounds that, as it were, He does not deliver the holy and the righteous from temptation, nor does He repay the good with good and the wicked with evil in this life—and thus not deserve condemnation along with those whom the prophet Zephaniah threatens on behalf of the Lord, saying: “*I will take vengeance on those who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do any good, nor will He do any harm’*” (Zeph. 1: 12), or to suffer the same fate as those who, with such complaints, blaspheme against God: “*Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them; and where is the God of justice?*” (Mal. 2: 17)? Add to this the blasphemy described by the Prophet afterward: “*Is it in vain that we have served God, and even more, that we have kept His commandments and walked in prayer before the face of the Lord Almighty? And now we bless the strangers, and all who practice lawlessness are prospering: they have defied God and yet are saved*” (Mal. 3:14–15). – Therefore, in order for us to avoid ignorance—which is the root and cause of this most shameful delusion—we must first clearly discern what is truly good and what is evil. Holding fast then not to the false opinion of the crowd on this matter, but to the true definition of Scripture, we will no longer be deceived by the delusions of unbelievers.

2. Everything that exists and occurs in the world falls into three categories: good, evil, and the middle way. We must therefore discern what good, evil, and the middle way truly are, so that our faith, grounded in sound knowledge, may remain unshaken in the face of all temptations. In human affairs, nothing should be regarded as an essential good except for one spiritual virtue, which, by sincere faith leading us to God, compels us to cling unceasingly to this unchanging good. Conversely, nothing should be regarded as evil except for one sin, which, separating us from the good God, binds us to the evil devil. That which is in the middle is that which may be attributed to one side or the other, depending on the quality and disposition of the one who benefits from it, such as: wealth, power, honor, physical strength, health, beauty, life itself or death, poverty, the frailty of the flesh, slander, and other such things, which, depending on the nature and disposition of the one who uses them, can serve either for good or for evil. For even wealth can often serve for good, according

to the Apostle, who “*commands those who are rich in this present age to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may receive eternal life*” (1 Tim. 6: 17–19); but again, it turns to evil when it is gathered merely to hoard and bury in the ground, as the miserly do, or to squander on luxury and pleasures rather than for the benefit of those in need. Likewise, the fact that power and honor, physical strength, and health are neutral—and suitable for both sides—easily proves that many of the saints in the Old Testament, possessing all these things, were very pleasing to God; whereas, on the contrary, those who made poor use of these blessings, turning them to serve their evil inclinations, were unjustly punished or put to death, as the Books of Kings often recount. Likewise, understand that other moderate things are not true goodness—which consists solely in virtues—but are something in between; for just as they are useful and beneficial to the righteous—who use them for righteous and necessary deeds, enabling them to store up good fruits as treasures for eternal life—so too are they useless and harmful to those who misuse them, leading them only to sin and death.

3. Keeping this distinction between things and deeds firmly in mind, and knowing that there is no true good except virtue arising from the fear of God and love for God, and that there is no true evil except sin and separation from God, let us now examine with the utmost attention, whether it has ever happened that God, either by Himself or through another, has caused such evil to any of His saints? You will undoubtedly find no such instance anywhere. For it has never happened that another could lead anyone into sin when that person does not desire this evil and resists it; and if it ever happened that someone was led into sin, it was only one who himself had begun this sin within himself, through a lack of sobriety of heart and a depraved will. Thus, when the devil sought to lead the righteous Job into this evil—into sin—he employed all the wiles of his malice against him—depriving him of all his wealth, striking his children dead, and covering Job himself from head to toe with wounds that caused unbearable pain—yet he could not in any way stain him with sin; because “*in all these trials*” Job remained unshaken and “*did not charge God with wrongdoing*” (Job 1:22)—he did not succumb to blasphemy.

4. But how is it that God Himself says of Himself: “*I am... the One who creates peace and forms calamity*” (Isa. 45: 7)—and the Prophet testifies of Him: “*Is there a calamity in a city that the Lord has not brought about?*” (Amos 3: 6)? – In Holy Scripture, the word “evil” sometimes refers to unfortunate events, not because they are evil in their very nature, but because they are perceived as evil by those to whom they are sent for their own good. For the Word of God, when speaking to people, necessarily speaks in human words and with human sentiments. Thus, the life-saving surgery and cauterization that a doctor beneficently performs on those suffering from dangerous sores are regarded as evil by those who must endure them; likewise, spurs to a horse and correction for a sinner are no delight; and all disciplinary strictness seems bitter to those undergoing education, as the Apostle says: “*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*”—and again: “*The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes every son He accepts. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*” (Heb. 12:6, 7, 11)? – Thus, the word “evil” is sometimes used to mean unfortunate events, as in the following passage: “*And God relented concerning the evil that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it*” (Jonah 3:10). And again: “*For You, O Lord, are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and You repent of the evil You intended to bring upon us*” (Jonah 4:2), that is, of the painful hardships and calamities that You are compelled to bring upon us because of our sins. Knowing how beneficial these are for some—not out of hostility toward them, but out of a desire for their salvation—another prophet prays thus: “*Bring evil upon them, O Lord; bring evil upon the proud of the earth*” (Isa. 26:15). And the Lord Himself says: “*Behold, I will bring evil upon you*” (Jer. 11:11)—that is, sorrows and ruin, by which, having been salvifically punished at the present time, you will finally be compelled to turn and hasten to Me, Whom you forgot in the days of your happiness. Why can we not acknowledge them as an essential evil, when they serve the good of many and lead them to the attainment of eternal joys? Therefore—let us return to the question at hand—everything that is commonly regarded as evil, whether inflicted upon us by enemies or afflicting us in some other way, should not be regarded by us as evil, but as something intermediate. And then it will no longer be what the one who inflicted it in a fit of rage considers it to be, but what the one who endures it feels it to be. Why, then, when a holy man is put to death, should one not think that evil has been done to him, but rather something intermediate? Because, whereas for the sinner it is evil, for the righteous it is a source of peace and deliverance from evils. “*For the righteous man, death is rest, and his way is hidden*” (Job 3:23). A righteous man suffers no loss from such a death—since nothing new or

unprecedented has happened to him, —but what was bound to happen to him by natural necessity, he accepted through the malice of the enemy, not without benefit for eternal life, and he paid the debt of human death—which he was bound to pay according to the inevitable law of our present existence—with the rich fruit of suffering as a pledge of the great reward awaiting him.

5. This, however, does not exonerate the evildoers. The wicked lawbreaker will not go unpunished simply because his evil deed could not cause substantial harm to the righteous man. For patience is a virtue of the righteous, and it is not the one who inflicted death or suffering, but the one who patiently endured them who deserves a reward. For just as the former will justly suffer punishment for his brutal cruelty, so the latter, despite not having suffered any substantial harm, will be rewarded; because, having patiently endured trials and sufferings through the strength of his spirit, he turned everything inflicted upon him with evil intent to his own good, to the increase of his bliss in the life to come.

6. Thus, Job's patience did not earn a good reward for the devil, who had made him more glorious through his temptations, but for Job himself, who endured them courageously; nor will Judas be granted deliverance from eternal torment because his betrayal served to save the human race. For one must look not to the consequence of an act, but to the disposition of the one who performs it. Why, then, must we steadfastly maintain the firm conviction that no one can be harmed by another unless they themselves invite it upon themselves through the weakness of their heart and cowardice, when even the blessed Apostle affirms the same principle in a single verse: *"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God"* (Rom. 8:28). For in saying, *"all things work together for good,"* He encompassed everything—not only what is considered happiness, but also what is regarded as misfortune; as the same Apostle says elsewhere about himself, that he has passed through both: *"the weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left—that is, glory and dishonor, slander and praise: as if deceivers, yet true; as if in sorrow, yet always rejoicing; as if poor, yet making many rich,"* and so on (2 Cor. 6:7–10). Thus, everything—both what is regarded as happiness and what the Apostle attributes to the right side, describing it with the words *"glory and praise,"* as well as what is regarded as misfortune and what He expressed with the words: *"disgrace and abuse"*—attributing these to the left side—are transformed in a perfect man into *"weapons of righteousness"*: if he magnanimously endures the (grievous) blows inflicted upon him, fighting with them—that is, using as weapons the very things with which he is attacked, and by being armed with it—like a bow, a sword, and the strongest shield—against those who inflict it upon him, he perfectly demonstrates his patience and courage, celebrating the most glorious triumph of his steadfastness with those very enemy arrows that strike him down to death; and if, in this way, neither carried away by good fortune nor disheartened by misfortune, but walking the straight path and the royal way, he is not, from such a peaceful state of heart, pushed aside—as it were—by the presence of joy, nor again knocked down—as it were—by the onslaught of misfortune and a surge of sorrow. — *"Peace is with those who love Your law, O Lord, and they have no stumbling block,"* testifies St. David (Ps. 118: 165); but of those who change with every turn of events, according to their nature and differences, it is said: *"The fool, like the moon, changes"* (Sirach 27:11). Likewise, of the perfect and the wise it is said: *"For those who love God, all things work together for good"*; and of the weak and the foolish it is proclaimed: *"All things are contrary to the foolish man"* (Prov. 14: 7), because he neither uses happiness for his own good nor is corrected by misfortune. The same moral strength is required to bear afflictions courageously as is needed to maintain proper moderation in joys; and it is certain that whoever is thrown off course by one of these circumstances is not strong enough to withstand either of them. However, happiness does more harm to a person than misfortune. For the latter sometimes restrains and humbles a person against their will, leading them to a salutary contrition that either disposes them to sin less or compels them to reform entirely; whereas the former, inflating the soul with pernicious yet pleasant flattery, reduces to dust in terrible ruin those who, because of their successes in happiness, consider themselves safe.

7. Such perfect men are allegorically called *"ambidextrous"* in Holy Scripture, as was Ehud, as written in the Book of Judges, who used both hands as if they were his right hand (3:15). We, too, can possess such spiritual perfection if we turn both happiness—regarded as the *"right hand"*—and misfortune—called the *"left hand"*—toward the right side through good and righteous use, so that whatever happens to us may be, according to the Apostle, *"weapons of righteousness."* Within our inner self, we discern two sides and, so to speak, two hands. And no saint can fail to possess both the one we call *"right"* and the one we call *"left"*; but the perfection of his virtue is recognized by the fact that he turns both into the right hand, making good use of them. To make it clearer what we are talking about, I say: a holy man possesses the right hand when he displays

spiritual progress—when, burning with the Spirit, he reigns over all his desires and passions; when, being free from every devilish attack, he cuts off and severs carnal passions without any effort or discomfort; when, having risen high above the earth, he regards all that is present and earthly as fleeting smoke and an empty shadow, and despises it as something destined to pass away immediately; when, in the rapture of his mind, he not only ardently desires the future but also sees it most clearly; when he is most effectively nourished by spiritual contemplations; when he clearly perceives, as through a door opened for him, he beholds the heavenly mysteries; when he sends up prayers to the Lord with purity and fervor; when, ablaze with the fire of the Spirit, he is so drawn with all the longing of his soul toward the invisible and eternal that he thinks he is no longer in the flesh; he also possesses this state, —when he is engulfed by storms of temptation, when he is inflamed by surges of lustful arousal toward carnal desires, when he is incited to frenzied anger by the fire of irritating disturbances, when he is driven to pride or vanity by self-exaltation, when he is oppressed by “*sorrow that leads to death*” (2 Cor. 7:10), when he is utterly disheartened by the assaults of insidious despondency, and when, with the departure of all spiritual fervor, he grows numb from coldness and a certain inexplicable melancholy—so that not only do good thoughts, which warm the inner fire, depart from him, but also psalms, prayer, and reading, and seclusion in the cell all become terribly tedious to him, and all the instruments of virtue are met with a certain unbearable aversion and reluctance—all of which indicate that when a monk is afflicted in this way, he knows that the left side is pressing upon him. Thus, whoever, regarding that which, as we have said, belongs to the right side, is not puffed up by the vanity that arises, nor, regarding that which belongs to the left side, while courageously fighting, falls into despair; that person will use both hands as if they were the right hand, and having emerged victorious in both actions, will receive the palm of victory from both his left and his right states. Such a palm, as we read, was earned by the blessed Job, who was crowned for his deeds with his right hand when, being a wealthy and noble father of seven sons, he offered sacrifices to the Lord daily for their purification, desiring to make them not so much for himself, but rather pleasing and acceptable to God; when his door was open to all who came; when he was a foot to the lame and an eye to the blind; when the shoulders of the infirm were warmed by the sheepskins from his flock; when he was a father to orphans and a husband to widows; when even in his heart he did not rejoice at the downfall of his enemy. That same Job, acting with unwavering courage, triumphed over calamities with inimitably high fortitude: when, having lost his seven sons in a single moment, he did not grieve with bitter sorrow as a father would, but as a servant of God found peace in the will of his Creator; when, having gone from being rich to the poorest, from abundance to nakedness, from a healthy man to a leper, from a noble and glorious man to one who was humiliated and despised, he kept his spirit’s courage intact; and when, finally, having lost all his possessions and all his wealth, he became a dweller in a dunghill, and as if some torturer of his own body—the cruelest of all—were scraping away the oozing pus with a shard of pottery and plunging his fingers deep into the wounds covering every part of his body, extracting worms from them. Through all this, he did not in the slightest fall into blasphemy against God, nor did he grumble against his Creator in any way; indeed, —without the slightest fear of such a burden of the most acute temptations, he tore off and cast aside even the very garment covering his body—the only thing that could have been spared from the devil’s plunder—and added his own voluntary nakedness to that with which this most ferocious plunderer had struck him. Likewise, the hair of his head—the only part of his former signs of glory that remained untouched—he cut off and cast to his tormentor; and, thus severing what his raging enemy had left him, he proclaimed his joy at his triumph over him with a heavenly voice: “*If we have accepted the good things from the hand of the Lord, shall we not endure the evil? Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; as it pleases the Lord, so it has come to pass; blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 2:10; 1:21). — I will rightly call Joseph “ambidextrous” as well, for in times of prosperity he was dear to his father, respectful toward his brothers, and pleasing to God; in times of adversity, he was chaste, faithful to his master, most gentle in his imprisonment, not holding grudges for wrongs done to him, charitable toward his enemies, and toward the envious—and even toward those who were nearly his murderers—not only was he tenderly disposed toward his brothers, but he was also abundantly generous to them. These and those like them are rightly called “ambidextrous”; for they use both hands as their right hand, and, passing through the trials enumerated by the Apostle, can say, like Him: “*the weapons of righteousness, the right hand and the left, glory and dishonor, slander and praise,*” and so on. — Let us, too, be ambidextrous, so that neither the abundance nor the scarcity of temporal blessings will sway us; neither will the former lure us into the pleasures of ruinous licentiousness, nor the latter plunge us into despair and grumbling, but when, in both cases, we give

equal thanks to God, we will derive equal benefit from both happiness and misfortune; when we are like the true man of both hands, the Teacher of the Nations, who testified of himself: *"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound; in any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:11–13).

8. Temptation, as we have said, comes in two forms—that is, through happiness and through misfortune; the reason why people are tempted, however, is threefold: for the most part, it is for the sake of testing; sometimes, for the sake of correction; and not infrequently, as punishment for sins. Thus, as we read, the blessed Abraham and many saints endured countless sorrows, like Job, for the sake of testing; and for his sake, the Jewish people were also subjected to trials in the wilderness, as Moses says in Deuteronomy: *"And you shall remember the whole journey by which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, to test you and afflict you, so that He might know what was in your heart—whether you would keep His commandments or not"* (Deut. 8:2)—and as is recalled in the Psalm: *"I tested you at the waters of Meribah"* (Ps. 80:8). And that Job was subjected to all that he endured precisely for this reason is directly attested to by God Himself, who says: *"Did you think I had created you for any other purpose than to prove that you are righteous?"* (Job 40:3). This happens for the sake of correction when the Lord, humbling His righteous ones for some minor and slight sins, or for their pride in their own righteousness, subjects them to various temptations—so that, having purified them in the present from every defilement of thought and having burned away every impurity He sees hidden within their innermost being, impurity (Isa. 1: 25), so that they may be presented to the future trial as pure as gold, allowing nothing to remain in them that, after being tested by the fire of judgment, would be found to require purification by punitive burning. In this sense it is said: *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous"* (Ps. 33: 20); and also: *"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, nor lose heart when He rebukes you. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises every son He accepts. If you endure discipline, God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom the Father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline—which all have shared in—then you are adulterers, not sons"* (Heb. 12: 5–9); and in Revelation: *"Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline"* (– 3: 19). To such people, under the image of Jerusalem, the Prophet Jeremiah speaks on behalf of God: *"I will bring an end to all the nations"* (I will destroy them), *"in which I scattered you; but I will not bring an end to you, yet I will discipline you in judgment"* (Jer. 30: 11). It is for this salvific correction that St. David prays, saying: *"Test me, O Lord, and try me; examine my heart and my mind"* (Ps. 25:2). Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah, understanding the salvific nature of such a trial, cries out: *"Chastise us, O Lord, but in judgment, not in wrath"* (Jer. 10:24). Likewise, Isaiah says: *"I will bless You, O Lord, for You were angry with me, but You turned away Your wrath and had mercy on me"* (Isa. 12:1). Blows of temptation are also sent because of sins. Thus, the Lord threatens to send such blows upon the people of Israel, saying: *"I will send the teeth of beasts against you, with the fury of the creatures that crawl on the ground"* (Deut. 32:24); and in the Psalms it is said of them: *"Many are the wounds of the sinner"* (Ps. 31:10); likewise in the Gospel: *"You were well; do not sin anymore, lest something worse happen to you"* (John 5:14). There is also a fourth reason why certain sufferings are sent to some, as we know from Scripture—namely, so that the glory and works of God may be revealed through them. Thus, in the Gospel it is said of the man born blind: *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him"* (John 9:3)—and regarding Lazarus's illness: *"This illness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it"* (John 11:4). There are also other kinds of divine retribution that befall certain individuals who have surpassed the very highest degree of evil and to whom, as we read, Dathan, Abiram, and Korah were condemned—and especially those of whom the Apostle speaks: *"For this reason God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done"* (Rom. 1: 26, 28)—which must be regarded as the most severe of all punishments. It is of them that the Psalmist speaks: *"They are not among the labors of men, nor do they share in the sufferings of men"* (Ps. 72: 5); for they do not deserve to be saved by the Lord's intervention or to receive healing through temporary punishments, as *"those who have gone astray and given themselves over to debauchery, committing every kind of impurity"* (Eph. 4:19)—and because of the hardening of their hearts from a long-standing life of unceasing sin, they exceed all measures of purification and retribution within the very short span of life in this age. The Word of God rebukes such people through the prophet Amos: *"You have been laid waste, as God laid waste Sodom and Gomorrah; and you were like a brand snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord"* (Amos 4:11), and through the

prophet Jeremiah: *“I have slain and destroyed My people, yet they have not turned from their ways”* (Jer. 15: 7)—and elsewhere: *“You struck them, but they were not wounded; you crushed them, but they would not accept discipline; you hardened their faces more than stone, and they would not turn back”* (Jer. 5: 3). Thus, finally, the Lord—like the most skilled Physician—having exhausted all healing remedies and seeing that there is no longer a single remedy that could be applied to their wounds, is, as it were, overcome by the magnitude of their iniquities and, having been compelled to withdraw from His merciful punishment of them, proclaims to them, saying: *“My zeal will be withdrawn from you, and I will rest; I will not care about you”* (Ezek. 16:42). As for the others, whose hearts have not yet been hardened by frequent sin, who have not yet deserved such a severe and destructive punishment, but are capable of accepting a corrective punishment for their salvation, it is said: *“I will punish them by making them hear of their affliction”* (I will correct them by letting them hear of the sorrow that threatens them) (Hosea 7:12).

9. How can one acquire and maintain patience and serenity? – True patience and serenity cannot be acquired or maintained without humility of heart. When patience springs from this source, there will be no need to shut oneself away in a cell or take refuge in the desert to avoid the sorrow caused by adversity. When rooted deep within the soul in the virtue of humility—its mother and protector—it no longer needs external aids. For if we are troubled by some groundless accusation, it is clear that the foundations of humility are not firmly established within us, and our inner edifice is subjected to a devastating upheaval at the slightest gust of a storm. Patience is not praiseworthy and worthy of admiration when inner calm is preserved, unshaken by any arrows of the enemy; but it is majestic and glorious when it remains unshakable amid the onslaught of the storm of temptations. And the more it appears to be crushed and shaken, the more it is strengthened; and the more it is seemingly dulled, the more it is refined. For it is no secret that patience derives its name from the endurance of afflictions, and therefore no one can be called patient except the one who endures all that is inflicted upon him without distress. And it is precisely for this reason that Solomon so rightly praises him: *“Better is a patient man than a mighty man, and one who controls his anger than one who captures a city”* (Prov. 16: 32). Furthermore: *“A patient man is of great understanding, but a hot-tempered man is utterly foolish”* (Prov. 14: 29). Thus, when someone, having endured slander, is consumed by the fire of anger, the insult inflicted upon him should not be regarded as the cause of such a sin on his part, but merely as an occasion for the revelation of the disease (anger) hidden within him, in accordance with the meaning of the Savior’s parable of the two houses—one built on rock and the other on sand—both of which were struck with equal force by the rushing waters and the stormy winds, yet with unequal consequences; for in this instance, the house built on solid rock suffered no harm at all from such a powerful onslaught, while the one built on shifting sand was immediately destroyed—and was destroyed, evidently, not because it was struck by the waves rushing toward it, but because it had been foolishly built on sand. Likewise, a holy person differs from a sinner not in that he is tempted by temptations no stronger than those faced by the sinner, but in that he is not overcome even by great temptations, whereas the sinner falls even under small ones. And, as we have said, the courage of any righteous person would not be praiseworthy if he were victorious without having been tempted; indeed, victory would have no place if there were no attack from the enemy. For *“blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been tested, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12). And according to the Apostle Paul, *“the power of God”* is not in peace and comfort, but *“is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Cor. 12:9). For thus the Lord said to Jeremiah: *“Behold, today I have made you like a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall against all the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land; they will wage war against you, but they will not prevail, for I am with you”* (Jer. 1:18–19). (– Collect 18:13).

10. I wish to present to you at least two examples of such patience—one of which was demonstrated by a pious woman who, desiring to perfect herself in the virtue of patience, not only did not flee from temptations but even sought out things that would grieve her; and no matter how often she was insulted, she did not falter under temptation. This woman lived in Alexandria; she came from a noble family and devoutly served God in the house left to her by her parents. Once, when she went to the late Archbishop Athanasius, she asked him to entrust to her care and support a widow from among those supported by the church. “Give me,” she said, “one of the sisters whom I might comfort.” The Archbishop, praising the woman’s good intentions and her zeal for works of mercy, ordered that a widow be chosen from among them all who would surpass the rest in moral integrity, dignity, and courtesy, so that her desire to show such generosity would not be dampened by the wickedness of the one who was to benefit from it, and so that she, in showing it, would

not suffer harm to her faith if offended by the latter's wickedness. Thus, having accepted this chosen one, she brought her into her home and began to serve her in every way. But seeing her modesty and gentleness, and receiving from her every moment a token of respect in gratitude for her act of charity, she returned after a few days to the aforementioned High Priest and said: "I asked that you command that I be given one whom I might comfort and whom I might serve with complete obedience." At first, he did not understand the reason for such a request or what this woman desired, and, thinking that her petition had been neglected due to the caretaker's carelessness toward the widows, he asked—not without some inner confusion—about the reasons for such a delay. He was told that the most virtuous widow of them all had been sent to her. Then, realizing what that wise woman was seeking, he ordered that she be given the most unruly widow of all—one who would surpass all others in anger, quarrelsomeness, violence, talkativeness, and frivolity. When they found and gave her such a woman, she took her into her home and began to serve her with the same—or even greater—zeal as she had served the first; yet in gratitude for such services, she received from her only insults—unworthy curses, slander, and abuse—and, reproaching her with scathing invective, the widow grumbled that she had begged the Archbishop for her not for peace of mind, but for torment, and had transferred her from a peaceful life to a difficult one, rather than from a difficult one to a peaceful one. This woman's insolence in such insults sometimes went so far that she could not even restrain her hands, yet the lady only redoubled her humble service in response, learning to overcome her fury not by resistance but by submitting herself even more humbly to her, and to tame her fury with loving gentleness. Having thus fully established herself in patience through these trials and having attained perfection in this desired virtue, she went to the aforementioned Saint to thank him both for his wise choice and for his own beneficial instruction, for the fact that he had finally, entirely in accordance with her desire, appointed for her such a most worthy teacher, through whose ceaseless insults she was strengthened daily in patience, until she reached the very summit of this virtue. At last, Lord, you have given me, for my comfort, exactly the one I wished to have; and that first teacher, by her respectful attitude toward me, comforted and consoled me more than I did her. – It suffices to say this much about women, so that the memory of such a matter may not only edify us, but also put us to shame; for unless we shut ourselves away in a cell, we cannot preserve our patience (– Collect. 18. 14).

11. Now let us consider another example of the patience of Abba Paphnutius, who lived in complete seclusion in the famous Skete Desert, where he now serves as a presbyter. Even as a young monk, he shone with such grace-filled holiness that the great men of that time marveled at his progress, and—despite the fact that he was the youngest of them all—they equated him with the elders and decided to include him in their number. When this became known, the envy that had once stirred the hearts of his brothers against Joseph now inflamed one of the Skete brothers with its poisonous fire, who maliciously sought to defile his beauty with some stain of disgrace. To this end, having waited until Paphnutius had gone to church on Sunday, he sneaked into his cell and, hiding his book among the wreaths—which are usually woven there from palm branches—went to church himself, pleased with his cunning; and at the end of the Sunday service, in front of all the brothers, he lodged a complaint with St. Isidore, who was then a presbyter, that a book had been stolen from his cell. This complaint so bewildered everyone—and especially the presbyter—that they did not know what to think or what to do, being struck by such a new and unheard-of crime there. Then the accuser who had reported this demanded that, after keeping all the brothers in the church, a few chosen from among them be sent to search all the cells. When the three elders appointed for this task by the presbyter, having searched all the other cells, came to Paphnutius's cell, they found a book hidden among the palm fronds—just as the slanderer had concealed it there—and, taking it, brought it immediately to the church and laid it before everyone. Paphnutius, though in good conscience he was certain of his innocence regarding this sin, nevertheless, as if guilty of theft, submitted himself to the judgment of the elders, expressing his willingness to bear whatever penalty might be imposed as reparation and asking that they grant him an opportunity for repentance. He said nothing in his own defense, for out of modest shame he feared that, by trying to wash away the stain of theft with words, he might incur further condemnation for lying, when no one suspected anything other than what had been found. Upon the conclusion of the proceedings and the drafting of the ruling, he left the church, not discouraged, but entrusting himself to the judgment of God Himself, and began to repent, intensifying his prayers with copious tears, tripling his fasting, and, in the utmost humility of spirit, humbling himself before others. When, for nearly two weeks, he had thus subjected himself to every kind of mortification of the flesh and spirit, and then, early on a Saturday or Sunday morning, came to the church—not to receive Holy Communion, but to prostrate himself at its doors and humbly beg forgiveness—then

God, the witness and knower of all that is hidden, not bearing to let him continue to afflict himself and be disgraced by others, caused the devil to reveal what that inventor of evil, that dishonest thief of others' possessions, that cunning defamer of others' glory, had done without any witnesses. For, seized by the most ferocious demon, he himself revealed all the cunning details of his secret scheme; and thus, the very one who had instigated the crime and the intrigues became its treacherous exposé. Afterward, this unclean spirit tormented this unfortunate brother severely and for a long time, so that not only the prayers of the other Saints present there—who possessed the divine gift of authority over demons—could not purify him of it, but even the special grace of Isidore the Presbyter failed to drive out this most ferocious tormentor, even though, by the Lord's generosity, he had been granted such power over them that the possessed were not even brought to his door once they had received healing. This was because Christ the Lord had reserved this glory for Paphnutius, so that the offender might be healed only by the prayers of the one against whom he had plotted, and might receive forgiveness for his sin and deliverance from his present punishment, proclaiming the name of the One whose glory he had hoped to overshadow as a jealous enemy (—Col. 18:15).

12. Two reasons prompted me to recount this story: first, so that by reflecting on this man's unshakable steadfastness, we might demonstrate all the more composure and patience, especially since we are subjected to fewer slanders from the enemy; second, to draw from it the firm conviction that we cannot be safe from the storm of temptations and the devil's attacks if we place all the protection of our patience and all our hope in it not in the strength of our inner self, but in the walls of a cell, or in desert solitude, or in the fellowship of the saints, or in anything at all outside of ourselves. For if the Lord, who said in the Gospel, "*The Kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:21), does not strengthen our spirit with the power of His intercession, then we will hope in vain—whether to overcome the slanders of the enemy of the air with the help of those living with us, or to ward them off by physical distance (i.e., by retreating to the desert), or to keep them out by shutting ourselves behind walls and a roof (i.e., by confining ourselves to a cell). For St. Paphnutius possessed all these things, and yet the tempter found a way to attack him—and neither the stronghold of walls, nor the solitude of the desert, nor the intercession of so many saints in that community could ward off this most wicked spirit from him. But since this holy servant of God did not place the hope of his heart in anything external, but in the Judge of all secrets Himself, he could in no way be shaken by the wiles of such an attack. Likewise, did not the one whom envy drove to such a crime also benefit from the blessings of the desert, the protection of a remote dwelling, and the fellowship of the blessed Isidore, the Abba and Presbyter, and the other saints? And yet, when the devil's storm found him himself built upon sand, it not only dealt a heavy blow to his dwelling (his inner structure), but completely destroyed it. Let us therefore cease to seek the foundations of our unshakable inner peace outside ourselves, and to expect that the weakness of our own patience might be aided by the patience of others. For just as "*the Kingdom of God is within us,*" so too "*a man's enemies are those of his own household*" (Matt. 10:36). And no one resists me more than my own feelings, which are my closest household members. Let us therefore pay closer attention to ourselves, so that our household enemies may not wound us. For when those within our own household do not rise up against us, then the Kingdom of God abides within us in unperturbed peace of mind. And if we carefully weigh the causes of what is happening within us, we will find that I cannot be wounded by any person—not even the most malicious one—unless I myself rise up against myself through the restlessness of my own heart. For if I am ever hurt, the cause lies not in an attack from without, but in my own impatience. Just as solid food is beneficial for the healthy but harmful to the sick, it cannot harm the one who receives it unless his weakness gives it the power to cause him harm (—Sob. 18:16).

8. On Divine Grace and Free Will

1. We must always be firmly convinced that we can in no way attain perfection through our own labors and deeds, even if we were to practice every virtue with tireless diligence. Human efforts alone cannot possess such value and power as to elevate us to the heights of holiness and bliss unless the Lord Himself assists us and directs our hearts toward what is beneficial for us. Therefore, at every moment we must cry out to God with David: "*Establish my steps in Your ways, that my feet may not slip*" (Ps. 16: 5)—so that this invisible ruler of the human spirit may turn our will toward virtue, since it is more inclined toward vice, whether through ignorance of what is good or through the delusion of the passions. This is very clearly expressed by the Prophet in a single verse of a psalm: "*I turned aside to pasture; and the Lord accepted me*" (Ps. 117:13). The first half of the verse refers to the instability of our will; the second half refers to the help always ready for us from the

Lord, Who, whenever we begin to waver, stretches out His hands to us, supports us, and strengthens us, lest we fall into a complete downfall by our own will alone. – Thus, no righteous person has enough strength within himself to attain righteousness; he wavers constantly and is ready to fall at any moment. Therefore, the Lord's mercy sustains him with His hand, lest, having fallen due to the weakness of his will, he perish completely in his fall (Discourses 3:12). And who would be so presumptuous and blind as to think that he has no need for God's constant assistance, when the Lord Himself clearly teaches in the Gospel: "*Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me; apart from Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:4–5)? How foolish, even blasphemous, it is to attribute any good deeds to one's own efforts rather than to God's grace and assistance, when the Lord's words testify that without His assistance no one can bear spiritual fruit (– Collect 3, 16)?

2. We believe that just as the beginning of a good disposition is planted within us by a special inspiration from God, so too the practice of virtue is granted by Him; our task, however, is to submit to God's inspiration and accept His help with greater or lesser readiness. We deserve a reward—or a just punishment—depending on whether we are negligent or, with reverent submission, strive to conform to God's decrees and providence, which are extended to us through His gracious favor. This was clearly expressed in the healing of the blind men of Jericho. That the Lord passed by them is the grace of Divine Providence and condescension. But their cry, "*Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David*" (Matt. 20:31), was an expression of their faith and hope; the healing itself, however, was again due to God's mercy (– Collect 3, 19).

3. A farmer, though he labors hard to cultivate the land, cannot expect a bountiful harvest unless timely rain falls on the tilled soil and the weather is favorable. Just as God does not grant a harvest to lazy farmers who do not strive to cultivate their land, so too will constant diligence bring no benefit to the hardworking if God's mercy does not favor them. Likewise, in the matter of living according to God, our own efforts are necessary, but if God's grace does not accompany us, we will succeed in nothing. Confess, then, that God is the primary source not only of good deeds but also of good thoughts: He inspires us with His Holy Will and gives us the strength and the right opportunity to fulfill what we rightly desire; "*for every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights*" (James 1:17). (–Collect 13, 3).

4. God's will always desires that the human being He created should not perish, but live forever. If God perceives even a spark of inclination toward good in our hearts, in His mercy He will not let it go out; but desiring that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, He does everything possible to ensure that this spark is transformed into a flame. God's grace is near to all; it calls everyone, without exception, to salvation and to the knowledge of the truth, for He says: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt. 11:28). (– Discourses 13, 7).

5. It is beyond human understanding how this salvation pertains to our free will as well, for it is said: "*If you are willing and obey Me, you will eat the good of the land*" (Isa. 1: 19), and yet it is the work of "*neither the one who wills, nor the one who runs, but God who shows mercy*" (Rom. 9: 16)—how it is that God will repay each person according to his deeds, and yet He Himself is "*the one who both wills and works for good*" (Phil. 2: 13)—why are we commanded to "*create in yourselves a new heart and a new spirit*" (Ezek. 18:31), and yet it is *also* said: "*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you*" (Ezek. 11: 19). It will not be difficult to resolve these doubts if we remember that both God's grace and our free will are involved in our salvation, and that although a person may sometimes desire virtue, he always needs God's help to fulfill these desires; just as it is not enough for a sick person merely to desire to be healthy; rather, the Giver of life—God—must grant the strength to restore health. To be fully convinced that even the good desires arising from the natural capacity given by the merciful Creator can be fulfilled only with God's help, it suffices to recall the words of the Apostle: "*For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out*" (Rom. 7:18). (– Collect 13, 9).

6. Many ask: When does grace work within us—is it when a good desire manifests itself in us, or does a good desire manifest itself in us when God's grace visits us? Experience confirms both: Saul and Matthew the tax collector did not desire these things on their own, but desired them in response to a calling; Zacchaeus and the thief on the cross preceded the work of grace with their own desire. Thus it must be understood: when God sees that we are inclined toward the good, He guides and strengthens our readiness; but if we do not desire the good, or have grown cold toward it, He gives us saving promptings, through which a good disposition is formed or renewed (– Collect 13, 11).

7. One must not think that human nature is capable of evil alone. The Creator has sown in our souls the seeds of all virtues, but for them to grow, they require God's influence; yet human beings always retain the free will to accept or reject these gracious influences. If the arrangement of our salvation did not depend on us at all, the Apostle would not have said, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*"; but if everything depended solely on us, He would not have added, "*For it is God who works in you, both to will and to act according to His good pleasure*" (Phil. 2: 12–13). God's grace both precedes us—for the Prophet says, "*My God, His mercy will go before me*" (Ps. 58: 11)—and follows our will, which is why it is said, "*And in the morning my prayer will go before You*" (Ps. 87: 14). (– Collect 13, 12).

8. God's grace always directs our will toward what is good, yet in such a way that it also requires or expects corresponding efforts from us. Lest it bestow its gifts upon the careless, it seeks out opportunities to rouse us from our cold indifference; so that the generous bestowal of its gifts may not seem unwarranted, it grants them in response to our desire and labor. Nevertheless, grace is always given as a gift, for it rewards our meager efforts with immeasurable generosity. Therefore, no matter how great human labors may be, they cannot make grace a gift that is not freely given. The Apostle to the Gentiles, although he said that he "*labored more than all the apostles*," he nevertheless adds that these labors do not belong to him, but to "*the grace of God that is with him*" (1 Cor. 15:10). Thus, with the words "*I have labored*," he expresses the efforts of his will; with the words "*not I, but the grace of God*"—divine assistance; and with the phrase "*with me*"—he shows that grace assisted him, not while he was idle and careless, but while he was laboring (—Sob., 13:13).

9. God arranges our salvation in many diverse and incomprehensible ways: in those who desire and seek salvation, He strengthens that desire, and in those who lack it, He stirs it up; He helps fulfill our salvific desires—and instills holy desires, or confirms them. That is why in our prayers we call Him both Protector, Savior, and Helper. Like the most tender Father and a compassionate Physician, He accomplishes everything in all of us: in some He initiates the beginning of salvation and kindles zeal for Him, in others He brings deeds to completion and virtues to perfection—He holds some back from imminent downfall, while for others He provides opportunities and favorable circumstances for salvation—He assists those who desire and strive, and draws and inclines those who are unwilling and resistant toward a good disposition: He accomplishes everything everywhere—stirring up, assisting, and confirming—but without infringing upon the freedom He Himself has granted (– Sob., 13, 18).

9. On Prayer

1. One must set as one's primary goal and the pinnacle of perfection unceasing prayer, grounded in the stilling of the soul and purity of heart, for the attainment of which we endure bodily toil and maintain a contrite heart. The connection between all these deeds and prayer is inseparable and reciprocal. For just as the practice of these virtues leads to perfection in prayer, so too—unless prayer completes and crowns them all—they cannot remain firm and steadfast. Just as the unceasing, pure, and unshakable prayer of which we speak cannot be attained or brought to perfection without them, so too these virtues—which, in the ordering of life according to God, precede it—cannot be manifested in perfection without unceasing prayer. Therefore, we could not proceed directly to a discussion of the power of prayer, which crowns the edifice of all virtues, unless we had first systematically identified and examined everything that must be cut away or prepared in order to attain it—or unless, in accordance with the meaning of the Gospel parable (Luke 14: 28–30)—we had not first calculated and gathered everything necessary for the construction of this most exalted spiritual pillar; which, however, even if prepared, will not function as it should and will not allow the final pinnacles of perfection to be properly placed upon it unless, first, after removing every impurity of vice and casting out the debris and dead refuse of the passions, a most solid foundation of simplicity and humility is laid upon the living and firm ground of our heart—as it were, upon that Gospel rock (Luke 6: 48), the most solid foundation of simplicity and humility is laid, upon which this pillar might be erected through the building up of spiritual virtues, standing unshakably and raising its head to the very heights of heaven, trusting in its own strength. But when it is established on such a foundation, then let a torrential rain of passions fall; let the rushing rivers of persecution attack like battering rams; let a fierce storm of hostile spirits rage—it will not only remain undestroyed, but will not even feel their impact.

2. Therefore, so that prayer may be offered with due fervor and purity, the following must be observed in every way: first, all concern for worldly matters must be completely cut off; second, not only must preoccupation with any business or circumstance be avoided, but even the memory of such things must not be

allowed; likewise, distraction, idle talk, verbosity, and jokes must be suppressed, and above all, the turmoil caused by anger or grief must be completely suppressed, and the pernicious stirrings of carnal lust and the craving for wealth must be uprooted entirely. Once these and similar vices—those visible to human eyes—have been thoroughly expelled and cut off, and after such a preliminary purification of everything, culminating in purity and blamelessness, one must then, first of all, lay an unshakable foundation of deep humility, strong enough to support a pillar reaching up to the very heavens; then, upon this foundation, the edifice of spiritual virtues must be erected, and the spirit must be kept from all flight and fickle wandering, so that in this way the spiritual gaze may gradually begin to rise toward the contemplation of God. For whatever our soul has absorbed before the hour of prayer inevitably comes to mind during prayer, being brought there by the hand of memory. Therefore, whatever state we wish to be in during prayer, we must prepare ourselves to be in that state before the time of prayer; and whatever we would not wish to see crowding within us when we pray, let us hasten to banish it from the innermost recesses of our hearts beforehand, so that we may fulfill the Apostle's command: "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17).

3. Our mind is aptly compared to an extremely light feather or a wisp of down, which, when not dampened by any external liquid, is usually carried aloft to great heights by the slightest breath of wind, due to its lightness; but when weighed down by any moisture, instead of rising into the air, it falls to the ground and sticks to the earth because of the weight of the moisture it has absorbed. So too is our mind: if it is not burdened by passions and worldly cares that come upon it, nor corrupted by the moisture of pernicious lust, then—being light by virtue of its natural purity—at the slightest breath of spiritual reflection, it soars upward and, leaving behind what is lowly and earthly, is carried away toward the heavenly and the invisible. That is precisely why the Lord's commandments admonish us: "*Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with gluttony, drunkenness, and the cares of this life*" (Luke 21:34). So, if we wish for our prayers to penetrate not only to heaven but even beyond the heavens, let us strive to raise our minds to their natural lightness, purifying them of all earthly vices and of every trace of worldly passions, so that, no longer weighed down by any foreign burden, our prayer may soar easily to God.

4. Pay attention to the causes which the Lord has pointed out as weighing down our minds. He did not point to adultery, fornication, murder, blasphemy, or theft—all of which are universally recognized as mortal sins worthy of condemnation—but to gluttony, drunkenness, and the cares and concerns of this world—which not only are not avoided by anyone in this world and are not considered shameful, but, it is a shame to say, even some who have renounced the world indulge in these same pleasures, seeing in them neither harm nor misfortune for themselves. However, these three evils, which weigh down the soul, separate it from God, and press it down to the earth—if understood according to the letter of the law—are easy to avoid, especially for us, who are so far removed from any contact with the world and have absolutely no opportunity to become involved in these visible cares, drunkenness, and gluttony. But there is another kind of spiritual gluttony and drunkenness, which is more difficult to avoid, and there is another kind of worldly concern and sorrow of this age, which also encompass us, even after our complete renunciation of all worldly possessions, our abstinence from wine and all gluttony, and our dwelling in desert solitude. I am referring to the indulgences of the flesh, attachments, and passions; if we do not purify ourselves of these, then even without the intoxication of wine or an abundance of food, our hearts will be weighed down by a drunkenness and gluttony that are even more harmful. And only the one whose mind, having cast off the bonds of all passions, finds deep peace, and whose heart clings most firmly to God as the supreme good with all its longing, can perfectly fulfill the Apostolic commandment: "*Pray without ceasing.*"

5. I believe it is impossible to encompass all kinds of prayer without deep contrition of heart, purity of soul, and enlightenment from the Holy Spirit. There are as many kinds of prayer as there are different states and moods that can arise in a single soul—or indeed in all souls. As the mind progresses in purity and in the quality of the state into which it is led—whether by chance or by virtue of its own inner workings—it rises renewed, and in each such moment it is transformed; and therefore it is evident that no one can always offer the same kind of prayers. Everyone prays differently when joyful, differently when burdened by sorrow or misfortune; differently when flourishing in spiritual progress; differently when oppressed by a multitude of enemy attacks; differently when seeking forgiveness of sins; differently when praying for an increase in grace, or for the acquisition of some virtue, or for the extinguishing of some passion; differently when struck with fear upon reflecting on Gehenna and the future judgment; or when he is inflamed with hope and desire for future blessings; or when he is in need and danger; or when he enjoys safety and peace; or when he is

enlightened by revelations of heavenly mysteries; or when he grieves over barrenness in virtue and dryness of the spirit.

6. According to their subject matter, the Apostle distinguishes four kinds of prayer, saying: *"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made"* (1 Tim. 2:1). – *"Prayer"* (δεησις) is a supplication or entreaty concerning sins, when someone, having come to a state of contrition over the sins they have committed—whether present or past—asks for forgiveness for them; – *"supplication"* – προσευχή—occurs when, in prayer, we offer or promise something to God (saying, "I will do such-and-such, O Lord, if only You will have mercy"); *"intercession,"* – εντεξις, – occurs when, in the fervor of the spirit, we offer prayers for others—for those we love or for the peace of the whole world; *"thanksgiving"* – ευχαριστία—occurs when the mind offers thanks (and praise) to God, recalling God's past blessings, or seeing His present ones, or foreseeing the blessings God has prepared in the future for those who love Him.

7. Following these four kinds of prayer is a most exalted state of prayer, which consists in the contemplation of the one God and in ardent love for Him, and in which our mind, embraced and permeated by this love, converses with God in the most intimate manner and with special sincerity. The Lord's Prayer—*"Our Father,"* etc. (Matt. 6:9–13)—inspires us to seek this state earnestly. We say, *"Our Father!"* and thereby, confessing God—the Ruler of the universe—as our Father, we confess together that we have been delivered from the state of slavery and adopted by God as His children. – And by adding next, *"Who art in heaven,"* we express our readiness to turn away with complete aversion from attachment to this present earthly life—which is transient and distances us far from our Father—and, on the contrary, to strive with the greatest desire toward that realm, where our Father dwells, and not to allow ourselves anything that, by making us unworthy of this exalted adoption, would deprive us—as illegitimate children—of our Father's inheritance and subject us to the full severity of God's righteous judgment. Having attained such a high rank as sons of God, we must burn with such filial love for God that we no longer seek our own interests, but desire with all our heart His glory—the glory of our Father—saying to Him: *"Hallowed be Thy Name,"* thereby testifying that our entire desire and all our joy is the glory of our Father—that the glorious Name of our Father may be glorified, reverently honored, and worshiped. The second petition of a purified mind is the petition, *"Thy Kingdom come"* of His Father—that is, the kingdom in which Christ reigns among the saints, when, after the devil's power over us has been taken away and the passions have been cast out of our hearts, God begins to reign in us through the fragrance of virtues—or the kingdom promised at the appointed time to all the perfect and to the children of God, when Christ will say to them: *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34). The third petition, proper to the sons: *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*—which means: may people be like the angels—and just as they fulfill God's will in heaven, so may all who live on earth do not their own will, but His; it also means: may everything in our lives be according to Your will; we entrust our fate to You, believing that You—who are all things—arrange both happiness and misfortune for our good, and care more for our salvation than we do ourselves. Furthermore: *"Give us this day our daily bread."* *"Daily"*—that is, above all that is essential—the highest of all essences—(which can only be *"the bread that came down from heaven"*). When it says *"today,"* it indicates that yesterday's partaking of it is insufficient unless it is also given to us now, to convince us of its daily necessity at all times to offer this prayer, since there is no day on which we do not need to strengthen the heart of our inner being by receiving and partaking of this bread. *"And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors."* The merciful Lord promises us forgiveness of our sins if we ourselves set an example of forgiveness toward our brothers: *"forgive us, as we also forgive."* It is clear that, in the hope of this prayer, only those who have themselves forgiven their debtors may boldly ask for forgiveness. But whoever does not wholeheartedly forgive a brother who has sinned against him will, by this prayer, be asking not for mercy but for condemnation. For if this prayer of his is heard, then, in accordance with his example, what else can follow but unrelenting wrath and the inevitable decree of punishment? *"Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not shown mercy"* (James 2:13). *"And lead us not into temptation."* Recalling the words of the Apostle James: *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation"* (James 1:12)—we must understand these words of prayer not as *"do not allow us ever to be tempted,"* but rather as *"do not allow us to be overcome by temptation."* Job was tempted, but he was not led into temptation; for, with God's help, *"he did not attribute folly to God"* (Job 1:22), nor did he defile his lips with blasphemous murmuring, to which the tempter sought to lead him. Abraham was tempted, Joseph was tempted, but neither one nor the other was led into temptation; for neither of them carried out the tempter's will. *"But deliver us*

from the evil one”—that is, do not allow us to be tempted by the devil beyond our strength, but “*grant us, with the temptation, a way out, so that we may be able to endure it*” (1 Cor. 10:13).

8. Although the proposed prayer, having been uttered by the Lord Himself, embodies the fullness of (prayerful) perfection; the Lord leads His faithful even further—to a certain higher state, as we mentioned above—to that fervent prayer, known or experienced by very few, indeed, I would say, ineffable, which, transcending all human understanding, is not expressed by the sound of a voice, the movement of the tongue, or the utterance of any words, and which the mind, illuminated by the outpouring of that heavenly light, does not express through feeble human speech, but, having gathered its senses, pours forth from itself uncontrollably, as if from a most abundant source, and in some inexpressible way pours it forth directly to the Lord, revealing in that briefest moment of time what, having come to its senses, it is unable to utter in words or trace in thought.

9. This kind of prayerful state is a gift from God; generally, however, a grace-filled prayerful disposition is characterized by a sense of tenderness, the presence of which stirs the mind into pure and fervent prayer. This tenderness arises on various occasions, as experience has shown. Sometimes, while singing psalms, the words of a particular verse provided an occasion for fervent prayer; at other times, the melodious sound of a brother’s voice stirred the souls of those who were amazed to intense supplication. We also know that at times, clear and reverent singing instilled great fervor in those present; and not infrequently, the exhortation of a perfect man and spiritual conversation stirred in those who were kneeling a desire for an abundant outpouring of prayers. It happened that we were no less deeply moved to complete tenderness by the death of a brother or some dear person. Likewise, the memory of our own coldness and sloth would sometimes kindle in us a saving spiritual fervor. And in general, the instances in which God’s grace awakens our souls from insensitivity and drowsiness are innumerable.

10. Just as tenderness arises in various circumstances, so too does it manifest itself in diverse ways: at times it reveals itself as an indescribable spiritual joy; at times it plunges all the soul’s powers and movements into deep silence; at times it brings forth tears in greater or lesser abundance. Tears, or a certain tearful mood, are its more common expressions. These tears arise either from the heart’s sorrow at the awareness of one’s sins, or from the contemplation of eternal blessings and the desire for eternal glory, or from the awareness of God’s great blessings upon oneself, accompanied by a sense of one’s unworthiness and inadequacy, or from the sense of our troubled sojourn on earth.

11. What is the sign that a prayer has been heard?—When, during prayer, no doubt troubles us, and nothing dampens our hope in our petition with despair; if, in the very outpouring of prayer, we feel that we have received what we asked for, then let us not doubt that our prayers have indeed been heard. For the one who prays will be deemed worthy to be heard and to receive what is asked for to the extent that he believes that God is looking upon him and is able to grant his request. For the saying of our Lord is unchanging: “*Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours*” (Mark 11:24). In this regard, the Word of God points out many reasons that contribute to a prayer being answered. Thus, a prayer is heard when two agree to pray (Matt. 18:19)—or when someone prays with faith, even if that faith is as small as a mustard seed (Matt. 17:20)—or when someone prays persistently (Luke 11:8)—or when almsgiving is combined with prayer (Sirach 29:15)—and other acts of mercy (Psalm 58:6–9). See how many ways there are to obtain the grace of having one’s prayer heard; therefore, let no one fall into despair when asking for the blessings of salvation. For suppose that you lack many of the things through which a prayer is heard; but surely you can be persistent in prayer, which is within the reach of everyone who desires it. For this reason alone, the Lord promised to grant whatever is asked for. Therefore, without wavering in unbelief, let us be persistent in prayer, and we will receive what we ask for. Thus the Lord promised: “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*” (Luke 11:9–10). But everyone who prays must know that he will certainly not be heard if he doubts that he will be heard.

12. Above all else, with regard to prayer, we must fulfill the Gospel commandment to pray to our heavenly Father after entering our inner room and closing the door. This should be done literally, but even more so spiritually. We pray within our inner room when, having completely detached our hearts from all thoughts and cares, we offer our prayers to the Lord in a certain secret manner and with boldness. We pray with the door shut when, with our lips sealed, we pray in silence to the One who tests not our words but our hearts. We pray in a secret place when, with only our heart and an attentive mind, we offer our petitions to God alone, so that even the most hostile powers cannot know what we are praying for. Why is it necessary to

pray in deep silence? Not only so as not to distract our fellow worshippers from prayer or disturb their devotional feelings with our whispers or exclamations, but also so that the intention (purpose) of our prayer may be hidden from our very enemies, who slander us—especially when we pray.

13. Our prayer will attain its proper perfection when what the Lord prayed to His Father is fulfilled in us: that *“the love with which You have loved Me may be in them”* (John 17:26); and further: *“just as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You, may they also be one in Us”* (ibid., v. 21). This will be the case when all our love, all our desire, all our zeal, all our striving, all our thoughts, everything we see, everything we speak of, and everything we hope for—will be God; and when that unity which exists between the Father and the Son, and between the Son and the Father, pours into our hearts and minds—so that just as He loves us with sincere purity and indivisible love, so too may we be united with Him by pure and indivisible love. Whoever attains this enters a state in which unceasing prayer cannot but burn in his heart; then every movement of his life and every aspiration of his heart will be a single, unbroken prayer, a foretaste and pledge of eternally blessed life.

14. To attain the highest perfection in prayer, one must establish oneself in the unceasing remembrance of God—a goal achieved through a brief, frequently repeated prayer (Conversations, 9:36). Our Fathers have found that one who strives for constant remembrance of God must acquire the habit of ceaselessly repeating the following prayer: *“O God, hear my cry; O Lord, come to my aid”* (Ps. 69:2). – This verse was not chosen unworthily from all of Scripture: it expresses all the dispositions required in prayer and meets all the needs of the one who prays. It contains a humble confession of one’s helplessness, a confession that God is the only helper, always ready to assist—faith and hope that He will help the one uttering this prayer and deliver him from every trouble. Whoever ceaselessly calls upon God with these words wisely perceives and feels in his heart that God is present with him, and turns to Him as to a Father with a son’s loving heart—and thereby draws upon himself God’s protection, shelter, and defense. And in this way, this brief prayer becomes an impregnable wall against the attacks of demons—a dispeller of the clamor of thoughts, a refuter of evil intentions, a tamer of passionate impulses, and a nurturer of every good inclination in the heart. The Fathers have also commanded us: if the passion of gluttony troubles you in its various manifestations, cry out: *“O God, hear my cry for help; O Lord, hasten to my aid”*; – or if you feel the need for stricter fasting to subdue the flesh, and do not hope to master yourself, pray: *“O God, hear my cry for help,”* and so on. If the spirit of despondency torments you, and sorrow consumes you, deterring you from every proper task, say: *“O God, hear my cry for help”*; – or if a certain spiritual joy visits your soul, and you wish to preserve and elevate it, say the same words: *“God, hear my cry for help.”* If the temptations of the flesh arise with their alluring sweetness—and you fear that this fire might scorch the fragrant blossom of chastity—cry out: *“O God, hear my cry for help,”* and so on; or if tranquility and coolness have entered your limbs, and you desire that this good state continue, or remain in you forever, repeat more earnestly: *“O God, hear my cry for help,”* and so on. So, in every spiritual need, repeat this one prayer; and it will be for you a deliverance from all that is evil and a safeguard of all that is good within you. Let it therefore constantly resound in your heart; in every task and service, on the road and at the table, when going to sleep and upon waking, do not cease to recite this verse and learn from it, until, through constant practice, you become accustomed to reciting it even in your sleep.

15. The fruit of this will be, first and foremost, that you will reject all the wealth of your own thoughts, and, held fast by the unity of this verse, you will become more and more accustomed to uniting your mind in thought upon the one Helper, seeing Him as ever present with you, all-seeing, and all-encompassing. From there, then, ascending to the most vivid communion with God, you will begin to be filled with ever more exalted mysteries, immersing yourself in God, abiding in Him alone, and finding satisfaction in Him alone. Thus, at last, you will attain that pure prayer mentioned above, which no longer admits any image into your mind, nor is expressed by any sound of the voice or the utterance of any words, but bursts forth from the heart with irrepressible liveliness, an ineffably rapturous, fiery yearning of the mind toward God, and pours out before Him in inexpressible sighs and groans.

10. On Guidance in the Spiritual Life—A Discourse with Advice from the Most Experienced

1. Once, the elders gathered around St. Anthony the Great and, from evening until morning, discussed various spiritual topics—and especially which virtue, above all others, could keep us beyond the reach of the devil’s snares of deception and lead us directly along the path to perfection. Various opinions were put

forward: some advocated fasting and vigil; others, non-attachment to possessions and contempt for all things; still others, hermitage or retreat into the desert; and still others, love for humanity. When everyone had spoken in this way, Blessed Anthony began to speak. “Everything you have said is salvific and necessary for those who seek God and desire to come to Him. But the experiences of the downfall of those who excelled in these virtues do not allow us to give precedence to any one of them. For even those who distinguished themselves by strict fasting and vigils, those who remained constantly in desert solitude, those who reached the extreme degree of non-attachment to possessions, and those who were generous givers of alms fell into the enemy’s snare and fell. And the reason for this, I believe, was none other than a lack of discernment. For discernment teaches a person to walk the royal path, avoiding dangerous extremes: with regard to fasting, for example, it permits neither excessive exhaustion of the body nor indulgence toward it. In the Gospel, it is called the eye and the lamp of the soul: “*The lamp of the body,*” says the Lord, “*is the eye. If your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness*” (Matt. 6:22–23). Just as light illuminates everything and the eye sees everything, so too does it, by reviewing and examining all of a person’s thoughts and deeds, clarify and determine what should be done and what should be avoided. But when someone lacks such discernment, then his deeds and thoughts, not being strictly examined, flow as they will, and here the enemy manages to substitute what appears to be good for what is true, and, using it to conceal a pit or a snare, casts him into them and destroys him.”

2. St. Anthony’s decision is confirmed by countless examples. Let us recall the pitiful downfall of the elder Iron. He had devoted himself to an extremely strict fast and deep seclusion, and, so as not to violate them in any way, at the enemy’s instigation, he stopped attending the usual gatherings of the hermits on Saturdays and Sundays, where, through mutual discussion, they clarified the various paths and crossroads of the ascetic life. Deceived by this, which seemed like good advice from the enemy, he succumbed to an even greater delusion—he mistook the enemy for an angel when he appeared to him in that form, and agreed, at his word, to throw himself into a dry well—he was crushed and died on the third day. “Here is another example: two brothers, intending to journey into the deepest desert, vowed to accept no food other than that which the Lord Himself would provide. When, wandering through the desert, they grew so exhausted that they could no longer move, they were attacked by the Maziks—a wild and cruel people; but seeing them in such a pitiful state, they took pity on them and offered them bread. One of them came to his senses and agreed to accept the bread, even though it was from people, as if it had been sent by the Lord; he regained his strength and survived. The other, however, stubbornly stuck to his decision—and died of starvation. Here is another example: a certain strict ascetic and hermit considered himself worthy of communion with the heavenly powers—and the enemy wasted no time in taking advantage of this; he began to appear to him as an angel, giving revelations about human deeds and thoughts, and producing light in the cell without a lamp. Having thus gained his complete trust, the enemy finally commanded him to sacrifice his son to God, following the example of Abraham. And this would certainly have been carried out had the son, seeing the unusual preparations, not managed to flee. – Furthermore: in Mesopotamia, the enemy led a certain ascetic and hermit to unquestioning faith in dreams by presenting to him in a vision two peoples: the Christian people, with the Apostles and Martyrs, in darkness, disgrace, sorrow, and weeping—and the Jewish people, with Moses, the Patriarchs, and the Prophets, in radiant splendor, glory, and joy—and persuaded him to convert to Judaism and undergo circumcision. “These examples alone are enough to convince us that lack of discernment is an open door to downfall and ruin.”

3. Prudence is a gift from God, which, however, must be developed and cultivated. How? By entrusting everything to the judgment of the most experienced Fathers. This is the wisest school of prudence, in which even those who lack a particular aptitude for it learn to reason well about what is proper. Thus is the question resolved—how prudence is acquired. True discernment is acquired through true humility, the first proof of which is to reveal to the Fathers not only what we do, but also what we think, trusting not in our own thoughts in anything, but following the instructions of the elders in everything, and considering good or bad only what they recognize as such. Such conduct helps one to remain safely on the right path and protects one from all the devil’s snares. It is impossible for one who orders his life not according to his own judgment but according to the counsel of those who have succeeded to fall prey to demonic deception. Thus, submitting one’s thoughts to the judgment of the Fathers replaces one’s own discernment and teaches it. The enemy hates the light; therefore, the revelation of evil thoughts, as soon as they are brought to light, dispels and destroys them. Just as a snake, drawn from a dark burrow into the light, tries to flee and hide, so too do evil thoughts, once exposed

through open confession and repentance, try to flee from a person. This is confirmed by many, many examples and experiences.

4. Abba Serapion recounts about himself: When I was a novice, I would secretly take a piece of dry bread from Abba and eat it. I did this for a very long time, and the passion took such hold of me that I could not overcome it. My conscience condemned me; yet I was ashamed to tell Abba about it. — But by the providence of the merciful God, some brothers happened to visit the elder, and they began to open up their thoughts to him and ask for his permission regarding them. The elder answered them as was necessary, and in the course of the conversation, he also spoke about abstinence in food. Then he added: “Nothing harms monks as much, and nothing delights the demons as much, as concealing one’s thoughts from one’s spiritual fathers.” These words struck me deeply; it seemed to me that God had revealed my sins to the elder, and, overcome with remorse, I began to weep—then I took from my bosom a piece of bread that I had been stealing, and, throwing myself to the ground, I asked him to forgive my past sins and to pray that I might be kept from doing this in the future. Then the elder said: “Your confession has freed you from your bondage; by revealing your sins, you have struck down the demon who was tormenting you while you remained silent. Until now, you allowed him to possess you, neither opposing him nor exposing him, but now that he has been driven out of your heart and exposed, he will no longer have a place within you.” The elder had not yet finished speaking when it seemed as though a burning torch had come out of my innermost being and filled the entire cell with a foul odor, so that those present thought sulfur was burning. The elder added: “Behold, the Lord has clearly confirmed the truth of my words and your deliverance.” Thus, through the act of confession, the passion of gluttony departed from me, and since then, my former desire has not even crossed my mind.

5. What do we see in Samuel?—He, having been consecrated to God from infancy and having been granted a conversation with Him, did not trust his own thoughts, but, having been called twice by God, hurried to the elder Elijah and received instruction from him on how to respond to God. Thus, God Himself chose to guide even the one He had deemed worthy of conversing with Him through the elder’s instruction, so as to lead him to humility through it. — Do we not see the same thing in St. Paul? The Lord Himself called him; but immediately He sent him to Ananias to learn the way of truth from him. — And St. Paul himself, after several attempts at preaching the Gospel, went to Jerusalem to verify his message, *“lest I be running in vain”* (Gal. 2:2)—even though he was tangibly accompanied by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is evident that the Lord reveals the path to perfection to no one except those guided toward it by spiritual Fathers, just as He says through the Prophet: *“Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will tell you”* (Deut. 32: 7).

11. On the Degrees of Perfection in the Spiritual Life, According to the Motives Leading to It

1. Three motivations compel people to subdue their passions, namely: fear of the torments of Gehenna in the future, or fear of the severity of the laws in the present; hope and desire to attain the kingdom of heaven; and finally, love of virtue or benevolence. That fear causes one to abhor the filth of evil is stated in Proverbs: *“The fear of the Lord hates iniquity”* (8:13). That hope also restrains one from being carried away by passions is stated here: *“All who hope in Him shall not be put to shame”* (Ps. 33: 23). As for love, it is said that it does not even fear the fall into sin: *“Love never fails”* (1 Cor. 13: 8). Therefore, the Apostle summed up the whole matter of salvation in the acquisition of these three virtues, saying: *“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—these three”* (1 Cor. 13:13). Faith, by instilling fear of the future judgment and torments, turns us away from the defilement of the passions; hope, by drawing our minds away from the present with the expectation of heavenly rewards, compels us to despise all carnal pleasures; love, by its fire kindling in us a love for Christ and for progress in spiritual virtues, impels us to turn away with utter hatred from everything that is contrary to them. Although these three virtues all lead us to the same end—that is, they urge us to abstain from everything that is forbidden—they differ greatly from one another in their degrees of excellence. The first two are characteristic of those people who, while striving for progress, have not yet come to love them with all their hearts; the third, however, belongs exclusively to God and to those people who have restored within themselves the image and likeness of God. For God alone creates all that is good, not out of fear or a desire for reward, but out of pure love. *““The Lord has done everything for His own sake,”* says Solomon (Prov. 16:4), that is, out of His goodness He lavishly pours out every kind of blessing upon both the worthy and the unworthy; for He cannot be grieved by offenses nor angered by the lawlessness of men, as He is eternally perfect and, by His very nature, unchanging goodness.

2. Therefore, whoever strives for perfection must gradually ascend from the first stage of fear—properly called “servile fear”—to the path of hope. Here, a person is likened no longer to a slave but to a hired worker; for he acts in anticipation of future reward. Although he, confident in the forgiveness of his sins, no longer fears punishment for them, and, aware of his good deeds, hopes to receive a good reward for them, he has not yet reached the state proper to a son, who, fully confident in his Father’s all-generous favor toward him, unhesitatingly regards as his own all that belongs to the Father.

3. Therefore, we must hasten our progress so that, through “*love that never fails*,” having ascended to the third degree of sonship—those who regard all that belongs to the Father as their own—we may be deemed worthy to take on the image and likeness of the heavenly Father and, following the example of His true Son, cry out: “*All that the Father has is mine*” (John 16: 15)—which is what Blessed Paul also testifies about us, saying: “*All that you are—whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or the present, or the future—all that you are*” (1 Cor. 3:21–22). The Savior’s commandment also calls us to such godlikeness: “*Be perfect*,” He says, “*just as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt. 5:48). For those who are still in the state of slaves and hired hands, the inclination toward good is sometimes interrupted—namely, when the soul, due to a certain cooling of its feelings or because of distraction by worldly pleasures and joys, ceases to be moved by the fear of Gehenna or the desire for future blessings. Thus, we can attain true perfection in no other way than by loving God for no other reason than the very impulse of love for Him; for He, too, first loved us for no other reason than our salvation. To this end, we must strive with ardent zeal to ascend from fear to hope, and from hope to the degree of love for God—or love for the virtues themselves—with complete fervor of the soul, so that, having embraced such devotion to the good, we may, as far as human nature allows, remain steadfast in it.

4. There is a great difference between one who extinguishes the flame of passions within himself out of fear of hell or hope for future reward—and one who, moved by a sense of divine love, turns away in revulsion from vice and impurity itself, and guards in his heart the virtue of purity out of love and devotion to purity, and does everything, without fear of torment, but out of love for virtue, and not looking toward the reward promised in the future, but being satisfied by the conscious enjoyment of present good. In such a state, a person—even if no one were to witness his deeds—will not allow himself to take advantage of an opportunity to sin, nor will he even defile himself secretly in his thoughts with sinful pleasure; for, nurturing in his heart a true love for virtue, he not only rejects anything contrary to it but also turns away from it with revulsion. But whoever is held back from being carried away by the allure of the passions by fear will, once the barrier imposed by fear is removed, return to what he loves, and therefore will not always be steadfast in his virtue, nor will he ever find peace from the struggle of the passions; for he will in no way be able to attain the firm and unceasing inner peace that comes from the establishment of purity. Where there is no respite from battle, one cannot help but sustain wounds from time to time. For no matter how skilled one may be in the art of war, no matter how valiantly one may fight, even if one frequently inflicts fatal wounds on one’s enemies, it is impossible for the enemy’s blade not to strike one occasionally. On the contrary, whoever has suppressed every rebellion of the passions, already enjoys a secure peace, and has committed himself to virtue itself; that person will constantly preserve this state of good disposition, by which he is wholly enveloped and to which he is wholly devoted, since he is certain that nothing is more ruinous than the loss of purity. Respect for those present will not in the least increase his integrity, nor will solitude diminish it in the slightest; but always and everywhere carrying with him the judge not only of his deeds but also of his thoughts—his conscience—he strives above all to please the One whom, as he is convinced, cannot be bypassed, deceived, or hidden from.

5. Whoever, relying on God’s help rather than on his own zealous labor, is deemed worthy to attain this degree of perfection, will pass from the state of servitude, in which fear reigns, and from the state of a hired hand, in which the motive is not the inner goodness of the one acting but the expectation of reward, into the state of sonship, in which neither fear nor the desire for reward has a place, but only “*love that never fails*” acts unceasingly. Whoever, through such love, restores within himself the image and likeness of God will delight in goodness simply because of his heart’s inclination toward goodness itself; and having acquired patience and meekness—qualities in some measure akin to God’s—he will no longer be angered by any of the vices of sinners, but rather, sympathizing and having compassion on their weaknesses, pray for their forgiveness, remembering that he himself had previously been overcome by similar passions until the Lord’s mercy saved him, and that it was not by his own efforts that he broke free from the bonds of the carnal life, but God’s grace delivered him from it; —so that he might understand that it is not wrath but compassion that

must be shown toward sinners, with a peaceful heart before God: *“You have loosed my bonds”*: *“To You I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving”* (Ps. 115:7),—and further: *“If the Lord had not helped me, my soul would soon have gone down to the grave”* (Ps. 93:17); and so that, being in such a humble state of mind, he might fulfill the following commandment of Gospel perfection: *“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you and cast you out”* (Matt. 5: 44); and in this way, he was deemed worthy to receive the reward attached to this commandment, by which we are not only made to bear the image and likeness of God, but are also called children of God: *“that you may be,”* it says there, *“sons of your Father who is in heaven: for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (v. 45). Realizing that he has attained such love, Blessed John says: *“Let us have confidence on the day of judgment, for just as He is, so are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17). For man, by his very nature feeble and weak, how else can he be *“as He is,”* if not by extending the benevolent love of his heart—in imitation of God—to the good and the evil, the righteous and the unrighteous? —So that he may do good out of devotion to goodness itself, revealing in himself that he is truly a child of God, of whom the same blessed Apostle proclaims: *“Everyone born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”* (1 John 3:9), and again: *“We know that everyone born of God does not commit sin; but the one born of God keeps himself safe, and the evil one does not touch him”* (1 John 5:18). – (This, however, should not be understood to refer to every kind of sin, but only to mortal sins. – In truth, even the holiest of souls cannot avoid falling into those minor transgressions that occur in speech, in thought, in desire—whether through ignorance, forgetfulness, some kind of excess, or an unforeseen circumstance—which, though distinct from the sin called *“sin leading to death,”* nevertheless cannot be without some degree of guilt and reproach). Therefore, whoever, as we have said, acquires a love for what is good and becomes an imitator of God, having clothed himself with the Lord’s mercy and long-suffering (Col. 3: 12), will pray even for his very persecutors, crying out like his Lord: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34). A clear sign of a soul not yet purified of evil passions is when a person feels no compassion for the sins of others but passes harsh judgment on them.

12. On the End of Penitential Works

1. Perfect repentance consists in no longer committing those sins for which we repent and for which our conscience convicts us; the proof of our satisfaction for them and of their forgiveness is the banishment from our hearts of even the slightest sympathy for them. Let everyone know that he is not yet forgiven for his past sins, as long as, while undertaking the labors and sighs of atonement for them, images of sinful deeds—whether those he himself committed or similar ones—flit before the eyes of his mind, and through this, not merely by indulging in unseemly objects but even by the mere recollection of them, the soul’s inner peace is shattered. Therefore, let the one who is vigilantly laboring toward such satisfaction consider himself absolved of his sins—and forgiven for all that he has done previously—only when he feels that his heart is no longer moved in the least by their allurements, and not merely by imagination. For the judge of repentance and forgiveness sits in our conscience; before the Day of Judgment, while we still linger in this flesh, He grants us the remission of our guilt and declares the completion of atonement through the proclamation of forgiveness. And to express what we have said more clearly—I say: then, at last, we must believe that all the defilements of our past sins have been forgiven when both sensual desires and passions are banished from our hearts.

2. *Question*: But from where, then, can that holy and saving contrition and humility arise within us, which are so described from the perspective of the penitent: *“I have acknowledged my iniquity and have not concealed my sin; I will confess my iniquity to the Lord,”* so that what follows may truly and justly apply to us: *“and You have forgiven the wickedness of my heart”* (Ps. 31:5)? Or how, prostrating ourselves in prayer, could we stir up within ourselves such tears of repentance that would be powerful enough to win us forgiveness of sins, as St. David did: *“I wash my bed every night; with my tears I drench my couch”* (Ps. 6:7), if we banish from our hearts every memory of our sins—which, on the contrary, we are commanded to keep firmly by the word of the Lord Himself: *“I am the one who blots out your transgressions and your sins; I will not remember them, but you must remember them”* (Isa. 43:25)? Why, not only while doing needlework but also during prayer, do I deliberately try to bring to mind in my soul the memory of past sins, so that, having more effectively disposed myself toward true humility and a contrite heart, I may have the boldness to say with the Prophet: *“Behold my humility and my toil, and forgive all my sins”* (Ps. 24: 18).

3. *Answer:* What has been said refers to the end of repentance and to the sign of a clear conscience and righteousness. As for the remembrance of sins, this is certainly quite useful and necessary; but only for those who are still undergoing the process of repentance—so that, beating their breasts, they may ceaselessly cry out: *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me”* (Ps. 50:5)—and also: *“For I will declare my transgressions and take care of my sin”* (Ps. 37:19). Thus, when we repent, and the memory of past sinful deeds still wounds us, it is necessary that the rain of tears born of the awareness of our guilt extinguish the fire of the burning conscience. But when, through the work of deep humility of heart and contrition of spirit, through tireless penitential labor and sighing, the memory of those sins is lulled to sleep and the sting of conscience is removed from the depths of the soul by the grace of the merciful God, then it will be clear that he has reached the end of atonement, has deservedly received complete forgiveness, and has been cleansed of the defilement of all his sins. However, such oblivion is attained only through the atonement of past sins and passionate inclinations, and through the complete and total purification of the heart; and no one can attain it without humility—not those who, through negligence or arrogance, neglect the purification of their passions—but only the one who, through bitter weeping and ceaseless sighs, washes away all the filth of past impurities, and who, through these labors, can cry out to God with all the strength of his soul: *“I have acknowledged my iniquity and have not concealed my sin”* (Ps. 31: 5),—and: *“My tears have been my bread day and night”* (Ps. 41:4)—so that, as a result, he may justly hear from the Lord Himself: *“I have removed your iniquity like a cloud, and your sin like the darkness”* (Isa. 44:22).

4. You said earlier that you deliberately bring to mind memories of past sins. This should not be done; even if such a memory intrudes against your will, it must be driven out immediately, because it distracts the mind from pure contemplation—especially for one who dwells in solitude—entangling it in the impurities of this world and suffocating it with the stench of the passions. For when you renew the memory of what you did before—whether out of ignorance or lust—under the prince of this world, from there, —I will concede to you that no sensual pleasure creeps up on you with such a thought—then, without a doubt, this mere mental contact with former corruption will taint the air of the mind with a repulsive stench and drive away the spiritual fragrance, or the sweetness of the aroma of virtues. Why, when the memory of past passionate deeds stirs the senses, one must recoil from it just as an honest and dignified man flees from a shameless and brazen woman who, in full view of everyone, approaches him with embraces or words. For if he does not immediately reject her touch and allows even the briefest delay in an improper conversation with her, then even if he refuses to consent to shameful pleasure, he will by no means escape the condemnation of all who pass by, as one who has permitted something disgraceful and reprehensible. Likewise, if we are led into such thoughts by a contagious memory, we must not linger in them even for a moment, but must immediately turn away from these imaginings—so that when the angels, passing by, see us entangled in such impure and shameful thoughts, they may not be prevented from saying of us: *“The Lord’s blessing be upon you; we have blessed you in the name of the Lord”* (Ps. 128:8). But it often happens that some inexperienced person, while reflecting with contrition on his own failings or those of others, is imperceptibly pierced by the subtlest arrow of lust and yields to it—and thus what began under the guise of piety ends in a shameful and ruinous outcome for himself. *“For there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end leads to the gates of hell”* (Prov. 16:25).

The Venerable Isichius, Priest of Jerusalem

A Brief Account of Him

The Venerable Isichius, a native of Jerusalem, was a student and disciple of St. Gregory the Theologian in his youth. After the death of his great mentor, he led an ascetic life in one of the Palestinian deserts, where he continued to study the spirit of Christianity—sometimes through books, sometimes through oral conversations with his contemporaries among the ascetics of Palestine, and sometimes through his own life experiences and research. In the year 412, the Archbishop of Jerusalem ordained the enlightened ascetic as a presbyter, and from that time on, combining the office of presbyter with that of preacher, he is remembered in the history of the Church as one of its most renowned teachers. “The Great Euthymius,” as his disciple Cyril of Scythopolis writes (in the Life of St. Euthymius), was greatly comforted by the fact that St. Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, upon arriving at his monastery in 429 to consecrate the church, brought with him the

learned Isichius, a presbyter and teacher of the Church.” Theophanes, in his chronograph, dates his death to the 26th year of the reign of Theodosius the Younger, which corresponds to 432–433. In Emperor Basil’s calendar, his commemoration is listed for March 28. Here, as throughout the East, he is now commemorated along with all the holy fathers on Cheese Saturday. In the canon of St. Theodore the Studite for this day, in the 9th verse, he is placed among the great teachers: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Athanasius the Great, the two Cyrils—of Jerusalem and of Alexandria—St. Epiphanius, Gregory of Nyssa—and is referred to as “another theologian,” naturally after Gregory the Theologian. By virtue of his scholarly works, St. Hesychius was a worthy disciple of St. Gregory the Theologian. The Menologion of Emperor Basil, recognizing St. Hesychius as a preacher and interpreter of Holy Scripture, states: “He explained and expounded the entire Holy Scripture with clarity and presented it for the common good; therefore, he was most renowned and remarkable to all.” From among his many works, following the example of the Greek Philoteleos, we have included in this collection a sermon addressed to Theodulus, divided into 203 chapters, as the most beneficial for those wishing to cultivate sobriety, attentiveness, and the guarding of the heart. Blessed Photius, in his Philokalia, in the 198th reading, calls this discourse “more suitable than any other writing for those leading an ascetic life for the sake of the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven.” It is set forth, he says, clearly and in every respect as required for people who do not engage in deep studies, but who devote all their effort and diligence to the deeds of an active life.” [In the translation, the Greek text of Theotokos was supplemented in some places from Migne’s **Patrologia Graeca**, vol. 93].

To Theodulus: A Soul-Benefiting and Salvific Word on Sobriety and Prayer⁶⁸

1. Sobriety is a spiritual art which, if practiced for a long time and with constant zeal, with God’s help, completely delivers a person from passionate thoughts, words, and evil deeds; it grants to those who practice it in this way a true knowledge of the incomprehensible God, as far as this is possible for us, and a hidden revelation of the hidden divine mysteries; and it is the creator of every commandment of the Old and New Testaments and the bestower of every blessing of the age to come. – It is, in fact, purity of heart itself, which, due to its greatness and lofty qualities—or, to speak more truthfully, due to our inattention and negligence—is now exceedingly rare among monks; yet Christ blesses it, saying, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8). Being such, it is acquired at a high price. Sobriety, if it abides constantly in a person, becomes for him a guide to a righteous and God-pleasing life. It is also a ladder to contemplation; it teaches us to properly govern the movements of the three parts of the soul (that is, the three faculties: the intellect, the passion, and the will) and to keep our senses firm—and in its possessor it daily renews the four cardinal virtues (that is, wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice).

2. The great Lawgiver Moses—and even more so the Holy Spirit—demonstrating how blameless, pure, all-encompassing, and exalted this virtue is, and teaching us how to begin and perfect it, says: “*Take heed to yourself, lest there be a secret word of lawlessness in your heart*” (Deut. 15: 9), calling a “secret word” any mental image of a sinful thing that is abhorrent to God: what the Holy Fathers also call a suggestion brought into the heart by the devil, which, as soon as it appears in the mind, is immediately followed by our thoughts, which passionately argue with it.

3. Sobriety is the path to every virtue and to God’s commandments; it is also called silence of the heart, and is the same as guarding the mind, which is kept in complete freedom from daydreaming.

4. Just as one born blind cannot see the light of the sun, so too does one who does not live in sobriety fail to see the radiance of the grace that flows abundantly from above; nor will such a person be freed from sinful deeds, words, and thoughts that are abhorrent to God. In their final journey, such people will not escape the princes of Tartarus (who await them).

5. Attention is the ceaseless stillness of the heart, free from every thought, in which it breathes—through Christ Jesus, the Son of God and God Himself, and breathes through Him alone always, unceasingly, and perpetually; calls upon Him, “ ”; stands valiantly with Him against His enemies; and confesses his transgressions to Him, who has the power to forgive sins. Such a soul, through this invocation, often embraces Christ, the Only One who knows the secrets of the heart, while striving in every way to hide its sweetness and

⁶⁸ Although in the Greek **Dobrotolyubie**, compiled by St. Nicodemus of Svyatogor, as well as in the Slavonic translation by St. Paisius (Velichkovsky), the author of the chapters is named “Presbyter Hesychius,” St. Theophan the Recluse, when compiling the Russian **Dobrotolyubie**, mistakenly attributed them to another writer—St. Hesychius of Jerusalem. In reality, the work belongs to Hegumen Hesychius of Sinai.

its inner struggle from all people, lest the crafty enemy somehow grant evil a convenient entry into it and destroy its most virtuous deeds.

6. Sobriety is the firm establishment of the mind's thought and its standing at the door of the heart; so that it sees how foreign thoughts—these thieves and plunderers—approach, hears what these destroyers say and do, and observes what demons sketch out and establish as an image, attempting to entice the mind into daydreams and thus deceive it. If we willingly undergo such a process, it will—if we so desire—very thoroughly and clearly demonstrate, through experience, the art of spiritual warfare and provide us with expertise in it.

7. A deep fear—on the one hand, of God's abandonment, and on the other, of the instructive allowance of external temptations—usually gives rise to frequent vigilance in the mind of a person striving to block the source of evil thoughts and deeds. It is precisely for this purpose that trials occur, and unexpected temptations are sent by God—to correct our lives, especially when someone has tasted the sweetness of rest from this good (mindfulness and sobriety)—and has grown complacent. From this frequent vigilance arises a habit; from this—a certain natural continuity of sobriety; and from this, by its very nature, the vision of battle is gradually born, followed by the unceasing prayer of Jesus, the sweet stillness of the mind free from daydreams, and a wondrous state arising from union with Jesus.

8. The mind that stands firm, calling upon Christ against its enemies and taking refuge in Him, is like a beast that, surrounded by a multitude of dogs, stands courageously against them, sheltered within a kind of enclosure. From afar, mentally conjuring up the imaginary forms of invisible enemies, it prays ceaselessly to Jesus, the Peacemaker, against them, and thereby remains invulnerable to them.

9. If you know—and it has been granted to you *“to appear before the Lord tomorrow”*—not merely to be seen, but also to see (Ps. 5:4)—then you understand what I am saying. If not, remain sober, and you will receive it.

10. The composition of the seas is a multitude of waters; and the composition and foundation of sobriety is the alertness and profound stillness of the soul, as well as the abyss of wondrous and ineffable contemplations, and of reasonable humility, righteousness, and love—is (in and of itself) the ultimate sobriety and prayer to Christ Jesus, free from thoughts, with sighs, unceasing, laborious, yet without despondency or weariness (Luke 18:1).

11. *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter,”* says the Lord, *“into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father”* (Matt. 7:21). And the will of His Father is this: *“You who love the Lord, hate evil”* (Ps. 96:10). Therefore, when we pray to Jesus Christ, let us hate evil thoughts—and God's will is fulfilled.

12. Our Lord and God, having become incarnate, set forth a model of every virtue as an example to the human race and as a call to rise from the ancient fall, vividly illustrating all His virtuous life in the flesh. Among the many other good examples He set, after His baptism He went into the wilderness, where, through fasting, He engaged in a spiritual battle with the devil, who approached Him as if He were a mere human being; and through the means of victory over him—that is, humility, fasting, prayer, and sobriety—which He practiced even though He had no need of them, as God and God of gods—He taught us, His unworthy servants, how to wage the battle against the spirits of wickedness as we ought.

13. As for the various methods (techniques) of self-discipline that, in my opinion, can gradually purify the mind of passionate thoughts—I will not hesitate to explain them to you without flowery or embellished language. For I do not consider it wise, even in this discourse—as is often the case in accounts of external wars—to obscure what is useful with a profusion of words, especially for simple people... *“But you, my son Timothy,”* I will say to you in the words of the Apostle, *“pay close attention”* to what you are about to *“read”* (1 Tim. 4:13).

14. Thus, there is one method (technique) of sobriety: to watch unceasingly over daydreams or fantasies; for without daydreams, Satan cannot devise thoughts and present them to the mind to deceive it.

15. Another is to keep your heart deeply silent at all times, free from every thought, and to pray.

16. Yet another: to constantly call upon the Lord Jesus Christ for help in humility.

17. Yet another way is to keep a constant remembrance of death in your soul.

18. All these practices, my beloved, are like gatekeepers who bar the entrance of evil thoughts; as for the idea that one should look only toward heaven (always occupying the mind with the contemplation of heavenly things), attaching no importance to the earth (and all that is earthly)—which is also one of the

effective means of spiritual sobriety, just like the others—I will explain this in more detail elsewhere, with the help of God, who gives the word.

19. If we cut off the causes of the passions (the triggers that stir them up) and engage in spiritual practices for only a short time, rather than remaining in this way of life forever, with this very activity as our focus; we will easily return to carnal passions, having gained no other fruit from that (good endeavor) except the utter darkening of the mind and the deepest descent into the material world.

20. For one who strives inwardly, the following four practices are necessary at every moment: humility, utmost vigilance, resistance to (thoughts), and prayer. Humility—so that, as he wages war against his adversaries—the proud demons—he may always have Christ’s help at hand in his heart; for the Lord hates the proud. Vigilance—so that he may always keep his heart free from any thought, even if it seems good. Resistance—so that, as soon as one realizes who has come, one may immediately resist the evil one with anger, as it is said: *“I answer those who revile my word”* (Ps. 118:42)—*“Shall not my soul obey God?”* (Ps. 61:2)? Prayer—so that after the resistance, he may immediately cry out to Christ from the depths of his heart with an unutterable sigh. And then the one who is striving will see how his enemy, by the name of Jesus, is scattered like dust by the wind and driven away, or how smoke vanishes along with its delusions.

21. Whoever does not have prayer purified of thoughts has no weapon for battle—prayer, I say, that is constantly at work in the innermost recesses of the soul, so that by the invocation of the Lord Jesus Christ the enemy, who secretly wages war, may be (invisibly) scourged and scorched.

22. You must look inward with a sharp and intense gaze of the mind to recognize those who enter; and once you recognize them, immediately crush the serpent’s head with opposition, crying out to Christ with a sigh at the same time. Then you will experience the invisible divine intercession. You will also clearly see then the righteousness of the heart (whether it acts righteously, or what constitutes the righteous action of the heart).

23. Just as one who holds a mirror in his hand and looks into it, standing among others, sees his own face as it is, and sees others looking into the same mirror: so, one who looks intently into his own heart sees his own condition there, and sees the gloomy faces of the mental Ethiopians.

24. The mind cannot overcome demonic delusions by its own power alone; let it never presume to do so. For our enemies, being cunning, feign defeat while plotting to bring down the fighter from another direction—through pride; but when the name of Jesus is invoked, they will not endure even a moment to stand and plot against you.

25. Take care not to think too highly of yourself (nor devise your own methods of struggle), as ancient Israel did; otherwise, you too will be delivered into the hands of your mental enemies. For that people, having been delivered from the Egyptians by the God of all, later devised for themselves a helper—a cast idol.

26. By the “fused idol,” understand our weak mind, which—as long as it invokes Jesus Christ against the spirits of wickedness—easily drives them out and, with skillful artistry, puts the enemy’s invisible, warlike forces to flight; but as soon as it recklessly dares to rely on itself alone, it falls and is shattered, like the so-called swift-winged one. This is what the one who trusts in the Lord confesses: *“‘The Lord,’ he says, ‘is my helper and my defender; in Him my heart trusts, and He will help me, and my flesh will flourish’* (Ps. 27: 7); and *‘who,’ besides the Lord, ‘will rise up for me against the deceitful? Or who will stand up for me against those who commit iniquity’* (Ps. 93:16)—countless thoughts? But he who trusts in himself rather than in God will fall a terrible fall. Flocks of pigeons, having soared high, spin around and fall downward. If they do not manage to turn around in time, they crash to the ground and are crushed to death.

27. May this, my beloved—if you wish to wage the struggle as you ought—serve as an exemplary guide to the form and manner of the silence of the heart: the small creature, the spider. It seizes and kills tiny flies, and you, if like it (sitting in its webbed lair), you remain in silent stillness within your soul, do not cease to strike down the infants of Babylon—for which striking down the Holy Spirit, through David, would call you blessed (Ps. 136: 9).

28. Just as it is impossible for the Red Sea to be seen in the firmament of heaven among the stars, and just as it is impossible for a person walking on earth not to breathe the air here: so it is impossible for us to purify our hearts of passionate thoughts and drive out from them our mental enemies without frequently invoking the name of Jesus Christ.

29. If, with humble reflection, the remembrance of death, self-denial, the struggle against (evil) thoughts, and the invocation of Jesus Christ, you always abide in your heart, and with these tools soberly

traverse each day the mental path—narrow, yet joy-filled and sweet— then you will enter into the holy contemplations of the saints, and you will be enlightened by the knowledge of profound mysteries from Christ, *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Col. 2:3) and *“in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* (v. 9). For in Jesus you will sense that the Holy Spirit has descended into your soul, and as the human mind is enlightened by Him, it *“beholds the glory of God with an unveiled face”* (2 Cor. 3:18). *“No one,”* says the Apostle, *“can say ‘Lord Jesus’ except by the Holy Spirit”* (1 Cor. 12:3), Who secretly confirms those who seek Him (in truth, in Him).

30. Those who love instruction must also know this: that evil demons, envying us because of the great benefit derived from the spiritual struggle—the wisdom it brings and the ascent to God—often conceal this mental struggle from us and quell it, (with the intention, moreover, that) when we (having forgotten the dangers of their attacks) become careless, they may suddenly carry off our minds (into daydreams) and once again make us negligent, inattentive to our hearts. For they are constantly preoccupied with a single goal and a single endeavor: to prevent our hearts from paying attention to themselves at all, knowing what riches are thereby gathered in the soul. – But it is precisely then (during the lull in the battle) that we will immerse ourselves in spiritual contemplation, remembering our Lord Jesus Christ—and the battle will once again take hold of our minds. Let us do everything, so to speak, by the counsel of the Lord Himself and with great humility.

31. While living in community, we must, of our own free will and with a willing heart, set aside every personal desire before the abbot, and thus, with God’s help, become, as it were, self-surrendered and will-less. At the same time, we must do our utmost not to be provoked by irritability and not to allow unreasonable and unnatural outbursts of anger, for otherwise, in the hour of spiritual battle, we will find ourselves lacking courage. For our will, unless we voluntarily restrain it, is usually provoked against those who attempt to restrain it by force (without our consent); and because of this, the anger thus stirred up, barking maliciously, destroys the understanding of the battle (the skill to wage it), which was barely acquired with great difficulty. Anger is usually destructive. If it is directed against demonic thoughts, it shatters and destroys them; but if it flares up against people, it destroys within us the good thoughts we have toward them. Thus, anger, as is evident, is destructive to all kinds of thoughts, whether they be evil or, as may happen, even righteous. It is given to us by God, like a shield and a bow, and remains so if it does not deviate from its purpose. But if it begins to act contrary to that purpose, it becomes a destroyer. I have seen that even a dog, which at times boldly attacks wolves, torments sheep.

32. Thus, one must flee from insolence (reckless freedom in dealing with others) as from the venom of an asp, and avoid frequent conversations as from serpents and the spawn of the viper; for they can very quickly lead to complete forgetfulness of the inner struggle and bring the soul down from the uplifting heights afforded by purity of heart. Such forgetfulness, which is worthy of a curse, resists attention like water resists fire, and becomes a powerful adversary at every moment. From forgetfulness we fall into indifference; from indifference we pass to neglect (of the rules of the spiritual life) and despondency—and to unbridled lusts; and in this way we turn back again, like a dog to its own vomit (2 Peter 2:22). Let us therefore flee from licentiousness as from a deadly poison; and let us cure the evil disease of forgetfulness by the strictest vigilance of the mind and the ceaseless invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ: for without Him we can *“do nothing”* (John 15:5).

33. It is not customary—indeed, it is impossible—to be friends with the serpent and harbor it within one’s innermost being; nor is it possible to pamper the body in every way, to love it and please it—except by providing what is strictly necessary—while at the same time striving for heavenly virtue. For the serpent, by its very nature, cannot refrain from wounding the one who has taken it in, and the body cannot refrain from defiling the one who pleases it with movements of lustful delight. When the body sins in any way, it must be flogged mercilessly until it bleeds, like a runaway slave drunk with wine, so that it may know that there is a master (the mind) above it, ready to punish it, and so that it may not seek sensual intoxication as if with wine in a tavern, lest this nocturnal slave—this perishable dust—forget its imperishable mistress (the soul). Do not trust your flesh until the very end of your life. The desires of the flesh, says the Apostle, *“are hostile toward God; for they do not submit to God’s law”* (Rom. 8:7)—and: *“For the flesh is at war with the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:17)—and again: *“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit”* (Rom. 8:8–9).

34. The task of *“prudence”* is to always direct our impulsive nature toward the struggles of the inner battle and toward self-discipline; the task of *“wisdom”* is to direct our mental faculties toward strict and unceasing sobriety and toward spiritual contemplation; the task of *“righteousness”* is to direct our volitional power toward virtue and toward God; the task of *“courage”* is to govern the five senses and restrain them so that they do not defile either our inner self or our heart, nor our outer self or our body.

35. *“His splendor is upon Israel”*—upon the mind that beholds the beauty of God’s glory as much as possible—*“and His power is in the clouds”* (Ps. 67: 35)—upon the light-beaming souls who, in the morning, fix their gaze upon Him who sits at the right hand of the Father, Who, illuminating them just as the sun shines its rays upon pure clouds, reveals them as most lovely.

36. *“One who sins will destroy the good of many,”* says Divine Scripture (Eccl. 9:18); and the mind, by sinning, destroys what is written about in the previous chapter—these heavenly drinks and foods.

37. We are no stronger than Samson, no wiser than Solomon, no more prudent than the blessed David, nor do we love God more than the chief apostle Peter. Let us not, then, place our hope in ourselves; for Scripture says that whoever trusts in himself will fall a terrible fall.

38. Let us learn humility from Christ, meekness from David, and from Peter—how to weep over our occasional falls—but let us not despair like Samson, Judas, and the very wise Solomon.

39. *“The devil, like a roaring lion, prowls around seeking someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). May we never cease to exercise watchfulness of heart, sobriety, discernment (of thoughts), and prayer to Christ Jesus, our God. For you will find no better help throughout your entire life than that of Jesus: because He alone, as God, knows the demons’ snares, wiles, and deceptions.

40. Let the soul boldly trust in Christ and call upon Him; let it by no means fear its enemies: for it does not fight alone, but with the Awesome King Jesus Christ, the Creator of all that exists—both incorporeal and corporeal, visible and invisible.

41. Just as the more rain falls upon the earth, the more it softens it; so too the holy name of Christ, proclaimed by us without hesitation—the more often we call upon Him, the more it softens the soil of our hearts, filling it with joy and gladness.

42. It is also good for the inexperienced to know that we, who are heavy and bowed down to the earth in both body and mind, can overcome our enemies—those who are incorporeal and invisible, malicious and cunning in their malice, swift and light—who have been tested in the battle waged from Adam until now—we have no other way to defeat them except through constant vigilance of the mind and the invocation of Jesus Christ, our God and Creator. For the inexperienced, the prayer of Jesus Christ may serve as an inspiration and guide toward testing and knowing what is good; for the experienced, however, the very best teacher in goodness is action, testing through deeds, and tasting what is good.

43. Just as a small and innocent child, seeing someone else perform some kind of magic trick, is delighted by it and, in its innocence, follows this miracle-worker—so too our soul, being simple and good—for it was created that way by its good Lord—is delighted by the devil’s fanciful suggestions and, beguiled by them, runs to him, the crafty one, as if to a good person, like a dove to one who sets a snare for her chicks, and thus mingles her thoughts with the devil’s fanciful suggestions. If it is the image of a beautiful woman, or something else entirely forbidden by Christ’s commandments, she then devises a way to carry out what the beauty that appeared to her has inspired; and then, having come to a resolution with that thought, she carries out through her body the lawlessness she imagined in her mind, bringing condemnation upon herself.

44. Such is the cunning of the evil one, and with such arrows does he ensnare every victim. Therefore, it is not safe, before the mind has gained great experience in battle, to allow thoughts to enter our hearts—especially at the beginning, when our soul still sympathizes with demonic temptations, takes pleasure in them, and willingly follows in their wake; but as soon as they are recognized, they must be cut off immediately, at the very moment they arise and take hold. When, however, the mind, having long engaged in this wondrous work, has mastered this feat, it will discern everything within itself and acquire skill in waging such a battle, so that it will accurately recognize thoughts and, as the Prophet says, will be able to easily catch *“little foxes”* (Song of Songs 2:15): then one can skillfully allow them to enter, fight them with Christ’s help, expose them, and cast them out.

45. Just as it is impossible for fire and water to pass through the same channel together, so it is impossible for sin to enter the heart unless it first knocks at the door of the heart with a wicked suggestion.

46. The first is the suggestion; the second is the mingling, when our thoughts and the thoughts of the evil demons mix; the third is the conspiracy, when thoughts of both kinds conspire for evil and decide among themselves how it should be carried out; and the fourth is the sensual act or sin. Thus, if the mind, remaining sober, pays attention to itself and, through rebuke and invocation of the Lord Jesus, drives away the suggestion at the very moment of its arising, then none of what usually follows it will come to pass. For the evil one, being an incorporeal spirit, can deceive souls only through fantasies and thoughts. (Of these actions) David speaks of temptation: *"In the morning I destroyed all the wicked of the earth"* (Ps. 100:8); and the great Moses speaks of idolatry: *"You shall not associate with them"* (Ex. 23:32).

47. Mind engages in an invisible struggle with mind—the demonic mind against ours. Therefore, every moment we must cry out to Christ from the depths of our soul, that He may drive away the demonic mind and grant us the spoils of victory, as the Lover of Mankind.

48. Let the image of heartfelt stillness be for you like one who holds a mirror in his hands and gazes intently into it; and then (that is, when you begin to imitate him) you will see how both the evil and the good are inscribed in your heart.

49. Take care at all times never to harbor any thought in your heart—neither impure nor seemingly virtuous—so that in this way you may easily recognize the foreigners, that is, the firstborn sons of Egypt (meaning the passions).

50. How good, pleasant, bright, sweet, all-beneficial, clear-sighted (cheerful), and beautiful is the virtue of sobriety! Guided by You, Christ our God, and walked through with vigilance by the human mind in great humility! For it extends its branches to the sea and the depths of contemplation, and its shoots to the rivers of the sweet divine mysteries (Ps. 79: 12), and nourishes (irrigates, refreshes) the mind, which has long been scorched by wickedness—by the sweetness of deceitful, demonic thoughts and the frenzied reasoning of the flesh, in which lies death.

51. Sobriety is like Jacob's ladder, at the top of which God sits, and upon which the angels walk. It uproots all evil from us, cuts off loquacity, slander, calumny, and the entire catalog (list) of sensual passions, not tolerating even a momentary loss of its own sweetness.

52. It is this, my brothers, that we must pursue with all our hearts. But, soaring in his visions with a mind pure in Christ Jesus, let us also keep before our eyes our transgressions and our former life, so that, being crushed and humbled by the memory of our sins, we may have the unceasing help of Jesus Christ, our God, in the spiritual battle. For as soon as, because of pride, vanity, or self-love, we are deprived of Jesus' help, we are thereby also deprived of purity of heart, through which God reveals Himself to man; for, according to the promise (Matt. 5:8), the former is the cause of the latter (purity of heart leading to the vision of God).

53. A mind that does not neglect its inner work, along with other blessings that arise from constant self-discipline and self-preservation, also attains the state in which the five bodily senses do not become accomplices in the sinful temptations that come from without. Paying full attention to his virtue—sobriety—and always desiring to delight in good thoughts, he does not allow the five senses to steal from him by entering his mind through their material and vain thoughts; but knowing what deceptions arise through them, he restrains them from within with strong effort.

54. Remain attentive in mind, and you will not be overwhelmed by temptations. But if you stray from this, endure whatever comes your way.

55. Just as bitter wormwood is beneficial for those who have lost their appetite and feel aversion to food, so too is it beneficial for the wicked to endure misfortunes.

56. If you do not wish to suffer evil, do not wish to do evil either, for the former inevitably follows the latter. What a person sows, that he will reap. Thus, when we, having willingly sown evil, reap (sorrow) against our will, we must marvel at God's justice in this.

57. The mind is blinded by the following three passions: the love of money, vanity, and the love of pleasure.

58. Knowledge and faith, which are the companions of our nature, have been dulled by nothing other than these passions.

59. Rage and anger, strife and murder, and the entire catalog of other passions have become deeply entrenched in people through them.

60. One who does not know the truth cannot truly believe; for knowledge naturally precedes faith. What is said in Scripture is not said merely so that we may know it, but so that we may also do it.

61. Let us, then, begin to put it into practice. Thus, progressing gradually, we will find that hope in God, firm faith, inner knowledge, deliverance from temptations, gracious gifts, heartfelt confession, and abundant tears are granted to believers through prayer; and not only that, but also patience in the face of afflictions, sincere forgiveness of one's neighbor, understanding of the spiritual law, the attainment of God's righteousness, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the bestowal of spiritual treasures, and everything that God has promised to believers both here and in the age to come. In a word, it is impossible for the soul to exist in the image of God except through God's grace and the faith of a person who dwells in the heart, in deep humility and undistracted prayer.

62. We have indeed received a great blessing from experience—namely, that one should ceaselessly call upon the Lord Jesus against the adversaries of the mind, if one desires to purify one's heart. And see how what I have said from experience agrees with the testimony of Scripture: *"Prepare,"* it says, *"to call upon the Lord your God, O Israel"* (Amos 4:12). The Apostle also says, *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thess. 5:17). And the Lord tells us: *"Without Me you can do nothing. Whoever abides in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. But whoever does not abide in Me will be cast out like a branch and wither"* (John 15:5–6). Prayer is a great blessing, combining all blessings within itself, for it purifies the heart, in which believers behold God.

63. Since the treasure of humility is exalted and pleasing to God, and has the power to eradicate every evil within us and everything that is hateful to God, it is not easily acquired. You may well find in another person certain individual acts of many virtues, but if you seek the fragrance of humility in him, you will hardly find it. Therefore, much diligence and effort are required to acquire this treasure. Scripture also calls the devil unclean because from the very beginning he rejected this precious treasure of humility and loved pride. For this reason alone, he is called an unclean spirit throughout Scripture. For what kind of bodily impurity could a being that is entirely immaterial, incorporeal, and without parts possibly commit, that he might be called unclean for this reason? Clearly, it is because of pride that he is called unclean, and from being a pure and luminous angel, he has been called vile. *"Everyone who is haughty is unclean before God"* (Prov. 16: 5). The first sin, according to Scripture, is *"pride"* (Sirach 10: 15). When Pharaoh said, *"I do not know your God, nor will I let Israel go"* (Exod. 5: 2), he spoke as one who was proud.

64. There are many acts of the mind that can win for us the blessed gift of humility, provided we do not neglect our salvation; for example: the recollection of sins—in word, deed, and thought—and many other things, when mentally reviewed, contribute to humility. It also leads to true humility when one constantly reflects on the virtues of one's neighbors and extols their other natural advantages, comparing one's own to theirs. Seeing in this way clearly in his mind his own wretchedness and how far he falls short of the perfection of others, a person will naturally come to regard himself as dust and ashes, and not even as a human being, but as a mere dog, because he lags behind all rational creatures on earth in every respect and is poorer and more destitute than all of them.

65. The mouth of Christ, the pillar of the Church, our great Father Basil, says: "A great aid to avoiding sin and not falling back into the same sin the next day is—at the end of the day—to subject ourselves and all that is ours to the judgment of our conscience, so that we may see where we have erred and where we have acted correctly. This is what Job did, both with regard to himself and with regard to his children." Such daily examination sheds light on what happens to us every hour (or teaches us to examine ourselves every hour, so that we may see how we ought to act at every hour).

66. Another man,⁶⁹ , also one of the wise in divine matters, said: "The beginning of fruitfulness is the blossom; and the beginning of an active life is self-restraint." Let us therefore embrace self-restraint, and moreover with measure and balance, as the Fathers teach, and let us spend the entire twelve-hour day in keeping our minds in check. By acting in this way, with God's help and through a certain self-discipline, we will be able to extinguish and diminish evil within ourselves. For a virtuous life is attained through self-discipline, and for it the kingdom of heaven will be granted.

67. The path to knowledge is dispassion and humility, without which no one will behold the Lord.

68. He who abides ceaselessly within his inner self, always turning his thoughts there, lives a chaste life; and not only that, but he also contemplates, meditates on the divine, and prays. And this is precisely what the Apostle speaks of: *"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh"* (Gal. 5:16).

⁶⁹ St. Nilus of Sinai.

69. One who does not know how to walk the spiritual path does not attend to passionate thoughts (that is, does not drive them away), but is constantly preoccupied only with the body—either indulging in gluttony and debauchery, or becoming sad, angry, and resentful, thereby clouding the mind, or undertaking excessive ascetic feats, thereby upsetting the heart.

70. One who has renounced worldly life—that is, a wife, possessions, and other such things—has made only the outer person a monk, but not the inner one. But whoever has renounced passionate thoughts about all these things has made the inner person—which is the mind—a monk as well. And such a person is a true monk. It is easy to make the outer person a monk, if one so desires, but it takes no small effort to make the inner person a monk.

71. Who among this kind has been completely freed from passionate thoughts and has continually been granted pure and immaterial prayer—which is the distinguishing feature of the inner man?

72. Many passions are hidden in our souls; but they reveal themselves only when their causes (objects, occasions) appear before our eyes.

73. Do not devote yourself entirely to physical training; but, having set a manageable task for the body, turn your whole mind to the inner self: *“Physical training is of little value, but godliness is of value in every way”* (1 Tim. 4:8).

74. When the passions are dormant—merely because either their causes (objects, occasions) have been removed or the demons have cunningly withdrawn—pride arises.

75. Humility and ascetic self-denial (ascetic bodily privations) free a person from every sin—the former by cutting off the passions of the soul, and the latter by cutting off the bodily ones. Therefore, the Lord says: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matt. 5:8)—they shall see both Him Himself and the treasures within Him when they purify themselves through love and self-restraint—and this will be all the more so as they continue to deepen their purification.

76. The vantage point (observatory, watchtower) for the words concerning every virtue is the preservation of the mind, just as in ancient times David’s guard referred to the circumcision of the heart (2 Sam. 18:24).

77. Just as we are harmed by looking at what is harmful to the senses, so it is with regard to the mind.

78. Just as one who damages the core of a plant causes the whole plant to wither, so too is it with the human heart. We must be vigilant at every moment, for the predators never sleep.

79. The Lord, wishing to show that every commandment is binding and that sonship is a gift earned for people by His own blood, says: *“When you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; for we have done what we ought to have done’”* (Luke 17:10). Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is not a reward for works, but a gracious gift from the Lord, prepared for His faithful servants. A servant does not demand freedom as a reward; but (having received it) he gives thanks as one who is in debt, and (not having received it) he awaits it as a favor.

80. Christ, according to Scripture, died for our sins and grants freedom to the servants who work well for Him; for He says: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Lord”* (Matt. 25: 21). But a faithful servant is not one who relies on mere knowledge (of a servant’s duty), but one who demonstrates faithfulness through obedience to Christ, who gave the commandment.

81. One who honors his master does what he is commanded; but if he sins in any way or disobeys, he accepts as his due whatever befalls him as a result. Be both inquisitive and diligent (of course, in fulfilling the commandments); for mere knowledge alone makes a person arrogant.

82. The temptations that unexpectedly befall us providentially teach us to be diligent.

83. A star’s essence is the light that surrounds it; but the essence of the pious and God-fearing is poverty and humility, for nothing else is meant to be the distinguishing and revealing mark of Christ’s disciples except humble wisdom and a meek demeanor. The four Gospels proclaim this everywhere. Whoever does not live in this way—that is, without humility—is deprived of a share in Him who humbled Himself even to the cross and death, and who is the active Gospel lawgiver of the divine commandments, having shown us the commandments that are binding upon us (through His deeds and life, as depicted in the Gospels).

84. *“All who are thirsty, come to the water,”* says the Prophet (Isa. 55:1); those who thirst for God, walk in purity of mind and heart. However, one who soars high above it must also turn his gaze to the earth

of his poverty. No one is higher than the humble. Just as where there is no light, all is dark and gloomy, so too, when there is no humility, all our diligent labors for God are vain and fruitless.

85. *“The conclusion of the matter, listen to all: Fear God and keep His commandments”* (Eccl. 12:13), both mentally and physically. If you compel yourself mentally to observe them, you will rarely need to labor physically for their sake. David says: *“I have desired to do Your will, and Your law is within my heart”* (Ps. 39: 9).

86. If a person does not form God’s will and His law within his heart, that is, within his innermost being, then he cannot comfortably fulfill them outwardly either. One who is not sober-minded and is indifferent is, as it were, saying to God: *“I do not wish to see Your ways”* (Job 21:14)—certainly due to a lack of divine enlightenment, through which one not only holds the law in one’s heart by conviction but is also strong enough to live according to God’s will.

87. Just as physical salt sweetens bread and all kinds of food, preserves meat from spoiling, and keeps it intact for a long time, so too should you understand the wise preservation of spiritual sweetness and the wondrous workings of the heart. For it divinely sweetens both the inner and outer person, drives away the stench of evil thoughts, and keeps us steadfast in goodness.

88. From attachment comes a multitude of thoughts, and from these comes evil sensual deeds. Whoever immediately extinguishes the former with Jesus will also avoid the latter. And he will be enriched with sweet divine knowledge, in which he will behold God as ever-present everywhere, and, holding up the mirror of the mind before Him, will be illuminated by Him, like clear glass held up to the sensory sun. Then, at last, the mind, having reached the ultimate limit of its desires, will rest from all other self-contemplation.

89. Since every thought enters the heart through the imagination of something sensory (and the sensory hinders the intellectual), the Divine light of the Godhead begins to illuminate the mind only when it is emptied of everything and becomes completely formless (presenting no image or form whatsoever). For that light manifests itself in a mind that is already pure, provided it is emptied of all thoughts.

90. The more attentively you listen to your mind, the more fervently you will pray to Jesus; and again, the more carelessly you watch over your mind, the further you will distance yourself from Jesus. And just as the former strongly illuminates the atmosphere of the mind, so the latter—turning away from sobriety and the sweet call of Jesus—usually darkens it completely. It is natural for this matter to be as we have said—and it cannot be otherwise. You will learn this from experience when you put it into practice. For virtue, and especially such a light-giving, sweet practice, is usually learned only through experience.

91. The ceaseless invocation of Jesus, with a certain warm desire full of sweetness and joy, causes the air of the heart to be filled with a joyful stillness through utter attentiveness. Moreover, the one responsible for the heart’s complete purification is Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God Himself, the source and Creator of all that is good. For He Himself says: *“I am the Lord God, who creates the world”* (Isa. 45:7).

92. The soul, being blessed and comforted by Jesus, responds to the Benefactor with a certain joy and love through confession, giving thanks and joyfully calling upon Him who has pacified it; for within itself it mentally sees how He dispels the delusions of evil spirits.

93. *“And my discerning eye,”* says David, *“shall look upon my ‘imaginary’ enemies, and my ear shall hear those who rise up against me with deceit”* (Ps. 91: 12–13). And I have seen *“the retribution of sinners”* being carried out by God within me (Ps. 90:8). When, however, there are no fantasies in the heart, then the mind stands in its natural order, ready to be moved toward every sweet contemplation, whether spiritual or God-loving.

94. Thus, as I have said, sobriety and the Jesus Prayer are mutually intertwined—utmost attention is part of unceasing prayer, and prayer, in turn, is part of the utmost sobriety and attention of the mind.

95. A good teacher for both body and soul is the unforgettable remembrance of death, and the practice of, setting aside all that lies in between (that is, between the present moment and the hour of death), always keeping it before one’s eyes—including the very deathbed on which we are to lie when parting from the body, and so on.

96. Brothers, one who wishes to remain unscathed at all times must not give in to sleep. But one of two things is inevitable—either to fall and perish, stripped of virtues, or to always stand guard with an armed mind; for the enemy, too, always stands with his army, lying in wait.

97. A certain divine state is born in our minds through the ceaseless remembrance and invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ, provided we do not neglect constant prayer to Him in our minds, unceasing vigilance,

and the work of a gatekeeper (i.e., letting in our own and driving away strangers); but truly, we will always engage in the invocation of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the same and consistent manner, crying out to Him with a fervent heart, that He may grant us to partake of (taste) His Holy Name (so that it may take root in our hearts). For frequent repetition is the mother of habit, both in regard to virtue and in regard to vice; and habit then reigns supreme, like nature. Having reached this state, the mind itself seeks out adversaries, like a hunting dog seeking a hare in the bushes; but the dog seeks to devour, while the mind seeks to strike and drive them away.

98. Therefore, whenever wicked thoughts multiply within us, let us interject the invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ among them; and immediately we will see that they begin to dissipate like smoke in the air—as experience has taught us. When, after this, the mind is left alone (free from distracting thoughts), let us return to unceasing attention and invocation. Let us act in this way whenever we face such a temptation.

99. Just as it is impossible to go to war naked, or to cross a great sea while clothed, or to live without breathing—so it is impossible, without humility and ceaseless prayer to Christ, to learn the mental and inner battle, and to skillfully pursue and quell it.

100. The great David, most experienced in matters of war, says to the Lord: “*I will preserve my strength through You*” (Ps. 58:10)—(that is, by turning to You for help). Likewise, the preservation of the dominion of the heart and of mental stillness—from which all virtues are born—comes to us through the assistance of the Lord, who has given us His commandments and who, when we call upon Him unceasingly, drives away from us that unwholesome forgetfulness which, more than anything else, destroys the stillness of the heart, just as water extinguishes fire. Therefore, O monk, do not give in to sleep born of negligence, which leads to your own death; but in the name of Jesus, cast out your enemies, and may this sweetest of names, as one wise man said, cling to your breath: and then you will know the benefit of silence.

101. When we, unworthy as we are, are deemed worthy to partake with fear and trembling of the divine and most pure Mysteries of Christ our God and King, then we will most clearly demonstrate sobriety, a clear mind, and strict attention, so that this divine fire—that is, the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, may consume our sins and our defilements—both small and great. For, upon entering us, it immediately drives the wicked spirits of malice from our hearts and forgives us our past sins; and our mind is then left free from the restless vexation of wicked thoughts. If, after this, standing at the door of our heart, we carefully guard our mind, then, when we again partake of the Holy Mysteries, the Divine Body will increasingly enlighten our mind and make it shine like a star.

102. Forgetfulness usually extinguishes the mind’s vigilance, just as water extinguishes fire. But the unceasing prayer of Jesus, coupled with unwavering vigilance, ultimately banishes it from the heart. Prayer needs vigilance, just as a small lamp needs the light of a candle (perhaps—like a lamp in a calm, windless place, so that it may burn like a candle).

103. We must take painstaking care to preserve what is precious; and truly, the only thing precious to us is that which preserves us from all evil, both sensual and mental. This is the preservation of the mind through the invocation of Jesus Christ—that is, to always look into the depths of the heart and to remain ceaselessly silent in thought—even, I would say, from thoughts that seem righteous—and to strive to be empty of all thoughts whatsoever, lest thieves hide beneath them. But even though we suffer, remaining patient in our hearts, comfort is nevertheless near.

104. A heart that is constantly guarded—one that is not allowed to accept the visions, images, and fantasies of dark and deceitful spirits—usually gives birth to light-filled thoughts. For just as a coal gives rise to a flame, so much more will God—who dwells in our hearts since our holy baptism—kindle our mental power to contemplation, like a flame on a wax candle, if He finds the air of our heart pure from the winds of malice and guarded by the watchfulness of the mind.

105. We must always keep the name of Jesus—the Christ—whirling within the space of our heart, just as lightning whirls through the air before it becomes rain. Those who have spiritual experience in the inner struggle know this well. We will wage this mental battle in the following order: the first step is attention; then, when we notice that an enemy thought has approached, we will hurl words of cursing from the heart at it with anger; thirdly, we must pray against it, turning our hearts to the invocation of Jesus Christ, so that this demonic specter may vanish at once; otherwise, the mind will follow in the wake of this fantasy, like a child beguiled by some skillful magician.

106. Let us strive, like David, crying out: “Lord Jesus Christ!”—May our throats fall silent (lose their voice); but may our discerning eyes never cease to look upward in hope “*toward the Lord our God*” (Ps. 68:4).

107. Always remembering the parable of the unjust judge, which the Lord told to teach us that we must always pray and not lose heart—and acting upon it—we will receive both benefit and vindication.

108. Just as it is impossible for one who gazes at the sun not to have his pupils shine brightly, so it is impossible for one who always penetrates the air of the heart not to shine.

109. Just as it is impossible to live this present life without food and drink, so too, without the preservation of the mind and the purity of the heart—which is what is called sobriety—it is impossible for the soul to attain anything spiritual and pleasing to God, or to be freed from mental sin, even if someone were to forcibly restrain himself from sinning in deed out of fear of torment.

110. Nevertheless, even those who, through a certain self-discipline, restrain themselves from sin in deed are blessed before God, the angels, and people; for “*those who discipline themselves*” are “*the ones who seize the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 11:12).

111. This is what is marvelous about the fruits of silence for the mind: that sins, which at first knock at the mind only as thoughts—so that, if accepted by the mind, they might later become gross, sensual sins—are all cut off mentally within our inner man by the virtue of sobriety, which does not allow them to enter within and manifest themselves in evil deeds, through the guidance and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

112. The Old Testament is a model of outward, sensual, and bodily deeds, while the Holy Gospel, which is the New Testament, is a model of attentiveness or purity of heart. And just as the Old Testament did not lead to perfection, did not satisfy, and did not confirm the inner man in the work of pleasing God—“*for,*” says the Apostle, “*the law has accomplished nothing*” (Heb. 7:19), but only hindered gross sins (cutting off from the heart wicked thoughts and desires to preserve purity of heart, which is a Gospel commandment higher than, for example, the prohibition against gouging out a neighbor’s eye or tooth): so understand this also regarding bodily righteousness and bodily deeds—I am speaking of fasting, abstinence, sleeping on the bare ground, standing, keeping vigil, and other such practices, which are usually undertaken because of the body and which calm the passionate part of the body from sinful impulses. All of this is certainly good, as is said of the Old Testament (that the Law is good); for it serves to instruct our outer man and to protect him from passionate deeds. But these ascetic practices are not guardians against or restraints against sins of the mind; that is, they are not powerful enough to deliver us from envy, anger, and the like.

113. But purity of heart—that is, the guarding and preservation of the mind, which is the purpose of the New Testament, if we observe it as we ought—cuts off all passions and every evil from the heart, uproots them from it, and instead instills in it joy, hope, contrition, weeping, tears, self-knowledge and knowledge of one’s own sins, remembrance of death, true humility, boundless love for God and people, and divine care of the heart.

114. Just as it is impossible for one walking on the earth not to cut through the air, so it is impossible for the human heart not to be constantly assailed by demons or not to be subject to their hidden influences, even if one were to strictly perform bodily ascetic practices.

115. If you wish not only to appear to be a monk before the Lord—good, meek, and always united with God—but also to truly be such; then strive with all your might to cultivate the virtue of attentiveness, which consists in guarding and preserving the mind and in establishing a sweet stillness of the heart and a blissful state of the soul, free from daydreams—a task you will not find in many.

116. The virtue of mindfulness is called mental wisdom. —And practice it with great sobriety and warm zeal through the Jesus Prayer, with humility and perseverance, with the silence of both the senses and the mind, with moderation in eating and drinking, and by turning away from all that is sinful; practice it skillfully through the path of the mind with discernment, and with God’s help it will reveal to you— —what you did not expect; it will give you knowledge, enlighten you, endow you with wisdom, and teach you what you were previously unable to comprehend, when you walked in the darkness of passions and dark deeds, being plunged into the abyss of forgetfulness and confusion of thoughts.

117. Just as the valleys yield wheat in abundance, so will it yield every kind of goodness in your heart—or rather, this will be given to you by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, without Whom we can do nothing. And at first you will find Him as a ladder, then as a book in which you will read; finally, as you progress more

and more, you will find Him as a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, and you will truly behold with your mind the Christ of Israel, the King of Powers, together with His Co-eternal Father and the Holy Spirit who is worshiped.

118. Demons always lead us into sin through deceitful fantasies. Thus, through fantasies of wealth and greed, they incited the wicked Judas to betray the Lord and God of all. With false dreams of bodily comfort—which is in itself insignificant—and of honor, wealth, and glory, they drew him into the murder of God, and then drove him to suicide by strangulation, securing for him eternal death—the very opposite of what they had presented to him in their dreams or deceptions, thus repaying him, the treacherous ones.

119. Behold, then, how the enemies of our salvation lead us into ruin through false dreams and empty promises. And Satan himself fell from the heavenly heights in the same way, like a bolt of lightning, having dreamed of being equal to God. Thus he later estranged Adam from God by instilling in him the dream of a certain divine dignity (omniscience); and in the same way, this deceitful and treacherous enemy usually beguiles all who sin.

120. Our hearts are filled with the bitterness of the poison of evil thoughts when, having become distracted due to forgetfulness, we are led away for a long time from the attention and prayer of Jesus. But when, out of love for the Divine and with steadfast zeal, we diligently begin to practice what has been described above (i.e., attention and prayer) in our inner sanctuary (in our inner workshop, in the heart), it is once again filled with sweetness in the sensation of being delighted by a certain divine joy. It is then that we firmly resolve to always walk in the silence of the heart—not for any other reason, but for the sake of the pleasant sweetness and comfort we feel in our soul from it.

121. The science of sciences and the art of arts is the ability to control evil thoughts. The very best remedy and art against them is to watch, with the Lord's help, for the appearance of their signs and to always keep one's thoughts pure, just as we guard our physical eyes, keenly observing with them anything that might accidentally harm them and striving in every way to prevent even a speck of dust from reaching them.

122. Just as snow does not produce a flame, nor water produce fire, nor a thornbush figs: so the heart of every person will not be freed from demonic thoughts, words, and deeds unless it purifies its inner self, combines sobriety with the Jesus Prayer, acquires humility and inner stillness, and strives with all the zeal of a mother-in-law, hastening to the front. A soul that does not heed itself is inevitably barren of good and perfect thoughts, like a barren mule; for there is no understanding of spiritual wisdom within it. Truly, invoking the name of Jesus and putting aside passionate thoughts is a sweet task that brings peace to the soul.

123. When the soul enters into a wicked agreement with the body, then together they build a city of vanity and a pillar of pride, and to dwell within it, they give rise to impure thoughts. But the Lord, through the fear of Gehenna, disrupts their harmony and separates them, compelling the mistress, the soul, to act wisely and speak words foreign and contrary to the body (the servant). From this fear, the division between them arises: *"For the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not submit to God's law"* (Rom. 8:7).

124. We must weigh our daily deeds hour by hour, paying close attention to them, and in the evening we must lighten their burden through repentance, to the best of our ability, if we desire, with Christ's help, to overcome evil within ourselves. We must also examine whether we perform all our sensory and visible deeds according to God, in the presence of God, and for God alone, so that we may not, through foolishness, be overcome by any unwholesome passions in the process.

125. If, with God's help, we gain something each day through our sobriety, we should not indiscriminately associate with others, lest we suffer harm from any seductive conversations; but rather we must despise all that is vain, for the sake of this virtue (sobriety), which is most lovely and sweet.

126. We must direct the three powers of the soul in the proper way, in accordance with their nature and in harmony with the intention of God, who created them. Specifically: the irascible power must be directed against our outer self and against the serpent—Satan. *"Be angry,"* it is said, *"and do not sin"* (Ps. 4:5). This means be angry at sin—that is, at ourselves and at the devil—so as not to sin against God. We must direct the power of desire toward God and virtue, and we must place the mind as the ruler over both of them, so that with wisdom and prudence it may order them, instruct them, punish them, and rule over them, just as a king rules over his subjects. And then the mind within us, according to God, will govern them (that is, when it reigns over them rather than submitting to them). Although the passions may rebel against the mind, we will not cease to command that the mind rule over them. For the brother of the Lord says: *"If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body"* (James 3:2). Truly, every

lawlessness and sin is committed by these three powers, and every virtue and righteousness is accomplished by these same three powers.

127. The mind becomes clouded and barren when a monk either speaks with someone about worldly matters, or mentally dwells on them within himself, or when his body and mind are vainly occupied with something sensual, or when he generally gives himself over to vanity (and frivolity). For in such a case, immediately afterward, he loses his fervor, (humility, boldness before God, and knowledge—he forgets God and God’s order): so that to the extent that we pay attention with our mind, to that extent we are enlightened, and to the extent that we do not pay attention, we are clouded.

128. Whoever daily strives for peace and stillness of mind and earnestly seeks it will easily despise all that is sensual, lest his labor be in vain. But if he deceives his conscience with any false reasoning (that it is no harm to be occupied with anything sensual), he will fall into the bitter sleep of forgetfulness, from which the divine David prays *not to fall asleep* (Ps. 12:4—*“lest I sleep the sleep of death”*). The Apostle says: *“For whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin”* (James 4:17).

129. The mind returns from idleness to its proper state and sobriety if, as soon as we become aware of our cooling off, we are inflamed with zeal and, with warm diligence, restore the mind’s usual activity (sobriety and prayer).

130. A mill donkey cannot move forward while walking on the wheel to which it is tied (it walks but remains in the same place until the wheel is stopped); and the mind will not move forward toward perfection—creative virtue (that is, the sobriety that leads to perfection)—unless it brings its inner (by halting the whirl of thoughts there). For such a mind is always blind with its inner eyes, unable to see virtue and the radiant Jesus.

131. A good and strong horse gallops joyfully, having taken a rider: so the mind will rejoice in the light of the Lord when it *“appears before Him in the morning”* free from all thoughts (Isa. 5:4). Stirring itself up, it will move *“from the strength”* of the mind’s active wisdom into the wondrous *“power”* of contemplation and the mysteries of the ineffable, and of virtues; and when he finally perceives in his heart the immeasurable depth of the exalted divine thoughts, then *“the God of gods will appear to him,”* as much as his heart can contain (Ps. 83:8). Struck by this, the mind then lovingly glorifies God, the visible and the all-seeing, Who for this very reason saves the intellectual gaze that so earnestly turns toward Him.

132. The heart’s silence, wisely maintained, will behold the lofty depths; and the ear of the mind that has fallen silent will hear wondrous things.

133. A traveler, having set out on a long, rough, and difficult journey, and fearing to lose his way on the return trip, places signs along the road as guideposts to help him return home safely; and let the man walking the path of sobriety set (as landmarks) the words (heard from the Fathers), fearing the same for himself (i.e., getting lost along the way or turning back).

134. But for the traveler, returning to where he set out is a cause for joy; whereas for the sober person, turning back is the ruin of the rational soul and a sign of turning away from God-pleasing deeds, words, and thoughts. And during the deadly sleep of the soul, he will have thoughts that, like thorns, will rouse him (from slumber), reminding him of the deep darkness and lethargy into which he has fallen because of his negligence.

135. Having fallen into sorrow, despair, and hopelessness (—into hopeless extremes from which there is no hope of escape)—we must do for ourselves what David did: *“pour out”* our hearts and *“our prayers”* before God, and *“declare”* our *“sorrow”* as it is to the Lord (Ps. 141: 3). For we confess to God, who is mighty and wise enough to arrange all things concerning us, and to make our affliction—if it is for our good—light (easy to bear and easy to overcome), and to deliver us from ruinous and destructive sorrow.

136. Anger toward people that is not naturally motivated, sorrow that is not according to God, and despondency—all are equally destructive to good and sensible thoughts; but the Lord, dispelling them for the sake of our confession, instills joy.

137. Thoughts that have crept into our hearts against our will and linger there are usually dispelled by the Jesus Prayer, combined with vigilance from the depths of the heart’s contemplation.

138. We will find relief and joy in our sorrow from the multitude of unspoken thoughts when we reproach ourselves sincerely and impartially—or when we confide everything to the Lord, as if to a person (who is part of us). In every way, through these two methods, we will find peace from everything (that troubles us).

139. The Fathers recognize Moses, the lawgiver, as an image of the mind—he who sees God in the burning bush, is glorified in person, and is appointed by the God of gods as a god to Pharaoh; then he strikes

Egypt with plagues, leads Israel out of it, and gives the law. All of this, when taken allegorically, in a spiritual sense, depicts the actions and virtues of the mind.

140. Aaron, the lawgiver's brother, serves as the image of the outer man. Therefore, as we angrily bring charges against him (the outer man), let us also speak to him, just as Moses spoke to Aaron when he sinned: "How did Israel (the mind, which perceives God) justify you, that you hastened to make him an apostate from the Lord, the Living God, the Almighty (by your own thoughts, you diverted him from the sober contemplation of God) (Ex. 32: 21)?"

141. Among many other good examples, the Lord, as He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead (by saying, "*Come out, young man*"), also showed that we must rein in the soul with strict restraint when it, like a woman, indulges in lax sensibility and, in general, strives to establish within itself a strict (toward itself) disposition—by which I mean self-reproach—that is capable of delivering the soul from self-indulgence, vanity, and pride.

142. Just as one cannot cross the depths of the sea without a large ship, so it is impossible to drive out the evil one's thoughts without invoking the name of Jesus Christ.

143. Rebuke usually blocks the further progress of such thoughts, while invoking the name of Jesus Christ drives them out of the heart. As soon as a thought arises in the soul through the perception of some sensory object—such as a person who has offended us, or a woman's beauty, or silver and gold—or when all these things pass through our mind one after another, it immediately becomes clear that the spirits that led our heart into such daydreaming are: resentment, lust, and the love of money. If our mind is experienced, trained, and skilled in guarding itself against delusions and in seeing, as clearly as in broad daylight, the seductive fantasies and wiles of the wicked, then it can easily extinguish the devil's fiery arrows through resistance, rebuke, and prayer to Jesus Christ, preventing passionate daydreaming from drawing our thoughts along in its wake, and preventing these thoughts from aligning with the phantom of temptation—whether by conversing amiably with it and indulging in excessive musing, or by joining forces with it—after which, with a certain inevitability, just as night follows day, evil deeds follow.

144. But if our mind is inexperienced in the practice of watchful sobriety, it immediately clings passionately to whatever vision presents itself to it, whatever it may be, and begins to converse with it, receiving absurd questions and giving equally absurd answers. Then our thoughts become mingled with demonic fantasies, which, as a result, become even more rampant and multiply, so as to appear more pleasing, beautiful, and attractive to the mind that is being beguiled and ensnared. Then our mind suffers something like this: as if on some plain where gentle lambs are grazing, a dog were to appear, and the lambs, as soon as it appeared, would run up to it frequently, as to their mother, deriving no benefit from approaching it, but only, as it were, taking on its filth and stench. In exactly the same way, our thoughts, out of inexperience, rush toward all the demonic fantasies in the mind and, as I said, mingle with them, so that one might say that the two hold a council together, —to devise a plan to bring to fruition through the body what seemed so alluring and sweet to them under the influence of demonic deception. Thus, the fall of the soul is ultimately brought about within; after which, as if by some necessity, what has ripened there within the heart is then manifested outwardly.

145. Our mind is something light and gentle, easily given over to dreams and irrepressibly prone to sinful thoughts, unless it possesses within itself a thought that, like a sovereign over the passions, would constantly restrain and curb it.

146. Contemplation and knowledge are usually the guides and the driving forces behind a strict life, in that the heart, enraptured by them, comes to despise earthly pleasures and every sensual delight of life as things of no consequence.

147. Conversely, a life of vigilance, lived in Christ Jesus, becomes the father of contemplation and knowledge and the source of divine aspirations and the wisest thoughts, united with its spouse—humility—as the Divine Prophet Isaiah says: "*Those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles*" (Isa. 40:31).

148. It seems too strict and burdensome to people to keep their minds silent of every thought. And indeed, this is difficult and painful: for it is painfully difficult not only for those uninitiated in the mysteries of spiritual warfare to confine and hold the incorporeal within the bodily dwelling, but also for those who have been tested in the inner, incorporeal battle. But whoever, through unceasing prayer, keeps the Lord Jesus in his heart will, according to the Prophet, "*not grow weary of following Him, nor desire the life of man*" (Jer.

17:16), for the sake of Jesus' beauty, pleasantness, and sweetness; and he will not be ashamed of his enemies—the unclean demons that walk around him—but *will “shout at them in the gates”* of the heart (Ps. 126:5) and drive them back with Jesus.

149. The soul, having soared after death into the air toward the gates of heaven, will not be ashamed of its enemies there, having Christ with it; but even then, as now, it will boldly cry out to them *“at the gates.”* Only until the very end of its life should it not cease, day and night, to cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and He will avenge it speedily, according to His unfailing divine promise, which He spoke in the parable of the unjust judge: *“I tell you, He will avenge her speedily”* (Luke 18:8)—both in this life and after she departs from her body.

150. As you sail across the sea of the mind, take courage in Jesus; for He Himself is within you—in your heart—mysteriously calling out to you: *“Fear not, O Jacob, O little one of Israel; I am your God; I will hold your right hand”* (Isa. 41: 13–14). *“If God is for us,”* what adversary is *“against us”* (Rom. 8:31)? God is for us, He who has blessed those who are pure in heart and has ordained that the Sweetest Jesus, the One and Only Pure One, should divinely dwell in pure hearts and abide within them. Let us not cease, then, following the divine Paul, to train our minds for godliness (1 Tim. 4:7).

151. He will enjoy, according to David, an abundance of peace (Ps. 36: 11), whoever does not show partiality toward human beings, judging unrighteousness in his heart—that is, whoever does not accept the images of deceitful spirits and, through these images, does not devise sin, but rather, judging strictly and pronouncing a strict verdict in the earth of his heart, gives sin its due. The great and wise Fathers, in some of their writings, refer to demons as “men” because of their rationality. So too in the Gospel, the Lord says, *“An enemy of man has sown this”* (Matt. 13: 28), that is, he has sown tares among the wheat (meaning the devil; for He later said, *“the one who sows them is the devil”*). Since we do not immediately resist these evildoers, we are overcome by such thoughts.

152. If, having begun to dwell in the attentiveness of the mind, we combine sobriety with humility and join prayer with resistance, then we will walk well along the path of the mind, as with a lamp of light, bearing the revered and holy name of Jesus Christ, —both sweeping away and cleansing us from sin, and adorning and tidying the house of our heart. But if we rely solely on our own sobriety or mindfulness, we will soon, having been attacked by our enemies, fall, having been cast down. And then these most cunning and malicious adversaries will begin to overcome us in every way, and we will become more and more entangled in evil desires, as in nets—or we will be subjected to utter slaughter by them, lacking within ourselves the victorious sword—the name of Jesus Christ. For only this sacred sword, when constantly wielded in a heart cleansed of every image, is able to turn them back, cut them down, burn them, and consume them, like fire consuming straw.

153. The work of unceasing vigilance, which is beneficial to the soul and fruitful, consists in immediately discerning the fanciful thoughts that arise in the mind. The work of rebuke is to expose and put to shame the thought that attempts to enter the air of our mind through the representation of some sensory object. That which immediately extinguishes and dispels every scheme of the adversaries—every word, every dream, every idol, and every pillar of wickedness—is the invocation of the Lord. And we ourselves see in our minds their sovereign defeat at the hands of Jesus, our great God, and His vengeance on behalf of us who are humble, poor, and good for nothing.

154. Many do not realize that our thoughts are nothing other than mere imaginary images of sensory and worldly things. But when we remain sober in prayer for a while longer, then prayer frees our mind from every material image of deceitful thoughts and enables it to discern the words of the adversaries (perhaps referring to the nature of thoughts in general—what they are—or to the plans and schemes of enemies as they instill thoughts), and to experience the benefit of prayer and sobriety. *“But with your eyes you look upon the recompense of the sinners”*—the mental ones—and you yourself *will “see”* and understand (Ps. 90:8), as the blessed Psalmist David says.

155. Let us, if possible, constantly remember death; for from this remembrance springs within us the casting aside of all cares and vanities, the preservation of the mind and unceasing prayer, detachment from the body and abhorrence of sin—and, to tell the truth, almost every virtue, living and active, flows from it. Therefore, let us, if possible, practice this as continuously as our breathing.

156. The heart, having completely detached itself from dreams, will begin to give birth to divine and mysterious thoughts that play within it, just as fish play and dolphins leap in a calm sea. A gentle breeze stirs

the sea, and the abyss of the heart is stirred by the Holy Spirit. “*And because you are sons,*” says the Apostle, “*God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father’*” (Gal. 4:6)!

157. Every monk will doubt and waver about undertaking spiritual practice before his mind has been sobered—whether because he has not yet come to know its beauty, or because, having come to know it, he is powerless to resolve himself to it due to a lack of zeal. But this hesitation will undoubtedly dissipate as soon as he begins the practice of guarding the mind, which is called mental wisdom or the active wisdom of the mind. For then he will find the Way, Who said, “*I am the Way, and the Resurrection, and the Life*” (John 14:6).

158. He will waver again, seeing the abyss of thoughts and the throng of Babylonian infants; but Christ dispels even this wavering, if we continually ground our minds in Him and cast aside the Babylonian infants, dashing them against this rock (Ps. 136: 9), —thus fulfilling, as it is said, His will against them (His indignation against them). For, as the Wise One says, “*Keep the commandment not to let a deceitful word go forth*” (Ecclesiastes 8:5). And the Lord says: “*Without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15: 5).

159. He is truly a true monk who practices sobriety, and he is a true ascetic who is a monk at heart (in whose heart there is nothing but God).

160. Human life stretches forward with the passing of years, months, weeks, days and nights, hours, and minutes. Along with them, we too ought to stretch forward (toward perfection) our virtuous deeds—that is, sobriety, prayer, and sweetness of heart—in unceasing silence, right up to the very end.

161. The hour of death will finally come for us as well—it will come, and there is no escaping it; and—oh, if only the prince of this world, coming then, would find our transgressions to be small and insignificant, so that he could not justly condemn us! —Otherwise, we will weep then, though it will already be too late. For, as the Lord says, “*the servant who knows his master’s will but does not do it will be beaten severely*” (Luke 12:47).

162. Woe to those who have corrupted their hearts! And what will they do when the Lord comes (Sirach 2:14)?—Let us, then, brothers, devote ourselves more zealously to the work of the heart.

163. Simple and dispassionate thoughts are followed by passionate ones, as we have learned from long experience and observation; and the former serve as a gateway for the latter, the dispassionate for the passionate.

164. Truly, a person must divide himself in two by his own will; he must tear himself apart with the wisest of thoughts; indeed, he must become an irreconcilable enemy to himself. Whatever attitude one has toward a person who has grievously insulted and wronged him, we must have the same—or even a worse one—toward ourselves, if we wish to fulfill the greatest and foremost commandment, that is, blessed humility—the dwelling of Christ, the incarnate life of God. Therefore, the Apostle says: “*Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Rom. 7:24)? “*For the flesh sets its mind on the things of the flesh, but the spirit on the things of the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:7). Showing, then, that subjecting the body to God’s will is one of the tasks incumbent upon us, he said: “*For if we judged ourselves, we would not be condemned. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord*” (1 Cor. 11:31–32).

165. The beginning of bearing fruit is the blossom; and the beginning of a sober mind is moderation in food and drink, the rejection and cutting off of all thoughts, and silence of the heart.

166. When, having come to know Christ Jesus, we begin to dwell in sobriety firmly established, then first there appears to us in the mind—as it were, a lamp held by the hand of the mind and guiding us along the paths of thought; then, as it were, the moon in full light, revolving in the firmament of the heart; and finally, as the sun, —Jesus, shining with righteousness like the sun, that is, revealing Himself and His all-illuminating lights of contemplation.

167. This is what He mysteriously reveals to the mind that, with unceasing zeal, keeps His commandment, which says: “*Circumcise your hearts*” (Deut. 10:16). – Yes, as has already been said, careful sobriety teaches a person these wondrous truths. The Divine is impartial. Why does the Lord say: “*Hear Me and understand; for whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him*” (Matt. 13: 12–13); and again: “*All things work together for good for those who love God*” (Rom. 8: 28). Do not these virtues (sobriety and prayer) all the more hasten them toward this?

168. A ship cannot move forward without water; nor can the preservation of the mind succeed in the least without sobriety, accompanied by humility and prayer to Jesus Christ.

169. The foundation of a house is stones; but for this virtue (the preservation of the mind), both the foundation and the roof are the holy and revered name of our Lord Jesus Christ. A foolish helmsman will quickly and easily suffer shipwreck during a storm if he dismisses the crew, throws the oars and sails into the sea, and goes to sleep himself; but even more quickly will a soul be drowned by demons if, at the onset of trials, it neglects to remain sober and to call upon the name of Jesus Christ.

170. We pass on what we know through Scripture, and we bear witness to those who are willing—as we have seen along the way—if you are willing to accept what is being told to you. For the Lord Himself said: *“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out like a branch and withers; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. But whoever abides in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit”* (John 15:5–6). Just as it is impossible for the sun to shine without light, so it is impossible for the heart to be cleansed of the defilement of harmful thoughts without prayer in the name of Jesus. If this is true, as I see (from experience), then let us call upon this Name as often as we breathe. For it is light, and those (impure thoughts) are darkness; and He (Jesus, whom we call upon) is God and Lord, while those are servants of demons.

171. It is fitting and proper to call the preservation of the mind “light-bearing,” “lightning-bearing,” “light-emitting,” and “fire-bearing.” For, truly, it is superior to even the greatest bodily virtues, no matter how many one may possess. For this very reason, this virtue ought to be called by the most honorable names, because of the radiant lights that are born of it. Those who love it are transformed—from being depraved, vile, ignorant, foolish, and unrighteous sinners—by the power of Jesus Christ into the righteous, virtuous, pure, holy, and wise; and not only that, but they also begin to contemplate the mysteries and to engage in theological reflection. Having become contemplatives, they dwell in that most pure, boundless Light, touch Him with ineffable touches, live and act with Him, for *they have “tasted that the Lord is good”*; so that the words of the divine David are clearly fulfilled in these first angels: *“But the righteous will confess Your name, and the upright will dwell in Your presence”* (Ps. 139:14). And indeed, they alone truly call upon God, confess to Him, and always love to converse with Him, loving Him.

172. Woe to the inner self from the outer; for the inner man suffers greatly from the external senses. But having suffered anything, he must use the scourge against these external senses. He who has done what is required according to the letter has already understood what is required according to the spirit.

173. If our inner man remains sober, then, according to the Fathers, he is strong enough to preserve the outer man as well. According to their same words, we and the wicked demons both commit sins together: they depict sins only in their thoughts or imaginative visions before the mind, as they please, while we sin both inwardly through our thoughts and outwardly through our deeds. Demons, lacking robust bodies, prepare torment for both themselves and us solely through thoughts, schemes, and deceptions. But if these most depraved beings were not deprived of a robust body, they would sin ceaselessly through their deeds as well, always harboring within themselves an evil will ready to commit wickedness.

174. But a heartfelt prayer to the Lord shatters them and reduces their temptations to dust. For Jesus, God and the Son of God, whom we call upon ceaselessly and without sloth, by no means allows them even to begin to implant sin in us—what is called an “attempt”—nor does He allow any image whatsoever to be shown to the mind in the mirror of thought, nor any words to be spoken to the heart. But if no image forces its way into the heart, then it will be empty even of thoughts, as we have said; for demons usually converse secretly with the soul through thoughts and teach it evil.

175. Thus, through unceasing prayer, the air of our mind is cleansed of the dark clouds and winds of evil spirits. And when the air of the heart is pure, nothing prevents the divine light of Jesus from shining within it, provided we do not become puffed up with vanity, conceit, and boastful self-aggrandizement, do not strive for the unattainable, and are not thereby deprived of Jesus’ help; for Christ hates all such things, being the very model of humility.

176. Let us, therefore, cling to prayer and humility—these two weapons, which, together with sobriety, serve as a flaming sword with which the spiritual warriors arm themselves against the demons. If we lead our lives in this way, then every day and every hour we may have a mysteriously joyful feast in our hearts.

177. There are eight principal sinful thoughts, which encompass the entire realm of such thoughts and from which they all originate. They all approach the gates of the heart, and, finding it unguarded by the mind, enter it one after another, each in its own time. When any of these eight thoughts rises to the heart and enters it, it brings with it a whole swarm of impure thoughts and, thus clouding the mind and heart, agitates the body and draws it toward committing shameful acts.

178. But whoever strikes the serpent's head (the appendix) with angry rebuke—gathering angry words as if striking the enemy's face with a fist—thereby puts an end to the battle. For, having struck off the head, he has avoided both wicked thoughts and the most wicked deeds. After this, his mind remains undisturbed: for God accepts his vigilance over his thoughts and, in return, grants him the knowledge of how to overcome his enemies and how to purify his heart from the thoughts that defile the inner man, of which the Lord Jesus says: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, adultery, sexual immorality... These are what defile a person"* (Matt. 15:19–20).

179. In this way, the soul can come to resemble the Lord in its goodness, beauty, and righteousness, just as it was created by God in the beginning to be good and righteous, as the great servant of God, Anthony, says: "When the mind in the soul is as it ought to be by nature, then the whole soul is virtue." He also said again: "For the soul to be righteous is the same as for it to have its mind in its natural state, as it was created." And a little further on, he says again: "Let us purify the mind; for I believe that, having been thoroughly purified and having returned to its natural state, it can become discerning and see beyond the demons, having within itself the Lord who grants revelation." This is what the glorious Anthony said, as the great Athanasius recounts in the Life of Anthony.

180. Every thought reproduces in the mind the image of some sensory object: for the Assyrian (the enemy), being himself a spiritual power, can deceive us only by making use of something familiar to us—something sensory.

181. Just as it is impossible for us humans to chase after birds through the air or to fly like them—because this is not natural to our nature—so it is impossible for us to rid ourselves of incorporeal demonic thoughts and freely direct the attentive eye of the mind toward God without sober, unceasing prayer. If you lack this, then you are on earth and will pursue earthly things.

182. If you truly wish to cover your thoughts with shame, you ought to remain silent and maintain a sober heart without effort; let the Jesus Prayer cling to your breath—and in a few days you will see this in practice.

183. Just as one should not write letters in the air, but must engrave them with a chisel on some solid surface so that they may be preserved for a long time: so too must we combine the Jesus Prayer with our laborious sobriety, so that the beautiful virtue of sobriety, together with Him, may always remain whole within us, and through Him be preserved in us forever as an inalienable part of ourselves.

184. Commit your affairs to the Lord, as has been said, and you will find grace, so that the words of the Prophet may not apply to us as well as to you: *"You are near, O Lord, to their lips, but far from their hearts"* (Jer. 12:2). No one else can truly pacify your heart from its passions except Jesus Christ Himself, who united within Himself what is far apart (that is, Divinity and humanity).

185. Both internal mental dialogues with one's own thoughts and external conversations and idle talk alike darken the soul. Therefore, those who strive to banish all that is harmful from their minds must, without pity, drive away both the lovers of idle talk—whether thoughts or people—for a most and God-given reason, namely: —so that the mind, being clouded, does not weaken in sobriety; for when we are clouded by forgetfulness (from such conversations), we lose our minds (becoming as if we had no mind at all).

186. Whoever preserves the purity of the heart with all diligence will have as his guide in this matter Christ, the Lawgiver of the heart, Who will mysteriously reveal His will to him. *"I will hear what the Lord God says about me"* (Ps. 84:9), says David, pointing to this. Depicting the mind's inner dialogue concerning the battle of thoughts and God's intercessory protection in it, he said: *"And a man will say: 'If there is any reward for the righteous'"* (Ps. 57:12). And then, expressing the decision reached as a result of this two-sided consideration, he says: *"For God is their judge"*—of the evil demons *"on earth"* in our hearts (ibid.). And in another place he says: *"A man will approach, and his heart will be deeply moved, and God will be exalted"*; and then *"their wounds"* will be counted as *"the arrows of infants"* (Ps. 63:7–8).

187. Let us always conduct ourselves as *those "instructed in wisdom by the heart"* (Ps. 89:12), breathing ceaselessly in Jesus Christ, the power of God the Father and the Wisdom of God. But if, by some chance, we should fall short and lose sight of this wise course of action, then the next morning we will once again gird up the loins of our mind and take up our task with renewed vigor, knowing that there is no excuse for us, *who "know how to do good,"* if we do not do it.

188. Just as when harmful food, recently consumed, causes painful distress in the body, and the one who has tasted it, as soon as he feels this harm, hastens to expel it, thus remaining unharmed—so too the mind,

when, having absorbed the evil thoughts it has taken in and feeling their soul-damaging bitterness, hurries to expel them through the Jesus Prayer, uttered from the depths of the heart, and cast them far from itself; through this, it avoids all harm from them, just as, by God's mercy, the teaching of others and one's own experience have enabled those of sound mind to understand this matter.

189. Combine sobriety with your breath and the name of Jesus, or the thought of death and humility; for both bring great benefit.

190. The Lord said: "*Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart*" (Matt. 11:29).

191. The Lord also said: "*Whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 18:4); "*But whoever exalts himself will be humbled*" (Luke 18:14). — "*From Me,*" He says, "*learn.*" And do you see what we are to learn? Humility. His commandment is eternal life; and this commandment is humility. Consequently, whoever is not humble has fallen away from life, and will certainly find himself in the very opposite of it.

192. If every virtue is brought about by the soul and the body, and if the soul and the body—through which, as I have said, every virtue is accomplished—are God's creation, are we not acting with extreme folly when we boast and take pride in adornments of the soul and body that are not our own? And is this not all the more so because, leaning on pride as on a reed, we set ourselves against God, whose greatness is boundless, thereby bringing upon our heads His most terrible displeasure through our extreme lawlessness and folly; for "*the Lord resists the proud*" (James 4:6). Instead of imitating the Lord in humility, we, through our vain and proud reasoning, enter into fellowship with the Lord's fierce enemy, the proud devil. That is why the Apostle says, "*What do you have that you did not receive?*" (1 Cor. 4:7). Did you create yourself? If you received from God the body and soul—from which, in which, and through which every virtue exists—then "*what do you boast about that you did not receive?*" (ibid.) For the Lord has granted you all these things.

193. The purification of the heart, through which both humility and every blessing that comes from above are present in us, is nothing other than ensuring that harmful thoughts are not allowed to enter the soul.

194. The guarding of the mind, carried out with God's help and for the sake of the One God, once established in the soul, imparts to the mind the wisdom to perform deeds in accordance with God. It also grants its participant no small ability to order both external deeds and words according to God, with impeccable judgment.

195. The distinctive high-priestly ornament in the Old Testament—the pure gold breastplate on the chest, inscribed with the words "Holy to the Lord" (Ex. 28:36) was a foreshadowing of purity of heart, which inspires us to pay attention to the breastplate of our heart, to see if it has been blackened by sin, so that (if this proves to be the case) we may hasten to cleanse it with tears, repentance, and prayer. Our mind is something light (fleeting), and it is difficult to keep it from sinful thoughts; one might say, however, that it follows both evil and good mental musings with equal ease.

196. Truly blessed is the one whose thoughts are so closely attached to the Jesus Prayer, crying out to Him unceasingly in the heart, just as air clings to our bodies, or a flame to a candle. The sun, as it passes over the earth, brings about the day; and the holy and worship-worthy name of the Lord Jesus, shining ceaselessly in the mind, gives rise to a countless multitude of sun-like thoughts.

197. When the clouds disperse, the air appears clear; and when the passionate fantasies are dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, then light-like and star-like thoughts are usually born in the heart, because Jesus has illuminated the air of the heart. For the Wise One says: "*Those who hope in the Lord will understand the truth, and the faithful will remain in His love*" (Wis. 3:9).

198. One of the Saints said: "If you are to bear a grudge, bear it against the demons; and if you are to be hostile, be hostile toward the flesh at all times. The flesh is a treacherous friend, and when it is satisfied, it wages the fiercest battle." And again: "Be hostile toward the flesh and wage war against the belly."

199. In the preceding chapters, comprising the first and second hundreds, we have described the labors of the sacred silence of the mind, presenting not only the fruit of our own research but also what the divine words of the godly Fathers teach us regarding the purity of the mind. Now, having said a little more to demonstrate the benefit of guarding the mind, we will conclude our discourse.

200. Come, then, follow me toward the attainment of the blessed preservation of the mind, whoever you may be, who love in spirit "*to see good days*" (Ps. 33: 12)—and I will teach you, in the Lord, the visible workings and dwelling of the incorporeal powers. The angels are never sated as they sing the praises of the Creator; nor will the mind, competing with them in purity, ever be satisfied. And just as the incorporeal (angels

in heaven) do not concern themselves with food, so too do the corporeal incorporeal ones (people—those who live soberly on earth) not concern themselves with it when they ascend to the heaven of the mind's silence.

201. Just as the heavenly powers do not concern themselves with wealth and possessions, so too those who have purified the eye of the soul and acquired the habit of virtue (sobriety) do not concern themselves with the malice of evil spirits. And just as those are distinguished by the wealth of success in perfection in God, so these are distinguished by their longing and love for God, their striving and ascent toward the Divine. And they, with an insatiable longing to taste the Divine love that leads to rapture, stretching upward in their ascent (climbing the steps of spiritual perfection), will not stop until they attain likeness to the Seraphim, — and they will not rest from the sobriety of the mind and the longing for elevation until they become angels in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

202. There is no poison more deadly than that of the asp and the basilisk; and there is no evil greater than the evil of self-love. The offspring of self-love—these flying serpents—are these: self-praise in the heart, self-indulgence, gluttony, fornication, vanity, envy, and the pinnacle of all evils, pride, which casts down not only people but also angels from heaven and covers them with darkness instead of light.

203. I have written this to you, Theodulus, my namesake of silence (i.e., Hesychius), though in reality I am not a man of silence. Perhaps I have not written everything pertaining to our subject, but in every way that which God has given—God, praised and glorified in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by all rational beings: angels and humans, and by every creature created by the ineffable Trinity, the One God, whose glorious kingdom may we also be deemed worthy to receive, through the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos and our Venerable Fathers. To Him, the incomprehensible God, be eternal glory. Amen.

Venerable Nilus of Sinai

A Brief Account of Him

The Venerable Nilus came from a wealthy and noble family and was likely already a listener and disciple of St. Chrysostom when the latter was preaching in Antioch. His noble birth and personal virtues elevated him to the rank of prefect of the capital. But the longings of his spirit were at odds with the duties and routines of life in the capital. Therefore, in agreement with his wife—with whom he already had two children—he left the world to pursue the path of salvation more successfully in solitude, following in his mother-in-law's footsteps. Taking his son Theodulus with him, he settled on Mount Sinai; while his wife and daughter found refuge in one of the Egyptian women's monasteries. In the Sinai Desert, St. Nilus lived an extremely austere life: with his own hands, he and his son dug a cave for themselves, and while living there, they subsisted not even on bread, but on wild, bitter plants. Yet they spent all their time in prayer, the study of Scripture, contemplation of God, and labor. Although he had renounced the world, the Venerable Nilus did not cease to interact with people. From all over—, and people of every sort—people turned to him with their spiritual needs, and no one was left without the necessary guidance and edification. Even the king wrote to him, asking for prayers, and he wrote to the king, rebuking him for his injustice toward St. Chrysostom. The reverend's other writings were primarily of a moral and ascetic nature. From all that he wrote, it is evident how vast and profound his knowledge was, and how tireless his labor was in this endeavor. A special trial came upon him to test his love for God. Savage barbarians from Arabia attacked Mount Sinai and the surrounding regions; they plundered everything, killed many, and took others captive. Among the latter was Theodulus, the son of St. Nilus. This misfortune weighed heavily on the reverend father's heart—and he found no peace, especially when, on the second or third day after the disaster, news reached him that the savages had decided to sacrifice his son to the morning star—Venus—though it was unclear whether this decision had actually been carried out. But God did not allow his father's heart to be tormented for long. He soon learned that the sacrifice had not taken place and that the captives had been sold into Christian lands. He was later found in the city of Elusa, whose bishop had bought him from the barbarians along with others and was already preparing him for service in the Church—a calling for which his father, who had come to seek him out, had also been urged. Their love for the desert life did not allow them to agree to this; and the bishop, having ordained them as priests, blessed them to depart for their beloved Sinai, where they remained until the end of their lives. St. Nilus departed this life in 390; he lived in the Sinai Desert for 60 years and died around 450. His feast days are November 12 and January 13. During the reign of Justin the Younger, his holy relics were

transferred to Constantinople and placed in the Church of the Holy Apostles. From the writings of St. Nilus, the “Discourse on Prayer” and the “Ascetic Discourse” were taken into the Greek **Dobrotolyubie** and from there into the Slavonic version. We also include *the “Discourse on Prayer”* in our **Dobrotolyubie**; but instead of the ascetic treatise, we prefer to include the treatise *“On the Eight Spirits of Deception,”* as well as *“two collections of brief sayings”* and instructions, one of which is titled *“Chapters or Exhortations,”* and the other, *“Thoughts That Turn a Person Away from the Transient and Attach Them to the Imperishable.”* – But since the Reverend Father has offered a great deal of most beneficial advice and instruction on prayer and the struggle against the passions in his other writings, just as edifying thoughts are found in abundance throughout those works—both regarding moral structure in general and, in particular, a life detached from all things: therefore, having considered that it would be unjust to deprive our Goodness-Loving of these treasures, we have decided to draw them from the aforementioned writings of the Reverend Father, placing what pertains to prayer under the heading of prayer, what pertains to the struggle against the passions under each of the eight passions, and what pertains to general edification — under the “Collection of Sayings.” In this, we follow the example of the ancients. For in the **Patrologia Graeca** (Migne, vol. 79), where all the writings of St. Nilus are collected, after *the “Thoughts that Turn One Away from the Transient and Attach One to the Imperishable”*—pp. 1249–50—there is a note stating that in the manuscript from which these thoughts were printed, there follow another fourteen thoughts, drawn partly from the treatise on *“non-acquisitiveness”* and partly from the treatise on *the “superiority”* of living in solitude over city life. These borrowings themselves have not been printed; but the example loses nothing by this. We will indicate the citations of these borrowings at the end of the articles, specifying the volume and page number—according to the edition of the Reverend’s works in Russian translation. The articles without citations are found on the same page as indicated above.

Ascetic Instructions by the Venerable Nilus of Sinai

1. A Word on Prayer

Preface

You have timely raised me up, as I lay in the burning fever of impure passions, through the touch of your God-loving writing, and you have comforted my mind, afflicted by the most shameful ailments, with consolation, blissfully imitating the great Guide and Teacher. And this is no surprise. It has always been your lot to seek what is glorious and remarkable, just as it was for the blessed Jacob. For after working hard for Rachel and receiving Leah, you seek your beloved, just as he fulfilled seven years of labor for her (Gen. 29:20–28). And I do not deny that, having labored all night, I caught nothing; but, having cast the nets at your word, I drew up a multitude of fish—not, I think, large ones, but one hundred and fifty-three (John 21: 11). And I am sending them to you in a basket of love; and in doing so, I am fulfilling your command by compiling an equal number of chapters (on prayer). I marvel at you and greatly delight in your wonderful choice, that you desired (nothing else) but chapters on prayer; and moreover, you did not merely desire that they be written down on paper, but that they be instilled in the mind through love and kindness. Since *“everything is a pair, one against another,”* as the wise Sirach says (42:25), do not accept them merely by the letter, but understand them in spirit as well. Do not complain about the small number of chapters, as one who knows *“how to be content and how to do without”* (Phil. 4:12). Indeed, do not complain, remembering that the Lord did not reject even the widow’s two mites, but accepted them more favorably than the rich offerings of many others. But above all, knowing how to maintain goodwill and love toward your sincere brothers, pray for the infirm, that he may be healed and, taking up his bed, begin to walk by the grace of Christ. Amen.

153 Chapters on Prayer

1. If anyone wishes to prepare fragrant incense, he must, according to the law, mix equal parts of *“pure frankincense, cassia, onycha, and stacte”* (Ex. 30: 34). These are the four⁷⁰ virtues. When they are all present

⁷⁰ Temperance, fortitude, wisdom, justice.

in the soul in perfect perfection and equal strength, then the mind will not be betrayed (by treachery, of course, by some inner traitor).

2. The soul, having been purified by the fullness of virtues,⁷¹ brings the mind into a state of unshakability, making it capable of accepting the disposition required (in prayer).

3. Prayer is a conversation of the mind with God. What state, then, does the mind need in order to be able—without looking back (or this way and that)—to ascend to its Lord and converse with Him without any intermediary⁷² ?

4. If Moses, who intended to approach the burning bush on earth, was forbidden to do so until he had removed his sandals from his feet (Exod. 3. 5)—how then can you fail to cast aside every passionate thought when you desire to see the One who is above all feeling and thought, and to converse with Him?

5. First and foremost, pray for tears, so that through weeping you may soften the very cruelty (Greek: “wildness”) within your soul and, having confessed to *the Lord your “iniquity”* (Ps. 31:5), receive from Him the forgiveness of your sins.

6. Use tears as a means to obtain every petition; for the Lord rejoices greatly over you when you pray with tears.

7. When you shed streams of tears during your prayer, do not by any means become proud within yourself, as if you were superior to many. It is because your prayer has received help from above, so that, having earnestly confessed your sins, you may appease the Lord with your tears.

8. Do not, then, turn the means against passions into a passion itself, lest you further provoke the One who has granted you this grace (i.e., tears). Many, while shedding tears over their sins, have forgotten the purpose of their tears and, becoming carried away, have strayed (from the right path, or have lost their minds).

9. Stand firm in patience and pray fervently, casting aside the distractions of worldly cares and all manner of thoughts; for they disturb and trouble you, seeking to disrupt your devotion in prayer.

10. When demons see that someone has the zeal and fervor to pray as they should, they (during prayer) plant thoughts in their mind about something that seems necessary (and then withdraw), but shortly afterward they stir up the memory of it again, prompting the mind to consider it (if it is a question, to resolve it; if it is a matter, to acquire it);—and he, not finding what he seeks, becomes annoyed and grieves. Then, when he stands to pray (this zealous devotee of prayer), they remind him of what he was thinking about and what he was seeking, so that his mind, being stirred again toward understanding (what was not resolved before), renders his prayer fruitless.

11. Strive to make your mind deaf and mute during prayer; and then you will be able to pray as you ought.

12. When temptation meets you, or someone’s rebuke irritates you—so that you are moved to anger against the one who contradicted you, or even utter some unseemly word; then remember prayer and the judgment that takes place during it (over you in your conscience before God)—and immediately the unruly agitation within you will be subdued.

13. Whatever you do in retaliation against a brother who has wronged you will become a stumbling block to you (will trouble you) during prayer.

14. Prayer is a branch (of the tree) of meekness and lack of anger.

15. Prayer is an expression (manifestation) of joy and gratitude.

16. Prayer is a remedy for sorrow and despondency.

17. “*Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor*” (Matt. 19:21), and, taking up your cross, deny yourself (– 16:24), so that you may pray without distraction.

18. If you wish to pray with praise, deny yourself during prayer and, enduring extreme hardships, be patient for the sake of prayer.

19. Whatever sorrow you may have to endure, be patient; then you will reap the fruit of this during prayer.

20. If you wish to pray as you ought, do not let your soul be sad (or do not harbor bitterness in your heart); otherwise, your efforts (or your prayerful labor) will be in vain.

⁷¹ In the *Dobrotolyubie*, both the Greek and Slavonic versions read: “by fulfilling the commandments.”

⁷² In the Slavonic version: “being in the midst of nothing”—this may be better.

21. “*Leave your gift there,*” says the Lord, “*before the altar, and go first to be reconciled with your brother*” (Matt. 5:24)—and then, when you return, you will pray without distraction; for resentment casts darkness upon the mind of the one who prays and shrouds his prayers in darkness.

22. Those who harbor sorrows (griefs) and resentment within themselves, and who pray while in this state, are like those who draw water and pour it into a leaky tub.

23. If you are patient, you will always pray with joy.

24. When you pray as you should, certain matters may come to mind for which it might seem just to you to be angry with your neighbor. (Be on your guard.) – There is no anger toward a neighbor that is truly righteous. And if you look for it, you will find that the matter can be resolved well even without anger. Therefore, do everything in your power not to give in to anger.

25. Be careful, when seeking to heal another, not to remain unhealed yourself, and not to allow your prayer to be interrupted.

26. By showing mercy to others and not being angry with them, you will find mercy for yourself, prove yourself wise in your self-assessment, and be counted among those who truly pray.

27. By arming yourself against anger, you will never suffer the onset of lust; for it feeds anger, and anger disturbs the eye of the mind and damages the disposition for prayer.

28. When praying, do not limit yourself to mere outward movements and postures, but lift your mind to the spirit of prayer with great reverence.

29. Sometimes, as soon as you begin to pray, you will immediately pray well; and sometimes, even after much effort, you will not attain this desired goal; (and this is permitted to you so that) you may seek (prayer) even more earnestly and, having received it, may have a prayer that is completely sound, safe from theft.

30. When an angel draws near to us, all those who trouble us (demons) immediately depart: the mind is then filled with great joy and prays soundly. And sometimes, during the onslaught of the usual battle, the mind struggles and is prevented from rising (to godly thought and spiritual well-being). This is because it was previously tainted by various passions (it was carried away by them and tasted them). However, if it seeks more earnestly, it will find, and if it does not grow weary of striving, it will be opened to it.

31. Do not pray, “Let it be according to your desires,” for they do not always agree with God’s will. But rather, pray as you have been taught, saying, “*Let Your will be done in me*” (Matt. 6:10). And in every matter, ask Him in this way: for He always desires what is good and beneficial for your soul, whereas you do not always seek this.

32. Many times, while praying, I asked for what seemed good to me, and I insisted on my request, foolishly pressuring God’s will instead of entrusting to Him the better arrangement of what He knows to be beneficial for me. But after receiving what I had asked for, I would later find myself in great sorrow, precisely because I had not asked that it be better according to God’s will; for the matter turned out not to be for me as I had thought.

33. What is good, apart from God? Let us therefore entrust to Him everything that concerns us, and we will be well off; for the Giver of good gifts is certainly good Himself.

34. Do not grieve if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask for. He wishes to bestow a greater blessing upon you by causing you to stand before Him in prayer with patience for a longer time. For what could be greater than to extend one’s conversation with God and to be embraced by communion with Him?

35. Undistracted prayer is the highest act of the mind.

36. Prayer is the ascent of the mind to God.

37. If you desire true prayer, renounce everything, so that you may inherit all things.

38. Pray, first, to be cleansed of your passions; second, to be freed from ignorance and forgetfulness; and third, to be delivered from every temptation and apostasy.

39. Seek in your prayer only righteousness and the kingdom—that is, virtue and knowledge—and all else “*will be added to you*” (Matt. 6:33).

40. It is righteous to pray not only for your own purification, but also for the purification of every person, in imitation of the angelic order.

41. Consider whether you truly stand before God in your prayer, or whether you are overcome by the desire for human praise and strive to gain it, disguising this (unwholesome desire with a seemingly noble one) by prolonging your prayer.

42. Whether you pray with the brethren or alone, strive not merely to fulfill a custom, but to pray with feeling.

43. It is characteristic of prayer (this kind—prayer with feeling) to be deeply absorbed in reverence, tenderness, and spiritual anguish, while confessing one's sins with silent sighs.

44. If your mind wanders during prayer, then you are not praying like a monk, but are still a layperson adorning the outer tabernacle.

45. When you pray, guard your memory with all your strength so that it does not impose its own thoughts upon you; but in every way lift yourself up to a mindful presence before God (with the awareness of before whom and for what purpose you stand). For during prayer, the mind is usually greatly distracted by the memory (it brings to mind things, people, and events, and through them diverts the mind's attention from prayer).

46. During prayer, your memory brings to mind either past events, new worries, or a person who has offended you.

47. The demon is very jealous of a person who prays and uses all manner of tricks to disrupt that person's intention; therefore, he ceaselessly stirs up, through memory, thoughts about various things, and through the flesh sets all the passions in motion, so as to hinder in any way the beautiful flow of prayer (i.e., the work of prayer) and the ascent to God (the elevation of attention).

48. When the all-cunning demon, having employed many tricks, fails to hinder the prayer of the diligent (prayerful person), he then slightly lessens (his attacks), but later, when the person finishes his prayer, he takes revenge on him. For either by inflaming him with anger, he destroys that beautiful state of mind acquired through prayer, or by arousing some wordless delight (the urge to savor sensual pleasure), he mocks the mind.

49. Having prayed as you ought, expect what you ought not to—and stand firm, guarding your fruit. This is what you were set to do from the very beginning—that is, to *"tend and keep"* (Gen. 2:15). Why, having done your part (having prayed as you ought), should you leave unguarded what you have acquired through labor? Otherwise, you will derive no benefit from prayer.

50. All the battle waged between us and the unclean spirits is waged for no other reason than spiritual prayer, for it is utterly opposed to and intolerable for them, while for us it is salvific and beneficial.

51. Why do the demons seek to stir up in us, through their influence, gluttony, fornication, greed, anger, resentment, and other passions? So that the mind, dulled by them, may be unable to pray as it ought; for the passions of our irrational nature, once they begin to act (once set in motion), do not allow the mind to act rationally.

52. We practice virtues because they are required by nature; we submit to nature for the sake of the Word who brought it into being—the Lord). And this Word usually becomes manifest to us (is clearly imprinted in our consciousness) in the state of prayer.

53. The state of prayer is a dispassionate disposition that, through extreme love, lifts the wise and spiritual mind to great heights.

54. One who wishes to pray truly must not only master anger and lust, but also be free from every passionate thought.

55. Whoever loves God always converses with Him as with a Father, turning away from every passionate thought.

56. Not everyone who has attained dispassion is already praying truly; for such a person may still be occupied with simple thoughts (about things, without any passionate stirrings) and be distracted by their stories (perhaps by their images and various combinations thereof)—and thus remain far from God. (There are no passionate stirrings, but the mind is daydreaming.)

57. But even when the mind does not linger in simple thoughts about things, this does not yet mean that it has already reached the state of prayer: for it may be occupied with (philosophical) contemplation of these things and delve into their causal relationships. Although all these are abstractions, since they are speculations about things, they imprint their images on the mind—and lead it far away from God. (The passions are not in motion, but the mind philosophizes rather than prays: the state of scholars).

58. Even if the mind rises above speculations about material nature, it does not follow that it has already beheld the very presence of God: for it may be occupied with the knowledge of intelligible beings (of the angelic world) and be filled with them (be full of diverse thoughts and ideas about them).

59. If you wish to pray properly, you need God, who grants prayer to the one who prays. Call upon Him in prayer, saying, “*Hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come*” (Matt. 6:9–10), that is, the Holy Spirit and Your Only-Begotten Son. For the Lord Himself taught this, saying that *it is fitting to worship* the Father “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

60. One who prays in spirit and truth does not draw thoughts for the glorification of the Creator from created things, but draws from Him Himself the insights needed to sing His praises.

61. If you are a theologian, you will pray truly; and if you pray truly, you are a theologian.

62. When your mind, burning with desire for God, gradually detaches itself, as it were, from the flesh and turns away from all thoughts arising from sensory impressions or from memory, while at the same time being filled with reverence and joy, then conclude that it has drawn near to the limits of prayer.

63. The Holy Spirit, condescending to our weakness, comes to us even when we are not yet pure; and if He finds our mind sincerely praying to Him, He descends upon it and dispels the whole crowd of thoughts and images surrounding it (causing them to vanish), thereby disposing it to the desire for spiritual prayer.

64. Other spirits—both good and evil—introduce thoughts, ideas, and imaginings into the mind by influencing the body; but the Lord acts in the opposite way: by inspiring the mind itself, He instills in it the knowledge of whatever pleases Him—and through the mind, He tames the unrestrained nature of the body.

65. He who, while loving true prayer, becomes angry or holds a grudge is worthy of every reproach; for he is like one who wishes to see clearly, yet at the same time covers his eyes with dust.

66. If you wish to pray as you ought, do nothing that opposes (is hostile to) prayer, so that God, drawing near, may descend upon you.

67. When you pray, do not ascribe any form to the Divine, and do not allow your mind to be transformed into any image (or to imagine itself in any form, or for any image to be imprinted in your mind); but approach the immaterial with the immaterial—and you will be united with it.

68. Beware of the enemy’s snares: for it happens that when you pray with purity and serenity, some strange and alien image will suddenly appear to you. The enemies do this in order to lead you into conceit, by instilling the thought that the Divine has appeared to you—and further, so that you might think that, like this sudden apparition, the Divine also has quantity (occupies space, has extension, and consists of parts), whereas the Divine has neither quantity nor form.

69. When the envious demon does not have time to set the memory in motion, it then acts upon the blood and bodily fluids to use them to produce in the mind an image of something foreign and fill it with visions; and the mind, having grown accustomed to dwelling on such thoughts, is easily carried away by them; thinking that it is ascending to an immaterial and invisible realm of knowledge, it is deceived, taking smoke for light.

70. Stand guard over yourself, protecting your mind from wandering thoughts during prayer and striving to remain in a peaceful state—so that “*He who is compassionate toward the ignorant*” (Heb. 5:2) may come to you and grant you the glorious gift of prayer.

71. It is impossible for you to pray with purity while entangled in worldly affairs and agitated by ceaseless cares; for prayer is the setting aside of (all extraneous) thoughts.

72. One who is bound cannot flee—nor can a mind enslaved by any passion perceive the place of spiritual prayer; moreover, it is swayed and tossed about by passionate thoughts and has no firm standing.

73. When the mind finally begins to pray purely and dispassionately, then the demons attack it, no longer from the left but from the right: they present a vision as if of God’s glory, or some figurative image pleasing to the senses, so that it seems to the person as though he has already fully attained the goal of prayer. As one man well-versed in the matter (Evagrius) said, this arises from the passion of vanity, from a demonic touch upon a certain part of the brain, and from a disturbance (or inflammation) in the nerves there.

74. I believe that the demon, by touching the aforementioned part of the brain as he pleases, transforms the light surrounding the mind; from this, vanity stirs up a thought that compels the mind to frivolously attribute to itself divine and essential knowledge. Since he is not troubled by impure carnal passions, but stands pure in prayer, it does not occur to him that there might be any hostile activity at work here,—and he becomes convinced that this is indeed a divine manifestation, whereas it actually originated from a demon who,

employing the utmost cunning, alters the light associated with the mind through the brain—as we have said—and shapes the mind itself (giving it a form—or causing it to imagine one thing or another).

75. The angel of God, once he appears, in a word puts an end to the enemy's activity within us and prompts the light of the mind to act without deception.

76. What is said in Revelation about the Angel—that he brings incense “*to offer with the prayers of the saints*” (Rev. 8:3)—I believe points to this grace, which acts through the Angel and imparts the ability to pray truly; so that the mind may finally dwell in prayer without confusion of thought, without despondency, and without timidity.

77. The vials of incense are, as it is said there, “*the prayers of the saints*,” which were offered by “*the twenty-four elders*” (Rev. 5:8). By the vial one must understand communion with God, or perfect, spiritual love for Him, in which prayer is offered in spirit and in truth.

78. When you think that during your prayer you have no need to weep over your sins, then see how far you are from God—since you are bound to abide in Him always—and you will shed the warmest tears.

79. Truly, this is so: having recognized your true state (your poverty and insignificance), you will weep with sweetness, lamenting yourself like Isaiah—as *one who is “unclean and has unclean lips”* and lives among such a people, that is, adversaries (of God—unclean forces or thoughts), you dare to stand before the Lord of Hosts (Isa. 6:5).

80. If you pray sincerely, you will receive full confirmation in many things, and the angels will gather around you, just as they did with Daniel, and enlighten you with the knowledge of the reasons why things happen.

81. Know that the angels inspire us to pray and stand with us in prayer, rejoicing and praying together for us. Thus, if we are negligent and entertain evil thoughts, we greatly anger them; for while they labor so hard on our behalf, we do not wish to implore God for ourselves, but by neglecting our service to God and abandoning their God and Lord, we converse with unclean demons (in our thoughts).

82. Pray peacefully and serenely; sing sensibly and cheerfully—and you will be like an eagle's chick soaring to the heights.

83. Singing psalms lulls the passions to sleep and tames the urges of bodily intemperance; and prayer attunes the mind to the intelligent activity proper to it.

84. Prayer is an activity befitting the dignity of the mind, or rather, its true use.

85. Singing psalms is an expression of manifold wisdom; and prayer is the prelude to spiritual knowledge.

86. Contemplation is a beautiful activity; it aids prayer by stirring the mind's intellectual power toward the contemplation of divine knowledge.

87. If you have not yet received the gift of prayer or psalm-singing, ask persistently, and you will receive it.

88. “*And the Lord told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart*” (Luke 18:1). Therefore, do not grieve or lose heart because you have not yet received it; for you will receive it in due time. The Lord added this to the parable: “*If I do not fear God and am not ashamed before men, yet because this widow keeps troubling me, I will avenge her*” (–5). So too, “*God will soon bring vengeance to those who cry out to Him day and night*” (–7). Be content, then, with diligent patience as you persevere in prayer.

89. Do not wish that what concerns you should be as you think is best, but as it pleases God; and you will be serene and grateful in your prayer.

90. Even if it seems that you are already with God, beware of the demon of lust; for he is very seductive and cunning, and strives in every way to overcome the resolve of your sober mind and to distract it from God, even when it stands before God with reverence and fear.

91. If you delight in prayer, prepare yourself for demonic temptations and patiently endure their scourges, for like wild beasts they will attack you and tear your whole body to pieces.

92. Be prepared, like an experienced fighter—do not waver, even if you suddenly see a ghost; do not be dismayed, even if a sword is drawn against you or a torch is held to your face; do not lose heart (do not be afraid), even if some hideous and treacherous apparition appears to you; but stand firm, professing the true faith, and look boldly upon your enemies.

93. Whoever endures sorrow will also be granted joy; and whoever endures hardship will not be deprived of a share in what is pleasant.

94. Be careful that the crafty demons do not deceive you with any vision. (If something like this happens,) remain composed, turn to prayer, and ask God that, if it is from Him (for your edification), He Himself may enlighten you; and if not, that He may quickly drive the deceiver away from you. And take courage; for these dogs will not stand their ground when you turn to God with fervent supplication, but, being struck invisibly and imperceptibly by God's power, they will flee far from you.

95. You must also be aware of the following trickery of the demons. Sometimes they divide themselves into groups. Some come to tempt you. And when you seek help, others enter in the form of angels and drive away the first ones, so that you may be deceived into thinking they are real angels and fall into the conceit that you are worthy of such a thing.

96. Try to be as humble and courageous as possible—and the demons' hostile attack will not touch your soul, nor will their scourge come near your body. "*The Lord will command His angel concerning you*" (Ps. 90:10–11) "*to guard you*"; and they will invisibly ward off from you every hostile act.

97. Although one who strives to maintain pure prayer will hear noise, clamour, cries, and curses from the demons, he will not be led astray in thought nor surrender to them, saying to God: "*I will not fear evil, for You are with me*" (Ps. 22:4), and similar words.

98. During such temptations, offer up constantly a brief but fervent prayer.

99. If the demons threaten you, saying they will suddenly appear in the air to astonish you and rob you of your mind, do not fear them and pay no heed whatsoever to such threats. They are merely trying to intimidate you to see whether you regard them as anything at all or have already completely disregarded them.

100. If you have presented yourself in prayer before God the Almighty, the Creator and Provider, why do you stand before Him so foolishly, abandoning your fear of Him—which is unshakable—and instead fearing flies and mosquitoes? Or do you not hear what the Prophet says: "*You shall fear the Lord your God*" (Deut. 10:20)—and also: "*All fear Him and tremble at the sight of His power*"—and so on (2 Chron. 36, the prayer of Manasseh).

101. Just as bread serves as food for the body and virtue for the soul, so spiritual prayer is food for the mind.

102. Pray in the sacred place of prayer not like a Pharisee but like the tax collector, so that you too may be justified by the Lord.

103. Strive not to pray against anyone in your prayer, lest you destroy what you are building by making your prayer abominable (before God).

104. Let the debtor of the "*talent of darkness*" teach you that if you do not forgive your debtor, you yourself will not be forgiven; for it is said, "*He will hand him over to the torturer*" (Matt. 18:34).

105. Set aside your physical needs during your time of prayer (before God), so that the bite of a flea, a mosquito, or a fly does not deprive you of the greatest gain that prayer brings.

106. It has been reported to us that when a certain saint stood to pray, the evil one opposed him so fiercely that as soon as he raised his hands, the evil one, transforming himself into a lion, raised his front paws and, sinking his claws into the ascetic's sides, did not retreat until the saint lowered his hands. But he never lowered them until he had finished his usual prayers.

107. Such was also, as we know, John the Little—or rather, the greatest monk—who remained in constant spiritual communion with God even as a demon in the form of a dragon coiled around him, gnawed at his flesh, and spat it in his face.

108. You have surely read the lives of the monks of Tavenisi, where it is said that when Abba Theodore was speaking to the brothers, two vipers crawled up to his feet, but he, without the slightest disturbance, arched his feet as if forming a vault and, letting the vipers pass beneath them, continued his speech to the end; and only then did he show them to the brothers, recounting the incident.

109. We have also read about another spiritual brother who, while he was praying, had an echidna crawl up and touch his foot; but he did not lower his hands until he had finished his usual prayer. And this man, who loved God more than himself, suffered no harm.

110. Keep your eyes focused during prayer, free from distractions, and, having detached yourself from the flesh and the soul, live by the mind.

111. To another certain saint, a steadfast man of prayer who lived in silence in the desert, demons appeared and, for two weeks, played with him as if he were a ball, tossing him up and catching him on a mat; yet they could not in the least divert his mind from his fervent prayer.

112. To yet another God-loving monk, as he was offering mental prayer while walking through the desert, two angels appeared and walked alongside him, with him in their midst. But he did not turn his attention to them even for a moment, lest he suffer loss in what was best, for he remembered the words of the Apostle, who says: “*Neither angels nor principalities nor powers can separate us from the love of Christ*” (Rom. 8:38–39).

113. Through prayer, a monk becomes like an angel, longing “*to see the face of the Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 18:10).

114. By no means desire or seek to see any face or image during prayer.

115. Do not desire to see Angels, or Powers, or Christ with your physical senses, lest you lose your mind by mistaking the wolf for the shepherd and worshiping the enemies—the demons.

116. The beginning of the mind’s delusion is vanity; when the mind is driven by it, it attempts to describe the Divinity in some form or image.

117. I will say what I have already told the beginners: blessed is the mind that maintains perfect silence during prayer.

118. Blessed is the mind that, praying without distraction, receives an ever-increasing longing for God.

119. Blessed is the mind that, during prayer, is detached from material things and free from greed.

120. Blessed is the mind that, during prayer, maintains complete indifference to all things.

121. Blessed is the monk who honors every person as if he were a god after God.

122. Blessed is the monk who regards the salvation and prosperity of all as his own.

123. Blessed is the monk who regards himself as the refuse of all.

124. A monk is one who, while separating himself from everyone, remains in unity with all.

125. A monk is one who regards himself as being with everyone and sees himself in each person.

126. He who always offers his every first thought to God as a fruit of prayer.

127. Avoid all lies and all oaths, as a monk who earnestly desires to pray; otherwise, you take on a guise that is not your own in vain.

128. If you wish to pray in the Spirit, borrow nothing from the flesh—and you will not have a cloud of darkness spreading before you during prayer.

129. Entrust your physical needs to God—and it will become clear that you are entrusting your spiritual needs to Him as well.

130. If you are deemed worthy to receive the promises, you will reign. Should you not, then, in view of this, bear your present poverty with joy?

131. Do not turn away from poverty and the sorrows of life—these are the instruments (wings) of light prayer.

132. Let your bodily virtues be a pledge of your spiritual virtues, your spiritual virtues a pledge of your innermost virtues, and these a pledge of knowledge of the immaterial and the essential.

133. If, while praying against a certain thought, you notice that it subsides quickly and easily, examine the cause of this so that you do not fall into a trap and, having been deceived, become a traitor to yourself.

134. It sometimes happens that demons, having planted certain thoughts in you, themselves prompt you to pray against them and resist them—and then immediately flee—so that you may fall into delusion, imagining that you have already begun to overcome your thoughts and strike fear into the demons.

135. If you pray against any passion or any demon that is tormenting you, remember the words of the Psalmist: “*I will pursue my enemies and overtake them; I will not turn back until they are destroyed. I will strike them down so that they cannot stand; they will fall at my feet,*” and so on (Ps. 17, 38–39). But say this at the right time, arming yourself against your adversaries with humility.

136. Do not think to acquire virtue without first fighting for it to the point of shedding blood. According to the Divine Apostle, we must strive against sin until death, so that we may remain blameless (Heb. 12: 4).

137. It sometimes happens that, having done a good deed for one person, you suffer harm from another (through the enemy’s schemes), so that, when faced with slander, you say or do something inappropriate, and in this way squander the good you have gathered. Such is the aim of the crafty demons. Therefore, you must watch over yourself wisely.

138. When you are subjected to the demons' attacks against you, take every possible care not to fall into their bondage.

139. At night, the wicked demons themselves seek to disturb the spiritual teacher; and during the day—through people, surrounding him with unpleasant incidents, slander, and misfortunes caused by them.

140. Do not refuse to endure these rough clothes. Let them beat and trample you, stretch and smooth you; but through this, your garment becomes brighter.

141. Until you have completely renounced your passions and your mind still shows resistance to virtue and truth, you will not find fragrant incense within your heart (i.e., pure and warm prayer).

142. Do you wish to pray (as you ought)? By turning away from this world, make your dwelling always in heaven—not merely in words, but through angelic deeds and the most divine understanding.

143. If, only when in distress (facing severe temptations, in danger of falling), you remember the Judge—how fearsome and unyielding He is—then you have not yet learned to *“serve the Lord with fear and rejoice before Him with trembling”* (Ps. 2:11). Know that during times of spiritual joy and comfort, it is even more fitting to serve Him with fear and reverence.

144. Wise is the person who, before achieving perfect repentance, does not cease to remember with sorrow his sins and the just punishment for them in the eternal fire.

145. Let the one who remains in sin and in provoking God's wrath—and who shamelessly dares to reach for the knowledge of divine things and for spiritual prayer—accept the Apostolic prohibition that it is not safe for him to pray with his head uncovered. Such a soul, to use the words of the Apostle, *“must have an angel standing over her head”* for the sake of those present (1 Cor. 11:10), having clothed herself in modesty and the humility befitting a humble person.

146. Just as it does no good for a person with eye problems to gaze long and intently at the sun in the strongest light at high noon, so it does no good for a passionate and impure mind to imagine a terrifying and supernatural prayer in spirit and truth; on the contrary, the Divinity will raise up indignation against him.

147. If the One who lacks nothing and shows no partiality does not accept one who comes to the altar with an offering until he has been reconciled with his neighbor who is grieving over him (Matt. 5: 23), then consider what self-restraint and what prudence are needed to offer incense pleasing to God on the altar of the mind.

148. Do not be a lover of words or a lover of glory; otherwise, it will be evident that *“sinners are at work”* not *“on your back”* but on your face (Ps. 128:3). And you will become a laughingstock to them during prayer, drawn away and enticed by them into unfocused thoughts.

149. Attention that seeks prayer will find prayer. Nothing better follows attention than prayer, and it is prayer that deserves our utmost care.

150. Just as sight is superior to all the other senses, so prayer is more divine than all the virtues.

151. The merit of prayer lies not only in quantity but also in quality. This is shown by *“those who went into the temple to pray”* (Luke 18:10) and by the following words: *“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions,”* and so on (Matthew 6:7).

152. As long as you pay attention only to the posture of the body befitting prayer and your mind is concerned only with the outward beauty of the tabernacle (and other external aspects of prayer... see Chapter 44), know that you have not yet seen the place of prayer, but that the blessed path to it is still far from you.

153. When, standing in prayer, you rise above every other joy, then (know that) you have truly found prayer.⁷³

154. Prayer and reading are wonderful; they put an end to the vain wandering of thoughts, restraining the mind that wanders where it ought not to, and usefully keeping it focused on this beautiful occupation without the slightest distraction (1:16).

155. Prayer prepares us for conversation with God, and through long practice in this, it brings us into fellowship with Him—with Him who accepts even the lowliest of people into His love and is not ashamed of friendly closeness with them, as long as the love dwelling within them gives them boldness (1:17).

156. Prayer detaches the mind from every thought of the sensual, lifting it up to God Himself, who exists above all things, so that we may converse with Him and boldly ask Him for whatever we wish; and in

⁷³ From here comes an addition from other writings of St. Nilus—*“on prayer.”*

this way enables a person to live a life of purity, as one who has already been in communion with God and is soon afterward preparing once more for that communion (1:19).

157. Paul teaches us to *“persevere in prayer”* (Rom. 12:12), establishing in ourselves the habit of prayer through continuous practice (Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18). He also commands us to *“pray in every place”* (1 Tim. 2:8), so that no negligent person may excuse himself by claiming to live far from a place of worship. Every place is suitable for prayer. God accepts those who call upon Him with a pure heart and righteous deeds, and, considering their disposition, hears their supplications, even if the place where they call upon Him, in our opinion, is no different from any other (1:20).

158. Sometimes during a vigil, one should read the psalms quickly, and at other times, one should give preference to singing the psalms. We must vary our approach, in opposition to the wiles of our enemies, who sometimes inspire us to rush through the text in haste, because our souls are overcome by despondency, and sometimes incite us to majestic, melodious singing (1, 234).

159. When an enemy thought assails your heart, do not seek this or that through prayer, but sharpen the sword of tears against the enemy. By confronting the enemy with such powerful armor, we will more quickly force him to retreat from us.

160. Love to practice manual labor—but even more so, the remembrance of prayer; for the former does not always bear fruit, whereas the latter constantly yields the fruit of its labor. Do not interrupt your prayer until you have fully fulfilled your duty of prayer, and do not heed the thought that it is time to sit down to work; likewise, when you are at work, do not become overly absorbed in your task, lest, in your haste, you disturb your heart and render it unfit for prayer.

161. A mind from which the thought of God has been stolen and which has grown distant from remembering Him sins indifferently even through the external senses: for neither the ear nor the tongue is any longer capable of serving as a guardian of such a mind, because the commitment to ascetic self-discipline has departed from within it (1, 244).

162. It happens that we strive to offer pure prayer and are unable to do so; but it also happens that we do not force ourselves, yet the soul remains in pure prayer. The former stems from our weakness, while the latter comes from grace from above, which calls us thereby to seek purity of soul, teaching us through both to not take credit for ourselves if we pray purely, but to acknowledge in this the gift of the One who grants it. *“For we do not know how to pray as we ought”* (Rom. 8:26). When we strive to make our prayer pure and cannot, but are instead clouded by darkness, then, with tears streaming down our cheeks, let us implore God that the night of strife may be dispelled and light may shine in our soul (1, 264).

163. The recollection of carnal desires is disturbing; for not only does it prevent us from conversing with God, but it even defiles the mind—which appears to be praying—with fantasies of vile images. It is good to remain constantly in prayer and to train the mind in conversation with God. But is this how it happens with us?—Often, distracted from the words of prayer, we follow the thoughts that lead us astray, neither rejecting them nor being distressed by them—which would be a sign of the will’s disagreement with those who suggest what is improper. Although outwardly we appear to be praying—for, with our knees bent, we seem to those watching us to be praying—in our minds we imagine something pleasant, converse amiably with friends, speak ill of our enemies in anger, feast with guests, build houses for relatives, plant trees, travel, engage in trade, are forcibly drawn into the priesthood, manage the affairs of the churches entrusted to us with great prudence, and go over most of all this in our minds, agreeing to whatever our thoughts suggest, allowing our hearts to be disposed to it as our passions please (– 2, 129–130).

164. Prayer requires that the mind be pure of every thought and admit nothing into itself that is not prayerful, even if it be honorable; but that, as one inspired by God, having detached oneself from all things, one may engage in conversation with Him alone (2, 131).

165. Whoever divides their time between manual labor and prayer tames the body through work and brings its disorderly demands under control, while the soul—which, laboring alongside the body, ultimately longs for rest—is thereby disposed toward prayer as an easier task and is led to it with zeal and vigor. For she finds comfort in the change of activity and the transition from one to another, whereas she grows weary when engaged in the same thing for a long time; she is burdened by monotony but rejoices in the variety of activities; it seems to her that by setting aside one task, she is, as it were, casting off all weariness, which is why she

approaches the next with what seem to be fresh energies, as if she were just beginning to work⁷⁴ – (2, 231. 232).

166. Whoever does not love to work nourishes their passions through inactivity and gives free rein to their desires to rush toward objects that appeal to them—which is most evident during prayer; for then the mind’s attention is entirely absorbed by what occupies the heart, and it does nothing but sift through in its thoughts the suggestions stirred up by the passion that has been set in motion, instead of conversing with God and asking Him for what is beneficial to itself. Knowing this, St. Paul zealously attacks idleness and, by his apostolic authority, obliges everyone to work (2 Thess. 3:6–12). Work is an anchor for the mind and gives it a safe direction. Let storms approach from all sides, and let gusts of wind threaten to wreck the ship; thought stands firm, held steady by work as by an anchor; it may be somewhat agitated by rising thoughts, but it is not swept into danger, because the bonds that hold it are stronger than the winds that drive it (2, 232, 234).

167. Those who refuse to engage in manual labor under the pretext that one must pray ceaselessly do not, in fact, pray at all. By thinking that idleness will free the soul from cares, they entangle it in a labyrinth of inescapable thoughts and thereby render it incapable of prayer. A body engaged in work keeps the mind focused; the mind, no less than the eyes, must observe what is being done and assist the body in performing its actions without error, whereas a body at rest gives the mind free rein to wander; for during rest, passions are aroused, and with every lustful recollection they carry off the mind and take possession of it as a captive (2, 234. 5).

168. There is a supreme prayer of the perfect—a kind of rapture of the mind, its complete detachment from the sensory realm, when, through the inarticulate sighs of the spirit, it draws near to God, Who sees the disposition of the heart, open like a written book, and expressing its will in wordless images. Thus Paul was caught up to the third heaven and did not know “*whether he was in the body or out of the body*” (2 Cor. 12:2) (2, 235).

169. After (below) the first comes the second kind of prayer, when words are spoken, and the mind follows them with devotion, knowing to Whom it is addressing its supplication.

170. But prayer that is interrupted by (base) thoughts and mingled with bodily concerns is far from the state befitting one who prays. Such a person does not even hear himself, his thoughts wandering here and there, and he does not remember what words he is uttering. But if the one praying is like this, will the Divine ear heed that which he himself, in his distraction, does not heed? In the words of those who said, “*Hear my prayer; give ear to my supplication*” (Ps. 16: 1), and “*Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication*” (Ps. 129: 2), their entire mind was carefully focused there and did not wander off, as is usually the case with the uncontrolled thoughts of the careless (2, 236).

2. On the Eight Evil Spirits

1. On Gluttony

1. The beginning of fruitfulness is blossoming, and the beginning of an active life is self-restraint.
2. The mind that restrains the stomach diminishes the passions, but the mind overcome by gluttony multiplies lustful desires.
3. The origin of tongues is Amalik, and the origin of passions is gluttony.
4. Fire is fed by wood, and the belly is fed by food.
5. An abundance of firewood kindles a great flame, and an abundance of food nourishes lust.
6. A flame dies out as fuel runs out, and a scarcity of food dries up lust.
7. The desire for food gave rise to disobedience, and the sweet taste of it drove us out of paradise.
8. Delicious foods delight the throat, but they also feed the ever-rising worm of lust.
9. An empty stomach prepares one for vigil in prayer, while a full one induces deep sleep.
10. Sobering reflection comes with fasting, while a life of plenty and contentment plunges the mind into a deep slumber.
11. The prayer of the fasting person is like an eagle’s chick soaring high, while the prayer of the one who has feasted falls to the ground, weighed down by satiety.

⁷⁴ This chapter and the next are directed against the Euchites.

12. The mind of the fasting person is a bright star in a clear sky, while the mind of the one who has feasted is as gloomy as the sky on a moonless night.

13. Fog hides the sun's rays, and the thick vapor of consumed food clouds the mind.

14. A stained mirror does not clearly reflect the features of the image within it; and the power of the mind, clouded by gluttony, cannot receive God's knowledge.

15. Land left uncultivated for a long time produces thorns; and the mind of a glutton breeds shameful thoughts.

16. **Just as** one cannot find fragrance in dung, so too can one not find the fragrance of contemplation in a glutton.

17. The eye of the glutton looks for feasts, and the eye of the temperate one looks for gatherings of the wise.

18. The soul of the glutton counts the days of remembrance of the martyrs, while the soul of the temperate imitates their way of life.

19. A timid warrior trembles at the sound of the trumpet heralding battle, while the glutton trembles at the announcement of the beginning of fasting.

20. A gluttonous monk is a slave to his belly, and under its whip he pays his daily tribute.

21. A hasty traveler soon reaches the city, and a monk who practices self-restraint reaches peace of mind.

22. A slow traveler (having not reached any settlements) spends the night in the open field; and a gluttonous monk will never reach the home of detachment.

23. The burning of incense perfumes the air—and the prayer of the self-restrained is God's fragrance.

24. If you give in to the lust for filling your belly, nothing will be enough to satisfy your gluttony; for gluttony is a fire that consumes fuel and always demands more.

25. A sufficient measure (of whatever is poured into a vessel) fills the vessel, but the stomach, even when full, will not say, "Enough."

26. The lifting up of the hands put Amalek to flight, and deeds directed toward heaven overcome carnal passions.

27. Destroy within yourself everything that stirs up passions, and firmly put to death your carnal members.

28. Just as a slain enemy does not arouse fear in you, so a mortified body will not disturb your soul.

29. **Just as** a dead body feels no pain from fire, so the self-controlled person feels no pleasure from dead lust.

30. If you strike down an Egyptian, bury him in the sand—that is, if you conquer lustful passion, do not satisfy the body (or keep it on a dry diet); for just as what was hidden in the earth sprouts when it is watered, so too does the lustful passion hidden within the body blossom when it is satisfied.

31. A flame that has died down flares up brightly again if new dry twigs are added; and lustful desire, once extinguished, is revived by the satisfaction of the belly with food.

32. Do not take pity on the body when it begins to complain of exhaustion, nor satisfy it fully with foods it desires; for if it regains its strength, it will rise up against you and wage an irreconcilable war against you until it captures your soul and delivers you into slavery to the passion of fornication.

33. A body fed sparingly is like a well-trained horse that will never throw off its rider. A horse—held in check by the bridle—yields and obeys the rider's hand; and a body, tamed by frugal eating and vigilance, does not break free from the grasp of the thought that sits upon it, nor does it neigh, as it does when driven by a passionate impulse.

* * *

34. Overindulgence in food nourishes thoughts, and the drunkard fills his sleep with dreams (1. 248).

35. The pleasure of indulgence dies as soon as the food has passed through the throat, but in this coffin, lust comes to life.

36. The toil of cultivating one's plot of land ends in rest; but various kinds of pleasures end in burning (whether carnal here, or punitive there).

37. Whoever, through his labors, causes the bloom of the flesh to wither, thinks daily in the flesh of his own death (for the weariness of the flesh compels him to think ceaselessly of death) (1. 249).

38. Let the prudence of the heart adjust the labor of self-restraint to the condition of the body, so that when the body weakens, he himself may not suffer.

39. Let the flesh be content with the limited satisfaction of its natural needs.

40. Let your bodily asceticism be directed toward moral ends, so that you may learn to grieve in your heart (over sins) and to mourn in your soul.

41. The mother of sensuality (lust) is gluttony: for it gives rise to sensual lust and many other passions. From it, like shoots from a root, other passions sprout; and soon, having become trees equal to the one that begot them, they branch out into vices that reach up to the heavens. Thus, greed, anger, and sorrow are the offspring and growth of gluttony. First and foremost, the glutton needs money to satisfy his ever-burning desire, even though it is never satisfied; then, he must become angry at those who stand in the way of acquiring money; and when anger is powerless to act, sorrow necessarily follows (2, 73).

42. Gluttony is most closely related to the lustful impulse. And nature itself, wishing to demonstrate the kinship of these passions, has placed the organs of copulation beneath the belly, signifying by this proximity their close connection. Therefore, when this passion (lust) weakens, it does so because of the depletion of what lies above—that is, the belly; and when it intensifies and is set in motion, it draws its strength from there. But gluttony is not merely the nourisher and sustainer of this passion; it destroys all that is good in a person. As soon as it gains the upper hand, self-restraint, chastity, courage, patience, and all other virtues usually fall away and vanish from the soul (2, 76).

43. It is excellent to remain within the bounds of necessity and to strive with all one's might not to transgress them. If lust draws someone even slightly toward the pleasures of this life, then no words will be powerful enough to halt their forward momentum (in that direction). For there is no limit to what exceeds necessity; but insatiable concern and endless, unbridled restlessness multiply the labor (required to satisfy them) without measure, and feed lust, just as a flame is fed by the addition of firewood (2, 88).

2. On Fornication

1. Abstinence gives rise to chastity; gluttony, however, is the mother of lustful desire.

2. Oil nourishes the flame of a lamp; but consorting with women kindles the fire of lustful desire.

3. Just as an unladen ship is tossed back and forth by the waves, so too is an unrestrained mind tossed about by wayward thoughts.

4. Lust makes satiety its own, joins the ranks of the mind's adversaries, and fights against it to the very end alongside its enemies.

5. He who loves silence is hard to wound by this enemy's arrows; but he who mingles with the crowd receives constant wounds from him.

6. A woman's gaze is a poisonous arrow that wounds the soul and pours poison into it; and the longer this wound festers, the greater the damage it causes.

7. Whoever guards himself against these arrows does not attend crowded gatherings or wander aimlessly at festivals. For it is better to remain quietly at home and devote oneself to prayer than, thinking to honor the festivals, to become easy prey for one's enemies.

8. Avoid associating with women if you wish to remain chaste, and never give them the freedom to treat you boldly; for at first they either genuinely possess or feign a timid modesty, but later they dare to do anything. – And this becomes for you a snare leading to death, a cunningly woven net dragging you into ruin. Let them not deceive you with modest words; for in them, too, is hidden the evil poison of a beast (a beast from the abyss).

9. It is better to approach a burning fire than a young woman when you yourself are young: for when you feel the pain of the fire as you draw near, you will immediately leap away, but once you are lulled by a woman's words, you will not leave so quickly.

10. Grass growing by the water withers, and the passion of debauchery arises in the company of women.

11. Whoever fills his belly and promises to be chaste is like one who claims that straw will stop the action of fire. Just as it is impossible to hold back the rush of a spreading fire with straw, so it is impossible to stop the burning desire for immorality through satiety.

12. A pillar rests upon its foundation—and the lustful passion rests upon satiety.

13. A ship tossed by the waves hastens to the harbor, but a chaste soul seeks the wilderness. The ship flees from the dangerous waves of the sea, and the soul flees from the faces of women that bring ruin.

14. The sight of a well-dressed woman drowns one worse than the waves. From the waves, one can still swim out of love for life; but the sight of a woman, alluring as it is, causes one to neglect even life itself.

15. A desert bush is safe from the flames of fire—and the chaste man, far from women, is safe from the ignition of the passion of immorality: for just as the memory of fire does not burn the mind, so too does passion have no power when it has no fuel.

16. If you show mercy to your adversary, you will have an enemy; and if you spare this passion, it will rise up against you.

17. For the intemperate, a glance at a woman stirs up lewd passion, but for the chaste, it inclines him to the glorification of God.

18. If lustful passion remains calm when dealing with women, do not believe in the dispassion she promises. For even a dog, surrounded by a crowd, wags its tail, but when it leaves the crowd, it immediately reveals its inherent ferocity.

19. When your thoughts of a woman become dispassionate, then conclude that you have entered the realm of chastity. But when the image of her that you conjure up takes hold of your soul, then know that you are still far from this virtue. Yet even in the first case, do not dwell on such thoughts, and do not converse mentally with the image of a woman for too long; for this passion loves to return—and the danger it poses is near.

20. Just as moderate smelting purifies silver, while smelting beyond measure causes it to be lost; so too does the habit of chastity spoil the prolonged mental image of a woman.

21. Do not dwell long on the image of a person who has come to mind, lest it kindle in you the flame of sensual desire and set the threshing floor of your soul ablaze.

22. Just as a spark left in straw for a long time produces a flame, so too does prolonged remembrance of a woman kindle lust.

* * *

23. If you subdue the flesh that lusts against the spirit through ascetic labors, then beyond this age you will receive the glory promised in the Beatitudes, as one who has triumphed in battle against the one who, within your body, “*wages war against the law of your mind*,” and enslaves you “*by the law of sin that is in your members*” (Rom. 7: 23) (1, 230).

24. Understand that certain kinds of fornication are combined—physical fornication and spiritual fornication. When a fornicatory thought merges with your spirit, then your soul unites with the seductive imprint within it (1, 247–8).

25. The demon takes on the form of a woman to seduce the soul into union with him. An incorporeal demon assumes the form of a woman in order to lead the soul into fornication through lustful thoughts. Do not be carried away by a phantom that has no substance, lest you do something similar in the flesh. All those who do not repel inner adultery with the cross are seduced by the spirit of fornication.

26. Punish your thoughts with meager food, so that they may think not of fornication but of hunger.

27. Combine your tears with prayerful vigil to receive help in this true battle.

28. During the battle against lust, refuse invitations to feasts.

29. The demon of debauchery attacks the zealous ascetic warrior swiftly, suddenly showering him with arrows of passionate lust, for he cannot long endure the burning heat of the luminous fire emanating from the ascetic’s labors; and to the one who, weakened in the strictness of self-restraint by the allure of lustful pleasures, the demon gradually creeps up to converse with his heart, so that, inflamed by evil desires, it may give itself over to conversation with them, be captivated by them, and completely set aside its hatred for this sin (1, 252–3).

30. It is most dangerous when the heart has become mired in the habit of lustful pleasures, and it takes great effort to cut this (passionate) weed off at the root.

31. Do not accustom your thoughts to engaging in conversation with the delights of lust, for in the midst of passionate thoughts and movements, a fire is kindled (Ps. 105:18). By inflaming you, they will make you think that it is difficult to restrain the fire of the flesh, that you are no longer able to resist your nature—and that even if you sin today out of necessity, you will repent tomorrow as commanded. For the (Christian)

law is merciful—it readily forgives the sinner who repents. At the same time, they will present to you as an example how some, after practicing abstinence, fell and repented again, lending credibility to their deceptive counsel—so that, by breaking down the resolve of your resistance with this hope of an easy return through repentance, they might turn the temple of chastity into a house of fornication (1, 253–4).

32. Behold, you who practice abstinence: do not be deceived by unknown hopes under the pretext of repentance. For many, having fallen, are immediately snatched away by death, while others were unable to rise (from their fall), bound by their habit of lustful pleasures as if by law. How do you know, O man, whether you will live or whether you will repent, that you set a limit on the years of your life?—By falling into this, you indulge your flesh, whereas you ought rather to devote yourself to the remembrance of death, so that you may more vividly picture in your heart the dreadful judgment to come, and thereby extinguish the scheming of your inflamed flesh.

33. The Creator has prescribed the same natural way of life for both us and the animals; “*I give you,*” God says to man, “*every plant in the field; it shall be food for you and for the animals*” (Gen. 1:29–30). Therefore, having received the same sustenance as the dumb creatures and, through our own ingenuity, having transformed it into something more luxurious, should we not justly be considered less rational than the dumb creatures, since the beasts remain within the bounds of nature, not violating what God has ordained, while we—human beings, endowed with reason—have completely strayed from the ancient law? For what delicacies do the animals have? What bakers and chefs, with a thousand arts, prepare delights for their meager bellies? Do they not love their ancient frugality, feeding on grass, content with whatever comes their way, and drinking water—and even that only rarely? That is why they indulge in carnal pleasures less often, not inflaming their desires with any fattening food, and not always knowing the difference between the male and female sexes. For nature grants them this desire only at one time of the year, when the natural law, as a means of perpetuating the species, has ordained that they mate to produce offspring like themselves; at other times, however, they shun one another to such an extent that they completely forget this desire. But in humans, sumptuous feasts have sown an insatiable lust for sexual pleasure, stirring up frenzied desires and never allowing the passion to subside at any time (2, 90).

3. On Greed

1. Greed is the root of all evil; like withered branches, it nourishes all other passions and prevents what has flourished from it from withering away.

2. Let anyone who wishes to eradicate the passions first uproot this source of them; but as long as greed for money remains, you will gain nothing by cutting off the branches; for even if they are cut off, they will soon grow back.

3. A monk who is greedy for possessions is like an overloaded ship, easily sunk by the waves raised by a storm.

4. A monk who is not greedy is a light traveler, finding shelter wherever he goes.

5. A monk who is not greedy for possessions is a soaring eagle, descending only when compelled by the need for food.

6. Such a one is above all temptation, scoffs at all that is earthly, and, soaring high, withdraws from all things earthly and dwells with the heavenly; for his wings are light, unburdened by cares.

7. When sorrow comes, he leaves his dwelling without grief; when death arrives, he departs from here contentedly, for he has not bound his soul with any earthly ties.

8. But the avaricious man is entangled in cares and bound like a dog on a chain; if forced to move, he carries with him the sorrowful memory of his possessions as a heavy and useless burden.

9. When death comes, he leaves the present with regret; he gives up his soul, yet his eyes never leave what he possesses—and he is dragged away by force, like a fugitive slave; he is separated from his body, but not from his possessions, for his passion holds him back more strongly than those who drag him away.

10. The sea is never filled, even as it receives many rivers, and the avaricious man’s greed is never satisfied by the wealth he has already amassed; he has doubled it—and desires to double the doubled amount again; and he never ceases to double it until death puts an end to this futile labor.

11. A prudent monk considers only the body’s needs—and fills his empty stomach with nothing but bread and water.

12. He will not flatter the rich to gratify his stomach, nor will he enslave his free mind to many masters; for his hands alone are enough to serve the body, satisfying its natural needs.

13. The non-acquisitive monk is an elusive warrior and a light-footed runner, quickly attaining “*the honor of the higher calling*” (Phil. 3:14).

14. A monk who is greedy rejoices in many sources of income, while the non-greedy monk rejoices in the crowns of success.

15. A monk who loves wealth works hard, while the unworldly monk spends his time in prayer and reading.

16. A monk who loves money fills his treasuries with silver, while the non-greedy one gathers treasure in heaven.

17. Cursed is the one who makes an idol and places it “*in secret*” (Deut. 27:15). But the same is true of the one who harbors a passion for the love of money. The former worships a false god to no avail, while the latter secretly carries the dream of wealth in his heart, like an idol.

* * *

18. The non-greedy person lives a carefree life, while for the greedy, the pursuit of wealth is a constant affliction (1, 237).

19. You will take the multitude of thoughts captive when you do not give your heart over to concerns about material things. Then you will bear your cross without distraction when you renounce the desire to own property.

20. The thought of material gain foretells old age and illness for you, so that you may divide your hope in God with your hope in possessions.

21. Let the one who has chosen the ascetic life in renunciation of the world be enveloped by faith, strengthened by love, and established by hope. Faith is not being left with nothing, but is an unshakable conviction of possessing what is most perfect, with patient hope and living love.

22. When you have renounced all things, do not heed the dark thoughts that will reproach you for your poverty, presenting to you your present circumstances—scarcity in everything, destitution, and disgrace—so that through such malice they might lead you to regret such a glorious virtue. But if you ponder the wisdom of such asceticism, you will soon find that for the very things for which you are reproached, a crown will be woven for you.

23. Let us set aside worldly affairs and turn to spiritual blessings. How long will we remain engrossed in childish games, without in the least adopting a manly way of thinking? In childhood, dice, balls, and the like serve as entertainment—and children are fond of them until they reach maturity. But when someone becomes a man, he casts all this aside and devotes himself wholeheartedly to important matters. Yet we all remain in infancy, marveling at what is proper to childhood and unwilling to concern ourselves with what is better—that which is fitting for men. Just as it is shameful to see a mature man sitting on a heap of ashes and drawing childish games in the ashes; so it is shameful—or far more shameful—to see those who have their sights set on the enjoyment of eternal blessings wallowing in the dust of earthly things, and by the incongruity of such actions bringing shame upon the dignity of their vow. The reason for this, it seems, is that we cannot imagine anything more important than what is visible; we do not realize the insignificance of present blessings and the superiority of those in the hereafter; and, blinded by the splendor of what is here regarded as honorable, we cling to it with all our desire (2, 81).

24. Let us, then, begin to renounce present goods; let us disregard property and money, and everything that draws us in and drowns our thoughts. Like a ship tossed by a storm, let us cast off the cargo so that the helmsman—the mind—and the passengers—our thoughts—may be saved. If those sailing the sea during a storm do not care about their cargo and with their own hands throw even precious items into the sea, placing possessions below life itself, then why do we not, for the sake of a better life, disregard that which drags the soul into the abyss? Why is our fear of God not as strong as their fear of the sea? They, out of love for this temporary life, do not highly value the loss of what they are carrying; but we, claiming to desire eternal life, do not even disregard trifles—we would rather perish with a worthless burden than be saved by parting with it. – Therefore, I implore you, let us cast off everything. Wrestlers do not enter the ring clothed; the rules of wrestling require them to compete naked in the arena. Whether in heat or cold, they enter the arena, leaving their clothes outside. If any of them refuses to strip, he must also refuse to wrestle. But we, having vowed to

strive, not only do we not cast off our garments (possessions), but, bearing thousands of burdens on our shoulders, we enter the fray, thereby providing our adversaries with many opportunities to seize us (2:82, 83).

25. How can one fight the spirits of malice when they strike him from all sides with ease? How can one combat the spirit of greed when one is showered with money? How can one outrun the demons, stripped of all care, when one is clothed in a thousand worries? Divine Scripture says: “*The naked will flee on that day*” (Amos 2:16). Naked is the one who is not clothed in the countless rags of worldly cares—naked is the one whose complex thoughts about money and possessions do not hinder his speed in running: for it is difficult, even impossible, for the malicious to catch the naked one (2:83, 84).

26. One must fight naked—and not only naked, but also anointed. Being naked ensures that the opponent has nothing to grasp onto, and being anointed with oil, even if one is seized, enables one to slip from the grasp of the attacker. This is why opponents try to shower each other with dirt—so that the dust, by roughening the smoothness of the oil, will make the opponent easier to hold once seized. But what is dust there corresponds to earthly affairs in our struggle, and what is oil there corresponds to freedom from cares here (2:85).

27. To be free from cares is characteristic of the perfect soul, while to be weighed down by worries is characteristic of the ungodly soul. It is said of the perfect soul that it is “*like a lily among thorns*” (Song of Songs 2:2), and this signifies a soul that lives without cares amidst those who are preoccupied with many things. In the Gospel, too, the lily signifies a soul free from cares; for it is said, “*It neither toils nor spins,*” yet it is clothed in glory more than Solomon (Matt. 6:28). Of those who have many cares regarding the body, it is said: “*The whole life of the wicked is spent in worry*” (Job 15:20). And indeed, it is wicked to extend concern for the body to one’s entire life—and to show no concern for the future (2:86).

28. Need should serve as the measure of acquisition. Whatever exceeds this measure is excess, which hinders rather than helps. Just as clothing proportionate to the body serves both as a necessity and an adornment, so clothing that hangs loosely on all sides, entangles the legs, and drags along the ground—in addition to being unsightly—becomes an obstacle to all work: so too does wealth that exceeds bodily needs serve as an obstacle to virtue and is subject to great censure from those capable of investigating the nature of things (2, 87).

29. By non-acquisitiveness we do not mean involuntary poverty, which, when it befalls out of necessity, crushes the spirit and, being involuntary, is considered unbearable; rather, we mean the voluntary resolve to be content with little, acquired through self-control of thought, yet one that requires effort, and this continues until such time as practice, having become a habit, makes bearable what for a long time seemed difficult and intolerable. Not only does physical beauty entice, but the splendor of wealth stirs up desire no less strongly—and in both cases, a courageous soul is needed to resist their allure.

30. Truly, those who triumph in this arena—while their thoughts struggle and contend, using persuasive arguments as if they were physical movements, striving to prove that one must agree with the opinion of the many, and to recognize what appears good as truly good, not to reject what is, by common consent, held to be worthy of esteem, not to turn away from the possession of what has been given for use by the Creator Himself, and not to condemn in vain the acquisition of that which has been brought into being for a specific purpose, and not in vain. These ascetics are truly worthy of praise, for they have not yielded ground to their opponents, have not strayed from their path, and have not surrendered to their enemies. Having firmly established their feet upon sound judgment, they did not yield to the allure of earthly possessions; they preferred a life of simplicity to one of turmoil and, through moderation in their needs, attained peace of mind (2:99–101).

31. The ancient saints took their zeal for non-possessiveness to such an extent that they led a homeless, shelterless life, subsisting on whatever food nature provided, and finding a place to sleep wherever and however they could. They had neither a roof over their heads, nor a bed, nor a table; sheepskins served as their clothing. They zealously followed the Lord’s counsel to the letter: “*Look at the birds of the air... look at the lilies of the field...*” (Matt. 6:26–28). They sincerely believed that what was necessary for the body’s needs would follow of its own accord when one pleased God, the Giver of these things, and primarily sought to attain the kingdom of heaven (2:102–3).

32. But how can our life, surrounded by complete contentment in every respect, compare to the life of those blessed ones—who were not troubled by thoughts of the body or bodily things, but by a pure longing for the Divine, which ceaselessly drew them upward to the most sublime, convincing them to forget what is

considered glorious on earth? They possessed nothing on earth except the body, which nature held fast to the earth; yet even that they would have wished to take with them to the place where their minds dwelt, contemplating heavenly blessings. And they would never have been torn away from that delight there, had nature not brought them back to the satisfaction of bodily needs, compelled by reverence for the One who bound the soul to the body to care for the body as well, even though they recognized detachment from it as supremely beneficial (2, 104).

33. Bodily need flows swiftly and passes; in the past it had no concern for the present, and in the present it has none for the future; it heals only the present. But the labor of virtue is a seed that yields inexhaustible fruit;—and even while it is being performed, it gladdens the conscience with the anticipation of delight, and upon departure from this world, it proves to be glorious and conducive to eternal joy (2, 105).

34. Since the path leading to the kingdom is fraught with so many difficulties—being narrow and surrounded on all sides by rapids—what is the point of burdening oneself with heaps of money and other possessions and attempting to walk this path in a way that makes it impossible to proceed? Concerns for material things, distracting and strongly drawing one downward, make a fall all the more likely, especially where the course of events demands keen and sober attention. And even with such attention, the journey rarely proceeds without stumbles, due to the difficulties on the narrow path through the rapids; but for those who have burdened themselves with the unnecessary weight of material possessions, a fall is inevitable. Indeed, the very act of acquiring possessions is already a fall (2, 111).

35. Our attitude toward material possessions is threefold: non-acquisitiveness—in its highest and middle forms—and a materialistic, acquisitive life. Their origins are as follows. In Paradise, this is what was commanded to the first man: “*Gather the grass of the field*” (Gen. 1:29). The dignity of the One who commanded it guarantees the complete suitability of such sustenance for the life intended for man. We may, however, add in explanation of this suitability that it was far more suitable than any other for preserving the desired refinement of those created in the image of God, so that the power of the mind might always remain unburdened and the sobriety of the mind unclouded. When, in this way, what was necessary for the body’s life was provided of its own accord, the mind did not remain idle, having all its time free from bodily labors, but was constantly drawn to spiritual contemplations, which filled it with inexhaustible joy. God Himself cultivated this disposition within him, coming to him daily of His own good will for conversation. “Such is the norm of the life proper to man!” Its essence cannot be altered or abolished; but a different manner of its visible conduct is possible—one that was made necessary by the subsequent fall. For the one who transgressed the commandment and was cast out of Paradise, God established a different way of life, in accordance with his fallen state, commanding him—who had not made proper use of his rest—to obtain food through work and labor; because he was unable to remain constantly in the service of God and in communion with Him when he had free time and was not in need of physical labor (in Paradise). For food, he was given bread earned by the sweat of his brow, and for clothing, leather tunics—thus setting a limit on greed and vanity. The original non-greed of Paradise was replaced by such modest acquisition, which, moreover, despite the toil involved, did not depend solely on him, but above all on God’s blessing. In practice, three ways of life emerged from this: some were content with modest acquisition, laboring with the sweat of their brow while trusting in God; others, having deepened their trust in God, renounced all acquisition entirely (eager to restore the paradisiacal non-acquisitiveness) and were sustained by God; a third group, having immersed themselves in all manner of labor, based their hope of having what they needed on it, while basing the security of their lives on material wealth. God was forgotten: the love of money became their god. These are the three aforementioned types of our relationship to possessions (2, 116–123—abridged).

36. The second type presented here represents conduct (primarily) befitting a rational being, namely: to spend one’s time in the service of God and to receive what is due from the treasury of God’s Providence; to trust in God’s providence and regard the earth as a gift; to serve the Creator sincerely, and to provide for the needs of creation through voluntary offerings; to be a stranger here, and to regard as one’s true home that which is prepared in heaven. The Creator prescribed this life from the beginning—and all the Saints lived this life, obeying Him (examples: Elijah, Elisha, the sons of the prophets, John the Baptist, and the Apostles) (2, 124–129).

37. Such is the “*highest*” form of non-acquisitiveness among the Saints. But the “*middle*” form of non-acquisitiveness, which follows it, is also very beneficial, as it is appropriate to the times and to necessity. Even if it cannot compete for primacy or boast of being on a par with the superior way of life, it undoubtedly

holds the second degree of honor. The first Saints (with perfect detachment) lived for the soul alone and for God, who created it, attaching no importance to the body; yet even without caring for it, they had everything they needed—not gathered in advance in granaries, but received in due time from God’s good will, as from a treasury. The Saints who followed them (with moderate detachment from worldly goods), while caring for the body’s necessary comfort and striving to ensure that our animal nature—left to neglect—would not be corrupted against the will of the One who united it with us, employed their hands in work only to the extent that it was absolutely necessary to serve the body; but they spent most of their time caring for the soul, in prayer, contemplation of God, and proper pursuits, with a view to excelling in good deeds (2, 137).

38. The latter, having become entirely flesh, devoted themselves wholly to serving an earthly idol, desiring not only what was sufficient for their physical lives, but also what would show them to be no less distinguished by their abundance, so that, at least through this, they might be in the public eye. In this way, they clearly expose their folly to ridicule, taking what is reprehensible as a source of praise, and thinking thereby to draw attention to themselves and earn admiration—for which they deserve contempt and derision. For just as what is appropriate to each station provides sound grounds for approval, so what is unbecoming to a station—even if it is not bad in other respects—is highly reprehensible where it is out of place (2, 138).

39. To which group are *the “middle class,”* situated between the two extremes, closer?—Certainly to those to whom they are more closely aligned in their actions, and with whom they proclaim a kinship by striving to be close to them in their way of life. For since they occupy a middle rank between the two groups, they are no longer equally inclined toward both; and although they lag behind those who precede them, they follow immediately behind them, walking in their footsteps with youthful strides, and are as far removed from those who follow them as runners gradually distance themselves from those walking at a leisurely pace or standing still. As for the former and the latter—they have nothing in common. What fellowship can those who possess much material wealth have with those who are unworldly ()? What harmony can there be between those who are wise in the flesh and those who are wise in the Spirit? What common ground is there between those entangled in worldly affairs and those who serve God without a care? Some, following the Apostles, leave behind all they have acquired; others acquire what they did not have. Some remain in silence, inwardly striving for spiritual progress; others engage in every kind of struggle, fighting for money and possessions. Some contend with the spirits of wickedness for heavenly blessings, while others attack their own kind for earthly blessings. To some, Paul says, “*You are to shine like lights in the world*” (Phil. 2:15), shining, of course, with the glory of life and becoming, to those who see them, examples of wholesome competition; while to others it is said: “*My name is blasphemed because of you*” (Rom. 2:24), that is, because of you who act contrary to your calling and bear an outward appearance that contradicts your deeds (2:139–40).

40. What word, then, is not despised by one who claims to have renounced worldly life but is in fact devoted to its pleasures? Who boasts of having despised the world yet is madly devoted to worldly affairs? Who promised not to pay any attention to earthly things but proves by his actions that his promise was false? Does he claim to have bid farewell to vanity, yet never part with it?—“You have come out of Egypt”—what, then, do you still have in common with idleness? You are journeying through the wilderness, hastening toward the Promised Land; why, then, do you linger, occupied with vain tasks, becoming a sluggish traveler on this long journey? Does the path before you require such care that you wander at the crossroads, risking the danger of failing to reach rest? You have placed your hand on the plow handle—why then do you turn back, making yourself unfit for the kingdom of heaven? You have left behind the fervor of the pentecost; why then do you look back, desiring to see what is happening there? Have you taken up your cross?—then follow Christ, leaving everything behind, for Christ, with whom you have been united, desires to be loved above all else (2:141–2).

41. The body requires little comfort—take care of this comfort; for you are bound to the body for a time, so that it may be your ally in the practice of virtue and so that the soul’s progress may not encounter any obstacles. But whoever is preoccupied with oxen, counts his flocks of sheep daily, and ceaselessly tends to vineyards, groves, fields, and orchards—so much so that even the length of the day is not enough for these tasks—when and where will such a person have time to remember God? When will he find time to sing psalms? When will he pray? What time can he devote to training himself in godly contemplation? And even if he finds an opportunity to do so occasionally amid his many tasks, how will he offer the Lord a pure prayer when his mind is not detached from the things that occupy him so much? How will he observe the movements of his passions to discern the difference between yesterday and today—whether for the better or for the worse?

How will he uncover the tangled web of thoughts that constantly replace one another, making observation itself difficult? Or do you not notice how your daily tasks crush you by day, and your worry about them at night, turning a time of rest into a time of torment? For then memory—by bringing to mind who has crossed the boundary, who has harmed the crops, who has cut off the irrigation channels, who has poisoned the pasture, who is committing or has committed some other offense, and how each one persists and argues—thus drives the soul’s irritable nature into a frenzy, inciting it to vengeance, leaving no time for sleep or rest, much less for prayer, which requires great silence and long periods of free time, providing, in part, liberation from all cares (2, 142–144).

4. On Anger

1. Anger is a frenzied passion that easily provokes even the wise, brutalizes the soul, and causes one to shy away from (friendly) conversation.

2. A strong wind does not shake a pillar, and a soul free from anger will not be carried away by irritation.

3. Water is stirred up by the force of the winds, and an irritable person is agitated by reckless thoughts.

4. An angry monk is like a wild boar in the wilderness; he sees someone and gnashes his teeth.

5. Thickening fog clouds the air, and the surge of irritation coarsens the mind of the angry person.

6. A passing cloud obscures the sun, and a thought of resentment obscures the mind.

7. A lion in a menagerie ceaselessly shakes the door latches, while the irritable monk in his cell sifts through angry thoughts.

8. A calm sea is a pleasant sight, but it is not more pleasant than a peaceful state of mind.

9. Dolphins play in the calm sea, and godly thoughts arise in a peaceful state of mind.

10. A long-suffering monk is a quiet spring, providing a pleasant drink to all; but the mind of the angry one is always agitated and gives no water to the thirsty; and even if it does, the water is murky and unfit to drink.

11. The eyes of the angry person are cloudy and bloodshot, betraying the turmoil of the heart; but the face of the long-suffering person is calm, their eyes are kind, and they look straight ahead.

12. A man’s meekness is remembered by God (Ps. 131:1), and a soul free from anger becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit.

13. Christ bows His head in a long-suffering spirit, and a peaceful mind becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity.

14. Foxes dwell in a vindictive soul, and beasts take refuge in a troubled heart.

15. A righteous man avoids a shameful refuge, and God avoids a vengeful heart.

16. A falling stone stirs up the water, and a harsh word stirs up a man’s heart.

17. Cast away angry thoughts from your soul and do not let irritation take root in your heart—and you will not be disturbed during prayer.

18. Just as smoke from smoldering straw troubles the eyes, so does a vindictive heart trouble the mind during prayer.

19. The thoughts of the angry are the offspring of the viper; they devour the heart that gave birth to them.

20. The prayer of the irritable is an abominable smoke; the psalm-singing of the angry is an unpleasant sound.

21. The offering of the vindictive is a worm-eaten sacrifice—and let him not approach the altars of purification.

22. The irritable person sees troubled dreams, and the angry person dreams of attacks by wild beasts.

23. The long-suffering man sees in a vision the assemblies of the holy angels, and the one who does not hold a grudge practices spiritual words, receiving the revelation of mysteries at night.

* * *

24. When the demons see that we have not been inflamed by the very heat of the insult, they then attack in silence, seeking to stir up the ruling power within us (the mind), so that we may rebel in absentia against those with whom we maintained peace when they were face to face with us (1, 229).

25. When a dispute or quarrel with a brother over some grievance ends peacefully, consider yourself to be at fault, so that in the silence of your heart you may not find a struggle of thoughts, some of which, by highlighting the insignificance of the insult, will reproach you for not even having bothered to dwell on it, while others, by emphasizing its importance, will instill regret that it was not repaid with an insult of equal measure.

26. When intense irritation deeply grieves any of the brothers in the community, then thoughts begin to flatter those living in solitude, so that, just as they have deprived the brothers of good-natured patience, they may also remove them from the path of love.

27. Whoever repels anger with good-natured patience and grief with love repels two evil, wrathful beasts with two virtues.

28. One who kneels in supplication, begging the one who has caused grief to cease his anger, at once turns both away from irritation.

29. Whoever reconciles those who are angry overcomes the very spirit of anger.

30. Whoever endures an angry person for the sake of peace is truly a son of peace (1, 230).

31. Prepare yourself to be meek and combative: meek toward people, but combative toward our enemy; for therein lies the natural use of anger—to oppose the (ancient) serpent with hostility (1, 235).

32. The meekness of the meek consists in being generous toward one's brother out of love and waging war against (the angry) thought directed against him.

33. Let the meek person also be ready to fight, not extending meekness to malicious thoughts nor extending the fight to neighbors by nature.

34. Do not turn the natural use of anger into something unnatural; that is, do not be angry with your brother, imitating a serpent, and do not associate with malicious thoughts, becoming a companion of that serpent (1:236).

35. A meek person, even when enduring something offensive, does not abandon love, but for love's sake *"bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"* (1 Cor. 13:4, 7).

36. If the work of love is to be patient, then to wage war against a brother in anger is not the work of love.

37. Anger stirs up grief and animosity, but love drives all three away.

38. If you have a firm foundation in love, pay more attention to it than to what offends you.

39. He who has acquired the virtue of love subdues the passions characteristic of the wicked.

40. Whoever possesses these three virtues from the Holy Trinity—faith, hope, and love—will be a three-walled fortress, fortified by the towers of virtue like battlements.

41. Whoever is wounded by the slander of others, without attributing it to the devil as its source, encourages the enemy even more to prepare arrows against him—because his soul falls, being wounded by such slander (1, 251).

42. When enduring the greatest slander or a grievous insult, do not hold a grudge, but bless them (1, 252).

43. Whoever bears a grudge against demons does not bear a grudge against people; but whoever bears a grudge against a brother is at peace with demons.

44. Anger and hatred are a fire in the heart, but the souls of those who are forgiving are watered by spiritual dew.

45. Just as burning coals cast off sparks, so do unforgiving souls spew forth malicious thoughts.

46. Just as a scorpion's sting causes the most excruciating pain, so a vengeful soul harbors the most bitter poison.

47. When David was reviled, he said nothing in reply, but he even restrained the vengeful spirit of Abishai (2 Sam. 16:10). And you, when subjected to reviling, not only do not repay reviling with reviling, but also restrain even the one who would seek vengeance on your behalf (1, 228).

48. Endure insults patiently, and shut the door to anger with your lips: in this lies your success.

49. Do not answer those who threaten you at all, so that your silence may shut the mouths that breathe fire.

50. By restraining your own tongue, you will inflict the most acute pain on your threats and those who revile you.

51. By remaining silent, you will not be consumed by insults; but your slanderer will be deeply wounded by your silence, seeing how magnanimously you endure his insolence.

5. On Sorrow

1. A sorrowful monk knows no spiritual joy; sorrow is the despondency of the soul and arises from angry thoughts; for anger desires revenge, and failure to take revenge gives rise to sorrow.

2. Sorrow is a lion's mouth, and it easily devours the sorrowful.

3. Sorrow is a worm in the heart—and it devours the mother who gave birth to it.

4. A mother suffers while giving birth to her child, but when she gives birth, she is freed from her suffering; but sorrow causes great pain even during childbirth, and after birth it torments her no less with pain.

5. A sorrowful monk knows no spiritual joy, just as one suffering from a high fever knows no taste of honey.

6. A sorrowful monk cannot direct his mind toward contemplation and will never offer up pure prayer; for sorrow is an obstacle to all that is good.

7. Shackles on the feet hinder swift progress, and sorrow is an obstacle to contemplation.

8. One captured by barbarians is bound in chains, and one captive to passions is bound by sorrow.

9. Sorrow has no power when there are no other passions, just as shackles do not bind when there is nothing to bind them to.

10. One bound by sorrow is overcome by passions, and bears the bonds as a mark of his defeat; for sorrow is the consequence of the unsatisfaction of a self-seeking desire, and such a desire is linked to every passion.

11. Whoever has conquered desires has conquered passions; and whoever has conquered passions will not be overcome by sorrow.

12. The temperate person does not grieve over a lack of food; the chaste person, over failing to commit shameful debauchery; the non-angry person, over failing to take revenge; the humble person, over being deprived of human honor; and the non-greedy person, over suffering a setback. They have completely extinguished all such desires within themselves—which is why they feel no sorrow; for the dispassionate are not pierced by sorrow, just as an arrow does not pierce one clad in armor.

13. A shield provides safety to a warrior, a wall to a city; but dispassion provides the monk with greater safety than either a shield or a wall. For a shield is often pierced by a swiftly flying arrow, and a wall is breached by a multitude of warriors, but sorrow cannot overcome dispassion.

14. He who has overcome his passions has overcome sorrow; but he who is overcome by the sweetness of passion will not escape its bonds.

15. He who is often sorrowful yet claims to be dispassionate is like a sick person pretending to be healthy; for just as a sick person is revealed by the color of his face, so sorrow exposes the passionate.

16. Those who love the world have many sorrows, but those who despise all that is in the world are always joyful.

17. The covetous person, having suffered a loss, grieves bitterly, but the one who has renounced possessions is carefree.

18. The glory-seeker grieves when he suffers dishonor, but the humble accepts it as a companion.

19. A smelting furnace purifies unrefined silver; and sorrow for God purifies the heart that is steeped in sin.

20. Frequent smelting reduces the amount of lead—and worldly sorrow weakens the mind.

21. Darkness diminishes the vitality of the eyes, and sorrow dulls the mind's contemplative faculty.

22. Sunlight does not penetrate the depths of the water, and the heart in sorrow is not illuminated by the mind's bright contemplation.

23. Every person delights in the sunrise, yet even it brings no solace to a sorrowful soul.

24. Jaundice suppresses the sense of taste, and sorrow robs the soul of feeling.

25. Whoever despises worldly pleasures will not be troubled by sorrowful thoughts.

* * *

26. When you unite the trinity within you (i.e., spirit, soul, and body) through the bond of peace, then, having united within yourself according to the commandment of the Divine Trinity, you will hear: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”* (Matt. 5:9) (1, 230).

27. This union of peace is great, for with it comes joy, which enlightens the eye of the mind to the contemplation of the highest goods.

28. If we acquire the joy of peacemaking in difficult circumstances, we will easily, with gratitude, ward off the sorrows that befall us and keep out the roaring demon of sorrow, who, seeking to devour the soul, attacks it most fiercely in times of sorrow, preparing a place for the spirit of despondency as well, so that together they may more powerfully darken the soul and destroy its labors.

29. Let the joy of peace be our law, written in our hearts—a joy that drives away sorrow, extinguishes anger, repels hatred, destroys vindictiveness, dispels despondency, and transforms grief into joy (1, 231).

30. Sheltered in peaceful serenity, this joy is an ocean of virtues, drowning the opposing hordes of the devil with the cross.

31. Understand also that there is a joy opposed to this one—a deceptive one—and, deceived by its shadow, do not mistake one for the other; for demons even imitate spiritual gifts so that, by misleading the mind with an illusion, they may drive it to madness. Spiritual joy arises without any external cause, finding its most sublime source in sorrow for God.

32. Sorrow for God renews the soul with tears, instills a watchful concern for the approaching death and judgment, and little by little teaches one to await them with longing (1, 232).

33. Unfulfilled desires give rise to sorrow; but prayers and thanksgiving cause them to wither away.

34. A mediating sorrow moves between those who are angry. If the one among them who comes to his senses first rises above his passion and extends a hand of apology to the other, he will drive away the bitter sorrow.

35. Sorrow is an illness of both soul and body; it takes the soul captive, while it withers the flesh, leaving it behind.

36. Sorrow arises from what is unpleasant (misfortunes, grief, distress); from sorrow comes a gloomy disposition (as they say, “he’s not in the mood”); and from both of these springs senseless quarrelsomeness (grumbling at everything).

37. If you wish to overcome sorrow and a gloomy disposition, then embrace benevolent love and clothe yourself in gentle joy.

38. Be especially grateful in times of sorrow: for through them the grace of intercession is felt more clearly. Thus, by driving away sorrow from the afflictions that befall you through gratitude, you will not dim the radiant beauty of courageous serenity.

6. On Despondency

1. Despondency is the exhaustion of the soul, and a soul in exhaustion, lacking what is natural to it, cannot stand firm and resist temptations.

2. Just as food is to a healthy body, so is temptation to a courageous soul.

3. The north wind nourishes growth, and temptations strengthen the soul’s patience.

4. A cloud without water is carried away by the wind, and a mind lacking patience is carried away by the spirit of despondency.

5. Spring dew promotes the growth of the field’s crops, and the word of God elevates the soul’s disposition.

6. The spirit of despondency drives the monk from his dwelling; but whoever has patience always abides in silence.

7. The despondent one uses visiting the sick as an excuse to go out, but in reality has his own purpose in doing so.

8. A monk in despondency is eager to serve and considers the fulfillment of his own desire through this to be a commandment.

9. A light breeze bends a weak plant, and the thought of wandering easily carries away the despondent.

10. A well-rooted tree does not bend under the force of the winds, and despondency does not afflict souls that are strong.

11. A wandering monk is like a withered desert branch; he stays in his cell for a short while, and then reluctantly sets off again for who knows where.

12. A plant that is moved from place to place bears no fruit, and a wandering monk bears no fruit of virtue.

13. A sick person is not satisfied with a single kind of food, and a despondent monk is not satisfied with a single task.

14. A lustful man is not satisfied with one wife, and a despondent monk is not satisfied with one cell.

15. The eyes of the despondent constantly turn toward the door, and his thoughts dwell on visitors; the door creaks, and he jumps up; a voice is heard, and he peeks out the window, not moving away from it until he grows bored.

16. The listless person, while reading a book, often yawns and nods off; he rubs his face, stretches, raising his arms, and, turning his eyes away from the book, stares intently at the wall; returning to the book, he reads a little, turning the pages, curious to see the end of a word, counts the pages, calculates the number of full sheets, criticizes the handwriting and the decorations—and finally, folding the book, places it under his head and falls into a not-very-deep sleep, because hunger is already beginning to trouble his soul and forces him to take care of himself as well.

17. A despondent monk is lazy in prayer and never recites his prayers.

18. Just as a sick person cannot bear a heavy burden, so a despondent person is unable to diligently carry out God's work; for the former's physical strength is impaired, while the latter has lost his spiritual strength.

19. Patience is the remedy for despondency, as is doing one's duty (despite a lack of enthusiasm) with all self-discipline, out of fear of God.

20. Set a limit for yourself in every task, and do not abandon it until you have finished; likewise, pray wisely and earnestly—and the spirit of despondency will flee from you.

* * *

21. Let courageous patience guide you in all your labors; for despondency stands against you, armed with all malice, and, watching over your labors, tests them all—and if it finds that any of them is not strengthened by patience, it makes that labor unbearably heavy (1, 233).

22. When, during the divine service, a spirit of despondency assails you, it whispers to your soul that psalm-singing is burdensome, setting laziness as an adversary against your zeal—and the “ ” urges you to hasten the psalm-singing so as to give the flesh rest, for it is, as it were, very weary for some reason.

23. When we are at a night vigil, let us not sit down during the service out of despondency; otherwise, demons will come and, gathering the chaff of thoughts, will immediately sow them in the heart.

24. Upon waking before the service, let us fill our hearts with bright thoughts, so that, having prepared ourselves with them, we may then stand during the psalm singing with an alert mind (1, 234).

25. Just as our outer self works with its hands so as not to be a burden to others, so too let our inner self work (in its own labor) so as not to allow the mind to be burdened by thoughts; for thoughts then impose their own work upon the soul when they seize it while it is idle from thoughts that are according to God (1, 235).

26. Cultivate manual labor out of love for humanity, and mental discipline out of wisdom, so that the former may serve to provide for strangers and to overcome or completely drive out sloth, while the latter may be a guide to contemplation and the complete purification of the mind from thoughts.

27. Let us not wander from place to place, but rather let us labor in silence at our tasks; for from idleness (and idleness) thoughts gain power over us (1, 238).

28. When thoughts compel us to go to a place that they had previously, through their suggestions, led us to love, they then compel us to regret it, so as to make us fickle and unproductive in everything.

29. A change of place should be undertaken for the sake of a more spiritual life, not for the sake of a more peaceful one (1, 239).

30. Patience, good cheer, and love are rewarding even in times of sorrow; but despondency, indolence, and self-love find joy in a life of ease.

7. On Vanity

1. Vanity is an irrational passion and easily creeps into every act of virtue.
2. A line drawn on water merges (and becomes invisible); so too does the labor of virtue in a vain soul.
3. A white hand hidden in the bosom—and the hidden deed shines more brilliantly than the light.
4. Ivy winds itself around a tree, and when it reaches the top, it dries up the root; and vanity grafts itself onto virtues and does not let go of them until it has stripped them of all meaning.
5. A cluster of grapes that has dropped to the ground or lies on the ground rots easily; so too does virtue perish when it clings to vanity.
6. A vain monk—a worker without pay—toils but receives no reward.
7. A leaky sack cannot hold what is put into it, and vanity destroys the reward of virtues.
8. The self-restraint of the vain is like smoke from a stove; both vanish into thin air.
9. The wind erases a person's footprints, and vanity reduces alms to nothing.
10. No matter how hard you throw a stone, it will not reach the sky—and the prayer of a hypocrite will not ascend to heaven.
11. Vanity is a hidden rock; if you strike it, you will lose your cargo.
12. A prudent man hides his treasure, and a virtuous monk hides the fruits of his virtue.
13. Vanity urges one to pray on the rooftops; but he who fights against vanity prays in his own cell.
14. A reckless man publicly proclaims his wealth and incites many to plot against him; but you, walking a path where robbers lurk, hide what you have until you reach the city of peace and there begin to enjoy your possessions safely.
15. The virtue of the vain is a crushed offering, which should not be brought upon the altar of God (Lev. 22:22).
16. Despondency weakens the strength of the soul, but the vanity of the sick makes them healthy, and the elderly stronger than the young—provided there are many witnesses to what is being done: then fasting, vigil, and prayer become easy; for the praise of many stirs up zeal.
17. Do not forsake your labors for the sake of human glory, nor exchange future glory for praise that is worthless; for human glory turns to dust, and its reputation fades away on earth, but the glory of virtue endures forever.

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18. True virtue does not seek human praise nor take delight in honor—that mother of evils (1, 226).
19. The beginning of honor is the desire to please others, and its end is pride.
20. He who seeks honors exalts himself and, as such, cannot bear humiliation.
21. Let labor in virtue be an honor to you, and let sought-after praise be a disgrace (1, 227).
22. Do not seek glory from the flesh—you who have resolved to renounce the passions of the flesh—but seek what is better, and this will be your glory.
23. He who desires to be honored envies those who surpass him in glory, adding hatred to this envy.
24. Overcome by a strong desire for honor, he cannot bear for anyone to be preferred over him, but claims primacy for himself so as not to appear inferior to anyone.
25. He cannot bear for those who surpass him to be honored even in his absence—and he usually dismisses the glory of their achievements as meaningless.
26. For the glory-seeker, defamation is the most grievous wound—and he cannot help but hate the one who defames him.
27. The glory-seeker is a slave to a cruel mistress—and is sold over to many tyrants: pride, envy, jealousy, and all manner of spirits; but whoever subdues the spirit of ambition with humility drives away a whole host of demons.
28. Whoever, through humility, makes himself a servant to all, becomes like Him who humbled Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7).
29. If you measure yourself by a small standard, you will not compare yourself with others.
30. Whoever reveals the weakness of the soul through tears will not think highly of his own labors (1:228).

31. Demons often subject the humble to humiliation and abuse so that, unable to endure undeserved contempt, they may abandon their humility; but whoever courageously endures dishonor in humility is thereby lifted even higher to the heights of wisdom.

32. Banish from within even the thought of human praise, so that you may thereby repel the self-seeking thought of vanity before it even arises.

33. When, by struggling against the causes of your passions, you overcome them, do not allow a deceitful thought to exalt you, lest, by believing it, you fall into delusion; but rather strive to see the flaws in what you have worked on, so that your success may not be tarnished by internal enemies (1, 230).

34. Others, having been praised for their success, grew complacent over time; as a result, both the praise faded away and their labors came to naught.

35. Others, hardened by pride in their deeds, began to imagine themselves to be great; meanwhile, their conscience grew increasingly calloused, the disease of vainglory intensified, and their thoughts—by diverting the soul's gaze from its wounds—plundered all their labors under the guise of praise (1240).

36. When you offer sincere repentance for your sins, the demons, while magnifying your acts of repentance, downplay your sins and often conceal them with forgetfulness, or lead you to believe that they have been forgiven—so that, by weakening your efforts, you may no longer consider it necessary to bitterly mourn your failings.

37. The sharpest weapon of the (ancient) serpent is vanity, which destroys the fruits of all our labors. But whoever prepares in advance a counter-maneuver of secret good deeds is close to cutting off the head of the devil himself (1, 241).

38. Hide the fragrance of your ascetic labors under the seal of silence, so that, if revealed by your tongue, they may not be plundered by glory.

39. Keep your tongue silent while actively pursuing the ascetic life (that is, let your deeds speak instead of your tongue); for in this way, even in silence, you will have your deeds—the worthy and trustworthy companions of your life—as witnesses. Whoever has deeds to show need not testify about themselves with their own tongue.

40. Others, having cast off the burden of their labors, try to conceal their laziness with deeds of the past, presenting—uncertainly and unconvincingly—as obvious witnesses deeds that are no longer present.

41. Just as you hide your sins from people, so hide your labors from them as well. You are ashamed to reveal your shameful deeds, lest you be subjected to reproach and humiliation—which would actually be beneficial for your soul. Be wary of displaying your labors as well, lest the sin of self-love bring ruin to your soul. If you reveal your shameful failures to God alone, do not reveal your struggles against them to people, lest they regard them as the crowning glory of victory.

42. Some, having become notorious among the people for their bad behavior, adopt a life of virtue—not to atone for their sinful failings through ascetic labors, but to silence the reproachful rumors about themselves. But if anyone engages in acts of piety solely for the sake of reputation, he serves not God but people (1. 245. 6).

43. Those who are distinguished in the ascetic life by the pallor of their faces should turn away from human praise before it comes—that is, when, even before meeting people, the enemy instills a thought of love of praise (1. 249).

44. When you have spent much time abstaining from wine, oil, and other excesses, then thoughts of praise, calculating the time, will begin to suggest to you that you should ease your labors for the sake of your body. To these malicious calculators, say the opposite—whatever may serve to thwart their intent. Thus, one of the brothers, praised by his inner thoughts for his labors in the struggle against demons, spoke the words of the Psalm: *“Let those who shamed me be turned back, saying to me, ‘Well done, well done’”* (Ps. 69:4).

45. Do not adorn yourself with fine garments, lest you be more clearly clothed in the demon of vanity; for it is not the beauty of garments that indicates you are clothed in the garments of virtue, but ascetic labors, like golden ornaments, bear witness to the beauty of your soul's garment (1, 256).

46. Whoever, after experiencing both the active and contemplative life, instructs the inexperienced in the art of discerning thoughts, must take care that pride in such knowledge and the desire to flaunt it for glory do not creep in.

47. One who labors most ruthlessly upon himself in performing bodily feats should not exhaust himself for the sake of praise, nor should he be exalted by glory. Otherwise, the demons, by inflating his soul with

these labors and glory and stirring him to intensify his ruthlessness toward himself even further, will entice him to undertake even greater feats so that he may exalt himself even more. To this end, they engage in the following internal dialogue with him through his thoughts: “Just as so-and-so labored without sparing himself and thereby earned such a great name for himself that people still speak of him even after his death; so you, too, must ascend to the very heights of asceticism, so that you may gain glory for yourself and so that your name may become great and be spoken of with great praise even after your death (1, 268).

48. In their dreams, they elevate another to the teacher’s chair and imagine him speaking—and that public opinion grants him precedence over all those who have become renowned for their ascetic labors and their wide-ranging knowledge. Through this, they stir up in him not only rivalry but also envy toward all those whose achievements are celebrated and whose deeds are worthy of admiration, as well as whose vast knowledge is astonishing (1, 269).

49. It sometimes happens that they lull the passions of the flesh to sleep and draw impure thoughts from within with the cunning intention of making the ascetic believe that, through the austerity of his life, he has completely conquered the spirit of lust, that his heart has been purified and has drawn near to the holiness of the saints—and that he has ascended to the very pinnacle of holiness. They often compel such a person to boast to himself about his own deeds: “I did this and that; I labored in such and such a way and exhausted myself”—without, however, allowing him to add: “*Not I, but the grace that is in me.*” Nor do they allow him to acknowledge God as his helper in the very things for which they compel him to boast, so that, having accomplished everything in his labors through his own efforts, he might claim all the praise for himself—and through this failure to give glory to God, he sinks into the depths of blasphemy, foolishly exalting himself as self-sufficient.

50. When such glory-seeking thoughts are heard in the heart and it does not resist them, then the monk (and especially the hermit) is not far from mental corruption; then the mind is in danger of being disturbed, either by demonic dreams accepted as true, or by phantoms during vigils, or by the appearance of demons in some luminous forms. For Satan himself, to deceive us, sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light; promising that, if you bow down to him, he will grant you such and such a gift, or carry you up to heaven like a new Elijah in a fiery chariot. And it has happened that those who accepted this as true strayed from the truth and fell into madness. To avoid this, remembering the reason why ascetic labors are undertaken with love, guard your heart with every care, so that, by focusing solely on outward deeds, you may not be insidiously ensnared within by (senseless) self-exaltation (1, 270).

51. To those who practice good deeds, the Lord admonishes: “*When you pray, go into your inner room, and after you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret*” (Matt. 6:6), and further: “*When you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you*” (– 2), commanding us to avoid doing any good deed for show, as if it were a harmful act. And the Prophet, saying that “*he who gathers his reward gathers it into a leaky bag*” (Hag. 1: 6), shows that every labor (striving and good deed) is destroyed by the corrupt motive of vainglory—as if through a leaky pouch, passing through a heart that is not protected by humble wisdom. A heart of humble wisdom is truly a treasure house and a strongly fortified barrier on all sides, “*where neither moth nor rust destroys, where thieves do not break in nor steal*” (Matt. 6:20). By “worm” is meant the conceit that arises within, destroying whatever is good in people; and by “thieves” are meant the praises coming from without, which, by stirring up foolish pride, hastily plunder the spiritual treasures gathered through long toil in good deeds. For just as a worm devours the substance from which it came into being, and thieves, by undermining a wall, carry off what has been painstakingly accumulated (material goods), so too does a thought, stirred by good deeds to pride, destroy the value of those very deeds; and human praise, by undermining weak minds, (invades) and leaves nothing good there—that which was brought in from outside by lawful means (through the doors), and is then expelled by them through the ears. But let no one allow this passion to overcome him to the point that, lulled by the sweet talk of vainglory, he suffers the complete loss of all that has been acquired through hard work; but let everyone remain sober and vigilant, so as to destroy the slanderers while they are still merely undermining, before they can cause harm, striking them at the very moment of their undermining, before the sun rises—and the thought becomes deed (2, 106–7).

8. On Pride

1. Pride is a swelling (puffiness) of the soul, filled with corrupted blood; if it matures, it will burst and cause great trouble.

2. The flash of lightning foreshadows a clap of thunder, and pride foreshadows the appearance of vanity.
3. Pride lifts the proud to great heights, and from there casts them down into the abyss.
4. Pride afflicts those who have turned away from God and attribute their good deeds to their own strength.
5. Just as one who steps on a spiderweb falls through and is carried away, so too does the one who relies on his own strength fall.
6. An abundance of fruit bends the branches of a tree to the ground, and an abundance of virtues humbles a man's wisdom.
7. Rotten fruit is useless to the farmer, and the virtue of the proud is of no use to God.
8. A support sustains a branch laden with fruit, and the fear of God sustains a virtuous soul.
9. Just as the weight of fruit breaks a branch, so pride brings down a virtuous soul.
10. Do not surrender your soul to pride, and you will not see terrifying visions; for the soul of the proud is forsaken by God and becomes a delight to demons.
11. At night, the proud person imagines a multitude of attacking beasts, and by day is troubled by fearful thoughts; when asleep, he often startles awake, and when awake, he fears even the shadow of a bird.
12. The rustling of a leaf terrifies the proud, and the murmur of water strikes his soul.
13. Thus, the one who just moments ago opposed God and rejected His help is now frightened by insignificant phantoms.
14. Pride cast the archangel down from heaven and caused him to fall to the earth like lightning. But a person's humility lifts him up to heaven and prepares him to rejoice with the angels.
15. Why do you soar so high, O man, and rise above the clouds, when you are but dust and ashes?
16. Consider your nature: you are earth and ashes, and soon you will dissolve into dust; now you are exalted, but shortly you will be a worm. Why do you boast of a body that will soon decay?
17. A man is great when God helps him; but as soon as he is forsaken by God, he comes to know the weakness of his nature.
18. You have nothing good that you have not received from God. Why, then, do you boast of what belongs to another as if it were your own? Why do you boast of what has been given by God's grace as if it were your own achievement?
19. Acknowledge the Giver and do not exalt yourself too highly; you are God's creation—do not separate yourself from the Creator.
20. God helps you; do not deny your Benefactor. You have ascended to the heights of life, but it was God who guided you; you have excelled in virtue, but it was God who acted within you; acknowledge the One who has exalted you, so that you may remain steadfast at the heights.
21. Recognize your fellow human being as being of the same essence as you, and do not deny your kinship with him out of arrogance.
22. He is humbled, and you are exalted; yet the one Creator fashioned you both.
23. Do not despise the humble one; he stands firmer than you, walks upon the earth, and will not fall easily; but the haughty one, if he falls, will be crushed.
24. A proud monk is a rootless tree that cannot withstand the force of the wind; but unpretentious wisdom is a fortified city, within which one dwells in safety.
25. A blade of grass is lifted high by a gust of wind, but the proud are carried away by the delusion of madness.
26. A burst bubble turns to nothing—and the memory of the proud will perish.
27. The words of the humble are a soothing balm to the soul, but the words of the proud are full of boasting.
28. The prayer of the humble moves God, but the plea of the proud offends Him.
29. Humility is a crown to the home, and it keeps those who enter safe.
30. When you ascend to the heights of virtue, you will have a great need for protection: for if one standing on the ground falls, he will rise again quickly, but one who falls from a height is in danger of dying.
31. A precious stone is befitted by a golden setting, and a man's humility shines with many virtues.

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32. Do not forget your fall, even if you repent; but remember your sin with weeping, for the sake of your humility, so that, having humbled yourself, you may necessarily cut off your pride (1:240).

33. Do not look upon the fallen with a haughty thought that exalts you, as if you were a judge, but pay attention to yourself with a sober mind—as the tester and evaluator of your own deeds (1, 245).

34. When you fall, sigh; and when you succeed, do not become arrogant. Do not boast that you are blameless, lest you be clothed in shame instead of glory.

35. One of the most eloquent men, speaking on the subject of humility, recounted the following: “A most eloquent father was struck on the cheek by a demoniac who was in the throes of a violent fit of madness; and the father, turning around immediately, offered him his other cheek, ready to receive the blow. Then the demon, struck by humility as if by lightning, cried out and immediately departed from God’s creation” (1, 259–60).

36. Just as those who descend into the depths of the earth extract gold from there, so those who descend to gold-like humility draw virtues from it (1:266).

37. St. Paul commands, “*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead*” (Phil. 3:13). Whoever is so disposed is not so much exalted by what he has achieved as humbled by what he lacks in comparison to what is expected, taking care to complete what is unfinished and not turning to what is already finished; for what has been accomplished often inflates the frivolous to the point of recklessness, while what remains to be done humbles the mind with the uncertainty of whether it will be brought to completion, and causes sorrow even before it is accomplished. Therefore, the Lord, guarding those who have ascended to the heights of virtue against the temptation to pride, says: “*When you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’*” (Luke 17:10). Although He does not prevent us from rejoicing that our duty has been fulfilled, He does not permit us to think highly of ourselves. For He says that a debt has been paid, not a voluntary gift offered (2:112–13).

38. Pride inflates thoughts to the point of arrogance, teaches one to despise every human being and to look with contempt upon one’s fellow man as something insignificant; it drives lofty thoughts to madness, inspires dreams of equality with God, does not acknowledge the Providence and care of the All-Good God, and assumes that, as a reward for one’s deeds, one receives all the graces one enjoys as a due reward for one’s deeds; it refuses to see God’s assistance in what one does and in what one succeeds at; it considers itself sufficient for every good deed; in its conceit, it thinks it has the strength for everything, while being utterly powerless. She is a water bubble, inflated by a vain opinion of herself, which, if one were to blow on it, would turn into nothing (2, 184).

3. Exhortatory Chapters

1. Have the fear of God and love for God, and treat everyone according to the pure testimony of your conscience.

2. Believe that God Himself stands before you in all the deeds you perform each day.

3. Shun praise, but be ashamed of and reproach yourself for blame.

4. Rejoice when you practice virtue, but do not boast, lest a shipwreck occur in the harbor.

5. The more you succeed in keeping the law, the more you should acknowledge that you are far from perfection.

6. Consider the end of every undertaking before you begin it.

7. Day and night, contemplate your final day, and no love for this present life will bind you to the earth.

8. Do not associate with those whom, as you can see, the good despise.

9. Whether you act, speak, or engage in philosophical discourse, strive not to harm anyone.

10. Do not take delight in the flowers of life; they are like the blossoms of grass—as soon as you touch them, they wither.

11. Give thanks in your sorrows—and the burden of your sins will become lighter.

12. Be steadfast in temptations; for they have exposed many, even the great, as lacking steadfastness or self-control.

13. Do not criticize God’s long-suffering; for it is a universal remedy.

14. Abhor the disorder of (human) life, but do not blame God for it.

15. Let us be mindful of ourselves—then we will not condemn others; for there is much within ourselves for which we condemn others.
16. Let a prayerful psalm always be on your lips; for the mere utterance of God's name puts demons to flight.
17. Let our prayer be offered with sobriety, so that we do not ask God for what displeases Him.
18. Always remember God—and your mind will become like heaven.
19. Keep your eyes in check; for if you do not watch over them, they will wander here and there.
20. Guard your tongue; for it often reveals what would be better left unsaid.
21. Cultivate your mind with instruction in the law; for constant instruction in it uproots evil thoughts.
22. Hide your virtues, but strive to have many witnesses to your life.
23. Detest the pleasures of the flesh, for they defile both body and soul.
24. Give the flesh only what is necessary, not what it desires out of lust.
25. Do not delight in worldly pleasures; for they bind you to this life, and both of these things give rise to enmity toward God.
26. Turn away from the joys of this life; for they cause those who are on the path of life to slip and fall.
27. If you have wealth, spend it; if you do not have it, do not accumulate it.
28. Consider fasting a weapon, prayer a wall, and tears a bath.
29. Whatever sins you have committed, remember them all with lamentation; for this brings constant contrition to the soul.
30. Comfort the poor; for they make the Judge merciful toward us.
31. Share in the needs of the saints; for through them we have communion with God.
32. Enter the Church as if entering heaven, and within it speak not of, nor think of, anything earthly.
33. Consider it necessary to have enough for life's necessities; but leave the care of these matters to God.
34. Exhaust the flesh with good works, but take care that it does not collapse entirely (under their weight).
35. Drink wine as little as possible; the more you reduce the amount, the more beneficial it is for those who drink it.
36. Keep your anger in check; for when it goes beyond measure, it becomes the father of madness.
37. In times of illness, turn first to prayer rather than to doctors and medicines.
38. Honor all priests, but seek out the good ones.
39. Love God's houses, but also make yourself a part of God's house.
40. Attend church frequently, for it delivers us from external storms and turmoil.
41. What is on earth is temporary; do not grieve, then, if such things are taken from you.
42. When a thought of lust comes upon you, counter it with the shame of being seen by others and the offense to God.
43. Guard your ears and eyes; for through them all the enemy's arrows enter.
44. When you pray, lift your thoughts to God; and if, becoming distracted, they drift downward, lift them back up again.
45. The mind never ceases to produce thoughts; but drive out the evil ones and cultivate the good ones.
46. Rejoice in humility; for the height it produces is great, and it cannot fall.
47. Strive as much as is necessary to subdue the desires of the flesh; and if you grow weary, grant your body some respite—not for pleasure, but for health.
48. Drive away evil thoughts with good ones.
49. Meditate on the splendor of heavenly blessings, and no attachment to the earth or to earthly pleasures will enter your heart.
50. Believe that evil thoughts are the devil's sowing; thus they will cease, and the sower will be put to shame.
51. Guard yourself most of all against listening; for it makes the soul distracted and careless, and a careless soul easily casts off the bridle of the law.
52. The soul must be divided between work and prayer (that is, so that it is sometimes engaged in work and sometimes in prayer); then the devil will find few ways to enter our hearts.

- 53.** If you stretch out your hand to work, let your tongue sing and your mind pray; for God requires that we always remember Him.
- 54.** Bless every task you undertake with prayer, especially those in which you sense doubt creeping into your thoughts.
- 55.** If you want the work of your hands to be divine rather than worldly, then let what you earn through them be shared with those in need.
- 56.** Rejoice in the visit of the saints, for through them God is revealed.
- 57.** Distinguish the truly holy by their deeds; for every tree is known by its fruit.
- 58.** Always strive to learn something when you see the saints; observe their gaze and their demeanor, for both are very beneficial.
- 59.** Strive to maintain a heart free from malice and a body free from impurity; for both make you a temple of God.
- 60.** Thus, guard your temple as the temple of the One who created you, who will judge you, and who arranges all things so that you—His image—may be pure.
- 61.** Conversations with worldly people distract the mind from God; therefore, not only should you yourself refrain from speaking with them, but you should also dissuade others from doing so.
- 62.** When you are reviled, consider whether you have done anything worthy of revilement; if not, regard this revilement as smoke that quickly vanishes.
- 63.** Without a contrite heart, it is impossible to be freed from passions; and the heart is brought to contrition through threefold abstinence—that is, abstinence from sleep, from food, and from physical rest.
- 64.** If you are wronged in any way, resort to patience—and the harm will fall upon those who wronged you.
- 65.** When you see wealth, or glory, or worldly power, reflect on their transience—and you will avoid the trap.
- 66.** Endure sorrows; for in them, like roses among thorns, virtues are born and come to maturity.
- 67.** Consider nothing equal in worth to virtue, for it is the image of God; therefore, it is unchanging, just as He is.
- 68.** Weep for the sinner who prospers; for the sword of the Just Judge hangs over him.
- 69.** Consider sloth the root of all evils; for it robs you of the good you possess and prevents you from acquiring the good you lack.
- 70.** When the one who does evil is not ashamed of it, the wound grows worse—and the fall leads to despair.
- 71.** Whenever you lose heart, consider what blessings are in store for the faithful—and spiritual joy will soon come to you.
- 72.** The faithful must be humble before everyone; for to be humble only before some means to have false humility.
- 73.** Do not prioritize anything over love for your neighbor, except in those cases where love for God is neglected because of it.
- 74.** Do not become attached to anyone or show partiality contrary to God's law; for whoever prefers anyone over God makes God seem less worthy than that person.
- 75.** Do not defend the wicked, for by doing so you encourage them in their evil and defile yourself by associating with their deeds.
- 76.** Admonish the sinner, but do not condemn the one who has fallen; for the latter is the act of a slanderer, while the former is the act of one who desires to correct.
- 77.** Strive always to hear and speak of the deeds of the saints; for this stirs the soul to wholesome competition.
- 78.** If the heart is a domestic church for each of us, then we must also perform church services within it.
- 79.** If a service is being held in the Church, attend it; but if not, (after singing) read the Gospel of the Apostles—and go (about your business).
- 80.** Judge the glory of virtues by the saints; for their glory remains immortal even after death.
- 81.** You will come to hate evil when you realize that it is the devil's flashing sword against us.

82. If you are admonishing someone who has fallen, temper your words with compassion; then his ears will be softened, and his heart will be enlightened.

83. When speaking with the saints, ask about spiritual matters; but when speaking with others, do not speak of them.

84. Always be eager to do good deeds, so that, by neglecting them, you do not depart from here as one who is only half-perfect.

85. “*Run in such a way as to win the prize*” (1 Cor. 9:24), that is, without stopping; for we must pursue virtue until we leave the arena of life.

86. Do not be negligent in keeping the commandments; for such people labor in vain.

87. Practice patience even before you need it, so that when the time comes, you will find its full armor ready.

88. Fight against evil thoughts and speak to them what is written in the Law (that is, in the Word of God against them).

89. With great diligence, turn your eyes away from this life, for the evil smoke rising from it stirs up the soul.

90. If some bad habit has taken hold of you, cut it away little by little—and without much effort you will pull this thorn out of your soul.

91. Love the pure God purely; and consider everything as inferior to Him, who is above all things.

92. If you wish to be a temple of God, offer God unceasing prayer as a continuous sacrifice.

93. Do not take one who lives carelessly as a counselor; for, loving what is evil, he cannot advise what is good when he does not love it.

94. Abstain from all that is perishable, and partake of the mystical supper every day; for in this way the body of Christ becomes ours.

95. When you are chastened by God in any way, do not grumble; for He chastens as a Father and is worthy of thanks as a Benefactor.

96. When you suffer dishonor, rejoice; for if it is unjust, your reward will be great, and if it is just, by remaining chaste through it, you will be spared the scourge of punishment.

97. Consider the sorrows and joys of life to be like shadows and a wheel, for they are fleeting, like a shadow, and turn, like a wheel.

98. Strive always to prosper in God; for whoever adds a little to a little will, in a short time, amass the good wealth sought by all.

99. If you wish to avoid painful torment, never speak ill of anyone; for this grieves the Divine.

100. If you wish to ward off every scourge of punishment from your home, do not speak ill of a human being—your fellow creature; for the Creator, who made him, is justly grieved by this.

101. If you wish to be above all sin, do not pry into the affairs of others; for there is much within you yourself that you accuse others of.

102. Flee from pride, O man, even if you are rich, lest you make God your enemy.

103. Love humility, even if you are great, so that you may be exalted on the Day of Judgment.

104. Do not mock others, and you will never be mocked throughout your life.

105. When you are in church, do not let your mind wander; for those who stand before the King do not laugh or let their minds wander.

106. Commit these words firmly to memory—and this will bring you glory throughout your life.

107. Strive for a virtuous life, so that you may have the courage to correct those who sin.

108. Rein in your insolence; do not rebuke anyone—lest you be condemned as one who is haughty.

109. Do not mock another’s downfall, lest you be mocked by someone you do not wish to be mocked by.

110. Observe these exhortations—and they will bring you a crown of glory.

111. Be a doer of these commandments—and they will make you honorable before people and pleasing to God; for God is pleased by these, and true service to Him is rewarded through such achievements.

112. Strive always to excel in good deeds.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ This concludes the exhortatory chapters in the Greek Patriarchal edition. The Moscow Academy’s translation adds the following chapters from the manuscript it used.

113. And a warrior, unless he has first been trained through long-term practice and tested in toil and battle, having demonstrated through experience that he can triumph over his enemies, is not glorified.

114. All the more so, before the true King of Heaven, no one is deemed worthy to receive the heavenly gifts of the Holy Spirit unless he first trains himself in the study of the holy commandments, and in this way takes up the heavenly weapon of grace itself and enters into battle against the spirits of wickedness.

115. To the extent that one succeeds in spiritual struggle, to that extent one ascends to the heights of the mysteries of the Spirit and the hidden treasures of wisdom.

116. And to the extent that one is enriched by grace, to that extent does one succeed in discerning the designs of malice, with the help of the Lord. To Him be glory and power forever! Amen. (In the Greek Patriarchal edition, the first chapters of these exhortatory chapters are as follows—and after them comes: “Fear God...” and so on.)

117. The beginning of salvation is self-condemnation.

118. It is better to throw a stone at random than to speak a word.

119. Treat everyone as you would like them to treat you.

120. Demonstrate the truth through deeds rather than words.

121. The pious person is not the one who shows mercy to many, but the one who offends no one.

122. It is better to sleep on the ground among tree leaves, with a clear conscience, than without it on a bed of gold.

123. A friend who nourishes the soul is a sweet friend.

124. Praise God with words, worship Him through your deeds, and revere Him with your mind and heart.

125. Wisdom, a good life, and nobility of character make one a priest.

126. The worst thing one can do is to grovel before everything shameful.

127. Study virtue through words, and preach it through deeds.

128. Do not merely regard virtue as a noble deed, but possess it as you ought.

129. By honoring the law, you will live according to the law.

130. A wanderer is one to whom all worldly things are foreign.

131. Do not flatter the rich, but do not provoke them either.

132. Wine strengthens the body, but the Word of God strengthens the soul.

133. Eat foods that are healthy, not sweet.

134. If you seek to please the crowd, you will become like the crowd.

135. Above all, mortify your body.

136. A hardworking person is one who never has any spare time.

137. To spew blasphemy against God is an unforgivable sin.

138. Great trouble comes from the ears and the tongue.

4. Thoughts that turn a person away from the perishable and attach them to the imperishable

1. The path to virtue is flight from the world—a good and short path.

2. One who desires the imperishable must regard all that is perishable as nothing.

3. If you desire true life, always expect human death.

4. Come to hate this present life, for you see how chaotically its wheel turns.

5. Do not covet goods whose use is fleeting and whose possession is lost.

6. Laugh at those who succeed in everything, and have compassion for those who fail in everything; for the former leads to a reward, and the latter to wisdom.

7. Strive for the patience that, as we know, the martyrs demonstrated; for we, too, are called to the martyrdom of conscience (to stand firm in the demands of conscience).

8. Put the soul above all else, and the path of virtue will then flow effortlessly; for all things are mortal, but the soul is immortal, and what is mortal must give way to what is immortal.

9. Be prepared for suffering, and you will derive great benefit from it.

10. Do not ask God for what is pleasant, but only for what is useful; for no matter how much you ask for the former, God will not grant it, and even if you somehow obtain it, it will soon vanish.

11. Do not despise poverty; for it makes the warrior in the arena of the law undistracted by anything.

12. Do not be captivated by wealth; for the cares associated with it most often separate a person from God against his will.
13. The end is near; prepare yourself, you sluggard, for the scourges.
14. The harvest is not far off; let us clear the field of the soul of its thorns.
15. Nothing is hidden from the Judge; and in vain do we strive to hide ourselves while we sin.
16. Be more ashamed before the angels—who are numerous around us—than before people, and turn away from every shameful deed.
17. Think carefully about the Judge's scales—and you will cast out of your life everything that cannot withstand the true weight (on those scales—or that proves to be counterfeit because of the admixture of foreign elements, just as, for example, a gold coin that fails to meet its standard weight due to the admixture of other elements).
18. Consider idleness and inactivity a loss to yourself, and hasten to do whatever is required of us.
19. Always reflect on the transience of this life, and nothing in it will be able to distract you.
20. Let not earthly joys—which are temporary—delight you; for they are a hook that lures and catches the soul like a fish.
21. Stand firm against temptations, showing the necessary courage.
22. Never despise a poor person who sheds tears, lest the tears of your prayer be despised.
23. Wisdom is the most excellent possession for people; but, being unique, it desires to dwell only with the one who has acquired it.
24. Virtue is God's tunic; weave it, and you will be the one who clothes the One who clothes all creation.
25. Earthly things are stolen by thieves; pursue heavenly things, which are beyond the reach of thieves' fingers (unattainable by these fingers).
26. One must renounce pleasures; for they lead to deeds that, once sobriety returns, bring lamentation.
27. Carnal thoughts must be abhorred in every way, for they corrupt the body and defile the soul.
28. Even earthly blessings are not attained without toil; why, then, do we turn away from heavenly blessings because of toil?
29. Do you wish to practice virtue without feeling the toil? Keep in mind that this toil is temporary, but the reward for it is eternal.
30. All who pine for vain (useless) pleasures should consider the brevity of their enjoyment and the length of the punishment that follows.
31. Consider everything transitory—only virtue is imperishable.
32. Disdain everything that makes a person beast-like—and do the one thing that can make you heavenly.
33. Strive for virtue; for through wisdom, it reveals Adam as a god.
34. Do you control your appetite? Then control your tongue as well, lest you be a slave to one thing and a useless free man to another.
35. Love God, and do not be more attached to your own than to Him, lest, according to His Word, you prove unworthy of Him, even though you do not desire this.
36. Endure sorrows patiently; for in them lies the crown for those who fight the good fight.
37. It is blessed to endure evil, but it is wretched to commit it; for the one who endures it is an heir of Christ, but the one who commits it is a co-heir of the devil.
38. The bread of fasting is good; for it contains no leaven of sensuality.
39. The altar of prayer is holy, for it draws the Holy of Holies near to us.
40. Do not consider justice to be the exclusive domain of virtue, for without it every deed is impure.
41. If you sow among the poor, you sow your own; for what belongs to others is more bitter than weeds.
42. The merciful man is blind if he is unjust; for he cultivates a field from which he cannot reap a harvest.
43. Always expect death, but do not fear it (or put yourself in a state where you do not fear it); for both are true marks of wisdom.
44. Bear the appearance of virtue, not to deceive, but to benefit those who see you.

45. One ought to speak well even of those who do not do good, so that, ashamed of their own words, they may begin to do good.
46. If you truly desire heaven, then the earth is nothing to you; for it prevents you from soaring toward it.
47. Do not desire to become rich out of a love of wealth; for God has decreed that the righteous should give alms *“from what they have”* (Luke 11:41;—from what they possess).
48. If a cup of cold water justifies the merciful, what reward awaits the one who lavishes everything on the poor?
49. Purity and compassion are the mothers of virtues; therefore, without both, one cannot serve Christ (or fight for Christ).
50. Do not neglect compassion; for it brought the Good Lord down from heaven.
51. Do not neglect purity; for through it, the Most Holy Virgin, having become the vessel of the Incarnation, bestowed upon mankind the God who became incarnate for our sake.
52. Do not say, “I will take vengeance on my enemy”; for we have a righteous Judge (and Avenger) in heaven.
53. Do not desire to live in pleasure, nor to be rich, nor to be famous; for these are the fleeting things of this life, and we were not created to perish.
54. Do not weep over the dead—this is the common path; and blessed is the one who reaches its end (without fault).
55. Weep for the sinner, not for the poor; for the former prepares a crown for himself, while the latter prepares torment.
56. Laugh at the wheel of life, spinning haphazardly; but beware of the abyss into which it casts those who fall asleep upon it.
57. Speak much with God, and little with people; but by studying the Law, you will correct both.
58. A bath that is beneficial to the soul is tears during prayer; but after prayer, remember what you wept about.
59. Do not flatter the powerful of this world; for *“the mighty will be severely punished”* (Wis. 6:6); and therefore they will have a Judge who is most severe toward them.
60. It is the lot of Adam (that is, fallen man) to labor (with the body, involuntarily and without reward); but by laboring in the Law, we earn our reward.
61. Eve’s descendants must suffer; but when we endure our sufferings with gratitude, then the curse is turned into a blessing for us.
62. Let your conscience be a lamp in your deeds; for it shows which are good and which are evil.
63. Let us judge ourselves—and the Judge is appeased; for He, being good, rejoices when He sees the sinner cast off his burden.
64. If we have done anything impure, let us wash it away with repentance; for we must present the image of God within ourselves as pure.
65. Let us heal the sores of our souls before they are laid bare—so that through these remedies we may avert the scourges of punishment.
66. Just as it is difficult for one who is bound to walk, so too can one who is entangled in worldly affairs not walk the path of virtue with purity.
67. We must hate sin; for then, even if someone falls into it, they will more quickly escape its snares.
68. Whoever does not hate sin, even if he does not commit sin, is counted among sinners.
69. Lament over your neighbor who sins, so that you may also lament over yourself; for we are all guilty of sin.
70. Remind a friend who has fallen of the Judge—and thereby you will anoint your own sinful wound; for such counsel is a universal remedy.
71. When you intend to say or do something, keep in mind the answer that will soon be required of you; and you will restrain yourself out of fear.
72. Fear the punishment for sin, and the chains that come with the thought of shame because of it; for the burden of both is immeasurable.
73. Both beauty and the multitude of future blessings are boundless, while present ones are but a shadow, smoke, or a water bubble.

74. Do not sow evil, for the harvest is near—and the fire awaits the sower of thorns.

75. Hypocrites, the greedy, and the pleasure-seekers are the roses of this world; but wait a little while, and you will see (instead of roses) trampled grass.

76. Every evil deed gives the devil a weapon against us; but he, armed with it, treats those who armed him cruelly.

77. Do you want to wear down your enemy? Cut off sin, and then you can mock him as you would a plucked sparrow.

78. Woe to the wicked; for when all are enlightened, he is shrouded in darkness.

79. Woe to the blasphemer; for his tongue will be tied before the Judge—and he will be unable to say anything in his own defense.

80. Woe to the lawless, for he will go before the stern Judge and the righteous Lawgiver.

81. Woe to the avaricious! Wealth will flee from him, and fire will consume him.

82. Woe to the sluggard! He will lament the time he has wasted.

83. Woe to the arrogant! When he lies in his coffin, he will learn who he really is.

84. Woe to the adulterer who has defiled the wedding garment! He will be cast out in shame from the king's wedding hall.

85. Woe to the quarrelsome and to the drunkard with him! They will be treated like murderers and punished like adulterers.

86. Woe to those who indulge in pleasures during this brief time! They fatten themselves like a calf destined for the slaughter.

87. Blessed is the one who walks the narrow path; for he will enter heaven as a crowned one.

88. Blessed is the one who rejects worldly pleasures; for the demons tremble before him.

89. Blessed is the one who is pure in heart and sincere in virtue; for he will judge the world, and will not be judged along with the world.

90. Blessed is the one who is unceasing in prayer, reading, and good deeds; such a one will not fall asleep in death.

91. Blessed is the one who leads a noble life and possesses humble wisdom; for he imitates Christ and will sit with Christ.

92. Blessed is the one whose lips never cease to speak the law; for God never departs from such a one's dwelling.

93. Blessed is the one who does good to many; for at the judgment he will find many defenders.

94. Blessed is the one whose virtue is not feigned; for the Judge's shovel will unfailingly scatter everything.

95. Blessed is the one who adorns his deeds before the fire appears, by which all will be tested.

96. Blessed is the one who hastens toward the life to come; for the present life emits the stench of decay and is drawn toward death.

97. Blessed is the one who dispenses the evil he has accumulated and stands pure before the pure Judge.

98. But the essence of the message is this: O soul, do not be careless! For soon you will stand before the scales of the dreadful judgment seat of Christ, our God.

5. Thoughts and exhortations similar to the preceding ones, drawn from other writings of St. Nilus

1. The courage of virtue is praiseworthy in times of peace, but its valor is even more praiseworthy in times of battle.

2. Virtue reveals itself not only in what it does, but also in the trials that oppose it.

3. He is dispassionate who has won the victory by enduring suffering in many battles; but he who claims to have attained virtue without battle is still passionate.

4. A heart that knows no battle is deprived of the opportunity to demonstrate virtue; for virtue derives its name from valiant deeds performed in battle.

5. Let us resolutely tear away the pleasure we derive from our thoughts, directing all our anger toward them, lest, by accepting these thoughts with pleasure, we become sympathetic even toward their objects.

6. In a person who is not silent, the soul struggles with sensory impressions, while the lover of silence, who guards his senses, struggles with his thoughts.

7. Those who have received the strength for ascetic labors through grace should guard against the thought that they possess this strength naturally on their own. The Source of all that is good in us is He who gave the Word regarding the commandments, just as the source of all that is evil is the crafty instigator of delusions. Therefore, whatever good you do, give thanks to the Source of good; but whatever evil troubles you with its temptations, attribute it to the originator of all evil.

8. As for the end of every trial (difficulty, sorrow)—give thanks to God, the Giver of all good things—so that the enemy’s malice may be put to shame by such sincerely offered thanksgiving. Whoever combines gratitude with his work will possess an imperishable treasure of the heart, having built a double wall with battlements against sin.

9. Praiseworthy is the man who has combined an active life with a contemplative one, so that the field of the soul, watered by both sources, may yield an abundance of virtues. For contemplation inspires the intellect to contemplate the most perfect things, while action puts to death “*the members that are on the earth: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire*” (Col. 3:5). Therefore, one who has girded himself with the full armor of action and contemplation is well-equipped to confront demonic cunning.

10. Demons wage war against the soul through thoughts, but patience—which is more effective against them—opposes them; and when they see this mighty leader of the battle, they enter the struggle with trepidation.

11. If you wish to wage war successfully against the host of demons, then guard the gates of your soul (the senses) with solitary silence and lend your ear to the words of the fathers, so that, having thus learned to better discern the thorns of thoughts, you may burn them with anger and rejection.

12. When you heed the advice of the fathers, do not be a judge of their deeds, but one who understands and studies their sayings.

13. It is the custom of enemies to divert the questioner’s attention to the actions of the advisor, so that, by setting you up to be a strict and critical judge of him, they may deprive you of his useful counsel.

14. When advice is offered to you, do not reject it, even if you yourself are knowledgeable.

15. Whoever does not heed his father’s commandment also disregards the commandment of the law.

16. Do not speak of your fathers’ achievements merely for your own pleasure, but demand of yourself that you be the most diligent in accomplishing them.

17. He who diligently strives to discern which thought opposes which feat will be skilled in the struggle against the enemy’s deception.

18. Know that in place of the spiritual feat that is lacking in the totality of your spiritual labors, a thought has crept in—one that usually opposes it—and has usurped its place.

19. Remember to guard your heart with prudence in your ascetic labors, so that neglect of care for the better things—having stolen it—does not deliver it into captivity to thoughts. Forgetting this captivity conspires with malice (the enemy) so that, as soon as it steals the mind, malice (the enemy) may enter it more swiftly and plunder it as it pleases.

20. When one person enjoys listening to another slander someone, then both serve as instruments of two spirits that mutually aid one another: for malicious listening fuels malicious speech, and malicious speech provokes malicious listening; and both, to the heart’s ruin, love one another.

21. Shut your ears to slander, lest you sin in two ways: by accustoming yourself to a destructive passion, and by failing to restrain others from slander.

22. He who loves to mock robbing the souls of the best (among his people) like a bandit, undermining the weak-minded with slander.

23. He who flees from a tongue that slanders his neighbor will drive slander away from his own.

24. He who listens with pleasure to the slanderer draws the poison of a beast (from the abyss) into his ears.

25. May your ear not taste this bitter poison, lest you, too, offer the same potion to another.

26. Do not cloud your hearing with gossip, lest, having sold yourself to this passion, you become a slave to many passions; for once a single passion has found a place within you, it will lead other passions into the same nest (or stall); and a masterful mind becomes a slave to many passions when, having joined forces with any one passion, it completely casts aside ascetic labors.

27. Whatever in you is worthy of envy, hide it above all from the envious.

28. When your friend, regarding the good reputation of your deeds as a humiliation to himself, is stung by envy and even takes it into his head to tarnish that reputation with some reproach, be careful not to be stung yourself by allowing the bitter poison of grief to seep into your soul. Satan's aim is precisely to fan the flames of his envy and to consume you with grief.

29. But let us rather humble ourselves and honor such *people "more highly"* (Rom. 12:10)—striving even through a meal to soothe their spirits, which have been enraged by jealousy.

30. Someone tried to persuade a certain patient, elderly hermit to leave the desert because of his advanced age. But the elder said to him, "Stop forcing me to do this; for me—a sinner—my time of exile is not yet over."

31. When I asked him to give me a word of edification, he replied: "First and foremost, diligently seek to root the fear of God in your heart—and then you will always find within yourself the necessary word that instructs a person in wisdom."

32. This same elder, when asked about acquiring the fear of God, said this: "Whoever carefully keeps the memory of death in mind is thereby led to the fear of judgment."

33. Driven by fear, let the Divine Scriptures be your daily companion; through conversing with them, you will banish the influence of foreign thoughts.

34. Whoever, through the teachings of the Divine Scriptures, gathers a treasure of spiritual knowledge in his heart will easily drive away such thoughts from it.

35. During nightly readings at vigils, as we listen to the Divine Scriptures, let us not dull our hearing with sleep, nor surrender our soul to the captivity of thoughts; but let us pierce our hearts with the sting of the Scriptures, so that, having been brought to contrition, we may be filled with zeal for salvation and put an end to the opposing indifference.

36. Burning with love for God through remembrance of heaven, one drives every desire to please men from one's thoughts.

37. Do not send the witness of your deeds—your conscience—to a thought that despises sin and speaks sweetly of it.

38. You will not extinguish the passions of the body unless you apply to your flesh the remedy of ascetic labors that subdue its passions. Nor will you extinguish the passions of the soul unless you first fill your heart with the fruits of love.

39. Bodily passions originate from the natural needs of the flesh—and abstinence is needed against them; but passions of the soul arise from the needs of the soul—and prayer is needed against them.

40. Love is the fullness of dispassion—the eradication of passions: it brings long-suffering, cools boiling anger, instills humility, and subdues pride.

41. Love, in and of itself, has nothing except God; for God is love.

42. Clothe yourself with the fear of God rather than the fear of eternal torment—so that the fear of the fire of Gehenna may kindle within you an unquenchable zeal (for the work of pleasing God), and so that you may more quickly gain wisdom against the wickedness of your thoughts; for fear is the beginning of wisdom.

43. One who explains the deceptions of the mind from experience will not be understood by everyone, but only by those who are themselves experienced; for the path to this knowledge is the same for all: experience.

44. The school of experiential knowledge is an active life; by embracing it with the greatest diligence, we come to know ourselves, learn to discern our thoughts, and come to know God.

45. Let your deeds be the strength that calms your thoughts; for action is wiser than knowledge and speech, just as it is far more laborious; in action, words flash like lightning, but when there are no deeds, words do not shine with the power of deeds.

46. Thoughts, by piercing the eye of the soul, blind us, so that even the best of the commandments are used in the worst possible way.

47. The demons rage against those (brothers) who distinguish themselves by their obedience to their abbot, and they gnash their teeth at them, because they have combined obedience with a carefree renunciation of the world.

48. For those who are submissive to their father, the demons, seeking out all manner of pretexts, prepare distress for him; and if anger arises in this situation, they stir up resentment against him, and then,

little by little, they instill oppression and hatred toward him, on the grounds that he supposedly punishes unjustly and shows favoritism; the demons do this in order to shake the soul in various ways and snatch it from the father's embrace.

49. Sometimes demons exalt ascetic labors in one's thoughts, and sometimes they belittle them as serving no purpose, so as to instill pride in some and sow despair in others. They exalt the labors of those whom they cannot lead into sloth, in order to lead them into pride; and to those who refuse to succumb to pride, they insist that their deeds serve no purpose, so that, by leading them thereby into sloth, they may plunge them into despair.

50. When our thoughts exalt our ascetic labors, let us cast them aside with contempt and humble our souls; but when they belittle these labors as serving no purpose, let us exalt Christ's mercy with all our strength.

51. To the same extent that you mortify your body, to that same extent examine your conscience. Know yourself, discerning the secret thefts of your thoughts, so that, remaining insensitive to their secret plundering, we may not be led astray by the notion that virtues are reaped solely through the austerity of life.

52. Just as gold that has not been put to use, when placed in a smelting furnace, becomes purer; so too does a novice monk, having refined his character in the monastery, become enlightened through the trials of patience. Through the brothers' commands, he learns obedience, and through the punishments of the one who disciplines him (the abbot or elder), he is prepared to have long-suffering deeply rooted within him. And if he joyfully accepts insults and comes to love humility in humiliation, then, having risen above the passions opposed to this, he will begin to shine ever more brightly with virtues, in proportion to the strength granted to him by grace.

53. The mind will find rest when, having cut off the causes of the passions, it enters into contemplation; but until the passions are cut off, it experiences both toil and danger, setting out with unsteady steps to battle its adversaries.

54. The elders highly approve of the hermit life when it is undertaken at the right time—that is, when one embarks upon it after having perfected one's virtues in communal life. And let such a person first test himself to see if he can successfully live in solitude; and if he finds this impossible for himself due to a lack of strength, let him return to communal life, lest, lacking the strength to resist the wiles of his thoughts, he lose his sanity.

55. Just as sons serve as comforters to a weeping widow, so too are ascetic labors a comfort to a fallen soul—they dispel thoughts of despair, deepen faithful repentance, proclaim the mercy of Christ, and atone for sins committed.

56. Just as a young dog attempts to snatch bread from an infant, so does a cunning thought seek to seize the mind from the heart. Therefore, let us not, like infants, be blind to the cunning of the opposing forces, lest we surrender our souls to their plunder.

57. Just as a glittering host of stars makes the sky bright, so the truth of the divine words, like a lamp brought within, illuminates a person. Therefore, let us all bear the same image of truth, for *"the Lord settles those of one mind in the same house"* (Ps. 67:7).

58. Just as the sun smiles upon the whole earth with its radiant rays, so love greets every soul with radiant deeds. If we acquire it, we will extinguish our passions and shine up to the heavens. You will accomplish any task as soon as you attain holy love; but when it is absent, there is no success in anything—then anger rages, manners grow coarse, and vanity mingles with labors undertaken out of pride.

59. First, one must struggle against the passions and, with great self-restraint, commit to memory what occurred during the battle; then, based on one's own experience, share with others the rules of the struggle and make victory easier for them by explaining in advance the methods for waging the battle. Others have overcome their passions, perhaps through a long and austere life, but they do not know the way to victory, because, as in a nighttime battle, they did not follow the course of the entire affair, and their minds did not discern the enemy's malicious intentions.

60. One who has tasted silence and begun to practice contemplation to some extent will not consent to bind the mind with cares for the body and, by distracting it from spiritual knowledge, turn it toward earthly affairs, when it mostly soars in the heights.

61. When the passions are subdued, enemies no longer trouble us from any quarter, and there is no need to employ defensive weapons; then one may proceed to cultivate the souls of others. But as long as the passions still reign supreme, and the battle against the wiles of the flesh continues, one must not lay aside

one's weapons; rather, one must keep them constantly at hand, lest the cunning enemies turn our repose into an opportunity for attack and capture us without the shedding of blood.

62. St. Moses gives Israel this lesson when they enter the Promised Land and defeat the peoples living there: *"Take care that you do not be tempted to follow them after they have been defeated"* (Deut. 12:30). – This lesson is very applicable to those who, having cut off their passions, do not pay close attention to their own hearts. For in such cases, images of the past begin to arise within them like offspring; and whoever allows them the freedom to frequently fall into a domineering mindset—without forbidding them entry there—will once again open a refuge within himself for the passions after having conquered them, thus making life unsafe from strife. For passions, even when they are tamed and, like oxen, have been trained to eat hay, are prone—through the tamer's negligence—to become wild again and to fall into bestial ferocity.

63. *"Cursed is the one who places an idol in a secret place"* (Deut. 27:15). It is not the same thing to hide something in the ground forever as it is to place it in a secret place. What is hidden in the ground and no longer perceptible to the senses is eventually erased from memory, whereas what is placed in a secret place, though concealed from outsiders, is often visible to the one who placed it there and thus renews the memory of itself. Every shameful thought that arises in the mind and is not cast out but secretly held onto is like an idol placed in a secret place. Whoever does this is subject to the punishment prescribed by the law; for cherishing a shameful thought is the same as worshiping an idol.

64. One must not allow images that corrupt the mind to enter the heart; for if the heart is plunged into the darkness of impure thoughts, it is then drawn, as if by force and against its will, toward a passionate act.

65. The Holy Spirit wrote the lives of the saints so that everyone living a particular way of life might be led to the truth by such examples.

66. Those who have only recently been freed from the turmoil of the world should be advised to remain in silence (within the walls of the monastery or their home), and not to reopen the wounds of the heart through sensory impressions by frequent outings, nor to add new idols to their old sinful ones. This silence is difficult for those who have recently renounced the world; for then memory stirs up all the impurity stored within it, having had no leisure to do so before because of the multitude of tasks that followed one another without ceasing. But this happens only at the beginning; in time, however, silence—armed with patience—will completely free the mind from the disturbance of impure thoughts.

67. The mind of one who has only just turned away from sin is like a body that has begun to regain its strength after a long illness; since it has not yet fully recovered, even a trivial cause can trigger a relapse. Its strength is still weak; which is why one must fear that passion might return if someone gives it cause to flare up by allowing oneself to be swept up in the crowd. Ascetics who have grown strong and mature may boldly go out into the fray here; but those who are not yet able to fight should find peaceful safety in silence by remaining at home.

68. When there is true inner stillness, and not only passionate impulses but also memories of them subside, then the soul, dwelling peacefully within itself, is able to discern the images previously imprinted and lurking within it, to engage in a struggle with each of them, and to tear them from the heart. But when images come one after another, it is impossible to erase the previous impressions; for the mind is occupied with new images, which, through their ceaseless allure, cloud the soul's vision. Just as those who wish to see the riverbed dry will gain nothing by scooping out water at the very spot where, in their opinion, what they seek lies; for the emptied spot is immediately refilled by the flowing water; and when the flow of water is blocked from above, the bottom is easily revealed, since the remaining water drains away on its own, leaving the ground dry for the desired investigation: it is just as easy to drain away the imprinted images of the passions when the senses no longer provide any external stimuli; but when, like a stream, they supply new and ever-new impressions, then it is not only difficult but impossible to completely purify the soul of passionate images and impulses.

69. The prophet commands: *"Exterminate the seed of Babylon"* (Jer. 50:16). For us, this is a piece of advice—to eradicate these images while they are still in the wombs of the senses, so that, falling onto the soil of the heart, they do not sprout and, watered by the rain of frequent conversation with them, do not bear the fruits of evil. Another Prophet, however, even praises those who do not wait for passions to mature but destroy them while they are still like infants feeding at the breast, saying: *"Blessed is he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rock"* (Ps. 136: 9). Job's words convey a similar meaning: *"The ants perished because they had no food"* (4:11). It is evident that the great Job, wishing to depict the insidious nature of passion,

devised a complex name for it—(*ant* and “*lion*”)—composing it from the names of the mightiest lion and the most insignificant of all creatures, the ant; for the onslaught of passions begins with subtle thoughts, creeping in imperceptibly like ants, but later grows and becomes no less dangerous to the one subjected to these onslaughts than a lion’s attack. That is why the ascetic must overcome the passions when they first appear as ants, using their insignificance as bait; for if they manage to attain the strength of a lion, they become invincible and cause great distress. Here, one must by no means give them food; for their food, as has been said many times before, consists of the images of passions that enter through the senses, which nourish the passions, each one arming its own idol against the soul.

70. And in the temple, the Lawgiver arranged “*latticed windows*” (Ezek. 41:16)—meaning by this that those who resolve to keep their hearts pure, like a temple, just as the lattice windows there ensure that nothing unclean can enter, must shield their senses with the fear of future judgment, like a lattice that would block the entry of newly arising and intruding unclean images.

71. 71. Whoever, while struggling against irritating (passionate) sights, is able—through fear of future punishments—to bring himself into such intense conflict as one tossed about at sea struggles against the waves; that person will easily overcome those who assail him, without feeling the blows inflicted, so that he will say: “*They struck me, but I was not hurt—they mocked me, but I did not take notice*” (Prov. 23:35), that is, they struck me, thinking to mock me, but I did not even feel the blows, because “*their arrows were like the sores of infants*” (Ps. 63:8); nor did I pay any attention to their taunts, not even showing that I noticed their presence.

72. Renouncing worldly affairs is of no benefit to those who do not remain steadfast in their resolve, but are once again carried away and yield to their thoughts, and often return to what they have left behind, thereby revealing their attachment to it, like Lot’s wife, who, looking back, was turned into a pillar of salt as a warning to such people. Frequent inclinations toward that from which we have turned away will undoubtedly lead us back from a good habit that has not yet taken root; and, by weakening our drive forward, they will once again draw us entirely to themselves and force us to return to our former bad deeds. The old, bad habit will thereby grow even stronger and will hardly allow a return to the practice of good character that had been begun. For habit gives rise to practice, and practice becomes second nature; yet it is difficult to transform and change one’s nature. Look at the soul that follows its habits, how it sits upon its idols, as if nailed to them: “*I cannot,*” it says, “*rise before you, for I am a woman by nature*” (; Gen. 31:35). And the soul, which has long found rest in the affairs of this life, sits upon them as upon idols and is so bound to them that it cannot and will not part with them.

73. The saints of God fled the cities, knowing that association with depraved people is far more corrupting than a contagious disease. Elijah, having left Judea, dwelt on Mount Carmel, which was desolate and teeming with wild beasts. His disciple Elisha followed this teacher’s example in his love for the wilderness. And John lived in the Jordanian wilderness, feeding on locusts and wild honey, to demonstrate how easy it is to satisfy the needs of physical life. Perhaps Moses, too, foreshadowed something similar when he gave the Israelites the law to gather manna only for a single day; this taught that concern for one’s physical sustenance should be limited to a single day. And all the saints, “*for whom the world was not worthy,*” having left the inhabited world, “*wandered in the deserts*” (Heb. 11:37–38), fleeing the alluring vices of humanity, so that the force of their aspirations, like a torrent, would not sweep them away into the general current of worldly life, which is ruinous.

74. We are created in the image of God so that we may preserve His attributes within ourselves and, through our exemplary lives, present clear signs of God’s likeness to those who look upon us. “*I,*” says God, “*am generous and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love*” (Ps. 102: 8; Joel 2: 13), and I uphold justice. These are the features of the divine countenance. By them is recognized the soul that has partaken of the likeness of God and has become akin to the Godhead. Driven by love for God and zealous for the fullness of godly perfection, yet bound by the constraints of the body that unites her to Him, she undertakes labor upon labor in her striving for self-purification, until she succeeds in acquiring what distinguishes the divine nature—goodness, long-suffering, kindness, and love for humanity. And then she becomes “*a little lower than the angels*” (Ps. 8:6).⁷⁶

⁷⁶ From the Letter to the Deaconess of Ancyra—Migne, vol. 2, p. 97.

75. Whoever flees worldly turmoil, does not allow himself to be troubled by the vanities of life, and shuns the company of frivolous and irresponsible people, spends most of their time at home in silent prayer and the study of God's Word, and on the rare occasions they leave the house is seen as dignified, meek, unirritable, compassionate, and brotherly; Who would not call such a person a true zealous servant of God, a true image and likeness of God, illuminated by the divine rays of God's goodness, and clearly manifesting his likeness to God through virtues as beautiful as the most attractive flowers?

76. These are the distinguishing traits of God—and of a person who zealously seeks to become like God: gentleness, lack of malice, lack of anger, lack of envy, charity, compassion, forgiveness, love of goodness, kindness, respectfulness, concern for the welfare of others, sociability, helpfulness, and lack of self-love; —in short, everything in which God reveals an abundance of goodness, He who “*makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous*” (Matt. 5:45). By these traits, one who strives to be an imitator of God is recognized.

77. This instruction alone would suffice to teach the devout how to live a blameless life; but, knowing how difficult it is for some to be led to this, St. Paul, through many exhortations, skillfully seeks to divert us from vanity, stirring up our zeal with various praiseworthy titles. At one point he says, “*You are God's temple*” (1 Cor. 3:16); at another, “*Walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8); at yet another, “*Live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*” (Phil. 1:27); and again, “*Your bodies are members of Christ*” (1 Cor. 6:15); in one place he calls us “*holy and blameless*” (Eph. 1:4), and in another—“*blameless and pure, children of God without blemish*” (Phil. 2:15). He speaks of all this as if it were already within us, even though it is not yet there—so that, fearing that such praise might turn into reproach and ridicule if we do not prove to be such, we may strive with all zeal to become and remain so. Why does the Holy Apostle not limit himself to these praises alone, but also prescribes various ways and means by which we may “*reach the measure of the full stature of Christ*” (Eph. 4:13)?

78. First and foremost, he requires that we die and be crucified to the world, so that we may not feel even the slightest of the world's pleasures or sorrows. “*You have died,*” he says, “*and your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (Col. 3:3), wishing to show how those who are united with Christ live—those who “*seek the things above*” and “*set their minds on things above,*” who have died “*to the elements of the world*” and no longer live according to them. He also says, “*Present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable to Him*” (Rom. 6:13), desiring, on the one hand, that we die to precisely that which sets in motion the passions of the flesh that lust against the of the Spirit, and on the other hand, commanding us to live by that through which acts of virtue are performed to please God. That is why He calls those who have “*put to death the members that are on the earth*” (Rom. 12: 1; Col. 3:5) and those who walk “*in the newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4)—those who, having sacrificed their flesh, are no longer driven toward evil, nor do they remain idle in doing good deeds; for, being a living sacrifice, they have not lost the strength for this, but, like a blossoming and youthful plant, they make use of it against the long-standing hostile schemes of the flesh, no longer carried away by these foolish desires, since they have completely passed from the life of the flesh to the spiritual life, and live not by the flesh but by the Spirit.

79. To those who, though clothed in the flesh, are no longer troubled by its disorderly demands, the Apostle says: “*You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:9). For sin no longer reigned in their dead bodies, nor did it compel them by force to obey their own impulses, opposing the law of the mind and usually enslaving them to a certain law in their members; but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus reigned, bringing them into complete obedience to Christ's commandments. In this arrangement, they not only delight in what is best for the inner man, but they also perfect him, being ready to avenge upon the body every former disobedience—which was previously permitted to please it—through efforts contrary to it, for the sake of virtue. — What, then, is this subduing, and how is it accomplished? The Apostle teaches this as follows: “*Just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness*” (Rom. 6:19). Those who, being overcome by habit, are compelled to transform a bad habit into a good one know how great this effort is. The effort is great, but those who do not spare themselves succeed in this through God's grace. After many setbacks and many attempts to move forward, they finally manage to turn away completely from the evil inclinations to which they were enslaved and to turn their whole disposition entirely from the worse to the better—so that they may use all their members against hostile passions, transforming them from instruments of unrighteousness into instruments of righteousness.

80. Pay attention to the movements of your mind, observing how it conjures up memories of things, accepting the images of these things either with bias or without bias. Many yield to their passions more in their thoughts than in their actions, silently consenting to them and taking pleasure in them. Inwardly they are fallen, though no visible failings follow them. And it happens that some appear outwardly to be entirely blameless—yet they alone are aware of the vileness hidden within and blush because what is unseen is the opposite of what is seen; the truth contradicts their respectable outward appearance and causes their conscience to feel justifiable shame. How does such a person differ from a coffin when his soul harbors improper thoughts and is filled with shameful feelings? Is he not even worse than a coffin? Coffins do not retain their stench for long, as long as moisture remains in the body, but as soon as the bodily fluids are exhausted, the stench ceases; the heart, however, filled with shameful thoughts, always inspires revulsion, being more foul-smelling than a decaying body—and it alone takes pleasure in its own shame.

81. Just as pleasure and sorrow follow desire (the former following its fulfillment, the latter its unfulfillment), and desire is aroused by sensation (an impression from external things, or thoughts about them); then whoever prevents the latter (the impression, the thought) leaves no room for the former (desire and pleasure or sorrow): just as one who crushes the head of a snake trapped in a doorway leaves behind the rest of its body—which would undoubtedly have slithered freely through the doorway had the head, having pushed its way forward, found a clear passage. Such is the law of self-awareness or sobriety.

82. If anyone desires something evil, whether he satisfies his desire or not, both outcomes are equally harmful to him—that is, joy in the first case and sorrow in the second. For this sorrow is not “*godly sorrow*,” which, in the words of St. Paul, “*brings about repentance leading to salvation*” (2 Cor. 7:10); nor is this joy a joy in the Lord, as those who rejoice with a clear conscience do (Phil. 4:4). This joy is a kind of spiritual delusion instilled by a demon, since it depends not on the enjoyment of true good, but on being carried away by its illusion.

83. These are the distinguishing features of the way in which virtue guides the mind devoted to it toward possible success. Success does not seem too distant, lest it appear as though virtue seeks to intimidate with great remoteness; yet it does not stand still so that it might be seized by the pursuer—and this is so that he may not cease his zeal until death, but may strengthen his diligence throughout his life, extending it to all things.

84. Even if a whole lifetime is not enough to cultivate virtue, and those who strive for it require great self-control because of their fleshly inclinations; then, given the distraction and fickleness of our thoughts, how can we successfully complete such a long and difficult journey and protect ourselves from the wiles of our adversaries—who are numerous and invisible, and who use our passions and emotions as weapons against us, thereby bringing us down with the very things with which God’s goodness has armed us for defense against them? Therefore, we must be vigilant and not be carried away by what our adversaries use against us. It is obvious: whatever does not contribute to our success in our endeavor serves the interests of our adversaries.

85. By what thoughts should those who intend to direct their thoughts aright be guided?—Listen carefully.—David said in one passage: “*The instruction of my heart is my understanding*” (Ps. 48:4); in another: “*I will always learn from Your precepts*” (Ps. 118:16); and again: “*I will learn from all Your works, and I will meditate on Your deeds*” (76:13). – Do this, and your ever-restless mind will have no time to wander to what is unworthy, but will be constantly engaged in that which, when delved into, brings delight and great benefit, delighting the senses with sight and the soul with contemplation.

6. Exhortation to Monks

1. Intemperance in food nullifies fasting, while self-restraint combined with prayer repels lustful desires.

2. The love of money—the mother of idolatry—suppresses contentment, while concern for the body’s needs cuts off hope in God.

3. A wandering mind hinders the reading of God’s Word and watchful prayer.

4. Outbursts of anger subdue gentleness and psalm-singing.

5. Despondency is driven away by patience and tears, while worldly sorrow is silenced by aversion to sensual pleasures.

6. Hospitality is fostered by humility and a dislike of self-importance and of having an advantage over others. Pride, however—that ancient evil, an abomination before the Lord, that which God opposes—is

subdued only by boundless humility, which declares: *“I am dust and ashes”* (Gen. 18:27), and also: *“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain; in vain do those who watch over it keep vigil”* (Ps. 126:1).

7. Just as it is impossible to purify murky water without stilling it, so it is impossible for a monk to know his inner constitution without silence.

8. Just as it is impossible for a warrior to be crowned with the victory wreath without engaging in battle, so it is impossible to be a Christian without deeds of virtue.

9. Just as the pans of a scale cannot remain level when one is weighed down by a heavy load, so it is impossible to fulfill God’s commandment when carnal reasoning prevails.

10. Just as it is impossible to master a craft without practicing it diligently, so it is impossible to attain prayer without drawing near to God with a righteous heart.

11. Whoever has not attained pure prayer has no weapon for battle.

12. Whoever walks about in fine clothes yet is empty of God’s virtues is a dwelling place for demons.

13. Just as a king will not dwell in the house of a poor man, so Christ will not dwell in a soul defiled by sin.

14. Just as a neglected field is cultivated through diligent labor, so a soul that has run wild in sin is tamed if it begins to live according to God’s law.

15. Just as a rock lying deep in the sea is beyond the reach of the waves, so too will one who has excelled in virtues—and is, as it were, immersed in them—not be shaken by the devil.

16. Just as a skilled physician immediately devises a remedy for the illness at hand, so the knowledge of God, preserved (in the mind and heart), teaches its possessor how to guard himself (against falling) and to strive for what is best.

17. Just as a stream carves its own path, so too does sin, once embraced, of its own accord lead the one who has acquired it to ruin.

18. Just as a deer caught in a net has no easy way to escape, so too will the one who nurtures lusts while wallowing in his own world not escape sin; for lusts, though cunning and sweet, are bonds that are difficult to break.

19. Just as a grapevine that bears no good fruit is cut down so that it does not take up space in vain, so too will anyone who does not bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit be uprooted from the Lord.

20. Just as it is impossible for a person struck by an arrow to remain unharmed, so it is impossible for a monk who has entertained an evil thought not to be wounded by it.

21. Just as a person who has lost the right path wanders in a foreign land, not knowing where to go, so too does a person who does not believe in the consubstantial Trinity wander.

22. Just as a person, though divided into many parts, is one in nature, so too the Holy Trinity, though divided by names and hypostases, is one in nature. You cannot comprehend the nature of God, even if you were to soar toward Him on wings. God is incomprehensible, for He is our Creator.

23. Just as a vessel being fashioned does not know the nature of the one who is fashioning it, so too a person cannot know the nature of God.

24. Do not question the Trinity, but simply believe and worship, for whoever questions does not believe.

25. Acquire wisdom, not silver; clothe yourselves rather in the radiant garment of Christ our Lord than in any fine linen garment, for such possessions will be of no use on the day of death.

26. Just as fire consumes thorns, so every sinner will be devoured by eternal fire, yet cannot die; for he will suffer immortal torment.

27. There is nothing great about becoming righteous; for in that case, we will merely become what God created us to be in the beginning—very good.

28. He who does not live according to his nature does not keep God’s commandments.

29. All wisdom consists in fearing the Lord; but any teaching that does not instruct in the law of the Lord is folly and senselessness.

30. Faith and baptism alone, without righteous deeds, will not save you from eternal fire. If you have united yourself with Christ, keep His commandments; and if you believe in the future, strive to earn eternal glory and fear the fiery sword. But if you do not keep God’s commandments, do not call yourself a believer.

31. Every creature obeys God’s will; only man dares to disobey Him, *“by whom all things were made.”*

32. We will bring God no benefit by keeping ourselves pure, but we gain for ourselves eternal life and the enjoyment of ineffable eternal blessings.

33. Do not say, “I cannot keep God’s commandment because of an obstacle from my father, or my mother, or my wife, or my children, or anyone else”; for they will not deliver you from the wrath to come or from the worm that never sleeps. Let everyone who hinders you from seeking God and virtue be an abomination and an object of hatred to you; with such a one, *“do not even associate.”*

Saint Ephrem the Syrian

A Brief Account of Him

St. Ephrem was born in the early years of the fourth century in the vicinity of Nisibis, or in the city itself, to parents of modest means. His parents raised him in the fear of God; but the years of his youth led him into certain moral missteps; which subsequently began to cloud his faith in God’s Providence, and he began to think that everything in our lives happens by chance. God’s Providence healed him of these mental dispositions through a very poignant lesson. He was accused of stealing sheep and imprisoned. At the same time, another man was imprisoned with him—and there they found a third. All of them had been wrongfully convicted in this instance. After spending seven days in this confinement, St. Ephrem heard a voice in a dream telling him that, although he was not at fault in this case, he was suffering for his past sins; likewise, his fellow prisoners were suffering for their own past sins. Upon waking, he recounted the dream to the other two—and all of them, reflecting on the past, realized that they had indeed previously committed similar misdeeds—and were acquitted. The judge acquitted St. Ephrem, just as had been foretold to him again in a dream. This circumstance, having instilled in St. Ephrem’s heart complete faith in the Eye of Divine Providence watching over us, so deeply moved him that he immediately left the world and withdrew to the nearby mountains to join the hermits, where he became a disciple of St. James, who later became the great Saint of Nyssa. Under his guidance, St. Ephrem practiced acts of piety, studied the Word of God, and, under the influence of both, was completely transformed in character. Instead of the angry and doubt-ridden young man, St. Ephrem now appears as a humble and contrite hermit, mourning his sins day and night and completely devoted to the ways of Providence. St. James, aware of his disciple’s great virtues, made use of his abilities in the administration of the Church once he became a bishop, entrusting him with the preaching of the Word of God, the instruction of children at the school; he took him along to the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea, and upon his return made him a partner in his decisions and prayers for the city’s deliverance from the invasion of Shapur the Persian (337). After the death of St. James (338), St. Ephrem decided to visit his mother’s homeland, the city of Amida, which was also located in Mesopotamia, and stayed with her for some time. From there, he was drawn to Edessa by a desire to venerate the local holy sites: for there was preserved the reply of Christ the Savior to Abgar; from there came the fame of the Image of Christ Not Made by Hands; there rested the relics of the Apostle Thaddeus, who had enlightened the king, the city, and the entire country with the faith; and monastic life flourished in the vicinity of the city. Upon arriving in this city, St. Ephrem remained there. Having no means of support, he took a job as a laborer for the owner of a bathhouse. This work did not suit his disposition or his goals; but he awaited guidance from above, which was not long in coming. He spent the time he had free from prayer and his assigned tasks conversing with pagans. During one such conversation, an elder from the desert happened to overhear him; judging by the high caliber of these discussions, the elder rightly concluded that St. Ephrem was in the wrong place. Therefore, after waiting until the conversation had ended, he spoke with him and, upon learning of his ascetic aspirations, suggested that he join one of the nearby monasteries, to which St. Ephrem immediately agreed. Having withdrawn to the mountains, he found there everything his soul had sought. There were many great ascetics there, whose entire lives were spent in prayer, psalm-singing, and the glorification of God; they had no other refuge but caves; they did not eat ordinary food, but subsisted solely on plants. Seeing all this, St. Ephrem wholeheartedly embraced this way of life for himself, adding to his ascetic and prayerful labors only the tireless study of the Word of God. His soul soon found kinship with these lovers of the desert; but he became especially close friends with the ascetic Julian, who shared his contrite spirit and equally loved the study of Divine Scripture. By devoting himself ceaselessly to the study of the Word of God, St. Ephrem drew from it tenderness and wisdom. But the treasures of his knowledge remained, for the most part, hidden from others, out of humility, and perhaps because they were

still the fruit of his own intellectual efforts rather than a special gift of teaching—a gift that does not like to remain hidden but demands the generous sharing of instruction with all. Soon this gift was bestowed, as was revealed to the same discerning elder who had led St. Ephrem out of the city, in a vision of a radiant angel who placed a certain mysterious book into St. Ephrem’s mouth. From that time on, his soul, saturated with the living water of the knowledge of God and divine things, began to pour forth an unstoppable stream of moving exhortations. Warmed by a living spirit and flowing from the fullness of a heart sanctified by God’s grace, his words were filled with spiritual anointing. The most persuasive exhortations, touching self-reproaches and admonitions to others, wise rules and counsel miraculously sprang from his lips; and often, in a sudden, unexpected surge, his reverent thoughts soared to God to confess the glory of His boundless love or to ask Him for forgiveness of sins. Biblical examples and sayings, experiences from the life of an ascetic, parables and comparisons from the natural world—all were readily at hand and arose spontaneously in his simple, unpretentious conversations. But it was not only moral, spiritual, and ascetic lessons that constituted the subject matter of his writings. He also devoted considerable effort to interpreting Holy Scripture, and even more to expounding dogma—particularly from those perspectives that were contradicted by both contemporary and earlier heretics. His entire life was devoted to such works—and was already drawing to a close—when he felt the desire to see the Egyptian ascetics and to visit the great Archpastor of Cappadocia, Basil the Great. Taking with him a disciple who could speak Greek, he reached the Mediterranean Sea and boarded a ship. Prayer and trust in God saved him and his companions from drowning. Mount Nitria welcomed him as a cherished guest and brought him comfort in meeting the great Paisius, with whom he spent six days in conversation, as well as John Kolov and other elders. In addition to Nitria, he visited other places inhabited by ascetics, and everywhere he left a warm memory of himself as a man enlightened by God; he himself took away from there instructive lessons about the lives and practices of both the departed and still-living Egyptian ascetics. On his return journey from Egypt, St. Ephrem decided to visit Caesarea in Cappadocia to see St. Basil the Great. Their first meeting took place in the church. St. Ephrem entered the church just as St. Basil the Great was delivering a sermon to the congregation, and he was convinced of the latter’s highly grace-filled state. St. Basil the Great, too, had been informed by the Holy Spirit about St. Ephrem and invited him to join him in the sanctuary. After a brief exchange of greetings there, their conversation continued at home, covering various topics. The Holy Father of Caesarea wished to ordain St. Ephrem to the office of presbyter; but the humble monk from Edessa refused under any circumstances to accept this office, and St. Basil could only ordain him as a deacon, while ordaining his disciple as a presbyter. Later, St. Basil sent two of his disciples to Edessa with an invitation for St. Ephrem to assume the episcopal see; but St. Ephrem, feigning madness, declined this honor, humbly considering himself unworthy of it. Upon returning to his hermitage in Edessa, St. Ephrem wished to spend the rest of his life in solitude. But God’s Providence once again called him to serve his neighbors. The city’s inhabitants were suffering from famine at that time. With powerful words, St. Ephrem persuaded the wealthy to alleviate the suffering of the poor, taking upon himself the task of administering their donations. This was his final act of service to the Church. Upon returning from the city to the mountains, he soon fell ill, and, having written his will, passed away peacefully in 372 or 373. He died in the arms of his disciples and the residents of Edessa who loved him; in the presence of a large gathering of people, clergy, and hermits, his body was laid to rest; but some time later, his incorrupt remains were transferred to the church.

* * *

The Greek collection **Dobrotolyubie** contains nothing by St. Ephrem. We consider it an injustice to deprive our collection of treasures of his teachings. Therefore, we have decided to select the most edifying of his works under the following headings:

1. Exhortation to Repentance and the Pursuit of Salvation.
2. Lessons on Repentance.
3. A General Outline of the Life of Those Who Have Devoted Themselves to Pleasing God and Working Out Their Own Salvation.
4. On Virtues and Passions.
5. On the struggle against the eight principal passions.
6. General Lessons on the Ascetic Life.

7. Added to all this, as a summary of all the lessons, is the 50th word: advice for ascetics, supplemented by similar advice from the 55th word. (Excerpts are taken from the edition of the Writings of St. Ephrem, in the series of the Works of the Holy Fathers. Quotations from each section are listed after its table of contents.)

St. Ephrem's Instructions for Ascetics

1. An Exhortation to Repentance and the Pursuit of Salvation

1. Come, beloved, let us engage in the purchase while the day of purchase still lasts. Come, let us acquire eternal life; let us buy the salvation of our souls. Let us embrace this beautiful thought; let us desire the Kingdom and paradise.

2. Strive in this *"eleventh hour"*; hurry, lest you be left outside the closed doors. Evening is near, and the Reward-Giver is coming with great glory to reward each one according to his deeds. Let us repent, brothers, while there is still time.

3. Listen to what the Lord says: *"There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15:10). Why do you give in to negligence, sinner? Why do you sink into despair? If there is joy in heaven when you repent, then what is there for you to fear? The angels rejoice, yet you give in to negligence? The archangel proclaims repentance—and you are afraid? The indivisible, worshiped Trinity calls you, yet you sigh!

4. Let us weep a little here, so that we may not weep there, suffering eternally. Christ's coming is sudden, like a terrifying flash of lightning. At that hour, each will receive according to his deeds; each will reap what he has sown. We will all appear before Christ's judgment seat with nothing hidden—and each will give an account to the Judge for himself. At that hour, no one will be able to help anyone else. Each will stand with fear and trembling, waiting to hear God's verdict.

5. Why do we neglect Holy Scripture and the words of Christ? Hear what the Lord says: *"The word that I have spoken will judge you on the last day"* (John 12:48). What is this Word? His Holy Gospel and the other Holy Scriptures of the Holy Prophets and Apostles. Let us not, then, neglect what is written. *"For heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of Christ will never pass away"* (Matt. 24:35).

6. Come, then, beloved, let us immerse ourselves in the sea of God's bounties before that dreadful day arrives. God Himself calls us: *"Come to Me, all of you... and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28). He invites everyone; for He desires everyone to be saved. Let no one hesitate; for He says, *"I will never cast out anyone who comes to Me"* (John 6:37). —And who is the one who comes to Him? It is the one who listens to His Word and keeps His commandments. Let us therefore listen and obey Him; for *"it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 10:31).

7. Repent, sinner, looking with boldness upon the boundless love of Christ, who said, *"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Matthew 9:13). Repent while there is still time, lest you be put to shame at the dreadful judgment, where thousands upon thousands of angels and saints will stand in awe—the books of deeds will be opened, and what is hidden will be revealed—the Judge is mighty, the judgment is relentless—deeds will be laid bare—and the river of fire. Reflect on all this, and hurry to save yourself.

8. What are you waiting for? What is on your mind? Will anyone else answer for you? Do you not know that each person will give an account to God for himself—each will reap what he has sown—each will bear his own burden? Cast off this burden of sin while there is still time.

9. Once and for all, you renounced Satan and all his works, and in the presence of many witnesses you entered into a covenant with Christ. Remember this and do not forget it. For know that at that very moment the angels recorded your words—your vows and your renunciation—and they keep them in heaven until the dreadful Day of Judgment. On the Day of Judgment, they will bring your record and the words of your mouth before the dreadful judgment seat. And then you will hear: *"By your own words I will condemn you, you wicked servant"* (Luke 19:22). Be merciful to yourself, then, and spare your soul.

10. Look at others—how they strive, how they seek salvation, how much effort they put into every good deed, how they guard themselves against all that is evil, how they have come to love the narrow and constricted path—they fast, keep vigil, endure suffering, and weep, —their lips always sing and praise the Bridegroom, their eyes always behold His beauty, and their souls rejoice.

11. Think and see: behold, the Bridegroom is already drawing near. — He is coming to crown those who have striven righteously and have loved the narrow and constricted path; He is coming to show mercy to the merciful—to make the impoverished blessed and to satisfy those who have hungered and thirsted for His sake; *“He is coming to bring to light the hidden things of darkness and to reveal the counsels of the heart”* (1 Cor. 4:5)—and *“to render to each one according to his deeds”* (Rom. 2:6).

12. Finally, a cry will suddenly ring out: *“Behold, the Bridegroom!”* (Matt. 25:6). Behold the long-awaited joy, the praise of the righteous, the Sun of Righteousness! Behold *“the Bridegroom—go out to meet Him”*!

13. Then those whose lamps are burning brightly and who are clothed in white will go out to meet Him with joy and boldness, rejoicing and hoping that their lamps will not go out. But what will happen to you? Noticing that your lamp is going out, in terror and sorrow, you will turn to the first ones with a plea—to give you some oil—and you will hear: *“Go to those who are selling and buy some”* (Matt. 25:9).

14. You will go—and find nowhere to buy it; for the purchase of life is already over. Then, in utter confusion, weeping and lamenting, you will say to yourself: “I will go and knock on the door of Christ’s mercy. Perhaps the merciful Lord will open them for me?”—You go and knock; but the Bridegroom answers you from within: *“Amen, I say to you: I do not know you”* (–12). Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. You have not shown mercy, and you will not be shown mercy. You have indulged your flesh and defiled your garments with impurity; how then do you expect to come up here and defile My Kingdom? You have carried out the devil’s will, while rejecting Mine; you have no part with Me. *“Depart from Me into the eternal fire”* (Matt. 25:41).

15. Hearing this, you will stand there in shame. — At the same time, a voice of joy and gladness will reach your ears; you will recognize the voice of each of your friends, and you will then sigh bitterly, saying: “Woe is me, the wretched one! What glory have I lost, and from what fellowship have I been excluded because of my evil and wicked deeds!” — But truly, God’s judgment is just; truly, I justly endure such deprivation. They lived in self-restraint, while I pursued every kind of pleasure; — they sang psalms, while I sang shameful songs; they prayed, while I lay about idly or went out to play; they wept, but I laughed. — That is why they now rejoice, but I lament; they are merry, but I weep; they will reign with Christ for all eternity, but I will be cast into the eternal fire with the Antichrist. Woe is me, wretched man!

16. You will say these and similar things then, tormented, and you will derive no benefit from them; for there is no benefit there, not even in repentance. — Let us, then, finally take care of the salvation of the soul: for this is *“the one thing needed”* (Luke 10:41).

17. The body also requires care, but not much; as for the soul, however, care must be constant; for the soul is above all else. You consist of soul and body; so give the soul spiritual nourishment, and the body physical nourishment. Do not let the soul die, but nourish it with the Word of God, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the reading of soul-saving Scriptures, fasting, vigil, prayers, tears, hope, and thoughts of future blessings. All these things and the like are food and life for the soul.

18. Throughout the Scriptures, only those who walk the narrow path are blessed, while those who have taken the broad and spacious path are everywhere foretold to face woe. Let us therefore forsake the broad path that leads to destruction and take the narrow one, so that, having labored a little here, we may reign for all eternity. Let us labor, always keeping before our eyes the One who is to come to judge the living and the dead, and constantly keeping in mind eternal life, the endless kingdom, rejoicing with the angels, and dwelling with Christ.

19. Do not take delight in the pleasures of this life. Let a psalm always be on your lips; for the very utterance of God’s name puts demons to flight. Even as you set your hand to work, let your tongue sing a psalm, and your mind pray. The Lord Himself urges everyone here to prepare themselves for the life to come. So let us do just that; and if we sin by stumbling, let us heal that with tears while there is still time for repentance. The time for repentance is short; but the Kingdom of Heaven has no end.

20. We praise the saints and desire their crowns for ourselves, yet we do not wish to imitate their deeds. Or do you think they received their crowns as a gift, without toil or sorrow? Would you like to hear what kind of rest the saints had in this life? *“They were beaten... they went about in sheepskins and goatskins... they were destitute, afflicted, and mistreated...”* and so on (Heb. 11:35–38). Do you want to reign with them forever?—Then follow in their footsteps.

21. Our fathers, like luminaries, illuminated the whole earth, having lived upon it amid thorns and thistles, among heretics and the ungodly, like precious stones and costly pearls. Because of their noble and pure lives, even their very enemies became their imitators. And who has not been moved to contrition upon seeing their humility? Here they labored, and there they rejoice; for God was glorified in them, and people were edified by them.

22. The course of our own lives, however, having abandoned the straight paths, follows rapids and rough terrain. We see no one who, for God's sake, has completely forsaken his possessions and, for the sake of eternal life, has entirely renounced the world. There is no one who is meek, humble, or silent. No one refrains from insulting others; no one endures slander; but all are prone to anger, love to argue, are lazy and irritable, and care about fine clothes; all are vain and glory-seeking, and all are self-centered.

23. We hear that God Himself—the Word—was nailed to the tree and put to death for our sins—and we laugh, giving in to distraction. The sun, unable to bear the Lord's insult, turned its brightness into darkness; yet we refuse to emerge from the darkness of our sinfulness. The veil of the Temple, having committed no sin whatsoever, was torn of its own accord; yet we do not want our hearts to be torn apart by remorse for our sins. Let us therefore repent at last, brothers, so that we may appease God for our sins.

24. I fear that that day may overtake us suddenly, and that we, finding ourselves naked, poor, and unworthy, may be cast out. For this very thing happened to those who lived in the days of Noah: *"They were eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, buying, selling, until the flood came and destroyed them all"* (Luke 17:27–28).

25. Whoever wishes to be saved must be zealous for salvation, and whoever desires to enter the Kingdom must not be negligent. Whoever wishes to escape the fire of Gehenna must strive lawfully; whoever does not wish to be cast to the never-sleeping worm must be sober. Whoever desires to enter the wedding hall and rejoice, let him prepare a brightly burning lamp and oil in a vessel. Whoever expects to be invited to that wedding, let him acquire for himself bright clothing.

26. The King's city is full of joy and gladness, full of light and delight, and to those who dwell in it, along with eternal life, it bestows every kind of comfort. Whoever wishes to live in the same city as the King, let him hasten his journey; for the day is drawing to a close, and no one knows what lies ahead on the path. Just as a traveler, though he knows the road is long, lies down to sleep until evening, and then, upon waking, sees that the day has already drawn to a close, and no sooner has he begun his journey than suddenly a cloud, hail, thunder, lightning, and calamities from all sides strike, and he is unable either to reach his lodgings for the night or to return to his former place: so too will we suffer the same if we delay our repentance. We are *"sojourners and strangers"* (Ps. 38: 13). Let us therefore strive to enter our city and our homeland in time.

27. We, brothers, are spiritual merchants—seeking the priceless pearl, which is Christ our Savior—the treasure that cannot be stolen. Let us not be lazy in seeking to acquire this pearl. Blessed— —three times blessed is the one who has striven to acquire it; but utterly pitiful and poor is the one who has grown weary—both of acquiring our common Creator and of being acquired by Him.

28. Do you not know that we are branches of the true Vine, which is the Lord? Take care, then, that none of us may prove barren. The Father of Truth, tending His vineyard, lovingly cares for those who bear fruit, so that they may bear even more fruit; but those who do not bear fruit, He prunes and casts out of the vineyard to be burned with fire. Be careful, then, lest, if you prove to be unfruitful, you be pruned and cast into the fire.

29. We, too, are the good seed sown by the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of the House—Christ. Behold, the time of harvest has already come, and the sickles are in the hands of the reapers: they await only the Lord's signal. Take care, then, lest we turn out to be weeds, bound into sheaves and cast into the fire to burn forever (Matt. 13:30).

30. Do you not know that the King of kings has invited us to a wedding feast in His palace? Why, then, do we give in to negligence and make no effort to obtain for ourselves bright garments, clearly burning lamps, and oil in our vessels? How can you fail to realize that no one enters there naked? And if anyone persists in entering without wedding garments, do you not know what will happen to him? By the King's command, his hands and feet will be bound, and he will be cast into outer darkness, where *there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 22:13). I fear that carnal passions might cast us—who are dressed only on the outside—out of the wedding hall.

31. What father is so compassionate? What father is so merciful? What father loves as much as our Lord, who shows love to us, His servants? He provides for all, stores up everything in abundance, heals the wounds of our souls, and is long-suffering, even when we forsake Him, desiring that all may become heirs to His Kingdom; He forgives the sinner's sins, stirring him to zeal, and quickly heeds the weak, lest he lose heart. He could compel us by force to do what is good, but He does not wish this, lest our free will be deprived of His praise. Shall we then grow weary of pleasing Him, when He loves and has mercy on us so much? He has redeemed and enlightened the eyes of our minds; He has granted us knowledge of Himself and allowed us to taste His sweetness, so that we might seek Him with all our hearts. Blessed is the one who has tasted His love; through this, he has prepared himself to taste it unceasingly.

32. Who would not love such a Lord? Who would not confess and worship His goodness? What excuse will we have on the day of judgment if we turn away? Or what will we say to Him? That we did not hear, or did not know, or were not taught? But His message has gone out to the whole earth. What was He supposed to do for us that He did not do? Did He not descend for us from immeasurable heights, from the blessed bosom of the Father? Did He not, though invisible, become visible for our sake? Did He—the immortal Fire—not become incarnate for our sake? Did He, the immortal One, not die for us, so that we might be brought to life? Was He not buried, so that we might be raised with Him? He has delivered us from the enemy, binding him and giving us the strength to attack him. When did we call upon Him, and He not hear us? When did we knock at the door, and He not open it to us? And even if He delayed at times, it was only to increase our reward. Considering all this, who will remain in negligence and carelessness, thereby offending such a Lord?

33. Consider this, brother! Those brothers who were here yesterday and spoke with us are no longer with us today; they have been called to their Lord and ours, so that each of them may present his account. Do you see the difference between “*yesterday*” and “*today*”? Just as “*yesterday*” has passed, like the morning's bloom, so too will “*today*” pass, like the evening's shadow. Examine your own purchase, then: is it pleasing to God? Our days flee like a jest. Blessed is the one who, day by day, reaps a great profit from his purchase and gathers it into eternal life. But you, beloved, why are you negligent? Why are you slothful? Why do you revel in despondency (idleness) as if it were wine?

34. Imagine two travelers, each on his way home, who met one another on the road as evening fell; they both stopped at the inn they had reached, and when morning came, they parted ways; each of them knows what awaits him at home—wealth or poverty, peace or sorrow. The same happens to us in this life; for this life is like an inn, from which, as we depart for our own place, we part ways, knowing what lies ahead. For it is no secret to anyone what he has sent ahead to heaven—for example, a tearful prayer, or frequent vigils, or contrite psalm-singing, or self-restraint with humility, or renunciation of earthly things, or sincere love and devotion to Christ. If you have offered these things, then take heart; for you are departing into rest.

35. You have been given time for repentance, yet you neglect it. Will you say to death, “Wait, let me repent”? Come to your senses, beloved, come to your senses. When the final hour closes in on you like a net, you will begin to cry out in terror: “Alas! My days have slipped away in distraction. I wasted my time on frivolous thoughts!” But what good will it do to think this way at the hour of death, when you are no longer permitted to remain in this world? Now, rather, ponder these words with your mind, and order your life according to their power.

36. Who will not weep, who will not mourn, who will not be filled with dread at the fact that the Lord of the universe—both Himself and through His servants, the Prophets and Apostles—preaches and cries out, yet no one listens? “*The wedding feast is ready,*” He cries out, “*My bride has been slain*” (Matt. 22:4). The Bridegroom sits in the wedding hall with glory and splendor, and joyfully receives those who come; the door is open, and the servants show their zeal. “While the door is still open, hurry to enter; otherwise, you will remain outside, and there will be no one to let you in.” – And there is no one who understands; no one makes an effort; laziness and the cares of this world, like chains, have bound our minds. We copy the Divine Scriptures correctly, and we read them correctly, yet we do not wish to obey them correctly; for we are unwilling to fulfill what is commanded in them.

37. Just as in the middle of the night, when the human race is deep in sleep, there is sometimes suddenly a great noise from heaven, along with terrible thunder and frightening lightning accompanied by an earthquake, and those who are sleeping are suddenly seized with terror; so at that hour, like the swiftest lightning that suddenly terrifies the whole earth, a trumpet will sound fearfully from heaven, awakening the sleepers and raising from sleep those who have been dead since the beginning of time: these heavens and “*the*

heavenly powers will be shaken” (Matt. 24:29), and the whole earth, like water in the sea, will be shaken before the face of His glory; for a terrible fire will go before His face, purifying the earth of the iniquities that defile it; Hell will open its eternal gates, death will be abolished, and the decayed dust of human nature, hearing the sound of the trumpet, will come to life. Then the righteous will rejoice and the pious will be glad; the perfect ascetics will be comforted for the toil of their struggle; The Martyrs, Apostles, and Prophets will be crowned. Blessed is he who is deemed worthy at that hour *“to be caught up in the clouds with glory”* to meet the immortal Bridegroom (1 Thess. 4:17). Just as each one has spread his wings here, so there he will soar to the heights; just as each one has purified his mind here, so there he will behold His glory; and to the extent that each one has loved Him, to that extent he will be filled with His love there.

38. I recalled that hour and shuddered; I thought of that dreadful judgment and was filled with terror; I thought of the joys of paradise, and, rising, I gave myself over to weeping and wept until I no longer had the strength to weep any longer; for I had spent my days in idleness and distraction, and lived out my years in impure thoughts—and did not realize how they had flown by, nor did I feel how they had passed; my days have dwindled, yet my transgressions have multiplied. Alas! What shall I do at that hour, when my acquaintances surround me—those who, seeing me in this guise of piety, flattered me, while inwardly I was full of iniquity and impurity and had forgotten the Lord who searches hearts and minds. – There is true shame there, and woe to those who will be put to shame there. – By Your bounties I implore You, O Lover of Mankind and Good One, do not place me on the left side with the goats that grieve You so deeply; do not say to me: *‘I do not know you,’* but in Your goodness grant me unceasing tears; grant my heart contrition and humility, and purify it, that it may become a temple of Your grace.

39. I implore your unity of mind, my beloved brothers; strive to please God while there is still time; weep before Him day and night in your prayers and psalm-singing, so that He may deliver us from that endless weeping, and from the gnashing of teeth, and from the fire of Gehenna, and from the worm that never sleeps, and that He may fill us with joy in His Kingdom, in eternal life, from which sorrow, sickness, and sighing—where there is always joy, gladness, and delight, and a feast filled with spiritual delicacies, which God has prepared for those who love Him. Blessed is the one who is deemed worthy of it; and woe to the one who is deprived of it.

40. *“The rich man spoke, and all fell silent, and his words rose up to the clouds”* (Sir. 13:28). And God speaks to us in Holy Scripture, yet we do not wish to be silent and listen; on the contrary, while one speaks, another slumbers, and yet another’s thoughts wander elsewhere. But what does Scripture say? *“He who turns his ear away from the laws of the Most High has defiled his own prayer”* (Prov. 28:9).

41. Strive for eternal life, to which you are called, before many witnesses, having made your good confession: *“For yet a very little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay”* (Heb. 10:37).

42. Fear the Lord with all your strength, and do not imitate the deeds of the wicked; for their fire will not be quenched, and their worm will not die (Mark 9:44).

43. Do not trust the deceiver who instills deceptive thoughts in you, saying, “You are still young; you have many years left to live; therefore, rejoice now and do not grieve your soul—in your old age you must repent.” – Are you really so foolish, brother, that you do not know the devil will deceive you in this? If you do not repent in your youth and in the prime of your strength, when you are able to endure every hardship and perform feats of courage, will you not, when you grow old, use the weakness of old age as an excuse? – And if you are taken from here while still in your youth, what will you do then? Therefore, abandon the enemy’s path and heed the voice of the true Lord, Who said: *“Watch therefore and pray, for you know neither the day nor the hour”* (Matt. 25:13).

44. It will come, it will come, and that dreadful hour will not be long in coming, in which, when we are tormented, we will have no excuse. For what will we be able to answer the Lord? What else was there left for Him to do for us that He did not do?—Did we not see God—the Word—humbling Himself in the form of a servant, so that we too might become humble? Did we not see His incomprehensible Face spitten upon, so that we, too, when insulted, might not become embittered? Or did we not see how His holy back was subjected to scourging, so that we, too, might meekly bear the yoke of obedience? Or did we not see how His Face was struck, so that we, when humiliated, might not fly into a rage? Or have we not heard Him say, *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart”* (Matt. 11:29), so that we too might become gentle and humble, and not envy one another, nor gnaw at one another, nor devour one another? What excuse, then, will we give Him?

45. I know that God has shown mercy to many who have repented; but most of them sinned out of ignorance. I know that God has forgiven many; but they had many intercessors before Him on their behalf. – I read what is written about Korah and Dathan, and I am horrified to see how God punished them for Moses' sake. I reflect on what is written about Miriam, his sister, how she was covered with leprosy for a single word spoken to Moses—and I shudder. If such a punishment befell a holy person, what torment will there be for the eternal God? Cain, who killed his brother, is subjected to such a long-lasting punishment; what, then, will become of those who have offended God? The judgment during the Flood was severe, and I fear I might suffer the same fate as those who perished then. God was angered by the construction of the pillar, which could not be completed—what, then, will He do for my own fall? I have repented, but I do not know if I have appeased God. I implore the saints as well; but perhaps their prayers will not be accepted, for I hear Ezekiel saying that *“neither Noah, nor Job, nor Daniel”* will succeed in what they ask for (Ezek. 14:18).

46. He who descended from the Father's bosom and became for us the way of salvation, the Lord, with His divine voice, inspires us to repentance, saying, *“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Matt. 9:13). – If I were to say this, you might not listen to me. But if the Lord Himself says this, why do you disregard it, without caring for your own life? If you recognize within yourself that there is a wound of thoughts and deeds in your inner being, why do you not care for your hidden wounds? Are you afraid of the physician?! But He is full of goodness and mercy. He came for you from the bosom of the Father. He became incarnate for you, so that you might approach Him without fear; He became man for you, to heal your grievous wounds. – And He Himself calls you to Himself with great love and all goodness.

47. The door of repentance is open; so strive, O sinner, to enter before it is shut. It will not wait for you if the time of its closing comes and finds you lingering in indifference. Why have you come to hate your own life, wretched one?—What is greater than your soul, O man? Yet you, O sinner, have neglected it. You do not know, beloved, at what hour the heavenly Physician will command the door of His healing to be shut. Come forward, I beg you; strive to be healed. He wishes to gladden the heavenly host with your repentance. The sun has already reached the evening hour, and it delays only for your sake, so that you may reach the sanctuary.

48. How long will you endure your impure enemy, shamelessly carrying out his will? He wants to cast you into the fire. That is the aim of his efforts! This is his gift to those who love him! He is always at war with all people, striking them with evil and impure desires, and he, who is impure himself, drives those who have submitted to him back into despair, hardens their hearts, and dries up their tears so that the sinner may not come to repentance. Turn away from him in every way, O man, harboring hatred and loathing for what is dear to him.

49. Let us begin; let us pray while there is still time. Here, while we are in this life, we can always appease God. It is not difficult for us to obtain forgiveness while it is still time for us to knock on the door of His mercy. Let us shed tears while there is still time for them to be accepted, so that, having passed into the age to come, we may not weep in vain; for there, tears count for nothing.

50. Why do we neglect our salvation? Why do we not desire to be healed while there is still time? For the sake of a few tears shed at this time and for the sake of repentance, God forgives all sins. Weep a little here, so that you may not weep there for all eternity in utter darkness. Be repentant here, so that you may not be cast into the unquenchable fire there.

51. Many saints and righteous people have turned away from this world and its deeds of their own free will and out of a firm hope in God's commandments, convinced that they will enjoy God's blessings in the paradise of sweetness. Having come to love Christ, they preferred Him to all that is perishable; therefore, they rejoice daily in God, are enlightened in Christ, and rejoice unceasingly in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity rejoices over them, the Angels and Archangels rejoice over them, and the paradise of sweetness rejoices over them.

52. Others, however, have become mired in the transitory and have become almost like senseless beings. – What are you doing, O man, living such a sinful life? God created you with reason: yet you make yourself like a speechless creature. Come to your senses, at least a little, and pull yourself together. – The Most High God came down from heaven for your sake, to lift you up from earth to heaven. You are called to the wedding of the heavenly Bridegroom: why, then, are you so careless? Why do you delay? Tell me, how will you go to the wedding without proper wedding attire? And if you enter without it, you will immediately hear: *“Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?”* (Matt. 22:12). Bind him and cast him

into the fiery furnace. Do you not fear this, nor tremble at the fact that the time is near when the Bridegroom will appear in His glory?—Do you not know that everything is already ready, and the heavenly trumpet awaits the signal?—And what will you do at that hour if you do not prepare for it as you ought?

53. At the hour of death, a great fear awaits all sinners. The hour of parting brings joy to all the saints, all the righteous, and all the ascetics; but that same hour plunges the negligent and the weak into sorrow, reminding them of their indifference and carelessness during their past life. Then remorse torments the heart of a person who has hitherto shown no concern for his own salvation. The anguish of this remorse surpasses even the fear of death and separation. — In contrast, the righteous, the saints, and the ascetics rejoice at the hour of death and separation, seeing before their eyes the great labor of their asceticism: their vigils, prayers, fasts, tears, lying on the bare ground, and sackcloth; their souls exult, for after separation from the body they look forward to entering into rest. But the sight of death is terrifying to sinners and to weak people who do not care about living a pure life in this vain world. And the hour of separation is a source of great sorrow for the sinful person; he is not permitted to say anything in his own defense; the command regarding that hour is given with severity.

54. The hour of parting does not sadden the one who has been freed from all earthly things; but it saddens the death of the lustful; it saddens the sinner; it saddens the slothful one, who was too lazy to do what pleases God; it saddens the avaricious one, who has bound his soul with worldly cares; it grieves the rich man, because it involuntarily separates him from his wealth; it grieves the lover of the world, because it separates him from the world. All such people grieve at the hour of death, because they are bound by worldly cares. But what is there for a soul, free from the world and detached from its cares, to sigh over and grieve about? She desired freedom, sought it, and attained it—and remained so always, courageously walking in God's way, readily doing what is pleasing to God. — And you, if you cling to God with all your soul, will never fear the hour of death; rather, death and separation from the body will become a joy for you.

55. The Good God has granted us the enlightenment of knowledge; yet day by day we reject it. If we had fulfilled God's will, we would be blessed at the hour of judgment, together with all who have done His will. But since we have not fulfilled it, we will have no justification there; for we all sin while having knowledge. We all experience God's Providence and all the gifts with which the good God has graced us. His grace often visits our hearts at all times, and if it finds rest, it enters and dwells permanently in the soul; but if it does not find a pure heart, it immediately withdraws. But His generosity once again prompts it to descend and visit us sinners, for we are all changeable by choice, but not by nature. We are always distracted and weak, envious and deceitful; we often think ill of one another, indulge in deceitful thoughts, and are always, as if in a dreadful mire, immersed in our thoughts. And when grace comes to visit us, it encounters in our hearts the stench of impure thoughts, and immediately withdraws, finding no way in to dwell within us as it pleases. And yet, through its luminous sweetness, it makes an impression on the heart so that a person may sense that grace has visited him but found no way in—so that, having been delighted by the radiance of grace, he may seek it out. However, grace itself cannot completely withdraw from us; for it is moved by its own mercy to have mercy on all. Do you see God's Providence? Do you see Christ's mercy? Do you see how the Holy God always loves us and desires that we be saved? Blessed is the person who always strives to prepare a pure heart for grace, so that when it comes, it may find the fragrance of virtues and the holiness of the soul and dwell within him forever and ever.

56. Blessed are those who, having fallen into the enemy's snare, managed to break his bonds and hid themselves, fleeing from him like a fish that has escaped from a net. A fish, while still in the water, if caught but breaks through the net and hides in the depths, will be saved; but once pulled onto dry land, it can no longer help itself. So too, while we are still in this life, we have the power from God to break the bonds of the enemy's will that bind us, to cast off the burden of sin through repentance, and to be saved into the heavenly kingdom. But if that dreadful command overtakes us, and the soul departs, and the body is committed to the earth, then we are no longer able to help ourselves, just as a fish, pulled from the water and confined in a vessel, can no longer help itself.

57. Let us not wait until death comes, lest we be left in shame at the resurrection of the dead—when the saints will be clothed in the radiant robe they have prepared for themselves through good deeds. If we then find ourselves not only stripped of radiant glory but also blackened and filled with a foul stench, what shame will then overcome us?—Let us therefore strive to avoid such a danger by embarking on the path of repentance and purifying ourselves from our passions.

58. Sin is darkness, and virtue is light. Sin, when loved and committed, blackens those who commit it; but virtue, when practiced, makes those who excel in it radiant.

59. Let us bear fruit pleasing to God before the dreadful command comes to take the soul from our body. Woe then to those who have offended our Lord God and have not repented! He will seek the time he wasted in negligence—and will not find it. Let us therefore weep before the Lord our God, that we may find His mercy. While we still have time, let us be careful and seek the Lord's blessing. We need not worry about money; even if someone loses it, he can acquire more in its place. Our soul is in danger; if we destroy it, we can never bring it back (Matt. 16:26–27).

60. Our days are fleeting, and the end is drawing near. Let us weep before the Lord our God before we are shut up in utter darkness. Then, even with many tears, we will not be able to regain these days if we spend them in idleness and do not make the slightest use of them for our salvation. *“Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Cor. 6:2). Blessed are those who are sober-minded, for they will be crowned with joy. *“Blessed are those who mourn now, for they will be comforted”* (Matt. 5:4), together with God's elect. Blessed are those who labor for the Lord, for heavenly delight awaits them.

61. Nor will we be justified by the deeds of others, nor will others be condemned for our deeds. When we are presented naked and exposed before the Judge to give an account of what we have done, then no one will be condemned for another: *“For each one will bear his own burden”* (Gal. 6:5).

62. If someone who has done wrong is reported to a ruler, the accused may still escape punishment by fleeing to another place; but from the face of God, where can we flee, according to the words of Him who said: *“Where can I go from Your Spirit, and where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I go down to the grave, You are there; if I take wing and dwell in the farthest seas, even there Your hand will guide me, and Your right hand will hold me fast”* (Ps. 138: 7–10).

63. Let us walk the narrow and constricted path, embracing contrition, so that the remembrance of death may abide in us, and that we may be freed from condemnation. For it is said: *“Woe to you who laugh now, for you will weep and mourn”* (Luke 6:25). *“Blessed are those who weep now, for they will be comforted”* (Matt. 5:4). Let us look into the grave, and we will see the mysteries of our nature—a heap of bones lying one upon another, skulls stripped of flesh, and other bones. Looking at them, we will see ourselves in them. Where is the beauty of our former complexion, where is the rosy glow of our cheeks? Reflecting on this, let us renounce carnal desires, lest we be put to shame at the resurrection.

64. Expect your departure every day, and prepare for this journey: for at the very hour you least expect it, the dreadful command will come; and woe to the one who is unprepared! Sorrow of the heart is a wonderful thing; it heals human souls.

65. Just as it is impossible for sailors to remain on a ship forever, or for a traveler staying at an inn not to leave it, so too is it impossible for us to remain in this life forever. We are strangers and sojourners. Let us therefore, beholding this with the eye of the mind, prepare for our departure from this life.

66. If you have been a hard worker, do not grieve over the approach of a blessed passage to the next life. One who returns home with wealth is never in sorrow.

67. God created man free; that is why honors and punishments are intended for him—namely, honors and crowns for those who strive well, and punishments and torments for criminals and the negligent. There is *“a sin leading to death”* (1 John 5:16); and death is prepared for those who persist in sin and do not turn away from forbidden deeds to lead a better life.

68. Great is the fear at the hour of death, when the soul is separated from the body; for at this hour of separation, the soul's deeds—both good and evil, those done by her day and night—will stand before her. Trembling as she looks upon her deeds, she says to them, “Go away—let me go.” But her deeds, with one voice, reply to her, “You have brought us into being; we will go with you to God for judgment.”

69. No one knows the day or the hour of parting. While we walk carefree and rejoice on earth, a terrible command suddenly overtakes us—to take our soul from the body. And the sinner sets out on that journey on a day and at an hour he did not expect, when his soul is filled with sins and has no justification.

70. Do not think, brother, that you will live many more years on earth—and do not grow complacent, indulging in sinful thoughts and deeds. The Lord's command will come suddenly and overtake the sinner when he no longer has time for repentance and to receive forgiveness. – And what will you say, brother, to death at the hour of parting?!

71. Constantly await death, separation, and your appearance before the Lord's judgment seat. And as a wise steward of your salvation, always have your lamp prepared—and examine it hourly with tears and prayers.

72. The day is drawing to a close; our time is running out; yet we, in our unbelief, think it is still morning. The time of the harvest is already at hand; this age is coming to an end; the angels hold their sickles at the ready and await the signal. Let us be afraid, beloved! It is already the eleventh hour of the day, and the journey is still long. Let us strive to be found on the way. Let us be alert; let us wake from our slumber.

73. Say to yourself: "Look, our brothers are working, while you and I are wasting our time in idleness; they, listening to the Divine Scriptures, are nourished like parched earth by rain, while we, even though we are within the monastery walls, let our thoughts wander everywhere; they are sober-minded, while we are careless; they stay awake in prayer, while we have bound ourselves with sleep and laziness; they have received their crown, while we remain in our laziness; they are pleasing to the Lord, while we please the world. Why do we not wake up, so that we too may receive our reward?"

74. These days, years, and months pass like a dream and like the evening shadow, and soon the dreadful and great coming of Christ will arrive. — And truly, that day will be dreadful for sinners who did not wish to fulfill God's will and be saved. — Let us, then, finally cast off our concern for earthly things—and begin to prepare to meet that day.

75. Everything passes away, everything vanishes, and nothing will be of any use to us at that hour except the good deeds we have done here. Each of us will then bring our deeds and words before the throne of the righteous Judge. Our hearts will tremble, and our innermost being will be shaken when our deeds are revealed and our thoughts and words are rigorously examined. Who will not tremble, who will not weep, who will not shed tears when everything that each of us has done in secret and in darkness is revealed there?

76. To illustrate this, I present to you the example of fruitful trees, which in their season bear fruit along with their leaves. Trees do not derive their splendor from some external source, but each one bears fruit according to its own nature from within itself. So too, on that dreadful day, all human bodies will bring forth from within themselves everything they have done, whether good or evil; and each will bring before the throne of the fearsome Judge their deeds, like good and pleasant fruit, and their words, like leaves. The saints will bring the fruit of good deeds—beautiful and precious; the martyrs will bring their praiseworthy patience in torments and persecutions; the ascetics will bring the fruits of self-restraint, vigil, and prayer. But sinful, ungodly, and defiled people, with shame, weeping, and lamentation, will bring there the fruit of impurity and injustice—food for the never-sleeping worm and the unquenchable fire.

77. Why, then, are we so careless? Or do we not know what awaits us? Knowing this, why do we not weep day and night, imploring God to grant us repentance, so that we may be delivered from that shame and eternal darkness? There our sinful lips will be silenced; there all creation will tremble, and even the very ranks of the holy angels will tremble at the glory and awesomeness of the Lord's coming. What will we say to Him on that day if we spend all our time in negligence? — Here He is long-suffering, drawing all to Himself and graciously receiving them into His Kingdom. But there He will demand an account, and He will pass judgment without mercy upon those who wished to follow Him but were negligent.

78. These are the things that await us—on the one hand, the Kingdom and life, rest and joy; on the other, eternal torment in utter darkness. — Go wherever you wish; you have been given complete freedom. — Therefore, if you are negligent, do not desire to be saved, do not walk in God's straight paths, and do not wish to fulfill His commandments, then you are destroying yourself and casting yourself out of the heavenly palace. "The Holy God did not spare His Only-Begotten Son for your sake; yet you, wretched one, show no mercy even to yourself. Come to your senses at last, and awaken from your sinful slumber!"

79. Climb to a height, and you will see that everything below is insignificant; but if you descend from that height, you will marvel even at a small whitewashed house.

80. Let us concern ourselves with our salvation; let us concern ourselves with the hour of death. Alas, how dreadful is the hour of death, when the soul is separated from the body! — Then it will not be a father accompanying his son, nor a mother her daughter, nor a wife her husband, nor a brother his brother, but only each person's deeds—the good or the evil they have done. Let us, then, send our good deeds ahead of us, so that when we ourselves go there, they may welcome us into their city.

81. If you wish to inherit the Kingdom, seek the King's favor even here. To the extent that you honor Him here, to that degree will He exalt you; as much as you serve Him here, so much will He honor you there.

For it is written: *“I will exalt those who exalt Me, but those who despise Me will be put to shame”* (1 Sam. 2:30). Honor Him, then, with all your soul, so that He may deign to grant you the honor of the saints. — You may ask: How, then, can I win His favor? — Offer Him gold and silver by helping those in need, if you have them. But if you have none of these things, offer Him other gifts—faith, love, self-control, patience, generosity, and humility; refrain from judging others; guard your eyes so they do not look upon vanity; guard your hands so they do not commit injustice; turn your feet away from the evil path; comfort the faint-hearted, be compassionate toward the weak, offer a cup of cool water to the thirsty, give a piece of bread to the hungry—whatever you have with you, and whatever He has bestowed upon you, bring that to Him; for Christ did not reject even the widow’s two mites.

82. Let us more often remember the torments awaiting the sinner, so as to stir ourselves to repentance and to put an end to a sinful life. — What is smaller than a gnat? Yet we cannot even endure its bite. What, then, will it be like there, with the poisonous, ceaseless worm? — When evening falls, people say: “Light the lamp, for it is dark”; and darkness is driven away by the lamp. What, then, will we do there in the face of impenetrable, unceasing darkness? — Here, when someone is scorched by the sun’s rays, they flee into the shade. What, then, will we do with the unquenchable fiery Gehenna?

83. Come to your senses and do not disregard the flame that is never extinguished. And if you do disregard it, then test yourself here to see if you can endure the cruelty of the tormenting fire. Light a lamp and hold the tip of your finger to it. If you are able to endure this pain, then perhaps you will be able to help yourself there as well. But if, when your whole body is outside the fire, you cannot endure the pain of a single small limb, what will you do when your whole body, together with your soul, is cast into the fiery Gehenna?

84. We are strangers and sojourners in this life; yet we do not know when we will be taken from here. Many, having awakened in the morning, did not live to see the evening; others, having fallen asleep in the evening, did not reach the morning: *“Man is like a breath; his days pass like a shadow”* (Ps. 143: 4). And who knows if the time of our departure has not already come?—Let us not, then, be negligent about our salvation.

85. Blessed is the one who, at the hour of death, proves to be a holy sacrifice, pleasing to the Lord, who with great joy parts from the body and from this vain life. The angelic hosts, seeing him in heaven, will praise him as a servant like themselves, well-versed in the Lord.

86. *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”* (Ps. 115:6); but *“the death of the wicked is bitter”* (Ps. 33:22)—the day will come, it will surely come, and it will not pass us by, the day when a person will leave everything and everyone behind and go alone, abandoned by all, naked and helpless, having neither intercessor nor companion, unprepared and defenseless, if that day finds him in negligence, *“on a day he does not know, and at an hour he does not expect”* (Matt. 24:50)—while he is reveling, amassing treasures, living in luxury, and indulging in debauchery. That hour will come suddenly—and all will come to an end. One long, agonizing night—and man will go, like a defendant, wherever those who take him lead him. Then, O man, you will need many helpers, many prayers at that hour of the soul’s separation. Great will be the fear then, great the trembling, great the upheaval, at the passage into the world beyond. This is our hour—a dreadful hour, yet inevitable. This is the end common to all—and dreadful for all; a difficult path, but one that all must travel; a narrow and constricted way, but we will all set out upon it; this is a bitter and dreadful cup, but we will all drink it to the dregs. What the soul experiences then is filled with fear and horror, but none of us knows it, except for those few who have gone before us there, except for those few who have experienced it firsthand.

87. Do you not see those who are nearing the end—how terrifying it is then? In what turmoil they are, how they sigh, how they cast their eyes here and there? How they sometimes gnash their teeth? Then they see what they have never seen, and hear what they have never heard, and endure what they have never endured; they seek a deliverer, and there is no one to save them.

88. One of those who are dying says: “Farewell, brothers, farewell. I am setting out on a long journey—a journey I have never taken before, to a land new to me, from which no one has ever returned, to a dark land where I do not know what awaits me. I am leaving now—and I will never return to you. This hour is too brief for me, for I am departing unprepared; this night is dark for me, for I am being cut down like a fruitless tree; the journey ahead is heavy for me, for I have no good guidance. “Now I see how I deceived myself, saying, ‘I am young; I will enjoy life for now, and then I will repent—God is merciful and will surely forgive me.’ Reasoning this way every day, I squandered my life.” I was taught, but I paid no attention; I was given instruction, but I laughed; I listened to the Scriptures, yet I end my life as if I had never heard them; I heard

about judgment, and I mocked it; I heard about death, and I lived as if I were immortal. And now I am taken away completely unprepared—and I have no helper; caught unaware, unrepentant—and there is no one to deliver me; subjected to condemnation—and there is no one to save me. How many times did I resolve to repent, only to do worse again? How many times did I cling to God, only to turn away from Him again? How many times has He shown me mercy, only for me to grieve Him anew?—And now I depart in a hopeless state.—Sigh, brothers, and shed a tear for me!!”—Thus does the one who is nearing the end sometimes speak to us—and suddenly his tongue is tied, his eyes change, his voice breaks, and his lips fall silent.

89. When the final hour approaches, angels—the reapers of souls—are sent to take the departing soul and present it before God’s judgment seat. Upon seeing them approach, the poor man—even if he were a king, a ruler, or a world-ruler—is thrown into utter confusion, as if by an earthquake; he trembles all over, like a leaf swayed by the wind; he flutters like a bird in the hands of a hunter; he is utterly transfixed and astonished, seeing terrifying powers, seeing sights new and magnificent to him, seeing menacing and stern faces, seeing an order of things he has never seen before. — All this is seen at that moment by the one who is being taken from us, and he no longer pays any attention to us. He merely offers prayers within himself, as much as his strength allows. From his demeanor, we conclude that he sees higher powers, and, motioning to one another, we say: “Be silent and do not disturb the one who lies there any further, lest you throw him into confusion. Let us rather pray that his soul may depart in peace, and that he may find a merciful Judge.”

90. He has died; he is no more; he has lived out his life, and now lies motionless, breathless, and silent. — What, then, is a human being? — A dreamlike vision and a shadow. — The angels—the reapers—take the soul and ascend through the air, where the principalities, powers, and rulers of the opposing forces stand. These are our evil accusers—here, the tempters and recorders of our evil deeds, and there, the tormentors. They meet the ascending soul along the way, examine it, and tally its sins according to their records—sins of youth and old age, voluntary and involuntary, committed in deed, word, and thought. Oh, what fear, what dread for that poor soul! What indescribable anguish it endures then from the innumerable host of enemies surrounding it in darkness, slandering it to prevent it from ascending to heaven, entering the land of life, and dwelling among the living.

91. Thus the angels, having taken the soul, lead it along a path known only to them. As for us, having prepared the body, we carry it to the cemetery—and there we encounter a new and terrifying mystery. The small and the great, kings and commoners, masters and slaves—all have become one dust, one earth, one ash, one stench, one decay: just as the Ethiopian is, so too is the one who was once handsome; just as the youth is, so too is the old man; just as the infirm is, so too is the one strong in body; all have become, as was decreed from the beginning—dust and ashes (Gen. 3:19).—And you can distinguish nothing.—A truly great and awesome mystery lies before us! We see that every age has been erased there, every physical beauty has changed, every facial beauty has vanished, every pleasing gaze has faded, every eloquent mouth is sealed, every lock of hair has rotted away—all has come to an end. We speak—and no one listens—we weep—and no one heeds us.

92. If only we could ask those who lie there: Where have you gone, our brothers? Where do you dwell? Where is your dwelling place? Give us a sign; speak with us, as you once did.” And it would be instructive for them to answer us: “We who have departed from you, who still live on earth—that is, the soul of each of us—are in a place befitting each soul according to its merit. And this dust lying before you, these ashes you see, this stench, these decayed bones—these are the bodies of those young men and maidens whom you once coveted. These ashes are the very flesh that you held in your embrace and kissed insatiably. These bared teeth, those very lips that you covered day and night with countless kisses. This pus and this repulsive moisture—that very flesh in whose embrace you gave yourselves over to sin. Therefore, look and be certain that, when you embrace your young lovers on your beds, you are embracing dust and slime. Know that when you kiss their limbs, you are kissing stench and pus. Realize that when you burn with love for them, the object of your desire is worms, ashes, and stench. Do not give in to delusion, foolish young men and maidens! Do not be beguiled by the fleeting beauty of youth; for we, the decaying corpses lying before your eyes, were once, during our lifetimes—just as you are now—striking in appearance, majestic, anointed with perfumes, loved, enjoying life, and prosperous; and now, as you see, all of this has become a delusion, dust, ashes, and a stench. Do not deceive yourselves any longer; but learn from us, who have gone before you and now lie in the grave, and be cautious, and be certain—that there is judgment, there is endless torment, there is impenetrable

darkness and a hopeless Gehenna, there is an unceasing worm, unceasing weeping, unceasing gnashing of teeth, and incurable sorrow.”.

93. This is what our brothers who have gone before us there teach us—not merely in words, but by their very deeds. Let us therefore awaken from our slumber. Let us cease to deceive ourselves with empty hopes. Let us no longer allow the cunning enemy to mock us. May we not be led astray by flattering thoughts promising a long life. Many, having made many plans, did not even live to see the morning, but were suddenly snatched away by death, like a bird by a hawk, or a lamb by a wolf. Some, having fallen asleep healthy in the evening, did not wake up; others, while sitting at the table, breathed their last; still others died suddenly while out walking or enjoying themselves; still others, dying in the bathhouse, found their funeral washing there; still others were suddenly snatched away by death during their wedding, in the very bridal chamber—and their wedding garments became their burial garments, and those who played music at the wedding were replaced by mourners, and those who danced by weepers. “We know all this,” and yet we do not cease to deceive ourselves. That is why we will find no mercy from God; for it is not out of ignorance but with full knowledge that we give ourselves over to deception. “I implore you, then,”—become at last not merely hearers, but also doers of the teaching offered to you.

94. What fear and what distress will we face at the hour of our departure from this life, when the soul is separated from the body?! A terrible and great mystery is then accomplished! Good angels and a multitude of the heavenly host approach the soul, as do all the opposing forces and the prince of darkness; both sides seek to draw the soul to their own realm. At that moment, if the soul has acquired good qualities here, led an honest life, and been virtuous, then on the day of its departure, the virtues it has acquired here are taken up by the good angels; they surround it and do not allow any opposing force to touch it; but in joy and gladness, together with the holy angels, they receive her and bring her to Christ, the Lord and King of Glory, and worship Him together with her and all the heavenly powers. And finally, the soul is led to a place of rest, to inexpressible joy, to eternal light, where there is neither sorrow nor sighing, nor tears, nor worry, but where there is immortal life and eternal joy in the heavenly kingdom with all others who have pleased God. – But if the soul lived a shameful life in this world, indulging in passions of dishonor and being carried away by carnal pleasures and the vanity of this world, then on the day of its departure from this life, those passions and pleasures which it acquired in this life are transformed into wicked demons; they surround the poor soul and do not allow God’s angels to approach it, but together with the opposing forces, the princes of darkness, they seize her—pitiful, weeping, despondent, and lamenting—and lead her away to dark, gloomy, and sorrowful places, where all sinners are kept until the Day of Judgment and eternal torment, to which the devil and his angels will be cast down.

95. Therefore, while there is still time, let us strive through repentance to purify ourselves of our passions, and through the labors of self-denial and good deeds to plant in our hearts virtues that will intercede for us at our passing, and together with the angels of God will stand before our Lord and Master, drawing His favor upon us.

2. Lessons on Repentance

1. Woe is me! What a shame I am in! My inner self is not as it appears on the outside! Truly, I have only the outward appearance of piety, but not its power. With what face will I come before the Lord God, Who knows the secrets of my heart? Being accountable for so many evil deeds, even as I stand in prayer, I fear that fire might come down from heaven and consume me. – Yet I do not despair, trusting in God’s mercy.

2. My heart has grown hard, my reason has been corrupted, and my mind has been clouded. Like a dog, I return to “*my own vomit*” (2 Peter 2:22). I have no sincere repentance, no tears during prayer, though I sigh and beat my breast—this dwelling place of passions.

3. There, both what was done in darkness and what was done openly will be revealed. What shame will overwhelm my soul when those who now say I am blameless see me as condemned! Having abandoned the spiritual, I have yielded to my passions. I do not want to learn, but I am glad to teach; I do not want to submit, but I love to subjugate others; I do not want to labor, but I am eager to burden others; I do not want to show honor, but I desire to be honored; I cannot tolerate reproach, but I love to reproach; I do not want to be humiliated, but I love to humiliate. – I am wise enough to give advice, but not wise enough to follow it myself; I say what ought to be done, but I do what ought not to be said.

4. Do not say, “Today I will sin, and tomorrow I will repent.” But let us repent today; for we do not know if we will live to see tomorrow.

5. Have we sinned? Let us repent, for the Lord accepts the repentance of those who truly repent.

6. If a brother sins, we gladly rebuke him; but if we ourselves sin, we do not gladly accept rebuke.

7. “Do not argue against the truth, and do not be ashamed of your punishment. Do not be ashamed to confess your sins” (Sir. 4:29–30). “Do not say, ‘I have sinned; what will become of me?’ For the Lord is long-suffering. Do not delay in turning to the Lord, and do not put off day after day” (Sir. 5:4, 8). “Remember that wrath will not be delayed” (Sir. 7:18).

8. “Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that I may weep for my sins day and night” (Jer. 9:1)? To laughter I said (Eccl. 2:2), “Depart from me”; and to tears, “Come to me”; for my sin is very great before the Lord, and my transgressions are beyond number.

9. Do you know that there are three different kinds of tears among people? There are tears over visible things—and they are very bitter and vain. There are tears of repentance, when the soul longs for eternal blessings, and they are very sweet and beneficial. And there are tears of remorse where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12)—and these tears are bitter and useless, because they are entirely fruitless when there is no longer time for repentance.

10. Outwardly we are humble, but in character we are cruel and inhuman; outwardly we are devout, but in character we are murderers; outwardly we are full of love, but in character we are enemies; outwardly we are friendly, but in character we are haters; outwardly ascetics, but in character—a plague upon ascetics; outwardly fasters, but in character—sea robbers; outwardly chaste, but in heart—adulterers; outwardly silent, but in heart—vagabonds; outwardly meek, but in character—arrogant; outwardly counselors, but in character, seducers; outwardly simple-hearted, but in character, dangerous. — Why is this so? Because we do not have the fear of God before our eyes, and either we do not know the Lord’s commandments, or, knowing them, we reinterpret them to suit ourselves.

11. And even now (after many years of self-improvement), there are still many impure thoughts within me—envy, malice, self-indulgence, gluttony, anger, vanity, and lust. I am nothing in myself, yet I consider myself to be something; I belong to the number of wicked people, yet I seek to gain for myself a reputation for holiness; I live in sin, yet I want to be regarded as righteous. I am a liar myself, yet I take offense at liars; I defile myself with my thoughts, yet I pass judgment on adulterers; I condemn thieves, yet I wrong the poor; I appear pure, though I am entirely impure; in the Church I take the first seat, though I am unworthy even of the last; I demand honor for myself when I ought to bear dishonor; before women I wish to appear charming, before the rich—pious. If I am insulted, I take revenge; when rebuked, I express my indignation; when I do not see flattery, I grow angry; I despise those in authority, yet I act hypocritically in their presence; I refuse to give honor to the worthy, yet I, being unworthy, demand honors for myself. I will not describe the thoughts that occupy me daily, my concerns with vanity, my neglect of prayer, or my passion for gossip. But I will describe my visits to church according to a set routine, along with the deliberate delays, contrived encounters, and hypocritical conversations with pious women, as well as my insatiable acceptance of gifts and flattery in order to gain more. Such is my life; such are my shortcomings!

12. Perhaps someone will say, “Are thoughts really that important?!” To this I will say: they are very important indeed, and here is proof from Scripture. Job offered sacrifices for his children, saying, “Perhaps they have thought something evil in their hearts” (1:5). If thoughts were not subject to accountability, then why would he offer even a single bull for the sins of his thoughts?—The wicked-minded were condemned in the assembly of Korah; and because they had evil thoughts, they were burned. And the Lord and Savior, in His condescension, called adultery “adultery,” lust for a wife “the very act itself,” anger “murder,” and hatred “equivalent to murder.” Blessed Paul also testifies to our responsibility for our thoughts when he says that the Lord will reveal “the counsels of the heart” at the judgment and bring to light “the hidden things of darkness” (1 Cor. 4:5).—Therefore, do not say that thoughts mean nothing, when consenting to them is recognized as the very act itself.

13. We must consider not only our thoughts, but even more so the decision of the will to accept those thoughts as pleasing and to yield to them. A farmer sows seed in the ground, but not everything is accepted by the soil; so too, the mind sows in the will, but not everything is approved and accepted by the will. From what the soil accepts, the farmer seeks a harvest; and for what the will has approved and accepted, God demands an account.

14. The Apostle called those who act naturally “spiritual,” and those who act unnaturally “carnal”; the spiritual, however, are those who transform even nature into spirit. God knows the nature, the will, and the powers of each person; He sows His Word within them and demands deeds commensurate with them; He supernaturally penetrates the soul and the spirit, nature and the will (without coercing the latter). If a person is content with what is natural, God does not hold it against him; for He has determined the measure of nature and established a law for it. But if the will is overcome by nature, He holds him accountable for insatiability and for violating God’s law.

15. I hate sin, yet I remain in passion; I renounce lawlessness, yet I reluctantly yield to pleasure. I have enslaved my nature to sin, and sin, having bought my free will, imposes necessity upon me. Passions pour down upon me like a river; for I have united my mind with the flesh, and separation is impossible. I hasten to change my will, but my previous state resists me in this. I rush to free my soul, but I am weighed down by a multitude of debts.

16. The devil, that wicked moneylender, does not remind me to repay; he lends generously but refuses to take anything back. He seeks only to enslave me and makes no argument about the debt; he lends so that we may grow rich in passions, and he does not demand repayment of what he has given. I want to pay him back, but he keeps adding to what I already owe. When I force him to take payment, he gives me something else, so that it appears I am paying him back with his own loan. He burdens me with new debts, because he eradicates my old passions with others that did not exist before. The old ones seem to have been paid off; yet he draws me into new obligations of passion and introduces me to new situations. He compels me to keep silent about my passions and not to confess them, and persuades me to pursue new passions, as if they were harmless. I grow accustomed to passions I have never known before, and, distracted by them, I forget my former passions. I make a pact with those who have come to me anew, and once again I find myself in debt. I rush toward them as if they were friends, and those who have lent me money turn out to be my masters once more. I want to free myself, and they make me a venal slave. I rush to break their bonds, and I bind myself with new ones; and in trying to rid myself of fighting under the banners of passions, because of their success and their gifts, I find myself their steward.

17. Oh, away from me this slavery to the serpent! Away with this power of the passions! Away with this deep-rooted sin. It has given pledges to buy my mind for itself; it has flattered the flesh to make my soul serve it. It preempted my youth so that my reason might not know what was happening; it bound my immature judgment to itself, and through it, like a copper chain, holds my limited mind captive; and if it tries to flee, it does not let it go, keeping it tethered. Sin surrounds the mind and locks the door of knowledge. Passion stands constantly guard over the mind, so that, even if it calls out to God, it will not prevent the flesh from being sold. It swears that indulging the flesh is not in the least wrong, and that there will be no punishment for such a trifle. It cites as examples a multitude of confused thoughts and assures me that it is impossible for them to be subjected to scrutiny; it points to their subtlety (insignificance) and assures me that all such things will be consigned to oblivion. This is how the enemy holds me back and binds me, ensnaring me with deceit and flattery.

18. Paul said of the sinner that he is “*of the flesh*” (Rom. 7:14). Sin is brought into play by those who willfully commit it; but habits mediate between nature and sin; and the passions are something given by sin and accepted by nature; the use of these leads to the subjugation of the soul, the confusion of the mind, and slavery. For sin, dwelling in the flesh, rules over the mind and takes possession of the soul, subjugating it through the flesh. Sin uses the flesh in place of a steward; through it, it also burdens the soul itself and becomes, as it were, its steward; for it assigns tasks and demands an account of their fulfillment. If it is necessary to inflict blows upon the soul, it burdens it with them through the flesh. For it has turned the flesh, as it were, into its own chain, and holds the soul upon it like a sheep for slaughter; and like a soaring bird, it has bound it with this chain, and with it, just as a mighty giant would with a sword, has severed its arms and legs. I can neither flee nor help myself, for I am dead while still alive; I see with my eyes, yet I am blind; I have become a dog instead of a man, and though I am rational, I behave like a creature without speech.

19. But I long to be freed from this wretched, passionate state, if the Lord will help me. If He acts toward me according to the abundance of His mercy, He will deliver me from sin; and if He pours out His goodness upon me, I will be saved. I am certain that this is possible for Him—and I do not despair of my salvation. I know that the abundance of His generosity will overcome the multitude of my sins. I know that when He came, He had mercy on all, and through baptism He granted the forgiveness of sins. I confess this

because I have benefited from this grace. I am in need of healing for the sins committed after my baptism; but for Him who raised the dead, it is not impossible to heal me in this as well. I am blind, but He healed even the man born blind. I am cast out like a leper, but if He wills, He can cleanse me as well. I am overwhelmed by sins, but His goodness toward me will not be overcome by them. He had mercy on Zacchaeus as one worthy; He will have mercy on me as one unworthy.

20. Even idle words are subject to judgment. And what is an idle word? A promise of faith that is not fulfilled in deed. A person believes in and confesses Christ, yet remains idle, failing to do what Christ has commanded. In another instance, a word is empty, namely, when a person confesses but does not amend his ways, when he says he repents but sins again. And speaking ill of another is an empty word; for he recounts what was not done and what he did not see.

21. Come, sinner, to the Good Physician, and be healed without effort. Cast off the burden of your sins, offer up a prayer, and wash your festering sores with tears. For this heavenly Physician heals sores with tears and sighs. Come, then, bringing your tears—this is the best medicine. For it is pleasing to the heavenly Physician that each person heal himself with his own tears and be saved. This remedy is not prolonged, yet it is effective; it does not merely bandage the wound, but heals you instantly. The Physician awaits only to see your tears; come forward, do not be afraid. Show Him the wound, bringing with it the remedy—tears and sighs.

22. Who will not be amazed, who will not be astonished, who will not bless the great mercy of Your goodness, Savior of our souls, when You deign to accept tears as payment for Your healing! O power of tears! How far you have reached! With great boldness, you enter heaven itself unhindered. O power of tears! The angelic ranks and all the heavenly powers rejoice ceaselessly at your boldness. O power of tears! If you wish, you may joyfully stand before the Holy and exalted throne of the Most Pure Lord. O power of tears! In the blink of an eye, you soar into heaven, and you receive from God what you ask for; for He comes out to meet you, willingly granting forgiveness.

23. How can I implore You, my Savior, when my lips are full of slander? How can I sing Your praises when my conscience is defiled? How can I call upon You when I have failed to keep Your commandments?—But You Yourself, O All-Good One, do not despise me, a wretch; do not cast me away, a vile one; do not forsake me, a hopeless one. For it is a great delight to my enemy to see me despair of myself; his only joy is to see me, as a result of my despair, become his captive: but You Yourself, through Your mercy, put his hope to shame, snatch me from his teeth, deliver me from his wicked schemes, and from all the snares he has set against me!—And to all whose consciences are troubled by their wicked deeds, I implore you: do not lose hope in yourselves; do not give joy to your adversary. But approach God without shame, weep before Him, and do not lose hope in yourselves. For our Lord takes great delight in those who repent and awaits our conversion. He Himself calls out to all: “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28). Therefore, let no one lose hope in himself, even if he has sinned. The Lord is strict only toward those who reject Him and do not repent.

24. Blessed is the one who, with full awareness, has chosen to weep, and with a contrite heart sheds tears upon the earth before the Lord like precious pearls.

25. Blessed is the one whose soul has become like a newly planted tree, and who always, like water from irrigation, has tears for God.

26. Blessed is the one who plants good plants—that is, virtues—in his soul and waters what he has planted within himself, praying with tears that his plantings may be pleasing and fruitful to the Lord.

27. I wish to illustrate to you the power of tears. Through her tearful prayer, Hannah received the Prophet Samuel, as well as joy, sorrow, and praise of God in her heart. The sinful woman in Simon’s house, weeping and washing the Lord’s holy feet with her tears, received forgiveness of her sins from Him. Tenderness (heartfelt weeping before God) is the healing of the soul. It instills the Only-Begotten Son within us when we long for Him, and draws the Holy Spirit into the soul. There is no joy on earth sweeter than that which comes from contrition. Has any of you been illuminated by this joy of tears for God? If any of you, having experienced this and found sweetness in it, have soared above the earth during prayer, then at that moment you were entirely outside your body, outside this entire age—and no longer on earth.—Holy and pure tears for God always wash the soul clean of sins and purify it from iniquities. Tears for God at all times give boldness before God; impure thoughts cannot in any way approach a soul that is constantly moved by God. Tenderness is a treasure that cannot be stolen; by tenderness I mean that which continues not just for a single

day, but ceaselessly, day and night, until the end of life. Tenderness is a pure spring that waters the fruitful plantings of the soul (i.e., virtues).

28. Before anyone commits an iniquity, the enemy greatly minimizes it in his eyes; in particular, he minimizes the lust for sensual pleasure, as if fulfilling it were the same as pouring a bowl of cold water onto the floor. Thus does the evil one minimize sin in a person's eyes before it is committed; but once the sin is committed, the evil one exaggerates the wickedness to the extreme in the eyes of the one who has fallen into it. At the same time, he stirs up waves of despair against him; and not infrequently he arms himself against him with parables, instilling such thoughts: "What have you done, you futile laborer? And what does your deed resemble? Here is what it resembles: someone planted grapevines, tended and cared for them—until they bore fruit—and after gathering the grapes, he filled the barrels with wine; but then he suddenly stood up, took an axe, and smashed the barrels; the wine spilled out and was lost; this is what your deed resembles." This is what the evil one suggests to a person, with the intention of plunging him into the depths of despair.

29. Therefore, knowing in advance the enemy's schemes, flee from sin. But if you do fall into sin, do not persist in it; rather, rise up and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart, so that your soul may be saved. Say to the wicked thought: "Although I have broken the barrels and ruined the wine, my vineyard is still intact, and the Lord is long-suffering, abounding in mercy, compassionate, and righteous. And I hope that, with the help of His grace, I will once again cultivate and harvest my grapes, and fill my barrels as before. For through the Prophet Isaiah He says: *'Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow; though they be red as crimson, I will make them white as wool'* (Ps. 1: 18).

30. To one person, a thought suggests and says, "You are still young; you will repent in your old age." But to one who has reached old age, a thought suggests, "You have grown old—how can you bear the labors of repentance? You need rest."

31. Do not despair of yourself, and do not say, "I can no longer be saved." On the contrary, you can still be saved. Love the fear of God with all your soul; and it will heal your wounds and keep you invulnerable from now on. As long as your soul loves the fear of the Lord, you will not fall into the devil's snares, but you will be like an eagle soaring on high. – But if, after this, the soul neglects the fear of God and becomes self-indulgent, then, having cast itself down from the heights, it becomes a plaything of the spirits of the underworld. And they, having blinded it, drag it into the passions of debauchery, like an ox yoked to a yoke.

32. If you are struck by an arrow from the crafty enemy, do not fall into despair in the least; on the contrary, no matter how many times you are overcome, do not remain defeated, but rise immediately and fight the enemy: for the Helper is always ready to extend His right hand to you and will lift you up from your fall. As soon as you first reach out your right hand to Him, He will extend His right hand to you to lift you up. The wicked enemy, however, strives only to plunge you into despair as soon as you fall. Do not believe him; but even if you fall seven times a day, strive to rise again and appease God through repentance.

33. Although we have fallen through our own weakness, let us strive to heal ourselves through repentance. Although, as human beings, we are subject to passions, let us not despair of ourselves to the very end; on the contrary, heeding God, let us listen to Him saying, *"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"* (Matt. 4:17). He did not prescribe repentance for only some sins and not for others; on the contrary, the Physician of our souls has given us this remedy for every sinful affliction.

34. Repentance is a field that is cultivated at all times. It is a tree that bears abundant fruit, offering God glorious fruits in every way. It is the tree of life, raising the dead to life through sins. It is in communion with the Godhead, and God delights in it as the power of His creation; for those whom sin destroys, it recreates for God's glory. It is spiritual interest; for it reaps what it did not sow and takes what it did not give.

35. The doers of good have fertilized God's field through repentance; through it they have enriched the Church; through it they have filled God's granaries. Through it, the earth has become heaven, for it has been filled with the Saints—these earthly Angels. The good servants are praised, for through repentance they have multiplied what was sown many times over.

36. God saw that the human race would be tempted by the enemy, and He set repentance against the enemy's downfall. The enemy persuades one to sin, but repentance is ready to receive the sinner. The enemy incites one to commit lawlessness, but repentance advises one to turn back. The enemy leads one into despair, but repentance promises the hope of salvation. Sin subdues the conscience, but repentance serves as a rod to rouse it. *"The Lord lifts up the fallen"* (Ps. 145:7); and He accomplishes this through repentance.

37. In repentance, the law serves as a lamp; for through it, sinners encounter God once more. The lawless person is clouded and cannot see God's goodness, for the enemy has filled his soul with despair. But repentance, like a good physician, removes the darkness and all that weighs down the soul, revealing to it the light of God's goodness. The devil prevents the ungodly from coming to their senses by presenting repentance as harsh. But repentance, seeing his cunning, approaches with tenderness and says: "Just bring God to mind—and I will do the work for you. Picture His mercy in your mind—and I will intercede for you with sighs. Just sigh lightly, sinners, in contrition—and I will make you God's servants. And the Prophet Isaiah said: '*When you return and sigh, then you will be saved*' (Isa. 30: 15). "Here is the testimony for you—just repent." If the sinner sighs, the burden of sin placed upon him by the serpent will fall away with that sigh. Then the mist of ignorance will clear from his mind—the eye of the soul will become clear, and repentance will begin to guide the soul toward salvation.

38. When a repentant sinner beholds God's goodness, he will not only sigh but also shed tears with great sorrow. For the soul, after a long separation from God, upon seeing Him as Father, is moved to shed tears. Because it has finally seen its Creator, it sheds tears and draws God near, for it loves the Father's favor; and in this way it is cleansed of everything to which the serpent had led it. Or have you not heard what David said: "*I wash my bed every night*" (Ps. 6:7)? But first he sighed, and then he began to weep. And so it is in nature: first the wind, then the rain; first the thunder roars, then raindrops form from the clouds.

39. David, sighing, drenched his bed with tears, for it had been defiled by adultery. He washed his bed with tears, which he had defiled through an unlawful union. He said, "*I am weary with my sighing*" (Ps. 6:7); and the toil of sighing is the fruit of a sick heart, which also brings forth many tears. Thus, tears multiply from the sighs that precede them.

40. Conscience has a natural inclination toward God (it stands for God and all that is of God) and rejects any deception that has crept in. Sin often intrudes shamelessly, but conscience, taking advantage of the circumstances of the moment, prevails. If anyone is seized by fear while in darkness, the conscience reveals that this is due to sin; for Scripture says, "*The wicked flees when no one pursues him*" (Prov. 28:1). Or if someone on a ship is thrown into confusion by the stormy waves of the sea, the conscience reminds him of his wickedness. Or during an earthquake, it brings to mind acts of lawlessness. Or when someone is on a journey, it brings to mind past sins. Finally, if the sinner does not repent, it convicts him when he falls into weakness and physical illness—and out of a love for life, he vows to God to crush sin within himself. Fearing death and the loss of the blessings of eternal life, he, tormented by his conscience, turns to repentance—this mediator between God and man.

41. The young man mentioned in the Gospel, having received his inheritance from his father, went off to a distant land and squandered it on prostitutes; as a result, he came to suffer agonizing poverty in every respect. When he began to languish under the burden of his hardships, repentance—by making him realize the loss of his former, carefree life with his father—revived in him the desire to return to it and the hope of appeasing his father through repentance. And he cried out: "*I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you*" (Luke 15:18). When the enemy pounced on the young man who had succumbed to temptation and did with him as he pleased, repentance remained at rest, having silenced his conscience and biding its time before taking action. But when a time of hardship came upon him, repentance, like a mother, spread out her bosom, embraced him, and snatched him from the hands of his stepmother—sensuality—to return him to his mother—piety.

42. The young man cried out: "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.*" The sinning son recognized his father, lamenting that the one who had deceived him was a stepfather and a malefactor. He saw the treachery, he saw the deception, and he ran to repentance as to a mother. For a long time he had fed on thistles and endured hunger; but repentance, like a compassionate mother, having received this young man, nourishes him once more with milk, offering him her breasts—nourishing him with milk because sin had exhausted his strength through a life of shame. Were it not for this milk, he could not have been healed. But those who could not rise up were raised up by repentance, nourished with milk. It healed the utterly feeble and delivered them into their father's arms.

43. Do you see how repentance first appears to sinners not as harsh, but as forgiving and easy! It did not impose fasting, nor did it demand abstinence or vigil, but invited them to begin with the confession: "*I have sinned.*" It begins with the easiest step, knowing that conscience will complete the rest. Conscience is the guardian of repentance; it takes the soul under its care and hastens to purify it. It knows the soul's docility—

and it guides it like a rider. It wants repentance to be accepted; it desires for it to take root in sinners and, like the sun, penetrate the mind and illuminate it. Thus it gently leads them to God and, in a short time, makes them His own.

44. We must not, brothers, despair of salvation, having such a mother—repentance. We must not lose hope of salvation when such a mother comforts us. It led those captured by the fierce enemy into paradise to God; will it truly turn away from us? It had mercy on those who were outside the Church; will it not have mercy on us? No one will allow others to freely squander what he himself has gathered with great effort. How then could God the Father yield possession of us—whom He acquired through the blood of His Son—to the enemy? – We are His flock, and He is our Shepherd. He has given repentance as purifying water, so that if we sin in any way, we may be washed clean by it. We have a “*bath*” not only for “*cleansing*” but also for “*renewal*.” If we sin in any way, having washed ourselves with repentance, we become pure.

45. Repentance is God’s altar, for through it sinners appease God. Those under the Law, having sinned, were required to offer a material sacrifice and, for this purpose, to go to Jerusalem; yet some were prevented from doing so by stinginess, others by poverty, and still others by laziness. In the new grace, all this is accomplished by repentance alone, offering a sacrifice in one’s conscience. It requires no goat, but confession. Do you have no turtledove, sinner? Sigh—and God will count this more than a turtledove. Do you have no dove? Confess your sins to God—and this will be your burnt offering. Do you have no other bird at all? Weep—and it will be counted as a sacrifice for you. If you pray, God will accept your prayer in place of a calf. If you prostrate yourself with a sincere heart, your zeal will be valued higher than an ox offered as a sacrifice. Why should you prepare incense? Repentance will purify you without the burning of smoke.

46. Repentance is also God’s meal, for through it God partakes of human salvation. And the Savior says: “*My food is to do the will of My Father who is in heaven*” (John 4:34). Thus, repentance is God’s wondrous bread; in it, God partakes of the confession of the conscience; in repentance, He drinks the tears of contrition; in it, He delights in the fragrant aroma—the sincere sentiment of sighs—for to God they are a fragrant censer. Behold—the manifold offerings of God: abstinence, fasting, vigil, diligent prayer, and submission with humility; for these are more pleasing to God than many sacrifices.

47. Repentance is a feast for God; for the Gospel says that God rejoices more “*over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people*” (Luke 15:7). Repentance, by celebrating a feast for God, invites heaven itself to the banquet. The angels rejoice when repentance invites them to the supper. All the heavenly hosts feast, stirred to joy by repentance.

48. Repentance offers sinners as a sacrifice, yet it also revives them; it puts them to death, yet it also raises them from the dead. How is this so? Listen: it takes sinners and makes them righteous. Yesterday they were dead, but today they are alive to God through repentance; yesterday they were strangers, but today they belong to God; yesterday they were lawless, but today they are holy. Repentance is a great crucible that takes in copper and transforms it into gold; it takes lead and yields silver. If you have seen how glass takes on the color of a hyacinth, or an emerald, or a sapphire, then you will have no doubt about such transformations through the power of repentance. Repentance, by God’s grace, unites the repentant with the grace of the Holy Spirit and makes a person wholly a child of God.

49. The Law commanded that sacred objects be made entirely of gold. The Lawgiver did not allow any emptiness in these precious materials, so that we might know that God’s saints possess complete holiness within themselves. Listen, you who are repenting! Draw near to God with all your heart, and He will reward you by completely refining you. You have sought refinement in the fire of repentance; see to it that nothing remains unrefined. Here is what I mean. Suppose you are repenting of fornication. Be careful to cast aside all forms of fornication, for they give rise to all manner of debauchery. And not only that, but cast aside everything that leads to defilement through them: laughter, jokes, foul language, gluttony—these are paths to fornication.

50. Cast aside all that is sinful entirely. When the people sinned, the prophet Moses commanded that a serpent be set up—that is, that sins be destroyed—and he made the serpent not hollow, but cast and solid. Why? To show you that you must completely turn away from all “*deceit*.” He made the serpent entirely of copper, because the root of all evil is “*love of money*.” He cast it from the furnace so that you might quench within yourself the “*flame*” that spreads within you, leading to the corruption of the mind. He hung the serpent on the tree so that, through repentance, you might crucify these three vices within yourself, for they lead to spiritual death.

51. My word is for you, O penitent one; let there be no empty space within you; be firm in your resolve to resist sin and stand firm in goodness, like a rock. “*Establish your heart,*” as the Prophet says, “*so that it may not waver*” (Ps. 111:5, 8). You must offer firm repentance, like Peter, because you have sinned persistently. God does not accept repentance that lacks firm action. Many imitate the gait of kings, but for this they are not honored as kings. Likewise, those who repent, if they do not offer firm repentance, will have only the appearance of repentance, without the power that repentance imparts. Those who offer repentance merely for show commit not just one sin, but many sins, because they lead others to offer only outward repentance as well. Such people are not only not forgiven, but a sin is added to their account.

52. Therefore, you who have sinned, offer sincere repentance so that you may receive forgiveness. St. Paul said that whoever builds on a foundation of “*wood, hay, and straw*” will not receive a reward; he said this not only regarding teaching but also regarding repentance. If anyone does not offer sincere repentance, he is like a reed or a piece of wood floating on the water. Whoever does not approach repentance with sincerity is like a piece of wood; and such a person will not only be rejected but also burned, as it is said, by fire. For what reason? Because he thought he could mock God.

53. Let us repent, like the people of Nineveh, so that we too may obtain salvation. They truly repented, and they were truly saved; just as they had sinned, so they repented—and were accepted. They did not turn back only halfway, for both kings and commoners wept alike. It was not just a portion of them who reformed, for both rulers and slaves wept together. They did not repent for only a short time—for three whole days, men and women, infants and the elderly, did not cease to confess their sins. They accepted the judgment, and as if preparing for death, they lamented bitterly for one another. “By Nineveh I mean a person, and by its multitude of inhabitants I represent the parts of the soul and the movements of the mind. Just as they collectively undertook repentance, so too must we, with all our strength and as a whole, offer repentance.”

54. In the Law, God commanded not only to destroy idols, altars, and places of worship, but also to cast the ashes of the burned stones and trees—as unclean—outside the camp. And you who are repenting, keep in mind that it is your duty to eradicate every trace of sin within yourself. If the ashes of sin remain within you, unclean animals and reptiles will be drawn to you. But if you cast them out of yourself, not even sinful gnats and mosquitoes will trouble you. Purify your mind completely of sinful corpses—and their very stench will vanish from you. For sinful corpses are passionate memories. If they remain within you, they will cloud your thoughts, and your thoughts will be made to whirl, which, like a thick mist, will settle upon your spiritual eyes.

55. Let us purge ourselves through repentance, lest we lose the grace of forgiveness, which is our true color. Purging is the thorough removal of what is evil. For in this way, the color (of forgiveness) bestowed upon us, having been tempered in our souls, will never fade. Thoroughly wash yourselves with tears, just as dyers wash the wool; surrender yourselves to humility; humble yourselves in all things; for by purifying yourselves in this way, you will approach God already prepared to receive grace.

56. Some of those who repent return to sin because they did not know the serpent hidden within them; and even if they did know it, they did not cast it out of themselves completely, but allowed traces of its image to remain within; and it soon, as if conceived in the womb, restores the full image of its malice. When you see a repentant person who sins again, understand that he has not changed in his mind; for he has left all sinful inclinations within himself. The sign of one who offers true repentance, however, is a disciplined and austere way of life, the casting aside of pride and conceit, as well as eyes and a mind always fixed on the beloved Jesus Christ with the desire, by the grace of Christ, to become a new person.

57. Guard yourself against whatever is contrary to virtue. If you fast yet laugh foolishly, you will easily be tripped up. If you weep in prayer yet behave worldly in society, you will soon be caught in a snare. If, while living a chaste life, you are careless, you will not delay in falling. Repentance must come from the whole heart. The repentant person must remain consistently the same—that is, always be what he began to be. If anyone falls short in any way, this is already a sign of imperfect repentance. If he changes, this reveals that a firm foundation for a life according to God has not been laid in his heart. Such a person repents like a child being taught, and weeps out of necessity—as one who has been beaten—rather than of his own free will. Worldly laws correct behavior through fear, but they do not change the disposition of the heart. Likewise, some people repent with an ulterior motive—perhaps one they are barely aware of—to occasionally indulge in sin.

58. One of the Prophets said: *“In the assembly of the Lord, do not slander with ‘tears’”* (Micah 2:5–6). By this, the prophet does not reject repentance, nor does he call the confession of a humble heart before the Lord slander; rather, he says that if tears are shed hypocritically with evil intent, such repentance is unstable. And he also says: *“Rend your hearts, not your garments”* (Joel 2:13). For he wants us not to boast of our repentance, but to truly repent. And David says: *“With my tears I will water my bed”* (Ps. 6:7). I will not shed tears in church, putting on a mere show before people and seeking glory so that they may regard me as righteous, but on my bed I will wash my bed with tears every night, so that I may be in harmony with Christ, who says: *“When you pray, go into your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is in secret; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you openly”* (Matt. 6:6).

59. Many trade in confession, often presenting themselves as better than they really are, and thereby concealing their true selves. Others make a business of repentance, using it to buy themselves glory. Still others turn repentance into a pretext for pride, and instead of receiving forgiveness, they take on a new debt. You have not yet been freed from your previous debt—and you are taking on a new one? You came to pay your debt—and you are binding yourself with a new obligation? Are you trying to free yourself from debt, only to prepare a new form of slavery for yourself?—This is what is meant by the words: *“Let his prayer be counted as sin”* (Ps. 108:7). And how can such a person not return to sin? How can he not give in to his passions again? Will the serpent leave him in peace? Will the creeping things cease to trouble him?—Alas! What Christ said will come true for such a person: *“seven other, more wicked spirits”* will take up residence in him (Luke 11:26).

3. A General Outline of the Life of Those Who Have Devoted Themselves to Pleasing the Lord

Excerpted in abridged form from Chapter 110. Although the text is addressed to monastics, it is generally applicable to everyone.

1. All who have dedicated themselves to God and always strive to *“present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God”* (Rom. 12: 1), it is incumbent upon them, in accordance with the sacred promises of the Gospel and the rest of Holy Scripture, to believe that by devoting themselves to every good work and every exercise in virtue, they may, through the grace of Christ and the power of God, obtain complete deliverance and purification from the passions of wickedness that arise in the soul and body. What is impossible for us is possible for God, who has made the promise. Moreover, sinful passions subsequently entered the soul and body as a result of the sin of the first man.

2. We, as believers, have received through Holy Baptism the pledge of grace, like a talent, to be multiplied many times over and thereby increase the promised inheritance. The divine and comforting Spirit, given to the Apostles and transmitted through them to the one true Church of God, dwells from the moment of baptism in everyone who approaches baptism with pure faith—and each person receives this *“talent”* for multiplication, cultivation, and growth, as stated in the Gospel.

3. Just as a child born into this world does not remain forever in infancy but grows daily, according to the law of nature, until he reaches full maturity, so too one who is born from above by water and the Spirit must not remain in spiritual infancy but, by constantly engaging in spiritual struggle, labor, and much patience, is obligated, through the fight against the spiritual adversary, to prosper and grow to the fullness of spiritual maturity—or *“to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”* as the Apostle teaches (Eph. 4:13).

4. But in physical birth, the newborn infant, by the necessary law of nature, reaches manhood: for God’s Providence has ordained that physical maturity should come to perfection not by one’s own will, but according to the order of nature; but in spiritual birth from above, God has established a different order—namely, in the matter of spiritual growth, He has entrusted to man’s free will the labor, the struggle, and the arduous journey (toward this goal) undertaken with steadfast patience. Strive, says the Lord, *“to enter through the narrow gate”* (Luke 13: 24); and again: exert yourselves, for *“those who seek the Kingdom of Heaven with all their might will seize it”* (Matt. 11: 12); and again: *“by your endurance you will save your souls”* (Luke 21:19). Thus has the grace of God arranged things so that each person, according to his own disposition and will, may attain spiritual growth through labor and effort.

5. To the extent that a person devotes himself to physical and spiritual discipline, taking delight in good deeds, to that same extent does he receive the participation of the Holy Spirit in spiritual growth through the renewal of the mind, —receiving (the strength for) salvation by grace alone, yet advancing in progress and maturity through faith, love, and the efforts of free will, so that, both by grace and by righteousness, he may

become an heir to eternal life. It is not entirely by God's power and grace, without one's own human cooperation and effort, that one grows in progress; nor is it entirely by one's own strength and power, without the cooperation and help of the Spirit, that we are able to attain the perfect will of God and the measure of purity. For *"unless the Lord builds the house and guards the city, the builder watches in vain and the laborer toils in vain"* (Ps. 126: 1).

6. What is the perfect will of God, which the Apostle exhorts and urges everyone to pursue (Rom. 12:2)?—The purification and sanctification of the heart through the indwelling of the Spirit of God, which undoubtedly takes place in the soul that, with faith and love, surrenders itself entirely to God. The Lord said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:7); of those who desire to attain such blessedness, He requires perfect purification from sin—that is, a decisive deliverance from the passions of wickedness and the complete establishment within oneself of the highest virtue. The Prophet also points to this when, in prayer, he said: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"* (Ps. 50:12); and again, when he asked, *"Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?"*—he answered: *"He who has no iniquity in his hands and is pure in heart"* (Ps. 23:3–4). By this, the Spirit showed that we must, through our own efforts, completely cut off from ourselves sin committed in deed, word, and thought, striving for perfect purity of spirit and hoping to attain it through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Apostle, describing what the souls of those who withdraw from carnal marriage and worldly bonds and desire to remain in virginity should be like, says: *"She who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how she may please the Lord, that she may be holy"*—not only *"in body"* but also *"in spirit"* (1 Cor. 7:34). He thereby teaches that the soul, the bride of Christ, desiring to be united with the pure heavenly King, must be free from active and mental sinfulness—that is, from both overt sins and secret passions—as St. John the Theologian says: *"Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

7. The soul that has withdrawn from worldly fellowship and desires to abide in union and communion with the imperishable Bridegroom must be pure not only from overt sins—such as fornication, theft, gluttony, slander, idle talk, loud laughter, and greed—but even more so, it must keep itself pure from the strongest passions of the soul and hidden sins—that is, from lust, vanity, the desire to please others, hypocrisy, a love of authority, flattery, malice, hatred, unbelief, envy, arrogance, jealousy, self-indulgence, self-love, boasting, and similar invisible *"passions of unrighteousness"* (Rom. 1:26). Scripture regards the hidden sins of the soul as similar to sins revealed in action; for they are offshoots of the same root. Thus, the Prophet rebukes certain people: *"You commit iniquity in your hearts"* (Ps. 57: 3). And he prays for himself: *"Cleanse me from my hidden faults"* (Ps. 18: 13). Therefore, just as we strive to protect the outer person—that is, the body—from obvious sins, treating it as the temple of God, so too must we apply the same diligence and effort to protecting the inner person—that is, the soul—from every evil thought, as it is said: *"Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life"* (Prov. 4:23).

8. We will succeed in this purification of the heart if we always resist and oppose wicked thoughts—such as pride, hatred, boasting, flattery, lust, rivalry, self-will, and so on—examining ourselves with the utmost rigor, guarding our minds against any alliance or harmony with secret passions of the soul, and instead devoting ourselves with all our strength to every good endeavor, labor, and feat, so as to place obstacles in the way of our enemy. For if we act in this way, the Lord, seeing our spiritual struggle, out of His love for mankind and by the power of His own Spirit, will surely bring about in us a great healing from secret passions, avenging our mental enemies.

9. We shall learn from St. Paul to what spiritual height we ought to strive to ascend. He says: all our concern is directed toward *"presenting every person perfect in Christ"* (Col. 1:28). And what this perfection consists of, he indicated in his prayerful blessing to the Ephesians, saying: *"May God grant you—to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; to have Christ dwell in your hearts through faith; to be rooted and grounded in love, so that you may..."* etc. (Eph. 3: 16–18). The crown of it all is love; he presented this even more strikingly in another epistle, where, listing God's various gifts and human self-sacrifice, he adds to each that all these and similar things are nothing without love. He then describes love as the devourer and destroyer of all passions (1 Cor. 13:1–8). This is the pinnacle of perfection. It follows from this that those who have been granted the gifts enumerated by St. Paul but have not yet been delivered (from passions) by the power of the most perfect and effective spiritual love are still in danger, struggle, and fear, even though they already possess spiritual gifts.

10. The Apostle pointed this out for those who desire to advance faithfully toward Christian perfection, so that no one who has been granted any gifts might think of himself as having already attained perfection even with the grace acting only partially, and so that, having deluded himself into thinking he no longer needs anything, and, content with mere inferior gifts, might fail to reach the proper limit of perfection. In pointing to this goal of perfection, the Apostle teaches that everyone, recognizing their own poverty in the face of such a wealth of love, should strive ceaselessly and unflaggingly in good works and run the spiritual race until they reach the goal, as it is said: *“Run in such a way that you may win”* (1 Cor. 9:24).

11. I have expounded at such length on the goal of asceticism for the purpose of establishing in those who wish to embrace it a firm understanding of what our hope is and what path lies before us, and so that each and every one of those who have consecrated themselves to God, guided by this understanding and constantly keeping in mind where we are called and what standard we are bound to attain, in every way, with all their strength, and with the utmost care, may they always zealously dedicate themselves and all that they possess in this world to what is good—without, however, falling into the presumption that we are something, but rather recognizing that we are truly always nothing in comparison with the excellence of the perfect measure of our calling and the unfathomable riches of Christ’s love. *“Let us, then, with patience, run the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith”* (Heb. 12:1)—*“forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead”* (Phil. 3:14).

12. How, then, brothers, should we live and conduct ourselves toward one another? Through what labors, sweat, and discipline can lovers of the truth attain the goal mentioned above? Let the one who strives for this goal, having withdrawn from the world and its pleasures, devote his soul to the brotherhood. This is what the Savior commanded when, after listing what one must leave behind to follow in His footsteps, He added: *“even his own soul”* (Luke 14:26). For what does it mean to give up one’s soul, or to renounce it?—To devote oneself unconditionally and entirely to the brotherhood, by no means to follow one’s own will, and resolutely to possess nothing under one’s control except the clothes one wears, so that, having no cares, one may always joyfully carry out only what is commanded. He who has renounced his own soul should honor all the brothers, and especially the superiors, as lords and masters; and with all *“prudence”* he should serve them, *“not working merely to please men, but as servants of Christ”* (Eph. 6:6). Having surrendered himself to the Lord, let him walk this narrow and difficult path (of obedience), and let him willingly submit to this good yoke of Christ, believing without a doubt that it prepares for him great salvation.

13. The brethren are to live among themselves in simplicity, purity, unanimity, peace, and sincerity of heart. Let no one exalt himself above another, nor consider himself better or superior to anyone; on the contrary, let each one, as a disciple of Christ, acknowledge himself to be the least of all people; so that through love, simplicity, the absence of rivalry and pride, and mutual submission to one another in the fear of God, the bond of peace in the brotherhood may be preserved, as if it were one body and one Spirit in Christ Jesus.

14. In resolving to follow these rules, let each person first and foremost strive with all his might to have in his heart a sacred love for and fear of God; let him ceaselessly ask God for these, and through frequent—or rather, ceaseless—remembrance of the Lord and of heavenly love, let him zealously strive in every way to renew them within himself daily, with the help of grace.

15. As for love of neighbor (after this), we can easily succeed. Put the first in first place, and then the second, following the first, will fall into place. But if anyone neglects the first great commandment—love for God, which, with God’s help, is formed within us from an inner disposition, a good conscience, and sound thoughts about God— —and if he then resolves to care for the second commandment, which is like it, then only an outward service to one’s brothers will result from this, and he will never be able to fulfill this service purely and soundly; for the wiles of malice, finding his mind far from the remembrance of God, from love for Him, and from striving toward Him, will either stir up murmuring and complaints in his soul about serving his brothers, presenting it as difficult and burdensome, or will inflate his pride and compel him to dream of himself as honorable and great, deluding him with the thought of his many deeds for the benefit of all. When a person is far from the remembrance of God and from the fear of God, then he inevitably seeks glory and craves praise from those whom he serves. But when the very mind and disposition of the soul are always occupied with thoughts of God and a longing for Him, then, in accordance with God’s love, a person—doing everything for the glory of God and enriching himself with pure and God-pleasing acts of love toward the brethren—achieves complete success in his labor, which is to be crowned with eternal reward from God.

16. Every exercise in virtue that we undertake should be performed for the glory of God, and should not be done for our own glory. Our observance of the commandments is holy and pure only when it is done with remembrance of the Lord, with the fear of God, and out of love for God. With such a disposition, the enemy—who is always attempting to defile the fulfillment of the commandments—is driven far from us, and everything commanded in the commandments becomes easy and manageable for us; for the love of God within us makes the commandments effortless and removes every difficulty in fulfilling them. The enemy strives in every way to distract our minds from remembering God, from the fear and love of the Lord, with various earthly temptations, so that later, through some plausible deceptions, he may turn our hearts away from the true good—that is, from the love of God—toward imaginary goods. And whatever good a person does, the evil one strives to tarnish and defile it by mingling into the fulfillment of the commandment his seeds of vanity, or doubt, or grumbling, or anything similar, so that the good deed may not be true good—which occurs only when it is performed humbly and earnestly for God. That is why everyone needs knowledge and discernment, so that the mind may recognize the enemy’s schemes and wiles and remove all that is sinful from one’s deeds. For even a good deed can be done carelessly or negligently, or with an impure intention, in which case it will not be pleasing to God; or it can be done according to God’s will, carefully, soberly, and for God’s sake—so that it will be pleasing to God.

17. Those who have wholly devoted themselves to God must fulfill all the commandments to the best of their ability, since it is evident to all that there is but one goal of piety, namely, that through faith and zeal for all virtues we may be deemed worthy of fulfillment by the Holy Spirit, and attain perfect liberation from the passions—that is, the purification of the heart wrought in the souls of the faithful and pious by the sanctifying Spirit. Therefore, let each one devote himself to goodness to the extent that his love for God extends. – And finally, if anyone desires to pray unceasingly, let him remain constantly in prayer. (This refers, of course, to the hermits.)

18. Therefore, if any member of the brotherhood desires to undertake the ascetic practice of prayer out of love for heavenly blessings, he should be permitted to do so—and he is most worthy of praise before men and before God. Let the brothers, with one accord and joy, permit such a one to remain in prayer, so that they themselves may receive a reward from God for granting this permission to their brother and for their kind assistance to him; provided that the one who undertakes this does so out of an irrepressible longing to abide with the one Lord—and in practice remains steadfast in this endeavor of ceaseless striving toward the Lord, resisting all superfluous thoughts, so that in this way the fruits of his labor may become evident daily for the edification of all. Whoever has love for the Lord—even if he does not yet feel the piercing and burning of divine love during prayer—but if he exerts himself, strives, and compels his will to this labor, unconditionally surrendering himself to heavenly love and seeking to attain true spiritual prayer; let the other brothers gladly allow him to remain in prayer, or rather, let them assist him as helpers, recognizing their brother’s progress toward perfection as their own achievement; let them not distract him from this through rivalry and jealousy, let them not hinder the beginning of this beautiful, zealous endeavor, and let them not interrupt his good striving toward God. And God, seeing the fervor of their mutual love, will grant the petitions of all, rewarding each one for their righteous and good will toward one another.

19. One who has entered the order of those who pray, having taken upon himself the greatest of tasks, must also undertake the most extensive of struggles; for there are many obstacles to abiding ceaselessly in prayer: sleep, despondency, the heaviness of the body, the whirl of thoughts, impatience, and slackness; and, in addition to all this, the rebellion of evil spirits, who wage war against the soul—which by its very nature ceaselessly seeks God—opposing it and hindering it in every way from drawing near to God. Therefore, one must constantly remain soberly attentive to everything taking place within—in struggle, patience, and weeping—striving with all one’s might to prevent anything that is detrimental to prayer.

20. If our prayer is not adorned with humility, love, simplicity, and kindness, then such a prayer will be of no benefit to us whatsoever; or rather, it will be a mere pretense of prayer. This, however, applies not only to prayer but to every spiritual endeavor in general—whether it be chastity, fasting, vigil, psalm-singing, ministry, or any other work performed for the sake of virtue. If, in performing them, we do not find within ourselves the fruits of love, peace, joy, meekness, humility, simplicity, sincerity, patience, lack of envy, and the like, then all such labors and deeds are in vain. For it is for such fruits that they are undertaken; therefore, when these fruits are not found in us, all our deeds and all our feats are in vain. Those who lack these fruits will find themselves on the same level as the foolish virgins on the Day of Judgment.

21. Those who are not yet able to devote themselves fully to the work of prayer should, with faith and the fear of God, prepare themselves for the service of the brethren or for the performance of spiritual duties; and having undertaken this work, carry it out as those who are fulfilling the Lord's commandment and doing spiritual work; be attentive to it as to the work of God, and serve with joy as servants of the Lord, by no means allowing the enemy's malice to defile your good work through seeking human approval, or grumbling, or arrogance, or laziness, or carelessness; but rather, striving in every way to sanctify your excellent obedience with reverence and love for God, so that it may be pleasing to Him.

22. Therefore, since all the brothers who lead the same way of life have the one goal mentioned above, let each one strive according to his strength and trust in God that, through diligent care and the practice of virtue, he will attain the full measure of Christian sonship. Simplicity, sincerity, mutual love, joy, and humility in all things may always be unshakable in the brotherhood, as a foundation, lest, by becoming haughty, or looking down on one another, or giving in to grumbling, we render our labor in vain. And let the one who abides constantly in prayer not exalt himself above those not yet capable of such constant prayer, so that his work may prosper before God and men. And let the one who has dedicated himself to ministry, or to some other form of service, not grumble out of malice, nor slander the one who persists in prayer and fasting, so that he too may obtain God's grace, and so that his work may be pleasing to God. – As members of one another, we are obligated to comfort one another. Just as the members of the body, governed by a single soul, serve one another without envy, so too we, being members of one another, governed by the one Spirit and nourished by the one living Word of truth, must, for our mutual comfort, conduct ourselves in general harmony through love and simplicity, kindness, and joy. – When such a spirit of mutual simplicity is maintained, then the abundance of those who devote themselves to prayer will make up for the shortcomings of those who bear the burden of obedience in this matter, and conversely, the abundance of those who carry out their duties will make up for the shortcomings of those who remain in prayer, *“so that there may be,”* as the Apostle says, *“equality”* (2 Cor. 8:14). If only simplicity, love, humility, and the absence of envy were established among the brethren. Then, to the extent that each one believes, loves, and labors—progressing daily in this way—he will be deemed worthy of the kingdom. This is truly the angelic life! This is precisely what it means *to say*, *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,”* when we unite with one another in a spirit free from envy—with simplicity, love, peace, and joy—regarding our neighbor's success as our own gain, and likewise acknowledging his weaknesses, shortcomings, and sorrows as our own loss, as it is said: *“Do not look out only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others”* (Phil. 2:4). In this way, by showing compassion for one another—especially the strong for the weak and the robust for the frail—we will be able to fulfill the law of Christ, as St. Paul instructed (Gal. 6:2).

4. On Virtues and Passions

1. It is necessary to know that since man is dual in nature—that is, consisting of body and soul—he also possesses two kinds of senses. There are five mental senses and five bodily senses. The mental senses are called by the sages the “ ” or powers of the soul, and they are as follows: intellect, reason, understanding, imagination, and sensation; while the bodily senses are: sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. From these arise two kinds of virtues and two kinds of vices. And it is absolutely essential for every person to know clearly what the virtues of the soul are, and what the virtues of the body are, as well as what the passions of the soul are and what the passions of the body are.

Virtues of the Mind

2. Regarding the virtues of the soul, we affirm that there are primarily four cardinal virtues, namely: courage, prudence, temperance, and justice. From these arise the following virtues of the soul: faith, hope, love, prayer, humility, meekness, generosity, patience, kindness, forbearance, knowledge of God, equanimity, simplicity, composure, sincerity, truthfulness, freedom, aversion to judgment, to vanity, to boasting, to pride, to envy, to deceit, and to the love of money; compassion, mercy, generosity, respectfulness, reverence, a longing for future immortal blessings, a desire for the Kingdom of God, and a yearning for adoption as children of God.

Physical Virtues

3. As for the bodily virtues—which, more accurately, can be said to be transformed into instruments of virtue through God-conscious living—and which, when free from all hypocrisy and the desire to please men, lead a person to excel in humility and dispassion, they are as follows: abstinence, fasting, hunger, thirst, vigil, standing all night, kneeling, consistently refraining from going to the bathhouse, contentment with a single tunic, eating only dry food, eating late and in small quantities, drinking only water, lying on the bare ground, poverty, non-acquisitiveness, emaciation, disregard for clothing, selflessness, solitude, silence, confinement to the cell, frugality, contentment with little, reticence, manual labor, every kind of suffering, and every physical feat. All of this, when the body is healthy and troubled by carnal passions, is very necessary and beneficial; but when it is weak and, with God's help, has overcome its passions, it is not so necessary; for everything is fulfilled by holy humility and gratitude.

Passions of the Mind

4. The passions of the soul are: forgetfulness, sloth, and ignorance. The eye of the soul—that is, the mind—when clouded by these three passions, falls under the dominion of other passions, which are: ungodliness, unbelief—that is, every kind of heresy—blasphemy, irritability, anger, resentment, quick temper, misanthropy, vindictiveness, slander, condemnation, unreasonable sorrow, fear, timidity, discord, jealousy, envy, vanity, pride, hypocrisy, lies, unbelief, imprudence, indiscriminateness, short-sightedness, insatiability, greed, laziness, exactingness, partiality, attachment to earthly things, despondency, faintheartedness, ingratitude, grumbling, boasting, conceit, quick temper, arrogance, love of authority, people-pleasing, cunning, shamelessness, insensitivity, flattery, secretiveness, mockery, duplicity, yielding to sin out of passion, ceaseless thoughts of sin, wandering thoughts, self-love—the mother of all evil, love of money—the root of all vices and passions, wickedness, and deceit.

Carnal Passions

5. The carnal passions are: gluttony, overindulgence, luxury, drunkenness, eating in secret, various forms of sensuality, fornication, adultery, debauchery, impurity, incest, child molestation, bestiality, evil desires, and all manner of unnatural and shameful passions; theft, sacrilege, robbery, murder out of envy or in a fit of irrational rage; all forms of carnal indulgence and the gratification of the flesh's desires—especially when the body is healthy; sorcery, divination, fortune-telling, soothsaying, dandyism, frivolity, idleness, a passion for finery, facial rubbing, scandalous debauchery, gambling, an excessive devotion to worldly pleasures, a life devoted to the flesh that dulls the mind, making it earthbound and beast-like, and in no way allowing one to lift one's gaze toward God and the works of virtue. The root of all evils—and, as some would say, the primary cause—is the love of pleasure, the love of glory, and the love of money, from which all that is evil is born.

6. But a person does not commit any sin unless, as the wise ascetic Mark says, these mighty giants—namely, forgetfulness, sloth, and ignorance—first overcome him and gain the upper hand. These are born of a life of sensual pleasure and ease, and of attachment to human glory and entertainment. And the root cause—and the most unfit mother—of all this is self-love, that is, an irrational attachment and passionate devotion to the body, a scattered and distracted mind, along with sharp-tongued profanity, all manner of licentiousness in speech and laughter, which lead to much evil and many downfalls.

7. Furthermore, one must know that the love of glory, when it has turned into a passion, is very diverse and takes many forms, and that there are many pleasures that beguile the soul when it is not sober before God, nor embraced by the fear of God and the love of Christ, nor occupied with the practice of virtues. For from every direction there appear thousands of pleasures that draw the eyes of the soul to themselves: physical beauty, money, luxury, fame, idleness, anger, possession, a love of authority, and greed, to our deception, these pleasures are presented to us with a bright and alluring appearance, sufficient to draw to themselves those who are captivated by such things and who lack a strong love for virtue, but who find it difficult to practice it. Every earthly attachment, every inclination toward anything material—no matter how insignificant it may be—produces pleasure and a pleasant sensation in the one who is drawn to it, though this is unreasonable and ultimately harmful; and it enslaves the soul's desiring power so strongly that the one who has succumbed to passion, upon being deprived of what is beloved, is plunged into irritability, sorrow, anger, and resentment. And if, in addition to this attachment, even a slight habit takes hold of a person, then, alas! it

causes the one captivated by an irrational attachment to surrender to it completely, because of the pleasure hidden within it.

8. The pleasure of lust, as stated above, is manifold, and finds satisfaction not only in fornication and other carnal pleasures, but also in other passions. And chastity consists not only in abstaining from fornication and carnal pleasures, but in being free from other passions as well. Therefore, the greedy, the avaricious, and the covetous are not chaste. Just as one is captivated by physical beauty, so the other is captivated by money. And the latter is even less chaste; for he lacks the same impulse as the former, which would compel him by the very demands of nature. For, in all fairness, the rider who is most rightly called unskilled is not the one who cannot control a stubborn and spirited horse, but the one who cannot manage a gentle and obedient horse. And from all this it is clear that the passion for money is greater than the others and is not natural; and the impulses toward it do not lie in our nature, but in a perverse will; which is why whoever is overcome by it commits an unforgivable sin. Therefore, we must clearly understand that sensuality is not limited to sexual immorality and physical pleasures alone, but is present in everything we love according to the whims and passions of our soul.

9. To understand the passions even more clearly, we have deemed it necessary to add the following. The soul is divided into three parts: the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive. And the sins of the rational faculty are as follows: unbelief, heresy, imprudence, blasphemy, indiscriminateness, ingratitude, and consent to sins arising from the appetitive faculty of the soul. The remedies for these sins are: unshakable faith in God, true and infallible dogmas, constant study of the words of the Spirit, pure prayer, and unceasing thanksgiving to God. The sins of the irritable force are as follows: cruelty, hatred, lack of compassion, vindictiveness, envy, murder, and constant thoughts of the like. The remedies for these sins are philanthropy, love, meekness, brotherly love, compassion, patience, and kindness. The sins of the lustful power are as follows: gluttony, overindulgence in food, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, impurity, debauchery, greed, and the craving for empty glory, gold, wealth, and carnal pleasures. Fasting, abstinence, self-denial, non-covetousness, giving money to the poor, striving for future blessings, desiring the Kingdom of God, and longing for adoption as God's children serve to cure and heal these sins.

10. I will now speak of the passionate thoughts that lead to the commission of every sin. There are eight vices: gluttony, fornication, greed, anger, sorrow, despondency, vanity, and pride. Whether or not all these thoughts trouble us is not within our power; but whether they remain or do not remain within us, and whether they stir up passions or do not, is within our power. But one thing is *temptation*, another is *association*, another is *passion*, another is *struggle*, another is *consent*—which draws one toward the act and resembles it—another is *self-will*, and another is *captivity*. *Temptation* is a simple suggestion made by the enemy, for example: “Do this or that,” just as the enemy said to Christ our God: “*If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread*” (Matt. 4:3). And this, as has been said, is not within our power. *Association*, on the other hand, is the acceptance of a thought suggested by the enemy, and, as it were, engaging with it and conversing with it with pleasure, occurring of our own free will. *Passion* is the habit formed as a result of association with a thought suggested by the enemy, and, as it were, constant reflection and daydreaming about it. *Struggle* is the mutual opposition between thought and mind, tending either toward the eradication of passion in thought or toward yielding to a passionate thought, as the Apostle says: “*The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are opposed to one another*” (Gal. 5:17). *Captivity* is the forced, involuntary enticement of the heart, dominated by prejudice and long-standing habit. *Consent* is the expression in thought of agreement with a passion; and “*self-will*” is the very act of yielding to a passionate thought.

11. Whoever, through his own resistance and steadfastness from the very beginning, repels the first—that is, the initial attraction—cuts off all the rest at once. Gluttony is eradicated by abstinence; fornication, by divine love and a longing for the future; avarice, by compassion for the poor; anger, by kindness and love for all; worldly sorrow, by spiritual joy; despondency, by patience, steadfastness, and gratitude before God; vanity—by secretly practicing virtues and constant prayer with a contrite heart; pride—by not condemning or belittling anyone, like the boastful Pharisee, but by considering oneself the least of all. In this way, the mind, having been freed from all the aforementioned passions and having ascended to God, begins even here to live a blessed life, having received the pledge of the Holy Spirit; and upon departing from this world, with dispassion and true knowledge, is placed in the light of the Holy and Divine Trinity, together with the Divine Angels, shining for all eternity.

12. The soul, as was stated above, consists of three parts; for there are three powers within it: thought, the irascible, and the appetitive. If there is love and benevolence in the irascible, and purity and chastity in the appetitive, then thought is pure. But if there is misanthropy in the affections and licentiousness in the desires, then the intellect is dark. When the passions are subject to it, the intellect is sound, chaste, and luminous; it spiritually contemplates the relationships among God's creatures and is elevated to the Holy and Blessed Trinity. Likewise, irritability is in harmony with nature when one loves all people, complains about none of them, and bears no grudge. And desire is true to nature when, through self-restraint, humility, and non-covetousness, it puts the passions to death—that is, carnal pleasure, the craving for gain, and the pursuit of fleeting glory; for desire has a threefold inclination: either toward carnal pleasures, or toward empty glory, or toward the allure of wealth—and because of this inclination, which is contrary to reason, one neglects God and God's commandments, forgets one's own nobility, becomes embittered toward one's neighbor, clouds one's thoughts, and prevents one from lifting one's gaze toward the truth. But whoever has attained the highest mode of thought, even here, as stated above, gets a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven, begins to live a blessed life, awaiting the bliss prepared for those who love God—a bliss to which may we, though unworthy, also be made worthy through the grace of Christ.

13. It is necessary to know that the full perfection of any virtue whatsoever cannot be attained by one who, throughout his entire life, does not strive with tireless diligence to acquire it through active and conscientious effort. This applies to almsgiving, prayer, love, or any of the cardinal virtues—courage, prudence, chastity, and justice. – While persisting in the practice of virtues, one must be careful not to diminish or completely destroy their value and significance by allowing improper motives to accompany them—such as seeking the approval of others, empty glory, and the like. And above all else, one must always practice the virtues with prudence—which is superior to all virtues, as it were a queen, and the virtue of virtues.

14. It is also essential for all who wish to excel in virtue and strive to avoid sin to know that, just as the soul is incomparably superior to the body, so too are the virtues of the soul—especially those that bear God's name and imitate Him—superior to the virtues of the body; just as the vices of the soul are graver and more destructive than those of the body, both in their effects and in the punishments they entail, though I do not know why this escapes the understanding of many. They guard against, fear, and avoid drunkenness, fornication, theft, and vices similar to these—since these are things that many apparently abhor; yet they view with indifference vices that are far more serious—those of the soul—such as envy, rancor, arrogance, deceit, and the root of all evils—the love of money—and vices similar to these.

5. On the Struggle Against the Eight Principal Passions, in General

1. Know that there are eight thoughts from which all evil springs: gluttony, fornication, love of money, anger, untimely sorrow, despondency, vanity, and pride. It is these that wage war against every person.

2. But if you wish to overcome "*gluttony*," love self-restraint, have the fear of God—and you will prevail.

3. If you want to overcome "*sexual immorality*," love vigilance and self-denial, always think of death, and never converse with a woman—and you will overcome.

4. If you want to overcome "*greed*," love simplicity and frugality.

5. If you wish to overcome "*anger*," cultivate meekness and magnanimity, and keep in mind how much evil the Jews did to our Lord Jesus Christ; yet He, as a God who loves mankind, did not become angry with them, but rather prayed for them, saying: "*Father, forgive them*," for this sin: "*for they do not know what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34).

6. If you wish to overcome untimely "*sorrow*," never grieve over anything temporary; but if you are wounded by a word, or troubled, or dishonored, do not grieve, but rather rejoice. Grieve only when you sin; but even then, exercise moderation so as not to fall into despair and perish.

7. If you want to overcome "*despondency*," take up some kind of craft—even if only for a short while—or read, or pray often.

8. If you want to overcome "*vanity*," do not love praise, honors, fine clothes, the place of honor, or preferential treatment; on the contrary, love being criticized and dishonored, with lies being spread about you—and reproach yourself, saying that you are more sinful than any sinner.

9. If you want to overcome "*pride*," whatever you do, do not say that it is accomplished by your own efforts or your own strength; but whether you fast, spend time in vigil, sleep on the bare ground, sing psalms,

or make many prostrations, say that this is done with God's help and under God's protection, and not by my own strength or my own efforts.

1. On the Struggle Against Gluttony

1. A monk must not crave meat, nor drink wine to the point of intoxication; otherwise, your mind will become coarse, and you will have no end to your worldly cares.

2. The signs of a good life in a young monk are humble and wise abstinence from wine and from excessive talk. Whoever loves these things will not persevere to the end in a good life.

3. Do not force your brother to drink wine to the point of intoxication, even if he has been drinking it for a long time; for a ship takes a long time to build, but is shattered in an instant by a single blow.

4. Whoever desires carnal comfort brings many misfortunes upon himself; but the long-suffering is saved.

5. It is better to eat in the Lord and give thanks to the Lord than to abstain from eating and condemn those who eat and give thanks to the Lord.

6. Have you sat down to a meal? Eat your bread, but do not condemn your neighbor, lest by your condemnation you become one who devours your brother.

7. Be firm in the faith, and eat whatever is set before you in the Lord. If something unwholesome is set before you that you do not wish to eat, do not send it away from the table when others wish to eat and give thanks to the Lord.

8. Have you sat down to eat? Eat like a human being, and do not look around like an ignorant person.

9. One brother said: "I do not refuse to eat meat out of any kind of disgust; for *'every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected'* (1 Tim. 4:4); but since it is written, *'Sweetness is of no use to a fool'* (Prov. 19:10), it is unwise for a monk to eat the meat of animals."

10. When pieces (leftovers) are offered, do not turn them down; for the Lord commanded His disciples to gather up the leftover pieces, *"so that nothing would be lost"* (John 6:12).

11. It is a reproach to a man to be drunk with wine; having seen many, I have found no one like one who is drunk.

12. Abstinence exhausts the flesh, but overeating dulls the mind.

13. Oppress yourself, O monk, and subdue your flesh, lest you be cast aside.

14. Work upon your flesh, and you will bear fruit for God.

15. Do you wish, monk, to find peace in the community of the brethren? Be content with the communal meal of the brethren; *"and there will be healing"* for your body, and *"restoration to your bones"* (Prov. 3:8), and your soul will suffer no harm. *"But if you set your eyes on cups and glasses, afterward you will suffer pain, as if bitten by a serpent"* (Prov. 23:31).

16. A lion, chasing prey for its belly, becomes a captive; and a glutton humbles himself for the pleasure of his belly.

17. An abundance of food dulls the mind, but proper self-restraint purifies it.

18. A drunkard and a hot-tempered man stirs up the souls of his brothers, and shame is ever with him.

19. A man who drinks in the evening does and says what he ought not to, and in the morning he repents; but if he finds wine again, he acts the same way.

20. Do not drink wine to the point of intoxication, even if your friends who are with you urge you to do so; for if wine overpowers you, those who urged you on will be the first to be led astray by you.

21. A glutton toils and agonizes over how to fill his belly with food, and when he has eaten, he suffers during digestion; but self-restraint brings health and sobriety.

22. A gluttonous monk worries about many things, but the self-restrained monk is like a gazelle in the field.

23. Do not worry about your stomach, monk, and you will have peace.

24. All the firewood in the forest is not enough to satisfy a fire; so the flesh is insatiable, no matter how much you satisfy it.

25. A drunken shepherd will not tend the sheep entrusted to him, and a sleepy one will himself become prey to wild beasts. For *"thorns grow in the hands of a drunkard"* (Prov. 26:9), but the soul of the self-controlled clings to God.

26. Temperance is the virtue of patience.

27. Do not drink wine to the point of intoxication to please others; for then you will suffer great shame when they find you drunk.

28. You have tasted bread and are satisfied! Give glory to God, who has nourished you. And if you wish to content your body with little, give glory to God, who has strengthened you, and do not say before everyone, “I have not even eaten such-and-such a portion of bread.” – What do you gain by this? – Are you not merely condemning those who eat and give thanks?

29. A gluttonous monk calls fasting a time of sorrow, but the temperate one does not look gloomy even during fasting.

30. I believe that excessive abstinence is not praiseworthy, nor is neglecting proper abstinence beneficial. Just as a prolonged deviation from established meals leads to lethargy and a lack of strength for service, so too does overindulgence in food invite condemnation. It is said: “*Woe to you who are full now, for you will go hungry*” (Luke 6:25). Moreover, the intemperate person, through excess, falls into carnal passions. Therefore, one must govern the body in a godly and proper manner.

31. After receiving refreshment (at the meal), do not wander through the cells, but remain in silence in your own cell; for the devil has led many astray with wine. Therefore, being in another’s cell after receiving refreshment gives the appearance of recklessness and debauchery. In such gatherings, souls fall into sin, especially when the abbot’s authority is neglected. For whoever does not wish to restrain his mind with the fear of God needs human fear to keep him from useless things, just as a slave remains chaste under his master’s strictness.

32. Eat simple and necessary foods, so that your mind may not become dulled by “*feasting, drunkenness, and the cares of this life*” (Luke 21:34). For those possessed by such passions do not regard fornication as fornication, nor adultery as adultery, and they do not abstain from anything that the pagans, who do not know God, do; but they commit all these things without fear, differing in no way from pigs wallowing in the mud; they remember neither the Law, nor the Prophets, nor the Lord Himself, who became incarnate to destroy the lawlessness of sin. Do not, therefore, be addicted to meat and wine, lest your mind become incapable of receiving spiritual gifts.

33. Do not indulge in baths, drinking, and an abundance of meat, lest you fall into insurmountable dangers by sinning in any important matter.

34. Do not listen to the advice of self-indulgent people—those who have made themselves slaves to their appetites and carnal passions.

35. Overeating and overdrinking are pleasant only in the moment, but the next day they leave one with a sense of unease and lethargy.

36. A monk will not remain long in one place, nor will he find peace, unless he first loves silence and self-restraint. For silence teaches stillness and constant prayer, while self-restraint keeps the mind undistracted. Finally, those who have attained this will find peace in their hearts.

37. Do not be seduced by the satisfaction of the belly, “*and do not get drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery*” (Eph. 5:18). Nothing is of any benefit to you except one thing: to fulfill the will of God.

38. Know that to the extent that anyone indulges his flesh—to his own detriment—he multiplies passions within himself, and ultimately the soul, burdened by the body’s bad habits, becomes barren. Therefore, the Savior says: “*Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with gluttony, drunkenness, and the cares of this life*” (Luke 21:34). That is why the Apostle says: “*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27).—But if anyone compels himself to the Lord’s work, then to the same extent his body becomes strong, and his soul is enlightened. Just as a wrestler constantly devotes time to physical exercises to train his body for the art of wrestling, so too must the ascetic of piety practice every good deed, as the Apostle says: “*Train yourself in godliness*” (1 Tim. 4:7–8).

2. On the Struggle Against Lust

1. The sensual man, upon encountering women, becomes cheerful and is drawn to their beauty; their physical attractiveness drives him mad, the beauty of their faces delights him, the gracefulness of their figures enchants him, and in conversation with women he melts with pleasure; when recalling what he has seen, he dreams lustfully, vividly picturing in his mind women’s faces, their passionate expressions, their enchanting smiles, the flutter of their eyes, the elegance of their attire, their flattering words, and the press of their lips.

He finds men boring; but when he sees women, his face lights up, and he rushes back and forth to offer his services; then, out of nowhere, he finds the voice to sing, the ability to make a witty remark, to laugh, and to present himself as entertaining and pleasant.

2. Do not let your eyes wander here and there, and do not gaze intently at another's beauty, lest your enemy bring you down through your eyes.

3. A wandering eye is a reproach to a monk. A wandering eye causes much sorrow to the one who follows it. If you do not refrain from letting your eyes wander, you will not tread the straight paths of chastity.

4. If you love self-restraint, you will subdue the demon of lust.

5. Whoever nourishes the flesh of his body nourishes evil lusts, and shameful thoughts will not cease within him.

6. Whoever restrains his eyes will find lightness; but whoever lets his gaze wander will take on a burden. For it is said: "*The flight of lust corrupts a mind that is not evil*" (Wisdom 4:12).

7. If, carried away by passion, you allow your eyes to gaze upon vanity, stop them quickly, lest you fall into the shame of sensual indulgence.

8. When the flesh is aroused, do not touch your body, lest you provoke an even stronger arousal.

9. Be mindful of yourself, monk; be mindful when you meet women.

10. Flee from the serpent that gnaws at the body; flee even more from the woman who gnaws at the soul.

11. Whoever admires a woman's beauty plants the desire for her beauty in his soul, and whoever lingers at the door of her house is like one walking on ice; for temptation is not far from him.

12. Two wrestlers are like a monk in the company of a woman. But the sober man will gather gain, and he himself will not be robbed.

13. Do not incline your ear to shameful words, lest your mind be defiled. "*For just as smoke is to the eyes*" (Prov. 25:20), so too is a shameful word harmful to the soul.

14. If the spirit of fornication troubles you, rebuke it, saying, "May the Lord destroy you, you stinking spirit of impurity." For we know the one who said, "*The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God*" (Rom. 8:7).

15. Everyone who loves purity and chastity becomes a temple of God.

16. "*If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him*" (1 Cor. 3:17), says the Holy Scripture. Resist the demon of fornication as you would a dog; do not consent in any way to be carried away by such thoughts; for from a single spark many embers arise, and from an evil thought evil desires multiply. Strive to eradicate the memory of them more than you would the stench of mud.

17. Just as a fragrant aroma delights the sense of smell, so too does the Holy Spirit rejoice in purity and dwell within a person.

18. Just as a pig takes pleasure in wallowing in the mud, so too do demons find pleasure in fornication and impurity.

19. In purity dwell great light, joy, peace, and patience; but in fornication dwell sorrow, despondency, insatiable sleep, and thick darkness.

20. Love purity, monk, in the love of Christ; it is as fitting for your life as a carpenter's plane is for a carpenter.

21. A certain monk, suffering from lust, rebuked the demon, saying, "Go into the darkness, Satan! Do you not know that, though I am unworthy, I nevertheless bear the members of Christ?" And immediately the passion ceased (as if someone had blown out a lamp); he marveled at this within himself and glorified the Lord.

22. Why do you love to dress up with such recklessness? Listen to what the Apostle says: "*Flee the passions of youth*" (2 Tim. 2:22). Do you not know what kind of enemy you are fighting? Do you not know how painful it is to be a snare to another soul? How can you fail to consider what rot and decay await those who do such things? I wish to make it clear to you that even if the outer person is well-dressed, but the dwelling place of the soul is defiled, his beauty will not be long in being corrupted. But if you acquire inner beauty, then from this beauty and from this light something will radiate onto the outer person as well, and such beauty is enduring!

23. Whoever adorns his clothes and fills his belly will suffer much reproach; but the sober-minded are a terror to their enemies.

24. If, while you are working, the spirit of lust disturbs you, do not be too lazy to raise your hands in prayer, and the prayer of faith will stand up for you.
25. Suppress lust within yourself before it suppresses you, for it leads those who yield to it into the depths of hell.
26. Love peace and holiness (purity), so that you may be deemed worthy to behold the face of the Lord God.
27. Refrain, brother, from jokes, lest they make you shameless; for shamelessness is the mother of debauchery.
28. Do not go to the cell of those who are intoxicated, lest you suddenly lose the riches of chastity.
29. When lust flares up in your body, bring to mind the unquenchable fire and the endless worm, and the burning of your members will immediately be extinguished; otherwise, having grown lax, you will be overcome and will come to repent, and the fire of the sorrow of repentance will consume you, and you will grow accustomed to sinning, even though you repent. At the beginning, strive to be strict with every stirrings of this desire, so that you are not overcome by it—and you will not grow accustomed to yielding victory to it in battle. For habit is a second nature. A habit of indulgence will never allow you to acquire self-discipline. It always builds up and tears down, sins and repents. If you get used to letting your guard down when you are attacked, then the inscription in your manuscript will be, for all eternity: *“repentance.”* Whoever is accustomed to yielding victory to desire is always condemned by his conscience; he is sorrowful at all times, and though he puts on a cheerful face before others, inwardly he is despondent because of his conscience’s condemnation. For the common lot of lust is to bring agonizing sorrow to those who indulge in it. Therefore, pay attention with all your soul, always keeping God within you.
30. Be mindful of yourself, and strive until death to keep yourself pure, so that you may meet your immortal Bridegroom with boldness and joy. Honor virginity; and it will lead you into the heavenly palace. That is why the Apostle said: *“I have betrothed you to one husband, a pure virgin, to present you to Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:2).
31. Guard your body from sin, lest you lie before the Creator; for we have offered ourselves as a gift to the Lord, and we no longer have authority over our own bodies, nor can we take back the gift of our own free will. If anyone, having made a vow to God, offers a gift to the Lord, and the priest, having received the gift, places it in the temple, then even if the one who offered the gift later repents, he no longer has the authority to take the gift back after it has been offered to the Lord; but if he attempts to steal it secretly, he will not be free from accusation as one who has taken his own property, but will suffer punishment as a sacrilegious person. Likewise, those who have consecrated their souls to God no longer have authority over their own bodies.
32. Beware of bad counsel. For it often happens that those who have fallen away from virtue strive to lead others astray as well, so that they are not the only ones wallowing in a dissolute life. They speak with flattery, seeking to distract those who obey them from chastity and plunge them into sin. Having fallen themselves, not only do they refuse to rise again, but they also deliberately lead others into temptation—toward downfall and corruption. And the devil uses them as bait on a hook. *“Their throats are open graves,”* devoted to *“passions of impurity”* (Rom. 3:13; Rom. 1:26). Beware of them, lest they burn you with their smooth words.
33. Blessed are those who preserve holiness (purity) in humility!—But let no one hope to attain peace (in this matter) by yielding to the enemy’s promptings; for then this tormentor will hold them captive through lustful thoughts and pleasures, even if they commit no shameful acts. In such a state, since they have not known a wife, the enemy instills in them the thought of claiming virginity for themselves, whereas their entire body is filled with the defilement of lust. Thus the enemy causes them to boast that they are free from sin, while he fills them with *“a cluster of bitterness and a cluster of sorrow”* (Deut. 32:32),
34. It goes without saying that one should not indulge in wine or spend time with women, for everyone clearly sees for themselves how foreign this is to virtue. And it is not only this one thing from which one must guard against the temptations of demons; one must also avoid effeminate conversations with men, which can arouse lustful pleasure and lead the soul to ruin. – We refrain from meeting with women not because we regard women as deceitful, but because through meeting and conversing with women, the enemy can easily bring us down and lead us to transgress God’s commandments. We must guard ourselves from all sides against the attacks of deceitful spirits, placing our hope in the full armor and power of the Holy Spirit. Whoever closes

one door to the enemy but opens two for him, and thinks himself safe, is deceiving himself. No; one must protect oneself from all sides and give no pretext to those who seek pretexts.

35. Do not be negligent regarding the virtue of chastity, but strive with all your might to preserve holiness (purity) within yourself, for this is why you have left the world behind. Preserve your virginity so that the Holy Spirit may dwell within you. Pay no heed to shameful desires and vain caresses; keep yourself pure, and if a sinful flame begins to burn within you, extinguish it with tears and prayer to the Lord, who loves those who seek holiness and serve Him in it. – A precious treasure is virginity with a righteous mind. If you love it, you will be glorified by the Lord, and you will prosper in all things.

36. If carnal strife arises within you, do not be afraid or lose heart. By doing so, you will embolden the enemy against yourself, and he will begin to sow seductive thoughts within you, suggesting: “It is impossible to quench the fire within you unless you satisfy your lust.” But “*endure patiently for the Lord*”; pour out your prayer with weeping before His goodness, and He will “*hear*” you and “*lift you up*” from the “*pit of passions*,” that is, from impure thoughts, and from the “*muddiness of the mire*,” that is, shameful fantasies, and He will “*set your feet*” upon the “*rock*” of holiness (purity) (Ps. 39:1–3), and you will see the help that has come to you from Him. Just persevere; do not let your thoughts slacken, do not grow weary as you bail water from the boat: for the harbor of life is near. “*While you are still speaking, He will say, ‘Here I am’*” (Isa. 58: 9). But He waits to see your struggle, to see if you are truly ready to fight against sin even unto death. So do not lose heart; God will not forsake you. He is watching your struggle; the faces of the Holy Angels and the host of demons are watching it as well. The angels are ready to present a crown to the victor; the demons—to cover the vanquished with shame. So be vigilant. Do not grieve your own (the angels), and do not bring joy to strangers (the demons).

37. There is no place hidden from God’s eyes. Do not let the enemy deceive you by suggesting, “*He will not see.*” You stand at God’s feet. Do not disregard this. For it is written: “*Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool*” (Acts 7:49).

38. It is not a tragedy that passions assail us and we must fight against them; but it is a tragedy if, by indulging ourselves, we fall before our adversaries. Resist, then, the lust that burns within you, so that you may avoid the never-extinguishing flame. If a passion defeats you once, it will not retreat, but will attack you even more fiercely. Be vigilant, then, lest you lose the glory of God’s presence.

39. Let us flee from drunkenness; let us flee, as much as possible, from encounters with women: for a woman’s word is like “*a snare*” in the heart (Prov. 7:21), and he who heeds it is drawn into an unholy union.

40. Be careful not to be ensnared by fleeting pleasures, lest you lose eternal life. You are called to be a merchant; remain fully sober, lest you lose your pearls, lest the enemy steal your treasure and sink your ship with its cargo, and lest you return home empty-handed. The enemy, knowing the glory that comes to one who keeps himself pure from the defilements of the flesh, wages a fierce battle against him with thoughts, seeking to ensnare him with them so that, carried away by them, he may miss out on future glory. And if he finds a soul that rejects impure thoughts, he does not attack it often, but neither does he withdraw from it entirely. Rather, he goes where, as soon as he pushes, the door is immediately opened to him; and he defiles the body and soul with the most impure desires in one who does not resist him; finally, as if he were a good counselor, he instills this thought in him: “It is better for you to go out into the world and take a wife than to crush your flesh in this way.” But nothing of the sort comes near the sober-minded. Therefore, be mindful of yourself, lest anything like this befall you.

41. Remember what you promised God and preserve your holiness (purity), so that you may find favor before the Lord. Listen to the one who said, “*Flee from sexual immorality*” (1 Cor. 6:18).—Do you want to know what a grave sin sexual immorality is? Behold: those whom the serpents could not kill in the wilderness were brought down by fornication in the land of Midian. If you have fallen into sin, do not remain in your fall, and do not disregard God’s long-suffering and His mercy. “*Remember that death will not be long in coming*” (Sir. 14:12). Remember that you cannot escape God’s hands. Therefore, do not be negligent, but repent, weep, and lament that you have been led astray; for even if we forget our fall, God, who created us, knows the deeds of each one.

42. Do not be careless, but courageously resist the enemy, and block the opening through which the enemy usually enters to destroy you, so that, finding no convenient entrance, he may depart empty-handed. And to block the breach means to safeguard the senses through which both good and evil enter the soul—that is, sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste—and not to allow your thoughts to wander where they ought not to

go. Keep in mind the giants who ravaged the earth with their dominion, and how the Lord wiped them from the face of the earth in an instant with the flood; and their strength was of no avail to them. Consider the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, how it was destroyed because of the sins of its inhabitants; and neither their luxury nor their pride availed them. Let us, then, take care of our own salvation, lest sudden death overtake us as well, and lest we depart from here under great condemnation.

43. Say to the one who instills wicked and impure desires in you: “O enemy of the truth! Must I shame myself so that you may fulfill your desire? Go to those like you who are depraved. You have asked for a herd of pigs! Drown with them. But I will no longer be a slave to my own desires. I have had enough of the past; from now on I will care for the truth and implore my God to deliver me completely from your deeds. He gave me the Holy Spirit, and I provoked Him to anger; He gave me a pure soul and body, and I defiled them.” Speak thus, beloved, to the one who instills such passions in you.

44. One of the Saints said: “Fornication is like a dog; if you pet it, it will not leave you, but if you chase it away, it will flee.” Be mindful of yourself, and do not neglect your life. Take care that a small pleasure does not cause you to lose the fruit of your labors—that you do not, for the sake of impurity, forfeit the reward of your deeds—that you do not, for the sake of impurity, lose the reward for silence, for vigil, for self-restraint, and for other virtues; do not be like a man who puts the wages he has earned into a leaky purse. — Protect yourself with the fear of the Lord.

45. If you are speaking with a woman of radiant beauty, guard your eyes lest lust disturb your mind; for then you will begin to speak at length, filled with passionate emotion; and it will turn out that while you speak of chastity with the tips of your lips, your soul is given over to lust and wholly absorbed by it. Therefore, when you happen to have such an encounter, it is better to cut short the conversation and resort to silence. For Scripture says, “*She entices him with her many words*” (Prov. 7:21). Frequent conversations of this kind cause no small harm to the soul.

46. A fornicator cannot love one who abhors his passion, but “*a man clings to his own kind.*”

47. Seek out ways to overcome your lust; for this is up to you.

48. A refuge from sensuality is, first of all, to pray often and with a sober mind, and then to give dominion to the mind and pure thought, to refrain from uttering licentious words inconsistent with a reverent disposition of the spirit, in the certainty that the Lord is the infallible Judge. Mindfulness and the expectation of judgment will destroy inner stirrings and dry up the growing lust; and in such a soul, stillness will come (lustful impulses will subside).

49. If you are chaste, do not boast of your self-restraint, but in humility pray to the Lord that He may be your Guardian to the end. For it is not uncommon for a sudden invasion of four-legged beasts into a vineyard to suddenly destroy the fruit due to the guard’s negligence.

50. When you go to bed, do not spread out more bedding than is necessary; for luxury can naturally inflame your body and strongly fan the embers of sensual desire.

51. Blessed is the one who guards his body as a sanctuary for the Savior, and has not shamed his soul with foreign deeds, but has remained pleasing to the Lord. Blessed is the one who has hated vile and shameful deeds, and has offered himself as a living sacrifice pleasing to the Lord.

52. Blessed is the one who, through his deeds, has rebuked the tormentor (the devil—the tyrant of souls) and has not been overcome by fear of the flames of lust; for his soul will be watered by the dew of the Holy Spirit.

53. If you valiantly struggle against those who seek to steal the fruits of your labor (vain thoughts), then be careful that no one, by some trick, creeps up from below and causes you to fall (a lustful thought). But put your thoughts in order (be vigilant), so that you do not miss the favorable wind and keep your sails ready, and save the ship by guiding it into the harbor of life.

54. Whoever plants a fig tree and leaves its fruit unattended? All the more so must one watch over purity and chastity. — Or who, having been bitten by an asp, does not take care to stay away from its lair? If, after being bitten, he puts his hand into its lair, he will be bitten again; who then is to blame for his death? Is it the venomous animal, or the man who did not protect himself? — Understand well what has been said.

55. It is harmful for a monk to associate with a woman. And do not go near a virgin at all, if you still harbor any carnal thoughts. A monk who spends time drinking wine with women is no different from one who throws himself into the fire. Flee from encounters with them, just as a chamois flees from a snare.

56. Guard the purity of your body. If you preserve it out of love for Christ, you will easily be able to excel in every virtue. The Holy Spirit dwelling within you will rejoice over you, for you fill your temple of God with the fragrance of purity and righteous will—and He will strengthen you for every good deed. And to excel in virtues and in divine purity, you have the following three aids: abstinence of the belly and the tongue, and restraint of the gaze. All three must be observed. If you preserve, say, the first two, but do not keep your eyes from wandering, you will not attain lasting purity. Just as a broken water pipe cannot hold water, so a wandering eye cannot hold a chaste mind. *“Do not gaze upon the beauty of strangers”* (Sir. 9:8)—and may your mind be fixed on the fear of God (Isa. 118:120).

57. A monk should not wash his body or feet with excessive care. Just as those who indulge in sensual pleasures seek satisfaction in the elegance of their bodies and clothing, so the ascetic of piety takes a stand against his adversaries by doing the opposite.

58. The struggle between holiness (purity) and defilement is no small matter. Those who encourage us in defilement suggest this thought: “No one sees you; what are you afraid of?” But those who encourage us in holiness object to them: “God sees—and His angels are with you; how can you say, ‘Who sees you?’” The tempter continues: “Where are they? So far, no one is visible here.” At this, the helpers of holiness interrupt him: “You don’t see?!—You spoke the truth: for it is written, *‘Their malice has blinded them’* (Wis. 2:21). *‘Does not the Creator of the eye see?’* (Ps. 93:9)? Where can you hide from God (Ps. 138: 1–12)?”—This is what you must keep in mind—and sin will no longer rule over you, and the sorrow of sin will not overtake you, but joy and peace in the Holy Spirit will come to you.

59. Guard the purity of your body in the Lord as a precious pearl; do not flaunt your clothing; keep your gaze downcast and your soul lifted up; do not engage in casual conversation with a young man, and even speaking with a woman is superfluous; do not prolong conversation with a young man, and do not associate with drunkards and jesters, but remain entirely in the fear of God, remembering the Apostle’s command: *“Do not get drunk with wine, for in it there is debauchery”* (Eph. 5: 18).

60. It happens that the evil one instills such a tempting thought: “A lustful thought troubles you constantly; how long must you bear this distress and endure it? Satisfy the flesh so as not to be in conflict; you will repent later—it is no great matter.” Answer him with sobriety: “But who can tell me that, if I indulge my flesh, I will find time for repentance and will not be swept away along with those who commit lawlessness? For *‘our life on earth is but a tent’*” (Job 8:9). If that were to happen, would it not be the same for me to sin as to take a sword and kill myself?—And how can you say that this is a trivial matter? For I see how highly those who have not yielded to this temptation are honored, and how dishonorable those are who have indulged in it. Joseph is praised from generation to generation, in heaven and on earth, while the Egyptian woman is mocked; the chaste Susanna is glorified, while the lustful elders have left behind a bad name for all generations. – How can you still say: “Satisfy it just once, and you’ll be at peace”? “Do you not know, O devil, that a beast, once accustomed to carnivorous habits, more often indulges this passion? And yet you wish to assure me that if I satisfy my lust, it will no longer trouble me. May the Lord forbid it, you cunning deceiver, who, like a lion, seeks to devour my soul. Your sweetness is bitter; your suggestion is the depths of evil; your promises are full of death and ruin. You are tempting me to sin, which will strip me of the Lord’s grace and offend the Holy Spirit. *“With whom,”* I was marked *“on the day of redemption”* (Eph. 4:30); yet you say this is no great matter. You tempt me to *“make the members of Christ members of a harlot”* (1 Cor. 6:15), so that in a single moment I may lose my immortal treasure and forfeit the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. And this, in your view, means nothing? You are tempting me to provoke the Lord to anger, so that on that dreadful day, before the dreadful judgment seat, I may hear from Him, the righteous Judge: “You wicked servant, more fond of pleasure than of God, you have defiled the earth with your impurities and your sins.” And is this not important? – Have you not yourself experienced the severity and immutability of the dreadful judgment of the righteous God, Who *“will not spare even the angels who sinned with you, but having bound them as prisoners of darkness, will deliver them to the judgment of the great day to be guarded by those who are tormented”*? And yet you say: “It is of no consequence”? – You are a lie, flattery, and ruin. With lies and flattery you blind the eyes of the mind and manage to entice others to prefer this fleeting pleasure to eternal life. But we, having committed ourselves to the Lord, do not fear you. The Lord is our strength; the Lord is our refuge; the Lord is our helper and defender.”

61. The demon of fornication is rendered powerless not only by abstinence from food, but also by abstinence of the eyes, *“that I may not see vanity”* (Ps. 118:37). In a gaze that wanders aimlessly, there is

already fornication, as the Lord testified: *“Anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matt. 5:28). Whoever turns his eyes downward and his soul toward the Lord uproots such adultery within himself; and whoever has conquered his belly has also conquered his gaze. The wandering eye is a terrible traitor to us.

62. The battle stirred up by the wandering eye inflames the soul with lust, whether the object is present or absent. It even presents the object to the heart in sleep; for the demons paint a tempting image in the mind and occupy the mind by renewing the image of the tempting object previously seen by a person’s eyes. For this very reason, the Prophet prays: *“Turn my eyes away, that I may not see vanity.”*

63. When a demon begins to sketch a tempting object within you, and paints in your mind the beauty of a woman you once saw; bring the fear of God into your heart, and remember those who sleep in their sins—think of the day of your departure, when your soul will be separated from your body—imagine that dreadful and terrifying voice that will be heard by those who have neglected the truth and failed to keep Christ’s commandments: *“Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41)—imagine also the worm that never dies and the unending torment. Meditate on this and keep it in mind—and the desire for pleasure will vanish from your thoughts, just as wax melts before the face of fire; for demons and fleeting moments cannot stand against the fear of God.

64. Whoever does not resist lust but allows his eyes to wander freely has certainly already yielded his mind to passions, and were it not for human shame, he would have defiled his body more than once. Therefore, unless he remains sober and constantly keeps the fear of God before his eyes, he will not delay in defiling his body as well. For this demon, who teaches the eyes to be distracted, is followed by another demon who actually commits sin in the flesh. If the second one sees that the first has succeeded in distracting the soul and making it unfocused, he immediately begins to urge that a carnal sin be committed as well. To the one overcome by his own eyes, he begins to suggest something like this: *“You have already sinned in your intention and committed adultery in your heart; you have already broken the commandment, and the sin of transgressing the commandment has already been imputed to you. Therefore, satisfy your lust now. For to do and to desire are one and the same. At least enjoy your lust.”*—But do not believe his thoughts, according to the words of the Apostle: *“We do not understand his thoughts”* (2 Cor. 2:11). For by this he wants to ensnare your soul. —To this demon, who advises you to commit an unlawful sin, you must say: *“Although I have fallen with my eyes and committed adultery in my heart, I nevertheless break my adulterous heart with sighs of repentance, and I wash my fallen eyes with tears. For ‘God will not despise a broken and contrite heart’* (Ps. 50: 19).

65. If you find yourself needing to go to a village, do not amuse yourself with conversation with women, lest your soul be carried away like a bird that has swallowed a snake. Be all the more vigilant then, for your fall is not far off. If you keep watch over yourself, you will be as safe as in a harbor. Fight temptation with reverence and fear of God. Shamefulness is the mother of fornication. If women see that you treat them freely and speak of trivial matters, they will incite you to even worse things and lead you to a fall. — But also be on guard against others who, under the guise of contrition and reverence, might weaken your resolve with their words. One of the Saints said: they speak these words in an attempt to lead you into passion.

66. If you notice that a certain thought is drawing you toward a rendezvous with a young man or a beautiful woman, know that you are approaching the enemy’s snares. If, even after being warned (not to do this), you do not abandon your intention, know that you are already entangled in the snares, and it will not be easy for you to overcome sensual desire. You may say, *“I do not suffer harm from this.”* But is it possible to walk on hot coals without burning your feet?

67. If you wish to be chaste, practice self-restraint and put an end to harmful encounters. To the extent that a person draws near to that which causes temptation, to that extent it is impossible for his heart to remain free from troubled thoughts and the kindling of wicked desires; for the sight of a face and the sound of words stir him to passion. Just as a sponge, when brought near something wet, swells and absorbs moisture, so too does a person whose thoughts are not steadfast—if he draws near to or converses at length with those who speak carnally—absorb harm; therefore, intoxicated by this, he becomes drunk through no fault of his own, and because he is already filled with what is harmful, he does not receive the spiritual word.

68. One who desires to reform and establish himself in purity must firmly hold fast to chaste thoughts, wear down the flesh with good works, and, through constant remembrance of God, purify his mind of all that is evil and shameful. Through this, our mind is filled with grace; and the grace of God, dwelling in the mind and ruling over it, bars the access of the crafty enemies when they attempt to enter.

69. When you see a sensible woman who shines with beauty, has a bright gaze, radiant cheeks, and a certain artificial expressiveness in her face—and she stirs up your thoughts and intensifies your desires—consider that what amazes you is earth, and what inflames you is ashes; —and your soul will cease to rage. Fix your thoughts on the skin of her face, and then you will see the utter worthlessness of her beauty; for you will find nothing but bones, sinews, and a foul odor. Imagine also that she grows old, changes, dies, and all that color fades away. Consider what it is that amazes you, and be ashamed—and, having been ashamed, repent.

70. Blessed is the person who strives to please God and keeps his body pure, so that it may become a holy temple of Christ the King. Have you already become a temple of God of your own free will? Be mindful of yourself day and night, lest your temple be defiled. If you keep it pure and fit for service to your Lord, then the Spirit of God will dwell within you and sanctify you more and more.

71. Gird yourself with faith, hope, and love, and stand strong on guard, protecting the temple of God from all impure thoughts. Become all eyes, constantly watching and on the lookout for the devil's robbers; and these robbers, as soon as they find someone who is lax and distracted, always pounce on him to defile his wretched bodily temple, so that it may no longer be acceptable to the Lord. Be vigilant, then, so that it does not turn out that you yourself are welcoming these robbers of the evil one—that is, impure thoughts and wicked desires.

72. The root of lust is shameless. If you cut it down every day, it withers away every hour. Uproot the root of lust completely from your heart, so that it does not wither and grow back hour by hour. If you cut it down a thousand times, it will spring up twice as many times—until you completely uproot it.

73. Be mindful of yourself, lest you allow the vile enemy to enter your temple in place of the Holy and Most Pure Lord, and lest your temple be defiled by the shamelessness of this enemy, the hater of goodness. He is shameless and stubborn in his intent; you drive him out time and again with rebuke, but he shamelessly strives to enter. If you let him into your temple, God will forsake you. And your temple will be filled with every kind of impurity, stench, and darkness.

3. On the Struggle Against the Love of Money

1. Do not seek profit that is harmful to the soul; for what is more precious than the soul?

2. A poor monk who remains silent in humility is better than a rich monk who is filled with pride and arrogance.

3. Whoever loves gold will not be justified; but whoever loves the Lord will be blessed. Whoever places his hope in gold will fall; but whoever places his hope in the Lord will be saved.

4. If you love the love of money, you will leave this world with nothing; but if you love simplicity, you will not be deprived of heavenly riches.

5. If you love poverty, you will put the demon of fornication to flight.

6. Whoever hides gold in his cell accumulates within himself the passions of pride and disobedience. But whoever gathers prayers and alms into his treasury grows rich in God. Others hoard money for themselves, but you, monk, hoard prayers and alms for yourself.

7. Let us seek only what satisfies our needs; for what is excessive merely distracts and brings no benefit.

8. A monk who seeks an inheritance from his earthly parents falls into temptation, but he who seeks the Lord will be saved.

9. Do not say, "What will I eat when I grow old?" For we are not even allowed to worry about tomorrow, yet you are already worrying about old age. Let us "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to us*" (Matt. 6:33). If, however, we do not seek this above all else, it will be clear that we do not care about it at all. Therefore, "*Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you*" (Ps. 54:23).

10. A monk who is greedy is like a barren palm tree, while one who is not greedy is like a pruned palm tree growing tall.

11. A monk attached to material things is like a hawk flying with straps on its legs; wherever it lands, it immediately becomes entangled. But one who is not attached to material things is like a traveler, always ready to set out.

12. Gold does not bring patience, but faith sets upon a firm foundation the one who has acquired it.

13. Why do we not cast off every useless worry and free ourselves from the burden of earthly things? Do you not know that the gate is narrow and the way is hard, and that the greedy cannot enter through it? God loves those who are not greedy, who willingly subject themselves to deprivation and sorrow for Christ's sake—in their struggles, in their vigils, and in their many sufferings.

14. Let not your hand be outstretched to take, but rather let it be outstretched to give (Sir. 4:35).

15. The passion of greed is the most grievous, for it is "*the root of all evil*" (1 Tim. 6:10). Would you like to know how this passion is eradicated?—By placing one's hope in God with all one's heart and all one's soul.

16. To another brother, the evil one instills an excessive zeal for manual labor. From this arises the passion of the love of money. Then the soul, having been wounded by the love of money—that root of all evil—prompts the monk to sit down to his work earlier than usual in the morning and to stop it later than necessary in the evening; so that, if possible, he neglects prayer and the divine service, and, driven by the love of money, is occupied solely with his work. When the bell rings for the service, this brother arrives after everyone else and looks for excuses to leave the service before anyone else. — Knowing this, guard yourself, lest you, having been led to stray into what is entirely forbidden, lose your rank. — For the enemy does not stop there. But, having found an opening, he manages to lead others astray, suggesting: "You labor and labor, yet you have almost nothing; go and learn a more profitable trade."—Without understanding the matter, some brother follows this advice into the world; and remains there entirely. Beware, therefore.

17. Chastity consists not only in abstaining from fornication and carnal pleasures, but also in being free from other passions. The avaricious, the money-lover, and the greedy are not chaste. Just as one is captivated by physical beauty, so the other is captivated by money; and the latter is even less chaste; for he lacks the same impulse as the former, which would compel him by the very demands of nature. The passion for money is not natural, and the impulses toward it do not lie in our nature but in a perverse will; therefore, whoever voluntarily yields to it commits an unforgivable sin.

4. On the Struggle Against Anger

1. He who drives away the spirit of anger and irritation is far from strife and rebellion; he is always calm in spirit, cheerful in countenance, and sound in mind—and is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

2. The meek person, even when wronged, rejoices; even when insulted, gives thanks; tames the angry with love; when struck, does not lose his composure; when quarreled with, remains calm; — when subjected to authority, he rejoices; he is not stung by (another's) pride; he rejoices in humiliation; he does not boast of his merits; he is at peace with all; he is submissive to his superiors; he is ready for any task; he is free from deceit; he knows no envy.

3. The one who is free from envy does not seek honor; he rejoices with those who rejoice, helps those who are successful, looks with pleasure upon those who walk the path of goodness, praises those who live as they ought, and, in general, being free from envy and free from rivalry, rejoices in every success and every noble deed of others.

4. Whoever is afflicted by envy and rivalry is pitiful; for he is an accomplice of the devil, through whose "*envy*" "*death entered the world*" (Wisdom 2:24). His heart is always worn out by sorrow, his body is consumed by pallor, and his strength is drained. Envy and rivalry are a terrible poison: from them spring slander, hatred, and murder.

5. Whoever has not wounded his tongue with slander has kept his heart and conscience unstained. Whoever has not been seized by the spirit of slander has truly come to know that he himself is a man of the flesh, and has kept himself from being vindictive. Whoever does not associate with slanderers will dwell with the angels. Whoever has not poisoned his ears and tongue with slander is filled with the healing power of love. Whoever does not defile his lips with slander—his lips will exude the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

6. Whoever slanders another condemns himself. In slander there is calumny, hatred, and backbiting; and he is rightly recognized as a fratricide.

7. Hatred or envy cloaked in piety is like bitter water in golden vessels. Plant the tree of life within it, and it will become sweet. By the cross of our Savior, all the slanders of the cunning enemy are abolished.

8. Love enlightens the eyes of the mind; but whoever loves strife and quarrels is like a man who often puts his hand into a den of vipers.

9. If you harbor the passion of resentment in your heart, you will become a dwelling place of wrath and ignorance, as well as sorrow—and the expression on your face will change. For it is said: *“The way of the resentful leads to death”* (Prov. 12:28).

10. Whoever harbors resentment in his heart is like one who nurtures a serpent in his bosom.

11. A hot-tempered person will stir up the souls of his brothers, but the long-suffering in love will fear God.

12. The north wind stirs up the sea, and a hot temper stirs up a person’s thoughts; but generosity drives away irritability, and without irritability, anger ceases.

13. An unbridled horse delivers its rider into the hands of evildoers, and a hot-tempered man falls into trouble.

14. Do not listen, monk, to envy; do not plot against your brother, and do not give him a reproachful name. As you seek to drive him from his place in disgrace, take care that you yourself do not suffer the very thing you are plotting against another. *“Whoever digs a pit for his neighbor will fall into it”* (Eccl. 10:8). Hear what is written: *“The wicked will fall into their own snare”* (Ps. 140:10).

15. Do not make the excuse: “This brother is harming the community.” But do not do evil to another, and do not associate with those who do evil; for God *“tests the hearts and minds”* (Ps. 7:10).

16. Whoever has found the way of patience and kindness has found the way of life.

17. He who envies his brother’s success cuts himself off from eternal life, but he who helps his brother will be his partner in eternal life. For if, at the judgment, both those who do evil and those who are complicit with them are punished, will not the Lord all the more reward the one who contributes to the fulfillment of His will?

18. It is better to quell anger with a smile than to rage uncontrollably.

19. Smoke drives away bees, but holding a grudge drives knowledge from the heart.

20. Pray to the Lord, and shed tears before His goodness; then resentment will not take root in your soul, and your prayer will be *“like incense”* before Him (Ps. 140:2).

21. Whoever wishes to live peacefully in every place should seek not his own peace, but the peace of others in the Lord, and he will find peace for himself. But the quarrelsome and ill-tempered will never find peace.

22. If a quarrel arises between brothers, the one who repents first will receive the crown of victory, but the other will also be crowned if he does not reject repentance but willingly does what is necessary for peace.

23. Irritability in a person is a pitfall for him; but whoever has overcome irritability within himself has avoided this pitfall.

24. The Lord dwells in the unity of the brethren, but their enmity delights the evil one.

25. Whoever remains silent when accused of wrongdoing harbors resentment in his heart, but whoever defends himself (or confesses) with meekness and peace does not harbor resentment.

26. An irritable and boisterous person is quick to swear, but the silent one is wise.

27. What is irritability? It is a brazen and shameless passion, followed by repentance; but sorrow consumes the heart of the one who has fallen into it.

28. Whoever loves rebellion will suddenly be overtaken by destruction, division, and irreparable devastation; for he rejoices in everything that is hateful to the Lord; but whoever loves peace will inherit peace; and meekness in a person prevents irritability.

29. Irritability and resentment are like the venom of vipers; for they distort the face, disturb the mind, weaken the sinews, and rob a person of the strength to accomplish anything; but meekness and love ward off all these things.

30. How is resentment eradicated? By keeping the fear of God and the remembrance of the day of death in one’s heart. *“Remember the end, and cease from strife”* (Sir. 28:6). Remember death, and do not become arrogant; for in a little while you will be laid in the grave; and what good will your evil deeds do you?

31. Be a peacemaker, so that you may be worthy of the title “son of God.”

32. Fuel for fire is wood; fuel for anger is pride.

33. Do you want to tame your anger? Embrace humility, and walk in the way of the meek and humble.

34. If brothers are deeply distressed with one another, blessed is the peacemaker; but whoever stirs them up to quarrel will not go unpunished.

35. The spirit of wisdom rests in a gentle and humble person; but the Lord loves those who walk in wisdom.
36. A meek and silent monk will inherit eternal life.
37. A meek monk is a guardian who watches over the passions.
38. Forgive your brother if he has sinned against you—and the Lord will forgive your transgressions.
39. Hurry to your brother who has offended you, and repent before him with a pure heart, according to the word of Him who commanded us to forgive our brother's sins not only "*up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven*" (Matt. 18:22).
40. Accept, brother, repentance from your brother as from one sent by God, so as not to dishonor the One who sent him and not to provoke His wrath against yourself.
41. Do not attack your brother on the day of his sorrow, and do not add to his grief.
42. Do not hold a grudge against your brother; for it is written: "*The way of those who hold a grudge leads to death*" (Prov. 12:28).
43. Can you not bear insults? Be silent, and you will find peace.
44. Be mindful of yourself, lest hot-temperedness, irritability, and a vindictive spirit get the better of you—for these will lead you to a life of anxiety and disorder. But cultivate magnanimity, meekness, and a lack of malice, and all that is fitting for Christians, so that you may lead a peaceful and serene life.
45. Harbor no hatred in your heart toward anyone, and do not repay evil with evil; but cultivate love, which Divine Scripture has placed above every virtue; for it likened love to the Creator Himself, saying, "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8).
46. The Lord will not leave one who has fallen but harbors no hatred or envy in his heart to remain in that fall; but He will extend a helping hand to lift him up—because he has not rejected love. On the other hand, one who appears to stand firm but is puffed up with pride and harbors hatred within is not safe; for the darkness of hatred has blinded his eyes, and he does not see where he is going.
47. Strive not to be quick-tempered, lest you become intoxicated without cause, burdening yourself with the passion of anger.
48. To rejoice and be glad at a neighbor's success is a mark of perfection; but to grieve and be dissatisfied when another is praised is a sign of a wicked disposition and a malicious heart.
49. It is an impossible task to bring virtue to perfection without dissolving it in love (1 Cor. 13:2). Without love, we will stray far from the straight path leading to the gates of heaven. Let us therefore shed tears so that we may be freed from the bonds of hatred, envy, pride, and every devilish defilement. It is a demonic act to take offense at the virtues of those who prosper. Hatred has taken root in the demons; their greatest desire is for everyone to perish completely. The saints, however, imitating the Lord, "*desire all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4); for, being filled with love, they have loved their neighbor as themselves.
50. Be patient, so that you may grow strong in wisdom. Patience is a wonderful gift; it drives out irritability, anger, and contempt, and brings the soul to a state of peace.
51. When someone slanders you, do not flare up in anger; but immediately, with humility and a smile on your face, turn irritation into peace. Remember, however, that a smile when you are irritated stirs up even greater anger in the other person. Therefore, first calm your heart, then speak with a smile. Fire is not extinguished by fire. And you, with love and kindness, should quell the anger of the irritated person. If a brother does not come to his senses through this, we will strive to use other measures—of every kind—to heal him, so that in the end his irritation does not prevail and render all our sacrifices to God unacceptable (Matt. 5, 23–24). Let us imitate the Lord and Savior, "*who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return*" (1 Peter 2:23), and David, who, in response to Shimei's slander, said: "*Let him curse, for the Lord has told him to curse David... may the Lord not despise my humility*" (2 Sam. 16: 10, 12).
52. Let not the sun go down on our anger, but let us forgive all our debtors and strengthen love, for it covers a multitude of sins. Whoever harbors enmity toward a brother and thinks to offer anything to God will be regarded as one who offers a dog as a sacrifice or the price of a prostitute. Whoever harbors enmity toward a brother—and thinks he loves Christ—is a liar and deceives himself.
53. If you have a grievance against your brother, or your brother against you, be reconciled. If you do not do this, whatever you offer to God will not be accepted (Mark 11: 25; Matt. 5:23–24). But if you fulfill this commandment of the Lord, then pray to Him with boldness, saying, "Forgive me my debts, Lord, just as

I forgive my brother, having fulfilled Your commandment!” And the Lover of Mankind will reply: “If you have forgiven, I also forgive; if you have pardoned, I also pardon your debts.”

5. On the Struggle Against Sorrow

1. Whoever patiently endures being slandered or wronged is like one who has confined a lion in a menagerie; but whoever retaliates against slander and wrongdoing is like a man who strikes himself (with a weapon).

2. Let us not lose heart; for we will not live forever in this life.

3. Do not let sorrow enter your heart; *“for the sorrow of this world produces death, but the sorrow that is according to God”* brings you eternal life (2 Cor. 7:10).

4. A monk who is ready to courageously endure whatever may happen will have only a little sorrow.

5. Do not let sorrow enter your heart, but take comfort in the Lord.

6. If you are subjected to slander, and afterward the purity of your conscience is revealed, do not become arrogant, but serve the Lord who has delivered you from human slander with humility, lest you fall into a terrible downfall.

7. A deceitful soul, when flattered, becomes arrogant, and when insulted, flies into a rage; but a good soul neither rejoices in flattery nor resents insults.

8. There is no limit to patience, provided it is infused with love.

9. Endure the Lord in the day of sorrow, so that He may shelter you in the day of wrath.

10. Do not mock the afflicted, nor rejoice at the sight of one who is going astray, lest the Lord be angry with you, and you be left without protection on the day of sorrow.

11. Do not think that you alone suffer more than anyone else. Just as it is impossible for one living on earth to avoid the air, so it is impossible for a person living in this world not to be tempted by sorrows and illnesses. Those preoccupied with earthly things experience earthly sorrows; and those who strive for spiritual things suffer for spiritual reasons. But the latter will be blessed, for their fruit is abundant in the Lord.

12. If we are prisoners of God the Savior, we will not be ashamed to bear the bonds of sorrow, but we will endure them with joy, awaiting His coming from heaven, when He will number us among the ranks of the saints; for those who share in His suffering will also share in His comfort (2 Cor. 1:7).

13. There are now two kinds of sorrow that surround every person under the sun: sorrow for God and worldly sorrow; and it is impossible to go through this life without one or the other—either without sorrow for God or without worldly sorrow. — Worldly sorrow is heavy and offers no reward; but sorrow for God brings comfort and, even more, gladdens the heart with the promise of eternal life. When you are subjected to the former, hasten to transform it into the latter—and you will drive the agonizing sorrow from your heart.

14. If, while doing God’s work with humility and reverence, the enemy—intending to hinder you from living a righteous life—stirs up careless people against you, do not be afraid, do not lose heart, and do not stray from the straight path. *“Wait for the Lord”* (Ps. 26:14), O chosen one of God, so that those who now insult you may be amazed at your glorious salvation, as it is written: *“The righteous, even if he meets his end, will rest in peace”* (Wisdom of Solomon 4:7).

15. Just as fire in a smelter tests gold and silver, so the souls of mortals are tested in tribulations, having the Lord as their helper.

16. Let us not fear trials, but let us boldly strive for the honor of the higher calling in Christ. For the Lord crowns all who love Him.

17. Whoever wishes to become a monk but cannot endure insults, humiliation, and loss will never become a monk.

18. Bear insults and slander magnanimously—taking a bad name as a good one, and the most unworthy name as a name that pleases God. —And one must always remember that *“a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle toward all”* (2 Tim. 2:24).

19. If you happen to fall ill, do not resort to useless remedies or human protection; but rather, let us be patient, awaiting God’s mercy, that He may guide us in all things; for there are times when even the flesh needs correction. In everything, let us please the Lord, *“for He cares for us”* (1 Peter 5:7). When a person is sick, his soul begins to seek the Lord even more than usual. Why is correction good, provided that the one being corrected gives thanks? Certainly, such a person will say: *“If we accept the good things from the Lord, shall we not also endure the bad? May the name of the Lord be blessed forever”* (Job 2:10; 1:21).

20. We must not lose heart during times of temptation, but remain vigilant in prayer and good deeds—imitating those who sail the sea, who, when a storm arises, keep a watchful eye on everything, stay alert, and call upon God for help. The Lord does not despise those who call upon Him in truth. Therefore, when sorrow befalls us, let us also take refuge in the Lord, as it is said: *“O Lord, in our distress we remember You”* (Isa. 26: 16). The sea is not always calm; and it is impossible to sail through this life without temptation. But if we hold fast to our faith in the Lord as if it were a rudder, it will lead us into the harbor of life—and then, having laid aside our labors, we will be clothed with life and incorruption.

21. If sorrow comes upon us, let us look forward to the coming of joy. Let us take as an example those sailing the sea. When the wind rises and a fierce storm strikes, they battle the waves, awaiting calm weather; and when calm sets in, they await the storm; and so they are always vigilant, lest a sudden gust of wind catch them unprepared and capsize them in the sea. So too must we act. When sorrow and hardship befall us, let us expect relief and help from God, so that, should the sorrow continue, the thought that we no longer have hope of salvation will not bring about our death. And in the same way, when we are joyful, let us expect sorrow, so that in the midst of our joy we do not forget our tears.

22. Be steadfast in temptations and sorrows, and resist the lust that inflames you, so that you, like an unfired brick, will not be washed away by raindrops, and so that you will not be found lacking the steadfastness you think you possess.

23. Having resolved to please God, be patient. Look at the generations of old, and you will see that all the saints attained the promises through constant and long-suffering patience. Therefore, let us urge ourselves every day so that we, too, may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven with them. – Because of our unbelief, patience departs from us. Be zealous for the Lord, and take courage as a faithful one, so that you may not lose your spiritual strength because of great sorrow. Imagine those who were subjected to torture in exile, in the mines, and in bitter slavery—and submit to the afflictions that befall you for the Lord’s sake.

24. If you happen to experience grief, enduring it is not yet the greatest evil; but it is both difficult and dangerous to remain in that state of grief. If someone has spoken ill of you in your absence, and another comes and tells you that a certain brother has spoken ill of you, then, as a wise person, discern whose temptation this is, and do not be upset with your brother. And say this to the one who told you: “Although he has insulted me, he is my brother, and I myself deserved the insult; moreover, he did not act of his own accord, but the enemy arranged this to sow enmity between us. May the Lord thwart the schemes of the evil one, have mercy on my brother, and not forsake us.” – If you are insulted to your face again, do not be upset by this, and do not let your mind be stirred up. – When it happens that we suffer an insult because of a wrongdoing, let us not be hard-hearted, but rather correct our own mistake.

25. If the one who comforts the sorrowful is a spiritual person, he comes to him not to cause harm, but for great benefit. But whoever has a carnal mindset will bring no benefit at all; rather, coming to comfort the sorrowful, he will upset him even more.

26. You hear an unpleasant word—and you grieve. But if you are rightly rebuked by a word, rejoice that you have been rebuked for your own good, and strive to correct your failings. Have you been rebuked unjustly? All the greater will be your reward if you bear it with good grace. And the Apostles, like criminals, were beaten in the midst of the city; yet they did not grow angry or become indignant, but rejoiced, *“because they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name’s sake”* (Acts 5:41). Rejoice, too, that you have been counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name’s sake.

27. Perhaps some negligent person might say, “It grieves me that this has happened to me after so much toil.”—Does this grieve you, servant of the Lord? Would it not be better for you to realize from this that, after so many years of effort, your passions still remain unconquered, and, having realized this, to begin conquering them starting with this very incident? *“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself”* (Gal. 6:3). The skill of a helmsman is revealed during a storm. Whoever boasts, “I have been living the monastic life for so many years,” yet does not demonstrate the deeds of that life, carries with him the tools of a craft he has not yet mastered. “A small trial befell you, and you immediately stepped out of the monastic way of life, as if you had renounced the monastic life. In a single moment, you ruined the labor of so many years.” “No, brother, do not turn your back on your enemies; but stand firm, fight, and your enemies will flee from you.” Put on the armor of faith, take up the *“helmet of salvation,”* take the *“sword”* of the Holy Spirit, *“which is the word of God”* (Eph. 6:17)—and fight, so that the Holy Spirit dwelling within you may rejoice in your valor.

28. If you cannot endure a small temptation, how will you endure a great one? If you cannot overcome a youth, how will you overcome a mature man? If you cannot endure a word, how will you endure a blow? If you cannot endure a slap or a blow, how will you bear the cross? If you do not bear the cross, how will you inherit glory in heaven along with those who say, *“For your sake we are put to death all day long; we are regarded as sheep for slaughter”* (Ps. 43:23)? Have we, brother, forgotten what our common Lord endured for us? He was reviled, humiliated; they said to Him, *“You have a demon”*—and He was not angry; they called Him a deceiver, slapped Him, beat Him, and nailed Him to the cross; He tasted vinegar mixed with gall, and was pierced in the side with a spear. He endured all this for our salvation. But we—woe to us, poor wretches!—are unwilling to endure even a single insult, not even a word, for His sake, He who suffered so much for us.

29. Whoever desires to please God and become an heir of God through faith, so that he may be called a son of God born of the Holy Spirit, must first of all, clothed in good cheer and patience, courageously endure the sorrows, misfortunes, and hardships that come his way, —whether these be physical illnesses and sufferings, or insults and offenses from people, or various invisible sorrows that wicked spirits bring upon the soul with the intent of leading it into laxity, indolence, and impatience, and thereby preventing it from entering into life. All this happens according to God’s providence, who allows every soul to be tested by various sorrows, so that those who love God with all their hearts may be made manifest through their courageous endurance of all things without losing hope in God, but with constant, grace-filled, faithful, and patient expectation of deliverance, —and so that, having endured every trial in this way, they may become worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

30. A soul that does not take courage and endure every temptation and every sorrow with steadfastness, but instead becomes distressed, despondent, indignant, anxious, and neglects the struggle—or even falls into despair— as one who no longer has hope of deliverance—having failed to preserve within herself the hope that, with unshakable faith, awaits God’s mercy—certainly does not become worthy of life; for she has not followed all the Saints, nor has she walked in the footsteps of the Lord. Look and observe how, from ancient times, the Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, having walked this path of temptation and sorrow, were able to please God thereby and were deemed worthy of great rewards.

31. God does not allow a soul that trusts in Him and is patient to be tempted to such an extent that it reaches despair—that is, to fall into such temptations and sorrows that it cannot bear them (1 Cor. 10:13). Nor does the evil one tempt the soul or burden it with sorrow to the extent he wishes, but only to the extent permitted by God. Let the soul endure everything courageously, holding fast to hope through faith and expecting help and deliverance from God; and it is impossible for it to be forsaken. On the contrary, the more the soul strives, turning to God with faith and hope and unquestionably expecting help and deliverance from Him, the sooner the Lord delivers it from every sorrow that holds it back. For He knows how much the soul must be subjected to trial and temptation—and He permits only that much. If a potter, having made vessels, does not place them in the kiln to be fired and hardened, they will not be fit for human use. But even when he places them in the kiln, he knows how long they must remain in the fire until they are ready, and he does not leave them in the kiln longer than necessary, lest they crack from being overfired; nor does he take them out prematurely, lest they remain unfinished and unfit for use. Therefore, if people have such discernment and knowledge when it comes to mortal matters, how much more does God know the needs of the soul in trials and temptations—those who desire to please Him and long to attain eternal life.

32. Just as flax is not suitable for spinning into fine threads unless it is beaten many times—yet the more it is beaten, the purer and more suitable it becomes for spinning— so too does a God-loving soul, when subjected to many temptations and trials and courageously enduring sorrows, become purer and more fit for spiritual work, and is ultimately deemed worthy to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. – Sorrows and temptations make the soul virtuous and steadfast, if it endures all that befalls it courageously, willingly, and with hope in God, awaiting deliverance from the Lord and His mercy with unshakable faith.

33. Souls subjected to afflictions as a test, and tormented in various ways by evil spirits—whether secretly, through the inner burden of sorrow or wicked thoughts, or openly, through bodily sufferings—if they endure courageously, maintain their hope, and await their reward from the Lord; they will be deemed worthy of the crowns of righteousness, and on the Day of Judgment will attain the same boldness before God as the martyrs. For the suffering in tribulations is the same—endured by some on the cross, by others through the evil spirits acting upon them.

34. If the enemy is unable to lead someone astray or bring them down through their thoughts, he then inflicts sorrows upon that person to cloud their mind, and only then sows whatever he pleases within them. And if even this fails to lead him into evil, the enemy grants him all the comforts of life; he exalts him and leads him into a great delusion, which is more dangerous and worse than all passions, for it makes a person proud, draws him into the abyss of sensuality, and drives out the remembrance of God, of his own weakness, and of the hour of death. He discerns a person's inclinations and then turns against them, opposing them with every kind of injustice.

35. Everything comes from God—both good and sorrowful; but one comes by His good pleasure, another by His discipline, and a third by His permission. By His good pleasure, when we live virtuously; for it pleases God that those who live virtuously be crowned with the wreaths of patience; for the sake of discipline, when, having fallen into sin, we are corrected; and by God's permission, when, even after being corrected, we do not repent. — Again, for the sake of discipline, God punishes us sinners so that we may not be condemned along with the world, as the Apostle says: "*We are disciplined by the Lord so that we may not be condemned with the world*" (1 Cor. 11:32). — In this sense—"*There is no evil in the city that the Lord has not brought about*" (Amos 3:6)—such as famine, plagues, diseases, defeats, and wars; for all these serve to purify us from sin. — God, however, permits—and completely abandons—those who either do not wish to live without sin or, despite being admonished, do not repent but remain in sin. "*Then God gives them over to a depraved mind,*" that is, He permits them the freedom to "*commit all kinds of immorality*" (Rom. 1: 28).

6. On the Struggle Against Despondency

1. A grumbling person is unfit for any task and lacks enthusiasm. He is lazy and always has an excuse ready to shirk his duties. And he corrupts others, saying, "What's the point of this? What's the point of that? There's no use in any of this."

2. When called to sing psalms, the lazy person gets annoyed; when awakened for a vigil, he makes excuses about stomachaches and headaches. If someone admonishes him, he says, "Teach yourself"; if taught something, he shouts, "I know that myself."

3. It is not right for a man who is able to work to eat another's bread in idleness, when the Apostle says, "*I have kept myself from need, and will keep myself*" (2 Cor. 11:9).

4. A grumbling monk suffers great harm; but whoever endures everything courageously will inherit joy.

5. If a spirit of despondency comes upon you, do not leave your home, but resist this spirit with patience. Do not let the thought that urges you to move from place to place persuade you. For if you give in to this thought, you will never have patience.

6. But the monk says, "Here there is strife and hardship, but there (in such-and-such a place) is a peaceful and carefree life" (thinking of moving there). For do you know who wages war against us? Is it not our enemy, the devil? And he "*roams the whole earth*" (Job 2:2). Since, wherever you go, you will be under heaven; thus, you will be vulnerable to the devil everywhere. Why is it better, then, to remain where *you are*, "*to resist the devil, and he will flee from you*"; and conversely, "*draw near to God, and He will draw near to you*" (James 4:7–8)?

7. The lazy monk makes excuses and says, "Today I live here, and tomorrow I'll go somewhere else; why should I work?"

8. A lazy monk gathers many excuses for himself—and the slumbering one will fall into trouble.

9. Whoever constantly moves from one cell to another acquires vain thoughts; but whoever remains in one place is more at peace.

10. A wandering monk is not immune to trouble unless he remains sober; but the one who stays where he is called will more quickly find peace.

11. Idleness is pleasant to you, but its end is bitter; you grow weary from work, but you will rejoice afterward.

12. A lazy and self-centered (self-pitying) monk, as soon as he sees work, hides, yet at supper he places himself among the first.

13. Remembrance of death and punishment is a sword against the demon of despondency.

14. Of all heavy burdens, despondency is the heaviest—especially when accompanied by unbelief; for its fruits are filled with deadly poison.

15. You, monk, have left your cell and wander through the world. Do you not fear “*lawlessness and strife in the city*” (Ps. 54:10)?

16. Who is more lazy than the thirsty man who sits near a spring yet does not reach out his hands to draw water and quench his thirst?—And who is more negligent than the man who owns a book yet neglects to read it?

17. Take the trouble to teach literacy to those who wish to learn it, so that, as they read about God’s wondrous deeds, they may bless His wondrous Name; and God will be your rewarder.

18. A monk in despondency is overcome by sloth; and when he has patience, he is overcome by pride; but whoever truly loves the Lord rejects both.

19. A lazy monk will suffer many losses, but a sober one will not neglect a single hour.

20. Do not love to move from place to place; but rather, with patience, derive benefit from the hardships encountered in your place of residence. Tell me, after you and I have traveled the whole world, will not a cell await us if we wish to be saved? And if we lack the patience to remain in a communal dwelling, and find no peace even in solitude, where, then, will we finally find refuge? This is like saying, “I cannot bear the sun’s heat, nor can I endure the shade.” I fear that, in the end, that very cave will shelter us.

21. Let us be steadfast in heart; for weakness of heart is contrary to virtue. Let us not lose heart if a little despondency befalls us, but let us compel ourselves, like a good traveler. When a traveler grows weak along the way, he does not give up on his goal of continuing the journey, but comforts himself with the words: “It’s not much further, and you’ll reach your lodging and rest.”—And the Lord, seeing how we compel ourselves, will give us strength and ease our difficulties.

22. To provide for ourselves, let us work, trusting in God. Do not grieve over labor; many, doing nothing, were weighed down by their very idleness. Learn to work so that you will not have to learn to beg for alms. Do not be negligent in your work. “*The Lord is near*” (Phil. 4:6).

23. Let us not lose heart while sitting in our cells, remembering that the holy martyrs, after much torture, were bound in iron chains. Therefore, let us not flee from the hardships of the cell, nor long for work, remembering that many of the saints were sent to the mines for the Lord’s sake. If we had lived in those times, would we have changed our way of life because of the torments? Would we have renounced our faith because of extremely difficult circumstances?

24. Hold fast to the place where you live, resisting sloth. For it is not by change of place or distance, but only by attentiveness of mind that you can subdue the passions. We need “*patience*” so that, “*having done the will of God, we may receive the promises*” (Heb. 10:36). He who gives in to despondency is as far from patience as a sick person is from health. Virtue is not recognized in despondency, but in patience. And patience is renewed and strengthened when the mind is occupied with contemplation and divine instruction. Nourished in this way, the mind gains strength, just as the body does from healthy food. But if the mind turns away from this grace and from this dignity, it will truly become poor and weak. Therefore, having cast off your attachment to material things, exercise your mind in this divine activity. And you will have no need to move your body from place to place or to wear it out with travels without a blessed purpose. For “*the Kingdom of God is within us*” (Luke 17:21).

25. When you notice within yourself that reading the Holy Scriptures has become tedious to you, and you are reluctant to listen to spiritual instruction, then know that your soul has fallen into a grave illness. For this is the beginning of wickedness, through which those afflicted have reaped the fruit of death.

26. Blessed is the one who cultivates beautiful and good thoughts within himself at every moment—and through hope has conquered the wicked passion of despondency, against which the Lord’s ascetics struggle.

27. Blessed is the one who, in the Lord’s work, has become like a valiant warrior, rousing the slothful and encouraging the faint-hearted on the Lord’s path.

28. Blessed is the one whom the passion of despondency has not cast down as one lacking courage; but he has attained perfect patience, for which all the saints have received their crowns.

29. When the spirit of despondency troubles you, do not be carried away by its thoughts; but remain in the very place where God has set you, reflecting within yourself on the love you had for God when you first came to the monastery gates. Let us have that same love until the end, enduring the Lord like a wrestler who, through endurance, overcomes the one striking him. For “*whoever endures to the end will be saved*” (Matt. 10:22).

30. Before the all-night vigil, a thought came to one brother: “Give yourself a rest today, and do not get up for the vigil.” But he replied to the thought: “Who knows? Perhaps you won’t get up tomorrow; that is why you must get up today.” And while he was working, a thought was also suggested to him: “Give yourself a rest today, and work tomorrow.” But he replied again: “No, I will work today, and the Lord will take care of tomorrow.”

31. If despondency troubles you, do not lose heart, but pray to the Lord that He may grant you patience. After praying, sit down, gather your thoughts, and comfort your soul with a psalm: “*Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why do you trouble me? Trust in God, for I will yet confess to Him that He is the salvation of my face and my God*” (Ps. 41:6). Say also: “Why are you so downcast, my soul? After all, we will not always live in this world. Listen to what the Psalmist says: ‘*I am a sojourner on earth, and a stranger, just as all my fathers were*’ (Ps. 38:13). We too will pass away with you, when it pleases God. The life of the righteous begins at their death. That is why the Prophet, longing for the life to come, says: “*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God; when shall I come and appear before Your face?*” (Ps. 41:2–3). The saints regarded this present life as a prison. That is why one of them joyfully cried out, “*Now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, O Lord*” (Luke 2:29); and another declared that he desired “*to be released and to be with Christ*” (Phil. 1:23).

32. When morning comes, the brother rises, offers a prayer, and sets to work on his craft. Then the enemy of good, the demon, instills in him a thought of despondency.

33. If, when despondency comes upon him, the brother continues to work and labor, then, with the help of grace, he drives the despondency away from himself. But if, when despondency comes upon him, the brother does not ward it off with patience, he is overcome by it and becomes its captive. Giving free rein to his thoughts, he begins to say to himself: “Today I feel somewhat downcast and unwell. I will rest today, and in the morning I will make up for two days’ work.” Thus, on this first day, the brother does nothing, hoping to make up for this neglect in the morning. But in the morning, the demon who hates goodness brings upon him an even deeper despondency than the day before. Then, already overcome by his thoughts, the brother gets up and sets aside his work—and either does not do it at all, or does it halfheartedly, not as a serious task. — Or the enemy lures him out of his cell and makes him loiter about.

34. Whatever you are doing, if the enemy brings despondency upon you while you are at work, to counter this adversary, point to some similar craft (adding: “Do you see how they labor for the sake of the temporary? Why, then, are you unwilling to labor for the sake of the eternal?”). And whatever work you undertake, let your conscience be your witness that what you are doing is done according to God—and you will be saved (from despondency).

7. On the Struggle Against Vanity

1. Understand, monk, what I am saying: let there not be in us—outwardly—piety, but within the cell—carefree licentiousness; lest we be like “*whitewashed tombs*” (Matt. 23:27). For in every place there is one and the same God, to whom be glory forever! Amen.

2. A monk who boasts of his own strength is the first fool; it is a source of shame and reproach for a monk to boast of his own power: “*Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord*” (1 Cor. 1:31).

3. Do you wish to earn a good reputation? “*Conduct your affairs with meekness*” (Sir. 3:17).

4. It is not yet a virtue to be dishonored and not feel it; but it is a virtue to feel it and endure it for the sake of piety. For it is said: “*The sluggard is not put to shame*” (Prov. 20:4).

5. The love of glory is a disease of the soul, a wicked passion.

6. It is written: “*Let the sincere praise you, not your own mouth—a stranger, not your own lips*” (Prov. 27:2). And again: “*Silver and gold are tested by fire,*” and a person “*is tested by the lips of those who praise him*” (v. 21).

7. Give honor to all for the Lord’s sake, without seeking honor for yourself, and you will find favor with the Lord.

8. Never be taken aback by a people-pleaser who seeks to please many, but not the Lord.

9. In secret, beloved, keep the Lord’s commandments, and the Lord will reward you openly.

10. If you see that a person on earth has attained great dignity, do not be amazed by this; but be amazed by the one who has come to hate earthly glory.

11. Be careful that, in desiring excessive honor for yourself, you do not bring dishonor upon yourself; for true honor for a person is to do everything according to God, while great dishonor is to transgress the commandments.

12. Do not strive to appear skilled in every task, lest you fall into vanity, which leads to a love of glory, anger, and sorrow. Above all, strive to be simple and even-tempered in all things.

13. Do not boast by flaunting your eloquence, but rather proclaim the teaching derived from the experience of simple, uneducated people, so that you may become a disciple of Christ's Apostles; for boasting in outward wisdom is forbidden, especially for Christians. *"Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord"* (2 Cor. 10:17).

14. Those who practice virtue to please others have laid the foundation of their salvation not on rock but on sand; therefore, as soon as the rain falls, the rivers rise, and the winds (temptations) blow, they fall away from their resolve. If they do not fall but live as they ought, they become puffed up with great pride; and when they do fall, they give themselves over to useless despair.

15. *"Let no one boast of himself"* (2 Cor. 10:18). But first examine your own deeds: have you truly lived a life worthy of the praise you give yourself—have you conquered lust, embraced poverty, hated slander, set aside the love of vanity, hated sexual desire, have you abhorred sensuality, have you truly done no harm to anyone, have you overcome your passions, have you truly not become angry when insulted, and when hearing praise of yourself, have you not become arrogant, have you loved the Lord with all your strength and your neighbor as yourself?—If we have not kept these things, then why should we boast about ourselves? — We must weep over this before the Lord's mercy, that He may heal us from the hardening of our hearts and strengthen us to lead a life worthy of Him.

16. We must do nothing to show off to people, but in everything we must act from a pure heart; for God knows what is hidden and secret, and from Him alone do we hope to receive our reward.

17. A vain man, though poor in possessions, even if he takes upon himself the title of King, is not yet a King; so a monk who eats in secret, yet hypocritically pretends to be a faster and a chaste man at the communal meal, is not yet an ascetic. He weaves a web of deceit—and walks not in the righteous path of the saints, but in the path of those who seek to please men.

8. On the Struggle Against Pride

1. The proud person cannot tolerate anyone being superior to him—and when he encounters such a person, he either envies him or competes with him. Rivalry and envy go hand in hand, and whoever harbors one of these passions harbors both.

2. Those who possess these passions are tormented by the success of others; those who do not are not grieved by it. The latter, when honor is bestowed upon another, is not embarrassed; when another is exalted, is not troubled, because he gives everyone the advantage and prefers everyone to himself.

3. Without humility, every feat, every act of self-restraint, every act of obedience, every act of non-covetousness, and every act of learning is in vain.

4. The impure spirit of pride is cunning and multifaceted, and it uses every effort to prevail over everyone: it ensnares the wise with wisdom, the strong with strength, the rich with wealth, the beautiful with beauty, and the artist with art.

5. Nor does it fail to tempt those who lead a spiritual life in the same way, setting its snares—for the one who has renounced the world, in his renunciation; for the chaste, in their chastity; for the silent one, in their silence; for the non-covetous, in their non-covetousness; for the prayerful, in their prayer. In all of them, it strives to sow its tares.

6. As a remedy against pride, read more often the following and other similar passages from Scripture directed against it: *"When you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants'"* (Luke 17:10). *"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself"* (Gal. 6:3). *"Whatever is exalted among men is an abomination before the Lord"* (Luke 16:15). *"Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, says the Lord"* (Matt. 11:29). *"In our humility the Lord has remembered us; He has delivered us from our enemies"* (Ps. 135: 23). *"I humbled myself, and He saved me"* (Ps. 114: 5). *"Everyone who is haughty is an abomination to the Lord"* (Prov. 16: 5).

7. If you are healthy in body, do not be proud, but be cautious.

8. Whoever exalts himself brings disgrace upon himself; but whoever serves his neighbor in humility will be glorified.
9. Humble the thought of pride before pride humbles you. Cast down the thought of arrogance before it casts you down. Crush lust before lust crushes you.
10. Do not condemn your brother for his inconsistency, lest you yourself fall into the same weakness.
11. A novice who lacks humility has no weapon with which to resist; and such a one will suffer a great defeat.
12. Let the monk consider himself the least of all—and he will gain hope. For *“the one who humbles himself will be exalted, and the one who exalts himself will be humbled”* (Luke 18:14).
13. The evil reproaches against a monk are pride, insolence, callousness, shamelessness, recklessness, quick temper, and madness.
14. If you love pride, you will belong to the demons; if you love humility, you will belong to the Lord Christ.
15. A haughty person will endure much sorrow, but the humble will always rejoice in the Lord.
16. Pride always seeks honor; but humility is not exalted in glory, nor is it troubled in disgrace; for it awaits its reward from the Lord.
17. Pride blinds the eyes of the wise, but humility enlightens them with love; for the Lord *“teaches the meek His way”* (Ps. 24:9).
18. It is dangerous for a person to trust in himself, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be saved.
19. He who adorns his garments will become proud; and a proud monk is like an eagle that has not yet grown its feathers.
20. A humble and wise monk is a light and swift walker and (as it were) a sharp-shooting archer.
21. Just as iron refines and subdues all things, so too does godly humility destroy the enemy’s schemes.
22. Just as a spear is to a hunter and a weapon is to a warrior, so is humility to a monk.
23. Pride is dangerous to a person, in whatever form it may take. Do not love pride, for there is no benefit in it. Every infirmity is healed through care, but the disease of pride is an evil that is difficult to cure; for it rejects healing medicine and concocts for itself a deadly poison. May it not be found among Christ’s servants.
24. Do you want to be great?—Be the least of all (Mark 9:35).
25. If a brother leaves the monastery, do not look down on him in your thoughts, and let him not be dishonorable in your eyes: *“Do not despise the day of your youth”* (Prov. 3:28).
26. Listen to the one who says, *“Take heed that you stand firm, so that you may not fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12), and also, *“Do not boast of yourself, but let God be the one who commends you”* (2 Cor. 10:18). For many thought of themselves that they had triumphed and were in charge; but they became the lowest of the low, while the desperate received grace; for God *“opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6).
27. If you see a person who is disobedient, proud, and *“wise in his own eyes,”* then his root is already half-dead; for he does not accept the nourishment imparted by the fear of God. But if you see a person who is silent and humble, know that his root is strong; for he is nourished by the fear of God.
28. Great is the success and great is the glory of humility, and there is no downfall in it. The sign of humility is to meet your brother’s needs with both hands, just as if you yourself were receiving assistance.
29. A proud and rebellious person will see bitter days; but the humble and patient will always rejoice in the Lord.
30. It is a great thing to find a humble and patient person; his goodness knows no bounds.
31. Whoever exalts himself above his brother is mocked by demons.
32. Rain causes weeds to multiply, and associating with worldly people breeds pride. But those who fear the Lord do not exalt themselves.
33. If you have been granted a gift, do not be presumptuous; for you possess not a single perfection of your own, *“which you did not receive from God”* (1 Cor. 4:7); and if you do not walk according to His commandments and will, He will take His gift from you and give it to someone better: and then you will be like a man from whom a pen, just dipped in ink, is taken away.
34. No matter how much a person exalts himself in the pride of his heart, he still tramples upon the earth from which he was taken and to which he will return; but the Lord exalts the humble.

35. Arrogance brings down, but humility receives the prize of victory.

36. Even if you prove to be as pure as gold before your brothers, still consider yourself a vessel unfit for use, and you will avoid pride, which is hateful to God and to people.

37. If you see that a brother is sinning, and you meet him the next morning, do not despise him, regarding him as a sinner in your thoughts; for you do not know that, perhaps, after you left him, he did something good in the wake of his fall and appeased the Lord with sighs and bitter tears.

38. We must refrain from condemning others; but each of us must humble ourselves, speaking of ourselves with the words of the Psalm: *“My iniquities have overwhelmed my head; they have become a heavy burden upon me”* (Ps. 37:5).

39. Do not give me, O Lord, the Lord of all, a heart that hates submission and fatherly instruction; remove from me proud thoughts; for You, O Lord, have forbidden the proud (Ps. 118:21).

40. Not only should my gaze be cast down, but my heart, too, must not exalt itself above others.

41. If two novices live with an elder, which of them is greater before the Lord? The one who humbles himself before his brother in the fear of God. For He who said, *“He who humbles himself will be exalted,”* did not lie (Luke 18:14).

42. Whoever wants to move a stone does not place the lever from above, but from below—and then he will easily turn the stone. This is a model of humility!

43. Pride is abhorrent to both God and people, but the Lord exalts those who love humility.

44. It is not dignity, honor, or greatness that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven, but humility, obedience, love, patience, and good will—these are what save a person. Have you not heard that the devil was cast down from heaven because of his pride? Have you not heard what great glory he lost by rebelling against God?

45. The humble person does not boast or take pride, but serves the Lord out of reverence for Him. The humble person does not impose his own will, contradicting the truth, but obeys the truth. The humble person does not envy the success of a neighbor, nor does he rejoice in his downfall; on the contrary, he rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep. The humble person is not dejected by deprivation and poverty, nor does he become arrogant in prosperity and glory, but he remains steadfast in the same virtue. The humble person honors not only those above them but also those below them. The humble person does not become irritable, does not insult anyone, and does not quarrel with anyone. The humble person is neither stubborn nor lazy, even if called to work at midnight; for he has committed himself to obedience to the Lord’s commandments. The humble person knows neither resentment nor deceit, but serves the Lord in simplicity, living peacefully with all. The humble person, if rebuked, does not grumble, and if scolded, does not lose patience; for he is a disciple of the One who endured the cross for us. The humble person hates self-love, which is why he does not seek primacy, but regards himself in this world as a temporary passenger on a ship.

46. Even if you study the entire Divine Scripture, take care that, contrary to Scripture, such a thought does not make you proud; for all Scripture, inspired by God, teaches us humility. And whoever thinks or acts contrary to what he has been taught thereby shows that he is a transgressor.

47. If the spirit of pride, or self-will, or wealth troubles you, do not be carried away by it, but rather stand courageously against the armies of the wicked and deceitful spirit. Picture in your mind ancient buildings, weathered statues, and pillars corroded by rust—and reflect within yourself, and consider where the owners and builders of all this are; and strive to please the Lord, that you may be deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven: *“for all flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass”* (1 Peter 1:24). What is higher and more glorious than royal dignity and glory? But even kings pass away, and so does their glory. Those who are deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven, however, will experience nothing of the sort; they will dwell in peace and joy in heaven with the angels, free from sickness, sorrow, and sighing, in joy and gladness, praising, glorifying, and extolling the King of Heaven and the Lord of all the earth.

48. If you are the first to arrive at the divine service and remain there until the end, let not this thought make you proud; for pride is like a den in which a serpent nestles and kills whoever approaches.

49. Let us not exalt ourselves, but rather humble ourselves. And what strength do we have to exalt ourselves, when even a small difficulty brings us down to the ground? Therefore, let us love humility, so that the Lord may not turn away from us.

50. In every place and in every deed, let humility be with you. For just as the body needs clothing, whether it is warm or cold outside, so too does the soul have a constant need to clothe itself in humility. It is better to walk naked and barefoot than to be stripped of humility; for the Lord covers those who love it.

51. Maintain a humble mindset, lest, having risen to great heights, you crash in a terrible fall.

52. The beginning of humility is submission. Let humility be both the foundation and the garment of your response; let your speech be simple and gracious in the love of God. Pride is unyielding, disobedient, and rebellious; it is led by its own thoughts. But humility is obedient, meek, and modest; it honors both the lowly and the mighty.

53. Having chosen a life of piety for yourself, be on guard lest the evil one, under the guise of piety, instill in you a foreign thought—namely, vanity and pride—which will make you unwilling to labor alongside your brothers. Work as the other brothers do, and guard your piety.

54. If a thought of conceit troubles you, say to the one wrestling against you: “Depart from me, wicked thought. What have I done, and in what virtue have I excelled, that you inspire such thoughts in me? The saints *‘were stoned, were sawn in two, were put to the test, were put to death by the sword’* (Heb. 11:37). The Lord Himself, the Ruler of all, *“endured”* the cross for us, disregarding the shame (– 12:2). But I, having spent my entire life in sin, what answer will I give on the Day of Judgment?”—And by this you will drive away pride from yourself.

55. One brother said: “I asked the Lord for a spirit of humility, so that when my brother commands me to do something, I might say to myself, ‘This is your master; obey him’; and if another brother commands me, I would again say, ‘This is your master’s brother.’ And if a child were to command me, I would say, ‘Obey the son of your master.’—And in this way, resisting foreign thoughts and with the help of grace, he went about his work with a peaceful mind.

56. Fearlessness gives rise to pride; and pride is the mother of disobedience. Humility and meekness bind those who possess them to the fear of God, like a pillar firmly established in the temple of God.

57. Guard yourself against the demon of conceit, lest you fall into a spirit of pride and disobedience and bring harm upon yourself. There is no shame in remaining in submission to the Lord and doing good with your own hands. This small furnace—and the suffering you endure for the Lord’s sake—will bring you eternal life. Imagine that someone exchanges a drachma for many thousands of talents of gold; this is what every sorrow of the monastic life signifies in comparison with the future suffering that will befall those who do evil. You give up a little, and you are given much. — Therefore, renounce pride, and the Lord will be your portion.

58. The distinguishing features and characteristics of a person who possesses true humility are as follows: to consider oneself a sinner more than all other sinners, having done nothing good before God; to reproach oneself at all times, in every place and for every deed; to slander no one and to find no one on earth who is more sinful or more negligent than oneself, but always to praise and glorify everyone; never to condemn, belittle, or slander anyone; to remain silent at all times, and to say nothing without being commanded or out of extreme necessity; but when asked, and there is a purpose, or extreme necessity compels one to speak and answer, then speak softly, calmly, sparingly, as if under compulsion and with shame; never put oneself forward unduly in anything, and never argue with anyone—neither about faith nor about anything else; but if someone speaks well, say to him, “Yes,” and if badly, reply, “As you see fit”; be submissive and despise one’s own will as something pernicious; keep one’s gaze cast down toward the ground at all times; keep one’s own death before one’s eyes; never engage in idle talk, never speak frivolously, never lie, and never contradict one’s superiors; to bear insults, humiliations, and losses with joy; to hate idleness and love labor; to grieve no one, nor wound anyone’s conscience. These are the marks of true humility; and blessed is the one who possesses them; for here one begins to become the dwelling place and temple of God, and God dwells within him—and he becomes an heir to the Kingdom.

59. There is no humility in a sinner regarding himself as a sinner; but humility consists in this: while recognizing much and great things within oneself, not imagining anything great about oneself. He is humble who is like Paul; yet he says of himself: *“I consider myself to be nothing”* (1 Cor. 4:4)—or: *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost”* (1 Tim. 1:15). Thus, to be exalted by merit and to humble oneself in mind—this is humility!

6. General Lessons on the Ascetic Life

1. There is restraint of the tongue—not speaking much or idly, not slandering; not hurting others with words, not swearing, not engaging in idle talk, not backbiting, not gossiping, not revealing secrets, and not meddling in matters that do not concern us.

2. There is restraint of the ear—to control one’s hearing and not be swayed by idle gossip.

3. There is restraint of the eyes—to control one’s gaze and not fix one’s eyes on what is sinfully pleasing or inappropriate.
4. There is self-restraint in anger—to control one’s anger and not flare up suddenly.
5. There is self-restraint in glory—not to desire or seek praise and honor, not to boast, not to be haughty, and not to have high hopes for oneself.
6. There is self-restraint in thoughts—to subdue thoughts with the fear of God, not to yield to seductive and inflaming thoughts, and not to take pleasure in them.
7. There is moderation in food—do not desire or seek out many, sweet, or expensive dishes; do not eat at irregular hours; do not give in to gluttony; do not let the quality of the food stir up greed; and do not crave one dish one moment and another the next.
8. There is moderation in drinking: do not consume not only wine but also water without measure; do not seek the pleasure of drinking artfully prepared concoctions; do not seek out various beverages; do not drink wine unnecessarily; and do not attend feasts.
9. There is abstinence from sinful sensuality—not giving in to accidental stirrings of lust, not yielding to shameful thoughts, not fulfilling the desires of the flesh, but restraining one’s passions through the fear of God.
10. The holy Fathers have left us a wonderful rule for acts of repentance and ascetic labor, saying: “Do not abstain only today, but prepare a feast for tomorrow; do not drink only water today, but obtain wine for tomorrow; do not wear only a hair shirt today, but fine cloth tomorrow; do not be meek and humble only today, but arrogant and proud tomorrow; do not be quiet and obedient only today, but unruly and unyielding tomorrow; do not give yourself over to weeping and wailing only today, but to laughter and indifference tomorrow; do not sleep on the bare ground only today, but rest on a soft bed tomorrow. But keep to one rule, my beloved, by which you may please God and be of benefit to yourself and your neighbor.
11. For forty or fifty years, the Holy Fathers did not change their rule—that is, their beautiful and blameless self-restraint, observed in regard to food, speech, sleeping on the bare ground, humility, meekness, faith, and love, non-covetousness, and unceasing prayer with weeping and contrition—and in this way they purified themselves. That is why God dwelt within them and was glorified in them.
12. If anyone does not purify himself from every wicked deed, from impure thoughts, from evil desires, from anger, irritability, envy, pride, vanity, hatred, slander, condemnation, and idle talk—in a word, —from everything that is hateful to God—and if, having turned away from these things, they do not keep themselves at a distance from them, then God will not dwell within them. Therefore, let us purify ourselves, beloved, so that God may dwell within us—and we may be made worthy of His promises.
13. Do you want to know what is in your heart? Listen! A love of praise is a sign that we are vain; a delight in food shows that we are gluttons; neglect reveals that we are lazy; greed—that we do not love Christ; envy proclaims that there is no love in us; the pleasure with which we condemn others means that we are full of hatred. Thus, the invisible soul is made visible through bodily actions, revealing whether it is good or evil.
14. But the tongue serves as the most uncontrollable preacher of what the heart loves and to what it clings; the secrets of our heart are exposed through our lips. When our lips are open and unguarded, our words flow indiscriminately, bringing to light everything that is in the heart. Therefore, if you wish to know the thoughts of the heart, pay attention to the mouth; from it you will learn what the heart cares about and strives for—whether earthly or heavenly, spiritual or carnal, pleasure or self-control, greed or contentment, humility or pride, love or hatred. From the treasures of the heart, the mouth offers food to those who come, and what the tongue is occupied with reveals what the heart loves—Christ, or something of this world.
15. Our soul is good by nature, but it becomes evil by its own free will. Passions are unnatural; they are instilled and developed by evil will—and habit makes them as strong as nature itself. Nature is bondage; habit is the will. The will, being free, is like a farmer who instills in our nature both bad and good habits, as he pleases. Nature is the soil we cultivate; the will is the farmer; and the Divine Scriptures are the advisors and teachers who instruct our farmer as to which bad habits he should uproot and which good virtues he should plant.
16. No matter how sober and zealous our farmer may be, without the teaching of the Divine Scriptures he is neither strong nor knowledgeable. The precepts of the Divine Scriptures give him understanding and strength, as well as—from their own branches—the good virtues to graft onto the tree of nature: namely, faith, hope, love, knowledge, diligence, and the like. But if our farmer, in his pride, should ever decide to abandon

his teacher and counselor—that is, the Divine Scriptures—then he begins to act errantly and grafts onto nature what is foreign to it, namely: unbelief, ignorance, hatred, envy, pride, vanity, love of glory, gluttony, strife, rebellion, and many other such things; because, having forsaken the Lawgiver, he himself is forsaken by Him. But if, having repented, he condemns himself and, falling at the feet of the Lawgiver, says, “I have sinned by forsaking You”; then the Lawgiver, in His characteristic love for mankind, immediately accepts him, grants him understanding and the strength to once again cultivate the field of his nature, to uproot the bad habits within it, and to plant good virtues in their place. Moreover, He grants him crowns for this and showers him with praise.

17. Why, then, have you renounced the world, if you still seek worldly pleasures, desiring clothing instead of nakedness, and wine instead of thirst? – You have been called to battle, yet you wish to go into battle against the enemy unarmed; instead of keeping vigil, you sink into sleep; instead of weeping and lamenting, you give yourself over to laughter; instead of love, you harbor hatred toward your brother. You have been called to obedience, yet you rebel. You are called to the inheritance of the Kingdom of God, yet you think of earthly things, displaying arrogance and pride instead of humility and meekness.

18. We are spiritual merchants, brothers, and we are like worldly merchants. A merchant calculates his profits and losses every day; and if he has suffered a loss, he strives to make up for it. So you too, beloved, every day—in the evening and in the morning—carefully reflect on how your business is faring. – And “*in the evening*,” entering the sanctuary of your heart, take stock and ask yourself: “Have I angered God in any way? Have I spoken idle words? Have I been careless? Have I grieved my brother? Have I condemned anyone? When I sang the psalms with my lips, was my mind not wandering toward worldly things? Did a carnal desire arise within me, and did I indulge in it with pleasure? Did I allow earthly cares to gain the upper hand over me?” If you have fallen short in any of these things, strive to make up for what you have lost; then sigh and weep, so that you may not fall into the same trap again. And “*in the morning*,” take stock of yourself once more and ask: “How did this night go? Did I gain anything from my efforts? Was my mind awake along with my body? Did tears flow from my eyes? Was I not weighed down by sleep while kneeling in prayer? Did wicked thoughts come to my mind, and did I dwell on them with pleasure?” If you were overcome by any of these things, then strive to heal yourself; set a guard over your heart so that you do not suffer the same thing again. – If you are so careful, you will preserve your treasure intact; and in this way you will please your Lord and benefit yourself.

19. Be mindful of yourself, lest you ever fall into laziness; for the prevalence of laziness is the beginning of ruin. Imitate the bee, and observe its wondrous mystery: how it gathers its harvest from the flowers scattered across the earth. Let your mind contemplate this insignificant creature. If all the sages of the earth and all the philosophers in the universe were gathered together, they would still be unable to make its wisdom comprehensible. And every sensible person, seeing its labors, glorifies God the Creator, marveling that so much wisdom comes from such a small creature. Likewise, my beloved, be like the bee, and gather for yourself a rich and imperishable treasure from the Divine Scriptures, and send it on to heaven.

20. A monk is like a warrior going into battle, who shields his body from all sides with full armor, remains vigilant until victory is won, and is on guard lest the enemy suddenly attack him, and lest he be taken captive if he fails to take precautions. Likewise, if a monk, allowing himself to become lax, grows slothful, he is easily captured by the enemy; for the enemy instills in him impure thoughts, which he accepts with joy—namely, thoughts of pride and vanity, as well as envy and condemnation, gluttony and insatiable sleep—and, moreover, drives him to despair. But if a monk remains ever vigilant, he draws God’s grace to his aid, learns from God how to please Him, and becomes both pleasing to God and a praiser of God. Just as one who looks at himself in a mirror is both the beholder and the beheld, so too, when grace finds rest in a person and dwells within him, it both glorifies him and is glorified by him.

21. Without the help of grace, the heart cannot muster sufficient strength or be filled with contrition to confess properly before the Lord; on the contrary, a person is poor and lacking in virtue, and vile and impure thoughts take root within him, “*like a night raven on a ruin*” (Ps. 101: 7). Therefore, it is man’s duty to call upon grace, so that when it comes, it may enlighten him—it is man’s duty, having purified himself, to seek that grace may dwell within him and help him; and with grace, he will succeed in every virtue, and, enlightened by it, will be able to comprehend the diversity and splendor of the blessings of the age to come. Grace becomes for him a wall and a stronghold, and protects him from this age for the life of the age to come.

22. Strive to acquire perfect virtue, adorned with all that God loves (which is love). It is called the single virtue and encompasses all the beauty and diversity of the virtues. Just as a royal diadem cannot be woven without precious stones and select pearls, so too is this single virtue impossible without the beauty of the various virtues. It is entirely like a royal diadem. Just as the latter, if it lacks even one gem or a single pearl, cannot shine upon the royal head, so too this singular virtue, if it lacks even one aspect of the beauty found in the other virtues, cannot be called a perfect virtue.

23. It is also like fine delicacies, which are prepared with all manner of exquisite seasonings, but not without salt. Just as these delicacies, if they lack salt, are unfit for consumption and unpalatable, so too is this virtue, adorned with all the beauty of various virtues, utterly unattractive if it is devoid of love for Christ and one's neighbor.

24. It is also like a perfect and beautiful alphabet, in which the letters are polished and adorned, but which becomes completely useless if even a single letter is removed. Likewise, this virtue, if deprived of even one of the other virtues, proves to be entirely useless.

25. And it is also like a large, soaring eagle which, upon spotting food caught in a net, swoops down on it with all its might; but as it seeks to snatch its prey, the tips of its talons become entangled, and because of this small detail, its entire strength is bound: and although, outwardly, its whole body appears free and outside the net, yet all its strength is bound by the nets. In the same way, this virtue, if bound by anything earthly, is stifled, grows weak, and perishes, and is no longer able to soar to great heights; for it is pinned down to the earth.

26. Just as someone dives into the depths to find a precious and exquisite pearl, and having found it, surfaces and rushes ashore with great wealth. So too, strip yourself of all the impurities of this life, clothe yourself in this virtue, and, adorned with it, remain vigilant day and night, lest it be stripped from you. No calamity—neither hunger, nor nakedness, nor despondency, nor sickness, nor poverty, nor persecution, nor any other diabolical temptation—can shake the soul that possesses it. If it remains vigilant, it grows even stronger and is crowned through this, continually prospering in God and becoming enlightened. Even death itself is powerless to harm it; on the contrary, upon departing from the body, the angels receive it, rejoicing, into heaven and bring it to the Father of lights.

27. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rejoice over her. The Father rejoices over her because she loved Him and loved no one but Him. His only-begotten Son rejoices over her because she desired Him and sought no one but Him. The Holy Spirit rejoices over her because she has become a Holy Temple for Him, and He has taken up residence within her. Heaven and the heavenly powers rejoice over her, and with one voice they prostrate themselves and glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, seeing that she is adorned with angelic virtue in all the beauty of righteousness. Paradise rejoices over her, for she has received it as her inheritance. Glory and majesty to the one good and philanthropic God, Who, in His goodness, grants us His Kingdom.

28. Let us be sober and work hard during this brief time. The evening is near. The Rewarder is coming in glory to give to each according to his deeds. Be careful that none of you, after success, becomes complacent and forfeits the Savior's immeasurable reward. A monk is like a sown field which, having grown from fruitful rains and dew, bears the fruit of joy; and when the time of harvest arrives, it causes the farmer great concern that hail and wild beasts might not devastate the field. When the farmer receives his reward in the harvest, having gathered the reaped fruits into the granary, he then rejoices and is glad, giving thanks to God. Likewise, while in this body, the monk must care for eternal life, laboring in asceticism until the very last day, so that through negligence he does not render his entire course of life useless. And when, having completed his journey, like the farmer, he carries the fruits of his labor to heaven, he brings joy and gladness to the angels.

29. Imagine that someone, standing before the King and conversing with Him, upon hearing the call of a fellow servant, leaves behind the wondrous and glorious conversation with the King and begins to speak with the servant; so too is the one who talks during the singing of the psalms. Let us realize, beloved, before Whom we stand. Just as the angels, standing in His presence with great awe, sing praises to the Creator, so too must we stand in reverence during the singing of the psalms. Let it not be that only our bodies are present, while our minds wander.

30. Three kinds of conduct multiply evil, and a fourth does not count among the good: when the young disobey; when the elders envy the successes of their juniors; when the devout are drawn to unseemly deeds; and when the abbot, out of his own ignorance, oppresses and burdens the brothers.

31. Three kinds of deeds multiply good, and a fourth kind is pleasing to the Lord and to people: when the brothers are of one mind in meekness and truth; when a brother instructs another in the fear of the Lord; when the younger ones are subject to the elders as to their rulers; and when the abbot loves his brothers as himself and truly cares for the salvation of their souls.

32. If you see someone trading in something, say to yourself: “This person, desiring the temporary, endures so much in order to gather fleeting goods. Will you, my soul, lose heart regarding what is eternal?”—If you see people quarreling with one another, say to yourself: “These people exert so much effort and argue among themselves over something that is of no benefit whatsoever. Will you, my soul, though endowed with many talents, fail to turn to God as you ought, so that your debt may be forgiven?”—If you see people building a house of clay, say to yourself: “These people, building a house of clay, are exerting their efforts to complete the work. Will you, my soul, neglect the eternal dwellings?” But so as not to prolong my words by speaking of one thing and then another separately, I will say this: whatever we see in life, let us replace worldly thoughts and mundane reasoning with spiritual ones, and with the grace that assists us, we will certainly benefit.

33. What is a monk? A monk is like a man who, while falling from a great height, came upon a rope hanging high above the ground, seized hold of it, and now hangs from it, ceaselessly crying out to the Lord for help, knowing that if he grows weak and lets go of the rope with both hands, he will fall and die.

34. Because we are unwilling to endure a little sorrow for the Lord’s sake, we unwittingly fall into many and grievous sorrows. Because we are unwilling to relinquish our own will for the Lord’s sake, we bring spiritual harm upon ourselves. Because we refuse to submit to subordination and humiliation for the Lord’s sake, we deprive ourselves of the comfort of the righteous. Because we do not heed the admonitions given to us for the Lord’s sake, we make ourselves a plaything of demons. Because we do not accept discipline with the rod, a dungeon awaits us, in which there will be no comforter.

35. The Deceiver—the enemy—has poured his poisons into each of us in various ways, and through his schemes he causes each of us to stumble. One has observed a fast, yet surrenders himself to rivalry and envy. Another has refrained from shameful desires, yet is bound by vanity. Yet another has excelled in vigil, yet is entangled in the snares of judgment. One shuns judgment, yet is filled with disobedience and rebellion. Another abstains from food, yet drowns in pride and arrogance. Another is tireless in prayer, yet allows irritability and anger to get the better of him. Another has succeeded in some small matter and already exalts himself above those who are more negligent than he is. Each one, in one way or another, is bound by sin—and none understands.

36. Our struggle is not against visible people, from whom, by keeping our guard up, we can protect ourselves. Those who wage war against us are invisible. Therefore, the danger is great for the careless, but the reward is great for the victors. — We will engage them in battle with skill and defeat them. — If the enemy—to give an example—incites us to gluttony, let us attack him with fasting; if he stirs up lust for a woman within us, by exercising patience we will overcome that desire, and the enemy will immediately flee from us; if he provokes us to anger, let us arm ourselves with peace; if he drives us to irritation, let us embrace meekness; if he stirs up hatred within us, let us cling to love; if he incites us to seek honor, let us show humility; if he incites us to seek glory, let us embrace our insignificance; if he dreamily leads us to heights, let us set before ourselves the Lord’s humility. — If we resist the enemy in this way, he will not stand against us and will flee, and grace will return to us.

37. Be mindful of yourself, O lover of asceticism, lest your days slip away in distraction. Do not allow deceitful thoughts to enter your heart, lest your strength fail in the struggle against your enemy. Always keep the sweetest Lord in your mind, so that the course of your struggle may be crowned with success. Hasten the struggles of your asceticism; for suddenly the day will come when the diligent will be crowned, and the slothful will repent. Acquire virtue while there is still time; acquire reverence for your eyes, truth for your ears, words of life for your tongue, visits to the infirm for your feet, the image of your Lord for your heart, and success in chastity for your members, so that you may be deemed worthy of greater honor before angels and men. A lifeless tree is honored if it bears the image of a mortal king; how much more, then, in this present age and the age to come, will a soul that has God within it be preferred.

38. Come, my friends, let us bow down before the Lord, that He may grant us the enlightenment of the soul to understand the wiles of the enemy—our adversary, who hates all that is beautiful. For he places in our path stumbling blocks, temptations, harm, the distractions of this age, carnal pleasure, hope for the permanence of this life, fear during our struggles, sloth in prayer, sleep, and carnal complacency during psalm-singing. But

as diligent as he is, so careless are we; and the more he devises evil schemes, the more we neglect our duty, even though we know that our days are numbered—and the Lord of glory is coming.

39. We have made a vow to bear the fruit of life. But for our fruit there are no tears to bring it to maturity; no contrition to make it flourish from the breath of tears; no humility to shade it from the great heat; no detachment from worldly goods so that nothing contrary might weigh it down; there is no love of God—that strong root that sustains the fruit; there is no carefree attitude toward earthly things; there is no vigilance, no alert mind sobered by prayer. Instead of these beautiful and good virtues, we have their opposites: there is fierce anger and irritability, which beat the fruit into a state of uselessness; there is greed, which weighs it down; there is great despondency. Will all these adversities allow it to ripen as it should, so that it may be fit for its Lord?

40. In order to imitate their way of life by observing each person's example—namely, how each, armed with zeal, strives toward "*the honor of the higher calling*" (Phil. 3:14)—one must carefully observe in one person a perfect and precise faith, in another, hope in God; in yet another, a twofold love for the Lord and neighbor; and in yet another, how he stands guard in the fear of God, protecting himself from every wicked deed, leading a life that is not reprehensible or open to criticism, but rather one praised by all for the purity and blamelessness of his conduct.

41. Behold how another, assailed by the enemy through various passions, turns to God in prayer and, clinging to Him with love and contrition, receives the help of grace and is delivered from unseemly and impure thoughts, —with great weeping, tears, and sighs, repenting of what he has done, mourning his sins with sorrow, confessing to God in prayers and vigils, enduring hardship through fasting, abstinence, and sorrow, and striving to save himself with these weapons. So strive to fight to the death, like a true warrior—keeping in mind that asceticism is no trivial matter, and that salvation is attained only through great diligence.

42. Follow the example of those who demonstrate complete renunciation of the world—and you will easily ascend to the heights of virtue. When you see in someone perfect detachment—how, having left everything behind, he strives to free his mind from all cares so that he may devote himself to prayer without distraction, and so that no thought or worry may interrupt his prayer—strive with all your might to emulate him. Whoever prays to God with a pure heart, with love and tears, reflects God Himself in his mind as in a mirror. And this priceless blessing is attained through poverty, destitution, and a life of every kind of hardship. "*The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life*" (Matt. 7:14).

43. Imitate the saints in your way of life—some in reverence and fear of God, some in humility, some in self-abasement and self-reproach, some in silence, some in meekness, some in good-natured patience, some in yielding and peacefulness, some in friendliness and unity of mind, some in sobriety and prudence, some in pleasant manners, friendliness, and forbearance, some in forgiving offenses, courage and magnanimity, some in feats of valor and obedience, some in manual labor and service to their brothers, some in zeal and fervor of spirit, some in complete detachment from the world and in daily dying like the Crucified One, some in steadfastness of spirit and love of truth, some in chastity and virginity. Look also—in some for kindness and a willingness to help, in others for gentleness of character and goodness, in others for compassion and mercy, in others for impartiality and justice, in others for unpretentiousness and modesty, in others for contentment with little and moderation, who is characterized by simplicity and straightforwardness, who is characterized by unceasing prayer, psalm-singing, and streams of tears—in short, look for the traits of a God-pleasing life in everyone—and imitate them.

44. Let us strive to gaze upon things above, to think of things above, to always remember things above, to be wholly attached to things above, to be in constant communion with things above—and in no way turn our gaze toward things below, where there are pleasures, where there are the lusts of this deceitful and life-destroying age. It is always good to gaze upon the things above with the eye of the heart, taking every care that nothing should enter the pupil of this eye—whether a wicked thought or anything else displeasing to God—and cloud the mind.

45. We must pray unceasingly that the Lord may deliver us from the devil's wiles. For these thoughts do not only overwhelm us when we sit alone in our cell, but they also rise up strongly when we gather in the house of the Lord; causing us to look even at men's bodies with impure eyes; and the serpent leads us to the most shameful acts through fanciful thoughts. He sows a mixture of thoughts so that the brother may become distracted and be unable to listen with a pure mind to the most holy mysteries of our Savior—God. – However, by guarding his eyes and keeping his mind alert, the chaste person overcomes this, with the help of God's

grace. Therefore, we must guard our hearts and our senses with all vigilance; for in this life we are engaged in a great struggle, and our enemy is fierce.

46. One must not give up the struggle. Whoever is at peace with his passions—how can he wage war against them when he has already sold himself into slavery to sinful pleasures and willingly pays tribute to the tormentor? For wherever there is enmity, there is war; where there is war, there is struggle; where there is struggle, there are crowns. If anyone wishes to be freed from bitter slavery, let him engage in battle with the devil. By emerging victorious in this battle, the saints have been granted heavenly blessings.

47. Whoever wishes to be freed from the enemy's mockery and to rid himself of his bitter slavery must oppose the will of this tyrant of ours and wage war against him out of love for the Creator. For then they will demonstrate the valor of their struggle, when—not only with their lips but also with the disposition of their hearts—they say to him: "We will not heed your voice, devil, and we will no longer serve your lusts." But during the struggle, one must lift up a prayerful voice to God; that He may put to shame those of His servants who seek evil. Then, let this raging tormentor kindle the furnace of lust sevenfold; those who hope in the Lord will soon see this furnace transformed into dew—and the tormentor, who once inspired fear, will himself tremble before them.

48. One of the Saints said: "Think of what is good, so as not to think of what is evil; for the mind cannot bear to be idle." – Therefore, let us devote our minds to the teaching of God's Word, to prayer, and to good deeds. For preoccupation with vain thoughts gives rise to vain deeds; whereas preoccupation with good thoughts yields good fruit.

49. Even if you have no visible tears, let there be contrition of heart; for there is a difference even among tears. – But blessed is the one who, in his soul as in a mirror, contemplates the Lord, and together with his tears pours out praise to Him in the presence of His goodness; for his prayer will be heard.

50. If you wish to become a chosen vessel, then excel in submission to your spiritual guide in the Lord and in humility. The lives of the saints became radiant, having been exalted through obedience. Joshua, for his perfect submission to Moses, was granted the gift of becoming his successor. Samuel, while serving under the priest Elijah, was deemed worthy to hear the voice of God. Elisha, through his submission, received the special grace of his teacher. God Himself—the Word—having become incarnate, lived a life of humility and obedience, as the Evangelist says: "*and He was subject to them*" (Luke 2:51). The Apostle also said: "*He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to death—even death on a cross*" (Phil. 2:8). You have begun with a good resolve; stand firm, so that the Lord may exalt you with the meek and humble in the Kingdom of Heaven.

51. One brother, while remaining in obedience to his spiritual fathers, went to another brother and said, "I want to leave my spiritual fathers and live in silence on my own." The other replied: "A certain man had a son whom he entrusted to a master so that he might teach him his craft." The boy paid no attention to his work. And after a few days, this child came to his father and said, 'Father, take me away from my teacher; I can learn this craft better on my own.' But his father said to him, 'If, while learning from others, you have learned nothing under their guidance, how can you succeed at anything on your own?' I can see that you have not learned your craft well, and I fear that my efforts on your behalf have been in vain. Therefore, set to work properly and master it under the master's guidance, so that, having become skilled in this craft, you may later make a living from it." – So let us, brother, not strive to cast off the yoke of submission—to the Lord—lest we remain unskilled in the work of pleasing God, and be helpless when we fall into temptation.

52. When, having conquered our passions, we root out every worldly attachment within ourselves, then the grace of the Holy Spirit, having found rest in us, will enlighten our hearts like a prepared lamp, abundant in oil and equipped with a wick. But if we are still enslaved by our passions and mired in them, we are like a lamp deprived of oil and a wick—and we sit in darkness. Let us therefore take care to prepare ourselves to receive the light of the mind; let us seek the spiritual life, so that both our mind, coming under the rule of the Holy Spirit, and our body, becoming a partaker of the Spirit, may be sanctified within us.

53. A Parable. Two men set out for a city thirty stadia away. When they had traveled two or three stadia, they came upon a shady grove along the road, through which streams of water flowed, and there were many pleasant spots. When the travelers entered this place, one of them, eager to see the city as soon as possible, hurried through it, while the other stopped to look around and fell behind. After looking around, he, too, wanted to go to the city, but he feared the heat and remained in the shade of the trees. But while he lingered, enjoying the pleasantness of the place, a beast came out of the forest, seized him, and dragged him

off to its lair. Meanwhile, the other man, who was not enticed by this spot, safely reached the city. — This parable means the following: the two men are those who have set out on the path of piety and have begun to strive along it. The attractive spot along the way is the world with its allurements. The one who passed by represents those who, paying no attention to anything, hasten to *“attain the honor of the higher calling in Christ”* (Phil. 3:14). And the one who was captivated by the attractive landscape represents those who, having forgotten their goal, turned their minds away from the invisible to the visible. The heat is the toil of virtue. The fact that a man, having lingered in one place, fell prey to a beast means that when someone fixes his thoughts on earthly desires, sin arises from that desire and, taking hold of the man, devours him like a ferocious beast—as it is written: *“When desire conceives, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death”* (James 1:15). Let us therefore flee from worldly desires, lest we once again become slaves to sin.

54. Avoid useless talk, lest you fall into shameful thoughts. Just as good words are beneficial to the soul, so bad words corrupt it, as the Apostle says: *“Bad company corrupts good habits”* (1 Cor. 15:33).

55. When you see negligent people who have grown old in monastic life, you must exercise great caution so that, out of envy for them, you do not follow the same path, and so that, having become self-controlled, you do not become haughty toward them—which means allowing pride to gain the upper hand over you. Listen to the one who says, *“Take heed to yourself,”* and guard your soul carefully.

56. Do not reveal your thoughts to just anyone, but only to those whom you know to be spiritual. For the devil has many snares. Hide nothing from spiritual people, lest the enemy, finding a foothold, take up residence within you. But do not enter into counsel with carnal people.

57. You must avoid useless conversations and have no dealings with those who are careless about the fear of God; for they say nothing useful, do nothing for the Lord, and speak neither of virtue, nor of piety, nor of purity. Their words are a deadly snare; their counsel is the abyss of hell; their company is the ruin of the soul.

58. Be careful not to lose your boldness before God for the sake of human honor or glory, or for the sake of food, drink, or clothing; for all these things are subject to decay, and everyone’s deeds—both good and evil—are recorded. *“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things”* (Col. 3:2), so that you may receive the promise of the heavenly Father.

59. The soldiers of the earthly king shed blood to please their king; but you have no need to shed blood—only do not be overcome by sin, lest it bear the fruit of death (Rom. 7:5). Be sober, brother, be sober, and persevere in your labors. God is not unjust and will not forget your labor. But even for the hardship you endure while sitting in your cell, the light of truth will shine upon you. *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Tim. 6:12), so that, having triumphed over the enemy, you may worship the King of Glory without shame. For the Lord crowns not only those who have died by the sword and those who have suffered at the hands of tormentors, but also those who have proven themselves skilled in asceticism and love. Just as the former endured reproach for the Lord’s sake, so too have the latter endured a life of sorrow and asceticism for the Lord’s sake.

60. Be mindful of yourself, and let there be *“no wicked thought in your heart.”* Do not yield to wicked thoughts. Thus did a certain man of old suffer, having hidden something from his oath in his thicket (Josh. 7:1–26); and similarly did Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha, suffer. They did not hide themselves only from God, but also from people. They committed their crime in secret; but they received their retribution openly. One was stoned to death in public, and the other was stricken with leprosy (2 Kings 5:27). For it is true what was said: *“God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* (Galatians 6:7).

61. By what means does the enemy overcome us? By what means do our passions multiply within us?—Is it not because of our disobedience?—When we are taught, we do not pay attention; when we are rebuked to correct our errors, we resist. We hide from people and neglect God. The dreadful serpent instills in us the “wisdom” to defeat with words those who wish to correct us; and because of this, sin multiplies within us, having no one to oppose it.

62. The beginning of spiritual corruption in a monk is laughter and licentiousness. When you see this in yourself, monk, know that you have fallen into the depths of evil. Do not cease to pray to God that He may deliver you from this death. Laughter and licentiousness plunge not only young monks but also the elders into shameful passions. One of the Saints said of licentiousness: *“Licentiousness is like a scorching wind; it destroys the fruits of the monk.”* Now listen about laughter: laughter deprives a person of the blessedness promised to those who weep (Matt. 5:4), destroys the good inner order, offends the Holy Spirit, harms the

soul, and corrupts the body. Laughter drives out virtues; it has no remembrance of death, nor any thought of torments.

63. The beginning of weeping is self-knowledge. Let our weeping, then, be not for man, but for God, Who knows the secrets of the heart, so that we may receive blessing from Him. Therefore, let us be cheerful in appearance, rejoicing in the Lord's gifts and in the Holy Spirit; but let us weep and lament in our hearts, imploring God to forgive us all our sins and to preserve us from them forever until our death. Weeping builds up and protects; weeping washes the soul with tears and makes it pure. Weeping gives birth to chastity, cuts off lusts, and strengthens virtues. Weeping pleases God and receives comfort from the angels.

64. Engage in spiritual matters so that the remembrance of God may be preserved within you; but abhor idle talk; for it is impossible for stench and fragrance to coexist.

65. The hermit is freed from three battles—those of sight, hearing, and speech. And the attentive communal monk is also freed from three battles—those of buying, selling, and attacks by robbers. But everywhere one must be mindful of oneself and keep one's conscience pure.

66. Do not say, "I have entered the monastery, and I bear the image of an angel." It is not merely outward appearance that pleases people, but God Himself; what is required above all are the fruits of good deeds. – So stand firm, like a fruit-bearing tree, guarding the fruits of your virtues, lest the worm of "*pride*" creep in and undermine the fruit of humility within you, lest "*vanity*" cloud your reverence, lest "*anger*" rob you of your meekness, irritation does not deplete your good-naturedness, strife does not disturb your peace, enmity does not stand in the way of friendship, holding a grudge does not cut off mutual love, resentment does not break harmony, "*gluttony*" does not hinder fasting, greed does not destroy self-control, "*carelessness*" has not hindered your diligence, sleep has not lulled your vigilance, "*despondency*" has not weighed down your zeal, laziness has not hindered your service, grumbling has not diminished your submission, "*disobedience*" has not barred the way to obedience, idle talk has not prevailed over psalm-singing, playfulness did not prevail over praise, laughter did not overcome weeping, "*fornication*" did not corrupt chastity, and the love of money was not preferred to non-covetousness. Take care not to love your parents more than Christ, nor to find greater delight in the world than in the Kingdom; that a passion for gossip may not incite your tongue; that envy of anyone may not torment you; that deceit may not defile the purity of your heart, that hypocrisy may not deprive you of the enjoyment of true blessings, that theft may not exclude you from the Kingdom, that falsehood may not bar you from paradise, that the desire to please men may not destroy your boldness, that the love of pleasures may not rob you of the love of God, that lust may not extinguish the contrition of your heart.

67. To the extent that one curbs and subdues one's will, to that same extent one progresses toward success. And the more stubbornly one clings to one's will, the more harm one inflicts upon oneself. Therefore, do not desire to be a slave to your will, but rather be obedient to God's will.

68. When you leave your cell to perform a service or to speak with someone, guard your eyes, and stir your heart with godly thoughts, saying to yourself: "You are not a painter, nor have you gone out to learn how to copy images of people." Be mindful of yourself. If your attention is occupied by the senses, how will you be able, with a clear mind—as in a mirror—to contemplate the heavenly, to find delight, and to rejoice in the remembrance of God?

69. Stop prying into the sins of others, lest your pious thoughts be naturally corrupted by this.

70. Practice silence; it will deliver you from many evils. Remember constantly the plight of sinners, fearing that you too may soon be counted among them.

71. Let us not be self-centered; for from self-centeredness, like branches, all passions spring forth. Self-centeredness, however, is eradicated by love, which draws all toward unity of mind and binds them together as one. Love is a great and precious treasure. Therefore, strive not to fall away from love.

72. As we care for our own salvation, let us present to our neighbor an example of virtue in faith, in love, in patience, in purity, in obedience, in humility, and in the fear of God, without being carried away by evil desires, but striving in spiritual labors.

73. To accept God's commandments, have the simplicity of a dove; to repel the enemy's wiles, have the cunning of a serpent.

74. Wisely avoid harmful company, so that your inner self may rest in peace.

75. Do not spend time with actors, lest your thoughts be corrupted; for their words are very harmful. They compel the elderly to act like youths, and they draw the young into lawless deeds.

76. When one weeps, it is impossible to sin; and no one in heartfelt contrition plots evil. Heartfelt contrition brings tears, and tears lead to the reduction of evil by refraining from wicked deeds.

77. If you are young, accustom yourself to silence and work. Work will make you unburdensome, and silence will keep the light of your soul unquenchable, not allowing it to be dimmed by any passion.

78. It is not hair or clothing that makes a person worldly, but a bad character and a tendency toward worldly and impure desires, which make the soul vile.

79. It is not the tonsure or the habit that makes one a monk, but heavenly desire and a divine way of life, in which the perfection of life is revealed.

80. Do not exalt yourself before temptation; for temptation, once it strikes, often puts to shame even those who appear to be steadfast. That is why one must remain vigilant and thus keep the mind safe from falling.

81. Do everything and think about everything in such a way as to please God; for if you lack this intention, all your deeds lose their value.

82. Whether you live in a community or in silence, secluded from everyone, do not neglect what you seek—that is, a pure heart and a contrite spirit. Whoever has attained these will not be humiliated by God; but to neglect them is a great danger.

83. Water your soul with divine waters (the Word of God and the sacraments), so that it may flourish and bear fruit in truth. We must strive for what is beneficial to the soul just as animals run to green pastures.

84. When the soul is healthy, then the body also has the strength for good works; but if the soul is lost in evil thoughts, then the body will inevitably be corrupted by sin.

85. The Evil One sets hidden snares for our soul every day, so that, by seducing it, he may subject it to eternal torment. These snares are filled with sweetness, to deceive and lure souls that are inattentive to themselves. Do not delight, brother, in this mortal sweetness, carried away by deceptive thoughts. A thought is a seducer; if it finds its way into the soul, it delights it with sinful thoughts, so that it may later kill it with sin. And it becomes a snare for the soul. But come to your senses and hasten to break this snare, driving the thought from your soul through prayer, tears, abstinence, and vigilance. – In all other matters, be vigilant, and do not dwell on a seductive thought even for a single moment. Always turn to God with prayer, fasting, and tears, so that you may be freed from all snares, temptations, and passions.

86. Let us be vigilant warriors; let us overcome the evil one daily in battle. Let us study the rules of this battle: it is invisible, and its rule is to strip ourselves of all earthly things. If we await death, keeping it before our eyes daily, then we will not sin. If you strip yourself of all earthly things, you will not be defeated in battle. Since earthly things draw us down, and passions cloud the eyes of the heart, the evil one overcomes us in battle against him.

87. Do not reason, monk, by saying: “The labors of asceticism are great, but I am weak and feeble, unable to strive.” —If you set out to go to some distant country or land, it will be impossible for you to cover the entire distance in a single moment; but by traveling each day from one resting place to the next, over time, you will reach the country you have in mind. The same must be said of the Kingdom of Heaven and the paradise of bliss. Everyone reaches it through the labors of a lifetime—through fasting, abstinence, and vigil. Abstinence, tears, prayer, vigil, and love—these are the resting places that lead to heaven. Endure them patiently—and with joy. After each stopover, the steps of your soul will be strengthened—and you will find no difficulty on your path leading to heaven.

88. The enemy manages to instill a spirit of recklessness in a person who has entered the monastic life without careful consideration. And to the one who became a monk out of reverence, he inspires feats beyond his strength. But the one who truly fears God is not led astray by either of these thoughts. The fear of God enlightens his heart to walk the straight path.

89. A brother, after taking the monastic vows, struggled with the thought of leaving the community. And his thoughts presented him with this example: “Look at this greenery in the garden; if the one tending these beds does not pull up the plants and transplant them to another place, they will not grow.” But Brother replied to these thoughts as follows: “Will the gardener really uproot everything that has been sown in these beds? Will he not leave in the bed what it can nourish?—Moreover, what has been pulled up is not as secure as what remains in place. Therefore, you too should be among those who are not uprooted.” – And thus, with the help of grace, he overcame that thought.

90. A monk must be prudent, so as to discern what the adversary plots against him—and to let some things pass with a laugh, others with humility, and still others to refute with a well-chosen word.

91. As long as the soul yearns for earthly things, the various desires of this world and the vain pleasures that appear to the soul in its thoughts weaken its strength; and because of this, the one dwelling in the cell falls into sloth. But when someone completely renounces the world, hates it and its allurements, and with all his heart and all his soul surrenders himself as a servant to the Lord, then sloth will not gain power over him, and as a result, he will be free to do his work. He will face only the struggle against the thought of vanity; but even this thought the servant of the Lord will drive away, taking into account both his own weakness and the fact that whatever gift he has is a gift from the Lord, in accordance with the saying: “*What you have, you have received*” (1 Cor. 4:7)? He also faces a struggle with the weakness of the flesh; but the servant of the Lord will not be overcome by fear because of this, nor will he separate himself from the love of God, according to the words of the one who said, “*Who shall separate us from the love of God?*” (Rom. 8:35–39). For behind all passions lies the spirit of fornication—but flee from shameful words, and you will avoid impure thoughts.

92. Wise elders are balm for the brethren, anointing and strengthening the soul.

93. If you have renounced the world, then attend to your task, so that you may obtain the pearl you seek. For some, having renounced the world, withdrew from worldly life—some left military service, others squandered their wealth—but in the end, led by their own will, they fell; for there is nothing more disastrous than being ruled by one’s own will rather than living according to God’s will. They pretended to be leaving all worldly things through the main gate, but returned to the world through a hidden door.

94. This is the fragrance of wisdom in a person: that in every circumstance he blames himself, and, in blaming himself, does not condemn another who has fallen into the same error.

95. Whoever has a heart clouded by a storm of thoughts and is overcome by passions neither feels shame before people nor fears God. If he is a ruler, he commits evil without fear. If, however, he is weak and poor, he also acts wickedly without shame, yielding to the coarseness of his nature.

96. For warriors, battle is brief, but for those who strive for salvation, it continues until their departure to the Lord. Therefore, one must set about this task with all diligence, sobriety, and patience. If you resolve to kill a lion, tackle it with determination, lest it crush your bones like a potter’s vessel. If you are cast into the sea, do not lose heart until you reach dry land, lest you sink into the depths like a stone. If you enter into a struggle, be sober-minded, so that your opponent does not rejoice in defeating you, and so that you do not receive the opposite of a crown.

97. Whoever wishes to become a monk must be prepared for courageous endurance, so that, upon entering monastic life, he will not say, “I did not know that this would happen to me.” This is made known to you. Set your thoughts in order, then, and arm yourself with patience—so that, when you say at your tonsure, ‘I will endure everything,’ you do not find yourself the very next morning breaking this vow, both in word and deed. The angels of God stand by and hear everything that comes from your lips. Take care not to lie; for the Lord ‘*will destroy all who speak falsehood*’ (Ps. 5:7).

98. Many temptations surround those who set out to serve the Lord. But the one who surrenders himself wholeheartedly to God’s guidance and abides in God’s will overcomes them all. God requires only our resolve, and He Himself gives us strength and grants us victory: “*He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him*” (Ps. 17:31).

99. Do not look upon the careless; but pay attention to yourself, keeping God before your eyes, following the example of the one who wrote: “*I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken*” (Ps. 15: 8).

100. Let us not judge anyone; for we do not know how he conducts himself in his cell, or how he labors before God; let us not judge if we see him laughing or talking; for we do not know what his state of mind is in his cell. Each of us must be mindful of ourselves; for each of us will give an account to God for ourselves.

101. Do you want to avoid being overcome by temptation? Cut off every trace of your own will. If a matter seems good to you, but the abbot, in the Lord, does not consider it good, then submit to him in the Lord. Engaging in arguments or following your own intentions is already a sign of falling away. Let everyone hear what is said in the Psalm: “*Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice before Him with trembling. Receive discipline before the Lord becomes angry, lest you perish from the way of the righteous*” (Ps. 2:11–12).

102. Let us not behave in such a way that today we practice self-restraint and meekness, but tomorrow we give in to intemperance and pride; today—silence, vigil, and humility—but tomorrow—entertainment,

insatiable sleep, disobedience, and the like; today we renounce the world, renounce all earthly things, renounce our homeland, friends, and parents, trusting in the Lord, but tomorrow we long to see our homeland, our relatives, and our inheritance—which plunges us into many evils. Let us remember that Lot's wife, having looked back, was turned into a pillar of salt. And the Lord teaches: "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62).

103. Always keep in mind that day when, having cast off everything, you left the world for the Lord, when you were inflamed with the fear of God and burned with zeal for the Lord. And hold fast to this disposition until the end; for "*whoever endures to the end will be saved*" (Matthew 10:22).

104. Do not let your guard down against the thoughts that come to you; for this is the beginning of the struggle. Take a lesson from a rain-filled pond. Shortly after the rain, when the blessing of the rain has just gathered in the pond, the water is murky, but then, the more time passes, the clearer it becomes. – Be patient; your thoughts will settle as well—and they will give you peace.

105. Listen to this parable about evil thoughts. When grapes are harvested from the vines, placed in a wine press, squeezed to yield wine, and poured into vessels, the wine at first boils as if heated by the fiercest fire, so that even the finest vessels, unable to withstand its force, sometimes burst from the pressure. So it is with human thoughts when they turn from this vain age and its cares toward the heavenly realm. Demons, unable to tolerate zeal in a person, confuse his mind in various ways, intending to mix into it "*the murk of corruption*" (Abba 2:15); and if they find a vessel that is not without flaw—that is, a faithless and doubting soul—they shatter it. Demons, like ravenous wolves, roam the monks' cells, seeking a door left open for them, so that, having burst inside, they may corrupt the soul that is submissive to them. But if they find the door locked—a soul firmly established in the faith—they depart with downcast faces.

106. In all your deeds, maintain humility, which is the mother of obedience. – Cast off double-mindedness, and clothe yourself in faith in all things, so that the Lord, seeing the zeal of your soul, may strengthen you in your work. – Nurture within yourself a strong hatred for sloth, rivalry, every kind of wickedness, and envy, since you have forsaken everything for the Lord. Know that if such thoughts cause you to slacken at the beginning, you will later suffer much toil and harm.

107. Just as you do not allow filth to accumulate in your yard, so do not allow carnal desires to gain strength within yourself.

108. On the broad path, the following occur: malice, entertainment, gluttony, drunkenness, extravagance, debauchery, discord, irritability, arrogance, fickleness, and the like; and following these are: unbelief, disobedience, rebellion, and the worst of all evils—despair. – And on the narrow path, the following are found: silence, self-restraint, chastity, love, patience, joy, peace, humility, and the like. And following these is immortal life.

109. Guard yourself especially against licentiousness, lest you become enslaved by loquacity and shamelessness, lest you become a source of joy for demons, and ultimately lose fellowship with your brothers. It is not so much wild donkeys that devour the grain as licentiousness that ruins the monks' labors.

110. Let us imagine those who stand before the earthly King and serve the mortal throne; with what attention and fear do they stand before their King? Should we not, all the more so as believers, stand before the Heavenly King with fear and trembling and with all reverence? Therefore, I do not consider it proper to gaze with a shameless eye upon the mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that lie before us. And let the Divine Scripture convince us of this, saying: "*Moses trembled and did not dare to look*" (at the burning bush) (Acts 7:32).

111. As I see it, there are three kinds of drowsiness that trouble a person at night. The "*first*" kind befalls a brother through the work of the evil one when the brother begins to sing psalms. But if there is no laziness in the brother, it has no power whatsoever; it troubles him more severely, however, if the brother's stomach is burdened with food and drink. "*The second*" befalls a brother during divine worship, due to his own negligence, when he does not make the effort to remain until the end of the service, and in the middle of the service wishes to leave those singing the psalms and go to sleep. "*The third*" occurs due to the demands of nature after the end of the regular service. – Do not be negligent, then. Have you not heard how the Prophet Samuel, though called repeatedly, never once failed to rise, even though he was still a youth? When you stand at the divine service, whether among the brethren or alone, to glorify our Savior Jesus Christ—and the first stirrings of drowsiness trouble you: upon noticing them, resist them, lest your laziness deprive you of the fruits of serving God; but endure with steadfastness, even if drowsiness closes your eyes once or twice; do not leave

your place—and you will gain great benefit. An addiction to insatiable sleep is like the passion for gluttony. If someone is accustomed to eating a lot, then nature demands a lot; but if someone is accustomed to moderation, then nature does not demand overeating. Consider the fishermen: they spend the whole night awake, not neglecting their work. But if any of them, weighed down by sleep and giving in to negligence, falls asleep, then when he awakens, he will see that they have caught nothing. And he will begin to reproach himself for his negligence. The same will happen to you if you give in to drowsiness and sleep, just as the Prophet says: *“They fell asleep in their slumber and found nothing”* (Ps. 75:6).

112. Just as a ship at sea, if a small hole appears in it and no effort is made quickly to repair it, will be swamped by the waves despite its great size because of such a small defect—so too it is with the soul that has allowed the enemy’s attacks to enter it, unless it turns to its Creator. That is why we need, my brother, sobriety and great humility. All that is wicked is rendered powerless by turning our hearts to God.

113. It happens that someone takes a vessel to draw water, but without filling it with water, overturns it and breaks it. Similar to this is the one who, having entered a monastery to attain Christian perfection, rejects God’s grace and returns once more to worldly life.

114. Faith is the mother of all that is good, and through it a person attains the fulfillment of the promises of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as it is written: *“Without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Heb. 11:6). – But the devil’s most fruitful gain is unbelief, which is the mother of every wicked deed. From it springs double-mindedness, which is disorder. *“A double-minded man,”* it is said, *“is unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:8).

115. Do you want to avoid temptations and slander? Set a gate at your lips concerning the Lord, *“and turn away your eyes from looking at vanity”* (Ps. 118:37)—and you will avoid both: slander through silence, and temptations by guarding your eyes. If we do not overcome this within ourselves, wherever we go, we will carry our enemies within ourselves. Overcome them, and you will have peace wherever you live.

116. Prayer and fasting are excellent, but almsgiving strengthens them; for it is said, *“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”* (Hosea 6:6). And the Savior blesses the merciful: *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”* And what does the angel say to Cornelius: *“Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God”* (Acts 10:4)—not just your prayers, but also your alms.

117. Do not neglect the Church service under the pretext of any worldly business. Just as rain nourishes the seed, so the Church service strengthens souls in virtue.

118. Do not act in such a way that today you remain in silence and devotion to God’s work, only to go from cell to cell the next morning—or, even worse, from village to village. But remain in silence at all times, remembering that to the extent that one remains silent, to that extent one’s thoughts become pure—and to the extent that one strays from silence, to that extent one’s mind becomes coarse.

119. The fear of God is a strong pillar against the enemy. Do not tear down this pillar, and you will not be taken captive. Cling to the Lover of Mankind, crying out with the Prophet to His goodness: *“In You, O Lord, I have trusted; let me never be put to shame. Deliver me and save me by Your righteousness”* (Ps. 30:1–6). Then the Lord will say to you: *“I will be with you; I will not forsake you or despise you. Be strong and courageous”* (Joshua 1:5–6).

120. Let us be magnanimous and bear one another’s burdens, striving to raise up those who have fallen and those who have been taken captive by the enemy. What warrior, seeing that his comrade has been taken captive by enemies, does not enter the fray and fight against them to rescue his comrade from the hands of his captors? And when he is unable to rescue him, he weeps and grieves, remembering his friend. Should we not, then, lay down our lives for one another all the more? For our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said: *“There is no greater love than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15: 13).

121. A person who spends his days in idleness deceives himself, giving no thought at all to the blessings the Lord has prepared for the righteous or to the punishment reserved for sinners, and indulging in pleasures without any fear. In such a person, the evil one stirs up all manner of carnal lusts; yet he is unable to perceive this, just as gates do not notice those who enter and exit through them; for lust, having taken root in his mind, has darkened his eyes.

122. Flee from licentiousness and laughter; curb gluttony through self-restraint, greed through non-covetousness, loquacity through silence, restlessness through remaining in your cell, sloth through remembrance of future blessings, and disobedience through humility; above all, flee from licentiousness, which, in my understanding, is the root of all evils. If you do not restrain it, it will make you shameless. But

if you restrain it, you will be blessed; for it is said: *“Blessed is the man who fears all things out of reverence”* (Prov. 28:14).

123. Be mindful of yourself, lest you waste your time in idleness and distraction. You have planted a vineyard for yourself; surround it with a fence. You have acquired a garden for yourself; guard its fruit, so that you may rejoice in it in the end; and do not let your pigs into the field you have cultivated with your own labor, lest they lay it waste. What good is it if we build for one day and destroy for two? With such a way of acting, how will the work ever come to an end?

124. All manner of sinful temptations are scattered throughout all humanity, so that a person may constantly struggle with his mind. But one struggles, while another yields to temptation and falls; and they fall—one into one thing, another into another, according to each person’s disposition. This does not happen without the enemy’s involvement, but even he takes our predispositions into account. And when he wishes to bind a person with sinful desires, he binds him with those that give him pleasure, so that, taking delight in the bonds, he will never wish to free himself. The one who binds us is cunning and knows well with what and how to bind each person; he knows that if he binds someone with involuntary bonds, the mind will immediately break the bonds and soon run away. Therefore, he binds each person with what brings them pleasure and comfort. That is why, even while we are bound, we do not grieve but rejoice in it—and even while we are ensnared, we boast of it; we take pride in it because one who is bound, for example, by envy—as long as he is not bound by adultery—considers himself unbound by anything, and one who is bound by vanity—as long as he is not bound by obvious injustices—thinks of himself as free from base bonds. None of those who are bound are aware of their bonds, nor do they perceive the snares laid out for them. They all suffer from the ignorance of those who are intoxicated. One who is bound, like one in a state of intoxication, does not know that he is bound. Under the influence of wine, they forget their bonds, and in their intoxication, they do not see the snares around them.

125. Bear in mind that the admixture of sinful passion corrupts and destroys every good: truth is destroyed when base deceit is mixed with it; purity is corrupted if lust touches it; faith is destroyed if it heeds prophecies; charity is tarnished if it becomes prideful; fasting is disgraced if it gives way to condemnation. Therefore, watch over yourself and do not allow such good-destroying admixtures.

126. You are obligated to protect each member of your body from harm in a proper manner. If your body is free from sexual immorality, guard your mouth from condemning others. The mouth cannot commit fornication, but it can lie and slander. If one of your members is blameless, but another is guilty, then by condemning that one member, you yourself are subject to condemnation. Do not disregard condemnation as something trivial. From the example of those who fall prey to hunters, learn not to disregard even the smallest thing. It happens that a bird becomes caught in a net by a tiny claw, and the power of its wings is subdued and overcome by the tip of that insignificant claw; and although the bird is completely outside the net, it is nevertheless captured by it.

127. Let us flee from evil thoughts; for thoughts are judged on a par with deeds. Let us turn to good thoughts, which receive a reward from the Tester of hearts equal to that of deeds. An intention is already a deed; for in it, as in the source of all creation, lies the foundation of our freedom.

128. The merciful Lord has provided us with weapons against all enemy attacks. Just do not be lazy in using them, and you will suffer no harm. If the enemy fires his fiery arrows at us, we have an invincible shield—prayer; if he intends to ensnare us with falsehood, let us resort to the truth, and we will be saved; if he intends to wound you with misanthropy, meet him with the power of philanthropy; if he attacks you with pride, fight him with humility; if he stirs up carnal lust, quickly clothe yourself in the armor of chastity; if he attacks us with insatiability, let us make ourselves wings—fasting. —Thus, just as our enemies have arrows, so too does our weakness have arrows. Defeat in battle comes not from a lack of weapons, but from inattention and a reluctance to use them.

129. What good is it if someone has everything but lacks saving love? If someone prepares a great feast to invite the King and the princes, and arranges everything lavishly so that nothing is lacking, but has no salt: will it be possible to taste such a feast? Undoubtedly not. The same applies here. Whether someone has preserved their virginity, fasted, kept vigils, prayed, given shelter to the poor, intended to offer gifts, firstfruits, or fruits, built churches, or done anything else—without love, all this counts for nothing before God (1 Cor. 13:1–4).

130. Let us concern ourselves with acquiring the eternal blessings promised to us; let us strive for this while it is still light, while the market has not yet closed; let us make friends for the life to come from among the poor and the needy. Let us buy oil from them and send it ahead of us; for here, the oil for the lamps of the hereafter is sold by widows, orphans, the infirm, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and all the poor who sit at the church doors.

131. When you stand before God in prayer, take care that your beautiful instruments—on which you sing to God, that is, your thoughts—are not plundered by your enemies. How or with what will you serve God when your instrument is taken from you, that is, when your thoughts are captive? Serving God requires that your thoughts, the entire strength and power of your soul, and your whole mind be undistracted and focused on God. Do not mix copper or lead with your gold—that is, do not mix many impure thoughts with your soul. Just as a virgin betrothed to a husband, if she is seduced by others, becomes abominable in his eyes: so too is the soul, carried away by impure thoughts and consenting to them, an abomination to her heavenly Bridegroom, Christ. – She must avoid all connection with these thoughts in every possible way and not take pleasure in consenting to them, so that the Lord, seeing her love for Him, may be pleased with her, and, coming, may destroy her enemies who seek to turn her thoughts away from Him. For as soon as the Lord sees that the soul is striving earnestly to be collected within itself, ceaselessly seeking the Lord, awaiting Him at night, and crying out to Him by day, He will not delay in avenging her, and He will purify her from whatever vice still remains in her, presenting her to Himself as a bride without blemish.

132. Open your heart; resolve to long for God all the days of your life. To long for God is everlasting delight and enlightenment, and everlasting joy. If you always long for Him, He will always dwell within you—He dwells in the souls of those who fear Him—and fulfills the will of those who love Him.

133. Do you wish to be a holy and spotless temple of God? Always keep the Image of God in your heart. By the Image of God, I do not mean a painted likeness, but that Image which is painted in the soul through good deeds, fasting, vigils, progress in goodness, self-restraint, and prayers; and the colors for this heavenly, sovereign Image are pure thoughts, the casting off of all earthly things, and a life that is always pure.

134. Neither in the world nor in the ascetic life does anyone receive a crown without a struggle; therefore, without a struggle, no one can obtain the unfading crown and eternal life. For this present life is always like a battlefield. Do you wish to prove yourself perfect in the struggle? Always clothe yourself in virtues, as in the weapons of the struggle. Have you clothed yourself in virtue? Strive ceaselessly not to cast it aside.

135. Strive to imitate the life and virtue of the holy fathers. Follow the path of their lives and strive as they did, —strive with your mind, strive with your spirit, strive with your body; be ascetic in your clothing, be ascetic in your food, be ascetic in your speech, be ascetic in your gaze, be ascetic in your thoughts—so that you may be perfect in all things.

136. Be mindful of yourself, so that you are not distracted during prayer. When you stand before God in prayer, stand before Him with fear and trembling. Cut off from your heart all thoughts and concerns about earthly matters. During the hour of prayer, be wholly a heavenly angel, and strive to ensure that your prayer is holy, pure, and unblemished, so that, upon seeing it ascend on high, the gates of heaven may immediately open before it; so that, upon seeing it (having ascended there), the Angels and Archangels may all greet it with joy and bring it before the holy and exalted throne of the Most Pure Lord. Thus, at the hour of prayer, always prostrate yourself before God, like the Cherubim and Seraphim.

137. Your battle is no ordinary one; on the contrary, all the angels and their Lord are watching the battle you wage against the enemy. – Thus, when you emerge victorious over the enemy, God and the angels will applaud you; and the angels, rejoicing, will glorify God, who has granted you the strength to defeat the evil one. That is why the battle intensifies more and more—so that you may become skilled in the faith, God may be glorified, and people may follow your example.

138. Do not fall into apathy because of weariness, but keep your hope in mind. For where there are feats, there are rewards; where there is battle, there is honor; where there is struggle, there is a crown. Keeping this in mind, anoint yourself with the oil of patience. Call out to yourself unceasingly, crying out with the Saints: *“Be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord”* (Ps. 26:14).

139. Prepare your affairs for your departure; put everything in order in your field; and this field is this life: take a good shield—the New Testament; surround your possessions with thorns (make a hedge of prickly

plants)—through fasting, prayer, and teaching. If you have such a fence, the beast—that is, the devil—will not enter. Cultivate your soul like a beautiful vineyard—and just as those who guard vineyards clap their hands and shout loudly, using that noise to stop intruders: so do you as well—raise your voice, exclaim in psalmody, and you will drive away the cunning beast—the fox, that is, the devil. Keep a constant watch over the enemy, should your desire incline you toward unseemly deeds. And if he begins to hurl wicked thoughts into your soul, as if from a sling, hold up the shield of faith and put on the helmet of hope. Take up *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Eph. 6:17). And having armed yourself thus against the enemy, persevere, and do not be negligent in battle; on the contrary, be sober-minded in all things, saying: “We know his schemes!”

140. When a wicked thought arises within you, draw your sword—that is, arouse the fear of God in your heart—and you will cut down all the enemy’s power. And instead of a military trumpet, use the Scriptures. Just as a trumpet gathers warriors with its sound, so too the Scriptures, calling out to us, gather good thoughts; and, bringing them into order through the fear of God, form them into a regiment to oppose the enemy: for our thoughts, like warriors, fight against the King’s enemies. Furthermore, just as a trumpet, with its sound during battle, stirs up young warriors to charge against their opponents, so the Scriptures stir up your zeal for what is good and strengthen you for the struggle against your passions.

141. To the best of your ability, compel yourself to read Scripture as often as possible, so that it may gather your thoughts, which the enemy scatters through his wicked schemes, planting deceitful thoughts within you, whether he inflicts frequent sorrows upon you or grants you many successes and worldly comforts. He does this out of his own malice, with the intention of turning a person away from God.

142. Be sober, and strive always to devote yourself diligently to reading, so that it may teach you how to avoid the enemy’s snares and attain eternal life.

143. Reading the Divine Scriptures brings a wandering mind to composure and grants knowledge of God. For it is written: *“Be still and know that I am God”* (Ps. 45:11). You hear that the knowledge of God is acquired by those who, with a pure heart, practice reading the Divine Scriptures. Therefore, do not be negligent, but practice this reading—and prayer—so that your mind may be enlightened, and that you may become *“perfect and complete, lacking nothing”* (James 1:4).

144. Some boast of conversing with nobles, princes, and kings; but you should boast that in the Holy Scriptures you converse with the Holy Spirit; for through them the Holy Spirit speaks.

145. Strive to read the Divine Scriptures and to remain constantly in prayer. For every time you converse with God through them, your body and soul are sanctified. Knowing this, strive to practice them more often.

146. If you cannot read, do not turn away from places where you can listen and benefit; for it is written: *“If you see a wise man, seek him out, and let your foot knock at his door”* (Sir. 6:36). This is beneficial not only for those who cannot read, but also for those who can; for many read without knowing what they are reading.

147. See to it that, when you wish to read, the enemy does not interrupt you by instilling despondency or distraction, or by saying, “Do such-and-such a task first, since it is not a big deal; and then you will read with a calm spirit.” By suggesting this, he also stirs up a special zeal for manual labor, so as to distract you from reading as quickly as possible. He does this when he sees that a brother is reading diligently and benefiting from it, trying to distract him from this activity and hinder him with these and other excuses. Do not believe him; but be like a thirsty deer longing to come to the springs of water—that is, to the Divine Scriptures—to drink from them and quench your thirst, which is scorching you with passions.

148. When the Lord grants you to read and understand a word from the Scriptures, take care that it does not pass you by (in vain); but meditate on it with your mind, engrave it on your heart, and preserve it indelibly in your memory. For it is written: *“I will meditate on Your precepts”* (Ps. 118: 16); and again: *“I have hidden Your words in my heart”* (– 11).

149. When you read, read with zeal and diligence; dwell on every word with great attention, and do not merely turn the pages, but if necessary, do not be too lazy to read a verse twice, three times, or several times, so that you may grasp its meaning.

150. When you sit down to read or to listen to someone reading, pray first to God, saying: Lord Jesus Christ! Open the ears and eyes of my heart, that I may hear Your Words and fulfill Your will. *‘Open my eyes, and I will understand the wonders of Your law’* (Ps. 118:18). I trust, O my God, that You will enlighten my

heart.” – Always pray to God in this way, that He may enlighten your mind and reveal to you the power of His Words. Many, relying on their own understanding, have fallen into error, and “*claiming to be wise, they have become fools*” (Rom. 1:22).

151. Acquire silence as a strong wall; for silence will raise you above the passions. You will wage battle from above, while they fight from below. Acquire silence, then, in the fear of God, and none of the enemy’s arrows will harm you. Silence, combined with the fear of God, is a fiery chariot that lifts those who have attained it up to heaven.

152. Silence is the mother of contrition, the mirror of sins, the wellspring of uncontrollable tears, the school of observing one’s thoughts and their reasoning, the foundation of fasting, the barrier against gluttony, the arena for practice in prayer and reading, the pacification of thoughts, an unshakeable haven from cares, a good and light yoke that comforts and sustains those who bear it, the mother of reverence, a prison for the passions, a bridle for the eyes, tongue, and ears, the wine of non-covetousness, the fruitful field of Christ that yields good fruit.

153. Acquire for yourself this good portion, chosen by Mary, who, sitting at the Lord’s feet and clinging to Him alone, became a model of silence. For this, the Lord praised her, saying, “*Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her*” (Luke 10:42). See what silence is like! The Lord Himself praises those who have attained it. Attain silence, then, and you will delight in “*the Lord*” (Ps. 36: 4), sitting at His feet and clinging to Him alone, so that you may say with boldness: “*My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me*” (Ps. 62: 9).

154. Illnesses do not suddenly become incurable, but having taken an evil start from neglect, they develop into immeasurable damage. And passions in the soul arise from a small cause, but if they are not eradicated, they produce immeasurable disorder in the soul. Do you see how a green stain on copper grows deeper and deeper?—Understand, then, what a passion does to the soul when neglected. If you do not remove the rust, you will not get rid of the stain; if you do not subdue the nature of the flesh, you will not succeed in driving the passion from yourself. Rust binds tightly to copper; so too does passion take root in one’s nature. Whoever cleans the copper before it rusts will have no further worries about it; whoever clothes the soul in virtue will be out of danger and will not suffer even the hidden corruption of evil. When polished, copper takes on a luster, just like clothing; and if the copper is polished while still unblemished by rust, it will serve well for a long time, but otherwise the luster is deceptive; such a vessel is fragile and quickly deteriorates, just as if it were made of damaged copper. Likewise, if a soul that has already been corrupted attempts to embrace virtue, it falls into wavering, and from wavering into corruption.

155. Just as the soul becomes carnal through its union with the moist body, so too does the body become spiritual when the soul, undecayed, is united with the seed of God. And St. Paul distinguishes between spiritual and carnal people. He knew that even the carnal have a soul, and the spiritual have a body; but because of the predominance of whatever is greater in a person, the name of the predominant aspect is applied to the whole person. If the flesh predominates over the soul in a person, then he is carnal; but if the soul predominates, then he is spiritual. And elsewhere, conveying the same meaning, he says: “*The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh; for these are opposed to one another, so that you may not do what you want*” (Gal. 5:17). The Gospel says that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who seek it earnestly (Matt. 11:12). The spirit strives to elevate nature to the Divine; for nature, through the flesh, is drawn toward the earthly. This struggle of the spirit against nature is a battle, and it takes place in two ways: in beginners, so that they may not fall into union with the flesh; and in the perfected, so that even the body itself may be made spiritual.

156. If the essence of a human being is the immortal soul, then there is no injustice on God’s part in turning humanity toward incorruptibility; He does not compel the complex human nature, but only urges it, through the power of the Spirit, to willingly draw the flesh—corrupted by sin—toward incorruptibility, as a slave. Just as copper takes on the appearance of fire in a fiery crucible, so too is the body spiritualized when it is fused with incorruptibility. The same copper, buried in the ground, is consumed by rust and turns to dust; so it is with the flesh immersed in passions.

157. How do the Saints relate to the flesh?—The nature of the flesh demands rest, yet they strive all the more to crush it and make it bitter. Our nature (corrupted, carnal) delights in glory, but they, though reviled, find comfort and keep their deeds hidden. The nature of the flesh demands the enjoyment of food; but they exhaust it with fasting and wear it down with ascetic feats. Nature has a tendency toward married life; but they

rein it in with abstinence and cut off all causes of lustful arousal. Nature pursues the comforts of life; but the Saints, when wronged, endure it; when robbed, they bear it magnanimously. In general, they completely renounce the life of the flesh, according to the Word of the Lord: *“Take up your cross and follow Me”* (Matt. 16:24). The Apostle teaches the same thing, saying: *“Put to death your members which are on the earth”* (Col. 3:5). He does not condemn God’s creation to destruction; rather, He desires to enliven the flesh by putting to death what is unnatural in it through the effort of the spirit. He did not say, “Put to death the bodily members,” but *“the members that are on the earth.”* What are these?—Fornication, impurity, evil desire, greed, and all such things. The carnal man, humiliated and corrupted by sin, delights in all such things. Sin violates nature. And then nature, instead of contentment, gives itself over to insatiability; instead of quenching thirst with drink—to drunkenness; instead of marriage—to fornication; instead of truth—to falsehood; instead of love—to enmity. All these things are foreign to nature, and the Apostle teaches us to put them to death by restraining our corrupted nature so that, being under the control of the Spirit, it does not overstep its bounds. And when the Savior said that it is better for an ascetic to enter the Kingdom *“lame”* or *“poor”* (Matt. 18:8), He did not command us to cut off the members He created, but rather not to make them instruments of sin.

158. Anyone who wishes to strive for Christ’s sake must acquire such armor that he may be able to resist the devil and please our Savior, namely:

159. Instead of strife, embrace, like a mustard seed, faith in the consubstantial and indivisible Trinity. Just as a mustard seed is perfectly round and, as it were, self-propelled, so let your faith be self-propelled. The movement of faith is virtue. Some have faith but no deeds; this is not faith, for it is dead—as it is said: *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2:20). Whoever has faith and performs the works of faith possesses faith like a self-propelled mustard seed. Acquire it, and be healthy and unharmed in faith, burning with zeal for the commandments of our Savior, so that you too may hear from Him: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord”* (Matt. 25:23). The Lord called him “good” because of his deeds, and “faithful” because of his faith.

160. Instead of a helmet, take up the hope of future blessings, *“which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and which have not entered the human heart—things that the angels long to look into”* (1 Peter 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:9). This hope gives you strong comfort in afflictions and sorrows, and the remembrance of it will gladden you. Christ’s blessed martyrs heeded this; amid the sharp torments, amid the terrible and varied tortures, amid the blazing fire, they kept this longed-for hope before their eyes, and therefore willingly and gratefully endured everything, so that they might obtain what they hoped for. Keep this hope constantly before your eyes, so that the desire for what you hope for may not allow you to think of anything fleeting, and moreover may stir within you a readiness for every good deed.

161. Instead of a belt, gird yourself with perfect love for God and your neighbor: love will ensure that you move forward without encountering obstacles. One who is girded passes through everything comfortably and unhindered; all the more so, one who is girded with love passes comfortably everywhere. For “love,” as it is said, *“bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”* (1 Cor. 13: 7); filled with it, St. Paul said: *“Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led astray, and I am not outraged?”* (2 Cor. 11:29). See the compassion and power of love!

162. Instead of shoes, put on humility: just as shoes are trampled underfoot, so too does the one who has acquired humility conduct himself in such a way that when everyone tramples on him, he regards this as in keeping with the natural order of things. And you, brother, acquire humility. These are not physical shoes, but spiritual ones: they will protect you, *“lest your foot stumble upon a stone”* (Ps. 90: 12). Blessed David, having acquired humility, said, *“I am a worm, and not a man”* (Ps. 21: 7). See how God loves humility, how closely He draws near to those who have acquired it, and how He always looks upon them with favor. For it is written: *“He dwells on high and looks with favor upon the humble”* (Ps. 112:5–6), and again: *“His eyes are on the needy”* (Ps. 9:29). When you hear of the poor, do not think of those who are destitute of possessions; for many kings have pleased God, and many poor people have perished. But “the poor” refers to those who are poor in spirit, as it is said: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5: 3).

163. Instead of a shield, protect yourself with the holy cross, marking your limbs and your heart with it. And do not merely make the sign of the cross with your hand, but also imprint it in your thoughts upon every activity: your coming and going, your sitting and rising, and your bed—and whatever service you perform, first of all, for a blessing, mark yourself with the cross in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a most powerful weapon—and no one can ever harm you if you are protected by this

weapon. If even the one who bears the seal of the earthly King cannot be harmed, how much more is no one able to contend with us when we bear upon ourselves such a seal of the great heavenly King. Use this weapon as often as possible, brother; for it strongly resists the arrows of the enemy. Never forget to protect yourself with the sign of the cross; and you will break the snares that the devil has hidden for you; for it is written: *“On this path, as I walked along it, they hid a snare for me”* (Ps. 141:4). Always mark yourself with the sign of the cross; and evil will not touch your spirit.

164. Instead of a bow, stretch out your hands in prayer, as it is written: *“You have made my right hand like a bow of bronze”* (Ps. 17:35). For indeed, the bow of bronze against the enemies is the hands stretched out in prayer offered in full awareness; this is the arrow, skillfully shot by the one who draws the bow. If you allow your thoughts to wander, you will be like a man who holds a bow in his hands but does not know how to aim the arrow at the enemy, and instead shoots it at the sky. Will this shot frighten your enemy if you hold the bow in your hands but shoot the arrow not at him but at random?—Not at all. Only when someone prays with discernment, does not allow his thoughts to wander, and understands who he is, to Whom he is addressing himself, and with Whom he is conversing—only then does the prayer draw near to God, and the enemy suffers greatly, as if struck by an arrow in the heart. Then, by God’s grace, the soul prospers more and more, while the enemy flees like dust before the wind, driven by the Angel of God. This is why those who pray with discernment and strive courageously to subdue their thoughts cause the enemy to suffer.

165. Pray with awareness (knowing to whom and for what you are praying). And if, during prayer, something—whether through your eyes or for some other reason, distracts your mind, know that this is the work of the enemy, and do not rush to end your prayer; rather, rebuke yourself, gather your mind again, and then pray with full awareness, so that you may know what you are asking of God and for what purpose you are asking Him, and so that you do not speak needlessly or ramble. — And it is the work of Satan to send thoughts flying like an arrow shot at random, preventing a person from remaining focused on what concerns him. For he knows that if a person continues his prayer, the One who created him will hear him, even if he is a sinner beyond count. That is why the enemy leads him into rambling thoughts, so that his thoughts fly like an arrow shot at the sky. And it happens that his hands are outstretched in prayer, but his tongue speaks one thing, while his mind thinks and imagines another—to the enemy’s mockery. Therefore, my brother, always ask God for what is especially needed and for what you have a particular need, and do so in accordance with the sense of that need. Consider the two blind men of Jericho. They cried out to the Lord: *“Have mercy on us, Son of David.”* And when the Lord asked them, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”*—they pleaded, with the pain and anguish of their hearts, *“that their eyes might be opened”* (Matt. 20:30). They did not say, “Give us this or that,” for did they not have many needs? But they asked for the one thing in which their need was most urgent. — Look at the Canaanite woman—what does she cry out after the Lord? — *“Have mercy on me, O Lord! My daughter is severely tormented by a demon”* (Matt. 15:22). She said nothing else but the sickness of her heart. Likewise, did not all who came to Him express before Him the sickness of their own hearts? If a sick person comes to a doctor, does he not show what ails him? And you, my brother, present to God the sickness of your soul. — Look upon Him, then, through the eyes of faith, so that, as it is written, you may see *“the One seated on the high and exalted throne”* (Isa. 6: 1), and the hosts of angels and archangels standing before Him; and, bowing down before His goodness, pour out your supplication before Him. First confess your sins, and only then present your words or your sorrow before Him, so that He may have mercy on you through His goodness and pour out His bounties upon you: O soul! *“Because of your great faith, let it be done for you as you wish”* (Matt. 15:28).

166. Those whose spiritual eyes are enlightened and ever open know with certainty that it is not by their own strength, but by the invincible power of God, that they are delivered from the temptations of the evil one. The freedom available to a person consists only in the resolve—or lack thereof—to resist the devil; yet even when such resistance is possible, man does not possess complete mastery over his passions. If human nature could resist the devil’s wiles even without the full armor of the Holy Spirit, then the Lord would not have commanded us to say in prayer: *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”* Therefore, whoever wishes to be delivered from the fiery arrows of the evil one, to attain dispassion, and to become a partaker of divine glory, let him, with an insatiable desire, with all his heart and all his strength, always seek help from above, so that with its aid he may overcome the passions, and through such a triumph—which is not in vain—attain the realm of purity, *“where no one but He will behold the Lord.”*

167. Strive to be a blameless child of God, and to enter that rest “*into which Christ has gone before us*” (Heb. 6:20); strive to be inscribed in the heavenly Church along with the firstborn; strive to ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem, where the paradise of sweetness is found. – But know that you will not be deemed worthy of these wondrous blessings unless you shed tears day and night like streams, just as the Saint says: “*I wash my bed every night; with my tears I drench my couch*” (Ps. 67:7). Do you not know that “*those who sow in tears will reap with joy*” (Ps. 125:5)? Therefore, the Prophet says: “*Do not hide my tears*” (Ps. 38:13); and again: “*You have set my tears before You, as in Your promise*” (Ps. 55: 9); and again: “*My tears have been my bread day and night*” (Ps. 41: 4); “*And I have mixed my drink with weeping*” (Ps. 101: 10). Tears shed in awareness, with great sorrow, amid the pure fervor of the heart’s innermost being, are the food of the soul, the heavenly bread that nourishes souls for eternal life.

168. Just as there is this visible heaven, called the firmament, so above it there is another heaven, radiant with light and invisible to the physical eye, where the ranks of angels dwell. There is a tabernacle not made with hands, in which the holy angels perform their service. All this is divine, ineffable, radiant, and belongs not to this age but to another world, where there is neither night nor evil spirits nor strife. But since not everyone, whoever they may be, is permitted to see the heavenly with the inner eye; therefore, as a kind of veil, the firmament has been set up so that even from there they may not simply behold everyone, but only those who are pure in heart and sanctified in mind—their fellow citizens and fellow soldiers. And when the veil is removed, then it will be revealed to the righteous what awaits the righteous.

169. Prayer offered at length, with a sorrowful soul and a focused mind, ascends to heaven. Just as water, while flowing over level ground and enjoying wide open space, does not rise to a height, but when the pipes of a water system block its flow below and constrict it, then, constrained, it rushes upward faster than any arrow: so too does the human mind wander and scatter as long as it enjoys great freedom; but when the heart’s contrition and anguish constrain it, then, in this beautiful affliction, it soars upward and sends up pure and fervent prayers to God. That prayers offered with sorrow are especially heard is attested to by the Prophet, who says: “*When I was in distress, I cried out, and He heard me*” (Ps. 119:1). Let us, then, stir our conscience and arouse sorrow in our souls through the remembrance of our sins, so that our prayers may be worthy of being heard—sober, vigilant, and capable of reaching the heavens with their cries. Nothing drives away sloth and indifference from us as effectively as a painful sense of sorrow, which gathers the mind into unity and brings it back to itself. Whoever grieves and prays in this way will, after prayer, be able to instill great comfort in his soul. Just as a gathering of clouds first darkens the air, but when rain falls from them and the clouds lose, one by one, the moisture they have accumulated, the air once again becomes clear and bright: so too does the sorrow of the soul, while it remains confined within, darken our thoughts; but when it exhausts itself in tears through words of prayer and flows outward, it then produces great clarity in the soul, bringing down into the mind of the one praying—like a ray of light—the thought of God’s help.

170. Do you wish to pray without distraction?—Let your prayer spring from the depths of your soul. Just as trees that have sent their roots deep into the earth, even when buffeted a thousand times by the winds, do not break and cannot be uprooted—because their roots are firmly anchored in the depths of the earth—so too do prayers sent up from the very depths of the soul, being securely rooted, reach upward, and no storm of thought can lead them astray. The Prophet gives us an example of this, speaking of himself: “*From the depths I cry out to You, O Lord*” (Ps. 129: 1).

171. I examined the armory of the victorious, seeking to understand which weapon brings decisive victory to the one who wields it. “Many weapons presented themselves to my gaze there,” and with each of them one can achieve a brilliant victory. First, I saw pure fasting—this sword that never loses its edge. Then I saw chastity, purity, and holiness—this bow from which sharp arrows pierce the heart of the wicked. I also saw poverty, which scornfully rejects silver and all possessions—this armor that prevents the devil’s cunning arrows from reaching the heart. I noticed there love—this shield; and peace—this sturdy spear, before which Satan trembles and flees. I saw vigil—this armor; prayer—these plates; and righteousness—this light war chariot. – But as I examined all these weapons and pondered which of them was the strongest, I saw the stronghold of humility and found that nothing is stronger than it; for no enemy weapon can pierce it, and the evil one is powerless to storm it. Therefore, if you wish to be victorious in the battle you are waging, seek refuge behind the stronghold of humility; take shelter there and do not leave this enclosure—and the predator will not take you captive; do not rely entirely on your other weapons, lest the evil one strike you down.

7. Advice to Ascetics

1. The beginning of monastic renunciation is the fear of God; a monk who does not fear God will be cast out beyond the gates of the Kingdom of God. The beginning of a good life for a monk is the knowledge of God; ignorance of God, however, darkens the monk's soul.

2. A monk's good inheritance is chastity and holiness; but a monk who lacks these is deprived of the inheritance of the fathers.

3. The spiritual struggle for a monk consists in studying the Scriptures and keeping God's commandments; a monk who does not engage in this is not a spiritual warrior.

4. A monk's nourishment is to do God's will; sensual food, however, will not bring a monk before Christ, but "*enters the stomach and passes out into the latrine*" (Matt. 15:17).

5. Let the monk's foot, moving with dignity, tread the steps of the Church; but let it not wander from house to house, acting disorderly.

6. Let a monk seek counsel from the wise; let not the counsel of the unwise take root in his heart.

7. A monk who stays awake with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs drives away nighttime reveries; but a monk who, puffed up by his good deeds, falls asleep, weaves a web of delusion.

8. A courageous monk avoids the devil's snares through the cross of Christ.

9. A monk who is grounded and bowed down to the earth acts in a satanic manner in everything (by opposing the commandments, through deceit, and by self-indulgence).

10. May a monk's mind always be occupied with good deeds. A monk's discipline consists of virtuous thoughts. A monk's vigilance subdues impure thoughts.

11. A monk's cultivation is a good soul that bears fruit according to the Gospel. The monk who cultivates it is the first to taste its fruit.

12. The immortal power within a monk is non-covetousness, which bears the cross; but the love of money is destructive to them, for it bars them from the Kingdom of Heaven.

13. A good gift to a monk is chastity, which, like Elijah in his chariot, lifts him up to heaven. The power of chastity lies in abstinence from food; but a monk who indulges in gluttony defiles his own flesh.

14. Tears shed from the eyes are the tree of life, growing to the heights of humility. The monk who acquires this will reap good fruit.

15. A monk who proclaims his gift to everyone arouses disgust—and will hear from the Lord: "*You have already received your reward*" (Matt. 6:2). But whoever is ashamed to speak of it will receive his reward from the Lord, who knows what is hidden.

16. When you give "*to God what is God's,*" do not boast, monk; but, praying to the Lord, say: "I bring to You what is Yours, O Lord, and from You alone do I seek the salvation of my soul."

17. The Lord hears the monk who performs his nightly prayers with a pure heart; during the day He makes him as bright as the day itself, and day by day He reveals him to be ever brighter.

18. The Lord does not rest in a monk's pride, but the Holy Spirit rests in his humility.

19. Let the monk's tunic (not the woven one, but the spiritual one) remain unstained at all times. Such a monk will enter the palace with the Bridegroom at midnight.

20. Monk, prepare oil to meet the Bridegroom; for if you have nothing to pour into the lamp so that it may burn brightly, you will remain outside the palace with the foolish virgins.

21. Let the monk's life, in imitation of the angels, be a burning away of sins; it must be the ceaseless fruitfulness of one who repents.

22. Let the monk's life bear the seal of the mortification of lust upon all his members: the life of John the Forerunner is a model for him.

23. May the storm of demons flee from the monks; may the peace of the angels rejoice among them. When the storm of demons comes, monk, restrain your irritability; for the monk's life must always be clothed in meekness and patience.

24. A monk burning with the spirit (of zeal for God) drives out demons; but a monk driven by (proud) rivalry, who competes with his brother, draws the devil to himself.

25. Let not the sun go down on your anger, and let not the disorderly shouting that comes from your irritated throat disturb your brothers.

26. Do not refuse to listen to hymns, for they are the singing of the angels; but flee from the clamor of demonic spectacles, for they are a demonic delusion.

27. May the cross of Christ always be upon your forehead, and the fear of God in your heart.
28. Silence, coupled with a pure heart, anoints the monk with the oil of the Holy Spirit.
29. A good disposition gives rise to brotherly love and drives away strife.
30. He who is united with the Lord will not surrender himself to the devil, lest he be put to shame in the bridal chamber.
31. An unbreakable shield for the monk is the singing of the angels on his lips; death, however, is a sleep more delightful than their song.
32. A monk's treasure is voluntary poverty; a monk clothed in it is divine. Store up treasure for yourself in heaven, for the ages of delight are endless.
33. Let your mind always be occupied with the Divine Scriptures. Let your door be locked not with iron bolts, but barred by the cornerstone (the name of the Lord Jesus, proclaimed in sobriety).
34. The monk's face becomes radiant in prayer, and the traces of the spiritual joy he experiences bring joy to the entire community of monks.
35. A monk who does not indulge his appetite and does not love wine becomes like an angel.
36. Indescribable beauty is the virginity shining in a monk's soul; yet his face becomes most hideous when that virginity is defiled.
37. The worst thing for a monk is to fall into sin; it devours all that is good in him, just as fire devours straw.
38. A monk who has renounced the world becomes a companion of Christ; but one entangled in worldly affairs is not pleasing to the Commander—Christ.
39. A monk who is not greedy for money is the most faithful preacher of the Kingdom of Heaven, but one afflicted with greed is a man who has perished miserably.
40. Chastity, accompanied by unblemished virginity, is the adornment of a young monk.
41. Obedience is a treasure for a monk: whoever acquires it will be heard by the Lord.
42. Let the monk speak words of goodness, and let him proclaim the Word of the Most High with his lips.
43. Let the monk willingly endure hunger to humble the earthly body and exalt the heavenly soul.
44. Let a monk speak words of truth, and let falsehood be banished from his lips.
45. When you hear harsh words, do not become angry, but be humble; for by becoming a peacemaker, you will receive a sure reward for peace, and you will be called a son of the Most High.
46. A lion is feared by wild donkeys; so too should a monk be to lustful thoughts.
47. A monk who permits fasting at the wrong time is like one who undermines the foundation of the pillar (in which he lives).
48. Just as a whirlwind stirs up dust on the plain, so is a proud monk who stirs up passionate desires in the monastery.
49. A good monk, unharmed by the arrows of sensuality, is an angel on earth.
50. Do not give in to pride, lest you fall a terrible fall. Imitate Paul's humility, so that you may become his co-heir.
51. Choose Moses' meekness as your model, so that God may transform your heart of stone into a lake of water, and you, having experienced the benefits of this, may proclaim with praise: *"The Lord has led me in the waters of rest"* (Ps. 22:2).
52. Recognize how wonderful humility is, and choose it for yourself; for it lifts one up to heaven. A good reward is offered to you for humility—the Kingdom of Heaven: do not lose heart over it.
53. A young monk, despising vanity, should be steadfast in chastity. A monk nourished by chastity is a new plant sanctified by God.
54. Fasting is a bridle for the monk; whoever casts off this bridle becomes a *"wild horse"* (Jer. 5:8). A young monk who does not bridle his stomach will not be able to refrain from carnal sin.
55. Day and night, the vigilant monk remains diligent in prayer; striking his own heart, he sheds tears and draws down the anointing oil from heaven upon himself.
56. The tree of life on earth is a monk who is not enslaved by passions and who has embraced the angelic life.
57. The sharpest sword against the devil is a psalm on the monk's lips.

58. The dry tree of Elisha drew iron from the depths; likewise, the monk's body, having become dry, draws the soul from the depths (of the passions). The monk's fast dries up the streams of sensuality. For the monk, the limit of fasting is death; and may it not leave him before his passing.

59. The sword against passions is the monk's vigilance in prayer. There is no limit set for the monk's prayer; therefore, let him bless the Lord at all times.

60. It is not easy for a monk who does not restrain his tongue on a day of anger to master his passions as well. A monk who becomes angry kills his own soul and wounds his neighbor with sharp arrows.

61. Arm yourself before temptation comes; this will help you prove yourself skillful in the face of temptation.

62. Do not accumulate wealth, nor indulge the flesh: the narrow and constricted path requires setting aside everything that is of no use on it. Imitate Paul, "*counting all things as loss so that I may gain Christ*" (Phil. 3:8). Wealth and indulgence of the flesh will not be admitted through the gates of heaven. Love, then, non-covetousness and self-restraint—and you will not be left outside those gates.

63. The burning fire within a monk is sensuality, kindled by drunkenness. Christ is an ever-flowing spring; by drawing from Him, quench that foul-smelling fire.

64. Do not utter an evil word; otherwise, you will become a vineyard that produces thorns. Use the most pleasant words when speaking with your neighbor, imitating the bee, which always brings honey that has no bitterness.

65. A frivolous monk is tossed about by a storm of thoughts; but the one who masters himself is strengthened by the words of the Gospel. A negligent monk, however, is choked by his thoughts, just as wheat is choked by thorns.

66. Do not harbor evil words against your brother in your heart, so that you may be able to proclaim in prayer: "*Forgive us... as we forgive*" (Matt. 6:12).

67. The crown of praise for a monk is peace and holiness; whoever attains them will "*see the Lord*" (Heb. 12:14).

68. A monk's wisdom lies not in knowing what labors to undertake, but in undertaking them wisely. Such a one teaches not by words, but instructs by deeds.

69. A wise monk, battling the hordes of demons, is never wounded by their arrows; strengthened by the cross of Christ, he crushes the head of the serpent.

70. A monk's most precious treasure is chastity, illuminated by the light of charity. He who has attained and preserved it will undoubtedly enter the bridal chamber.

71. Observe the commandments of the Most High, and keep the rules of the Fathers; and you will be an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven.

72. A monk who is reckless and presumptuous will fall into temptation and the devil's snare; but the meek will find peace and the crown of holiness.

73. A monk who eats to excess will fall into delusions and nighttime fantasies; but for the one who fasts, his bed is not defiled, and his sleep is undisturbed.

74. A monk who fears God will not tolerate anything harmful, for the Lord protects such a one, and on the day of his death he will have a sacrifice of atonement.

75. A monk's humility is not recognized by great deeds, but is tested in temptations. A monk's patience in afflictions, faithfully maintained, earns him an unshamed hope. And may he hold fast to it until his last breath, for "*whoever endures to the end will be saved*" (Matt. 10:22). Endure, monk; for the time of suffering is short, but the ages of joy are endless.

76. Let the monk's singing be unceasing; for the seraphim praise Him without ceasing. Let there be a spiritual song on your lips, monk, one that lightens the burden of the temptations that assail you.

77. An obedient monk will stand before the cross with holy boldness; for on the cross is the Lord, who was obedient even unto death—a death on the cross.

78. May the monk's voice, in prayerful meekness, rise sincerely to God from lips that do not waver.

79. A true light on earth is a monk who has not slandered with his tongue. Whoever is such, and has not defiled his body with sins, is a friend of Christ.

80. If the fear of God fills a monk, he is like an unshakable pillar. A monk who has not acquired the fear of God will easily be captured by his enemies.

81. A monk who possesses nothing is a pure light on earth; for *“the love of money, being the root of all evil”* (1 Tim. 6:10), bears no good fruit.
82. It is better for a monk to eat meat and drink wine than to devour the flesh of his brothers through slander.
83. Gold is tested in a fiery furnace, and a monk is known among the multitude of monastics.
84. Let a monk’s hands be reverently raised to God to defeat the enemy, imitating Moses, who, by raising his hands in the shape of a cross, defeated Amalek.
85. Abundant grace rests upon the monk who is crucified and dies daily; the angels rejoice over him, welcoming him into the Kingdom of Heaven.
86. Fasting is the bridle for the passions, and the mortification of the passions is prayer accompanied by almsgiving.
87. A monk who is above carnal passions is whiter than snow; desiring Christ alone, he will see how Christ crowns him on the day of grace.
88. A monk who whispers will drive away many monks and scatter his friends. The serpent drove Eve out of Paradise through whispering; and a monk who whispers is like him, for he destroys his neighbor’s soul and does not save his own.
89. Whoever sings wisely in his heart will be heard by God. Let the monk’s soul gaze upon God with an undistracted eye; for it is proper for her, having renounced the world and united herself with Christ, to disregard all earthly things.
90. The monk’s soul, fragrant with the Spirit, holy, shields its sense of smell from the serpent, so as not to smell the filth of lust in it. — Likewise, whoever has the fear of God in his heart will not be touched by the filth of sensuality.
91. Strive always to be simple-hearted and sincere, and do not keep one thing in your heart and another on your lips; for this is deceit.
92. Be truthful and do not lie, for lies come from the devil.
93. Do not repay evil with evil; but if anyone does you wrong, forgive him, so that God may forgive you as well.
94. If you are plagued by resentment, pray wholeheartedly for that brother, and the resentment will depart from you.
95. Be careful not to allow the passion of envy to take root in you, lest the devil devour you alive; rather, go to confession and pray to God to deliver you from such danger.
96. If you see someone sinning, do not reveal his sin, do not condemn him, and do not harbor hatred toward him, lest you too fall into the same sin; rather, say, “I am worse than he; and today he has sinned, but tomorrow I will sin.”
97. Know also that demons fear silence, fasting, vigil, abstinence, humility, prayer, tears, and other ascetic virtues.
98. If you want God to grant you tears, contrition, and dispassion, constantly remind yourself of death and your own grave.
99. If you are deceived by the devil and fall into a sin, whether small or great, do not despair or condemn yourself to ruin, but resort to confession and repentance, and God will not turn away from you.
100. Do not love to go into cities; for if you do not see what is sinful, you will remain pure.
101. Do not drink wine to the point of intoxication; otherwise, your heart will rush headlong toward pleasures.
102. Do not eat twice a day, lest your body become coarse, and with it your passions grow strong.
103. Do not sleep too much, but constantly ask for God’s help, *“so that you may escape like a bird from a snare”* (Prov. 6:5).
104. Do not speak much, lest you fall into falsehood.
105. Acquire nothing beyond your needs, and live with moderate means.
106. Be silent, and do your work.
107. Control your tongue and your stomach with all your strength.
108. Be humble; act as if you were ignorant and uneducated.
109. Be gentle with all people.
110. There is much harm in talkativeness and laughter; a prudent man observes silence.

111. Always keep death before your eyes, and temptation will never lead you to fall.
112. In the evening and in the morning, examine yourself to see how you have spent your time; but this cannot be done without effort (constant self-attention and observation of the heart).
113. Fear God, as one who must give Him an account of all your deeds.
114. Ask yourself every day: Which passion have you overcome?
115. Whoever believes there will be a judgment does not judge anyone, but rather guards and protects himself even from the smallest and most insignificant evil.
116. Whoever believes that his body will be resurrected takes care to purify it from defilement.
117. Having established yourself in the fear of God, keep and fulfill all that you ought to do—and do not disregard the promptings of your conscience; but be attentive to it, so that it may be your guardian and immediately show you into what you are falling, never leaving you, and not allowing you to fall into the hands of your enemies.
118. Know that when a monk's mind begins to turn away from its own will and turn to God, despondency first assails him. Prayer and unceasing meditation on God serve to eradicate such despondency; this meditation is sustained by self-restraint, and self-restraint is preserved by physical labor. Such is the narrow gate that *"leads to life"* (Matt. 7:14).
119. If you have truly loved the Lord and are striving to attain the coming Kingdom, and have vowed to labor because of your sins, then remember the judgment and eternal torment, awaiting with fear your departure from this world.
120. Have no attachment to money, possessions, parents, worldly glory, friends, relatives, or brothers—or to anything earthly at all. Have no concern or care for these things; but having severed every bond, set aside all worry, and come to hate these things—even stripping your own flesh bare of all this—follow Christ without anxiety or laziness, always looking toward heaven and expecting help from there. For death is sudden, and judgment is near. And woe to the unprepared!

Saint John of the Ladder

A Brief Account of Him

The parents of St. John, his place of birth, and the circumstances leading up to his entry into the Sinai monastery are unknown. His writings indicate that he received a good education; however, his desire to dwell with God compelled him to leave the world and its glory and to withdraw to the Monastery of Sinai, which was renowned at that time for its wise Fathers. He entered the monastery at the age of 16 and placed himself under the instruction and guidance of the elder Martirius, who, four years later—when St. John was 20—tonsured him as a monk. His obedience to his elder was so great that it seemed he had no will of his own; yet toward his brothers he conducted himself simply and humbly, showing no superiority toward anyone. After living with his elder for 19 years, St. John was bereaved of him, and following his death, he began to live alone, choosing for this purpose a secluded place, called Fola, five stadia away from the monastery. He lived there for 40 years. His life in seclusion flowed peacefully, marked by strict asceticism, which he nevertheless knew how to conceal, without appearing to be anything out of the ordinary. Every Saturday and Sunday he would come to the monastery to attend the Divine Liturgy in the church, to partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, and then to converse with the Holy Fathers and examine his spiritual state in light of their guidance. During such conversations, in the assembly, St. John would often speak as well, and naturally, his words could not help but stand out among those of others. This pleased the humble; but some of the less discerning began to suspect the wise speaker of vanity and were unable to conceal such suspicion. Then St. John, so as not to lead the weak astray, imposed upon himself complete silence, which he strictly observed for an entire year; and he lifted it only after the earnest entreaties of those very same people who had compelled him to impose such a feat upon himself. After forty years of living in silence, St. John was elected abbot of the Sinai Monastery by the unanimous will of all the brothers. But after guiding this spiritual flock for four years, he returned once more to his solitude, not long before his death, which occurred in the 80th year of his life, in the year 563. At the request of the abbot of Raif, who shared his name, St. John wrote **The Ladder of Divine Ascent**, in which he describes, in 30 steps, the stages of spiritual ascent toward perfection. He also appended

to **The Ladder** a **Letter to the Shepherd**, in which he sets forth the duties of a spiritual shepherd. From the 30 words of **The Ladder**, we present a selection under the following headings:

1. General Principles of Asceticism
2. On Repentance
3. On Virtues and Passions, and on the Struggle Against the Latter in General
4. On the Struggle Against the Eight Principal Passions: b) lust; c) anger; e) despondency; z) pride
5. On Impassivity

Ascetic Lessons of St. John Climacus

1. General Principles of Asceticism

1. God is life and salvation for all who are endowed with free will.

2. One who has dedicated himself to God, though clothed in a material and mortal body, imitates the life and state of the incorporeal—he adheres solely to God’s words and commandments at all times, in every place, and in every deed, — always keeps their senses in check and exercises self-discipline against their natural inclinations, — always meditates on death, grieving and suffering in their soul, — turns away from material goods praised by the world in order to obtain heavenly blessings.

3. All who have earnestly renounced worldly life have undoubtedly done so either for the sake of the Kingdom to come, or because of the multitude of their sins, or out of love for God. If, however, they had none of these intentions, then their withdrawal from the world was unwise. Nevertheless, our good Guide awaits to see what the outcome of their journey will be.

4. When we wish to leave Egypt and flee from Pharaoh, we too need a certain Moses—that is, an intercessor before God and through God—who, standing in the midst of our actions and conduct, would lift up his hands to God on our behalf, so that, guided by him, we might cross the sea of sins and defeat Amalek, the enemy of the passions.

5. For all who have attempted to ascend to heaven in the flesh, self-discipline (restraining oneself) and constant self-denial (voluntary privations) are truly necessary—especially at the very beginning of renunciation, until our pleasure-seeking nature is purified and our insensitive heart is warmed by love for God. For toil—truly, toil—and great, hidden suffering are inevitable in this endeavor, until our mind, this fierce and pleasure-seeking dog, becomes chaste and loving. – However, you who are passionate and weak! – let us be of good cheer. Let us confess our weakness to Christ the Lord, presenting it to Him with unshakable faith, as with a right hand—and we will certainly receive His help—even beyond our worth, if only we always humble ourselves into the depths of humility.

6. Those who undertake this endeavor must renounce everything, despise everything, laugh at everything, and shake off everything in order to lay a firm foundation. The following three-pillar foundation is good: non-malice, fasting, and chastity.

7. A firm beginning (resolve) will undoubtedly be of benefit to us, even if we later grow weak; for a soul that was once courageous, if it grows weak, is wounded by the memory of its former zeal, which acts as a sharp weapon. Some have lifted themselves up in this way many times, after having grown lax.

8. When the soul, treacherously betraying itself, destroys its blissful and longed-for fervor, let it then diligently examine the reason why it lost it; and let it direct all its effort and all its zeal toward that reason; for the former fervor cannot be restored except through the very same door through which it departed.

9. At the very beginning of renunciation, we undoubtedly practice virtue with difficulty, self-compulsion, and sorrow; but as we make progress, we cease to feel sorrow in them, or we feel it, but only slightly; and when our carnal reasoning is overcome and captivated by the fire of zeal, then we perform them with all joy, desire, and divine fervor.

10. Laypeople asked me, “How can we, living with our wives and entangled in worldly cares, attain the most perfect Christian life?” I replied to them, “Do whatever good you can; do not judge anyone, do not steal, do not lie to anyone, do not boast before anyone, do not harbor hatred toward anyone, do not neglect church gatherings, be merciful to those in need, do not lead anyone astray, do not violate another’s honor, and remain faithful to your wives. – If you do these things, you will not be far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

11. Let us set out on this noble endeavor with joy and courage. Let us not fear our enemies; for they gaze upon the face of our soul, though they themselves are invisible—and when they notice that it has changed out of fear, they arm themselves more fiercely against us, seeing that we have been frightened. So let us boldly arm ourselves against them; for no one can contend with a courageous warrior.

12. Those who truly wish to serve Christ must first of all take care—with the help of spiritual fathers and their own discernment—to choose for themselves suitable places and ways of life, paths, and forms of instruction; for communal living is not beneficial for everyone, and not everyone is suited to silence. Each person must consider which path corresponds to his or her own qualities.

13. The entire monastic life consists of three main forms of ascetic practice: either in ascetic solitude and hermitage; or in silence with one, or at most, two others; or, finally, in patient dwelling in a communal life.

14. Whoever has truly loved the Lord, whoever truly desires and seeks the coming Kingdom, whoever has true sorrow for his sins, whoever has truly fixed within himself the memory of judgment and eternal torment, whoever truly fears the end of this life, will no longer love anything temporal; will no longer be preoccupied with or concerned about possessions and acquisitions, nor about the glory and honor of this world, nor about anything earthly; but, having set aside all such cares, and having even come to hate his own body, he will follow Christ, naked and free from cares and sloth, constantly gazing toward heaven and awaiting help from there, according to the words of the Holy One who said, *“My soul clings to You”* (Ps. 62:9), and according to the words of another ever-memorable one: *“I have not grown weary of following You, nor have I desired a day of human rest, O Lord”* (Jer. 17:16).

15. It is a shame for us, having left everything behind, to once again be preoccupied with the same things. This is what it means to turn back and not be led into the Kingdom of God.

16. Listen to what the Lord said to that young man who had nearly fulfilled all the commandments: “One thing you lack: sell your possessions and give to the poor, and make yourself poor so that you may receive alms from others” (Luke 18:22, Matthew 19:21).

17. Let us be mindful that, while thinking we are walking the narrow path, we do not in fact wander along the broad and spacious one. Here is the true description of the narrow path: mortifying the flesh, standing in prayer all night, drinking water in moderation, eating little bread, enduring the humiliation of slander, reproaches, mockery, and insults, cutting off one’s own will, enduring attacks, not grumbling in the face of contempt, bearing heavy afflictions—so as to endure courageously when wronged, not to be indignant when slandered, not to be angry when condemned, and to be humble when humiliated. Blessed are those who walk the paths of the way shown here, for *“theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”* (Matt. 5:3–12).

18. Whoever thinks he has no attachment to any thing, yet grieves in his heart when deprived of it, deceives himself.

19. This refuge (renunciation of the world) is the cause of both salvation and misfortune; those who sail this sea of the mind know this. But it is a pitiful sight when those who were saved from the abyss suffer drowning in the very refuge itself.

20. Having withdrawn from the world, do not touch it; for passions easily return.

21. Flee from those places that present you with an opportunity to fall as you would flee a scourge, for when we do not see the forbidden fruit, we do not desire it so strongly.

22. Let us strive to imitate Lot, not his wife; for the soul that turns back to where it came from will become like salt that has lost its strength and will grow stiff. Flee from Egypt never to return; for hearts that turn back to it have not seen Jerusalem—that is, the land of dispassion.

23. Let him who is able and willing to help you cast off the burden of your sins be your father; let contrition—which can wash you clean of defilement—be your mother; let your brother be a fellow worker and rival in the pursuit of the heavenly; take the remembrance of death as your inseparable companion; let the sighs of your heart be your beloved children; let your body be your servant, and make the heavenly powers your friends, for at the hour of your soul’s departure they may be of benefit to you if they are your friends. *“These”* are *“the generation that seeks the Lord”* (Ps. 23: 6).

24. As we withdraw from the world, we must choose places to dwell that are devoid of opportunities for comfort and vanity—and that are humble; otherwise, we are acting out of passion.

25. Just as it is impossible to look at the sky with one eye and at the earth with the other, so it is impossible for one who has not, in thought and deed, severed all ties with the world to avoid spiritual calamities.

26. A good and well-ordered character is acquired through much labor and effort; but what has been acquired through long effort can be lost in an instant: *“For bad company corrupts good habits”* (1 Cor. 15:33).

2. On Repentance

1. Repentance is a renewal of baptism. Repentance is the purification of the conscience. Repentance is a covenant with God to reform one’s life. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord through the performance of good deeds that are the opposite of one’s former sins. Repentance is a spirit of self-condemnation and self-care, free from external concerns. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the rejection of despair.

2. For us, who have fallen into the pit of lawlessness, it is impossible to be drawn out of it unless we plunge into the abyss of humility.

3. There is the broken humility of those who repent; there is the pangs of conscience of those still falling into their sin; and there is the blissful wealth of humility that visits the perfected through God’s influence. The sign of the second (kind of humility) is perfect endurance of dishonor. — Old habits often torment even those who weep over them. And do not be surprised by this. The causes and nature of our falls—which ones occur due to negligence, which due to neglect of spiritual discipline, and which due to God’s withdrawal—are obscure and utterly incomprehensible to the soul. Someone, however, told me that in the falls that befall us due to neglect of our spiritual life, we are granted a swift return from them; for He who delivers us to them does not allow the demon of sorrow to hold us for long.

4. When a wound is still fresh and raw, it heals easily; but chronic wounds, those left neglected and allowed to fester, do not heal easily, and require much effort—cutting, applying poultices, and cauterization—to be healed. Many wounds become incurable over time, but *“with God all things are possible”* (Matt. 19:26).

5. Before the fall into sin, the demons present God to us as loving toward humanity, but after the fall, as unapproachably strict.

6. Do not listen to the enemy who, after your fall, whispers to you about the insignificance of your transgression, saying, “As long as you do not do this or that, this is nothing.” Often even small offerings have appeased the great wrath of the Judge (and vice versa).

7. Whoever truly seeks assurance of the forgiveness of his sins considers every day on which he does not weep to be lost, even if he has done some good on that day.

8. Let no one who ought to weep over their sins slacken their zeal in this matter, deluding themselves with such a hope: “At the end of my life (at the hour of death), I will receive assurance of forgiveness.” What is unknown is not certainly true. *“Relieve me”* with this assurance, *“that I may rest; I will not depart from here even before I receive it”* (Ps. 38: 14). *“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the bonds are loosed”* (2 Cor. 3:17); where there is priceless humility, there the bonds are loosed. But those who lack these two things should not delude themselves: they are bound.

9. Those who live in the world are the only ones alien to these revelations. But some of them, walking the path of charity, will come to realize at the hour of their departure how fruitful this is for them.

10. Whoever weeps for himself will not come to recognize the weeping, the fall, or the reproach of another. — A dog wounded by a beast becomes even more enraged against it, raging uncontrollably against it because of the pain from the wound.

11. Let us consider whether our conscience has ceased to convict us because it has been, as it were, suppressed by evil, rather than because it has become pure. The sign of forgiveness for a fall is the constant acknowledgment that we are debtors.

12. Let us all pay attention—especially those of us who have fallen—so that the pernicious teaching of the godless Origen does not enter our hearts. That vile teaching emphasized above all God’s love for humanity, which is very much to the liking of those who seek pleasure.

13. At the very beginning of our spiritual struggle, let us confess our sins to our good judge (spiritual father), in private; but if he commands it, then in the presence of all. For when sores are revealed, they are not aggravated by this, but healed.

14. During confession, be—both in outward appearance and in inner feeling and thought—like a condemned criminal, with your face bowed to the ground; and if possible, wet the feet of your spiritual father with your tears, as if they were the feet of Christ Himself.

15. Demons usually tempt us either not to confess our sins to our spiritual father at all, or to confess them while shifting the blame for our sins onto others.

16. Do not be deceived by a spirit of pride; confess your sins to your spiritual father without hiding anything, for without self-reproach it is impossible to be freed from eternal shame. Expose your sore to the doctor and do not be ashamed to say to him, “Father, this is my ulcer, my wound; it did not come from anyone else, but from my own laziness: no one is to blame for it—neither man, nor spirit, nor body, nor anything else—but only my own negligence.”

17. John the Baptist required confession from those who came to him before baptism, not because he himself needed it, but seeking the salvation of those who came.

18. Nothing is more repulsive to those who are repenting than the confusion caused by irritability, for repentance requires great humility, while irritability is a sign of great pride.

19. A ray of sunlight that penetrates a house through a crack illuminates everything within it, so that even the finest dust floating in the air becomes visible; in the same way, when the fear of the Lord enters the heart, it reveals all its sins.

20. Just as water washes away letters, so too can a tear cleanse sins.

21. Just as, for lack of water, letters are erased by other means, so too do souls deprived of tears purify and erase their sins through sorrow, sighs, and much lamentation.

22. Just as a fresh wound heals quickly, so, on the contrary, long-standing spiritual wounds are difficult to heal, though they can be healed.

23. Just as it is shameful for one who has buried his father to attend a wedding immediately upon returning from the funeral, so too is it unseemly for those who weep over their sins to seek peace, honor, or glory from people in this present age.

24. Just as the dwellings of citizens differ from those of convicted criminals, so too must the way of life of those who mourn their sins be entirely different from that of the innocent.

25. The feeling of the soul is its natural property; but sin dulls this feeling. Conscience brings about either the cessation of evil or its reduction. Conscience, in turn, is the product of the inner voice, and the inner voice is the word and rebuke of the Guardian Angel given to us at baptism. This is why we observe that those who have not been enlightened by baptism are not tormented in their souls for their evil deeds to the same extent as the faithful, though the reason is not entirely clear.

26. Let anyone who wishes to be freed from the burden of his sins imitate those who sit by the graves outside the city, and let him not cease to shed warm and fervent tears, and let him not cease from the silent sobs of the heart, until he, too, sees Jesus coming and rolling away the stone of hardness from his heart, and freeing our mind, like Lazarus, from the bonds of sin, and commanding His servants—the angels: “*Loose him*” from his passions “*and let him go*” (John 11: 44), toward the bliss of dispassion.

3. On virtues and passions—and on the struggle against the latter—in general

1. Discernment is the true understanding of God’s will at all times, in every place, and in every matter; it is found only in those who are pure in heart.

2. Whoever has overcome the first three of the principal passions (vanity, love of money, gluttony) has thereby overcome the last five as well (fornication, anger, sorrow, despondency, pride); but whoever is negligent in overcoming the first will not conquer even one.

3. All demonic attacks stem from three main causes: either from our own negligence, or from pride, or from the devil’s envy.

4. As a rule in all cases, let us align our conscience with God (enlightened by faith and the Lord’s commandments), and having discerned from which direction the winds blow, let us set our sails according to its guidance.

5. In all the deeds by which we strive to please God, the demons dig three pits for us: first, they strive to hinder our good work; second, when they are defeated in this first attempt, they strive to ensure that what is done is not according to God; and when they fail in this scheme as well, then, having quietly crept up on our soul, they flatter us as though we were living in a manner pleasing to God. – The first temptation is resisted

by zeal (for salvation) and concern for death; the second—by obedience and humility; and the third—by constant self-reproach. *“This is the task before us, until the fire of God enters our sanctuary”* (Ps. 78: 16). – Then there will no longer be in us the violence of evil habits; *“for our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb. 12:29) *that devours* every arousal and stirrings of lust, every evil habit, every hardening and darkening, whether internal or external, visible or mental.

6. When demons overcome the soul and darken the light of the mind, then there will no longer be in us, the wretched, either sober attention, or reason, or knowledge, or shame; but in their place will come: hard-heartedness, insensitivity, lack of judgment, and blindness.

7. *The theft* of the soul occurs when we regard as good that which is not good—it is an imperceptible deprivation of wealth, an unknown captivity of the soul. *The “murder”* of the soul is the killing of the rational mind through indulgence in wicked deeds (the suppression of the fear of God, conscience, and spiritual sensibility by mortal sins). *The “destruction”* of the soul is falling into despair after committing iniquity.

8. Let those who have been enslaved by their passions and have repented take heart! For even if they have fallen into every pit, become entangled in every snare, and suffered from every ailment, once healed, they will be lights and physicians, beacons and guides to all, revealing the nature and forms of every ailment and, through their own experience, saving those on the brink of falling.

9. The most excellent *“alphabet” for everyone* (beginners) is as follows: obedience, fasting, sackcloth, ashes, tears, confession, silence, humility, vigilance, courage, cold, labor, suffering for the sake of God, humiliation, contrition, forgiveness, brotherly love, meekness, simple and unquestioning faith, indifference to the world, pure hatred of parents, impartiality, simplicity without malice, voluntary self-denial.

10. The state and characteristics of the *“prosperous”* are: lack of vanity, lack of anger, good hope, silence, discernment, a firm remembrance of judgment, mercy, hospitality, moderate instruction, unceasing prayer, and lack of love of money.

11. The limit, state, and law of souls *“perfect in piety”* are as follows: an unconquerable heart, perfect love, a fountain of humility, the outpouring of the mind, Christ’s passion, the unceasing radiance of light and prayer, an abundance of God’s illumination, a longing for death, a hatred of life, an aversion to the body, a prayerful intercessor for peace, as if forcibly compelling God to show mercy, a co-worker with the angels, an abyss of reason, a dwelling place of the mysteries, a repository of ineffable revelations, a savior of mankind, a god over demons, a master of the passions, a ruler of the body, a lord of nature, one who is alien to sin, a dwelling place of dispassion, an imitator of the Lord through the Lord’s help.

12. We must constantly care for and seek the spiritual sense; for when it appears, then the external senses will cease to exert a deceptive influence on the soul; and knowing this, one of the wise men said: *“And you will find the sense of God”* (Prov. 2:5, 3).

13. The monastic life—in terms of deeds, words, thoughts, and actions—must be lived in accordance with the promptings of the heart. If this is not the case, then it will not be monastic, let alone angelic.

14. Some are, so to speak, naturally inclined toward self-restraint, or silence, or purity, or modesty, or meekness, or tenderness; but others have a nature almost entirely opposed to the aforementioned virtues, yet they force themselves to practice them; and although they are sometimes overcome, I nevertheless praise them more than the former, as those who overcome their nature.

15. Monks are the light of the angels, and monks are the light for all people; therefore, let them strive to be a good example in everything, *“giving no offense to anyone in anything”* (2 Cor. 6:3), neither in deed nor in word.

16. With the help of the Holy Trinity, let us arm ourselves against the three principal passions with the three virtues. If we do not, we will bring many hardships upon ourselves.

17. If God is raised up in us through our actions, His enemies will be scattered; and if we draw near to Him through vision, then *“those who hate Him”* and us *“will flee from His presence”* and ours.

18. Then, above all, through hard work—and not mere words—let us strive to learn the divine truths; for it is not words but deeds that we must show at the time of the exodus.

19. Those who have heard that a treasure is hidden in a known place seek it out, and having found it with difficulty, carefully preserve what they have found; but those who have become rich without effort tend to be wasteful.

20. What sins arise from the eight principal passionate thoughts, and which of the three principal passions is the parent of each of the other five?—The mother of fornication is gluttony; the mother of

despondency is vanity; sorrow and anger are born of all three principal passions; and the mother of pride is vanity. — As for which sins arise from the eight principal passions, I will say this: in unbridled passions there is no sense or order, but only chaos and disorder.

21. Untimely laughter, for example, sometimes arises from the demon of lust; sometimes from vanity, when a person shamelessly praises himself inwardly; and sometimes laughter arises from satiety.

22. Excessive sleep sometimes stems from satiety; sometimes from fasting, when those who are fasting become elated; sometimes from despondency; and sometimes simply from one's nature.

23. Loquacity sometimes stems from satiety, and sometimes from vanity.

24. Blasphemy is, in essence, a product of pride; but it often arises from condemning one's neighbor for the very same thing, or from the hostile envy of demons.

25. Hardness of heart sometimes stems from satiety, sometimes from insensitivity; and sometimes from attachment to something. And attachment, in turn, sometimes stems from sexual immorality, sometimes from greed, sometimes from gluttony, sometimes from vanity—and from many other causes.

26. Deceit arises both from pride and from anger.

27. Hypocrisy stems from self-satisfaction and self-will.

28. The virtues that are the opposites of these, however, are born of opposite parents. But since I would not have enough time to discuss each of them separately, I will say briefly in general that the mortification of all the passions mentioned is humility—and whoever has acquired this virtue has conquered all passions.

29. Let the fear we feel toward our superiors serve as an example of the fear of God; and let love for physical beauty serve as a model for love of God: for nothing prevents us from taking examples for virtue even from actions that are contrary to it.

30. God is not revealed in labor alone, but in labor accompanied by simplicity and humility. Although *"God's power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Cor. 12:9), the Lord will reject the worker who lacks humility.

31. Illness is sometimes sent to purify us from sin; and sometimes to humble our pride.

32. Our good and all-good Master and Lord, seeing that someone is very lazy in his spiritual struggles, humbles his flesh with sickness as a less difficult struggle; and sometimes by this He purifies the soul from wicked thoughts and passions.

33. Everything that happens to us, whether visible or invisible, is received in one of three ways: either with a good disposition, or with a passionate one, or with a disposition somewhere in between. I saw three brothers who suffered a loss: one of them was indignant, another remained without sorrow, and the third accepted it with great joy.

34. I have seen farmers who sowed the same seeds into the ground; yet each of them had his own particular intention: one to pay off debts, another to become wealthy, and a third to honor his Lord with gifts; while others had in mind to earn praise for their good deeds from those passing along this path of life, or to annoy their envious enemy, or to avoid reproach from people for idleness. — These are the names of the seeds sown by these farmers: fasting, vigil, almsgiving, various acts of service, and the like. Let the brethren themselves carefully examine their intentions in the light of the Lord.

35. Just as when drawing water from springs, we sometimes unknowingly scoop up a toad along with the water; so too, in practicing virtues, we often fulfill passions secretly intertwined with them. Thus—gluttony is intertwined with hospitality; with love—fornication; with prudence—excessive strictness (rigorism); with wisdom—cunning; with meekness—suspicion, slowness, laziness, backbiting, self-will, and disobedience; with silence—the oppression of teaching; with joy—conceit; with hope—sloth; with love again—condemnation; with silence—despondency and sloth; with purity—bitterness; with humility—presumption (without measure); and following all of these, as a common remedy—or rather, a poison—comes vanity.

36. Let us not grieve when, after asking something of the Lord, we are not heard for a long time. The Lord Himself would wish that all people become dispassionate in an instant (but He encounters great obstacles from our own will).

37. All who ask God for something and do not receive it undoubtedly fail to receive it for one of the following reasons: either because they ask before the time is right; or because they ask beyond their measure and out of vanity; or because, had they received what they asked for, they would have become proud or fallen into indolence.

38. It happens that in some people—not only the faithful but also the unfaithful—all passions depart, leaving only that one which, as the primary evil, alone replaces all the others, and which is so harmful that it can cast one down from heaven itself (this is pride).

39. The substance of the passions is consumed as it is devoured and rooted out of the soul by the divine fire.⁷⁷

40. Sometimes the demons withdraw of their own accord to lull us into complacency. But then they suddenly attack the poor soul, plunder it, and accustom it to vice to such an extent that afterward it slanders itself and wages war against itself.

41. I am also aware of another kind of retreat by these beasts—one that occurs when the soul is thoroughly entrenched in sinful habits. We see an example of this in infants who, out of long-standing habit, suck their thumbs when their mothers no longer allow them to suckle at the breast.

42. I also know of a fifth form of dispassion, which arises in the soul from great simplicity and praiseworthy gentleness. To such people, help is sent from God, *“who saves the upright in heart”* (Ps. 7:11), and they themselves do not even notice that He is delivering them from their passions. Just as infants, when their clothes are removed, do not at all notice their own nakedness.

43. Sin and passion, of course, are not part of human nature. God is not the creator of passions. He, however, has bestowed many virtues upon our nature, among which are the following: charity—for even pagans are compassionate; love—for even speechless animals often shed tears when they lose one another; faith—for we all generate it within ourselves; hope—for whether we give or receive, sow, or sail, we do so in the hope of gaining wealth. Therefore, if—as has been proven—love and virtue are naturally inherent in our nature, and love is the fulfillment of the law, then it is clear that virtues are not foreign to our nature. And let those who excuse their failure to practice virtue by claiming their own weakness be put to shame.

44. But as for purity, lack of anger, humility, prayer, vigil, fasting, and constant contrition, these virtues are above nature. Some of them were taught to us by people through their example; the angels served as models for others; and for still others, the Teacher and Giver is God the Word Himself.

45. It sometimes happens that while we are in prayer, an act of charity arises that admits of no delay. In such a case, we must give preference to the work of love. For love is greater than prayer, since prayer is a particular virtue, while love encompasses all virtues.

46. Not infrequently, God, by the decree of His Providence, leaves certain very slight passions in spiritual people so that, by looking upon these slight, almost sinless weaknesses, they may reproach themselves greatly and thereby acquire the imperishable wealth of humility.

47. Whoever did not live in obedience from the beginning cannot acquire humility, for anyone who has taught himself a craft tends to think highly of himself.

48. The fathers limit the active life to two principal virtues: fasting and obedience. And rightly so; for the first is the destroyer of sensuality, and the second safeguards this destruction with humility. And weeping has a twofold effect, since on the one hand it destroys sin, and on the other it gives birth to humility.

49. It is characteristic of the pious to give to everyone who asks; to give even to those who do not ask is the work of the most pious; and to refrain from demanding back what was taken from the one who took it—especially when he is able to return it—belongs only to the dispassionate.

50. With regard to all passions and virtues, let us constantly examine where we stand—at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end.

51. All the demons’ attacks against us stem from the following three causes: self-indulgence, pride, and the demons’ envy.

52. It is one thing to pray against thoughts; another to resist them; and yet another to pay them no mind and rise above them (or to rule over them). The middle one (i.e., the one capable of contradicting them) often resorts to the first method, due to his unpreparedness; but the first is not yet able to repel his enemies in the second way; and the third ultimately mocks his enemies.

53. Just as those with a keen sense of smell can detect fragrances, even when someone carries them secretly upon their person, so too does a pure soul perceive in others both the fragrance it has itself received from God—and the stench from which it is completely free—even though others do not notice it.

54. Although not everyone can be dispassionate, everyone can be saved.

⁷⁷ In the Optina translation, the following addition appears: “And as the material is eradicated and the soul is purified, the passions also recede—unless a person himself draws them back through a materialistic lifestyle and laziness.”

55. Do not let those foreigners prevail over you—those who urge you to question the ineffable ways of Providence and God’s providence toward people—and who secretly suggest that the Lord shows partiality. These are the offspring of conceit—and they reveal themselves as such.

56. Some have said that certain demons oppose others; but I have ascertained that they all seek our destruction.

57. Every spiritual endeavor, whether visible or mental, is preceded by one’s own free will and most sincere desire, which, with God’s assistance, are brought to fruition. For if the former (free will and desire) do not precede, then the latter (God’s assistance) will not follow.

58. “There is a time for everything under heaven,” says Ecclesiastes. Therefore, let us not be deceived by prideful zeal, which urges us to seek before its time what will come in due season. Let us not seek, at the time of sowing, that which belongs to the harvest; for there is a time to sow our labors, and there is a time to reap the ineffable gifts of grace. Otherwise, even in due time, we will not receive what is fitting and proper for that time.

59. Some, by the inscrutable dispensations of God’s Providence, have received the gifts of grace before their labors; others, in the very midst of their labors; still others, after their labors; and some, even at the hour of death. It is a test to see which of them is more humble than the rest.

60. There is despair arising from the multitude of sins and the burden of conscience; and there is despair arising from pride and arrogance, when those who have fallen into sin think that they were not worthy (of being spared) the fall. The former is healed by abstinence from sin and good hope; the latter, by humility and not judging anyone.

61. In all your undertakings and deeds, both external and internal, examine whether they are truly undertaken and carried out to please God. The sign that our deeds are pleasing to God is, for beginners, progress in humility; for those of intermediate stage, the cessation of inner strife; and for the perfected, the multiplication and abundance of divine light.

62. When the air is cleared of clouds, the sun appears in all its splendor; so too does the soul that has been granted forgiveness of sins and freed from passionate habits (and thoughts) undoubtedly see the Divine light.

63. Some find the greatest delight in miracles and other visible spiritual gifts, not realizing that there are many superior gifts which are hidden and therefore safe from falling away.

64. One who is completely purified of passions sees the soul of one’s neighbor—not its very essence, but its constitution, feelings, and dispositions; whereas one who is still progressing judges the soul by its bodily actions.

65. Those who are weak in spirit must recognize the Lord’s visitation and His mercy toward them through bodily illnesses, misfortunes, and external temptations; but the perfected recognize God’s visitation through the presence of the Holy Spirit within them and through the multiplication of gifts.

66. Among the evil spirits there is a demon—a forerunner—who appears immediately upon our awakening to tempt us and defile our very first thoughts. Dedicate the beginning of your day to the Lord; for to whom you give them first, to that one they will belong. A most skilled craftsman once told me the following words, worthy of attention: “From the beginning of the morning, I know the entire course of my day.”

67. In the temptations that befall us, the demons strive to make us say or do something unwise; and when they cannot overcome us, they approach quietly and secretly instill a proud sense of gratitude toward God.

68. Those who have sought wisdom in heavenly things ascend to heaven after death, while those who cling to earthly things descend into the underworld; for there is no third, intermediate place for souls separated from their bodies.

69. Just as a deer parched with thirst longs for water, so let monks long to comprehend God’s good will; and not only this will, but also when our own will is mingled with it, and when an opposing force is at work. They must also consider which deeds should be performed immediately and without any delay, and which—without haste and with prudence.

70. All who wish to know the will of the Lord must first put to death their own will within themselves; and after praying to God with faith and sincere simplicity, they must consult their fathers and brothers with a humble heart and without any doubt in their minds; and they must accept their counsel as if it came from the

mouth of God, even if it contradicts their own reason. – Those who follow this rule without doubt are filled with great humility. – And God does not allow them to be led astray.

71. Some discerned God's will in this way: they detached their thoughts from any inclination toward one desire or another of the soul—that is, both toward that which impels them to action and toward that which opposes it; and, having stripped their mind of its own will, they presented it to the Lord with fervent prayer for a set number of days; and in this way attained knowledge of His will—either because the Mind within their minds mentally revealed it to them, or because one of those thoughts completely vanished from their soul.

72. Others, based on the sorrows and difficulties their undertaking encountered, concluded that it was in accordance with the divine will. Still others, on the contrary, based on the unexpected help they received in their endeavor, sensed that it was pleasing to God, saying to themselves: “God assists only those who choose what is good.”

73. Whoever has acquired God within himself through divine enlightenment is soon made aware of God's holy will, both in matters requiring prompt action and in matters that allow for delay, in the latter case (i.e., through divine providence).

74. God is righteous, and He will not shut the doors of His mercy to those who knock upon them with humility.

75. In all circumstances, we must examine our intentions, for the Lord looks upon them in all our deeds. Anything that is free from partiality and all impurity, and is done solely for God's sake and not for any other reason, will be counted as good for us, even if it is not entirely good in itself.

76. There are courageous souls who, out of a strong love for God and humility of heart, attempt deeds beyond their capacity; but there are also proud hearts who venture into the same undertakings (at the instigation of our enemies). For our enemies often deliberately incite us to undertake deeds beyond our capacity, so that, having failed in them, we may fall into despondency and abandon even those deeds that are commensurate with our strength—and thus become a laughingstock to our enemies.

77. I have seen those who are weak in soul and body who, because of their many sins, attempted feats beyond their capacity but could not bear them. I told them that God judges repentance not by the measure of one's labors, but by the measure of one's humility (accompanied by weeping, contrition, and aversion to sin).

78. Sometimes one's upbringing is the cause of extreme evils, and sometimes bad company; but often the corruption of one's own soul is enough to lead to ruin. Whoever has rid himself of the first two evils may perhaps rid himself of the third as well; but whoever is dominated by the third is unfit for any place. There is no place safer than heaven; yet even there, some have perished because of their corrupt will.

79. Among the unclean spirits, there are some who are more cunning than others. They are not content merely to lead us into sin, but they also urge us to make others our accomplices in evil, so as to bring the most terrible torments upon us. – I saw a man who passed on his sinful habit to another; then, coming to his senses, he began to repent and turned away from sin; but since the one he had taught did not cease to sin, his repentance was not genuine.

80. Listening to accounts of the feats and virtues of the spiritual fathers stirs the mind and soul to zeal; and listening to their teachings is a lamp in the darkness, a return of the strayed to the right path, and enlightenment for the blind.

81. Whoever desires to present to the Lord a chaste body and a pure heart must maintain a temper-controlled and self-restrained life, for without these two virtues all our labor will be in vain.

82. Among the virtues, there are daughters, and there are mothers of virtues. The wise person strives above all to acquire the mothers. God Himself, through His own action, instructs the mothers, while there are many teachers to instruct the daughters.

83. Let us be careful not to compensate for the scarcity of enjoyment (in food) with an excess of sleep, and vice versa; for to act in this way is unwise.

84. Among the unclean spirits are some who, at the beginning of our spiritual life, interpret the Divine Scriptures for us. They usually do this in the hearts of the vain, and even more so in those trained in secular sciences, so that by gradually deceiving them, they may finally plunge them into heresy and blasphemy. We can recognize this demonic theology—or rather, this war against God—by the confusion and the disorderly, unrestrained joy that arises in the soul during these interpretations.

85. We will never cease to grow in virtue and love, neither in this age nor in the age to come, always receiving new light of understanding through the light (enlightenment from above). And the angels, these intelligent beings, do not remain static, but always receive glory upon glory, and understanding upon understanding.

86. Do not be a harsh judge of those who teach about great virtues with their words, while being lazy in doing good; for the lack of action is often compensated for by the benefit of that teaching. We have not all attained everything in equal measure: some excel more in word than in deed, while in others, on the contrary, deed is stronger than word.

87. God is not the creator of evil; therefore, those who say that certain passions are natural to the soul are mistaken, failing to understand that we ourselves have transformed our natural dispositions into passions for evil. By nature, for example, we possess the seed for procreation, yet we use it for lawless sensuality; by nature there is also anger within us—intended against that ancient serpent—yet we direct it against our neighbor; we have been given zeal so that we may be zealous for virtues, yet we are zealous for vices... and so on.

88. A soul that is not slothful provokes the demons to battle against itself; and as the battles multiply, so do the crowns. One who is invulnerable to adversaries will receive no crown; but whoever does not lose heart in the face of attacks will be praised by the angels as a brave warrior.

89. Constantly examine the manifestations of passionate impulses within you; and you will see that there are many passions within you which, being afflicted by spiritual ailments, we cannot even recognize—either because of our weakness or because of a deeply rooted sinful habit.

90. Demons often distract us from what is easiest and most beneficial, and urge us to undertake what is most difficult.

91. A community organized according to God's will is a spiritual laundry that washes away every stain, every coarseness, and every ugliness of the soul. Hermitage, on the other hand, can be called a dyehouse for those who have first cleansed themselves of lust, resentment, and irritability, and only then have withdrawn into silence.

92. The demons of fornication, anger, gluttony, despondency, and drowsiness do not have the power to inflate our minds (but rather humble them); whereas the demons of avarice, pride, loquacity, and many others usually add the evil of arrogance to the sin itself; and the demon of judgment is like them in this regard.

93. If a monk, after visiting worldly people or receiving them at his dwelling, is pierced by the arrow of sorrow an hour or a day after parting from them—instead of rejoicing in his deliverance from the snare that hindered his progress—then he becomes a plaything of the passions of vanity or lust.

94. We must consider with great care when and in what circumstances we should stand against the objects of our passions and fight against them, and when we should retreat; for sometimes, due to weakness, it is better to choose flight so as not to die spiritually.

95. Just as winds, in calm weather, disturb only the surface of the sea, but at other times set the very depths in motion, so too must we conclude regarding the winds of darkness; for in those consumed by passion they agitate the very feelings of the heart, while in those who have triumphed over them, they agitate only the surface of the mind; therefore, the latter are quicker to restore within themselves their usual tranquility, which has remained untouched.

96. Abstinence is the mother of health; and the mother of abstinence is the thought of death and the firm remembrance of the gall mixed with vinegar that our Lord, Master, and God tasted.

97. Silence is the cause and helper of chastity; fasting extinguishes the passions of the flesh; and contrition of heart is the enemy of wicked and impure thoughts.

98. Just as a serpent cannot shed its old skin unless it crawls through a narrow opening, so too we cannot cast off our former evil habits, the corruption of the soul, and the garment of the old man unless we walk the narrow and constricted path of fasting and self-denial.

99. Just as eggs warmed under wings come to life, so too do thoughts hidden from the spiritual father turn into deeds.

100. Just as good horses, when running together, spur one another on, so too in the communal life of good brothers, one spurs the other on to holy zeal.

101. Just as clouds obscure the sun, so too do wicked thoughts darken and destroy the mind.

102. Just as the poor, upon seeing the king's treasures, become even more aware of their own poverty, so too does the soul, upon reading accounts of the great virtues of the Holy Fathers, involuntarily become even more humble in its way of thinking.

103. Just as one who carries perfumes gives off a fragrant scent even against his will, so too is one who has the Spirit of the Lord within him recognized by his words and by his humility.

104. Just as thieves will not rashly enter a place where they see the king's weapons lying about, so too do the thieves of the mind hesitate to steal from one who has united prayer with his heart and established it there.

105. Just as a ship with a good helmsman, with God's help, enters the harbor safely, so too does the soul, having a good shepherd, ascend comfortably to heaven, even though it once committed many sins.

106. Just as one without a guide easily goes astray on his path, even if he is very intelligent, so too does one who walks the path of monasticism on his own authority easily perish, even if he knew all the wisdom of this world.

107. Whoever is weak in body and has committed many grave sins should walk the path of humility and the virtues related to it; for he will find no other salvation.

108. Recognizing one's wrongdoing leads to turning away from it; and turning away from it is the beginning of repentance. The beginning of repentance is the beginning of salvation, and the beginning of working toward salvation is a good resolve (to please God). This good resolve gives rise to good works, and the beginning of good works is virtue. The beginning of virtues is their essence, and the essence of virtue is action. The generation of virtue is constancy (in thought and zeal for it), and the fruit and result of constant thought (and zeal) is habit. The source of habit is the purification of the soul by goodness, and the purification of the soul is the mother of fear. Fear gives rise to the observance of the commandments, both heavenly and earthly, and the observance of the commandments is a sign of love. The beginning of love is the wealth of humility; the wealth of humility is the fullness of love—and then the perfect indwelling of God in those who have become pure in heart through dispassion; *"for such will see God"* (Matt. 5:8).

4. On the Struggle Against the Eight Principal Passions

1. The Struggle Against Gluttony

1. It would be remarkable if anyone, before entering the grave, were to be freed from the assaults of the stomach.

2. In the passion of gluttony, the stomach, even when sated, cries out, "I am hungry!" and when filled and swelling from excess, it cries out, "I am starving." This passion, with food before one's eyes, incites one to devour everything at once.

3. Whoever caresses a lion often tames it; but whoever indulges the body strengthens its ferocity.

4. A slave to his belly seeks out what delicacies to honor the feast with; but a servant of God considers what gifts might enrich him.

5. When a guest arrives, the glutton makes an effort to be hospitable, driven by gluttony; and he thinks that the opportunity to comfort the visitor is also a license for him to do as he pleases. He takes the visit as a pretext to drink wine; and under the guise of concealing virtue, he becomes a slave to passion.

6. Often, vanity is at odds with gluttony: and these two passions wage war against one another over the poor monk, as if he were a purchased slave. Gluttony compels one to indulge, while vanity urges one to display one's virtue; but a wise person avoids both of these abysses and knows how to use the right moment to counter one passion with another.

7. If the flesh still rages, it must be tamed by abstinence, at all times and in all places. But when it has subsided (which, incidentally, I do not expect to see before my death), then we may conceal our abstinence from others.

8. If your spiritual father permits you—as a young person—to drink wine at feasts, then observe what kind of man he is himself: if he is God-fearing, you may allow yourself a little; but if he is not entirely prudent, it is better for you, disregarding his blessing, to maintain abstinence, especially while you are still struggling with the fire of carnal lust.

9. In taming the stomach, let us proceed with prudent gradualness: first, let us cut out food that causes weight gain; then, food that stirs up the appetite; and finally, food that is overly sweet. Give your stomach

food that is moderate and easily digestible, so that through moderate satiety you may rid yourself of its greed, and through the rapid digestion of food, rid yourself of arousal as if it were a scourge.

10. For those who have not fallen, special abstinence is required only when lust arises; but for those who have fallen, it is necessary even unto death; until their very end, let them give no comfort to their bodies and fight against them without compromise. The former need only maintain the proper order of the mind at all times; the latter must also appease God through the soul's lamentation and wasting away (from hunger and thirst).

11. Let us subdue the belly by meditating on the future fire. Obeying the belly, some (because of the arousal caused by lust) eventually cut off their own members—and died a double death. Look closely and you will see that overeating is the sole cause of the drownings (in the sea of lust) that befall us.

12. The mind of one who fasts prays with sobriety, while the mind of the intemperate is filled with impure fantasies. The satiation of the stomach dries up the springs of tears, but a stomach dried up by abstinence gives birth to tears.

13. Whoever serves his belly while seeking to conquer the spirit of fornication is like one who extinguishes a fire with oil.

14. When the stomach is restrained, the heart is humbled; but if it is sated with food, the heart is lifted up in its thoughts.

15. Restrain your stomach through self-control, and you will thereby silence your mouth; for the tongue draws its strength from an abundance of food.

16. He who fills his stomach expands his internal organs; but in the one who starves it through self-restraint, they gradually shrink; and once shrunk, they no longer demand or accept much food.

17. Know that often a demon sits upon the stomach and does not allow a person to be satisfied, even if he were to devour all the food of Egypt and drink all the water of the Nile.

18. If you have promised Christ to walk the narrow and difficult path, then restrain your stomach. *The "broad path" of gluttony is vast, "leading to destruction" through debauchery, "and many walk along it," but "the gate is narrow and the path is hard" of self-restraint, "leading to life" through purity, "and few enter through it" (Matt. 7:14).*

19. As you sit at a table laden with food, picture death and judgment before your mind's eye; for even in this way you may barely manage to curb your passion for gluttony, if only a little. When you drink, always remember the vinegar and gall of your Lord; and in this way, you will either remain within the bounds of self-restraint, or at the very least, upon sobering up, you will humble your thoughts.

20. Gluttony is the cause of all falls and breaches of vows in monastic communities. If you conquer this mistress, every place will help you attain dispassion; but if she rules over you, you will suffer everywhere until your very death.

21. A living remembrance of death curbs intemperance in eating; and when intemperance in eating is curbed with humility, other passions are also cut off at the same time.

22. Once, when I was still young, I came to a certain town or village—and there, during lunch, thoughts of gluttony and vanity suddenly assailed me; but, fearing the consequences of gluttony, I decided it was better to be overcome by vanity. Among laypeople, the root of all evil is the love of money, and among monks, it is gluttony.

23. I have seen courageous men who, out of some necessity, having granted their stomachs a little leeway in food, subsequently exhausted this wretched body by standing all night long; and in this way taught it to joyfully turn away from satiety.

24. It is an impossible task to be completely free from gluttony and vanity at the beginning of monastic life. But we must not fight against vanity by indulging the stomach.

25. Just as a criminal who has been sentenced and is on his way to execution does not speak of public spectacles, so too, one who truly mourns his sins will not indulge his stomach.

26. Just as a great deal of manure breeds many worms, so too does an abundance of food lead to many stumbles, wicked thoughts, and (shameful) dreams.

27. If the extreme limit of gluttony is to force oneself to eat when one does not want to, then the extreme limit of self-restraint is to restrain one's nature when it craves, even though it has done nothing wrong at that moment.

28. Just as fat birds cannot fly high, so too is it impossible for one who indulges his flesh to ascend to heaven.

29. Just as dried-up mud is no longer pleasing to pigs, so too does the flesh, withered by ascetic struggles, no longer satisfy the demons.

30. (*Confession of Gluttony*). How do you intend to rid yourselves of me, when I am bound to your very nature?—My gateway is the need for food, and habit makes me insatiable—which, together with the soul's insensitivity and forgetfulness of death, serves as the foundation of your passion for me. — My firstborn son is fornication; the second offspring after him is hardness of heart; and the third is drowsiness. A sea of evil thoughts, waves of filth, and the depths of unspeakable impurity—these, too, spring from me. My daughters are: sloth, loquacity, insolence, mockery, blasphemy, backbiting, cruelty, disobedience, insensitivity, captivity of the mind, boastfulness, arrogant and foolish self-confidence, love of the world—which is followed by defiled prayer, flying thoughts, and often unexpected misfortunes; and following all this comes despair—the fiercest of all passions. —The memory of my sins rises up against me, but does not prevail. The thought of death is a fierce enemy to me, but there is nothing in human beings that can completely destroy me. Whoever has received the Comforter prays to Him against me, and when He is implored, He does not allow me to act passionately within him. But those who have not tasted Him seek in every way to delight in my sweetness.

2. The Struggle Against Fornication

1. The satisfaction of the belly is the mother of fornication, and the mortification of the belly is the cause of purity.

2. When we are sated, the spirit of gluttony departs and sends the spirit of fornication to us, informing it of our condition and saying, "Go and seduce so-and-so; his belly is full, and therefore you will have little trouble." This spirit, upon arriving, smiles and, binding our hands and feet with sleep, does whatever it pleases with us, defiling the soul with fantasies and the body with lustful outbursts.

3. Let no one who has been trained in the preservation of purity attribute its attainment to himself, for it is impossible for anyone to overcome his own nature; and where nature is overcome, there is recognized the coming of the One who is above nature; for, without any contradiction, the lesser is abolished by the greater.

4. The beginning of purity occurs when thoughts are not mingled with lustful desires, and emissions occur from time to time in sleep without fantasies; the middle stage of purity is when natural movements arise only from satisfaction with food and are free from fantasies and emissions; and the end of purity is the mortification of the body, preceded by the mortification of impure thoughts.

5. He who drives away the lustful dog through prayer is like one fighting a lion; whoever subdues it through resistance is like one who has put his enemy to flight and is pursuing him; but whoever has become completely free from the very attachment, having once and for all made it impossible for it to gain any access to him, though he remains in the flesh, has already risen from the grave.

6. If the mark of purity is to feel no lustful impulse even in one's dreams, then surely the extreme degree of lustfulness would be to suffer emissions in waking life from mere thoughts and memories alone.

7. Whoever wages war against this adversary through physical labor and sweat is like one who has bound his enemy with a rope; whoever wages war against his enemy with abstinence and vigilance is like one who has bound his enemy with iron shackles; and whoever arms himself against him with humility, patience, and self-denial is like one who has slain his adversary and hidden him in the sand.

8. There are those who bind this tormentor through heroic deeds, those through humility, and those through God's inner inspiration. The first is like the dawn, the second like the full moon, and the third like the radiant sun; but all of them dwell in heaven.

9. The fox pretends to be asleep, and the demon pretends to be chaste; the former to deceive a bird, and the latter to destroy a soul. Do not trust this mortal body throughout your life; and do not rely on it until we stand before Christ.

10. For beginners, falls into carnal sins usually occur because of an abundance of food; for those of intermediate standing, they arise from pride, and for the same reason as with beginners; but for those approaching perfection, they occur only because of judgmental attitudes toward others.

11. Some praise those who are eunuchs by nature (from birth) as having been delivered from the torments of the flesh; but I praise those who daily make themselves eunuchs and, with their thoughts—like a knife—have grown accustomed to circumcising themselves.

12. Do not think to overthrow the demon of lust with arguments and proofs; he has favorable grounds on his side, since he wages war against us by means of our very nature.

13. Whoever hopes to struggle against his own flesh, or to conquer it by his own strength, labors in vain. For if the Lord does not destroy the house of carnal lust and build the house of the soul, then he who attempts to succeed in this by his own efforts watches and fasts in vain.

14. Cast down before the Lord the weakness of your nature, acknowledging your utter powerlessness in all things, and you will imperceptibly receive the gift of chastity.

15. Those who have slipped and fallen into the pit of lust fall far behind those ascending and descending the ladder (seen by Jacob); and in order for them to resume such an ascent, they require much toil and extreme penance.

16. There is fornication even without knowing a wife—which, being unnatural, subjects one to greater torment. It is a kind of death and destruction that we always carry within ourselves, and most of all in our youth. But I do not dare to declare this destruction in writing, for my hand is restrained by the one who said, “*It is shameful even to mention or speak of the things that are done in secret*” (Eph. 5:12).

17. The inhuman enemy, the instigator of fornication, portrays God as merciful, suggesting that He shows great leniency toward this passion as if it were natural. But observe this schemer closely, and you will find that, once this sin has been committed, he already portrays God differently—as merely just and unforgiving. He makes the first suggestion to draw us into sin, and the second to plunge us into despair.

18. When, after committing a sin, we are tormented by anguish and despair, it is not our nature to give in to further falls; but when these feelings subside, the malicious enemy once again begins to speak to us of God’s love for humanity.

19. The Lord, being incorruptible and incorporeal, rejoices in the purity and incorruptibility of our body; the demons, however, rejoice in nothing more than foul fornication, and love no passion as much as this one, which defiles the body.

20. The mother of sweetness (of fruits that bring comfort) is the earth and the dew; and the mother of purity is silence combined with obedience. Purity of the body, attained through silence alone, while bringing one closer to the world, often did not remain unshakable; but that which is attained through obedience is universally virtuous and unshakable.

21. Whoever attempts to quell this struggle through abstinence alone is like a man striving to swim out of the depths of the sea using only one hand. Combine abstinence with humility; for the former, without the latter, proves useless.

22. Whatever passion you see reigning within yourself, arm yourself most of all against that one, especially against your natural inner enemy. For if you and I do not conquer this passion, victory over others will be of no benefit to us; but having struck down this Egyptian, we too will surely behold God in the bush of humility.

23. When I was tempted, I felt joy, tears, and comfort, and in my naivety I thought this was a spiritual fruit, but it was the enemy’s deception.

24. Do not be deceived, young man! I have seen some who prayed for those they loved, who, though driven by lustful passion, nevertheless thought they were fulfilling the duty of holy love.

25. When we lie down on our beds, that is when we must be most vigilant; for then the mind, separated from the body, wrestles with the demons; and if it has not yet cut off all sympathy for the sweetness of lust, it readily becomes a traitor.

26. May the remembrance of death fall asleep and rise with you, along with the prayer of Jesus; for nothing can provide you with such powerful intercession during sleep as these practices.

27. Emissions during sleep sometimes occur from an abundance of food, and generally from excessive indulgence of the flesh; sometimes from pride, when we, having long remained free from emissions, become puffed up by this; sometimes from the fact that we condemn our neighbor; and sometimes simply from demonic envy. God allows this to happen to some so that, through this misfortune, He may teach the sinless person humility.

28. Do not allow yourself to dwell during the day on the dreams you had while sleeping; for it is the demons' intention to defile us while we are awake through these dreams.

29. During the storm of temptation by lust, the following are a great help to us: a hair shirt, ashes, standing all night, hunger, scorching thirst—quenched only by a few drops—staying in cemeteries, and above all, humility of heart; and if possible, a spiritual father or a zealous brother, quick to help and wise in experience; for I consider it a miracle that anyone could, on their own, save their ship from this abyss.

30. A certain man, upon seeing an extraordinarily beautiful woman, glorified the Creator through her. From gazing upon her, love for God was kindled within him, and a fountain of tears burst forth from his eyes. And it was wondrous to see how that which would have led another to ruin became, for him, a crown of victory beyond the natural order. If such a person always has the same feelings and actions in similar situations, then he has attained incorruptibility even before the general resurrection.

31. We must be guided by the same rule with regard to hymns and songs. Those who love God are usually stirred by both secular and spiritual songs to holy joy, God's love, and tears, while those who love sensual pleasures are stirred to the opposite.

32. Some say that after tasting carnal sin, it is impossible to be called pure; but I, refuting their opinion, say that it is possible and easy for one who desires to transform a wild olive tree into a good one through grafting. If the keys of the Kingdom were entrusted to one who is chaste in the flesh, then the opinion of those people might be justified. But let them be put to shame by the one who, having a mother-in-law, became pure and bears the keys of the Kingdom.

33. The serpent of carnal lust takes many forms: to those who have not tasted its sweetness, it suggests tasting it just once and then stopping; but to those who have tasted it, this cunning serpent urges them to taste it again. Many of the former, being unaware of this evil, remain free from temptation; but the latter, having experienced this abomination, suffer temptations and incitements. However, the opposite often happens as well.

34. When we rise from sleep in a good and peaceful frame of mind, this happens to us through the hidden influence of the Holy Angels, especially if we fell asleep in prayer and sobriety. But it happens that we rise in a gloomy and vexed state of mind, suffering this because of evil dreams.

35. It is no wonder that the immaterial should struggle against the immaterial; but it is a miracle—and truly a wondrous miracle—that one clothed in matter should put immaterial enemies to flight, in the struggle against this very matter of his own, which is hostile and treacherous.

36. The wise Fathers hold that one thing is *an apposition*, another is *a conjunction*, another is *a coordination*, another is *a subjugation*, another is *a struggle*, and yet another is *the* so-called *passion* of the soul. They define an apposition as a simple word (thought) or an image of some object that reappears to the mind and is brought into the heart; *a conjunction* is a dialogue with the image that has appeared, whether with passion or dispassionately; *an assimilation* is the soul's inclination toward what is seen, accompanied by delight; *captivation* is the violent and involuntary enticement of the heart by what is seen, or its complete fusion with it, which disrupts our sound disposition; "*struggle*" refers to strenuous resistance against the adversary, ending either in victory or defeat—at will; and "*passion*" refers to such a lustful disposition which, having taken root in the soul, is then, through long habit, transformed into what seems to be a natural property of the soul, so that the soul already strives of its own accord and of its own volition toward its satisfaction. Of all these, the first is sinless; the second is not entirely so; the third may be either sinful or sinless, depending on the disposition of the one who strives. This struggle is either a source of reward or of torment. Captivity is subject to judgment in some cases when it occurs during prayer, and in others when it occurs at other times—in some cases when one thinks of indifferent things, and in others when one thinks of evil things. As for *the passion*, it is undoubtedly condemned in every case, and if it is not purified by equivalent repentance, it is subject to eternal torment. But whoever treats the first—that is, the initial impulse—with detachment (rejecting it without dwelling on it with their attention) cuts off everything that follows in one fell swoop.

37. The most enlightened and discerning of the Fathers have also noted another thought, one that is more subtle than all those mentioned above. It is called a "flash of thought"—which, without a specific time, without a word or image, and with the speed of an arrow, instills passion in the one being tempted. There is nothing more fleeting in the body, nothing faster or more instantaneous in the spirit, than the way this thought—with a single subtle reminder—timeless, unspoken, and for some even unknown—suddenly makes its presence felt in the soul, without prior consultation or agreement with it. – Whoever has been able to grasp

through tears (to understand, to grasp) such subtlety of this thought? That person can also explain to us how it happens that the soul, from a single glance, or the touch of a hand, or the sound of singing, passionately strays (is defiled and corrupted by lust) without having thought about it or intended it.

38. Sometimes lust, having arisen within the soul, passes into the body, and sometimes it passes from the body into the soul. The latter usually happens to those living in the world, and the former to those leading a monastic life, due to the scarcity of the substance (or material) of lust within them.

39. When, after a long struggle with the demon—the ally of our mortal flesh—we finally drive him out of our hearts with the stones of fasting and the swords of humility, then this accursed one, like a worm crawling within our body, strives to defile us with a certain tickling sensation, arousing untimely and inarticulate movements.

40. This demon watches more closely than any other for the moment when we are physically unable to pray against him. And then this vile one makes a special effort to attack us.

41. For those who have not yet attained true prayer from the heart, exerting oneself in bodily prayer helps (in the struggle against lust)—that is, the raising of the hands, the beating of the chest, the tender lifting of the eyes to heaven, sighs mixed with groans, and frequent kneeling; —which, however, they are often unable to do because of the presence of others. —It is precisely then that the demons try especially hard to attack them; and since they do not yet have the strength to resist them with steadfastness of mind and the invisible power of prayer, they may, out of necessity, sometimes yield to those who are fighting against them. In such a case, however, withdraw from people as quickly as possible, if you can; hide somewhere out of sight for a short time—and there, raising your eyes in sorrow—spiritual, if you can, and if not, at least physical—and spreading your arms in the shape of a cross, to thus put to shame and defeat the mental Amalek, —cry out to the Almighty to save you, not with cunning words, but with humble utterances, first and foremost imploring: *“Have mercy on me, for I am weak”* (Ps. 6:3). Then, through experience, you will come to know the power of the Most High, and with invisible aid, you will put the invisible ones to flight. Having become skilled in this manner of warfare, you will soon drive away your enemies with your soul alone; for this second gift is given by God to those who do the first as a reward.

42. Drink eagerly, as the water of life, the reproach from every person who wishes to give you this medicine that cleanses you from lustful desires; for then profound purity will shine forth in your soul, and the light of God will not be lacking in your heart.

43. Do not cease to imagine and recall the abyss of dark fire, the merciless servants, the unmerciful and implacable Judge, the endless depth of the flames of hell, the narrow passages leading to the underworld, the dreadful chasms, and other things of this kind; so that through the fear born of these recollections, you may cast away from yourself the sensation of lust, unite yourself with incorruptible purity, and receive into your soul the radiance of the incorporeal light, which is more brilliant than all other lights.

44. There is a demon who, as soon as we lie down on our bed, comes to us and bombards us with cunning and impure thoughts: so that, being too lazy to arm ourselves against them with prayer, and falling asleep with impure thoughts, we may then be overwhelmed by impure dreams.

45. What the eyes have not seen, the throat does not strongly desire to taste merely from hearing about it; so too, those who are pure in body derive great relief in the battle against fornication from their ignorance of its (fornicatory) delights.

46. Just as one who fights a lion and takes his eyes off it perishes immediately, so too does one who struggles against his own flesh—if he gives it rest.

47. For those who struggle against bodily lust, silence is appropriate at times—but only with the permission of a mentor who knows them well.

48. I have learned that the demon of despondency precedes the demon of fornication and prepares the way for him; by thoroughly relaxing the body and plunging it into sleep, it enables the demon of fornication to commit defilements in the sleeper just as in waking life.

49. Just as an earthly king finds it abhorrent when someone stands before him, turns his face away from him, and converses with his enemies, so too is it abhorrent to the Lord when someone stands before Him in prayer while harboring impure thoughts.

50. When this dog (the demon of lust) comes to you, drive him away with the spiritual weapon of prayer; and no matter how shamelessly he persists, do not yield to him.

51. (*Confession of Lustful Passion*). The soul asks: “Tell me, my spouse—my very nature (for I wish to ask no one but you about what concerns you)—tell me, how can I remain unscathed by you? How can I overcome your torment?” She, answering her soul, says: “I will not tell you what you yourself do not know; but I will tell you what we both understand. I have within me my father—self-love (self-indulgence and self-pity). From afar, every form of self-indulgence and comfort prepares my arousal; from this comfort and the deeds that accompany it, a lustful burning then ignites within me. And then, having conceived, I give birth to sins; and they, once born, in turn give birth to the death of the soul through despair. – If you recognize my weakness and your own—both obvious and profound—you will bind my hands. If you starve my throat, you will bind my feet so that I may not go any further. If you unite yourself with obedience, you will sever your bond with me. And if you acquire humility, you will cut off my head.

3. *The Struggle Against Greed*

1. The love of money is the daughter of unbelief. It uses possible weaknesses, the approach of old age, and the sudden onset of famine due to drought as excuses for itself.

2. The lover of money is a scoffer and a willful violator of the Gospel. (The spirit of the Gospel is love.) But whoever has love will not hoard money. Anyone who tries to get along with both (love and money) is deceiving himself.

3. Whoever mourns for himself renounces (not only his possessions but) his own body as well; and if the time demands it, he will not spare even that.

4. Do not say that you need to collect for the poor (in order to gain the Kingdom by helping them), for the Kingdom can be bought even for two lepta.

5. A lover of travel and a lover of money met; and the latter called the former imprudent.

6. Whoever has conquered this passion (for money) has cut off all worries; but whoever is bound by it (is always tormented by worries) and can never pray with a pure heart.

7. The love of money begins with the intention of giving alms, but ends in hatred of the poor. And he (the money-lover), while he is gathering, is merciful, but as soon as he has gathered enough, he clenches his fists.

8. I have seen beggars who, though living the life of the spiritually poor, have become spiritually rich and have forgotten their former poverty.

9. The non-acquisitive person has set aside all earthly cares, does not worry about life and worldly matters, and walks his path unhindered. He is the master of the world, having cast all his sorrow upon God. He will not tell anyone of his need, but accepts whatever comes as coming from the hand of the Lord.

10. The non-acquisitive person is attached to nothing and does not think about what he has, as if it did not exist; for he had already renounced everything when he decided to become a hermit. Whoever grieves over anything is not yet non-acquisitive.

11. The non-covetous person prays with a pure heart, but the covetous person, during prayer, is filled with material images, as if praying to them.

12. Those who live in obedience are free from the love of money; for when they have even surrendered their own bodies, what else can they possibly possess as their own?

13. One who has tasted the heavenly regards earthly things as nothing; but one who has not tasted the former delights in the acquisition of the latter.

14. O monks! Let us not be less faithful than the birds—which neither sow nor gather.

15. Great is the one who has piously renounced all possessions; but the one who renounces them of his own free will is holy. The former will receive a hundredfold, whether in possessions or in gifts, while the latter will inherit eternal life.

16. Waves will not leave the sea, nor will anger and sorrow leave the lover of silver.

17. Unshakable faith dispels all anxiety, and the remembrance of death teaches one to renounce even the body.

18. There was not a trace of greed in Job; that is why, even after losing everything, he remained unperturbed.

19. “*The root of all evil*” is called “*the love of money*” (1 Tim. 6:10); for it gives rise to hatred, theft, envy, divisions, strife, discord, malice, cruelty, and murder.

20. Faith and a life of pilgrimage are the death of the love of money; but mercy and love spare not even the body itself.

21. Just as those with shackles on their feet cannot walk comfortably, so too those who hoard money cannot ascend to heaven.

22. If the extreme degree of greed is when a person cannot stop accumulating wealth or is never satisfied with it, then the height of non-greed consists in not sparing even one's own body.

23. Let us cast aside our cares; for we have enrolled ourselves among those who are free from cares. We have no excuse if we do not fulfill this. Let us remember one thing: that to those who have received the Lord through the renewal of Holy Baptism, He has given "*the right to become children of God*" (John 1:12); which is why it is said to them: "*Be still and know that I am God*" (Ps. 45:11).

24. It is a great shame for us who have left everything behind, after the calling by which the Lord—and not man—called us, to concern ourselves with anything that cannot benefit us during our great need, that is, at the hour of the soul's departure. This is what it means, as the Lord said, to turn back and not be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

25. The demon of avarice battles against those who are not covetous; and when he cannot overcome them, he presents beggars to them and, under the guise of mercy, persuades them to turn from the immaterial back to the material.

26. Just as those who exchange gold for clay suffer a great loss, so too do those who, for the sake of material gain, proclaim and publicize their spiritual achievements—they suffer nothing but loss.

4. The Struggle Against Anger

1. *Anger* is the recollection of hidden hatred, that is, resentment. "*Anger*" is the desire to harm the one who has caused distress. "*Irritability*" (quick temper) is a momentary flare-up of the heart. "*Grief*" is an unpleasant (annoying) feeling lodged in the soul. "*Fury*" is the corruption of a good disposition and the defilement of the soul.

2. Some, being prone to irritability and anger, pay no attention to it and do not care to heal this passion, not considering what the Wise One said: "*The impulse of fury is his downfall*" (Sir. 1:22).

3. Anger, like the rapid movement of a millstone, can in a single moment grind away and destroy the wheat and fruit of the soul—more than anything else can in an entire day. Therefore, one must watch oneself carefully. Like a flame fanned by a strong wind, it scorches and destroys the field of the soul more quickly than a slow fire.

4. Impartiality is an insatiable desire for dishonor, just as the vain have an excessive desire for praise. Impartiality is a victory over one's nature, attained through toil and sweat, accompanied by indifference to insults.

5. Meekness is an unshakable disposition of the soul, remaining the same in the face of both dishonor and praise.

6. The beginning of non-anger is silence of the lips when the heart is troubled; the middle is silence of the thoughts when the soul is slightly disturbed; and the end is unshakable stillness in the face of the winds of impurity.

7. Just as water, poured continuously onto a fire, extinguishes it completely, so too do the tears of true weeping usually extinguish every flame of anger and wrath.

8. Just as darkness is dispelled by the appearance of light, so every sorrow and anger vanishes from the fragrance of humility.

9. Nothing is more out of place for those who repent than irritable anger; for turning to God requires great humility, while irritability is a sign of a high opinion of oneself.

10. If the height of meekness is to remain peaceful and loving in one's heart toward an irritable person even in their presence, then without a doubt the height of anger is when someone, being alone with themselves, wages a fierce battle and struggle against the one who has offended them, expressing this through words and gestures.

11. If the Holy Spirit is the peace of the soul, and anger is the turmoil of the heart, then nothing poses such an obstacle to His dwelling within us as irritable anger.

12. Silence of the lips is the first weapon against anger; but it is possible, under the guise of silence, to hide a grudge. And this is worse; it is better to speak one's mind, even in anger. Some, when angry, refuse to

eat—and thereby only deepen this passion; while others eat a great deal—and this drives them into a rage—whereas moderate consolation has often helped to quell fury. Therefore, the struggle against this passion requires great prudence. And nature itself aids it, just as it does the serpent of carnal lust.

13. Sometimes moderate singing successfully dispels irritation; but sometimes, when it is excessive and untimely, it contributes to sensuality. Therefore, one must make use of this remedy, wisely establishing both its measure and its time.

14. It is more beneficial for the angry to live in community, while the lustful would do better to lead a life of silence, as a remedy against fornication and foul impurity. Those suffering from either of these ailments must entrust themselves to the care of a spiritual father, so that he may at times keep them in silence and at other times engage them in the practices of communal obedience.

15. It is very harmful to disturb the eye of the heart with irritation, as the one who said, “*My eye is troubled by anger*” (Ps. 6:8), put it; but it is even more harmful to express the inner turmoil of anger in words; and to let one’s hands act upon it as well—this is entirely contrary to and alien from the monastic life—the angelic and divine life.

16. Let us look closely—and we will see that many of the wrathful diligently observe vigil, fasting, and silence—and the enemy does not hinder them in this; for he knows how, even amid acts of repentance and weeping, to prepare the fuel for the nourishment and rekindling of this passion.

17. The beginning of blessed meekness is to patiently endure insults, despite the bitterness and pain of the soul; the middle stage is to keep one’s heart free from sorrow and care during such times; and perfection, if it occurs, is to regard them as a source of praise for oneself.

18. It is one thing for beginners to be free from anger, arising from penitential weeping, and another for the perfected to be unmoved by anger. In the former, anger is restrained by tears, as by a kind of bridle, while in the latter, this serpent is slain by the sword of dispassion.

19. I saw three monks who had all suffered dishonor together. One of them felt insulted but remained silent; another rejoiced for himself but grieved for the one who had reviled him; the third, however, having imprinted the harm done by his neighbor upon his mind, shed fervent tears for him. Here we see the practitioners of fear, reward, and love.

20. Holding a grudge is the ultimate expression of anger—keeping the sins (committed by our neighbor against us) in memory, rejecting the path to forgiveness (as ordained by God: “Forgive, and you will be forgiven”), —the ruin of all former virtues, a poison that kills the soul, a worm gnawing at the heart, a shame to pray (how can one say, “Forgive us, as we forgive?”), a nail driven into the soul, unceasing sin, relentless lawlessness, and hourly evil.

21. He who has subdued his anger has nipped in the bud the seeds of resentment; for children are begotten only by a living father.

22. He who has acquired love has become a stranger to enmity; but he who harbors enmity multiplies within himself labors that know no rest.

23. If you are to hold a grudge, hold it against the demons; and if you are to be hostile, be hostile toward your own body at all times. The flesh is an ungrateful and treacherous friend; when you indulge it, it harms you even more.

24. A vindictive heart is a twisted interpreter of Scripture, allegorically twisting the words of the Spirit to suit itself. But may the prayer given to us by the Lord Jesus put it to shame—a prayer we cannot utter while harboring a vindictive heart.

25. If, after much effort to improve yourself, you are unable to tear this thorn from your heart, then go and humbly repent before the one against whom you harbor enmity, even if only in words; and, ashamed of your long-standing hypocrisy toward him, you will embrace him in your love, your conscience pricking you like fire.

26. Do not consider yourself free from this affliction merely because you have prayed for the one who offended you, or given him gifts, or invited him to a meal; but only when, upon hearing that he has suffered some misfortune—whether spiritual or physical—you are deeply moved and weep for him as you would for yourself.

27. The memory of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus heals a vindictive heart—a heart that is deeply humbled by His lack of malice.

28. Some subject themselves to toil and sweat in order to obtain forgiveness, but the one who does not hold a grudge is ahead of them. For the saying is true: “If *you forgive others* quickly, *you too will be forgiven* generously” (Luke 6:37).

29. Not holding onto evil is a sign of true repentance; but whoever, while remembering evil, thinks that repentance is taking place is like a person who, in a dream, imagines himself running.

30. I have seen resentful people who, while advising other resentful people not to be resentful, were ashamed of their own words and turned away from this passion.

31. Slander is born of hatred and a grudge—a subtle ailment, a hidden leech that sucks the blood of love.

32. Some people mask slander with love, with a desire to correct. But if you love your neighbor, do not speak ill of him; instead, pray for him. Only such conduct is pleasing to the Lord.

33. Whoever wishes to rid themselves of the spirit of condemnation should direct their rebuke not at the one who falls, but at the tempting devil. For no one desires to sin against God, though everyone is free to sin of their own accord (i.e., sins of their own volition).

34. One of the shortest paths to receiving forgiveness of sins is to judge no one; for it is said, “*Do not judge, and you will not be judged*” (Luke 6:37).

35. Just as fire is opposed to water, so it is unbecoming for a repentant person to judge others. Even if you were to see someone sinning at the very moment their soul leaves their body—even then, do not condemn them, for God’s judgment is hidden from people. Some have clearly fallen into great sin, yet in secret have performed even greater good deeds; and those who love to gossip have been led astray, seeing only the smoke and failing to perceive the sun behind it.

36. Experience has shown that whatever sins—whether of the body or of the soul—we use to condemn our neighbor, we ourselves will fall into.

37. Those who are quick and harsh in condemning their neighbor’s transgressions are indignant because of this passion, for they lack a perfect and constant remembrance of and sorrow for their own sins. For if anyone, unclouded by the veil of self-love, looks truthfully upon his own evil deeds, he will no longer concern himself with anything else but them, rightly reasoning that even his entire life would not be enough to mourn for himself—even if he lived a hundred years, and even if he saw the entire Jordan River flowing from his own eyes.

38. Demons, the murderers of souls, incite us either to sin or, if we do not sin, to condemn those who do, so that through this they may defile us—and those who do not sin as well.

39. Know that, in a spirit of hostility, taking pleasure in criticizing a neighbor’s teachings, deeds, and virtues is a sign of vindictive and envious people.

40. I have seen people who secretly commit grave sins—sins that simply remain undisclosed—who, convinced of their own purity, mercilessly attack those who have fallen into sins, even if minor, that have become public knowledge.

41. To judge is a shameless usurpation of God’s authority; and to condemn is the ruin of one’s own soul.

42. Just as pride, even without any other passion, can destroy a person, so condemnation alone can completely destroy us. Thus, that Pharisee was condemned for this.

43. The angry man and the hypocrite met; and in their conversation, not a single word of truth could be found. If you look into the heart of the former, you will find fury; and if you examine the soul of the latter, you will see deceit.

44. Just as winds stir up the abyss, so anger, more than any other passion, agitates the mind.

45. (*Confession of This Passion*). Tell us, O mad and shameful passion, what is the name of the father who begot you, and what is the name of the mother who bore you wickedly; also, what are the names of your wicked sons and daughters; and not only that, but who are those who struggle against you, and who are those who slay you? – “I have many mothers, and more than one father. My mothers are: vanity, greed, gluttony, and sometimes fornication; but my chief father is pride. My daughters are: rancor, hatred, enmity, and self-justification. My rivals are the virtues opposite to my daughters—forbearance and meekness; my slanderer, however, is humility.”

5. The Struggle Against Sorrow

1. Whoever has come to hate the world has escaped sorrow. But whoever is attached to anything visible has not yet been freed from it; for how can one not be saddened by the loss of a beloved thing? Although we must maintain self-control in all things, we must be especially prudent and attentive in this regard.

2. When the abbot tests us with beneficial humiliation through rebukes and reprimands, let us recall the terrible words of the Universal Judge; and we will undoubtedly cut through the reckless sorrow and grief instilled in us with meekness and patience, as with a double-edged sword.

3. If we have fallen, let us first and foremost take up arms against the spirit of sorrow; for it, appearing during our prayer and reminding us of our former boldness before God, seeks to turn us away from prayer.

4. Love for the lowly is the cure for irritability; while psalm-singing, mercy, and non-covetousness are the slayers of sorrow.

5. Just as too much wood smothers and extinguishes the flame and produces a great deal of smoke, so too does excessive sorrow make the soul, as it were, smoky and dark, and dries up the stream of tears.

6. The narrow path is marked by disgrace, reproach, ridicule, insults, and the burden of afflictions. And it leads to salvation if you—when wronged—endure with courage; when slandered—do not resent; when humiliated—do not become angry; and when condemned—submit with humility. Blessed are those who walk in the ways of this path, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:3–12).

7. Willingly enduring all sorrow is the true, saving path of repentance.

8. To consider oneself worthy not only of the visible and invisible sorrows already endured, but also of greater ones, is a sign of active repentance.

9. Just as water, when confined, rises upward, so too does the soul, oppressed by misfortunes, flow upward in repentance toward God and be saved.

10. A certain Abba Kir was mistreated every day at the monastery; and the servants would drive him away from the meal almost every day, so that he was often left without food. I (St. John Climacus) asked him how he viewed this. He replied: “Believe me, Father, these fathers of mine are testing me to see if I am truly a monk. And since they do not do this in earnest, I, knowing their intention, bear it cheerfully and do not grieve.” – At the time of his death, two years later, he said: “I thank you, brothers; for because you tempted me for my own salvation, I was free from demonic temptations for seventeen years.”

11. Another man, a certain Macedon, an elder, had been justly sentenced—as a punishment—to remain always among the novices; but when his term ended, he himself begged to be allowed to remain under this humiliating penance, as if he had sinned gravely. – Later, he confessed to St. John Climacus: “I have never experienced such relief in any inner struggle, and never before have I felt within myself the sweetness of the Divine light as I do now.”

12. As we are pierced by reproaches, let us remember our sins until the Lord, seeing our need and the harm we inflict upon ourselves, deigns to blot out our sins—and transforms the sorrows that gnaw at our hearts into joy, as the Psalmist says: “*Though I have many sorrows in my heart, Your comfort has gladdened my soul*” (Ps. 93:19).

13. Blessed is the one who, being rebuked and humiliated daily for God’s sake, compels himself to endure; he will rejoice with the martyrs and speak boldly with the angels. – Whoever rejects righteous or unrighteous rebuke rejects his own salvation, but whoever accepts it—whether with sorrow or without—will soon receive forgiveness of sins.

14. My son! If you first submit yourself to the endurance of dishonor, you will labor only a little to attain blessed peace of mind.

15. Just as a small fire softens a great deal of wax, so too does a small humiliation often suddenly soften the heart, soothe it, and eradicate all its ferocity, all its insensitivity and bitterness.

16. Annoyances, humiliations, and all such occurrences in the soul of a novice are likened to the bitterness of wormwood—while praise, honor, and approval are likened to honey. But wormwood purifies all inner impurity, whereas honey usually increases bitterness.

6. The Struggle Against the Spirit of Despondency

1. Despondency is a slackening of the soul, neglect of spiritual struggles, and aversion to one’s vow; it is the delight of the laity, a slanderer of God, as if He were unmerciful and inhuman; in psalm-singing it is

discordant, in prayer it is feeble, yet in physical service it is strong as iron, in manual labor it is diligent, and in obedience it is swift and willing.

2. A man who lives in obedient submission knows no despondency; and through the sensual, he prospers in the spiritual.

3. Community life is the enemy of despondency, but for the silent monk, it is a constant companion; it will not depart from him before death, nor will it cease to struggle against him until his passing. Upon seeing the hermit's cell, it smiles, and drawing near, it settles close to him.

4. A doctor visits the sick in the morning, but despondency visits the ascetics around noon.

5. Despondency incites hospitality and pesters with suggestions to give alms from one's earnings; it eagerly urges visits to the sick, recalling the words: "*I was sick, and you came to Me*" (Matt. 25:36); it persistently urges: "Go to those who are grieving and the faint-hearted"—and, being faint-hearted itself, advises us to comfort the faint-hearted.

6. To those who have set out to pray, it reminds them of necessary tasks and devises every possible means to distract us from prayer with some blessing, like a silent bridle.

7. Each of the other passions is overcome by a single virtue; but despondency, for the monk, is all-encompassing death. Of all the eight leaders of evil, the spirit of despondency is the most grievous.

8. When there is no psalm singing, despondency does not arise; and at the end of the rule (during which drowsiness sets in), the eyes open cheerfully.

9. During attacks of despondency, the temptations of the flesh are revealed; and nothing brings as many crowns to the attentive monk as despondency.

10. He who weeps over himself knows no despondency.

11. A monk who loves money does not know despondency: he constantly recalls the words of the Apostle: "*Let the idle not eat*" (2 Thess. 3:10), and another: "*These hands have ministered to me and to those with me*" (Acts 20:34).

12. Despondency sometimes arises from indulging in sensual pleasures, and sometimes from a lack of reverence before God.

13. Diligent prayer is the antidote to despondency; the remembrance of the Last Judgment, however, gives rise to zeal (to act according to God's will).

14. Good hope is the sword with which the monk conquers and slays despondency.

15. (*Confession of Despondency*). Tell us, you negligent and lax passion: who is the one who gave birth to you in evil? What are your offspring? Who are those who wage war against you? And who is your murderer? – (*Answer*). – I have many mothers: sometimes the insensitivity of the soul, sometimes forgetfulness of heavenly blessings, and sometimes excessive labor. My offspring, who dwell with me, are changes of residence, disregard for the commandments of the spiritual father, forgetfulness of the Last Judgment, and sometimes the abandonment of the monastic vow. My adversaries, who bind me, are psalm-singing and needlework. My enemy is the thought of death; yet prayer, with firm hope of attaining eternal blessings, puts me to death.

7. The Struggle Against Vanity

1. Vanity is the squandering of labor, the loss of sweat, the thief of the soul's treasure, an ant on the threshing floor of life, which, though small, is always ready to steal the fruits of our labor and the rewards of our deeds.

2. Vanity clings to everything: I boast when I fast, but when I break my fast to hide my self-denial from others, I boast again, considering myself wise; I am overcome by vanity when I dress in fine clothes; but even when I dress in shabby clothes, I still boast; if I speak, I am overcome by vanity; if I remain silent, I am again overcome by it. No matter how you throw this trident, its tip will always point upward.

3. A vain person is an idolater. He thinks he is honoring God, but in reality he is pleasing people, not God.

4. Anyone who loves to show off is vain. The fasting of the vain goes unrewarded, and their prayer is fruitless; for they do both to seek human praise.

5. A vain ascetic does himself a double wrong, for he exhausts his body but receives no reward.

6. The Lord often hides from our eyes the virtues we have acquired; but a person who praises us—or rather, flatters us—opens our eyes with praise, and as soon as they are opened, the wealth of virtue vanishes (it is, as it were, devoured from our sight).

7. The flatterer is a servant of demons, the leader of pride, the destroyer of compassion, the ruiner of virtues, and the one who leads one astray from the true path. *“Those who bless you flatter you, and they make your feet stumble,”* says the Prophet (Isaiah 3:12).

8. I have seen weeping people who, upon being praised, flared up in anger at the praise and, as often happens in business, exchanged one passion for another.

9. When a neighbor—or even a friend—reproaches you, whether in your absence or in your presence, show love by praising him.

10. It is a great thing to reject human praise from the heart, but it is greater still to turn away demonic praise.

11. It is not the one who disparages himself who shows humility (for who can endure insults from himself?), but the one who, when rebuked by another person, does not diminish his love for that person.

12. When the demon of vanity sees that an ascetic has attained, even if only a little, peace of heart, he immediately urges him to go out into the world, saying, “Go and save the perishing souls.”

13. Vanity prompts the frivolous, in the presence of others, to put on a mask of humility and to display piety in their actions, facial expressions, and tone of voice; at the table, it compels them to abstain conspicuously; during psalm singing, it makes the lazy zealous and the tone-deaf melodious.

14. Vanity makes the favored proud and sows resentment in the despised.

15. Vanity clings very easily to natural gifts, and through them often brings ruin upon its unfortunate slaves.

16. Once I saw how the demon of vanity drove out his brother, the demon of wrath. One brother became angry with another; but when laypeople arrived, he suddenly calmed down, having sold himself to vanity; for he could not serve both of these masters at once.

17. Whoever has become a slave to vanity leads a double life: one outwardly, and another in his thoughts and feelings; one in private, and another in public.

18. One who has tasted heavenly glory naturally despises all earthly glory; and I would be surprised if anyone, having not tasted the former, were to completely despise the latter.

19. I have seen some who began their spiritual pursuits out of vanity; but later, having changed their intention in their endeavors, they crowned a reprehensible beginning with a praiseworthy end.

20. Whoever boasts of natural gifts—such as wit, quick understanding, skill in reading and speaking, a sharp mind, and other similar abilities that come to us without effort—will never attain anything higher than natural blessings; for *“whoever is unfaithful in a little will also be unfaithful in much”* because of his pride (Luke 16:10).

21. Whoever asks God for gifts in return for his labors stands on a precarious foundation; but whoever, on the contrary, regards himself as a perpetual debtor before God will suddenly find himself enriched with heavenly riches beyond his expectations.

22. Do not listen to this instigator when he teaches you to proclaim your virtues for the benefit of those who hear you; *“for what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?”* (Matthew 16:26). Nothing benefits one’s neighbors as much as a humble and sincere disposition, and words that reflect it. In this way, we will also encourage others not to become arrogant; and what could be more beneficial than this?

23. Praise exalts and inflates the soul; but when the soul is exalted, pride takes hold of it, lifting it up to the heavens and casting it down into the abyss.

24. Wicked vanity teaches us to assume the appearance of a virtue we do not possess, leading us to be deceived by the Savior’s words: *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds”* (Matt. 5:16).

25. Do not hide your shame with the thought of not giving your neighbor cause for stumbling; though it may not always be useful to apply this remedy, but rather depends on the specific nature of the sins.

26. When our admirers—or, rather, flatterers—begin to praise us, let us hasten to recall our many sins (and God’s judgment, which is not like that of man)—and we will see that we are unworthy of what they say or do in our honor.

27. Those who are simple at heart are not very susceptible to being poisoned by this venom; for vanity is the ruin of simplicity and a life of pretense.

28. It often happens that a worm, having reached maturity, grows wings and soars to great heights; so too does vanity, having grown stronger, give birth to pride, the ruler and consummator of all evils.

29. The beginning of the eradication of vanity lies in guarding one's lips and embracing dishonor; the middle lies in cutting off all mental attachments to vanity; and the end (if there is an end to the abyss) lies in doing, without embarrassment in the presence of others, that which serves to bring dishonor.

30. Conceal your nobility, and do not boast of your high birth, lest you be one way in word and another in deed.

31. I saw an inexperienced disciple who, in the presence of certain people, boasted of his teacher's virtues; and, thinking to claim glory for himself from another's harvest, he instead earned disgrace when everyone said to him, "How is it that a good tree has produced a barren branch?"

32. Vanity loves to make a grand appearance on the throne of loquacity; but silence of the lips puts an end to vanity.

33. Those who succumb to the demon of vanity are subject to sudden surges of lust when, having temporarily freed themselves from lewd thoughts, they begin to think highly of themselves. The lustful impulses that arise as a result lead them to recognize the vanity lurking in the depths of their hearts, and teach them not to attribute the purity of heart that sometimes occurs to their own diligence and effort, following the Apostle's instruction: "*What do you have that you did not receive?*" (1 Cor. 4:7)—whether directly from God or through the help of others and their prayers.

34. Silence and stillness are the enemies of vanity; but if you live in a community, endure the insults.

35. If extreme vanity is when a person, seeing no one around to praise him, acts vainly in private, then the sign of perfect humility is not to be overcome by vain thoughts even in the presence of others.

8. The Struggle Against Pride

1. Pride is the rejection of God, contempt for people, the mother of condemnation, the spawn of praise, the repelling of God's help, the cause of downfall, the source of anger, the bitter tormentor of others' deeds, the inhuman judge, the adversary of God, and the root of blasphemy.

2. *The beginning* of pride is the taking root of vanity; *its "middle"* is the belittling of one's neighbor, the shameless boasting about one's own deeds, self-praise in the heart, and hatred of rebuke; and *its "end"* is the rejection of God's help, arrogant reliance on one's own efforts, and a demonic disposition.

3. I have seen people who thanked God with their lips while boasting in their thoughts. A clear example of this is the Pharisee, when he said, "*God, I thank You*" (Luke 18:11).

4. Where the Fall occurred, pride had already taken root, for pride is the harbinger of the Fall.

5. A self-righteous monk will strongly contradict; but a humble monk will not only refrain from contradicting, but will not even dare to raise his eyes.

6. A cypress tree does not bow down or lie prostrate on the ground; likewise, a haughty monk cannot possess humble obedience.

7. If "*God opposes the proud*" (James 4:6), then who can have mercy on them?—And if "*everyone who is haughty is an abomination to the Lord*" (Proverbs 16:5), then who can purify him?

8. He who rejects rebuke reveals the passion of pride; but he who accepts it has freed himself from the bonds of pride.

9. A wise elder once admonished a proud brother; but the latter, blinded in spirit, said, "Forgive me, Father, I am not proud at all." Then the wise elder replied, "How, my son, can you more clearly prove that you are proud than by asserting that there is no pride in you?"

10. For people of a proud disposition, it is most beneficial to be obedient, to lead the most humble and despised life, and to read accounts of the ruinous consequences of pride and the supernatural cures for it.

11. It is shameful to boast of others' adornments, and it is the height of folly to take pride in God's gifts. Boast only of those virtues you possessed before your birth; as for those you have acquired since your birth, God has granted them to you, just as He granted you life itself. — If you have cultivated any virtues without the aid of your mind, then let them alone be yours, for even the mind itself was given to you by God. — And if you have performed any feats without your body, then they alone were the result of your own effort; for even the body is not yours—it is God's creation.

12. Do not rely on your virtues until you hear the Judge's final verdict concerning you; for in the Gospel we see that even one who was already reclining at the wedding feast was bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness (Matt. 22:13).

13. Let us not cease to examine ourselves and compare our lives with those of the Holy Fathers and luminaries who came before us; and we will find that we have not yet taken a single step to follow in the footsteps of these great men—we have not even fulfilled our vow as we ought, but still remain in the worldly order.

14. A monk is an abyss of humility into which he has cast himself and in which he has drowned every evil spirit.

15. From pride comes the forgetting of sins; but the remembrance of them is the intercessor of humility.

16. Pride is the poverty of the soul, which imagines itself to be rich and, while in darkness, thinks it possesses light.

17. The proud are like an apple, rotten on the inside but shining with beauty on the outside.

18. The proud have no need of the devil, the tempter; they have made themselves their own devil and adversary.

19. Blasphemous words are born in proud hearts, while heavenly visions are born in humble souls.

20. I do not know how it happens that so many of the proud, unaware of themselves, think they have attained dispassion, and only upon leaving this world do they perceive their wretchedness.

21. Whoever is captive to pride desperately needs God's extraordinary help for deliverance; for human means of salvation are futile.

22. Blasphemous thoughts arise from pride, and pride prevents one from confiding them to a spiritual father. That is why it often happens that this affliction plunges some into despair, destroying all their hope, like a worm gnawing away at a tree.

23. There are no thoughts that are (because of pride) as difficult to confess as blasphemous thoughts; therefore, they often remain in many people until old age. But in the meantime, nothing strengthens the demons and evil thoughts against us as much as the fact that we do not confess them but hide them in our hearts—which nourishes them.

24. No one should think that he is guilty of blasphemous thoughts; for the Lord is the knower of hearts and knows that such words and thoughts are not ours, but those of our enemies.

25. Let us learn to despise the spirit of blasphemy, and, paying no attention whatsoever to the thoughts it instills, say to it: *"Get behind me, Satan; I worship the Lord my God, and I will serve Him alone; but may your 'sickness' and your words 'return upon your own head,' and may your blasphemy fall upon your 'head,' in this age and in the age to come (Ps. 7:17).*

26. Whoever despises this enemy is freed from his torment; but whoever intends to fight him in any other way will be overcome by him. He who seeks to conquer spirits with words is like one who tries to shut out the winds.

27. When holy humility begins to flourish within us, then we will begin to despise all human praise and glory. And when it matures, we will not only regard our good deeds as nothing, but we will even count them as an abomination, thinking that we daily add to the burden of our sins by squandering our virtues in ways unknown to us.

28. Diligent repentance and tears, purified of all defilement, build a temple of humility in the heart and tear down the shack of pride built on sand.

29. The signs of the disappearance of pride and the establishment of humility are: joyfully bearing insults and humiliations, the quenching of anger, and disbelief in one's own virtues.

30. The end of all passions is vanity and pride for anyone who does not pay attention to himself. But their destroyer—humility—keeps its possessor unharmed from every deadly poison (of the passions).

31. A humble monk does not pry into things beyond comprehension; but the proud one seeks to probe even the depths of the Lord's decrees.

32. Demons approached one of the most discerning brothers and flattered him. But this humble and wise man said to them: "If you were to cease praising me in my heart, I would conclude from your departure that I am great; but if you do not cease to praise me, I see my impurity in your praise; for *'every proud heart is an abomination to the Lord'* (Prov. 16:5). "Therefore, either depart, so that I may consider myself a great

man; or praise me—and I will gain great humility through you.” They were so struck by this double-edged sword of reasoning that they vanished at once.

33. It is one thing to be arrogant, another not to be arrogant, and yet another to be humble. One person judges all day long; another judges nothing, yet does not condemn himself either; and a third, though blameless, always condemns himself.

34. When a horse runs alone, it seems to itself that it is running fast; but when it runs with others, it realizes how slow it is. (Compare yourself to the best, and you will avoid conceit.)

35. Impure demons secretly planted praise in the heart of a certain attentive ascetic. But he, guided by divine inspiration, was able to overcome the spirits’ cunning with such a pious stratagem: he wrote on the wall of his cell the names of the highest virtues—that is, perfect love, angelic humility, pure prayer, incorruptible purity, and others like them. When his thoughts then began to praise him, he would say to them, “Let us go to the judgment”—and, approaching the wall, he would read the written names—and add: “Even if you acquire all these virtues, know that you are still far from God.”

36. If you wish to acquire an unwavering love for prayer, first train your heart not to look for the sins of others; but the precursor to this must be a hatred of vanity.

37. If we wish to understand ourselves, let us not cease to examine and discipline ourselves; and if, with a sincere heart, we hold that every neighbor of ours is superior to us, then God’s mercy is not far from us.

38. Many call themselves sinners, and perhaps they truly think of themselves that way; but the heart is tempted by humiliation (at the hands of others).

39. Whoever says that he feels the fragrance of humility—even when receiving praise, though his heart is scarcely moved—let him not be deceived, for he is deluded.

40. *“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory,”* said someone in the depths of his soul (Ps. 113: 9); for he knew that human nature, being so weak, cannot accept praise without harm. *“My praise is from You in the great church”* (Ps. 21:26)—in the age to come; but before that, I cannot accept it safely.

41. It is the natural property of the lemon tree that, when barren, it stretches its branches upward; but when they are bent downward, they are more likely to bear fruit. —He who has acquired knowledge understands this.

42. If the pride of some of the angels turned them into demons, then without a doubt humility can turn demons into angels. Therefore, let the fallen take courage, trusting in God.

43. Nothing humbles the soul as much as living in poverty and subsisting on alms.

44. Whoever stubbornly insists on defending his own opinion in conversation, even if it is just, let him know that he is possessed by a devilish affliction (pride); and if he acts this way in conversation with his equals, perhaps the rebuke of his elders will heal him; but if he behaves this way toward those greater and wiser than himself, then people cannot cure this illness.

45. Once I asked one of the most accomplished elders how obedience is connected to humility. He replied: A prudent novice, even if he were to raise the dead and receive the gift of tears, and attain deliverance from strife, always believes that this is accomplished through the prayer of his spiritual father—and remains alien and distant from vain boasting; and indeed, how could he boast of something that, as he himself acknowledges, he accomplished through the help of another and not by his own efforts?

46. While living in the community, be mindful of yourself, and by no means strive to appear more righteous than the other brothers in any way; otherwise, you will commit two evils: you will wound the brothers with your false and feigned zeal, and you will give yourself cause for pride.

47. Be zealous, but in your heart, without expressing it in any way outwardly—neither by your appearance, nor by any word, nor by any subtle sign; in everything, be like your brothers, so that you may avoid pride.

48. False compassion gives rise to pride, while true compassion brings comfort.

49. Whoever takes pride in his own tears and condemns in his mind those who do not weep is like one who has asked the king for weapons against his enemy and then uses them to kill himself.

50. If anyone notices that he is easily overcome by pride and irascibility, cunning and hypocrisy—and wishes to wield against these enemies the double-edged sword of meekness and goodwill—let him hasten to enter, as it were, the launderette of salvation, the assembly of the brethren, —and, moreover, the most severe ones, when he wishes to rid himself completely of his vicious habits; so that there, shaken by the rebukes,

humiliations, and disturbances of the brothers, and struck by them mentally, and sometimes even physically oppressed, trampled upon, and kicked, he may cleanse the robe of his soul—from the filth that dwells within it.

51. I have seen that pride can be the cause of humility. For the fruit of arrogance is a fall into sin; and this fall into sin is often, for those who desire salvation, a cause for humility.

52. A proud soul is a slave to fear; trusting in itself, it fears the faintest sound of creatures and even shadows.

53. The immoral can be corrected by people, the deceitful by angels, but the proud are healed by God Himself.

54. Visible pride is healed by sorrowful circumstances; invisible pride—by the Invisible One before all ages.

55. Watch over pride unceasingly with the eye of the soul; for among all deceptions, there is nothing more destructive than this passion.

56. If the sign of ruin—that is, pride—is when one exalts oneself even over small and insignificant matters, then the saving sign of humility is to maintain a humble mindset even in great undertakings and reforms.

57. Once I caught this mad seductress in my heart, carried there on the shoulders of her mother—vanity. Binding them both with the bonds of obedience and striking them with the whip of humility, I compelled them to tell me how they had entered my soul. Finally, under the blows, they said: “We have neither beginning nor birth, for we ourselves are the rulers and mothers of all passions. One of our enemies—the contrition of the heart born of obedience—harbors no small enmity toward us. But to be subject to anyone—this we cannot endure; that is why, even though we were rulers in heaven, we withdrew from there. In short: we are the mothers of everything opposed to humility; and whatever aids humility opposes us. However, if we appeared in such power even in heaven, where will you flee from our presence? We very often follow those who endure insults, who practice obedience and patience, who do not hold grudges, and who serve their neighbors. Our offspring are the downfall of spiritual men: anger, slander, resentment, irritability, shouting, blasphemy, hypocrisy, hatred, envy, backbiting, self-will, and disobedience. There is one thing we have no strength to resist—being severely beaten by you, we will say this to you as well: “If you sincerely reproach yourself before the Lord, you will despise us as a spider’s web.” “You see,” said pride, “that the horse I ride is vanity; but holy humility and self-reproach will laugh at the horse and its rider, and will sweetly sing that song of victory: *‘Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously exalted; He has cast the horse and its rider into the sea’* (Ex. 15: 1), that is, into the abyss of humility.”

5. On Detachment

1. The stars are the splendor of the firmament, and the adornment of dispassion is virtue.

2. One is called and is impassive who has made his flesh impervious to passions, has elevated his mind above every creature, has subjugated all his senses to his mind, and has presented his soul to the face of the Lord, always reaching out to Him, even beyond his own strength.

3. Some also say that dispassion is the resurrection of the soul before the resurrection of the body, while others say that it is the perfect knowledge of God (union with God)—second only to the angels.

4. This perfect and never-ending perfection of those who are perfect in the Lord—as someone who has tasted it told me—finally sanctifies the mind and detaches it from all material things, so that, upon reaching this heavenly refuge, it spends most of its life in the flesh in an ecstatic vision of heaven.

5. There is the dispassionate, and there is the most dispassionate of the dispassionate. For one hates evil intensely, while the other insatiably enriches himself with virtues.

6. Purity (chastity) is also called dispassion. And rightly so; for it is a foretaste of the general resurrection and the incorruptibility of the perishable.

7. If the sign of complete enslavement to the passions is that a person quickly obeys almost all the thoughts secretly instilled by demons, then I consider it a sign of holy dispassion when someone can truthfully say with David: *“I have not known the wicked who turns away from Me”* (Ps. 100: 4), and do not know how he came, why he came, or how he departed; I have become insensitive to all that, being wholly united with God, and hoping always to remain in such a state.

8. Whoever has been deemed worthy to be in this state, even while still here, clothed in mortal flesh, becomes a temple of the living God, Who guides him and instructs him in all his words, deeds, and thoughts; and he, by virtue of inner enlightenment, discerns the will of the Lord as if hearing a certain voice, and, being above all human teaching, says: *“When shall I come and appear before the face of God?”* (Ps. 41:3)? For I can no longer endure the pangs of heavenly longing, but I seek that immortal beauty which You bestowed upon me before I fell into corruption.

9. The dispassionate one—what more is there to say?—*“no longer lives for himself, but Christ lives in him”* (Gal. 2:20), as he *who “fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith”* (2 Tim. 4:7) said.

10. Just as a royal crown is not made from a single stone, so too dispassion cannot be achieved if we neglect even a single virtue.

11. Humility is born of obedience, and from humility comes dispassion, which is the culmination of humility. The beginning of humility is obedience; and dispassion, which is the daughter of humility, perfects her mother.

12. Some exhaust their bodies in pursuit of dispassion and the abundance of gifts, miracles, and the power of discernment; but these poor souls do not know that it is not toil, but above all humility, that is the mother of these blessings.

13. Whoever has united himself in marriage with the virtue of humility is meek, gentle, easily persuaded, merciful, and above all, peaceful, joyful, submissive, carefree, alert, diligent—and, need I say more? — dispassionate, for *“in our humility the Lord has remembered us, and has delivered us from our enemies”* (Ps. 135: 23–24)—from our passions and defilements.

14. Many have quickly received forgiveness of sins—but no one has quickly attained dispassion; for to attain it requires a long time, much labor of love, and God’s help.

The Holy Venerable Fathers Barsanuphius and John

A Brief Account of Them

Excerpted from **The Lives of the Saints** compiled by Nicodemus the Hagiorite: St. Barsanuphius was originally from Egypt. From a young age, he was filled with a burning desire to lead a life of asceticism. Once, passing by a horse racing track, he entered it and, seeing how everyone there was trying to outrun one another, said to himself: “Do you see how earnestly those seeking perishable crowns strive? ‘Shouldn’t we—the heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven—strive all the more?’” And he left that spectacle, even more fervent in spirit for asceticism than before. Whether he was in any monastery in Egypt is unknown. Tradition indicates that he was a monk directly in Palestine. Having come to Jerusalem to venerate the holy sites, he remained there and at first lived under the guidance of the elder Marcellus, and later moved to the monastery of Abba Serid near Gaza. There, striving for the highest asceticism, he set up a small cell for himself outside the monastery and, shutting himself away in it, enjoyed the sweetest silence. At the beginning of this period of silence, they brought him only three loaves of bread a week from the monastery. But as he gave himself over to weeping and drew great sweetness from his tears, he was often content with just one loaf because of the sensation of this ineffable sweetness, and on many occasions he even forgot to eat it. Thus, he ate sometimes twice a week, sometimes once; for he was frequently drawn to spiritual food, the sweetness of which made him forget about physical food. Over time, washing himself with constant tears, the blessed one so purified his heart of spiritual and bodily passions that he rose above the enemy’s arrows, attained peace of mind—which is the receptacle of the gifts of the Holy Spirit— —and he also attained that in him every passionate impulse and speculation had fallen asleep, or, rather, died, which is why he called his cell a tomb. From the very moment he purified his heart of passions and was deemed worthy to be a temple and dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, as a result of such purity, he was enriched with exalted, true, and perfect humility, by which he considered himself to be dust and ashes—in deed, not merely in word—and always said to himself: “Who am I? And who considers me to be anything at all?” Through such humility, he was deemed worthy of the greatest of all virtues—discernment, which is given by God to the monk as a steward. Through discernment, the great Barsanuphius was granted the gift of insight, by which, according to the explanation of St. Peter of Damascus, the mental and hidden essences of sensible and intelligible beings are comprehended. Through this

insight, he was deemed worthy to receive the gift of clairvoyance and prophecy—to see what is happening far away as if it were close at hand, and the future as if it were the present (Resp. 31. 812). By God’s grace, he also discerned the inner dispositions of people and answered those who questioned him, not according to their words, but in accordance with the direction of their minds and thoughts. And by constantly, in accordance with the words of the divine David, aspiring in his heart toward God, and adding humility to humility, silence to silence, and love to love, he was finally deemed worthy to attain the highest gift—ecstasy in God, in which he was lifted up to the seventh heaven, not on the dreamy wings of thought, but in the ineffable power of the Spirit; and there he received a blessing and beheld the ineffable blessings and mysteries of the kingdom of God, not knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body, just as the great Paul did (2 Cor. 12:3). And he was then granted the abundant gift of miracle-working, so that he could raise the dead in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, cast out demons, heal incurable diseases, perform other mighty deeds and miracles, and, like Elijah, close and open the heavens. Barsanuphius, great among the Fathers, was deemed worthy to receive such great gifts and to attain such great perfection in virtue. However, he acquired these great gifts amid such trials that many not only cannot endure them in reality but cannot even conceive of them by hearsay. Likewise, this most blessed one was subjected to severe illnesses, but he endured them with such fortitude that, even when ill, he not only never reclined on a bed for his own comfort but did not even cease his manual labor. This saint lived in the 6th century, during the reign of Emperor Justinian, and for a full fifty years or more, no one ever saw him. Only once did he appear to several brothers and wash their feet, to dispel doubts about his existence. And toward the end of his life, he parted with the silence so dear to him for the good of the Church, when Justinian began to persecute the Affortodocets—whom he had previously protected—who did not accept his teachings. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, in this time of need, persuaded this great Abba to go to the Emperor with a plea to turn his wrath into mercy. The mission was successful. Convinced by the power of Abba’s words, the Emperor halted the planned persecution of those who, as he saw it, were disobedient to him personally, and restored his favor to the Church of Jerusalem, sending her gifts through Barsanuphius. The great Abba passed away in 563. Others, without specifying the year, generally say: before the year 600. Another elder, the Venerable John, led a life of silence just like Barsanuphius and was granted the same gifts of the Spirit as he, especially and above all the gifts of clairvoyance and prophecy, which is why he was called a prophet. It is unknown where St. John was from or how he came to this monastery. He lived in the first cell of the great Barsanuphius, after the latter had arranged another cell for himself near the same monastery—and he lived in silence there for 18 years until his very death. No one ever saw him smile, or be embarrassed, or receive the Divine Mysteries without tears, as the abbot of that monastery testified about him. By the grace of Providence, the Venerable John, having foretold many other things that came to pass exactly as he had predicted, also foretold his own death, saying this: “I will die in the cells of Abba Serid. If Abba Serid had lived longer, and I had lived another five years, but since God hid this from me and took him away, then I, too, will not live any longer.” But since Abba Elia, who was still young at the time, having been tonsured and appointed abbot of the monastery, did not know the monastic rules or how to govern the brethren, he implored the blessed John: “Grant me just two weeks so that I may ask you about the monastery and its administration,” the elder, taking pity on him and moved by the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, said: “Very well, I will stay with you for two more weeks.” And Abba Elia asked him about everything concerning the administration of the monastic community. At the end of the two weeks, the venerable one summoned the entire monastic community and, greeting each one individually, sent them back to their cells; and then, in peace, he gave up his spirit into the hands of God. After the death of the Venerable John, St. Barsanuphius fell completely silent and no longer gave answers to anyone, as Abba Dorotheus states in the title of his second discourse; after Barsanuphius fell silent, Abba Dorotheus left that monastery and established his own separate community.

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These blessed fathers, who loved their neighbors with all their hearts, not only bestowed spiritual blessings upon them during their lifetimes, but continue to do so even after their deaths, leaving us this soul-saving book of their godly answers as a paternal legacy to their children, so that, by diligently reading it, we may derive great spiritual benefit from it. This book contains 850 answers to various questions posed by different people: bishops, priests, monks, laypeople, elders, the young, the infirm, and the healthy. Some of these answers were written by the so-called “other Elder John,” while others—and indeed the majority of

them—were given by the great Elder Barsanuphius himself, who did not write them himself but dictated them through Abba Serid. The following circumstance is particularly noteworthy. When the great Barsanuphius began to give his answers, he summoned Abba Serid, recounted his answer to him, and instructed him to write it down (the answer was addressed to John, a monk of the Mirosav Monastery). Abba Serid, not expecting to be able to retain in his mind all the words the Saint had spoken to him, wondered how he would write down such a multitude of words, and assumed that the Elder would instruct him to bring ink and paper so that, as he listened, he could write everything down, word for word. St. Barsanuphius, by the grace of discernment granted to him, perceived Serid's secret thought; his face shone like fire, and he said to Serid: "Go, write, and do not be afraid; even if I were to tell you to write countless words, know that the Holy Spirit will not allow you to write a single word more or less than what is said, even if you yourself were to wish it, but will guide your hand to write everything faithfully, in the proper order." Such is this book! Abounding in wondrous reasoning, it resolves the most intractable questions—it is a teacher of patience, an eradicator of grumbling, a sword that cuts off one's own will, an axe that strikes down the desire to please others, a guide to true and perfect humility, teaching us to consider ourselves as nothing, a herald of repentance, a mother of tears, and an intercessor for the salvation of souls and perfection in Christ the Lord.

Instructions for Ascetics

(Select consecutively all passages relating to spiritual struggles and the battle against the passions)

1. Set your mind to give thanks to God for everything, heeding the words of the Apostle: "*Give thanks in all circumstances*" (1 Thess. 5:18). Whether you are in sorrow, in need, in affliction, or in sickness and bodily toil—give thanks to God for everything that befalls you, for "*we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*" (Acts 14:22). Therefore, do not waver in your soul, and do not grow lax in your heart in any way; but remember the words of the Apostle: "*Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day*" (2 Cor. 4:16). Unless you endure suffering, you cannot ascend the cross and partake of its saving fruits.

2. As long as a ship is at sea, it is subject to dangers and the buffeting of the winds. But when it reaches a calm and peaceful harbor, it no longer fears dangers, disasters, or the buffeting of the winds, but remains safe. So too, as long as you remain among people, expect sorrows, dangers, and the buffeting of the winds of the mind. But when you reach the haven of stillness prepared for you, then you will have no fear.

3. Do not lose heart in the sorrows and physical labors you endure while working for the common good; for this, too, means "*to lay down one's life for the brethren*" (1 John 3:16)—and I hope that the reward for this labor will be great. Just as the Lord appointed Joseph to provide for his brothers during the famine (Ps. 32: 19) in Egypt, so He has appointed you to serve the community. I, for my part, repeat to you the words of the Apostle: "*You, therefore, my child, be strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit*" (2 Tim. 2: 1).

4. One attains God's peace through works pleasing to God, while another attains it through humility. You, however, maintain a disposition that will enable you to attain it through both, when anger dies within you as a result of the taming of irritability in your heart; and then the word of Scripture will be fulfilled in you: "*Behold my humility and my toil, and forgive all my sins*" (Ps. 24: 18). May the Lord preserve your soul, your body, and your spirit from all evil, from every opposition wrought by the devil, and from every fantasy that stirs up rebellion in your thoughts.

5. Above all, guard yourself against the spirit of despondency, which gives rise to all evil and various temptations. Why does your heart grow weak and weary because of the sorrow inflicted upon you by Christ's sheep? Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: long-suffering is the mother of all good things. Look at Moses, who chose "*to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin*" (Heb. 11:25).

6. Be careful lest the cunning serpents rob you and poison you with their venom (anger). It is deadly. No one will ever do good through evil, because one is overcome by evil oneself. On the contrary, "*evil*" is overcome by "*good*" (Rom. 12:21). You stand "*in the arena*"; that is why you must fight against wild beasts, just as the Apostle did in Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32), who boasted of having defeated the beasts. You have been cast into a storm at sea; therefore, you must endure many dangers and struggle against the raging waves. Having overcome them with God's help, you will enter the peaceful harbor of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

7. You are troubled by thoughts that compel you to upset others and to be upset by others yourself. But know, my brother, that if anyone offends another—whether by deed or by word—he himself will later be

offended a hundredfold more. Be patient in all things, then, and be careful not to mix your own will into anything. Examine your thoughts carefully, lest they infect your heart with deadly poison (anger) and deceive you into mistaking a gnat for a camel and a pebble for a cliff, so that you become like a man who, having a log in his own eye, looks at the speck in another's eye.

8. You call yourself a sinner, yet in reality you show that you do not feel that way. One who acknowledges himself as a sinner and the cause of many evils does not contradict anyone, does not quarrel with anyone, and does not get angry at anyone, but regards everyone as better and wiser than himself. If you are sinful, why do you reproach your neighbor and accuse him, as if sorrow comes to you through him?—It turns out that you and I have not yet reached the point of considering ourselves sinners. — Look, brother, how we have disgraced ourselves: we speak with our lips, but our deeds show otherwise. — Why, when we struggle with our thoughts, do we not receive the strength to reject them? Because we first rush to judge our neighbor, and through that our spiritual strength weakens, and we accuse our brother while we ourselves are at fault. — Cast every thought upon the Lord, saying, “God knows what is best,” and you will find peace—and little by little you will gain the strength to endure.

9. If anyone cannot endure reproach, he will not see glory; and if he does not purify himself of bitterness, he will not taste sweetness. You have entered among the brethren and various trials in order to be refined and tested: and gold is tested by nothing other than fire. By no means set any rules for yourself, for by doing so you will expose yourself to strife and worry; but with the fear of God, discern what is fitting for the time, and do nothing out of zeal; as much as possible, turn away from anger, condemn no one, and love especially those who tempt you. If you look closely, you will find that it is they who lead us to success.

10. Be patient in afflictions, as one who has attained the Lord's promise, which says: “*In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world*” (John 16: 33); so that you may attain invincible love, which brings those who have acquired it into the royal courts and makes them brothers of Christ.

11. Churn the milk, and you will get butter; but if you squeeze the teat with your hand, blood will come out (Prov. 30:33). If anyone wishes to bend a tree or a vine like a hoop, he bends it gradually, and they do not snap; but if he bends it suddenly and forcefully, the tree breaks at once. (This refers to the strict measures of abbots—and to the excessive ascetic practices of monks.)

12. Are you weary from afflictions, like a person of the flesh? Or have you not heard that afflictions await you? And do you not know that “*many are the afflictions of the righteous*” (Ps. 33: 20)—and they are tested by them, as gold is in the crucible? Therefore, if we are righteous, let us submit ourselves willingly to the trial of sorrows; but if we are sinful, let us endure them as we deserve. — Let us recall all the saints, from the beginning of the world, — and remember how much they endured while doing good, speaking good, and remaining unshakable in the truth. They were hated and reviled by people until the very end of their lives—and, according to the Savior's words, “*prayed for their enemies and those who persecuted them*” (Matt. 5:44). Have you, too, been sold into slavery, like the chaste Joseph? Have you, like Moses, endured hostility from childhood to old age? Have you been persecuted, like David, who suffered persecution at the hands of Saul? Or, like Jonah, were you cast into the sea? Why, then, does your mind grow weak? Do not be afraid or tremble, as one lacking courage, lest you lose God's promises. Do not be terrified, as an unbeliever, but encourage your faint-hearted thoughts. Love afflictions in all things, so that you may be a skilled son of the saints.

13. No one who wishes to reach the city lies idle; no one who wishes to work and sees the rising sun gives in to laziness; no one who wishes to fertilize his field neglects it. But the one who wishes to reach the city hurries to get there before dusk falls—(the one who wishes to finish his work), seeing the rising sun, hurries cheerfully to his labor, fearing to be delayed by anything—and the one who wishes to fertilize his field strives to do so before it becomes completely unproductive. — “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*”

14. Do you wish to be free from sorrows and not be weighed down by them?—Look forward to greater ones, and you will find peace. Remember Job and the other saints, and the sorrows they endured; acquire their patience, and your spirit will be comforted. Be courageous, take heart, and pray.

15. Weep, sob; do not seek to be regarded as anything special, and do not compare yourself to others in anything. Leave the world behind, take up your cross, cast off earthly things, shake the dust from your feet, “*do not be concerned about disgrace*” (Heb. 12:2), do not stoke the furnace with the Chaldeans, lest you be burned along with them by God's wrath. Consider every person superior to yourself—weep for your dead—

cut down your own log—restore your fallen house—cry out: *“Have mercy on me, Son of David... that I may see”* (Luke 18:38, 41).

16. While we still have time, let us pay attention to ourselves and learn silence. And if you wish to be at peace with everything, be dead to every person, and you will find peace. I say this concerning thoughts, concerning all deeds, dealings with people, and cares.

17. You wrote: *“Pray for my sins.”* And I will say the same to you: *“Pray for my sins.”* For it is written: *“Do to others as you would have them do to you”* (Luke 6:31). Although I am wretched and the least of all people, I still do this to the best of my ability, in accordance with the commandment: *“Pray for one another, that you may be healed”* (James 5:16).

18. If you cannot reason about the faith, then do not reason. One who is firm in the faith, if he speaks and debates with heretics or unbelievers, will never be confounded; for he has Jesus within himself, the Prince of peace and tranquility. And such a one, after a peaceful debate, can lovingly lead many heretics and unbelievers to the knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ. As for you, since discussing other subjects is beyond your capacity, hold fast to the royal path—that is, the faith of the Holy Fathers (and for us today, the faith confirmed by the seven Ecumenical Councils)—into which you were baptized: it contains everything with precision for those who fully understand. Take special care of yourself, reflecting on your sins and on how God will meet you.

19. When you hear praise directed at yourself, recall the words of Scripture: *“My people, those who call you blessed are flattering you and are leading you astray”* (Isa. 3:12). Such flattery prevents us from seeing the vileness of our deeds: it seems to harm even those who have attained a measure of spiritual progress and leads away from faith in God, Who says: *“How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another?”* (John 5:44). Whoever embraces the humility of the Apostle will rather choose *“to be foolish, that he may become wise”* in the end (1 Cor. 3:18). But whoever presents himself as wise, rather than spiritual, I wonder if he will escape the condemnation reserved for pride.

20. (*On the question of fear at night*). Citizens fear an enemy invasion as long as they have no help from the king. But when they receive word that a military commander has entered their city, they are no longer anxious, knowing that their leaders are looking out for them. Even if they hear of the enemy’s approach, having a defender, they no longer fear. So too, if we believe in God, we do not fear demons; for God sends us His help.

21. The hours and hymns are part of church tradition and have been well established to bring all people into harmony (in prayer), as well as to foster harmony among many in communal living. The sketes, however, recite neither the hours nor the hymns, but instead spend time alone engaged in manual labor, reading, and meditation, and after a while they rise to pray. When you stand in prayer, you should pray for deliverance from the old self— —or recite the *“Our Father,”* or both together, and then sit down to your handiwork. As for how long to continue praying while standing, I will say this: if you *“pray without ceasing”* according to the words of the Apostle (1 Thess. 5:17), then duration is not necessary.

22. As for nighttime sleep, pray for two hours in the evening, counting from sunset; and after finishing the Doxology, sleep for six hours, then rise for vigil and stay awake for the remaining four hours. Do the same in the summer—but shorten the Doxology and read fewer psalms, in keeping with the shorter nights.

23. The Lord taught us how to attain humility, saying, *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:29). If you, too, wish to attain perfect peace, recognize what the Lord endured, and endure it yourself, and set aside your own will in all things. The Savior Himself said: *“I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me”* (John 6:38). Perfect humility consists in enduring reproaches, insults, and all else that our Teacher, Christ Jesus, suffered. This also serves as a sign that a person has attained perfect prayer—namely, that he is no longer troubled, even if the whole world were to insult him.

24. The gateway to perfect prayer is when one is freed from the distraction of thoughts and sees that his mind, enlightened by the Lord, is filled with joy. The one who prays perfectly is the one who mortifies himself to the world and its comforts; and when someone diligently performs his work for God’s sake, this is not distraction, but diligence pleasing to God.

25. Regarding moderation in food and drink, the Fathers say that one should consume both somewhat less than is customary, that is, not to fill the stomach completely. And each person must determine for himself the proper measure, both in cooked food and in wine. However, moderation is not limited to food and drink

alone, but extends to conversation, sleep, clothing, and all the senses; in all these things there must be a proper measure of moderation.

26. How should one determine the measure of food and drink so that it is slightly less than the proper amount?—From the total amount of food—that is, bread and other meals—set aside just under one ounce; and as for wine and water, set aside less than half a cup of each. If you are mindful of yourself and find it easy to drink only once, that would be good; but if you cannot, then drink twice, though each time less than the proper amount. And during times of confusion and inner turmoil, you should also slightly reduce your usual amount of food and drink—that is, reduce food by one more ounce and all drink by one more cup—so that, in total, you reduce the amount of food by two ounces and the amount of drink by one cup.

27. How, then, does one determine the proper measure, or how does one know how much one needs to eat and drink?—By observing oneself over the course of several days with regard to all food—that is, bread, other meals, and vegetables—a person can learn from experience how much food and drink his body needs (to be satisfied without feeling burdened). From this measure, let them set aside one ounce of food and half a cup of drink. And during times of war, let them set aside one ounce and half a cup each.

28. What is abstinence “according to one’s strength”? To abstain “according to one’s strength” means to consume food and drink, as stated—namely, to consume them slightly less than is proper—and the same applies to sleep. But if someone, due to labor and fatigue, consumes slightly more than this, it will not be a violation of the rule “according to one’s strength.” — You might ask: What should be the proper measure of sleep? — The Fathers prescribe half the night for this. As for food, stop eating when you still feel like having a little more—and in this way, always consume it in moderation.

29. What does it mean to eat on a whim, and what does it mean to eat out of natural need? — To eat on a whim means to want to eat not out of the body’s need, but to please the stomach (and the throat). If, however, you see that your body prefers a certain food—not because of its sweetness, but because it is light—then eating it is not a whim. Some, by their very nature, crave sweet food, others salty, and still others sour—and this is not a whim. But to love a particular food especially and to desire it lustfully—that is a whim, the handmaiden of gluttony. — If you wish to know whether you are possessed by the passion of gluttony, here is how you will find out: if food controls your thoughts (so that you cannot resist it), then you are a glutton. But if there is no such control, and you freely accept any food in accordance with the body’s needs, then you are not a glutton. There is another sign of gluttony—wanting to eat before mealtime; this should never be done, unless there is a valid reason.

30. If the desire (for gluttony) does not overcome me beforehand but arises just as I am about to eat, what should I do then—should I refuse the food, or not? —When you are eating with others, do not refuse to eat; but, invoking the name of God, drive away the craving and eat sparingly, reminding yourself that this food will soon turn to a foul odor. But when you are alone and hungry, eat bread or some other food that does not cause you distress.

31. Should one consult the elders about every thought that arises in the heart? — One should not consult them about every thought that arises in the heart, but only about those that linger within a person and torment him. This is similar to when a person, even though many people annoy him, ignores the annoyances and pays them no mind. But if someone rises up and attacks him, then he reports that person to the ruler.

32. Should we resist the thought that struggles against us? — Do not resist it; for the enemies of this desire it, and (seeing your resistance) will not cease to attack; but pray to the Lord against them, laying your weakness before Him, and He can not only drive them away but also completely destroy them.

33. Nighttime visions and defilements occur—sometimes from pride, sometimes from gluttony, and sometimes from the devil’s envy. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that when pride and overindulgence on our part do not aid the enemy, he cannot repeat this often. Just as a builder who cannot find the necessary materials labors in vain, so too does the devil.

34. I want to control my appetite and reduce the amount of food I eat, but I cannot. Even if I do reduce it for a time, after a short while I return to my former habits, and the same is true with drinking. Why is this?—No one is free from this except those who have attained moderation, as the one who said: *“I have forgotten to eat my bread; because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my flesh”* (Ps. 101:5–6). Such a person soon achieves moderation in food and drink; for tears serve as his bread—and eventually he reaches the point where he is nourished by the Holy Spirit. Believe me, brother, I know a man of this caliber; once or twice a week—and often more—he is drawn to spiritual food, and because of its sweetness he forgets physical food;

but when the time comes to eat bread, he is as if sated and does not want to eat it, and as he eats, he reproaches himself, saying, “Why am I not always in this state?” And he desires to progress even further.

35. How does one attain such a state?—When all a person’s thoughts form a single whole in God; then this flesh will follow the thoughts directed toward God—and the joy of the Spirit appears in the heart, nourishing the soul and fattening the body, and strengthening both of them. Such a person no longer grows weak or despondent; for from that moment on, Jesus acts as his Advocate and places him near the threshold where “*every sickness, sorrow, and sigh shall flee away*” (Isa. 51: 11)—and the word of Scripture is fulfilled in him: “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matt. 6: 21). It is humility that brings a person to this state.

36. How can one distinguish between natural physical weakness (due to abstinence) and that caused by a demon, and how much food should one eat? – Regarding weakness: if the body, while consuming its daily food (with the usual degree of self-restraint), becomes weak, this is due to demons; otherwise (when the degree of self-restraint is excessive), it is natural weakness. The usual measure of self-restraint is to rise from the table feeling slightly hungry, as the elders have prescribed for beginners. – When a person has become established in this, and in a greater measure of self-restraint, then, having already been trained by habit, he cannot fail to know how much he ought to eat.

37. “Pray for me; I am in great sorrow.”—Those who are completely dying to the world through patience and sorrows reach the measure of maturity. O beloved brother!—The Lord endured the cross—should you not also rejoice in your sorrows, the endurance of which leads into the Kingdom of Heaven? That you are sorrowful is a good sign. Do you not know that sorrows and temptations multiply when the Lord is preparing His grace for someone? And in general, do not seek bodily rest unless the Lord sends it to you, for bodily rest is abhorrent to the Lord. And the Lord said, “*In the world you will have tribulation*” (John 16:33).

38. What daily food should you set aside for yourself?—If you set aside daily food for yourself in your cell, it will lead you into worry and strife. Be content with whatever God sends. “*He who walks uprightly walks in hope*” (Proverbs 10:9).

39. When reading the Psalms, should one recite the “*Our Father*” after each psalm? – It is enough to recite the “*Our Father*” once.

40. Follow the path that we have walked, following in the footsteps of our Fathers. I do not recall that, having found perfect peace, we ever took advantage of it; but we tried in every way to mix in a little distress and sorrow from all sides, fearing Him who said, “*You have gathered your good things in your bosom*” (Luke 16:25), and remembering that “*we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). This is how we acted even when many possessions came into our hands, and God knows in what poverty we lived, for the sake of Him who became poor for our sake. – It is not good to seek peace of mind in everything. Whoever seeks this lives for himself and not for God; for such a person cannot subdue his own will.

41. The Lord wants you to regard every person as superior to yourself. Obey your spiritual father in everything, and do whatever he tells you, whether it concerns food, drink, or any other matter. If you are slandered, rejoice; this is very beneficial for you. If you are insulted, endure it; “*for whoever endures to the end will be saved*” (Matt. 10:22). Give thanks to God for everything; for thanksgiving intercedes before God on behalf of our weaknesses. In everything and always, judge yourself as one who sins and is led astray—and God will not judge you; be humble in everything, and you will receive grace.

42. In all circumstances, let us resort to humility; for the humble lie on the ground, and one who lies on the ground—where can he fall? But for one who is on high, it is easy to fall. If we have repented and been set right, it is not of ourselves—it is a gift from God; for “*the Lord lifts up the fallen and gives sight to the blind*” (Ps. 145:8).

43. Illness is God’s instruction to us, and it serves for our good if we give thanks to God. Was not Job a faithful friend of God? But what did he not endure, while giving thanks and blessing God?—And his endurance finally led him to unparalleled glory. Be patient a little while (in your illness), “*and you will see the glory of God*” (John 11:40).—And if you cannot fast (while ill), do not grieve; God does not require anyone to labor beyond their strength. Moreover, what is fasting if not a discipline of the body, intended to subdue the healthy body and render it powerless against passions, as the Apostle says: “*When I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor. 12:10). Illness is a greater punishment than this, and it counts in place of fasting—and is even valued more highly than fasting. Whoever endures it with patience, giving thanks to God, receives

through that patience the fruit of his salvation. Instead of weakening the body's strength through fasting, it is already weakened by illness. Give thanks to God, then, that you have been freed from the labor of fasting. Even if you eat ten times a day, do not be sad; you will not be condemned for it, since you are not doing so to indulge yourself.

44. Out of envy (for the fruits of faith), demons instill unbelief in us; and if we accept it, we become their servants and accomplices.

45. (*Daily Practices*). You should practice singing psalms a little and pray aloud (praying from memory) a little; you also need time to examine and guard your thoughts. As for psalm singing and reciting prayers by heart, do not bind yourself to a strict schedule, but do as much as the Lord strengthens you; do not neglect reading and silent prayer either. A little of one, a little of the other, and thus you will spend your day pleasing God. Our perfect fathers did not have a set rule, but throughout the entire day they fulfilled their rule: they practiced psalmody for a while, recited prayers by heart for a while, examined their thoughts for a while, and, though only a little, they also took care of their food—and they did all this with the fear of God. For it is said: “*Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31).

46. Let not the enemy disturb you in your sorrow. Does temptation or sorrow ever befall anyone without God's permission? No. God permits these things for the benefit of our souls, but the devil presents things to us differently than he did long ago when he cast our first parents out of Paradise. – But we do not understand this, and, forgetting that God sends us sorrow to purify us from all impurity, we become troubled and despondent. – If you want to be saved, do not trust your own thoughts; for the demons sow evil seeds within you and present one thing in place of another. By no means accuse anyone of anything, but strive in everything to please your neighbor. And do not think evil of anyone; for by doing so you yourself become evil, since the wicked think evil, and the good think good. When the thought comes to you, “They are talking about me,” know that it is the enemy whispering to you. Never harbor such suspicions. Endure everything, rejoicing and being glad; for the reward for patience is great. And do not believe the demons; for what they show you is not real: they only seek to confuse you in some way.

47. (“Another Insult”). I am amazed at your naivety, brother. Do you really think the devil ever stops tempting anyone?—Moreover, can one blame the possessed who fall to the ground and foam at the mouth?—In the same way, one cannot blame those whom the devil drives to oppose and insult us. It is not them who are to blame, but the passion and the one who stirs it up. The enemy confuses you—and you do not look at your own sins, but keenly see the sins of your neighbor; you harp on your brother's transgressions, yet have forgotten your own. —And who are you to look at the sins of others? —Remember Lazarus—how long did he endure, thanks be to God?

48. “I have fallen into lustful dreams (shameful ones).” —God allows us to fall into lustful dreams and other passions so that we may recognize our own weakness and place our trust and hope not in ourselves, but in Him alone. – However, do not think that we fall into fantasies and other passions by God's will; rather, God allows this to happen to us because of our negligence, and out of His love for humanity, He uses the evil (manifested in us) to lead us to humility for our salvation. Know, then, who you are, and humble yourself not only before God but also before people, entrusting all your cares to the One who can do far more than we ask or even imagine.

49. “I am weary from temptations.” – Do not lose heart, brother; God has not forsaken you and will not forsake you. Know that the sentence pronounced by the Lord upon our common father Adam—“*by the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread*” (Gen. 3:19)—is unalterable. Just as gold, refined in the crucible, becomes pure and fit for a royal crown, so too does a person, refined by sorrows—if he endures them with gratitude—become a son of the kingdom. Believe, then, that everything that happens to you serves your good, so that you too may gain boldness before God.

50. (*To the sick person who is despondent.*) Meditate on the sufferings of our Savior—as if you, too, were suffering with Him the insults, the wounds, the humiliations, the abuse of being spat upon, the reproach of the scarlet robe, the shame of the crown of thorns, the vinegar mixed with gall, the pain of the nails driven into His hands, the piercing of the spear, the outpouring of water and blood—and draw comfort from this for your own sufferings. The Lord will not let your labor be in vain. He has allowed you to endure a little sickness so that you may not be a stranger to the Saints when you see them at that hour bearing the fruits of their patient suffering and glorified, but may be a partner with them and with Jesus, having boldness before Him together

with the Saints. Do not be sad, then; God has not forgotten you, but cares for you as for His sincere son, and not as for an “*adulterer*.”

51. May that great Brother of ours grant help to us all; I mean our Lord Jesus Christ, who was pleased to make us His brothers (Heb. 2:11). And we have already become such, and the angels bless us. – O, whom do we have as our brother! The Mighty One, to strengthen us;—the Strong One, to share His bounty with us;—the Commander, to strike down our enemies who attack us in battle;—the Healer, to heal our inner self along with our outer self, subjecting the latter to the former; – A Nourisher, to nourish us with spiritual food, – The Living One, to sustain us, – The Merciful One, to have mercy on us, – The Generous One, to show us kindness, – The King, to make us kings as well, – God, to make us gods as well. – Therefore, knowing that everything is found in Him, pray to Him—and He will grant the petition of your heart, provided you do not hinder Him yourself.

52. May the Lord Jesus, who said, “*Ask, and you will receive*” (John 16:24), fulfill all your petitions. Just prepare your house, cleansing it thoroughly, to receive God’s gifts. They remain preserved only in a cleansed house—and they give off their fragrance only where there is no impurity. Whoever partakes of them becomes alien to the old man, crucified to the world, just as the world is to him, and lives always in the Lord. No matter how fiercely the enemy’s waves crash, they cannot shatter his ship; and from that moment on, he becomes a terror to his enemies—for they see the holy seal upon him—and to the extent that he becomes their enemy, to that extent he becomes a sincere and beloved friend of the Great King.

53. Do not let the anxieties caused by demonic passions and fantasies overwhelm you. Believe that, although demons disturb and tempt us, they will not succeed in doing anything, but will even increase our virtue—if only we diligently watch over ourselves to maintain a little patience. Let us not slacken in our efforts, lest we lose the promises given to us by our loving and merciful God. It is up to Him to grant, and our task is to preserve. And do not be surprised that, after God’s holy promises and unrepentant gifts, the demons once again raise their shameful passions against you, hoping to steal immeasurable riches, but remember how shameless they were when, after God Himself had testified on behalf of the holy Job, they raised such temptations and torments against him in order to topple this pillar of patience; yet they did not overcome him and could not plunder the treasures of his radiant faith and gratitude. Gold is purified by passing through fire—that is, the righteous man through many trials. God permitted and allowed His servant to be tempted even after His special testimony concerning the righteous man, for the greater honor and glory of the Lord and the utter defeat of His enemies. Do not lose heart, then. The seals of the promises remain intact; “*Wait for the Lord*” (Ps. 26:14); “*But he who endures to the end will be saved*” (Matt. 24:13), concerning Christ Jesus our Lord.

54. (*Answers*). – The turmoil in your thoughts arises because you have an unstable heart. – You need not abstain from (grape) wine entirely, but consume it in moderation. – Sleeping while sitting eventually leads to humility. – In general, surrender yourself entirely to God, in reverence for Him.

55. Be mindful of yourself; the demons want to entice you toward things that are of little benefit, such as sleeping while sitting or not using a pillow—which is the same as “*mint, cumin, and fennel*”—and they suggest “*neglecting the greater matters of the law*” (Matt. 23:23), that is, to quell anger, dry up irritability, and attain obedience in all things. They sow these things in you in order to wear out your body, causing you to fall ill, so that you will inevitably require a soft bed and various foods; but rather, be content with a single headboard and rest upon it with the fear of God. Put into your pot a mixture of spiritual remedies, such as humility, obedience, faith, hope, and love; for whoever possesses them prepares a feast for Christ, the Heavenly King.

56. “I was carried away by a blasphemous thought.”—It has been quite some time since the blasphemous demon, who destroys the souls that accept him, set out against you. He has seized you by the yoke (the chain around your neck—your passions) to put you to death. Oh, may God not allow him to carry out his will upon you (2 Tim. 2:26).—But do not despair. God, who accepts your repentance, stands before you. Awaken from the delusion of captivity—and above all, quell your anger and irritability, knowing that they lead a person to pernicious blasphemy against God; but acquire humility, which scorches demons; obedience, which opens the way for the Son of God to enter a person; faith, which saves a person; hope that does not put one to shame; and love, which prevents a person from falling away from God. You have not cultivated these virtues; on the contrary, you have chosen their opposites—anger, irritability, and utter ruin—the aforementioned blasphemy. But make an effort to amend your ways, contemplating God’s goodness and reflecting on how many blessings the Lord has bestowed. – The past is forgiven, but amend your ways from

now on. – For 40 days, offer repentance to God, making three prostrations daily and saying, “Forgive me, my God, for blaspheming You!” and confess Him with your blasphemous lips three times a day, saying, “Glory to You, my God, and blessed are You forever—Amen!” – And do not fall into the same sin again, lest something worse befall you. From insensitivity of heart you came to anger, and from anger you went on to the point of falling away from Holy Communion: being completely ensnared, you also fell into the pit of blasphemy. – And if the hand of the merciful God and the prayers of the Saints had not intervened, your soul would have fallen into the ruin of despair. Behold, through me, the least of all, God speaks to you: you have sinned—sin no more. Pray also for your past sins. God is merciful and, if we desire to amend our ways, forgives our sins.

57. (I grieve over Abba because he shows preference to others.) Brother! You are tempting yourself. Do you not know that *“each person is tempted when they are lured and enticed by their own desire”* (James 1:14)?—Pay no attention to anyone but yourself, and do not be curious about others, for this is of no benefit to you in any way. – And see how Satan has troubled your heart through such a trivial matter. – Rise up, then, supported by the hand of God, – and do not trust your own thoughts, through which the demons show you things as they please.

58. (When offered the chance to do something that signifies respect). Guard yourself against taking pleasure when you are honored for something, and show obedience that drives out rebellion, which is hated by God and by those who love Him. Cling to obedience, which lifts one up to heaven and makes those who attain it like the Son of God.

59. (How to begin repentance?) If you wish to begin repentance, look at what the woman who had sinned did: *“With her tears she washed the Lord’s feet”* (Luke 7:38). Weeping washes away everyone’s sins. But a person attains weeping through hard work, by means of much study of Scripture, patience, reflection on the dreadful judgment and eternal shame, and through self-denial, as the Lord said: *“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”* (Matthew 16:24). To deny oneself and take up one’s cross means to set aside one’s own will in all things and to consider oneself as nothing.

60. (Because of my physical weakness, I cannot strive as the Fathers did.) If you are weak and cannot endure much, then do what you can, consuming a little less food and drink than you need; for God accepted the widow’s two mites and rejoiced in them more than in all else. – Train yourself not to treat others lightly—and you will be saved.

61. Thoughts arise within me, saying: “Go to a foreign land, and there you will be saved.”—This comes from the enemy, who offers this to you under the guise of truth, so that, having mocked you, he may make you an object of temptation for many, so that you may bear condemnation on their behalf as well. – However, you are subjected to this because of your sloth and vanity. The demons add their own schemes to your sloth and vanity in order to destroy your soul. So watch yourself carefully and strive against these thoughts, driving away negligence and vanity; do nothing of your own will, and do not accept the thoughts and self-justifications that arise within you—otherwise, you will suffer a severe fall. Acquire steadfastness, and it will remove from you the freedom to act as you please toward your neighbors—the cause of all evil in man; let go of all cares, and you will be free to serve God; become dead to every person, and you will be a stranger; consider yourself as nothing, and your mind will not be troubled; do not think that you have done anything good—and your reward will be preserved for you in its entirety. Furthermore, remember that you will not remain in this body for long, and strive to do what will enable you to say with boldness on that day: *“I have prepared myself and have not been troubled”* (Ps. 118:60). Brother! One cannot live without toil, and no one is crowned without struggle. Compel yourself to strive for your salvation—and God will help you, *“who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4).

62. Not everyone living in a monastery is a monk, but a monk is one who performs monastic work. The Lord said: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). Brother! Why do you allow the enemy to mock you and expose you to the danger of falling?—“You ask,”—yet you make no effort to carry out what has been told to you. You ask again and vainly pass it on to others to curry favor—and thereby prevent yourself from succeeding soon. Time is given to us so that, having recognized our passions, we may labor to heal them, weeping and wailing. If, while in your cell, your thoughts wander, reproach yourself for it, confessing your weakness before God.

63. Whoever wishes to be a monk must by no means have a will of his own in anything. Christ the Lord, teaching us this, said: *“I have come into the world, not to do My own will”* (John 6:38). But if you obey one command and refuse another, you will thereby show that you are wiser than the one who commands you, and this is the same as being mocked by demons. Therefore, you must obey in everything, even if it seems to you that the task commanded is not sinless. The Abba who assigns it to you will bear your sin, and he will be held accountable for you. If the task is extremely inconvenient or dangerous for you, or beyond your strength, explain this to the Abba, and do as he judges.

64. (When I engage in conversation, I get carried away and lose myself; afterward, I feel ashamed and grieve.) To prevent the weak from falling into this, and into a love of glory, they must avoid talkativeness at all costs and end the conversation by making some excuse and withdrawing from those who are speaking. – When a conversation is beneficial and does not hinder a more important task, stay as long as they are talking; but if the conversation is not helpful, say, “Forgive me, I am weak,” and take your leave.

65. How should one behave when meeting others? When meeting someone, limit yourself to a greeting; then say, “Pray for me; I am on my way to attend to some business,” and leave. And when you are asked about something and you know the answer, say it and move on; but if you do not know, say, “I do not know,” and move on.

66. I want to stop seeing people: should I stop immediately, or gradually?—If you stop seeing people all at once, you will have peace; otherwise, you will be the cause of much confusion both for yourself and for others.

67. (A patient asks whether he should read medical books.) Read them, but as you read them—or when you ask anyone about medical treatments—do not forget that without God, no one receives healing. Whoever devotes himself to the art of medicine must dedicate himself to the name of God, and God will grant him help. The art of medicine does not prevent a person from being pious; but practice it as a craft, for the sake of the brethren. Whatever you do, do it with the fear of God, and you will be preserved by the prayers of the Saints.

68. “I am busy all day long—and it prevents me from remembering God.”—It happens that a person hears a great deal about a certain city, but when he happens to enter it, he does not realize that this is the very city he had heard about. So it is with you, brother: you spend the whole day in remembrance of God and do not realize it. To keep the commandment and strive to observe it as God’s—in this lies both obedience and remembrance of God.

69. We need food every day, but we must not eat it with relish. When we receive it, giving thanks to God who has given it and condemning ourselves as unworthy, then God causes it to serve us for sanctification and blessing. Likewise, if you need something and succeed in obtaining it, thank God for helping you and condemn yourself as unworthy; and God will turn away your attachment to it.

70. Everyone loves his neighbor to the extent of his ability; but the measure of perfect love consists in loving one’s neighbor as oneself, for the sake of the love one has for God. – Young people are prone to fall because of their foolish love for one another and because they gather together for private conversations. – The measure of their love for one another should be this: not to slander one another, not to hate one another, not to belittle one another, not to seek only one’s own interests, not to love one another for the sake of physical beauty or for the sake of any physical activity, and not to sit together without extreme necessity, lest they fall into audacity, which destroys all the fruits of a monk’s life and makes him like a dry tree.

71. “I want to be saved, but I do not know the way to salvation.”—Brother! God, through Holy Scripture and through the Fathers, has shown us the way to salvation, saying: *“Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will tell you”* (Deut. 32:7). – Therefore, if you do not wish to go astray in the matter of salvation, do not do anything without consulting your spiritual fathers, and you will not go astray by the grace of God, *“who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4).

72. “A thought tells me that if I go somewhere and live alone, I will attain perfect silence.” – Our Lord Jesus Christ, before the cross, endured many afflictions and insults, and after that He ascended the cross. Likewise, no one can attain perfect and fruitful stillness and the rest of the holy and perfect life unless he first suffers with Christ (while living among his brothers) and endures all His sufferings, recalling the words of the Apostle: *“If we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him”* (Rom. 8:17). Do not be deceived; there is no other path to salvation except this one.

73. (To the Sick). This illness has befallen you so that you may not depart to God without having borne fruit. If you endure it and give thanks to God, it will be counted to your credit in place of ascetic deeds, since you have not long remained in the monastic life.

74. One must not go anywhere without a command; for what we do of our own accord is not pleasing to God. But when you go by command, then in fulfilling the command of the one who sent you lies both prayer and pleasing God, Who said: *"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me"* (John 6:38).

75. (I am struggling with obedience. Should I ask for help?) Brother! Whoever desires to come to Jesus and walk the path of salvation must expect trials and sorrows at every moment. Scripture says: *"My son, if you set out to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for trial"* (Sirach 2:1). And the Lord said: *"Whoever comes after Me must deny himself, take up his cross"* every day, *"and follow Me"* (Matthew 16:24). Therefore, whoever wishes to be His disciple must remain obedient until death. It is more beneficial for you to be alone and to labor a little on your own than to invite another. Freedom in your spiritual life is not so much strengthened when a brother merely helps you, but rather when he is constantly with you.

76. (Whom should one ask about one's thoughts, and is it proper, after asking one person, to ask another about the same thing?)—You should ask the one in whom you have faith, whom you know is capable of bearing your thoughts, and whom you trust as you would God; but to ask another about the same thought is an act of unbelief and doubt. If you believe that God speaks through His Saint, then what is the point of testing here, or what need is there to tempt God by asking another about the very same thing?

77. "How many times must one pray so that a thought may receive guidance regarding a matter?"—When you cannot ask your spiritual father, you must pray three times about every matter; and after that, observe where your heart inclines—even if only by a hair's breadth—and act accordingly; for guidance becomes evident and is understood by the heart in every way.

78. "How should one pray three times—at different times, or all at once? Sometimes it is impossible to delay."—If you have free time, pray three times over the course of three days; but if there is an urgent need, as during the Savior's Passion, take as your example that He withdrew three times to pray, and while praying three times, He spoke the same words (Matt. 26:44).

79. (On Guidance). When a ship is tossed by the waves, if it has a helmsman, he, by the wisdom given to him by God, saves the ship, and those on board rejoice at seeing its safety. Above all, a sick person is greatly comforted by the memory of a doctor, and even more so by the doctor's skill; and a traveler in danger from robbers is encouraged by the voice of the guards, and even more so by their presence. If this is indeed the case, then should not the father's response, " , " bring much greater joy to everyone who hears it, especially when it is accompanied by earnest prayer to God, who said, *"Pray for one another, that you may be healed"* (James 5:16)?

80. He who confesses his sins is justified in them, according to the words of Scripture: *"Declare your iniquities first, that you may be justified"* (Isa. 43:26), and again: *"I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my heart"* (Ps. 31: 5). Let us guard ourselves from now on, for God has forgiven us our past sins.

81. If anyone, while observing a fast, adds anything to it of his own will, or fasts seeking human glory and gain from it, then his fast is abhorrent to God. So it is in everything. Any good deed that is performed not solely out of love for God, but to which one's own will is mingled, is impure and displeasing to God. This can also be understood from the Divine Law, which says: *"You shall not sow mixed seed in your field, nor make for yourself garments of wool and linen"* (Deut. 22:9–11; Lev. 19:19).

82. When memorizing the Psalms, do not be presumptuous, lest you end up filling the air with useless words, and this serve as a condemnation against you. The Word of God is the seed of goodness; if it remains unfruitful within you, you will be condemned along with the one who buried the silver given to him for multiplication in the ground.

83. With what words can we give thanks to Him who first created us, then granted us help against the enemy—and, most importantly, provided a place for our repentance, and gave us His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of our hearts?—We will never be able to thank Him as He deserves; nevertheless, let us offer Him the thanksgiving we can with our lips and hearts—especially by enduring everything for His sake even unto death—and He, in His love for mankind, will count all this as the two mites of the widow in the Gospel.

84. When a matter that is of God presents itself to you, and a contrary thought resists it, then from this very fact it is evident that the matter is truly of God. – But offer up a prayer—and see: if, while you are praying, your heart is strengthened in what is good and that good increases rather than diminishes, then whether or not the opposing thought that troubles you persists, know that the matter is from God; for what is good inevitably faces sorrowful opposition due to the devil’s envy, but it (the good) prevails over this through prayer. If, however, the apparent good is inspired by the devil, and there is also opposition arising from him, then through prayer even the apparent good diminishes, and with it the apparent opposition. In such a case, it is evident that the enemy resists the thought he has planted solely to deceive us into accepting that thought as good.

85. When a thought praises you, and you cannot avoid the harm it causes, try to call upon the name of God, and say to your thought: Scripture says, “*My people, those who praise you are deceiving you and causing you to stumble*” (Isa. 3:12). Do the same when others praise you—remembering, moreover, that those who accept human praise gain no benefit, as the Lord Himself says: “*How can you believe in Me, when you receive glory from men?*” (John 5:44). – In general, we must keep in mind and heart that one should “*boast in the Lord*” (2 Cor. 10:17); for even if we have anything from God, it is all by God’s help. Why, then, did the Apostle, having attained such greatness, not boast in himself, but cry out, saying, “*By the grace of God I am what I am*” (1 Cor. 15:10)?

86. When, during psalm singing, prayer, or reading, an evil thought arises, disregard it, and focus more intently on the psalm singing, prayer, or reading, so that you may draw strength from the words you are uttering; if it persists, try to call upon the name of God, and God will help you and thwart the wiles of the enemies.

87. “How can one attain contrition in prayer, reading, and psalm-singing?”—Contrition in prayer comes from remembering one’s sins. The one who prays must recall his own deeds, and how those who do such things are judged, and that dreadful voice: “*Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire*” (Matt. 25:41). – As for reading and psalm-singing, devotion arises when one focuses one’s mind on the words being spoken and receives into one’s soul the power contained within them. If, despite this, indifference still remains within you, do not lose heart, but continue to labor patiently; for God is merciful, generous, and long-suffering, and He accepts our efforts. Always remember the words of the Psalmist: “*I waited patiently for the Lord, and He heard me*” (Ps. 39: 1). Learning from this, trust that God’s mercy will soon come upon you.

88. If, while singing psalms or when you are with others, you happen to call upon God, do not think that you are not calling upon Him unless you speak aloud, but remember that He is the Knower of hearts and looks upon the heart—and call upon Him in your heart. This is what is said in Scripture: “*Shut your door and pray to your Father in secret*” (Matt. 6:6).—Even if you do not utter the name of God in your heart, but merely remember God, this is even more like a call—and it is sufficient to help you.

89. True weeping, combined with contrition, atones for past sins and washes away defilements; it constantly protects the person who has attained it through the name of God, drives out laughter and distraction, and sustains unceasing lamentation; it is a shield that deflects all the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16); whoever possesses it is not wounded by the battle at all, whether he is among people or even with harlots.

90. Imperfect weeping comes and goes, in accordance with how the thought (zeal) for salvation alternately flares up and subsides. But when that fervor becomes constant, then there is great and constant contrition, and this is followed by true weeping, which one must strive to attain by compelling oneself.

91. Humility consists in cutting off one’s own will in all things and having no concern for anything. To cut off the root of the passions (lust, gluttony, greed) means to cut off one’s own will, to afflict oneself as much as possible, and to compel the senses to remain within their proper bounds rather than to abuse them; through this, the root of not only these but also other passions is cut off.

92. Surrendering everything to God’s will protects a person from confusion, no matter what happens. Yet confusion may still arise and prevent one from accepting what has happened with gratitude and joy. In such a case, one must wage a battle against this confusion by renewing one’s devotion to God’s will and reaffirming the conviction that everything comes from God, and that everything that comes from God is good for us. – Nothing good is accomplished by our own efforts alone, but by the power and will of God. Nevertheless, God also requires of us an effort in accordance with His will, and not one based on any cunning or deceit, which comes from the evil one.

93. Silence is better and more wondrous than any edifying discourse. Our fathers honored and cherished it, and through it they were glorified. But since we, because of our weakness, have not yet attained

the point of walking in the way of the perfect, let us speak of what serves for edification—and speak by referring to the words of the Fathers, rather than delving into the interpretation of Scripture; for this task presents no small danger to the uninitiated. Scripture is spoken spiritually, and a person of the flesh cannot understand spiritual things. It is better for us to rely on the words of the Fathers in our discourse and find the benefit contained therein. But let us use them in moderation, remembering the one who said, *“In the multitude of words sin is not avoided”* (Prov. 10:19). And so that we do not thereby fall into pride and self-glorification in our thoughts, let us keep in mind that, if we do not put into practice what we say, we speak to our own condemnation.

94. If silence is recognized as more beneficial than good conversation, then all the more so is it beneficial in conversations about mundane matters (such as cities, villages, trade, peace, war, and the like). But when we cannot remain silent and are drawn into conversation about such subjects, let us at least not prolong the conversation, lest we fall into some enemy’s trap through verbosity.

95. If you find yourself in the company of people discussing worldly or spiritual matters, allow yourself to say something that contains no harm, but speak judiciously, merely to avoid having your companions praise you for being silent. But even when you act this way—that is, speak little—be careful not to condemn them for speaking too much.

96. When you intend to do something and sense a disturbance in your thoughts, and this disturbance remains even after invoking the name of God—even if only by a hair’s breadth—then recognize from this that the deed you wish to do has been suggested to you by the evil one, and do not do it; for nothing done with a disturbed mind is pleasing to God. – But when someone resists that hesitation (when a thought arises that resists it), then one should not immediately consider the matter harmful, but examine it to see if it is good or not—and if it is not good, abandon it; but if it is good, carry it out, disregarding the hesitation.

97. If, having begun a conversation, you realize that it is sinful, cut it off by saying, “No, let’s not talk about that,” or, after pausing briefly, say, “I forgot what I was talking about”—and steer the conversation toward something else—something sinless.

98. What is self-justification?—It is when someone denies sin, as we see in Adam, Eve, Cain, and others like them, who sinned but, wishing to justify themselves, denied their sin.

99. Every thought and every deed, as has been said, must be examined to see whether it is good or not, and one must do what is good and reject what is not. However, so that what is good is not accompanied by confusion, one must examine the prevailing thought behind it—the purpose for which one undertakes anything—and when you question it out of the fear of God, God will not allow you to fall into error. – But in any case, do not forget to call upon the name of God.

100. (To one who has been struck by a brother and wishes to separate from him). Do not be upset, lest you act rashly, especially toward a person whose thoughts are clouded by the envious devil. Some sick people, their minds clouded by a high fever, torment those who are healthy and serve them, without even realizing it, because the illness has completely taken hold of them. So too, the one who is tempted, though he is destroying his own soul, is unaware of it; for he is intoxicated by the passion of his affliction, under the influence of the adversary, who always distorts everything before him in order to cast him into the pit of destruction. He is not worthy of anger or vengeance, but of pity and forbearance. Through these, God allows us to be tempted—and He allows it with care, so that we may appear before Him as those who have been tested. Let us, then, be lenient toward our neighbor during his sensual and mental struggles, for it is said: *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Gal. 6:2). – Do not be tempted to leave your place and separate yourself from your brother; for this would not be according to God, but the fulfillment of the devil’s will, and if you resolve to do this, the enemy will not rest, but will incite you to even worse things. It is better to pray for your brother with all your heart, and to love him in Christ Jesus our Lord.

101. (To a brother troubled by fear). Brother! You must glorify God for the fact that He is fulfilling in you the word of Scripture that says: *“God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear”* (1 Cor. 10:13). According to your strength, He allows you to be trained in spiritual warfare; but He tests great men with great temptations according to their strength, and they rejoice in this; for temptation leads a person to success. Where there is good to be had, there is also a struggle. Do not fear temptations, but rejoice in them, for they lead to success. Despise this temptation. God helps you and protects you.

102. Strive to cultivate humility and submission; under no circumstances insist on having your own way, for this gives rise to anger; do not judge or belittle anyone, because this weakens the heart and blinds the

mind, and from this comes indifference and a hardening of the heart. Be constantly vigilant, studying the law of God, for through this the heart is warmed by heavenly fire, as it is said: *“And in my teaching a fire will blaze up”* (Ps. 38:4). Guard your lips from idle talk and empty chatter, and do not let your heart grow accustomed to evil words. Humble yourself before God, saying, *“God, be merciful to me, a sinner”* (Luke 18:13); and He will have mercy on you, preserve you, and shield you from all evil, so that you may pass from darkness to the true light, from deception to the truth, from death to life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

103. Give your body as much (food) as it needs; and you will suffer no harm, even if you eat three times a day. If a person eats only once a day but recklessly, what good does that do him?—Gluttony is followed by the temptation to fornication—and the enemy then burdens the body with sleep to defile it.

104. Do not be surprised if you sometimes feel great weakness while serving (at the rule) and while doing manual work. Such is the nature of this path: sometimes a person feels one way, and sometimes another, just as a traveler sometimes walks on smooth paths, sometimes encounters rapids and mountains, and then returns to level ground. Do not focus on your weakness; just keep doing your work.

105. (To a sick person forced to eat contrary to the rule.) God does not condemn those who eat not for their own pleasure but because of bodily weakness. Foods are forbidden to us to protect us from gluttony and bodily desires, but where there is weakness, those prohibitions are set aside; for where there is weakness, there is a call to God.

106. (To a sick person who asked for prayers in his exhaustion.) My despondent and complaining brother! Why are you grieving? Why are you crying out? Why do you send for help from afar, when you have Jesus standing close to you and desiring that you call upon Him for help! – Call out to Him: *“Teacher!”* and He will answer you. Touch the hem of His garment, and He will heal you not only of this one affliction, but of all your passions. If your mind were where it ought to be, then even the bites of venomous snakes and scorpions could not bring you down from there to the sensation of bodily illness: “ ” *“I have forgotten,”* he says, *“to take my bread because of the sound of my sighing”* (Ps. 101: 5). Do not grieve; God’s mercy is near to you.

107. Despise the body, which will be eaten by worms; it will not help you in the least when it is given over to decay. The Apostle says: *“Do not gratify the desires of the flesh”* (Rom. 13:14).

108. (The sick person: Should I indulge the body in its weakness?) God has given us reason so that we may be guided along the right path through the Divine Scriptures. The Apostle says: *“Test everything; hold fast to what is good”* (1 Thess. 5:20). One must only be careful not to consume or do anything out of passion; but what one does out of weakness or necessity is not counted as either sin or indulgence. When we are healthy, desire prompts us to seek rest for the body; but when we sustain the body out of necessity, it will help us in the performance of our duties. If we care for animals that serve our needs, we should all the more care for the body as the instrument of the soul. When an instrument becomes dull, this hinders the artist, even if he is quick-witted and knowledgeable. The Apostle, noting St. Timothy’s illness and weak stomach, commanded him to drink wine (1 Tim. 5:23), though he also commanded him to *“endure hardship”* (to endure privations) while carrying out *“the work of an evangelist”* (2 Tim. 4:5). And in all things, a person must be guided by reason—and he will not easily stray.

109. “The battles against me are growing ever more intense.”—Brother! The time of battle is the time for action; do not slacken, but act. Fight the battle; and when it intensifies, strengthen yourself as well, crying out: “Lord Jesus Christ!” You see my weakness and my sorrow; help me, *“and deliver me from those who persecute me, for I have taken refuge in You”* (Ps. 141:7; 142:9); and pray that you may receive the strength to serve God with a pure heart.

110. God has given people two gifts through which they may be saved and delivered from all the passions of the old man: humility and obedience; yet we do not strive for them, nor do we desire to abide in them or be guided by them. – Cast aside all deviations, bow your neck to humility and obedience, and you will receive grace. If you carry out with humility and obedience what you hear from the Fathers, the Lord will grant you His gracious help not only in the task in which you are engaged, but will also ensure that all your endeavors are successful, for He preserves the path of those who fear Him and shields their journey. Why are you indignant? Why do you argue? God’s mercy will help you if you remain constantly in God’s patience. Stop being angry, irritable, and envious. Die to every person. Ask yourself: Who am I?—*“Dust and ashes”* (Gen. 18: 27) *“and a dog”* (Matt. 15: 27). Do not judge others by belittling or mocking them. Force yourself

not to say: “What is this? Why is that?” (Sirach 39:22). “Why am I not equal to this or that person?” But work diligently at your small craft, with the fear of God, and you will receive no small reward for it.

111. When drowsiness sets in due to despondency and hinders the task at hand, then one must rise to pray and not cease praying—and the Lord will dispel the drowsiness through prayer.

112. (To one who wished to be last—just so he might be accepted into the monastery.)—To be in the last place is not your concern to seek. It depends on your Abba; your task is to prepare yourself for obedience.

113. If a person does not make an effort himself, to the best of his ability, and does not combine his own efforts with the prayers of the Saints, he will derive no benefit from the Saints praying for him. When they fast and pray for him, but he indulges in sensual pleasures and behaves recklessly, what good will their prayers for him do? For here is fulfilled what is said in Scripture: “*One builds up, and another tears down; the only thing that remains is labor*” (Sir. 34: 23)? And the Apostle says: “*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*” (James 5:16), that is, when a holy and righteous person prays for a sinner, the sinner, to the best of his ability, must cooperate with the saints’ intercession through repentance.

114. When someone asks another to give him something, and the other does not have it, he will not be condemned for not giving him what was asked. And the Apostle Peter, when a lame man asked him for alms, said: “*I have neither silver nor gold*” (Acts 3:6)—and did not borrow money to give to him. Likewise, if someone has only what is strictly necessary for himself, he should not spend even that on alms, lest he later, when he himself is in need, come to grieve, being unable to endure poverty. And when a beggar pesters him, and he says, “Forgive me, I have nothing to give you,” this is not a lie; for one who has only what is necessary for himself has nothing to give to another. Let him say to the beggar, “Forgive me, I have only what is necessary for myself.” Recall the five virgins who, when others asked them for oil for their lamps, replied, “*There will not be enough for us and for you*” (Matt. 25: 9). And the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: “*Let your abundance be their lack*” (2 Cor. 8:14), and: “*For why should others have joy while you have sorrow?*” (2 Cor. 8:13).

115. When you want to give alms, but a thought causes you to doubt whether you should give, then examine your thought; and if you find that it is motivated by stinginess, then give, and even a little more than what you originally intended to give.

116. “How can someone who has nothing to give share in bliss?”—Bliss is not promised only to those who give alms.—“*Blessed are the poor in spirit,*” “*Blessed are those who mourn,*” and so on (Matt. 5:3 ff.). So, if you cannot give alms, be poor in spirit, so that you may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven with the saints. Weep over your sins in this world, so that you may find comfort with those who mourn. Acquire meekness, so that you may inherit the earth. Be pure in heart, so that you may behold God in His glory. Endure reproach, persecution, and false slander for the Lord’s sake, so that you may rejoice in the joy of receiving a great reward in heaven.

117. If the law of the Lord commands one thing, but the law of this world prescribes the opposite: what should one do?—The law of God is more important; for it speaks of the salvation of the soul, while the law of this world, being carnal, speaks to the carnal.

118. Your love asks me about the fact that you sometimes find yourself gazing passionately at the one before you—and becoming captivated in your soul. This clearly refers to the temptations of the devil. In this regard, you must remember the decay and stench of our nature, and how we will change when we are in our graves. Also, picture before your eyes the coming dreadful judgment of God, and what the fate of those who act this way will be, and how you will be able to bear that great shame when our deeds are revealed before the angels and archangels, before all people, and before the righteous Judge—and how the mouths of those who commit these deeds will then be silenced. Let us fear Him who said: “*Do not deceive yourselves: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals will inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Cor. 6:9–10)—and: “*Anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent*” and so on. (Matt. 5:28). You must remember this and not frequent the company of those toward whom you feel this conflict; but do not reveal to them why you are withdrawing from them, so as not to give them cause for various suspicions. — And as soon as you need to speak with them, call upon the holy name of God for help, saying: Lord Jesus! Cover me and help me in my weakness.” And do not be afraid; He will break the bow of your enemies, for evil is rendered powerless by His name. Speak little rather than much, and do not give free rein to your ears or your thoughts; but conduct yourself with dignity and without confusion, so that no one may notice what is happening. If, through this, you gain strength, do not be bold toward your enemies, for they are shameless, and even if they are defeated

a thousand times, they will take up the fight again. But God the Victor helps the humility of man, for whose sake He, of His own will, chose to become incarnate.

119. “How does the mind become entangled in lustful thoughts?”—The entanglement or distraction (and captivity) of the mind occurs not only in relation to lustful passion but also in other cases. The mind is subjected to this because of distraction—and when this happens, a person must call out to himself, saying: “Lord, forgive me, for the sake of Your Holy Name; because of my negligence, I have been subjected to this. Deliver me from distraction and from every snare of the enemy.” – And let this be the sign by which you may recognize such distraction: if someone is conversing with another, and his mind wanders here and there, it happens that while he is speaking about one thing, his thoughts turn to another. This is distraction. – In the same way, lustful thoughts also lead us astray. It happens that someone is conversing with another, and if the enemy manages to distract the mind from godly sobriety, then, as a result of distraction, lustful desire arises in the mind. – And this, too, is a form of distraction, because it did not arise from reflection or recollection, but the person was carried away by it through forgetfulness. – Having come to his senses, such a person must call himself to order, as mentioned above, and take refuge in God’s mercy; the Lord is gracious and will accept him as the prodigal son. But when such a battle arises in the mind even without distraction, one must remain sober, not take pleasure in such thoughts, not linger in them, but rather turn to the Lord God.

120. It is best to avoid all conversation with women. If necessity compels one to interact with them, let us seek to do so through others. If even this is impossible, then, when interacting with them, let us conduct ourselves as one who approaches a fire. Just as one takes every precaution not to be burned by fire, so too shall we treat women as if approaching a fire—and we shall firmly establish ourselves in the fear of God. Let us not look at women under any circumstances. Let us not give free rein to our eyes, nor linger in conversation with them; for from this arises the fire of lust; but let us strive to withdraw from them quickly, praying to God that He may save us in this difficult hour from the snare of the devil set before us, and let us constantly remember God—and His great power will cover our weakness in Christ Jesus our Lord.

121. “Is it good for me to leave my wife with the intention of entering a monastery?”—You must not leave her of your own accord, for you will violate the commandment of the Apostle, who says: “*If you are bound to a wife, do not seek a dispensation*” (1 Cor. 7:27). If she (after you leave) sins and begins to live a wicked life, then this sin will be upon you—unless you leave her by mutual agreement, after consulting with her, and for the sake of her good. – But leave this matter to God; and as His love for mankind sees fit, so will He act.

122. One should by no means grieve over the things of this world, but only over sin itself. Likewise, “*rejoice with those who rejoice*” means to share in the joy of those who excel in virtue according to God and rejoice in the hope of future blessings; and “*weep with those who weep*” means to sympathize with sinners as they repent of their sins.

123. (On “*Blessed are the peacemakers.*”) It is better to bring peace to one’s own heart: this is fitting for everyone—and blessed is the one who does so. But it is not fitting for everyone to reconcile those who are quarreling, but only for those who can undertake this without any harm to themselves. The weak, however, should rejoice in the peace of all, but not make themselves mediators for the reconciliation of every person, except perhaps those whom they love in God; and even then, only when no harm to their own soul is involved.

124. “I am being insulted by someone: what should I do?”—Do him a kindness.

125. “When one of the fathers comes to me, I don’t have the necessary things to offer him—and I grieve.” – Such a thought comes from the devil. It is enough to offer them what you have, as it is written: “*Be content with what you have*” (Heb. 13:5)—and God will make them aware of your zeal. When you happen to go somewhere, do not expect to find peace there—and you will not be dismayed; but if, having hoped to find it, you do not, you will speak ill of the one who welcomed you: yet slander is the death of the soul. – Give thanks for everything: for in this lies spiritual and soul-nourishing food and peace.

126. He who seeks counsel from the fathers imitates Christ, Who “*humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant*” (Phil. 2:7–8). A man who lives without counsel is an enemy to himself, for Scripture says, “*Do everything with counsel*” (Sir. 32:21). It is more beneficial to ask with humility than to follow one’s own will; for the Lord Himself puts into the mouth of the one being asked what to say, for the sake of the humility and righteousness of the asker’s heart.

127. Never argue about the faith: God does not require this of you, but only that you believe rightly, as you received from the Holy Church at baptism, and that you keep His commandments. Keep this—and you will be saved. But if you are asked, say: “Forgive me, holy fathers, this is beyond me.”

128. Do not inquire into anything that God does not require of you, but be content, as I said above, with the profession of the true faith, and do not be curious about anything beyond that.

129. When you happen to be with laypeople and they begin to engage in idle talk, if you have no particular need, leave; but when there is a need, turn your mind to your prayer, not condemning them, but acknowledging your own weakness. – However, if they are well-disposed toward you and you know that they are eager to hear the Word of God, try to turn this idle conversation into something useful—by telling them something from the lives of the saints.

130. When someone you know holds to heretical speculations, exhort him to come to know the true faith, but do not argue with him, and do not wish to hear his speculations, lest you be infected by his poison. If he wishes to hear the truth of the faith, direct him to the Holy Fathers, who can benefit him in Christ. In this way, you will help him according to God’s will without harming yourself. But if he does not repent after the first and second admonitions, then, according to the Apostle’s word, “*reject him*” (Titus 3:10).

131. “My conscience tells me not to leave my home often, but it so happens that there are several church services throughout the week: should I attend them, or is it better to stay home and devote myself to prayer?” – If you know that leaving the house and the encounters you have there cause you harm, then it is beneficial for you not to go out often—even for church services—but only from time to time; for silence delivers one from many evils.

132. “If I find it necessary to leave the house—whether for my own needs or for the sake of my fathers—would it not weigh on my conscience if I did not go to church in such a case?” – If you need to leave the house out of necessity or at the command of the fathers, strive to do your duty with the fear of God, and do not worry about missing the church service; but return to your home, and there reflect on your sins. But if you leave the house out of laziness or distraction, then it is better to go to the church service and not let your mind wander, but to pay attention to yourself.

133. “Is it good to go to church at night (for a vigil), or to keep vigil at home to the best of one’s ability?”—It is good to keep vigil at home, for there are conversations in church.

134. “A thought presents to me the lack of the means I need, suggesting that I cannot provide for my family—and from this, sorrow assails me.”—This is sorrow of every kind. If we had hope in God, He Himself would guide us according to His will. Therefore, “*Cast your sorrow upon the Lord*” (Ps. 54:23), and He is powerful enough to provide you and your household with everything you need without sorrow or grief. Say to Him, “*Let Your will be done,*” and He will not leave you in sorrow or grief.

135. “When I do something unjust and then make amends for it, my mind becomes conceited, suggesting that I have done something good; what should I say to it in this case?” – Tell him: Without God, we cannot do anything good, as He Himself said: “*Without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). And the Apostle says: “*What do you have that you did not receive? But if you have received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*” (1 Cor. 4:7). Therefore, if we cannot take pride even in doing good, how much less should we do so in abstaining from evil. It is great folly to take pride in the fact that we do not sin.

136. “Every food has a natural sweetness: does it not harm the one who eats it?”—God the Lord has granted sweetness to every kind of food, and there is no harm in this for the one who receives it with thanksgiving. But one must always guard against addiction, for it is harmful to the soul.

137. “Is it improper to do something in such a way that the work turns out clean, when, for example, I happen to be constructing a building or doing something else?” – It is not inappropriate to make something so that it turns out clean and beautiful, for the sake of the purpose for which it is intended, but without attachment, for the Lord rejoices in all purity. But if you notice a fondness for a thing within yourself, then remember its end—how it is subject to decay—and you will be calmed; for there is not a single thing that remains constantly in the same form, but everything is transitory and changeable.

The Venerable Abba Dorotheus

A Brief Account of Him

Abba Dorotheus flourished at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. He spent his early youth studying secular sciences—with great diligence. After completing his education, he lived for some time in his homeland, not far from the monastery of Abba Serid, perhaps in Ashkelon or Gaza. He was of sufficient means. He soon came into contact with the great elders Barsanuphius and John, whose teachings inspired him to leave everything behind and take monastic vows at the monastery of Abba Serid, where they resided. Under their guidance, he received his monastic training—primarily, however, under the guidance of the elder John—while at the same time fulfilling the duties assigned to him by the abbot of the monastery, who first entrusted him with the supervision of the guesthouse and then the infirmary. During this latter period of service, he served as the mentor of St. Dositheus. After the deaths of Abba Serida and the elder St. John, when their common mentor, the great Barsanuphius, withdrew completely into his cell, the Reverend Dorotheus left Abba Serida's community and became the abbot of another monastery. His teachings, delivered to his disciples, likely date from this time. These teachings, numbering twenty-one, along with several epistles, constitute all that remains to us as a legacy from the writings of this Father, whose light of teaching spread not only in monastic communities but also everywhere among Christians. The year of his death is estimated to be around 620. His feast day is June 5.

Instructions for Ascetics

(Excerpted in sequence)

1. In His goodness, God has given us commandments that purify us, so that, if we so desire, we may, by keeping these commandments, be cleansed not only of sins but also of the passions themselves. For the passions are one thing, and sins are another. Passions are: anger, pride, sensuality, hatred, evil lust, and the like. Sins, however, are the very acts of the passions, when one carries them out in practice—that is, performs with the body those deeds to which his passions impel him; for one may have passions but not act upon them.

2. The (old) Law was intended to teach us not to do what we ourselves would not want to suffer; that is why it restrained us only from doing evil. Now, however (in the New Testament), we are required to cast out the very passion that drives us to do evil—hatred itself, sensuality itself, vainglory itself, and other passions.

3. Listen to what the Lord says: *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:29). Here He revealed the root and cause of all evil and the remedy for it—the cause of all that is good; He showed precisely that exaltation has brought us low, and that mercy cannot be obtained except through its opposite, humility. — Why have we been subjected to all these sorrows? Is it not because of pride? Man was created in every kind of delight and was in paradise. But he was commanded not to do one thing, and yet he did it. Do you see pride? Do you see disobedience (the daughter of pride)?—Then God said: Man cannot enjoy a single joy; if he does not experience misfortune, he will go even further and perish completely; if he does not know what sorrow and toil are, he will not know what joy and peace are either;—and He cast him out of Paradise. — There he was left to his own pride and his own will, so that they might crush his bones, and through this he might learn to follow not himself but God's commandments, and so that the very suffering of disobedience might teach him the bliss of obedience, as the Prophet says: *“Your apostasy will discipline you”* (Jer. 2:19). — Now the goodness of God calls out: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:28). It is as if to say: You have toiled and suffered, and experienced the evil consequences of disobedience; so come now and turn back; revive yourselves with humility, instead of the pride with which you have killed yourselves. *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:29).

4. Abba Mark said: Without contrition of heart, it is impossible to be freed from evil and to acquire virtue. Through contrition of heart, a person becomes obedient to the commandments, is freed from evil, acquires virtues—and then ascends to his rest.

5. Some God-loving people, having curbed the workings of the passions through holy baptism, desired to conquer the passions themselves and become dispassionate—such as St. Anthony, St. Pachomius, and other God-bearing Fathers. They embraced the noble intention *“to purify themselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit”* (2 Cor. 7:1). But knowing that, while living in the world, it is not easy to achieve this, they devised their own special way of life, a special way of acting—that is, a life of seclusion detached from the world—and began to flee from the world and live in the deserts, striving in fasting and vigils, sleeping on the bare

ground, and endured all manner of other hardships, having completely renounced their homeland and kinship, their estates and possessions.

6. Not only did they keep the commandments, but they also brought gifts to God. The commandments are given to all Christians, and every Christian is obligated to keep them. This is the same as the tribute owed to a king in the world. But just as there are great and noble people in the world who not only pay tribute to the king but also bring him gifts—for which they are granted special honors, rewards, and distinctions—so too the Fathers not only paid tribute to God by keeping the commandments, but also brought Him gifts—chastity and non-possessiveness, which are not commandments but acts of free will: for concerning the first it is said, *“Let the one who is able to accept this accept it”* (Matt. 19: 12), and concerning the second: *“If you wish to be perfect... sell what you have and give to the poor”* (Matt. 19:21).

7. They crucified the world for themselves, and then set about crucifying themselves to the world, imitating the Apostle, who says: *“The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”* (Gal. 6:15). For when a person renounces the world and becomes a monk—leaving behind parents, possessions, and all worldly affairs and cares—then he crucifies the world for himself. And when, having freed himself from external things, he strives against the very pleasures themselves, or against the very desire for things, and against his own wishes, and puts to death the very passions, then he crucifies himself to the world—and can boldly say with the Apostle: *“The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

8. Our Fathers, having crucified the world to themselves, also crucified themselves to the world by devoting themselves to ascetic struggles. But we, although we seem to have crucified the world to ourselves by leaving the world and entering the monastery, we do not wish to crucify ourselves to the world, for we still love its pleasures, still have an attachment to it, sympathize with its glory, and harbor within ourselves a fondness for food, clothing, and other vanities. However, we must not act this way; just as we have renounced the world and its possessions, so must we renounce our very attachment to those things.

9. We have left the world; let us also leave behind our attachment to it. For attachments once again bind us to the world and unite us with it, even if they concern trivial, ordinary, and worthless things. But if we wish to be completely transformed and freed from attachments, let us learn to cut off our desires—no matter how trivial the things to which they pertain. For nothing benefits people as much as the curbing of one’s own will; and truly, a person prospers more from this than from any other virtue. Meanwhile, such suppression of one’s will and desires can happen moment by moment. Suppose someone is walking; a thought tells him, “Look this way and that,” but he suppresses his desire and does not look. He encounters people talking; a thought tells him, “Say a word or two to them,” but he suppresses that desire—and does not speak. He approaches the kitchen; a thought tells him, “Go in and ask what the cook is preparing,” but he suppresses that desire, and does not go in, and so on and so forth. —By suppressing his desires in this way, he becomes accustomed to suppressing them and, starting with small things, reaches the point where he suppresses them effortlessly and calmly even in great matters; and so he finally comes to have no will of his own at all, and whatever happens, he remains calm. Thus, by cutting off one’s will, one attains impartiality, and from impartiality, with God’s help, one ascends to perfect dispassion.

10. One of the elders said, “Above all, we need humility.” Why did he say that?—Why did he not say that, above all, we need self-control? For the Apostle says, *“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things”* (1 Cor. 9:25). Or why did he not say that, above all, we need the fear of God? For it is written in Scripture: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Prov. 1:7). Why did he also not say that, above all, we need almsgiving or faith? For it is said: *“Sins are cleansed by almsgiving and faith”* (Prov. 15:27), and also: *“Without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Heb. 11:6). Why, then, having set aside all these things that are so necessary, does he emphasize only humility? The Elder shows us by this that neither the fear of God, nor almsgiving, nor faith, nor self-control, nor any other virtue can be perfect without humility. For it is through humility that all the arrows of the enemy and the adversary are broken. All the saints walked in its path and through its labor. *“Behold my humility and my labor, and forgive all my sins,”* cries the Psalmist; and again: *“I humbled myself, and the Lord saved me”* (Ps. 24:18; 114:6).

11. The same elder said: Humility is not angry with anyone, nor does it provoke anyone to anger. Humility draws God’s grace upon the soul; and when God’s grace comes, it delivers the soul from these two grave passions. For what could be more grievous than being angry with one’s neighbor and provoking him to anger? – But am I saying that humility delivers us from only these two passions? It delivers the soul from every passion and every temptation.

12. When St. Anthony saw all the devil's snares spread out before him and, sighing, asked God, "Who, then, will escape them?" God answered him, "Humility escapes them," and—what is even more astonishing—added, "They do not even touch him." Do you see the power of this virtue? Truly, there is nothing stronger than humility; nothing can overcome it. If something sorrowful befalls a humble person, he immediately condemns himself, acknowledging that he deserves it—and will not reproach anyone, nor will he lay the blame on another. In this way, he endures what has happened without confusion, without sorrow, with perfect calm; and therefore he is not angry with anyone, nor does he provoke anyone's anger.

13. There are two kinds of humility, just as there are two kinds of pride. "The *first* kind of *pride*" is when someone reproaches a brother, condemns him, and dishonors him as if he were insignificant, while considering himself superior to him. If such a person does not come to his senses soon and strive to correct himself, he gradually falls *into* "the *second* kind of *pride*," which is pride against God Himself and attributes one's own deeds and virtues to oneself rather than to God, as if one had accomplished them by one's own efforts, through one's own knowledge and intellect, and not by God's help. From this, one can see what the two kinds of humility consist of. "The *first*" humility consists in regarding one's brother as wiser and in every way superior to oneself—or in regarding oneself as lower than everyone else. "The *second*" humility, however, consists in attributing one's deeds to God. And this is the perfect humility of the saints.

14. Perfect humility is born of keeping the commandments. When there is much fruit on the trees, the fruit itself bends the branches downward and causes them to droop; but a branch that bears no fruit reaches upward and grows straight. There are also certain trees (lemon trees) that bear no fruit as long as their branches grow upward; but if someone takes a stone, ties it to a branch, and bends it downward, then it bears fruit. So too, when the soul humbles itself, it bears fruit, and the more fruit it bears, the more it humbles itself. That is why the saints, the closer they draw to God, the more they see themselves as sinners. Thus, when Abraham saw the Lord, he called himself "*dust and ashes*" (Gen. 18:27); and Isaiah, upon seeing God exalted, cried out: "*Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips*" (Isa. 6:5).

15. No one can express in words what humility is and how it is born in the soul unless they learn it from experience. No one can come to know this from words alone. Once, Abba Zosima was speaking about humility (that the holier a person is, the more humble they are), and a certain sophist who was present asked him: "Do you not know that you possess virtues? After all, you see that you are keeping the commandments: how is it, then, that while doing so, you consider yourself a sinner?" The elder could not find an answer to give him, but only said, "I do not know what to say to you, but I consider myself a sinner." And when the sophist continued to pester him with the question, "How?"—the elder replied only this: "I do not know how; but I truly consider myself to be so. Do not trouble me." Likewise, when Abba Agathon was nearing the end of his life, and the brethren said to him, "Are you afraid too, Father?" he replied, "As much as I could, I compelled myself to keep the commandments, but I am a man, and how can I know whether my deeds are pleasing to God? For God's judgment is one thing, and human judgment is another."

16. Regarding what leads to humility, one of the elders said this: "The path to humility consists of physical labors performed wisely—and of considering oneself lower than everyone else—and of praying to God unceasingly." – Physical labor leads the soul to humility, because the soul sympathizes with the body and shares in everything that happens in the body. Just as physical labor humbles the body, so too is the soul humbled along with it. To consider oneself lower than everyone else is a distinctive feature of humility, and practice and training in this naturally root humility and uproot the pride we mentioned first. For how can anyone take pride before another, or rebuke and humiliate anyone, if they consider themselves lower than everyone else? – Likewise, praying unceasingly clearly opposes pride—the second kind. For it is evident that one inclines toward humility who, knowing that he cannot perform any virtue without God's help, never ceases to pray to God that He may bestow His grace upon him. Why? Because one who prays unceasingly, even if he is deemed worthy to accomplish something, cannot become proud, knowing why he accomplished it; for he cannot attribute this to his own strength, but attributes all his successes to God, always giving Him thanks and always calling upon Him, trembling lest he be deprived of such help. Thus, he prays with humility and is humbled by prayer; and the more he always progresses in virtue, the more he is always humbled; and as he is humbled, he receives help and progresses in humility.

17. When God created man, He instilled within him something divine—a thought akin to a spark, possessing both light and warmth—a thought that enlightens the mind and shows it what is good and what is evil. This is called conscience—and it is the natural law. By following this law—the conscience—the

Patriarchs and all the Saints, even before the written law, pleased God. But when people, through the Fall, suppressed and trampled upon their conscience, then the written law became necessary, the holy Prophets became necessary, and the very coming of our Lord Jesus Christ became necessary—to reveal and restore it—so that the spark, which had been buried, might be rekindled through the observance of His holy commandments.

18. Now it is up to us either to smother it again or to let it shine within us and enlighten us, if we obey. When our conscience tells us to do something, and we disregard it—and when it speaks again, and we do not act but continue to trample on it—then we smother it, and it can no longer speak clearly to us because of the burden weighing upon it; but like a lamp shining from behind the conscience, it begins to show us things that grow darker and darker. Just as in water clouded by much silt, no one can recognize their own face, so too, through sin, we fail to understand what our conscience is telling us—so that it seems to us as if we have no conscience at all.

19. Conscience is called an adversary because it always resists our evil will and reminds us of what we ought to do but do not do; and if we do what we ought not to do, it condemns us. That is why the Lord called it an adversary and commands us: *“Be reconciled to your adversary while you are still on the way with him”* (Matt. 5:25)—that is, in this world, as St. Basil the Great says.

20. Let us, then, guard our conscience while we are in this world; let us not allow it to convict us of any wrongdoing, and let us not trample upon it in anything, even if it be the smallest thing. Know that from neglecting this small and, in essence, insignificant thing, we move on to neglecting even the great. If anyone begins to say, “What’s the big deal if I eat this trifle? What’s the big deal if I look at this or that thing?” then from this: “What does it matter in this, what does it matter in that”—he falls into a wicked habit and begins to disregard what is great and important and to trample on his conscience; and thus, becoming hardened in evil, he will be in danger of falling into complete insensitivity.

21. One must keep one’s conscience both in relation to God, in relation to one’s neighbor, and in relation to things. — In relation to God, one keeps one’s conscience by not neglecting His commandments; and even in those things that people do not see, and in which no one demands anything of us, one keeps one’s conscience toward God in secret. — Keeping one’s conscience clear toward one’s neighbor requires that one never do anything that, as we know, offends or tempts one’s neighbor—whether by deed, word, appearance, or gaze. — Keeping one’s conscience clear in regard to material things consists in not mistreating any object, not allowing it to be damaged, and not discarding it unnecessarily. — In all these matters, one must keep one’s conscience pure and unblemished, so as not to fall into the trouble against which the Lord Himself warns us (Matt. 5:26).

22. St. John says, *“Perfect love casts out fear”* (1 John 4:18). But how then does the holy Prophet David say, *“Fear the Lord, all you His saints”* (Ps. 33: 10)? This shows that there are two kinds of fear: one is initial, and the other is perfect—one is characteristic of beginners, and the other is characteristic of perfect saints who have attained the measure of perfect love. Whoever does God’s will out of fear of punishment is still a beginner; but whoever does God’s will out of love for God—in order to please God—is led by this love into perfect fear, by which, having tasted the sweetness of abiding with God, he fears falling away and fears losing it. And it is this perfect fear, born of love, that drives out the initial fear.

23. It is impossible to attain perfect fear unless one first acquires the original fear. The Wise Sirach says: *“The fear of God is the beginning and the end”* (Sirach 1:15, 18). The “beginning” refers to the initial fear, followed by the perfect fear of the saints. The initial fear is characteristic of a spiritual state. It protects the soul from every fall; for it is said: *“Through the fear of the Lord, everyone turns away from evil”* (Prov. 15:27). But whoever turns away from evil out of fear of punishment, like a slave who fears his master, gradually comes to do good of his own free will—at first, like a hired hand, hoping for some reward for his good deeds. If, however, he continues in this way—avoiding evil out of fear, like a slave, and doing good in the hope of a reward, like a hired hand—then, abiding in goodness by God’s grace and uniting with God in proportion to this, he finally acquires a taste for goodness, comes to a certain sense of what is truly good—and no longer wishes to be separated from it. Then he attains the dignity of a son and loves the good for the sake of the good itself—and although he fears, it is because he loves. This is the great and perfect fear.

24. St. David the Prophet also describes this gradual process in the following words: *“Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”* (Ps. 33: 15). *“Turn away,”* he says, from *“evil”*—that is, avoid all evil in general; turn away from every deed that leads to sin. But having said this, he did not stop there;

rather, he added: “*and do good.*” For it happens that some do no evil, yet they do no good either; for example, they do not wrong others, yet they do not show mercy, or they do not hate, yet they do not love. Having said this, he continues logically: “*Seek peace and pursue it.*” He did not merely say, “*Seek,*” but “strive earnestly for it, so that you may attain it.”—Pay close attention with your mind to these words, and note the subtlety observed by the Saint. — When someone is granted the grace to turn away from evil and then, with God’s help, diligently does good, the enemy’s attacks will immediately arise against him—and he strives, labors, and is distressed, at times fearing to return to evil like a slave, and at other times hoping for a reward for his good deeds like a hired hand. But while enduring attacks from the enemy, fighting against him, and resisting him—driven by these impulses—he does good, yet with great sorrow and great effort. But when he receives help from God and gains some skill in doing good, then he sees peace, then he feels peace, then he understands what the sorrowful struggle means, and what the joy and gladness of peace are. — And only then does he begin to seek peace, striving earnestly for it, so that he may attain it, possess it fully, and establish it within himself. But whoever has attained this measure finally tastes the blessedness of the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9).—And from this point on, who can move this soul to do good for any reason other than the enjoyment of that very good? It is then that such a person comes to know perfect fear.

25. The Fathers have said that a person acquires the fear of God if he keeps death and the torments of the afterlife in mind—if every evening he examines himself to see how he spent the day, and every morning, how the night passed—if he is not presumptuous, and finally, if he maintains close fellowship with a person who fears God. For they say that a certain brother asked an elder: “What must I do, Father, to fear God?” The elder replied to him: “Go and live with a person who fears God—and by the very fact that he fears God, he will teach you to fear God as well.” — We drive the fear of God away from ourselves by doing the exact opposite of what has been said: we have neither a remembrance of death nor a remembrance of torment—we do not pay attention to ourselves or examine how we spend our time—but we live carelessly and associate with people who do not fear God—and we become presumptuous. And this last point is the worst of all: it is utter ruin; for nothing so drives the fear of God from the soul as insolence. Abba Agathon was once asked about it, and he said: “Insolence is like a strong, scorching wind from which, when it blows, everyone flees, and which spoils every fruit on the trees.”—May God deliver us from this all-destructive passion—insolence.

26. Presumption takes many forms: one can be presumptuous in word, gesture, and gaze. Because of presumption, some fall into idle talk, speak worldly things, act in a ridiculous manner, and provoke others to indecent laughter. Insolence is also when someone touches another without need, reaches out to someone who is laughing, pushes someone, snatches something from their hands, or stares shamelessly at someone: all this is caused by insolence, and all this stems from the absence of the fear of God in the soul—and from this, a person gradually descends into complete carelessness. — That is why God, when He gave the commandments of the Law, said: “*The children of Israel shall be reverent*” (Lev. 15: 31); for without reverence and modest modesty (shyness), a person neither honors God Himself nor keeps any of the commandments. That is why there is nothing more harmful than audacity—and that is why it is the mother of all passions, for it drives out reverence, banishes the fear of God from the soul, and gives birth to carelessness.

27. Abba John, a disciple of Abba Barsanuphius, was in the habit of repeating the following four sayings—sometimes one, sometimes another—when dismissing the brothers who came to see him: “By keeping a clear conscience toward one’s neighbor, humility is born; — one must never prefer one’s own will to that of one’s brother; — flee from all that is human, and you will be saved; — ‘*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*’ (Gal. 6:2).” — Each time he prefaced these sayings with words such as: “I once said, brother—may God preserve love—the fathers said,” and after that he would add one of his own sayings.

28. In any task that comes your way—even if it is extremely necessary and requires careful attention—I do not want you to carry it out with hesitation or confusion. But be assured that every task you undertake—whether great or small—is one-eighth of the goal; and maintaining your composure, even if this means failing to complete the task, is seven-eighths. Therefore, if you undertake a task and wish to fulfill it completely and entirely, strive not only to carry out the task itself—which, as I said, is one-eighth of the goal—but also to preserve your composure intact—which constitutes seven-eighths. But if, in order to carry out the work of your service, it becomes necessary to get carried away and harm yourself or another by arguing with them, then you should not lose seven-eighths just to preserve one-eighth.

29. The wise Solomon says in Proverbs: “*Those who lack guidance fall like leaves; but salvation lies in the multitude of counsel*” (Prov. 11:14). Do you see what Holy Scripture teaches us? It exhorts us not to

rely on ourselves, not to consider ourselves all-knowing, not to believe that we can govern ourselves, for we need help; we need those who instruct us according to God. There are none more wretched or closer to ruin than those who have no guide on the path of God. For what does this mean: “Those who have no guidance fall like leaves”? A leaf is always green, blooming, and beautiful at first, but then it gradually withers, falls, and is finally trampled underfoot. So too, a person who is guided by no one is at first always zealous for fasting, vigil, silence, obedience, and other virtues; but then this zeal gradually cools, and since he has no one to instruct him, support him, or rekindle this zeal within him, it imperceptibly withers, falls, and finally becomes a slave to his enemies, who then do with him as they please.

30. Concerning those who lay bare their thoughts and actions and do everything after consultation, the Wise One says: “*Salvation lies in the counsel of many.*” He does not say, “In the counsel of many”—meaning that we should consult with everyone—but that we should consult on everything—of course, with those we trust—and not in such a way that we say one thing while concealing another, but by revealing everything and seeking counsel on all matters; for such a person, true salvation lies “*in the counsel of many.*”

31. When we do not reveal our thoughts and intentions and do not seek the counsel of the experienced, then we cling to our own will and follow our own justifications (that is, what we ourselves consider righteous). And then, while seemingly doing a good deed, we set traps for ourselves and perish without even realizing it. For how can we comprehend God’s will, or surrender ourselves fully to it, if we trust in ourselves and cling to our own will?—That is why Abba Pimen said that “our will is a wall of bronze between man and God.”

32. For the one who trusts his own mind and surrenders to his own will, the enemy sets a trap as he pleases. But for the one who does everything by counsel, the enemy has no access. That is why he hates both questioning and instruction regarding himself; he hates the very voice, the very sound of such words. And shall I say why?—Because he knows that his malice will be immediately exposed as soon as people begin to ask questions and speak of what is beneficial. And he fears nothing more than being recognized, because then he can no longer scheme as he pleases. When someone asks for and hears advice from someone experienced: “Do this, but don’t do that,” or “Now is not the time for this,” and sometimes, “Now is the time”; then the devil cannot find a way to harm him or bring him down, because he always seeks counsel and protects himself from all sides—and thus the saying is fulfilled in him: “*Salvation lies in the multitude of counsel.*”

33. The enemy loves those who rely on their own reason; for they help him and weave their own snares. I know of no other cause of a monk’s downfall except when he trusts his own heart. Some say that a person falls because of this or that; but I know of no other fall except when a person follows his own will. If you see someone who has fallen, know that he followed his own will. There is nothing more dangerous, nothing more ruinous than this.

34. I always tell you that it is through small indulgences that we come to commit grave sins. What is worse than sin—condemning one’s neighbor? What does God hate so much, and from what does He turn away so strongly? And yet a person falls into such a great evil from something seemingly trivial—from allowing oneself to take even a slight offense at one’s neighbor. For when this is permitted, the mind begins to ignore its own sins and to notice the sins of others. And from this (from the habit of doing so) arise gossip, reproaches, slander—and finally—destructive condemnation. But nothing angers God so much, nothing so strips a person of grace and leads to ruin as reproaching, slandering, and condemning one’s neighbor.

35. It is one thing to slander, and another to condemn or belittle. To slander means to say about someone: “So-and-so lied,” or “committed adultery,” or “became angry,” or “did something else that was not good.” This is someone who slandered his brother—that is, spoke passionately about his sin. But to condemn means to say: “So-and-so is a liar, a fornicator, or quick-tempered.” This is someone who condemned the very disposition of his soul, passed judgment on his entire life by saying that he is such-and-such, and condemned him as such—and this is a grave transgression.

36. The Pharisee, praying and giving thanks to God for his virtues, did not lie but spoke the truth, and he was not condemned for that: for we ought to thank God when we are enabled to do something good, because He helped and assisted us in it. He was not condemned for this; nor was he condemned for saying, “*I am not like other men.*” But when, turning to the tax collector, he said, “*or like this tax collector,*” then he was condemned (himself for condemning another). For he condemned the very person, the very disposition of his soul, his entire life. That is why the tax collector went out justified more than he did (Luke 18:11).

37. It belongs to God alone to justify or condemn, since He knows the disposition of each person’s soul, as well as their strength, aspirations, and gifts, their physical constitution, and their abilities—and in

accordance with this, He justly condemns or justifies each one. For who can truly know all these things except the One who created all and is all-knowing?

38. Sometimes we not only condemn but also humiliate our neighbor; for there is a difference between condemning and humiliating. Humiliation occurs when a person not only condemns but also despises another—loathing them and turning away from them as from some abomination: this is worse than condemnation and far more destructive.

39. Those who wish to be saved do not pay attention to the faults of others, but always look at their own and prosper. Such was the man who, seeing that his brother had sinned, sighed and said, “Woe is me! Just as he has sinned today, so will I sin tomorrow.” Do you see the wise disposition of the soul? How did he immediately find a way to avoid condemning his brother? For by saying, “So will I tomorrow,” he instilled in himself fear and concern that he, too, might sin before long—and thus avoided condemning his neighbor. Moreover, he was not satisfied with this, but also cast himself at his feet, saying, “And this one will repent of his sin, but I will not repent as I ought; I will not attain repentance; I will be powerless to repent.” Do you see the enlightenment of the divine soul?

40. It happens that the poison of condemnation, having overflowed our soul, seeks to pour out onto others as well. And so, when we meet another brother, who is peaceful toward all, we rush to tell him: “This and that happened”—and we cause him harm by planting the sin of condemnation in his heart. We do not fear the words: “*Woe to him who leads his friend astray with murky corruption*” (Habakkuk 2:15); yet we commit a demonic deed and are heedless of it. For whose work is it to confuse and harm, if not that of demons? And so we find ourselves acting as the demons’ accomplices, leading both ourselves and our neighbor to ruin. Why is this so? Because there is no love within us. For “*love covers a multitude of sins*” (1 Peter 4:8).

41. The saints do not condemn the sinner nor turn away from him, but have compassion on him, grieve for him, admonish him, comfort him, heal him as a sick member, and do everything to save him. – What did St. Ammon do when the brothers came and said to him in confusion, “Go and see, Father, is there a woman in such-and-such a brother’s cell?” What mercy did he show? Realizing that the brother had hidden a woman under a barrel, he went and sat on it, and ordered them to search the entire cell. When they found nothing, he said to them, “May God forgive you.” Thus he put them to shame and did them a great service, teaching them not to believe accusations against their neighbor too readily; and he corrected that brother, not only by covering for him in a godly manner but also by instructing him when the time was right. For, having sent everyone out, he took him by the hand and said to him, “Think of your soul, brother!”—This brother was immediately ashamed, was moved to repentance, and put an end to his sin. Thus, the elder’s love for humanity and compassion had a beneficial effect on his soul.

42. Imagine a circle, with its center at the middle, and radii—beams—extending from the center. The farther these radii extend from the center, the more they diverge and move away from one another; conversely, the closer they approach the center, the closer they come to one another. Now suppose that this circle is the world, the very center of the circle is God, and the straight lines (radii) extending from the center to the circumference, or from the circumference to the center, are the paths of human life. And here, too, the same applies. To the extent that the saints enter the circle toward its center, desiring to draw near to God, to that extent, as they enter, they draw nearer both to God and to one another; and moreover, in such a way that to the extent they draw near to God, they also draw near to one another, and to the extent they draw near to one another, they also draw near to God. – Understand the same principle regarding separation. When they turn away from God and turn toward the external, it is evident that to the extent that they depart from the center and move away from God, to that same extent they also move away from one another—and to the extent that they move away from one another, to that extent they also move away from God. Such is the nature of love: but to the extent that we remain outside and do not love God, to that extent each of us is also distant from our neighbor. If, however, we love God, then to the extent that we draw near to God through our love for Him, to that extent we are united in love with our neighbors; and to the extent that we are united with our neighbors, to that extent we are also united with God.

43. Why is it that sometimes, when someone hears an insulting remark, they pay no attention to it and take it in stride, as if they hadn’t heard it at all, while at other times, as soon as they hear it, they are immediately embarrassed? Why does this happen? Here is why they are not embarrassed: **first**, it happens that after prayer or a good spiritual exercise, a person is in a good frame of mind, and therefore is forgiving toward his brother and is not embarrassed by his words; it **also** happens that some have a great fondness for someone, and

therefore bear everything that person inflicts upon them without distress; it **also** happens that some despise the one who wishes to insult them and do not take offense at his insults. – But people are troubled by the opposite of this—either because they are not in a good frame of mind, or because they harbor animosity toward the one who has insulted them—and for other reasons as well. – Yet the main cause of all such distress is that we do not reproach ourselves.

44. Abba Pimen said: “Wherever one who reproaches himself may go, whatever harm, dishonor, or other sorrow may befall him, he already considers himself worthy of every unpleasant thing and is never troubled. Is there anything more carefree than such a state?”...

45. Someone might say: If a brother insults me, and I, upon examining myself, find that I gave him no cause for it, how can I reproach myself? – In truth, if anyone examines himself with the fear of God, he will find that he has given cause in every way—whether by deed, word, or appearance; and if it does not turn out that he has given any cause at the present time, then he has certainly offended him at some other time, either in this matter or in another, or perhaps he has offended another brother and should have suffered for it—or often for some other sin. That is why I say that if anyone examines himself with the fear of God and rigorously examines his conscience, he will certainly find himself guilty and reproach himself.

46. It happens that someone, sitting in silent seclusion, remains at peace. But then a brother comes, and in the course of conversation says something unpleasant, and he is immediately thrown into confusion—and later says, “If he had not come to me and disturbed me, I would not have sinned.” – What a ridiculous line of reasoning! Did the one who spoke those words to him instill that passion within him? He merely brought to the surface what was already within him;—and now he must not grieve over his brother, but repent of his passion, reproaching himself. Such a person is like rotten bread, which looks good on the outside but is moldy on the inside, and when someone breaks it open, its rottenness is revealed—or like a clean vessel that is full of stench and foul odor inside, and when someone opens it, its stench is immediately noticeable. So this man remained, as it seemed to him, at peace, unaware that the passion was within him; the brother spoke a single word to him and revealed the rot hidden within him. Therefore, if he wishes to be forgiven, let him repent, reproaching himself. Only by this path will he attain purity and prosper. He must also thank that brother for having brought him such benefit.

47. As the soul commits sin, it grows weary from it; for sin weakens and wears down the one who gives himself over to it; and therefore everything that befalls him weighs him down. But if a person prospers in goodness, then as he prospers, what was once heavy becomes lighter for him.

48. In any case, we must look upon suffering. Whether someone does us good or we suffer evil at the hands of another, we must view it as suffering and thank God for everything that happens to us, always reproaching ourselves and saying that if something good happens to us, it is the work of God’s merciful providence toward us, and if something evil happens, it is because of our sins.

49. Wretched are we, who sin daily and indulge our passions! We have abandoned the righteous path shown to us by the fathers—the path of self-reproach—and are walking the crooked path of reproaching our neighbor. And each of us strives in every matter to shift the blame onto our brother and lay the entire burden upon him; each is lazy and does not keep a single commandment, yet demands that our neighbor fulfill all the commandments.

50. Where is that elder who, when asked, “What is the most important thing you have found on this path, Father?” replied, “To reproach oneself in everything?” Likewise, Abba Pimen said with a sigh, “All virtues have entered this house, but without one virtue it is difficult for a person to stand firm.” “What virtue is that?” they asked him. He replied, “That a person should reproach himself.” And St. Anthony said, “It is a great deed to take upon oneself one’s sins before the face of God—and to expect temptation until one’s last breath.” And everywhere we find that our fathers found peace because, having entrusted everything—even the smallest thing—to God, they always observed this rule: to reproach themselves in all things.

51. The Fathers said that it is not proper for monks to become angry or to insult anyone, and furthermore: “Whoever has overcome irritability has overcome the demons, but whoever is overcome by this passion is entirely alien to the monastic life,” and so on. “What, then, are we to say about ourselves, when we not only give in to irritability and anger but also harbor grudges? What are we to do but lament such a pitiful and inhuman state (of our souls)? Let us, however, take heed of ourselves, brothers, and strive, with God’s help, to rid ourselves of the bitterness of this destructive passion.”

52. Disagreements and grievances often arise among brothers, but they usually hasten to settle these quarrels and make peace. It happens, however, that some, even after bowing in reconciliation, continue to grieve over their brother and harbor ill will toward him. This is resentment—and it requires great care lest one become entrenched in it and perish. Whoever has reconciled immediately after becoming angry has healed his anger, but has not yet struggled against resentment—and therefore continues to harbor resentment toward his brother. For resentment is one thing, anger another, irritability yet another, and confusion yet another. To help you understand this better, I will give an example. Whoever kindles a fire first takes a small ember: this is the word of the brother who inflicted the insult. If you endure that word, you have extinguished the ember. But if you think, “Why did he say that? Since that’s the case, I’ll say such-and-such to him; if he hadn’t wanted to insult me, he wouldn’t have said that—so I’ll insult him too—without fail”—then you have added kindling, or something similar, just as one who stokes a fire does, and produced smoke, which is agitation. Confusion is that very movement and agitation of thoughts that stirs up and irritates the heart. And irritation is a vengeful rebellion against the one who has grieved you, which turns into insolence, as Blessed Abba Mark said: “Malice, nourished by thoughts, irritates the heart; but prayer kills it.” If you had taken a brother’s slight remark to heart, you would have extinguished that small ember before confusion arose. – However, even that, if you wish, you can easily extinguish while it is still fresh—through silence, prayer, or a single bow from the heart. – But if you continue to smolder—that is, to irritate and agitate your heart with thoughts like, “Why does he... so should I...”—then your heart will flare up, and a fever of irritability will arise. – If you wish, you can extinguish this as well before anger takes hold. But if you continue to agitate and irritate yourself, you will be like a person adding wood to a fire, which produces a fiery flame—and this is anger. And anger, if it becomes entrenched, turns into resentment, from which a person cannot free themselves unless they shed their own blood (through sweat and self-discipline).

53. You have heard what initial confusion is, what irritability is, what anger is, and what rancor is. Do you see how a single word can lead to such evil? For if you had first rebuked yourself, patiently endured your brother’s words, and refused to take revenge on him—or to respond to one word with two or five words, or to repay evil with evil—you would have been freed from all these evils. That is why I say to you: always cut off your passions while they are still young, before they take root, become entrenched within you, and begin to weigh you down; for then you will have to suffer greatly from them. It is one thing to pull up a small blade of grass, and quite another to uproot a large tree.

54. One can repay evil with evil not only by deed, but also by word and gesture. Some think that they do not actually repay evil with evil, but it turns out that they do so by word, or gesture, or movement, or glance; for by all these things one can offend one’s brother—and this, too, is repaying evil with evil. Another, however, makes no effort to take revenge for the wrong done to him—neither by deed, nor by word, nor by appearance, nor by gesture—but harbors resentment toward his brother in his heart and grieves over him. Still another, though he does not grieve over his brother, if he hears that someone has insulted that brother in any way, or that he has been scolded or humiliated—and rejoices at it—then he, too, is found to be repaying evil with evil in his heart. Another harbors no malice in his heart and does not rejoice upon hearing of the humiliation of the one who insulted him; indeed, he even grieves if that person is insulted. Yet he does not rejoice in the other’s prosperity either—for example, when he sees that person being praised and flattered, he grieves; and this, too, is a form of resentment, albeit the mildest.

55. Another person, if someone happens to insult him, and they bow to one another and reconcile, lives in peace with that person and harbors no ill will toward him in his heart; but when, after some time, that person happens to say something distressing to him again, he begins to recall the past and is troubled not only by the second incident but also by the first. – This is like a man who has a wound and has applied a bandage to it; although the wound has now healed and closed over, the spot is still tender; and if someone throws a stone at him, that spot is injured more than any other part of the body and immediately begins to bleed. The same thing happens to that person: he had a wound, and he applied a bandage—that is, he bowed his head and healed the wound, that is, his anger, through reconciliation; he also began to strengthen himself against resentment, striving not to harbor a single evil thought in his heart. This means that the wound is healing; but it has not yet completely healed—there is still a remnant of resentment, from which the wound can easily reopen if the person suffers even a slight injury.

56. One must strive—to completely purge the inner pus as well, so that the sore spot may heal completely, and so that no disfigurement remains and it is impossible to tell that there was ever a wound in

that place. How, then, can this be achieved?—By praying with all one’s heart for the one who has offended and saying: “God, help my brother and me for the sake of his prayers!” – By praying in this way for his brother, he shows compassion and love; and by asking for help for himself through his brother’s prayers, he humbles himself. And where there is compassion, love, and humility, what room is there for irritability, resentment, or any other passion? – And Abba Zosima said: “Even if the devil were to employ all the wiles of his malice along with all his demons, all his schemes would be nullified and crushed by humility according to Christ’s commandment.” And another elder said: “He who prays for his enemy will not be vindictive.”

57. Put the elders’ advice into practice, and then you will truly understand what they are saying; if you do not put it into practice, you can never learn the way of asceticism from words alone. What person, desiring to learn a craft, masters it from words alone? No; first he works and makes mistakes, works and destroys his creation; and so, little by little, through toil and patience, he learns the craft, with the help of God, who watches over his labor and his will. Yet we want to learn the art of arts through words alone, without getting down to work. Is that even possible?!—Let us, then, be mindful of ourselves and labor diligently while we still have time.

58. We must be vigilant in every way so as not to be robbed by lies, for the liar is not united with God. Lies are foreign to God. Scripture says that “*lies are from the devil*,” that he “*is a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8:44). Behold, the devil is called the father of lies, while God is the Truth; for He Himself says, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6). See from Whom we separate ourselves and with whom we unite ourselves through falsehood!—Therefore, if we truly wish to be saved, we must love the truth with all our strength and all our zeal and guard ourselves against every falsehood, lest it separate us from the truth and from life.

59. There are three different kinds of lies: one lies in thought, another lies in word, and yet another lies through his very way of life. – One lies in thought who accepts his own assumptions as truth—that is, empty suspicions about his neighbor; for example, when he sees someone talking with his brother, he makes his own conjectures: “He’s saying something about me”—and the like. – Such a person lies in thought; for he speaks nothing true, but only according to his own opinion, and from this arise slander, gossip, enmity, and condemnation. – In short, one lies who, for example, being too lazy to get up for prayer, does not say, “Forgive me, I was too lazy to get up,” but says, “I had a fever, I was unwell,” and invents dozens of lies—so as not to make a single bow or humble himself. Likewise, if he desires something, he will not say directly, “I desire this,” but twists his words, citing now an illness, now a need—and lies until his desire is satisfied. Eventually, people stop believing him, even when he speaks the truth. —He who lies with his very life is the one who, being a fornicator, pretends to be chaste; or, being greedy, presents himself as merciful; or, being arrogant, puts on the appearance of humility.

60. Let us take care of ourselves. Who will give us this time if we waste it in vain? Truly, there will come a time when we will long for these days and not find them. Abba Arsenius always said to himself, “Arsenius, why did you leave the world?”

61. If we were willing to make even a little effort, we would not grieve so much nor experience such difficulties. For if anyone compels himself to make efforts, by continuing to strive, he progresses little by little and then practices virtue with ease; for God, seeing that he compels himself, grants him help. Let us, then, compel ourselves; for although we have not yet attained perfection, if we strive, we will receive help through our striving, and with this help we will acquire every kind of virtue. That is why one of the Fathers said, “Give your blood and receive the Spirit,” that is, strive, and you will gain proficiency in virtue.

62. Just as one who wishes to learn carpentry does not engage in any other craft, so too those who wish to learn the spiritual way should concern themselves with nothing else but to study day and night how to acquire it. However, there must be a measure to everything. One of the elders said: “Walk the royal path and count the stages (versts).” For virtues are the middle ground between excess and deficiency. That is why it is said in Scripture: “Do not turn to the right or to the left, but walk the royal path” (Deut. 5:32; 17:11).

63. Evil in and of itself is nothing, for it is not a being of any kind and has no composition. But the soul, having strayed from virtue, becomes passionate and gives birth to sin, and then suffers, finding no natural rest in it. Does a tree, by its very nature, have worms inside it? But a little rot sets in; from this rot a worm is born—and this very worm devours the tree. So too does the soul itself produce evil—and again suffers from evil itself, as Gregory the Theologian said: “Fire is the product of matter; and it devours matter, just as evil devours the wicked.”

64. We see the same thing in physical illness: when someone lives disorderly and does not take care of their health, an excess or deficiency of something occurs in the body, and from this the person subsequently becomes ill; but before this, there was no illness at all, and it never was anything; and again, once the body is healed, the illness no longer exists at all. In exactly the same way, evil is an ailment of the soul that has been deprived of the health proper to it and inherent in its nature, which is virtue.

65. There are three states in a person: he either acts on his passion, resists it, or eradicates it. The one who acts on passion is the one who carries it out and indulges it. The one who resists it is the one who does not act on it and does not cut it off, but prudently avoids the passion, as it were, yet still harbors it within. And the one who eradicates passion is the one who strives and acts against it.

66. One who acts on passion is like a man who, struck by his enemy's arrows, takes them and thrusts them into his own heart with his own hands. One who resists passion is like a man showered with his enemy's arrows but clad in armor, and therefore unharmed. And the one who uproots passion is like one who, while being showered with arrows by his enemy, shatters them or returns them to the enemy's heart, as it is said in the Psalm: "*Let their weapons pierce their own hearts, and let their bows be shattered.*"

67. One brother lay feverish for seven days, and now another forty days have passed, yet he still finds no strength within himself. "This humble one was ill for seven days"—but how many days have passed since then, and he still has not recovered? So it is with the soul: sometimes one sins only a little, but how long does one then spend shedding one's own blood before being set right?

68. We see our brothers being taken from our midst, yet we do not pay attention to ourselves, even though we know that we, too, are gradually drawing near to death. Let us, then, pay attention to ourselves, and while there is still time, let us not waste it in vain. How can we forget the words of that elder who said that if anyone loses gold or silver, he may find another in its place; but if we lose time by living in idleness and laziness, we will not be able to find another to replace what we have lost. Truly, we will seek even a single hour of this time and will not find it.

69. A great elder was walking with his disciples in a certain place where there were various cypress trees, both large and small. The elder said to one of his disciples, "Pull up this cypress." The cypress was small, and the brother immediately pulled it up with one hand. The elder pointed to another one, larger than the first, and said, "Pull this one up as well." The brother shook it with both hands and pulled it out. The elder pointed to another one, even larger. He pulled that one out as well, but with great difficulty. Then the elder pointed to yet another, even larger one. With the greatest effort—first shaking it vigorously, laboring and sweating—the brother finally pulled this one out as well. Finally, the elder showed him an even larger cypress tree. But the brother, though he labored hard and sweated over it, could not pull it out. The elder, seeing that he could not do it alone, told another brother to help him. And the two of them barely managed to pull it out. "Then the elder said to his disciples: 'So it is with passions; while they are small, we can easily uproot them if we wish; but if we treat them as if they were small, they grow stronger, and the stronger they become, the more effort they demand of us; and when they become deeply rooted within us, then even with great effort we cannot uproot them from ourselves on our own, unless we receive help from certain saints who assist us through God.'"

70. The prophet says to the daughter of Babylon: "*Blessed is he who seizes and dashes your infants against the rock*" (Ps. 136:9).—The daughter of Babylon is a symbol of all that is sinful and opposed to God. Her offspring are passionate thoughts and deeds. Blessed is the one who does not accept the wicked thoughts that arise within him, and does not allow them room to grow within himself and bring evil to fruition; but while they are still small, and before they take root and rise up against him, he strives in every way to crush them against the rock of unshakable resolve, and to destroy them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

71. The Fathers have shown us how a person should gradually purify himself: every evening he should examine himself to see how he spent the day, and again in the morning, to see how he spent the night, and repent before God for whatever sins he may have committed. As for us, since we sin so much, it is truly necessary—because of our forgetfulness—to examine ourselves even after six hours have passed, to see how we spent our time and in what ways we have sinned.

72. Whoever examines himself in this way will find that evil begins to diminish little by little—and if he committed nine transgressions, he will commit eight;—and thus, progressing gradually with God's help, he will not allow passions to take root within him. It is a great misfortune to fall into the habit of any passion.

73. It is not the one who has become angry once who is already called angry—nor is the one who has committed fornication once called a fornicator—nor is the one who has shown mercy once called merciful; but in both virtue and vice, through frequent practice in them, the soul acquires a habit, and then this habit either torments or soothes it. Virtue brings peace: for the more good we do, the greater our habit of virtue becomes, and through this we regain our natural disposition and return to our original well-being. But vice torments us: because through it we acquire a habit that is foreign and hostile to our nature, and which destroys it.

74. If an eagle is entirely outside the net but becomes entangled in it with just one talon, this small detail is enough to render it powerless—and the hunter can seize it whenever he wishes. So it is with the soul: if it allows even a single passion to become a habit, the enemy can bring it down whenever he pleases, since, because of that passion, it is in his hands. Do not, then, allow any passion to become a habit for you, but strive and pray to God day and night so that you may not fall into temptation. But if, as human beings, we are overcome and fall into sin, let us strive to rise up immediately, repent of it, weep before God's goodness, and remain vigilant and diligent. And God, seeing our good will, our humility, and our contrition, will extend a helping hand to us and show us mercy.

75. We must bring everything that happens before God and say: nothing happens without God's will; God knows that this or that is good and beneficial, and that is why it happens this way. Of all that God creates, there is nothing that is not good, but "*everything was very good*" (Gen. 1:31). Therefore, no one should grieve over what happens, but should lift it up to God and find peace. There are some people who are so overwhelmed by the sorrows that befall them that they renounce life itself and consider death sweet, just to be rid of their sorrows; but this stems from cowardice and great foolishness. They do not know the terrible need that awaits us when the soul departs from the body.

76. A very zealous brother asked a certain elder, "Why does my soul long for death?" The elder replied, "Because you do not want to endure the sorrows you are facing, not knowing that the sorrows to come are far heavier than those here."—And another brother also asked the elder, "Why do I fall into carelessness while in my cell?" And he said to him, "Because you have not yet come to know either the rest that awaits you or the future torment. For if you truly knew this, even if your cell were full of worms, so that you stood in them up to your neck, you would endure this without slacking off". But we, while asleep, wish to be saved, and therefore we languish in sorrows; whereas we ought to thank God and consider ourselves blessed that we are deemed worthy to suffer a little here, so that we may find no small peace there.

77. Evagrius said: "Whoever gives in to passions and prays to God to die quickly is like a sick person who begs a carpenter to quickly chop up his bed (on which he nevertheless found some comfort in his suffering). For while in this body, the soul finds relief from its passions and a certain comfort: here a person eats, drinks, sleeps, converses, and socializes with his friends. But when the soul leaves the body, it is left alone with its passions, and therefore is always tormented by them; consumed by them, it is scorched by their fire—and is so tormented by them that it cannot even remember God. This remembrance of God could comfort the soul, as it is said in the Psalm: "*I remembered God and was glad*" (Ps. 76:4); but its passions do not allow it to do so.

78. From the sufferings here on earth, you can gain some understanding of what the torment there is like. When, for example, someone has a fever, what is it that burns him? What kind of fire causes this burning? So too, the passionate soul is always tormented there by its evil habits, bearing bitter memories and agonizing impressions of the passions that ceaselessly burn and inflame it.

79. Who, moreover, can recall without horror the dreadful places of torment—the fire, the darkness, the merciless servants of the tormentors, and other torments mentioned in Scripture: living alongside demons, for whom alone the fire of that place is prepared (Matt. 25:41)? – And how crushing and deadly is the very shame of condemnation alone? St. Chrysostom says: "Even if there were no river of fire flowing and no terrifying angels standing by, but only all people were summoned to judgment—and some, receiving praise, were glorified, while others were sent away in disgrace, so that they might not see the glory of God— would not the punishment of that shame and disgrace, and the sorrow of being deprived of such blessings, be more terrible than any Gehenna?"—

80. Let us therefore strive to purify ourselves, so that we may be spared such a calamity. Effort is certainly required: let us labor, that we may find mercy. If someone who owns a field leaves it neglected, will it not become overgrown?—And will it not be filled with thorns and thistles all the more the longer he neglects

it? And when he later wants to clear his field of all the weeds he allowed to grow during his neglect, will his hands not be all the more bloodied the more he has let it go to ruin?—For he must not merely cut the weeds but pull them out by the roots; otherwise, they will all grow back, no matter how much he cuts them. So it is with our soul. When we are negligent toward it, it becomes overgrown with all manner of evil weeds of the passions; but when, having come to our senses, we set about cleansing it, painful labor is inevitable: for we must not only abstain from passionate deeds, but also uproot the very habits of passion. Yet there is nothing worse than a passionate habit. “It is no small feat,” says St. Basil the Great, “to overcome a bad habit, for a habit, having taken root over a long period of time, often acquires the strength of nature.”

81. We must not only cut off the passions but also their causes; then we must thoroughly fertilize the soil of our character with repentance and tears—and only then begin to sow the good seed, that is, good deeds. For just as it is with a field—if, after it has been cleared and fertilized, good seed is not sown in it, then weeds sprout and, finding the soil loose and soft from the clearing, take deeper root in it: so it is with a person: if, having repented of his past deeds and corrected his character, he does not strive to acquire virtues, then what is said in the Gospel about the return of an unclean spirit to its former dwelling—now cleansed and swept, along with seven other spirits—as a result of which that person ends up worse off than before (Matt. 12:44).

82. Everyone who desires to be saved must not only refrain from doing evil but is also obligated to do good, as it is said in the Psalm: “*Turn away from evil and do good*” (Ps. 33). For example, if someone was quick to anger, they must not only refrain from getting angry but also acquire meekness; if someone was proud, they must not only refrain from pride but also become humble. For every passion has a virtue that is its opposite: pride—humility, stinginess—charity, fornication—chastity, cowardice—patience, anger—meekness, hatred—love.

83. Just as we once cast out the virtues and accepted passions in their place, so now we must strive not only to cast out the passions but also to establish the virtues within ourselves in their stead. We naturally possess within ourselves the virtues given to us by God. For God, in the very act of creating man, instilled in him all the virtues, as He said: “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Gen. 1: 26). It is said, “*in our image*”—because God created the soul to be immortal and free—and “*after our likeness*” refers to virtue—as if to say, “*Be holy, for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16). Consequently, virtues are natural to us; but passions do not belong to our nature, but are introduced into it—namely, when the soul gives itself over to self-indulgence, it then strays from virtue and harbors passions within itself.

84. Abba Pimen spoke well when he said that a monk’s progress is revealed in temptations: for a monk who truly “*sets out to serve the Lord*” must “*prepare his soul for temptation*” (Sir. 2:1)—so that he may never be astonished or confused by anything that happens to him, believing that nothing happens without God’s Providence. And whatever is part of God’s Providence is entirely good and serves the benefit of the soul; for everything God does, He does for our benefit, loving and having mercy on us. And we must, as the Apostle said, “*give thanks for everything*” (Eph. 5: 20; 1 Thess. 5:18) for His goodness, and never grieve or lose heart over what has happened to us, but accept everything that befalls us without confusion, with humility and hope in God, believing that whatever God does to us, He does out of His goodness, loving us and for our own good.

85. If anyone has a friend and is certain that the friend loves him, then even when he suffers something at the friend’s hands—even something severe—he thinks that the friend did it out of love, and will never believe that his friend intended to harm him: all the more should we think of God, Who created us, brought us from non-existence into being, became incarnate for our sake, and died for us—that He does everything to us out of His goodness and out of love for us. One might think of a friend: “He does everything out of love and compassion for me (and is always ready to act this way); but he lacks the wisdom to always arrange everything concerning me for the best; hence it happens that he harms me unintentionally. But we cannot say this of God; for He is the source of wisdom, knows everything that is beneficial to us, and accordingly arranges everything concerning us, even the most trivial matters. Again, regarding a friend, we can say that although he loves and cares for us and is wise enough to manage matters concerning us, he is powerless to help us in the very things he intends to benefit us with. But we cannot say even this about God; for all things are possible for Him, and nothing is impossible for Him. In light of all this, we must accept everything that happens to us with gratitude, as coming from God, our Benefactor and gracious Lord, even if it is distressing.

86. If anyone endures a temptation with patience and humility, it will pass without harming him; but if he loses heart, becomes troubled, and blames everyone else, he only burdens himself and gains no benefit,

but only harms himself; whereas temptations bring great benefit to the one who endures them without being troubled.

87. We must not be embarrassed even when passion embarrasses us. Why should you, a man of passion, be surprised—and why should you be embarrassed—when passion troubles you? “You yourself have fostered it within yourself; you willingly harbor it within yourself—and yet you are troubled? You have accepted its pledges, and yet you ask, ‘Why does it trouble me?’ Better to endure, to strive, and to pray to God to help you; for it is impossible for one who has indulged in passions to be free from their painful assaults.” Their vessels, as Abba Sisoës said, are within you; give them their pledge, and they will depart from you. Since we have loved them and set them in motion, it is impossible for us not to be captivated by passionate thoughts that compel us, even against our will, to act on our passions; for we have voluntarily surrendered ourselves into their hands.

88. Whoever is assailed by passionate thoughts before acting on them is still in his own city; he is free and has God as his helper. For as soon as he humbles himself before God in this matter and struggles a little, God’s help will appear to free him from the assault of passion. But if anyone refuses to struggle and, indulging himself, gives in to carnal pleasure, then God’s help withdraws from him, and the passion draws him into passionate deeds; and this will result in his unwittingly serving that very passion.

89. It is told that when a certain disciple of a great elder was afflicted by a battle against the flesh, and the elder, seeing his struggles, said to him, “If you wish, I will pray to God that He may ease this battle for you,” the disciple replied: “Although it is hard and difficult for me, Father, I see within myself the fruit of my labor; therefore, pray to God that He may grant me patience.” The elder said to him in response, “Now I know that you are prospering and surpassing me.” Such are those who truly desire salvation! And this is what it means to bear the yoke of temptation with humility!

90. When God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt and from Pharaoh’s bondage, Pharaoh then burdened them even more with labor. So too, when the devil sees that God has taken pity on a soul and is ready to have mercy on it and relieve it of the burden of passions, he burdens it even more with passions and fights against it more fiercely. But the fathers, knowing this, strengthen a person with their teaching and do not allow him to give in to fear. “*Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord*” (Ps. 30:25).

91. The fear of God prompts the soul to keep the commandments, and through the commandments the house of the soul is built. Let us therefore fear God and build houses for ourselves, so that we may find shelter during winter, rain, lightning, and thunder, for those without a house suffer great hardship in winter.

92. We can learn how to build a house of the soul by observing the construction of a physical house. One who builds a house erects walls on all four sides, rather than focusing on just one wall; otherwise, he will waste his expenses and labor in vain. Likewise, a person who wishes to build a spiritual house must not neglect any aspect of his edifice, but must erect it evenly and in harmony. This is what Abba John meant when he said, “I want a person to acquire a little of every virtue every day”—and not as some do, who, clinging to a single virtue and abiding in it, practice only that one and pay no attention to the others.

93. The house of the soul is thus built evenly and harmoniously on all sides in the following manner: First, one must lay the foundation, which is faith; for “*without faith it is impossible to please God*” (Heb. 11:6). And then, upon this foundation, one must build the structure evenly—namely: if an opportunity for obedience arises, one must lay the stone of obedience; if one encounters grief from a brother, one must lay the stone of long-suffering; if an opportunity for self-control presents itself, one must lay the stone of self-control. Thus, for every virtue for which an opportunity arises, one must lay a stone in the edifice, and in this way build it up from all sides, laying in the edifice now a stone of compassion, now a stone of self-denial, now a stone of meekness, and so on. But in all this, one must take care to cultivate patience and courage: for they are the cornerstones; through them the building is held together and wall is joined to wall, preventing them from leaning or separating from one another. Without patience and courage, no one can practice any virtue. That is why it is said: “*By your patience you will save your souls*” (Luke 21:19).

94. One who builds a house applies lime to each stone; for if he places one stone upon another without lime, the stones will fall out and the house will collapse. Lime (in the building of the soul) is humility, because it is taken from the earth and lies beneath everyone’s feet. And any virtue practiced without humility is not a virtue. This is also stated in the Father’s Sayings: “Just as a ship cannot be built without nails, so one cannot be saved without humility.” – An ordinary house has a roof. The roof of the spiritual house is love, which

constitutes the perfection of virtues, just as the roof of a house is the crowning element of the house. – A railing runs around the roof so that, as the law says (Deut. 22:8), children do not fall from the roof. The railing in the house of the soul consists of sobriety, attentiveness, and prayer; and the children are the thoughts that arise in the soul, which are guarded by sobriety and prayer.

95. But in this work of construction, one more thing is necessary, namely, that the builder be skilled. For if he is not skilled, he may build a crooked wall, and the house will eventually collapse. Skilled is the one who practices virtues wisely; for it happens that some undertake the labor of virtue, but because they perform this labor unwisely, they ruin it themselves or constantly spoil the work; and in this way, they do not complete the building, but only build and destroy.

96. Here is one example among many. If someone fasts either out of vanity or thinking to himself that he is performing some special virtue, then such a person fasts unwisely, and therefore begins afterward to rebuke his brother, considering himself to be something great; and it turns out that not only has he, having laid one stone, removed two, but he is in danger of destroying the entire wall through his condemnation of his neighbor. But whoever fasts wisely does not think he is performing some special virtue, nor does he want to be praised as a faster; but believes that through self-restraint he will attain chastity, and through this he will attain humility, as the Fathers say: “The path to humility consists in bodily labors performed wisely,”—and so on. Such a person proves to be a skilled builder, able to construct his house firmly.

97. Do not be led astray by thoughts that virtue is beyond your strength and unattainable for you; but, inspired by faith, boldly take the first step, show before God your good will and diligence—and you will see the help He will give you to accomplish virtue. – Imagine two staircases—one leading up to heaven, the other down to hell—and you are standing on the ground between them. Do not think or say: “How can I soar from the ground and suddenly find myself at the height of heaven, that is, at the top of the staircase?” Just be careful not to slip down by doing evil; instead, strive to climb upward little by little by doing the good that comes your way. Every good deed will be a step upward. Thus, ascending with God’s help from one step to the next, you will finally reach the top of the ladder.

98. If we seek, we will find, and if we ask, we will receive; for the Gospel says: “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*” (Matt. 7:7). It is said, “*Ask*,” so that we may call upon God for help in prayer; and “*Seek*” means that, having seen how virtue comes and what brings it about, we should accordingly apply our own efforts to acquire it. “*Knock*” means to fulfill the commandments; for whoever knocks does so with their hands, and the hands signify action. Thus, we must not only ask, but also seek and act, striving, according to the Apostle, “*to be ready for every good work*” (2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Tim. 3:17)—that is, being fully prepared to wisely fulfill God’s will, as He desires and as is pleasing to Him.

99. The Apostle commanded us to “*test what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect*” (Rom. 12:2)—so that we may then act in accordance with it. —What, then, is God’s good will? —It is to love one another, to be compassionate, to give alms, and the like; this is “*God’s good will*.” And what is “*God’s pleasing will*”? Not everyone who does something good does so in a way that is pleasing to God. It happens, for example, that someone finds a poor, beautiful orphan; he is drawn to her because of her beauty—and he takes her in and raises her, both as a poor orphan and as a beautiful girl. This is God’s will and it is “*good*,” but “*not pleasing*.” What is “*pleasing*,” however, is when someone performs an act of mercy not out of any human motive, but for the sake of God, who commanded it, for the sake of goodness itself, and out of pure compassion: this is pleasing to God. – Finally, God’s “*perfect*” will is when someone performs an act of mercy—not with stinginess, not with laziness, not with contempt—but with all their strength and with all their will, showing mercy as if they themselves were receiving it, and doing good as if they themselves were receiving the benefit: then God’s perfect will is fulfilled. – This is how a person fulfills God’s will—which is good, pleasing, and perfect.

100. There are two kinds of gluttony: the first is when a person seeks pleasant food and does not always want to eat a lot, but desires something tasty; the second is when a person is overcome by gluttony—and does not desire fine food, nor care about its taste, but wants only to eat and eat, without distinguishing what the food is, and concerned only with filling the stomach. The first is called “gluttony of the throat,” and the second, “gluttony of the stomach.” – Whoever wishes to observe a fast for the purification of their sins must avoid both of these forms of gluttony; for they satisfy not the body’s need but its passion, and if anyone indulges in them, it is counted as a sin against them.

101. However, while fasting, we must not only observe the rule regarding food mentioned above, but we must also abstain from every other sin, so that just as we fast with our stomachs, we may also fast with our tongues, refraining from slander, lies, idle talk, belittling our brothers, anger, and every other sin committed with the tongue. We must also fast with our eyes, that is, not look at vain things, not give our eyes free rein, and not look at anyone shamelessly or without fear. Likewise, we must keep our hands and feet from every evil deed.

102. What purpose should we have when we visit one another?—First, we should visit one another out of love; second, in order to hear the Word of God, because the Word of God is better understood among many brothers: what one does not know, another does, and the first, by asking the other, also learns it; finally, to understand the state and condition of our own souls—and to draw examples of conduct from others, as St. Anthony did, learning meekness from one, humility from another, silence from yet another, and in this way gathering within ourselves the virtues of each person we visit.

103. When observing others, one must above all avoid suspicion, from which harmful judgment arises. I have had many experiences confirming the truth that everyone judges others according to their own disposition. Let me give an example. Suppose someone happens to be standing in a certain place at night, and three people walk past him. Upon seeing him, one of them thinks: he is waiting for someone to go and commit fornication; another: he must be a thief; the third: he has arranged with someone from the nearest house to go somewhere together to pray—and is waiting for that person. So three people saw the same man in the same place, yet they did not form the same opinion of him; one thought one thing, another thought another, and the third thought yet another—and evidently each according to his own state of mind. Just as bodies that are melancholic and emaciated transform every food they consume into poor-quality fluids, even if the food is wholesome, so too does a soul of a bad disposition derive harm from every thing, even if the things it encounters are good. But one with a good disposition is like someone with a robust constitution, in whom, even if he eats something harmful, it is transformed into wholesome juices. Likewise, if we have a good disposition and are in a good state of mind, we can derive benefit from every thing, even if that thing is not in itself beneficial.

104. I heard of a certain brother who, when he came to visit a fellow brother and saw that his cell was not swept or tidied, would say to himself: “Blessed is this brother, who has set aside all concern for earthly matters and has directed his entire mind so fully toward heaven that he finds no time even to put his cell in order.” Likewise, if he visited another and saw his cell tidy, swept, and clean, he would again say to himself: “Just as this brother’s soul is pure, so too is his cell pure, and the condition of his cell corresponds to the condition of his soul.” And he never spoke of anyone as careless or proud, but, through his good disposition, he saw everyone as good and benefited from everyone. May the Good God grant us the same good disposition, so that we too may benefit from everyone and never notice the faults of our neighbor.

105. *“Instructions for Those Being Trained in the Monastic Life.”* If you live in obedience, never trust your own heart, for it is blinded by old passions. Do not follow your own judgment in anything, and do not decide anything for yourself without asking for guidance and counsel. Do not think or assume that you are better or more righteous than your mentor, and do not scrutinize his actions. By doing so, you will obey and walk calmly and safely in the path of our Fathers. Compel yourself in all things and subdue your will; and by the grace of Christ, through instruction, you will become accustomed to subduing your will, and then you will do so without compulsion or sorrow, so that everything will happen for you as you wish. Do not wish for everything to happen as you want it to; but wish for it to be as it will be, and in this way you will be at peace with everyone. And believe that everything that happens to us, down to the very smallest detail, occurs according to God’s Providence, and then you will bear everything that comes upon you without distress. Believe that insults and reproaches are medicines that heal the pride of your soul, and pray for those who reproach you as if they were true physicians of your soul, being certain that whoever hates insults hates humility, and whoever avoids those who grieve him flees from meekness. Do not seek to know your neighbor’s faults, and do not entertain suspicions about him that are instilled in you by the enemy; but if such thoughts do arise in you, due to our own sinfulness, strive to turn them into good thoughts. Give thanks for everything, and acquire goodness and holy love. Above all, let us all guard our conscience in everything—in our relationship with God, with our neighbor, and with material things; and before we say or do anything, let us examine whether it is in accordance with God’s will; and then, having prayed, let us say or do it, humbling ourselves before God and asking for His help.

106. If you want holy thoughts of faith to exert their soothing effect at the right time to quell unrighteous impulses, thoughts, and feelings, then train yourself in them always, frequently reviewing them in your mind—and I believe in God that you will find peace. Also, blend prayer with instruction. Strive to excel in this, so that when bodily or spiritual sorrow befalls you, you may endure it without grief, without heaviness, and with patience.

107. When you hear that you have done something you did not do, do not be surprised or upset, but immediately bow humbly to the one who told you this, saying, “Forgive me, and pray for me”—and then remain silent, as the Fathers have said. And when he asks you, “Is this true or not?” then, after bowing in humility, tell the truth about what happened; and after speaking, bow again in humility and say, “Forgive me and pray for me.”

108. If, when meeting or interacting with the brethren, you cannot maintain a steady state of mind, then at least try not to be tempted by anything, not to condemn anyone, not to slander, and not to nitpick at a brother’s words, deeds, or gestures—for this will not benefit you; rather, try to draw edification for yourself from everything.

109. Know that whoever is troubled by any thought, or grieves over it, and does not confess it, thereby strengthens it against himself—that is, gives that thought greater power to struggle against and torment him. But if he confesses it and begins to struggle against and resist his thought, and to do the opposite of it, then the passion will weaken and will not have the strength to fight him or cause him sorrow. And then, little by little, through spiritual struggle and with God’s help, he will overcome the passion itself.

110. Abba Pimen said that fearing God, praying to God, and doing good to one’s neighbor are the three principal virtues. – He placed the fear of God first because the fear of God precedes every virtue, for “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Ps. 110:10), and “*the fear of God turns a person away from evil*” (Prov. 15:27). He then said to pray to God because a person, by himself, can neither do anything good nor acquire virtues, but in everything he needs God’s help alongside his own efforts, which are inspired by the fear of God. And he mentioned doing good deeds for one’s neighbor at the end because this is an act of love, which is the pinnacle of Christian perfection (Rom. 13: 10).

111. When the soul is numb, it is helpful to read the Holy Scriptures and the edifying words of the God-bearing Fathers frequently, to remember God’s terrible judgment, the departure of the soul from the body, and the dreadful dark forces that await it—with whom it has done evil in this fleeting and calamitous life.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

A Brief Account of Him

St. Isaac was a native of Nineveh. Nothing is known about his parents. In the prime of his youth, having withdrawn from the world and all worldly things, he entered the Monastery of St. Matthias together with his brother, and there he embraced the monastic way of life. Having perfected himself in asceticism at this monastery and having sufficiently excelled in virtue, he was seized by a desire for silence. Therefore, having withdrawn a great distance from the monastery, he settled in a hermit’s cell and began to lead a life of complete solitude, having no communion with anyone and attending only to himself and to God. His own brother, having taken over the administration of the aforementioned monastery, strongly urged and implored him to leave the desert and return to his former abode; but he was so attached to the desert that he would not agree to leave it even for a short time. Yet what his brother’s plea could not achieve, divine revelation accomplished. St. Isaac, having disobeyed his own brother, submitted to the Father, who had called him from on high to govern the Church of Nineveh. Therefore, he left the desert—and was ordained bishop of the great city of Nineveh. For it was fitting that the lamp should not remain hidden in the seclusion of the desert, but be placed on the candlestick of the Pastorate, and cast the bright rays of radiant virtue far and wide. But this did not last very long: no sooner had this light shone than it was soon hidden again. The Saint left the episcopal see due to the following circumstance. Two men came to him at the bishop’s residence—a creditor and a debtor—the former demanding immediate repayment of the debt from the latter, while the latter, acknowledging his debt, asked the former to grant him a short extension. But the creditor replied: “If he does not pay me the debt right now, I will take him to court immediately.” St. Isaac remarked to him: “If, according to the Gospel commandment, you should not even demand repayment from one who has taken what is yours, how much

more should you show generosity to one who promises to pay you the debt soon.” But this cruel man replied, “Leave the Gospel commandment aside for now.”—And he would listen no more. Then the Holy One of God said to himself, “If they do not obey the Lord’s Gospel commandments, what is left for me to do here?”—Seeing, moreover, how much the silence and serenity to which he had grown accustomed in the desert were being disrupted by the inevitable demands of governing, he resolved to leave the throne and return to his beloved desert hermitage. Remaining there until his death, St. Isaac performed great feats in his struggle against demons and the flesh; he excelled in the virtues required by both the active and contemplative life; he attained spiritual perfection; and— even in this life, was deemed worthy of grace—it would be superfluous to speak of this: one can easily learn of it from his writings. St. Isaac wrote extensively, and everything he wrote was based on personal experience. He first actively lived through everything that he later committed to writing, and through his own actions he instructed those under his guidance. Thus, even from the desert, he continued to pour forth an inexhaustible stream of pure and life-giving water, with which he abundantly quenched the souls of his brothers. The writings of St. Isaac have come down to us in Syriac and Arabic; of these, nearly half have been translated into Greek—and from Greek into Russian, among the works of the Holy Fathers, numbering 91 in total. St. Isaac departed for his heavenly abode at the end of the 6th century. His feast day, according to the calendar of Archbishop Sergius, is January 28.

Ascetic Instructions

(Excerpted in short articles)

1. The fear of God is the beginning of virtue; it is the fruit of faith and is sown in the heart when the mind is freed from worldly distraction, so that one may gather one’s wandering thoughts into contemplation of future restoration.

2. In order to lay the foundation of virtue, it is best for a person to keep himself removed from worldly affairs and to abide by the law that illuminates the righteous and holy paths, as the Holy Spirit indicated through the Psalmist (Ps. 22:3; 118:35).

3. The beginning of the path of life is to constantly study the Word of God with one’s mind and to live a life of poverty. Nourishing oneself with one helps to perfect the other. If you nourish yourself by studying the Word of God, this helps you to succeed in poverty; and success in non-covetousness gives you the leisure to succeed in studying the Word of God. The support of both contributes to the swift erection of the entire edifice of virtues.

4. Without withdrawing from the world, no one can draw near to God. By “withdrawal,” I do not mean a physical relocation, but a detachment from worldly affairs. The virtue of withdrawing from the world consists in not allowing one’s mind to be occupied by the world.

5. When grace abounds in a person, the fear of death becomes insignificant to him on the path to the righteousness he desires (or in the face of obstacles on that path)—and he finds many reasons in his soul why, for the sake of the fear of God, he is ready to endure sorrows as something that is to be expected; then everything that is unpleasant to the body and capable of causing it suffering counts for nothing in his eyes compared to what he hopes for in the future. But when a person’s lack of grace increases, then what happens within him and to him is the opposite of what has been said: then knowledge, based on inquiry (which can rely only on the tangible), becomes greater than his faith; he does not place his hope in God in every matter; and God’s providence regarding man is understood differently. Such a person is constantly subjected to fears, due to the schemes of those who lie in wait “*in the darkness to shoot him down*” with their arrows (Ps. 10:2).

6. Doubt in the heart brings fear into the soul; but faith can make the will steadfast even when limbs are cut off. To the extent that love for the flesh prevails within you, to that extent you cannot be bold and fearless in the face of the many adversities surrounding the one you love.

7. The chaste person is not one in whom, during struggle, toil, and feats of valor, shameful thoughts cease, but one who, through the sincerity of his heart, keeps the vision of his mind chaste, not allowing it to stray toward impure thoughts. — And just as the integrity of his conscience is evident in the gaze of his eyes, testifying to his fidelity (to the law of purity), so shame hangs like a veil over the innermost chamber of his thoughts, and his purity, like a chaste virgin, is preserved through faith in Christ.

8. To ward off the soul’s preconceived inclinations toward impurity, nothing is as helpful as immersing oneself in the love of studying the Divine Scriptures and comprehending the depth of their meaning. When thoughts are immersed in the delight of comprehending the wisdom hidden in the words; then, to the extent

that a person derives enlightenment from them, to that same extent he leaves the world behind and forgets all that is in the world. — But even when the mind floats only on the surface of the sea of the Divine Scriptures and cannot penetrate to the very depths of Scripture’s meaning; even this very fact—that he is occupied with a zeal to understand Scripture—is sufficient for him to firmly bind his thoughts with a single thought of what is praiseworthy, and to prevent them from straying toward the material and the carnal.

9. In everything you encounter in Scripture, seek out the purpose of the word, so that you may penetrate to the depth of the Saints’ thought and understand it with greater precision. Those who are guided by divine grace toward enlightenment in their lives always sense, as it were, an intelligent ray passing through the verses of Scripture, distinguishing for the mind mere words from that which is spoken to the soul with profound meaning.

10. If a person reads verses rich in meaning without delving deeply into them, then his heart remains impoverished (tasting nothing), and the holy power within him fades away—that power which, through the soul’s wondrous understanding, bestows upon the heart the sweetest delight.

11. Every thing naturally tends toward that which is akin to it. And the soul, possessing within itself a share of the spirit, when it hears a statement containing a hidden spiritual power, is ardently drawn to the content of that statement. Not every person is moved to wonder by what is spoken spiritually and contains within itself a great, hidden spiritual power. A word about virtue requires a heart not preoccupied with earthly things; but in a person whose mind is burdened by concern for the transitory, virtue does not stir thoughts of loving it or seeking to possess it.

12. Detachment from the material world through one’s very being precedes union with God, although not infrequently, according to the economy of grace, in some the latter precedes the former. The order of the monastic life differs from the order common to all people. — You, however, should follow the common order. If grace precedes you, that is its business; and if it does not, then follow the path of all people and ascend you too to the height of the spiritual pillar.

13. The soul’s insatiability in the pursuit of virtue turns to its advantage a portion of the visible (sensual) desires of the body associated with it. Moderation adorns every thing. Without moderation, even what is esteemed beautiful becomes harmful.

14. Do you wish to commune with God through your mind? — Practice charity. There is no other path to spiritual love—which imprints the invisible image (of God) within oneself—unless one first begins to be generous to the same degree that our heavenly Father is perfect, as the Lord said (Luke 6:36).

15. Just as an artist who paints water on walls cannot quench his thirst with that water, so too is a word not backed by action. Whoever speaks of a virtue that he himself has put into practice conveys it to his listener just as one gives another money earned by his own labor. And whoever sows the teaching from his own earnings into the ears of those who listen to him speaks boldly, saying to his spiritual children, just as the aged Jacob said to the chaste Joseph: *“I give you”* a special portion *“above your brothers, which I took”* from the Amorites *“with my sword and my bow”* (Gen. 48:22).

16. Someone has said beautifully that the fear of death grieves a man who is condemned by his own conscience; but whoever has a good conscience within himself desires death just as much as he desires life.

17. If something has become deeply intertwined with your soul, consider it your treasure not only for this life, but believe that it will go with you into the life to come. And if it is something good, rejoice and give thanks to God in your heart; but if it is something evil, then grieve and sigh, and strive to free yourself from it while you are still in the body.

18. Always keep in mind the deepest sorrows of those who are grieving and embittered, so that you yourself may give due thanks for the small and insignificant sorrows that befall you, and be able to bear them with joy.

19. In times of apathy and sloth, recall in your heart the days of your former diligence—how you were attentive to everything, even the smallest details; what feats you accomplished, and with what zeal you resisted those who sought to hinder your progress. Through such remembrance, your soul will be reawakened, as if from a deep sleep; it will be clothed once more in the flame of zeal, as if rising from the dead, and through fervent struggle against the devil and sin, it will return to its former state.

20. The work of the cross is twofold: one consists in enduring the sorrows of the flesh (physical privations, inevitable in the struggle against the passions), and is called “active work” proper; the other consists in the subtle work of the mind, in divine contemplation, and in abiding in prayer, etc., and is called

“contemplation.” The first purifies the passionate part of the soul, while the second enlightens the rational part of the soul. Any person who, before being fully trained in the first part, moves on to this second part—drawn by its sweetness, not to mention by his own laziness—will incur wrath for failing first to “put to death *the parts of the body that are on the earth*” (Col. 3: 5)—that is, without first healing the infirmity of his thoughts through patient practice in bearing the cross—dared to dream in his mind of the glory of the cross. This is precisely what the ancient Saints meant when they said that if the mind sets out to ascend the cross before its senses, having been healed of their weakness, have attained serenity, then God’s wrath befalls it. For whoever has a mind defiled by shameful passions, and who is quick to fulfill his mind with fanciful thoughts, his mouth is silenced by a prohibition—because, without first purifying his mind through suffering and subduing his carnal desires, but, relying on what the ear has heard and what is written in ink, he has rushed straight ahead to walk a path filled with darkness, though blind in body.

21. Imagine that virtue is the body, contemplation is the soul, and both together form a single perfect human being, united by the spirit from two parts: the sensory and the rational. And just as it is impossible for the soul to come into a state of manifesting its being without the formation of the body with its members, so it is impossible for the soul to attain contemplation without the practice of virtue.

22. Having heard that one must withdraw from the world, leave the world behind, and purify oneself of everything in the world, you must first understand and discern—not through common notions but through purely rational ones—what the very term “*world*” means, and from what distinctions this name is composed, and you will be able to discern how far your soul is from the world, and what elements of the world are mingled within it. — “World” is a collective term encompassing what are called the passions. When we wish to refer to the passions as a whole, we call them the “world”; but when we wish to distinguish them according to their individual names, we call them “passions.”

23. When you come to understand what the world is, then, by distinguishing all that is meant by it, you will also come to understand how you are bound to the world and how you have detached yourself from it. To put it more briefly: the world is a carnal life and the scheming of the flesh. It is precisely by the fact that a person has withdrawn from this that it is known that he has departed from the world.

24. Fear for the body is so strong in people that, as a result, they are often left unable to accomplish anything praiseworthy or honorable. But when fear for the soul overcomes fear for the body, then bodily fear melts away before the fear of the soul, like wax before the power of a burning fire.

25. The soul is by nature dispassionate. Passions are something superimposed—and the soul itself is to blame for them. —If the nature of the soul was once bright and pure because it had received the Divine light within itself, and if it returns to this same state when it regains its original order, then it is undoubtedly true that the soul is outside its own nature as soon as it enters into a passionate state, as the disciples of the Church assert.

26. The natural state of the soul is the knowledge of God’s creatures—both sensible and intelligible. Its supernatural state is the movement (or action and state) of contemplating the pre-existent Divinity. Its unnatural state, however, is the movement of the soul, or its disposition and way of life, such as is found in passionate people who are enslaved by their passions. Thus it is evident that the passions of the soul are not, by their very nature, of the soul.

27. If you wish to know human mysteries and have not yet reached the point of discerning them by the spirit, you will discern them through each person’s words, way of life, and dispositions. Whoever is pure in soul and blameless in conduct always speaks the words of the Spirit with chastity, and, in accordance with the measure of his understanding, reasons both about the Divine and about what is within himself. But for those whose hearts are filled with passions, their tongues are moved by those very passions. If they speak of spiritual matters, they will reason under the influence of passion. The wise recognize such a person at first meeting, and the pure can smell the stench of their wickedness.

28. The tasks of a monk are as follows: freedom from the flesh, physical labor in prayer, and unceasing remembrance of God in the heart.

29. Prayer is one thing, and contemplation in prayer is another, although prayer and contemplation derive their origin from one another. Prayer is sowing; contemplation is the reaping of the harvest, during which the reaper is filled with wonder at the inexpressible vision of how, from the small and bare seeds he sowed, such beautiful ears of grain have suddenly sprung up before him.

30. The Savior began the work of our salvation through fasting. Likewise, all who follow in the Savior's footsteps on this foundation establish the beginning of their endeavor, for fasting is a weapon prepared by God. – And who, if he reflects on this, will not be convinced of its truth? – If the Lawgiver Himself fasts, how can anyone bound by the law fail to fast? That is why, before fasting, the human race knew no victory, and the devil never experienced defeat at the hands of our nature; but by this weapon he was truly vanquished. And our Lord was the leader and first-born of this victory, so that He might place the first victorious crown upon the head of our nature. And as soon as the devil sees this weapon in any person, this adversary and tormentor is immediately seized with fear, reflecting and recalling his defeat in the wilderness by the Savior—and his power is instantly crushed, and the very sight of the weapon given to us by our Chief Commander burns him. – Clothed in the armor of fasting, one is always inflamed with zeal. – Whoever abides in it has an unshakable mind, ready to confront and repel all fierce passions.

31. Deeds and labors then bring dispassion to the soul, put to death *the "members that are on the earth,"* and grant rest to the thoughts, when we partake of silence, when the turmoil in the soul—caused by impressions from the external senses—ceases. Otherwise, success in this is impossible. For if a tree is watered daily, will its root ever wither? Does the water ever run out in a vessel to which it is added daily?—When a person attains stillness, then the soul easily discerns the passions, and the inner person, stirred to spiritual work, overcomes them, and day by day lifts the soul toward purity.

32. When can one say that someone has attained purity?—When one sees all people as good and no one appears to him as impure or defiled, then he is truly pure in heart.

33. What is proper for an ascetic living in silence in his cell to do?—Does a prudent and sober-minded person really need to ask how he should conduct himself when he is alone with himself? – What other occupation does a monk have in his cell besides weeping? And what other occupation is better than this? The very existence of a monk and his solitude, resembling a stay in a tomb, far from human joy, teach him that his activity is weeping. And all the Saints departed from this life in weeping. – Let us therefore pray to the Lord to grant us weeping. For if we receive this grace—the best and most excellent of all gifts—then, with its help, we will attain purity; and as soon as we attain it, it will never be taken from us until the very end of our life in this world.

34. Blessed are the pure in heart, for there is no moment when they do not delight in the sweetness of tears—in which they always behold the Lord. As long as tears remain in their eyes, they are granted a vision of His revelations in the heights of their prayer, and they have no prayer without tears. This is precisely what the Lord meant when He said, *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matt. 5:4). For when a monk, with the help of tears, has been granted the grace to cross the realm of the passions and enter the plain of spiritual purity, then he encounters the comfort that God gives to those who mourn because of their purity. Shedding tears and weeping is a gift of the dispassionate. And if the tears of one who weeps and laments can temporarily not only guide him toward dispassion but also completely purify and free his mind from the memory of passions, what can be said of those who, with full awareness, practice this work day and night?

35. One of the Saints said that the body becomes a friend of sin when it fears temptations, lest it go to extremes and lose its life. Therefore, the Holy Spirit compels it to die (inspiring the ascetic to condemn himself to death). For He knows that unless he dies, he will not overcome sin. If anyone desires that the Lord may dwell within him, he compels his body to serve the Lord, to labor in the commandments of the Spirit as written by the Apostle, and to guard his soul from the works of the flesh described by the Apostle (Gal. 5:19). But the body, having become accustomed to sin, finds rest in the works of the flesh, and the Spirit of God finds no rest in its fruits. For when the body is exhausted by fasting and humility, then the soul is strengthened by prayer.

36. When the body is greatly oppressed by the sorrows of silence, endures privations and hardships, and is on the verge of losing its life, it usually implores you, saying, "Grant me a little freedom to live decently; I am now walking in the right path, for I have been tested by all manner of afflictions." And as soon as, out of compassion, you soothe it from its sorrows and grant it some respite, it will gradually begin to whisper to you with flattery (and its flattery is very powerful): "We can live well even in the world, following the same rules by which we now live; for we have been tested in many ways. Just tempt me, and if I'm not as you wish, we can return. The desert will not flee from us."—Do not believe it, even though it will plead earnestly and make

many promises. It will not fulfill what it says. When you yield to its request, it will plunge you into great falls from which you will be unable to rise and escape.

37. When you fall into despondency from temptations and grow weary of them, say to yourself: “Once again you are craving an impure and shameful life.” – And if your body says to you, “It is a great sin to take one’s own life,” then answer it: “I am taking my own life because I cannot live impurely. I will die here so as not to witness the true death of my soul—death to God. It is better for me to die here for the sake of purity than to live a wretched life in the world. I have freely chosen this death for my sins. I am putting myself to death because I have sinned against the Lord; I will no longer provoke His wrath. What good is a life far from God to me? I will endure these hardships so as not to be cut off from the hope of heaven. What does God care for my life in this world if I live poorly in it and provoke God’s wrath?”

38. It is harmful for a monk to see the world and worldly things. And what a change takes place in the mind of one who, having remained silent with himself for a long time, suddenly falls back into the whirlpool of the world, seeing and hearing things that are unfamiliar to him! – Let us not be deceived by those who claim that there is no harm to us in hearing and seeing certain things, that our thoughts remain the same whether in solitude or in the world, that our modesty is not disturbed—whether in the cell or outside it—and that no adverse change befalls it, and that when we encounter people and things, we do not feel the turmoil of the passions. Only those of such strong spirit can assert this—those who, even if they sustain wounds, do not feel them. But we have not yet attained such health; we still bear festering wounds that will swarm with maggots if they are neglected for even a single day, and they will remain unbandaged, unplastered, and unsecured with bandages.

39. The soul, having once entrusted itself to God in faith and having experienced His assistance time and again, no longer concerns itself with itself, but is bound by wonder and silence, and is unable to return to its former ways of conduct and put them into practice, lest it otherwise be deprived of God’s Providence, which in secret watches over the soul unceasingly, cares for it, and constantly watches over it—and it will not be deprived of it because, in such a case, the soul would be presumptuously deluding itself into thinking that it can sufficiently provide for itself by the power of its own understanding.

40. Those in whom the light of faith shines no longer stoop to such shamelessness as to ask God again in prayer, “Give us this,” or “Take that from us”—nor do they care in the least for themselves; because with the spiritual eyes of faith they see at every moment the Father’s Providence, by which that true Father shelters them—He who, with His immeasurably great love, surpasses all earthly fatherly love, and who, above all others, is able and has the power to provide for us in abundance, far more than we ask, think, or imagine.

41. Whoever has been deemed worthy to taste the sweetness of faith and has turned back to worldly knowledge is like one who has found a precious pearl and exchanged it for a copper coin; and furthermore, like one who has forsaken complete freedom and returned to a state of poverty, filled with fear and slavery.

42. There are three mental modes through which knowledge ascends and descends. These modes are: the body, the soul, and the spirit. Knowledge is a gift from God to rational beings, bestowed upon them at the beginning of their creation—and by its very nature it is simple and indivisible, like sunlight, but in accordance with its functioning, it undergoes changes and divisions. —Listen to the order of this functioning.

43. *“The First Degree of Knowledge.”* When knowledge follows carnal desire, it unites the following modes into one: wealth, vanity, adornment, bodily comfort, the pursuit of verbal wisdom suitable for governing this world and giving rise to innovation in inventions, arts, and sciences, and everything else with which the body is crowned in this visible world. – And by these distinguishing features, this way of thinking becomes opposed to faith. – And it is called mere knowledge; for it excludes all divine providence, and because of the body’s predominance, it instills in the mind an irrational powerlessness and directs all its concern entirely toward this world alone. Here is how this philosophy conceives of itself: as if it were a mental power secretly governing man, a divine providence watching over him and caring entirely for him. Therefore, it does not attribute the governance of the world to God’s Providence, but rather regards all that is good in man, his deliverance from what is harmful to him, and his natural guard against difficulties and the many adversities that secretly and openly accompany our nature as the result of his own prudence and his own methods. Such is the conception of self-deceiving knowledge. It imagines that everything happens according to its own design; and in this it agrees with those who assert that there is no governance of this world. However, it cannot exist without constant concern and without fear for the body; and therefore it is overcome by cowardice, sorrow, despair, fear of demons, fear of people, rumors of robbers, reports of deaths, anxiety in sickness, worry

in poverty and lack of necessities, fear of death, fear of suffering and wild beasts, and everything else of a similar nature—all of which make the mind resemble a sea in which, hour after hour, day and night, waves toss about and crash down upon swimmers. Since this way of life is unable to entrust its care to God in the hope of faith in Him, it is constantly occupied with stratagems and devising means concerning everything that pertains to itself. But when the methods it devises prove ineffective in any given situation— —and it fails to discern the mysterious providence in this, it then quarrels with those who hinder and oppose it. In this regard, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has been planted within this mindset, uprooting love. — Arrogance and pride prevail within it. — It boasts, yet walks in darkness—and values its possessions in comparison to what is on earth, unaware that there is something better than itself.

44. *“The Second Degree of Knowledge.”* When a person, having left the first degree, is occupied with spiritual thoughts and desires, then, in the light of the soul’s nature, he performs the following excellent deeds: fasting, prayer, almsgiving, reading the Divine Scriptures, a virtuous life, the struggle against passions, and so on. For all good deeds, all the beautiful qualities discerned in the soul, and the wondrous ways employed in service in Christ’s court—at this second stage of guidance, in the working of His power—are accomplished by the Holy Spirit. And it is the Holy Spirit who shows the heart the paths leading us to faith and gathers within it the provisions for the true life. After repentance come the labors of good deeds and asceticism, aimed at purifying the heart, with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. But even here, the path is still carnal and difficult. In it lies only the path that leads and guides us to faith. There is yet a higher degree of guidance. And if anyone succeeds, he will find the opportunity, with Christ’s help, to be raised to that level as well, when he lays the foundation of his conduct in silent seclusion from people, in the reading of Scripture, in prayer, and in other good deeds through which everything pertaining to the second degree of guidance is accomplished. And it is through these that all that is beautiful is accomplished; this is what is called the conduct of affairs; for through sensory acts, mediated by the bodily senses, one carries out one’s work at the external level.

45. *The third degree of conduct is the degree of perfection.* Listen now to how a person becomes refined, acquires the spiritual, and, in his way of life, becomes like the invisible powers, which carry out their service not through deeds produced by the senses, but through the care of the mind. When knowledge rises above the earthly and above concerns for earthly affairs, and begins to explore its thoughts regarding what is hidden from the eyes within, and its gaze extends upward and is guided by faith in concern for the age to come, in the longing for what has been promised to us, and in the search for hidden mysteries; then faith itself absorbs this knowledge, transforms it, and gives birth to it anew, so that it becomes entirely spirit. Then it can soar on wings into the realm of the incorporeal, touch the depths of the intangible sea, representing in the mind the divine and wondrous acts of governance in the natures of mental and sensory beings, and seek out spiritual mysteries comprehended by a simple and subtle mind. Then the inner senses are awakened to spiritual activity in the manner that will prevail in that life of immortality and incorruptibility; for even in this life, as it were in secret, the soul experiences a spiritual resurrection, a true testimony to the universal resurrection.

46. Here are the three stages of knowledge. — From the time a person begins to distinguish evil from good, and until he departs from this world, the knowledge of his soul remains within these three stages. And the fullness of all falsehood and wickedness, the fullness of truth, and the ability to touch the depths of all the mysteries of the spirit are brought about by a single form of knowledge within these three states; and within it is contained every movement of the mind, whether it ascends or descends, in good, in evil, or in the middle between good and evil. These same degrees are called by the Fathers: the natural, the unnatural, and the supernatural. And these are the three directions along which the remembrance of the rational soul is elevated and lowered, when, as has been said, one either acts righteously according to nature, or, transcending nature, is enraptured by the remembrance of it in the contemplation of God beyond nature, or goes out to feed pigs, having squandered the wealth of his reason while laboring with a multitude of demons.

47. The first degree of knowledge cools the soul for the work of walking with God. The second warms the soul for a swift progression toward that which is at the level of faith. The third, however, is rest from action, in which the mind, in a single exercise, delights in the mysteries of the future. But since our nature cannot yet completely rise above the state of spiritual death and the burden of the flesh, as long as a person lives in the flesh, he remains in a transitional state between the two. Like a poor beggar, his soul begins to perform service at the second, middle degree of virtue; at other times, like those who have received the spirit of sonship, in the mystery of freedom, it delights in spiritual grace, according to the worthiness of the One

who bestows it; and again it returns to the humility of its deeds, performed with the aid of the body. For in an imperfect age there is no perfect freedom.

48. The work of the second degree consists in action and continuous practice; the work of the third degree, however, is the work of faith, which is not produced by deeds but is accomplished through spiritual mental images, in a purely spiritual act; and it transcends the senses. – By faith, however, we do not mean the kind that a person has in discerning the distinction between the Divine Hypostases worthy of worship and the wondrous economy of the Incarnation through the perception of our nature—although this faith is exceedingly lofty; – but the faith that shines in the soul from the light of grace, strengthening the heart with intelligent testimony so that it may not waver in the certainty of hope, far from all doubt. And this faith is revealed not through the sharpening of the ears’ hearing, but through the spiritual eyes that see the mysteries hidden in the soul, the invisible divine riches, concealed from the eyes of the children of the flesh, and revealed by the Spirit to those who partake of Christ’s table, in instruction by Christ’s law, as the Lord said: “If you keep My commandments, I will send you the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, *whom the world cannot receive, and He will teach you all truth*” (John 14:17, 26).

49. *There is yet another distinction among forms of knowledge.* The kind of knowledge that deals with the visible, or receives through the senses what is conveyed from the visible, is called natural. The kind of knowledge, however, that deals with the power of the mind and, within itself, with the natures of incorporeal beings, is called spiritual; for perception is received by the spirit, not by the senses. And because of these two sources (the perception of visible and spiritual things), both kinds of knowledge come to the soul from outside. But the knowledge imparted by divine power is called supernatural; and it is even more incomprehensible and higher than knowledge. And the soul receives the contemplation of this knowledge not from a substance outside itself, as in the first two kinds of knowledge; but within itself, immaterially, suddenly, swiftly, and beyond expectation, it is revealed and made known from the very depths of the soul; for, according to the words of Christ, “*The Kingdom of Heaven is within you*” (Luke 17:21)—it does not nourish hope through a foreshadowing, nor does it come “*through observance,*” but within the image imprinted in the innermost mind, it reveals itself of its own accord, without any thought of it. The first kind of knowledge comes from constant study and diligent learning; the second—from a good life and sound faith; and the third is granted as a gift to faith alone, through which knowledge is set aside and deeds come to an end.

50. Do not doubt the power of the prayers in our liturgical texts, even if, during prayers or hourly readings, they are not followed by intense emotion and unceasing contrition.

51. Accept as necessary a word spoken from experience, even if the one who uttered it is not a learned man; for even though the king’s treasures are greater than all others on earth, they do not neglect to accept as a supplement a morsel taken from a beggar; and from small streams, rivers are flooded and become great in their course.

52. The recollection of good and the recollection of evil, as if with a finger, point out to us either the shame of our thoughts or the nobility of our life, and each, according to its nature, strengthens within us thoughts and impulses that are either righteous or wicked. We are occupied with them in the secret recesses of our minds; but in this mental occupation, the course of our lives is depicted, and in it we can see ourselves.

53. There is a love like a small lamp fueled by oil, which goes out as the oil runs out—or like a rain-fed stream whose flow ceases as the rainwater that feeds it runs dry. But there is a love like a spring gushing from the earth, which never runs dry. The first is human love; the second is divine, having God as its source.

54. Do you wish to delight in poetry during your service and to grasp the meaning of the words of the Spirit that you utter? – Set aside completely the number of verses, do not take into account the meter of the verses, and abandon the usual bombast; but immerse your mind in the study of the words of the Spirit until your soul is stirred to lofty understandings, and through this is moved to praise or to wholesome sorrow. – In a slavish approach (in reading only what is prescribed), there is no peace for the mind; and confusion usually robs the mind of its taste for meaning and understanding and scatters one’s thoughts. It is fitting to call confusion the devil’s chariot, for Satan has the habit, like a charioteer, of sitting upon the mind, taking with him a host of passions, entering with them into the unfortunate soul, and plunging it into confusion.

55. Do not argue with the thoughts instilled in you by the enemy, but rather interrupt your conversation with them through prayer to God. We do not always have the strength to resist such opposing thoughts in order to stop them; on the contrary, in such cases, we often receive a wound from them that takes a long time to heal. Despite all your wisdom and all your prudence, the enemies will succeed in striking you. But even if

you do defeat them, the impurity of those thoughts will defile your mind, and the stench of their filth will linger in your nostrils for a long time. By employing the first method, however, you will be free from all this and from fear; for there is no other help except God.

56. When, during your time of seclusion in silence, you turn to handicrafts, do not use your father's commandment as a cover for your love of money. To avoid despondency, let your work be modest and not disturb your mind; but do not forget that prayer, in its proper order, is above all else.

57. Be assured that your Guardian is always with you—and that, together with all other creatures, you stand under the one Lord, Who, with a single gesture, sets everything in motion and arranges all things. So stand firm and be of good cheer. Neither demons, nor deadly beasts, nor wicked people can carry out their will to harm or destroy you, unless the Ruler permits it and allows it to happen to a certain extent. Therefore, say to your soul: "I have a Guardian who protects me; and no creature can appear before me unless there is a command from above. But if it is the will of my Lord that the wicked should prevail over creation, then I accept this without sorrow, not wishing that the will of my Lord should remain unfulfilled." In this way, in your trials, you will be filled with joy, having come to know and fully realize that the Lord's sovereign guidance governs and directs you. Thus, strengthen your heart with hope in the Lord.

58. Guardianship of the tongue not only causes the mind to soar toward God, but also secretly imparts great strength to the visible deeds performed through the body, and likewise enlightens one in secret deeds, as the Fathers used to say, because guarding one's lips causes the conscience to soar toward God, provided one observes silence with full awareness.

59. Every thought of good will is followed by "*zeal*," whose fervor is like burning coals; and it usually protects this thought, preventing any resistance, obstacle, or barrier from approaching it. This is a virtue without which no good can be produced. Someone clothed in Christ called this zeal a dog and a guardian of God's law. This power of zeal is awakened, strengthened, and kindled in two ways to guard the house (the soul)—and it is also brought to exhaustion, slumber, and laziness in two ways. It is aroused and kindled (firstly) when a certain "*fear*" comes to a person's mind, causing him to fear for the good he has acquired or intends to acquire, lest it be stolen or destroyed. When this fear is aroused, zeal blazes day and night like a burning furnace—and, like a cherub, it constantly watches over its surroundings and zealously guards its good against all enemy temptations, both from without and within. There is another way in which this zeal is kindled—when the desire for virtue grows most strongly in the soul. And to the extent that this desire grows in the soul, to that same extent is the zeal for virtue kindled. The first cause for its cooling is when the very desire for good diminishes or ceases in the soul; and the second cause is when some thought of confidence and boldness enters the soul and takes root there—and a person begins to hope, to think, and to cling to the idea that he has no reason to fear harm from any power; therefore, he lays aside the weapon of vigilance, and the house is left unguarded; the dog falls asleep and abandons his watch for a long time. Both of these things happen because some very subtle thought of pride has entered the soul and taken root there; or because a person has begun to devote himself more to concerns about the transitory, or to frequent, alluring contact with the world. Or this happens because of the womb, that mother of all evil. Whenever an ascetic enters into fellowship with the world, his soul immediately grows weary. The same happens when he associates with many who, out of vanity, inevitably crush his soul. The mind of an ascetic who enters into communion with the world is like a helmsman who sails calmly across the sea and suddenly finds himself in the midst of underwater rocks and is shipwrecked.

60. To choose the good is the task of the one who desires it; but to bring that choice to fulfillment is God's work. For this, a person needs God's help. Let us therefore ensure that whenever a good desire arises within us, it is followed by frequent prayers, asking not only for His help but also for guidance as to whether this desire is pleasing to God's will or not. For not every good desire enters the heart from God, but only that which is beneficial.

61. Sometimes a person desires what is good, but God does not help him; for sometimes such a desire comes from the devil, not for our benefit but to our harm—either because the desired endeavor is beyond our capacity, since we have not yet attained the way of life appropriate to it, —or because it is foreign to the way of life we have chosen for ourselves—or because the time has not yet come when it can be accomplished or when we can begin to carry it out—or because we lack both the knowledge and the physical strength sufficient for it—or because the circumstances of the time do not favor us in this matter. The devil, meanwhile, uses every trick to make such a matter seem plausible, so that by enticing us toward it, he may disturb our peace of

mind or cause harm to our body. Therefore, even good desires must be carefully considered. It is better to do everything with counsel.

62. Virtue is the mother of sorrow; from sorrow comes humility; and grace is bestowed upon humility. And the reward that follows is no longer for virtue itself, nor for the labor done for its sake, but for the humility that springs from them. If, however, humility is lost, then the former will have been in vain.

63. The Lord demands not merely the observance of the commandments, but rather the reformation of the soul, for which He established the commandments. The body acts the same way in both good and evil deeds; the mind, however, is either righteous or sins, depending on its disposition.

64. A gift without trials is ruin for those who receive it. If you do what is good before God, and He gives you a gift, implore Him to grant you the ability to be humble to the extent that is fitting for you, or to place a guardian over the gift, or to take it away from you, so that it may not be a cause of your ruin. For it is not beneficial for everyone to possess wealth.

65. Virtues are accompanied by sorrows. Whoever flees from sorrows undoubtedly parts ways with virtue as well. If you desire virtue, then submit yourself to every kind of suffering. For suffering gives birth to humility. Until we attain true knowledge, we draw near to humility through trials. For whoever remains in virtue without suffering has the door to pride wide open.

66. When a person dwells in pride, the Guardian Angel, who is close to him and stirs within him a concern for righteousness, departs from him. But when a person offends this Angel, and he departs from him, then a stranger (the spirit of darkness) draws near to him—and from that time on, he no longer has a concern for righteousness.

67. God often permits the virtuous to be tempted by something—He allows temptations to arise against them from all sides, afflicts them in their bodies, as He did with Job, plunges them into poverty, causes people to turn away from them, and strikes them in the things they have acquired; yet no harm comes near their souls. — And it is impossible that, when we walk the path of righteousness, we should not encounter sorrow, or that the body should not grow weary from illness and toil—and yet remain unchanged, provided we love to live in virtue. — When a person walks in God's way—and encounters something of this kind; then it is not fitting for him to stray from his path, but he must accept this with joy, without complaint, and give thanks to God for sending him this grace, and that he has been deemed worthy, for God's sake, to fall into temptation and to become a partner in the sufferings of the Prophets, the Apostles, and the other Saints, who endured sorrows for the sake of this path. Whether temptations come to him from people, from demons, or from the flesh, let this be a cause for him to give thanks. For it is impossible for God to bestow a blessing upon one who desires to abide with Him in any other way than by sending him trials for the sake of the truth; just as it is impossible for a person to become worthy of this greatness—that is, to enter into trials and rejoice—without the grace of Christ. This matter is so great that St. Paul clearly calls it a gift when a person is deemed worthy to suffer for the sake of hope in God, saying to the Philippians: *"For it has been granted to you by God not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"* (Phil. 1: 29). Likewise, St. Peter wrote in his epistle: *"If you suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed"* (1 Peter 3:14)—because you have become partakers of Christ's sufferings. You should not rejoice when you live in comfort, yet frown in times of sorrow, regarding them as foreign to God's way. For His path has been laid out from of old and from generation to generation through the cross and death. And where does such a thought come from (to walk God's path half-heartedly)?—Realize from this that you are outside God's path and are straying from it, unwilling to follow in the footsteps of the saints, or intending to devise for yourself another, special path, and to walk along it without suffering. God's path is the daily cross. No one has ascended to heaven by living a life of indifference. — As for the path of indifference, we know where it ends.

68. True righteous people always reflect within themselves that they are unworthy of God—and the very fact that they are truly righteous is evident from the fact that they acknowledge themselves to be wretched and unworthy of God's care, and confess this both secretly and openly, and are enabled by the Holy Spirit to do so, so that they may remain in toil and hardship as long as they are in this life. But God has reserved a time of rest for them in the age to come. And those who have the living Lord within them do not, for this very reason, desire to be at rest or to be freed from sorrow, even though at times they are mysteriously given spiritual comfort.

69. Such is the will of the Spirit, that His beloved should abide in toil. The Spirit of God does not dwell in those who abide in rest. This is how the sons of God are distinguished from others: they live in afflictions,

while the world takes pride in luxury and rest. God did not will that His beloved should rest while they are in the body, but rather desired that, while in the world, they should abide in sorrow, in hardship, in toil, in poverty, in nakedness, in need, in humiliation, in insults, in a weary body, and in sorrowful thoughts, so that what was said might be fulfilled in them: *“In the world you will have tribulation”* (John 16:33). The Lord knows that those who live in peace cannot abide in His love, and therefore He denies them peace and the delight that comes with it.

70. Because of the love the saints have shown toward God by suffering for His Name, their hearts gain the *“boldness”* to look upon God with unveiled faces and to ask Him with confidence. — Great is the power of bold prayer. Therefore, God allows His saints to be tempted by every kind of sorrow, so that they may experience His help firsthand and come to know how much God cares for them. Through these trials, they gain wisdom and, from experience, acquire knowledge of all things, so as not to be mocked by demons. If God were to train them in one good thing alone, they would lack instruction in other areas, and they would be blind in the midst of trials.

71. If a person is not first tested by evil, he has no taste for the good, so that when he encounters the good within the evil, he may make use of it with understanding, as if it were his own. How pleasant is knowledge gained directly from experience and practice, and what strength it imparts to the one who has acquired it within himself through long-term experience—this is known to those who have experienced the assistance of this knowledge, as well as the weakness of nature and the help of divine power, and have become convinced of it. For they come to know this only when God, having at first withheld His power from assisting them, brings them to the realization of the weakness of human nature, the difficulty of temptations, the cunning of the enemy, and the nature of the struggle they face—how they are endowed by nature, and how they were protected by divine power, how far they have come on their journey, how much God’s power has exalted them, and how powerless they are in the struggle against every passion when this divine power is withdrawn from them—so that from all this they acquire humility, draw near to God, begin to await His help, and abide in prayer. And where would they have gained all this if they had not experienced much evil, having fallen into this evil by God’s permission, as the Apostle says: *“Lest I be exalted because of the surpassing revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan”* (2 Cor. 12:7)? But in temptations, having repeatedly experienced God’s help, a person also acquires firm faith; from this, he becomes fearless and gains equanimity in temptations.

72. Temptation is beneficial to every person. Ascetics are tempted so that they may add something to their spiritual wealth; the complacent, so that they may guard themselves against harm; those immersed in slumber, so that they may prepare themselves for awakening; those who stand far off, so that they may draw near to God; those who belong to God, so that they may rejoice in Him with boldness. — Every untrained son receives wealth from his Father’s house not for his own benefit. That is why God first tempts and afflicts, and then reveals His gift.

73. While a person is in a state of indifference, he fears the hour of death; but when he draws near to God, he fears the judgment to come; and when he enters fully into the presence of God, then both fears are consumed by love. — Why is this so? — Because as long as a person remains in the realm of the flesh and lives a carnal life, he is terrified of death. But when he is in spiritual understanding and leads a good life, his mind is occupied at every moment with the remembrance of the future judgment; for, as is right by his very nature, he moves in the spiritual order, is engaged in his understanding and way of life, and is prepared to draw near to God. But when he attains that knowledge of the truth, through the awakening within him of the knowledge of God’s mysteries and the strengthening of his hope for the future, then that carnal man—who, like an animal, fears slaughter—and the rational man, who fears God’s judgment, are both consumed by love; and having become a son, he is adorned with love, rather than being disciplined by a terrifying rod, saying, *“I and my father’s house will serve the Lord”* (Josh. 24:15).

74. Blessed is the one whose thoughts are always on God, and who abides with Him alone in the conversation of his understanding. Joy in God is stronger than this earthly life; and whoever has found it will not only pay no heed to suffering, but will not even turn his gaze toward his own life. Love is sweeter than life, and the understanding of God, from which love is born, is even sweeter than honey and honeycomb. For love, it is no sorrow to accept a painful death for the sake of those who love. Love is the fruit of knowledge; and knowledge is the fruit of spiritual health, and spiritual health is the strength that comes from prolonged endurance.

75. Eternal life is consolation in God; and whoever has found consolation in God regards worldly consolation as superfluous. If anyone has received wisdom from the Spirit, he recognizes it from the wisdom itself, which, in the depths of his being and in his feelings, teaches him humble conduct. If anyone has attained humility, he knows it by this: if he finds it abhorrent to please the world through his association with it or through his words; and if the glory of this world is hateful in his eyes.

76. Passions (in action) are desires which, being produced by the things of this world, entice one under the pretext of necessity to satisfy the needs of life; and these desires do not cease as long as this world endures. But a person who has been graced with divine grace, having tasted and experienced something higher than this, does not allow these passions to enter his heart; because in their place another, better desire has prevailed within him—and neither these passions themselves nor what they engender come near his heart, but remain outside, inactive—not because there are no longer any passionate desires, but because the heart that would receive them is dead to them and lives by something else; not because the person has found peace through the exercise of reason and action, but because there is nothing in his mind to disturb him, and his consciousness is sated, having found delight in something else.

77. If we keep the law of sobriety and the practice of prudence under control, the struggle against passionate desires will not even come close to the mind. They are prevented from entering the heart not through struggle, but through the saturation of consciousness and understanding—with which the soul is filled—and through the desire for the wondrous contemplations found within the soul. As long as a person lives, he needs sobriety, vigilance, and alertness to guard his treasure. But if he abandons the limit (fast) assigned to him, he will become weak and be robbed. One must not labor only until one sees the fruit; rather, one must strive until the very end. For it is not uncommon for even ripe fruit to be suddenly struck by hail.

78. If we train ourselves in righteous reflection (meditation in the heart), we will be ashamed of our passions as soon as we encounter them. But we will also be ashamed of even approaching our passions because of their sinfulness.

79. When, out of love for God, you desire to perform some deed, set death as the limit of this desire; and in this way you will truly be deemed worthy to ascend to the rank of martyrdom in the struggle against every passion, and you will suffer no harm from whatever you encounter within that limit, provided you persevere to the end and do not slacken. The thoughts of a feeble mind render the power of endurance feeble as well; but a steadfast mind imparts to those who follow its thoughts a strength that nature does not possess.

80. Life in this world is like letters inscribed on tablets; and whoever wishes may add to them, subtract from them, or alter the letters. But the life to come is like manuscripts inscribed on blank scrolls, sealed with the royal seal, in which neither additions nor subtractions are permitted. Therefore, while we are still in the midst of change, let us be mindful of ourselves; and while we still have control over the manuscript of our lives—which we write with our own hands—let us strive to enrich it with a good life and to erase the shortcomings of our past life. For as long as we are in this world, God does not affix His seal to either the good or the bad, until the very hour of our departure from this life.

81. Prayer requires practice so that the mind may become skilled through prolonged engagement in it. Prayer is preceded by seclusion (solitude, the withdrawal of thoughts from all that is extraneous). Solitude is necessary for the sake of prayer, and prayer is necessary so that we may acquire God's love; for through prayer we find reasons to love God.

82. We must know that every secret conversation with God, every concern of a good mind for God, every reflection on spiritual matters is established by prayer, is called prayer, and is united under this name,—whether you understand various readings, or the voice of the lips in praise of God, or thoughtful sorrow for the Lord, or physical bows, or the singing of psalms, or everything else that makes up the entire order of true prayer, from which God's love is born; for love comes from prayer, and prayer comes from dwelling in solitude; we need solitude so that we may converse more freely with God.

83. Guard yourself against conceit during times of positive change within you. Carefully reveal to the Lord in prayer your weakness and your ignorance regarding the subtleties of this conceit, so that you may not be forsaken or tempted into anything shameful; for pride is followed by fornication, and conceit by delusion.

84. When you place all other ascetic practices on one side of the scale and silence on the other, you will find that silence outweighs them. People have much advice; but when someone draws near to silence, it will be superfluous for him to follow that advice, and his former deeds will prove superfluous, and he himself will be found to have surpassed those deeds; for he has drawn near to perfection.

85. Let almsgiving always have the upper hand in you. Let our mercy be a mirror, so that we may see within ourselves that likeness and that true image which exists in God's nature and in God's essence. A cruel and unmerciful heart will never be purified. A merciful person is the healer of his own soul; for, as it were, with a strong wind from within, he dispels the darkness of the passions. This, according to the Gospel's word of life, is a good debt that we lend to God.

86. When you approach your bed, say to it: "Tonight, perhaps you will be my coffin, O bed; and I do not know whether, instead of temporary sleep, the eternal sleep to come will overtake me this very night." Therefore, while you still have legs, pursue the work of salvation before you are bound by chains that cannot be broken. While you still have fingers, crucify yourself in prayer before death comes. While you still have eyes, fill them with tears before they are covered with dust. Just as a rose withers as soon as the wind blows upon it, so if one of the elements that make up your being were to cease within you, you would die. Take to heart, O man, that your departure is imminent, and say to yourself unceasingly: "Behold, the messenger who has come for me is already at the door. Why then do I sit here? My departure is eternal; there will be no return."

87. Whoever loves conversing with Christ loves solitude. But whoever loves to remain among many is a friend of this world. If you love repentance, love silence as well. For without silence, repentance does not attain perfection. If you love silence—the mother of repentance—then gladly embrace the slight physical discomfort, the reproaches, and the insults that will be heaped upon you because of your silence. Devotion to silence is a constant anticipation of death. Whoever enters into silence without this mindset cannot bear what is inevitably associated with this way of life.

88. Let us love silence until the world is put to death in our hearts. Let us always remember death, and with this thought draw near to God with our hearts—and worldly pleasures will become contemptible to us.

89. One of the silent ones said: "I strive in silence so that the verses may be a delight to me as I read and pray. And when my tongue falls silent from the pleasure of comprehending them, then, as if in some kind of dream, I enter a state in which my senses and thoughts are stilled. And then, when, as this silence continues, my heart is stilled from the turmoil of memories, waves of joy are sent to me unceasingly through inner thoughts, coming suddenly, beyond all expectation, to delight my heart."

90. Another said: "Silence cuts off pretexts and causes for new thoughts, and within its own walls causes the memory of what we have previously occupied ourselves with to decay and wither away. And when old thoughts decay, then the mind, correcting them, returns to its proper order."

91. Yet another says: "Choose for yourself a delightful practice—unceasing vigil at night, during which all the fathers cast off the old man and were granted the renewal of the mind. In these hours, the soul experiences that immortal life, and through this experience, it casts off the garments of darkness and receives the Holy Spirit into itself."

92. And further: "It is impossible to subject these (external) senses to the authority of the soul without silence and withdrawal from people; for the rational soul, being essentially united and intertwined with these senses—which are its own—is involuntarily carried away by their impressions and thoughts unless a person remains vigilant in secret prayer."

93. Just as the seed of the sweat of fasting brings forth the ear of chastity, so does satiety bring forth lustful burning, and overindulgence brings forth impurity. When the belly is hungry and humble, shameful thoughts cannot penetrate the soul.

94. How your beauty, chastity, is illuminated by lying on the bare earth, by the toil of hunger that robs one of sleep, by the suffering of the flesh, which, when abstaining from food, becomes like a deep chasm between the ribs and the belly! Every morsel of food we take into our bodies and every repose of the flesh give rise within us to shameful imaginings and hideous fantasies; and as they arise, they incite us to a secret inclination toward shameful deeds. But the emptiness of the belly and of our thoughts makes our mind a desert, undisturbed by thoughts, and silent from all rebellious thoughts.

95. *Some necessary instructions for the one who observes silence:* If, during various services, you remain—as far as possible—free from the wandering of the mind, and suddenly the verse on your tongue is cut off, and the chains of silence are laid upon your soul without your free will, and this follows a long period of silence; then know that in your silence you are moving forward, and that meekness has begun to take root within you. For mere silence is truly worthy of condemnation. If you notice in your soul that with every thought that arises within it, with every recollection, and during the moments of contemplation that occur in

your silence, your eyes fill with tears, and tears flow unbidden down your cheeks; then know that a breach is beginning to open before you, to the ruin of the adversaries. If you find within yourself that at times your mind, without any prior intention to do so and outside the usual order of things, sinks deep within you and remains in this state for about an hour or for some time, and then you notice that peace reigns in your thoughts—and the same thing happens to you repeatedly; then know that the cloud has begun to overshadow your dwelling. But if, when you undertake this task, you do not find peace from the passions that trouble you, do not be surprised. Just as the depths of the world, when deprived of the sun's rays, remain dark for a long time, so too do the scent of medicines and the fragrance of incense, spreading through the air, linger for quite some time before they dissipate and vanish; all the more so do passions, like dogs accustomed to licking blood in a butcher's shop, stand and bark when they are not given their usual food, until the power of their former habit is broken. But when you press forward, you will find the following clear signs close at hand in your soul: you will be strengthened in all things by hope and enriched by prayer—your mind will never lack what is useful whenever you encounter people and feel the frailty of human nature (each such occasion will protect you from pride)—the faults of your neighbor will become unworthy of attention in your eyes, – you will long to depart from this body with the same desire with which you would dwell in the age to come; – regarding every sorrowful trial that befalls you, whether openly or in secret, you will find that all this has come upon you justly and according to judgment, and you will give thanks to God for it.

96. Passions are set in motion either by certain images or by a feeling without images, and by memory—at first without passionate movements or thoughts—which then gives rise to irritation.

97. Constant vigil accompanied by reading, followed by frequent prostrations, will not fail to bring about, through diligent effort, a peaceful disposition of the heart. And whoever has attained it has done so through these very means. Those who wish to attain it again must remain in silence and, at the same time, practice what has been said; but first and foremost, they must not let their thoughts become attached to anything other than their own soul; they must practice inner work, and in reflecting on their actions themselves—practicing precisely those in which we find a certain feeling particularly close to us, one that affirms us in a good state of mind.

98. In every rational nature, there are countless changes, and changes occur in every person hour by hour. A discerning person can come to understand this by testing himself; if he remains sober-minded and observes himself in his own mind, he will easily discover what changes his thoughts undergo at any given time, how suddenly they shift from a peaceful state to confusion, and for what reasons. St. Macarius wrote about this in his instructions to the brethren, urging them not to fall into despair when changes for the worse occur; for even those who stand on the ladder of purity, just as the air cools, always experience falls from a better to a worse state, even though there is no negligence or self-indulgence on their part; on the contrary, even when they observe their discipline, such downfalls occur to them, contrary to the intention of their own will. The Blessed Mark affirms the same, saying: “Changes occur in everyone, just as in the air.” *“In everyone,”* that is, not only in the lowest and worst, but also in the perfect. Just as in nature there is cold and soon after heat—and likewise hail and, not long afterward, clear weather—so it is in our spiritual practice: sometimes struggle, sometimes help from grace; sometimes the soul is in turmoil and cruel waves rise up against it—and then a change occurs again, because grace visits and fills the human heart with joy and peace from God, with chaste and peaceful thoughts.

99. Therefore, when you are in turmoil, do not despair—and when you are filled with peace, do not become arrogant. On the contrary, examine more closely within yourself the impure thoughts and those unseemly images that took root in your mind during the turmoil, in the hour of confusion and disorder of thoughts; —and reflect on how quickly you were led astray by your passions and conversed with them in a clouded state of mind; and know that all this was brought upon us by God's Providence for our humility, for He provides for each of us and arranges what is beneficial for each person.

100. Humility, even without heroic deeds, makes many sins forgivable; but without humility, even heroic deeds are useless and even bring us much harm. Just as salt is to all food, so is humility to every virtue. To acquire it, we must constantly grieve in our thoughts with self-abasement and judicious sorrow. And if we acquire it, it will make us children of God.

101. Our Lord has shown us the support for our weakness in prayer, saying: “Awake, *‘watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation’*” (Matt. 26:41). Pray and do not be slothful, but at all times *“be watchful and pray”* (Col. 4:2–3). *“Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find”*; *“knock, and it will be opened to*

you.” *For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened*” (Matt. 7:7–8). He especially confirmed this word of His and urged us to greater diligence with the parable of a friend who came to his friend at midnight and asked him for bread. The Lord says: *“Amen, I say to you, even if he does not give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him whatever he needs”* (Luke 11:8). And you, pray, and do not be negligent. What an unspeakable encouragement to boldness!

102. The Lord knows that before death He will not take away from us the possibility of straying, that this change is very close to us—namely, the transition from virtue to vice—and that man and his nature are capable of embracing the opposite; which is why He has commanded us to be vigilant and to strive in constant prayer. And He commanded us to pray not only to protect ourselves from obvious change, but also because of the subtlety and incomprehensibility of what we constantly encounter—things that cannot be grasped by our minds in those states in which we often find ourselves involuntarily. For although our thoughts are very firm and attached to what is good, His Providence nevertheless repeatedly leaves us on the brink of temptations and casts us into them, as the blessed Paul said: *“A thorn in the flesh was given to me”* (2 Cor. 12:7–9).

103. This world is a contest and an arena for competition. This is a time of struggle. And during a struggle, and during a contest, there is no law; that is, the King sets no limits for His warriors until the contest is over, and every person is brought to the gates of the King of Kings and tested there to see whether he has won the contest or has broken his back. Here there is but one law—to remain vigilant and to resist. —Let us not neglect prayer, nor be too lazy to ask for help from the Lord, without Whom we can do nothing that is pleasing to Him. — Let us firmly keep in mind that as long as we are in this world and remain in the flesh—even if we were to ascend to the heavenly vault—we cannot remain idle and without labor, nor can we be without care.

104. Perfection in this path consists in the following: repentance, purity, and self-improvement. (The repentant person enters into a struggle against the passions—and struggles until the heart is purified of them; the purification of the heart is the end of the struggle and the gateway to the realm of perfection.)

105. Someone was asked, “What is repentance?” And he replied, “Abandoning one’s former ways and grieving over them”; and also, “a contrite and humble heart.”

106. He was also asked, “How can a person acquire humility?” And he said, “By constantly remembering one’s sins and the nearness of death, by wearing simple clothing—by always choosing the last place, and in every situation willingly taking on the most menial and humbling tasks—by not being disobedient, – to remain silent, – not to enjoy attending gatherings, to desire to remain unknown and unelected to any office, – not to keep any possession entirely at one’s own disposal, – to detest conversation with many people, – to have no love of gain, and, moreover, to rise above the inclination to criticize and accuse anyone, and above envy, – not to be the kind of person whose hands are on everyone and upon whom everyone’s hands are laid, but to go about one’s business alone in solitude, and not to take upon oneself the care of anything in the world except oneself. In short: a life of wandering, poverty, and solitude—these are the things from which humility is born and the heart is purified.”

107. The sign of those who have attained perfection is this: even if they were to be delivered ten times a day to be burned for the sake of love for their neighbors, they would not be satisfied with this, as demonstrated by Moses (Ex. 32:32), Blessed Paul (Rom. 9:3), and the other Apostles. – God delivered His Son to death on the cross out of love for His creatures. And if He had had anything more precious, He would have given it to us as well, in order thereby to win our race for Himself. – Imitating this, all the saints, striving for perfection, seek to become like God in the perfection of love for their neighbor.

108. No one can attain the level of this love unless they feel it in the secret of their hope. Those who love this world cannot acquire love for others. When someone acquires love, they are clothed in God Himself along with that love. And whoever has acquired God must not only refuse to accept anything else alongside Him, but must also put off his own body. But if anyone, through love for the world, clothes himself in this world and this life, he will not be clothed in God until he leaves this behind. For God Himself has testified to this, saying: *“If anyone”* does not forsake this, and *“does not hate his own soul, he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:26). One must not only forsake it, but also hate it.

109. Why is hope so sweet, and why do all deeds become easy in its presence?—Because at that moment a natural desire (for well-being) is awakened in the souls of the saints, and hope allows them to drink of this in the monastery from its own cup, and it delights them. Therefore, they no longer feel the toil, but

become insensitive to toil and sorrow, and throughout their entire journey they think that their journey is taking place as if on air, and that they are not walking on human feet; for the difficulty of the path is invisible to them; there are no hills or streams before them, and what are rough places on the path become smooth for them (Isa. 40:4). Their attention is turned toward the bosom of their Father—and hope itself, as if with a finger, points them at every moment toward what is distant and invisible, yet visible to the secret eye of faith; and the desire for this distant goal, as if by fire, kindles every part of their soul. All the striving of their thoughts extends toward that end, and they always hasten to reach it. Thus hope kindles them as with fire, and they cannot grant themselves rest in this swift and unceasing flow, which they carry out with joy.

110. Detachment does not consist solely in not feeling passions, but also in not allowing them to take root within oneself. As a result of the many and varied virtues, both manifest and hidden, acquired by the Saints, the passions have been exhausted within them, and they cannot easily rise up against their soul; nor does their mind need to be constantly attentive in its reasoning; for it is at all times filled with thoughts that are consciously stirred in the mind by reflection and conversation about the most excellent virtues. And as soon as the passions begin to stir, the mind is suddenly captivated by a certain insight that has penetrated it, keeping the passions at bay; and the passions, as Blessed Mark said, remain within them as if idle.

111. The mind, by the grace of God, as it performs virtuous deeds and draws near to knowledge, scarcely perceives that which constitutes the evil and unwise part of the soul. For knowledge lifts it up to the heights and separates it from all that is in the world. And because of the purity of the saints, and the subtlety, flexibility, and sharpness of their minds, as well as because of their ascetic efforts, their minds are purified and find themselves enlightened, due to the dryness of their flesh. And, as a result of their training in silence and their prolonged abiding in it, every inner contemplation comes easily and quickly, and what they contemplate fills them with wonder. At the same time, they are usually abounding in contemplations, and their mind never lacks objects of understanding, nor are they ever without that which produces the fruit of the Spirit within them. Through long-standing practice, the memories that stir up passions in their hearts are erased, and the power of the devil's dominion is weakened. For when the soul does not associate with the passions by dwelling on them—since it is constantly occupied with other concerns—the power of the passions cannot hold its spiritual sensibilities in its clutches.

112. Just as pride carries the soul aloft and gives it freedom to soar in the clouds of its own thoughts and to whirl about throughout all creation, so humility gathers the soul into a single point through silence—and it becomes centered within itself. Just as the soul within the body is hidden from sight and from communion with all people, so too does a truly humble person not only desire not to be seen or known by others, but even will to plunge from himself into himself, to become nothing, as if nonexistent, as if not yet brought into being. – And as long as such a person remains hidden, withdrawn into himself, and separated from the world, he abides entirely with his Lord.

113. The humble never stops to look at gatherings, crowds, commotion, noise, or revelry—nor does he pay attention to words, conversations, shouts, or the distraction of the senses—for his desire is not to possess many things or to be constantly occupied, but to be free at all times, free from cares, so that his thoughts do not stray beyond himself. For he is certain that if he becomes involved in many things, he will not be able to remain free from confusion of thought; because with many tasks come many worries and a multitude of complex thoughts; and through this, the door to passions is opened, the stillness of reason is driven away, and the door to peace is shut. Therefore, the humble-minded person guards himself against all that is excessive; and through this, he remains at all times in stillness, in peace, in tranquility, in modesty, and in reverence.

114. The humble and wise person is never hasty, hurried, or confused, nor does he have impetuous or frivolous thoughts, but he remains at peace at all times. There is nothing that could astonish, confuse, or terrify him; for neither in sorrow does he become terrified or change, nor in joy does he become astonished or elated. But all his joy and gladness are in whatever pleases his Lord.

115. The humble-minded dare not even pray to God or ask for anything, nor do they know what to pray for; but they simply remain silent with all their senses, awaiting only the mercy and the will that shall come upon them from the face of the Most Worshiped Majesty, —when he bows his face to the ground, and the inner vision of his heart is lifted up to the gates of the Holy of Holies, where He dwells in darkness, before Whom the eyes of the Seraphim are closed—and dares only to speak and pray thus: “According to Your will, O Lord, let it be with me.”

116. Walk before God in simplicity, not in the cleverness of the mind. Simplicity is followed by faith; but the subtlety and cunning of cleverness are followed by self-conceit; and self-conceit, in turn, leads to separation from God.

117. When you stand before God in prayer, make yourself in your thoughts like a speechless infant. Do not speak before God from any knowledge, but draw near to Him with childlike thoughts, and walk before Him, so that you may be deemed worthy of that fatherly care which fathers have for their infant children. It is said: “*The Lord preserves the little ones*” (Ps. 114:5)—not only those who are small in body, but also those who are wise in the world, who, having set aside their own knowledge, have, of their own free will, made themselves like little children, and have begun to learn of that all-pervading Wisdom which cannot be attained through the labors of (of the books). Ask God that He may grant you to attain the measure of this faith. Pray for this without laziness, seek it with fervor, and implore it with great earnestness until you receive it. You will be granted this if you first, with faith, compel yourself to cast your cares upon God and replace your own concern with His providence. And when God sees in you this resolve—that with a pure heart you have entrusted yourself to God Himself more than to yourself, and have compelled yourself to trust in God more than in your own soul—then that inexpressible power will take up residence within you, and you will tangibly feel that there is undoubtedly a power with you—that power which, when felt within themselves, causes many to walk through fire without fear and to walk on water without wavering in their minds from the fear of drowning.

118. Does it not seem to you that this spiritual knowledge might in some way be mistaken for knowledge of the soul?—Not only is it impossible to mistake this spiritual knowledge for that of the soul, but there is not even any possibility of perceiving it through the senses by anyone who zealously practices the knowledge of the soul. And if any of them wish to draw near to this other spiritual knowledge, they will not be able to do so—even slightly—until they renounce this mental knowledge, along with all its subtle twists and complex methods, and adopt a childlike way of thinking. On the contrary, the habits and concepts of mental guidance become a great obstacle to them until they gradually erase them. This spiritual guidance is simple and does not shine through in mental thoughts. Until the mind is freed from many thoughts and attains a single simplicity of purity, it will not be able to perceive spiritual guidance.

119. If you have once entrusted yourself to the Lord, who is all-sufficient to protect you and watch over you, then do not worry about such things again, but say to your soul: “In every matter, He to whom I once entrusted my soul is sufficient for me. I am not here; He knows this.” – Then you will truly see the wonders of God—you will see how God is always near to deliver those who fear Him, and how His Providence surrounds you, even though it is invisible. But just because the Guardian who dwells with you is invisible to the physical eye, you must not doubt Him as if He did not exist; for He often reveals Himself even to the physical eye, so that you may be comforted.

120. As soon as a person rejects all visible help and human hope, and follows God with faith and a pure heart, grace immediately follows him and reveals its power to him through various forms of assistance. First, God reveals Himself in the visible, bodily realm and provides help through His providence, so that in this way, above all else, he may come to feel the power of God’s Providence. By comprehending this visible help, he is assured of help in the hidden as well—in the course of which grace reveals to him the intricate web of difficult thoughts and intentions, as a result of which a person can easily discern their meaning, their mutual connection, and their allure, and how they arise from one another—and destroy the soul. At the same time, grace exposes before his eyes all the wickedness of the demons, and, as it were, points out to him what he would have suffered had he not come to know this. Then the thought arises in him that he must ask his Creator for every thing, small and great, in prayer.

121. When God’s grace strengthens his resolve to trust in God in all these matters, he gradually begins to face temptations. And grace allows temptations to be sent upon him, commensurate with his capacity, so that he may bear their weight. And in these temptations, help draws near to him tangibly, so that he may remain steadfast until he is gradually trained and acquires wisdom, and, trusting in God, comes to despise his enemies. For it is impossible for a person to become wise in spiritual battles, to know his Provider, to sense his God, and to be firmly established in faith in Him, except through the strength gained by enduring trials.

122. As soon as Grace perceives that a hint of doubt is beginning to arise in a person’s thoughts, and that he has begun to think highly of himself, it immediately allows temptations to intensify and grow stronger against him, until he recognizes his own weakness and once again, in humility, clings to God.

123. Do not be surprised that when you set out to practice virtue, severe and intense sorrows pour down upon you from every side; for virtue is not considered such if its practice is not accompanied by difficulty. That is why St. John (Colov or the Prophet) said: “Virtues usually encounter difficulties; it is worthy of reproach when it is attached to ease.” And Blessed Mark says: “Every perfect virtue is called a cross when it fulfills the commandment of the Spirit.” This is the Apostolic teaching that “*all who desire to live*” in the fear of the Lord and “*in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Tim. 3:12). The Lord, however, says: “*Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*” (Matt. 16:25). For this reason, He offers you the cross at the very beginning, so that you may first commit yourself to the cross, and only then send your soul to follow Him.

124. Nothing is as powerful as despair. It knows no defeat, whether by the right hand or the left. When a person, in his thoughts, robs his life of hope, then there is nothing more daring than he. None of his enemies can stand against him, and there is no sorrow whose very mention would exhaust his wisdom; for every sorrow that befalls him is lighter than death, and he has bowed his head to accept death upon himself.

125. The hope of peace has at all times caused people to forget what is great, good, and virtuous. Both before our time and to this day, not because of anything else but precisely because of this, people grow weary; and not only do they fail to achieve victory, but they even lose what is best. Therefore, to put it briefly, if a person neglects the Kingdom of Heaven, it is surely because of the hope for a little earthly comfort. Who does not know that birds approach the net, seeking rest?

126. When the mind is zealous for virtue, then the external senses do not yield to any difficulties. When the heart is zealous in spirit, then the body does not grieve over sorrows, does not fall into fear, and does not shrink back in terror; for then the mind, like a diamond, resists all temptations within it with its firmness. Let us, then, be zealous—and indifference, which breeds laziness, will flee from us. Zeal breeds courage and gives the soul victorious strength. What power of the demons can withstand it when the soul mobilizes its natural zeal against them?

127. Our ancient fathers, knowing that our mind is not always able to remain focused on one thing and keep watch, and at other times cannot even discern what harms it, clad themselves in detachment from worldly possessions as if it were a weapon and withdrew to the desert, where there are no worldly pursuits that give rise to passions, so as to have no cause for irritation, desire, or resentment. Against all this and the like, they fortified and shielded themselves as with an impregnable pillar.

128. When a person lives in detachment, the thought of departing from this life constantly comes to mind—and he devotes constant care to preparing for it, — he shuns all rest; the thought of renouncing the world stirs vividly in his mind; he fortifies his heart to face dangers without fear; he does not fear death, for he fixes his gaze upon it at every moment; he accepts sorrows, if they come, with joy and gladness, knowing that they bring crowns. But if it happens that he acquires anything transitory, then at that very moment a love for the body begins to awaken in his soul; thoughts of carnal comfort arise, along with ways to obtain everything that serves that purpose; from this point on, the steadfastness of heart he possessed—when, in his detachment from worldly goods, he was above the world—begins to slip away from him, and his soul becomes overwhelmed by thoughts that instill fear for his life; thus, his firm hope in God departs from him.

129. Various Sayings. — Just as it is impossible for one whose head is submerged in water to breathe in the thin air, so too is it impossible for one who immerses his thoughts in earthly cares to breathe in the sensations of that new world. Just as a deadly stench disrupts the body’s constitution, so does an indecent sight disrupt the peace of the mind. Just as glass cannot remain intact when it collides with a nearby stone, so too a saint, when he remains with and converses with a woman for a long time, cannot preserve his purity and avoid being defiled. Just as trees are uprooted by a strong and constant flow of water, so too is love for the world uprooted from the heart by the flow of temptations directed at the body. Just as bitter medicines purge the impurity of unhealthy fluids from the body, so the severity of sorrows purifies the heart of wicked passions. Just as it is impossible for one who spares his enemy on the battlefield to remain unharmed, so it is impossible for the ascetic to save his soul from destruction if he spares his body. Just as a young maiden, struck by the sight of something terrifying, runs to her parents, clings to their clothes, and cries out for help, so too does the soul—to the extent that it is distressed and crushed by the fear of temptations—hurry to cling to God, calling upon Him in unceasing prayer. And as long as temptations continue to assail her one after another, she redoubles her supplication; but as soon as she is set free, she gives herself over to idle thoughts. Just as one who brings a great gift to the King is rewarded by him with a gracious glance, so too does the great King of the ages, God, forgive every measure of sin to the one who has tears in his prayer, and reward him with a

gracious glance. Just as a man carrying a precious pearl, walking along a path frequented by robbers, is in constant fear of being attacked and robbed; so too, the one who bears the pearl of chastity and walks in the world—this path full of enemies—cannot be free from the fear of these robbers until he reaches the abode of the tomb, that is, the land of rest. Just as a person who drinks wine on a day of mourning, once intoxicated, forgets all sorrow about his difficult situation, so too does one who is intoxicated with the love of God in this world—that is, in the house of weeping—forget all his labors and sorrows, and because of his intoxication becomes insensitive to all sinful passions, his heart is strengthened by hope in God, his soul is light as a feathered bird, his mind is lifted from the earth at every moment, his thoughts soar above all that is human, and he enjoys immortality with the Most High.

130. Humility is the garment of the Godhead. The incarnate Word clothed Himself in it, and through it spoke to us in our flesh, veiling the majesty of His greatness and His glory with this humility, so that creation might not be consumed by gazing upon Him. Creation could not have looked upon Him had He not taken on a part of it, and thus come to speak with it. Therefore, whoever puts on this garment of humility puts on Christ Himself; for in the likeness in which Christ was visible to His creation and lived among it, he too desires to clothe his inner man.

131. Humility is a certain mysterious power which, upon the completion of their entire life, the perfect saints receive. This power is given by the power of grace only to those who are perfect in virtue, for this virtue encompasses everything.

132. Not everyone who is modest, silent, and gentle has already attained the degree of humility. Nor will we call one who acts with humility when recalling his sins, grieving over them, truly humble, even though this is praiseworthy; for he does not yet possess humility, but is skillfully drawing it near to himself—he desires only humility, but does not yet have it. The truly humble person has no need to use his own reasoning to invent reasons for humility, but manifests humility in everything without effort or self-compulsion.

133. If anyone asks how to acquire humility, we will answer him: *“It is enough for a disciple”* to become like his teacher—a servant like his master (Matt. 10:25). See how He who commanded humility and grants this gift manifested humility—imitate Him, and you will acquire it.

134. We must avoid in every way anything that stirs up evil passions within us; above all, we must cut off within ourselves the causes of these passions and whatever sets them in motion, even the smallest ones; and when, despite this, passions do arise, we must resist them and fight against them. For both of these purposes, the very best thing is to immerse oneself in one’s inner self and remain there in solitude, ceaselessly cultivating the vineyard of one’s heart. When our mind dwells there in solitude and seclusion, it is no longer the mind that wages war against the passions, but grace.

135. The purpose of the Savior’s coming, when He gave us His life-giving commandments as purifying remedies for our passionate state, was to cleanse the soul from the damage caused by the first transgression and to restore it to its original state. Just as remedies are for a sick body, so are the commandments for a passionate soul. And it is clear that the commandments are established in opposition to the passions, for the healing of the sinful soul.

136. The corruption came upon us through the transgression of the commandments. From this it is already evident that health is restored by keeping them. And without keeping the commandments—unless we first set out on the path leading to purity of soul—we must not even desire or hope for the purification of the soul. And do not say that God, even without our keeping the commandments, can grant us the purification of the soul by His grace. These are the Lord’s judgments, and the Church does not command us to ask for anything of the sort. The Jews, during their return from Babylon to Jerusalem, traveled by natural means; but Ezekiel arrived in Jerusalem supernaturally and, through divine revelation, became a witness to the future renewal. Something similar occurs in the matter of purity of soul. Some, by following a well-trodden path—through keeping the commandments in a life of great toil, even at the cost of their own blood—attain purity of soul; while others are granted it as a gift of grace. And it is remarkable that we are not permitted to ask in prayer for the purity granted to us by grace, nor to renounce a life spent in keeping the commandments. For to the rich man who asked the Lord, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* the Lord clearly said, *“Keep the commandments”* (Luke 10:25). But when the rich man pressed for further instruction, He said: *“If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and take up your cross and follow Me”* (Matthew 19:21). And this means: die to everything you possess, and then live in Me; depart from the old world of passions, and then enter the new world of the Spirit. For the Lord, having said, *“Take up your cross”* (Matt.

16:24), thereby taught man to die to everything in the world. And when he had put to death the old man within himself—that is, his passions—then He said to him, “*Follow Me.*” It is impossible for the old man to walk in the way of Christ.

137. Blessed Basil the Great and the blessed Gregorys, who loved the desert and extolled silence, did not come to silence because they had failed to practice the commandments, but lived first in the world, keeping the commandments that those living in society were required to keep, and then attained purity of soul and were deemed worthy of spiritual contemplation. And after this, they hastened to go out into the silence of the desert; and from that time on, they dwelt with their inner man; therefore, they became contemplatives and remained in spiritual contemplation until they were called by grace to become shepherds of the Church of Christ.

138. The desert lulls the passions to sleep. But one thing is required of a person for this—to lull one’s passions to sleep, and even to root them out, that is, to overcome them when they persist in opposing us. For passions that have been lulled to sleep are reawakened as soon as a cause arises for them to come into action. Let us therefore desire the desert not merely because it lulls the passions to sleep, but let us wish that, amid the lack of sensory pleasures and in isolation from all others, we may find wisdom there, and that the inner, spiritual man in Christ may be renewed within us; so that at every moment we may be watchful over ourselves, and so that our mind may become vigilant, guarding itself at all times, and may not lose sight of the hope within it.

139. Our Lord, in order to make us like the greatness of our Heavenly Father, has ordained mercy for us, yet monks prefer silence to mercy. How can this be reconciled? The Lord has ordained mercy so that we may become like our Heavenly Father, because it draws the merciful closer to God. And we, as monks, honor silence without excluding mercy, but striving as much as possible to distance ourselves from vain cares and turmoil; —we do not intend to neglect our duty (toward our neighbors), but we cherish silence so that (more accurately, to fulfill another higher duty) we may abide in the contemplation of God, through which we can best restore our purity and draw near to God. If, however, at some point our brothers should have a genuine need for us, we must not neglect it. Therefore, let us constantly urge ourselves to be inwardly merciful toward every rational being at all times. For this is what the Lord’s teaching inspires in us, and it is in this—and not in anything vain—that the distinction of our silence lies. And we must not only preserve this inner compassion of ours, but, when circumstances call for it, we must not neglect to demonstrate our love openly.

140. The Giver of Life has summed up the fullness of the commandments in two commandments that encompass all the others—love for God and a similar love for the image of God. The first fulfills the purpose of spiritual contemplation, while the second fulfills both contemplation and action. For the nature of God is simple, invisible, and naturally lacks nothing; and consciousness, in its self-contemplation, naturally lacks nothing with regard to God; in bodily activity, its activity is simple and manifests itself in a single part of the mind, in accordance with the simplicity of the venerable Giver, which is above carnal sensation. And the second commandment—that is, love of one’s neighbor—due to the duality of nature, requires that we desire to fulfill in the body, in the same way, what we fulfill invisibly in consciousness. Since action always precedes contemplation, it is impossible for anyone to rise to the realm of the higher unless they first fulfill the lower through actual deeds. And no one may claim, with regard to love for one’s neighbor, that they excel in it with their soul if they neglect that part which, to the best of their ability and in accordance with time and place, is carried out in the flesh. For it is only through this fulfillment that it becomes certain that perfect love exists within a person. And when we are, as far as possible, faithful and true in this, then the soul is given the strength, in simple and incomparable concepts, to extend itself to the great realm of lofty and divine contemplation. But where it is not possible to fulfill love for one’s neighbor through deeds visible in the body, there our love for our neighbors, fulfilled only by the soul, is sufficient before God.

141. Whoever desires to love God above all else must take care to preserve the purity of his soul; and the purity of the soul is attained by overcoming and eradicating the passions. Passions are a door shut before the face of purity. Unless one opens this shut door, he will not enter the spotless and pure realm of the heart. And without this, the soul cannot have boldness in the hour of prayer; for this boldness is the fruit of purity and of the efforts made to attain it. Here is the order in which all this takes place: patience, with self-discipline, struggles against the passions for the sake of purity; if the soul overcomes the passions, it attains purity; and true purity causes the mind to gain boldness in the hour of prayer.

142. Let us refrain from asking God for anything lofty; but above all, let us acquire patience for whatever befalls us—and with great humility and contrition regarding what is within us and our thoughts, let us ask for the forgiveness of our sins and for the peace of our souls. One of the Fathers wrote: “Whoever does not consider himself a sinner, his prayer is not accepted by the Lord.” It is written that “*the Kingdom of God does not come with observance*” (i.e., in a noticeable way)—(Luke 17:20). For our part, we will strive in every way to put our hearts in order through acts of repentance and a life pleasing to God; the Lord’s Kingdom will come of its own accord if the place in our hearts is pure and undefiled. As for what we seek “*with observance*”—that is, God’s exalted gifts—this is not approved by the Church of God; and those who have received such things have brought upon themselves pride and downfall. And this is not a sign that a person loves God, but a sickness of the soul. And how can we seek God’s exalted gifts when Paul boasts of his sufferings and considers participation in Christ’s sufferings to be a great gift from God?

143. As long as the soul is afflicted by passions, it does not perceive the spiritual with its senses, nor does it know how to desire it; rather, it desires only what it hears with its ears and reads in the Scriptures. The inner power of the soul is healed from these illnesses by the secret fulfillment of the commandments, through participation in Christ’s sufferings. Initially, our nature, through Christ’s incarnation, received renewal and was united with Christ’s suffering and death; and then, through this renewal by the shedding of blood, it was sanctified and became capable of receiving the new and perfect commandments. And if these commandments had been given to people before the shedding of blood, before the renewal and sanctification of our nature, then perhaps even the newest commandments, like the ancient ones, would have merely cut off vice in the soul, but would not have been able to eradicate the very root of vice from the soul. Now, however, it is not so: the inner workings and the new and spiritual commandments, which the soul keeps out of the fear of God, renew and sanctify the soul, and secretly heal all its members. For it is clear to all what passion each commandment silently heals within the soul, and their effectiveness is palpable to both the healer and the one being healed, just as it was with the woman suffering from a hemorrhage.

144. The healing of the passionate part of the soul can also be accomplished by grace, as was the case with the blessed Apostles. But this is a matter of God’s special election; ordinarily, however, the soul attains health through the lawful path. Namely: whoever has overcome the passions through the observance of the commandments and the arduous labors of a true life has attained spiritual health by the lawful—common—path, has been nourished with milk beyond the materiality of this world, has cut off his former nature within himself, and has been reborn, as in the beginning, in the spiritual realm, and by grace, having acquired the understanding of the inner man, has become visible in the realm of the spirit, and has received into himself the new, uncomplicated world.

145. When the mind is renewed and the heart is sanctified, then all the concepts arising within it are stirred in accordance with the nature of the world into which it enters. First, a love for the Divine is stirred within it, and it longs for communion with the Angels and the revelation of the mysteries of spiritual knowledge; his mind is purified by the spiritual knowledge of creatures, and the contemplation of the mysteries of the Holy Trinity shines within him, as well as the mysteries of the divine economy established for our sake; and then he enters fully into union with the knowledge of hope for the future.

146. If the soul, while confined to the realm of the passions, could truly comprehend the spiritual, it would have no need to ask about or inquire into the mysteries of the spiritual world. But it is clear that instruction and knowledge, when accompanied by passions, are of no benefit and are insufficient to open the door that is closed to the face of purity. When, however, the passions are removed from the soul, then the mind is enlightened and placed in the pure realm of nature, and has no need for questions; for it clearly sees the blessings found in their proper place. For just as the external senses do not perceive the natures and things that come into contact with them as a result of instruction, but each sense naturally perceives the thing that meets it: so, in a similar way, imagine spiritual contemplation. For the mind, which penetrates the hidden mysteries of the spirit, if it is in its natural health, fully contemplates the glory of Christ, and neither asks questions nor learns, but delights in the mysteries of the new world, beyond the freedom of the will, in proportion to the fervor of faith and hope in Christ.

147. If you desire your heart to become a dwelling place for the mysteries of the new world, then first enrich yourself through bodily works: fasting, vigil, worship, asceticism, patience, the subduing of thoughts, and the like. Engage your mind in reading the Scriptures and delving deeply into them; write the commandments before your eyes; and through ceaseless prayerful conversation and deep immersion in prayer,

uproot from your heart every image and every likeness that you have previously conceived. Train your mind to delve constantly into the mysteries of the Savior's household; cease to seek for yourself knowledge and contemplation, which, in their proper place and time, transcend verbal description, and continue to fulfill the commandments and labor to attain purity, and ask the Lord to grant you a life of wisdom. The beginning, middle, and end of this life consist of the following: the severing of all things through union with Christ. If, however, you long for the contemplation of the mysteries, cultivate the commandments within yourself through action, and not merely through a desire to know them. Spiritual contemplation operates within us in the realm of purity.

148. Contemplation among the children of the mystery of faith is united with faith and feeds on the pastures of Scripture. Words that are incomprehensible to the intellect become understandable to us through faith, and we gain knowledge of them through contemplation, which comes after purification. For the spiritual mysteries, which are beyond understanding and which neither the bodily senses nor the rational power of the mind can perceive, God has given us faith, through which we know only that these mysteries exist. And from this faith, hope in them is born within us (that is, the hope of comprehending them). By faith we confess that God is the Lord, the Ruler, the Creator, and the Organizer of all things. Consequently, moved by our conscience, we resolve that we must keep His commandments, and understand that the old commandments are kept out of fear, while Christ's life-giving commandments are kept out of love, as the Lord says: *"If you love Me, keep My commandments. 'And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate'"* (John 14:15–16). By the coming of the Advocate, He means the gift of the revelation of spiritual mysteries; therefore, in receiving the Spirit, whom the Apostles received, lies the fullness of spiritual knowledge. And the Lord promised, after interceding with His Father, to give them the Comforter, so that as they keep His commandments and purify themselves, He might abide with them forever. Do you see that by keeping the commandments, the mind is made worthy of the grace of mystical contemplation and the revelations of spiritual knowledge?

149. Keeping the commandments reveals such power when it is done out of love for the One who gave them, and not out of fear. Therefore, the lawful door leading to contemplation is love. On all the ascents of revelations of knowledge and mystical contemplations, Divine love leads those who have attained it both upward and downward. Therefore, one must first acquire love; and after that, spiritual contemplation will come to us naturally. And understand the wisdom of the blessed Paul, how he set aside all the gifts bestowed by grace and asked for the most essential one—that by which the gifts are received and preserved, namely, love (1 Cor. 13). It is the place of revelations; and in this place, contemplation reveals itself to us of its own accord. Just as, as the soul matures naturally, it takes in more and more knowledge about what exists in the world, and learns this more and more day by day, so too in the spiritual realm does a person take in spiritual contemplation and a sense of the Divine, and learns this to the extent that the mind matures in a life of reason. But when he enters the realm of love, then he contemplates the spiritual in its proper place.

150. As long as a person exerts effort to make the spiritual descend to him, it does not yield. And if he dares to dream, and lifts his gaze toward the spiritual, and attempts to reach it with his understanding before the time is right, his vision soon becomes dulled, and instead of reality, he perceives phantoms and images. As soon as you grasp this with your discerning mind, you will not seek contemplation out of turn. But if it seems to you that even now (before entering the realm of purity and love) you are experiencing contemplation, then this contemplation is the shadow of a phantom, not true contemplation; for everything conceived in the mind has a semblance and a dreamlike image, but there is also true contemplation. And in the natural order, sometimes what is real is seen, and sometimes the opposite of that; the eye sees a shadow instead of reality, sees water where there is no water, sees buildings suspended in the air, even though they stand on the ground. Imagine the same phenomenon with regard to the mental as you do with the physical.

151. If the mind's vision is not purified by the fulfillment of the commandments and by the deeds of a silent life, if it does not attain the perfection of the light of love, and if it does not progress with age in the renewal of Christ, then it cannot become a true beholder of divine contemplation. Nevertheless, those spiritual likenesses that the mind attempts to construct for itself are called illusions, not reality. And the fact that the mind sees one thing instead of another stems from the fact that it has not been purified. This was also the case with the external philosophers, who regarded as spiritual that about which they had not received true teaching from God—and boasted about it in undue conceit, divided the one God into polytheism, spoke and agreed

among themselves in the mockery of their thoughts, and called this delusion of their foolish thoughts “speculation on the nature of things.”

152. True contemplation of the sensible and supersensible realms and of the Holy Trinity itself is revealed in Christ’s Revelation. Christ taught this to people and showed it to them when, through His Hypostasis, He first renewed human nature, restored and granted it its original freedom, and Himself paved the way for us to ascend to the Truth through His life-giving commandments. And our nature is capable of becoming a spectator of true—rather than imaginary—contemplation only when a person, through the endurance of suffering, labor, and sorrow, casts off the old, passion-ridden man, just as a newborn infant casts off the garments worn while in the womb. Then the mind, having been spiritually reborn, becomes capable of receiving the contemplation of its true homeland.

153. And this contemplation serves as nourishment for the mind until it reaches a state where it can receive a higher contemplation than the first; for one contemplation leads a person to another, until the mind is introduced into the realm of perfect love. Love is the abode of the spiritual, and it dwells in the purity of the soul. When the mind enters the realm of love, then grace is at work; the mind receives spiritual contemplation and becomes a beholder of the hidden.

154. As I have already said, the gift of revelations of intellectual contemplation is granted in two ways. Sometimes it is granted by grace for fervent faith; and sometimes for keeping the commandments and for purity. By grace, as was the case with the blessed Apostles, who purified their minds not by keeping the commandments but by fervent faith; for they believed in Christ with simplicity and, without a doubt, with a heart ablaze, followed Him. And when Christ had accomplished His most venerable work of building up the Church, He sent them the Spirit of the Comforter, Who purified and perfected their minds, and effectively put to death within them the old, passion-driven man, and effectively brought to life within them the new, spiritual man. – Thus, the blessed Paul was mysteriously renewed, and thereafter received the contemplation of the mysteries of revelation. It is not written what Jesus spoke to him openly, but it is written that Ananias said to him: “*Saul, brother, our Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me to you so that your eyes may be opened and you may be filled with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 9:17). – And when he baptized him, he was filled with the Holy Spirit; and he perceived the hidden mysteries of the revelations, just as this had happened to the holy Apostles, to whom the Lord Jesus had said: “*I have much more to say to you, but you cannot bear it now; yet when the Holy Spirit comes, He will guide you into all the truth and will tell you what is to come*” (John 16:12–13).

155. And it was precisely then, when Blessed Paul received the Holy Spirit and was renewed by Him, that he was deemed worthy of the mysteries of revelation; he began to contemplate through the spirit of revelation, took delight in this contemplation, heard ineffable words, beheld the highest nature, marveled at the visions of the heavenly powers, and took delight in the spiritual. And let it not be as the heretics (Euktitai) claim in their madness, that he attained this ascent of his own volition! The mind cannot ascend there at all. On the contrary, Paul was caught up in the spirit of revelation, as he himself wrote in his epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:2, 4), contrary to these vain people, who likened themselves to the holy Apostles and called the fantasies of their thoughts “spiritual contemplations.”

156. Regarding people who are filled with passions and engage in the study of the laws of the corporeal and incorporeal—and who, therefore, are no different from the sick who teach rules for maintaining health—one of the Saints wrote: “Blessed is Paul, when he learned of disciples who neglected the commandments and had not overcome their passions, yet longed for the bliss of contemplating the mysteries—a bliss possible only after purification from those passions—said to them: ‘First put off the old man of passions, and then desire to put on the new man, renewed by the knowledge of the mysteries in the likeness of the Creator; and do not desire my bliss or that of the other Apostles, which is actively perfected by grace; for “*God has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills*” (Rom. 9:18). For who can stand against Him, or resist His will?—God sometimes grants freely; at other times He requires deeds and purification, and only then sends the gift; and sometimes, even after deeds and purification, He does not grant it here, but reserves it to bestow the vision in its proper place.”

157. We find that He acts in this way even with regard to a gift lesser than this—that is, the forgiveness of sins. For He grants baptism freely and requires absolutely nothing except faith; but when it comes to repentance for sins after baptism, He does not forgive immediately, but requires labor, sorrow, grief, contrition, tears, and prolonged weeping—and only then does He forgive. He forgave the thief immediately

for a single confession spoken on the cross, and promised him the kingdom; but from the sinful woman, He also required faith and tears.

158. The soul that loves God finds rest in God and in Him alone. First, sever every external bond within yourself, and then you will be able to be united with God in your heart; for union with God is preceded by detachment from material things. Bread is given to an infant as food only after it has been nourished with milk: and a person who intends to prosper in the Divine must first detach himself from the world, just as an infant detaches itself from its mother's embrace and breasts. Physical labor precedes spiritual labor, just as the dust preceded the soul breathed into Adam. Whoever has not attained physical labor cannot possess spiritual labor either; for the latter is born of the former, just as an ear of grain springs from a bare wheat kernel. And whoever lacks spiritual labor is also deprived of spiritual gifts.

159. Just as sowing in tears is followed by harvests of joy, so too will suffering for God's sake be followed by joy. Bread earned by sweat tastes sweet to the farmer; so too are the deeds of righteousness sweet to the heart that has received Christ's knowledge. Endure humiliation and humility willingly, so that you may have boldness before God. A person of wisdom who endures every harsh word—even when he himself has done no wrong to the one who spoke it—is blessed, even though he thereby places a crown of thorns upon his own head, for he is crowned with an imperishable crown, though he himself does not know it.

160. Whoever, with discernment, flees from vain glory has sensed the age to come in his soul. Whoever seeks peace in this present life has already had his mind set on the age to come. But whoever is bound by greed is a slave to his passions. Do not think that the acquisition of gold and silver alone constitutes greed; it is the acquisition of anything at all—that to which your will is attached. Do not praise one who suffers physically yet gives free rein to the senses—by which I mean the ears, the gaping and unrestrained mouth, and the wandering eyes.

161. Know that forgiving the sins of debtors is an act of righteousness. Then you will see peace and clarity everywhere in your mind. If a merciful person does not rise above his own righteousness, then he is not merciful—that is, a truly merciful person not only gives alms to others from his own possessions but also joyfully endures injustice from others and shows them mercy. Whoever lays down his soul for his brother is merciful, not the one who shows mercy to his brother only through almsgiving. And the one who, if rebuked by his brother, does not have the audacity to respond and sadden his heart is also merciful.

162. Love the practice of vigil, so that you may find comfort in those close to your soul. Engage in reading in silence, so that your mind may always be lifted up to the wonders of God. Love poverty with patience, so that your mind may be gathered into one, free from distraction. Detest a life of luxury, so that your thoughts may remain serene. Refrain from many things, and care for your soul alone, so that you may save it from the dissipation of inner peace.

163. Love chastity, so that you may not be put to shame before God during your prayer. Acquire purity in your deeds, so that your soul may be illuminated in prayer, and the remembrance of death may kindle joy in your mind. Do not be lazy in your work, lest you be put to shame when you stand among your friends. Do not bind your freedom with what serves as pleasure, lest you become a slave to slaves. In your attire, love simple clothing, so that you may humble the thoughts arising within you—that is, the pride of the heart. Whoever loves splendor cannot attain freedom of thought; for the heart is inwardly shaped in the likeness of external images.

164. Humility is followed by self-restraint and moderation in all things. Humility, through constant self-restraint, attains contemplation and adorns the soul with chastity; but vanity, through the ceaseless turmoil and confusion of its own thoughts, gathers impure treasures from everything it encounters and defiles the heart. It gazes upon the nature of things with an unchaste gaze and occupies the mind with shameful images, while humility spiritually enriches itself through contemplation and inspires those who have attained it to give praise.

165. It is better for you to free yourself from the bonds of sin than to free slaves from bondage. It is better for you to be at peace with your own soul in the unity of the threefold nature within you—that is, body, soul, and spirit—than to pacify those of differing minds through your teaching. Gregory says: "It is good to engage in theology for God's sake, but it is better for a person to make himself pure for God." It is more beneficial for you to see to it that what has fallen in your soul due to passions is restored by directing your thoughts toward the Divine, rather than to raise the dead.

166. Throughout your life, wherever you may go, consider yourself a stranger, so that you may be able to rid yourself of the harm caused by carelessness in your conduct. Always bless with your lips, and no one will speak ill of you, for slander begets slander, and a blessing begets a blessing. In every matter, consider yourself lacking, so that you may learn—and throughout your life you will prove yourself wise. Do not tell another what you yourself have not experienced, lest you be ashamed of yourself, and lest your lies be exposed when your life is examined.

167. Be careful not to read heretical teachings, for this is most likely to stir up a spirit of blasphemy within you. Read frequently and insatiably the works of teachers on God's Providence, for they guide the mind to discern the order in God's creatures and works, strengthen it through their own wisdom, prepare it through their subtlety to acquire luminous thoughts, and ensure that it proceeds in purity toward an understanding of God's creatures. Read the Gospel, bequeathed by God for the knowledge of the entire universe, so that your mind may be immersed in God's wonders. Let your reading take place in a silence undisturbed by anything, and be free from excessive concern for the body and from the turmoil of daily life, so that you may experience in your soul, through sweet comprehension, the sweetest taste that surpasses every sensation, and so that your soul may experience this through its abiding in it.

168. Purify your soul; cast off concern for what lies outside your nature; drape a veil of chastity and humility over your thoughts and movements; and through this you will discover what lies within your nature, for to the humble the mysteries are revealed.

169. If you intend to devote your soul to the work of prayer, which purifies the mind, and to staying awake at night in order to attain a clear mind, then withdraw from the sight of the world, cease meeting with people, and do not receive in your cell, as is customary, friends—even under the pretense of benefit—except for those of like mind and spirit with you and your fellow ascetics; fear the disturbance of inner conversation, and after cutting off external conversation, combine your prayer with almsgiving, and your soul will behold the light of truth. For to the extent that the heart ceases to be troubled by external matters, to that same extent the mind can, through the comprehension of divine thoughts and deeds, attain to understanding and wonder. For the soul is quick to replace one conversation with another, if we take care to exercise a little diligence.

170. To replace one conversation with another (the vain one with the soul-saving one), devote yourself to reading Scripture and the lives of the saints. And when you set out to pray and follow your rule, instead of reflecting on what you have seen and heard in the world, you will find yourself reflecting on the divine Scriptures you have read; and through this reflection, your thoughts of worldly matters will fade away; and in this way, the mind is purified. And this is what is written—that reading helps the soul when it turns to prayer; and likewise: the soul is enlightened in reading through prayer. And reading, in turn, instead of external distractions, provides nourishment for various forms of prayer; therefore, through reading, the soul is enlightened so that it may always pray without laziness or distraction.

171. It is just as unseemly for those who are lustful and gluttonous to delve into spiritual matters as it is for a harlot to pontificate on chastity. A body that is extremely sickly cannot tolerate rich food; and a mind preoccupied with worldly things cannot approach the study of the Divine. Fire does not ignite in damp wood; nor is divine fervor kindled in a heart that loves tranquility. Just as one who has not seen the sun with his own eyes cannot describe its light to anyone based solely on hearsay—nor even perceive that light—so too is one who has not tasted the sweetness of spiritual matters with his soul.

172. If you have anything beyond your daily needs, give it to the poor, and go boldly to offer your prayers—that is, converse with God as a son with his Father. Nothing can draw the heart closer to God than almsgiving; and nothing produces such stillness in the soul as voluntary poverty. When you give, give generously, with a gentle expression on your face, and provide more than what is asked for. Do not try to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy; let all people be equal to you in doing good. For in this way you can draw even the unworthy to goodness, because the soul is quickly drawn to the fear of God through bodily means.

173. Cleanse your cell of excesses, for this will lead you to self-restraint, even if you do not wish it. Frugality in all things teaches a person self-restraint. Those who have triumphed in the external battle—that is, the battle waged against the soul by the senses—hearing, sight, and so on—need not fear the internal battle either. When a person closes the city gates—that is, the senses—he fights within and fears not those who plot evil outside the city. Blessed is the one who, knowing this, does not trouble himself with a multitude of tasks, but has turned all his bodily activity toward the labor of prayer.

174. While God is inwardly moving your heart to contrition, keep bowing and kneeling without ceasing. Do not allow your heart to be preoccupied with anything else if, at that moment, the demons begin to persuade you to attend to other matters; and then watch and marvel at what will come of it for you. Nothing else in the struggles of asceticism is as important or as difficult, nor arouses such envy in the demons, as when someone prostrates himself before the cross of Christ, praying day and night, as if with his hands bound behind his back. If you wish to keep your zeal from cooling and your tears from drying up, devote yourself to this, and blessed are you if you attend to what has been said to you day and night and seek nothing else. If you do not strive, you will not attain it; and if you do not knock fervently at the door and remain in vigil before it unceasingly, you will not be heard.

175. Until the outer man dies to all worldly things—not only to sin but also to every deed—and likewise the inner man dies to wicked thoughts, and until the natural movements of the body are subdued to the point that no sinful sweetness is stirred up in the heart, until then the sweetness of the Spirit of God will not be stirred up in man; his members will not attain purity in this life, divine thoughts will not enter his soul, and they will remain imperceptible and invisible. – And until a person, in his heart, sets aside concern for worldly matters—except for the necessary needs of the flesh—and leaves the care of these things to God, spiritual rapture will not be aroused within him.

176. Whoever keeps in mind, with conviction and feeling, the equality to which the common end of all leads, needs no other Teacher to renounce worldly life. Whoever does not voluntarily distance himself from the causes of passion is unwittingly drawn into sin. The causes of sin are as follows: wine, women, wealth, and physical health; not, however, because these are sins by their very nature, but because human nature is easily led by them into sinful passions, and therefore a person must be carefully on guard against this. People abhor poverty, but to God, a haughty soul and a lofty mind are far more abhorrent. People hold wealth in high esteem; but to God, a humble soul is honorable.

177. If you wish to begin doing good, prepare yourself first for the temptations that will assail you. For it is the enemy's custom—when he sees that someone has begun a virtuous life with fervent faith—to confront that person with various terrible temptations, so that, overcome by fear, he may grow cold in his good resolve and no longer have the zeal to pursue deeds pleasing to God. Therefore, prepare yourself courageously to face the temptations that assail virtue, and only then begin to practice them.

178. God's commandments are greater than all the treasures of the world. Whoever has acquired them finds God within himself. Whoever always rests in God's care has found God as his guardian. Whoever desires to fulfill God's will will have the heavenly angels as his guides. Whoever fears sin will complete the dreadful journey without stumbling, and in the midst of darkness will find light both before him and within himself. The Lord guards the footsteps of those who fear sin, and when temptation arises, God's mercy precedes them. Whoever considers his transgressions to be minor falls into a state worse than before and suffers sevenfold punishment.

179. Sow alms in humility, and you will reap mercy at the judgment. Whatever good you have destroyed, acquire it anew. If you have destroyed chastity, God will not accept alms from you if you remain in fornication; for He desires the holiness of your body. And every ailment is healed by its proper remedy. You have been overcome by envy; why then do you strive to fight against sleep (rather than against envy)?

180. While a transgression is still small and has not yet matured, root it out before it spreads its branches far and wide and begins to bear fruit. Do not give in to negligence while the fault still seems small to you; for later you will find in it a ruthless master and flee from it like a slave or a prisoner. But whoever resists a passion from the beginning will soon gain mastery over it.

181. Whoever can joyfully endure an insult, even while having the means to repel it, has received comfort from God through faith in Him. And whoever humbly endures the accusations leveled against him has attained perfection, and the Holy Angels marvel at him. For no other virtue is so lofty and so difficult to practice.

182. Do not trust yourself to be strong until you are tempted—and find yourself unchanged. Do not rely on your own strength, lest you be allowed to fall through weakness; and then, through your own fall, you will come to know your weakness. Do not trust your knowledge, lest the enemy, stepping in, catch you with his cunning. Never boast in your speech of your deeds, lest you be put to shame. In whatever a person boasts, God allows him to be changed so that he may be humbled and learn humility.

183. Lift your eyes ceaselessly to God; for God's Protection and Providence encompass all people, but He is invisible and reveals Himself only to those who have purified themselves of sins and who always think of God—and of Him alone. God's Providence is revealed to them especially when, for God's sake, they enter into temptation. For then they perceive God's Providence as if beholding Him with their physical eyes, in accordance with the measure and cause of the temptation that befalls each of them, so as to inspire these ascetics to courage, as was the case with Jacob, Joshua, the three youths, Peter, and the other saints, to whom Providence appeared in some human form, encouraging and strengthening them in piety.

184. Need we even speak of the ascetics, strangers to the world, and of the hermits? They turned the desert into a city, transforming it into a settlement and dwelling place of the angels. Angels always came to them because of the righteousness of their lives, and as warriors of the one Lord, they sometimes fought alongside one another. They loved the desert all the days of their lives, and out of love for God, they made their homes in the mountains, caves, and chasms of the earth. Since they had forsaken the earthly to love the heavenly and had become imitators of the angels, the holy angels themselves, in justice, did not hide their presence from them, but fulfilled their every desire and provided them with every kind of help in all things.

185. Whoever has dedicated himself to God once and for all spends his life in peace of mind. Without detachment, the soul cannot free itself from the turmoil of thoughts—and without bringing the senses to stillness, it will not experience peace in thought. Without facing temptations, no one will acquire spiritual wisdom. Without diligent reading, one cannot discern the subtleties of thought. Without stillness of thought, the mind will not penetrate the innermost mysteries. Without hope in faith, the soul cannot boldly face temptations. Without experiencing God's manifest protection, the heart is unable to hope in God. If the soul does not consciously partake of Christ's sufferings, it will have no communion with Christ.

186. Whoever shows mercy to a beggar has God as his guardian, and whoever becomes poor for God's sake will find treasures that never run dry. God lacks nothing, but He rejoices when He sees that a person honors His image and reveres it for His sake. When someone asks you for what you have, do not say in your heart, "I will keep this for myself so that I may find rest in it, and God will provide what this person needs from somewhere else." Such thoughts are fitting for the unrighteous and those who do not know God. A righteous and good person will not give his honor to another, nor will he allow the time of grace to pass in idleness. A poor and needy person is provided for by God, for the Lord forsakes no one; but you, by sending the poor person away, have turned away from the honor given to you by God and have removed His grace from yourself. Therefore, when you give, rejoice and say, "Glory to You, O God, for making me worthy to find someone to comfort." But if you have nothing to give, rejoice all the more and, giving thanks to God, say: "I thank You, my God, that You have given me this grace and honor—to become destitute for Your name's sake—and have deemed me worthy to taste the afflictions laid upon the path of Your commandments, in sickness and poverty, just as Your saints who walked this path have tasted them."

187. Our nature has become prone to passions; there are many temptations in this world; evil is not far from you—it springs up within you and lies at your feet. Just as the ages are close to one another before our eyes, so are temptations close to people; and God has wisely arranged this for your benefit, so that you may constantly knock at His door, so that the fear of affliction may instill remembrance of Him in your mind, so that you may draw near to Him in prayer, and your heart may be sanctified by unceasing remembrance of Him. God did not create you immune to sorrow, lest you, desiring to be a god, should inherit the same fate as the one who was originally a cherub but later, through pride, became Satan; nor did He create you unchanging and immovable, lest you become like the nature of inanimate creatures.

188. Constantly purify yourself before God, keeping Him in remembrance in your heart, so that, having remained long without remembering Him, you may not find yourself lacking boldness when you come to Him. For boldness before God comes from frequent communion with Him and much prayer. Communion with people takes place through the body, but communion with God takes place through the soul's remembrance of Him, attention to Him in prayer, and complete surrender to Him. By maintaining remembrance of God over the long term, the soul is at times filled with wonder and amazement. "*Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord,*" you who are condemned, "*and be established*" in hope; "*seek His face*" through repentance (Ps. 104:3, 4)—and be sanctified by the holiness of His face and cleansed of your sins.

189. When temptation befalls the unrighteous, he has no hope to call upon God and expect salvation from Him; for in the days of his rest he strayed from God's will. Before sorrow befalls you, pray to God; and in the time of distress you will find Him—and He will hear you. Noah's ark was prepared in times of peace;

its timbers were hewn over the course of a hundred years, and in the time of wrath the unrighteous perished, while it became a refuge for the righteous.

190. In those in whom peace is dead, insults are borne with joy; but in those in whom peace is alive, insults cannot be borne; rather, driven by vanity, they become angry, and through unwise actions fall into confusion or are overcome by sorrow. Whoever wishes to excel in the virtues of patience in the face of insults and magnanimity must withdraw from his kin and become a wanderer; for it is impossible to excel in this virtue in one's homeland. Only the great and the strong are capable of enduring such sufferings among their own kin—and this is possible only for those in whom this world has died; for they no longer expect any consolation in this present age.

191. Just as grace is close to humility, so are painful trials close to pride. The eyes of the Lord are upon the humble, to gladden them; but the face of the Lord is against the proud, to humble them. Be one who is easily overlooked in your greatness, rather than one who boasts in your smallness. Whoever pursues honor, it flees from him; but whoever flees from honor, it pursues him from behind. Whoever hungers and thirsts for God's sake, God will satisfy him with His blessings. Whoever endures nakedness for God's sake, He will clothe him in a garment of incorruption and glory. Whoever becomes impoverished for God's sake is comforted by His true riches. Acknowledge yourself a sinner throughout your life, so that you may be justified throughout your life. Associate with the humble, and you will learn their ways. Let it always be your habit to be gracious and respectful toward everyone.

192. For the soul's benefit, God has permitted it to be subject to the passions; yet He did not deem it beneficial to place it above the passions before the second life. — And for the soul to be subject to the passions is beneficial for the pricking of the conscience; but to remain in the passions is brazen and shameless. Just as gluttony gives rise to turmoil of thought, so too do verbosity and disorderly conversations lead to senselessness and the mind straying from its proper order. Concern for worldly matters throws the soul into confusion, and being troubled by them disturbs the mind and robs it of peace. A monk who has devoted himself to heavenly pursuits ought always to be free from all worldly cares, so that, having withdrawn into himself, he may find nothing at all that belongs to this present age. Having been freed from all such things, he may then, without distraction, study the law of the Lord day and night.

193. Physical labor without purity of mind is like a barren womb and withered breasts; for it cannot draw near to the knowledge of God. They weary the body but do not bother to root out the passions of the mind; and therefore they reap nothing. Just as one who sows among thorns can reap nothing, so one who destroys himself with resentment and greed can succeed in nothing, but groans on his bed from insomnia due to the worries about his affairs that oppress him.

194. If the soul is illuminated by the remembrance of God and by unceasing vigilance day and night, then the Lord establishes there (within) a cloud to protect it, sheltering it by day and illuminating its night with a fiery light; in its darkness, light shines forth.

195. Just as a cloud obscures the light of the moon, so the vapors of a full belly drive God's Wisdom from the soul. Just as a fiery flame burns in dry wood, so does the body when the belly is full. Just as one combustible substance, when applied to another, increases the fiery flame, so the variety of bodily desires increases lustful movements in the body. Divine knowledge does not dwell in a body given over to sensual pleasure; and whoever loves his body will not attain God's grace. Just as in the pains of childbirth a child is born who brings joy to the mother, so too, when the throat is afflicted, the fruit of the knowledge of God's mysteries is born in the soul. Just as a father cares for his children, so Christ cares for the body that suffers for His sake—and is always near His lips.

196. A pilgrim is one whose thoughts have transcended all worldly things. A monk is one who dwells apart from the world and always prays to God to grant him future blessings. A monk's wealth is the consolation found in weeping and the joy of faith that shines in the recesses of the mind. A virgin is one who has not only kept his body undefiled by carnal union but is ashamed even of the slightest reminder of it. If you love chastity, drive away shameful thoughts by practicing reading and persistent prayer; and then you will have a weapon against the natural impulses toward such things; and without this, it is impossible to see purity in the soul.

197. If you are truly merciful, then when what is rightfully yours is taken from you, do not grieve inwardly, and do not speak of the loss to outsiders. Let the harm inflicted by those who have wronged you be absorbed by your mercy, just as the bitterness of wine is absorbed by an abundance of water. Demonstrate the

abundance of your mercy through the good deeds you bestow upon those who have wronged you, just as the blessed Elisha did toward his enemies, who intended to take him captive (2 Kings 6:13–23).

198. Whoever is truly humble and wise, when falsely accused, does not become indignant and says nothing in his own defense regarding the matter in which he is falsely accused, but accepts slander as the truth and does not try to convince people that he has been slandered, but asks for forgiveness. Some willingly brought upon themselves the label of immoral people, though they were not such; while others endured being called adulterers, though they were far from adultery, and with tears bore witness that they bore the fruit of a sin they had not committed, and wept as they asked forgiveness from those who had wronged them for a transgression they had not committed, even as their souls were crowned with every purity and blamelessness. Still others, so that they might not be praised for the excellent rules of life they observed in secret, presented themselves as holy fools, having been dissolved by the Divine salt; they were unshakable in their silence, so that at the height of their perfection, the Holy Angels served as heralds of their virtues.

199. The Savior referred to the various degrees of intellect among those dwelling in that realm as “many dwellings” with the Father—that is, the distinctions and differences in spiritual gifts of which they enjoy according to their intellect. For He called them “many dwellings” not because of differences in location, but according to the degree of their gifts. Just as each person enjoys the visible sun in accordance with the purity and receptivity of their eyesight, and just as the illumination from a single lamp in a single house varies, even though the light is not divided into many separate lights, so in the age to come all the righteous will dwell undividedly in one land, but each will be illuminated in his own measure by one spiritual Sun, and according to his own merit will draw to himself joy and gladness, as it were from one atmosphere, from one place, throne, spectacle, and image. – And no one sees the measure of another’s grace, whether higher or lower, so that, if he were to see another’s superior grace and his own lack, it would not be a cause of sorrow and grief for him. There, everyone, according to the grace given to him, rejoices inwardly in his own measure. Outside of all this, there is a single spectacle and a single realm—and apart from these two degrees, I mean one heavenly realm and one earthly realm, with diversity in the variety of rewards between them.

200. When the devil wishes to defile the mind with a lustful thought, he first tests their patience through their love of vanity, and the onset of this thought does not appear to be a passion. This is how he usually proceeds with those who guard their minds, into whom it is impossible to quickly implant any indecent thought. But when he tears a person away from his stronghold and the person begins to dwell on the first thought and stray from his stronghold, then the devil confronts him with something reminiscent of fornication and leads the mind astray toward indecent objects. At first, the mind is confused by the sudden influx of these thoughts—and then comes to terms with them—and proceeds from thought to action. But if the mind draws back and forestalls the first influx of thoughts, then, with God’s help, it can easily overcome the passion.

201. It is better to ward off passions by remembering virtues than by resisting them, because when passions step outside their proper sphere and rise up to battle, they imprint their images and likenesses on the mind. This battle gains great power over the mind, greatly disturbing and throwing thoughts into confusion. But if one follows the first rule we have mentioned, not even a trace of the passions remains in the mind once they have been driven away.

202. Until a person receives the Comforter, he needs the Divine Scriptures so that the remembrance of what is good may be imprinted on his mind, and so that, through constant reading, his inclination toward the good may be renewed within him and his soul protected from the subtleties of sinful ways: for he has not yet acquired the power of the Spirit, which dispels delusion and captures thoughts that are beneficial to the soul. When the power of the Spirit descends into the soul’s power active within a person, then the commandments of the Spirit take root in the heart in place of the law of the Scriptures, and then he is secretly taught by the Spirit and has no need for the aid of sensory matter; for as long as the heart learns from matter, delusion and forgetfulness immediately follow instruction; but when teaching is imparted by the Spirit, then the remembrance remains intact.

203. A fledgling bird is that mind which, through repentance, has recently emerged from the bonds of the passions, and during prayer strives to rise above the earthly, but cannot; on the contrary, it still crawls upon the face of the earth, lacking the strength to fly. However, through reading, good works, fear of God, and concern for many virtues, it gathers its thoughts into unity; for it is incapable of knowing anything beyond this. And this keeps the mind unstained for a short time; but later, memories return, and they disturb and defile the heart; because man has not yet experienced that serene atmosphere of freedom into which, only after a

long time, by forgetting the earthly, he leads his mind; for he has acquired only bodily wings—that is, virtues that are performed outwardly—but has not yet seen the contemplative virtues, nor has he been deemed worthy to experience them; and these are the wings of the mind upon which a person draws near to the heavenly and departs from the earthly.

204. As long as a person serves the Lord with anything sensory, the images of that which is sensory are imprinted in his thoughts, and he conceives of the Divine in bodily images. But when he attains an inner perception, then, to the extent of that perception, his mind will, from time to time, rise above the images of things.

205. When your soul draws near to emerging from darkness, this will be the sign for you: your heart burns within you and blazes like fire day and night; and therefore you regard the whole world as dust and ashes, desiring not even food, because of the sweetness of new, fiery thoughts that are constantly stirring within your soul. Suddenly a fountain of tears is given to you, like a stream flowing of its own accord, mingling with all your activities—that is, during your reading, your prayer, and your meditation, when you eat and drink, and in all your affairs. And when you see this in your soul, take heart, for you have crossed the sea; and be so diligent in your affairs, and keep such careful watch, that grace may increase in you day by day. But until you find this within yourself, you have not yet completed your journey, nor have you entered the mountain of God. And if, even after you have found and received the grace of tears, they cease, and your fervor cools without any other change—that is, without bodily infirmity—then woe to you! What have you ruined by falling into either pride, indifference, or sloth?!—But we will write later about what follows the tears.

206. If you have no work to do, do not speak of virtues. More precious before God than any prayer or sacrifice are sorrows for Him and for His sake; and more fragrant than all incense is the scent of their sweat. Consider every virtue accomplished without physical labor to be a premature and lifeless fruit of the womb. The offerings of the righteous are the tears of their eyes, and the sacrifice pleasing to God is their sighs during their vigils. The righteous and those oppressed by the burden of the body will cry out to the Lord, and in sickness they will send up prayers to God; and at the cry of their voice, the Holy Orders will come to their aid to encourage and comfort them with hope; for the Holy Angels, by virtue of their closeness to the holy men, share in their sufferings and sorrows.

207. Wine warms the body, but the Word of God warms the mind. Those inflamed with fervor are inspired by thoughts of what they hope for and direct their minds toward the age to come. Those intoxicated by wine do not see the obstacles before them; so those intoxicated by hope know neither sorrow nor anything of this world. Blessed are those who, for the sea of sorrows and for the sake of love for God, have girded their loins with simplicity and an unquestioning disposition, and do not turn back. Those who set out on a difficult path with hope do not turn back, nor do they pause to ponder the nature of this journey. But when they have crossed the sea, then, looking back on the difficulty of the path, they give thanks to God for delivering them from the straits, the rapids, and the roughness of the journey—even though they were unaware of it at the time. Hope, setting out on a voyage, sails on with initial fervor, paying no heed whatsoever to the body and not pondering within itself whether the undertaking will be successful or not. When you wish to begin a work for God, first make a will, as one who will no longer live in this world, as one prepared for death and having despaired of this present life, as one whose time has come to an end. Begin every good work with courage, and do not approach such works with a double mind; do not waver in your heart as you trust in God, lest your labor become fruitless and your work a burden.

208. The deeds of those who live according to God are as follows: One spends an entire day striking his head against the ground, doing so in place of performing the divine services, that is, the hours. Another combines a series of prayers with constant and prolonged kneeling. Yet another substitutes God's services for himself with a multitude of tears and is content with that. Another strives to grasp the meaning of what is being read and combines this with a specific rule. Another torments his soul with hunger, so that he is unable to perform the divine services. Another, immersed in fervent meditation on the Psalms, makes his service unceasing. Another spends his time reading, and his heart is warmed. Another becomes absorbed, pondering the divine meaning in the Holy Scriptures. Another, astonished by the wonders that strike him in the verses, is held back from his usual reading and is overcome by silence. Another, having tasted all this and been satisfied, turned back and became inactive. Another, having tasted only a little and become conceited, fell into error. One was prevented from keeping his rule by a serious illness and weakness; another—by the dominance

of some habit, or some desire, or self-will, or vanity, or greed, or a passion for accumulating material possessions. Still others stumbled but rose again, and did not turn their backs until they had obtained the precious pearl.

209. The beginning of everything is a good intention before God (the resolve to please God). Following this, after withdrawing from worldly affairs, come: fasting, reading, all-night and sober vigils—according to each person’s strength—and many prostrations, which are beneficial to perform during the day and often at night as well. Let your very minimum be to make thirty prostrations—then bow before the Holy Cross and end there. But there are also those who, to the best of their ability, increase this number of prostrations. Others, meanwhile, spend three hours in a single prayer, keeping their minds clear, and prostrating themselves face down on the ground without compulsion or wandering thoughts (that is, some pray frequently but in short intervals; while others pray only once but remain in prayer for a long time).

210. Our adversary, the devil, has an ancient custom of cunningly varying his struggle against those who undertake this ascetic endeavor. Employing various weapons against them and adapting to the person’s intentions, he alters his method of combat. *The first tactic of the enemy’s battle.* – Those who are lazy by choice and weak in thought, he attacks fiercely from the very beginning, setting strong temptations against them, so that fear might seize them from the very first endeavor, and their path might seem cruel and impassable to them—and they might say: “If the beginning of the path is so arduous and difficult, can anyone endure it to the very end, with the many struggles that lie ahead?” And the devil does not wage battle against them for long—but soon puts them to flight. This is because they embarked on the Lord’s endeavor with doubt and indifference. But God commands us to undertake this struggle with a willingness to die for His sake, promising to crown the faithful laborer with the honor of martyrdom. Since they did not resolve at the outset to give themselves up to death, they prove to be so weak. That is why they are no longer steadfast in any battle, being self-centered and, above all, sparing their bodies. And the enemy drives them away like a storm, seeing in them none of the spiritual strength one usually sees in the saints. It is by a person’s own will that he strives toward God, and God cooperates, helps, and reveals to him His providence concerning him. And the devil cannot approach a person or tempt him unless the person gives him an opening or God permits it.

211. The second method. – As for those whom the devil sees as courageous, who regard death as nothing, and who set out to do their work with great zeal, the devil does not immediately confront them, nor does he engage them in battle at their first advance, knowing that zealous warriors are not easily defeated. Therefore, as long as he sees them in this state, he does not even dare to touch them until he sees—that their zeal has cooled, and that the weapons they had prepared in their minds have been laid aside through their abandonment of the divine words and remembrances that aid and assist them. As soon as they begin to stray from their original thoughts and, of their own accord, begin to devise what serves to overcome them, through the flattery of their own reasoning, which wears them down from within, and they themselves will dig for their souls a pit of destruction through the idleness-induced drifting of their thoughts—from which coldness reigns in their minds and hearts—then he will mercilessly rush upon them. The devil has refrained from attacking them until now because a certain power surrounds those who, with ardent zeal, strive toward God, hope in Him, and believe in Him. For this reason, God wards off from them the ferocity of the devil’s malice, and it does not come near them. The enemy is restrained when he sees the Guardian who always protects them. For as long as they do not cast aside the means of help—prayers and the labors of humility—the Intercessor and Helper never departs from them.

212. Remember, then, as you follow in God’s footsteps, at every moment of your struggle, the beginning and the initial zeal you felt when you first set out on this path, and those fiery thoughts with which you first left your home and joined the ranks of the soldiers. Test yourself every day, so that the fervor of your soul may not grow cold in any of the roles you have taken on, nor in the zeal that burned within you at the beginning of your endeavor. And ceaselessly raise your voice throughout the military camp, encouraging and inspiring the sons of this land to courage, while showing the enemy’s side that you remain sober-minded. At the same time, call upon God with confidence, weep before His goodness, shed tears, and labor until He sends you a Helper. And then you will no longer be defeated.

213. The third tactic of the enemy’s battle. — When the enemy sees the strength that a person receives from God through his zeal and his faithful invocation of Him, he then tries to find some way to drive away the angel who is helping him, —namely, by attempting to stir up thoughts of pride within him, so that he might think to himself that all his strength depends on his own power, and that he himself, by his own strength,

protects himself from his adversary and his slayer. Whoever believes such thoughts, instilled by the enemy, will have God's help depart from him—and he will fall into the enemy's hands. But whoever does not yield to these suggestions, but firmly holds fast to the memory of the One who assists him, and never ceases to direct the eye of his heart toward heaven—against such a one the enemy devises new methods of warfare.

214. *The fourth tactic of the enemy's warfare* consists in oppressing a person through his natural needs (especially the need for a wife and the need for a livelihood). (Regarding a wife.) Although he cannot force a person to commit such an act, because the person is protected by silence and his dwelling is far from the occasions and causes of sin, he nevertheless strives to make the minds of the ascetics see this as a phantom and tries to instill in them false dreams under the guise of truth. At the same time, so that they may come to desire what they dream of, he stirs up their desires and prompts them to dwell on shameful thoughts, to consent to them, and to become guilty of them. For the enemy knows that for the ascetic, victory and triumph over him are brought about by his own thoughts and are accomplished in a brief moment—as soon as a thought moves from its place and descends from its height to earth, and the will, for a single moment, shows its consent,—just as happened to many when they fantasized about feminine beauty. If, however, they were one or two steps away from the world, the enemy would often resort to actually bringing women to them. Through this and similar means, the enemy sometimes triumphed over the careless and those whose hearts were not strong. But others proved stronger than these temptations, and, aided by God's grace, they overcame the enemy and his delusions. (Regarding the second temptation). The enemy also often caused them to see, in their dreams, gold, precious objects, and other treasures; and sometimes he actually showed them these things in the hope that, perhaps, he might succeed in halting one of them in his progress through such fantasies and ensnare him in one of his nets and traps. This is allowed to happen so that it may be tested whether, when these things are removed during their life of seclusion, amid their deprivation and poverty, they are truly God-loving; and whether, when confronted with these things, they strive, out of love for God, to disregard them, and—even when tempted by them—do not allow them to gain the upper hand, regarding them as nothing in comparison with the love of God. True ascetics do not yield, and after the trial they are found purified, like gold in a crucible; but the careless and the weak are overcome even by a slight hardship in times of want and turn back, renouncing the ascetic life.

215. As soon as someone recognizes his own weakness and truly feels it, he immediately rouses his soul from lethargy and arms himself with caution. But no one can perceive his own weakness unless at least a small temptation—whether physical or spiritual—is allowed to come upon him, and he is granted deliverance from it. For then he will clearly see the futility of his own efforts and measures—he will see that his caution, self-restraint, and the safeguards for his soul, in which he hoped to find safety, were of no use whatsoever, and that deliverance came apart from all of that. From this he gains the certainty that he himself is nothing, and that only God's help saves. Whoever has come to realize that he needs God's help offers up many prayers. And to the extent that he multiplies them, so his heart is humbled. For anyone who prays and asks cannot help but be humbled. *"A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise"* (Ps. 50:19). As soon as a person humbles himself, God's mercy immediately surrounds him. And then the heart senses divine help and finds within itself a certain strength of confidence (in God). And when a person feels that God's help truly sustains him, then his heart is truly filled with faith. From this, he comes to understand that prayer is a refuge for those seeking help, a source of salvation, a treasure of hope, a harbor that saves from turmoil, a support for the weak, a covering in times of temptation, a shield of deliverance in battle, a sharp arrow against enemies—and it becomes clear to him that the whole multitude of spiritual blessings is made accessible to him through prayer. From this point on, he begins to delight in the prayer of faith; he no longer prays with toil and weariness, but with heartfelt joy and wonder, ceaselessly pouring out expressions of gratitude, with countless acts of kneeling.

216. Driven by a great desire for God's help, a person draws near to God while abiding in prayer. But to the extent that he draws near to God with his intention, to that same extent does God draw near to him with His gifts, and does not withhold grace from him because of his great humility. Sometimes, however, the generous God withholds the gifts of grace from him, so that this may serve as an incentive for him to draw near to God, and so that, because of his need, a person may remain constantly before God, ready to receive what is for his benefit. God grants some requests quickly—namely, those without which no one can be saved—while He delays granting others. In some circumstances, He repels and dispels the enemy's scorching power from him, while in others He allows him to fall into temptation so that this trial may serve as a reason for him to draw near to God—and so that he may learn to be seasoned in temptation, and, having before his eyes the

proof of his own weakness, may be increasingly established in humility. For the righteous person who has not recognized his own weakness, his deeds are as if on the edge of a razor—and he is not far from falling and from the destructive lion of pride. Whoever does not know his own weakness lacks humility; and whoever lacks it has not yet attained perfection; and whoever has not attained it always lives in fear; for his city is not founded on pillars of iron and thresholds of bronze—that is, on humility. Without humility, a person’s work (the work he seeks) cannot be perfected, and the seal of the Spirit has not yet been affixed to the scroll of his freedom—until then, he remains a slave, and his work is not free from fear.

217. Therefore, the Lord leaves His saints with reasons for humility and a contrite heart in fervent prayer, so that those who love Him may draw near to Him through humility. And He often terrifies them with the passions of their nature and the inclinations of shameful and impure thoughts, and frequently with reproaches, insults, and taunts from people; sometimes with physical illnesses and ailments; at other times, by poverty and a lack of basic necessities, or by the torment of intense fear, abandonment, the devil’s open attacks, and various terrifying events. And all this is so that they may have reasons for humility and so that they do not fall into the slumber of indifference.

218. When it happens that your soul is filled with darkness within, and just as the sun’s rays are obscured on earth by a mist of clouds, your soul is deprived of spiritual consolation for a time, and the light of grace within dims—because a cloud of passions overshadows your soul, and because the joy-giving power within you is somewhat diminished, and an unusual gloom has cast a shadow over your mind— Do not be troubled by this thought, but be patient—read the books of the teachers, compel yourself to pray—and wait for help. It will come soon, without you even realizing it. For just as the face of the earth is revealed by the sun’s rays from the darkness of the air that envelops the earth, so prayer can dispel and scatter the clouds of passion in the soul, and illuminate the mind with the light of joy and comfort.

219. Until you have reached the realm of tears, your inner self still serves the world—that is, you still lead a worldly life, and you still do God’s work with your outer self, while your inner self remains barren; for its fruit begins with tears. When you reach the realm of tears, then know that your mind has emerged from the dungeon of this world, has set its foot on the path of the new age, and has begun to breathe in the fragrance of a wondrous new air. Tears begin to flow because the birth of the spiritual infant is at hand. Grace, the mother of all, mysteriously desires to bring forth the Divine Image into the light of the age to come. But this kind of weeping is not the same as that which occurs intermittently among those who observe silence (sometimes during contemplation, sometimes while reading, sometimes during prayer). I am not speaking of this kind *of weeping*, but of the kind that occurs *unceasingly, day and night*. The eyes of one who has attained this state resemble a spring of water *for two or more years*, and then he comes to a stilling of his thoughts. And upon the stilling of the thoughts, to the extent that nature allows, one enters “*that rest*” of which St. Paul spoke (Heb. 4:3). And through this peaceful repose, the mind begins *to contemplate the mysteries*. Then the Holy Spirit begins to reveal heavenly things to him—and *God dwells within him*, and raises up in him the fruit of the Spirit. But listen further: when you enter the realm of the stilling of thoughts, then a flood of tears will be taken from you—and tears will come to you in moderation, and at the proper time.

220. There are three stages in which a person progresses: the stage of beginners, the middle stage, and the stage of the perfected. Those in *the first stage* have a disposition of thought inclined toward goodness, yet their minds are still swayed by passions. *The second stage* is a middle ground between a state of passion and a state of dispassion, where both good and evil thoughts arise equally within a person, and he ceaselessly emits both light and darkness. Moreover, if he ceases—even for a short time—to read the Divine Scriptures frequently and to form divine mental images in his mind, while maintaining caution in outward conduct—from which inner preservation arises—then a person is drawn into passions. But if he nourishes his zeal for the spiritual in the manner described, —seeking, striving, nourishing good thoughts through the reading of the Scriptures and keeping them from straying into the realm of the flesh, lovingly guarding his soul, and clinging to God with patience in tireless prayer—then God will finally open His door to him, especially because of his humility; for the revelation of mysteries comes to the humble-minded (and this is *the third order*).

221. Hope in God is preceded by labor for God and the sweat shed in one’s work. If you believe in God, you are doing well. But faith requires deeds, and hope in God is revealed in suffering for the sake of virtue. Do you believe that God cares for His creatures and is all-powerful? Then let your faith be accompanied by fitting deeds; and then God will hear you. Do not try to hold the wind in your hand—that is, faith without deeds. Often, a person, unaware, walks a path where there is a wild beast, or murderers, or something similar;

and then God's providential care saves him from harm, or slows the traveler's progress in some way until the wild beast has moved aside, or causes him to turn aside from the path by some encounter. Sometimes a wicked serpent lies on the path, unseen; but God, not wishing to expose a person to that temptation, causes the serpent to suddenly hiss—it stirs from its place and crawls ahead of the traveler, who, upon seeing it, takes precautions and is saved. It often happens that a house, a wall, or a stone falls—and someone is sitting there—and God, in His love for humanity, commands an angel to hold back the falling object until those sitting there have moved away or been called away; and as soon as they have moved away, He immediately allows the falling object to fall. All this and the like are the work of God's general and universal Providence; but the righteous person is subject to a special, unceasing providence. God has commanded other people to manage their affairs prudently and, with God's providence, to make use of their own wisdom; but the righteous person, instead of wisdom, has acquired faith, by which he fears nothing, but *"walks confidently like a lion"* (Prov. 28:1). And just as his constant care is devoted to God, so God says of him: *"I am with him in his affliction; I will deliver him and honor him; I will satisfy him with long life and show him My salvation"* (Ps. 90:15–16). One who is lax and lazy in his work cannot have such hope. But whoever abides with God in all things, draws near to Him through the goodness of his deeds, and ceaselessly directs the eyes of his heart toward His grace—such a one may say of himself what the divine David said: *"My eyes have grown dim, for I have set my hope on my God"* (Ps. 68: 4).

222. When we seek to flee from the world, nothing separates us from it so much, puts our passions to death within us, and quickens us for the spiritual life as much as weeping and heartfelt, reasoned sorrow. But likewise, nothing makes us such accomplices of the world and distances us so much from the treasures of Wisdom and the knowledge of God's mysteries as frivolity and, in our carefree conduct, the flight of our thoughts. – And this is the work of the wayward demon. I therefore implore you with love to guard against the enemy's malice, lest he, through idle talk, cool the fervor of your love for Christ in your soul—He who tasted gall on the cross for your sake—and lest the enemy, instead of that sweet exercise and boldness before God, does not, while you are awake, fill your soul with many dreams, nor, while you sleep, ensnare it with absurd visions, the stench of which the angels cannot bear. Compel yourself to imitate the humility of Christ, so that the fire kindled within you by Him may blaze up more quickly— —a fire that uproots all the movements of the world that slay the new man and defile the courts of the Holy and Almighty Lord. For I dare to say with St. Paul that we are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16). Therefore, just as God Himself is pure, let us purify His temple, so that He may desire to dwell in it. And just as He Himself is holy, let us sanctify His temple; let us adorn it with every good and honorable deed, and perfume it with the fragrance of the peace of God's will, through pure and heartfelt prayer. Then the cloud of His glory will overshadow the soul, and the light of His majesty will shine within the heart.

223. A man who is preoccupied with many cares cannot be silent; for a multitude of tasks disrupt his stillness and silence, even if he does not wish it. A monk must place himself before the face of God and always lift his eyes to God, if he truly wishes to guard his mind, to ward off foreign impulses that creep into it, and, in the stillness of his thoughts, to discern what enters and what departs. Do not seek light in your soul without freedom from cares, nor silence and stillness while your senses are unrestrained. Without ceaseless prayer, it is impossible to draw near to God. Moreover, after the labor of prayer, imposing new concerns upon the mind leads to a scattering of thoughts. Tears, striking one's chest during prayer, and ardent zeal to continue praying awaken in the heart the fervor of the sweetness of tears, and the heart soars toward God with praiseworthy rapture, crying out: *"My soul longs for You, O God, the strong and living God: when shall I come and appear before Your face?"* (Ps. 41:3).—Whoever has tasted this wine and then been deprived of it knows alone in what pitiful state he is left, and what has been taken from him because of his slackness.

224. How harmful are meetings with people and conversations with them for those who live in silence! – Just as a heavy hailstorm, suddenly falling upon the fruits of the trees, beats them down and destroys them, so too do meetings with people—even if only brief—beat down the flowers of virtue that have just blossomed and luxuriously crowned the stem of the soul, planted by the streams of the waters of repentance (Ps. 1: 3). Just as a heavy frost, covering the greenery that has barely emerged from the earth, scorches it, so too does meeting with people scorch the root of the mind, which has begun to produce the grain of virtue. Just as a noble and respectable person, when intoxicated, forgets his nobility and becomes a laughingstock because of the foreign thoughts brought on by wine, so too is the chastity of the soul disturbed by the sight of people and

conversation with them: —a person forgets his caution; the resolve of his will is erased from his thoughts, and the foundation for a praiseworthy way of life is uprooted.

225. Do not think, O man, that there is any practice in the entire monastic life more important than the night vigil. Through it, if the ascetic is not distracted by bodily affairs or concern for the transitory, his mind will, in a short time, soar upward as if on wings and rise to the delight of God. If a monk abides in mental vigilance with discernment, you will see him as if he were not a fleshly being. It is impossible that those who spend their entire lives in this practice should be left by God without any gifts for their sobriety, the alertness of their hearts, and the attentive striving of their thoughts toward Him. The soul that labors to remain in vigilance will have the eyes of the Cherubim, so that it may ceaselessly lift its gaze and contemplate the heavenly spectacle.

226. One who has chosen this divine labor must guard himself in every way during the day against the turmoil of social gatherings and against concern for worldly affairs; otherwise, he will endure the labor of abstaining from sleep but will reap no fruit from it; for in such a case, it will be impossible for the mind to participate properly in psalm-singing and prayer. But when someone, instead of worrying during the day, devotes himself to reading the Divine Scriptures—which strengthens the mind, serves especially as nourishment for prayer, and aids in the vigil closely connected with prayer— then in this reading he finds a guide on the right path; he finds that which is the seed of all-nourishing prayerful contemplation, which keeps thoughts from wandering and ceaselessly sows the remembrance of God in the soul.

227. Constant silence, together with reading, moderate eating, and vigil, quickly stir the mind to wonder, provided there is no cause to break the silence. The thoughts that arise in those who are silent, of their own accord and without deliberate effort, cause both eyes—from which tears flow, washing the cheeks with their abundance—to resemble a baptismal font.

228. Until one truly hates the causes of sin—from the heart—one is not freed from the pleasure produced by the power of sin. This is the most brutal struggle (against the delight in sin), one in which a person does not yield even to the point of shedding blood. In it, one's freedom is tested in the unity of one's (exclusive) love for virtue. In this struggle lies the power of sin, by which the enemy usually confuses the souls of the chaste, forcing them to experience what they had never accepted into themselves at all. And this is the time of an unseen struggle, which is extremely difficult when this battle, through acquired habit, gains great power over those who have delivered themselves to defeat by yielding to their own thoughts.

229. Beware of idleness; for in it lies certain death—and without it, it is impossible to fall into the hands of those who seek to enslave us. On that day, God will judge us not for the psalms, nor for our neglect of prayer, but for the fact that by neglecting this, we give demons entry. And when, having found a place for themselves, they enter and shut the doors of our eyes, then they will inflict upon us, in a most tormenting way, that which exposes us to God's condemnation and the most severe punishment. The observance of this—the service of psalm-singing and prayer—within the cell was established by the wise, in the spirit of revelation, to safeguard our lives; but the unwise regard the neglect of this as insignificant. Since the latter do not take into account the harm that results from this, both the beginning and the middle of their path are marked by ignorant freedom, which is the mother of the passions.

230. We cannot prevent the causes of our passions from arising; therefore, we are tempted even against our will. We do not desire sin for ourselves—but it happens that we accept the causes leading us to sin with pleasure; and then these causes become the reason for the effects of sin. Whoever loves the occasions of passion involuntarily becomes enslaved to them. Whoever hates his sins will cease to sin; and whoever confesses them will receive forgiveness. It is impossible for a person to abandon a sinful habit unless he first develops an aversion to sin, and it is impossible to receive forgiveness before confessing one's transgressions.

231. As long as a person carries within himself the poison of delight in his sins, everything he does seems proper to him. And as soon as nature strays from its proper order—whether intoxicated by wine or by lust—it makes no difference; for both remove one from one's present state, and both produce the same agitation in the body; though the means differ, the result is the same.

232. If you are alone in your cell and have not yet attained the power of true contemplation, then always occupy yourself with reading the troparia and kathismas, meditating on death, and hoping for the future. All of this focuses the mind on a single point and keeps it from wandering until true contemplation comes; for the power of the spirit is mightier than the passions. As for hope for the future, occupy yourself with remembering God, strive to understand the meaning of the troparia well, and beware of everything

external that incites you to desires; at the same time, be careful even in the small things you do in your cell. Examine your thoughts, and pray that you may have discernment in all your activities; from this, joy will begin to flow to you; and then you will find sorrows that are sweeter than honey.

233. No one can overcome the passions except through visible and tangible virtues; and no one can overcome the wanderings of the mind except through the study of spiritual knowledge. Our mind is fickle, and if it is not anchored by some form of reflection, it never ceases to wander. And without perfection in the virtues mentioned above, it is impossible to attain this state of preservation; for unless one conquers one's enemies, there can be no peace. Passions serve as a barrier to the soul's hidden virtues; and unless they are first subdued by outward virtues, the inner virtues remain hidden behind them.

234. Love for God is naturally fervent, and when it overwhelms someone without measure, it fills that soul with rapture. In one who has experienced this love, an extraordinary transformation is evident: his face becomes radiant and joyful, and his body is warmed; fear and shame depart from him; he regards a terrible death as a joy; the contemplation of his mind does not allow for any interruption in his thoughts of the heavenly; he does not feel the stirrings caused by external objects, for although he does something, he is completely unaware of it—since his mind soars in contemplation, and his thoughts are always, as it were, conversing with someone. The Apostles and martyrs once revelled in this spiritual ecstasy. Some travelled the world, toiling and enduring reproach, while others, in terrible sufferings, did not lose heart but endured them valiantly. – Still others wandered in the deserts, mountains, and caves—and in their disorder they were the most well-ordered; they were regarded as foolish, yet among the wise they were the wisest.

235. Asceticism is the mother of holiness; from it comes the first experience of the mysteries of Christ—which is called the first degree of spiritual knowledge. A defiled soul does not enter the pure kingdom, nor does it commune with the spirits of the saints. Adorn the virtue of your chastity with tears, fasting, and solitary silence. A little sorrow for God's sake is better than a great deed performed without sorrow. What is accomplished without effort—that is, the practice of worldly people who perform acts of charity outwardly but gain nothing within themselves—is in vain. But strive within yourself, and suffer for Christ, so that you may be deemed worthy to partake of Christ's glory. The mind will not be glorified with Jesus unless the body suffers for Christ.

236. There are two ways to ascend the cross: one is the crucifixion of the body, and the other is the ascent into contemplation; the first is the result of liberation from the passions, and the second is the result of the effectiveness of the spirit's deeds. The mind is not subdued unless the body is subdued to it. The kingdom of the mind is the crucifixion of the body: and the mind is not subdued to God unless freedom is subdued to reason. Whoever subdues himself to God is close to having everything subdued to him.

237. The foundation of all that is good, the return of the soul from the enemy's captivity, the path leading to light and life—all this is contained in the following two practices: gathering oneself into unity and always fasting, that is, wisely and prudently making it a rule to abstain from food, to remain in one place without leaving, and to be constantly engaged in contemplation of God. From this come the subjugation of the senses, sobriety of mind, the taming of the fierce passions aroused in the body, the luminous movements of thought, diligence in virtuous deeds, tears and the remembrance of mortality, pure chastity, far removed from every fantasy and tempting thought—in short, from this comes the freedom of the true man, spiritual joy, and resurrection with Christ in the Kingdom. Whoever disregards these two paths should know that not only will he harm himself in all that has been said above, but he will also shake the very foundation of all virtues—and will fall into the following two vices, which are the opposites of the former: namely, carnal indulgence and shameless gluttony. These are the very beginnings of what is contrary to what has been said—and they make room in the soul for all passions.

238. The enemy, knowing the times of our natural needs—which prompt nature to satisfy itself—and knowing that the wandering of the eyes and the satisfaction of the belly cause the mind to become confused, strives precisely at such times to incite us to increase our natural needs and to sow in us images of deceitful thoughts, so that the passions, in an intensified struggle, may gain the upper hand over nature, and man may sink into sin. Therefore, just as the enemy watches for such times, so too must we, especially at these very times, be wise and not allow ourselves to rashly carry out the will of these suggested thoughts, not yield victory to greed, and above all, not to move from our place of silence or go where it happens to be convenient for us, so as not to thereby provide excuses for leaving the desert altogether.

239. The enemy stands before our eyes day and night, observing, waiting, and watching for any open door through which he might enter our senses. And when we allow even a single lapse in vigilance, then this cunning and shameless dog shoots his arrows at us. Sometimes nature itself begins to love peace, freedom, laughter, the soaring of thoughts, and laziness—and becomes a source of passions and an abyss of rebellion; and sometimes the enemy instills these things in the soul. Be careful not to indulge yourself in small matters, lest you come to indulge in greater ones and suffer great downfalls. And a small negligence, as someone has said, often leads to great dangers. To remain sober-minded even in small and insignificant matters—that is wisdom.

240. Do not lose heart when the matter concerns securing your life, and do not be too lazy to die for it; for cowardice is a sign of despondency, and carelessness is the mother of both. A timid person reveals that he suffers from two ailments: love of life and lack of faith. Love of life is a sign of unbelief. But whoever disregards this proves that he believes in God with all his soul and looks forward to the future. Courage of heart and disregard for danger arise from one of two causes: either great faith in God or hard-heartedness. Hard-heartedness is followed by pride, while faith is followed by humility of heart.

241. A person cannot gain hope in God unless he has first, to the best of his ability, fulfilled God's will. For hope in God and courage of heart are born of the testimony of conscience, and only through the true testimony of our mind do we have hope in God. The testimony of the mind consists in the fact that one's conscience does not condemn a person in the least, as if he had neglected something to which he is bound according to his strength. If our heart does not condemn us, *"we have confidence before God"* (1 John 3:21). Therefore, boldness is the result of progress in virtue and a clear conscience.

242. A person's constant silence and keeping of silence arise from the following three reasons: either for the sake of human glory, or out of ardent zeal for virtue, or because a person has within himself a certain divine conversation, and his mind is drawn to it. Virtue does not consist in the performance of many and varied bodily deeds, but in the wisest hope of the heart; for a proper purpose binds it to God. The mind, without bodily deeds, can do good; but the body, without the wisdom of the heart, even if it does something, cannot derive any benefit from it. Nevertheless, when a man of God finds an opportunity to perform a good deed, he will not hesitate to prove his love for God through the labor of his actions.

243. In the struggle against the stirrings of carnal lust, consider abstaining from the sight of women a powerful weapon for yourself; for the enemy cannot bring about in us what nature is capable of doing by its own power. Do not think that nature forgets what God has naturally instilled in it for procreation and for testing those who persevere in this struggle. But abstaining from objects of desire puts lust to death in the members, causes one to forget it, and eradicates it. Objects, when unseen, produce a slight and barely perceptible stirring; but objects, when seen, arouse passions through their proximity, nourish them—just as oil nourishes the flame of a lamp—and rekindle a passion that had already died down and been extinguished. Natural movement, without the addition of anything from outside, cannot disturb the purity of the will or disrupt chastity; for God has not given nature the power to overcome the good will's inclination toward Him. But if we sometimes willingly indulge in the sensual, and give ourselves over either to eating and drinking in excess, or to intimacy with women, looking at them, and talking about them—which kindles and rapidly spreads the fire of lust throughout the body—then we thereby transform the naturally gentle movement within the body into a fierce and uncontrollable one—through these additions to nature prompted by the impulses of our own will. Whatever God has created, He has created beautifully and in proportion. And as long as the measure of conformity to nature is properly preserved within us, natural movements cannot compel us to stray from the path: but only harmonious movements are aroused in the body, which merely indicate that there is a natural passion within us, without, however, causing the stirrings and disturbances strong enough to hinder chastity.

244. Sometimes there is a stirring in the limbs, permitted by God because of our pride. We know of this struggle that when we have been attentive to ourselves for a long time and have labored diligently—even to the point of considering ourselves somewhat successful—we are permitted to endure it so that we may learn humility. Other trials arise from our sloth and excessive indulgence of the flesh, through the abandonment of all that is painful and arduous in our way of life—especially the constant confinement to the cell and the toil of physical labor. Sorrow, hardship, and the constraints of life restrain and mortify sensuality; whereas ease, comfort, and the repose of the flesh unleash, nourish, and revive it. God and His angels rejoice when we are in need, while the devil and his minions rejoice when we are at ease. Sorrow and constraint broaden and

facilitate the fulfillment of the commandments; but ease gives way to passions, and thereby hinders and suppresses the fulfillment of the commandments. In a body that is constrained, thoughts cannot give in to dangerous flights of fancy. When someone joyfully bears labors and sorrows, then he can easily rein in his thoughts, because they are rendered inactive by the labors. When a person, remembering his past sins, punishes himself, then God looks upon him with favor. God rejoices that, for straying from His path, the person has imposed punishment upon himself—which serves as a sign of repentance. And the more he imposes discipline on his soul, the more God’s favor toward him increases. But any joy whose cause is not virtue immediately stirs up lustful impulses in the one who experiences it.

245. Virtues build upon one another so that the path of virtue is not difficult or arduous, so that one may progress through them in order and find relief in doing so, and so that, in this way, even the hardships endured for the sake of virtue may become pleasant, as something good. Thus, no one can acquire true detachment unless they prepare themselves to endure temptations with joy. And no one can endure temptations unless they are convinced that, in exchange for the sorrows they have prepared themselves to endure, they can receive something that surpasses physical comfort. Whoever deprives himself of material things but has not deprived himself of the reality of the senses—that is, sight and hearing—has prepared for himself double sorrow, and will suffer and grieve all the more. For if mental images of things—without the things themselves—produce a painful sensation in a person, what shall we say when the things themselves are present and close to us? In this case, a person suffers from the sensations produced by these things just as he previously suffered while performing the action; for the memory of his habit regarding them never leaves his mind. How wonderful is the life of a hermit in this regard! In it, only thoughts remain as temptations; yet it also contributes greatly and powerfully to the taming of those thoughts.

246. Do not seek advice from a person who does not lead the same way of life as you, even if he is extremely wise. Entrust your thoughts rather to an uneducated person who has gained practical experience in the matter than to a learned philosopher who reasons based on his research without having tested it in practice. To gain experience means not merely approaching certain things and observing them without internalizing knowledge about them, but, through prolonged engagement with them, clearly perceiving their benefits and harms through personal experience. Often, a thing appears harmful on the surface, but inside it turns out to be full of benefit; and conversely, a thing often appears to be beneficial, but is inwardly full of harm. Therefore, seek the counsel of one who, having tested everything himself, is able to patiently discuss what requires deliberation in your own affairs—and can reliably point out what is truly beneficial to you.

247. When you find unchanging peace on your path, be wary; for you are far from the straight path trodden by the weary feet of the Saints. As long as you are still on the path to the city of the kingdom, let the following be a sign to you that you are drawing near to the city of God: you will encounter powerful temptations;—and the closer you come and the more you progress, the more the temptations before you will multiply. Therefore, as soon as you feel the greatest and strongest temptations in your soul along your path; know that at that moment your soul has truly and secretly ascended to a new, higher degree, and that grace has been multiplied for it in the state in which it finds itself; for in proportion to the greatness of grace, God leads the soul into the tribulation of temptations to exactly the same degree. If the soul is weak and lacks sufficient strength for great temptations, and therefore asks not to be subjected to them, and God grants its request; then know for certain that to the extent the soul lacks sufficient strength for great trials, to that same extent it is also insufficient for great gifts; and just as access to great trials is denied to it, so too are great gifts denied to it. For God does not grant a great gift without a great temptation; the gifts are determined by God in proportion to the temptations, according to His wisdom, which those He has created cannot comprehend.

248. The temptations encountered upon embarking on a virtuous life and “*as it progresses*” differ from the temptations permitted to “*humble the pride*” of the heart. The temptations that befall the soul from the spiritual rod “*for its progress*” and growth—and through which it is taught, tested, and led into spiritual struggle—are as follows: sloth, heaviness in the body, weakness of the limbs, despondency, confusion of thoughts, suspicion arising from physical exhaustion, a temporary loss of hope, a darkening of thoughts, a lack of human assistance, scarcity of what the body needs, and the like. These temptations give rise in the soul to a sense of loneliness and defenselessness, a darkening of the heart, and humility. The Providence, however, measures the temptations according to the strengths and needs of those who endure them. Within them coexist both comfort and defeat, light and darkness, strife and help—in short, confinement and spaciousness. And this serves as a sign that a person is prospering with God’s help.

249. The temptations that come upon people by God's permission—*those who "exalt themselves"* before God's goodness and offend God with their "*pride*"—are as follows: the deprivation of the power of wisdom that people possess; a restless sensation within themselves of wandering thoughts, permitted upon them to humble their pride; quick irritability; the desire to have everything go their own way; quarreling over words; rebuking others; a heart that despises everyone; complete delusion of the mind; blasphemy against the name of God; foolish, laughable thoughts, as if people were disregarding them, and their honor were reduced to nothing; and, both secretly and openly, in various ways, they are subjected to shame and humiliation by demons; finally, the desire to be in fellowship and interaction with the world, to speak ceaselessly and engage in reckless idle talk, to always seek out news and even false prophecies, and to promise far more than one's strength allows. And these are the essence of spiritual temptations. Among the bodily temptations are: painful, complex, prolonged, and difficult-to-cure seizures; constant encounters with wicked and godless people; falling into the hands of abusers; unexpected stumbles and dangerous falls; and ruinous misfortunes for them and their families. All that we have described belongs to the category of temptations of pride. The beginning of these appears in a person when he begins to seem wise in his own eyes. And he undergoes all these misfortunes as he internalizes such thoughts of pride: the more of them you have, the more pride penetrates you.

250. There is another kind of temptation—faint-heartedness due to a lack of patience. Every difficult circumstance and every sorrow, if not met with patience, leads to intense suffering; for patience in a person wards off misfortunes, while faintheartedness is the mother of suffering. Patience is the mother of consolation—and a certain strength, usually born of a generous heart. It is difficult for a person to find such strength in their sorrows without a divine gift, obtained through unceasing prayer and the shedding of tears. When it pleases God to subject a person to great sorrows, He allows them to fall into the clutches of faint-heartedness. And this gives rise to an overwhelming power of despondency, in which he feels his soul crushed—and this is a foretaste of Gehenna; for from this spring thousands of temptations: confusion, irritation, blasphemy, complaints against fate, perverse thoughts, wandering from one land to another, and the like. The cause of all this is your own negligence. You yourself have not taken care to seek a remedy for this. Yet there is but one remedy for all of this—humility of heart. Without it, no one can break down the barrier of these evils. As humility increases, so does patience in afflictions; as patience increases, the burden of sorrows is lightened, and comfort is received; as comfort increases, so does love for God; and as love increases, so does the joy of the Holy Spirit. God does not remove temptations from His servants, but grants them patience in temptations because of their faith and their surrender to His will.

251. A life according to God in the flesh consists of bodily deeds—bodily efforts to purify the body from passions through virtuous activity. A life of the mind is a matter of the heart, pursued unceasingly with careful thought of the judgment, as well as constant prayer of the heart, reflection on God's Providence and care, both private and general, as seen in the whole world, and guarding oneself against hidden passions, so that nothing passionate may be found in the inner and spiritual realm.

252. Repentance is given to people as grace upon grace after baptism; for repentance is a second rebirth from God. Repentance is the door to mercy; through this door we enter into God's mercy, and apart from this entrance, you will not find mercy. Repentance is the second grace, and it is born of faith and fear; fear, however, is the fatherly rod that guides us until we attain the spiritual paradise of blessings: after which it departs from us. Paradise is the love of God, in which lies the enjoyment of all blessings. The tree of life is the love of God, from which Adam fell; and since then, joy has not been found by him; but he toiled and labored in the land of thorns. Those deprived of God's love, if they walk in righteousness, eat that bread of sweat in their labors, which was commanded to the first man after his fall. He who lives in love bears the fruit of life from God, and even in this world he breathes the air of the resurrection. Love is the kingdom; the Lord mysteriously promised the Apostles that they would taste it in His kingdom. For it is said, "*You will eat and drink at the table of My kingdom*" (Luke 22:30)—what else does this mean but love?—Behold, "*the wine that gladdens the heart of man*" (Ps. 103:15). Blessed is he who drinks of this wine!

253. Just as it is impossible to cross the great sea without a ship or a boat, so no one can attain love without fear. We can cross the foul sea between us and the heavenly paradise only in the boat of repentance, which is rowed by the oarsmen of fear. But if the oarsmen of fear do not steer the ship of repentance, on which we journey across the sea of this world to God, then we will drown in this foul sea. Repentance is the ship, fear is its helmsman, and love is the Divine harbor. Fear leads us onto the ship of repentance, carries us across

the foul sea of life, and guides us to the Divine harbor, which is love. All who labor and are burdened—through repentance—come to this harbor. And when we attain love, then we have attained God, and our journey is complete, and we have arrived at the island of the world to come, where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit dwell.

254. There is knowledge that precedes faith, and there is knowledge that is born of faith. The knowledge that precedes faith is natural knowledge, while that born of faith is spiritual knowledge. Natural knowledge distinguishes good from evil, and it is called natural discernment, by which we naturally, without learning, distinguish good from evil. God has implanted this discernment in rational nature; through learning, however, it is enhanced and enriched. There is no human being who does not possess it. This is the power of natural knowledge in the rational soul, a power that is constantly brought into action within it. The honor of rational nature is the discernment that distinguishes good from evil, and the Prophet rightly likened those who have lost it to senseless beasts (Ps. 48:13).

255. Natural insight, which precedes faith, is the path to faith and to God. Having been instilled in our nature by God, it itself convinces us that we must believe in God, who brought all things into being. This faith produces fear within us, and this fear compels us to repentance; and through our actions, a person is granted spiritual knowledge—or a sense of the mysteries—which gives rise to the faith of true contemplation. Spiritual insight is not born simply from bare faith alone; but faith gives rise to the fear of God, and through the fear of God—when we begin to act in accordance with it—spiritual insight is born from the action of this fear, as St. Chrysostom said: “When someone acquires a will corresponding to the fear of God and a proper way of thinking, then he soon receives the revelation of the hidden things.” By “revelation of the hidden things,” he means spiritual insight.

256. Yet it is not the fear of God that gives rise to this spiritual insight; rather, this insight is given as a gift for the practice of the fear of God. The practice of the fear of God is repentance; and repentance, having run its full course and come to an end, leads to the place where spiritual insight is given. Spiritual insight is a perception of the hidden. And when someone perceives this invisible reality, then a different kind of faith is born within that perception—one that is not contrary to the first faith, but rather affirms that faith. This is called contemplative faith. Until then, there was hearing; now there is contemplation, and contemplation is more certain than hearing.

257. All this arises from that natural knowledge which distinguishes good from evil. It is the good seed of virtue. Following this natural knowledge within a person comes—a constant pricking of the conscience—an unceasing remembrance of death and a certain agonizing concern that continues until the very end of his life—and after this, sorrow, despondency, the fear of God, natural modesty, —sorrow for one’s past sins, proper diligence, remembrance of the common path, concern for preparing oneself for it—a tearful supplication to God for a good entry through these gates, through which every creature must pass—contempt for the world and a fierce struggle for virtue. All this is acquired through natural knowledge—and let everyone compare their deeds with this. When it becomes evident that a person has acquired this, it means that he is walking the natural path; and when he transcends this and enters into love, then he rises above nature—and struggle, fear, toil, and weariness in all things come to an end for him. These are the consequences of natural knowledge. – And we find this within ourselves when we do not cloud this knowledge with our self-indulgent will. – And we remain at this stage until we enter into love, which frees us from all of this. Let everyone, based on all that we have said, examine and test themselves to see where their path lies: whether in that which is unnatural, or in that which is natural, or in that which is supernatural.

258. A good thought takes root in the heart only through divine grace; a wicked thought approaches a person only for the sake of temptation and testing. A person who has come to know the extent of his weakness has attained the perfection of humility. God’s gifts draw the heart, stirring it to unceasing thanksgiving. The Lord bears with all human weaknesses, but He does not tolerate a person who is always grumbling, nor does He leave such a person without correction. Grace is preceded by humility; and punishment is preceded by pride. The proud are allowed to fall into blasphemy; those who boast of their active virtue are allowed to fall into fornication; and those who boast of their wisdom are allowed to fall into the dark snares of ignorance.

259. Whoever honors every person while remembering God will, by God’s secret providence, find help from every person. Whoever defends the wronged finds God as his advocate; whoever extends his hand to help his neighbor receives God’s strength to aid himself. Whoever accuses his brother of his vice finds an accuser in God. Whoever corrects his brother in private heals his own vice; but whoever accuses anyone before

an assembly increases the pain of his own wounds. A friend who rebukes in secret is a wise physician, but one who heals before the eyes of many is a reviler.

260. God corrects with love, not with vengeance (God forbid)! He seeks only to heal His own image and harbors no anger. Whoever does good for the sake of reward will soon change. No matter how much a person may perfect himself in this life in his striving toward God, everything remains behind Him; but in the age to come, God reveals His face to him—though not exactly as He is. No matter how deeply the righteous here enter into the contemplation of God, they behold only an image as in a mirror, whereas there they behold the manifestation of truth.

261. A fire that has ignited in dry wood is difficult to extinguish: and if God's warmth sets upon the heart of one who has renounced the world, its blaze is not quenched—and it burns more fiercely than fire. When the power of guilt enters the limbs, the mind forgets all restraint: and the remembrance of God, when it takes hold of the pasture of the soul, eradicates from the heart all remembrance of the visible world. The sense of the age to come in this world is like a small island in the sea; and whoever approaches it is no longer tossed about by the waves of the visions of this age. A monk, as long as he sees a need in this life to labor still, grieves over separation from the body; but when he feels in his soul that he has made the most of his time and received his pledge, he longs for the age to come. As long as a merchant is at sea, fear grips his limbs, lest the waves rise up against him and the hope of his enterprise be drowned; and as long as a monk is in the world, fear takes hold of his life, lest a storm arise within him and his work—at which he has labored from his youth to his old age—be lost.

262. A sailor, while sailing across the sea, gazes at the stars and steers his ship by them until he reaches the harbor; and a monk gazes upon prayer, for it sets him aright and directs his journey toward that harbor toward which his life is directed in hourly prayer. A swimmer, stripped of his clothes, plunges into the sea to find a pearl; and a monk, having cast off all worldly things, lives out his life to find within himself the pearl—Jesus Christ—and when he finds Him, he no longer seeks anything else that exists besides Him.

263. It is harmful for a virgin to be in public gatherings and among large crowds, and for a monk's mind to be in conversation with many. A bird, wherever it may be, strives toward its nest to raise its young there; and a discerning monk hastens to his place to bring forth within himself the fruit of life. Clouds obscure the sun; and excessive talk darkens the soul that has begun to be enlightened by prayerful contemplation. It is said of a bird called the siren that anyone who hears the sweet sound of its voice is so captivated that, following it through the desert, they forget their very life because of the sweetness of its song, fall, and die. This is similar to what happens to the soul. When heavenly sweetness enters it, then, moved by the melodious sound of God's words—which are imprinted on the mind—the whole soul rushes in His wake, so that it forgets its bodily life; and the body is stripped of its desires, while the soul is lifted from this life to God.

264. A tree, unless it first sheds its old leaves, does not produce new branches; and a monk, until he uproots from his heart the memory of his past deeds, does not bear new fruits and branches in Christ Jesus. In the oyster shell where a pearl is formed, it is said that a spark of lightning produces a certain kind of spark, and from the air it takes in substance, but until then it remains mere flesh: and the monk's heart, until it takes in heavenly substance through understanding, his work is something ordinary, and he does not contain the fruit of consolation within his own shells. A dog that licks its own nostrils drinks its own blood, and, because of the sweetness of its blood, does not feel the harm it is doing to itself; and a monk who is prone to revel in vanity drinks his own life, and because of the sweetness he feels for a moment, does not realize the harm he is doing to himself.

265. Do not approach the words of the sacraments contained in the Holy Scriptures without prayer and a plea for God's help, but say: "Grant me, O Lord, to receive a sense of the power contained within them." Consider prayer the key to the true meaning of what is said in the Holy Scriptures. When you wish to draw near to God with your heart, first prove your love to Him through physical labor. In these lies the beginning of life—and the Lord has laid them as the foundation of perfection. Consider idleness the beginning of the soul's darkening, and gatherings for conversation the darkening that follows darkening. If even useful speech, when unchecked, leads to darkening, how much more so does idle talk. The soul becomes insubstantial from the multitude of prolonged conversations.

266. Moderation and established rules in one's life enlighten the mind and prevent confusion. Confusion of the mind arising from disorder (from the lack of consistent rules) produces darkness in the soul,

and darkness in turn produces further confusion. Peace (of mind) is the result of good order, and from peace light is born; and from light and peace, pure air shines forth in the mind.

267. A self-seeking soul is deprived of wisdom, but a merciful soul will be made wise by the Spirit. The key to the heart's access to divine gifts is given through love for one's neighbor, and as the heart detaches itself from bodily bonds, the door to knowledge also opens before it. How beautiful and praiseworthy is love for one's neighbor, provided that the care it entails does not distract us from the love of God!

268. How pleasant is conversation with our spiritual brothers, provided that we can maintain our communion with God at the same time! It is good to care for conversations with our spiritual brothers as well, as long as moderation is observed—that is, as long as, under this pretext, we do not lose our inner work and way of life, nor our unceasing conversation with God. The latter is disrupted at the very beginning of the former; for the mind is not sufficient to sustain two conversations at once. Excessive conversation with spiritual brothers can also be harmful; and it is harmful even to look at worldly people from a distance; even without seeing them, the mere sound of their voices disturbs the peace of the heart.

269. Just as the soul is by nature superior to the body, so too is the spiritual body superior to the physical one. But just as the creation of the body originally preceded the breathing of life into it, so too do bodily deeds precede spiritual ones. And it is not a lofty life, maintained without change, that constitutes great strength. A weak drop, dripping constantly, wears through a hard stone. When the time draws near for the spiritual man to rise within you, then joy stirs in your soul, and your thoughts are enveloped within you by the sweetness that is in your heart. But as long as the world attempts to rise up within you again, then the agitation of your thoughts multiplies within you. By "the world" I mean the passions that arise from the agitation of the mind. When they are born and reach maturity, they become sins and kill the person. Just as children are not born without a mother, so passions are not born without the flight of the mind, and the commission of sin does not occur without a dialogue with the passions.

270. If patience grows in our souls, it is a sign that we have secretly received the grace of consolation. When the soul is enraptured by the joy of its hope and by God's gladness, then the body feels no sorrow, even though it is frail. Then it is able to bear a heavy burden without showing any lack of strength. This happens when the soul enters into that spiritual joy. If you guard your tongue, God will grant you the grace of heartfelt tenderness, so that you may see your own soul in it and thereby enter into spiritual joy. To the extent that a person has embarked on a spiritual struggle for God's sake, to that extent his heart receives boldness in his prayer; and to the extent that a person is distracted by many things, to that extent he is deprived of God's help.

271. *The first thought* that, through God's love for humanity, enters a person and guides the soul toward life "is" *the thought* that takes root in *the "heart concerning the destiny of this nature."* This thought is naturally followed by a disregard for the world; and this is how every good impulse within a person begins, leading him to life. It is this very divine power, which accompanies a person, that lays the foundation when it desires to reveal life within him. – And if a person does not extinguish this thought we have spoken of within himself through worldly cares and idle chatter, but rather nurtures it in silence, dwells upon it in contemplation, and engages with it; then it will lead him to a profound contemplation that no one is able to describe in words. Satan hates this thought and attacks with all his might to eradicate it from a person. And if it were possible, he would give him the kingdom of the whole world, just to erase such a thought from a person's mind through distraction. For the crafty one knows that if this thought abides in a person, then his mind no longer dwells on this earth of delusion, and his schemes cannot reach him.

272. *Another process* follows *this*, when a person lives a good life and draws near to the experience of contemplating and practicing it, when from above he receives "*the grace to taste the sweetness of spiritual knowledge.*" The beginning of this process consists of the following: first, a person becomes convinced of God's providence toward humanity, is enlightened by his love for the Creator, and marvels both at the order of rational beings and at God's great care for them. From this point, the sweetness of God and the kindling of love for God begin within him, blazing in his heart and consuming his spiritual and physical passions. This love, accompanied by strong diligence and a good conscience, then begins to flare up suddenly—and a person is intoxicated by it, as by wine, and his heart is carried captive to God. To the extent that a person strives for a good life, for self-discipline, and for spending time in reading and prayer, to that same extent this power is established and strengthened within him.

273. Let us not be disheartened when we find ourselves in darkness. I mean that particular darkness in which the soul at times languishes, as if amidst waves; and whether a person reads Scripture or performs a

service, in whatever task he undertakes, darkness follows darkness. Such a person abandons the task, and often is not even allowed to approach it. This hour is filled with despair and fear; hope in God and the comfort of faith in Him are completely cast aside by the soul—and the whole soul is utterly filled with doubt and fear. But God does not leave the soul in such a state for long; rather, He soon provides a way out (1 Cor. 10:13). And I will point this out to you and offer some advice: if you do not have the strength to control yourself and fall on your face in prayer, then cover your head with a cloak and sleep until this hour of darkness passes for you, but do not leave your cell. Those who desire to lead a contemplative life and who seek the comfort of faith in their journey are most subject to this temptation. Therefore, this hour torments and wearies them most of all with the wavering of the mind; and blasphemy often follows this, and sometimes a person is overcome by doubt regarding the Resurrection, and other things of which we ought not to speak. Those engaged in physical labor are completely free from these temptations. They are overcome by a different kind of despondency, known to all, which differs in its nature from these and similar temptations. Blessed is the one who endures this without stepping outside the door. However, this struggle does not end in a single hour; nor does grace return suddenly and take root in the soul, but rather gradually. And one thing gives way to another—at times temptation, and at times consolation.

274. A person consumed by unreasonable jealousy never enters the realm of the mind; and one who is alien to that realm is also alien to joy. If the realm of the mind is called perfect health, and unreasonable jealousy is contrary to that realm, then it follows that the one in whom there is malicious jealousy is already suffering from a grave illness. A heart filled with sorrow over weakness and powerlessness in obvious bodily affairs takes the place of all these bodily affairs. Bodily affairs without sorrow of the mind are like a body without a soul. Whoever grieves in his heart and gives free rein to his passions is like a man who suffers physically and whose mouth is open to any food harmful to him, or like one who has an only son—and who, little by little, kills him with his own hands.

275. Chastity and conversation with a woman are like a lioness and a sheep in the same house. Deeds without mercy before God are like a man who kills his son in the presence of his father. Just as a handful of sand thrown into the sea is insignificant, so too are the sins of all flesh in comparison to God's Providence and God's mercy. And just as a spring abundant with water is not blocked by a handful of dust, so too is the Creator's mercy not overcome by the vices of His creatures. To be resentful and to pray is like sowing on the sea and expecting a harvest. Just as a flame of fire cannot help but rise upward, so the prayers of the merciful rise to heaven. Just as water flows down a slope, so does the power of irritability when it finds its way into our hearts.

276. There is humility born of the fear of God, humility born of love for God, and humility born of joy. The humble person, out of the fear of God, is accompanied at all times by modesty in every aspect of life, orderliness of the senses, and a contrite heart. A gathering of the humble is beloved by God, like a congregation of seraphim. A chaste body is more precious before God than a pure sacrifice. These two virtues—humility and chastity—prepare in the soul a betrothal pledge for the Holy Trinity.

277. Watch over your inner self, but not as you would your eyesight; for internal strife is, without a doubt, easier to manage than external strife. Do not believe, brother, that inner thoughts can be restrained without bringing the body into a good and orderly state. Fear habits more than you fear enemies. One who nurtures a habit within himself is like a man who feeds fire. If a habit demands something once and its demand is not met, you will find it weak the next time. But if you yield to its will once, you will find it attacking you with far greater force the second time.

278. Do not be friends with anyone who loves to laugh and loves to put on a show for others; otherwise, he will teach you the habit of indulging in idleness. When someone begins to slander his brother in your presence, lower your gaze. As soon as you do this, you will show caution both before God and before him. If you give to one in need, let the cheerfulness of your face precede your gift, and comfort his sorrow with a kind word. When you do this, your kindness will be more precious to him than even a gift that exceeds his needs. In all your deeds, let bodily self-control and a clear conscience precede you; for without them, every deed is vain before God.

279. Let them persecute you, but do not persecute; let them crucify you, but do not crucify; let them wrong you, but do not wrong; let them slander you, but do not slander. Going to court is not the way of the Christian life; there is not even a hint of this in Christ's teaching. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep

with those who weep; for this is a sign of purity. Grieve with the sick; shed tears with the sinners; rejoice with those who repent. Be friendly with all people, but remain alone in your thoughts.

280. Do not condemn or revile anyone, not even those who lead extremely wicked lives. Spread your garment over the one who has fallen and cover him. Know that this is why we must not leave the doors of our cell—so that we may not know of the evil deeds of men; and then, in the ignorance of our minds, we will see all people as holy and good. If you cannot labor with your body, at least mourn in your mind. If you cannot fast for two days, fast at least until evening; but if you cannot even fast until evening, then beware of gluttony. If you are not a peacemaker, at least do not be a lover of strife. If you are unable to silence one who condemns your friend, then at least beware of associating with him.

281. Know that if fire goes out from you and burns others, God will hold you accountable for the souls consumed by your fire. And if you do not kindle the fire yourself, but agree with the one who does and take pleasure in it, you will be counted among his accomplices at the judgment. On all the paths that people walk in this world, they find no peace until they draw near to hope in God. The heart finds no rest from toil and stumbling blocks until hope enters it, pacifies it, and pours joy into it. It is of this that the venerable lips spoke: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matt. 11:28). The light of the mind gives birth to faith; faith gives birth to the consolation of hope; and hope strengthens the heart.

282. The Son of God endured the cross; therefore, we sinners boldly rely on repentance. The sorrows of the mind are sufficient to replace every bodily deed. St. Gregory says: “He who is in union with God is a temple of grace—and is always preoccupied with the thought of His judgment.” Blessed Basil said: “Unceasing prayer produces in the soul a clear thought of God; and when we establish within ourselves the remembrance of God, it is God Himself who dwells within us.” Thus we become the temple of God. A contrite heart serves as a preparation for rest in God.

283. What we acquire during our idleness is what puts us to shame during our prayer. Sobriety helps a person more than work; and distraction (the wandering of thoughts) harms him more than (physical) rest. Domestic strife arises from rest and troubles a person, but he has the ability to put an end to it. For as soon as a person abandons rest and returns to his work, these quarrels are removed from him and depart. But what is caused by a lack of self-control is not the same as what is caused by rest. As long as a person remains within the realm of his freedom during rest, he can return and govern himself according to his established rules; for he is still within the realm of his freedom. But by granting himself permission (for pleasurable thoughts), he steps outside the realm of his freedom. If a person had not completely abandoned self-observation, he would not be forcibly and involuntarily compelled to submit to that which does not bring him peace.

284. Do not, O man, grant freedom to any of your senses, lest you reach the point where it becomes impossible to return to freedom. Indolence harms only the young, while indulgence harms both the old and the perfected. Those who, through indolence, fall into evil thoughts can return to self-examination and reaffirm their noble way of life. But those who, in their eagerness for action, have neglected self-examination are led captive from a noble life into a life of debauchery.

285. We should not grieve only when we are tempted to do something, but especially when we become hardened in that same sin; for temptation often befalls even the perfect, while becoming hardened in the same sin is a complete darkening of the soul. The sorrow we feel at our temptations is credited to us by grace in place of a pure deed. Whoever, in the hope of repentance, deliberately yields to temptation a second time acts deceitfully toward God; death overtakes him unexpectedly, and he does not reach the time when he hoped to perform acts of virtue.

286. Everyone who has given free rein to the senses has also given free rein to the heart; for the workings of the heart serve as bonds for the external senses. If anyone engages in this practice with discernment, it becomes evident through the following three signs: he is not bound by bodily pleasures, he does not indulge in gluttony, and he does not allow himself to become irritable. Where these three are present, there is no true inner order, even if the outward appearance is flawless. Prudent disregard for the body gives rise to detachment from all things, disregard for peace, and indifference to human affection. If anyone willingly and joyfully accepts loss for God’s sake, then he is pure within. Whoever does not look with pleasure upon those who honor him, and does not resent those who dishonor him, has become dead to the world in this life.

287. Do not harbor hatred toward a sinner; for we are all accountable. If you rebuke him for God’s sake, then weep for him. And why should you hate him? Hate his sin, and pray for him, so that you may

become like Christ, Who did not grow angry with sinners but prayed for them. Be a preacher of God's goodness; for God rules over you, though you are unworthy; for you owe Him much, yet His punishment is not evident upon you, and for the small deeds you have done, He rewards you with great things.

288. Fear God out of love for Him, not because of the fearsome name attributed to Him. Love Him as you are bound to love Him—not because of what He will give you in the future, but because of what we have received in the present, and because of this one world that He created for us. Who persuaded Him in the beginning to bring us into being? Who intercedes for us when we do not remember Him? When we did not yet exist, who brought this body of ours to life? From where does the thought of knowledge take root in the earth? What immeasurable goodness is it that restores our sinful nature to rebirth! Come, you who are discerning, and marvel. Who, possessing a wise and wondrous mind, will rightly marvel at the mercy of our Creator?

289. To the extent that a person disregards this world and is zealous for the fear of God, to that extent does God's Providence draw near to him—and in secret, a person senses the assistance of Providence, and pure thoughts are given to him to understand it. If anyone voluntarily deprives himself of worldly goods, to the very extent that he deprives himself of them, to that same extent God's mercy accompanies him, and God's love for humanity sustains him. As for the souls of those who are not strong enough to attain true life through voluntary renunciation of all things, He leads them to virtue through involuntary sufferings, as we see in the case of the poor man Lazarus. God is close to the sorrowful heart of the one who cries out to Him in distress. Even if He sometimes subjects us to bodily deprivations and other afflictions, the Lord shows great love for the soul of the afflicted, commensurate with the severity of their suffering.

290. When the longing for Christ's love does not prevail in you to the point that, out of joy in Christ, you remain dispassionate in all your afflictions, know that the world dwells in you more than Christ does. When illness, poverty, physical exhaustion, or fear of harm to the body disturbs your mind to the point that it turns you away from the joy of your hope and from your concern for pleasing the Lord, then know that it is the body that lives within you, not Christ. Simply put, whatever attachment prevails in you above all else is what lives within you. If you lack nothing you need, your body is healthy, and you fear nothing adverse—and you say that you can thus walk purely toward Christ—then know that you are sick in mind and deprived of the taste of God's glory.

291. Lest you say that there has never been a person whose mind was completely elevated above weakness when the body was crushed by temptations and sorrows, and in whom the sorrow of the mind was overcome by love for Christ, —I will remind you of the martyrs, and see how their endurance, strengthened by the power of Christ's love, overcame great sorrow and bodily illness. And it was not only they who displayed such steadfastness; there were philosophers, pagans who did not know the true God, who showed remarkable strength of courage. One of them made it a rule to remain silent—and did not waver from this decision, despite the obvious danger of death. Others completely suppressed their natural desires; still others easily endured slander; some endured cruel illnesses without sorrow; and others demonstrated their patience in sorrows and great calamities. If they endured this for the sake of empty glory and hope, should we monks—called to communion with God—not endure far more?

Volume III

Preface

Here is the third volume of the Russian edition of **Dobrotolubie**. Almost all the articles contained herein are taken from the Greek **Dobrotolubie**. The only additions are a conversation with Abba Zosima, who guided St. Mary of Egypt, and an ascetic discourse from the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor. All of this follows in the following order:

1. A monastic treatise in one hundred chapters by Blessed Diadochus, Bishop of Photiki, preceded by ten definitions of the highest degrees of the principal virtues.

2. The Venerable John of Carpathos—one hundred chapters—consisting of words of comfort and exhortation.

3. The Discourses of Abba Zosima.
4. Saint Maximus the Confessor—a) A Discourse on Asceticism, in the form of questions and answers; b) Four hundred chapters on love; c) Speculative and practical chapters selected from his seven hundred chapters.
5. The Venerable Phalassius—four hundred chapters on love, abstinence, and the spiritual life.
6. St. Theodore, Bishop of Edessa—100 edifying chapters.
7. Another certain Theodore—an edifying, contemplative discourse.
8. A highly beneficial account of Abba Philemon.
9. The Venerable Theognostus—on the active and contemplative life, 75 chapters.
10. The Venerable Philotheos of Sinai: 40 chapters on sobriety.
11. By Elder Elijah—The Garden of Flowers. *Editor's Note for the HTML Version (2005)* The main text of the second through fifth volumes of ***Dobrotolyubie*** has been edited to bring it in line with modern Russian spelling and pronunciation. Quotations from Holy Scripture have been left unchanged. Their meaning can be clarified, if necessary, using the modern Russian edition of the Old and New Testaments. The distinction in the spelling of the words “мир” (society, sometimes—the created universe as a whole), “миръ” (peace, order, harmony), and “μυρο” (a fragrant mixture for sacred anointing) has also been left unchanged.

Blessed Diadochus, Bishop of Photiki in Illyrian Epirus

A Brief Account of Him

Nothing is known about the origins and early life of St. Diadochus prior to his episcopate. During his episcopate, however, he was renowned both for his holy life and his wise teachings. Victor, Bishop of Utica in Africa, in the preface to his **History of the Persecutions by the Vandals** (Migne, **Patrol. Lat.* vol. 58), written around 490, refers to himself as Diadochus's disciple, bestows this title upon himself in his own honor, and adds that “This blessed Diadochus is worthy of being extolled with every kind of praise, since he left behind a great many works on orthodox doctrine and the Christian life.”—From this, it must be concluded that he flourished in the second half of the 5th century and may have died not long before its end, as can be surmised from the fact that his signature appears in the letter from the bishops of Epirus to Emperor Leo (457–473). Other details of his life are unknown. Of his writings, the following are known to date: a) two discourses—one on the Ascension of the Lord, setting forth the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word of God, and the other against the Arians; b) 100 chapters on the ascetic life, with 10 introductory guidelines on the ultimate limits of perfection in the principal virtues. Sofronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, cites passages from these writings in his circular letter against the Monophysites (Bibliography of Photius, vol. 231); St. Maximus the Confessor also referred to him on more than one occasion. Regarding his chapters on asceticism, which we have included in our collection, Blessed Photius comments as follows: “This work (i.e., the 100 chapters) is exceedingly beneficial to those engaged in spiritual struggle, and for those who, through long practice, have acquired skill in the deeds leading to perfection, it contains nothing obscure; for in such a case, knowledge gained through experience readily follows the path of the teaching set forth in the text.” The compilers of the Greek edition of **Dobrotolubie**, in the preface to this work, state: “That our Holy Father Diadochus was a man wise in action and enlightened in contemplation is something anyone who wishes to know can discern from this work, which has come down to us intact and which he composed so beautifully, drawing spiritual wisdom from his long experience and from the divine aspirations of his heart. Dividing it into one hundred chapters, he meticulously reveals in them the deepest mysteries of this desirable virtue, enriching them with frequent citations from Divine Scripture and the contemplations of a mind enlightened by faith. It can be said that in this work he has left for all who followed him—the ascetics and the God-bearing Fathers—an exemplary teaching on holy sobriety in conjunction with all the virtues. For you will find that very many of them turn to these chapters as the most reliable guides to the truth and quote verbatim from them in their writings on temperance. This was done after the Council held during the reign of Andronikos Palaiologos by Gregory and Simeon of Thessaloniki, Gregory of Sinai, His Holiness Callistus, and many others, thereby testifying to the irreproachability of his teaching. The Holy Church honors the memory of St. Diadochus, together with all the Saints who shone through their ascetic deeds, on Cheese Saturday. During

the service on this day, in the second ode, the following is sung: “I sing of Diadochus, together with Eustathius and Juvenal, the most exalted of the Fathers.”

Blessed Diadochus on the Ultimate Limits or Summit of Perfection in the Principal Virtues

1. The limit, or summit, of perfection in faith is the dispassionate immersion of the mind in God.
2. The limit of hope is the mind’s turning toward the goods to be received.
3. The limit of patience is to stand steadfast in patience toward the invisible, as if seeing it with the eyes of the mind.
4. The limit of non-covetousness is to desire not to have, just as another desires to have.
5. The pinnacle of understanding is not to be aware of oneself in ecstasy (or total devotion) toward God.
6. The limit of humility is the resolute forgetting of one’s own good deeds.
7. The limit of non-anger is a great desire not to be angry.
8. The limit of purity is a feeling constantly attached to God.
9. The limit of love is to multiply one’s friendly disposition toward those who insult and revile one.
10. The pinnacle of perfect transformation in the sweet tasting of God is to regard the sorrow of death as a joy.

A Spiritual Treatise, Divided into One Hundred Chapters of Active Practice, Filled with Spiritual Knowledge and Reasoning

*1. On the three virtues which, like leaders, must precede the spiritual contemplation of the mind.*⁷⁸

Let faith, hope, and love—and above all love—lead the way in spiritual contemplation, brothers; for those two (faith and hope) teach only to despise visible goods, while love unites the very soul with God through virtue, comprehending the Invisible with a spiritual sense.

2. When and How a Person Becomes Good.

By nature, there is but one God who is good. But a person also becomes good through zealous diligence in cultivating good character, being transformed—from what he is not by nature—by the One who is essentially good, when the soul, through zealous diligence in pursuing the good, becomes so much a part of God as it desires with all its strength and actively seeks; for it is said: “*Be good and merciful, just as your Father in heaven is*” (Luke 6:36; Matt. 5:48).

3. When and How Sin Begins.

There is no evil in nature, nor is anyone evil by nature; for God has created nothing evil. But when someone, through the desires of the heart, introduces the image of evil into himself, then evil—even though it does not exist in nature—begins to exist in the form desired by the one who does so. That is why, while constantly and diligently remembering God, we must not heed the habitual promptings toward evil; for the good that exists in nature is more powerful than the evil that enters nature from without through habit—since the former exists, while the latter does not, except when it is brought about.

4. When and how do we attain the state of being in the image of God?

We are all human beings created in the image of God; but to be in the likeness of God is the privilege of only those who, out of great love, have surrendered their freedom to God. For when we are not our own masters, when we deny ourselves, then we become like Him who, through His love, has reconciled us to Himself—a state that no one can attain unless they persuade their soul not to be carried away by the allurements of a self-satisfied and self-indulgent life.

5. How to ensure that the will is always ready for good alone.

Self-mastery is the free will of the rational soul, readily striving toward whatever it desires. We will have such a will ready for good alone if we always eradicate every evil thought with good thoughts.

6. What is the light of true vision,

and what enables the mind to make use of this light.

⁷⁸ These headings are not found in the Greek text. They were invented by the Latin translator. Believing that they will greatly aid in understanding and remembering the wise teachings of St. Diadochus, we borrow them from him (Patrologia Graeca, Migne, vol. 65).

The light of true knowledge is the ability to distinguish good from evil without error. And then (that is, when such discernment exists and life itself is ordered according to it), the righteous path, lifting the mind toward the sun of truth, God, leads it into that boundless intellectual enlightenment—as one who, with boldness (faith and hope), has finally attained the one love. That which is righteous must be reclaimed from the hands of those who revile and trample upon it, with non-angry zeal; for zeal for piety triumphs not through (angry) hatred, but through (loving) rebuke and persuasion.

7. *On what the spiritual word produces—and on how*

how the movement of love makes discourse about God easy and abundant.

The spiritual word instills satisfactory conviction in the intellect; for it (the word) proceeds from God through the action of love. Why, then, does our mind move effortlessly and without burden through the waves of theological contemplation, without suffering the lamentable and distressing scarcity of enlightened thoughts? In this state, it soars freely in all-encompassing contemplations, as much as the action of love desires. It is indeed a good thing—when speaking of God—to always expect, with faith, the enlightenment of the mind brought about by love; for there is nothing more meager than the mind when, without God, it undertakes to philosophize about God.

8. *When it is appropriate to begin a conversation about divine matters.*

Just as one who is not enlightened in the spirit should not engage in spiritual contemplation, so too one who is richly illuminated by the grace of the Holy Spirit should not venture into discourse about such matters: for there, the scarcity of luminous thoughts cloaks the mind in the darkness of ignorance, while here their abundance prevents one from speaking, since at this time the soul, revelling in the love of God, desires to enjoy the glory of the Lord in silence; Therefore, one should engage in divine discourse (conversation about God) when a moderate level of spiritual arousal is observed; for such a measure provides the soul with a certain image of glorious words (which accurately and clearly depict invisible spiritual realities), while at the same time the longed-for spiritual illumination nourishes the speaker's faith, so that the teacher may be the first to taste the fruit of knowledge that flows from love. *"The laborer is worthy to receive his share of the harvest first"* (2 Tim. 2:6).

9. *On the gift of knowledge and the gift of wisdom,*

how each enlightens, and how they are acquired.

From the one Holy Spirit come both wisdom and knowledge, as with all divine gifts; but each of these gifts, like all the others, has its own distinct effect (energy). This is why the Apostle testifies that to one is given wisdom, and to another, revelation (1 Cor. 12:8). Vision unites the soul with God in an experiential (tangible) way, but it does not inspire the soul to discuss this or other spiritual matters; this is why some who wisely lead a life of solitude, though enlightened by the sense of knowledge, do not venture into discourse on divine matters. Wisdom, however, if it is granted to someone along with the knowledge that comes from the fear of God (which is rare), reveals with love the innermost effects (energies) of vision; for vision usually enlightens through an inner effect, while wisdom does so through the word. They are attained in this way: knowledge comes through prayer and profound silence accompanied by complete carefreeness; and wisdom comes through humble study of the words of the Spirit, and above all, through the grace of the all-giving God.

10. *When the soul is in struggle, one must remain silent;*

and when it is at peace, then one should engage in conversation,

while restraining the mind with humility.

When the soul is stirred by anger against the passions, one must know that this is a time to be silent, for it is the hour of battle. But when one sees that this agitation has subsided—whether through prayer or almsgiving—then let him yield to the impulse of love to utter divine words, while nevertheless restraining the wings of the mind with the bonds of humility; for if one does not humble oneself to the utmost through self-abasement, one cannot speak worthily of God's greatness.

11. *The spiritual word does not lead to pride,*

but the word of worldly wisdom does.

Why is this so? The spiritual word keeps the soul free from vanity; for, filling every part of it with the sensation of the richness of spiritual light, it ensures that the soul has no need for human honor. That is why it also keeps the mind free from vain thoughts at all times, immersing it entirely in the love of God. The word of worldly wisdom, however, always beckons a person toward a love of glory; for it is incapable of allowing one to experience firsthand the good that comes from it (which would satisfy the heart) and, instead, bestows

upon its followers a love for human praise, being itself an invention of vain people. We ourselves will recognize this quality of God's spiritual Word without error if we spend the hours when we have no need to speak in warm remembrance of God, in carefree silence.

12. *On Self-Love and Love of God—*

and what is characteristic of those who love themselves and those who love God.

Whoever loves himself cannot love God; but whoever does not love himself because of the overflowing abundance of God's love—he alone truly loves God. Such a person never seeks his own glory, but always seeks only the glory of God. For just as the self-loving person naturally seeks his own glory, so the God-loving person naturally seeks and loves the glory of his Creator. It is characteristic of a God-loving soul, filled with the spirit of God, to seek, in the fulfillment of all the commandments it observes, the glory of God alone, while regarding itself, to delight in humility. For glory is fitting for God, because of His greatness, and humility is fitting for man, so that through it we may become one with God: for if we too wish to do this, then, following the example of St. John the Baptist, rejoicing in the glory of the Lord, we will say unceasingly: "*He must increase, but we must decrease*" (John 3:30).

13. *When and why does it happen*

that a person seems to himself not to love God,

as if they wished to, even though they love Him very deeply.

I saw a certain man who was always sorrowful and weeping because he did not love God as much as he wished, even though he loved Him so much that he constantly harbored in his soul a fervent desire that God alone might be glorified in him, while he himself was as nothing. Such a person does not know who he truly is, nor does he take pleasure in the very praises spoken to him. For in his great longing for humility, he does not understand his own worth, but, serving God as the law commands priests, he, through a strong inclination toward the love of God, obscures the memory of his own worth, hiding the praise due to him in the depths of his love for God, in a spirit of humility, so that in his thoughts he may always appear to himself as a lowly servant, as if the dignity required of him were completely foreign to him, out of a strong desire for humility. Acting in this way, we too ought to flee from all honor and glory for the sake of the overflowing riches of love for the Lord, who has loved us so much.

14. *Concerning the one who loves God with the feelings of his heart,*

and how, by completely renouncing self-love,

comes to a rapturous love for God.

Whoever loves God in the depths of his heart is known by Him. For to the extent that one receives love for God in the depths of his heart, to that extent does he himself abide in God's love. Why does such a person never cease, with a certain fervent zeal, to yearn for enlightenment of the mind and strive for it with such intensity that at times he feels the complete exhaustion of the very strength of his bones, becoming, as it were, unaware of himself, but entirely transformed and absorbed by love for God? Such a person is, in this life, both present and absent; for while still journeying in his body, through the movement of the soul and by the power of love, he ceaselessly draws near to God—and is strangely received by Him. For, burning ceaselessly in his heart with the inexhaustible fire of love, he necessarily remains heartily attached to God, having completely renounced self-love through the power of this love for God. "*For,*" he says, "*if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are in our right minds, it is for you*" (2 Cor. 5:13).

15. *When someone begins to love their neighbor,*

and why carnal love quickly fades,

but spiritual love never does.

When someone begins to feel a deep love for God, then in a spiritual sense he also begins to love his neighbor, and once he has begun, he does not cease: such is the love of which all the Holy Scriptures speak. Carnal love, not being bound by a spiritual sense, evaporates very easily as soon as even the slightest occasion arises. Spiritual love, however, is not like that: even if some sorrow should be endured, in a God-loving soul under God's influence, the bond of love is not severed: for, warmed by the heat of love for God, it immediately returns to a good disposition and receives love for one's neighbor with great joy, even if a considerable offense has been received from him or great harm has been suffered; for then the bitterness of discord is completely absorbed by the sweetness of God.

16. *On love for God in the heart,*

how it is acquired; also on perfect love,

which is free from the purifying fear of God, and of another kind of love that is imperfect, combined with purifying fear.

No one can love God with all their heart without first kindling the fear of God in the depths of their heart; for the soul comes to active love only after it has been purified and softened by the influence of the fear of God. Yet no one can attain the fear of God—with the fruit it bears—unless they are free from all worldly cares; for only when the mind is at rest in complete stillness and freedom from worry does the fear of God begin to have a saving effect upon it, purifying it through a powerful sense of that fear from all earthly coarseness, so as to raise it to full love for the all-good God. Thus, fear is the attribute of the righteous who are still being purified, in whom a moderate measure of love is present, whereas perfect love is the attribute of those who have already been purified, in whom there is no fear, since *“perfect love casts out fear”* (1 John 4:18). Both of these states are found only among the righteous, who, through the work of the Holy Spirit, are progressing in virtue. This is why Scripture says in one place, *“Fear God, all you who are holy to Him”* (Ps. 33:10), and in another, *“Love the Lord, all you who are devout to Him”* (Ps. 30: 24), “ ”—making it clear to us that the fear of God is characteristic only of the righteous who are still being purified, with a moderate measure of love, as has been said, whereas perfect love is characteristic of the righteous who have been purified; and in them there is no longer any fearful thought, but there remains only a ceaseless burning and clinging of the soul to God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, as the Prophet says: *“My soul clings to You; let Your right hand uphold me”* (Ps. 62: 9).

17. *How a sick soul begins to be healed through the power of the fear of God, and how, little by little, it is brought to perfect health through love.*

Just as wounds that occur in the body, if they are not cleansed and prepared as they should be, do not respond to the medicines applied by doctors; but when they are cleansed, they respond to the medicines and thereby attain complete healing: so too the soul, as long as it remains negligent and is covered with the leprosy of sensuality, cannot feel the fear of God, even if someone were to constantly preach to it about God’s terrible and inescapable judgment; but when it begins to purify itself through the act of giving itself full attention, then it begins to feel, as if it were a life-giving remedy, the fear of God burning within it, as in some fire, through the effect of reproofs; and in this way, purifying itself little by little, it finally attains perfect purification. At the same time, as much love as is added within her, so much does fear diminish, until she attains perfect love, in which, as it is said, there is no fear, but perfect dispassion, brought about by the glory of God. May the fear of God be our unceasing praise above all praises, and ultimately love—the fulfillment of the law of perfection in Christ.

18. *A soul entangled by worldly cares cannot love God or even judge its own condition correctly.*

A soul that has not freed itself from worldly cares will neither love God sincerely nor abhor the devil as it ought. Concern for this earthly life weighs upon it like a heavy veil, and its mind cannot establish within itself a court of judgment regarding this matter, so as to hear within itself the unerring verdicts of the court (of conscience). This is why detachment from the world is absolutely necessary.

19. *What is characteristic of a pure soul.*

A pure soul is characterized by words free from envy, zeal without malice, and unceasing concern for the glory of the Lord. Then (when the soul is pure) the mind faithfully sets its scales (just as the pans of a balance are set), and remains sober in its judgment of all things, as in the purest and most incorruptible court.

20. *It is necessary to combine faith with deeds, and deeds with faith.*

Faith without works, and works without faith, cannot be approved. A believer, in order to prove his faith, must offer works to the Lord. And the faith of our father Abraham would not have been counted as righteousness if he had not brought forth its fruit—his son—as a sacrifice to God.

21. *What is faith without works, and what is faith that acts in love?*

He who loves God believes sincerely and performs the works of faith in a godly manner. But one who merely believes, without abiding in love and in that very faith which he seems to possess, does not truly have it. He believes with a certain lightness of mind, lacking within himself the effective (unifying) plumb line of glorious love. Only *“faith working through love”* (Gal. 5:6) is the crown of all virtues.

22. *One should not curiously probe the depths of faith.*

He who probes the depths of faith is tossed about by waves of thought; but he who contemplates it with a simple heart enjoys a sweet inner stillness. The depth of faith, being the water of oblivion, does not

tolerate being looked into or scrutinized by curious thoughts. Let us, then, with a simple mind, float upon these waters, so that in this way we may reach the harbor of God's will.

23. *When the soul cannot, through the feeling of the heart or the taste*
perceive the fragrance of heavenly blessings, even if it desires them intensely.

No one can sincerely love or believe unless he is his own judge. For when our conscience is troubled by its own reproaches, the mind is not permitted to perceive the fragrance of the supreme blessings, but is immediately torn by doubt: by virtue of previous experiences of faith, it yearns for them with a warm impulse, yet it can no longer lovingly perceive them in the feelings of the heart, due, as I have said, to the frequent pangs of a convicting conscience. However, if we purify ourselves through the warmest prayer and attentiveness, we will once again attain this longed-for blessing, with an even greater, God-given appreciation of it.

24. *On the twofold sense—the bodily and the spiritual—and how one ought to*
to arouse the spiritual sense to the enjoyment of heavenly things.

Just as our bodily senses involuntarily draw us toward the goods visible to us, so too does our intellectual—or spiritual—sense usually guide us toward the invisible goods when it tastes divine goodness. Everything desires what is akin to itself: the soul, being incorporeal, desires heavenly blessings, while the body, being of the earth, desires earthly delights. Thus, we will unerringly attain the ability to experience the immaterial if we refine our callous body through labor.

25. *The soul's sensibility was unified in its functioning*
in the state of innocence; through the Fall it was divided,
and the grace of the Holy Spirit restores it to the simplicity of unity.

That the natural faculty is one is taught to us by the very action of holy knowledge (the mind enlightened by grace). Through Adam's transgression, it was divided into two modes; but through the Holy Spirit, it is made one and simple again. However, no one can perceive this within themselves except those who, in anticipation of future blessings, willingly renounce the blessings of this life and, through self-restraint, dry up every desire of the bodily senses. For only in such people does the mind, because of its complete freedom from worry, perform its functions soundly and vigorously, able to taste the divine goodness in an ineffable way through the senses, and at the same time, as it progresses, to communicate its joys to the body, expressing its rejoicing through confession with a kind of boundless word of love, saying: "*My heart trusts in Him, and He will help me; my body will flourish, and I will confess my devotion to Him*" (Ps. 27:7). Such joy, which occurs in this instance in both soul and body, is a humble reminder of eternal, imperishable life.

26. *One must keep the mind unperturbed,*
in order to discern correctly whether thoughts come from God or from the devil.

Those who strive for spiritual growth must always keep their thoughts under control, so that the mind may accurately discern the thoughts that arise, and, having discerned them, store the good and God-sent ones in the treasury of memory, while casting out the unwholesome and demonic ones from the recesses of the soul. And the sea, when it is calm, is visible to fishermen down to its very depths, so that almost none of the living creatures moving there are hidden from them; but when it is stirred up by the winds, it conceals in its impenetrable murkiness what it had generously revealed during the pleasant stillness; at which time the art of those who devise fishing tricks is rendered useless. The same thing happens to the contemplative mind, especially when the depths of the soul are stirred by unjust anger.

27. *Why are there so few who fully understand their own failings,*
and what is needed to achieve this.

There are very few who are fully aware of all their failings, and whose minds never stray from remembering God. Just as our physical eyes, when healthy, can see everything clearly—even the tiniest gnats and flies flitting through the air—but when they are dusty or covered with moisture, they see only what is large and constantly before them, albeit dimly, while they are completely unable to perceive what is small through their sense of sight: so too the soul, when through self-reflection it dispels the darkness that befalls it from worldliness, then regards even its small failings as very great, adding tear to tear with great gratitude, lamenting over them—as it is said: "*The righteous will confess Your name*" (Ps. 139: 14); but when it is possessed by a worldly disposition, then even if it commits murder or some other punishable act, it feels little remorse; as for other failings, it cannot even perceive them, and often even regards them as virtues, and is not ashamed to defend them fervently, poor thing.

28. *How the Holy Spirit purifies the soul, and what we must do to achieve this.*

It is the work of the Holy Spirit alone to purify the mind. For if the Stronger One does not come to seize and bind that predator (Luke 11:22), then what has been stolen by him cannot be recovered in any way. It is fitting, therefore, to soothe the Holy Spirit within us through every virtue, and above all through inner peace, so that we may have within us the lamp of reason always shining; for when He shines unceasingly in the innermost recesses of the soul, then not only are even the smallest, dark suggestions of the demons made evident in the mind, but they also become powerless and unstable, being exposed by that Holy and glorious Light. This is why the Apostle says, “*Do not quench the Spirit*” (1 Thess. 5:19)—that is, *do not “offend”* (Eph. 4:30) the grace of the Holy Spirit with evil deeds or thoughts, lest we be deprived of that all-conquering lamp. For the Spirit, who is eternal and life-giving, does not thereby cease to exist, but His grievedness—or rather, His withdrawal—leaves our mind hardened and alienated from the light of knowledge.

29. *On the unity of the soul’s sensibility before sin*
and its division due to sin—and on the fact
when an irrational desire is united
and becomes in harmony with the rational.

There is, as I have said, a single natural faculty in the soul [for the five well-known bodily senses are a separate matter; they serve the needs of the body, as the all-holy and philanthropic Spirit of God teaches us]; but it is now divided into two in the manifestations of the soul’s movements, due to the inclination toward evil, which has attached itself to the mind through disobedience. At times, it is drawn to the passionate part of the soul—from which we sweetly partake in the pleasures of this life; at other times, it delights in its rational, intellectual movements—since our mind, when we live in chastity, eagerly strives to partake of heavenly beauties. If, therefore, we become accustomed to despising the goods of this world, we will finally be able to bring the soul’s earthly desires into harmony with its rational disposition, by virtue of the communion of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us. For unless His Divinity effectively illuminates the innermost recesses of our hearts, we will be unable to taste heavenly blessings with an undivided sense—that is, with the whole disposition of the soul.

30. *When and how the mind’s discernment distinguishes true consolations from false ones.*

The faculty of the mind is its discernment, which accurately distinguishes spiritual matters. Just as our bodily sense of taste, when in a healthy state, infallibly distinguishes the good from the bad—desiring what is pleasant (and turning away from what is unpleasant)—so too our mind, when it begins to function in a good frame of mind and with complete detachment from the transitory, can richly experience divine consolation and not be led astray in the least by anything contrary to it. For just as the body, by tasting earthly delights, acquires infallible experience in this sense, so too the mind, when it rises above carnal reasoning, can taste and discern the consolation of the Holy Spirit without error, as it is said: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Ps. 33: 9), and, having an unforgettable memory of this experience through the work of love, to discern what is best without error, according to the words of the Holy Apostle: “*And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you may test what is best*” (Phil. 1: 9).

31. *On Satan’s false consolation, which he instills during the repose of sleep,*
and how the mind dispels it by warmly invoking the name of Jesus
and puts Satan himself to flight.

When the mind begins to feel the gracious comfort of the Holy Spirit, then Satan also instills his own comfort into the soul through a seemingly sweet sensation, during the tranquility of the night, at the moment of the most subtle kind of sleep (or falling asleep). If at that time the mind holds the holy name of the Lord Jesus in the warmest remembrance, and uses this most holy and glorious name as a sure weapon against delusion, then that cunning deceiver immediately withdraws, but in return finally launches an attack against the soul with his own face (and not with thoughts). Thus, by accurately discerning the deceptive wiles of the evil one, the mind succeeds more and more in distinguishing spiritual matters.

32. *On the soul’s good consolation, whether in a state of wakefulness*
or during the repose of sleep, and how Satan
attempts to deceive the soul with false comfort during sleep.

True consolation occurs either while the body is awake or as it sinks into sleep, when one, in warm remembrance of God, is, as it were, drawn close by love for Him; whereas deceptive, alluring consolation, as I have said, always occurs at the moment when the ascetic enters a subtle kind of drowsiness or absent-

mindfulness, accompanied by a lukewarm remembrance of God. That which comes from God clearly draws the souls of the pious ascetics into God's love through a powerful outpouring of spiritual feelings; but this usually envelops the soul in a certain wind of deceptive charm and, during bodily sleep, attempts to steal the sensation by the taste of something pleasant, even though the mind remains, to a certain extent, sober with regard to the remembrance of God. – Therefore, if, as I have said, the mind remains sober at such a time, remembering the Lord Jesus, it immediately dispels this deceptive breath of the enemy that appears pleasant, and joyfully steps forward to fight against him, having a weapon ready against him, by grace, through its most praiseworthy spiritual experience.

33. *How joy in the Holy Spirit is distinguished from the devil's false joy,*
and when the devil sets out to deceive with false comfort.

If the soul, with an unwavering and undreamy movement, is set ablaze with the love of God, drawing even the body itself into the depths of this ineffable love—whether in wakefulness or, as I said, during the ascetic's sleep induced by holy grace, while the soul thinks of absolutely nothing else but that one thing to which it is stirred—then one must know that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Being entirely filled with pleasant sensations from that ineffable divine sweetness, she cannot at that moment think of anything else, but only feels herself filled with an inexhaustible joy. But if, in such a state of excitement, the mind perceives a certain doubtful wavering or some impure thought, and if in this situation she invokes the Holy Name of the Lord to ward off evil—and not, moreover, out of love for God alone—then one must know that this consolation comes from the deceiver and is merely a phantom of joy. Such joy is imposed from without and does not manifest as a quality or a constant disposition of the soul; evidently, here the enemy seeks to seduce the soul. Seeing that the mind is beginning to demonstrate true discernment of its feelings, he approaches to comfort the soul with his own so-called consolations, which seem good, hoping that, being distracted by this delusional, insipid sweetness, the soul will fail to recognize its entanglement with the deceiver. By these signs we can discern “*the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception*” (1 John 4:6).—However, it is impossible for anyone to taste divine goodness with the senses or to tangibly experience demonic sorrow unless one is convinced within oneself that grace has made its dwelling in the depths of one's mind, while evil spirits have no place to nest anywhere near the heart's faculties. The demons, however, do not want people to ascertain this in any way, lest the mind, knowing this for certain, arm itself against them with the constant remembrance of God.

34. *On the Two Kinds of Love—Natural and Spiritual (Grace-Filled)*
and the Distinctions Between Them.

There is a natural love in the soul, and there is love poured into it by the Holy Spirit. The former, if we so desire, comes into motion in proportion to our will; which is why it is easily plundered by evil spirits as soon as we cease to maintain our will with sustained effort. But this love so inflames the soul with love for God that all parts of the soul cling to the ineffable sweetness of divine love in a certain boundless simplicity of disposition; for then the mind, as if filled to the brim by the spiritual (grace-filled) action (energy), pours forth a certain abundant stream of love and joy.

35. *On the grace of God, how it alone calms the agitated movements of the soul.*

Just as a stormy sea, when anointing oil is poured upon it, usually calms down because the richness of the oil overcomes the force of the storm's surging waves, so too our soul, anointed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is filled with a sweet stillness; for, as the Prophet says: “*But my soul, be still before God*” (Ps. 61:6)—then, to its delight, every agitation within it is quelled, yielding to the grace of the Spirit that overshadows it and to the serenity it engenders. Therefore, no matter what disturbances the demons may attempt to cause in the soul at that time, it remains at peace within itself and full of joy. But no one can attain such a state, nor remain in it, unless he ceaselessly sobers and sweetens his soul with the fear of God; for the fear of the Lord bestows upon those who strive a certain kind of purity and holiness. “*The fear of the Lord is pure,*” says the Prophet, “*enduring forever*” (Ps. 18:10).

36. *How and when the soul can perceive the glory of God;*
and on the deceitfulness of the devil, who sometimes shows light,
or something resembling light.

Let no one, upon hearing of the mind's perception, imagine that the glory of God appears to him through the senses. We say that when the soul is pure, it perceives divine consolation through a certain ineffable tasting, but not in such a way that anything from the invisible realm appears to it through the senses; “*for now we walk by faith, not by sight,*” as the blessed Paul says (2 Cor. 5:7). Therefore, if any of those who

are striving in the spiritual life should see a light, or a vision resembling fire, or hear a voice, let him not under any circumstances take such a manifestation as true. For this is clearly a deception of the enemy—and many to whom this has happened have, through ignorance, strayed from the true path. We, however, know that as long as we live as strangers in this mortal body, we are separated from God (2 Cor. 5:6)—that is, we are unable to see Him or His wondrous heavenly things with our eyes.

37. *On dreams sent by God and those inspired by the devil, and on the difference between them.*

Dreams that appear to the soul through God's love are infallible indicators of spiritual health. They do not shift from one image to another; they do not instill fear, nor do they provoke laughter or sudden sorrow, but approach the soul with complete gentleness and fill it with spiritual joy; therefore, even after the body awakens, the soul eagerly seeks this joy it experienced in the dream. With demonic visions, everything is the opposite of this—they do not remain in the same form, nor do they reveal their appearance for long to those who are not confused; for they cannot be satisfied for long with that which is not of their own volition, but which they borrow solely from their own deceitfulness. At the same time, they speak at length and promise great things, while terrifying us even more with threats, often taking on the appearance of warriors; sometimes they sing flattery to the soul with a loud cry. When the mind is clear, it quickly recognizes them, and—sometimes it rouses the body through mental effort, and sometimes it prefers to remain in the same state, rejoicing that it was able to recognize their deceit and expose them even within the dream, thereby provoking their great anger against itself. – It happens, however, that even good dreams do not bring joy to the soul, but rather a certain sweet sorrow and a painless tear. This happens to those who have already attained great humility.

38. *On the Virtue of Not Believing in Any Dreams.*

We have explained how to distinguish between good and bad dreams, based on what we ourselves have heard from experienced elders. Let us, however, hold fast all the more to the rule—as a great virtue—that we must by no means believe any dream. For dreams are, for the most part, nothing other than idols of the mind, the play of the imagination, or, as I have already said, the devil's mockery and amusement at our expense. If, adhering to this rule, we sometimes fail to accept a dream sent to us by God, the loving Lord Jesus will not be angry with us for this, knowing that we dare to do so out of fear of demonic wiles. For although the aforementioned method of discerning dreams is sound, it does happen, however, that the soul—insensitive due to some enemy-induced rapture and having been involuntarily defiled—which, I believe, no one is free from—loses the path of sound discernment and believes evil dreams to be good.

39. *An example proving that God does not hold anyone accountable for disbelieving the dreams He sends.*

Let the following incident serve as proof of what has been said: a master, returning home after a long absence, stands at the gate at night and calls to his servant to open it; the servant, not recognizing for certain whether it was his master, resolutely refused to let him in, fearing that, deceived by the similarity of the voice, he might let in a villain and become a traitor to the property entrusted to him by his master; and when day broke, the master not only did not become angry with him for this, but on the contrary, he showered him with great praise, recognizing that the servant had mistook his own voice for a deception, not wishing to lose any part of his property.

40. *On the soul's perception of the spiritual light within itself, on the lights of the enemy, and on how to live in the world while remaining alien to it.*

There is no doubt that when the divine light begins to act tangibly within our mind, it becomes entirely luminous, so that it itself perceives abundantly this light that dwells within it. This is always the case as soon as the soul strongly reigns over the passions. But it happens that something similar appears illusory in the mind, arising from the enemy's malice—sometimes as light, sometimes as fire—as the divine Paul teaches, saying that even "*Satan*" sometimes "*disguises himself as an angel of light*" (2 Cor. 11:14). Therefore, one should not embark on the ascetic life with such a hope (that is, the hope of seeing light within oneself), lest Satan find a soul already prepared to be led astray by delusion and actually lead it astray. But one thing must be kept in mind in this regard: to attain love for God with all one's senses and with full conviction of the heart—which is to love God with all one's soul, with all one's heart, and with all one's mind (Luke 10:27). Whoever is moved by God's grace in this way, while living in the world, remains a stranger to the world.

41. *On obedience—that it is the greatest of virtues, is the gateway to love and the forerunner of all virtues.*

Obedience is, as is well known, the first among the introductory (beginner's) virtues; for it cuts off pride and engenders humility within us. That is why it serves as the gateway to love for Christ—God—for those who embrace it with a sincere heart. Having cast it aside, Adam fell into the depths of hell. But the Lord, having loved him, for the sake of the plan of our salvation, was obedient to His Father even unto the cross and death (Phil. 2:8), —and this even though He was in no way inferior to His majesty—so that, by His obedience, He might atone for the guilt of human disobedience and lead those who live in obedience to a blessed and eternal life. Therefore, those who take up the struggle against the devil's pride must, first and foremost, strive for this virtue—and it, leading the way, will then unerringly show them all the paths of virtue.

42. *On the fact that self-restraint must be maintained in all things,*
so that not only the bodily virtues may be attained,
but also those that purify the inner person.

Self-restraint is an essential part of all virtues; that is why "*the one who trains*" must "*restrain himself*" from everything (1 Cor. 9:25). Just as when even the smallest part of the human body is removed, the entire appearance of the person becomes disfigured, no matter how small the part that is missing—so too, when someone neglects even a single virtue, they disrupt the entire splendor of self-control, even if they do not realize it. That is why we must not only practice the virtues that are difficult for the body, but also those that have the power to purify our inner being. For what good is it to keep the body chaste when the soul commits adultery with the demon of disobedience? Or how will one be crowned who guards himself against gluttony and every other bodily lust, yet neglects vanity and vainglory, unable to endure even the slightest insult; when he knows that the light of righteousness will balance the scales (of retribution) with the righteous deeds only of those who performed them in a spirit of humility?

43. *On the Benefits and Practice of Food Abstinence.*

Those who strive in the spiritual life must hate all unspoken lusts so much that this hatred becomes a habit for them. As for abstinence in food, it must be observed in such a way that no one ever goes so far as to regard any food as abominable. This is a demonic act and is akin to swearing an oath. For we do not abstain from certain foods because they are evil by nature—far be it from us! —but so that, by abstaining from them, we may proportionately subdue the fiery passions of the flesh; and also so that the food remaining from our consumption may be used to meet the immediate needs of the poor—which is a sign of sincere love.

44. *How to make it easy to give up the sweetness of food and other pleasures.*

To eat and drink from all that is offered, giving thanks to God, is in no way contrary to the law of the vision; for everything in God's creations is "*very good*" (Gen. 1:31). But to voluntarily abstain from overeating and eating sweets is very prudent and wise. — Yet we cannot so willingly renounce the delights set before us unless, through actual practice and experience, we taste the divine sweetness with all our senses.

45. *On the elimination of excessive self-restraint,*
so that the body may remain strong for spiritual feats.

Just as when burdened by an abundance of food, our body makes the mind somewhat careless and sluggish, so too, when exhausted by excessive abstinence, it makes the contemplative part of the soul despondent and unwilling to reason. It is fitting, therefore, to adjust one's physical diet in proportion to the body's strength and condition: when it is healthy, to restrain it as much as necessary, and when it is weak, to relax the restrictions somewhat. One who is striving for spiritual excellence should not let the body grow lax, but should remain as strong as is required for the task, so that the soul, too, may be properly purified through bodily labor.

46. *On Easing the Usual Strictness of Abstinence*
on the occasion of the arrival of brothers or other travelers.

When, upon the arrival of any brothers or any traveler, vanity, taking advantage of this occasion, stirs up and, inflating us with its poison, begins to incite us not to violate our rule regarding food; then it is especially necessary to relax the usual measure of food intake somewhat. For in this way we will drive the devil away from us, as he laments the failure of his temptation; we will prudently fulfill the law of love; and we will preserve the mystery of our abstinence, keeping it hidden through this relaxation.

47. *On fasting and other bodily virtues—*
that they alone, without a good disposition of the heart,
have no value before God.

Fasting, though it is a tool that prepares those who desire chastity, has value—but not before God. Therefore, those who strive for piety should not boast about it, but should hope to achieve their goal through faith in God alone. And masters of any art, in the perfection of their skill, do not prove themselves by the quality of their tools, but by patiently completing a work, and that work itself serves as an indicator of how skilled they are in their craft.

48. *On the benefit of moderation in drinking for spiritual fruitfulness in the soul.*

Just as soil that is watered in moderation yields a bountiful harvest of the pure seed sown in it, while soil drenched by excessive rains yields only thorns and thistles: so too the soil of the heart, when we drink wine in moderation, reveals its natural seeds to be pure, and those sown in it by the Holy Spirit bear good fruit and are fruitful; but when we overwater it with excessive drinking, it yields only thorns and thistles in all its thoughts.

49. *On intemperance in drinking, and how it gives rise to shameful lusts.*

When our mind floats on the waves of drunkenness, it not only gazes passionately at the images presented to it by demons in dreams, but also, conjuring up certain beautiful faces within itself, delights in these fantasies as if they were living beings. For when the lustful parts of the body are warmed by the heat of wine, a certain urge presses upon the mind to conjure up such shadows of passion within itself with sensual delight. That is why we must, by observing moderation, avoid the harm that comes from excess. Then the mind, lacking the sweetness that drives it to depict sin, remains entirely free from daydreams and, even better, free from sensual delight.

50. *On Avoiding the Consumption of Beverages That Stimulate the Appetite,*
and those artificially prepared.

Those who wish to subdue the rising desires of the body should not touch artificially prepared beverages, which the schemers behind such inventions call “appetizers” because they usually pave the way for a multitude of foods to enter the stomach. For not only is their nature harmful to bodies engaged in ascetic struggle, but the very senseless mixing of the substances that make up these beverages greatly offends a God-fearing conscience. For what is lacking in the nature of wine that there should be a need to temper its strength by adding various sweeteners?

51. *What did the Lord wish to teach by accepting vinegar on the Cross from a sponge attached to a reed?*

Our Lord and Teacher of this holy (ascetic) life, Jesus Christ, was given vinegar to drink during His suffering by those who served the devil’s commands, in order to leave us, as it seems to me, a clear example of the attitude with which we must undertake our holy struggles. By this He seems to say: those who struggle against sin should not partake of sweet foods or drinks; rather, they must patiently endure the bitterness of the struggle. One might also compare the hyssop to the sponge, so that through both a more perfect image of our purification may be presented. The former, being a hard object, represents the nature of spiritual struggles, while the latter, being used in ablutions, reminds us of the complete perfection of purification.

52. *The spiritual should not go to the bathhouse; and here is why.*

No one would consider going to the bathhouse sinful or unwise; but to abstain from it for the sake of self-restraint, I call a courageous and most chaste act. For in such a case, neither is our body indulged by that pleasurable washing, nor is the memory of Adam’s disgraceful nakedness stirred up in the soul, so that, like him, we might seek leaves to cover the second shame of nakedness. This is especially necessary for us, who, having recently freed ourselves from the pernicious corruption of this life, must strive in every way to remain in inseparable union with the beauty of chastity through the spotless purity of our bodies.

53. *Why should a doctor be summoned in monasteries to treat an illness;*
and what those living in seclusion in the desert should do in such cases.

Nothing prevents one from calling a doctor during times of illness. God foresaw that there would be a need for the art of healing and willed that it should eventually be developed on the basis of human experience; for this purpose, He had already provided for the existence of medicines among His creations. However, one should not place one’s hope for healing in them, but in our true Physician and Savior, Jesus Christ. I say this, however, to those who lead an ascetic life in monasteries or in cities, for the reason that, judging by the course of events that befall them, they cannot always maintain an unceasing exercise of faith, being surrounded by love, —or even so that they may not fall into pride and the devil’s temptation, because of which some of them publicly declare before many that they have no need of doctors. But if anyone leads a hermit’s life in deserted

places with two or three like-minded brothers, then no matter what ailments he may suffer, let him entrust himself to the One Lord, the healer of all our sicknesses and infirmities. Through the Lord, even in the desert itself, he finds sufficient comfort in his illnesses. Moreover, just as his act of faith can never run dry, so too does he have no opportunity to flaunt his virtue of patience, being shielded by the gentle veil of the desert. For this reason, the Lord brings those of one mind into His house (Ps. 67:7).

54. *What Constitutes Cowardice in Illness, and What Constitutes Good Temper.*

When we are greatly distressed by the ailments that befall us, we must realize that the naked soul is still enslaved to the love of the body. For just as it craves material pleasures, it does not wish to renounce the goods of this life; thus, it considers it a great burden not to be able, because of illness, to enjoy the things that are pleasant to the flesh. – If, however, it bears the sorrows of illness with gratitude, this is a sign that it is not far from the limits of dispassion. Why, then, does it await death itself with joy, as the means of entering into true life?

55. *What is required so that the soul does not take delight in the blessings of this world, but rather to desire to be released from the body?*

The soul will not desire to be freed from the body unless it becomes completely indifferent to this world (i.e., to all that is earthly and worldly). – All bodily senses resist faith, for the senses seek to enjoy only the present—that which is here and now—while faith promises the abundance of future blessings. Why should the ascetic never think of leafy, shady trees, nor of flowing springs, nor of flower-filled meadows, nor of magnificent houses, nor of pleasant conversations with loved ones—just as he should not recall rich offerings, even if he happened to have been honored with them. But he ought to make grateful use of what is necessary, and to regard this life as a kind of pilgrimage, alien to all carnal comfort. For only by restraining our thoughts in this way can we direct them entirely toward the path leading to eternal life.

56. *Just as the unrestrained enjoyment of the bodily senses hinders remembrance of God and His commandments, and how to avoid this evil.*

Eve was the first to warn us that sight, taste, and the other senses dispel the memory of the heart when we indulge in them without restraint. For as long as she had not gazed with lust upon the forbidden tree, she had carefully remembered God's commandment; and because of this, as if sheltered by the wings of God's love, she was unaware even of her own nakedness. But when she gazed at that tree with lust, touched it with great desire, and finally tasted its fruit with uncontrollable longing, she immediately developed an inclination toward carnal self-indulgence, and, having united with this passion as if naked, she devoted all her desire to the pursuit of earthly pleasures, thereby contributing—through the visible allure of the fruit—to her own fall and that of Adam; as a result of which it became difficult for the human mind to remember God or His commandments. We, however, always keeping God constantly in mind as we look into the depths of our hearts, will guide this heart—which is prone to the allurements of life, as if blind—for true spiritual wisdom consists in restraining the carnal impulse within us to see “*what is beautiful to behold.*” This is what the most experienced Job teaches us, saying, “*Even if my heart follows the path of my eyes*” (Job 31:7). Such conduct is a sure sign of extreme self-restraint.

57. *How is it that one who walks in the Spirit knows no carnal desires, and the devil tempts his purity in vain?*

Always dwelling in his own heart, he is far from all the alluring things of this life; and walking in the Spirit, he cannot know carnal desires. Since such a person thus pursues his journey protected by virtues, having these very virtues as gatekeepers of his city of purity, all the demons' schemes against him remain unsuccessful, even though at times the arrows of this lust common to all reach even the windows of nature.

58. *On despondency, which sometimes assails one after the expulsion of carnal desires—what it is and how to dispel it.*

When the soul ceases to desire the beautiful things of this world, a certain spirit of despondency usually creeps into it, which neither allows it to willingly labor in the service of the Word nor leaves within it a firm desire for future blessings, but also presents this present life as utterly worthless, as lacking worthy deeds of virtue, and belittles the very knowledge of , treating it as something granted to many others or as revealing nothing special to us. We will avoid this lukewarm and enfeebling passion if we confine our thoughts within extremely narrow bounds, keeping in mind only the remembrance of God; for only in this way can the spirit, having risen to its proper fervor, drive away from itself that senseless enfeeblement.

59. *How great is the help in spiritual struggle from the ceaseless warm remembrance of the name of Jesus in the depths of the heart.*

When we close off all escape routes for our mind with the remembrance of God, it needs to be given some task, binding upon it, to satisfy its constant restlessness. It must be given only the holy Name of the Lord Jesus, through which alone it fully satisfies its zeal in achieving the set goal. But it must be understood that, as the Apostle says, “*no one can say ‘Lord Jesus’ except by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:3). On our part, it is required that the aforementioned phrase (“Lord Jesus Christ,” etc.) be constantly uttered in the depths of one’s mind, which is absorbed in contemplation, in such a way that one does not stray into any extraneous daydreams. Those who constantly hold this holy and glorious Name in their minds in the depths of their hearts can see the light of their own mind (clarity of thought, or a definite awareness of all inner movements). Furthermore, this wondrous Name, when held in thought with intense care, very tangibly burns away every defilement that arises in the soul. “*For our God is a consuming fire,*” as the Apostle says (Heb. 12:29). From this, finally, the Lord leads the soul into a great love for His glory; for that glorious and much-desired Name, by drawing the mind toward it through remembrance in a warm heart, instills in us the habit of loving His goodness unhindered; because there is then nothing left to stand in the way of it. And this is that precious pearl which is acquired by those who have given up all their possessions with unspeakable joy at having found Him.

60. *On the two kinds of joy—the initial and the perfect—
and of the tears that lie between them.*

There is a joy that is the beginning, and another that is the end: the former is not free from self-centered dreams, while the latter is strengthened by humility; between them lies godly sorrow and painless weeping. “*For in the abundance of wisdom there is an abundance of understanding, and a discerning mind will find sorrow*” (Ecclesiastes 1:18). For this reason, one must first call the soul to deeds of virtue through the joy that comes at the beginning; then subject it to the rebuke and testing of the truth of the Holy Spirit, both regarding sins committed in the past and regarding the inclinations still being formed in self-forgetfulness. “*For in their conviction of iniquity, You have punished man, and You have made his soul wither like a spider’s web*” (Ps. 38:12). So that after God’s conviction has tested her, as in a crucible, she may receive the effect of unpretentious joy in the warm remembrance of God.

61. *On forgetting God and restoring remembrance of Him,
the causes of the former, and the means to the latter,
and on its highest manifestation.*

When the soul is agitated by anger, or weighed down by gluttony, or clouded by deep sorrow, then the mind cannot maintain remembrance of God, even if it were somehow compelled to do so. For, being entirely clouded by the ferocity of these passions, it is then completely alien to its own sensibility; therefore, desire has nowhere to imprint its mark, so that through it the mind might bear an unforgettable and unchanging image of the thought of God, since then its memory becomes coarse due to the harshness of the passions. — But when the mind is free from such disturbances, then, even if forgetfulness should occasionally steal away the thought of the beloved Lord for a moment, the mind, having regained its energy and liveliness, immediately seizes upon that longed-for and saving prey with fervor; for then grace itself meditates with the soul and calls out: “Lord Jesus Christ!” just as a mother, teaching her child, repeatedly repeats the Name “Father” together with him until she brings him to the point where, instead of any other word the child is capable of, he clearly pronounces “Father,” even in his sleep. Therefore, the Apostle says, “*The Spirit Himself intercedes for us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*” (Rom. 8:26). For since we are still infants in the perfection of this virtue of prayer, we certainly need His help, so that when His ineffable sweetness embraces and sweetens all our thoughts, we may be moved by our whole disposition to remember God and our Father and to love Him. For, as the same wonderful Paul says, “*we cry out to Him, ‘Abba, Father’*” (Rom. 8:15), when He disposes us to call upon God the Father.

62. *On anger—when and how it may be permitted.*

Anger, more than any other passion, usually disturbs the soul and throws it into confusion; but there are times when it is extremely beneficial to it. Thus, when we are unashamedly angry at the ungodly, or at those who are shameless in some other way, so that they may be saved or at least feel ashamed, we thereby bring to our soul the same benefit as meekness; for in such a case we are in every way contributing to the purposes of God’s righteousness and goodness. Likewise, when lustful desires arise in the soul, by becoming

even more angry at this sin, we often sober the soul and give it the manly strength to resist it. And there is no doubt that, even when we are in a state of extreme distress of spirit, by angrily rebuking the very spirit that is causing the distress, we can rise through wisdom even above the horrors with which death boasts of subduing us: for the Lord, wishing to show us this at the resurrection of Lazarus, first rebuked hell in spirit and strengthened Himself, and only then, with an unshaken will—as He always did in all His deeds—restored Lazarus’s soul to his body. So, it seems to me, chaste anger was given to our nature by God, who created us, more as an instrument of righteousness; and if Eve had used it against the serpent, she would not have fallen prey to the destructive influence of that passionate desire. That is why I believe that one who uses chaste anger out of zeal for piety will be found more favorable on the scales of righteous retribution than one who, due to the immobility of his mind, never stirs himself to anger; for in the latter, the ruler of human thoughts and feelings remains untrained, while the other, mounted on the steeds of virtue, remains ever in the struggle and races amid the hordes of demons, ceaselessly training the four-horse chariot of self-restraint in the fear of God—which Holy Scripture has called “*the chariot of Israel*,” as we find in the account of the divine Elijah’s ascension to heaven (2 Kings 2:12). God taught the early Jews the four virtues in many different ways; which is why such a disciple of wisdom (courage, justice, and self-control) was taken up into heaven, having, as it seems to me, these very virtues as his steeds, when his spirit was taken up in a whirlwind of fire.

63. *It is not fitting for one who is perfect in the spiritual life to engage in legal disputes.*

One who has been granted holy knowledge and has tasted the sweetness of God must never bring a lawsuit (when someone files a complaint against him), nor initiate a lawsuit against anyone himself, even if someone were to strip him of the very clothes he is wearing; for the justice of the authorities of this age is inferior to God’s justice—or rather, it is nothing compared to God’s justice; and what difference is there between the children of God and the people of this age, if not that the righteousness of the latter cannot be compared to the righteousness of the former; which is why the former is called human righteousness and the latter, the righteousness of God. So too, our Lord “*when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten*” (1 Peter 2:23); on the contrary, not only did he endure the stripping of his garments in silence, but—what is incomparably greater—he prayed to the Father for the salvation of those who had acted wickedly against him. The people of this world, however, will not cease to litigate until they have received, with interest, what they seek from those against whom they litigate, especially when they seek profit on a loan: so that their “justice” often becomes the beginning of great injustice.

64. *It is better to entrust tolerable injustice to God’s judgment*

to pay attention to prayer and the guarding of one’s heart than to go to court.

I have heard some pious people say that no one should be allowed to plunder what we have for our own sustenance and for the relief of the poor; lest, by condoning such evil, we become guilty of the sin of those who wrong us, and especially when we endure this from Christians, —But to act in this way is nothing other than desiring to save our possessions more than ourselves. For if, neglecting prayer and the examination of my own heart, I begin to seek judgment against those who have wronged me and to languish in the courtrooms, it is clear that what I seek is far more precious to me than my own salvation, not to mention the most salvific commandment itself. And how can I be a follower of the Gospel commandment that instructs me: “*Do not resist the one who takes what is yours*” (Luke 6:30), unless, according to the words of the Apostle, I “*rejoice in the plundering of my possessions*” (Hebrews 10:34)—when this commandment does not even exempt from the sin of greed the one who, through a court ruling, recovers what was wrongfully taken from him? Transient (temporary, or courts established by mortals to judge transient matters) cannot abrogate God’s imperishable Judgment; and the guilty party must comply with the laws to which his case is subject and by which he must defend himself. It is indeed a good thing to endure violence at the hands of those who wish to wrong us, and to pray for them, so that for the sake of their repentance—and not for the sake of their returning to us what they have stolen from us—their sin of extortion may be forgiven. For God’s righteousness requires that we accept the thief himself—and not the goods he has stolen—as free from sin through repentance.

65. *Sell everything and give it to the poor; humility, above all else, inclines one to do this.*

It is very fitting and, above all, beneficial to the soul that, having come to know the true path of piety, one should immediately sell all one’s possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor, in accordance with the Lord’s commandment, and not allow oneself, under the pretext of always wishing to be able to fulfill the commandment (to help the poor), to disregard this saving command (to give everything away at once). From this we will gain, first of all, a more peaceful carefree state of mind, and from this, in turn, a poverty immune

to slander—a poverty that is itself heavenly wisdom—and which gives others no cause for unjust accusations against us, since we will have nothing left that could fan the flames of greed in the hearts of the greedy. Then, more than any other virtue, humility will warm us and calm us in our innermost being, as if we were naked; just as a mother, taking her child in her arms, comforts and warms it in her embrace when, in its infantile simplicity, the child casts off its garment and throws it far from itself, finding, in its great innocence, nakedness more pleasant than the variegated beauty of its garment. For it is said: *“The Lord preserves the little ones; He has humbled me and saved me”* (Ps. 114: 5).

66. *Giving everything away is the path to humility.*

The Lord will hold us accountable for our acts of charity, *“according to what one has, not according to what one lacks”* (1 Cor. 8:12). Therefore, if I, in the fear of God and with fervent goodwill, obeying the Lord’s command, were to give away in a short time everything I would have distributed over many years, for what will I be rebuked when I no longer have anything? – But someone will say: (if we give everything away), where then will the poor—who are now sustained by our modest alms—receive their alms? – To such a person, here is a fitting lesson: do not presume to devise something reprehensible in God’s eyes to cover up your self-love. God will never run out of ways to provide for His creation, just as He has done from the beginning. And before this or that person was moved to give alms, were the poor left without food or clothing? Be assured, then, that it is far better, as soon as you come to know the truth, to spend everything generously in service to the poor, rejecting the foolish scheming and pride inspired by a love of wealth, and hating your own desires—which means hating your own soul— so that later, having no further reason to rejoice in self-praise for the constant distribution of our wealth, we may humble ourselves as though we were doing nothing good. For as long as we abound in wealth, we take great delight in distributing it whenever the mood strikes us, as if joyfully fulfilling a divine command; but when we have given it all away, we are filled with feelings of humility and contrition, as if we had done nothing righteous. Consequently, the soul, in great humility, turns inward, so that what we can no longer attain through daily acts of charity, we may receive through diligent prayer, patience, and humble wisdom; for it is said: *“The poor and needy will praise Your name, O Lord”* (Ps. 73:21). Moreover, the gift of theological discourse is not granted by God to anyone except those who have first prepared themselves to renounce all their possessions for the sake of the glory of God’s Gospel, so that in God-pleasing poverty they may proclaim the riches of the Kingdom of God. This is what is implied by the words: *“You have prepared Your goodness for the poor, O God,”* and by the addition: *“The Lord will give the preacher a message with great power”* (Ps. 77:11, 12).

67. *On the gift of theology—how many and what kinds of blessings flow from it.*

All the gifts of our God are very good and a source of every blessing; but none of them kindles and stirs the heart to love His goodness as much as the study of theology. For, being the foremost fruit of God’s goodness, it bestows the foremost gifts upon the soul: first, it disposes us to joyfully despise all the pleasant comforts of this life, since in it we have, in place of fleeting comforts, the ineffable riches of God’s words; and then it illuminates our mind with a kind of fiery transformation and thereby makes it a partaker of the ministering spirits. Having prepared ourselves properly, beloved, let us strive toward this virtue—glorious, all-seeing, cutting off every earthly concern, nourishing the mind with the words of God in the radiance of ineffable light—and, to put it briefly, —preparing the verbal, rational soul for undivided communion with God the Word through the holy Prophets. And in the souls of men—O wondrous miracle!—having arranged hymns that proclaim God, this divine matchmaker sings aloud of God’s greatness.

68. *Why is our mind*

not as eager for prayer as for theological contemplation:

and how necessary prayer is for success in such contemplation.

Our mind is, for the most part, not very inclined toward prayer, because it is constrained and limited by the virtue of prayer; but it is more eager to engage in theological contemplation, due to the breadth and boundlessness of divine contemplations. Therefore, so as not to give free rein to its rambling within us and not to indulge its desire to give itself over boundlessly to lofty flights of fancy, let us devote ourselves above all to prayer, psalm singing, and the reading of Scripture, without neglecting the interpretations of wise men, whose words are filled with true knowledge of the faith. By acting in this way, we will not only prevent him from mingling his own words with the words of grace, nor allow him, carried away by vanity, to be distracted by flights of fancy under the influence of self-satisfaction and loquacity; but we will also learn to keep him free from daydreams during contemplation and make almost all his thoughts tearful. Finding rest within

himself during moments of silence, and especially reveling in the sweetness of prayer, he not only becomes free from the passionate impulses mentioned above, but also, renewed, he easily and effortlessly gains the strength to abide in divine contemplation, while at the same time excelling in discerning judgment (practical wisdom) with great humility. It should be noted, however, that prayer is higher than any breadth of contemplation; it is proper only to those who are filled with holy grace in every sensation and perception.

69. *Grace initially acts most tangibly upon the soul,*
and then diminishes its effect and even withdraws entirely.

How beneficial this is for the soul! At first, grace usually illuminates the soul with its light, accompanied by a strong sense of it; but as progress is made in the spiritual Christian life, it then, for the most part unbeknownst to the God-loving soul, performs its mysteries within it: so that afterward (once the soul is pacified) it may lead us, in joy, onto the path of divine contemplation, as if we had just been called from ignorance into knowledge; and in the midst of our struggles (to pacify the soul from the passions), it may keep our thoughts from becoming vain. It is fitting for us to be cast into sorrow in moderation, as if we had been forsaken by grace, so that we may humble ourselves all the more and learn to submit to the Lord's decrees concerning us, and then, in due time, enter into joy, inspired by blessed hope: for just as boundless sorrow leads the soul into despair and hopelessness, so too does excessive joy lead it to conceit and boasting. I speak of those who are still infants in life and reason. Between the enlightenment of grace and abandonment lies temptation; and between sorrow and joy lies hope. For it is said: "*I have waited patiently for the Lord, and He has heard me*" (Ps. 39: 2)—and again: "*Through the multitude of my afflictions, Your consolations have gladdened my soul*" (Ps. 93: 19).

70. *How harmful is loquacity to the soul, and how beneficial is silence.*

Just as doors in a bathhouse that are frequently opened quickly let the internal heat escape to the outside, so too does the soul, when many people speak—even if they speak only good things—let its memory (the conscious standing in the order of spiritual things) escape through the door of speech. Consequently, the mind is ultimately deprived of its purest thoughts, and, driven by a disorderly flood of thoughts, it speaks confusedly to those present. In such a case, it no longer possesses the Holy Spirit, who keeps our thoughts free from daydreaming; for this Spirit, being good and free from all turmoil and daydreaming, shuns verbosity. — Silence, on the other hand, is beneficial, being the mother of wise thoughts.

71. *How a God-loving soul ought to govern the sense of truth.*

The Word of Knowledge itself teaches us that at the beginning, a God-loving soul (having set out on the path of pleasing God) is assailed by a multitude of passions, especially anger and hatred. It is subjected to this not so much by the action of evil spirits as by the very course of its progress in the spiritual life. For as long as the soul is led by worldly reasoning, even though it sees the truth being trampled upon by others, it remains indifferent to it; for, being wholly occupied with its own desires, it has no concern for God's truth. But when it begins to rise above its passions and desires, then—through detachment from worldly things and through love for God—it can no longer remain indifferent, even in a dream, to seeing God's truth being abandoned; rather, it becomes angry and indignant at the evildoers until it sees these very offenders against the truth defending its dignity, through the power of a godly thought (having come to the fear of God and repented). Thus, she naturally hates the unrighteous and loves the righteous deeply; for the eye of the soul is not deceived (led astray by a wrongful view) when its veil—the body—is refined by extreme self-restraint. However, it is far better to lament the insensitivity of the unrighteous than to hate them: for although they are worthy of hatred, the word of truth does not approve of a God-loving soul being stirred up by hatred, because when hatred is in the soul, true knowledge is rendered inactive.

72. *The theological mind and the mind of the scholar.*

The theological mind, sweetened and refined in the soul by the very words of God, attains its measure of dispassion with sufficient breadth. For "*the words of the Lord,*" as it is said, "*are pure words, silver refined, purified by the earth*" (Ps. 11:7). And the mind of the scholar, grounded in the trial of grace-filled influences, rises above the passions. The theologian also partakes of the scholar's experience if he cultivates the most humble dispositions within himself; and the scholar, to some extent, partakes of contemplative virtue if the rational part of his soul is free from sin. For it does not happen that everyone acquires both of these gifts in perfection; so that each who possesses one of them, marveling at how the other surpasses him, may excel in humility with zeal for a righteous life. That is why the Apostle says: "*To one is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by the same Spirit*" (1 Cor. 12:8).

73. On vocal prayer and prayer offered in the heart.

When the soul abounds with its natural fruits, it performs its psalm-singing most vocally and is inclined to pray above all with a voice. But when it is moved by the Holy Spirit, it sings and prays with all joy and sweetness in a single heart. The first state is followed by a dreamy joy (arising from self-satisfaction); the second by a spiritual tear, and then by a certain joy that loves silence: for the memory, while the voice is held in check, remains warm and inclines the heart to produce certain tear-inducing and soul-searching thoughts. In this, truly, one can see the seeds of prayer—sown with tears, yet joyfully, upon the soil of the heart, in the firm hope of a bountiful harvest (Ps. 125:5). However, when we are overwhelmed by great sorrow, then we must sing the psalms a little more loudly, suppressing the soul's cries of grief with the joy of hope, until this heavy cloud of sorrow is dispelled by the wind of the psalm's melody.

74. On Natural and Grace-Filled Love of God.

When the soul comes to know itself, it then radiates from within a certain warmth and a godly reverence: for, not being disturbed by worldly cares, it reflects a certain love (for God) from within itself into the world, seeking God, the source of peace, in proportion; but this remembrance (of the God sought) soon dissipates, either because sensory impressions cloud this remembrance, or because nature, in its poverty, quickly exhausts its own goodness. That is why the Greek sages, though they sought to achieve through self-restraint what they desired, did not attain it as they should have; for their minds were not influenced by eternal and all-true wisdom. But the God-loving warmth bestowed upon the heart by the Holy Spirit is, first of all, entirely peaceful and unceasing; furthermore, it calls all parts of the soul to love God and does not burst forth from the heart, but of its own accord fills the whole person with a certain boundless love and joy. Those who have come to know it must strive to attain it. For natural love is a sign that the nature does not thrive through self-restraint; yet it cannot elevate the mind to dispassion, as spiritual (grace-filled) love does.

75. On the light-bearing influence of grace upon the soul—

and on its darkening under the influence of dark forces.

Just as the air surrounding us, when the north wind blows, becomes pure due to a certain subtlety and the refreshing effect of this wind; but when the south wind blows, it becomes, as it were, thickened due to a certain heaviness brought on by this wind, which carries away from its own regions and spreads a kind of dry mist over the entire universe: so too, when the soul receives the influence of the breath of the true and Holy Spirit, it is entirely free from demonic obscuration; but when it is strongly swept by the spirit of delusion, it becomes entirely covered by the clouds of sin. Therefore, we must always direct our striving with all our might toward the purifying and life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit—that is, toward the spirit which the Prophet Ezekiel, in a vision, saw coming from the North (– 1:4): so that the contemplative part of our soul, above all, may remain pure, and we may be deemed worthy to enter into divine visions without shame, beholding in the atmosphere of light that which is in the light. This is the light of true knowledge.

76. How the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of delusion act in the soul before and after baptism.

Some have imagined that grace and sin—that is, the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of delusion—are both hidden within the minds of those being baptized: for, they say, one calls the mind to good, while the other calls it to the opposite. I, however, have come to understand from the divine Scriptures and from the mind's own experience that before baptism, grace directs the soul toward good from without, while Satan lurks in its very depths, attempting to block the mind from all righteous paths; from the very moment we are reborn in baptism, the devil is outside, and grace is within. That is why we find that just as delusion once reigned over the soul—so truth reigns over it after baptism. After this, Satan continues to act upon the soul, just as before, and often even more fiercely, but not as one coexisting with grace—God forbid!—but rather, as it were, smoldering before the mind through the weakness of the body and the allure of wordless pleasures. This happens by God's permission, so that a person may attain the enjoyment of goodness only by passing through storm, fire, and temptation. For it is said: "*We have gone through fire and water, and You have brought us to a place of rest*" (Ps. 65:12).

77. The Mode of Action of God's Grace in the Soul.

Grace, as I have said, from the very moment we receive baptism, begins to dwell secretly in the very depths of the mind (spirit), concealing its presence even from the mind's own perception. But when someone begins to love God with all the will (heart) of his being, then grace speaks to the soul with an ineffable word through the senses of the mind, imparting to it a portion of its blessings. Consequently, whoever desires to hold fast to this gift within himself forever comes to desire, with great joy, to renounce all present blessings,

so as to fully acquire that field in which he has found the hidden treasure of life (Matt. 12:44). For when one renounces all worldly wealth, one finds within oneself that place where God's grace is hidden. Then, as the soul progresses, the divine gift (of grace) reveals its beneficence (beneficial nature) in the mind; but at the same time, the Lord allows the demons to trouble the soul even more, both to teach it to discern good from evil with discernment and to make it more humble; for when it is subjected to such temptations, it is overcome with great shame at the disgrace of the demons' thoughts.

78. *Through baptism, the Holy Spirit is poured into the heart, and the evil spirit is cast out;* but this does not completely put an end to the temptations to sin.

We are made in the image of God through the intelligent (spiritual) movement of the soul; while the body is, as it were, its dwelling place. But since Adam's sin not only defiled the soul's essential characteristics but also subjected our body to corruption, the All-Holy God the Word became incarnate and, as God, through His own baptism, granted us the water of salvation for rebirth: for we are reborn in water through the action of the Holy and Life-giving Spirit, as a result of which we are immediately cleansed both in soul and body, if we approach God with a willing heart. At this moment, the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and sin (or the father of sin) is cast out by Him, since it is impossible for these two entities to coexist within the soul—which is characterized by unity and simplicity—as some have thought. Moreover, when divine grace, through Holy Baptism, unites itself in boundless love with the features of the image of God as a pledge of likeness, where is there room for the evil one—since there is no fellowship between light and darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14). Thus, as we journey along the path of holy struggles, we believe that through the *"bath of rebirth"* (1 Tim. 3:5), the vile serpent is cast out from the depths of the mind; yet we are not surprised that even after baptism we continue to experience both good and evil thoughts. For the bath of sanctification, though it washes away the filth of sin, does not destroy the duality of our desires, nor does it prevent demons from waging war against us and speaking deceitful words to us; so that whatever we might retain while remaining in that natural state, we may preserve by the power of God, having taken up the weapons of righteousness.

79. *Grace acts through the faculties of the mind, while Satan acts through the fleshly senses and passions.*

Satan, as I have said, is cast out of the soul through holy baptism; but, for the reasons mentioned above, he is permitted to act upon it through the body. God's grace is instilled into the very depths of the soul, that is, into the mind. For, as it is said, *"All the glory of the king's daughter is within,"* invisible to demons (Ps. 44:14). That is why, when we fondly remember God, we feel that divine love, as it were, gushes forth like a stream from the very depths of our heart; whereas evil spirits attack the bodily senses and nest within them, conveniently acting—through the flesh at their disposal—upon those whose souls are still infantile. Thus, according to the divine Apostle, our mind is always in harmony with the law of the Spirit; but the fleshly senses are readily drawn away by sensual inclinations (Rom. 7:18). Consequently, in those who zealously advance in knowledge, grace, through the senses of the mind and the body itself, fills them with inexpressible joy; but when we walk the path of piety carelessly and heedlessly, the demons, finding us in this state, enslave our soul through the bodily senses, forcibly dragging it toward what it does not desire—they are murderers.

80. *Against those who say that grace and sin dwell together in the hearts of the baptized.*

Those who say that two entities—namely, the spirit of grace and the spirit of sin—coexist in the hearts of believers cite, in support of this view, the words of the Evangelist: *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:5), and conclude that divine light is in no way defiled by coexisting with the evil one, even if divine light were to come near demonic darkness in any way. But this Gospel passage also rebukes such people, showing that they reason contrary to the Holy Scriptures. For just as God—the Word, this true light—deigned to appear to His creatures in His flesh, out of His boundless love for humanity He kindled within us the light of His holy knowledge; yet the wisdom of the world did not comprehend—that is, did not recognize—this counsel of God, since *"the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God"* (Rom. 8:7): for this reason, the Theologian used this word; and after saying a few more words, this wonderful man adds: *"for the true light, which enlightens every person coming into the world"*—instead of: guides and gives life. *"For He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:9–12). And the most wise Paul, in explaining this very statement—*"they did not receive Him"* (they did not know Him)—says: *"Not that I have already attained this, or am already perfect; but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me"* (Phil.

3:12). Thus, the Evangelist is not speaking of Satan when he says that he did not know the true light—for he was alien to it from the beginning—but he rightly rebukes with these words those people who, though they hear of God’s powers and miracles, do not wish to approach the light of His knowledge because their hearts are darkened.

81. There are *two kinds of evil spirits: the most subtle, which wage war against the soul,* and the coarsest, which act more upon the body.

The Word of knowledge teaches us that there are two kinds of evil spirits: some are more subtle, others are more grossly material. The most subtle wage war against the soul, while the coarsest usually ensnare the flesh through certain shameful, sensual impulses; which is why the spirits that attack the soul and those that attack the body are always opposed to one another, even though they share an equal zeal to harm people. When grace does not dwell within a person, evil spirits, like serpents, nest in the depths of the heart, preventing the soul from turning toward the desire for good. But when grace dwells secretly in the mind, then they, like dark clouds, flit across the parts of the heart, transforming into sinful passions and various illusory fantasies, so that by distracting the mind with these fantasies through memory, they may turn it away from communion with grace. Thus, when spirits attacking the soul inflame us with passions—especially with conceit and pride, the mother of all evils—we must then recall the decay of our own body to put this arrogance of self-glorification to shame. We must do the same when demons, waging war against the body, prepare our hearts to boil over with shameful lusts: for this very remembrance, in conjunction with the memory of God, will strongly thwart all the temptations of evil spirits. But if, in response to such a remembrance, the demons of the soul begin to instill the thought of the boundless insignificance of human nature—as having no dignity whatsoever—because of the decay of the flesh (for this is how they love to act when someone begins to torment them with such thoughts), —let us recall the honor and glory of the Heavenly Kingdom, while not forgetting to keep in mind the severity of God’s impartial judgment; so that we may prevent such fainthearted despair and thereby impart steadfastness and strength to our hearts—which are prone to swift and easy lust—to resist.

82. *The devil cannot dwell in the hearts of those who are in grace;* but he wages war against them through the body.

The Lord teaches us in His Holy Gospel that when Satan returns and finds his house swept clean and empty—that is, the heart barren—he takes with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, enters it, and makes his home there, making the person’s final condition worse than the first (Luke 11: 25). From this, we must understand that as long as the Holy Spirit dwells within us, Satan cannot enter the depths of the soul and dwell there. But the divine Paul also teaches the same understanding of this view of the matter—when, having seen the nature of this matter through ascetic (experiential) knowledge (that is, what it truly is), he says: “*For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man; but I see another law in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members*” (Rom. 7:22–23). As for those who have succeeded in living by the Spirit, he goes on to say: “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death*” (Rom. 8:1–2). And in another passage, to show that Satan wages war from the body against the soul that has become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, he says: “*Therefore, stand firm, having your loins girded with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the spiritual sword, which is the word of God*” (Eph. 6:14–17). But captivity is one thing, and struggle is another; for the former implies a kind of forcible seizure into one’s power, while the latter denotes an equal and opposing struggle. This is why the Apostle says that the devil attacks the souls that bear Christ the Lord within them with fiery arrows. For this is usually the case: whoever cannot reach his opponent with his hands uses arrows against him, so that from a distance he may wound the enemy with whom he is fighting; and so Satan, since he can no longer, as before, take up residence in the minds of those who strive, due to the presence of grace within them; instead, dwelling in the body, he swoops down upon the lustful dampness to entice the soul with its allure. That is why the body must be dried up, so that the mind, drawn by lustful dampness, does not slip into the snares of sensuality and fall. From the Apostle’s own words, it is easy to see that the mind of those who strive is under the influence of divine light, which is why it is subject to God’s law and delights in it; but the flesh, by its very propensity toward evil, submits to evil spirits, which is why it is drawn to bow to their evil suggestions. From this it is self-evident

that the mind is not some sort of common dwelling place for God and the devil: otherwise, just as I serve God's law with my mind, and with my flesh to the law of sin, if my mind did not freely resist the demons, willingly submitting to the beneficent influence of grace upon it, while at the same time the body is enticed by the pleasant fragrance of wordless delights, because, as I said, I allow evil spirits to take up residence within it? The Apostle says: "*For I know that in me—that is, in my flesh—nothing good dwells*" (Rom. 7:18). Thus, in those who resist sin through their struggles (for the Apostle does not speak of himself here), the demons wage war against the mind, while the flesh seeks to relax and entice them toward lust through soothing, pleasant sensations; for, by righteous judgment, they are permitted to hide in the depths of the body even in those who strive earnestly against sin, because the will of human reasoning is always subject to temptation. But if anyone is able, even in this life, to die through ascetic labors, then he finally becomes entirely a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; for such a one has already risen before death—as was the blessed Paul himself, and as were and are all those who have striven and continue to strive against sin with perfect devotion.

83. *Just as the thoughts instilled by Satan are regarded as coming from the heart,*

The heart itself produces both good and evil thoughts; however, it does not generate evil thoughts from its own nature, but has some of them because the memory of evil has become a habit within it due to past temptations, while the greater part of them—and indeed the most wicked ones—it originates from the wickedness of demons. We, however, perceive all of them as coming, as it were, from the heart; which is why some have thought that both grace and sin dwell together in our minds, citing as proof the words of the Lord: "*For what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, and the like*" (Matt. 15:18, 20). Yet they do not know that our mind, through the action of a certain subtle sensation, becomes the recipient of those evil thoughts implanted in it by evil spirits; for, through the action of the flesh—the body, which is prone to self-indulgence—the soul is drawn into this, though we do not know how, because of its union with the flesh; for the flesh loves the allure of sensual pleasure immeasurably. For this reason, the thoughts instilled in the soul by demons seem to originate from the heart, and we make them our own when we desire to take pleasure in them: this is what the Lord rebukes, as the divine Word itself reveals, and He uttered the words cited above. For when someone delights in the thoughts that the crafty Satan instills in him and, as it were, inscribes the memory of them in his heart, is it not evident that he subsequently brings forth these thoughts from within himself?

84. *An example from Scripture explaining that grace and the devil cannot dwell together in the heart.*

The Lord says in the Gospel that a strong man cannot be driven out of his house unless a stronger man binds him, plunders all that he has, and throws him out (Matt. 12:29). How, then, after such humiliation, can this cast-out one enter again and remain there alongside the true master of the house, who rests in his own home as he pleases? And what king, having defeated a tyrant who rebelled against him, would want him to dwell alongside him in his royal chambers? Would he not rather kill him at once, or, having bound him, hand him over to his soldiers for the most prolonged torment and the most pitiful death?

85. *Proof of the same from the experiences of the spiritual life, or of how grace and sin operate in one who is prospering.*

If anyone, on the grounds that we think both of evil and of good, concludes that the Holy Spirit and the devil dwell together in the mind, let such a person know that this happens to us because we have not yet tasted or seen "*how good the Lord is*" (Ps. 33: 9). For at first, as I have already said above, grace conceals its presence in those being baptized, awaiting the soul's free will; but when a person turns wholly to God, then grace reveals its presence to the heart through some ineffable feeling; and again awaits the soul's response, allowing in the meantime the devil's arrows to reach the very depths of its feelings, so that it may seek God with the warmest willingness and the most humble disposition. If, as a result, a person finally begins with firm resolve to press forward in keeping the commandments and ceaselessly calling upon the Lord Jesus; then the fire of holy grace extends even to the outer senses of the heart, tangibly consuming the thorns of the human earth; hence, the devil's counsel and suggestions stop far away from that place (where the heart is with grace), merely lightly touching the passionate part of the soul. But when a person, through ascetic efforts, is clothed in every virtue—and especially in perfect detachment from worldly possessions—then grace illuminates his entire being with a profound, indescribable feeling, kindling within him the warmest love for God; then the demons' arrows are extinguished even before they reach the bodily senses, for the breath of the Holy Spirit

fills the heart with deep peace, and the fiery arrows of the demons are quenched even as they fly through the air. However, even one who has attained this degree is sometimes permitted by God to be subjected to the evil influence of demons, leaving his mind unenlightened at such times, so that our free will may not be completely bound by the bonds of grace—not only because sin must be overcome through spiritual struggles, but also because a person must continue to progress in spiritual experience: for what is considered perfect in the one being taught is imperfect in comparison with the riches of God the Teacher in His love that zealously seeks progress, even if someone, striving for this progress, were to ascend to the very top of the ladder shown to Jacob.

86. *God's permission is for instruction, and God's rejection is for punishment.*

The Lord Himself says, "*Satan has fallen from heaven*" (Luke 10:18), so that he might not see the glorious dwelling place of the Holy Angels: how then can he, unworthy of fellowship with God's good servants, have the human mind as a dwelling place in common with God? Even if they say that this happens by divine permission, they do not thereby present any conclusive proof. For educational permission in no way deprives the soul of divine light; what happens in this case is only that grace, as I have already said, conceals its presence from the mind, so that, moved by the bitterness of the devil, the soul may, with all fear and great humility, seek help from God, experiencing within itself the evil influence of the enemy. Just as a mother, whose child is misbehaving because it is unwilling to submit to the rules of nursing, briefly releases it from her embrace so that the child, frightened by the ugly strangers or some wild animals surrounding it, may, in great fear and tears, yearn to return to her embrace. But by God's repulsion, the occasional permission He grants delivers the soul—which does not wish to have God within itself—to the demons, as if bound. But we are not children to be cast aside; rather, as we believe, we are the true offspring of God's grace, nourished by it through rare allowances and frequent consolations, so that, under the influence of such benevolence toward us, we may grow *to reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13).

87. *On the Effects on the Soul of God's Disciplinary Allowance*

and His punitive abandonment;

and on how one should act in the face of both.

Educational permission first strikes the soul with great sorrow, a sense of humiliation, and a certain measure of despair, in order to suppress its vanity and desire to impress others, and to bring it to fitting humility. But immediately afterward, it instills in the heart a tender fear of God, a tearful confession, and a great desire for the most blessed silence. As for abandonment arising from God's aversion, it leaves the soul to itself, and it becomes filled with despair and unbelief, arrogance, and anger. It is therefore incumbent upon us, knowing both this indulgence and this abandonment, to approach God during these times in accordance with the nature of each: in the former, we must offer Him thanksgiving and vows, as He mercifully chastises the unruliness of our character by depriving us of consolation, so that He may teach us, as a father, to soundly distinguish good from evil; and here, constant confession of sins, unceasing tears, and greater seclusion—so that, through such diligent effort, we may implore and move God to look upon our hearts as He did before. We must realize, however, that when, under God's permissive providence, the soul engages in a face-to-face struggle with Satan, then grace—though it hides itself—assists the soul through unseen help, so as to show its enemies that victory over them is the work of the soul alone,

88. *An example illustrates*

what good and evil thoughts arise in the presence of grace.

And whoever is deemed worthy to contemplate the spiritual. Just as when someone, in winter, standing in an open place somewhere, turns to face the east at the beginning of the day, the front part of his body is warmed by the sun, while the back part remains untouched by the sun's warmth, because the sun is not directly overhead at that moment: so it is with those who are still at the beginning of their spiritual journey: their hearts are sometimes partially warmed by holy grace, which is why their minds then begin to bear the fruit of spiritual contemplation; but the outer parts of their hearts still remain preoccupied with carnal thoughts, because not all parts of the heart are yet illuminated by the holy light of grace in deep feeling—which some, failing to understand this, have imagined to mean that there are two opposing forces within the minds of those who strive spiritually). This is why it happens that the soul contemplates both good and evil at the same time, just as in the example given above, a person feels both cold and warmth at the very same moment. For ever since our mind slipped into the duality of knowledge, it has had a certain compulsion—even if it does not wish to—to think of both evil and good at the same moment, especially in those who attain subtlety of reasoning. No

matter how hard one tries to think only of good, evil immediately comes to mind, because human memory, ever since Adam's sin, has been divided into two kinds of thought. But if we begin to fulfill God's commandments with fervent zeal, then grace, illuminating all our senses with a profound sense of His presence, will burn away all our sinful memories; and by sweetening our hearts with a peace of unceasing love, it will accustom us to think of spiritual things rather than carnal ones. This very often happens to those who are drawing near to perfection, who keep a constant remembrance of the Lord in their hearts.

89. *Through baptism, grace restores the image of God,*
and then paints the likeness of God
together with a person's efforts to acquire virtues,
the highest of which is love—the supreme mark of godlikeness.

Holy Grace bestows upon us two blessings through baptism, which regenerates us, one of which immeasurably surpasses the other. But one it bestows immediately; namely, in the water itself it renews and illuminates all the features of the soul that constitute the image of God, washing away from us every stain of sin; while the other it awaits to bring about in us together with us: this is what constitutes the likeness of God. — Thus, when the mind begins to partake with great feeling of the blessings of the All-Holy Spirit, then we must know that grace begins, as it were, to paint upon the features of the image of God the features of godlikeness. For just as painters first sketch the image of a person with a single color, and then, little by little, layer color upon color, they render the image of the one they are painting so that it resembles him even down to the hairs: so too does the holy grace of God first restore, through baptism, the features of the image of God in a person, restoring him to the state in which he was when he was created; and when it sees that we desire with all our will the beauty of God's likeness, and stand naked and unafraid in its workshop, then, as virtue after virtue blossoms in the soul, and its countenance is raised from glory to glory, it imparts to the soul the features of God's likeness: whereby the senses reveal how the features of the likeness of God are reflected in us, while the perfection of that likeness we come to know through the enlightenment of grace. The mind, flourishing in a certain measure and in inexpressible harmony, perceives all virtues through the senses; but no one can attain spiritual love unless he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit in all its fullness and tangibly. For if the mind does not receive from the divine light the perfect likeness to God, then although it may possess all other virtues, it remains unparticipating in perfect love; for only when a person becomes completely like God's virtue (I am speaking of the likeness to God that is within human capacity) does he also bear the likeness of divine love. Just as when a portrait is painted of someone, the most pleasing of colors and the most essential of features—when applied to the painted face—make it, even down to the smile, completely like the person being portrayed: so too, when divine grace paints the likeness of God in a person, the radiant trait of love, once applied, reveals that the features of the image of God are fully elevated to the splendor of godlikeness. And no virtue can bring dispassion (purification and freedom from the passions) to the soul except love alone: for *"the fulfillment of the law is love"* (Rom. 13:10); so that although our inner man is renewed daily by the experience of love, he reaches full maturity only together with the complete perfection of love.

90. *At first, one is allowed to fully taste the consolations of grace,*
and then they are hidden; the first to sustain zeal
for spiritual struggles, and the second so that the one striving may be humbled.

The full manifestation of grace in love.... and how this comes about. At the very beginning of one's spiritual progress, if one ardently loves God's virtue, the Holy Spirit grants the soul a full and certain taste of God's sweetness, so that the mind may accurately and definitively recognize how great is the fruit of God-loving labors; but then conceals the richness of this life-giving gift for a long time, so that we—even though we may excel in all virtues—may consider ourselves to be nothing, because we do not see within ourselves that holy love has become a constant disposition. For at such times it happens that the demon of unlovingness sometimes assails the souls of those who strive in the spiritual life with such force that they treat even those who love them with hostility, and even during greetings and embraces they maintain this corrupting act of hostility. Because of this, the soul grieves deeply and suffers, for although it carries spiritual love in its memory (it is aware of the obligation of love), it cannot experience it in its feelings, due, as it seems to the soul, to the insufficiency of its most perfect efforts. That is why we must, for now, compel ourselves through forceful effort to perform acts of love, so that in this way we may come to taste it with full feeling and with assured satisfaction; yet in perfection, no one living in this flesh can attain it, except for those saints who have reached martyrdom and perfect confession—and whoever achieves this is completely transformed and even reluctantly

partakes of food; for in one nourished by divine love, what desire for the goods of this world can there still be? For this reason, the most wise Paul, that great repository of knowledge, while proclaiming to us the future consolations of the righteous—based on his own assurance of this—says: *“The kingdom of heaven is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Rom. 14: 17), which are the fruit of perfect love. Thus, those who are advancing in the spiritual life may often partake of the work of love here, but no one can attain it in full perfection unless the *“body of death”* has first *been* completely *“devoured”* (2 Cor. 5: 4).

91. *On the work of grace-filled love for God.*

Someone who loves God insatiably told me: when I desired to experience God’s love tangibly, the good Lord granted it to me with full sensation and satisfaction; and I felt this effect with such intensity that my soul then desired, with an indescribable joy and eagerness, to leave my body and go to the Lord, and to forget entirely the order of this temporary life. And anyone who has experienced the power of such love, even if he has suffered a thousand insults and deprivations at the hands of another, does not harbor anger toward that person, but remains spiritually attached to the one who insults and wrongs him; but he is inflamed with zeal only against those who attack the poor, or *“speak lies against God,”* as Scripture says (Ps. 73:6), or who otherwise live wickedly. For one who loves God far more than himself—or who loves himself not at all, but God alone—no longer stands up for his own honor, but desires only that the truth of Him who has honored him with eternal glory be honored. And he desires this not with some fleeting or transient desire, but possesses such a disposition as an unchanging character trait, due to his full experience of love for God. Moreover, one must know that a person stirred by God to such love is elevated above faith itself during the very act of love within him, just as he already holds the Venerable One in his heart with full love through faith. St. Paul clearly points this out to us when he says: *“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love”* (1 Cor. 13:13). For whoever, as I have said, holds God in the abundance of love is, at that moment, far greater than his faith, being wholly immersed in love.

92. *How necessary it is for success in theology*

to restore the peace that has been disrupted with others.

The work of holy knowledge, by its very nature, causes us no small amount of sorrow when, out of some irritation, we offend someone and make them our enemy. For this, it never ceases to prick our conscience until, through explanations and apologies, we succeed in restoring the offended person’s former goodwill toward us. Such anguish manifests itself with particular intensity when someone from this world becomes angry with us, even if unjustly. This weighs heavily upon us and troubles us greatly, since in every way we have served as a stumbling block and a cause of offense to them. Consequently, our mind then proves incapable of theological reflection; for knowledge, which is, by its very nature, entirely love, does not allow our thoughts to expand into divine contemplation— —unless we first embrace in love the one who is unjustly angry with us. In the event that He does not wish this, or has withdrawn from our midst, it is incumbent upon us, having accepted the image of His face into our good will with an unrestrained outpouring of the soul, to thus fulfill the law of love in the depths of our hearts. For those who desire to have knowledge of God must also represent in their minds the faces of those who are unjustly angry with an anger-free thought. When this happens, then the mind will not only move infallibly in the realm of theology, but will also rise with complete boldness in the work of love, as if ascending from the second step to the first.

93. *The path of virtue is at first difficult and bitter,*
but then becomes easy and pleasant.

The path of virtue seems harsh and daunting to those just beginning to love piety, not because it is so in and of itself, but because human nature, from the very moment of emerging from the mother’s womb, is accustomed to living a life of indulgence in pleasures; but for those who have already managed to reach its midpoint, it appears entirely good and joyful: for when our evil inclinations are suppressed by good habits, then the very memory of senseless pleasures disappears as well; as a result, the soul already walks with great joy along all the paths of virtue. Therefore, the Lord, leading us onto the path of salvation, says that the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and few are those who find it (Matt. 7:14); but to those who eagerly desire to begin keeping His holy commandments, He says: *“My yoke is easy and My burden is light”* (Matt. 11:30). Therefore, at the beginning of our endeavor, we must strive with all our might to fulfill God’s holy commandments, so that the good Lord, seeing our good intention and effort, may grant us readiness and a willing spirit to gladly submit to His glorious will: *“For the Lord establishes the will”* (Prov. 8: 35). After

that, we will begin with great joy to do good unceasingly; and then we will truly feel that *“it is God who works in us both to will and to act for His good pleasure”* (Phil. 2: 13).

94. *External and internal temptations enable those who strive*
capable of imprinting divine beauty within themselves.

Just as unwarmed and unmelted wax cannot properly imprint the seal placed upon it, so too a person, unless tested by trials and weaknesses, cannot bear the seal of God’s virtue. Therefore, the Lord says to the divine Paul: *“My grace is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Cor. 12: 9). The Apostle himself boasts, saying: *“Most gladly, then, I will boast all the more in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me”* (ibid.). Likewise, it is written in Proverbs: *“The Lord disciplines those He loves; He punishes every son He accepts”* (Prov. 3:12). The Apostle calls “weaknesses” the rebellions of the enemies of the Cross, which often befell both him and all the Saints at that time, so that they might not be exalted, as he says, by an abundance of revelations (2 Cor. 12:7); but rather, through humility, they might abide in the image of perfection, reverently preserving the divine gift through frequent humiliations. We, however, call “weaknesses” the wicked thoughts and bodily afflictions. For in those days, the bodies of the saints who struggled against sin—though subjected to deadly wounds and various other afflictions—were far above the passions that had entered human nature through sin; but now, as the peace of the churches multiplies in the Lord, it is necessary to test the bodies of the ascetics of piety with frequent afflictions, and their souls with wicked thoughts. This is especially true of those among them whose knowledge is powerful, accompanied by every sense and assurance, so that they may not fall into vanity and pride, and may, for the sake of great humility, receive, as I have said, the seal of divine beauty in their hearts, according to the words of the Holy Prophet: *“The light of Your face, O Lord, has shone upon us”* (Ps. 4:7). It is fitting, then, to endure with gratitude such counsel from the Lord concerning us; and then both our illnesses and our struggle against demonic thoughts will be counted as a second martyrdom for us. For he who spoke in those days through the mouths of lawless rulers to the holy martyrs—*“Renounce Christ and love the glory of this age”*—he himself speaks even now to the servants of God; He who then tormented the bodies of the righteous and grievously reviled the honorable teachers through those who served his devilish schemes—he himself now inflicts various sufferings upon the confessors of piety, accompanied by great revilement and humiliation, especially when, for the glory of the Lord, they help the oppressed poor with great strength. For this reason, we must, with all diligence and patience, cultivate within ourselves such a testimony of conscience before God: *“I was patient, and the Lord heard me”* (Ps. 39:2).

95. *On the two kinds of humility—the humility of the average person and the humility of the perfect.*

Humility is not easily attained: for the higher it is, the greater the effort required to attain it. It comes to those who partake of holy knowledge in two ways: when a devotee of piety is in the midst of spiritual progress, he maintains the most humble view of himself—whether because of bodily weakness, or because of adversity from those who are hostile to the zealous for a righteous life, or because of deceitful thoughts; but when the mind is fully alert and is clearly illuminated by holy grace, then the soul begins to possess humility as if by its very nature. For, being watered and nourished by divine grace through God’s goodness, it can no longer be puffed up or swollen with a love of glory, even if it were to fulfill God’s commandments unceasingly; rather, it considers itself the most insignificant of all, in the sense of communion with divine goodness, (that is, that she is such by God’s mercy). That humility is accompanied for the most part by sorrow and despondency, while this is joy mingled with all-wise modesty; the former, as I said, comes to those who are in the midst of their spiritual struggles, while the latter is bestowed upon those who are already drawing near to perfection. That is why it is not uncommon for someone to be overwhelmed by worldly successes, whereas this person, even if someone were to offer him all the kingdoms of the world, remains unshaken; not only does he not fear the most terrible arrows of sin, but he does not even feel them at all; for, being wholly spiritual, he no longer has any sense of outward glory. However, the ascetic reaches this final stage only after having passed through the first in every way: for grace will not grant us the second kind of wealth unless it first softens our will through trials, by allowing the passions to arise in an instructive manner during the first stage.

96. *On guarding oneself against empty and evil thoughts and words.*

Those who love the pleasures of this world move from thoughts to transgressions. Carried away by reckless passion, they express nearly all their passionate designs with lust, either in unseemly words or in lawless deeds. And those who resolve to lead an ascetic life diligently move from moral lapses to evil thoughts,

or to evil and harmful speech (they have turned away from wicked deeds, but still remain in the realm of unwholesome thoughts and speech). And the demons, if they see such people—whether they are engaging in gossip and slander, or carrying on idle and inappropriate conversations, or laughing inappropriately, or becoming excessively angry, or craving vain and empty glory—immediately attack them in droves. Taking vanity as a pretext for their wickedness, and leaping through it as through some dark doorway, they plunder their souls. It is fitting, therefore, for those who devote themselves to the pursuit of virtue to desire neither glory nor the company of many, nor to enjoy frequent outings and walks, nor to slander anyone—even if that person were worthy of slander—nor to speak at length, even if they could say one good thing; for loquacity greatly scatters the mind and not only renders it incapable of spiritual work but also delivers it into the hands of the demon of despondency, who, having gradually weakened it, then hands it over to the demon of boundless sorrow, and finally to the demon of anger. That is why one must always train the mind to observe the holy commandments and to remember the glory of the Lord deeply. For, as Scripture says, he who keeps the commandments “*will not be led astray by a deceitful word*” (Eccl. 8:5)—that is, he will not be drawn toward impure thoughts or words.

97. *Constant remembrance of the Lord and unceasing prayer*

combined with vigilance of the mind—is the sole means of purifying the heart.

When the heart receives the devil’s attacks with a certain burning pain, so that the one being tempted feels as if he is bearing the arrows themselves—this is a sign that the soul has come to zealously hate the passions. And this is the beginning of its purification. For if it does not endure great pain from the shamelessness of sin, it will not be able later to rejoice abundantly in the beneficence of righteousness. After this, let the one who desires to purify his heart continually warm it with remembrance of the Lord Jesus, making this alone the object of his contemplation and his unceasing spiritual labor. For those who wish to cast off their corruption should not behave in such a way that they pray at times and not at others, but must always practice prayer with a watchful mind, even if they live far from places of worship. For just as one who sets out to purify gold, if he leaves the crucible without fire even for a short time, causes the ore being purified to harden again—so too, the one who sometimes remembers God and sometimes does not: what he seems to gain through prayer, he loses by ceasing it. But it is characteristic of a man who loves virtue to consume the earthiness of the heart through constant remembrance of God, so that, as the evil gradually evaporates under the influence of the fire of good remembrance, the soul may, in full glory, rise completely to its natural radiance.

98. *What does dispassion, or purity of heart, consist of? Dispassion does not mean not being assailed by demons, for in that case, according to the Apostle, we would have to “withdraw from the world”* (1 Cor. 5:10); but rather, it means that when they assail us, we remain unassailed; just as warriors clad in armor are exposed to the arrows of their enemies, and hear the sound of the flying arrows, and even see the very arrows shot at them, yet remain unharmed by them because of the sturdiness of their armor. But these, being protected by iron, are not wounded during battle; we, however, by performing good deeds—clothed in the full armor of holy light and the helmet of salvation—will disperse the dark phalanxes of demons: for purity is achieved not merely by ceasing to do evil, but rather by completely eradicating evil within ourselves through all-encompassing zeal for the good.

99. *On the two demons that wage the longest battle—*

the demon of excessive zeal and carnal lust.

And how to fight against them. When a man of God has almost conquered all his passions within himself, two demons still remain waging war against him: one torments the soul, stirring him up—through his great love of God—to excessive zeal, so that he will not allow anyone else to please God more than he does; and the other torments the body, stirring it up with a fiery impulse toward carnal lust. This happens with the body, first of all, because such lustful pleasure is inherent in our nature, having been implanted in it for the sake of procreation, which is why it is so difficult to overcome; and secondly, by God’s permission. For when the Lord sees one of the ascetics rising too high in the multiplication of virtues, He sometimes permits him to be troubled by this evil demon, so that he may consider himself the worst of all living people. Such an attack by this passion sometimes occurs after good deeds have been performed, and sometimes before, so that the movement of this passion—whether it precedes or follows the deeds—causes the soul to appear most unworthy in its own eyes, no matter how great the deeds it has accomplished may be. – But against the first (the demon that stirs up excessive zeal), we will fight by increasing our humility and love; and against the

second (the demon of carnal lust)—by abstinence, patience, and a deep remembrance of death, so that through this, feeling the constant working of the Holy Spirit within us, we may become, in the Lord, superior even to these passions.

100. *We must confess to God all involuntary and unknown sins:*

otherwise, the hour of death will be difficult.

Those of us who have become partakers of holy knowledge will certainly have to give an account even of the involuntary wanderings of the mind, as Job says: *“You have marked out my path; if I have sinned unwittingly”* (Job 14:17)—and rightly so. For if anyone is always occupied with the remembrance of God and does not neglect His holy commandments, he will fall into neither involuntary nor voluntary sin. We must therefore immediately offer a contrite confession to the Lord even for our involuntary failings, incorporating it into the performance of our usual prayer rule. Since it is impossible for a person not to fall into human failings, (we should therefore always confess them to the Lord) until our conscience, in tears of love, is assured of their forgiveness: for, as St. John says: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). That is why we must constantly heed the feeling of contrite confession (and nurture this feeling), lest our conscience somehow deceive itself into thinking that it has already been sufficiently contrite and has confessed to God. For God’s judgment is far stricter than the judgment of our conscience, even if someone were to be fully convinced that they have done nothing wrong, as our wise Paul teaches, saying: *“But I do not commend myself; for I have no knowledge of myself, yet I am not justified by this; but the Lord is the one who judges me”* (1 Cor. 4:3–4). If, however, we do not properly confess even these (involuntary and unknown) sins, then at the hour of our departure we will find within ourselves a certain vague fear. But we who love the Lord ought to desire and pray that at that time we may be free from any fear: for whoever is in fear at that time will not pass freely by the princes of hell, because they regard this timidity of the soul as a sign of its complicity in their evil, just as it exists in themselves. But the soul, rejoicing in God’s love, at the hour of its separation from the body, soars with the angels of peace above all the dark hosts, for such a soul is, as it were, winged by spiritual love, having in this love the full and flawless fulfillment of the law. That is why those who depart from this life with such boldness will be caught up with all the saints at the Lord’s second coming. But those who, at the hour of death, are even slightly overcome by fear will then be left among the multitude of all other people, as those standing under judgment, so that, having been tested by the fire of judgment, they may receive the reward due to them according to their deeds from our good God and King Jesus Christ. For He is the God of righteousness, and He has in store for us who love Him the riches of His Kingdom, for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Maximus’s interpretation, in response to certain questions, of the following words from this hundredth chapter: “so that, having been tested by the fire of judgment...” and so on. “Those who have attained perfect love for God and, through virtue, have made the wings of their souls light enough to soar, are, according to the Apostle, caught up in the clouds and do not come to judgment; but those who have not attained such perfection—and who, even while doing good deeds, are not free from sin—these come before the judgment seat, and there, through the examination of their good and bad deeds, they are, as it were, tested by fire; if the scale of their good deeds outweighs the bad, they are spared punishment.”

Our Venerable Father John of Karpathos

A Brief Account of Him

Nothing is known about our Holy Father John of Karpathos—who he was, when he flourished, where he lived his ascetic life, or anything else concerning him. The only testimony about him comes from Blessed Photius, in the 201st reading: “I read a book in which, following the ten definitions of the principal virtues and the one hundred chapters of Diadochus, Bishop of Photica in Epirus, and several writings of St. Nilus, there is also a work by John of Karpathos, to which he gives the following title: ‘A Word of Comfort to the Monks Who Turned to Him for Comfort from India.’ And this work also consists of one hundred chapters.” – Judging by this comparison of St. John with Diadochus and Nilus, one may conclude that he was regarded as their contemporary and lived in the fifth century. Karpathos is a large island between Rhodes and Crete. St.

John was either a native of that place or lived there as a monk. – With these words, the Holy Father fatherly instills in his readers the courage to endure sorrows and withstand the temptations they face.

To the monks in India who wrote to him, one hundred exhortatory chapters

When presenting spring flowers to earthly kings, some of the petitioners were not only never rejected but were sometimes even granted special gifts. So too, at your request, as I bring you—who dwell in heaven—a hundred words of wisdom gathered from various sources, may I be graciously received and be deemed worthy of the gift of your prayers.

1. Since the King of all is eternal, His kingdom having neither beginning nor end, it is only fitting that those who have dedicated themselves to serving Him and to the virtues—which are pleasing to Him—should strive with all their hearts. For the honors of this life, however brilliant they may be, come to an end along with this life, whereas those that God bestows upon the worthy endure forever, since they are given together with immortality.

2. Blessed David, singing a song to God on behalf of all creation, mentioning the angels and all the heavenly powers, descended even to the earth, and did not omit the beasts, the cattle, the birds, or the creeping things, honoring them with such a song on their behalf as worship of the One who created them, and as if desiring that every creature might have its proper part in this. How, then, can a monk—comparable to Sapphire gold—ever allow himself to slacken in psalm-singing or grow lazy in it?

3. Just as fire embraced the bush but did not consume it, so too the heat of the body neither disturbs nor defiles either the flesh or the mind in those who have received the gift of dispassion, even if they bear a very heavy and hot body: *“for the voice of the Lord cuts off the flame”* (Ps. 28, 7) of nature, and God’s will and His word separate what is united by nature.

4. The moon, now waxing, now waning, represents the condition of a person who at times acts righteously, at times sins, and then, through repentance, returns to the path of virtue. The mind of the sinner is not lost—as some of you think—just as the moon’s body has not diminished, but only its light. Thus, through repentance, a person regains the radiance that is proper to him, just as the moon, after waning, is once again clothed in its usual light. *“Whoever believes in Christ, even if he dies, will live”* (John 11:25). *“And you shall know that I am the Lord: I have spoken, and I will do it”* (Ezek. 37:14).

5. When a swarm of hostile thoughts rises up against you in your mind, and you succumb to them and are defeated, know that you have temporarily separated yourself from divine grace; therefore, according to , by righteous judgment, you have been delivered into the hands of your own downfall. Strive, then, so that grace may never, even for a moment, forsake you because of your negligence. But when, having risen above temptation, you are able to surmount the wall of passionate thoughts and the wicked suggestions of the enemy’s malice that crowd in one after another, do not be ungrateful by failing to recognize in this the gift given to you from above; but confess with the Apostle, saying, *“It is not I, but the grace of God that is with me”* (1 Cor. 15:10), which has wrought this victory in me, raised me above the impure thoughts that rose up against me, and *“delivered me from the unrighteous man,”* that is, from the devil and from the old man (Ps. 17:49). Why, lifted up on high by the wings of the Spirit and, as it were, detached from the body, was I able to soar above the demons pursuing me—demons who usually ensnare the human mind with the net of sensuality? Having prayed for deliverance from this, I cry out: “You who brought me up out of the land of Egypt”—that is, out of the soul-destroying world—who, fighting for me with this hidden hand, struck down Amalek and gave me hope that the Lord will also destroy the other nations of unrestrained passions from before us (Ex. 17:14–16). This God of ours will grant wisdom and strength: for some have received wisdom, but not the strength of the Spirit to defeat their enemies. He will lift up your head above your enemies, and give you *“wings like a dove’s, and you will fly and rest with God”* (Ps. 54: 7). The Lord will make your muscles as strong as bronze, showing you to be steadfast, swift, and strong against your adversary, and casting all who rise up against you under your feet (Ps. 17: 35–40). Give thanks to the Lord for preserving your purity, for He has not delivered you into the hands of the lusts of your flesh and blood or of the unclean and corrupting spirits that act through them, but has protected you with His right hand as a wall. Build an altar to Him, as Moses did after putting Amalek to flight (Ex. 17: 15), and sing to Him: *“For this reason I will confess to You and praise You, O Lord, and sing to Your name, extolling Your might”* (Ps. 17:50), for You have delivered my life from decay and snatched me from the snares and traps of the ever-changing, manifold, and cunning malice of the world.

6. Evil demons kindle impure passions within us, renew them, exalt them, and multiply them; but meditation on the divine word, especially when accompanied by an outpouring of tears, puts them to death and destroys them, even if they are deeply rooted, and little by little renders harmful sinful actions—both of the soul and of the body—as if they did not exist: Let us only not be slothful in prayer and hope, unceasing and unwavering, as we wait upon the Lord.

7. Why does Christ offer praise through the mouths of the faithful who are like infants in their wickedness? Certainly, to crush with psalm-singing the enemy and the avenger who tyrannizes without measure—the enemy of virtues, the malicious avenger, the devil. For it is said, “*With the multitude of Your glory You have destroyed Your adversaries*” (Ex. 15: 7) and the enemies who wage war against us.

8. Everyone reaps the fruits of his own path—half now, and the other half in the age to come.

9. A monk must always maintain the most rigorous asceticism, not be seduced by passions, and cultivate profound silence.

10. The demons, who hate our souls, inspire certain people to bestow upon us some trifling praise, and then tempt us to take pleasure in it. If, after this, we become lax through conceit and give way to vanity, it will not be difficult for our enemies to take us completely captive.

11. It is better to accept one who reviles you than one who praises you, for, according to Scripture, the latter is no different from one who curses (Prov. 27:14).

12. When you are zealously pursuing the practice of fasting but, due to weakness, falter in it, then, with a contrite heart, turn with thanksgiving to the Provider and Judge of all. If you always present yourself as humble before the Lord in this way, you will never be haughty before any person.

13. The enemy, knowing that prayer is our most victorious weapon—and a devastating one for him—and striving in every way to turn us away from it, sometimes instills in us a desire to engage with the Hellenic writings from which we have strayed. But let us not heed his suggestions, lest we stray from the laws and order of our spiritual practice, and gather thorns and thistles instead of figs and clusters of grapes. “*For the wisdom of this world is folly with God*” (1 Cor. 3:19).

14. “*I bring you good news of great joy,*” says the angel, “*which will be for all people*” (Luke 2:10), and not for some group. And again: “*Let the whole earth bow down to you and sing to you*” (Psalm 65:4), and not just part of the earth. Singing, however, is characteristic not of those who pray tearfully to receive something, but of those who rejoice at having received what they desire. If this is so, then let us not despair, but, rejoicing, let us live our present lives, drawing from these words an incentive to such joy and contentment. However, let us temper this joy with the fear of God, as it is said elsewhere: “*Rejoice in the Lord with trembling*” (Ps. 2: 11). So too, the women who were with Mary fled from the tomb with fear and great joy (Matt. 28: 8). Perhaps we, too, will one day flee from the tomb in our minds with fear and joy. And it would be strange if we did so without fear; for no one is sinless, not even Moses or the Apostle Peter. Yet in such people, divine love, having triumphed, drives out fear at the hour of departure.

15. You have testimony in Scripture that the passionate person, having believed with all his heart and with all humility, receives the gift of dispassion. Today the Lord says to the “*wise*” thief, “*You will be with Me in Paradise*” (Luke 23:43); to the woman with the issue of blood: “*Your faith has saved you; go in peace*”—the bliss of dispassion (Mark 5:34). There are also many other similar passages, such as: “*According to your faith, let it be done for you*” (Matthew 9:29).

16. When, in our strict struggle against the passions, we are more severely assailed by demons with shameful thoughts, let us then, above all, be strengthened in our faith in the Lord, and let us build up within ourselves the firmest hope in the promised eternal blessings, which our enemies, out of envy, strive to deprive us of and to alienate us from. For if these blessings were not exceedingly great, the demons would not burn with such envy toward us nor would they assail us so often with wicked thoughts, hoping at least thereby to satisfy their malice and thinking to drive us to despair through this repeated and unbearable harassment.

17. Some maintain that true knowledge consists in action (based on the truth that has been recognized). Therefore, strive all the more to demonstrate both faith and knowledge through your deeds; for those who boast of knowledge alone will hear: “*They profess to know God, but their deeds deny Him*” (Titus 1:16).

18. For the most part, during feasts and holy gatherings—especially when someone intends to partake of the mystical meal—the demons strive to defile the ascetic with shameful fantasies and the emission of semen. But even with this, they fail to crush or weaken one who is accustomed to enduring everything patiently

and courageously. And let not those who bend into a curve (like serpents), though they pretend to be straight, boast against us.

19. For your steadfastness and zeal, the enemies take revenge, tormenting your soul with various and unspeakable temptations. But take heart! From these great and innumerable sorrows, a crown is woven for you. *Moreover, “Christ’s power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Cor. 12:9), and the grace of the Spirit is accustomed to flourish in the most sorrowful circumstances, as the prophetic word assures us: “For,” it says, “*in darkness a light shines for the righteous*” (Ps. 111:4); of course, “*if only you dare to hold fast to the hope of which we boast until the end*” (Heb. 3:6).

20. Nothing so disrupts a generally good disposition as laughter, jokes, and idle talk. And yet nothing renews a weary soul and prepares it for closeness with God as much as the fear of God, attentive devotion, constant instruction in God’s Word, arming oneself with prayer, and the pursuit of fruitful vigilance.

21. It is both fitting and beneficial for the soul to bear every sorrow steadfastly—whether caused by people or by demons—knowing that we deserve every hardship and blaming no one but ourselves for it. Whoever blames another for his own sorrows strays from right and proper judgment.

22. It happens that a person, though diligent, strays from the right path, stepping out of his proper place because of multiplied temptations, by which, as Scripture says, “*all his wisdom and all his skill are consumed*” (Ps. 106: 27). This is permitted “*so that we may not rely on ourselves*” (2 Cor. 1:9), “*and so that Israel may not boast, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’*” (Judg. 7:2). But trust that you will once again be restored to your former glorious state, when, by God’s command, the evil one—who compels you to see and hear everything with passion and incites you to sin—will be cast away from you and driven off; for he clouds the mind as with a thick cloud and causes the flesh to feel an unspeakable heaviness and burden; and he makes the natural thought—which in itself is simple and without guile, like a newborn infant—complex and highly skilled in every sin, corrupting and perverting it by inclining it now this way, now that.

23. Man is a great being, growing inwardly and exalted for his virtues. And yet this great being fears sin as an elephant *fears* a mouse, “*lest, while preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27).

24. Not only at the end of the world *will* the devil “*speak words against the Most High,*” as Daniel says (7:25); but even now it happens that, through our thoughts, he sends forth grievous blasphemies against heaven itself, dishonoring the Most High Himself, His creation, and the holy mysteries of Christ. We, however, standing firm on the rock of knowledge, must not fear this or be astonished by the audacity of this wicked one, but, arming ourselves with faith and fervent prayer and relying on the help from above, must boldly respond to the enemy.

25. With threats and abuse, the enemy boldly attacks the soul that has just departed from the body, appearing as a bitter and terrifying accuser of its failings. But one can also see then how a God-loving and faithful soul, though it had been wounded many times before by sins, does not fear his attacks and threats, but rather stands strong in the Lord, is filled with joy, and is inspired by courage, seeing the heavenly powers accompanying her and the light of faith shielding her like a wall; and with great boldness she cries out against the evil devil: “What have you to do with us, you who are alien to God? What have you to do with us, you who were cast down from heaven and are a slave to the wicked one? You have no power over us; Christ, the Son of God, has power over us and over all things; to Him we have sinned, and to Him we will give an account, having as our guarantee His mercy toward us and salvation in Him through His honorable Cross. But you, wretched one, flee from us. You are nothing to us or to Christ’s servants.”—At such bold words, the devil, who tears at the soul’s spine, will finally give way, letting out a scream, powerless to withstand the name of Christ; but the soul, being higher than him and soaring above the enemy, will silence him, just as a so-called swift-winged bird silences a raven. – After this, she is carried in joy by the divine Angels to the place destined for her according to her state.

26. That even a small temptation, sometimes permitted by God, may pose an obstacle to the zealot’s progress—let Echeinis, the tiniest of fish, confirm this to you: with a single touch, it halts a ship laden with all manner of goods and prevents it from moving forward; Recall also the one who says of himself: “*I, Paul—I who once and twice intended to come to you, but Satan hindered me*” (1 Thess. 2:18). Yet do not let this cause you confusion; rather, strive against it with patience, and you will receive grace.

27. When one rich in virtues, through laziness, strays from what is proper, then the sons of the evil east—the Amalekites, or else the Midianites (Judges, chapter 6)—rise up against him, —a force of lust—with

their camels, that is, countless passionate memories, and they corrupt all the fruits of the earth, that is, the fruits of the best deeds and customs; as a result, Israel eventually becomes impoverished, falls into despondency, and is compelled to cry out to the Lord. Then a good thought is sent to him from above—a man who imitates Gideon in great faith and humility [for he said, “*My thousand is the least in Manasseh*” (Judges 6:15)]; and he takes up arms against such a multitude of attackers with three hundred weak men, and with the help of grace, he gloriously raises the trophy of victory over his enemies.

28. You cannot “*tread upon the asp and the basilisk, and trample the lion and the serpent*” (Ps. 90:13) unless, through prolonged prayer, you implore God to grant you the angels as your allies, so that they may lift you up in their arms and raise you above all worldly wisdom.

29. When any of those who strive earnestly is defeated, let him not lose heart or become lax in his conduct, but, inspired by the words of Isaiah, let him stand upright and take heart, singing this song: “*Submit yourselves, you mighty ones,*” O cunning demons! “*For even if you rise up again, you will be defeated again; and whatever counsel you devise, the Lord will bring to ruin, for God is with us*” (Isa. 8:9–10)—God, who raises up the fallen and causes our enemies to be torn apart by sorrow and vexation as soon as we repent.

30. It is impossible for one who is being trained through trials to avoid sorrow; but after this, such people are granted great joy, sweet tears, and divine thoughts, because they have cultivated sorrow and contrition in their hearts.

31. If neither Isaac, who desired it, nor Esau, who sought the coveted blessing, received what they hoped for (Rom. 9:16)—since God shows mercy, blesses, and anoints with the Spirit not the one we desire, but the one whom He Himself, before the foundation of the world, predestined to serve Him—then we shall by no means be disheartened or envious when we see any brothers, the lowly and the least, excelling in virtue. You have certainly heard what the Lord says in the parable: “*Give this man a seat*” (Luke 14:9)—so that the one who is above you may recline there. Let us marvel all the more at this Judge, who has wisely and ineffably decreed that the least and the last should take precedence and lead, while we are last, even though we excel him in both deeds and years. Whatever measure the Lord has given to each person, let us be content with that. “*If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit,*” as it is written (Gal. 5:25).

32. Do not agree under any circumstances when someone under your authority says to you: “Give me authority for a time, for the sake of virtue, to try this or that task and to carry it out in such and such a way.” For whoever speaks thus clearly desires to carry out his own will and rejects the covenants of the best obedience.

33. As you will see, the passions of the flesh and of the soul will be eradicated in time and by God’s providence, even if they are many; but the mercy of Christ will never cease. For “*the mercy of the Lord is from this age and to the age to come upon those who fear Him*” (Ps. 102: 17).

34. The royal treasuries will be filled with gold; and the minds of true monks will be filled with knowledge.

35. It sometimes happens that a teacher falls into disgrace and is subjected to temptations because of those who have received spiritual benefit from him. For, as it is said, “*We are dishonorable*”—being dishonorable as slaves to the flesh—“*and weak; but you are glorious and strong in Christ*” (1 Cor. 4:10).

36. The source and foundation of corruption through the flesh is passionate thought. But the one who has come to his senses after a fall drives it out of his soul through repentance. For it is said, “It would be better if you had wept, so that the wicked and unseemly thought that incited you to do this might be removed from among you” (1 Cor. 5:2). Thus, weeping opposes the spirit of corruption.

37. Who will proclaim to the one oppressed by disgrace and powerlessness toward virtue that he will behold Jesus—not only in the future, but even here, with the great power and glory of the One who is coming to him through dispassion? So, like Sarah, whose soul had grown old in barrenness and who, according to the promise, finally gave birth to a son of righteousness, will say: “God has brought me laughter”—that is, He has granted me great joy after so many years of sorrow caused by passion; or, according to another translation: “God has made me young”—“*my youth is renewed like the eagle’s*” (Ps. 102: 5). For having grown old before in sins and shameful passions, I have now been born again and have become young and tender, having previously been coarsened by the flesh, and now I view worldly things lightly, having embraced the simplicity and indifference proper to my nature, after my mind was restored to health through God’s abundant mercy, and my flesh became, like that of Naaman the Syrian, like the flesh of infants, through my baptism in the Jordan of knowledge; Now I am of one mind, having been delivered, by God’s grace, from the serpent’s

cunning and from the horde of evil thoughts, which are highly skilled in evil and deeply rooted in the material world (immersed in sensuality).

38. Suppose the Lord Himself says to you: “At one time I took away from you such-and-such a gift, in which you found satisfaction for your mind and rest; and in their place I gave you another gift, such-and-such, equal to them. Yet you, thinking of what was taken away and paying no attention to what was given in its place, groan, suffer, and are wounded by sorrow; but you bring Me joy by accepting sorrow from Me (2 Cor. 2:2), for I cause sorrow for your benefit—to save you rather than to destroy you—as I care for the son I hold dear.”

39. Impose upon yourself the commandment not to eat fish, and see how the enemy will then begin to relentlessly drive you toward a craving for fish, and how you yourself will likewise begin to rush frantically toward tasting what you ought not even to desire, so that you may experience, as it were, what happened to Adam; for he, too, upon hearing, “You must not eat from this tree”—this one forbidden thing—rushed toward it with all his desire.

40. God saves some through wisdom, and others through simplicity and gentleness; for you must know that God will not reject the gentle.

41. Those who devote themselves more earnestly to prayer are subjected to more terrible and fierce temptations.

42. If you are predestined for dispassion, do not give in to carelessness, but strive with all your strength to attain it. For “*we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life*” (2 Cor. 5:2:4), not only physically with the end of the world, but also spiritually here and now, as a pledge. For “*death has been swallowed up in victory*” (1 Cor. 15:54). And all the Egyptians who pursue us and insult us will be swallowed up by the waves of the power sent to us from heaven.

43. If you have forgotten the one who said, “*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27), and, “*Take heed to yourselves, that you may not fall*” (1 Cor. 10:12)—and also: “*Watch yourselves*” (a word to the spiritual), “*lest you also be tempted*” (Gal. 6:1), —if you have forgotten Solomon’s straying from the right path and his transgressions, after such great grace;—if you have consigned to oblivion the great Peter’s unexpected denial: then rely on your own reason, take pride in your way of life, boast of the length of your great asceticism, and give way to pride. – But, O brother, do not become lazy (lying back idly), and do not give in to carelessness—but rather fear, as long as there is breath in your nostrils, even if you have reached the age of Moses, and pray, saying: “*O Lord, do not cast me off in my old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me, O God, my Savior! In You I will sing my song*” (Ps. 70:9, 6).

44. The Lord says to you, as He did to Matthew: “Follow Me” (Matt. 9:9). – If now, as you eagerly follow your long-desired Lord along the path of life, you stumble with your foot over a stone of passion and suddenly fall into sin, or if, encountering muddy places, you frequently and unwittingly slip and fall; then as many times as you happen to fall and cause excruciating pain to your body, so many times, rising again with your former zeal, run in the footsteps of your Lord until you reach Him. Thus, “*in holy meditation, I have appeared before You, to see Your saving power and Your glory; and in the name of Your name I will lift up my hands, and I will be filled with joy and gladness, and my mouth will sing a song to You*” (Ps. 62:3–6). It is a great honor for me to have received the name “Christian,” as the Lord tells me through the mouth of Isaiah: “*It is a great thing for you to be called My servant*” (Isa. 49:6).

45. Where it is said that “*the Father will give good things to those who ask Him*” (Matt. 7:11), and where it is said that “*He will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him*” (Luke 11:13): These words teach that God’s prayerful servants are deemed worthy not only of the forgiveness of sins but also of heavenly gifts, being strengthened in their seeking by the thought that the Lord has promised such blessings not to the righteous but to sinners. Therefore, ask persistently and with unwavering resolve, even though you are not perfect in a virtuous life, are weak, and are unworthy of anything—and you will receive great things.

46. Let the unbeliever or the one of little faith consider how an ant takes flight and how a certain worm becomes a bird, and how many other wondrous phenomena occur among creatures; so that, having cast aside the infirmity of unbelief and despair in this way, he may finally take flight and, like a tree, bring forth glorious knowledge. For “*I am,*” says the Lord, “*the one who brings life to the dry tree and revives the withered bones*” (Ezek. 17:24; 37:4 and 9).

47. Let us by no means, for the sake of bodily needs, waste away in worry; but let us believe in God with all our soul, as a certain good man once said: “Trust in the Lord, and He will trust in you”—and as the blessed Apostle Peter writes: “*Be self-controlled and alert in your prayers*” (1 Peter 4:7)—cast all your anxieties upon God, for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). If you still doubt and do not believe that He cares for you and will provide for you, look at the spider and consider how different a person is from a spider—a spider, I say, weaker and more powerless than anything else. Yet it has no possessions, makes no journeys far and wide, does not sue or get angry, and has no storehouses; it spends its life in perfect meekness, chastity, and utter silence, takes no interest in the affairs of others, but does his own thing and quietly and serenely goes about his business, thereby silently telling those who love idleness that one who is unwilling to work should not eat; and he is so silent that he far surpasses Pythagoras himself, whom the Greeks admire more than any other philosopher for his feat of self-restraint in speech; Pythagoras did not speak to everyone, but would occasionally converse secretly with his friends; he would also sometimes address oxen and eagles, uttering words that were laughable and nonsensical; he abstained entirely from wine and drank only water. The spider surpassed Pythagoras’s restraint of speech with its perfect silence; and it surpassed his abstinence from wine by shunning even water. In this silent state dwells the weak and humble spider, unwilling to go out and wander here and there, nor to indulge excessively in labor and weariness; and He who dwells on high, looking down upon the humble (and there is nothing more humble than a spider), extending His providence even to it, sends it a small catch daily, near its dwelling, causing small insects to be caught in its web for its sustenance.

48. Perhaps someone enslaved by gluttony will say: “I eat a great deal, and since I spend so much as a result, I cannot help but become entangled in many worldly cares and transactions.” But let even such a person look at the great whales grazing in the Atlantic Ocean, how abundantly they are nourished by God and never experience hunger, even though each of these beasts eats as many fish as even the most populous city cannot consume in a day. “*All look to You; give them their food in due season,*” sings the Holy Prophet (Ps. 107:27). Whether one eats much or little, God provides for both. Hearing this, you too—who have a vast and spacious belly—entrust your whole self to God and faith, casting aside every worldly concern and an overly anxious mind, and do not be unfaithful, but be faithful.

49. If we truly desire to please God and be most blissfully loved by Him, let us present our mind to God naked, carrying nothing from this world with us or within us—neither skill, nor knowledge, nor sophistical reasoning—even if we have studied all the wisdom of the world. For God turns away from those who approach Him with a conceited disposition, nourished by vanity and arrogance. Some commentators have rightly described vain self-conceit as self-indulgence and self-aggrandizement.

50. How can we overcome sin that has already taken root? Self-discipline is necessary (or forcing one’s will against one’s desires). For it is said: “*A man toils with his own hands and drives away*” (forcibly drives away) “*his own destruction*” (Prov. 16:26), always striving to direct his thoughts and heart toward holiness. The law does not forbid using force to overcome force (i.e., the force of sin with the force of good aspirations). When we apply self-discipline to some good endeavor (i.e., we force ourselves to put a good aspiration into action), then we await the power that is to come to us from on high, dwelling in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49)—that is, by remaining in unceasing prayer and other virtues—until this mighty power comes to us, a power that acts not like our feeble efforts, but one that cannot be expressed by bodily lips, powerfully overcoming and subduing both sinful nature and the malice of demons, overcoming the inclination of our souls toward evil, and overcoming all unseemly bodily impulses. “*There was,*” he says, “*a noise from heaven, like a violent wind*” (Acts 3: 2), to forcefully drive out from us the evil that constantly draws us toward what is evil.

51. “The enemy *lies in wait in his snare, like a lion in his lair*” (Ps. 9:30), hiding from us the snares and nets of impure and ungodly thoughts; but we, too, if we do not sleep, can set even greater and more dangerous snares, nets, and ambushes for him. For prayer and psalms, vigil and humility, service to others and mercy, thanksgiving, and listening to the divine words—these are an ambush for the enemy; and a snare, and a pit, and scourges, and nets, and a stranglehold.

52. Having lived to a ripe old age, the divine David, giving thanks to God who chose him, says at the end of his confession of God’s blessings: “Now Your servant has found the courage to pray to You with this prayer.” This is said to help us understand that it requires great effort and much time spent in prayer to attain the beginnings of a serene disposition of the heart—this other, certain “heaven of the heart”—where Christ dwells, as the Apostle says: “*Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you?*” (2 Cor. 13: 5)?

53. If Christ “*has become for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*” (1 Cor. 1:30), then clearly He is also our rest. For He says, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28). It is therefore fitting to say that He became the Sabbath for mankind, that is, rest. For the human race can find rest only in Christ alone.

54. Just as there is a cup of falling and a cup of wrath, so there is also a cup of weakness, which the Lord, having received from us, delivers into the hands of our enemies at the proper time, so that it is not we but the demons who grow weak and fall.

55. Just as in external affairs there are money changers, weavers, bird catchers, soldiers, and builders, so too, in internal affairs, understand that there are also, in our thoughts, gamblers, poisoners, pirates, hunters, fornicators, murderers, and the like; such must be driven out immediately by pious resistance and prayer, especially the fornicators, so that they do not defile the holy place and do not make the man of God abominable.

56. The Lord grants salvation not only through words, as was the case with the thief who cried out to Him from the cross, but also through thoughts. Thus, the woman with the issue of blood recognized within herself (that is, she thought with faith): “*If I but touch the hem of His garment, I will be healed*” (Matt. 9:21); and Abraham’s servant “*spoke to God in his heart*” concerning Rebekah (Gen. 24:15).

57. The sin that has been committed almost immediately drives the repentant person to God, as soon as he perceives the stench, the burden, and the frenzy of sin. But whoever does not wish to turn to repentance is not driven by sin toward God; rather, sin holds him captive and binds him with unbreakable bonds, intensifying his destructive desires to the utmost.

58. Guard yourself against the spells of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:22), the most vicious of which are thoughts of pride and vain glory. You can rid yourself of them, by the grace of God, if you humble and mortify your soul, and cast yourself down before the Lord, calling upon Him to help you and confessing that the deliverance you seek is a heavenly gift. That is why it is said: “*No one can receive anything unless it is given to him from heaven*” (John 3:27).

59. It sometimes happens that, during a brotherhood gathering, a vain thought breaks through, prompting you to say something out of turn; but angelic thoughts inspire you to drive away this talkative, untimely thought. — Therefore, if you do not drive it away with virtuous silence, but allow it to come out, having been puffed up with conceit, then you will have to suffer the evil consequences of it—being justly subjected either to an even greater sin, or to some external misfortunes, or to severe troubles from the brethren, or to torment in the age to come: for even for an idle and vain word—spoken out of an untrained tongue, we will give an account; which is why we must carefully guard our tongues.

60. Those who are tempted by sensual pleasures, anger, vainglory, and other passions are described as being scorched by the sun by day and by the moon by night (Ps. 120: 6). Therefore, pray that the divine, dew-bestowing cloud may overshadow you, so that you may avoid the enemy’s scorching heat.

61. By no means grant bold access to yourself to those who love drunkenness and are slaves to riotous feasts, nor to those who are eager to speak shameless words, even if they are grayed by age and even if they have led a monastic life for a long time; lest their corruption cover you as well, and you be counted among the unclean and the uncircumcised of heart.

62. First, the keys are entrusted to Peter, and then he is permitted to fall into denial of Christ the Lord, so that through such a fall his self-conceit might be humbled. So too, if—having received the key of understanding—you fall prey to various temptations, do not be surprised by this; but glorify the one all-wise Lord, who, through these falls, curbs the pride that follows in the wake of divine knowledge: for temptations are a bridle, by God’s providence, capable of restraining human arrogance.

63. If the Lord often takes away our blessings, as, for example, He took away Job’s wealth—for “the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away” (Job 1:21)—then surely the evil that the Eternal One has brought upon us will also be taken from our hands; for, as the wise man says, “*Both good and evil come from the Lord*” (Sir. 11:14). And He who brings evil upon us is the same One who grants us eternal joy with eternal glory. “Just as I watched over you,” says the Lord, “to destroy you and bring evil upon you, so I will rebuild you and no longer destroy you; I will plant you and no longer uproot you.” Let the popular proverb be silenced, which says: “Once things have turned for the worse, they will never be good again.” For He who has changed our affairs for the worse can certainly, once again, unexpectedly turn them into the brightest of circumstances.

64. The one who attacks the demons with greater strength and determination—whether through self-control, prayer, or some other virtue—will himself receive the deepest wounds from them, to the point that he will even fall into despair, suspecting that the condemnation of spiritual death weighs upon his soul, and will be compelled to cry out: *“Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* (Rom. 8:24); for the enemy compels me against my will to obey his laws.

65. It is not merely written, as some have said to one another: *“Arise, let us go to the people who live in hope and dwell in peace”* (Judg. 18: 9–10); and again: *“Come, let us go up to Judah, and after speaking to them”* with deceitful words, *“we will turn them away from”* the truth (Isa. 7: 5–6). Thus, the evil demons usually sharpen the swords of temptation against those who have chosen a life of silence, and they attack those who are more devout and God-fearing with greater fury, luring them into sin even through acts of piety itself, with unspeakable slander; so that, at least in this way, they might be turned away from faith in Christ, from prayer, and from hope, and thus be overcome. But we, O Lord, speaking with David (Ps. 79:19), will not depart from You until You have mercy on us and those who devour us are driven away from us; we will not depart from You until You command those who tempt us to depart from us, and we are revived by patience and steadfast dispassion. For temptation is the very essence of human life, and often, at a specific time, the One who sets our trials allows us to fall at the feet of strangers; but it is the nature of a great and valiant soul not to despair in the face of sorrowful misfortunes.

66. If the devil is so powerful that he can, even when a person does not wish it, bend him and draw him to his own will, because of his departure from his true, natural order; how much more powerful, then, is the Angel who, at a certain time, having received a command from God, can transform a person’s entire disposition for the better? And if the icy north is so powerful that it transforms the softest nature of water into the hardness of stone, what then cannot the warmest south accomplish? If the air, when extremely chilled, subjugates everything to itself and fills all with its cold—for *“who can stand before the face of the frost?”* (Ps. 147:6)—How, then, can heat fail to transform everything according to its own nature? For who can stand before the face of heat? Let us therefore believe that even the cold, black coal of our mind will someday—or sooner—become hot and radiant through the touch of the divine fire.

67. Even in this present age, with faithful testimony and signs manifesting in our inner Joseph, there is a state of dispassion in which our mind, having departed from Egypt, is freed from passionate desires and the hidden, most shameful bondage, and hears a language it did not know— not the language of demons, which is impure and corrupts sound reason, but the holy language of the Angels, who transform the mind from the corporeal to the incorporeal—a language that enlightens the soul that receives it.

68. I have heard some brothers who are severely afflicted in body and unable to observe fasting ask me: How can we be delivered from the devil and the passions without fasting? To such one must reply that not only by abstaining from food, but also by crying out to God from the heart, you can destroy and drive away evil impulses and those who stir them up. For it is said: *“They cried out to the Lord in their distress, and He delivered them from their troubles”* (Ps. 106:6); and it is also written: *“From the belly of hell I cried out; You heard my voice: ‘Let my life rise from the grave’”* (Jonah 2:3, 7). Why? *“Until,”* it says, *“the iniquity—that is, the burden of sin—passes away, I will cry out to God on high”* (Ps. 56: 23), so that, granting me the greatest blessing, He may destroy the very root of sin by His power, wipe out the idols of the passionate mind, and reveal to those free from idolatry our weaknesses, which are full of idols. Therefore, if you have not received the gift of self-control, know that the Lord, for the sake of your prayer and hope, desires to hear you when you call out to Him. Now that you have learned of the Lord’s judgment concerning you, do not grieve over your inability to undertake the feat of fasting, but rather strive to rid yourself of the enemy through prayer and good-natured patience. If thoughts of weakness and suffering drive you out of the city of fasting, flee to another (Matt. 10:23)—that is, to the city of prayer and thanksgiving.

69. Pharaoh said in prayer, *“May God take this death away from me”*—and he was heard; likewise, the demons who begged the Lord not to command them to go into the abyss received what they asked for. Will not a Christian, praying for deliverance from spiritual death, be heard all the more?

70. There is a time when one is enlightened and comforted by divine grace, but when that grace wanes, one falls into mental agitation and unseemly desires and grumbles about it, or succumbs to useless despondency, rather than zealously striving through prayer to restore within oneself that saving disposition; is like a poor man who, having received alms from the King’s palace, resents not having been ushered inside to recline at the King’s table.

71. *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”* (John 20:29)—just as blessed are those who, humbled by the workings of grace, finding no comfort within themselves but instead facing a succession of sorrows and deep darkness, do not fall into despair, but, strengthened by faith, endure valiantly, confident that they see the unseen.

72. Humility, granted by God’s grace in due time—after many struggles, battles, and tears—to those who seek it, is incomparably stronger and loftier than the humility found in those who have strayed from virtue. Those who are deemed worthy of it are truly perfect men.

73. When the devil left the Lord, *“the angels came to Him and ministered to Him”* (Matt. 4:11). And just as it is not written that the angels were present during the Lord’s temptation, so too, when we are tempted at any time, the angels do not stray far away; then, after the tempters have departed, they come to us and serve us, offering divine thoughts, confirmation, enlightenment, contrition, consolation, patience, delight, and everything that saves, strengthens, and restores the soul that has labored in the struggle. It was said to Nathanael: *“From now on, you will see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”* (John 1: 51), that is, from now on, the service and help of the angels will be poured out abundantly upon the human race.

74. Remember the High Priest, at whose right hand the devil stood to oppose him (Zech. 3:1)—that is, every righteous thought, word, and deed—so that you may not be astonished when something similar happens.

75. A monk must understand what weakness is, as in the words: *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak”* (Ps. 6:3), and what a turning away from God is—this is the disease of the devil and his angels.

76. Just as iron becomes impervious to fire’s penetration, so frequent prayers make the mind most powerful in the battle against the enemy; that is why the demons strive with all their might to weaken us through laziness so that we do not persevere in prayer, knowing that it is hostile to them and a weapon for the mind in battle.

77. David commended the zeal of those who had gone out with him from Ziklag against the foreigners, even though they had grown weary and remained by the stream of Bosor.⁷⁹ Why, upon returning victorious from the battle against the barbarians, and hearing some say that those who had sat by the stream out of exhaustion should not be given a share of the spoils—and seeing that they were ashamed and had nothing to say—the most gracious David defended them, saying: they had been stationed by the goods to guard them, and he set aside for them a portion equal to that which he had given to the warriors who had fought valiantly and cheerfully (1 Sam. 30: 21). Consider now this: if in any brother who at first showed fervent zeal [for the practices of fasting, vigil, and the like] and then grew somewhat lax in them, we assume that his inner virtues (his good dispositions) —faith, repentance, humility, weeping, patience, hope, generosity, and so on—then this person, who clings to them and patiently abides in them while awaiting Christ Jesus the Lord, even though weak in outward deeds, will receive, as is fitting, a certain eternal gift.

78. Those who have devoted themselves entirely to God, both in action and in contemplation, are called Levites and priests; and the “Levitical cattle” (Num. 3) are those who, though powerless to walk steadfastly along the path of virtue, nevertheless delight in virtue, desire it unceasingly, and strive for it to the best of their ability, even if they do not always succeed because of the evil that robs them of their strength. But in due time, they too—we may hope—will receive the gift of dispassion, by God’s love for mankind alone. For it is said: *“You have heard the desire of the poor, O Lord”* (Ps. 9:38).

79. We often notice and see the blows that the enemy inflicts upon us, both openly and covertly; but the torments and vexations he endures from us—whether we excel in virtue, repent of our sins, endure insults, bear misfortunes with equanimity, persevere in prayer, or perform other acts of piety—which tear him apart, torment him, weeps and is broken—all of this, by God’s providence, we do not see, lest we become proud. *“For it is righteous before God,”* as the Apostle says, *“to repay with affliction those who afflict you”* (1 Thess. 1:6).

80. If a stump, whether on the ground or on a rock, sprouts shoots from the moisture of the water, just as a newly planted tree does, then it is possible for us as well—when we are revived by the power of the Holy Spirit—to bring forth the incorruptibility that we have received by nature and to bear fruit, just as a newly planted tree does, even though we have fallen into the old man.

⁷⁹ The entire company that set out from Sekelag numbered 600 men. Two hundred of them, having reached the Vazorova stream, lacked the strength to go any further. David left them there to guard the supplies and continued on with 400. – Their zeal, of course, is evident in the way they set out.

81. To the soul that despairs because of the abundance of temptations and the multitude of sins, and says, “Hope is lost; we are doomed,” what does God, who does not despair of our salvation, say? “*You will live, and you will see that I am the Lord*” (Ezek. 37:6). But to the soul that wonders by what power and through what virtues it might be born again in Christ, it is said: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you*” (Luke 1:35). Where the Holy Spirit is present, do not seek the laws of nature or the usual sequence of causes and effects. For the almighty and worshiped Holy Spirit will bring about in you, by His power, what is impossible by nature, so that you will be amazed. Moreover, He will now reveal your mind—which was once overcome—as a victor. For the Comforter, who descends upon us from above, is above all things; and He will raise you above all natural impulses and demonic passions.

82. Strive to preserve the radiance of your noble mind unharmed. If you begin to look upon everything with passion, it means that the Lord has darkened you, has cast a veil over your face—and “*the light of your eyes is not with you*” (Ps. 37:11). However, even if you do have this, do not grow weary or lose heart, but pray with Saint David: “*Send forth Your light and Your truth to me, who am darkened by despondency—the salvation of my face and my God*” (Ps. 42:3, 5); “*Send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth*” (Ps. 103: 30).

83. Blessed is the one who insatiably feasts on prayers and psalms here, day and night, and strengthens himself with the glorious reading of Scripture; for such communion will bring the soul inexhaustible joy in the age to come.

84. Strive with all your strength not to fall; for it is not fitting for a strong warrior to fall; but if you should happen to fall, rise quickly and stand once more in the good struggle. Even if the former—the fall—should happen to you ten times, due to the withdrawal of grace, let the latter—the rising—happen to you ten times as well. And so it shall be until the end of your life. For it is written, “*If the righteous falls seven times, he will rise seven times*” (Prov. 24:16). As long as you hold fast to the weapon of the holy schema (that is, the resolve to serve God), with tears and supplication to God, you are counted among those who stand firm, even if you fall often. As long as you remain with the monks, like a valiant warrior, you will receive wounds from the front—for which you will be praised, because even while wounded, you did not yield, did not give in, and did not retreat. But if you turn away from the monks, you will receive wounds from behind, like a fugitive and a coward who has lost his bearings and abandoned the ranks.

85. Despair is worse than sin. Judas the traitor was fainthearted and unskilled in battle; that is why he fell into despair; and the enemy, rushing in, threw a noose around him. But Peter—that firm rock—having suffered a terrible fall, like one skilled in battle, did not lose heart or despair in his extreme sorrow, but leaping to his feet, he shed the bitterest tears from a contrite and humble heart; and our adversary, seeing this, as if struck in the face by the fiercest flame, immediately recoiled and fled far away, uttering fierce cries.

86. Against the following three passions, a monk must wage an unrelenting battle to the very end: against gluttony, against vanity, and against the love of money, which is idolatry.

87. A certain king of Israel defeated the people of the troglodytes and other barbarians allied with them through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, sung to the accompaniment of David’s instruments and with his words (2 Chron. 12:3; 20:22). You, too, have these barbaric troglodytes—demons—oppressing your senses and limbs, tormenting your flesh with lust, and inciting you to look, listen, and smell with passion; to speak indecent words; to have eyes full of fornication; and to be confused both inwardly and outwardly, in the manner of Babylon. Take care, then, to utterly destroy these troglodytes who are doing evil within you, through great faith, and through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

88. Just as the Lord desires that man be saved through man, so the devil strives to ensure that man be destroyed through man. That is why one must not associate with a scornful, malicious, or talkative person, lest one end up in hell along with him. For even those who draw close to the righteous barely manage to attain salvation. But if anyone associates with a deceitful person without fear, he will meet with shipwreck, just as with a plague or leprosy. And who would pity someone who approaches a dragon with a cheerful face? Flee, then, from those who are untrained in the use of the tongue, from sowers of discord, and from those who are restless both within and without.

89. Whoever wishes to be called wise, sensible, and a friend of God should strive earnestly to present his soul to the Lord just as he received it from Him—pure, unblemished, and entirely blameless. For this, he will be crowned in heaven and blessed by the angels.

90. A single kind word once made that once-wicked robber pure and holy and led him into paradise. And a single unkind word barred Moses from entering the Promised Land. Let us not, then, regard loose speech as a minor affliction; for the slanderers and the gossipers shut the Kingdom of Heaven against themselves. – Though a man of the world may still achieve some success here, there *he* will have none, “*but the wicked will be caught in their own destruction*” (Ps. 139: 12). A certain wise man rightly said that it is better to fall from a height to the ground than to fall because of one’s tongue. We must therefore heed St. James, who writes: “*Let every person be quick to listen and slow to speak*” (James 1:19).

91. So that we do not drift away or become distracted, seduced by vanity, it is good to heed the Prophet, who says: “*Come, my people, enter your sanctuary*”—the sanctuary of your heart, hidden from every sensory impression, that formless dwelling illuminated by dispassion and the shadow of holy grace— “*shut your doors*” against all that is visible, “*take refuge, however small it may be*”—for all human life is small—and after this he adds: “*until the wrath of the Lord has passed*” (Isa. 26: 20), as another said: “*until the lawlessness has passed*” (Ps. 56:2). For lawlessness—and consequently demons, passions, and sins—are the wrath of God, as Isaiah says to God: “*You were angry, and we have sinned*” (64:5). A person avoids this wrath by constantly listening to his heart in prayer and striving earnestly to remain within, in his inner, impregnable sanctuary. For, as someone says, “Draw wisdom into your innermost being” (cf. Prov. 8:12; Sirach 45: 31; 51:18); for “*all the glory of the king’s daughter is within*” (Ps. 44:14), says another, adding: “*This is the task before me, until I enter the sanctuary of God*” (Ps. 72:17), “*and the mountain of my inheritance*” (Ps. 67: 17), “*to the prepared dwelling*” (Ps. 32: 14), which You, O Lord, have made “*in the sanctuary prepared by Your hands*” (Ps. 77: 54).

92. Let anyone who truly wishes to renounce the world imitate the blessed Prophet Elisha, who took nothing of his possessions with him, driven by his great love for God, which burned within him like a flame. Let him distribute all that he has to the needy, and having thus taken up the Cross of the Lord, let him willingly go to a voluntary death—the gateway to the eternal kingdom.

93. When you sense that the Amorite is gaining strength within you like an oak, pray earnestly to the Lord that He may dry up its fruit from above—that is, the sin committed in deed—and its roots from below—that is, impure thoughts. And may the Lord drive the Amorite from your presence!

94. Do not be surprised when you see those who mock our silence, for they themselves cannot remain silent; rather, drive away their evil influence through song, yet without malice, strengthening within yourselves your greater obedience *to God*, and crying out in song: “*But my soul, obey God*” (Ps. 61: 6); “*For instead of loving me, they slandered me, yet I prayed*” (Ps. 108: 4), for the healing of both myself and them.

95. Unless a strong wind blows on the sea, there will be no waves; and unless a demon attacks us, neither the soul nor the body will be stirred up by passions.

96. If you are always warmed by prayer and divine grace, then, as the divine Scripture says, you are clothed in the armor of light. Your garment is warm, while your enemies are clothed, as if in a double garment, in shame and trembling from the cold.

97. Keeping your sins in mind, do not be lazy about striking your chest, so that with such blows you may break up and soften your hardened heart, just as stonemasons break up metal-bearing soil; and you will find a vein of gold within it, and you will rejoice over the hidden treasure.

98. May the fire of desire for the highest goods and of holy contemplation of the words of the Spirit burn ceaselessly on the altar of your soul.

99. If you always strive to “*put on the readiness to preach the gospel of peace*” (Eph. 6:15), then you will certainly set things right both in your own home and in the home of your neighbor. But if you lose heart (when faced with adversity), you will be spurned invisibly, and according to the law, *you will “inherit the name of one whose boot has been removed”* (Deut. 25:9–10).

100. If, according to John, God is love, then whoever loves abides in God, and God abides in him. Whoever hates his neighbor, breaking the bond of love, has evidently received hatred instead of love. For the one who hates his fellow man, who is of the same nature as himself, is far from God, “*for God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*” (1 John 4:16). To Him be glory and power forever. Amen.

Blessed Abba Zosima (Palestinian)

A Brief Account of Him

An ancient Latin translator of the conversations of the Venerable Zosima prefaces them with the following: “I hold these conversations in high esteem and value them greatly, because of the true nature of ascetic deeds clearly set forth in them, because of the abundant spiritual anointing with which they are imbued, and because of the sweetest fragrance of holiness they exude. I have never transcribed anything so willingly, nor have I ever translated anything with such joy in my heart. This led me to investigate who their author was and in what era he flourished, since neither fact was definitively known. “Not many of the Conversations have survived. They were apparently recorded by a devoted listener as he received them from the lips of an elderly elder who, during his many years of monastic life, had passed through all the degrees of Christian perfection and ascended to the very summit of holiness accessible to mortal humanity, with the help of divine grace. The author of the conversations is referred to as the blessed Abba Zosima. The only hint given about the recorder is that he was one of Abba Zosima’s constant listeners and was likely a brother at the monastery where Abba Zosima lived, near the Jordan River. “But who, then, is this blessed Abba Zosima? After a long and careful investigation into this matter, this is what I have finally concluded: that the author of our conversations is none other than the renowned Zosima, who was chosen from above to hear about the life of St. Mary of Egypt, the penitent, from her own lips, and to provide guidance to and bury this venerable mother.” He supports this view by pointing out that certain circumstances in the life of Abba Zosima, who delivers these teachings, are similar to those in the life of Abba Zosima, who saw St. Mary of Egypt and recounted her story.

1. The account of the life of St. Mary of Egypt states that Abba Zosima, having entered a certain monastery at a young age, lived there for 53 years; then, following a special inspiration from above, he moved to one of the monasteries along the Jordan River; and as he was leaving that place, he saw St. Mary. And in these very conversations, it is mentioned that Abba Zosima, who spoke them, had previously lived in a certain monastery in Tyre (ch. 24); then these conversations show him passing through Naples (in Samaria, ch. 14); and finally at the monastery of St. Gerasimus (ch. 2). The latter references clearly explain the former.

2. In the account of St. Mary, it is said of Abba Zosima that he was rich in spiritual experience and that, for this reason, many sought his counsel—not only from his own monastery but also from others near and far (p. 2—in Greek). It is clear that he did not like to write, but only spoke. Nor did he write the legend about St. Mary; rather, he passed it on orally, as it had been preserved among the brethren until St. Sophronius committed it to writing. That the author of these very instructions was the same is proven by the very manner of their presentation: he was asked, and he spoke. His twenty-ninth conversation takes place at the monastery of St. Gerasimus. It is reasonable to assume that all the others were also heard there and recorded by one of his closest disciples.

3. Abba Zosima, the author of these teachings, who loved to quote the sayings of the Fathers, cites all the earliest elders, and does so in such a way that the memory of them was still fresh at that time. This points to the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. It is believed that St. Mary of Egypt passed away around the year 430. Abba Zosima moved to a monastery on the banks of the Jordan River at, one might estimate, the age of seventy. He lived in this monastery for about thirty years, for he passed away at the age of one hundred. For someone who lived in the first half of the fifth century, the sayings of the fourth-century elders would have been fresh in his memory. Such indications, which must be accepted when identifying the author of the conversations, also determine the time of their origin and how they came to be. Abba spoke; a disciple eager for spiritual edification wrote it down. Thus, all the conversations begin: “Abba Zosima spoke, or said, or recounted.” There is no doubt that just as many conversations were held, so many were recorded. These conversations appear to be an excerpt that was seen and read by John Moschus, the compiler of the *Spiritual Meadow* (*Limonarium*). The feast day of the Venerable Zosima is April 4. In the *Patrology*, ed. Migne, these conversations are included in vol. 78. They are also found in the manuscript *Paterikon* from the monastery of St. Savvas the Palestinian, where they appear at the end of the first chapter as an appendix. In the manuscript, the conversations are presented without any division. In the printed edition, there are 14 sections; however, some of these sections contain more than one conversation. In the translation, it was deemed more appropriate to treat each instruction and each narrative as a separate entry. This was all the more

necessary because not all the conversations are included in the printed edition, and some of those that are included are not presented in their entirety. This resulted in 31 sections.

The Discourses of Blessed Abba Zosima

1. Making the sign of the cross over his lips, Blessed Zosima began to speak thus: God the Word, having become incarnate, bestowed great grace upon those who believed and have faith in Him. It is possible even in our time to believe and to begin doing so from now on, if we so desire. For if our will desires it and grace works within us, then anyone who desires it can regard the whole world as nothing. Then he picked up whatever came to hand—a straw, it seems, or a splinter, or some other trifle—and added: Who, because of this, would quarrel or argue, hold a grudge, or be consumed by grief, except perhaps one who has truly lost his mind? Will not a man of God, who prospers and presses on in life according to God, regard the whole world as no more valuable than this straw, even if he truly possessed everything? For, as I always say, it is not harmful to lack, but it is harmful to possess with attachment. Who does not know that, of all that we possess, nothing is more precious to us than our body? Therefore, if, when the time demands it, we are commanded to disregard even our body, how much more so should we disregard everything else we possess besides it? However, one should not simply scatter one's possessions haphazardly, just as one should not indiscriminately throw oneself into death: for such behavior is characteristic only of one who has lost his mind; but one must wait until the time demands it, so that one may then be ready for such a task. At this, he recalled a brother who had vegetables, and said: Did he not sow them? Did he not labor? Did he not harvest them? Did he not fertilize them? Yet he did not uproot them indiscriminately or cast them aside; rather, he treated them as if he did not possess them at all. That is why, when an elder came to him with the intention of testing him and began to uproot them, he did not even show himself to him but hid; and when only one root remained, he said to him, "If you wish, Father, leave this one, and we will make a feast out of it." From this, the holy elder recognized that he was a true servant of God, not a servant of vegetables, and said to him, "The Spirit of God has rested upon you, brother."—If he had been attached to the vegetables, he would have immediately revealed this through sorrow and confusion; but he showed that he regarded them as if he did not possess them at all. And Abba Zosima concluded: Demons take note of such instances; and if they see that someone is dispassionate toward material things, untroubled by their loss, they understand from this that he walks upon the earth but does not possess earthly wisdom within himself.

2. All power lies in the aspirations of the will. A fervent will can, in a single hour, bring God more of what is pleasing to Him than the labors of a long time without it. A sluggish and lazy will is inactive.

3. Demons are afraid when they see that someone, being subjected to insults, dishonor, losses, and all manner of other misfortunes, grieves not because he has suffered these things, but because, having suffered them, he did not endure them courageously: for they understand from this that he has set out on the true path and has a firm desire to walk perfectly according to God's commandments. — At this, Abba Zosima recalled St. Pachomius and how he had acted when his elder brother rebuked him, saying, "Stop, driven by vanity, from expanding the monastery." St. Pachomius was doing this by a commandment from above. Why, when he heard this, did he—as if standing up for a good cause—feel a surge of indignation; yet he said nothing against his brother at that time. But when night fell and the unpleasant stirring in his heart subsided, he went into his small prayer room and began to weep and pray, saying: "O God! I still have carnal thoughts within me; I still live according to the flesh. Woe is me! As such, *'I must die,'* according to Scripture (Rom. 8:13). After such struggles, after such preparation of the heart, I am once again carried away by anger, even though it is for a good cause. Have mercy on me, Lord, lest I perish completely! For if You do not establish me completely in goodness, and the enemy finds a foothold in me—even the smallest one—I will be his captive: *"For whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it"* (James 2:10). But I believe that if You, in Your great generosity, help me, I will finally learn to walk in the way of Your saints, always *"pressing on toward what is ahead"* (Phil. 3: 13), and I will put the enemy to shame as I ought. "Otherwise, Lord, how will I teach those whom You will call to live this life alongside me, if I do not first conquer myself and the enemy?" He remained in such prayer all night, speaking these words with weeping until daybreak; and from the sweat beneath his feet a pool of water formed, for it was harvest time, and the place was very hot. "I am amazed at this," said the blessed Zosima, "for his tears knew no bounds. How could God not grant such a fervent will all the blessings sought from Him, when it is dead to everything else but this?"

4. Abba Zosima also said: When someone, having brought to mind one who has insulted him, or caused him harm, or reviled and slandered him, or done him some other evil, devises schemes against him, he brings slander upon himself just like the demons; and then he himself is enough to bring slander upon him. And what do I mean by “when he devises schemes”?—If he does not remember him as a benefactor and a healer, then he is treating him most unjustly. For he brings to the surface the very passion from which you suffer, in order to heal it; and you must therefore remember him as a healer sent to you by Christ. For Christ’s sake, you must endure everything, in gratitude to Him for such a blessing. But if you do not make proper use of this and do not turn away from your evil passion, God is not to blame for this. The very fact that you suffer is a sign that your soul is sick; if you were not sick, you would not suffer. Therefore, you must be grateful for the fact that through it you have come to know the course of your illness, and you must accept with love what you have endured from it as a healing remedy sent by the Lord Jesus Himself. But if you not only fail to give thanks but take offense, rebel against it, complain, and devise schemes against it; then by doing so you are, as it were, saying to the Lord Jesus: “I do not want to be healed by You; I do not want to accept Your healing; I want to rot in my wounds; I want to be subject to demons. I do not know the Lord; and who is He that I should obey His voice (Ex. 5:2)? And what, in the end, will the Lord do?”—The Lord, being gracious toward our infirmities, has given us commandments for their healing, such as cauterization and purgatives. Therefore, whoever desires and seeks to be healed must endure in silence—even if it is painful—whatever the physician prescribes. After all, even one who is physically ill does not find it pleasant to endure incisions and cauterizations, or to take purgatives; but, being convinced that without this it is impossible to be rid of the illness, he entrusts himself to the doctor’s care, confident that through this slight pain that lies before him, he will be delivered from a severe internal disorder and a long-standing illness. But the “cauterizer,” Jesus—the Christ—is the one who inflicts offenses and harm.

5. He said further: “Destroy temptations and thoughts—and there will not be a single saint.” He who flees from the saving temptation flees from eternal life. One of the Saints says: “Who bestowed those crowns upon the holy martyrs, if not their tormentors? Who granted St. Stephen such glory surrounding him, if not those who stoned him?”—adding to this the saying of another Saint, who said: “I do not blame those who revile me; on the contrary, I call them my benefactors and honor them as such; nor do I reject the Physician of souls, who administers the medicine of dishonor to my vain soul, for fear that He might one day say to my soul: *‘I have healed Babylon, but she is not healed’* (Jer. 51: 9); and again: *‘How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Behold, your house is left to you desolate’* (Luke 13: 34, 35).

6. He also said: Evagrius feared that the Lord, in rebuking him, might say to him: “You were afflicted with vanity, and I prescribed for you the medicine of disgrace so that you might be purified through it; but you were not healed.” – Let us therefore know that no one speaks the plain truth about us except the one who rebukes us. The Lord, who searches hearts and minds, knows that even if all people were to praise and flatter us, our whole being is nonetheless worthy of rebuke and the reproach of reproachful words. If they say, “You did such-and-such,” I will reply, “But what good is there in all that I have done?”—No one speaks a lie about me except those who praise and flatter me, and no one speaks the truth about me except those who rebuke and humiliate me; and even they do not yet speak the whole truth about me. If they were to learn—not the whole sea of my evil deeds, but only a part of them—they would be repelled by the stench and foul odor of my soul. If every limb of the human body were to turn into a tongue to rebuke us, I am convinced that even then they would not be able to fully express our dishonor. Every accuser condemns only a certain part; he cannot know the whole. If Job says, *“I am full of shame”* (Job 10:15), and what is full can hold nothing more, what shall we say, we who are an abyss of evil? The devil has humbled us with every sin—and we must be grateful to those who humble us through humiliation: for those who are grateful for their humiliation strike a blow against the devil. The Holy Fathers have said that if humility is brought down to hell, it will be lifted up to heaven; and conversely, if pride is exalted to heaven, it will be brought down to hell. Who would compel a humble person to harbor ill thoughts against anyone, or even to slander anyone, or to lay blame on another? For whatever a humble person endures or hears, he takes it as an occasion to slander and humble himself. At this, the blessed Zosima recalled how Abba Moses, when the clergy expelled him from the altar, saying, “Get out, Ethiopian,” began to humble himself, saying, “They did well to treat you this way, you dark-skinned man! Since you are not a man, do not walk among men. They did well.”

7. He also said: “What could be more fitting than to put into practice what we hear from our holy and active mentor, Abba Ammon, who says: Pay close attention to yourself—why you left the world and why you are here—and strive in every way, when someone causes you any sorrow, to remain silent and not utter a single word until your heart is calmed by unceasing prayer; and only then should you beg your brother for forgiveness. For whoever loves the true and straight path, when troubled by something, always strongly rebukes and convicts himself, saying: “Why are you raging, my soul, and why are you tossing about like a madwoman?” By doing this, you show that you are sick. For if you were not sick, you would not suffer. Why, then, having ceased to rebuke yourself, do you reproach your brother, who has shown you your sickness? Learn the commandments of Christ the Lord through deeds and truth, He who “*when He was reviled, did not revile in return,*” and “*when He suffered, He did not resist*” (1 Peter 2:23). Hear what He says and what He demonstrates by His actions: “*I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from insults*” (Isaiah 50:6). But you, poor soul, because of a little insult and disrespect, because of some contempt and aversion, condemnation and slander, sit there weaving countless hostile thoughts, thereby bringing calumny upon yourself, just like demons. What more can a demon do to such a soul than what it does to itself? We see the Cross of Christ, and every day we read about the sufferings He endured for our sake; yet we ourselves cannot bear even a single insult. Truly, we have strayed from the right path.

8. He also said: If anyone were to live as long as Methuselah but did not walk in the straight path that all the saints walked, —I am speaking of the path of humiliation and unjust losses and their courageous endurance—that person will not prosper in the least and will not find the treasure hidden in the commandments, but will only waste all the years of his life in vain. He added: When I was with the blessed Dionysia, a certain brother asked her for something as a blessing, and she gave him what and as much as she could. But since he was given less than he had expected, he began to revile her and speak absurd words against her and me. Hearing this, she became angry and wanted to retaliate against him in some way. Realizing this, I said to her, “What are you doing? By doing this, you are bringing slander upon yourself and stripping your soul of all virtue. And how are you worthily enduring what Christ endured for your sake?” I know, madam, that you have squandered all your wealth as if it were chaff, but if you do not seek meekness, you will be like a blacksmith who strikes a piece of iron but fails to forge the needed object. Listen to what Ignatius the God-Bearer says: ‘Seek meekness, by which all the power of the prince of this world is destroyed.’ A sign that the world has been completely abandoned is not being troubled by anything. It happens that someone, having despised many treasures, becomes attached to a needle, and this attachment causes him confusion and anxiety. Then the needle takes the place of treasures for him. This is how one becomes a slave to a needle, or a cowl, or a robe, or a book, ceasing to be a servant of God. One of the wise men rightly said, “As many passions as there are in the soul, so many masters there are.” And the Lord says: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). And the Apostle : “*For whoever is overcome by something is its slave*” (2 Peter 2:19). Having heard this, she looked at me in surprise and said, “May you find the God whom you long for.”

9. The blessed one also said: The soul desires to be saved, but by craving vain things and worrying about them, it shuns the labors necessary for salvation. Though in truth, it is not the commandments that are heavy, but our evil desires. It happens, however, that sometimes, fearing to drown at sea or fall into the hands of robbers, we despise everything and willingly abandon our possessions when we see that death lies before us shortly. But if, in order to live a little longer on earth, we despise everything and consider it a blessing to save ourselves—whether from robbers or from the sea—even after having lost everything—and if someone who was raving with fear just moments before hastily abandons everything just to preserve his temporary life, then why do we not apply the same reasoning to eternal life? Why is our fear of God not as strong as our fear of the sea, as one of the Saints said?

10. To confirm this, Abba recounted the following story, which he had heard from others. Once, a gem merchant boarded a ship with his children, carrying with him a great many precious stones and pearls, which he hoped to sell at a profit in the country to which he was bound. By God’s providence, he came to be particularly fond of a young boy who served him on the ship; and he comforted the boy, just as the boy comforted him, and gave him the same food that he himself ate. One day, this young boy overheard the sailors whispering among themselves, and upon listening closely, he learned that they had decided to throw the merchant overboard because of his precious stones. This saddened him greatly. When he later came to the merchant with a sad face to serve him as usual, the merchant asked him, “Why are you so sad today?”

“Nothing,” replied the boy, not daring to tell the truth. The merchant asked again, “Is there something troubling you? Tell me the truth—what is it?” The boy burst into tears and said to him, “The sailors have plotted against you in this way.” “Is that so?” asked the merchant. “Yes,” replied the boy, “that is what they have agreed upon among themselves.” Then the merchant called his children and said, “Whatever I tell you to do, do it without arguing.” Then, spreading out a cloth, he told them, “Bring the boxes here.” They brought them. And he began to lay out the stones. When he had laid them all out, he said, “Such is life!” “Because of these things, I am in danger of being thrown into the sea and, shortly thereafter, of dying without taking anything with me.” Then he ordered his children, “Throw all of this into the sea,” and as soon as he spoke, they immediately threw everything into the sea. The sailors were astonished, and their evil plan was thwarted. Having finished this story, the blessed Abba Zosima added: “Do you see where his thoughts suddenly turned? How he immediately became wise—both in words and in deeds? And this was for the sake of preserving this fleeting life. And he acted rightly, reasoning that if he were to die, what use would these stones be to him?” Yet we do not wish to endure even a small loss or deprivation with indifference for the sake of Christ’s commandments. But if we cannot help but grieve, then we should grieve over the perdition of the one who caused us harm, and not over the loss of property; for the one who has acted unjustly has cast himself out of the kingdom: “*For the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Cor. 6:9); but to you, the unjust, He has granted eternal life, as the Lord says to such: “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (Matt. 5:12). But we, having set aside our sorrow over the ruin of a member of Christ, sit and dwell on thoughts of things that are fleeting and insignificant, perishable and worthless. Truly, we are worthy of every punishment. God has raised us to the rank of members of the body, whose head is Christ our God, as the Apostle said: “*All the members of the body, though many, are one body*” (1 Cor. 12:12). And the head of all is Christ (Eph. 1:22). Therefore, when a brother causes you sorrow, it is like a suffering hand or a sore eye causing another member to suffer. For we do not cut off or cast aside our hands, nor do we gouge out our eyes when they cause us pain, considering the loss of one or the other of these members to be a greater harm to ourselves; but rather, we make the sign of the cross—this most honorable seal of Christ—upon them, call upon the saints to pray, offer our earnest prayers to God on their behalf, and at the same time prepare eye ointments and poultices to heal the ailing member with their help. So, just as you pray for your eye or your hand, that they may be healed and no longer cause you pain, so pray also for your brother. Yet we, seeing how members of Christ suffer such spiritual harm, not only do we not grieve for them, but we even pray against them. This is truly characteristic of those who lack a merciful heart.

11. The blessed one also said: He who has acquired the treasures of generosity—love and compassion—first brings joy and benefit to himself, and then to his neighbor; whereas, on the contrary, malice first wounds and harms the one who harbors it. Although it may seem that he causes harm to his neighbor—in property, in honor, or even in the body itself—in reality, he deprives himself of eternal life. To this, Abba added the saying: “What is not harmful to the soul is not harmful to man either.”

12. He also said: “Someone told me, ‘Abba, there are too many commandments given to us, and the mind becomes clouded when you start to consider what you are keeping and what you are not keeping.’” I replied to him: “Let this not trouble you; but keep this in mind: if you are not attached to material things, you will easily practice every virtue. By not quarreling over them, you will not hold grudges, and then what difficulty will it be for you to pray for your enemies? Is it the same as digging the earth?” – But walk the path of patience, bear unjust losses of property with equanimity, give thanks for disgrace—and you will be a disciple of the Holy Apostles, who, returning from court after being beaten, “*rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Christ*” (Acts 5:41). And they, being pure and holy, accepted disgrace for the name of Christ; but we must endure disgrace because of our own sins. We are disgraceful, even if no one dishonors us—and we are cursed: “*For cursed,*” says the Prophet, “*are those who turn aside from Your commandments*” (Ps. 118: 21). Not everyone is called to endure disgrace for the sake of Christ’s name—not everyone, but only the holy and the pure, as I have said; the duty of people like us, however, is to accept disgrace with gratitude, confessing that we rightly suffer for our evil deeds. Woe to that soul which, knowing its own impure deeds and seeing that it rightly suffers what it suffers, sits there deceiving its own conscience and spinning thoughts, saying, ‘He said this and that to me, he dishonored me and reviled me’—thus bringing slander upon itself and taking the place of demons for itself. For what happens with artists also happens to the soul. Just as the master, having taught his art to a student, leaves him to work on his own and no longer needs to sit beside him, but only occasionally checks to see if he has grown lazy or ruined his work:

so too the demons, if they see a soul that is submissive and readily accepts evil thoughts, consign it to this satanic art, and no longer deem it necessary to sit beside it, confident that the soul alone is sufficient to slander itself; they only come from time to time to see if it has strayed.

13. Abba also said, “What is more convenient than to love everyone, and what is more pleasant than to be loved by everyone? And what comfort do Christ’s commandments not offer?”—But the will does not strive to fulfill them; for if it did, then with the help of God’s grace, everything would be easy for it. A slight inclination of our will toward the good draws God to our aid, as I have often said, and as the divine Anthony says: for virtue, all that is needed is our desire and experience; we need not journey far to attain the kingdom of heaven, nor cross the seas for virtue. — What rest does the meek and humble enjoy?! Truly, *“the meek shall inherit the earth and delight in abundance of peace”* (Ps. 36: 11).

14. The blessed one also recounted: Once we were walking—I, one brother, and several laypeople—along the road to Naples (in Samaria) and came to the place where the customs post was located. The laypeople, knowing what was required by custom there, paid the toll without saying a word; but the brother who was with me began to argue, saying to them, “How dare you demand payment from monks?!” Hearing this, I said to him, “What are you doing, brother? You are telling him nothing other than, ‘Even if reluctantly, honor me as a saint.’” It would have been another matter if, seeing your good will and humility, he himself had been ashamed and said, ‘Forgive me, I will not take it.’ But you did not act as a disciple of the meek and humble One. Pay what is due, and go on your way in peace.”

15. On another occasion, when I was in the holy city, a certain lover of Christ came to me and said: “My brother and I have had a minor disagreement; and my brother does not want to reconcile with me. Please intercede and speak to him.” I gladly agreed to this, and after summoning his brother, I spoke to him, urging him toward love and peace. He seemed convinced, but then he said to me, “No, I cannot reconcile with him, because I have sworn by the cross not to do so.” Then, smiling, I said to him: “Your oath means this: ‘I swear by Your holy cross that I will not keep Your commandments, but will do the will of Your enemy, the devil.’” Know, then, that not only are we not obligated to keep our word to do any evil deed, but rather we must repent and be contrite for having resolved within ourselves to act in this way—as the God-bearer Basil said; if Herod had come to his senses and not fulfilled his oath, he would not have fallen into the great sin of beheading the Forerunner of Christ. Finally, I cited for him the account from the Holy Gospel of how, when the Lord wished to wash St. Peter’s feet, the latter, with the zeal characteristic of those who swear, said, *“You shall not wash my feet”*—and then not only consented to it but even desired more (John, chapter 13).

16. The blessed one spoke again: “I was asked how one should restrain anger,” and I replied, “The beginning of restraining anger is not to speak while the angry agitation persists.” We see an example of this in Abba Moses, who, when the fathers—wishing to test him—spoke among themselves in the assembly, saying, “Why does this Ethiopian enter our assembly?”—upon hearing this, remained silent; and when, after the assembly, some asked him if he had been embarrassed, he replied, *“I was embarrassed and did not speak”* (Ps. 76:5). But that was in the beginning. Later, when he had matured—and had been ordained a deacon—he not only remained silent but was also unperturbed. Here is what happened: The archbishop, wishing to test him, said to the clergy, “When Abba Moses enters the sanctuary, send him out, and, following him, eavesdrop on what he says.” When he entered the sanctuary, the clerics said to him, ‘Get out, you black-skinned Ethiopian.’ And he went out, saying to himself, ‘They have treated you well; since you are not a human being, why do you enter the assembly of people?’ (The True Tale of Abba Moses, chs. 3, 4). Now he not only remained silent in the face of ridicule, but he was not embarrassed; and not only was he not embarrassed, but he even rebuked himself. To be embarrassed and to remain silent is characteristic of the imperfect and the beginners; but even not to be embarrassed is the mark of the perfect, as the Prophet says: *“I prepared myself and was not embarrassed”* (Ps. 118:60). And this is a great virtue. — Yet we often find ourselves standing below even the most novice of beginners when we do not strive to overcome ourselves and force ourselves to remain silent when anger arises, thinking—due to our great negligence—that this virtue is too lofty and inaccessible to us. We do not even show a desire to begin this labor upon ourselves and thereby draw God’s grace to our aid; or, if we do appear to show a desire, it is feeble, unsteady, and unworthy of receiving any blessing from God.

17. To this the blessed one added: The course of our life is as follows: whoever contributes the effort of his own will to the task receives what he needs from grace. Just as a farmer may sow only a little, but if God blesses his labor, he reaps a great harvest, as it is written of Isaac: *“Isaac sowed in that land and reaped*

a hundredfold harvest of barley that summer; the Lord blessed him” (Gen. 26:12): so if the Lord blesses the work of our free will, we will do everything effortlessly, without compulsion, and with joy—and derive benefit from everything. Prayer offered with self-discipline and patience gives rise to prayer that is easy, pure, and joyful. And the one that occurs through self-discipline is the work of the will, while the one performed with delight is the work of grace. Do we not see the same thing in the process of mastering the arts? Let the one who takes up an art do so with a firm desire to learn; at first, he works with difficulty, fails to harmonize one part with another, and often makes mistakes. But he does not lose heart; instead, he takes up the task again, and even if he makes mistakes again, he does not abandon the task, demonstrating to his teacher the steadfastness of his will. If he loses heart and abandons his efforts, he will learn nothing; but if, despite frequently making mistakes, he does not abandon the task but patiently continues to labor and work, then eventually, with God’s help, he will master the craft and begin to produce all his works little by little, without burden, with pleasure, and with such success that what he earns from it is sufficient for his full sustenance. So too in the matter of the spiritual life, one who resolves to cultivate virtues must not think that he will succeed in them immediately, for that is impossible; but let him exert effort, and even if at first his progress is not entirely smooth, he must not give up on what he has begun, or else he will not achieve success; rather, he must make new and renewed efforts, just as one who wishes to learn any art does. When he labors in this way with patience, without losing heart, God will look upon the work of his will and grant him the strength to do all things without compulsion. And this is precisely what Abba Moses meant when he said: the strength for those who wish to acquire virtues lies in not losing heart when they happen to fall, but in renewing their zeal and labor toward the same end.

18. He also said: Every virtue requires both effort and time, as well as a sincere desire for it; above all, it requires God’s assistance. For if God does not assist our will, our labor will be in vain, just as the labor of a farmer who has tilled and sown his fields will be in vain if God does not cause his seed to sprout. God’s assistance, however, requires our prayers and supplications; for it is only through them that we draw God’s help to intercede for us. If we neglect prayer, how will God look upon our labor? Likewise, even if we pray, but lazily, distractedly, or grow bored quickly during prayer, we will not be granted anything, as I have always told you: for God looks upon our will and, judging by it, bestows His gifts. Was not Abba Moses once the leader of robbers? Did he not commit a multitude of crimes, so that he had to hide from his master because of his wickedness? But since he set about his task courageously and with such fervent resolve, everyone knows to what heights he rose, so that he was numbered among God’s chosen ones, as the writer of his life story says. As for us, although at the beginning of our renunciation we show the warmth of zeal, over time, through our own negligence, we lose it, becoming attached to things that are cold, empty, and worthless, in place of love for God and our neighbors; and moreover, if we manage to do something good, we attribute it to ourselves, as if we had accomplished it by our own strength rather than having received it from God; whereas the truth says: *“What you have, you did not receive; you were given it. If, then, you were given it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?”* (1 Cor. 4:7).

19. He also said: The Lord Jesus would not have been impoverished or weakened in His ability to bestow upon us the same blessings with which He enriched the holy patriarchs, had He seen that we use what He has already given us for our own good and for His glory. But since He sees that, because of our disorderliness, we turn the small and few gifts He has already given us to our own harm, He—being loving toward humanity—does not entrust us with greater ones, lest we perish in the end. If He saw that we were using what little He has already given us for our own good, He certainly would not be powerless to grant us even more, as I said earlier. God, as I always say, being good, has given us the freedom and the ability to derive benefit from everything; but through our partiality and abuse, we destroy God’s gifts and deprive ourselves of them when, through our own malice and wickedness, we turn the blessings already granted to us to our own harm.

20. The blessed one also often said: No one can harm a faithful soul; but whatever suffering it endures will be counted as a blessing. A worker, though weighed down by labor, continues to work cheerfully, confident that he will receive his reward after his labor; but the unfaithful, when faced with hardship, suffers as if in hell because of his unbelief. The faithful, despite all their hardships, remain faithful and confidently await their reward for their patience—from this they draw great comfort; but the unfaithful, having no faith, what comfort can they possibly receive from the Lord? He sits and smolders in his thoughts, even when faced with a minor sorrow, ranting to himself: “He said that to me, but I, too, have something to say to him”—he

holds a grudge and plots impossible things that he is utterly powerless to carry out. For not everything that people plot can they actually accomplish. No; but only what God permits—and this, too, He alone determines through the course of events. Often one plans to do evil to another; but if God does not permit it, his efforts are in vain, and human free will is merely tested thereby. How often did people plot to harm the holy patriarchs! Yet since God did not permit it, no one could do them any harm, as it is written: *“Do not let anyone oppress them, nor let kings speak against them; do not touch my anointed ones, and do not deal treacherously with my prophets”* (Ps. 104: 14–15). But when God wishes to display the abundance of His power, He moves even the hearts of the most unmerciful to mercy, as it is written in the Book of Daniel: *“And God granted Daniel favor and kindness in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs”* (Dan. 1: 9). Blessed is the soul that, through its longing for God, has truly prepared itself to receive His gifts; for He does not forsake such a soul in anything, but protects it in all things, even in those things for which it does not ask Him out of ignorance. The Wise One spoke well: *“The wise man dwells under the shelter of God”* (Ps. 30: 21). How many times did Saul attempt to kill the blessed David? What did he not do? How did he fail? But since the Lord protected David, all of Saul’s schemes came to nothing; and not only that, but he himself was often delivered into the hands of the Holy One, who nevertheless spared him, harboring no bitter or vengeful malice toward him.

21. Once Abba was asked: “How can one avoid becoming angry when others humiliate and slander you?” He replied: “Whoever considers himself the most insignificant in his own heart is not disturbed by any humiliation, as Abba Pimen said: ‘If you humble yourself, you will have peace.’”

22. Abba also said: A certain brother who lived with me and received the schema from me—one whom I strove to teach every virtue and whom I sometimes treated with leniency because of his weakness, since he was of a delicate constitution—said to me one day: “My Abba! I love you very much.” I replied to him: “I have not yet met a person who loves me as much as I love him. Now you say that you love me—and I believe it—but if something unpleasant should happen to you because of me, you will not remain the same.” As for me, no matter what I may suffer from you, I will always remain equally fond of you, and nothing can turn me away from loving you.” Not long after that—and I do not know what came over him—he began to say many things to me, even shameful words; and I heard it all. Then I said to myself: He is a healer in the service of Jesus, sent to heal⁸⁰ my vain soul. From such people, one who is mindful of oneself can regain what one loses through those who flatter him. He is my true benefactor. And I always remembered him as my physician and benefactor. To those who told me about his words, I said: “He recognized only my obvious faults, and even then, not all of them, but only a part; my hidden shortcomings, however, are innumerable.” Some time later, he met me in Caesarea (of Palestine). He approached and, as was his custom, embraced and kissed me, and I him, as if nothing had happened between us. After such slander, he embraced me in this way when we met, no doubt because I showed him no suspicion and not the slightest sign of offense, even though I had heard it all. But he himself fell at my feet and, embracing them, said: “Forgive me, my father, for the Lord’s sake, that I spoke so much ill of you.” I, in turn, kissed him tenderly and said to him: “Do you remember, my God-loving friend, how, when you told me, ‘I love you very much,’ I replied that I had never met a person who loved me as much as I love him, and that if something unpleasant were to happen to you, you would not remain the same, and that no matter what suffering I might endure because of you, I would always treat you the same, and nothing could tear me away from my love for you?” – Let your heart be assured that nothing you said was hidden from me; but wherever and to whomever, I heard it all, and I never said that it was not so, and no one could persuade me to say anything bad; but I also said: ‘What he says is true, and he speaks out of love’; and, considering you my own, I have never failed to remember you in my prayers, and to give you even greater proof of my love for you, I will reveal to you that once, when my eye became very sick, I remembered you, placed the sign of the Holy Cross upon it, and said: “Lord Jesus Christ! For his sake, heal me!”—And I was healed at once.

23. The blessed one also often said: We humans do not know how to make others love and honor us; we have lost all sense of this. If someone shows a little patience toward his brother when he is angry or grieves over him, he will soon come to his senses, and, realizing how the other had been patient with him, will lay down his very soul for him. At this, the blessed one once recalled a certain brother who had told him that he had an Abba who was very meek, whom the whole country revered as an angel of God because of his great virtue and the miracles he performed. One day, this brother, moved by the enemy, approached him and began

⁸⁰ It is customary in the East to treat ailments by cauterization.

to slander him to the utmost in front of everyone. The elder stood calmly, watching his lips, and then said, “The grace of God is in your mouth, my brother!” But the brother, becoming even more enraged, shouted, “I know why you’re saying this, you senseless and gluttonous old man—it’s just to make yourself look meek.” The elder replied: “Truly so, my brother; what you say is just.” After this, someone asked the elder: “Were you not troubled, O elder of God?” “No,” he answered, “but I felt in my soul that it was, as it were, covered by Christ.” – To this, the blessed one added: “Truly, we ought to thank such people and honor them—those who are passionate, as doctors who heal the wounds of their souls, and those who are dispassionate, as benefactors who bring them the kingdom of heaven.”

24. The blessed one also said: “When I was still at the monastery in Tyre, before I left there, a certain elder, renowned for his virtues, came to us.” When we began to read the book of memorable tales and the wise sayings of the holy elders—for the blessed one loved to read them and, as it were, breathed them in and drew from them instruction in every virtue—and came to the story of that elder who, when robbers came to him and said that they had decided to take everything in his cell, he calmly replied to them: “Take, my children, whatever you see fit”; and when they had taken everything and left, leaving behind a single bag, he picked it up and ran after them, shouting: “My children! Take back from me what you forgot in our cell”; and they, struck by the elder’s lack of malice, returned everything to his cell, saying to one another in repentance: “Truly, this is a man of God”—as soon as we had read this, the elder said to me: “You know, my Abba, this story has been of great benefit to me.” I said to him: “How so, Father?” He replied: “Once, while I was staying in the regions near the Jordan, after reading this, I marveled at the elder and said: ‘Lord, grant me to walk in the footsteps of those whose way of life (schema) You have enabled me to adopt.’ And so this desire remained within me. And then, two days later, robbers approached and knocked on the door. I immediately recognized that they were robbers and said to myself, ‘Thanks be to God! Now is the time to show the fruit of my desire.’ Then, opening the door, I welcomed them warmly, and after lighting a lamp, I began to show them my belongings, saying to them, ‘Do not be afraid; as I believe in the Lord, I will hide nothing from you.’ They asked me, ‘Do you have any gold?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘here are three coins,’ and I opened the vessel before them. They took them and left in peace. ‘As for me,’ said the blessed one with a smile, ‘I asked him, ‘Did they return to you, as those did to that elder?’ ‘God forbid,’ he replied at once; ‘I never even thought they would return.’” – To this the blessed one added: “Such was the elder’s zeal, and this is what his readiness to imitate the saints brought him—that he not only did not grieve but even rejoiced, as one who had been granted some special blessing.”

25. As I mentioned earlier in our conversation, the blessed one said that if we show a little patience toward our brother who is angry, we will win his soul; now I want to tell you a story about this that I heard from the blessed Sergius, the abbot of Pedia. He told me: Once we were traveling with a certain holy elder and lost our way. Not knowing where to go, we ended up in a sown field and trampled a little of the greenery. Seeing this, a farmer who happened to be working there at the time began to scold us harshly, shouting angrily: “You monks! Do you fear God?” “If you had the fear of God in your hearts, you would not have done this.” The holy elder immediately said to us, “For the Lord’s sake, say nothing.” Then he turned gently to the farmer and said, “You speak the truth, my child; if we had the fear of God, we would not have done this.” The farmer began to scold them angrily once more. The elder said to him once more: “You speak the truth that if we were monks, we would not have done this. But, for the Lord’s sake, forgive us; we admit that we have sinned against you.” This so moved the farmer that he approached, threw himself at the elder’s feet, and said: “Forgive me, for the Lord’s sake, Father, and take me with you.” “And indeed,” said the blessed Sergius, “he followed us, and upon arriving at the monastery, he took the schema.” “This,” added Abba Zosima, “is what the meekness and kindness of the holy elder, with God’s help, were able to accomplish—a soul created in the image of God, which is more desirable to God than the darkness of the worlds with all their riches.”

26. Abba Zosima also said: Once, when I was with Blessed Sergius, he said to me, “Read something from Scripture for us.” I began to read Proverbs, and when I came to the passage that says, “*Where there are many trees, the fire rages; but where there is no one to stir it up, the quarrel dies down*” (Prov. 26:20)—I asked him, “What does this saying mean?” He replied, “Just as trees are the (material) cause of a fiery flame, and if there are not enough of them, the fire soon goes out—so too do passions have their causes; and if one cuts off these causes, the passions remain inactive.” Specifically: the causes of fornication, as Abba Moses said, are: eating and drinking without restraint, sleeping to one’s heart’s content, sitting idly, amusing oneself, engaging in idle talk, and loving to dress up. If one cuts off all of this, the passion for fornication will be

powerless. Again, the causes of anger, as he also said, are: giving and taking (engaging in troublesome transactions), doing as one pleases, loving to give orders, and considering oneself wise. Whoever cuts these off will find that the passion of anger has no power over him. The same applies to all passions. And this is what Abba Sisoy meant when a brother asked him, “Why do the passions not depart from me?” He replied, “Because their vessels—that is, their causes—are within you; give them their pledge, and they will depart.”

27. On another occasion he said: A double-tempered person, in whom the outburst of anger does not subside, is one who is not satisfied with the first provocation but stokes himself up to a second outburst of anger. Whoever, having been inflamed with anger, immediately comes to his senses and, realizing his fault, asks forgiveness from the brother at whom he was angry, is not called double-angry; the quarrel subsides within him; for as soon as he, realizing his fault, is reconciled with his brother, the quarrel no longer has a place within him. But whoever, having become angry, does not acknowledge his fault, but instead stirs himself up even more to anger, and regrets not that he became angry, but that he did not say even more than what he said in his anger—such a person is called double-angry; and the strife within him does not subside, because after the anger has passed, resentment, animosity, and malice take hold of him. — May the Lord Jesus Christ deliver us from such a disposition, and grant us a share in the meek and humble.

28. He also often said that great vigilance and no small amount of wisdom are needed to counter the devil’s cunning; for it happens that he sometimes stirs up anxiety and discontent over nothing, suggesting even seemingly righteous pretexts so that it may appear that anger in the given situation is justified and has a valid reason. But whatever he may suggest, let those who truly wish to walk in the way of the holy monks know that no irritation, however justified it may seem, should be permitted, as Macarius says: “Monks should not become angry”; and furthermore: “One should not cause sorrow to one’s neighbor.” He also told us the following: Once I commissioned a skilled scribe to copy some books for me. When he had finished, he sent word to me: “I have finished; send for whatever you deem appropriate and take them.” A brother, having heard of this, went to the scribe on my behalf, paid the agreed-upon fee, and took the books. Meanwhile, unaware of what had happened, I sent our brother with a letter and payment to collect them. The scribe, realizing from this that he had been mocked by the brother who had taken the books, became very angry and said, “I will certainly go and punish him—both for mocking me and for taking what was not his.” When I heard about this, I sent word to him: “You surely know, my brother, that we acquire books in order to learn from them love, humility, and gentleness; but if the very purpose of acquiring books leads to quarrels, then I do not want to have them, so as not to quarrel: *“for it is not fitting for a servant of God to quarrel”* (2 Tim. 2:24). Thus, by refusing the books, I ensured that no deliberate offense was caused to that brother.

29. Once, while sitting with us and conversing about matters of salvation, the blessed one began to quote sayings of the holy elders; and, having come to the saying spoken by Abba Pimen—that he who condemns himself finds peace everywhere—and to the one spoken by Abba of Mount Nitria in response to the question, “What have you gained most of all, Father, on this path?” ‘To always accuse and reproach myself,’ he replied, whereupon the questioner added, ‘And there is no other way but this.’ Recalling these sayings, the Blessed One said, ‘What power the words of the saints have! And truly, whatever they said, they spoke from experience and truth, as the divine Anthony testifies.’ Their words are powerful precisely because they were spoken by those who lived them, just as one of the wise commands everyone to do: “Let your life confirm your words.” At this, Abba told us the following story: When I had not yet been at the Lavra of Abba Gerasimus for very long, we were sitting one day with a brother dear to me and conversing about matters pertaining to the salvation of the soul. I recalled the words of Abba Pimen and that other elder of Nitria mentioned above, and the brother said to me: “I have come to know the truth of these words through experience, and I have tasted the peace that comes from living by them.” I lived in sincere friendship with a certain deacon of this Lavra. I do not know why, but he began to suspect me of a certain matter, took offense at it, and began to look at me gloomily. Noticing this gloom, I asked him to explain the reason for it, and he said to me, “You did such-and-such a thing.” Not being aware of having done such a thing, I began to assure him of my innocence; but he replied, “I’m sorry, I am not convinced.” Returning to my cell, I began to search my heart to see if I had ever done such a thing—and found nothing. Later, when he took the chalice to offer it, I swore to him that I did not recall having done that thing; but even then he was not convinced by this. Then, coming to my senses again, I recalled these words of the elders, and with complete faith in their truth, I turned my thoughts inward and said: The deacon sincerely loves me, and moved by this love, he revealed to me what is in his heart toward me, so that I might watch myself carefully, lest I do such a thing. However, my

poor soul, as you say, what deed have you not done? You have committed thousands of evil deeds, and you have forgotten them. Where is what you did yesterday, or ten days ago? Do you remember that? So have you not done this as well, just as you did that—and forgotten it, just as you forgot what came before? Thus, I resolved in my heart that I had truly done this; but just as I had forgotten what came before, so I forgot this as well. And I began to thank the Lord and the deacon, for through him the Lord had enabled me to recognize my sin and repent of it. Then I rose, and with these thoughts in mind, I went to my brother to confess before the deacon and to thank him. But as soon as I knocked on the door, he opened it first and bowed to me, saying, “Forgive me; I was deceived by demons into suspecting you of that deed; for God has truly assured me that you are not guilty of it,” and he would not let me reassure him further, saying, “There is no longer any need for that.” After recounting this, the blessed Zosima added: “This is what sincere humility did for the heart of the brother who loved him—that he not only did not take offense at the deacon’s actions, nor was he insulted by him—first, because the deacon had suspected him, second, for not believing his assurances of innocence—but he even took upon himself a sin that had not been committed, and not only that, but he also thanked the deacon. Do you see what this virtue accomplishes? To what heights of excellence does it elevate those who love it? For if the brother had wished, he would have had a thousand reasons to become a demon through the deacon. But since he was devoted to virtue, not only did he not take offense at him, but he even thanked him, for virtue had taken hold of his heart. So if we, too, had first sown within ourselves the seeds of meekness and humility and prepared our hearts for them, the enemy would have no place to sow his evil seeds there. But when he finds us empty of good thoughts—or worse yet, inciting ourselves to evil—he seizes upon these opportunities to fill us with his wickedness. But when there is a love for virtue, the opposite is true: for then the Lord, seeing how the soul longs to be saved and how earnestly it cultivates good seeds within itself, fills it with His gifts because of its good will.

30. Once, the blessed Abba, recalling an elder who had been robbed by a brother living next door—and that, knowing this, he had never rebuked that brother but had worked even harder, saying, “Perhaps the brother is in need”—marveled at the kindness of the saints and recounted the following incident. During my stay in Pediaa, an abbot told me the following: near our monastery lived an elder who was of a most blessed soul. A brother living next door to him, one day while the elder was away, led by the devil’s temptation, opened the elder’s cell, went inside, and took his belongings and books for himself. When the elder returned and, upon opening his cell, did not find his belongings, he went to that brother to tell him about it. But upon entering the brother’s cell, he saw his belongings lying in the middle of it, because the brother had not yet had time to put them away. Not wishing, however, to embarrass the brother or rebuke him, he pretended to be seized by a sudden stomachache and went outside—where he stayed for quite some time, as if attending to a need, so that the brother might have time to put the belongings away in the meantime. When he returned to him afterward, he began to talk about something else and did not expose the brother. A few days later, the elder’s belongings were found in his possession, and he was arrested and taken into custody. The elder knew nothing about this; but upon hearing that his brother was in prison—and not knowing why he was there—he came to me,” says the abbot, “for he used to visit us often,” and asked, “Please do me a favor: give me a few eggs and some plain bread.” I said to him, “Surely you have someone with you now?” “Yes,” replied the elder; and he took these things so that he could go to the dungeon and comfort his brother. As soon as he entered the dungeon, the brother fell at his feet and said: “I am here because of you, Abba, for it was I who stole your belongings”—but “your book is with so-and-so, and your clothes are with so-and-so.” The elder said to him, “Let your heart be assured, my son, that I did not come here for that reason; I did not even know that you were here because of me; but when I heard that you were here, I was grieved and came to comfort you; here, look—eggs and fresh bread. Now I will go and do whatever it takes to get you out of here.” He went and asked some of the officials who knew him because of his virtue; and they ordered that the brother be released from prison.

31. It was also told of the same elder that once he went to the market to buy himself some clothes. He bought them and paid one gold coin. He still had to pay the rest in small change. He took the clothes and placed them beneath him, and began counting out the small change onto a small board. Just then, someone approached and tried to pull the clothes out from under him. Sensing this, the elder understood what it meant, and out of pity for the man, he began to rise little by little, as if stretching while holding the coin, until the man had pulled the clothes out and left; and the elder did not rebuke him. “After this, the blessed Zosima said: What were those clothes of his worth, or the things stolen from him? But how precious is his free will! He showed that, even while possessing them, he was as if he had nothing at all. When they were taken from him,

he remained the same, neither grieving over it nor becoming angry; for, as I always say, it is not possession itself that harms, but possessing with attachment. Even if this elder had possessed the whole world, he would have been as though he possessed nothing: for by what he did, he showed that he was free from everything. Let us, then, brothers, strive to imitate the examples of the holy fathers and zealously fulfill their words, so that, having borne good fruit here, we may be made worthy of eternal blessings, in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom be glory and power with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Saint Maximus the Confessor

A Brief Account of Him

St. Maximus of Constantinople was of noble birth. Having received a comprehensive education—in theology, philosophy, and every other subject required at that time—he was appointed to the imperial court by Emperor Heraclius and performed the duties of chief secretary with success and to great acclaim. When the Monothelite heresy arose—for which both the emperor and the patriarch were partly to blame—and turmoil began in the palace, in the city, and in other regions of the empire, St. Maximus regarded this as a blessed opportunity to fulfill his long-standing desire to leave the world and enter a monastery. Having withdrawn from public affairs, he entered the Chrysopolis Monastery (641) and devoted himself with all zeal to ascetic practices, following the strict monastic rules, setting for all and in every respect an example worthy of imitation. Consequently, when a new abbot was needed at the monastery, he was unanimously elected by all to this office, which he fulfilled with dignity, without indulging himself or seeking to please men. Meanwhile, the Monothelite heresy continued to grow and spread, supported by the court and the patriarch; turmoil grew along with it. Unwilling to tolerate the turmoil, St. Maximus left the monastery and set out for Rome. On his way, he stopped for a time in Carthage, in Africa, where, at a council held there, he denounced the untenability of Monothelitism in the person of Pyrrhus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was present but had been removed from office. He then sailed to Rome, where he soon took part in a council against the Monophysites, convened by Pope St. Martin, in response to the emperor's decree to accept and sign the Typikon—a statement of the creed he had composed, which included Monophysite heresy. At this council, Monophysitism, the imperial typikon, and “ ” all those who accepted this heretical doctrine were condemned and anathematized. This conciliar decree was then disseminated far and wide, throughout the West and the East. Enraged by this, the emperor ordered the arrest of Pope St. Martin and St. Maximus and their transport to Constantinople. Upon their arrival there, St. Martin, after enduring unimaginable tortures, was exiled to Chersonesos, where he died (655). As for St. Maximus, they set about trying to win him over to their side, which they did with great zeal: first in the imperial palaces; then in a prison in Constantinople; then to the Thracian town of Vizia, the site of the holy martyr's first imprisonment; and finally, after being summoned from there, back to Constantinople, to the monastery of St. Theodore, where he was held—in a more solemn and menacing atmosphere. The trial was conducted by senators, with bishops sometimes present as well. The aim was to persuade St. Maximus to accept their teachings, or at least to sign the typikon, or at least to remain silent. Nothing succeeded. The truth of Orthodoxy, as spoken by St. Maximus, proved victorious every time, compelling his opponents not only to remain silent but also to bow down before him. They attempted to shake the courage of this champion of the truth through promises, threats, and instructions on how to circumvent the truth unnoticed by others—and finally, at the last meeting, through beatings. Nothing helped; and St. Maximus was exiled to a second place of confinement via Selinvri to Pervera, on the western shores of the Sea of Marmara. But the enemies of the truth could not rest; and St. Maximus was summoned once more to Constantinople for final exhortations, which were conducted with greater persistence, yet also to no avail, in three sessions: in the imperial chambers, in the prison, and again in the chambers, where the final decision was made: to spare the martyr's life but to subject him to torments worse than death. And with this aim, they handed him over to the city prefect. This same inhuman torturer, seizing the reverend father, led him into the praetorium, ordered him to be stripped naked, and, having laid him on the ground, commanded that he be flogged with the sharpest whips. And they beat the elder of God so inhumanely that not a single spot on his body remained unharmed, and the ground beneath him was stained with blood. – Then, barely breathing, they cast him into a dungeon. In the morning, they took the Saint back to the praetorium—and subjected him to an even more brutal punishment: they cut out his tongue, which had spoken for God and denounced heresy, and

severed his right hand with a knife and an axe for writing instructive and expository books. Then, having dragged him out of the praetorium, stripped and barefoot, they paraded him through the marketplace for public humiliation, showing the people his severed tongue and hand. Finally, after such inhuman torments and humiliations, they sent the Saint into distant exile in Mingrelia; and there they imprisoned him in the Schemar Prison, where, after suffering for three years and enduring every kind of hardship, St. Maximus departed to the Lord, having been comforted before his death by a prophetic vision. This took place in the year 662. The commemoration of St. Maximus is observed on January 21. St. Maximus left behind many writings—some dogmatic and some polemical, but most of them moral and ascetic in nature. The Greek work **On Charity** includes the following from his writings: four hundred chapters on love; seven hundred chapters on the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Word of God; as well as numerous chapters on virtues and passions; and an exposition on the Lord's Prayer. We have included the following in our collection: all the chapters on prayer, as they are; and from the seven hundred chapters, we have selected those that are more easily understood, as well as those that are more moral and ascetic in nature. In place of what is omitted here, we have included, based on Migne's edition, a word of ascetic wisdom. Thus, the following works by St. Maximus are presented:

1. The Ascetic Discourse, in the form of a disciple's questions and the elder's answers
2. Four Hundred Chapters on Love (in a new translation)
3. Speculative and Practical Chapters, selected from the seven hundred chapters of Greek Philanthropy

1. Words of Asceticism, in the form of a disciple's questions and the elder's answers

1. A brother asked the elder: "I beg you, Father, tell me, what was the purpose of the Lord's Incarnation?" – The elder replied: "I am surprised at you, brother, that even though you hear the Creed every day, you ask me this." – "I will tell you, however, that the purpose of the Lord's Incarnation was our salvation." The brother said: "Explain this to me, Father." – The elder replied: "Since man, originally created by God and placed in Paradise, transgressed the commandment and was subjected to corruption and death; then, despite the fact that through God's manifold providence in every way and form he was guided toward the good, he continually prospered only in evil, driven to despair by a multitude of carnal passions: for this reason, the only-begotten Son of God, the eternal Word, proceeding from God the Father, the source of life and immortality, appeared to us who were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death (Isa. 9:2, Matt. 4:16), having been incarnated by the Holy Spirit and the Most Holy Virgin—and showed us the example of a godly life, giving the holy commandments with the promise of the kingdom of heaven to those who would live by them, and the threat of eternal torment to those who would transgress them; and having endured the saving Passion and risen from the dead, He granted us the hope of the resurrection and eternal life, having by His obedience atoned for the guilt of original sin and by His death destroyed the power of death, so that *"just as in Adam all die, so also in Him all will be made alive"* (1 Cor. 15: 22); and finally, having ascended into heaven and seated Himself at the right hand of the Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit as a pledge of life—for the enlightenment and sanctification of our souls, and to assist those striving for salvation in fulfilling His commandments. Behold, in brief, what was the purpose of the Lord's Incarnation!

2. The brother said: "Father, I would like to hear briefly what commandments I must keep in order to be saved." – The elder replied: The Lord Himself said to the Apostles after His Resurrection: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:19–20). Thus, everything commanded by Him must be observed by every person baptized in the name of the Life-giving and God-originating Trinity. The Lord has inseparably united the observance of all the commandments with true faith, knowing that if one is separated from the other, it is impossible for a person to be saved. That is why David, though he had the true faith (he was not content with it alone), said to God: *"I have set my face toward all Your commandments; I have hated every way of unrighteousness"* (Ps. 118: 128). Against every path of unrighteousness, the Lord has given us commandments that are contrary to it; and if anyone neglects any of them, he thereby embarks on the opposite path of unrighteousness.

3. The brother said: "Father, who can keep all the commandments—when there are so many of them?!" – The Elder replied: "The one who imitates the Lord and follows Him step by step." The brother said: "But who can imitate the Lord? The Lord was God, even though He became man, but I am a sinful man, enslaved by countless passions. How then can I imitate the Lord?" The elder replied: "None of those who are enslaved

to the world and its vanities can imitate the Lord; but those who can say, *'We have left everything and followed You'* (Matt. 19:27), receive the strength to imitate the Lord and to be guided by all His commandments." The brother asked, "What kind of power?" The elder replied, "Listen to what He Himself says: *'Behold, I give you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you'* (Luke 10:19)."

4. Having received such power and authority, the Apostle Paul said: "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ*" (Phil. 3:17). And again: "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:1). And further: "*Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal. 5: 24). Also: "*I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 6: 14).

5. Speaking prophetically of this same power and help, David said: "*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the God of heaven. He says to the Lord: 'You are my shield and my refuge, my God, in whom I trust'*" (Ps. 90:1–2). And a little further on: "*You will tread upon the asp and the viper; you will trample the lion and the serpent... 'He will command His angel concerning you to guard you in all your ways'*" (11–13). But those who are attached to the flesh and love the vanity of the world, listen to what they hear from the Lord: "Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). And again: "*Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:27). Also: "*Whoever does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple*" (33). And so, whoever desires to be His disciple, to prove himself worthy of Him, and to receive strength from Him against the spirits of wickedness, abstains from every habit that indulges the flesh and frees himself from every attachment to material things; and in this way strives against invisible enemies for the sake of the Lord's commandments—just as the Lord Himself set an example for us in Himself, both when He was tempted in the wilderness by their prince, and when, having appeared in the world (during His public ministry), He was tempted by those who acted under their influence.

6. The brother said: "But, Father, there are many of the Lord's commandments; and who can keep them all in mind in order to strive for them all, especially I, a man of limited understanding?—Why would I wish to hear a brief word (a simple rule) so that, by keeping it, I might secure my salvation?" The elder replied: "Although there are many commandments, brother; they are all summed up in one word—the following: *'You shall love the Lord your God... with all your strength, with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself'*" (Luke 10:27). Whoever strives to keep this word fulfills all the commandments at once. But whoever does not renounce, as stated above, every attachment to material things cannot truly love either God or his neighbor. It is impossible to be attached to material things and love God at the same time. And this is what the Lord meant when He said, "*No one can serve two masters*" (Matt. 6:24). And: "*You cannot serve both God and mammon*" (Luke 16:13). For to the extent that the mind clings to the things of this world, to that extent it becomes enslaved by them and despises God's commandment, transgressing it without fear.

7. The brother said: "What kinds of things do you mean by 'attachment,' Father?" The elder replied: "To food, to money, to possessions of every kind, to glory, to relatives, and other such things." The brother said: "But didn't God create all these things, Father, and give them to people for their use?" How then can He now forbid us even to touch these things?" The elder replied: "Indeed—God created all this and gave it to people for their use—and everything that came from God is good (Gen. 1:31) (and was then given to us) so that, by making good use of it, we might please God. But we, being weak and earthbound in our thinking, have preferred material things to the commandment of love, and, having become attached to them, we therefore quarrel with others. We ought to prefer love for every person—which serves as a sign of love for God—to all that is visible and even to the body itself, as the Lord Himself shows in the Gospel, saying, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). What, then, is this commandment, the observance of which will prove that we love Him? Listen to what He says again: "*This is my commandment, that you love one another*" (John 15:12). Do you see—mutual love for one another constitutes love for God, which is the fulfillment of every commandment of God (Rom. 13:10)? That is why the Lord commands not only that we not be attached to the things of this world, but also that we renounce all our possessions for the sake of those who sincerely desire to be His disciples.

8. The brother said: "You said, Father, that love for every person should take precedence over all visible things and even over one's own body; but how can I love someone who hates me and turns away from me?" Whoever envies me, spreads slander, plots against me, and attempts to do me harm—how can I love

such a person?—Judging by nature, it seems to me, Father, that this is impossible; for the feeling of sorrow naturally compels one to turn away from the one who caused the sorrow. – The elder replied: For reptiles and beasts, which are governed by nature, it is indeed impossible not to take revenge, to the best of their ability, for the harm done to them; but for those created in the image of God, governed by reason, honored with the knowledge of God, and having received the law from Him, it is possible not to turn away from those who insult them and to love those who hate them. That is why the Lord, saying, “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,*” and so on (Matt. 5:44), commands this—certainly not as something impossible, but as something possible; otherwise, He would not have prescribed punishment for those who transgress this commandment. That such love is possible was demonstrated in practice by the Lord Himself and His disciples, who labored for the love of their neighbor even unto death and prayed fervently for those who killed them. But we, since we are attached to material things and pleasure and prefer (material things and pleasures) to the commandments; we are therefore unable to love those who hate us; and not only that, but often, because of them, we even turn away from those who love us, proving ourselves to be worse in character than beasts and creeping things. Since we are thus unable to follow in God’s footsteps, we cannot know His purpose, from which we might draw strength for ourselves.

9. The brother said: “Behold, Father, I have left everything—my family, my possessions, the pleasures and glory of the world—so that I have nothing left but this body; and yet I cannot love a brother who hates me and turns away from me, even though I do my best not to repay him evil for evil.” Tell me, what must I do so that I may love such a one from the heart—and indeed anyone who insults me or slanders me in any way?” The elder replied: “It is impossible to love one who insults you, even for one who has renounced the world and all that is in the world, unless he truly knows the Lord’s purpose. But when the Lord grants him to know it, and he becomes eager to walk according to its guidance, then he will be able to love from the heart those who hate and insult him, just as the Apostles loved, for they knew it.”

10. The brother said: “What is this purpose of the Lord? Please explain it to me, Father.” – The elder replied: “If you wish to know the Lord’s purpose, listen carefully.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God by nature and who, out of love for humanity, chose to become man, was born of a woman and was subject to the Law, according to the divine Apostle, so that by keeping the commandments as a man, He might annul the ancient curse of Adam. Knowing that the entire Law and the Prophets hang on two commandments: – “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself*”—He determined to act in this way from beginning to end, so that He might keep these commandments perfectly, yet in a human manner. But the devil, who deceived man in the beginning and thereby gained dominion over death, the devil, seeing how the Father testified about Him at His baptism, and how He, having received from heaven—as a man—the Holy Spirit, then went out into the wilderness to be tempted by him—the devil—directed all his attacks against Him, hoping to make Him prefer the goods of this world to love for God. Knowing, however, that there are three things around which all human desires and pleasures revolve—namely, food, money, and glory—by which he always plunges people into the abyss of destruction, he attempted to tempt even the Lord with these three; but the Lord, proving Himself above all this, sternly commanded: “Get behind Me, Satan.”

11. This is the mark of love for God (that is, to stand above such things), and Satan, unable to persuade the Lord Jesus Christ to transgress it because of what he had promised, What he had promised, he then attempted in every way, when the Lord began His public ministry, to lead Him to violate the commandment of love for one’s neighbor, acting through the lawless Jews. To this end, when the Lord taught the ways of life and demonstrated by His deeds a model of heavenly living, proclaimed the resurrection of the dead, and promised believers eternal life and the kingdom of heaven—while threatening unbelievers with eternal torment—and to confirm the truth of His words performed wondrous divine signs, calling the people to faith,—he incited the lawless Pharisees and scribes to various slanders against Him, so that, unable to withstand the temptations as they had hoped, He would be moved by hatred toward His slanderers—and he, the schemer, would thus have achieved his goal by portraying Him as a violator of the commandment to love one’s neighbor.

12. But the Lord, as God, knowing his schemes, did not harbor hatred toward the Pharisees who were incited against Him (for how could this be possible, when He is goodness itself?), but rather, through His love for them, He confounded the instigator himself. Thus, since they, being subjected to hostile incitement, might not accept Him—and if they did accept Him, it was because they willingly, through inattention and carelessness, yielded to the instigator’s suggestions—yet the Lord instructed them, rebuked them, reproached

them, wept over them, and at the same time never ceased to do them every kind of good; He bore slander with equanimity, endured suffering with patience—showing toward them every act of love. With such love for those incited against Him, He astonished the instigator. What a wondrous battle! Instead of hatred, He shows love, and through His goodness He overthrows the father of malice. Having endured so much evil from them—or, more accurately, for their sake—having striven to the point of death, in human terms, for the commandment of love, and having won a complete victory over the devil, He finally received, for our sake, the crown of the Resurrection;—and in this way, the new Adam renewed the old. —This is the meaning of the words spoken by the divine Apostle: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,”* and so on (Phil. 2:5).

13. Such was the Lord’s purpose: to be obedient to the Father even unto death, as a human being for our sake, keeping the commandment of love, and to strike down the devil, suffering at his hands through the scribes and Pharisees he incited. Thus, freely yielding as if to grant him victory, He defeated the one who sought to defeat Him and wrested the world from his tyranny. *“For Christ was crucified in weakness”* (2 Cor. 13:4), but by this weakness He put death to death and abolished the one who holds the power of death (Heb. 2:14). So too did Paul himself experience weakness, and he boasted *“in his weaknesses, so that the power of Christ might dwell in him”* (2 Cor. 12:9).

14. Reflecting on this victory, St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,”* and so on (Eph. 6:12). And to those who are at war with invisible enemies, he commanded them to take up the armor of righteousness, the helmet of hope, the shield of faith, and the spiritual sword, *“so that they may extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”* (vv. 11–14). Illustrating this struggle in practice, he said: *“For I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified”* (1 Cor. 9: 26–27), and again: *“To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, and we are in distress”* (1 Cor. 4:11), and further: *“in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in the cold and in nakedness”* (2 Cor. 11:27).

15. With the same struggle he waged war against the demons that stir up carnal lusts, driving them away by exhausting his body. Showing us, by his very example, the way to victory over those demons who incite hatred and, for that very purpose, stir up the most careless against the godly—so that, being tempted by them, they might come to hate them and thereby transgress the commandment of love—he said: *“When we are rebuked, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we console: for we have become the world’s refuse, the scum of the earth until now”* (1 Cor. 4:12–13). The demons inspired people to rebuke, slander, and persecute the Apostle in order to incite him to hatred toward those who rebuked, slandered, and persecuted him—with the aim of leading him to violate the commandment of love. But the Apostle, unaware of their intentions, blessed those who rebuked him, endured those who persecuted him, and implored those who slandered him to turn away from the demons inciting them to do so and to turn to the good God; and in this way he always defeated the host of demons that teach evil, overcoming evil with goodness, following the example of the Savior. In this way, he and the other Apostles delivered the whole world from the demons and dedicated it to God, overcoming through their victory those who thought they had triumphed. And so, brother, if you, too, hold fast to this same goal, you, too, will be able to love those who hate you; but if you do not, you will not be able to; for otherwise, it is impossible.

16. The brother said: *“Truly, Father, it is so, and not otherwise.”* – And for this reason, the Lord—who was reviled, struck on the cheeks, and subjected to other sufferings at the hands of the Jews—endured it all, having compassion on them as those who, out of ignorance, were committing “ ” and were deceived, just as He said on the cross: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34), while triumphing on the cross over the cunning and deceit of the devil and his princes; for even unto death He endured the struggle against them for the sake of the commandment of love, as you have said. He has granted us this victory over them; and having destroyed the power of death, He bestowed His resurrection as life upon the whole world. But pray for me, Father, that I may fully comprehend the purpose of the Lord and His Apostles, and then remain sober-minded during times of temptation, not being deceived by the schemes of the devil and his demons.

17. The elder replied: *“If you always keep these words in mind, you will be able to discern (the wiles of the evil one).”* But when you realize that just as you are tempted, so too is your brother tempted, forgive your tempted brother, and resist the tempting devil—who seeks to incite you to hatred toward your tempted brother—without yielding to his wiles. This is precisely what James, the brother of God, teaches when he says

in his epistle: “Submit yourselves to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (4:7). And so, if, as has been said, you always keep the above in sober thought, you will be able to discern the purpose of the Lord and His Apostles, and to love people, showing compassion toward them when they act wrongly, while always opposing the cunning demons through love. But if you and I are dissolute, careless, and negligent, and surrender our thoughts to carnal pleasures, then we will not be waging war against the demons, but against ourselves and our brothers; and we will be pleasing the demons by waging war against people for their sake.

18. The brother said: “Yes, Father; the demons always take advantage of my negligence to rise up against me. But I beg you, Father, tell me how I should attain sobriety.” The elder replied: “Complete detachment from earthly things and constant study of the Holy Scriptures lead the soul to the fear of God, and the fear of God leads to sobriety.” And then the soul begins to see how the demons wage war against it through thoughts, and to repel them—as David also said: *“My eye looks upon my enemies”* (Ps. 53:9). Encouraging his disciples to engage in such a struggle against the demons, the chief Apostle Peter said: *“Be sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour; resist him, firm in your faith”* (1 Peter 5:8). And the Lord said: *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation”* (Matthew 26:41). Likewise, Ecclesiastes says: *“If the spirit of the ruler comes upon you, do not leave your post”* (10:4). The post of the mind is virtue, knowledge, and the fear of God. Finally, the wonderful Apostle, who labored with great sobriety and courage, said: *“Though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: casting down arguments and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish every disobedience”* (2 Cor. 10:3–6). — So if you, too, imitate the saints and, with great effort, empty yourself of everything for God’s sake, you will be sober-minded.

19. The brother said: “What must one do, Father, to be able to remain constantly with God?” The elder replied: “It is impossible for the mind to remain always with the one God unless it acquires the following three virtues: love, self-control, and prayer. Love tames anger, self-control dries up lust, and prayer, freeing the mind from all thoughts, presents it naked before God Himself. These three virtues embody all truth; and without them, the mind cannot abide with the one God.

20. The brother said: “I beg you, Father, teach me how love tames anger.” The elder replied: “The work of love is to love one’s neighbor and do him good, to be long-suffering toward him, and to endure all that he inflicts, as has often been said. Possessing such qualities, love naturally tames anger in the one who has acquired it.” The brother said: “These are no small matters; but blessed is the one who has been able to acquire it. I, however, am truly far from it; yet I ask you, Father, tell me, what does it mean to be long-suffering?”

21. The elder replied: “To remain steadfast in spirit amid misfortunes, to endure every evil, and to await the end of the trial, without allowing oneself to be overcome by anger, or to speak a foolish word, or to suspect anything, or to think anything unbecoming of a godly person, as Scripture says: *“The patient one endures for a time, and afterward joy will be his reward: ‘for a time he hides his words and his mind from the confessions of the faithful’”* (Sirach 1:23–24).

22. Such are the characteristics of long-suffering!—And not only this, but also considering oneself to be the cause of temptation is a characteristic of long-suffering. And perhaps this is indeed the case (i.e., that the cause lies within us). For much of what happens to us occurs for our instruction, or for the purification of past sins, or for the correction of present negligence, or for the prevention of future falls. Whoever considers that a temptation has befallen him for any one of the reasons mentioned will not become angry when he is afflicted—especially when he is aware of his own sins at that moment; he will not blame the one through whom the temptation came: for whether through him or through another, he was in any case destined to drink the cup of God’s judgments;—but he will lift his mind to God and give thanks to Him who permitted the temptation, blaming himself alone and willingly accepting correction, as David did toward Shimei and Job toward his wife. But the unwise person often asks God for mercy; yet when mercy comes, he does not accept it, because it did not come as he wished, but as the Physician of the soul judged to be beneficial. That is why he is faint-hearted and restless—sometimes he is angry at people, and at other times he hurls blasphemies at God; and in this way he reveals his ingratitude and fails to receive healing from the rod of discipline.

23. The brother said: “You have explained this well, Father. But I beg you, tell me also how self-restraint dries up lust.” The Elder replied: “Abstinence teaches one to refrain from everything that does not

satisfy a necessary need but merely provides pleasure; it does not allow one to touch anything except what is necessary for life; it does not let one pursue what is pleasant but commands one to seek only what is useful; and it instructs one to measure food and drink according to need, to prevent excessive moisture from accumulating in the body, and to sustain the body's life alone, keeping it free from lustful desires. This is how abstinence dries up lust. – On the contrary, pleasure and an abundance of food and drink inflame the belly and kindle the strongest urge of shameful lust, drawing a person, like an irrational animal, toward unlawful mingling. Then the eyes become shameless, the hands are unrestrained, the tongue speaks only what tickles the ear, and the ear willingly listens only to vanity; the mind neglects God, and the soul not only commits adultery in thought but also draws the body into an unseemly act.

24. The brother said: "Truly so, Father. But I ask you to teach me also about prayer, how it detaches the mind from all thoughts." The elder replied: "Our thoughts are ideas about objects, some of which are sensory and others intellectual. When occupied with them, the mind carries within itself and sifts through thoughts about them." But the grace of prayer unites the mind with God, and—by uniting it with God—frees it from all thoughts. Then the mind, conversing with God in its nakedness, becomes godlike. Having become such, it asks God for what is godly, and never fails in its petition (it always receives what it asks for). That is why the Apostle commands us to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17), so that by uniting our minds with God more frequently, we may gradually cast aside our attachment to material things.

25. The brother said: "But how can the mind pray unceasingly? For when we sing or read, when we converse with someone, or serve someone, we naturally distract it with many thoughts and images." The elder replied: "Divine Scripture does not command anything impossible." The Apostle himself, through whom these words were spoken, sang, read, and carried out his (apostolic) ministry—and yet he prayed unceasingly. – To pray unceasingly means to keep one's mind fixed on God with great reverence and fervent desire, to cling to hope in Him, and to trust in Him in all things—in deeds and in circumstances. Being in this frame of mind, the Apostle says: "*Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress?*"—and so on (Rom. 8:35). And shortly thereafter: "*I have come to know that neither death nor life, nor angels*" (38). And again: "*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body*" (2 Cor. 4:8–10).

26. Being in this state of mind, the Apostle prayed unceasingly; for in all his affairs and circumstances, as has been said, he clung to the hope of God. And all the saints always rejoiced in their afflictions, hoping through them to attain the perfection of divine love. That is why the Apostle said: "*Most gladly, then, I will boast—in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me*" (2 Cor. 12:9). And a little further on: "*When I am weak, then I am strong*" (v. 10). But woe to us poor souls, for we have strayed from the path of the Holy Fathers, and because of this, we are devoid of any spiritual work.

27. The brother said: "Father, why is it that I have no contrition?" The elder replied: "It is because you and I lack the fear of God before our eyes. It is because we have become a refuge for every kind of evil, and we despise God's terrible punishments as mere fantasies." How could one not be contrite when hearing, for example, Moses speak on behalf of God about sinners: "*For a fire will be kindled by My wrath,*" "*it will blaze down to the depths of hell: it will consume the earth and its crops, and burn the foundations of the mountains*" (Deut. 32:22–23). And again: "*I will sharpen my sword like lightning; my hand will execute judgment; I will take vengeance on my enemies and repay those who hate me*" (41). Or as Isaiah cries out: "*The lawless in Zion have turned away; terror will seize the wicked; your strength of spirit will be in vain; you will be consumed by fire. Who will tell you that the fire is burning? Who will tell you of the place of everlasting rest?*" (Isa. 33:14). And again: "*They will go out and see the corpses of those who have rebelled against me; for their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched, and they will be a disgrace to all flesh*" (Isa. 66:24). Or as Jeremiah says: "*Give glory to the Lord your God before it grows dark, and before your feet stumble against the dark mountains; and you will wait for the light, but there will be only the shadow of death, and you will be cast into darkness*" (Jer. 13:16). And again: "*Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, and ears but do not hear. Will you not fear Me,*" says the Lord, "*or be ashamed before Me?*" (Jer. 5:21–22). And again: "*Your apostasy will punish you, and your wickedness will condemn you; acknowledge and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake Me, says the Lord... I planted you as a fruitful vine, entirely true; how have you turned into a bitter, foreign vine?*" (Jer. 2: 19–21)? And again: "*I did not sit among the merry-makers, but I feared the power of your hand; I sat alone, for I was filled with*

bitterness” (Jer. 15:17). Who, too, would not be horrified upon hearing what Ezekiel says: “*Your end has come, and I will pour out my wrath upon you; I will take vengeance on you according to your ways, and I will bring upon you all your abominations. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity... and you will know that I am the Lord who strikes*” (Ezek. 7:3, 9). Who would not be crushed upon hearing how Daniel describes the Day of Judgment, saying: “*I looked, and there were thrones set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool; His throne was a blazing fire, and its wheels were burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming forth from before Him; thousands upon thousands served Him, and myriads stood before Him; the court was seated, and the books were opened*” (Dan. 7:9–10), that is, the deeds of each person. And again: “*In a night vision, behold, one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him; and to him were given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom will never be destroyed. My spirit was greatly agitated within me, I, Daniel, and the visions of my head troubled me*” (Dan. 7:13–15).

28. Who will not tremble upon hearing what David says: “*God has spoken once; I have heard it twice: for the power belongs to God, and to You, O Lord, is mercy; for You will repay each person according to his deeds*” (Ps. 61: 12, 13)? – And again, what does Ecclesiastes say: “*The conclusion of the matter: Hear everything, fear God, and keep His commandments, for this applies to every person; for God will bring every creature into judgment for every sin, whether good or evil*” (Eccl. 12:13–14)?

29. Who will not tremble upon hearing the same from the Apostle, who says: “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil*”? (2 Cor. 5: 10; Rom. 14: 10). Who, then, will not weep after this over our unbelief and the blindness of our souls—that, having heard all this, we do not repent and shed bitter tears over such negligence and such carelessness on our part, which Jeremiah, foreseeing, said: “*Cursed is everyone who does the work of the Lord carelessly*” (Jer. 48:10). If we were concerned for the salvation of our souls, we would tremble at the word of the Lord and hasten with all diligence to fulfill His commandments, from which our salvation comes. But we, despite hearing from the Lord Himself, “*Enter through the narrow gate that leads to life*” (Matt. 7:13–14), have chosen the broad and spacious path that leads to destruction. Therefore, when He comes to judge the living and the dead, we will hear from Him: “*Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41).

30. And we will hear this not only when we commit evil deeds, but also if we neglect to do good and fail to love our neighbor. And if, on top of that, we commit evil deeds, how will we endure that day in such a wretched state of soul? Moreover, we must know that “*You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not murder*”—and so on—were said to the ancients through Moses (Matt. 5:28). But the Lord, knowing that for a Christian to attain perfection in life, merely observing these commandments is not enough, said: “*Truly I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*” That is why, both before and after those words, He always demanded perfect holiness of the soul—for the sake of which the body is also sanctified—and prescribed sincere love for all people, through whom we may attain love for Him Himself. He set this example for us in Himself and in His disciples, as has been said many times.

31. What excuse can we have on that day, having such an example before us, yet remaining so negligent? Lamenting over us, Jeremiah says: “*Who will give water to my head, and a spring of tears to my eyes, that I may weep day and night*” for this people (Jer. 9:1)—that, having been made worthy of such grace, we remain in such negligence, or worse, are filled with every kind of evil. I hear Moses speaking of us as well: “*Jacob ate and was satisfied; he grew fat and plump; then he abandoned the God who made him and turned away from the God of his salvation*” (Deut. 32:15). Micah also weeps over us, saying: “*Woe to me, for my soul! For the righteous have perished from the earth, and there is no one among men who does what is right; everyone wrongs his neighbor with malice; they prepare their hands for evil*” (Micah 7:2–3). Likewise, the Psalmist spoke of us, praying: “*Save me, O Lord, for the godly have become few; for truth has dwindled among the sons of men*” (Ps. 11:2).

32. Mourning for us, the Apostle also speaks prophetically: “*They have all turned aside; together they have become worthless; there is no one who does good—not even one. Their throats are open graves; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of vipers is under their lips; their mouths are full of curses*”

and bitterness. Destruction and wickedness are in their paths, and they do not know the way of peace. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:12–18). And again, in a prophetic vision concerning our present evil life, he writes to Timothy: “*But know this: in the last days perilous times will come. For people will be self-centered, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, intemperate, savage, without love, traitors, and reckless*”—and so on (2 Tim. 3:1–4). Woe to us, then, for we have reached the very extremes of evil. For who among us is not guilty of the listed forms of wickedness? Has not this prophecy been fulfilled in us? Are we not all gluttons? Are we not all pleasure-seekers? Are we not all madly attached to material things? Are we not all quick-tempered? Are we not all vindictive? Are we not all traitors to every virtue? Are we not all slanderers? Are we not all gossipers? Are we not all disrespectful? Are we not all hostile toward our brothers? Are we not all conceited? Are we not all arrogant? Are we not all proud? Are we not all vain? Are we not all hypocritical? Are we not all deceitful? Are we not all envious? Are we not all disobedient? Are we not all lazy? Are we not all deceitful? Are we not all careless? Are we not all negligent regarding the Savior’s commandments? Are we not all filled with every kind of evil? Have we not become idolatrous shrines instead of temples of God? Instead of the Holy Spirit, a refuge for evil spirits? Do we not call God “Father” only in pretense? Have we not become, instead of sons of God, sons of Gehenna? Have we not become worse than the Jews, we who now bear the great name of Christ? And no one takes offense at hearing such truth. Even those (the Jews), though lawless, said, “*We have one Father, God*”; but from the Savior they heard, “*You are of your father the devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father*” (John 8:41, 44).

33. Is it not just for us, who have transgressed His commandments, to hear such things from Him? Behold, the Apostle called those who are led by the Spirit “sons of God.” “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God,*” he says, “*these are the sons of God*” (Rom. 8:14). How, then, can we be called children of God when we are led by carnal reasoning? Those who are led by the Spirit, he says, are clearly recognized by the fruits of the Spirit. The spiritual fruit, says the Apostle, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). Do we possess any of these? Is it not rather the opposite? Therefore, we ought not to be called children of God, but rather the opposite. That which is born of someone is like the one who begot it. But the Lord says, “*What is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6). We, however, have become flesh that lusts against the Spirit, and therefore the following judgment rightly applies to us: “*My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh*” (Gen. 6:3). How can we even call ourselves Christians when we have nothing of Christ within us?

34. Someone might say: “I have faith in Christ; is this faith in Him alone enough for my salvation?” But the Apostle James counters this, saying: “*Even the demons believe—and tremble*” (James 2:19). And again: “*Faith without works is dead in itself*” (17:26).—Do we even believe in Him?! How can we say that we believe Him regarding the future when we do not believe Him regarding the present and the here and now? And we do not believe: for we are attached to material things, we live according to the flesh, and we wage war against the Spirit. But those who truly believe in Christ and have received Him into themselves through the fulfillment of His commandments say: “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Gal. 2: 20). That is why, suffering for Him for the salvation of others—as faithful imitators of Him and true fulfillers of His commandments—they said: “*When we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we comfort*” (1 Cor. 4:12). For they heard His word, which commanded: “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you*” (Matt. 5:44). Thus, through their words and deeds, Christ, who was at work within them, was revealed. But since we act contrary to all His commandments, we find ourselves filled with every kind of impurity. That is why we have become, instead of the temple of God, a house of commerce; instead of a house of prayer, a den of thieves; instead of a holy race, a sinful race; instead of the people of God, a people filled with sin; instead of the holy seed, an evil seed; instead of the sons of God, sons of lawlessness; For having abandoned the Lord’s commandments, we serve evil spirits through impure passions—and have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger.

35. That is why the great Isaiah, lamenting over us and at the same time desiring to help us in our fall, cries out, saying: “*Why do you continue to wound yourselves by committing lawlessness? Every head is sick, and every heart is in sorrow: from the feet even to the head, there is no soundness in it—neither scab, nor sore, nor a burning wound; there is no bandage to apply, nor oil, nor a dressing?*” (1:5–6). What, then,

follows from this? *“The daughter of Zion will be left like a bush in a vineyard, like a storehouse of fruit in a garden, like a city under siege”* (v. 8). Showing us this desolation of our soul, the Apostle also said: *“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God in their understanding, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done—filled with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, deceit, and greed; filled with malice, murder, strife, deceit, and malice; whisperers, slanderers, blasphemers, irritators, boastful, proud, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, unyielding: unloving, untrustworthy, unmerciful. But some, having come to know God’s righteousness—that those who practice such things deserve death—not only do them themselves but also approve of those who practice them. “For this reason God gave them over to the passions of dishonor, to defile their own bodies among themselves”* (Rom. 1:28–32, 26, 24). And what follows from this? *“The wrath of God,”* it says, *“is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”* (v. 18).

36. Signifying this desolation of the soul, the Lord said: *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Your house is left to you desolate”* (Matt. 23:37–38). Isaiah again saw how we, monks, perform our services only in a physical sense, while neglecting spiritual service to God; yet, despite this, we are puffed up. He said: *“Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of God, you people of Gomorrah. ‘What do I care for your many sacrifices?’ says the Lord. ‘I am sated with burnt offerings of rams and the fat of lambs; I have no desire for the blood of bulls and goats. Who has asked these things from your hands to be carried about in My courtyard? And even if you bring Me a seventh of the grain, it is in vain: incense is an abomination to Me; I will not endure your new moons, your Sabbaths, or your appointed feasts; my soul hates your fasts, your solemn assemblies, and your festivals; you have become a burden to Me—I will not endure your sins. When you spread out your hands to Me, I will turn My eyes away from you; even if you multiply your prayers, I will not listen to you.”* Why is that? *“For,”* He says, *“your hands are full of blood”* (Isaiah 1:10–15), since *“whoever hates his brother is a murderer”* (1 John 3:15). Therefore, any ascetic labor devoid of love is displeasing to God.

37. And God, exposing our hypocrisy from afar, says: *“These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me; in vain do they worship Me”*—and so on (Isaiah 29:13). And what our Lord said in rebuking the Pharisees is very applicable to us, the hypocrites of today, who, having been granted such grace, turn out to be even worse than they were in character. Do we not also tie up heavy and unbearable burdens and lay them on people’s shoulders, while we ourselves do not even want to touch them with a finger (Luke 11:46)? – Do we not also do all our deeds so that we may be seen by others (Matt. 6:5)? Do we not also love to take the places of honor at banquets and to sit in the front rows at assemblies? Do we not also love to be called “Teacher, Teacher” by people—and do we not even persecute to the point of death those who do not accord us such honor? Have we not also taken the key of understanding, yet instead of opening the way with it, we shut the kingdom of heaven before people—so that we ourselves do not enter and do not let others enter either? Are we not also blind leaders, who strain out a gnat but swallow a camel? Do we not also clean the outside of the cup and the plate, while inside we are full of robbery, greed, and intemperance? Do we not also tithe mint, dill, and cumin, yet neglect justice and the love of God? Are we not like whitewashed tombs, appearing righteous to people on the outside, yet inside filled with hypocrisy, lawlessness, and every kind of impurity? Do we not build the tombs of the martyrs and adorn the reliquaries of the Apostles, while in character we are like those who killed them (Matt. 23: 3–32)? Who, then, will not weep for us in this condition? Who will not pity our captivity? For because of this, we, the honorable sons of God, have been counted as earthen vessels. Because of this, our gold has grown dim, and our fine silver has changed (Lamentations 4:1–2). Because of this, we, the Nazirites of Zion, who shone brighter than snow, have become like Ethiopians—once whiter than milk, now blacker than ink. Because of this, our appearance has turned blacker than soot; our iniquity has increased beyond the iniquities of Sodom; because of this, we, the sons of the day and of light, have become sons of the night and of darkness (1 Thess. 5:5). Because of this, we, the sons of the kingdom, have become sons of Gehenna. Because of this, we, the sons of the Most High, die like men, and fall like one of the princes (Ps. 80:7). For this reason, we have been delivered into the hands of lawless enemies—that is, the evil and ferocious demons—and to the most unrighteous and deceitful ruler on earth, that is, their prince Satan, for we have sinned and committed lawlessness by transgressing the commandments of the Lord our God (Dan. 3: 29–32), having trampled underfoot the Son of God and regarded the blood of the covenant as nothing (Heb. 10: 29). But, O Lord, *“do not deliver us up to the end, for the sake of Your name; do not destroy*

Your covenant, and do not withdraw Your mercy from us” (Dan. 3: 34–35), for the sake of Your bountifulness, our Father who art in heaven, for the sake of the goodwill of Your Only-Begotten Son, and for the sake of the mercy of Your Holy Spirit. “Do not remember our former iniquities; may Your bounties, O Lord, quickly come upon us, for we have become very poor. Help us, O God, our Savior, for the glory of Your name; O Lord, deliver us and cleanse us of our sins for the sake of Your name” (Ps. 78: 8:9), remembering our origin, which Your Only-Begotten Son, out of love for mankind, took from us and now holds for us in heaven, giving us a firm hope of salvation, lest we become worse through despair. Help us and deliver us, for the sake of His precious blood, which He shed for the life of the world; for the sake of His holy Apostles and martyrs, who shed their blood for His name; and for the sake of the holy Prophets, Fathers, and Patriarchs, who strove to please Your holy name. Do not despise our prayers, O Lord, and do not forsake us in the end. For we do not trust in our own righteousness, but in Your mercy, by which You provide for our people. We pray to You and ask for Your grace, that the sacrament prepared for us by Your Only-Begotten Son for our salvation may not be a cause of condemnation for us; do not cast us away from Your presence. Do not despise our unworthiness, but have mercy on us according to Your great mercy; and by the abundance of Your bounties, cleanse us of our iniquities, so that, having approached the face of Your glory without condemnation, we may be made worthy of the protection of Your Only-Begotten Son, and not be found to be deceitful and unrepentant slaves to our sins. O Almighty Lord, hear our prayer, for we know no other God but You; we call upon Your name. You are the One who works all things in all, and from You we seek all help. Look down from heaven, O God, and behold us from the dwelling place of Your holy glory. “Where is Your zeal and Your strength? Where is the abundance of Your mercy and Your kindness, since You have been patient with us? For You are our Father, since Abraham did not beget us, nor did Israel give birth to us; but You, O Lord, are our Father; save us, for from the beginning Your holy name has been upon us”—and Your Only-Begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit. “Why have You led us astray, O Lord, from Your way, and hardened our hearts so that we do not fear You?” Bring back Your servants, O Lord, for the sake of Your holy Church and for the sake of all Your saints from of old; “that we may at least inherit Your holy mountains: our enemies have trampled Your sanctuary. We were as in the beginning, when You did not rule over us, nor was Your name called upon us” (Isaiah 63:15–19).

38. *“If the heavens were to be opened, the mountains would tremble before You and melt away, as wax melts before the fire; the fire would consume Your enemies, and Your name would be feared by those who oppose You. When You perform Your glorious deeds, the mountains will tremble before You. From of old we have not heard, nor have our eyes seen a God, except You, and Your works, which You will do for those who wait for Your mercy. For mercy is reserved for those who do what is right, and Your ways will be remembered: You were angry, and we have sinned.”—It would be better to say: we have sinned, and You were angry. “For this reason we have gone astray, and we have all become like the unclean, like a city of the unclean; all our righteousness is like this: and we have fallen away like leaves because of our iniquities; so the wind carries us away, and there is no one to call upon Your name or to remember to hold You back; for You have turned Your face away from us and delivered us up because of our iniquities. And now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the work of Your hands, all of us. Do not be too angry with us, and do not remember our iniquities in the time of judgment; but look upon us now, for we are all Your people. The city of Your sanctuary lies desolate; Zion is like a wilderness; Jerusalem has become a curse. Our holy house, and the glory which our fathers blessed, has been consumed by fire, and all our glory has fallen together. And You, O Lord, have endured all these things; You have remained silent and have humbled us greatly” (Isaiah 64:1–12).*

39. This happened to Your ancient people as a foreshadowing, but now it has truly been fulfilled in us. *“We have become a byword to our neighbors,” the demons, “a mockery and a scorn to those around us” (Ps. 78:4).* But look down from heaven and see, and save us for the sake of Your holy name. Grant us to discern the schemes of our enemies and deliver us from their wiles. Do not withhold Your help from us, for we are not sufficient in ourselves to defeat those who attack us; but You are mighty to save us from all our enemies. Save us, O Lord, from all the afflictions of this world, through Your goodness, so that, having crossed the sea of life with a clear conscience, we may appear pure and blameless before Your awesome throne and be made worthy of eternal life.

40. After hearing all this and being overcome with deep contrition, the brother said to the elder with tears in his eyes: *“As far as I can see, my father, there is no hope of salvation for me. ‘For my iniquities have overtaken my head’ (Ps. 37: 5). Tell me, I beg you, what should I do?”* The elder replied: *“It is impossible for*

people to save themselves; but with God all things are possible, as the Lord Himself said (Matt. 19: 26), and so *'let us present ourselves before Him in confession... let us worship and bow down before Him, and weep before the Lord who made us: for He is our God'* (Ps. 94: 2:6), for we hear His word spoken through the Prophet Isaiah: *"When you return, you will be saved"* (Isa. 30: 15). And again: *"Can the hand of the Lord not save? Or has He made His ear too heavy to hear? But your sins have come between you and God; because of your sins, He has turned His face away from you, so that He may not have mercy"* (Isa. 59: 1–2). Why does He say: *"Wash yourselves; be clean; remove the wickedness from your souls before My eyes; cease from your wickedness; learn to do good; seek justice; defend the oppressed; judge for the fatherless; plead the cause of the widow; then come, and let us reason together,"* says the Lord. *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool. "And if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these words"* (Isa. 1: 16 – 20); He also speaks through Joel: *"Return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love"* (Joel 2: 12–13). And to Ezekiel He commanded, *"Say: 'Son of man, speak to the house of Israel, saying: "Our transgressions and our iniquities are upon us, and we are consumed by them; how then can we live?" Say to them: 'As I live,' declares the Lord God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that the wicked turn from his ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why should you die, O house of Israel?'"* (Ezek. 33:10–11). The Third Book of Kings, showing the abundance of God's goodness, says this: When Ahab—who was in the vineyard of Naboth, which he had taken as an inheritance after Jezebel had Naboth killed—heard the words of Elijah, who said: *"Thus says the Lord: Because you have killed and taken possession—in the very place where the dogs licked up his blood, there the dogs will lick up your blood as well... And Jezebel's dogs will devour her in the outskirts of Jezreel."* When Ahab heard these words, he hid himself from the Lord's presence; he went about weeping, tore his clothes, and girded himself with a sackcloth, and fasted, and *"was clothed in sackcloth"* day and night. *"And the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, 'Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Therefore, I will not bring the evil upon him during his lifetime'"* (1 Kings 21:19, 23, 27, 29). And the prophet David says: *"I acknowledged my iniquity and did not conceal my sin. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my heart. Therefore, every godly person will pray to You in times of need"* (Ps. 31: 5, 6). In the Gospel, the Lord says: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt. 4: 17). And when Peter asked Him, *"How many times, if my brother sins against me, shall I forgive him—up to seven times?"* Being by nature good and inexpressibly merciful, He answered him: *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven"* (Matt. 18:21–22). What can compare to such mercy? To what shall we liken such love for humanity?

41. Having thus come to know the fear of God, as well as His goodness and love for humanity, from both the Old and New Testaments, let us turn to Him with all our hearts. Why should we perish, brothers? Let us cleanse our sinful hands, reform our double-minded hearts, grieve, be contrite, and weep over our sins. Let us cease from our evil deeds; let us trust in the Lord's mercy, fear His judgments, and resolve to keep His commandments. Let us love one another with all our hearts; let us say, *"You are our brothers"*—and may the name of the Lord be glorified even by those who hate and revile us. Let us forgive one another when we are tempted by one another, for we are all fought against by our common enemy. Let us resist our evil thoughts, calling God to fight alongside us, and thereby drive out from within ourselves the evil and unclean spirits. Let us subdue the flesh to the spirit, mortifying it and bringing it into subjection through all manner of afflictions. Let us purify ourselves from every defilement of the flesh and the spirit. Let us encourage one another in love and good deeds. Let us not envy others, nor become angry with those who envy us. Let us show mutual compassion and heal one another with humility. Let us not condemn or mock one another, for we are members of one another. Let us cast aside apathy and carelessness, and let us courageously strive against the evil spirits. We have Jesus Christ the Righteous One as our Advocate before the Father; and He is the atonement for our sins: let us therefore pray to Him with a pure heart, with all our soul, and He will forgive our sins. *"For the Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth"* (Ps. 144: 18). Why does it say: *"Offer to the Lord a sacrifice of praise, and pay your vows to the Most High; call upon Me in the day of your distress, and you will be delivered, and you will glorify Me"* (Ps. 49: 14:15). And what does Isaiah say again? *"Loose every yoke of injustice, tear up the deeds of oppression, set the oppressed free, and tear up every unjust decree. Break your bread for the hungry, and bring the poor and homeless into your house; if you see a naked person, do not turn*

away, and do not despise your own kin. Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will surround you.” And what comes next?—“Then you will call, and God will answer you; while you are still speaking, He will say, ‘Here I am.’ Then your light will shine in the darkness, and your darkness will be as the noonday; and your God will be with you always, and you will be satisfied as your soul desires” (Isaiah 58:6–10). Do you see that when we break every bond of injustice and set our hearts on doing good to our neighbor with all our soul, then we will be clothed in the light of knowledge, freed from the passions of wickedness, filled with every virtue, illuminated by the light of God’s glory, and delivered from all ignorance; —and as we pray to Christ, we will be heard, and we will always have God with us and be filled with divine desires.

42. Let us love one another, and we will be loved by God. Let us be patient with one another, and He will be patient with our sins. Let us not repay evil with evil, and He will not repay us according to our sins. We will find the remission of our sins in forgiving our brothers; for God’s mercy toward us is hidden in our mercy toward our neighbors. That is why the Lord said: “*Forgive, and you will be forgiven*” (Luke 6:37). And: “*For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you*” (Matthew 6:14). And again: “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matthew 5:7). And: “*With the measure you use, it will be measured to you*” (Matthew 7:2). Thus the Lord has prepared for us the way of salvation, “and granted us the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). After this, our salvation is already in our hands.

43. Let us therefore surrender ourselves entirely to the Lord, that we may receive Him entirely, and through Him become gods. For this is why He became man, being by nature God and Lord. Let us submit to Him wholeheartedly, and He will tirelessly repel our enemies. “*If only my people would listen to Me,*” He says, “*Israel, if only they would walk in My ways, I would subdue their enemies for them; and I would lay My hand upon those who oppress them*” (Ps. 80: 14–15). Let us place all our hope in Him alone; let us cast all our sorrow upon Him—and He will deliver us from every affliction and sustain us throughout our lives. Let us love every person with all our heart; but let us not place our hope in any person. Only to the extent that the Lord protects us do our friends help us and our enemies grow weak before us. But when the Lord forsakes us, then our friends also forsake us (leaving us helpless), and our enemies overcome us. But even those who trust in themselves will fall a terrible fall, while those who fear the Lord will be exalted. That is why David said: “*I do not trust in my bow, nor will my sword save me; for You have saved us from those who hate us, and You have put to shame those who hate us*” (Ps. 43:7–8).

44. Let us not entertain thoughts that downplay our sins and deceptively assure us that they have already been forgiven. It was to warn us against such thoughts that the Lord said: “*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves*” (Matt. 7:15). As long as our minds are still troubled by sin, know that we have not yet attained its forgiveness; for we have certainly not yet produced fruits worthy of repentance. The fruit of repentance is the dispassion of the soul; and dispassion is the eradication of sin. We do not yet possess perfect dispassion if at times we are troubled by passions and at other times we are not. We have not, therefore, attained perfect forgiveness of sins. We were freed from original sin through holy baptism; from those sins which we dared to commit after baptism, we are freed only through repentance.

45. Let us therefore repent sincerely, so that, having been freed from passions, we may attain the remission of sins. Let us despise temporal goods, lest, by quarreling with others over them, we violate the commandment of love and fall away from the love of God. Let us walk by the Spirit and not fulfill the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Let us be vigilant and sober, and shake off the slumber of carelessness; let us emulate the holy ascetics of Christ and imitate their deeds, forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what lies ahead. Let us imitate their tireless zeal, their fervent dedication, their steadfastness in self-control, the holiness of chastity, the steadfastness of patience, the unshakable serenity, the sincerity of compassion, the imperturbable meekness, the warmth of zeal, the genuine love, the lofty humility, the perfect detachment from worldly goods, the courage, the benevolence, and the quiet demeanor. Let us not indulge in the pursuit of pleasure; let us not allow our thoughts to grow lax; let us not defile our conscience. Let us live in peace with all and in holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Above all, brothers, let us flee from the world and from the ruler of this world. Let us renounce the flesh and its desires. Let us ascend to heaven and there establish our dwelling place, imitating the divine Apostle, so that we may reach the Prince of Life and partake of the fountain of life. Let us form a choir with the Angels and Archangels, and let us sing the

praises of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and power with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

2. Four Hundred Chapters on Love

Preface to Elpidios

I am sending you, Father Elpidios, a treatise on the ascetic life, as well as a treatise on love comprising four hundred chapters—equal in number to the four Gospels—which may not entirely meet your expectations, but is the best we can offer. Nevertheless, let your holiness know that this, too, is not the fruit of my own mind. But having read the writings of the Holy Fathers and gathered from them what draws the mind's attention to my subject—and having condensed much into a little in the form of sayings or chapters for the sake of easier memorization and mental review— I am sending this to Your Reverence, asking that you read it with a good intention, seeking only benefit, and paying no attention to the lack of eloquence, and that you pray for my unworthiness, which is devoid of any spiritual fruit. I also ask that you not regard what is written as a burden (as if I were placing heavy burdens on your conscience); for I am fulfilling the commandment of obedience. I say this because there are many of us today who weigh down consciences with instructive words, but very few who teach by example or learn from example. Take the trouble to delve more carefully into each chapter. For not everything, I think, is easily understood by everyone; but much of it will require much study on the part of many, even though, on the surface, it is expressed very simply. It may be that what is revealed in them in this way will also prove beneficial to the soul. But this will certainly be the case, by God's grace, if one reads not with a skeptical spirit, but with the fear of God and love. Whoever reads this or any other book not for spiritual benefit, but to find statements with which to reproach the author, in order to vainly show himself to be more knowledgeable than the author, will find nothing useful revealed to him anywhere, ever, or in any way.

The First Hundred on Love

1. Love is a benevolent disposition of the soul, by which it prefers nothing in existence to the knowledge of God. But it is impossible for anyone who is attached to anything earthly to attain such a loving disposition.

2. Love is born of dispassion; dispassion, of hope in God; hope, of patience and magnanimity; these last two, of self-restraint in all things; self-restraint, of the fear of God; and the fear of God, of faith in the Lord.

3. One who believes in the Lord fears the torments of hell. One who fears these torments refrains from passions. One who refrains from passions patiently endures sorrows. One who endures sorrows will place hope in God. Hope in God detaches the mind from every earthly attachment. A mind detached from this will come to love God.

4. One who loves God prefers the knowledge of God to all that He has created, and constantly strives for it with eagerness.

5. If all that exists comes into being through God and for God, and God is best known through that which has come into being through Him, then one who turns away from God and occupies himself with lower things thereby shows that he prefers to God that which has come into being through Him.

6. Whose mind is attached to God by love regards all visible things as nothing, even his own body as if it were foreign.

7. If the soul is better than the body, and God, who created it, is incomparably better than the world, then one who prefers the body to the soul, and the world created by God to God Himself, is no different from an idolater.

8. Whoever turns his mind away from love for God and from abiding in His presence, and instead attaches it to anything sensual, prefers the body to the soul, and what came into being through Him to God the Creator.

9. If the life of the mind is the enlightenment of knowledge, and this light is born of love for God, then it is rightly said that there is nothing higher than divine love.

10. When, drawn by love, the mind ascends to God, it perceives neither itself nor anything else that exists at all. Illuminated by the boundless divine light, it becomes insensitive to all creation, just as the physical eye is to the stars when the sun shines.

11. All virtues assist the mind in loving God, but above all, pure prayer. Lifted up to God by it, the mind is beyond all that exists.

12. When, through love, the mind is enraptured by divine knowledge and, having transcended all that exists, perceives divine boundlessness—then, following the example of the divine Isaiah, having come to realize his own insignificance out of amazement, he sincerely proclaims the words of this prophet: *“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; yet with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts”* (Isa. 6:5).

13. One who loves God cannot help but love every person as oneself, even though one does not approve of the passions of those who have not yet been purified. Therefore, when one sees their conversion and reform, one rejoices with immeasurable and inexpressible joy.

14. An impure, passionate soul is filled with lustful and hateful thoughts.

15. Anyone who sees in his heart a trace of hatred toward any person, for any transgression, is completely alien to the love of God. For love of God in no way tolerates hatred of a person.

16. “Whoever loves Me,” says the Lord, “will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). “And this is My commandment: that you love one another” (John 15:12). Therefore, whoever does not love his neighbor does not keep the commandments; and whoever does not keep the commandments cannot love the Lord either.

17. Blessed is the person who can love everyone equally.

18. Blessed is the person who is not attached to any mortal or temporary thing.

19. Blessed is the mind that, transcending all creation, delights unceasingly in divine beauty.

20. Whoever, in caring for the flesh to the point of lust, bears a grudge against a neighbor over something temporary, serves the creature more than the Creator.

21. Whoever guards his body against indulgences and illnesses has in it a partner in the service of what is best.

22. He who flees all worldly desires places himself above all worldly sorrows.

23. He who loves God inevitably loves his neighbor as well. And such a person cannot hoard his possessions, but manages them in a godly manner, giving to everyone who asks.

24. One who practices charity, imitating God, makes no distinction between the wicked and the good, between the righteous and the unrighteous, in matters of bodily needs. But he distributes equally to all, in proportion to their need; though he prefers the virtuous to the wicked because of the good disposition of their will.

25. Just as God, who is by nature good and dispassionate, loves everyone equally as His creatures, yet glorifies the virtuous as kindred to Him in character, and shows mercy to the wicked out of His goodness, and, while punishing them in this age, brings them to repentance: so too does a man of sound mind and free from passion love all people equally—the virtuous by nature and because of the goodness of their will, and the wicked, both by nature and out of compassion, showing them mercy as those who are foolish and walking in darkness.

26. The disposition of love is shown not only by the distribution of one’s possessions, but even more so by the teaching of God’s Word and by physical service.

27. One who has sincerely renounced worldly things and serves his neighbor out of love without hypocrisy is more quickly freed from every passion and becomes a partaker of divine love and divine knowledge.

28. One who has acquired divine love within himself, like the divine Jeremiah, *“is not weary of following the Lord his God”* (Jer. 17:16); but he courageously endures every hardship, insult, and reproach, harboring no ill will whatsoever toward anyone.

29. When you are insulted by someone or humiliated in any way, guard against thoughts of anger, lest they—by severing you from love because of this insult—lead you into the realm of hatred.

30. When you suffer from reproach or dishonor, know that you have received great benefit from it, for through this humiliation, pride has been providentially driven out of you.

31. Just as the memory of fire does not warm the body, so faith without love does not produce the light of knowledge in the soul.

32. Just as the light of the sun draws a healthy eye toward itself, so the knowledge of God naturally draws a pure mind toward itself through love.
33. A pure mind is one that has emerged from ignorance and is enlightened by the Divine light.
34. A pure soul is one that has been freed from passions and is constantly rejoiced by divine love.
35. Passion is worthy of censure, as it is an unnatural movement of the soul.
36. Impassivity is a peaceful state of the soul in which it is not easily moved toward evil.
37. Whoever has, through his own diligence, attained the fruits of love will not turn away from it, even if he were to endure a thousand evils. Let Stephen, a disciple of Christ, and those like him, and Christ Himself—who prayed to the Father for His murderers and asked Him to forgive them, since they were acting in ignorance (Luke 23:34)—bear witness to this.
38. If the nature of love is to be patient and kind (1 Cor. 13:4), then it is evident that one who is angry and malicious is alien to love. But one who is alien to love is alien to God, for *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8).
39. “Do not say, ‘We are the temple of God,’” says the divine Jeremiah (7:4). Do not say, “Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ alone can save me.” For this is impossible unless you also acquire love for Him, demonstrated by your deeds. As for faith alone: *“Even the demons believe—and tremble”* (James 2:19).
40. The works of love consist of: zealous kindness toward one’s neighbor, generosity, patience, and the prudent use of material goods.
41. One who loves God grieves no one, nor is he grieved by anyone over temporary matters; rather, he grieves and is grieved by a single saving sorrow, the kind with which the blessed Paul himself was grieved and with which he grieved the Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:4).
42. One who loves God lives an angelic life on earth, fasting and keeping vigil, singing and praying, and always thinking well of every person.
43. If everyone strives to attain whatever they desire, yet God is incomparably better and more desirable than all goods and desired things—what zeal, then, must we show to attain Him, who is by nature good and desirable?
44. Do not corrupt your flesh with shameful deeds; do not defile your soul with evil thoughts; and the peace of God will descend upon you, bringing love with it.
45. Exhaust your flesh through fasting and vigil; and do not be lazy in your practice of psalm-singing and prayer; and the sanctification of chastity will descend upon you, bringing love with it.
46. He who has been deemed worthy of divine knowledge and has attained its enlightenment through love never becomes puffed up with a spirit of vanity; but he who has not been deemed worthy of it is very easily led astray by it. However, if such a person, in everything he does, keeps his eyes fixed on God, doing all things for His sake, then with God’s help he will easily avoid this affliction.
47. One who has not yet attained divine knowledge, inspired by love, often thinks that what he does is according to God; but one who has been deemed worthy to receive such knowledge from the heart repeats the words of Patriarch Abraham, which he spoke when he was honored by God’s appearance: *“I am but dust and ashes”* (Gen. 18: 27).
48. He who fears the Lord has humility as his constant companion, and through its reminders he returns to love and gratitude toward God. Recalling his former life according to the spirit of the world, his various transgressions, the temptations he faced from his youth, and how the Lord delivered him from all of them and led him from a life of passion to a life according to God, he receives both fear and love; and ceaselessly, with deep humility, gives thanks to God, the benefactor and ruler of our lives.
49. Do not defile your mind by harboring thoughts of lust and anger, lest, having fallen away from pure prayer, you fall into a spirit of despondency.
50. The mind loses its boldness before God when it converses with evil and impure thoughts.
51. The foolish person, driven by passions, when stirred up by anger, becomes agitated and hastens without reason to flee from his brothers; but when inflamed by lust, he then, repenting, returns and engages in conversation with them. The prudent person, however, acts differently in both cases. When angered, he cuts off the causes of his agitation and frees himself from resentment toward his brothers; when overcome by lust, he refrains from unspoken urges and idle conversation.
52. During times of temptation, do not leave your monastery; but courageously endure the turmoil of thoughts, especially those that bring sorrow and despondency: for in this way, having been wisely tested by

afflictions, you will gain firm hope in God. But if you leave it, you will prove yourself to be neither skilled, nor courageous, nor steadfast.

53. If you wish not to fall away from divine love, then do not let your brother go to sleep while he is angry with you, nor go to sleep yourself while you are angry with him: *“but go and be reconciled to your brother, and when you return”* (Matt. 5:24) with a clear conscience, offer Christ the gift of love in earnest prayer.

54. If, according to the words of the Divine Apostle, one who possesses all the gifts of the Spirit but has no love gains nothing, then what diligence must we exercise to acquire it (1 Cor. 13:3)?

55. If love *“does no harm to a sincere person”* (Rom. 13:10), then does not the one who envies his brother, who is grieved by his brother’s good reputation, who tarnishes his name with slander, or who maliciously accuses him out of ill will, make himself an enemy of love and subject himself to eternal condemnation?

56. If love is *“the fulfillment of the law”* (Rom. 13:10), then is not the one who bears a grudge against a brother, plots against him, curses him, and rejoices in his downfall a transgressor of the law, and is he not worthy of eternal torment?

57. If *“whoever slanders a brother or condemns a brother slanders the law and condemns the law”* (James 4:11), and since the law of Christ is love (John 13:34), does the slanderer not fall away from the love of Christ and make himself guilty of eternal torment?

58. Do not lend your ear to the tongue of the slanderer, nor your tongue to the ear of one who delights in evil speech, whether speaking or listening to words against a neighbor: lest you fall away from divine love and find yourself alienated from eternal life.

59. Do not accept reproach against your father, nor encourage anyone who dishonors him; lest the Lord be angered by your deeds and cut you off from the land of the living.

60. Shut out the slanderer’s words—let them not enter your ears—lest you sin with him a double sin: by becoming accustomed to this destructive passion yourself, and by failing to prevent him from slandering your neighbor.

61. *“But I say to you,”* says the Lord, *“love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you”* (Matt. 5:44). Why did He command this?—To free you from hatred, grief, anger, and resentment, and to enable you to attain the greatest treasure of perfect love; which cannot be possessed by anyone who does not love all people equally, following the example of God, who loves all people equally, *“who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4).

62. *“But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer; but if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two”* (Matt. 5, 39–41). Why? So that you may remain free from anger, anxiety, and sorrow—and so that your lack of malice may teach him, and both of you may be brought under the yoke of love, for the Lord is good.

63. We harbor passionate imaginings about the very things to which we were once attached. That is why the one who overcomes passionate imaginings naturally despises the imagined things as well. For the struggle against memories of things is just as much more difficult as the struggle against the things themselves, just as it is easier to sin in thought than in deed.

64. Some passions are bodily, and others are of the soul. Bodily passions are prompted by the body, while those of the soul are prompted by external objects. But both are cut off by love and self-restraint: the former by love, and the latter by self-restraint.

65. Some passions belong to the soul’s irritable faculty, and others to its desiring faculty. Both are aroused by the senses; they are aroused when the soul is devoid of love and self-restraint.

66. It is more difficult to overcome the passions of the soul’s irritable faculty than those of the desiring faculty; that is why the Lord has provided the most powerful remedy against them—the commandment of love.

67. All other passions concern only either the irritable part of the soul, or the desiring part, or the thinking part, such as forgetfulness and ignorance; but despondency, encompassing all the powers of the soul, suddenly, in a single breath, sets almost all the passions in motion, which is why it is more grievous than all other passions. The Lord, in His goodness, having provided a remedy against it, says: *“By your endurance you will save your souls”* (Luke 21:19).

68. Never strike any of the brothers, especially without cause, lest he, unable to bear the sorrow, depart; and then you will never escape the reproach of your conscience, which will always cause you sorrow during prayer and drive your mind away from boldness before God.

69. Do not tolerate those who bring you the temptations of suspicion regarding any person whatsoever, for those who in any way allow themselves to be tempted by events—whether they occur intentionally or unintentionally—do not know *“the way of peace”* (Rom. 3: 17), which, through love, leads those who love Him to the knowledge of God.

70. One who treats people differently according to their dispositions—loving one and hating another for this or that reason, or sometimes loving and sometimes hating the same person for the same reasons—does not yet possess perfect love.

71. Perfect love does not divide the single nature of human beings according to their different dispositions; but, always regarding that nature, loves all people equally: loving the good as friends and the wicked as enemies, doing them good, being long-suffering, enduring what they inflict, by no means repaying them with evil, but even suffering for them when circumstances require it, so that, if possible, they too may become friends; but even if this is impossible, He does not withdraw His favor from them, always showing the fruits of love equally to all people. So too our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, in showing His love for us, suffered for all humanity and granted to all equally the hope of the resurrection, although, of course, each person makes himself worthy of either glory or the torments of hell.

72. Whoever does not regard glory and disgrace, wealth and poverty, joys and sorrows as nothing has not yet attained perfect love. Perfect love not only regards all these things as nothing, but also temporal life and death themselves.

73. Listen to what those who have attained perfect love say: *“Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I know 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 8:35–39).

74. Listen again to what they say about love for one’s neighbor: *“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, as my conscience testifies to me through the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart; for I could wish that I myself were cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites,”* and so on. (Rom. 9:1–4). Moses and other saints spoke in the same way.

75. Whoever does not regard ambition and sensuality—and the greed that results from them and is born of them—as anything at all cannot cut off the causes of angry irritation; and whoever does not cut them off cannot attain perfect love.

76. Humility and self-mortification (physical privations) free a person from all sin; for the former cuts off the passions of the soul, and the latter those of the body. This is what the blessed David did, as is evident from his following prayer to God: *“Behold my humility and my toil, and forgive all my sins”* (Ps. 24:18).

77. Through the commandments, the Lord makes those who keep them dispassionate; and through the divine dogmas, He grants them the light of knowledge.

78. All dogmas speak either of God, or of visible and invisible creations, or of the providence and judgment revealed in them.

79. Almsgiving heals the irritable part of the soul; fasting dries up lust; prayer purifies the mind and prepares it for the contemplation of reality. For the Lord has given us commandments according to the capacities of our souls.

80. *“Learn from Me,”* says the Lord, *“for I am gentle and humble in heart”* (Matt. 11:29). Gentleness protects the irritable mind from agitation, and humility frees the mind from pride and vanity.

81. The fear of God is twofold. One arises from the threat of punishment, which in turn gives rise within us, in due course, to self-restraint, patience, hope in God, and dispassion, from which love springs. The other is connected with love itself, producing reverence in the soul so that, out of the boldness of love, it does not fall into contempt for God.

82. The first kind of fear is “driven out” by perfect love (1 John 4:18), which has dispelled it from the soul, leaving it no longer afraid of torment; but the second kind, as has been said, is always accompanied by love. The following words of Scripture apply to the first: “*The fear of the Lord turns a person away from evil*” (Prov. 15:27); “*and: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Prov. 1:7); and to the second: “*The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever and ever*” (Ps. 18: 10); “*and: there is no want for those who fear Him*” (Ps. 33: 10).

83. “*Put to death, therefore, your earthly members: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, and so on*” (Col. 3: 5). Here the Apostle calls carnal reasoning “the earth”; fornication, the sin committed in deed; impurity, consent to it; passion, a passionate thought; evil desire, the mere acceptance of a lustful thought; and greed, the substance that gives rise to and sustains passion. The Divine Apostle commanded that all these, as elements of carnal reasoning, be put to death.

84. First, memory brings a simple thought into the mind; and if it lingers there, this sets passion in motion; if you do not eradicate passion, it inclines the mind toward consent; and when this happens, then one has already reached the point of sin in deed. That is why the most wise Apostle, writing to Christians who had converted from paganism, first commands them to cease committing sin in deed, and then, moving backward to the previous order, to reach the very cause of it. The cause that gives rise to and rekindles passions, as stated above, is greed, which, in my opinion, here signifies gluttony, as the mother and nurturer of fornication. For gluttony—not only with regard to possessions but also with regard to food—is evil; just as self-restraint—not only with regard to food but also with regard to possessions—is good.

85. Just as a bird tied by the leg, having begun to rise upward, is pulled back down to the ground by the rope: so the mind, not yet having attained dispassion, though it soars toward the knowledge of heavenly things, is pulled back down to the ground by its passions.

86. When the mind is completely freed from passions, it then proceeds unhindered toward the contemplation of being, directing its path toward the knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

87. When the mind is pure, upon receiving concepts of things, it is stirred to spiritual contemplation of them; but when it becomes impure through sloth, it simply imagines thoughts of other things, and when it perceives anything human, it transforms it into shameful and evil thoughts.

88. If no worldly thought ever assails your mind during prayer, know that you are not outside the realm of dispassion.

89. When the soul begins to feel healthy, it will also begin to have pure and serene dreams.

90. Just as the physical eye is drawn to the beauty of visible things, so is the pure mind drawn to the knowledge of the invisible. By “invisible,” I mean the incorporeal.

91. It is a great feat not to be attached to things, but it is far greater to be dispassionate toward their images; for through our thoughts, evil spirits wage war against us—a war more fierce than the one waged through the things themselves.

92. One who has excelled in virtue and been enriched with knowledge—seeing things as they truly are by nature—always acts and speaks according to sound reason, never deviating from it. For it is by this standard that we judge whether we use things wisely or unwise, and whether we are virtuous or vicious.

93. The sign of perfect dispassion is when, both while awake and asleep, images of things always arise in the heart in their simplest form.

94. By fulfilling the commandments, the mind is freed from the passions; through spiritual contemplation of the visible, it is freed from passionate thoughts about things; through knowledge of the invisible, it is freed from the contemplation of visible things; and finally, through knowledge of the Holy Trinity, it is freed even from the very knowledge of invisible things.

95. Just as the sun, rising and illuminating the world, reveals both itself and the objects it illuminates, so the Sun of Righteousness, shining in a pure mind, reveals both Himself and the understanding of all that has come into being from Him and all that is to come into being.

96. We know God not by His essence, but by the splendor of His creations and His providence over them. In them, as in a mirror, we see His boundless goodness, wisdom, and power.

97. A pure mind dwells either in simple thoughts about human affairs, or in the natural contemplation of the visible, or in the contemplation of the invisible, or in the light of the Holy Trinity.

98. When engaged in the contemplation of visible things, the mind either examines their natural properties, or what they signify, or seeks their very cause.

99. When engaged in the contemplation of invisible things, it seeks to understand their natural properties, the cause of their existence, what follows from this, and what God's providence and judgment are regarding them.

100. When, however, it is in God, it first seeks, out of ardent love, to comprehend His nature; yet it finds consolation in this not from the knowledge of what is within Him—for this is impossible and beyond the capacity of any created nature—but is consoled by the knowledge of what surrounds Him, such as: eternity, boundlessness, indescribability, goodness, wisdom, and all-pervading power— —all-provident and all-judging. And it is only in Him that it is comprehensible to anyone that He is boundless; and the very knowledge of His incomprehensibility is a knowledge that transcends the mind, as the great theologians—Gregory and Dionysius—have said.

The Second Hundred on Love

1. One who sincerely loves God prays without any distraction, just as one who prays without any distraction sincerely loves God. But one whose mind is fixated on anything earthly cannot pray without distraction. And so, one whose mind is attached to anything earthly does not love God.

2. A mind that dwells for a long time on thoughts of anything sensual inevitably develops a passion for it—whether it be desire, lamentation, anger, or resentment—and, unless it attaches no importance to that thing, it cannot free itself from that passion.

3. Passions, taking possession of the mind, bind it to material objects; and, separating it from God, compel it to concern itself with them. On the contrary, the love of God, prevailing over the mind, loosens its bonds, persuading it not to value not only sensory objects but even temporal life itself.

4. The purpose of the commandments is to make one's thoughts about things simple, while reading and contemplation serve to make the mind immaterial and formless. The result of this is prayer without distraction.

5. For the mind to be completely freed from passions so that it may pray without distraction, the active method alone is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by various spiritual contemplations. The active method frees the mind from intemperance and hatred; the contemplative method, on the other hand, delivers it from forgetfulness and ignorance, and in this way the mind gains the ability to pray as it ought.

6. There are two highest states of pure prayer. One occurs among those who lead an active life, the other among those who lead a contemplative life. One arises in the soul from the fear of God and good hope; the other from divine love and utmost purity. The sign of the first state is when one gathers the mind away from all worldly thoughts, offering prayers without distraction or confusion, as if God Himself were standing before him, just as He truly does. The sign of the second is when, in the very act of prayer, the mind is enraptured by the divine and boundless light, and feels neither itself nor anything else that exists, except for the One who, through love, brings about such illumination within it. In this state, as he strives to comprehend the words about God, he receives pure and luminous knowledge of Him.

7. Whoever loves something desires to embrace it in every way; and he removes everything that hinders him in this, so as not to be deprived of it. So too, the one who loves God cares for pure prayer and casts out from himself every passion that stands as an obstacle to it.

8. Whoever rejects self-love, the mother of all passions, will, with God's help, easily cast aside all other passions as well, such as anger, sorrow, resentment, and the like. But whoever is possessed by the first will, even if unwillingly, be afflicted by the latter as well. Self-love, however, is a passionate love for the body.

9. People love one another in a praiseworthy or reprehensible way for the following five reasons: either for God's sake—as the virtuous person loves everyone, and even the unvirtuous person loves the virtuous; or by nature—as parents love their children, and vice versa; or out of vanity—as the one praised loves the one who praises him; or out of self-interest—as the rich man is loved for his wealth; or out of sensual pleasure—as the one who works for his belly, and the one who prepares feasts for what lies beneath the belly. The first of these is praiseworthy, the second is mutual, and the rest are driven by passion.

10. If you hate some, while others you neither love nor hate; if you love some only moderately, while others you love very strongly; then from this inequality, recognize that you are still far from perfect love, which inspires one to love every person equally.

11. *“Turn away from evil and do good”* (Ps. 36: 27)—that is, fight against your enemies to subdue your passions, and then be vigilant so that they do not multiply; and fight again to acquire virtues, and afterward be vigilant to preserve them. And this, indeed, would be *“to work and to keep”* (Gen. 2:15).

12. By God’s permission, those who tempt us either inflame the soul’s desiring faculty, or agitate its irritable faculty, or cloud its thinking faculty, or afflict the body with sufferings, or deprive it of bodily needs.

13. Demons either tempt us themselves or incite people who do not fear the Lord against us: they tempt us themselves when we withdraw from people, just as the Lord was tempted in the wilderness; they tempt us through people when we interact with them, just as the Lord was tempted through the Pharisees. But by looking to our example—that is, the Lord—we will repel them in both cases.

14. When the mind begins to make progress in the love of God, then the spirit of blasphemy begins to tempt it, instilling in it such thoughts that no human being could conceive, but only the devil, their father. And he does this out of envy toward the lover of God, so that, having conceived such thoughts and fallen into despair, he may no longer dare to soar toward God through his usual prayer. But the deceiver gains nothing from this that serves his purpose; rather, it makes us more steadfast. For as we are tested and struggle against him, we become more experienced and sincere in our love for God. *“Let their sword enter their own hearts, and let their bows be broken”* (Ps. 36: 15).

15. The mind, turning to the visible, naturally comprehends things through the senses. Neither the mind, nor the natural understanding of things, nor things themselves, nor the senses are evil; for these are all God’s creations. What, then, is evil here? Evidently, it is the passion that clings to the natural understanding of things. And this passion has no place in the use of natural concepts about things, provided the mind remains vigilant.

16. Passion is an unnatural movement of the soul, either out of senseless love or out of reckless hatred toward something sensual, or for the sake of something sensual: out of senseless love, whether for food, or for women, or for wealth, or for fleeting glory, or for any other sensual thing, or for the sake of it; – out of senseless hatred, when, as stated above, one hates any of the aforementioned things without reason, or hates someone because of them.

17. Or again—evil is an erroneous judgment about known things accompanied by their improper use. Thus, with regard to things, a correct judgment regarding sexual intercourse sets procreation as its goal. But whoever has in mind only the pleasure of lust errs in judgment, regarding what is evil as good. And such a person, when having sexual relations with his wife, abuses this. In a similar way, one should reason about the understanding and use of other things.

18. When demons, having turned your mind away from chastity, surround it with lustful thoughts, then cry out to the Lord with tears: *“Those who persecute me have now overtaken me; my joy, deliver me from those who have overtaken me”* (Ps. 16:11; 31:7). And you will be delivered.

19. The demon of lust is heavy and presses hard upon those who struggle against this passion, especially when they neglect moderation in food and when they meet and converse with women. At first, it imperceptibly captures the mind with a craving for sensual pleasure; then, through the gateway of memory, it enters the silent mind, and just as it inflames the body, so it presents various shameful images to the mind; and in this way, it entices the mind to consent to sin. If you do not want this to continue within you, embrace fasting, labor, vigil, and virtuous silence accompanied by diligent prayer.

20. Those who ceaselessly seek our souls seek, through passionate thoughts, to plunge them into mental or actual sin. But when they encounter a mind that rejects them, then *they “will be put to shame and disgraced”*; when they find a mind engaged in spiritual contemplation, then they will turn back and *“be put to shame very quickly”* (Ps. 34: 4; 6: 11).

21. The work of the *“deacon”* is carried out by the one who anoints the mind for sacred deeds and drives away passionate thoughts from it; the work of the *“presbyter”* is carried out by the one who enlightens the mind with knowledge of reality and destroys false knowledge; the work of the *“bishop”* is accomplished by the one who completes his perfection through the holy anointing of the Holy Trinity, to whom worship is rendered.

22. Demons grow weak when, through the fulfillment of the commandments, our passions diminish; they perish when, by virtue of the soul’s dispassion, they vanish completely from it, finding nothing in it by which they clung to it or with which they waged war against it. This is what is meant by: *“They will be weakened and perish before Your face”* (Ps. 9:4).

23. Some people abstain from passions out of human fear, others out of vanity, still others out of self-discipline; and still others are freed from passions by God's providence.

24. All the words of the Lord contain the following four elements: commandments, doctrines, warnings, and promises; and for their sake we endure every kind of austerity in life, such as: fasting, vigils, sleeping on the bare ground, privations and hardships in obedience, insults, dishonor, torment, death, and the like. "*For the words of Your lips,*" says the Prophet, "*I have kept the ways of affliction*" (Ps. 16:4).

25. The reward for self-restraint is dispassion; for faith, knowledge; dispassion gives rise to discernment, and knowledge to love for God.

26. The mind, when it leads an active life in the proper manner, excels in prudence; and when it leads a contemplative life in the proper manner, it excels in knowledge. The former leads the one who strives in it to distinguish virtue from vice; the latter introduces its participant into the knowledge of the properties of incorporeal and corporeal beings. The mind becomes worthy of the gift of—that is, theological knowledge—only when, soaring on the wings of love, it has transcended all that has been said above and, having attained abiding in God, contemplates His attributes in spirit, as far as the human mind is capable.

27. If you wish to engage in theology, do not seek what is in God Himself; for this cannot be found not only by the human mind, but by the mind of any other being that exists after God. But consider, as far as possible, the attributes that clothe Him, such as: eternal essence, boundlessness, indescribability, goodness, wisdom, and the power that creates all things, providentially governs all things, and judges all that exists. For among men, he is already a great theologian who, even if only to some extent, reveals these attributes of God.

28. A man is strong who has united knowledge with action: for then he thereby dries up lust and tames anger; and thereby he lifts up his mind and dwells with God.

29. When the Lord says, "*I and the Father are one,*" He thereby signifies the unity of nature; but when He again says, "*I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me,*" He demonstrates the indivisibility of the Hypostases. Thus, the Trivites (Tritheists), by separating the Son from the Father, fall into an abyss on both sides: either, by acknowledging the Son as consubstantial with the Father but separating Him from the Father, they are compelled to say that He is not begotten by the Father, and in this way fall into the heresy that acknowledges three gods and three principles; or, while acknowledging the Son as begotten by the Father but separating Him from Him, they must necessarily admit that He is not consubstantial with the Father, and thus subject the Lord of time to time. According to the teaching of the great Gregory, one must preserve the one God and confess the three Hypostases, each with its own distinct nature. For, according to his teaching, the Trinity is divided yet indivisible; and united yet distinct. What a wondrous division and union! But what wonder would there be if the Father and the Son were united and divided just as one person is united with and separated from another, and nothing more?

30. One who is perfect in love and has attained the summit of dispassion knows no distinction between what is his own and what is another's, or between his own and another's, or between the faithful and the unfaithful, or between the slave and the free, or even between male and female. But having risen above the tyranny of the passions, and beholding the one human nature, he regards all equally and is equally disposed toward all. In him there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all (Gal. 3:28).

31. From the passions lying within the soul, demons draw their inspiration to stir up passionate thoughts within us. Then, by overwhelming the mind with these thoughts, they compel it to consent to sin; having conquered it in this, they lead it into mental sin; and once this is accomplished, they lead it—like a captive—to the very act of sin. After this, having finally laid waste to the soul through these thoughts, they depart along with them. Only the idol (the mental image) of sin remains in the mind, of which the Lord speaks: "*When you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*" (Matt. 24: 15). Let the reader understand that the holy place and the temple of God is the human mind, in which the demons, having desolated the soul with passionate thoughts, have set up the idol of sin. I believe that no one who has read Josephus doubts that what the Lord said has come to pass historically. Some, however, say that the same will happen in the time of the Antichrist.

32. Three principles impel us toward goodness: the seeds (of goodness within us) from nature, the holy Powers, and our free will. The seeds of nature—for example, when we treat others as we would like to be treated; or when we see a person in distress and need, and naturally feel compassion for them. The Holy

Powers—when, feeling an impulse toward a good deed, we find (within ourselves) a favorable disposition and succeed. Finally, there is good will, when, distinguishing good from evil, we choose the good.

33. Similarly, there are three principles that drive us toward evil: passions, demons, and evil will. Passions, when we desire something recklessly; for example, food at the wrong time and without need, or a wife without the intention of procreation and who is unlawful; likewise, when we become angry or distressed at someone we should not, such as one who has dishonored us or caused us harm. Demons: when, during moments of our weakness, having discerned an opportune time, they suddenly assail us and, with great force, stir up the aforementioned passions and those like them. Finally, evil will: when, knowing what is good, we choose evil.

34. The reward for deeds of virtue consists of dispassion and knowledge. For they are the means by which we attain the Kingdom of Heaven, just as passions and ignorance lead to eternal torment. And therefore, whoever seeks them for the sake of human glory, rather than because they are good in themselves, hears from Scripture: *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives”* (James 4:3).

35. Among human actions, many are good in themselves, but may become evil for some reason. For example, fasting and vigil, prayer and psalm-singing, almsgiving and hospitality are, in themselves, good deeds; but when done out of vanity, they are no longer good.

36. In all our deeds, God looks at our intention—whether we do them for Him or for some other reason.

37. When you hear the words of Scripture: *“He will repay each person according to their deeds”* (Rom. 2:6), remember that God rewards with good not for what is done without a right intention—even if it seems good—but specifically for what is done with a right intention. For God’s judgment looks not merely at what is done, but at the intentions with which it is done.

38. The demon of pride employs a twofold deceit: either he persuades the monk to attribute his good deeds to himself rather than to God, the Giver of all that is good and the Helper in righteousness; or, when the monk refuses to do so, he incites him to belittle his less perfect brothers. But he does not realize that even through such actions, the demon is inciting him to reject God’s help. For by belittling those who, unlike him, were unable to prove themselves righteous, he presents himself as having demonstrated exceptional righteousness through his own strength. This is impossible, as the Lord said: *“Without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). For our weakness is such that even when we desire what is good, we cannot bring it to completion without the Giver of all that is good.

39. Whoever has come to know the weakness of human nature has gained experiential knowledge of God’s helping power. And such a person, having already accomplished some things with its help and striving to accomplish others, never belittles anyone. For he knows that just as it helped him and delivered him from many passions and misfortunes, so it is powerful enough to help everyone whenever He wills, and especially those who strive for His sake; though, due to certain circumstances, He does not free everyone from passions all at once, but, as a good and compassionate Physician, He heals everyone who comes to Him in due time.

40. When passions lie dormant, pride sets in—either because their causes are hidden, or because the demons slyly withdraw.

41. Almost every sin arises from the delight of self-indulgence, and is therefore eradicated by suffering and sorrow—whether voluntary or involuntary—through the act of repentance or through some misfortune, prudently brought about by God’s Providence toward us. *“For if we would judge ourselves,”* says Scripture, *“we would not be condemned; but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world”* (1 Cor. 11:31–32).

42. If an unexpected temptation comes upon you, do not blame the one through whom it came, but seek the reason why it came; and you will find correction. For whether through him or through someone else, you were meant to drink the bitterness from the cup of God’s judgments.

43. The more wicked you are, the less you should resist suffering, so that, humbled by it, you may cast out your pride.

44. Temptations come upon people; some bring pleasures, others sorrows, and still others bodily sufferings. For the Physician of souls, according to His decrees, administers the remedy, looking at the cause of the passions lying within the soul.

45. Temptations are sent to some to atone for sins committed in the past, to others to put an end to sins they are currently committing, and to still others to prevent sins they might commit in the future; except for those that come to test a person, as was the case with Job.

46. The prudent person, reflecting on the healing nature of God's providence, bears with gratitude the afflictions that befall him through it, blaming no one else for them but his own sins; but the unwise, when they sin and are punished for it, regard either God or people as the cause of their misfortunes, failing to comprehend the wisdom of God's providence in this matter.

47. There are means that halt the movement of the passions and prevent them from growing; and there are others that diminish them and lead to their extinction. Thus, fasting, labor, and vigil prevent lust from growing; while solitude, contemplation, prayer, and love of God diminish it and lead to its disappearance. The same applies to irritability: magnanimity, forgiveness, and meekness halt it and prevent it from growing; while love, charity, goodwill, and love for humanity diminish it.

48. Whose mind is ceaselessly directed toward God, in that person desire grows into a longing for God, and all irritability is transformed into divine love. For through prolonged communion with divine illumination, the mind, having become entirely luminous, restrains and subdues its desiring part within itself, transforming it into an unceasing, as has been said, desire for God and an unwavering love for Him—transforming it entirely from the earthly to the divine.

49. Not everyone who is free from envy, anger, and resentment toward those who have offended them already possesses love for them: for one may, without loving them, refrain from repaying evil with evil, in accordance with the commandment; but it is not so easy to repay evil with good without forcing oneself to do so; for the disposition to do good even to those who hate one is characteristic of perfect spiritual love alone.

50. One who does not love another is not necessarily one who hates him; likewise, one who does not hate is not necessarily one who loves. But he may be in the middle with regard to him—that is, neither loving nor hating. For a loving disposition in the soul is usually produced by the five motives listed in Article 9 of this second hundred: one praiseworthy, one mutual, and three reproachful.

51. When you notice that your mind delights in material things and dwells pleasantly on thoughts of them, know that you love them more than God. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,"* says the Lord (Matt. 6:21).

52. A mind that clings to God and abides in Him through prayer and love becomes wise, good, strong, compassionate, merciful, generous, and, simply put, possesses within itself nearly all the divine attributes. But one who turns away from Him and becomes entangled with material things, giving himself over to sensual pleasure, becomes either beast-like or savage, and because of this, wages war against people.

53. Scripture calls worldly things "the world," and those who occupy their minds with them are worldly people, to whom—to their greater shame—it says: *"Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from this world"* (1 John 2:15–16).

54. A monk is one who has turned his mind away from sensory things and, through self-restraint, love, psalm-singing, and prayer, continually abides with God.

55. In a spiritual sense, a "herdsman" refers to a man of action, for the righteous deeds performed in the spiritual life are like working livestock. That is why James says, *"The herdsman are your servants."* A shepherd of sheep, on the other hand, is a contemplative man, for the thoughts grazed by the mind on the mountains of contemplation have the significance of sheep. That is why *"every shepherd of sheep is an abomination to the Egyptians"*—that is, to the opposing forces (Gen. 46:34).

56. A depraved mind, when the body is aroused by the senses to its natural lusts and pleasures, follows them and aligns itself with their fantasies and desires. But a virtuous mind restrains itself and diverts its attention from passionate fantasies and desires, and moreover strives to improve its actions.

57. Among the virtues, some are bodily, and others are spiritual. The bodily virtues are: fasting, vigil, sleeping on the bare ground, service, manual labor—so as not to be a burden to others, or for the sake of almsgiving, and so on. And the spiritual virtues are: love, generosity, meekness, self-control, prayer, and so on. And so, if it happens that due to some necessity or physical condition—for example, illness or some other similar reason—we are unable to fulfill the bodily virtues mentioned above, we have the Lord's forgiving mercy, for He knows the reasons for this; but if we fail to practice the spiritual virtues, we will have no excuse, for they are not subject to such obstacles.

58. Love for God inclines the believer to despise every fleeting pleasure, every bodily suffering, and every sorrow. May all the Saints, who suffered so much for Christ, bear witness to this.

59. Beware of the mother of all evils, self-love, which is an irrational love for the body. For from it, under the guise of blessing, the first three fundamental and root passions—namely, gluttony, greed, and vanity—are born, drawing their pretexts from the body’s necessary needs; and from these springs the entire family of passions. That is why, as has been said, one must be very wary of self-love and combat it with great vigilance. For with its eradication, all its offspring are also eradicated.

60. The passion of self-love prompts the monk to spare the body and indulge it in food under the guise of preserving health and exercising prudent control over the body, so that, gradually yielding to its demands, he may fall into the abyss of sensuality; as for the layperson, precisely because he is a layperson, he is tempted “*to care for the flesh in lust*” (Rom. 13: 14).

61. The highest state of prayer, they say, is when the mind, during prayer, is outside the flesh and the world, completely immaterial and invisible. Whoever maintains such a state unbroken truly prays unceasingly.

62. Just as the body, when dying, is completely separated from all earthly things, so too the mind, when dying in the act of the most perfect prayer, is detached from all worldly thoughts. And if it does not die such a death, it cannot be with God or live with Him.

63. Let no one deceive you, humble monk, with the thought that you can be saved by indulging in sensual pleasure and vanity.

64. Just as the body sins through its deeds and, to keep itself in check, has bodily virtues to practice self-control, so the mind sins through passionate thoughts and, to keep itself in check, has spiritual virtues to practice self-control by viewing things with purity and impartiality.

65. Just as days are followed by nights and summers by winters, so too are vanity and sensuality followed by sorrows and painful sufferings, whether in this present age or in the age to come.

66. It is impossible for one who has sinned to escape the coming judgment without voluntarily undertaking painful labors in this life, or without suffering from involuntary misfortunes.

67. For five reasons, they say, God permits us to be afflicted by demons: the first reason is so that, as we are afflicted and struggle, we may come to discern virtue from sin; the second is so that, having attained virtue through struggle and toil, we may hold fast to it firmly and unwaveringly; third, so that, succeeding in virtue, we may not become conceited, but may learn humility; the fourth is that, having experienced through action how evil sin is, we may come to hate it with perfect hatred; finally, the fifth and most important reason is that, having become dispassionate, we may not forget our own weakness, nor the strength of the One who has helped us.

68. Just as the mind of the hungry longs for bread, and that of the thirsty for water, so the mind of the glutton longs for varied delicacies; that of the lustful, for women’s faces; that of the vain, for human honors; that of the avaricious, for profits; the vindictive one—of revenge against those who have offended him; the envious one—of the downfall of the one he envies. The same is true of other passions. For a mind besieged by passions embraces passionate thoughts, both while the body is awake and in sleep.

69. When lust increases, the mind dreams of things that bring pleasure; and when anger increases, it sees things that inspire fear; impure spirits intensify the passions, taking our negligence as their ally and inciting them; while the holy angels diminish them, urging us to practice virtue.

70. Frequent arousal of the soul’s lustful desires instills in the soul an irresistible habit of indulging in pleasurable pursuits, while frequent outbursts of irritability make the mind timid and rob it of courage. The former is healed by prolonged fasting, vigil, and prayer; the latter, by charity, philanthropy, love, and mercy.

71. Evil spirits wage war against us either through material things or through passionate thoughts about material things: through material things against those who are caught up in them, and through thoughts against those who have withdrawn from material things.

72. Just as it is easier to sin in thought than in deed, so too is the battle waged through thoughts more difficult than the battle waged through material things.

73. Things are outside the mind, but thoughts about them are within it. Therefore, it is within the mind’s power to use them for good or for evil. For the misuse of thoughts leads to the misuse of things.

74. The mind receives passionate thoughts in the following three ways: through the senses, through the condition of the body, and through memory. Through the senses—when things that make an impression on them, such as those for which we have a passion, arouse passionate thoughts in the mind; through the condition of the body—when the body’s altered state, caused by a lack of moderation in diet, the influence of demons, or some illness, prompts it toward passionate thoughts or rebellion against Providence; through

recollection—when memory revives thoughts of things to which we are attached and thus stirs up passionate thoughts in the mind.

75. Of the things given to us by God for our use, some are found in the soul, others in the body, and still others in the environment surrounding the body. In the soul are its faculties; in the body are the senses and other members; around the body are food, possessions, money, and so on. Whether we make good or bad use of these things and the contingencies that arise from them reveals us to be either virtuous or vicious.

76. Among the aforementioned events, some occur within the soul, some within the body, and others in the world around the body: within the soul—knowledge and ignorance, remembrance and forgetfulness, love and hatred, fear and boldness, joy and sorrow, and so on; in the body—pleasure and fatigue, sensitivity and numbness, health and illness, life and death, and the like; in the environment surrounding the body—abundance and scarcity, wealth and poverty, honor and dishonor, and so on. Of these, some are regarded by people as good, and others as evil; whereas, in the strict sense, none of these is evil, but becomes evil or good depending on how it is used.

77. Knowledge is by nature a good, just as health is. But the opposite has brought far greater benefit to many, for to the wicked, knowledge does not serve the good, even though it is, as has been said, good by nature. Likewise, health, wealth, and joy do not serve them for good, for they do not use them for their own benefit; for such people, the opposite is more beneficial: and consequently, this (i.e., the opposite) is not evil in the strict sense, even though it appears to be evil.

78. Do not abuse your thoughts, lest you be compelled to abuse material things as well; for if you do not first sin in thought, you will never sin in deed.

79. The “*image of the earthly*” (Adam) consists of the principal vices, such as: folly, cowardice, intemperance, and falsehood. The “*image of the heavenly*” consists of the principal virtues, such as: prudence, courage, chastity, and justice. “*But just as we have put on the image of the earthly, so let us also put on the image of the heavenly*” (1 Cor. 15:49).

80. If you wish to find the path that leads to life, seek it in that Way Who said, “*I am the way, the door, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6; 10:9); and there you will find it. But seek diligently, for “*few are those who find it*” (Matt. 7:14); lest, having been left behind by these few, you find yourself among the many.

81. The soul refrains from sin for the following five reasons: either out of fear of people, or out of fear of judgment, or for the sake of future reward, or out of love for God, or, finally, because of the pangs of conscience.

82. Some say that there would be no evil in creatures if it were not for a certain external force that draws us toward it. But this force is nothing other than our neglect of the mind’s natural activity. That is why those who are diligent in this regard always do good and never do evil. And so, if you too desire this, cast aside negligence, and in doing so you will also cast aside evil, which is the sinful use of thoughts, accompanied by abuse and worldly things.

83. By the very nature of the rational part within us, it should, by submitting to the divine word, rule over the irrational part within us. Let this order be observed in all things—and there will be no evil in creatures, nor will anything be found that leads to it.

84. Some thoughts are simple, while others are complex. The simple ones are dispassionate, while the complex ones are passionate, as they are composed of passion and thought. Nevertheless, it can be seen that many of the simple ones follow in the wake of the complex ones when they begin to move toward sinning in thought. Let us take gold as an example. A passionate thought about gold came to someone’s mind, and he set out mentally to steal it: and so, in his mind, he had already committed a sin. The thought of gold was followed by thoughts of a purse, a chest, a storeroom, and so on. Here, the thought of gold was complex, for it was combined with passion; whereas the thoughts of the purse, the chest, and so on were simple, for the mind had no passion for them. The same is true of every other thought—a vain thought, a thought about a wife, and so on. For not all thoughts that follow a passionate thought are themselves passionate, as shown in the example. From this we can discern which thoughts are passionate and which are not.

85. Some say that demons, by touching the private parts of our body during sleep, arouse the passion of lust; then, once aroused, this passion brings the image of a woman to mind through memory. Others, however, believe that the demons themselves appear to the mind in the form of women; then, by touching the private parts of the body, they arouse a desire for women; and dreams of this kind occur. Still others believe that the passion prevailing in the approaching demon stirs up the same passion in the person, and in this way

the soul is inflamed with such thoughts and conjures up images through memory. Similarly, regarding other passionate dreams, some say that this is how they occur, while others say that it is that way. However, by none of the aforementioned means can demons arouse any passion, neither while the body is awake nor during sleep, if love and self-restraint are inherent in the soul.

86. Some of the commandments of the law must be observed both physically and spiritually, while others only spiritually. For example: *“Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal,”* and similar commandments must be observed both physically and spiritually; and spiritually in three ways. On the other hand, circumcision, observing the Sabbath, sacrificing a lamb, eating unleavened bread with bitter herbs, and the like, are to be observed only spiritually.

87. There are three principal moral states among monks: the first is when one sins in no way through one’s actions; the second is when one does not allow passionate thoughts to linger in the soul; the third is when one regards in one’s thoughts, without passion, the images of women and those who cause offense.

88. One is free from greed who has renounced all property and possesses nothing on earth except his body; having cast aside all attachment even to it, he has entrusted all care for himself to God and to godly people.

89. Among those who acquire wealth, some do so dispassionately; therefore, when they lose it, they do not grieve, just as they once joyfully accepted the plundering of their possessions (Heb. 10:34). Others, however, acquire it with passion; therefore, when they face the prospect of losing their possessions, they grieve, just like the rich man mentioned in the Gospel, *who “went away sorrowful”* (Matt. 19:22); and if they do indeed lose them, they grieve mortally. Thus, the loss of possessions reveals whether one is a dispassionate or a passionate accumulator.

90. Demons attack those who are devoted to prayer, instilling in their minds simple thoughts about sensory things and thereby distracting them from prayer; they attack those devoted to knowledge, keeping passionate thoughts within them for as long as possible; and they attack those engaged in active life—tempting them to sin through their actions. – The accursed ones fight against everyone in every way possible to turn people away from God.

91. Those who, by God’s providence, are trained in piety in this life are tested by the following three temptations: either by the offer of pleasant things, such as good health, beauty, many children, wealth, fame, and the like; or by the sorrow of losing children, possessions, or fame; or by what causes suffering to the body, such as illnesses, torments, and so on. To the first group, the Lord says: *“Whoever does not renounce all his possessions cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:33); to the second and third groups: *“By your endurance you will save your souls”* (Luke 21:19).

92. It is said that the condition of the body is altered, and through this, the mind is given passionate or dispassionate thoughts, by the following four causes: angels, demons, the air, and food. Angels, it is said, affect it through their words; demons, through their touch; the air, through its changes; and food, through the quality of food and drink, as well as their excess or scarcity. In addition to these, changes are also brought about by memory, hearing, and sight, when the soul is first affected by sorrowful or joyful circumstances. Having been affected by them, the soul brings about a change in the body’s condition; and the altered condition of the body, as previously stated, induces corresponding thoughts in the mind.

93. Death is, in essence, separation from God; the sting of death is sin, which Adam, having taken into himself, was at once cast out from the tree of life, from paradise, and from God, whereupon bodily death necessarily followed. Life, however, is none other than the One who said, *“I am the life”* (John 14:6). He, having been in death, raised the dead back to life.

94. When something is written, it is written either for one’s own remembrance, or for the benefit of others, or for both, or to the detriment of some, or for show, or out of necessity.

95. *“The valley of the shadow of death”* (Ps. 22:2) is active virtue; *“still waters”* are knowledge of creation.

96. *“The shadow of death”* is human life. And whoever is with God, and with whom God is, can boldly say: *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me”* (Ps. 22:4).

97. A pure mind views things rightly; a tongue trained by practice presents what it sees as if before the eyes of others; and an open ear receives it; but one deprived of these three condemns the speaker.

98. He is with God who knows the Holy Trinity, its creation, and its providence; and who keeps the passionate part of the soul dispassionate.

99. They say that *the “rod”* signifies God’s judgment, and *the “staff,”* His Providence. Whoever has come to know this may say: “*Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me*” (Ps. 22:4).

100. When the mind is stripped of passions and enlightened by the contemplation of what is, then it can abide in God and pray as it ought.

The Third Hundred on Love

1. The prudent use of thoughts and things brings about chastity, love, and knowledge; while the imprudent use brings about intemperance, hatred, and ignorance.

2. “*You have prepared a table before me,*” and so on. “*Table*” here signifies active virtue: for it is prepared by Jesus Christ against those who oppose us; *the “oil”* that anoints the mind signifies the contemplation of creation; God’s “*cup*” signifies the knowledge of God; His “*grace*” is His Word and God Himself: for through His Incarnation He pursues us day after day until He has reached all those who are to be saved, as He did with Paul. “*House*” signifies the kingdom into which all the saints will dwell; and the length of days signifies eternal life (Ps. 21:5–6).

3. Sins arise in us from the improper use of the powers of the soul—that is, the powers of desire, passion, and reason. The improper use of the power of reason is ignorance; the improper use of the powers of passion and desire is hatred and intemperance. The proper use of these powers, however, is knowledge, prudence, love, and chastity. And if this is so, then nothing that has been created and brought into being by God is evil.

4. It is not food that is evil, but gluttony; not procreation, but fornication; not money, but the love of money; not glory, but vanity: and if this is so, then there is nothing evil in existence except abuse, which arises from the mind’s neglect of the cultivation of nature (the powers of the soul and their proper direction).

5. This, says Blessed Dionysius, is what constitutes evil in demons: reckless irritability, mad lust, and rash imagination. But recklessness, madness, and rashness in rational beings are a deprivation of reason, intellect, and prudence; and such deprivation occurs only after one has possessed or held something. Consequently, there was a time when they possessed reason, intellect, and reverent prudence. And if this is so, then demons are not evil by nature; rather, they became evil through the abuse of their natural powers.

6. Some passions give rise to intemperance, others to hatred, and still others to both intemperance and hatred.

7. Gluttony and the love of delicacies are the causes of sexual immorality; the love of money and vanity are the causes of hatred toward one’s neighbor; their common root, self-love, is the cause of both.

8. Self-love is a passionate and reckless love of the body. Love and self-control are its opposites. It is evident that whoever possesses self-love possesses all passions.

9. “*No one,*” says the Apostle, “*has ever hated his own flesh*” (Eph. 5:29): yet nevertheless “*mortifies*” it and “*subjugates*” it (1 Cor. 9:27), giving it nothing but “*food and clothing*” (1 Tim. 6:8); and these alone, simply because they are necessary for life. Thus they love it dispassionately, and, as a servant of the Divine, “*nourish and warm*” it solely with what makes up for its lack.

10. Whoever loves someone tries in every way to please that person. And so, whoever loves God naturally strives to do what is pleasing to Him; but whoever loves the flesh does what satisfies it.

11. What is pleasing to God is love, chastity, contemplation, and prayer; what is pleasing to the flesh is gluttony, intemperance, and everything that leads to them. That is why “*those who are in the flesh cannot please God*” (Rom. 8:8); “*but those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (Gal. 5:24).

12. When the mind is inclined toward God, it treats the body as a servant and gives it nothing more than what is necessary for life; but when it is inclined toward the flesh, it becomes enslaved to its passions, and its care for the body always takes the form of lust (Rom. 13:14).

13. If you wish to rid yourself of evil thoughts, heal your passions; then you will easily drive them from your mind. Specifically, regarding the passion of sexual immorality—fast, keep vigil, labor, and withdraw into solitude; regarding anger and sorrow, attach no importance to glory, disgrace, or other earthly things; regarding resentment, pray for the one who has offended you—and you will be freed.

14. Do not measure yourself against the weakest of people, but rather expand yourself in accordance with the commandment of love. By measuring yourself against others, you will fall into the abyss of pride; but by expanding yourself in accordance with love, you will reach the heights of humility.

15. If you truly keep the commandment to love your neighbor, why then do you harbor bitterness and resentment toward him? Is it not clear that you prefer the temporary over love, and by defending it, you wage war against your brother?

16. Gold has become so desirable to people not so much out of necessity as because, through it, many satisfy their lust for pleasure.

17. There are three reasons for the love of wealth: sensuality, vanity, and unbelief; and unbelief is stronger than the first two.

18. The hedonist loves silver so that he may enjoy himself with its help; the vain person, to gain glory; and the unbeliever, to hide and store it, fearing hunger, old age, sickness, or exile, and placing more hope in it than in God, the Creator and Provider of all creatures, even down to the smallest and most insignificant animals.

19. Four kinds of people accumulate wealth: the three mentioned above, and a fourth, the household-minded person; it is evident that only the latter accumulates it rightly, so that his hand may never be empty when it comes to providing what is needed to everyone.

20. All passionate thoughts either stir up the soul's desiring faculty, or agitate its irritable faculty, or cloud its thinking faculty; hence it happens that the mind becomes blind to spiritual contemplation and prayerful ascent. Therefore, a monk—especially one who practices silence—must pay close attention to his thoughts, discern their causes, and cut them off. He should discern them in this way: the soul's lustful power is aroused by passionate memories of women, and their cause is intemperance in food and drink, as well as frequent and unwise association with women. They are cut off by hunger, thirst, vigil, and solitude. – The irritable power is stirred up by passionate memories of people who have grieved us; the cause of this is sensuality, vanity, and love of pleasure, because of which the passionate person is grieved—either because he has lost them or because he has not received them. They are cut off by regarding these things as nothing—by despising and humbling them out of love for God.

21. God knows Himself and knows His creatures, and the Holy Powers know God and know God's creatures. But the Holy Powers know God and His creatures not in the same way that God knows Himself and His creatures.

22. God knows Himself through His blessed nature, and His creatures through His wisdom, by which and in which He created all things; whereas the Holy Powers know God, who exists beyond all participation, through participation (in His knowledge), and His creatures through the perception of the intelligent contemplations present within them.

23. Creatures are outside the mind; yet the mind receives their contemplation within itself. But this is not the case with God, who is ever-existent, boundless, and indescribable, who has bestowed upon all that exists from Him both being, well-being, and everlasting existence.

24. The rational and intellectual nature partakes of the Holy God—that is, of His goodness and wisdom—through its very existence, its capacity for well-being, and the grace of eternal existence. By this grace, it knows God; and it knows His creatures, as stated above, through the perception of the all-ordaining wisdom contemplated in them—a wisdom that is subtle and is mentally constructed in the mind.

25. God, bringing rational and intelligent beings into existence through His supreme goodness, bestowed upon these creatures four divine attributes that sustain, protect, and save them: being, eternal existence, goodness, and wisdom. Of these, He bestowed the first two upon the being, and the last two upon the moral faculties: upon the being—existence and eternal existence; and upon the moral faculties—goodness and wisdom—so that the creature might be made, through participation, to be what He Himself is in essence. Hence it is said that man is created in the image and likeness of God: created in the image—as a being—of the Being, as an ever-existing—of the Ever-Existing—though not without a beginning, yet infinitely; created in His likeness—as the good one is good, as the wise one is wise—thus becoming, by grace, what God is by nature. Every rational being is created in the image of God, but only the good and the wise are created in His likeness.

26. All rational and intelligent being is divided into two—that is, into the angelic and human natures; and the entire angelic nature is in turn divided into two principal moral unions and communities: the holy and

the accursed—that is, the Holy Powers and the wicked demons; and the entire human race is divided into only two unions: the pious and the impious.

27. God, as self-existence, self-goodness, and self-wisdom—or, to put it more precisely, as the One who exists above all these things—has absolutely nothing opposed to Himself. But creatures, since they all exist solely by participation and grace—and rational and intelligent beings, moreover, possess the capacity for goodness and wisdom—have opposites, namely, non-existence as opposed to existence, and evil and ignorance as opposed to the capacity for goodness and wisdom. Their eternal existence or non-existence lies in the power of the One who created them, while their participation or non-participation in His goodness and wisdom lies in the will of rational creatures.

28. The Greeks, believing that the nature of creatures has been with God from eternity and that they have received only their qualities from Him, say that there is nothing opposed to their nature, and that the opposite lies solely in their qualities. But we maintain that the single divine nature, being eternal, infinite, and bestowing eternity upon all other natures, has no opposite; whereas the nature of creatures has non-being as its opposite, and their eternal existence or non-existence lies within the power of the Being Himself. But since His gifts are irrevocable and unchangeable, the creature, as it is now, will always be so, sustained by His almighty power, even though it has, as has been said, non-being as its opposite—for it has been brought from non-being into being and possesses, in His will, the power to be or not to be.

29. Just as evil is the absence of good, and ignorance is the absence of knowledge, so too is non-existence (non-being) the absence of existence (being)—not of that which is not truly existent, for this has no opposite—but of that which exists by participation in the truly Existent. The deprivation of the first two depends on the will of the creature; but the deprivation of the second consists in the will of the Creator, Who, out of goodness, always wills that beings exist and are always blessed by Him.

30. All creatures are either rational and intelligent beings capable of containing opposites within themselves—that is, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance—or various bodies composed of opposites, such as earth, air, fire, and water. Some are entirely incorporeal and immaterial, although some of them are associated with bodies; others, however, consist solely of matter and form.

31. All bodies are by nature immobile; they are moved by the soul—some by the rational soul, others by the irrational soul, and still others by the insensitive soul.

32. Among the powers of the soul, one is nutritive and vegetative, another is imaginative and impulsive, and yet another is rational and intellectual. Plants share in the first; speechless animals share in the second along with the first; and humans share in the third along with the first two. The first two powers are perishable, while the third is regarded as imperishable and immortal.

33. The holy powers, imparting enlightenment to one another, also impart to human nature both the virtue and the knowledge that exist within them: virtue, that is, God-imitating goodness, by which they bestow benefits upon themselves and one another, and upon the beings lower than themselves, making them God-like; —knowledge, so to speak, either of something supreme concerning God; for, as the Prophet says, “*You, O Lord, are high above all forever*” (Ps. 91:9); or of something most profound concerning corporeal beings, or of something most precise concerning incorporeal beings, or of something most lucid concerning providence, or of something most certain concerning judgment.

34. Impurity of the mind consists, first, in false knowledge; second, in ignorance of anything universal; I say this with regard to the human mind, for it is not proper for an angel to be ignorant of even anything particular; third, in passionate thoughts; fourth, in consenting to sin.

35. The impurity of the soul consists in its failure to act in accordance with its nature; for this gives rise to passionate thoughts in the mind. The soul acts in accordance with its nature when its passionate faculties—that is, the irritable and the desiring—remain dispassionate when influenced by things and by the thoughts concerning them.

36. The impurity of the body is sin committed through action.

37. He loves silence who is impartial toward worldly things; he loves all people who loves nothing human; and he has knowledge of God and the Divine who is not tempted by anyone, neither because of that person’s failings nor because of the suspicious thoughts aroused about him.

38. It is a great thing not to be partial toward things, but it is far greater still to remain dispassionate when thinking about them.

39. Love and self-restraint keep the mind dispassionate toward both things and thoughts about them.

40. The mind of the God-loving person is not armed against things or thoughts about them, but against the passions associated with these thoughts. That is, he does not rise up against a woman, nor against one who has wronged him, nor against his imaginings of them: but against the passions associated with these imaginings.

41. The monk's entire battle against demons consists in separating passions from thoughts; for otherwise it is impossible for him to view things dispassionately.

42. A thing is one thing, a thought is another, and a passion is yet another: a thing, for example, is a husband, a wife, gold, and so on; a thought is a simple recollection of any of these; a passion is either wordless love or reckless hatred toward any of them. — A monk's struggle lies in such a passion.

43. A passionate thought is a thought composed of passion and thought. Let us separate passion from thought, and a pure thought will remain. We separate them, if we wish, through spiritual love and self-restraint.

44. Virtues detach the mind from passions; spiritual contemplations detach it from simple thoughts; and pure prayer presents it to God Himself.

45. Virtues exist for the knowledge of creatures; knowledge, for the knower; and the knower, for the unknowable object of knowledge; and above all this stands the One who guides beyond knowledge.

46. God, who is self-sufficient, brought creatures into being from nothingness not because He had any need, but so that they might, according to their capacity, partake of His bliss and find joy; and He Himself rejoiced in His works, seeing them rejoice and be insatiably satisfied by the Insatiable One.

47. The world has many who are poor in spirit, but not in the proper sense; many who weep, but either over the loss of possessions or the loss of children; many who are meek, but toward impure passions; many who hunger and thirst, but for the unrighteous seizure of others' property and the accumulation of wealth; many who are merciful, but toward the body and bodily things; and pure in heart, but out of vanity; and peacemakers, but those who subject their souls to the flesh; many who are persecuted, but for their own lawlessness; many who are reviled, but for shameful sins. But blessed are only those who both act and suffer for Christ and because of Christ. Why? *"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven"*; and: *"For they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:3, 8); and so on. They are not blessed because they act and suffer in this way, for those mentioned above do the same; but because they act and suffer for Christ's sake and because of Christ.

48. In everything we do, as has been said many times, God looks at the purpose—whether we do it for Him or for some other reason. Therefore, when we wish to do something good, let our aim be not to please people but to please God, so that, always keeping our eyes fixed on Him, we may do everything for Him; otherwise, we will bear the labor in vain and forfeit our reward.

49. And during prayer, banish from your mind even simple thoughts about human affairs and contemplations of all creation, so that by dwelling on lesser things you may not stray from Him, Who is incomparably better than all that exists.

50. If we truly love God, then by this very love we will drive away the passions. To love Him is to prefer Him to the world, and the soul to the flesh—with contempt for all worldly things, with constant devotion to Him—through self-control, love, prayer, and psalm-singing, and so on.

51. If, while paying attention to God for a long time, we take careful care of the passionate part of the soul, then we will no longer be led astray from the right path by the temptations of our thoughts; but by understanding their causes more precisely and cutting them off, we become prudent, so that the prophetic word is fulfilled in us: *"My eye will be on my enemies, and my ear will hear those who rise up against me with deceit"* (Ps. 91:12).

52. When you see that your mind is turning piously and righteously toward worldly thoughts, know that your body also remains pure and sinless. But when you see your mind mentally engaged in sins and you do not put a stop to it, know that your body will not delay in falling into them as well.

53. Just as things serve as a world for the body, so thoughts serve as a world for the mind; and just as the body commits adultery with a woman's body, so the mind commits adultery with thoughts of women through the imagination of its own body: for it mentally beholds the image of its own body copulating with the image of a woman. Likewise, in his thoughts, he takes revenge with the image of his own body against the image of the one who has wronged him. The same is true of other sins: for whatever the body does in the world of things, the mind does mentally in the world of thoughts.

54. Should we not be horrified, tremble, and be driven to distraction by the fact that, while God *the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son*" (John 5:22); —while the Son cries out:

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged” (Matt. 7:1), *“Do not condemn, so that you may not be condemned”* (Luke 6:37); and likewise the Apostle: *“Do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes”* (1 Cor. 6:5); and again: *“For when you judge another, you condemn yourself”* (Rom. 2:1); when, I say, this is the case—why have people, having ceased to weep over their own sins, taken judgment out of the Son’s hands, and now, as if they were sinless, judge and condemn one another? Heaven is appalled by this, and the earth trembles; yet these insensitive ones are not ashamed!

55. Whoever prays into the sins of others, or judges a brother on the basis of suspicion, has not yet begun the path of repentance, has not taken it upon himself to recognize his own sins—which are truly as heavy as a multi-pud lead weight—and does not know why a person becomes *“hard-hearted, loving vanity, and seeking falsehood”* (Ps. 4:3); and therefore, like a madman wandering in darkness, having set aside his own sins, he dwells on the sins of others—whether real or imagined—based on mere suspicion.

56. Self-love, as has been said repeatedly, is the cause of all passionate thoughts; for from it arise the three principal thoughts of the desiring part of the soul: gluttony, greed, and vanity. Then, from gluttony arises the lustful thought; from avarice the covetous thought; from vanity, the proud thought; while all the others follow each of these three, such as: the angry, sorrowful, resentful, despondent, envious, slanderous thoughts, and others. These passions bind the mind to material objects and draw it down to earth, weighing it down like the heaviest stone, whereas by nature it is lighter and more ethereal than fire.

57. The beginning of all passions is self-love, and their end is pride. Self-love is a reckless love of the body. Whoever cuts it off cuts off all the passions that arise from it.

58. Just as earthly parents are partial toward those born of them, so too is the mind naturally attached to its own thoughts; and just as the most partial of parents see their children as the most modest and well-behaved of all, even though they might be the most deserving of ridicule in every respect: so too does an unwise mind regard its own thoughts as the most reasonable of all, even if they are the most absurd of all. To the wise, however, their own thoughts do not appear that way; but even when they have confirmation that they are true and good, they trust their own judgment all the less, and instead appoint other wise people as judges of their thoughts and reasoning, lest their efforts be in vain (Gal. 2:2); and from them they accept confirmation.

59. When you overcome any of the most shameful passions—such as gluttony, fornication, anger, or greed—a thought of vanity will immediately assail you; and when you overcome that, a thought of pride will take hold of you.

60. All dishonorable passions, when they control the soul, drive the thought of vanity from it; but when they are overcome, they open the way for it to enter.

61. Vanity gives rise to pride, sometimes being driven out and sometimes remaining. But when driven out, it leads to conceit, and when it remains, to arrogance.

62. Vanity is eradicated by secret action, and pride by attributing to God the deeds done properly.

63. One who has been granted the knowledge of God and has truly tasted its sweetness despises all pleasures arising from the power of desire.

64. One who is led by earthly desires craves either food, or the satisfaction of bodily urges, or human glory, or wealth, or something else that follows from these; and if the mind finds nothing better than these things to which to transfer its desire, it will not resolve to despise them for the rest of its life. Far superior to these, however, is the knowledge of God and of divine things.

65. Those who despise pleasures do so out of fear, or in hope, or because they recognize their insignificance; or else out of love for God.

66. Knowledge of divine things without attachment to them does not persuade the mind to completely despise the material world, but is akin to a mere thought about a sensory object. Therefore, one can find many people who possess much knowledge yet wallow in carnal passions, like pigs in the mud (2 Peter 2:22). For having been somewhat purified during their zeal for what is good and having gained a certain measure of knowledge of it, they later grew lazy and became like Saul, who, having been granted the royal throne but having begun to live unworthily of it, was cast down from it with terrible wrath.

67. Just as a mere thought of human things causes the mind to despise the Divine, so too a mere knowledge of the Divine does not persuade it to despise the human entirely; for here the truth still dwells in shadows and conjectures; and therefore requires the blissful devotion of holy love, which unites the mind with spiritual contemplations and persuades it to prefer the immaterial to the material, the intellectual to the sensory, and the Divine.

68. Not everyone who has cut off the passions and simplified his thoughts has thereby turned them toward the Divine; but he may be attached neither to the human nor to the Divine, which happens only to active people who have not yet been granted knowledge, and who abstain from the passions either out of fear of torment or in hope of the Kingdom of Heaven.

69. *"We walk by faith, not by sight,"* and our knowledge is still as in a mirror and in riddles (2 Cor. 2:7). Therefore, we need long practice in it, so that through prolonged instruction and diligence, we may acquire an unshakable habit of unceasing contemplation.

70. If, having temporarily set aside the causes of our passions, we engage in spiritual contemplation but do not devote all our time to it, having this as our sole occupation: we will easily turn back to carnal passions, having gained no other fruit from it except mere knowledge mixed with conceit, the end of which is the gradual clouding of knowledge itself and the mind's complete deviation toward material objects.

71. The passion of love, when reprehensible, occupies the mind with material objects; but the passion of love, when praiseworthy, binds it to the Divine. For the mind, as a rule, inclines toward whatever objects it dwells upon; and toward whatever it inclines, it also turns its desire and love—whether toward divine, immaterial, and conceptual objects, which are proper to it, or toward carnal things and passions.

72. God created both the invisible and the visible worlds; and He also created the soul and the body. And if the visible world is so beautiful, how much more so is the invisible one? If the invisible world is better than this one, how much more exalted is God, who created them both? If the Creator of all good things is better than the best of all created things, then why has the mind abandoned what is best and turned instead to what is worst—that is, to carnal passions? Is it not evident that it has become accustomed to this, having dealt with it from birth, while it has not yet experienced at all that which is better and higher than all else? Thus, if through long-term abstinence from sensual pleasures and instruction in divine matters we gradually wean him from such a habit, then, as he gradually succeeds in this, he will be drawn to the divine and come to recognize his own dignity, and finally transfer his entire devotion to God.

73. One who speaks dispassionately about a brother's sin does so for two reasons: either to correct him or to benefit another. But if he speaks—whether to the person himself or to another—without these aims, then he speaks to condemn or slander his brother, and such a person will not escape being forsaken by God, but will inevitably fall into either the same or another transgression, and, having been exposed and rebuked by others, will be put to shame.

74. Those who commit the same sin should not be judged equally based on the act itself, but differently (judged according to the cause of the sin): for some sin out of habit, while others do so out of a sudden, uncontrollable impulse. In the latter case, a person had no thought of the sin before committing it, nor does he have any inclination toward it afterward; on the contrary, he grieves deeply and is tormented by what has happened. It is quite different for one who sins out of habit: for even before the sin, he did not cease to sin in thought, and after committing it, he remains in the same frame of mind.

75. Whoever practices virtue out of vanity also seeks knowledge out of vanity. But such a person no longer does or says anything for the sake of edification; rather, in everything, he seeks to gain glory from those who see his deeds or hear his words. This passion is revealed when, if some of these people begin to slander his words or deeds, he is deeply distressed—not because they have not been edified, for he had no such intention, but because he feels humiliated or belittled by them.

76. The passion of love of money is revealed when someone always receives with joy but gives with sorrow. Such a person cannot be truly frugal (see p. 19).

77. A person who suffers endures suffering for the following reasons:—either out of love for God, or in the hope of a reward, or out of fear of torment, or out of fear of people, or due to natural endurance, or for the sake of future pleasure, or out of self-interest, or out of vanity, or out of necessity.

78. It is one thing to rid oneself of thoughts, and another to be freed from passions. Often one is rid of thoughts when the objects toward which one had a passion are not in sight; but passions, meanwhile, remain hidden in the soul and are revealed when the objects appear. Therefore, one must observe the mind in the presence of such things and discern toward which it has a passion.

79. A sincere friend is one who, when a neighbor is tempted, endures alongside him—without confusion or anxiety—the sorrows, hardships, misfortunes, and calamities that have befallen him, as if they were his own.

80. Do not despise your conscience, which always gives you the best counsel; for it offers you divine and angelic counsel, frees you from the secret defilements of the heart, and, at the hour of your departure from this world, grants you boldness before God.

81. If you wish to be wise and at the same time humble, rather than a slave to the passion of pride, then always seek in things what is hidden from your understanding; and when you discover that there is much that is diverse and unknown to you, you will marvel at your own ignorance and humble your own wisdom. And by recognizing your own insignificance, you will come to know many great and wondrous things. But boasting about your knowledge prevents you from making progress in learning.

82. He who does not resist the healing remedies sincerely desires salvation; and these remedies are sorrow and grief, brought about by various misfortunes. But he who resists misfortunes knows neither what trade is taking place here on earth, nor what profit he will take with him when he departs from here.

83. Vanity and the love of money are mutually generative. For some grow rich through vanity, while others, having become rich, become vain. But such is the way of the world. A monk, however, is more vain—when he is unworldly; but when he possesses silver, he hides it, ashamed that he has something unbecoming of his calling.

84. It is characteristic of a monk's vanity to take pride in virtue and its consequences; but it is characteristic of his pride to take pride in his successes, to belittle others, and to attribute these things to himself rather than to God. It is characteristic of the vanity and pride of a layperson to boast and take pride in beauty, wealth, strength, and sound judgment, or worldly prudence.

85. The successes of laypeople are the downfall of monks, and the successes of monks are the downfall of laypeople. The successes of laypeople consist in wealth, fame, power, pleasures, physical well-being, having many children, and similar things, in which, upon entering, a monk perishes. The "successes" of a monk, however, are non-possessiveness, obscurity, powerlessness, abstinence, suffering, deprivation, and the like; when involuntarily subjected to these, a lover of the world regards them as a great misfortune and is often close to the danger of putting a noose around his neck—and some have indeed done so.

86. Food was created for two reasons: for nourishment and for healing. Therefore, those who partake of it with the wrong intention, and who do not use what God has given for its proper purpose, are condemned as hedonists. And with regard to all things, their improper use is a sin.

87. Humility is born of pure prayer, accompanied by tears and sorrow. For by constantly calling upon God for help, it prevents one from foolishly relying on one's own strength and wisdom, and from exalting oneself above others—two fierce diseases of the prideful passion.

88. It is one thing to struggle against a simple thought, so that it does not stir up passion, and another to struggle against a passionate thought, so that we do not consent to sin. Both of these kinds of struggle prevent thoughts from lingering within us.

89. Sorrow is inseparable from resentment. Thus, when the mind sees with grief, as in a mirror, the face of the brother who has offended it, it is evident that it harbors resentment. "*The way of the vengeful leads to death*" (Prov. 12:28); "*for whoever harbors a grudge is lawless*" (Prov. 21:24).

90. If you bear a grudge against someone, pray for him; and by separating, through prayer, your sorrow from the memory of the wrong he has done to you, you will halt the momentum of the passion; and by becoming friendly and compassionate, you will completely drive the passion from your soul. When another harbors malice toward you, be kind and humble toward him, and live peacefully with him, and you will deliver him from that passion.

91. The sorrow of the envious is difficult to stop. For he regards as a misfortune for himself that which he envies in you. And there is no other way to calm him except by concealing it from him. But if it is beneficial to many, yet causes him sorrow, which side should be disregarded? You must side with what is beneficial to many; yet, as far as possible, do not neglect him either, and do not let yourself be carried away by the deceitfulness of passion, offering help not to the passion itself but to the one suffering from it; but, with humble wisdom, regard him as superior to you, and give him preference over yourself at all times, in every place, and in every matter. And you can put a stop to your own envy if you rejoice in the joy of the one you envy and grieve with him over what he grieves about, fulfilling the Apostle's command: "*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*" (Rom. 12:15).

92. Our mind stands between two entities, each of which instills what is characteristic of it: one virtue, the other vice—that is, between an angel and a demon. But the mind has the power and strength to follow or resist whichever it chooses.

93. The Holy Powers guide us toward the good; and the natural seeds of goodness and good will help us; while the temptations of demons are empowered by the passions and evil will.

94. A pure mind is sometimes taught by God Himself, who descends upon it; at other times, the Holy Powers inspire it with goodness, and at still other times, the nature of things as it is contemplated by the mind.

95. A mind worthy of knowledge must keep its thoughts dispassionate toward things, its contemplation free from error, and its state of prayer serene. But it cannot always maintain this, as it is obscured—like smoke—by the intrusions of carnal impulses, at the instigation of demons.

96. We do not become angry at everything that causes us sorrow; for there are more events that cause sorrow than those that provoke anger. For example: something broke, something was lost, someone died. In such cases, we are merely saddened, but in others we are both saddened and angry, not being in a prudent frame of mind.

97. The mind, when receiving thoughts about things, usually changes its appearance anew in accordance with each thought; but when contemplating them spiritually, it is transformed differently in accordance with each contemplation. But when it is in God, it becomes utterly formless and invisible. For, contemplating the One who is of one form, it itself becomes of one form and entirely radiant.

98. The perfect soul is that in which the entire power of desire is wholly directed toward God.

99. A perfect mind is one which, having come to know the Unknowable through true faith, has surveyed all of His creations in general and received from God all-encompassing knowledge of His providence and judgment within them, to the extent that this is accessible to human beings.

100. Time is divided into three parts: and faith extends to all three of these parts; hope to one, and love to two. Faith and hope have a limit; but love, uniting with the Infinite and ever increasing, endures for all eternity. And that is why *“love is the greatest of these”* (1 Cor. 1:3, 13).

The Fourth Hundred on Love

1. First, the mind is amazed when contemplating the boundlessness of God—that unfathomable and much-desired abyss; second, it is astonished by how God brought all that exists into being out of nothing. But just as *“His greatness has no end”* (Ps. 141: 3), *“so His wisdom has no limit”* (Bar. 3: 18).

2. For how can one fail to marvel, contemplating that inaccessible and wondrous source of goodness? Or how can one not be filled with awe, pondering how and from where the verbal and rational nature, and the four elements from which bodies are composed, came into being, when there was no substance pre-existing their creation? What is this power that, having moved to action, brought them into being? But the sons of the Hellenes do not accept this, not knowing almighty goodness and its life-giving, mind-transcending wisdom and reason.

3. God, who has existed from eternity as the Creator, creates—whenever He wills—through His consubstantial Word and Spirit, by His boundless goodness. Do not ask: “How is it, then, that the Creator, being good from all eternity, has appeared only now?” For I also tell you that the unfathomable wisdom of the infinite Being is beyond human understanding.

4. The Creator, having from eternity within Himself the knowledge of all that exists, brought it to fruition and set it in motion whenever He willed. For it is inappropriate to doubt whether the almighty God can bring anything to fruition whenever He wills.

5. Investigate why God created what He did; for this can be known; but do not probe into how and why He did so not long ago: for this is beyond your understanding. For among divine things, some are comprehensible to man, while others are not. Contemplation, if left unchecked, can cast one into the abyss, as one of the Saints (Gregory the Theologian) said.

6. Some say that creatures have coexisted with God from eternity; but this is impossible. For how can beings that are finite in every respect coexist from eternity with the Infinite, and how can they be creatures at all if they are coeternal with the Creator? But this is the argument of the Greeks, who conceive of God, the Creator, not as a nature at all, but merely as a set of attributes. We, however, recognizing God as almighty, say that He is the Creator not merely of attributes, but also of qualified natures. If this is so, then creatures have not coexisted with God from eternity.

7. The Godhead and the Divine are knowable in some respects and unknowable in others. They are knowable through contemplation of what surrounds Him; they are unknowable in that He is in Himself.
8. In the simple and infinite nature of the Holy Trinity, do not seek any inclination or capacity, lest you make It complex, like created beings: for that is absurd and does not apply to God.
9. Simple, uniform, without qualities, peaceful, unperturbed, serene—one nature that is boundless, almighty, and all-sustaining. Every creature, however, is composed of essence and accidents and is always in need of God's Providence, as it is not free from changeability.
10. Every intellectual and sensory nature, when brought into being, received from God the power to receive impressions from things; the intellectual received the power to think, and the sensory, the power to feel.
11. God merely communicates, whereas a creature both receives and communicates: it receives existence and well-being, but communicates only well-being; yet the corporeal nature does so differently than the incorporeal nature.
12. An incorporeal being conveys well-being by speaking, acting, and being contemplated; whereas a corporeal being conveys it only by being contemplated.
13. The eternal existence or non-existence of rational and intellectual beings depends on the will of the Creator, *who made "all things very good"*; but whether they exist as good or evil by their own choice depends on the will of these creatures.
14. Evil is not perceived in the nature of creatures, but in their errant and irrational movements.
15. The soul moves wisely when its desiring power is tempered by self-restraint, its passionate power yearns for love while turning away from hatred, and its intellectual power abides in God through prayer and spiritual contemplation.
16. One who, during times of temptation, does not show magnanimity in the face of sorrowful events but cuts himself off from love for his spiritual brothers does not yet possess perfect love or a deep understanding of God's Providence.
17. The purpose of God's Providence is to reunite those who have been torn apart in various ways by evil through true faith and spiritual love. The Savior suffered so *that "He might gather into one the scattered children of God"* (John 11:52). Therefore, whoever is unwilling to bear heavy trials, endure sorrowful events, or suffer painful tribulations walks outside of God's love and the purpose of His providence.
18. "*Love is patient and kind*" (1 Cor. 13:4): does not the one who is faint-hearted in the face of sorrowful events, who harbors malice toward those who have grieved him, and who cuts himself off from love for them, stray from the purpose of God's Providence?
19. Consider this: is it not within yourself, rather than in your brother, that the evil lies which separates you from your brother? And hasten to be reconciled with him, lest you fall away from the commandment of love.
20. Do not neglect the commandment of love; for through it you will be a son of God, but by transgressing it, you will prove yourself a son of Gehenna.
21. Love between friends is destroyed: if you are envious, or become the object of envy; if you cause or suffer harm; if you dishonor or suffer dishonor; and finally, if you harbor and hold onto suspicious thoughts about your brother. So, have you not done or suffered something like this, and is that why you are turning away from the love of friends?
22. If you have been tempted by a brother, and your distress has led you to hatred, do not be overcome by hatred, but overcome hatred with love. You can overcome it in this way: by praying sincerely to God for him, by accepting the apology offered by your brother, or by healing yourself with his apology, acknowledging yourself as the cause of the temptation and resolving to be patient until the storm passes.
23. Long-suffering is the one who waits until the end of the temptation and receives praise for what he has endured.
24. "*A patient man is rich in understanding*" (Prov. 14:29); for he relates everything that happens to the final end, and in anticipation of it endures all sorrow. The "*end,*" according to the Apostle, is "*eternal*" life (Rom. 6:22). "*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent*" (John 17:3).
25. Do not be quick to reject spiritual love; for there is no other path to salvation left for people.

26. Do not regard as wicked and evil today the one whom you yesterday honored as a spiritual brother and a man of virtue, out of hatred for him—hatred born in you through the instigation of the evil one—but with long-suffering love, remembering yesterday’s goodness, cast today’s hatred out of your soul.

27. Do not now revile the one whom you praised yesterday as good and extolled as virtuous, calling him depraved and evil, simply because your love has turned to hatred, using slander against your brother as an excuse for this evil hatred you harbor toward him; but continue to offer him the same praise, even if you are still grieved, and you will easily return to saving love.

28. Because of the resentment toward your brother that still lurks within you, do not alter your customary praise of him in conversations with other brothers by subtly interweaving criticism into your words; but speak of him in conversation with sincere praise and pray earnestly for him as you would for yourself—and soon you will be freed from destructive hatred.

29. Do not say, “I do not hate my brother,” when you turn away from the memory of him, but heed what Moses says: “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him*” (Leviticus 19:17).

30. Even if, due to some temptation, your brother continues to slander you, do not depart from a loving state of mind, and do not allow that same evil spirit to disturb your thoughts. You will not be led out of it if, even when reviled and slandered, you bless him and wish him well. Such is the path of wisdom in Christ, and whoever walks this path will dwell with Him.

31. Do not regard as well-intentioned those who direct words at you that stir up annoyance or hostility toward your brother, even if it seems they are speaking the truth; but turn away from such people as from deadly serpents, so that you may put a stop to their slander and free your soul from bitterness.

32. Do not wound your brother with insinuations, lest you receive the same in return and thereby drive the spirit of love from both of you; but with loving boldness, go and rebuke him (Matt. 18:15) to remove the causes of grief and to free both yourself and him from anxiety and vexation.

33. Examine your conscience with the utmost care to see if it is your fault that your brother will not be reconciled with you, and do not reject its rebuke with false reasoning—for it knows your innermost thoughts and will rebuke you at the hour of your departure from this world, and during prayer it will be a stumbling block to you.

34. In times of peace, do not dwell on what your brother said in a moment of anger—whether something unpleasant was spoken to your face or said about you to another in your absence, which you later heard about—lest, by harboring thoughts of ill will, you return once more to the destructive hatred of your brother.

35. A rational soul that harbors hatred toward another person cannot be at peace with God, who has given us this commandment: “*If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses*” (Matt. 6:15). Even if your brother does not want peace, keep yourself free from animosity by praying sincerely for him and not speaking ill of him to anyone.

36. The ineffable peace of the holy angels is based on these two dispositions: love for God and love for one another; likewise, the peace of all the saints from of old. And so our Savior has most wisely said: “*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 22:40).

37. Do not be self-indulgent; then you will not hate your brother. Do not be self-loving; then you will love God.

38. If you desire to live with your spiritual brothers, renounce your own desires at their door; for in no other way can you be at peace either with God or with those who live with you.

39. One who has attained perfect love and has ordered his entire life according to it calls “*Jesus*” the Lord “*by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:3). The opposite of this, however, results in the opposite.

40. Love for God always seeks to open the mind to conversation about God and the divine; love for one’s neighbor, on the other hand, always inclines one to think well of him.

41. It is characteristic of one who loves vain glory, or is attached to anything material, to take offense at people over trivial matters, to hold a grudge against them, to harbor hatred toward them, or to be enslaved by shameful thoughts; but all this is foreign to a God-loving soul.

42. When you do not speak or do anything shameful in your thoughts, when you do not hold a grudge against those who have harmed you or slandered you, and when, during prayer, your mind is constantly

detached from material things and images—know that you have attained a measure of dispassion and perfect love.

43. It is no small feat to free oneself from vanity; one is freed from it through the secret cultivation of virtues and frequent prayer; and the sign of this freedom is not to hold a grudge against those who have slandered you or are slandering you.

44. If you wish to be righteous, provide what is fitting for each part of yourself—that is, the soul and the body: for the thinking part of the soul—reading, spiritual contemplation, and prayer; for the impulsive part—spiritual love, which is the opposite of hatred; to the desiring part—chastity and self-restraint; and to the flesh, food and clothing, which alone are necessary.

45. The mind acts according to its nature; when it keeps the passions in check, it contemplates the meaning of all that exists and abides with God.

46. Just as health and sickness are seen in the body of an animal, and light and darkness in the ocean, so too are virtue and vice in the soul, and knowledge and ignorance in the mind.

47. A Christian attains wisdom through these three paths: the commandments, the dogmas, and faith. The commandments detach the mind from the passions; the dogmas lead it to the knowledge of the Being; and faith leads it to the contemplation of the Holy Trinity.

48. Some ascetics drive away only passionate thoughts, while others cut off the passions themselves. Passionate thoughts are driven away either by psalm-singing, prayer, contemplation of God, or some other appropriate occupation; the passions, however, are cut off by contempt for those things to which one is attached.

49. We are prone to passion toward women, wealth, glory, and so on. One can attain indifference and contempt toward women if, having renounced the world, one diligently strives, as one ought, to mortify the body through abstinence; toward wealth—if he convinces his mind to be content with what he has; toward fame— —if he comes to love the secret cultivation of virtues offered to God alone. The same applies to other passions. Whoever despises all these things never comes to harbor any animosity.

50. One who has renounced worldly things—such as a wife, possessions, and the like—has made the outer man a monk, but not yet the inner man; whereas one who has renounced passionate thoughts has made the inner man—that is, the mind—a monk as well. It is easy to make the outer man a monk, if one so desires; but it is no small feat to make the inner man a monk.

51. Who, then, in this category has been completely freed from passionate thoughts and has been deemed worthy to attain pure prayer, detached from all things—which is the mark of an inner monk?

52. Many passions lie hidden in our souls; they are revealed, however, when their objects appear.

53. Perhaps someone may remain unmoved by passions in the absence of their objects, having attained a small measure of dispassion; but as soon as the objects appear, the passions immediately begin to entice the mind.

54. In the absence of the object of a passion, do not consider yourself to possess perfect dispassion. But when an object does appear, and you remain unmoved neither by it nor by the memory of it, then know that you have entered the realm of dispassion; yet even then, do not be complacent: for although long-standing virtue subdues the passions, if you neglect it, they will be stirred up again.

55. He who loves Christ undoubtedly imitates Him as much as possible. Christ, for His part, never ceased to do good to people; when met with ingratitude and reviled, He was long-suffering; when beaten and killed by them, He endured it all, imputing no evil to anyone. These three actions constitute the works of love for one's neighbor; without them, anyone who claims to love Christ or to inherit His Kingdom is deceiving himself. For the Lord said: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father"* (Matt. 7:21). And again: *"Whoever loves Me will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15, 21), and so on.

56. The entire purpose of the Savior's commandments is to free the mind from intemperance and hatred, and to elevate it to love for Him and for one's neighbor, from which the light of holy, active knowledge is born.

57. Having been granted by God a certain knowledge, do not neglect love and self-control; for they, by purifying the passionate part of the soul, prepare for you a smooth path to knowledge.

58. The path to knowledge is dispassion and humility; *"without these, no one will see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14).

59. Since “*the mind boasts, but love builds up*” (1 Cor. 8:1), join love with the mind, and you will be free from pride; you will be a spiritual steward, edifying both yourself and all who draw near to you.

60. Love builds up because it does not envy, is not provoked by those who envy, and does not boast publicly about what is worthy of envy; it does not consider itself to have already attained perfection (Phil. 3:12), and regarding what it does not know, it is not ashamed to admit its ignorance. In this way, it protects the mind from conceit and always disposes it to excel in knowledge.

61. Knowledge is usually followed by conceit and envy, especially in the beginning. Conceit manifests itself only inwardly; but envy manifests itself both inwardly and outwardly: inwardly (on my part) toward those who possess knowledge, and outwardly (toward me) from those who lack it. Love repels these three vices: conceit, because “*it does not boast*”; internal envy, for “*it does not envy*”; external envy, for “*it is patient and kind*” (1 Cor. 13:4).—Therefore, one who possesses knowledge must also acquire love, so that it may keep the mind unharmed in all things.

62. One who has been granted the gift of knowledge but harbors resentment, ill will, or hatred toward another is like one who pierces his own eyes with thorns and thistles. Thus, knowledge necessarily requires love.

63. Do not concern yourself entirely with the flesh, but having assigned it a task according to its strength, turn your whole mind toward the inner life. For “*physical training is of little value, but godliness is of value in every way*” (1 Tim. 4:8), and so on.

64. He who dwells within—and cares ceaselessly for the inner life—practices self-control, is patient, shows mercy, and is humble; and not only that, but he also contemplates, studies theology, and prays. This is precisely what the Apostle means when he says, “*Walk by the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:16), and so on.

65. One who does not know how to walk the spiritual path does not concern himself with passionate thoughts, but focuses all his attention on the flesh—and either indulges in gluttony, debauchery, vexation, anger, and resentment, thereby clouding his mind; or he engages in ascetic practices to an excessive degree, thereby suppressing his thoughts.

66. Scripture does not take away from us anything given to us by God for our use, but it curbs intemperance and corrects recklessness. That is, it does not forbid eating, having children, or possessing money and spending it wisely; but it does forbid gluttony, adultery, and the like. It does not even forbid thinking about such things, for that is why the mind was created; but it does forbid thinking about them with passion.

67. Some of the things we do for God are done in accordance with the commandments, while others are not done in accordance with the commandments but, so to speak, as a voluntary offering. In accordance with the commandments—when we love God and our neighbor, love our enemies, do not commit adultery, do not murder, and so on—for which, if we violate them, we are subject to condemnation. Acts not based on the commandments include preserving our virginity, living a celibate life, renouncing all possessions, living as hermits, and so on. These actions serve as offerings so that, if through weakness we fail to fulfill a commandment, we may appease our gracious Lord with these offerings.

68. One who has chosen a celibate life or virginity must have “*loins girded*” and a “*lamp burning*” (Luke 12:35): “*loins girded*” through abstinence; and a “*lamp burning*” through prayer, contemplation of God, and spiritual love.

69. Some of the brethren think that they cannot possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit; for, through their neglect of keeping the commandments, they do not know that whoever has true faith in Christ possesses within himself, in a condensed form, all the gifts of God. But since, through our idleness, we are far removed from active love for Him—which would reveal to us the divine treasures within us—we rightly consider ourselves strangers to God’s gifts.

70. If, according to the words of the Divine Apostle, Jesus Christ dwells in our hearts “*through faith*” (Eph. 3:17), “*and in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom*” and knowledge (Col. 2:3), then all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in our hearts. They are revealed to the heart as each person is purified by the commandments.

71. “*This is the treasure hidden in a field*” (Matt. 13:44) of your heart, which you have not yet found because of your idleness. For if you had found it, you would have sold everything and bought that field. But you, having left that field, are working around it, where there is nothing but thorns and thistles.

72. That is why the Savior says: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matt. 5:8). They will see Him and the treasures within Him when they purify themselves through love and self-control, and all the more so the more they are purified.

73. That is why He also says: *“Sell your possessions and give alms”* (Luke 12:33), *“and all these things will be clean for you”* (Luke 11:41)—not as those who are preoccupied with things pertaining to the body, but as those who strive to purify their minds from hatred and intemperance, which the Lord calls *the “heart”* (Matt. 15:19). For all that defiles the mind prevents it from seeing Christ living within it through the grace of holy baptism.

74. Scripture calls the virtues “paths”; but love is the greatest of all virtues; which is why the Apostle said: *“And I will show you a still more excellent way”* (1 Cor. 12:31), one that leads one to despise all material things and to prefer the eternal to the temporal.

75. Love for God opposes lust; for it inclines the mind to abstain from sensual pleasures; and love for one’s neighbor opposes anger, for it compels one to despise glory and wealth. And these are the two coins that the Savior gave to the innkeeper (Luke 10:35) so that he might care for you. But do not be ungrateful by joining the robbers, lest you be wounded again and end up not merely barely alive, but dead.

76. Purify your mind of anger, resentment, and shameful thoughts; and then you will be able to recognize Christ dwelling within you.

77. Who has enlightened you with faith in the Holy, Consubstantial, and Worshiped Trinity? Or who has made known to you the incarnate plan of the One from the Holy Trinity? Who taught you about the incorporeal, about the origin and end of the visible world, or about the resurrection from the dead and eternal life, or about the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven and the Last Judgment? Is it not the grace of Christ dwelling within you, which is the pledge of the Holy Spirit? What is greater than this grace? Or what is better than such wisdom and knowledge? What is higher than such promises? If, even after all this, we remain idle and negligent, and do not purify ourselves of the passions that blind our minds and prevent us from seeing such truths more clearly than the sun itself, then we must blame ourselves, and not deny that grace dwells within us.

78. God, who has promised you eternal blessings and has placed the Spirit as a pledge in your heart, has commanded you to take care of your life so that the inner person, having been freed from passions, may begin to taste those blessings even in this present life.

79. As you become worthy of lofty divine contemplations, take special care to cultivate love and self-control, so that, by keeping the passionate part of your soul serene, you may have unceasing light within your soul.

80. Rein in the soul’s irritable nature with love; subdue its lustful nature with self-control; and lift up its thinking nature through prayer: and the light of your mind will never be dimmed within you.

81. The causes that destroy love are as follows: dishonor, harm inflicted, slander against one’s faith or way of life, beatings, blows, wounds, and the like; and furthermore, when this happens either to the person himself or to any of his relatives or friends. Whoever breaks off love for any of these reasons has not yet understood the purpose of Christ’s commandments.

82. Try as much as you can to love every person. If you cannot do this yet, then at least do not hate anyone. But you will not be able to do even this unless you despise all earthly things.

83. If someone has slandered you, do not hate him, but hate the slander and the demon that incited him to it. But if you hate the one who slandered you, then you have come to hate the person and have broken the commandment; and what he did with words, you are doing with deeds. But if you keep the commandment, show him an act of love, and if you can, help him, so that you may turn him away from evil.

84. Christ does not want you to harbor hatred or resentment toward anyone, nor anger or malice toward anyone, in any way whatsoever, or for any temporary reason. This is what the four Gospels preach to everyone.

85. Many of us speak, but few act. Yet no one should distort the word of God to suit their own carelessness; rather, they should confess their weakness without hiding God’s truth, lest, along with transgressing the commandments, they also become guilty of misinterpreting the word of God.

86. Love and self-restraint free the soul from passions; reading and contemplation of God deliver the mind from ignorance; and standing in prayer places the one who prays before God Himself.

87. When the demons see that we despise the things of this world, yet do not wish to hate people or fall away from love because of them, they then spread slander against us so that, unable to bear the distress, we may come to hate the slanderers.

88. There is no burden heavier for the soul than slander—whether it be against one’s faith or one’s conduct—and no one can disregard this except the one who, like Susanna, looks to God, the only One who is mighty and can deliver from troubles, just as He delivered her and revealed the truth to people as proof; just as He revealed it concerning her, and comforts the soul with hope.

89. Depending on how you pray for the one who slandered you, God will certainly reveal the truth about you to those who were led astray.

90. In essence, there is only one God; but in the disposition of the soul, there is only one who imitates God: for his chief aim is to unite the wicked with the good in essence, so that they too may become good. For this reason, when reviled, he blesses; when persecuted, he endures; when slandered, he comforts; when killed, he prays for those who kill him (1 Cor. 4:12–13). He does all this so as not to stray from his primary goal—love.

91. The Lord’s commandments teach us to make blessed use of the things that are in between. Blessed use of these intermediate things purifies the state of the soul; a pure state of the soul gives rise to discernment; and discernment gives rise to dispassion, from which perfect love is born.

92. One who, when tempted, cannot overlook a friend’s transgression—whether it is actually committed or merely appears to be so—does not yet possess dispassion. For the passions hidden in such a person’s soul, when stirred up, blind the mind and prevent one from perceiving the rays of truth and distinguishing good from evil. Should we not conclude that such a person has not yet attained perfect love, which drives out the fear of judgment (1 John 4:18)?

93. “*A true friend is not treacherous*” (Sir. 6:15): he regards his friend’s misfortunes as his own and bears them together with him, suffering even unto death.

94. There are many friends, but only in times of prosperity; in times of trial, however, you will scarcely find even one.

95. One must love every person from the heart, but place one’s hope in God alone, and serve Him alone with all one’s strength. For as long as He preserves us, all our friends favor us, and none of our enemies are able to harm us. But when He forsakes us, all our friends turn away from us, and all our enemies gain power over us.

96. There are four main kinds of God’s abandonment: one is providential abandonment, as was the case with the Lord Himself, so that through this apparent abandonment He might save those who were abandoned; another is abandonment as a trial, as was the case with Job and Joseph, so that one might be revealed as a pillar of courage and the other as a pillar of chastity. Another is abandonment for spiritual edification, as was the case with the Apostle Peter, so that through humility an abundance of grace might be preserved in him. Finally, there is abandonment through rejection, as was the case with the Jews, so that through punishment they might be turned to repentance. All these forms of abandonment are salvific and filled with God’s grace and love for humanity.

97. True keepers of the commandments and those who are truly initiated into the mysteries of God’s judgments do not abandon friends who are being tempted by God’s permission; but those who despise the commandments and are uninitiated into the mysteries of God’s judgments rejoice with a friend when he prospers, but when the one being tempted suffers, they abandon him. It sometimes happens that they take the side of the adversaries.

98. Christ’s friends love everyone sincerely, but are not loved by everyone. Worldly friends, on the other hand, do not love everyone, nor are they loved by everyone. Christ’s friends preserve their bond of love to the end; but worldly friends do so only until they come into conflict with one another over some worldly matter.

99. “*A friend is faithful, and kinship is strong*” (Sir. 6:14). For even in a friend’s prosperity, he is a good counselor and a like-minded partner; and in times of suffering, he is the most sincere defender and the most compassionate advocate.

100. Many have spoken at length about love, yet you will find it only among Christ’s disciples, if you seek it; for they alone had true Love as their teacher of love, of whom it is said: “*If I have the gift of prophecy*

and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2–3). For whoever has obtained love has obtained God Himself; *"for God is love"* (1 John 4:8): To Him be glory forever. Amen.

3. Speculative and Practical Chapters, Selected from the Seven Hundred Chapters of the Greek "On Love"

1. There is one God—beginningless, incomprehensible, possessing the full power to be (as He is), completely excluding any thought of *"when"* or *"how"* He exists, as He is inaccessible to all and unknowable by any creature in His nature.

2. Everything that exists is called conceivable and knowable—that is, such that there are demonstrable principles for its knowledge. God, however, is called inconceivable, but it is believed from the conceivable and knowable that He exists.

3. Knowledge of created things has its own proof, its own foundations obtained by natural means, by which they are naturally defined. God, however, is believed to exist solely on the basis of the foundations found in these things, granting the devout a confession and faith in His existence that is more certain than any proof. Faith is true knowledge, having unprovable foundations, serving as a confirmation of things that transcend the mind and language,

4. God is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that exists: the beginning as Creator, the middle as Provider, and the end as Completer; for, as Scripture says, *"from Him and through Him and to Him are all things"* (Rom. 11:36).

5. There is no soul more honorable than one that is rational by nature. God, being good, creates every soul in His image and brings it into being as self-moved—(free). Then each, according to its own will, either chooses honor or brings upon itself dishonor, of its own accord, through its own deeds.

6. God, as it is written, is the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), shining equally upon all with the rays of His goodness. The soul, however, depending on its disposition, is usually either like wax, as one who loves God, or like mud, as one who loves material things. Just as mud, by its very nature, is dried up by the sun, while wax is naturally softened by it, so too every soul that loves material things and the world, receiving from God enlightening inspirations and, according to its disposition, rejecting them, hardens like mud and, like Pharaoh, brings ruin upon itself; but every God-loving soul, on the other hand, is softened like wax and, receiving the imprints of the images of divine things, becomes a dwelling place for God in the spirit.

7. He who has enlightened his mind with divine insights, trained his speech to ceaselessly honor the Creator with divine songs, and sanctified his senses with pure and unblemished perceptions—he has added to the natural goodness of existence, in its image, well-being in its likeness through a voluntary disposition of goodwill.

8. He who compels his mind to contemplate the one God and His perfections, who makes speech the true interpreter and explicator of these perfections, and who has trained his senses to gaze piously upon the visible world and all that is in it, proclaiming to the soul the greatness of the intellect hidden therein—he preserves his soul unstained.

9. God, having freed us from the bitter bondage of the tyrants—the demons—has bestowed upon us the benevolent yoke of godliness: humility, by which all the devil's power is subdued, and every good is established in those who accept this yoke and is preserved from being stolen away.

10. The believer fears God; he who fears God humbles himself; he who humbles himself becomes meek, having adopted a disposition impervious to unnatural impulses of anger and lust; the meek keep the commandments; he who keeps the commandments is purified; he who is purified is enlightened; he who is enlightened is deemed worthy to lie with the Bridegroom—the Word—in the treasury of mysteries.

11. Just as a farmer, surveying a field suitable for planting trees, sometimes unexpectedly stumbles upon a treasure: so too every ascetic, humble and sincere, and even-tempered in spirit, free from the thickets of earthly passions, like the most blessed Jacob, when asked by his father about the secret of his success: *"What is this that you have so quickly found, my son?"* may answer, saying: *"What the Lord your God has given me"* (Gen. 27:20). For when God, without any effort on our part, bestows upon us—who did not expect it—profound insights into His wisdom, we think that we have suddenly discovered a spiritual treasure. A skilled and experienced ascetic is a spiritual farmer who takes what is perceived through the senses in visible things—like a wild tree—transplants it into the spiritual field, and thereby discovers a treasure: the grace-filled vision of the manifestation of God's wisdom in created things.

12. Let the one who seeks knowledge for the sake of showing off, and who does not attain it, not envy his neighbor, nor be consumed by sorrow; rather, let him undergo the preparatory labor for knowledge, as prescribed—the labor of active virtue. By zealously performing this in advance with the body, he will prepare the soul to receive knowledge.

13. Those who rightly seek knowledge of things with a pious intention, without any thought of showing off before others, will encounter most luminous insights into them and find guidance toward a truer knowledge of themselves. To such, the Law says: having entered the Promised Land, you will inherit “*great and good cities*” that you did not build, “*houses full of every good thing*” that you did not construct, “*springs that have been dug*” that you did not dig, “*vineyards and olive groves*” that you did not plant (Deut. 6: 10, 11). For the one who lives not for himself but for God is filled with divine gifts, which are not always evident because of the threatening onslaught of the passions.

14. The hypocrite, as long as he thinks he has not been exposed, remains at peace and is silent, content with the glory he derives from appearing righteous; but when he is exposed, he spews out scathing words, thinking to cover up his own shame by reviling others. To such a person, the Word of Scripture—comparing him to the offspring of a viper, as one who is wicked—commands him to produce fruits worthy of repentance, that is, to transform his innermost disposition of the heart in accordance with the image he presents.

15. One who pretends to be a friend in order to harm his neighbor is a wolf, concealing his wickedness under sheep’s clothing. Such a person, upon encountering a simple disposition, or anything said or done with Christian sincerity, seizes upon it and devours it, and then showers those whose words and conduct he attacks with countless insults, “*as one who spies on the liberty of the brethren which is in Christ*” (Gal. 2:4).

16. He who feigns silence with evil intent devises a plot against his neighbor; but failing in this, he turns to his own passion, inflicting torment upon his heart. But he who remains silent for the sake of good fosters friendship and departs rejoicing, as one who has received enlightenment that has dispelled the darkness.

17. In a gathering of brothers, the one who hastily interrupts the conversation does not hide (i.e., reveals) that he is afflicted by a love of glory; having been caught up in this, he offers many direct and indirect thoughts on the subject at hand, desiring to disrupt its flow.

18. The wise person, both teaching and learning, desires to learn and teach only what is useful; but the supposed sage, whether asking questions or being asked, offers only that which feeds curiosity.

19. Whatever blessings of grace a person receives by God’s favor, he must pass on to others without envy, according to the Lord’s word: “*Freely you have received; freely give*” (Matt. 10:8). He who hides a gift under the ground slanders the giver, as if he were cruel (Matt. 25:24), and renounces virtue for the sake of sparing the flesh. But whoever sells the truth to his enemies will later, when condemned, accept death by strangulation, unable to bear disgrace as a lover of glory.

20. Those who still fear the battle against their passions and dread the attacks of invisible enemies ought to remain silent; that is, in the struggle for virtue, one should not resort to conflict, but turn to prayer, entrusting to God the care of oneself and one’s protection—as it is written in the Book of Exodus: “*The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still*” (Ex. 14:14). But those who, after the defeat of their pursuing enemies, seek—in a spirit of gratitude—to understand what path of virtue they should take, should simply keep their hearts open and listen to what the Lord says, as was commanded to Israel: “*Hear, O Israel*” (Deut. 6:4)! But for those who, having purified their hearts, yearn uncontrollably for divine guidance, it is fitting to have reverent boldness, as a result of which they are told: “*Why do you cry out to Me?*” (Exodus 14:15). Thus, for those who are commanded to remain silent out of fear, it is fitting only to take refuge in God; but for those commanded to listen, readiness to hear and fulfill the divine commandments is fitting; and for those who have attained spiritual understanding, ceaseless crying out in prayer is fitting—both in asking for the removal of evils and in expressing thanksgiving for the blessings received.

21. The soul can never reach out toward the knowledge of God unless God Himself, in His gracious condescension toward it, touches it and lifts it up to Himself. Nor could the human mind ever ascend so high as to receive some divine illumination, were it not for God Himself, who exalts it—as far as the human mind is capable of being exalted—and enlightens it with divine radiance.

22. According to the Gospel, only a believer can move a mountain (Matt. 17:19) of sin through a life of active goodness, rooting out from within his former attachment to sensual things, which are fleeting and changeable. Whoever has become a disciple, receiving from the Word the broken pieces of bread—symbolizing spiritual guidance—will feed thousands with them, demonstrating through his deeds the

multiplying power of the Word (Matt. 15:32 et seq.). And whoever is able to become an Apostle heals “*every infirmity and every disease and casts out demons*” (Matt. 10:1): “*casts out demons*,” that is, drives away the influence of the passions; “*heals diseases*,” that is, through hope he restores a godly disposition to those who have lost it; he cures infirmities, that is, he rouses and strengthens those who have grown lax through sloth with the word of judgment. But he who has received “*authority to trample on serpents and scorpions*” (Luke 10:19) destroys the beginning and the end of sin.

23. An apostle and a disciple are, of course, both believers; but a disciple is not always an apostle, though he is always a believer; whereas a believer alone is no longer a disciple or an apostle. However, it is possible, through life and contemplation, for this third (the believer) to rise to the rank and dignity of the second (the disciple), and for this second to rise to the rank and dignity of the first (the Apostle).

24. That which is produced in time according to a temporal order, once it has attained perfection, comes to a halt, because its natural growth then ceases. But that which the grace of God produces according to the order of the virtuous life, even after attaining perfection, is again impelled toward growth: for here it is the case that the end of one thing serves as the beginning of another. Whoever has cut off within himself the corrupt passions dwelling in him through active virtue has thereby begun other most divine transformations “*from glory to glory*” (2 Cor. 3:18): for God, who works within him, never ceases to do good, just as He never began to do so; for just as it is the nature of light to shine, so it is the nature of God to do good. Why, according to the law—which corresponds to the state of temporal things that are born and die—is the Sabbath observed by ceasing from work; but according to the Gospel—which corresponds to the state of spiritual and intellectual things—it is celebrated by performing good deeds, although those who do not understand that the Sabbath is for man, and not man for the Sabbath—and that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath—take offense at this (Mark 2:27–28).

25. To experience spiritual joy, it is not enough for the soul merely to subdue the passions unless it also acquires virtues through the fulfillment of the commandments. “*Do not rejoice*,” says the Lord, “*because the demons are subject to you*”—that is, the workings of the passions—“*but rejoice because your names are written in heaven*”—that is, that by the grace of sonship, for the sake of virtue, you have been transferred to the category of dispassion.

26. Until we have, through the mind, detached ourselves from our natural state and from everything that comes after God, we cannot consider ourselves to have acquired an unshakable habit of virtue. For only when such a disposition is established within us through love will we come to know the power of the divine promise; for the perfect immutability of the worthy is established, as we must believe, precisely where the mind has previously rooted that power through its love. And one who has not withdrawn from himself and from everything that can be conceived in any way, and who has not established himself in a silence that transcends all thought (the stilling of all movements of the mind), cannot in any way be free from changeability.

27. The great Moses, after he had already set up his tabernacle outside the camp—that is, after he had firmly established his heart and mind beyond all that is visible—began to worship God; and after he had entered into darkness, that is, into the invisible and immaterial realm of knowledge, he remained there, performing the most sacred mysteries (or is consecrated for that purpose) (Ex. 33: 7; 20: 21).

28. In Holy Scripture, one can distinguish between the flesh and the spirit, as if it were a kind of spiritual person. And whoever were to say that the letter of Scripture is the flesh, while its meaning is the spirit or the soul, would not err against the truth. It is clear, however, that the wise person is one who, having cast aside the flesh as something perishable, clings entirely to the spirit as that which is imperishable.

29. The one who fulfills the law through life and conduct abstains from certain passionate deeds, offering to God as a sacrifice the activity of the speechless passions. And this is sufficient for his salvation, given his spiritual infancy.

30. Nurtured by the prophetic word to reject the works of the passions, he also strives to set aside any sympathy for them and any association with them that arises in the soul, so that, by showing himself to be abstaining from sin with the worse part—that is, the flesh—and with the better part—that is, the soul—he may not be secretly sinning with uncontrollable passion.

31. Having sincerely embraced the Gospel way of life, he cuts off within himself both the beginning and the end of sin, and practices every virtue both in deed and in thought, offering to God a sacrifice of praise

and confession, as one delivered from the active assault of the passions, free from the mental struggle against them, and possessing only an insatiable delight that nourishes the soul with hope for future blessings.

32. Sensation—or the perception of sensory impressions—accompanies the *“active” person*, who labors to practice virtues; whereas insensitivity—or the lack of being swayed by sensory impressions—is characteristic of the *“contemplative” person*, who focuses his mind on God, detaching it from the flesh and the world. The one who strives to free the soul from the natural bonds of sympathy with the flesh—the *“active” one*, through labor on the path of goodness—often feels weary and senses his good disposition waning; but the one who, having torn out the thorns of this sympathy through practice and abiding in contemplation, can no longer be captivated or held back by anything, having been purified of that by which those who sought to dominate him usually wounded and held him captive.

33. Just as the fruit of disobedience is sin, so the fruit of obedience is virtue; and just as disobedience is followed by the transgression of the commandments and the severing of the covenant with the One who gave the commandments, so obedience is followed by the fulfillment of the commandments and the closest union with the One who commanded them. For he who keeps the commandment through obedience has fulfilled the truth and preserved unbroken the unity of love with the One who commanded. But he who transgresses the commandment through disobedience has committed sin and cut himself off from the unity of love with the One who commanded.

34. Whoever, after the breaking of the union due to transgression, seeks to be reunited again, first turns away from the passions, then from passionate thoughts, then from nature and all that is natural (i.e., from the material world), then from mental concepts and knowledge of them (i.e., from the spiritual world), and finally, having transcended the diversity of Providence’s plans (the course of events), approaches the Unity itself in a way that is unknown: in that Unity, having beheld his own immutability, he *“rejoices with an inexpressible joy”* (1 Pet. 1:8), *“as one who has found the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”* (Phil. 4:7), and who, to those deemed worthy of it, ceaselessly protects them from falling.

35. The fear of Gehenna compels those being led onto this path (beginners) to avoid sin; the desire for a reward of blessings imparts readiness to those who are progressing in the practice of virtues; and the mystery of love elevates the mind above all created things, making it blind to everything that comes after God. For only those who have become blind to everything other than God does the Lord enlighten, revealing to them what is most divine (Ps. 145:8).

36. On the Lord, as on a foundation of faith, as we rebuild the lofty edifice of virtues, let us lay upon this foundation *“gold, silver, and precious stones,”* that is, pure and unadulterated theology, a life that is bright and glorious, divine thoughts, and pearl-like contemplations; and not *“wood, hay, and straw”* (1 Cor. 3:12)—that is, not idolatry or a passion for the sensual, not an irrational life, not passionate thoughts devoid, like ripe ears of grain, of wise understanding.

37. Let the one who devotes himself to spiritual knowledge keep the steps of his soul steadfast before the Lord, as God said to Moses: *“But you, stand here with me”* (Exod. 33:2 ff.). It is important to understand, however, that there are distinctions even among those who stand before the Lord, if the wise read the following carefully: *“There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power”* (Mark 9:1). For the Lord does not always appear in glory to all who stand before Him; but to those who are just beginning their journey toward Him (the beginners), He comes in the form of a servant, while to those who are strong enough to follow Him in the ascent to the high mountain of His Transfiguration, He appears in the form of God, in which He existed before the world began. Thus, it is possible for the same Lord to appear differently to those who approach Him—to one in one way and to another in another, according to the faith of each, which varies the vision.

38. It is said of one who leads an active life that he dwells temporarily in the flesh, like a stranger whose aim is, through the practice of virtues, to sever from his soul any sympathy for the flesh and to detach himself from material delights. And of one who leads a contemplative life, it is said that he dwells in virtue itself, as one who contemplates the truth in mirrors and, as it were, in riddles. For he has not yet beheld, through a face-to-face experience, the true forms of the hoped-for blessings as they truly are. And every saint, with regard to future blessings, *“walks as a stranger,”* crying out: *“I am a sojourner and a stranger, as were all my fathers”* (Ps. 38: 7, 13).

39. It is always good, having detached ourselves from all things, to seek God, as we are commanded (Ps. 45:11; 104:4). For although, by the very nature of this present life, in seeking Him we cannot reach the

depths of God, perhaps, having attained even a little of His depth, we will behold the holiest of the holy and the most spiritual of the spiritual. The High Priest illustrates this figuratively when, from the Holy Place (the first part of the tabernacle), which is holier than the courtyard, he enters the Holy of Holies, which is holier than the Holy Place.

40. If the Son of God and the Father, the Word of God, became the Son of Man and a human being for this very reason—so that He might make people gods and sons of God—then let us believe that we will be where “*Christ Himself, as the head of the whole body,*” (1 Cor. 1:18), who became our “*Forerunner*” to the Father according to His humanity. For in the assembly of the gods—that is, of those who are saved—God will stand in the midst, distributing the rewards (according to each one’s worthiness) of that bliss, without, however, separating the worthy from one another by place.

41. Whoever still indulges in the passionate desires of the flesh lives in the land of the Chaldeans, as a servant and maker of idols. But when, having come to sound judgment, he gains some understanding of the way of life befitting his nature (and develops a sympathy for it); then, having left the land of the Chaldeans, he goes to Haran in Mesopotamia (Gen. 11:28–31)—that is, to a state bordering on virtue and sin, not yet purified of sensual allure. And when he goes beyond the limits of this middle, sensual understanding of good, he then enters the land of goodness—that is, a state free from all sin and ignorance—which the true God reveals and promises to give as a reward for virtue to those who love Him.

42. Let the one who is eager to attain wisdom in the spirit of piety, having taken up the battle against invisible forces, pray that both natural discernment (of good and evil)—whose light is not great—and the enlightening grace of the Spirit may abide with him; of which the first guides the flesh toward active virtue, while the second guides the mind to prefer above all else fellowship with wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon 8:2), “*by which the strongholds of evil and every exaltation that sets itself against the mind of God are destroyed*” (2 Corinthians 10:4). This is also demonstrated by Joshua, who prays, “*May the sun stand still over Gibeon*”—that is, may the unwaning light of God’s knowledge be preserved in him on the mountain of mental contemplation—“*and the moon over the wilderness*”—(Josh. 10:12)—that is, may the natural distinction between good and evil, which transcends carnal weakness, remain unchanging with regard to virtue.

43. “*Gibeon*” is the exalted mind; and “*the wilderness*” is the flesh, humbled by death. “*The sun*” is the Word, which enlightens the mind, gives it the power for contemplation, and delivers it from all ignorance; and the “*moon*” is the natural law, which obliges the flesh to submit lawfully to the spirit in order to accept the yoke of the commandments. The moon is taken as a symbol of nature because of its changeability. However, in the saints, nature remains unchanging because of their unchanging habit of virtue.

44. The Lord is not to be sought outside of those who seek Him, but those who seek Him must seek Him within themselves by faith, as evidenced by their deeds: “*The word is near you,*” says the Apostle; “*in your mouth and in your heart—that is, the word of faith*” (Rom. 10:8); for the search for the word of faith is the search for Christ Himself.

45. Without dwelling on the height of God’s boundlessness, let us not despair of God’s love for humanity, as if, because of such height, it could not reach us; nor, recalling the immeasurable depth of our fall through sin, let us not doubt the possibility of the resurrection of the virtue that has been put to death within us. Both are possible for God—both to descend and enlighten our minds with knowledge, and to restore virtue within us once more, and to exalt us with Himself through works of righteousness. “*Do not say in your heart,*” says the Apostle, “*‘Who will ascend into heaven?’—that is, to bring Christ down; or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’—that is, to bring Christ up from the dead*” (Rom. 10:6–7).

46. Like animals, those who live for their senses alone abuse God’s creations to satisfy their passions. Paying no heed to the clear word of wisdom—that they might know and glorify God through His creations, and understand where we come from, what we are, what our purpose is, and toward what end we were created through the visible world—they wander in darkness their entire lives, grasping with both hands nothing but ignorance of God.

47. Those who pay attention only to the letter of Holy Scripture and, bound by the law to bodily service, associate the dignity of the soul with the sacrifices of speechless animals, think they can please God through these offerings. They are very concerned with the body and its outward purifications, but they pay no heed to the beauty of the soul, which is marred by the wounds of the passions, even though it is for the soul’s sake that the multitude of visible things was created and the entire Law and all the divine Word were revealed.

48. The fact that the Lord “*is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel*” (Luke 2:34), if both aspects are taken in a positive light, means: for the fall of each believer into passions and evil thoughts, and for the rising of virtues and every God-loving thought.

49. “*Out of fear of the Jews, they were sitting in an upper room with the doors locked*” (John 20:19)—that is, out of fear of the spirits of malice, firmly established in the realm of revelations, at the height of divine contemplations, having shut off their senses like doors, —do not accept the God-Word who comes unbeknownst to them, who, appearing to them not according to the order of sensory phenomena, grants you dispassion through peace, and through the breath—communion with the Holy Spirit—conferring authority over evil spirits and revealing the symbols of His mysteries.

50. “*The land of the Chaldeans*” is a life of passion, in which sinful idols are set up and worshiped. “*Mesopotamia*” is a way of life that veers from one extreme to the other. And “*the Promised Land*” is a state (of the spirit) filled with every kind of (spiritual) blessing. Anyone who, like ancient Israel, does not care for this state of well-being, falls back into the slavery of the passions and is deprived of the freedom that has been granted.

51. It should be noted that none of the saints went to Babylon of their own free will: for it is inappropriate and unwise for those who love God to choose what is evil instead of what is good. If, however, some of them were involuntarily taken there along with the people, we understand by “them” those who, not of their own accord but due to special circumstances—for the sake of saving those in need of guidance—set aside the lofty discourse of knowledge and turned to the teaching on the passions: by virtue of which circumstance the great Apostle deemed it more necessary to remain in the flesh—that is, to continue teaching moral doctrine to his disciples—even though he had every desire to renounce moral teaching and be with Christ through pure and simple spiritual contemplation (Phil. 1:29).

52. Just as the blessed David, playing the harp, soothed Saul, who was tormented by an evil spirit (1 Sam. 16:23), so every spiritual word—sweet because of the contemplative insights that permeate it—soothes a mind afflicted with epilepsy, freeing it from the evil conscience that oppresses it.

53. “*A man of fair complexion with kind eyes,*” like the great David (1 Sam. 16:12), is one who, through the radiance of a life lived according to God, possesses a word of wisdom that shines as brightly as that life itself. In such a person, good deeds are combined with contemplation; the former shines with various virtues, while the latter shines with divine thoughts.

54. One who prays to receive daily bread certainly does not receive it entirely as it is in itself, but as the recipient is able to receive it. To all who ask, He gives Himself—the Bread of Life (John 6:35)—as a who loves mankind; yet not to all in equal measure, but more to those who have done great deeds of righteousness, and less to those who are lacking in such deeds: to each according to the capacity (or disposition) of his mind to receive it.

55. To the one who lives an active life, the Lord is present through virtues, but He is absent from the one who attaches no value to virtue. Again, to the contemplative man, He is present through true knowledge of things; but He is absent from the one who, to any degree, falls short in this regard.

56. At the beginning of teaching people piety, the matter usually proceeds as if it pertained only to the body. And in the early stages of approaching godliness, we speak more according to the letter than according to the spirit. Then, gradually drawing closer to the spirit and refining the carnal nature of our speech with spiritual contemplations, we come to dwell purely in Christ, as much as is possible for human beings; so that we can say, following the Apostle: “*Though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him no longer in that way*” (2 Cor. 5:16). This is due to the simple (or pure) approach of the mind to the Word without any veils over it, since we have already progressed from a carnal understanding of the Word to the vision of “*His glory, as the only-begotten of the Father*” (John 1:14).

57. Whoever has begun to live the life in Christ has transcended both the righteousness of the Law and natural righteousness: as the Divine Apostle makes clear when he says, “*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything*” (Gal. 6: 15)—in other words, using the term “*circumcision*” to denote righteousness under the law, and the term “*uncircumcision*” to allude to a similar righteousness according to the law of nature.

58. The Word of God is the way (John 14: 6) for those who, leading an active life, faithfully and steadfastly run the race of virtue, turning neither to the right out of vanity nor to the left out of the temptation of the passions—and directing their steps toward God: which Asa, king of Judah, failed to observe to the end

(3 Kings 15:23), fell ill, as it is said, in his old age with his legs, having become feeble and too weak to continue on the path of life according to God.

59. *"I am the door,"* said the Lord (John 10:9). For He leads those who have successfully completed the entire path of virtue, in the blameless course of their active lives, into the realm of knowledge and, like light, reveals to them the most radiant treasures of wisdom. He is the same—the way, the door, the key, and the kingdom: the way, as a guide; the key, as the one who unlocks the entrance to the divine treasures for the worthy; the door, as the one who leads in; the kingdom, as the inheritance, and as the One who is present in all through communion.

60. The Lord is called *"light, life, resurrection, and truth: Light,"* both as the illuminator of souls, as the dispeller of the darkness of ignorance, as the enlightener of the mind to the understanding of perplexing things, and as the revealer of mysteries accessible only to the pure; *"life,"* as the Giver to souls who love Him of the proper movement within the realm of divine things; *"resurrection,"* as the One who rouses the mind from its dead attachment to the material and purifies it from all corruption and lifelessness; *"truth,"* as that which grants the worthy an unwavering disposition toward good deeds.

61. It is not the one who merely reverently honors God with words who glorifies God within himself, but the one who, for God's sake and because of the commandments, patiently endures sufferings and labors. Such a person is in turn glorified by God with the glory that exists in God, as a reward for virtue, bearing within himself the grace of dispassion through communion. For everyone who glorifies God within himself through sufferings endured for the sake of virtue in his active life is himself glorified in God through the dispassionate illumination of the divine rays in a state of contemplation. And the Lord, speaking of His voluntary passion, says: *"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him at once"* (John 13:31–32). From this it is clear that sufferings for the sake of virtue will be followed by divine gifts of grace.

62. As long as the soul makes its passage from strength to strength and from glory to glory—that is, progressing from one virtue to a greater virtue, and ascending from one level of knowledge to a higher—it does not cease to be a stranger, as it is said: *"My soul has wandered far"* (Ps. 119: 6). For the distance is great, and it must pass through many degrees of knowledge until *"you enter the place of wonderful dwelling, even the house of God, amid the sound of joy and praise, the noise of the festive crowd"* (Ps. 41:5)—always adding a voice to the voices, a spiritual voice to the spiritual voices, as one progresses in spiritual contemplations, rejoicing in the things clearly perceived—with joy and fitting thanksgiving. Such celebrations are observed by all who have received the grace of *"the Spirit who cries out in their hearts, 'Abba, Father'"* (Gal. 4:6).

63. *"A wonderful dwelling place"* is an impassive and unshakable disposition toward the virtues, through which God the Word, having come, adorns the soul with the various beauties of the virtues, as a tabernacle. The house of God is knowledge composed of many and varied contemplations, through which God, having visited the soul, fills it with an abundance of wisdom. *"The voice of joy"* is the exultation of the soul as it beholds the multitude of virtues. Confession is thanksgiving for the glorious satisfaction or fulfillment with wisdom. *"The sound"* is the ceaseless, mysterious praise that arises from the blending of both—that is, joy and confession.

64. Having courageously overcome carnal passions, and having won sufficient victories over unclean spirits, and having cast their thoughts out of the realm of his soul, let him pray that he may be granted a pure heart and that a righteous spirit may be renewed within him—that is, that through God's grace he may be completely cleansed of evil thoughts and filled with divine thoughts.

65. He who has made his heart pure not only comes to know the meaning and significance of things that are secondary and exist after God, but, having passed beyond all of them, beholds God Himself in a certain way: in this lies the ultimate limit of all good. When God visits such a heart, He deems it worthy to inscribe His words upon it by the Spirit, as upon the tablets of Moses, to the extent that the heart has cultivated itself through good deeds and contemplation, in accordance with the commandment that mysteriously decrees: *"Be fruitful and multiply"* (Gen. 35:11).

66. The mind of Christ, which the saints receive—as it is said, *"We have the mind of Christ"* (1 Cor. 2:16)—does not come by depriving us of our own mental faculties, nor does it essentially and personally take the place of our mind; rather, it illuminates the power of our mind by its own nature and draws its activity into union with itself. In my view, the mind of Christ is possessed by one who thinks about everything in His spirit and is led through all things to think of Him.

67. We are called the body of Christ, according to the Apostle's words: "*You are the body of Christ, and individually members of it*" (1 Cor. 12:27)—not because we are deprived of our bodies while being His body, nor because He personally passes into us or is divided among our members; but because, like the flesh of Christ, our own is freed from sinful corruption. For just as Christ was sinless by nature, both in body and soul, as a human being, so too we who believe in Him and are clothed with the Spirit in Him can, by our own free will, be sinless in Him.

68. As long as anyone remains in this life, no matter how perfect he may be, according to his present condition—in action and contemplation—he possesses only in part both knowledge and prophecy and the pledge of the Holy Spirit, but not in full—since he is yet to attain the perfect state, which reveals the truth face to face to the worthy, just as it is in itself: so that he will not merely possess a part of the fullness, but will bear within himself the fullness itself through communion. For the Apostle says that then all (i.e., those who are saved) "*will reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4: 13); "*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col. 2:3); upon the revelation of "*which will be abolished in part*" (1 Cor. 13:10).

69. Some ask: What will be the state of those who attain perfection in the Kingdom of God? Will there be progress and advancement (toward ever greater goodness), or will there be a single, unchanging state? What will the bodies and souls be like then, and how should we think about this? Upon reflection, one might say that, just as in physical life, food has a dual purpose—sometimes it serves to nourish growth, and sometimes to sustain those being nourished—namely, —as long as we have not yet reached the full measure of bodily growth, we nourish ourselves for growth, but when the body ceases to increase in size, then it is nourished not for growth but for preservation: so too, with regard to the soul, nourishment has a twofold significance. It is nourished by virtues and contemplation when it prospers, until, having transcended all that exists, it reaches the measure of Christ's fulfillment: but having attained this, it ceases to progress or to increase itself by the prescribed means, and, being nourished directly by imperishable food in a manner that transcends understanding—and perhaps for that very reason by the highest form of growth— it receives it now only to preserve the God-like perfection given to it and to experience the immeasurable delights of that food, through which, by receiving the well-being that always sustains it in the same way, it becomes a god through participation in Divine grace, having itself ceased all actions of mind and sensation, and having caused the natural actions of the body—united with it to the extent of its accessible deification—to cease as well; so that through soul and body the one God shines forth, overcoming their natural characteristics with an abundance of glory.

70. Some of those who love God seek to understand the nature of the difference between the eternal dwellings and the promised inheritances—whether it will be determined by place, or by the quantity and quality of each person's spiritual perfections. Some hold the former view, while others hold the latter. Whoever has come to know that "*the kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:21) and that "*in my Father's house there are many dwelling places*" (John 14:2) will side with the latter view.

71. The Kingdom of God the Father, by His omnipotence, is present in all believers; but by grace, it is present in those who have completely renounced every inclination toward natural life—both of the soul and of the body—and have attained spiritual life; so that they can say, "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20).

72. He who, through the labors of virtue, has been able to "*put to death the members that are on the earth*" (Col. 3:5) and, by fulfilling the commandments of the Word, overcomes the world that is within him, will have no sorrow, just as one who has already left the world behind and begun to dwell in Christ, the conqueror of the world of passion and the giver of every kind of peace. For whoever has not renounced attachment to material things will certainly have sorrow, as his feelings fluctuate along with the changes in that which is changeable by nature; but whoever has begun to dwell in Christ no longer perceives, in any way, changes in material things, whatever they may be. That is why the Lord says: "*I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). That is to say, in Me, the Word, you will have peace, being delivered from the vicissitudes and turmoil of earthly things; but in the world—that is, in your attachment to material things—you will have sorrow, because of the ceaseless change from one thing to another within it. Both will experience sorrow: the one who acts virtuously, because of the labor associated with it, and the one who loves the world, because of losses and deprivations in material things; but for one it is salvific, while for the other it is ruinous

and destructive. For both, the Lord is the source of peace: for the former, because after the labors of virtue He grants him the peace of dispassion in a state of contemplation; and for the latter, because through repentance He removes from him his habitual attachment to the transitory.

73. We must be not only slayers of bodily passions but also destroyers of the soul's passionate thoughts, imitating that Holy One who says: *"In the morning I will destroy all the sinners of the earth, to cut off from the city of the Lord all who commit iniquity"* (Ps. 100:8); that is, bodily passions and unlawful thoughts of the soul.

74. Whoever, with godly and righteous discernment, preserves the path of virtue unblemished by straying to the side opposed to it will understand the visitation of God that comes upon him for the sake of dispassion, as the same holy Prophet assures us, saying: *"I will sing and understand the way of the blameless when He comes to me"* (Ps. 100: 2).

75. One who is being led onto the path of piety should not be guided solely by a desire to fulfill the commandments, but also by the remembrance of the severity of the judgments of divine justice, which should frequently spur him on to deeds of virtue; so that he may both desire the divine out of love and refrain from evil out of fear. This is why it says, *"I will sing of your mercy and judgment, O Lord"* (Ps. 100: 1), testifying that just as one, sweetened by love, converses prayerfully with God, so one, strengthened by fear, sends up a song to Him.

76. There is but one pre-eternal and pre-substantial good Being, the Triune Unity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—who together constitute the infinite of the three infinite ones; concerning His being—how He is, what He is, and in what way He is—all understanding is beyond the reach of created minds. It eludes all the understanding of those who reason, by no means because of its natural inner hiddenness, and its knowledge immeasurably surpasses all knowledge.

77. One God the Father, the Begetter of the One Son, and the Source of the One Holy Spirit; an indivisible Unity and an inseparable Trinity; the beginningless Mind, the sole Begetter of the One, the essentially beginningless Word, and the Source of the One ever-existing Life, that is, the Holy Spirit.

78. One God, the One who is without beginning and co-eternal, having no parts and being indivisible; the One is both the One and the Trinity

79. Christ God is born, and, by assuming flesh endowed with a rational soul, becomes man—He who bestowed being upon all that exists from the One who sustains all, and whom the Virgin, having given birth to Him supernaturally, did not lose any sign of her virginity. For just as He became man without altering His nature or changing His powers, so too does He make and preserve as a Virgin the One who gave birth to Him and is His mother, pointing to one miracle within the other and, at the same time, using each to veil the other. God Himself, by His very nature— —is always mysteriously hidden; and if He sometimes reveals Himself from His natural hiddenness, He does so in such a way that by very act of revealing it, He makes it even more hidden. Thus (and in His birth as a human being) He makes the Virgin a birthing mother, so that the very act of birth formed the unbreakable bonds of virginity.

80. Let us gaze with faith upon the mystery of the Divine Incarnation, and simply glorify, without questioning, the One who deigned to do this for us. For who, relying on the power of his own reason, can explain how the Word of God is conceived? How is flesh formed for Him without seed? How is He born without decay? How is the Mother the one who remained a Virgin even after giving birth? How does He who is above all perfection grow in years (Luke 2:52)? How did He, being pure, receive baptism? How did He Himself, though hungry, satisfy the hungry? How did He, who was weary, give strength? How did He, who suffered, grant healing? How did He, who was dying, give life? And—putting the last before the first—how can God be man, and—what is even more mysterious—how can the Word, in His hypostasis, be essentially in the flesh, while in His nature He remains hypostatically one with the Father? How is He both God by nature and, naturally, a man, without renouncing either nature—neither the divine nature by which He is God, nor our human nature by which He became man? – All these mysteries are encompassed by a single faith, which confesses things that exist, things that are beyond words and understanding (Heb. 11: 1).

81. Adam, having disobeyed the commandment, learned that the birth of our nature has its origin in sensual pleasure. The Lord, banishing this from nature, did not deem it fitting for Himself to be conceived from seed. The woman, having transgressed the commandment, showed that the birth of our nature begins with pain. The Lord, having removed these from human nature, did not allow the mother to suffer decay after giving birth; so that He might remove from human nature both voluntary pleasure and, because of it,

involuntary suffering, becoming the destroyer of that of which He was not the Creator—and so that He might teach that another life must mysteriously begin in the spirit, a life that may begin with suffering and illness, but ending in every way with divine delight and endless joy. For this reason, the Creator of man becomes a human being and is born as a human, so that He may save humanity; and by healing passions with passions, He will appear as the slayer of our passions, renewing our spiritual dispositions with love through His own fleshly privations.

82. It is beneficial for virtue to labor amidst painful trials; for in such cases, it graciously bestows upon all who endure them the reward of a dispassionate soul, through which the soul, united with God in love, turns away in disposition from the flesh and the world. The exhaustion of the body is the strengthening of the soul.

83. Carried away by the allure of sensual pleasure, we have preferred death to true life. Let us therefore gratefully endure the bodily labor that destroys this pleasure, so that when death destroys it—along with the death that arose through it—we may receive the life returning to us, which was once sold for pleasure but is now bought back for a few labors of the flesh.

84. If, when the body is healthy and well-fed, the power of sin usually increases, then it is clear that when it is in want, the power of virtue should flourish. Let us therefore bear with courage the weariness of the flesh—this purifier of the soul’s defilements and the cause of future glory. *“For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18).

85. Just as doctors who treat the body do not prescribe the same medicine for everyone, so too God, in healing the diseases of the soul, does not know a single method of healing suitable for all; but by providing what is necessary for each soul, He brings about healing. Let us therefore give thanks to Him as we are being healed, even if what happens to us involves suffering; for the outcome is blessed.

86. Nothing reveals the disposition of the soul as clearly as the rebellions of the weary flesh: for if it yields to them, it shows that it loves the flesh more than God; but if it remains unshaken by such temptations, it reveals that it honors virtue more than the flesh; for this reason it will receive God as a fellow inhabitant within itself—He who was pleased to suffer in our nature for its sake—and, as He once called out to His disciples: *“Take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

87. If all the saints have shared in corrective discipline, then let us, too, be grateful along with them when we are corrected, so that we may be deemed worthy to share in their glory. *“The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes every son He accepts”* (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6).

88. Adam, having accepted the rib (his wife, taken from his rib), which offered him sweetness, cast humanity out of Paradise. But the Lord, who was willing to be pierced by a spear in His side, admitted the thief into Paradise. Let us therefore love the painful mortification of the flesh and hate its pleasures: for the former leads into Paradise and makes us partakers of its blessings; while the latter drive us out of it and deprive us of its blessings.

89. If God suffers in the flesh, having become man, who then will not rejoice when suffering, having God as a partner in that suffering? For suffering with Him is a path to the kingdom. True is the one who said, *“If we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him”* (Rom. 8:17).

90. If it is absolutely necessary to suffer, because of the desire for pleasure that our first parent mingled with our nature, then let us courageously endure these temporary sufferings, which dull the sting of that desire within us and deliver us from the eternal torments that would result from it.

91. The end of all good is love, for it guides, leads, and draws all who walk in it toward God, the supreme good and the source of all good, remaining ever faithful, never failing, and always unchanging. Faith is the foundation upon which hope and love follow, as it firmly establishes the truth. Hope is the stronghold—with love and faith standing on either side of it—as it demonstrates to both the faithfulness of the One believed in and the loveliness of the One loved, and teaches the way to attain them. Love is the fulfillment of these, embracing all that is ultimately desirable and offering rest in it; instead of faith in what is and hope for what will be, it brings about (and within itself) the possession of these as present and the enjoyment of them as inherent.

92. There are three evils, the greatest and most pernicious, and, to put it simply, the progenitors of all evil: ignorance, self-love, and hatred, which are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing. For from ignorance of God comes self-love, and from this comes hatred toward one’s fellow human beings. And no one disputes that the evil one produces and stirs them up within us, teaching us to misuse our faculties—reason, desire, and energy.

93. We must, with our reason—instead of ignorance—ascend to God through the pursuit of knowledge of Him—through desire, having purified it of the passion of self-love, to direct all our desire solely toward God—and by energy, having freed it from hatred, to strive to attain the one God and to create within ourselves the divine and blissful love that unites us with God and reveals the lover of God as God—a love that arises from them (i.e., the knowledge of God and the desire for God) and for the sake of which they exist.

94. When we reject self-love—which, as I have said, is the beginning and mother of all evils—then everything that stems from it will be cast aside along with it; for when it is gone, no form or trace of evil can possibly remain within us.

95. We ought to honor and love ourselves and one another just as Christ Himself first showed by His example, deigning to suffer for us.

96. The act and proof of perfect love for God is a sincere and benevolent disposition toward one's neighbor. For *"whoever does not love his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?"* says the Divine John (1 John 4:20).

97. Behold the door through which the one who enters steps into the Holy of Holies and is deemed worthy to be a beholder of the ineffable beauty of the Holy and Royal Trinity.

98. It is impossible for us to be in fellowship with God—we who rebel against Him with our passions and willingly pay tribute to the evil tyrant and destroyer of souls, the devil—unless we first wage a resolute war against this deceiver. For as long as we willingly enslave ourselves to the passions of wickedness, we remain enemies and adversaries of God, even though we call ourselves believers. And we will derive no benefit from the world when our soul, corrupt in its disposition, rebels against its Creator and refuses to be under His kingly authority; meanwhile, it sells itself to countless evil masters who plunge it into sin and flatteringly teach it to choose, instead of the path of salvation, the path that leads to ruin.

99. God created us so that we might become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), partakers of His eternal essence, and become like Him (1 John 3:2) through the grace of deification, for the sake of which all that exists is ordained and sustained, and that which does not yet exist is brought into being and generated.

100. If we wish to be called and to be God's own, let us undertake the task of not betraying the Word to our passions, like Judas, nor of denying Him, like Peter. Renouncing the Word, however, is a refusal to do good out of some fear, while betrayal is a deliberate sin in deed and a willful impulse toward sin.

101. Human pride and carnal reasoning, having set people against one another and misinterpreted the law, have divided the single nature (of those of one nature) into many parts; and by bringing into force the hard-heartedness that now prevails, they have, through such a mindset, turned nature itself against itself (that is, people against one another). Therefore, whoever, through sound judgment and noble wisdom, succeeds in destroying this disposition of nature shows mercy first to himself and then to others, having set his heart aright according to nature, and through such a disposition naturally drawing near to God and demonstrating in himself what it means to be created in His image, and how magnificently God, having created our nature in the beginning in His own likeness and clearly reflecting His own goodness within itself, arranged it to be in every way equal to Himself—not violent, peaceful, not turbulent, closely bound in love with God and with itself,—such that through it we embrace God with longing (i.e., as a *longed-for good*) and one another with compassion (as beings of the same nature).

102. The God who loves humanity became human in order to draw human nature (i.e., all people) to Himself and to prevent it from falling into evil; by which it divides itself against itself and rebels against itself, without any restraint, due to the fickle volatility (changeability) of its disposition toward others.

103. Let us renounce, with all our strength, the pleasures of this life and the fear of its sorrows, and let us certainly rid ourselves of every passionate thought and every demonic wile. For it is for the sake of pleasure that we love our passions, and because of sorrows that we flee from virtue.

104. The allure and sweetness of sin usually vanish along with the very means by which it is committed; which is why a person, having discovered through experience itself that every sinful pleasure is invariably followed by sorrowful displeasure, has come to desire the pleasure with all his heart, while feeling utter aversion toward displeasure and sorrow—seeking the former with all his might and striving in every way to avoid the latter, believing—though, in fact, is entirely impossible—to separate them from one another in this way, and to satisfy his wicked self-love with pleasure alone, enduring absolutely no sorrow, having forgotten—as is usual when blinded by passion—that sinful pleasure is never without the bitterness of dissatisfaction. For the bitterness of sorrow is naturally mingled with the sweetness of sin, although those who

partake of it forget this because the passionate sweetness prevails over them: for what one possesses always so occupies one's attention that it completely obscures from one's senses what lies ahead. In this way, by pursuing pleasures out of self-love, while striving by every means to avoid all bitterness for the same reason, we give rise to countless corrupting passions within ourselves.

105. No one experiences such a sense of sweetness and bitterness as when, having been freed from every carnal inclination, one unites—or rather, clings—with one's mind to God, who is truly the most lovable, the most precious, and the most exalted good.

106. Just as no one can serve God purely unless he has completely purified his soul, so too can he not serve God without indulging the body for its own sake. By performing this corrupting service to the body—and thus being a being who loves pleasure—man has constantly experienced both sweetness and bitterness in power and action, always tasting from the tree of disobedience, in which the knowledge of good and evil is dissolved at the same time, a knowledge actually experienced through the senses.

107. Where reason does not reign, there usually prevails the power of the senses, with which the power of sin is inextricably intertwined, drawing the soul through pleasure toward the desires of the flesh, which are naturally akin to it: as a result of which, having taken upon itself—as if it were its natural duty—a passionate and pleasure-seeking care for the flesh, it leads a person away from true natural life and inclines him to become, for himself, the architect of evil, which has no independent existence.

108. For the rational soul, evil is the neglect of its natural blessings, arising from a passionate attachment to the flesh and the world, which the mind—having become the guide—destroys in accordance with its knowledge of spiritual orders, correctly interpreting the origin and nature of the world and the flesh, and driving the soul into the spiritual realm that is its own, where the law of sin does not intrude at all, having no sense that could serve as a bridge to convey it to the mind (or into the rational spiritual realm); since the former relationship between this sense and the soul has already been destroyed and all sensory spectacles have been left behind, so that the mind, having transcended them, no longer perceives them at all, having become alien to them both in disposition and by nature.

109. Just as the mind, holding the passions in its power, makes the senses instruments of virtue, so too do the passions, when they hold the mind in their grasp, incline the senses toward sin. And one must look at this soberly and consider how the soul should maintain a proper and virtuous course of action, using the very means it previously employed in committing sins to generate and strengthen virtues.

110. The Holy Gospel introduces a renunciation of the carnal life and an embrace of the spiritual life. I am speaking of those who always die (1 Cor. 15:31) according to the flesh—that is, according to the human life in the flesh in this world—but who live only for God by the Spirit, as the Divine Apostle says: they no longer live their own lives, but Christ lives in them (Gal. 2:20). In the same way, those who endure great sorrows, torments, and afflictions in this world, and who joyfully endure persecution and all manner of temptations, are also considered dead to the flesh.

111. Every passion arises from and is generated by the combination of some sensory object with a sensation, accompanied by a deviation of the natural active powers—that is, the senses, or desire, or reason—from their proper natural mode of operation. If now the mind, having discerned the purpose of this combination of elements—that is, the sensory object, the sensation, and the natural active force participating in it—is able, through its reasoning, to restore each of these to its naturally proper order and to contemplate each in and of itself, that is, the sensible object without relation to the sense, the sense without connection to the sensible object, and the active power participating in this—desire, for example, or some other—without a passionate disposition toward the sensible object or the sense, and without allowing the passion itself to direct its contemplation—if, I say, the mind succeeds in doing this; then it will grind it down and scatter it like the calf that was once cast by the Israelites (Ex. 32: 20), this composition of passion, whatever form it may take, and scatter it upon the waters of knowledge, completely destroying even the subtlest thought of passion by restoring the things that produce it to the order proper to them by nature.

112. A life stained by many falls into sin arising from carnal passions is “*a defiled garment*” (Jude 23). For by the manner of his life, as by a kind of garment, every person usually reveals what he is—righteous or unrighteous: one has a clean garment, that is, a virtuous life, while another's life is entirely stained by evil deeds. – Or rather, “*garments defiled by the flesh*” refer to an inner disposition and state of mind that gives the soul its character, as it is according to conscience (or before conscience), by virtue of the recollection of the evil impulses and actions arising from the flesh—and seeing these garments constantly upon itself, it (the

soul) is struck by the stench of the passions. For just as from the spirit, through the rational combination of virtues with one another, imperishable garments are formed in the soul—and by putting them on, it appears good and glorious—so, from the flesh, through the interweaving of various passions—by their affinity with one another—a certain impure and defiled garment is produced for it, revealing the soul as it is, superimposing upon it another image and likeness in place of the Divine.

113. The firm and sure foundation of hope for the deification of human nature lies in the Incarnation of God, which makes man a god to the same extent that God Himself became man. For it is clear that He who became man without sin can deify human nature without transforming it into the Godhead, by exalting it to Himself to the same extent that He Himself humbled Himself for the sake of man. —Teaching this in a mysterious way, the great Apostle says that “*in the coming ages the immeasurable riches of God’s grace will be made known through us*” (Eph. 2:7).

114. The soul, covered with the impurity of sensual pleasures as with rust, is purified by painful labor, and every inclination toward the material is completely eradicated from it when it comes to know through experience the harm of loving it; for this reason, God permits the devil, by righteous judgment, to afflict people with agonizing sorrows.

115. Pleasure and sorrow, and the desire and fear that follow them, were not originally created together with human nature; otherwise, they would be among the characteristics defining that nature; but, according to the teaching of the great Gregory of Nyssa, they were introduced after the loss of the perfection inherent in our nature, having been grafted onto the most irrational part of our nature; and through them, immediately after the transgression of the commandment, our likeness to speechless animals became manifest and clear, instead of the blessed image of God. For it was fitting that, upon the obscuring of the dignity of reason, human nature should justly bear punishment from the very thing through which it had acquired the traits of irrationality. Thus God wisely arranged it so that man might thereby come to appreciate the superiority of reason.

116. Passions are also good in the hands of those who are zealous for a good and salvific life, when, having wisely separated them from the carnal, we use them to attain the heavenly; namely: when we transform desire into a vigorous movement of spiritual longing for divine blessings; the love of pleasure—into a life-giving joy arising from the mind’s rapture at divine gifts; fear—into a cautionary vigilance against future torment for sins; sorrow—into repentance aimed at correcting present evil; and, in short, when we use these passions to destroy or prevent present or anticipated evil, as well as to acquire and preserve virtue and knowledge, just as wise physicians destroy or prevent damage already present in the body from poison or the body’s impending exposure to the venomous echidna.

117. The law of the Old Covenant, through active wisdom, purifies our nature from all defilement; and the law of the New Covenant, through contemplative guidance, mentally elevates the mind from the corporeal to the spiritual visions of things that are akin to it.

118. Holy Scripture calls those who are just beginning and still in the antechambers of the Divine court of virtues “*the fearful*” (those guided by fear); but those who have acquired a commensurate skill in understanding and in the practice of the virtues are usually called “*those who are making progress*”; and those who, through spiritual understanding, have ascended to the very summit of true knowledge of the virtues, are called “*perfect*.” Thus, one who has turned away from the old cycle of passions and, moved by fear, has surrendered his entire disposition to the divine commandments is not deprived of any of the blessings befitting beginners, even though he has not yet acquired skill in the virtues nor become a partaker of the wisdom “*spoken of among the perfect*” (1 Cor. 2:6). Likewise, the one who is making progress is not deprived of any of the blessings belonging to his rank, even though he has not yet attained the same ultimate knowledge of divine things that is characteristic of the perfect. And the perfect, who have already been mysteriously granted contemplative theology and have purified their minds of all material fantasies, are those who have internalized Divine love, bearing a complete and flawless likeness to the image of Divine beauty.

119. There are two kinds of fear: one is pure, and the other is impure. The fear that arises from sin, driven by the anticipation of torment, is impure; for it is caused by a sin one is conscious of having committed, and it will not last forever, because it disappears along with the removal of the sin through repentance. But the fear that always dwells in the soul even without this anxious dread of sin is pure and will never depart; for it is in some way inherent in God, as a tribute from the creatures, expressing the natural reverence of all before His majesty, which surpasses every kingdom and power.

120. The Holy Spirit is present in all people in general, as the One who embraces all, provides for all, and stirs up the natural seeds (of goodness) in all. But in those living under the law, He is specifically present as the revealer of transgressions of the commandments and the illuminator of the prophecies concerning Christ. In all those who are in Christ, however, in addition to the above, He is also the bestower of sonship, or the producer of adoption. And as the giver of wisdom, He is not present simply or unconditionally in any of the aforementioned persons, but only in those who, understanding the matter, have made themselves worthy of His divine indwelling through their God-like life. For anyone who does not carry out God's will, even if he is faithful, has an unwise heart, as a breeding ground for evil thoughts, and a body subject to sin (i.e., guilty of sin), as it is always filled with impure, passionate desires.

121. God, who desires all people to be saved and who longs for their deification, withers their pride and vanity like a barren fig tree with a curse (Matt. 21:19), so that they, having preferred true righteousness to merely appearing righteous, and having cast off the hypocritical cloak of virtuous pretense, may genuinely embrace virtue, as the Divine Word desires, and lead the rest of their lives piously, striving more to maintain a good disposition of the soul before God than to display outwardly virtuous pretense before people.

122. The devil is God's enemy and avenger. He is an enemy—when, out of hatred for Him, he feigns a false yet pernicious love for us humans; by stirring up various passions and enticing our will with the sweetness we expect from them, he leads us to prefer temporal goods over eternal ones, thereby stealing all the disposition of our soul and completely turning us away from the love of God, making us willful enemies of the One who created us. The Avenger—when, pouring out all his hatred toward us, he demands punishment for us, who through sin have become, as it were, subject to him. For nothing is so pleasing to the devil as to see a human being put to death. And when this is permitted to him, he swoops down like a storm upon those over whom, by God's permission, he has gained authority, devising one after another ways to inflict involuntary sufferings upon them (for their voluntary passions)—not to carry out God's command, but to satisfy his passionate hatred toward us; so that the soul, exhausted under the weight of sorrows and misfortunes, might cast aside all hope of divine help, and the infliction of grievous misfortunes, instead of serving as a lesson, might become the cause of the loss of faith in God's very existence.

123. Without God's permission, even the demons themselves cannot serve the devil in any way. For God knows how, with fitting benevolence and goodness, to permit the devil, through his servants, to inflict various punishments for the sins we have committed. Scripture clearly demonstrates this in the story of Job, where it is written that the devil could do absolutely nothing to Job without God's permission.

124. God, being good and desiring to completely root out from us the seed of evil—that is, the lust for pleasure that deprives the mind of divine love—He permits the devil to bring afflictions and sufferings upon us: so that through these afflictions He may purify the soul from the poison of past lusts and instill in it hatred and complete aversion toward present lusts, which flatter the senses alone, —since their previous gratification brought nothing beneficial but painful consequences—and so that, in this way, the very most tormenting and misanthropic power of the enemy may become the proximate cause of a return to virtue for those who have willfully sinned against it.

125. One who suffers for having trampled upon God's grace, if he comes to understand the purpose of the divine providence that is healing him, will accept the misfortune that has befallen him with gratitude and joy, and will willingly correct the sin for which he is being punished; but whoever remains insensitive to such healing intentions is justly deprived of the grace granted to him and is given over to the turmoil of the passions, being left to carry out what he was inwardly inclined and eager to do.

126. Whoever, by God's permission, is led to correction through a sorrowful misfortune brought upon him by involuntary temptations, yet does not accept it with gratitude, and, out of pride—by which he considers himself righteous—does not repent without delay; such a person, as one who resists the divine decrees of righteous judgment and willfully refuses to submit, by God's command, to the yoke of the king of Babylon, is taken captive, suffers chains and bonds, famine, death, and the sword, and is utterly driven from his land. All this and much more of the same sort is endured by the one who, driven from his own land—from a disposition and habit of virtue and wisdom—because of his own unwillingness, out of pride and a vain opinion of himself regarding the purification of his sins, willingly chooses, according to the Divine Apostle, "*in afflictions, hardships, and distresses*" (2 Cor. 12:10; 6:4). The great Apostle knew that outward humiliation through arduous physical circumstances has the power to preserve divine treasures in the soul; which is why he willingly endured them, both for himself and for those to whom he was to reveal in himself an example of

faith and virtue; so that they, even if they suffered anything through their own fault, like the one who was subjected to penance, the Corinthian (1 Cor. 5:5), might have before them one who suffered innocently, as a source of comfort and an example of his patience to follow.

127. The Divine Apostle calls the various works of the Holy Spirit “different gifts,” all imparted by the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4). Such a manifestation of the Spirit is given in proportion to the faith present in each person, in the participation in a particular gift; namely, each believer, according to his faith and the spiritual disposition within him, receives a corresponding work of the Spirit, which gives him the disposition and strength sufficient to fulfill one commandment or another.

128. Just as one receives the word of wisdom, another the word of knowledge, another faith, and yet another some other gift listed by the great Apostle (1 Cor. 12:8–12), so one receives through the Spirit the gift of perfect, direct, and immaterial love for God, in proportion to his faith; another, through the same Spirit, receives the gift of perfect love for one’s neighbor; yet another receives some other gift, through the same Spirit, as I have said; for each has his own gift at work within him. For the Apostle calls every disposition that is active and powerful in fulfilling the commandments a gift of the Spirit.

129. Faith is a power that keeps everything within in a state of harmony, or it is harmony itself, bestowing a supernatural, direct, and perfect union of the believer with the God in whom he believes.

130. Since man, consisting of soul and body, is subject to the action of two laws—namely, the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit—of which the law of the flesh has a sensory effect, while the law of the Spirit has a mental or spiritual effect; whereby the law of the flesh, acting sensually, usually binds one to matter, while the law of the spirit, acting mentally or spiritually, produces an immediate union with God: it is therefore entirely natural that whoever “*does not ponder in his heart*” (Luke 11: 23)—that is, does not sever the direct union with God that has been accomplished through faith; such a person, being dispassionate, and even more so having become like God by virtue of union with God through faith, “*will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move*” (Matt. 17: 20): by which saying it is pointed out, as with a finger, that the reasoning and the law of the flesh are truly heavy and difficult to move, and for our natural powers, completely immovable and unshakable.

131. The power of irrational self-preservation—or animality—has become so deeply rooted in human nature through the senses that many regard a human being as nothing more than flesh, capable only of enjoying this present life.

132. The Lord—having said, “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33), that is, first of all the knowledge of the truth, and then the active pursuit of virtuous conduct—clearly showed that believers must seek the one divine knowledge and, adorning it with deeds, virtue.

133. Since there are many things that believers must seek in order to know God and attain virtue—such as freedom from passions, endurance of temptations, understanding of virtues and the kinds of deeds corresponding to them, the expulsion of the soul’s inclination toward the flesh, the alienation of the senses from the sensual, the complete detachment of the mind from all created things—and, generally speaking, there is a countless multitude of things necessary for turning away from sin and ignorance and for acquiring knowledge and virtue—the Lord said: “*Whatever you ask for in prayer, you will receive if you have faith*” (Matt. 21:22)—thereby expressing that, in general, everything that contributes to the knowledge of God and to virtue is what the godly, with reason and faith, should seek and ask for: for all of this is salvific for us, and the Lord always grants it to those who ask Him.

134. “*A fragrance from life to life*” (2 Cor. 2:16) was the Apostle, both by his example, inspiring the faithful to actively strive to acquire the fragrance of virtues, and as a preacher, leading those obedient to the word of grace from a sensual life to a spiritual life; “*a stench of death leading to death*,” he was to those who had plunged from the death of ignorance into the death of unbelief, causing them to sense the condemnation awaiting them.

135. There are three powers in the soul: the rational, the impetuous (energetic), and the concupiscent. Through the rational power, we seek to know what is good; through the concupiscent, we desire the good we have come to know; and through the impetuous, we strive and struggle for it. Those who love God, striving with these powers toward divine virtue and knowledge—seeking one, desiring the other, and striving with the third—receive imperishable nourishment and the knowledge of divine things that enriches the mind.

136. God, who created human nature, together with bestowing upon it, by His will, existence, also endowed it with the power to act appropriately; by this power I mean the movement (impulse) toward the

practice of virtues, which is essentially inherent in our nature and which is consciously manifested in action according to the will of the one who possesses it.

137. If a person relies solely on the sensory, bodily distinction of things based on their pleasantness or unpleasantness; then, having transgressed the Divine commandment, he partakes of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—that is, of sensuous speechlessness, or irrationality—being able to distinguish well only that which serves to preserve the integrity of the body, and consequently accepting what is pleasant as good and avoiding what is unpleasant as evil. But if he adheres entirely to rational reasoning, which clearly distinguishes the temporal from the eternal, then, having kept the divine commandment, he partakes of the tree of life—that is, of the wisdom formed in the mind—being able to distinguish well what serves the salvation of the soul, and consequently to accept the glory of eternal blessings as good, while rejecting the transience of temporal blessings as evil.

138. Good for the mind is an dispassionate inclination toward the spiritual, while evil is a passionate inclination toward the sensual. For the senses, however, good is a passionate movement toward the body, through the indulgence of lustful desire, while evil is an unpleasant state resulting from the deprivation of this.

139. Grapes yield wine; wine causes intoxication; intoxication leads to delirium (which is evil—a temporary loss of reason). Is it not the same with the active mind—which can be likened to a grapevine, —that, when cultivated with virtues, produces knowledge, and knowledge produces a good ecstasy that frees the mind from the bonds of the senses?

140. Along with thoughts of sensory objects, the evil one insidiously instills imaginations of their outward appearances and forms, through which passionate desires for those objects are usually aroused based solely on their outward appearance, when our rational activity halts in its passage toward the mental and spiritual through (or through) the sense that lies in between. It is here that the enemy succeeds in corrupting the soul, plunging it into passionate agitation.

141. The Word of God is light and fire, inasmuch as it illuminates natural thoughts and consumes unnatural ones; just as it dispels the darkness of the sensory life for those who, through the fulfillment of the commandments, strive toward the hoped-for better life, while those who willingly, out of love for the flesh, cling to this dark night of (sensory) life are punished by the fire of judgment and condemnation.

142. The power of our mind is by nature capable of knowing corporeal and incorporeal beings; but regarding the Holy Trinity, it receives knowledge solely by grace, believing only that it exists, but by no means daring to inquire what it is by nature, as the demonic mind does.

143. Having beheld the splendor of future blessings with the pure eye of faith, one willingly obeys the command to leave one's homeland, one's kin, and one's father's house, setting aside all sympathy and attachment to the flesh, sensation, and all that is sensual; and when any temptation from this world should arise, he rises above nature, preferring the cause of his calling to nature itself, just as the great Abraham preferred God to Isaac (Gen. 22:1 ff.).

144. Whoever strives to practice virtue and study the Divine Scriptures—not for the sake of glory, nor out of greed, nor out of flattery or a desire to please men, nor for show (1 Thess. 2:3–5)—but does, speaks, and thinks everything for God's sake, such a one walks the path of truth with understanding.

145. Whoever fasts and abstains from all food that stirs up the passions, and does many other things that may contribute to the deliverance of the soul from sinful inclinations, prepares the way of which it is said (Luke 3:4): “*Prepare the way of the Lord.*” But whoever adopts such a way of life out of vanity, greed, flattery, a desire to please others, or for any other reason—rather than to please God—*does not “walk in the righteous paths of God”*: he undertakes the labor of preparing the way, yet is not deemed worthy to have God walk along this path.

146. One who has dedicated himself to the true life, knowing that every affliction—whether voluntary or involuntary—is death “*to the mother of death, lust*” (James 1:15), accepts every encounter with sharp, involuntary temptations with joy and gladness, using patience to make these afflictions into smooth and easy paths—to the honor of a higher calling (Phil. 3:14)—which unerringly guide him as he devoutly follows the divine course. For the mother of death is lust; and the death of lust is affliction, whether voluntary or involuntary.

147. Anyone who, through self-control, has subdued lust—which is multifaceted and complex, intricately intertwined with all the senses—*has “made crooked paths straight,”* and by enduring the unbearable and cruel afflictions he encounters, has made rough paths smooth. Why, as a reward for virtue and

for the labors undertaken for its sake—having undertaken them rightly and lawfully, having conquered lust with a longing for virtue, and having suppressed the pain of sorrows with a love for the truth—and having courageously accomplished divine feats in both respects, *he will “behold,”* as it is written, “*the salvation of God*” (Isa. 40: 5).

148. Having straightened out the twists and turns of voluntary passions—that is, the movements of lust—through self-restraint, and having smoothed over the sharp turns of involuntary temptations—that is, various kinds of afflictions—through patience, and having made the paths level, this one will truly “*see the salvation of God*”, having become pure in heart, and through the power of virtues and devout contemplation, he beholds God at the end of his struggles and feats, according to the Lord’s word: “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5: 3), receiving as a reward for their efforts in practicing virtue the grace of dispassion, without which no one will see God.

149. As long as the mind retains a living remembrance of God, it seeks the Lord through contemplation (Ps. 26:4, 8), but not simply, rather “*in the fear of the Lord*” (2 Chron. 26:5), that is, by keeping the commandments. For whoever seeks the Lord without this fulfillment does not find Him, because he did not seek the Lord in the fear of the Lord. “*And the Lord will prosper him*” (ibid.); for the Lord prospers everyone who, with knowledge, does what is right, teaching him various virtues and revealing to him the true meaning of created things.

150. Without faith, hope, and love, just as nothing evil is ultimately eradicated, so too nothing good is fully established within us. Faith persuades the struggling mind to turn to God and stirs it to boldness through the assurance that every spiritual weapon is at its disposal; hope serves as an unfailing guarantor of divine assistance, promising the destruction of opposing forces; and love makes the mind inseparable—or rather, utterly inseparable—from its kinship with the Divine, even in the midst of battle itself, binding all the strength of its disposition to the longing for the Divine.

151. Faith comforts the struggling mind, inspiring it with the certainty of help; hope, by presenting assured help before the eyes, repels the attacks of adversaries; and love renders the onslaught of enemies dead (or ineffective) to the God-loving mind, completely rendering it powerless through its ardent striving toward God.

152. Turning to God in and of itself clearly testifies to the fullest heartfelt acceptance of divine hope, without which there is never, in anyone or for any reason, an aspiration toward God: for it is the nature of hope to present the future as the present before one’s eyes and to assure those struggling against the power of the adversary that the God who protects them does not in any way abandon them—for Whom and for Whose sake the saints must fight. For without some expectation—whether difficult or easily fulfilled—no one ever turns toward the good.

153. Every mind, girded with divine power, has, as it were, certain elders and princes: – *the “power of thought,”* in which rational faith is generated, teaching one always to contemplate the ineffable attributes of God and to enjoy future blessings with hope as if they were present; – *“the power of desire,”* in which divine love is established, binding the will to the desire for the purest Divinity and holding fast the disposition toward the desired;—and *“the power of motivation,”* in which divine peace is firmly established, directing all the movement of desires toward the love of the Divinity. Every mind has these powers as its allies in the eradication of evil and in the cultivation and preservation of virtue.

154. One who has not first purified oneself of passions should not engage in the contemplation of natural things, for the images of sensible objects can draw the mind—which has not been completely freed from passions—into passion. For the mind, which, out of indulgence in the senses, lingers long in its reveries on the appearances of sensory objects, becomes a source of impure passions and lacks the strength to turn, through contemplation, to the mental objects that are akin to it.

155. Whoever, during the uprising of the passions, courageously restrains the senses, completely banishes daydreaming and the memory of sensory objects, and utterly suppresses the mind’s natural inclinations toward investigating what lies outside itself—that person will, with the help of divine grace, triumphantly put to shame the evil and tyrannical violence of the passions and the devil that has risen up against him.

156. When the mind is deranged, anger is uncontrollable, lust is bestial, and, as a result, ignorance, self-will, and shameful impulses take hold of the soul—then sinful habit emerges with force, intertwined with various sensual pleasures.

157. A mind that has learned to wisely avoid invisible battles or clashes (with invisible enemies) should neither engage in natural reasoning nor do anything else during an attack by evil forces, but only pray, weary the body with labor, diligently suppress material speculation, and guard the city walls—that is to say, the sentinel virtues of the soul, or the means of preserving virtue, namely, self-control and patience—so that the enemy might not, by any means, beguile the soul with his wiles and draw its inclination to his side, thereby turning it away from God by feeding it “*murky corruption*” (Avvakum 2:15), and by a false good might not lead the heart, which seeks the better, toward the worse.

158. Whoever has courageously restrained the senses through prudent and all-encompassing self-restraint and patience, and through the powers of the soul has blocked the entry of sensory images into the mind—such a one effectively thwarts all the devil’s evil schemes, sending him back in shame “*by the same way he came*” (2 Kings 19:33).

159. Whoever, during the onslaught of temptations, refrains from thoughts of worldly things and instead devotes himself to prayer, gathering his mind away from everything else and turning it toward himself and toward God, slays the sinful inclination, and thereby puts the devil to flight in shame—the devil who stirs up that very inclination—in the hope of which he approached the soul with his customary audacity, rising up against the truth with proud thoughts: for even the great David, having known, suffered, and acted—and who, by experience, knew very well the order of all mental battles—said: “*When the sinner rose up against me, I was struck dumb and humbled, and I kept silent about my blessings*” (Ps. 38, 2:3); and after him, the divine Jeremiah, commanding the people, “*Do not go out into the fields or walk along the roads, for the enemy’s sword is all around*” (Jer. 6:25).

160. Natural desires and pleasures do not bring reproach upon those who experience them, since they are necessary consequences of the constitution of our nature. For nature provides us, even against our will, with pleasure—such as food that satisfies prior hunger, – and drink that quenches the pangs of thirst, – and sleep that restores the strength exhausted by wakefulness, – and everything else that comes to us according to our natural needs, necessary for the well-being of our nature, and useful for the acquisition of virtue by those who are zealous for it. All such things are appropriate for anyone who avoids sinful inclinations, within reasonable limits that prevent one from falling into slavery to the reprehensible and unnatural passions that arise arbitrarily within us—passions that have no other source in us except for the uncontrolled movement of natural needs and desires within the mind, which are not innate for the purpose of leading us to an immortal and everlasting life.

161. It is the work of the Highest Good that it has made not only the divine and incorporeal natures of rational beings reflections of the ineffable divine glory—as beings capable, in accordance with their capacity, of perceiving all the inconceivable splendor of inaccessible beauty— but has also imprinted clear traces of its greatness upon sensible creatures—who in many ways fall short of intelligible beings—traces capable of transporting the human mind, as it delves into them, directly to God, elevating it above all that is visible, as if ushering it into the realm of supreme bliss.

162. The active wisdom of the doer elevates him above the passions, while the contemplative wisdom of the knower places him above all that is visible, raising his mind to objects akin to it (4, 100).

163. Knowledge united with action, and action united with knowledge, constitute the throne of God and the footstool of His feet: the throne through knowledge, the footstool through action. If, then, anyone were to call “heaven” such a human mind—purified of all reveries about the material world and always engaged in, or rather adorned with, detached thoughts about the Divine—that person, it seems to me, would not be straying beyond the bounds of truth.

164. The starting point of the movement of every passion is usually a sensory object related to it. For without such an object—which, through the mediation of some sense, draws the powers of the soul to itself—a passionate movement would never arise; since there is no passion without a sensory object. If there were no wife, there would be no fornication; if there were no food, there would be no gluttony; if there were no gold, there would be no love of gold. Thus, the source of every passionate movement of our natural powers is a sensory object—or a demon—which, through it, incites the soul to sin.

165. Between God and man stand sensory objects and those contemplated by the mind. The human mind, desiring to reach God, must not be enslaved to sensory things in active life, nor by any means be held back by mental objects in contemplative life.

166. The wrath of God is a painful sensation experienced by those being instructed; and this painful sensation is caused by the infliction of involuntary hardships in life, through which God often leads the mind—which is puffed up with virtue and knowledge—to modesty and humility, enabling it through these hardships to know itself and recognize its own weakness; having sensed this weakness, it casts aside the vain pride of the heart.

167. The wrath of the Lord is the curtailment or withholding of divine gifts, which (withholding) is for the benefit of every mind that thinks highly of itself and boasts of the blessings God has given it, as if they were the fruit of its own virtues.

168. The divine—truly—limit and law of Providence in the course of events is to punish in such a way as to teach, through misfortunes, gratitude to those who, while in a better state, proved ungrateful, making the trial of present afflictions a path to the recognition of the divine power that was at work in their previous prosperity: otherwise, if Providence had allowed us to boast unhindered about the good within us, we would certainly have fallen into godless pride, imagining that the acquisition of virtue and knowledge is achieved by our own natural powers rather than by grace.

169. One who thinks he has already reached the pinnacle of virtue will no longer seek the source of all good, attributing to himself alone the power to succeed in doing good, and thereby depriving himself of the confirmation and protection of salvation—that is, God. But whoever feels within himself a natural lack of strength for good never ceases to hasten to the Almighty to make up for what he lacks.

170. Righteous anger befalls a mind that is overly wise about itself—that is, when it is abandoned, or allowed to suffer attacks from demons, both in action and in thought; so that through this he may come to realize his natural weakness and become aware of God’s power and grace, which envelop him and accomplish all that is good within him, and humble himself by casting far from himself that unnatural and alien haughtiness, lest another wrath befall him—the wrath of the withdrawal of the gifts previously bestowed.

171. He who has not come to his senses through the first manifestation of wrath—that is, abandonment—and has not humbled himself by recognizing it as a good teacher of gratitude, encounters another wrath that befalls him, taking away the effect of his former gifts and depriving him of the strength that had protected him until now. For thus says God concerning ungrateful Israel, presenting it in the form of a vineyard: *“I will take away its hedge, and it shall be plundered; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled; I will forsake my vineyard; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and thorns shall grow up in it as in a wasteland; I will command the clouds not to rain upon it”* (Isa. 5:5–6).

172. There is yet another path that leads to wickedness: indifference to the loss of virtue. For one who is accustomed to disobeying God (by disregarding His commandments) will even renounce God Himself when circumstances demand it (by threatening death for faithfulness to the commandments): since he prefers earthly life to God and considers earthly pleasures in the heart to be better than any of God’s commandments.

173. A God-loving and virtuous person, like Hezekiah, who has wisely girded himself with strength against the demons, if he should happen to experience the assault of evil spirits waging an invisible battle against him in his mind, and if, through prayer, he receives from God an angel sent to him—that is, a word of great wisdom—and, having crushed and scattered this entire devilish phalanx, yet does not attribute the cause of such victory and salvation to God, but to himself alone; —such a person does not give God His due (2 Chron. 32:25), failing to match the greatness of salvation with an abundance of thanksgiving, and failing to commensurate his goodwill toward Him with the benefactor’s kindness.

174. Let us enlighten the mind with divine insights, and adorn the body with manners befitting these insights, making it, through the rejection of passions, a rational vessel of virtue. For the passions inherent in the body, when governed by reason, are not blameworthy; but when their movement is allowed without this restraint, then they give cause for reproach. This is why it is said that we must reject those passions whose movement is natural, but whose exercise is often unnatural, not being governed by reason.

175. He who has become haughty in his heart because of the gifts he has received and has become conceited, *“as if he had not received them”* (1 Cor. 4:7), justly experiences God’s wrath upon him when God permits the devil to entangle him in his thoughts, both to shake the active order of his virtues and to darken the light of his mental understanding, so that, having sensed his own weakness, may recognize the source of the power that alone overcomes our passions, and, having repented and humbled himself, may cast aside the pride of self-conceit, thereby appeasing God to turn away from him the wrath that usually falls upon the unrepentant—a wrath that withdraws the grace that guards the soul and leaves the ungrateful mind empty.

176. No one can truly bless God unless he has sanctified his body with virtues and enlightened his soul with true knowledge. A disposition toward virtue is the face of the contemplative mind, as toward heaven, lifted up to the heights of true knowledge.

177. Blessed is the one who has truly realized that God, within us as within organs, accomplishes every deed and contemplation, virtue and knowledge, victory and wisdom, goodness and truth, so that we contribute absolutely nothing to this of our own accord, except for a single disposition that desires the good; possessing which, the great Zorobabel says, addressing God: “*Blessed are You, who have given me wisdom, and to You we confess, O Lord God, the Father of our fathers. From You comes victory, and from You comes wisdom, and Yours is the glory, and I am Your servant*” (2 Esdras 4, 60–59). As a truly grateful servant, he attributed everything to God, the Giver of all things; having received from Him, he possessed wisdom; and in his confession he attributed to Him all the power of the bestowed blessings, which are, as has been said, a combination of victory and wisdom, virtue and knowledge, action and contemplation, goodness and truth: for, combining with one another, they radiate the rays of God’s single glory and splendor.

178. All the perfections of the saints were clearly gifts from God, so that no one possesses anything at all except the gift bestowed, which God Himself, as the Lord of all, measures according to the degree of gratitude and goodwill of the recipient, who remains the possessor of only that which is consecrated to God.

179. Each of us, in proportion to the faith that dwells within us, receives the manifest working of the Spirit: thus, each person becomes a dispenser of grace for himself. This is why none of the wise will ever envy another who is abundantly blessed, since it is up to him to acquire the disposition that determines the reception of divine blessings.

180. The reason for the difference in the distribution of divine blessings is the measure of each person’s faith (Rom. 12:6); and in accordance with how we believe, we also have a zealous readiness to act in the spirit of faith. Thus, the one who acts (in the spirit of faith) demonstrates, by the measure of his activity, the measure of his faith, receiving grace to the extent that he has believed. And the one who does not act in this way demonstrates, by the measure of his inaction, the measure of his unbelief, suffering deprivation of grace to the extent that he has succumbed to unbelief. Why, then, does the envious person act wrongly toward those who do good, when the growth of faith and deeds—and consequently the reception of grace, which comes in proportion to faith (and deeds consistent with it)—is clearly in his own hands and not in the hands of others?

181. “*And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,*” says Isaiah, “*the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord; and He shall be filled with the fear of the Lord*” (Isa. 11:3–4). The characteristics of these spiritual gifts are as follows: “*fear*”—refraining from evil deeds; “*strength*”—performing good deeds; “*counsel*”—discerning what is contrary to duty; “*piety*”—an infallible vision of what is right; “*knowledge*”—the comprehension, through action itself, of the rationality hidden within the virtues; “*understanding*”—the soul’s perfect disposition toward what is known (the savoring of it); “*wisdom*”—the ineffable union with God, which, through communion, makes one who partakes of it a god.

182. The spirit of “*the fear of God*” is abstinence from evil deeds; “*the spirit of fortitude*” is a zealous striving and movement toward the energetic fulfillment of the commandments; “*the spirit of counsel*” is the skill of discernment (between good and evil), by which we rationally fulfill the commandments, separating the worse from the better; the “*spirit of piety*” is the infallible perception of the forms of the virtues, by acting in accordance with which we never stray from sound judgment; the “*spirit of knowledge*” is the correct understanding of the commandments and their rational foundations, upon which the forms of the virtues are based; “*the spirit of reason*” is harmony with the forms and foundations of the virtues (the resolve to fulfill the former and act according to the latter)—or, better said, the transformation (of oneself according to them)—by which the natural powers are fused with the forms and foundations of the commandments; “*the spirit of wisdom*” is an exaltation toward the Cause of being in the most spiritual understandings contained in the commandments, and union with It, by virtue of which—though in a manner unknown—we are initiated, as far as this is accessible to humans, into the understanding of things as they exist in God, and we communicate this to others through speech that flows from the heart, as from a certain spring.

183. Blind faith is possessed by one who, by virtue of that faith, does not keep God’s commandments. For if God’s commandments are light (Proverbs 6:23), then it is clear that one who does not keep God’s commandments remains without divine light, bearing a mere nominal—rather than a true—divine title.

184. No one who sins can cite the weakness of the flesh as an excuse for sin. For union with God the Word, through the fulfillment of the oath, has restored the whole nature to strength, thus making the inclination of the will toward the passions inexcusable for us. The divinity of the Word, being ever present by grace to those who believe in Him, silences the law of sin that is in the flesh (Rom. 8:2).

185. Knowledge that is not restrained by the fear of God produces pride, leading the one who has become proud because of it to regard as his own that which has been given. But activity, increasing together with divine love, without acquiring knowledge beyond what must be done, makes the doer humble in spirit.

186. The heavenly dwelling is an impassive, virtuous habit, and knowledge free from any error that might confuse the mind.

187. The first kind of dispassion is complete abstinence from evil deeds, as seen in beginners; the second is the complete rejection of thoughts of mentally planning evil, which occurs in those who walk the path of virtue with reason; the third is the complete stilling of passionate desire, which occurs in those who ascend from visible things to mental contemplations; the fourth form of dispassion is complete purification even from the simplest and most bare-boned daydreaming, which arises in those who, through knowledge and contemplation, have made their minds a pure and clear mirror of God. Thus, one who has purified himself of passionate deeds, freed himself from mental attachment to them, suppressed the lustful impulse toward them, and made his mind pure even of the simplest thought concerning them—possessing these four principal dispassionate states—departs from the realm of material creatures and enters the order of intellectual beings, which is divine and peaceful.

188. The first dispassion is defined as the body's impulse toward actual sin that does not move from its place (the impulse exists, but is not allowed to proceed); the second is the complete rejection of the soul's passionate thoughts, by which the impulse made possible by the first dispassion is suppressed, lacking the passionate thoughts that would stir it to action; the third is the complete stillness of the desire for passions, for the sake of which the second also occurs, consisting in the purity of thoughts; the fourth form of dispassion is the complete setting aside in one's thoughts of all sensual fantasies, through which the third also begins, since there are no sensual fantasies painting pictures of the passions.

189. The beginning and end of everyone's salvation is wisdom, which at first gives rise to fear, and then, having reached perfection by the end, gives rise to love. Or rather, at the beginning it is itself, as a matter of prudence, fear, in order to keep its lover from evil; and then, toward the end, it naturally becomes love, filling with spiritual joy those who, by living in communion with it, have forsaken the possession of all visible goods.

190. Every confession humbles the soul, sometimes teaching it to acknowledge that it is justified by grace, and sometimes compelling it to admit that it is itself to blame for its sins, due to its own negligence.

191. Confession takes two forms in content: one consists of feelings of gratitude for the blessings bestowed; the other consists of feelings of self-reproach and the awareness of the evil one has done. For confession refers both to the grateful remembrance of God's blessings, deeply felt, and to the frank acknowledgment of evil deeds by those guilty of them. Both of these give rise to humility. For both the one who gives thanks for blessings and the one who chastises himself for transgressions are usually humbled: the former, considering himself unworthy of the blessings bestowed; and the latter, imploring forgiveness for his transgressions.

192. The passion of pride consists of two forms of ignorance, or unawareness, which, coming together as one, produce a single, fused line of reasoning (prideful). For the proud person is one who acknowledges neither divine help nor human weakness. Thus, pride is a deprivation of both divine and human knowledge.

193. Vanity is a turning away from the goal that is according to God and a turning toward another goal that is not according to God. For the vain person is one who cares for virtue for his own glory rather than for God's, and who, through his labors, seeks only to earn fleeting human praise.

194. The people-pleaser is concerned with one thing only: that his outward behavior be ostentatious, and that he may earn a kind word from a flatterer, captivating first the eyes and then the ears of those who are delighted or amazed only by what is seen and heard, and who define virtue solely by what the senses perceive. Flattery, therefore, is the display of good manners and words before people and for the sake of people.

195. Hypocrisy is the pretense of friendship, or hatred disguised as friendship, or enmity operating under the guise of goodwill, or envy mimicking the character of love, or a life adorned with a false appearance

of virtue rather than true virtue, or the pretense of righteousness—merely appearing to exist, or deception that takes the form of truth—all of which those who are morally corrupt, imitating the serpent, manage to devise.

196. God is the cause of all creatures and of all the good found within them. Therefore, one who exalts himself through virtue or knowledge—and to the extent of his virtue, that is, his success in it through the help of grace—without acknowledging his own weakness, has clearly not escaped the evil spirit of pride; one who does good for the sake of his own glory has preferred himself to God, pierced as he is by the thorn of vanity; one who practices virtue or speaks of it merely “*so that people may see him*” (Matt. 23:5) has placed human approval above divine approval, afflicted by the passion of seeking human approval; and he who has merely embellished his conduct with a mere outward appearance of virtue—maliciously, for the sake of deception—and who conceals an evil disposition of the heart behind a veneer of piety, traffics in virtue through the cunning of hypocrisy. Is it not evident that each of these has directed his aim toward something other than the Cause of all things?

197. Demons neither hate chastity nor despise fasting, just as they do not despise the distribution of possessions, hospitality, psalm-singing, diligence in reading, solitude, lofty contemplation, sleeping on the bare ground, vigil, or anything else that characterizes a life according to God, —as long as the purpose of such deeds is set on something pleasing to them.

198. The demons that wage war in the absence of virtue are those who teach fornication and drunkenness, greed, and envy; and those who wage war in the presence of virtue are those who teach conceit, vanity, and pride, and in this way, through a subtle deception, secretly sow discord within us.

199. Oh, if only we, too, would respond to these spirits of malice—who invisibly approach us under the false guise of spiritual friendship and, with the “good” intention of “*bringing about our death*” through sin (Rom. 7:3), say, “*Let us also build together with you*” (2 Esdras 5:65)—might we reply: “*It is not for you or for us to build a house for the Lord our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel*” (2 Esdras 5:68). “*Alone*”—because, having been freed from the spirits that wage war due to a lack of virtue, which we have already avoided, we do not wish to be tempted again by you; having risen above them through an abundance of virtue, and fall into a downfall as much more ruinous as the first, inasmuch as in the former there was easier hope of recovery, for we were then among those condescendingly forgiven because of weakness; but in this case, either there is no weakness at all, or it is very difficult, for we will be in a state of being hated for our pride. — And we are “*not alone*,” for we have the holy angels as our helpers in goodness, and even more so God Himself, who reveals Himself to us through works of righteousness and builds us into a holy temple, free from every passion.

200. “*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*,” as it is written (James 5:16). It is effective in two ways: first (when the one praying is righteous), and offers prayer to God through deeds in accordance with the commandments—a prayer that does not consist merely of words, nor is it uttered as an empty sound of the voice, nor is it idle and lacking any solid foundation, but is active and alive, being inspired by deeds in accordance with the commandments. For the power and effectiveness of prayer depend on the fulfillment of the commandments through the cultivation of virtues; consequently, the righteous person has a strong and mighty prayer, supported by the commandments. Second, when someone, asking for the prayer of the righteous, himself performs the works of prayer—promising to reform and actually reforming his former life—and through this good conversion makes the prayer of the righteous strong and all-powerful.

201. The prayer of the righteous is of no benefit to the one who resorts to it when that person takes greater delight in sinful deeds than in virtues. Thus, the great Samuel once wept for the sinning Saul, but he was unable to appease God on his behalf, having failed to accompany his weeping with the sinner’s appropriate repentance. Why, then, does God, stopping His servant from useless weeping, say to him: “*How long will you weep for Saul? I have rejected him, so that he may no longer reign over Israel*” (1 Sam. 16:1)?

202. Again, the most compassionate Jeremiah, praying for the Jewish people who had clung to demonic delusion to the point of madness, is not heard, because his prayer was not supported by the conversion of the godless Jews from this delusion. Therefore, stopping him from his ceaseless but fruitless entreaties, God says: “*Do not pray for these people, and do not ask that they be spared; do not intercede with Me on their behalf, for I will not listen to you*” (Jer. 7:16).

203. It is a sign of great ignorance—not to say madness—to seek salvation through the prayers of the saints for one who delights in his heart in pernicious deeds, and to ask for forgiveness for that very thing in which, with self-praise, he is at the same time truly defiling himself in thought and feeling. One who asks for

the prayers of the righteous must not allow them to be rendered fruitless and ineffective—if he truly hates evil—but, by strengthening them with his own virtues, must make them effective and powerful enough to rise up to the Almighty, who grants forgiveness of sins.

204. *“The prayer of the righteous is powerful,”* whether it is offered by the righteous person himself or by someone who asks the righteous person to offer it. On the part of the righteous person, it is aided by the fact that it gives him boldness before the One who is powerful to grant the requests of the righteous; and on the part of the one who asks the righteous person to pray, it is aided if he abandons his former wickedness and turns wholeheartedly to virtue.

205. The Word of Truth knows two kinds of sorrow, the first of which is formed invisibly in the soul, while the second is visibly arranged in the sensory realm: the former embraces the entire depth of the soul, being caused by the scourges of conscience, while the latter weighs down the senses, restraining them from their natural outpouring with the burden of grievous misfortunes.

206. Just as the word of truth recognizes two kinds of sorrow, so too does it recognize two kinds of temptation: some arise internally within the realm of the will through the stirring of evil desires, while others come from outside the will in the form of involuntary troubles, sorrows, and misfortunes. The former is the cause of mental sorrow, and the latter of sensory sorrow (5, 90).

207. A temptation arising within the realm of the will causes sorrow to the soul but brings pleasure to the senses; conversely, an involuntary temptation comforts the soul (when it meets it rationally) but burdens the flesh with sorrow.

208. I believe that when the Lord and our God taught His disciples how to pray, He, with the words, *“Lead us not into temptation”* (Matt. 6:13), urged them to pray for deliverance from temptations arising in the realm of the will—that is, from stirrings of lust that shake one’s good dispositions and intentions; and the great James, called the brother of the Lord, in teaching those who strive for the truth not to be surprised by the trials they encounter, had in mind involuntary trials when he said: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face various trials”* (James 1:2), that is, those that occur involuntarily, beyond our control, and cause sorrow and hardship. – This is clearly shown by the words that follow both of these sayings: for there the Lord adds: *“but deliver us from the evil one”*; and here the great James states: *“knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”* (James 1:3–4).

209. *Perfect* is the one who fights against voluntary temptations with self-restraint and endures involuntary ones with patience; and *“whole”* is the one who performs deeds with knowledge and does not leave contemplation idle.

210. The mind and the senses, being opposed to one another, have natural functions, due to the extreme dissimilarity and difference of their objects. The mind has as its objects mental and incorporeal entities, which it perceives incorporeally; the senses, on the other hand, have as their objects sensible and corporeal natures, which they perceive sensually.

211. As soon as the intellect begins to regard the senses as its own natural power, it becomes entangled in the appearances of sensible things and becomes the inventor of carnal pleasures, lacking the strength to rise above the nature of visible things because of its partiality toward the senses.

212. Salvific pleasure is the joy of the soul arising from virtue; and soul-beneficial displeasure is the suffering of the flesh for the sake of virtue. For he who passionately indulges in sensory pleasures does not direct his desire toward what is proper; and he who shuns the contingencies that cause the deprivation of these pleasures flees from that from which one ought not to flee.

213. Just as the eye cannot perceive the sensible without sunlight, so the human mind can never attain spiritual contemplation without spiritual light. For sensible light naturally illuminates the senses to perceive sensible things; whereas spiritual light enlightens the mind to the contemplative comprehension of the supersensible.

214. Inventing arbitrary difficulties and inducing involuntary ones, though they subdue desire by curbing its active movement, do not, however, destroy the power or capacity for procreation, which lies in our nature as a law. – For virtuous self-discipline usually engenders dispassion of the will, not of nature; and through this dispassion of the will, the mind is visited by the grace of divine delight.

215. It is impossible that the Lord—who is by nature wise, righteous, and almighty— – as the wise One, did not know the means of healing (our nature afflicted by sin); as the righteous One, desired to bring

about the salvation of man in a sovereign manner, by the will of one who had fallen under the yoke (and guilt) of sin; or, as the almighty One, was not able to accomplish what was required for our healing.

216. God's wisdom is revealed in the fact that He truly and substantially became human; His righteousness in the fact that, through His birth, He assumed a nature capable of suffering like ours; His omnipotence in the fact that, through His sufferings and death, He secured for our nature eternal life and unchanging freedom from passion.

217. Envious of both God and us, the devil deceitfully suggested to man that God was envious of him, and thereby led him to transgress the commandment. He is envious of God so that His truly all-praised power, which deifies man, might not become manifest; and of man—so that he might not, through virtue, visibly become a partaker of divine glory. Thus, this most wicked one envies not only us—because of the glory we have before God through our virtue—but also God—because of the manifestation of His all-praised love in our salvation.

218. God, by the single, boundlessly powerful will of His goodness, embraces and sustains all—angels and humans, the good and the evil. Yet they all partake of God to varying degrees, not as He passes through them unimpeded, but in accordance with their disposition.

219. We do not recognize a distinction of persons in Christ, because the Trinity remained the Trinity, and after the Word became incarnate, no new person was added to the Holy Trinity through this incarnation. But we do recognize in Him a distinction of natures, so as not to confess the flesh to be consubstantial with the Word by nature.

220. A perjurer is one who swears falsely in the name of the Lord—that is, one who promises God to live virtuously but then turns all his attention to something else, alien to the vow he uttered with his own lips, and by failing to keep the commandments breaks the solemn vow of a godly life. In short, one who has chosen a life according to God but has not become completely dead to this present life is a liar and a perjurer; just as one who has sworn to God—that is, who has promised to walk blamelessly through God-pleasing deeds—and has not fulfilled that promise.

221. Whoever endures the onslaught of involuntary temptations, like the blessed Job and the valiant martyrs, with unshakable wisdom, is a mighty lamp, preserving within himself the unquenchable light of salvation, received by the power of the Lord. But even the one who knows the wiles of the evil one and is familiar with the battles (clashes, skirmishes) in unseen conflicts—this one, too, illuminated by the light of knowledge, is a lamp to others, who, like the great Apostle, can rightly say: "*We do not understand his thoughts*" (2 Cor. 2:11).

222. Just as a lamp cannot remain unquenched without oil, so too the light of spiritual gifts cannot be preserved without a disposition that has become a habit—one that nourishes inner goodness with words, deeds, and character befitting it, as well as with feelings and thoughts in harmony with it. For every spiritual gift requires, in accordance with its nature, a disposition (or state of mind) that continually pours into it, like oil, a certain mental substance, so that it may remain whole and intact through the good disposition of the one who has received it.

223. God is called and is the Father by grace only to those who bear witness to their spiritual rebirth from God through virtuous character. In these character traits, one sees, as it were, the face of the soul, reflecting in its virtues the distinct features of the God who begot it; and those who possess them inspire those who observe them to glorify God, presenting their lives as a model of virtue to be imitated. For God is not usually glorified by mere words, but by deeds of righteousness, which proclaim His divine majesty far more eloquently than words.

224. Whoever demonstrates within himself knowledge animated by action, and action animated by knowledge, has found the precise way of God's true work within us. But whoever possesses any one of these qualities in isolation from the other has either turned knowledge into an empty fantasy (unconfirmed and uncontrolled) or transformed action into a soulless idol. For knowledge without action is no different from the dreams of the imagination, lacking action to confirm it; and action without meaning is the same as an idol, lacking the knowledge that animates it.

225. Truly, pride is a cursed passion—a haughtiness consisting of a combination of two evils, pride and vanity: of these, pride turns away from the Creator of virtue and nature, while vanity distorts both nature and virtue itself; for in the proud, nothing is done according to God, and in the vain, nothing occurs according to nature.

226. The written law, by deterring one from wrongdoing through fear, accustoms one to righteousness; in time, however, this habit gives rise to a love of truth, from which springs a steadfast disposition toward goodness, leading to the forgetting of past vice.

227. Circumcision, in a spiritual sense, is the complete severing of the inclination toward carnal lusts.

228. The Sabbath is the stilling of the passions, or their complete inactivity.

229. God commanded that the Sabbath, the new moons, and the feasts be observed, not because He wanted people to honor the days merely as days: for that would mean legitimizing the worship of the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25), on the grounds that the days themselves are naturally worthy of honor and therefore worthy of worship. But by commanding us to honor these days, He symbolically commanded us to honor Himself. For He Himself is the Sabbath— —as rest from the toils and cares of life and from the labors of righteousness; He is also the Passover, as the liberator of those held captive in the bitter labor of sin; and He is Pentecost, as the beginning and the end of all things.

230. We recognize as spiritual sacrifices not only the mortification of the passions, which are subdued by *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Eph. 6:17), but also the consecration of all natural powers to God and their offering as a whole burnt offering to God through the fire of the Spirit’s grace.

231. The power of sin, or carnal reasoning, is cut off by the grace of holy baptism, and active obedience to the divine commandments completely puts it to death by the sword of the Spirit.

232. The passion of gluttony, with its lustful thoughts, has, like a sword, destroyed many virtues: it kills the seeds of chastity through intemperance; it corrupts the righteousness of justice through licentiousness; it severs the natural bonds of charity with self-love; and, in short, the passion of gluttony is the destroyer of all the fruits of virtue.

233. Every zealous seeker of salvation is devoted to both virtuous deeds and holy thoughts: for without virtue and knowledge, no one has ever succeeded in attaining salvation. The work of virtue is to bring bodily impulses into order through sound reasoning, skillfully restraining them from inappropriate inclinations as with a bridle; and the work of knowledge is to carefully consider and reasonably deliberate how one ought to act, and then to prepare oneself to carry it out.

234. Anyone who has put to death *“the members that are on the earth”* (Col. 3: 5), and has extinguished all his carnal reasoning, and has cut off every sympathy for it—so that he might say with the blessed Apostle Paul: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ”* (Rom. 8:32)—such a person has become without father, without mother, and without a genealogy, like the great Melchizedek (Heb. 7:3), having nothing by which his flesh and nature might hold him back, because of the complete union with the Spirit that has been accomplished within him.

235. I do not think it is right to call the end of this life “death,” but rather deliverance from death, removal from the realm of corruption, liberation from bondage, an end to anxieties, the cessation of strife, an exit from darkness, rest from toil, the calming of turmoil, shelter from shame, escape from passions, and, generally speaking, the end of all evils—from which the Saints, having reformed themselves through voluntary self-denial, have made themselves strangers and sojourners in this life. For, valiantly struggling against the world, against the flesh, and against the rebellions arising from them, and having suppressed the delusion born of the sympathy of the senses with the sensual, they preserved within themselves the dignity of the soul without being enslaved.

236. The saints were good and benevolent, kind-hearted and merciful, having shown an equal disposition of love toward the entire human race; by the power of this love, they faithfully preserved throughout their lives the best of all goods—that is, humility— this guardian of all good and destroyer of the evil opposed to it, they remained impervious to all the temptations that beset us—both those that arise of our own volition and those that do not—suppressing the former through self-restraint and repelling the latter through patience.

Blessed Abba Falasius

A Brief Account of Him

Our reverend Father Falasius flourished in the first half of the seventh century and served as a presbyter and abbot of a monastery in the Libyan deserts. This blessed Abba combined his love for piety with a love for

spiritual enlightenment and devoted much time to the study of Holy Scripture. He was a contemporary of St. Maximus the Confessor, with whom he maintained spiritual communion. Several letters from St. Maximus have been preserved; indeed, an entire book is dedicated to him, containing an explanation of difficult passages in Holy Scripture. St. Maximus held this Abba in high esteem and, in one letter, even calls him his mentor. His blessed repose likely occurred no later than 660. The four hundred sayings of his presented here—on love, abstinence, and the spiritual life—are full of edification. They are all primarily of a moral and ascetic nature, but there are also some that contain dogmatic ideas, which St. Damascene used in his exposition of the faith. If one reads only the initial letters of the sayings in sequence according to the original text, a specific idea emerges—which is placed at the beginning of each hundred.

Abba Falassius on Love, Abstinence, and the Spiritual Life, to Presbyter Paul

The 101st Hundred

whose acrostic reads as follows: *To my spiritual brother and beloved Lord Paul of Falassia, seemingly a man of silence, but in truth a vain merchant.*

1. Love, wholly directed toward God, unites those who love with God and with one another.
2. The mind that has attained spiritual love thinks nothing of its neighbor that is unbecoming of love.
3. Under the guise of love, hypocrisy is concealed by one who blesses with his lips but despises in his heart.
4. One who has attained love bears with equanimity all the sorrow and grief inflicted upon him by his enemies.
5. Love alone unites all creatures with God and with one another in unity of mind.
6. True love is possessed by the one who allows neither suspicion nor a single word against his neighbor.
7. One who does nothing that might disrupt love is honorable before God and people.
8. Sincere love is characterized by the true word “*from a good conscience*” (1 Tim. 1:5).
9. Whoever passes on words of reproach to a brother—words heard from others—hides envy under the guise of goodwill.
10. Just as physical virtues attract praise from people, so do spiritual virtues attract praise from God.
11. Love and self-restraint purify the soul, while pure prayer enlightens the mind (spirit).
12. A man is strong who drives away evil through his actions and his mind.
13. He who has attained dispassion and spiritual understanding has found grace with God.
14. If you wish to rid yourself of passionate thoughts, cultivate self-control and love for your neighbor.
15. Guard yourself against intemperance and hatred, and you will encounter no stumbling blocks during prayer.
16. Just as one cannot find fragrances in a garbage pit, so too—in a vindictive soul—one cannot find the fragrance of love.
17. Bravely restrain anger and lust, and you will soon be rid of evil thoughts.
18. Vanity destroys the concealment of good deeds, and pride drives away all humility.
19. Hypocrisy and lies are characteristic of vanity, while conceit and envy are characteristic of pride.
20. A ruler is one who has mastered himself and subjected both soul and body to the mind (spirit).
21. A friend’s sincerity is revealed in times of trial, when he stands by us in our time of need.
22. Calm your emotions through silent solitude, and subject the thoughts that arise in your heart to strict judgment.
23. Do not respond to painful insults with resentment, but treat flattery with hostility.
24. Silent solitude, prayer, love, and self-control—these are the four-horse chariot that lifts the mind to heaven.
25. Wear down the flesh with fasting and vigil, and you will drive away the tormenting, lustful thought.
26. “*As wax melts before the face of fire*” (Ps. 67:3), so does an impure thought melt away from the fear of God.
27. It is a great evil for a rational soul to linger long in shameful passion.
28. Endure patiently the blows of sorrowful and heart-rending misfortunes; for through them, God’s providence seeks to purify you.

29. Having cast aside your possessions and renounced the world, renounce at last your evil thoughts as well.
30. It is fitting for the mind to always learn from the words of God.
31. Just as it is God's work to govern the world, so it is the soul's work to govern the body.
32. With what hope shall we meet Christ, we who are still enslaved to carnal pleasures?
33. Lust is destroyed by suffering and sorrow, whether they arise of our own accord or are sent by Providence.
34. The love of money is the food of the passions, for it sustains and nourishes all-encompassing, self-indulgent lust.
35. Sorrow gives rise to a lack of pleasure (or the satisfaction of sensual desire); pleasure, however, is intertwined with every passion.
36. By whatever measure you measure out to your body, so will it be measured out to you by God (Matt. 7:2).
37. The acts of divine judgment are the recompense for deeds performed through the body.
38. Virtue and knowledge give birth to immortality; their loss, however, has become the mother of death.
39. Sorrow for God removes desire; and the removal of desire is the resurrection of the soul.
40. Impassivity is the soul's steadfastness against evil; yet it cannot be attained without the grace of Christ.
41. Christ is the Savior of soul and body, and whoever follows in His footsteps is freed from all that is evil.
42. If you wish to attain salvation, renounce the pleasures of the flesh, and embrace self-control, love, and prayer.
43. True discernment is characteristic of dispassion, by which all things are done in due measure.
44. Our Lord and God is Jesus Christ; and the mind that follows Him will not remain in darkness.
45. Gather your mind and watch over your thoughts; and those you find to be passionate, fight against them.
46. There are three sources from which thoughts arise: the senses, memory, and the fullness of the body; but the most troublesome of these are those that arise from memory.
47. Whoever is granted wisdom becomes a partaker of the understanding of the incorporeal ones and knows the beginning of the world and its end.
48. Do not neglect the proper course of action, and your mind will be enlightened; for to such it is promised: "*I will open to you hidden and unseen treasures*" (Isa. 45:3).
49. Whoever has been freed from passions has found favor with God, and whoever has been deemed worthy of knowledge has been granted great mercy.
50. The mind, freed from passions, becomes luminous, being constantly illuminated by the contemplation of all that exists.
51. The light of the soul is knowledge; deprived of it, the unwise walk in darkness.
52. The unwise spend their lives in darkness; and the darkness of ignorance envelops them.
53. Whoever loves Jesus will be delivered from evil; and whoever follows Him will behold the true light.
54. The mind, freed from passions, perceives subtle thoughts, both when the body is awake and when it sinks into sleep.
55. A mind that has attained the highest degree of purity feels constrained by created beings and desires to be beyond all creation.
56. Blessed is the one who has attained boundless boundlessness; and only the one who has transcended all limits can attain this.
57. Those who revere God ponder His words; those who love Him discover the truth within them.
58. The mind, moved by righteousness, finds the truth; but one moved by any passion will not attain it.
59. Just as God is unknowable in His essence, so too is He indefinable in His greatness.
60. The wisdom of a being that has neither beginning nor end is unfathomable.
61. The salvation of every creature lies in the all-benevolent providence of its Creator.

62. The Lord sustains all who fall and raises up all who are cast down, through His mercy.
63. Christ is the Judge of the living and the dead, and the righteous Rewarder of every deed (Acts 10:42; Ps. 61:13).
64. If you wish to rule over your soul and body, be quick to cut off the causes of the passions.
65. Bind the powers of the soul to the virtues, and every impulse of the passions will be severed from them.
66. Rein in the urges of lust with self-restraint, and the urges of anger with spiritual love.
67. Silent solitude and prayer are the most powerful tools of virtue; for by purifying the mind, they make it perceptive.
68. Only spiritual conversation is beneficial; in all other cases, silence is preferable.
69. Of the five kinds of conversation, engage in three; do not overindulge in the fourth; and abstain from the fifth.
70. Silence loves those who have no attachment to anything worldly; and it loves all people who love nothing human.
71. The true teacher is conscience; whoever obeys it remains unblemished.
72. Conscience offends only those who have either reached the pinnacle of virtue or have fallen into the very depths of evil.
73. Perfect dispassion gives rise to pure thoughts; and perfect knowledge brings one face to face with the Incomprehensible.
74. He who has not attained carnal pleasures grieves with a disgraceful sorrow; but he who has despised them remains carefree.
75. Sorrow, in general, is the deprivation of desired pleasure, whether that which comes from God or that which comes from the spirit of the world.
76. The Kingdom of God is goodness and wisdom; whoever attains them dwells in heaven.
77. Woe to the man who, though his soul is the body, prefers the ways of the world to God.
78. One has attained love equal for all who does not envy those who excel in goodness, but pities those who do not care about it.
79. He who has established the requirements of virtue as a law for both soul and body ought to rule properly.
80. A good spiritual merchant is one who, for the sake of the future, has renounced both the pleasures and the sorrows of this life alike.
81. The soul is strengthened by love and self-restraint, and the mind (spirit) by pure prayer and spiritual contemplation.
82. When listening to a helpful word, do not judge the speaker, lest you deprive yourself of edification that saves the soul.
83. An evil heart harbors evil thoughts and turns a neighbor's virtues into faults by misinterpreting his deeds.
84. Do not trust a thought that condemns your neighbor, for whoever has an evil treasure also harbors evil thoughts.
85. A good heart produces good thoughts; for his thoughts are shaped by the treasure he holds.
86. Guard your thoughts and flee from evil, lest your mind be clouded and you begin to see things distortedly.
87. Reflect on the Jews and guard yourself against their deeds. Blinded by envy, they blasphemously called the Lord and God "Beelzebub."
88. Malicious suspicion clouds the mind and causes it to mistake what is wrong for what is right.
89. Passions spring from all virtues; that is why passionate people misinterpret virtues as passions.
90. If the mind remains in joy or sorrow for a long time, it soon falls into the passion of despondency.
91. A pure conscience delights the soul, while an impure thought casts it down into the abyss.
92. When passions arise, they drive away vanity; but once they are driven away, vanity returns.
93. If you wish to rid yourself of all passions at once, embrace self-control, love, and prayer.
94. The mind that abides in God through prayer frees even the passionate part of the soul from passions.
95. God, having given being to all creatures, embraces them all together through His providence.

96. Though He is the Lord of all, He was pleased to become a servant, thereby demonstrating the highest degree of His providence toward creation (Phil. 2:7).

97. God the Word, having become incarnate without change, united Himself with all creation through the flesh.

98. It is a wondrous miracle in heaven and on earth that God is on earth and man is in heaven; so that, by uniting humans with the angels, He might bestow deification upon them all together.

99. The sanctification and deification of angels and humans is the knowledge of the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity.

100. The forgiveness of sins is liberation from the passions; whoever has not been freed from them by grace has not yet attained forgiveness.

The Hundred and Second

The acrostic reads as follows: “ ” *Pray for me, my most honest brother; for I expect great misfortunes, as I deserve, because of my own willful actions—sorrows of the soul and afflictions of the body.*

1. Do you wish to be rid of your passions all at once?—Renounce the mother of all passions: self-love.

2. The health of the soul is dispassion and wisdom, and it is impossible to attain it for one who is enslaved by carnal pleasures.

3. Abstinence with patience and love with generosity dry up sensuality, both bodily and spiritual.

4. Self-love is the source of the soul’s vices; self-love, in turn, is love of the body (or self-pity).

5. A distinctive feature of reason is to submit oneself to the mind, and at the same time to subdue and enslave the body.

6. It is a disgrace for a rational person to submit to the irrational and to concern oneself only with the satisfaction of shameful desires.

7. It is ruinous for a rational soul to abandon its Creator and grovel before the body.

8. You are commanded to keep the body as a slave; to be enslaved by its pleasures is unnatural.

9. Sever the bonds of fellowship with the body, and give this slave nothing but what is strictly necessary.

10. Enclose your senses within the fortress of silent solitude, so that they may not lead the mind astray toward their characteristic desires.

11. The most powerful weapons for one who remains silent with patience are self-restraint, love, prayer, and reading.

12. The mind never ceases to dwell on the objects of carnal pleasures until, having subdued the flesh, it devotes itself to contemplation.

13. We strive to keep the commandments in order to free ourselves from passions, and to uphold the divine dogmas in order to be deemed worthy of knowledge.

14. The serenity of the soul comes from dispassion and knowledge, and it is impossible to attain it for one enslaved by carnal pleasures.

15. Subdue the body by cutting off its lustful desires, and you will free it from the heavy bondage of those desires.

16. Created free and called to freedom, do not allow yourself to be enslaved by impure passions.

17. **Through** sorrows and joys, desires and fears, the demons bind the mind to the sensual.

18. The fear of God restrains lusts, and sorrow for God drives away sensuality.

19. The desire for wisdom despises fear, and the sweetness of knowledge drives away sorrow.

20. Scripture contains the following four subjects: commandments, dogmas, warnings, and promises.

21. Abstinence and labor curb lust, while silent solitude and divine love dry it up.

22. Do not wound your brother with cryptic, suspicious words; for you yourself, if it should happen, would not be able to bear such treatment.

23. Anger is restrained by magnanimity and lack of malice, and it is destroyed by love and compassion (forbearance).

24. To whom knowledge is given, the light of understanding is given; but whoever, having received it, dishonors it will see darkness.

25. Observance of the commandments gives rise to dispassion; and dispassion of the soul is guarded by knowledge.

26. Transform sensory perception into intellectual contemplation, and you will elevate the senses above the sensory realm.
27. A woman symbolizes the soul engaged in ascetic practice; through union with her, the mind gives birth to virtue.
28. The study of God's words teaches the mind of God to those who seek it truly, reverently, and zealously.
29. Just as light is to those who see and to what is seen, so is God to those who think and to what is thought.
30. The sensible firmament signifies the firmament of faith, upon which all the saints shine like the heavenly bodies.
31. Jerusalem is the heavenly one—the knowledge of the incorporeal; for in it the vision of the world is contemplated.
32. Do not neglect the life of action; otherwise, your knowledge will diminish; and then, because of the famine that will ensue, you will go down to Egypt (Gen. 26:1–2).
33. Spiritual freedom is liberation from the passions: which no one attains without the grace of Christ.
34. The Promised Land is the Kingdom of Heaven, for which impassivity and knowledge make us worthy.
35. Spiritual Egypt is the darkness of the passions, into which no one descends unless he first experiences famine.
36. Fill your ear with spiritual words, and you will turn your mind away from impure thoughts.
37. God alone is good and all-wise by nature; but the mind, too, can become such through communion with Him, if it strives for it.
38. Control your appetite, your sleep, your anger, and your tongue—*“and your foot will not stumble over a stone”* (Ps. 90:12).
39. Strive to love every person equally, and you will drive away all passions at once.
40. Sensory perception is common to both the mind and the senses; but the knowledge of the spiritual belongs to the mind alone.
41. It is impossible for the mind to engage in spiritual matters unless it first cuts off its inclination toward the senses and the sensory.
42. Natural feeling has a predisposition toward the sensory, and, being distracted by it, distracts the mind as well.
43. Put the senses in the service of the mind, and do not give them time to distract it.
44. When the mind begins to dwell on sensual matters, divert its attention from the senses by lifting it to a spiritual understanding of what lies before it.
45. A sign that the mind has devoted itself to spiritual matters is contempt for everything that delights the senses.
46. The mind, striving toward the contemplation of spiritual objects, derives unceasing delight from this.
47. When the mind is enriched by knowledge of the One, then the senses, too, are certainly subjugated to it.
48. Do not let your mind wander among sensory things, lest it accumulate the joys and sorrows inherent in them.
49. For those whose mind is always occupied with spiritual matters, the desirable part of the soul becomes a divine weapon.
50. It is impossible for the mind to be filled with knowledge unless the desirable part of the soul is first adorned with the virtues proper to it.
51. The mind becomes detached from the world when it completely cuts off all sensation toward the sensual.
52. The distinguishing feature of the rational part of the soul should be the pursuit of knowledge of God, and that of the desiring part—love and self-restraint.
53. The intellect cannot always be occupied with anything sensory if there is no inclination toward it.
54. The mind is perfect when it is filled with knowledge; the soul is perfect when it is established in virtue.

55. The mind's inclination toward the sensual makes it a slave to bodily pleasures.
56. The mind, too, is moved from its place of knowledge when the desirable part turns away from its virtues.
57. We have received "*the right to become children of God*" (John 1:12), but we do not become them unless we cast off our passions.
58. Let no one think that he has truly become a child of God unless he has already acquired divine traits within himself.
59. The adoption of good or bad habits makes one a son of God or of Satan.
60. A wise man is one who listens to himself and hastens to purify himself of every defilement.
61. A hardened soul feels nothing even when it is scourged and is incapable of feeling any gratitude toward a benefactor.
62. One clothed in impurity is cast out of the divine wedding halls and becomes a partaker of utter darkness (Matt. 22:12–13).
63. He who fears God cares for his soul and delivers himself from an evil fate.
64. It is impossible for one who has forsaken God and slavishly indulges in carnal pleasures to obtain God's mercy.
65. Jesus Christ is the Word who said, "*No one can serve two masters*" (Matt. 6:24), even though we do not want to believe it.
66. A defiled soul becomes hardened by passions and, without cutting and cauterizing, is incapable of believing.
67. Those who have become calloused need severe trials; for without intense pain, they cannot be softened.
68. A wise man cares for his soul and, through voluntary self-mortification, avoids involuntary torments.
69. Care for the soul consists of self-mortification (acts of self-denial) and humility, for the sake of which God forgives all sins.
70. Just as lust and anger multiply sins, so abstinence and humility erase them.
71. Sorrow for God breaks the heart; it is born of the fear of hellish torments.
72. Sorrow for God purifies the heart and distances it from impure pleasures.
73. Patience is the diligence of the soul (the desire to tax the soul); where such diligence exists, the love of pleasure is banished.
74. Every sin is committed for the sake of pleasure; every forgiveness, however, comes about through suffering and sorrow.
75. Those who do not undertake to repent through voluntary suffering are subjected to involuntary suffering by God's providence.
76. Christ is the Savior of the whole world; and He has granted repentance to people for their salvation (Matt. 4:17).
77. Repentance gives rise to the observance of the commandments; and the observance of the commandments purifies the soul.
78. The purification of the soul is its liberation from passions; and liberation from passions gives birth to love for God.
79. The soul that loves God is pure, and the mind that has been freed from ignorance is pure.
80. Strive to keep God's commandments even unto death; for, having been purified through them, you will enter into life.
81. Use your body as a servant of the commandments, keeping it as free from sensuality and as free from pain (healthy) as possible.
82. The rebellion of the flesh arises from neglect of prayer, diet, and silence.
83. Good silence gives birth to the children of the good—love, self-control, and pure prayer.
84. Reading and prayer purify the mind; love and self-control, however, purify the desiring part of the soul.
85. Always observe the same degree of self-restraint, lest you fall into its opposite through inconsistency.

86. Having laid down laws for yourself, do not betray yourself by later interpreting them in a sophistically twisted manner; for whoever in this way leads himself away from them deceives himself (he is a devil to himself).

87. Passionate souls are mental sunsets; for in them the sun of truth has set.

88. He is a son of God who has become like God in goodness, wisdom, strength, and truth.

89. The sickness of the soul is an evil inclination; its death, however, is sin, committed through one's actions (Rom. 5:12).

90. Spiritual detachment is perfect dispassion, in which the mind withdraws from all things of this world.

91. Observe all things in accordance with the virtues of the soul, for from this the fruit of righteousness is born.

92. The contemplation of mental objects is said to be incorporeal, as it is entirely foreign to matter and form.

93. Just as the four elements are not alien to matter and form, so too are the bodies composed of them not alien to them.

94. The Word, who became flesh out of love for humanity (John 1:14), neither altered what He was nor changed what He became.

95. We speak of God—the Son who became incarnate—both as being of the Godhead and of humanity, and in the Godhead and in humanity, as well as being of two natures and in two natures.

96. We confess one Person in Christ, with two natures united inseparably.

97. We glorify the one, indivisible Person in Christ, and we confess the unconfused union of the two natures in Him.

98. We worship the triune, single Divine nature, and we glorify the consubstantial Holy Trinity.

99. The Fatherhood, Sonship, and Proceeding are proper to each of the three Persons; but the Being, Nature, Divinity, and Goodness are common to all three Persons.

Number 103

whose acrostic reads: “ ” *Evil should not be considered that which burdens the flesh but purifies the soul; rather, that which offends the conscience but delights the flesh.*

1. Think well of Him who is good by nature, and think well of every person.

2. On the Day of Judgment, we will have to give an account before God for our words, deeds, and thoughts.

3. Our habit of doing good or evil compels us to think, speak, and act in ways that are good or evil.

4. A mind possessed by passions conceives unseemly thoughts; and these thoughts are revealed through words and deeds.

5. A passion precedes an evil thought; the cause of passions is the senses; and the cause of their evil use is, clearly, the mind.

6. Restrain your emotions, subdue your thoughts, and use the commandments as a weapon to conquer your passions.

7. Evil is deep-rooted and requires a sustained struggle; for a deeply ingrained habit is not easily uprooted.

8. A sustained effort of self-control and love, accompanied by patience and silence, consumes the passion that has taken root.

9. Lift up your mind in prayer more often, and you will dispel the thoughts that swirl in your heart.

10. Asceticism requires patience and courage; for sensuality is driven out only through long-term and willing self-discipline.

11. You will successfully perform the deeds of asceticism if you do everything in moderation and according to the rule.

12. Always maintain the same measure in your ascetic practices, and do not violate the established rule unless absolutely necessary.

13. Just as love and self-control purify the thoughts, so do contemplation and prayer—“*every thought and every plan that is not in accordance with Christ*” (2 Cor. 10:5).

14. Ascetic labors—namely, fasting, vigil, patience, and generosity—purify the conscience.

15. Whoever cheerfully endures the blows of involuntary temptations becomes humble, skilled (in spiritual matters), and trustworthy.
16. Patience is rooted in the soul's desire for self-discipline; it consists in enduring the hardships and involuntary temptations that arise.
17. Bearing terrible slanders with equanimity gives rise to a lack of malice; patience, however, eradicates all that is evil from the soul once and for all.
18. The blows of severe misfortunes tear the heart apart, and the sorrow they engender drives away sensuality.
19. There are four principal passions, which Providence wisely uses one against the other.
20. For sensuality is destroyed by the inducing of sorrow, and the fear of hellish torments causes lust to wither away.
21. A prudent mind instructs the soul in spiritual deeds and trains the body for every kind of physical endeavor.
22. Strive to show that a monk is not merely an outward person, but also an inward one—by purifying them of passions.
23. The first renunciation is liberation from possessions; the second and third are liberation from passions and ignorance.
24. Anyone who wishes to do so can easily renounce possessions; but it takes no small effort to renounce attachment to them.
25. He who keeps lust in check will also master anger; for in lust lies the cause of anger.
26. So then, have we been cleansed of passionate thoughts and, as a result, tasted pure and immaterial prayer, or not yet?
27. The mind is great if it has been freed from passions, has renounced all created things, and abides in God.
28. The one who prospers meditates on the following three subjects: the fulfillment of the commandments, the knowledge of the dogmas, and faith in the Holy Trinity.
29. A mind freed from passions is occupied with the following: subtle thoughts, the contemplation of created things, and the eternal Light.
30. The worst passions are hidden within our souls; yet they become evident when their deeds are exposed.
31. It sometimes happens that the mind remains unperturbed and attains a certain degree of dispassion; yet it remains unrefined due to the absence of things (or objects for active practice).
32. Passions are set in motion by the following three things: by the recollection of their objects, by the satisfaction and repose of the body, and by the senses, as has been said.
33. The mind, having properly governed the senses and brought the body into order, has but one battle—the battle with memory.
34. Passions are set in motion through the senses when there is a lack of self-restraint and spiritual love.
35. Moderate fasting, vigil, and psalm-singing generally regulate the body's constitution.
36. The following three things clearly impair the body's constitution: an irregular diet, changes in climate, and demonic influence.
37. Passionate thoughts are subdued by the following: prayer, reading, self-restraint, and love.
38. First, silence your senses, and then combat your thoughts with the weapons of virtue.
39. A sin of the mind is the misuse of thoughts for evil—and an active sin is the misuse of things for evil.
40. The misuse of thoughts and things is ungodly and unrighteous—the use of both for evil.
41. Sinful passions are the bonds that keep the mind captive to the senses.
42. One who has no attachment to deeds or things, nor to the memory of them, possesses perfect dispassion.
43. A good soul does good to one's neighbor, and if met with ingratitude, remains magnanimous toward him, and patiently endures any harm suffered at his hands.
44. Evil thoughts are evil itself, and one who has not purified himself of them will not learn true knowledge.

45. Whoever listens to Christ enlightens himself, and whoever imitates Him improves himself.
46. Resentment is a disease of the soul; it arises either from insults, losses, or suspicious thoughts.
47. The Lord blinds the mind of the envious because they do not grieve righteously over their neighbor's blessings.
48. A slanderous soul has a three-edged tongue, for it wounds itself, the listener, and sometimes even the one being slandered.
49. He who prays sincerely for the one who has offended him is free from malice; and he who does not withhold gifts from him is freed from resentment.
50. Hatred toward one's neighbor is the death of the soul; and this is what the slanderer's soul possesses and brings upon itself.
51. Sloth arises from the corruption of the soul; but a soul afflicted by sensuality is not diligent.
52. He who loves the Lord Jesus devotes himself to ascetic labors; and perseverance in these labors drives away laziness.
53. The soul is strengthened by ascetic labors—and by doing everything in moderation, it drives away laziness.
54. He who rules over his belly dries up lust, and his mind does not bow down to lewd thoughts.
55. The mind of the chaste is a temple of the Holy Spirit; but the mind of the glutton is a dwelling place for ravens (Isa. 34: 11).
56. Gluttony gives rise to a craving for various delicacies, but fasting makes even a single loaf of bread sweet.
57. He who secretly rejoices with the one who is envied is freed from envy; and he who conceals that which might be envied frees others from envy.
58. Keep away from one who lives carelessly, even if his name is great among many.
59. Make a hardworking man your friend, and you will find in him a covering for your sins.
60. The careless person has sold himself to many masters; and however they lead him, so he lives.
61. Negligence, like a friend, favors you in times of peace; but in times of temptation, like an enemy, it rises up against you.
62. It lays down its own soul for you before the passions arise, but when they do arise, it takes your soul for itself.
63. A neglected field becomes overgrown with thorns, and a negligent soul is filled with impure passions.
64. A wise mind restrains its soul, exhausts the body, and subjugates the passions to itself.
65. Visible actions are indicators of invisible inner ones, just as the fruits a tree bears reveal what kind of tree it is.
66. Words and deeds expose the hypocrite, just as they reveal the secret false prophet.
67. A mind that has lost its reason does not instruct its soul, but leads it away from love and self-control.
68. The cause of impure thoughts is a corrupt character, sustained by vanity, pride, and arrogance.
69. Those possessed by these passions are characterized by hypocrisy and deceit, as well as cunning, mockery, and the most vile lies.
70. Such people are also enslaved by envy and zeal, anger and fury, sorrow and resentment.
71. Such is the path of those who live in indifference, and such are the treasures hidden within me.
72. Austerity (strict bodily asceticism) and humility save the soul and deliver it from the passions mentioned above.
73. The mark of a wise mind is a helpful word, and the mark of a good soul is a good deed.
74. An enlightened mind utters wise words, and a pure soul cultivates divine thoughts.
75. The thoughts of the zealous teach wisdom, and his words enlighten those who hear them.
76. When a soul is imbued with good dispositions, it cultivates good thoughts; but when it is imbued with evil inclinations, it gives rise to wicked thoughts.
77. A passionate soul is a breeding ground for evil thoughts, and from its treasure house it brings forth evil (Matt. 12:35).
78. A good treasure is a virtuous habit, and a good mind brings forth good things from it.

79. A mind moved by divine love cultivates good thoughts about God, but one moved by self-love gives rise to the opposite.

80. A mind moved by love for one's neighbor constantly thinks good thoughts about him (1 Cor. 13: 5); but a mind moved by the opposite assumes evil in him.

81. The cause of good thoughts is virtue; the cause of virtues is the commandments; and the cause of their fulfillment is a good will.

82. Virtues and vices—whether present in the soul or departing from it—incline the soul toward good or evil, prompting it to have thoughts that are hostile to one another.

83. The cause of evil thoughts is passion; the cause of passions is disobedience to the commandments; the cause of disobedience is seduction by the senses; and the cause of seduction is the mind's neglect of the proper control of the senses.

84. In those who are making progress, good dispositions can still be easily turned into their opposites; but in those who are perfect, these dispositions are unshakable.

85. The strength of the soul is an unshakable habit of virtue; he who has attained it said, "*Who shall separate us from the love of God?*" (Rom. 8:35).

86. Self-love precedes all passions; pride follows them all.

87. The three principal sinful passions have their origin in the passion of self-love.

88. These three are gluttony, vanity, and greed, from which all other passions arise.

89. Gluttony is followed by fornication; vanity is followed by pride; and the rest follow all three.

90. Following all three are sorrow, anger, resentment, envy, sloth, and others....

Prayer

1. Christ, Lord of all! Deliver us from all these things—both from the destructive passions and from the thoughts they engender.

2. We were created for Your sake, that we might find bliss in You, having been placed in the Paradise You planted.

3. But we have brought this present disgrace upon ourselves, having preferred what is destructive to blessed delight.

4. For this reason, we have received our just reward within ourselves, inheriting death instead of eternal life.

5. Now, O Lord, just as You have always watched over us, continue to be our guardian to the end—just as You were pleased to become incarnate for our sake, so save us all.

6. For You came to save us who were lost; do not, then, exclude us from the company of the saved.

7. Raise our souls to life and save our bodies, cleansing us from every defilement.

8. Break the bonds of the passions that hold us captive, just as You broke the hosts of unclean demons.

9. And deliver us from their tyranny, that we may serve You alone, the eternal Light.

10. When, after the resurrection from the dead, we form with the Angels a single, blessed, and eternally indissoluble choir.

The One Hundred and Fourth

whose acrostic reads: “ ” *But pray diligently to our God, that we may be delivered from evils—both real and imaginary, and those merely regarded as such.*

1. Whoever has detached his mind from the love and caresses of the flesh has, by the Life-giving Spirit, “*put to death the deeds of the flesh*” (Rom. 8:13).

2. Do not think of renouncing your inclination toward the flesh if your mind is still occupied with what is proper to the flesh.

3. Just as sensation and the sensory are proper to the flesh, so the mind and the intellectual are proper to the soul!

4. Turn your soul away from the senses and the sensory, and your mind will dwell in God and be occupied with spiritual matters.

5. Intellectual beings, which are known by the mind alone, are akin to the Divine; but the senses and sensory things are created to serve the mind.

6. Let the senses and sensory things serve you for spiritual contemplation, not for the gratification of the flesh's lusts.
7. You are commanded *to "put to death the deeds of the flesh"* so that, through arduous struggles, you may resurrect the soul that has been deadened by the pleasures of the flesh.
8. Be ruled by God, and rule over your senses; and, being superior, do not allow that which is inferior to you to have power over you.
9. God is eternal, infinite, and boundless, and He has promised eternal, infinite, and ineffable blessings to those who obey Him.
10. It is the nature of the mind to dwell in God and to reflect upon Him, as well as upon His providence and His terrible judgments.
11. You have the power to lean toward one thing or another, but stand on the side of what is better, and you will subdue what is worse.
12. The senses and the sensible are good, as creations of the good God; yet they cannot in any way be compared to the mind and the intellectual.
13. God created the rational and intellectual nature capable of knowing all things and God Himself, and He produced the senses and the sensory realm for the purpose of serving this end.
14. Just as it is inappropriate for a slave who is not bound to subjugate a benevolent master, so it is inappropriate for the rational mind to submit to the mortal body.
15. A mind that does not rule over the senses falls into sin through them: for, being beguiled by sensual pleasures, it usually gives rise to debauchery.
16. Keeping the senses under your control, lock away your memory securely as well; for first the impressions received through the senses, and then the recollection of them, set the passions in motion once more.
17. Exhaust your body and pray more often—and you will soon be rid of prejudiced thoughts.
18. Study the divine words unceasingly; for diligent practice in this eradicates the passions.
19. Reading, vigil, prayer, and psalm-singing free the mind from wandering after things of the passions.
20. Just as spring stirs plants to life, so too does dispassion stir the mind toward the knowledge of the One Who Is.
21. Keep the commandments, and you will find peace; love God, and you will attain knowledge.
22. Through labor and the sweat of your brow, you are condemned to eat the bread of knowledge.
23. Negligence led our forefather to fall, and instead of the consolations of paradise, it condemned him to death.
24. Command your own Eve, too, to guard against the serpent; lest, having been beguiled by him, she offer you the forbidden fruit.
25. Just as the soul naturally gives life to the body, so virtue and knowledge give life to the soul.
26. A mind that fancies itself wise is a cloud without water, carried by the winds of vanity and pride.
27. As you abstain from vanity, beware also of fornication, lest, in avoiding honors, you fall into dishonor.
28. While avoiding vanity, look to God, lest you otherwise fall into conceit or immorality.
29. It is characteristic of vanity to act for show; and of pride—to belittle others and to be angry.
30. As you avoid gluttony, guard against seeking the approval of others, and against feigning a cheerful countenance to appear hypocritical.
31. Fasting is beautiful when it delights in eating little and is content with meager fare, while also avoiding the desire to please others.
32. When fasting until evening, do not eat your fill, lest you end up rebuilding what you have just destroyed.
33. When abstaining from wine, do not drink too much water either; for otherwise, you will still be providing fuel for immorality.
34. Pride causes one to turn away from God's help, to trust in oneself, and to exalt oneself above others.
35. There are two remedies against pride; if one does not make use of them, he will encounter, unwillingly, a third that is very severe.
36. Pride is driven away by prayer with tears, by not belittling anyone, and by involuntary sorrows.

37. Discipline through trials is a spiritual rod that teaches humility to those who are puffed up in their folly.
38. It is wise not to yield to the thoughts of one who secretly slanders a neighbor.
39. Just as a gardener who fails to pull up weeds allows them to choke the vegetables, so a mind that fails to purify its thoughts ruins the fruits of ascetic labor.
40. A wise man is one who heeds counsel, especially when that counsel is offered by a spiritual father in accordance with God's will.
41. One who is enslaved by passions cannot even understand counsel and is utterly incapable of submitting to spiritual guidance.
42. One who does not accept counsel does not walk in the right paths, but is always swept along by rapids and into abysses.
43. A monk is a mind that has renounced the sensual and does not even allow itself to entertain lustful thoughts.
44. A healer is a mind that has healed itself and, through that very healing, heals others.
45. Seek virtue, and then strive not to lose it, lest you live in shame and die without mercy.
46. Our Lord Jesus Christ has granted light to all, but those who do not believe in Him keep themselves in darkness.
47. Do not consider the loss of virtue a small matter; through it, death entered the world.
48. Obedient fulfillment of the commandments is the resurrection of the dead; for life is the natural consequence of virtue.
49. The death of the body necessarily follows the death of the mind through transgression of the commandment.
50. Just as Adam, having transgressed the commandment, fell into death, so the Savior, having been obedient, put death to death.
51. Put sin to death, lest you rise again as a dead person and pass from the lesser death to the greater.
52. Because of Adam's transgression, the Savior became incarnate to fulfill the oath and raise all to life.
53. Whoever has put the passions to death and freed himself from ignorance passes from this life into eternal life.
54. By studying the Scriptures, you will find the commandments; and by fulfilling what is written, you will be freed from the passions.
55. Keeping the commandments purifies the soul, and the purification of the soul makes it a partaker of the light.
56. The tree of life is the knowledge of God; by partaking of Him, one becomes pure and remains immortal.
57. The beginning of an active life is faith in Christ, and its end is love for God.
58. Jesus Christ is our Lord and God, who has granted us faith in Him so that we may receive eternal life.
59. He appeared to us, uniting the Godhead with soul and body, so that, as God, He might deliver both soul and body from death.
60. We cultivate faith in order to attain love, from which the light of knowledge is born.
61. The following will result from the pursuit of faith: the fear of God, abstinence from pleasures, endurance of hardships, hope in God, dispassion, and love.
62. From sincere love comes knowledge of nature; and after that comes the fulfillment of the highest desires, that is, the grace of theology.
63. The mind that restrains the passions certainly restrains them by the power of the fear of God, believing in God and in what He has threatened and promised.
64. Of those to whom faith is granted, self-restraint is required; once established, this gives rise to patience, which sustains the habit of diligence.
65. The mark of patience is a love for labor; relying on this, the mind embraces the hope that it will obtain what has been promised and avoid what has been threatened.
66. The anticipation of future blessings unites the mind with what is hoped for; and while remaining in this union, it forgets the blessings of the present.

67. One who has tasted what is hoped for abandons the present; for then he devotes all his desire to the latter.
68. Future blessings have been promised by God Himself, and the believer longs for the future as if it were the present.
69. A sign that the mind dwells in the hoped-for blessings is when it strives to establish within itself a complete forgetfulness of earthly things and expands in the knowledge of future blessings.
70. The truth is good, which God of truth teaches, confirming it from every side to the God-loving soul.
71. The blessings prepared for the heirs of the promise are eternal, existing before all ages, and transcending both mind and word.
72. Let us conform ourselves to the rules of piety, so that, having strayed into passions, we may not fall away from hope.
73. Jesus Christ is the One of the Holy Trinity, and it is He with whom you are to be a co-heir.
74. Having been taught by God the knowledge of what exists, one will have no difficulty believing the Scriptures regarding what is foretold in them.
75. The Holy Spirit, finding the mind stripped of passions, accordingly secretly leads it into the knowledge of what is hoped for.
76. In accordance with the purification of the mind, the soul is also guided toward the knowledge of the divine words.
77. One who has brought his body into proper order and who practices divine knowledge is, by this very knowledge, purified more and more.
78. The mind, beginning to contemplate divine matters, starts with faith, and then, moving and progressing among these matters, returns once more to faith—but to a higher one.
79. It is observed that fear follows the beginning of this contemplation, while love precedes its end.
80. The mind, beginning to contemplate from a faith that is attentive (or that understands what to believe), attains in theology that which extends beyond the limits of all reason—defined by an unforgettable faith (always present in consciousness, abiding immovably within it) and by the contemplation of the hidden.
81. The words about God spoken by our holy and blessed Fathers are not to be understood as being in accordance with Him (corresponding to His essence and majesty), but as being about Him (revealing Him to us to the extent that our minds can comprehend).
82. All words, whether affirmative or negative, are understood to refer to Him, that is, to God.
83. Thus, “being,” “Divinity,” “grace,” and other such terms are used in the affirmative; while “beginningless,” “boundless,” “invisible,” and the like are used in the negative.
84. Since there is one nature, transcending all understanding and speech, and one hidden Divinity of the Holy Trinity, everything that is spoken of and contemplated concerning It is spoken of and contemplated collectively.
85. Just as the Holy Trinity is believed to be one Godhead, so too are the three Persons of the one Godhead confessed.
86. The positive and negative attributes mentioned above are generally applied to the entire Holy and consubstantial Trinity, with the exception of personal attributes, some of which are positive and others negative.
87. The personal attributes of the Divine Hypostases are—fatherhood, sonship, and procession—and others properly attributed to the Persons.
88. A Hypostasis is defined by the nature together with its personal attributes; thus, each Hypostasis possesses both what is common to the nature as a whole and what is proper to the Hypostasis itself.
89. Among the attributes common to the entire Holy Trinity, the negative ones are considered the most important; but this is not the case with regard to the personal attributes. For among these, as has already been said, some are positive and others are negative—such as, for example, unbegottenness and begottenness, and the like. “Unbegottenness” differs from “begottenness” in meaning: for “unbegottenness” denotes the Father, while “begottenness” denotes the Son.
90. Terms and names are used to clarify what is contemplated concerning the nature of the Holy Trinity, as stated (see ch. 81); but not concerning the essence of the nature: for what pertains to it is unknowable to the mind and inexpressible in words, but known to the One Trinity.

91. Just as the single nature of the Godhead is called Triune, so the Holy Trinity is confessed to be consubstantial.

92. The Father is contemplated as both without beginning and as the beginning—without beginning, as the Unbegotten, and as the beginning, as the Father of the Son and the Source of the Holy Spirit, Who eternally exist from Him and in Him.

93. The One, moving toward the Trinity, remains the One; and the Trinity, reducing itself to the One, remains the Trinity. This is truly wondrous!

94. The Son and the Holy Spirit are confessed not to be without beginning, yet to be eternal: not without beginning, in that they are related to the Father as the beginning and source; and eternal, in that one is begotten from eternity and the other proceeds from eternity, existing with the Father.

95. The indivisible, single Divinity of the Trinity is always rightly contemplated, and the three distinct hypostases of the one Divinity are always rightly confessed.

96. The personal attributes are: of the Father, being unbegotten; of the Son, being begotten; and of the Holy Spirit, proceeding. The origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit is confessed as timeless. For just as light comes from the Sun and is in the Sun, so too do They have eternal existence from the Eternal One and in the Eternal One.

97. The personal attributes of the hypostases are always contemplated as immutable and unchanging, while the common nature, or Divinity, is contemplated as indivisible.

98. We confess the One in the Trinity and the Trinity in the One as indivisibly divided and separately united.

99. A single principle is contemplated in the Godhead—the Father—the source of the Son and the Spirit, as their Parent and: the eternal source of the co-eternal, the boundless source of the co-boundless; and these three are consubstantial and indivisible. The Creator of all things—the Provider and Judge—is the Triune God: the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. For it is said that from Him, through Him, and in Him are all things: to Him be glory forever. Amen (Rom. 11:36).

100. We confess the Son and the Holy Spirit to be co-eternal with the Father and co-begun, in that, being eternal and without beginning, they derive their existence—and their origin—from Him and in Him. They are eternally with the Father and in the Father, and the Father is eternally with Them. There has never been a moment when the Father was without Them, nor They without Him. Such is the nature of God—one in essence and three in persons—to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

St. Theodore, Bishop of Edessa

A Brief Account of Him

The son of prayerful and visionary parents, residents of Edessa, Theodore showed no aptitude for learning when he began his studies, but prayed to God for the revelation of meaning. Once, he hid beneath the Holy Table during the Liturgy, and a certain young man, having fed him honey, instilled in him a love for solitude. The presiding bishop, upon learning of this, ordained Theodore as a reader, and he remained at the monastery, where he easily and freely studied the sciences of the time under the guidance of his mentor, Sophronius. At the age of 18, having lost his parents, he distributed his estate, setting aside only a portion for his sister, and at the age of 20 he withdrew to the monastery of St. Savvas, near Jerusalem, where he spent 12 years in the communal quarters and 24 years in seclusion. He was called out of this seclusion by decree of the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem and ordained as Bishop of Edessa (), to which he then traveled. Upon arriving in Edessa, he devoted all his energies to the welfare of the Church and the faithful; but his efforts encountered great obstacles from the Muslims, the rulers of the city, and the heretics who filled it. Seeing that his efforts were in vain and that his life was even in danger, St. Theodore went to Baghdad to the Caliph Mawiya to seek his favor. After healing the caliph of his illness, he persuaded him to issue orders to the rulers of Cilicia, Syria, and Mesopotamia to return the property of the Church of Edessa to it and not to prevent people from converting to Orthodoxy. Upon returning to Edessa, he was joyfully received by the Orthodox flock, which subsequently grew through the conversion of heretics and was beneficently guided by this zealous shepherd, who was divinely inspired. Foreseeing the approach of death and wishing to rest in his former secluded cell, St. Theodore set out for Palestine, where, at the site of his ascetic labors, he soon passed away

on the 9th day of July, the date on which his memory is commemorated. At that time, Michael reigned in Constantinople with his mother Theodora—the 9th century. The one hundred soul-saving chapters presented here were composed by him at the request of the elders of the monastery while he was still in seclusion. The compilers of *Greek Philanthropy* write of them: “We cannot say with certainty whether St. Theodore left any other writings. However, we include these one hundred chapters, which he laboriously compiled, among the other patristic writings on sobriety; for they aptly depict the matter of sacred sobriety and can therefore bring rich spiritual benefit to those who read them with due attention.”

One Hundred Most Beneficial Chapters by Our Venerable Father Theodore of Edessa

1. Since, by the grace of the good God, having renounced Satan and his works, we have been united to Christ—as in the beginning in the font of rebirth, so now again in monastic vows—let us keep His commandments. This is required of us not only by our solemn vow, but also by our natural duty; for, having been created by God from the beginning “*very good*,” we must remain so. Although sin, arising from our inattention, has produced within us that which is unnatural to us; yet, through the abundant mercy of our great God, we have been called again, renewed by the passion of the Passionless One, and redeemed by the blood of Christ the Lord, thus being delivered from the ancient transgression of our forefathers. Therefore, if we become righteous, there will be nothing great in this; but it will be all the more worthy of pity and condemnation if we fall away from righteousness.

2. Just as a good deed, when done without true faith, is entirely dead and ineffective, so too does faith alone, without righteous deeds, not deliver us from eternal fire. For “*Whoever loves Me*,” says the Lord, “*will keep My commandments*” (John 14:23). Therefore, if we love the Lord and believe in Him, we will bear witness to this by keeping His commandments, so that we may obtain eternal life. But if we despise the observance of His commandments—to which all creation submits—how can we call ourselves faithful, we who are more honored than any creature, yet are the only ones among them who disobey the commands of the Creator and prove ungrateful to our Benefactor?

3. By keeping Christ’s commandments, we give Him nothing—for He lacks nothing and is the Giver of all good things—but we benefit ourselves, earning eternal life and the enjoyment of unspeakable blessings.

4. Anyone who opposes us in the fulfillment of God’s commandments—be it a father, a mother, or anyone else—is detestable and hateful to us, lest we hear: “*Whoever loves father or mother more than Me, or anyone else among men, is not worthy of Me*” (Matt. 10:37).

5. Let us therefore bind ourselves with all our might to the fulfillment of the Lord’s commandments, lest we be bound by the unbreakable bonds of evil desires and sensual pleasures; for in that case, the judgment concerning the barren fig tree will be pronounced upon us as well, saying, “*Cut it down; why should it use up the soil?*” (Luke 13:7). For, He says, “*everyone who does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire*” (Luke 3:9).

6. One who is overcome by lusts and pleasures, and who turns to the world, will soon fall into the snares of sin; and sin, once committed, is like fire in a reed bed, like a stone rolling down a mountain, like a stream swelling as tributaries flow into it. So it is; and every sin destroys the one who commits it.

7. Through sin, the soul departs from its natural order, and, becoming wild because of this and filled with the thorns of sinful pleasures, it becomes a dwelling place for fearsome beasts, as it is said: “*There the onocentavres rest; there the hedgehog makes its nest, and demons meet with the onocentavres*” (Isa. 34: 14–15)—which are various sinful passions. But when it calls itself back to its natural order (for it can do so, if it wills, while still bound to the flesh), it will subdue itself through diligent self-discipline and begin to live according to God’s law; then the beasts that had previously taken up residence within her will flee, and the Angels, the guardians of our lives, will arrive, making the day of her conversion a day of joy and gladness; then the grace of the Holy Spirit will come upon her, teaching her how not only to preserve herself in goodness—but also to prosper even more in it.

8. The Fathers call prayer a spiritual stronghold, without which we cannot go out to battle, lest we be wounded by the enemy’s spears and led away to their land. But no one can attain effective, pure prayer unless he sits before God with a righteous heart; for God is the One who grants prayer to the one who prays and instructs man in wisdom.

9. The fact that passions trouble the soul and attack it is beyond our control; but the fact that passionate thoughts linger within us and stir up the passions is within our control. The former is sinless, since it lies

beyond our control; but the latter, if we courageously resist and overcome it, brings us crowns, and if, by yielding, we are defeated, subjects us to torment.

10. There are three principal passions: lust for pleasure, love of money, and love of glory. These are followed by five other spirits of malice; and from these, ultimately, a great multitude of passions and all manner of diverse sinful inclinations are born. That is why whoever overcomes the first three rulers and leaders of the passions thereby also overthrows the five passions that follow them, and then subdues all the passions.

11. Whatever we have done out of passion is what stirs the soul through passionate memories. But when passionate memories are completely erased from the heart, to the point that they no longer even approach it, this serves as a sign of the forgiveness of past sins. For as long as the soul is passionately attached to anything sinful, one must acknowledge that the dominion of sin still resides within it.

12. Carnal and materialistic passions are usually diminished and withered away by bodily sufferings (voluntary privations and bodily ascetic practices); while spiritual and invisible passions are destroyed by humility, meekness, and love.

13. Passionate lust is subdued by abstinence combined with humility; burning anger is tamed by love; and a wandering mind is focused by diligent prayer, with remembrance of God. Thus are all three parts of the soul purified. It was with a view to correcting these that the Divine Apostle said: *“Pursue peace and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord”* (Heb. 12:14).

14. Some are perplexed as to which comes first—whether thoughts set the passions in motion, or the passions set thoughts in motion—since some say one thing and others say the other. I, however, say that thoughts are set in motion by the passions: for if there were no passions in the soul, passionate thoughts would not trouble it.

15. It is the custom of the demons who are always at war with us to place obstacles in the way of virtues that are within our power and easy to practice, while instilling a strong desire for those that are beyond our power and untimely (which it is not yet time for us to undertake); specifically: they compel those who are succeeding in communal obedience to perform the deeds of the silent ones; and they instill in the silent ones and hermits the desire to adhere to the rules of communal life. In the same way, they act with regard to every virtue. But let us *“not be ignorant of their schemes”* (2 Cor. 2:11), knowing that everything done in its own time and in its proper measure is good, while everything excessive and untimely is harmful.

16. Those who move about in the world and encounter objects of passion are assailed by demons, who draw them into passionate deeds; but those who live in the desert, where such objects are absent, are troubled by passionate thoughts. In this second form of battle, it is far more difficult to achieve victory than in the first. There, the task requires time, place, and other conveniences; the mind, however, is easily swayed and uncontrollable in its thoughts. To combat this invisible battle, we have been given pure prayer, in which we have been commanded to abide unceasingly. It makes the mind strong in battle and always ready for it, since it can be performed without the involvement of the body.

17. Pointing to the complete mortification of the passions, the Apostle says: *“Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5:24). For when we put the passions to death, destroy lusts, and subject the thoughts of the flesh to the Spirit—only then do we take up the cross and follow Christ. And withdrawal from the world is nothing other than this putting to death of the passions and the manifestation of the life hidden in Christ.

18. Those who suffer from the rebellions of this mortal body and are weary from its almost constant warfare should not blame the flesh for this, but themselves; for if they did not give it strength, extending their care for it to the point of lust, they would not suffer so much from it. Or do they not see those who have crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts and bear the likeness of Jesus’ death in their own mortal flesh—how they have it as a helper, especially in good deeds—not as an adversary, but as one that is submissive and guided by God’s law? Let them do the same, and then they too will taste such peace.

19. Any association of thought with any forbidden lust, or any inclination toward lustful pleasure, is sinful for a monk. For at first the thought begins to cloud the mind with its covetous nature; then the soul inclines toward sinful pleasure, unable to withstand the struggle; and finally, a union takes place, which, as has been said, is sin. If this continues, a passionate attraction arises from it, which little by little leads to the sinful act itself. For this very reason, the Prophet praises those who smash the infants of Babylon against the rock (Ps. 136: 9). The meaning of this is clear to the wise and discerning.

20. Angels, being ministers of love and peace, rejoice in our repentance and progress in virtue; therefore, they strive to fill us with spiritual contemplations and assist us in every good deed. On the contrary, demons, servants of wrath and malice, rejoice when virtue is diminished, and direct all their efforts toward luring our souls into shameful fantasies.

21. Faith is a virtue that fosters a good disposition; it instills in us the fear of God; and the fear of God teaches us to keep the commandments, or to lead a good and active life; from an active life springs true dispassion; and the fruit of dispassion is love, which is the fulfillment of all the commandments, binding and holding them all together

22. Just as a healthy body senses the illness that seizes it; but one who does not recognize this suffers from insensitivity: so too the mind, insofar as it retains its full natural activity, is aware of its own powers and sees from where the more tyrannical passions assail it, directing a more urgent resistance against that part. But its condition is dire if it spends its days in insensitivity, like one fighting an enemy at night, since it does not see the enemy's intentions.

23. When our mental power is unwaveringly devoted to the contemplation of virtues, and when the desiring power is directed solely toward them and toward their Giver, Christ the Lord, while the irascible power arms itself against the demons—then our powers act in accordance with their nature.

24. According to St. Gregory the Theologian, the rational soul is tripartite. He called the virtue of the intellectual power prudence, knowledge, and wisdom; the virtue of the irascible power—courage and patience; and the virtue of the appetitive power—love, chastity, and self-restraint; Yet truth has a part in all of them, teaching us to act properly. Through prudence, it wages war against hostile angels, defending the virtues; through chastity, it views things dispassionately; through love, it compels us to love all people as ourselves; through self-restraint, it cuts off all sensual pleasures; and through courage and patience, it arms itself against invisible battles. Such is the melodious harmony of the soul's organ.

25. Let him who strives for chastity and longs for blessed purity—which no one would err in calling dispassion—mercilessly chastise and subdue the flesh, invoking divine grace with a humble mind—and he will receive what he desires. But whoever indulges the body without restraint in eating and drinking will be tormented by the spirit of fornication. For just as a great quantity of water extinguishes a flame, so hunger and thirst—or, in general, any form of self-restraint combined with humility of soul—destroy the inflamed desires of the flesh and shameful fantasies.

26. Let the passion of resentment depart completely from your soul; and by no means give place to enmity within yourself. For just as fire is hidden in straw, so is resentment lurking in the heart. But rather, pray fervently for the one who has offended you and do him good, as much and in whatever way you can, so that you may save your soul from death and not be presumptuous during your prayer.

27. The Lord rests in the souls of the humble, but in the hearts of the proud dwell the passions of wickedness; for nothing strengthens them against us as much as haughty thoughts; and, conversely, nothing so effectively uproots these former evils from the soul as blessed humility, which is rightly called the slayer of passions.

28. May your soul be purified more and more from evil memories, and may it be enlightened by the best of thoughts, always keeping in mind what has been said—that at the hour of departure, a heart given to sensual pleasures is a prison and a set of chains, while a diligent heart is an open door. For truly, when pure souls depart from the body, angels accompany them, guiding them to a blessed life; but souls that have been defiled and have not been purified by repentance are snatched away—alas for me!—by demons.

29. A head adorned with a precious diadem, sparkling with Indian gems and pearls, is beautiful; but incomparably more beautiful is the soul, rich in the knowledge of God, radiant with luminous contemplations, and having the All-Holy Spirit dwelling within it. And who can worthily describe such a blessed soul in words!

30. Do not allow anger and fury to take root in your soul; for *“a hot-tempered man is not honorable”* (Prov. 11:25); *“but in the heart of the meek rests wisdom”* (Prov. 14:33). If the passion of anger takes hold of your soul, those who live in the world will be found better than you, and you will be covered with shame, having proved yourself unworthy as a monk.

31. In every temptation and in every battle, let prayer be your invincible weapon—and you will triumph through the grace of Christ. But let it be pure, as our wise Teacher commands us, saying: *“I want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing”* (1 Tim. 2: 8).—Whoever neglects such prayer will be given over to temptations and passions.

32. *It is written, “Wine gladdens the heart of man” (Ps. 103:15).* But you, who have vowed to weep and mourn, turn away from such merriment—and you will be gladdened by spiritual gifts. If, however, you take pleasure in wine, you will spend your life in the company of shameful thoughts, and you will endure many sorrows.

33. Do not spend the feasts in drunkenness, but in renewal of the mind and purity of soul. For by filling your belly with feasting and wine, you will provoke the wrath of the One to whom the feast is dedicated.

34. We are commanded to stay awake in psalm-singing, prayer, and Scripture reading at all times, but especially on feast days. A monk who stays awake refines his mind for soul-nourishing contemplation, while excessive sleep dulls the mind. But be careful not to indulge in idle memories or sinful thoughts during your vigil; for it is better to sleep than to stay awake for the sake of such vanities and to defile yourself with unworthy pursuits.

35. Both the one who nurtures a serpent in his bosom and the one who harbors a wicked thought in his heart will be put to death: the former by being struck in the body by a poisonous sting, and the latter by having injected deadly poison (of thought) into his soul. But just as we swiftly slay the offspring of vipers, so too will we not allow evil thoughts to take root in our hearts, lest we suffer bitterly from them later.

36. A pure soul—a chosen vessel—can rightly be called “*a sealed garden, a spring sealed up*” (Song of Songs 4:12) and “*the seat of understanding*” (Proverbs 12:23). But a soul defiled by impure passions is filled with the stench of sin.

37. I have heard from experienced and active elders that sinful thoughts in the soul arise from vanity in clothing, overindulgence of the belly, and harmful conversations.

38. Let the desire for possessions not take root in the souls of ascetics. A monk who is greedy for possessions is like a leaky ship, tossed about by the waves of anxiety and plunged into the depths of sorrow. The disease of the love of money, which gives rise to many passions, is rightly called the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

39. Detachment from worldly possessions and silence are a treasure hidden in the field of monastic life. Go, then, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and with that you will buy the field; after digging it up and finding the treasure, guard it carefully within yourself from theft, so that you may be enriched with wealth that cannot be stolen.

40. Once you have begun to live with your spiritual father and have experienced the benefit he brings, do not allow anyone to turn you away from your love for him or from living with him; do not condemn him in any way; do not speak ill of him, even if he rebukes you or even strikes you; do not lend an ear when someone else slanders him; and by no means associate with those who revile him, lest the Lord be angered against you and blot you out of the book of life.

41. The feat of obedience is founded on self-denial and renunciation of all things, as we have learned. Let the one who undertakes it fortify himself with three bulwarks: faith, hope, and pure and divine love, so that, being protected by them, he may successfully strive in this good feat and receive the crown of righteousness.

42. Do not be a judge of your father’s deeds, but a doer of his commandments. The demons, as is their custom, will begin to point out his faults to you, in order to deafen your ears to his teachings, and thereby either make you a weak and fearful warrior in battle, or, through mere thoughts of unbelief, weaken you and make you indolent toward every form of virtue.

43. He who does not heed his father’s commandments proves himself a transgressor of the very best points of his vow. But he who has instilled obedience within himself and cut off his own will with the sword of obedience has fulfilled what is due of him—what he promised to Christ the Lord before many witnesses.

44. Observing the monks, we have clearly seen and confirmed that the enemies of our life—the demons—vehemently rage against the fathers who strive in obedience, gnashing their teeth at them and devising all manner of malicious schemes against them. And what do they not do, what do they not suggest, to tear them away from their fathers’ bosom? They present pretexts for disobedience, as if they were blessings; they create discontent; they stir up animosity toward the father; they portray his instructions as reproaches, and these reproaches, like sharp arrows, pierce the heart. “And why,” they say, “have you, being free, become a slave—and a slave to a heartless despot?” “How long will you bear the yoke of slavery, never seeing the light of freedom?”—After this, they suggest: “You would be better off practicing hospitality, visiting the sick, and caring for the poor.” Then they extol the virtue of complete seclusion and silence; and they sow all manner

of evil weeds into the heart of the devout ascetic, just to cast him out of his father's spiritual enclosure and, having pulled him from his peaceful harbor, cast him into the sea, where a storm of the soul rages wildly. If they finally succeed in this, they take him into their power and, like a captive, force him to act according to their evil desires.

45. Do not, therefore, lose sight of the wickedness of your enemies and adversaries while remaining obedient to your spiritual father, and do not forget the vows of your calling before God: do not let yourself be overcome by insults, nor fear reproaches, revilements, or mockery; do not be led astray by the temptations of sinful thoughts; do not flee from a father's sternness; and do not dishonor the blessed yoke of humility through insolent self-indulgence and self-will; but, having laid the Lord's word in your heart: "*Whoever endures to the end will be saved*" (Matt. 10:22). "*Run with endurance the race set before you, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*" (Heb. 12:1–2).

46. Just as a goldsmith, by placing gold in the crucible, refines it to its purest state, so too does the novice monk, who devotes himself to the struggles of submission to the will of his fathers and is refined by all the sorrows of a God-fearing life, learning obedience through toil and great patience, purge himself of all bad habits and become filled with humility, becomes entirely radiant, and worthy of heavenly treasures, a life free from sorrow, and a blessed abode, from which sorrow and sighing have fled and where unceasing joy and gladness are planted.

47. True and deeply rooted faith gives birth to the fear of God; and the fear of God teaches us to keep the commandments: for, as it is said, where there is fear, there is observance of the commandments; and in the observance of the commandments lies active virtue, which is the beginning of contemplation; and the fruit of all this is dispassion; through dispassion, love is established within us; and the beloved disciple speaks of love: "*God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*" (1 John 4:16).

48. How truly beautiful and good is the monastic life! How truly beautiful and good it is when it flows within the bounds and according to the laws established for it by its founders and leaders, who were instructed by the Holy Spirit. For a soldier of Christ ought to be unworldly (possessing nothing), unburdened by any worldly plans or affairs, as the Apostle says: "*No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but strives to please the one who commissioned him*" (2 Tim. 2:4).

49. It is fitting, therefore, for a monk to be unworldly, dispassionate, free from every sinful desire, not a glutton, not a drunkard, not stingy, not lazy, not covetous, not a lover of pleasure, not a lover of glory: for if anyone does not renounce all such things, he cannot properly lead this angelic life; but for those who do act in this way, it is a good yoke and a light burden, since, in such a case, divine hope makes everything easy for them. This life is pleasant, its deeds are delightful, and its blessings are a good portion that will not be taken away from the soul that has attained it.

50. Having renounced worldly cares and taken up the monastic life, do not desire wealth in order to distribute it to the poor; for this, too, is one of the deceptions of the evil one, leading to vanity, so as to plunge the mind into a multitude of troublesome cares. Let you have only bread and water; with these alone you can earn the reward of hospitality. Even if you lack these, simply by welcoming a stranger with a kind heart and offering him a word of comfort, you can thus earn the reward of hospitality. You have an example of this in the poor widow, of whom the Lord testified in the Gospel that, with her two mites, by virtue of her good will, she surpassed the alms of the rich.

51. This is said of those who live in silence. But those who are under their father's authority should keep one thing in mind: never to deviate in any way from their father's command; for by fulfilling this properly, they fulfill all that is required of them; conversely, those who deviate from the precise fulfillment of this duty will remain unskilled in every form of virtue and spiritual life.

52. Here is yet another piece of advice for you, lover of Christ: love the life of a pilgrim—that is, be like a pilgrim, a stranger to the affairs of your own country; do not be enticed by parental concerns or the affections of relatives; avoid staying in the city and sit patiently and unceasingly in the desert, saying with the Prophet: "*I have fled and taken refuge in the desert*" (Ps. 54:8).

53. Seek out places that are secluded and far from the world, and even if you are troubled there by a lack of basic necessities, do not be afraid; even if enemies surround you like bees or angry wasps, waging all manner of war against you and disturbing you with all sorts of thoughts, do not be afraid; do not lend them a willing ear, and do not flee from the field of battle, but rather endure everything courageously, singing to

yourself and saying: *“I have waited patiently for the Lord; He has heard me and answered my prayer”* (Ps. 39:2). And you will see God’s greatness, His intercession, His care, and all His saving providence toward you.

54. You should have as friends those who are edifying to you and who share your way of life; for Scripture says, *“Let those who are peaceful be your friends, your spiritual brothers, and holy fathers,”* of whom our Lord also said: *“My mother and my brothers are those who do the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matt. 12:49).

55. Do not be partial to varied and expensive foods, and do not feast on them; for, as Scripture says, *“she who feasts on such things,”* (1 Tim. 5:6) *“is dead while she lives.”* And even with inexpensive foods, if possible, avoid overeating. For it is written: *“Do not be enticed by the fullness of the belly”* (Prov. 24:15).

56. Do not allow yourself to be outside your cell too often if you have chosen a life of silence; for this is very harmful—it robs you of grace, clouds your thoughts, and weakens your zeal. That is why it is said: *“The fumes of lust corrupt a mind that is free from malice”* (Wisdom of Solomon 4:12). Cut off all contact with the outside world, lest your mind become clouded and disturb the order of your silence.

57. While sitting in your cell, do not go about your tasks aimlessly, nor waste your time in idleness: for, as they say, one who travels without a purpose toils in vain. But find for yourself a good deed, and gather your mind. Always keep the hour of death before your eyes; remember the vanity of the world—how deceptive it is, and at the same time how unstable and insignificant—and reflect on the circumstances of the dreadful trial at the Last Judgment, how our bitter accusers will then visibly present our deeds, words, and thoughts, which they have stored up, and which we accepted. Bring to mind the torments of hell and how souls will be confined there. Also envision that great and dreadful day—that is, the day of the general resurrection, the standing before God, and the final judgment of the infallible Judge. Imagine the torments, shame, and the condemnation of conscience that will befall the sinners, and how they will be rejected by God and cast into eternal fire, to the worm that never dies, into impenetrable darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth; and as you survey all the other torments, do not cease, groaning, to bathe your face, your garments, and the place where you sit with tears. With such thoughts, as I have seen, many have brought upon themselves an abundance of tears and have wonderfully purified all the powers of their soul.

58. Reflect also on the blessings reserved for the righteous, their placement at Christ’s right hand, the voice of the Lord—the Master—calling them blessed, the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, the gifts bestowed upon them that surpass understanding, that sweetest light, joy without end, unbroken by any sorrow, those heavenly dwellings where the angels dwell, and all else promised to those who fear the Lord.

59. May such thoughts remain with you at the table, accompany you to sleep, and rise with you. Take care never to forget them, but wherever you may be, do not turn your mind away from remembering them, so that evil thoughts may flee from you, and divine consolations may fill your soul. A soul that is not protected and armed with these thoughts cannot maintain silence properly; for a spring that contains no water bears that name in vain.

60. And this is the way of life prescribed for those who practice silence: fasting to the best of one’s ability, vigil, sleeping on the bare ground, and all manner of other voluntary privations, for the sake of future rest; for as Scripture says, *“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18); especially pure, unceasing, and uninterrupted prayer: it is a strong wall, a pleasant refuge, the protection of virtues, the eradication of passions, the improvement of the soul, the purification of the mind, rest for the afflicted, and comfort for those who weep; prayer is a conversation with God, a contemplation of invisible things, and for those who long for confirmation of their truth, a communion with the angels, success in good deeds, and the confirmation of what is hoped for. Embrace this queen of virtues, O ascetic, and strive with all your strength to keep her within yourself; pray day and night, in good spirits and in distress; pray with fear and trembling, with an alert and sober mind, so that your prayer may be pleasing to the Lord: for Scripture says: *“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer”* (Ps. 33: 16).

61. One of the ancients said very truthfully and appropriately that, of the demons who oppose us, the first to enter the fray are those entrusted with gluttonous desires, who instill the love of money and incline us toward vanity; while all the others, following behind them, carry off those wounded by them.

62. And indeed, upon closer examination, we have come to realize that it never happens for a person to fall into any sin or any passion unless he has first been wounded by one of these three. That is why the devil then tempted the Savior with these three thoughts; but the Lord, proving Himself inaccessible to them,

commanded the devil to withdraw from His presence, thereby granting us victory over him as the good and philanthropic Lord, who took on a body like ours in every way except sin, and showed us the true path to sinlessness; by following this path, we build within ourselves the new man, *“renewed in the image of the One who created him”* (Col. 3: 10).

63. The words of David teach us to hate demons with perfect hatred, as enemies of our salvation. And this is very helpful in the pursuit of virtue. But who, then, will be the one who hates the enemies of salvation with perfect hatred? The one who sins not only in deed but also in thought. For as long as the vessels of their love—that is, the causes of the passions—remain within us, how can hatred for them take root in us? For a heart given to sensual pleasure is powerless to nurture hatred for them within itself.

64. The wedding garment is the dispassion of the rational soul, which has withdrawn from worldly pleasures, renounced all unseemly desires, and devoted itself entirely to God-loving thoughts and the purest contemplations. But as soon as she indulges in the passions of immorality and becomes entrenched in them, she is stripped of this garment of chastity and clothed in torn and defiled rags, just as it is shown in the Gospels that the one bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness (Matt. 22: 13), had a garment woven from such thoughts and deeds, which the Word of the Lord deemed unworthy of the divine and imperishable bridal chamber.

65. Regarding self-love, which hates everyone, one of the wise men rightly said: the fierce battle of self-love, like a certain tyrant, stands at the head of all the thoughts with which those three and those five captivate our mind.

66. It would be remarkable if anyone, always satiating himself to the full with delicacies, were able to attain dispassion. By dispassion, however, I do not mean abstaining from sin in deed—for that is self-restraint—but rather, when one has completely cut off the very arising of passionate thoughts from the heart—which is also called purity of heart.

67. It is easier to purify an impure soul than to restore to health one that has been purified but has once again been wounded by the passions; for those who have only just cast off worldly bonds—no matter what sins they may happen to fall into—find it easier to attain dispassion; but for those who *“tasted the good word of God”* (Heb. 6:5) and have already walked the path of salvation, only to stray back into sin, the path to dispassion is blocked by obstacles that are almost insurmountable. This is due to an established habit of sin and a deep-rooted inclination toward sin, but no less so because the demon of habitual sin, swirling before the eyes of the mind, ceaselessly presents images of that sin. Nevertheless, a zealous and diligent soul will readily accomplish even this most difficult task, with the assistance of God’s grace—which is loving and long-suffering toward us, calling us to repentance, and receiving those who return with inexpressible abundance of mercy—as we learn from the parable of the prodigal son in the Gospels.

68. None of us can, by our own strength, escape the wiles and schemes of the evil one, but only through the invincible power of Christ. Therefore, those who dream of abolishing sin—which is abolished by God’s grace alone—through their own deeds and the strength of their will are dangerously mistaken. For this reason, John Chrysostom, the luminary of the Church, says that human effort alone is insufficient unless it is accompanied by help from above; and again, help from above will be of no use unless it is accompanied by one’s own effort. Both Judas and Peter exemplify these two aspects: the former, having received so much from grace, derived no benefit from it because he did not apply his own will or contribute his own effort; and Peter, though he showed zealous readiness, fell because he did not receive help from above. It is thus evident that virtue is woven from both of these. Therefore, I ask that, just as we entrust everything to God and do not slumber ourselves, so too, while striving with zeal, we should not think to set everything right through our own efforts.

69. God does not want us to see Him as doing nothing—which is why He does not do everything Himself—nor does He want us to think too highly of ourselves—which is why He has not entrusted everything to our will and our efforts; but by removing what is harmful from both sides, He has left what is beneficial. The Psalmist also teaches us well, saying: *“Unless the Lord builds the city, those who build it labor in vain”* (Ps. 126: 1). Nor is it possible to *“tread upon the asp and the basilisk, and trample the lion and the serpent”* (Ps. 90:13) unless one has first purified oneself as much as human strength allows and received the power to do so from Him who said to the Apostles: *“I give you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10:19). That is why we are commanded to implore the Heavenly Father in prayer: *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* (Matthew 6:13). For if, without Christ’s

strength and help, we do not deliver ourselves from the fiery darts of the evil one and do not attain to dispassion, then we labor in vain, hoping to accomplish anything worthy through our own strength or zeal. Therefore, whoever desires to stand firm against the devil's wiles and render them ineffective, and to become a partaker of divine glory, must, with tears and sighs, with an insatiable desire and a fervent soul, seek God's help and divine intercession night and day. But whoever wishes to receive these things must purify his soul from every worldly pleasure and from all passions and lusts. For it is of such souls that God says: *"I will dwell in them and walk among them"* (2 Cor. 6:16), and the Lord said to His disciples: *"Whoever loves Me will keep My commandments, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him"* (John 14:23).

70. One of the ancients spoke a most wise and beneficial word concerning thoughts, saying: Examine your thoughts at the threshold of the heart (as they enter it)—whether they are our own or from the adversary; and those that are our own and good, bring them into the innermost treasury of the soul and keep them there, as in an inviolable treasury, but those that are hostile, after chastising them with the scourges of sound reasoning, drive them out immediately, giving them no rest or place even in the vicinity of your soul; or better yet, strike them down entirely with the sword of prayer and the most divine teaching, so that through such an extermination, the fear of thieves may fall upon their very leader as well. Know that whoever so thoroughly purifies his thoughts becomes a true zealous defender of the commandments.

71. Let the one who strives to cut off the thoughts and impulses that battle and disturb him rally more allies and fellow warriors and draw them close to himself for a joint struggle; —namely, humility of soul, bodily labor, and every other form of ascetic self-denial, and especially prayer from a contrite heart with many tears, as David sings: *"Behold my humility and my labor, and forgive all my sins"* (Ps. 24: 18) and: *"Do not ignore my tears, O Lord"* (Ps. 38: 13), and again: *"My tears have been my bread day and night"* (Ps. 41: 4). Again: *"I have mixed my drink with weeping"* (Ps. 101:10).

72. The devil, the adversary of our lives, uses various thoughts to belittle our sins and often covers them with forgetfulness, so that we may slacken in our efforts and no longer think to mourn our failings. But we, brothers, will not allow ourselves to forget our failings, even if it seems they have already been forgiven through our repentance; rather, we will always remember our sins and never cease to mourn them, so that, having acquired humility as a faithful companion, we may avoid the snares of vanity and pride.

73. Let no one think he can bear the labors and succeed in virtue by his own strength; for the source of all that is good for us is God, just as the source of all that is evil is the deceiver of our souls—the devil. Therefore, when you do something good, give thanks to the source of it; and when something evil befalls you, attribute it to the ruler of such things.

74. He who combines knowledge with corresponding action is a praiseworthy spiritual cultivator, watering the field of the soul from these two most delightful sources. In this way, knowledge inspires the mind with the contemplation of what is best, while the action corresponding to it puts to death *"the members that are on the earth: fornication, impurity, passion, and evil desire"* (Col. 3: 5). When these are put to death, then the beautiful flowers of virtue bloom, bearing abundant spiritual fruit—*"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control"* (Gal. 5: 22–23). Then, at last, this chaste worker, having crucified *"the flesh with its passions and desires,"* will say with the God-bearing preacher: *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me"* (Gal. 2: 20).

75. And here is something else that must not be hidden from you, lover of Christ: when a single passion finds a place within you and takes root to the point of habit, it brings other passions into the same house; for although the passions compete against one another, just as do their instigators, the demons, they all seek our ruin in unison.

76. The bloom of the flesh, which is made to wither by ascetic struggles and whose every desire is cut off—this is the one *who "bears the marks of Christ the Lord on his mortal body"* (Gal. 6:17).

77. The end of ascetic labors is the peace of dispassion, while the end of the flesh's various comforts is the passions of dishonor.

78. Do not allow yourself to consider the length of your monastic life a worthy achievement, and do not be caught up in self-praise because of your long sojourn in the desert and your patient endurance of harsh ascetic struggles there, but keep the Lord's word in mind: that you are still an unfree servant and have not yet fulfilled the commandments of your Master. And indeed, as long as we remain in this present life, we have

not yet been called back from exile, but still sit by the rivers of Babylon, still suffer under the yoke of Egyptian bondage, and have not yet seen the Promised Land: for we have not yet cast off the old man, who smolders with alluring lusts; we have not yet been clothed in the image of the heavenly one; we still bear the image of the earthly. Therefore, there is no room for self-praise, but we must weep, praying to the Almighty to save us from the bitter slavery of Pharaoh, to deliver us from his fierce tyranny, and to lead us into the good land of promise, so that we may finally find rest in the Sanctuary of God, being deemed worthy to stand at the right hand of the Majesty on High. These blessings, which surpass even the greatest minds, we may be deemed worthy of not by the deeds we manage to perform in righteousness, but by God's immeasurable mercy. Let us not cease to shed tears day and night, imitating the one who said: *"I am weary with my groaning; every night I wash my bed with my tears; I drench my couch with my weeping"* (Ps. 6:7). For those who sow in tears will reap with joy (Ps. 125:5).

79. Drive away from yourself the spirit of loquacity, for in it lurk all manner of malicious passions: from it comes falsehood, from it comes insolence, from it comes mockery, obscenity, idle talk, and much more; so that through it the saying is truly justified: *"Through much talk you will not escape sin"* (Prov. 10: 19).—*"A man of few words is a throne of wisdom"* (Prov. 12: 23). But the Lord also said that we will have to give an account for every idle word (Matt. 12: 36).

80. We have been commanded not to respond in kind to those who slander and rebuke us, or attack us in any other way—that is, not to slander in return, nor to rebuke in return, but rather to speak kindly of them and bless them. For when we live at peace with those who are not at peace, we are then at war with the demons; but when we are at enmity and at war with our brothers, we are at peace with the demons—whom we have been taught to hate with perfect hatred and to wage unceasing war against them.

81. Avoid using deceitful words to cause your neighbor to stumble, lest you yourself be made to stumble by the all-deceitful devil. For listen to what the Prophet cries out: *"The Lord detests the man of blood and the flatterer"* (Ps. 5: 7) and again: *"The Lord will destroy all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks deceit"* (Ps. 11: 4). Likewise, avoid condemning your brother when he falls, lest you fall away from kindness and love. For whoever lacks kindness and love toward his brother has not known God; for God is love, as John, the son of Thunder and Christ's beloved disciple, proclaims (1 John 4:8).—If Christ, the Savior of all, laid down His life for us, then we too must lay down our lives for our brothers (1 John 3:16).

82. Love is rightly called the mother of virtues, the head of the Law and the Prophets. Let us, then, undertake every effort until we attain that blessed love, and through it free ourselves from the tyranny of the passions, and ascend to heaven, soaring on the wings of virtue, and behold God, as far as this is possible for human nature.

83. If God is love, then whoever has love has God within himself. But when love is absent, we are of absolutely no benefit, and it is entirely impossible to say that we love God. For St. John says: *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar"* (1 John 4:20), and again: *"No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us"* (1 John 4:12): from this it is clear that love is the highest of all the goods mentioned in Holy Scripture; – and there is not a single kind of human virtue that unites and harmonizes us with God which is not connected to love and does not proceed from it, being in some ineffable way embraced and protected by it.

84. When receiving brothers who come to us, let us not be burdened by this, nor regard it as a violation of silence, so as not to break the rule of love; nor shall we invite them as though we were doing them a favor, but rather as those who themselves receive good from them, and let us welcome them as those who are indebted to them, with a prayer of " " and a joyful countenance, as Patriarch Abraham showed us by example. Therefore, the Theologian teaches, saying: *"My children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth; and by this we know that we are of the truth"* (1 John 3:18–19).

85. The Patriarch, having chosen hospitality as his constant practice, sat before his tent and invited passersby—all without distinction, even the ungodly and the barbarians—offering them a meal without hesitation. Therefore, he was deemed worthy of that wondrous fellowship at the table, having hosted the Angels and the Lord Himself. Let us, too, devote ourselves to hospitality with all zeal and readiness, so that we may welcome not only angels but God Himself. For the Lord says: *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me"* (Matt. 25: 40). It is good to do good to all, but especially to those who have nothing with which to repay you (Luke 14:14).

86. Whoever's heart does not stray into breaking God's commandments, or into negligence, or into entertaining hostile thoughts, is pure in heart and worthy to hear: "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*" (Matt. 5:8).

87. Let us strive to exercise reasonable control over our senses—especially sight, hearing, and speech—making it our rule to see, hear, or speak nothing out of passion, but everything for the benefit of our souls. For nothing is more prone to sin than these faculties when they are not governed by reason; and, conversely, nothing is more conducive to the cause of salvation than when reason governs them, keeps them in order, and leads them where they ought to go and where it wills. For when they run amok, then the sense of smell becomes indulgent—and the sense of touch reaches out with frenzy toward what is improper, and a countless multitude of passions arise; but when they are kept in order by reason, then great peace and unperturbed stillness manifest themselves throughout us.

88. Just as precious myrrh, though contained in a vessel, fills the air of a dwelling with its fragrance, bringing a pleasant sensation not only to those near it but also to those standing far away: so too does the fragrance of a virtuous and God-loving soul, emanating through all the bodily senses, reveal to all who behold it the virtue hidden within. For whoever sees that the tongue utters nothing inappropriate or indecent, but only what is beneficial to those who hear; that the eyes gaze modestly; that the ears do not take in any unseemly melodies or words; that the feet walk with dignity; and that the face is not distorted by laughter, but rather suggests tears and weeping ready to flow—Who, seeing all this, would not recognize what an abundant fragrance of virtues is contained within? That is why the Savior says: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven*" (Matt. 5:16).

89. The path that Christ and our God called "*narrow and difficult*" in the Gospel, He later called "*a good yoke and a light burden*" (Matt. 7:13–14; 11:30). How, then, can these two things—which seem to be opposites—be seen as one and the same?—Thus: by its very nature, this path is harsh and difficult; but by the will of those who follow it and by their good hopes, it is desirable, beloved, and more sweet than sorrowful for souls who love what is good. That is why you see that those who have chosen this narrow and sorrowful path walk along it with greater readiness than along the spacious and broad one. Listen to what Blessed Luke says about the Apostles, how they, after being flogged, returned from the council rejoicing (Acts 5: 40, 41). But surely this is not the nature of whips; they do not cause sweetness and joy, but rather sorrow and pain. If, then, the whips were sweet for Christ's sake, what is so surprising if, for His sake, other forms of suffering and the afflictions of the flesh are likewise sweet?

90. Tormented and held captive by our passions, we often ask ourselves in bewilderment, "Why are we enduring this?"—We must understand that such captivity befalls us because of our turning away from the contemplation of God. But if anyone clings with his mind to our God and Lord, then—as God is faithful—the Savior Himself will deliver such a soul from every bondage, as the Prophet says: "*I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken*" (Ps. 15:8). What could be sweeter than always having the Lord at one's right hand, covering and protecting one, and keeping one from wavering? But whether we are deemed worthy of this depends on us.

91. The Fathers spoke well and unquestionably true when they said that a person will find no peace unless he has acquired and established within himself such an inner disposition that, in the world, there is nothing but God; that he turns his mind to nothing else, but desires Him alone and remains attached to Him alone. Such a person will truly find peace and freedom from the tyranny of the passions. "*My soul clings to You,*" says the Psalmist, "*and Your right hand upholds me*" (Ps. 62:9).

92. Pride, sensuality, and the love of glory drive the remembrance of God from the soul; and when the remembrance of God is cut off, then the turmoil of the passions takes root within us.

93. Self-love is the mother of countless passions. Therefore, when someone uproots self-love from his heart, he will easily gain the upper hand over other passions as well, with the Lord's help. For from it are usually born anger, sorrow, resentment, sensuality, and unbridled audacity; and whoever is overcome by it is inevitably overcome by other passions as well. By self-love we mean a passionate inclination toward and love of the body, accompanied by the fulfillment of carnal desires.

94. Whoever loves something desires to be with it unceasingly and turns away from everything that prevents him from dwelling with and communing with the beloved object. Clearly, this is because even one who loves God always longs to abide with Him and converse with Him. We attain this through pure prayer. We must therefore devote ourselves to it with all our strength; for it unites us to our Lord. Such was the one

who said: *“O God, my God, to You I cry out in the morning; my soul longs for You”* (Ps. 62:2). For the one who turns his mind away from all that is evil and is continually pierced by divine love cries out to God in the morning.

95. As we have learned, dispassion is born of self-control and humility; and knowledge is born of faith; through them, the soul flourishes in discernment and love. Those who have instilled divine love within their hearts, on the wings of pure prayer, continually soar to its very height, *“until they reach the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4: 13).

96. Through active virtue, lust is subdued and anger is restrained; and through contemplation and meditation, the mind is inspired, and, rising above all material things, it dwells with God and attains true bliss in Him.

97. Our first task is to subdue the passions and, to the best of our ability, overcome them; our second task is to acquire virtues and not leave our soul empty and inactive; and our third task is to soberly guard the fruits of our virtues and labors: for we are commanded not only to work diligently but also to guard them vigilantly.

98. *“Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning,”* says the Lord (Luke 12:35). The proper girding of our loins, by which we become well-prepared and ready for action, is self-control accompanied by humility of heart; and by self-control I mean the cutting off of all passions. And the source of light for the spiritual lamp is pure prayer and perfect love. In this way, those who are truly well-disposed are like people who are waiting for their Lord; when He comes and knocks, they will immediately open the door to Him, and He, having come with the Father and the Holy Spirit, will make His home with them. *“And blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He comes, will find doing so”* (Luke 12:36–37).

99. A monk must, as a son, love God with all his heart and with all his mind; as a servant, he must revere Him and obey Him, and fulfill His commandments with fear and trembling: he must burn with zeal, be clothed in the full armor of the Holy Spirit, find rest in the hope of receiving eternal life, to carry out all that is commanded without fail, to live a sober life, to guard his heart from evil thoughts, to engage constantly in holy contemplation of God through good thoughts, to examine himself daily regarding his thoughts and deeds, to make up for what is lacking, and not to be puffed up by what has been done, calling oneself an unworthy servant who has not fulfilled one’s duty as one ought; to give thanks to the All-Holy God for everything and to ascribe to Him all that is right in one’s life; to do nothing at all out of vanity or to please men, but to do everything in secret, hoping for praise from the one God alone; but first and foremost, to be fortified in one’s soul by the Orthodox faith in all the dogmas of the Universal Church, handed down to it by the God-proclaiming Apostles and by the Holy Fathers: for those who live in this way will receive a great reward—eternal life and an indestructible dwelling—with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and Triune God.

100. *“The end of the matter, listen to this: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of every person,”* says Ecclesiastes (12:13). “I,” he says, “am showing you in a few words what the way of God consists of: fear God and keep His commandments.” The fear mentioned here, of course, is not a mere fear of punishment, but a perfect fear that brings about perfection—a fear we are bound to have out of love for the One who gave the commandments. For if we refrain from sin out of fear of punishment, it is clear that if we were not to face these horrors, we—being inclined to sin—would certainly commit them without hesitation. But if we abstain from sins not out of fear of punishment but out of aversion to the sins themselves, then we act out of love for our Lord, fearing to provoke His wrath. When we fear that we might neglect something commanded, such fear is pure, because it arises from the good itself; and it purifies our souls, being equivalent to perfect love. Anyone who possesses this fear and keeps the commandments because of it is a true human being—that is, a person as he ought to be. Knowing this, let us fear God with such fear and keep His commandments, *“so that we may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing in virtue”* (James 1:4), possessing humble wisdom and a contrite heart, and ceaselessly offering to the Lord the prayer of the great Saint Arsenius: “My God! Do not forsake me;

I have done nothing good before You,

but grant me, by Your grace, to make a start at it.” For all our salvation lies in God’s goodness and love for mankind. To Him be glory and power and worship—to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

The Venerable Theodore of Edessa

A Brief Account of Him

The present contemplative treatise deserves a place among other ascetic writings, due to its wise interpretation of the inner phenomena of our spiritual life and the drawing of appropriate lessons from them for those engaged in spiritual struggle. The author of this treatise is unknown. In the title, he is referred to as the Venerable Theodore. But who he was is not clear. The compilers of the Greek “Dobrotolubie,” seeing in this treatise ideas similar to those contained in the one hundred chapters of St. Theodore of Edessa, attributed it to the latter and placed it following his one hundred chapters. However, His Eminence Filaret of Chernigov writes (On the Fathers, §277, note 10) that this treatise can be attributed to St. Theodore of Edessa only speculatively. Indeed, the treatise itself provides no definitive indication to that effect. Therefore, while leaving it up to each individual to acknowledge or not acknowledge the attribution of this saying to St. Theodore of Edessa, and considering its reading beneficial for all who seek benefit from reading, we place it—following the example of the Greek *Dobrotolubie*—immediately after the one hundred chapters of St. Theodore of Edessa.

The speculative discourse of our venerable father Theodore

1. How great a feat it is to break these strong bonds of materialism, to free oneself from its bondage, and to acquire the habit of doing good! Truly, a noble and courageous soul is needed to renounce all that is material.

2. What, then, should one seek after this? It is not merely purification from the passions; for this is not yet a virtue in itself, but only a preparation for virtue. However, the purification of bad habits must be accompanied by the acquisition of virtues.

3. The purification of the soul consists of: “*in the intellectual aspect*”—the transformation and complete abandonment of worldly, alluring habits, that is, everyday cares and concerns, bad inclinations, and inappropriate speculations and conjectures; “*in the part of the appetitive faculty*”—not to strive for anything material, nor to be guided by sensation, but to be submissive to reason; “*in the part of the irascible faculty*”—not to be disturbed by anything that happens.

4. And after such purification and eradication of everything that renders our powers impure, and after their reordering, there follows the ascent toward spiritual perfection and deification: for he who has turned away from evil ought to do good (Ps. 33: 15). In doing so, one must first of all deny oneself, and thus, taking up the cross, follow the Lord in order to attain the highest state of deification.

5. What, then, is this ascent toward perfection and deification? “*In terms of the mind*,” it is the most perfect knowledge of existence and of the One who is above all that exists, to the extent that this is accessible to human nature; “*in terms of desire*”—an all-encompassing and unceasing desire and striving toward the supreme good; “*as regards the faculty of impulse*”—the most vigorous and active movement toward the desired, unceasing and unwavering, its forward progress unhindered by any misfortunes encountered; but marching on unstoppably, without turning back.

6. The soul’s movement toward the good must be as much stronger than its movement toward the evil as intellectual beauties surpass sensory ones; thus, its care for the body must be permitted only to the extent necessary to satisfy its needs and sustain life, so as not to bring our animal organism to a violent breakdown. But while this is easy to recognize in theory, it is very difficult to put into practice; for it is not possible to eradicate the soul’s ingrained habits without effort.

7. Just as mastery of any art is not attained without sweat, so too, in regard to the blessed nature—God—intense contemplation and the extension of attention are achieved through much labor and over a long period of time, until the desiring power becomes accustomed to the consequences of such striving and tastes its fruits. In this process, our mind must resist sensuality, which draws us toward the earthly; hence our battle and unceasing struggle against the flesh until death: although at times it may seem to diminish, as a result of the taming of anger and lust, and the subjugation of the senses under the yoke of the mind, enriched by experienced knowledge and skill in this battle.

8. It should be noted, however, that an unenlightened soul, not usually receiving help from God, can neither be truly purified nor ascend to the divine light, as has been said; for what has been said must be

understood as referring to the faithful. To clarify this further, it is necessary to briefly explain the distinction between our various forms of knowledge. Among the earthly forms of knowledge, one is natural, and the other is supernatural. What this second form is will become clear from the first.

9. We call “natural knowledge” that which the soul can acquire, through investigation and inquiry, using natural methods and powers, concerning creation and the Creator—of course, to the extent that this is accessible to a soul bound to matter. For the mind’s energy is weakened by its contact with and fusion into the body, and because of this, it cannot be in direct contact with intellectual objects, but must conceive of them through the imagination, whose nature is to form extended and substantial images. Thus, the mind, insofar as it is in the flesh, requires corresponding images of things in order to judge and understand them. Whatever kind of knowledge the mind, as it is, acquires by this natural means, we call natural knowledge.

10. Supernatural knowledge, on the other hand, is that which comes to the mind by a means that transcends its natural modes and powers, or in which the object of knowledge relatively surpasses the mind bound to the body, so that such knowledge is evidently proper to the incorporeal mind. It comes from the one God when He finds the mind purified of all material attachments and filled with divine love.

11. Not only knowledge, however, is thus divided, but also virtue: for some virtue is such that it does not exceed nature and is rightly called natural; while another is imparted from the first source of good, and, since it exceeds our natural powers and condition, must properly be called supernatural.

12. Having explained this, we hold that even the unenlightened can possess natural knowledge and natural virtue, but by no means the supernatural. For how could he acquire them without having a share in the supreme Cause that is active here? The enlightened, however, can possess both.

13. I will add just one more distinction here: supernatural virtue cannot be acquired without first acquiring natural virtue; yet nothing prevents one from becoming partaker of knowledge of the supernatural even without natural virtue. It must be understood, however, that just as animals possess sensation and imagination, so does man; only in him are these faculties far superior and more elevated: so it is also with natural virtues and knowledge: both the enlightened and the unenlightened possess them, but in the enlightened they are in a far better and higher state than in the unenlightened.

14. I will add this as well: of the kinds of knowledge called natural, that which concerns virtues and their opposite inclinations is also of two kinds: one is abstract, when the philosopher, reflecting on such dispositions, has not tested them in practice—such knowledge is sometimes shaken by doubts; and the other is active, and, so to speak, heartfelt, when knowledge is confirmed by the actual testing of such dispositions—such knowledge is evident and true, never wavers, and admits of no doubt.

15. Meanwhile, as this is the case, we learn that there are four things that oppose the mind in the pursuit of virtue: “*the first*” is a predisposition toward habits contrary to virtue, which, by virtue of long-standing habit, leads one to incline toward the earthly; “*second*,” the influence of the senses, which, carried away by sensory beauties, draws the mind along with them; “*third*,” the weakening of the mind’s energy, to which it is subjected because of its union with the body. For the relationship between sight and the visible—and, in general, between the senses and the sensible—is not the same as that between the mind and the intelligible. — I am speaking of the mind of the soul while it still dwells in the body. — For immaterial minds come into more active contact with the intelligible than sight does with the visible. — But just as when vision is clouded—it reflects the forms of the things it sees not clearly, not precisely, and, moreover, in a blurred manner—so too our mind, though it is aware of the intelligible, cannot effectively perceive intelligible beauties; and at the same time, it cannot desire anything from them, since the degree of inclination corresponds to the degree of knowledge—and it is immediately drawn back to sensory beauties, which appear clearer to it; for it is necessarily drawn to whatever appears before it as good, whether true or not. — In addition to all this, there is also (*a fourth*) factor: the attacks of inhuman, impure spirits. And it is impossible to say how many and what kinds of snares they set to capture souls, alas! — Everywhere along the way, in myriad and varied forms—in the senses, in speech, in the mind, in, one might say, all that exists—from which no soul would have escaped if He who took the lost sheep upon His shoulders—those who fix their eyes upon Him—had not, through His boundless care, made them superior.

16. To avoid all this, we need the following three means, of which *the “first”* and greatest is to turn our eyes wholeheartedly toward God and to ask Him for a helping hand, placing all our hope in Him, based on the sincere conviction that if He does not intercede, we will inevitably fall captive to those who draw us toward themselves. The “*second*,” which I believe is the cause of the first, is the ceaseless nourishment of the

mind through knowledge. By this knowledge, I mean the knowledge of all that exists—both sensible and intelligible—as it is in itself, and how it relates to the First Cause, since it exists from and for that Cause—as well as the contemplation of the Author of all that exists, made accessible to us through what proceeds from Him. For the examination of the nature of creatures purifies one from a passionate attachment to them, frees one from being beguiled by them, and elevates one to their source, enabling one—as in a mirror—to see, within the beautiful, the wondrous, and the great, that which is most beautiful, most wondrous, and greatest; or rather, that which is above all beauty, wonder, and greatness. Always dwelling in such thoughts, how can the mind fail to desire true good? For if it sometimes turns toward what is foreign to it, will it not all the more turn toward what is its own? Once the soul is captivated by this, to what of the things that exist below will it allow itself to cling, when such things usually distract it from the One who loves it and whom it loves? Indeed, it will even become dissatisfied with life in the flesh, as something that places obstacles in the way of acquiring and savoring true goods. For if, as has been said, it is unclear how the mind perceives mental beauty in the material world, yet mental blessings are such and so abundant that even a small trickle from the sea of that beauty and a faint glimmer of its rays can persuade the mind to soar beyond all that is non-mental, and to rush toward those blessings alone, by no means allowing itself to turn away from the sweetness of that beauty, even if, because of this, it should happen to fall into something bitter. And the “*third*” thing that must accompany this is the mortification of our fleshly spouse; for otherwise it is impossible to perceive clearly and distinctly the aforementioned manifestations of those heavenly goods. The flesh is mortified through fasting, vigil, sleeping on the bare ground, wearing the necessary coarse garments, and engaging in arduous labor. Thus the flesh is put to death, or rather, is crucified with Christ. Having thus become refined and purified, light and well-ordered, it readily follows the movements of the mind without resistance and, together with it, ascends to the heights. – Without this, however, all our efforts in this regard prove futile.

17. When this noble trinity is in harmony within itself, it gives rise in the soul to the image of the blessed virtues. And it is impossible for a soul adorned by this trinity to bear even a trace of sin or to lack any virtue. In such souls, the mind is no longer troubled by the pursuit of wealth—which has already been cast aside—nor by glory—which has already been spurned—from which the soul, as long as it remains attached to them, is wounded by many passions. And just as I assert that it is impossible for a soul attached to wealth and glory to soar to the heights, so I do not say that it is possible for a soul that has labored for quite some time in the three spiritual practices mentioned—to the point of having mastered them—to concern itself with them. For if, in such a state of mind, it considers nothing to be a true good except the Supreme Good, and among other goods, the best is that which, as it is convinced, most closely resembles the first—how then can it love and willingly accept gold and silver, or anything else among earthly things?—The same applies to glory.

18. Even this most insatiable thing—I mean, worry—does not then attack the mind from the opposite side. – For what would he have to worry about, being unattached to anything in this world and not engaging in any of it? The cloud of worries is composed of the vapors of the principal passions—sensual desire, love of money, and love of glory—so that one who is free from these is also free from worry.

19. Such people—who are accustomed to these three spiritual practices—also lack nothing in prudence, which is regarded as the companion of wisdom and is the most powerful of the means that lead away from sorrow. For the study of the virtues involves the precise discernment of what is good and what is contrary to it; and for this, prudence is required. Under its guidance, experience and the struggle against the flesh teach how best to do good and resist evil.

20. And fear is inherent in them. For as love increases, so does fear; and the greater the hope of obtaining good, the greater the fear of failing to obtain it. And this gnaws at the souls of those wounded by love far more than the threat of countless torments; for to obtain it is the greatest bliss, while to fail to obtain it is the greatest misery.

21. In order for the word to guide us along the way and in other respects, we must begin at the end: for everything that comes into being derives from its end both the distinction of its parts and their proper order. The end of our life is bliss, or, which is the same thing, the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God. And this itself is not merely the vision of the most royal Trinity, but also the reception of divine attraction, and, as it were, the experience of deification, and through this attraction, the filling of what is lacking in us and the perfection of what is imperfect. And this is the nourishment of spiritual beings—this filling of what is lacking through that divine attraction. Here a certain unceasing cycle is fulfilled, beginning with the same and ending

with the same. For the more one understands, the more one desires; the more one desires, the more one savors; the more one savors, the more one is stirred toward greater understanding once again; and immediately this unchanging movement—or, perhaps, unchanging stillness—begins.

22. Thus, the end of life—as far as it is accessible to our understanding—is such. Now we must consider how one should proceed toward it. For rational souls—who are intelligent beings and differ little from the minds of the angels—life here is a struggle, and life in the flesh is given to them as a trial. The reward for this feat and struggle is the aforementioned state—a gift worthy of both divine goodness and divine justice: justice, because these blessings are not attained without one’s own toil and sweat; divine goodness, because the gift immeasurably surpasses any personal effort, and also because the very ability to do good is a gift from God.

23. But what, then, is the feat here?—a rational soul is united with an animal body made of earth, which has existence and is drawn toward the lower realm. It is united with this body in such a way that from these two—soul and body—which are completely opposed to one another, a single being has come into being, not through transformation or mixing of these parts—God forbid!—but in such a way that from these two, each retaining what is proper to its nature, a single person has been formed in two perfect natures. Thus, this composite being—man—being a kind of dual-natured creature, manifests in action the characteristics proper to each nature in particular. – It is natural for the body to desire that which is like itself—the bodily. Such a desire for the like is natural to all beings, since their very existence depends on the realization within themselves of that which is like themselves. It is also natural for the body to take pleasure in the like through the senses; furthermore, rest is pleasing to it when it is weary. This is what is natural and desirable to our animal nature. – For the rational soul, as a rational nature, it is natural and desirable to seek that which is equally rational, and to take pleasure in what is proper to that mode. Above all else, however, love for God is naturally rooted within it. And it naturally desires to take pleasure in Him and in other intellectual things, but it cannot do so unhindered.

24. The first man was able to perceive and take pleasure in both the sensible through the senses and the intelligible through the intellect without hindrance. But he ought to have been primarily concerned not with the lesser, but with the greater; although in and of himself he could enter into communion with the intelligible through the intellect and with the sensible through the senses. I am not saying that Adam should not have made use of his senses: for it was not in vain that he was endowed with a body; but that he should not have primarily delighted in the sensible, and for the sake of the sensible; but rather, perceiving the beauty of creatures through sensory impressions, he should have turned to the Author of that beauty and delighted in Him with wonder, having all the more reason to marvel at the Creator, rather than clinging to the sensory and marveling at it, while neglecting the intellectual beauty of the Creator. This is how Adam should have acted.

25. But since he made poor use of his senses, he began to marvel at the beauty of the sensory world; and, seeing the fruit as pleasing to the eye and good to eat, he tasted it, abandoning the delight found in intellectual things; then the righteous Judge, deeming him unworthy of the contemplation of God and all that exists—things he had despised—cast him out, “*making darkness his dwelling*” and separating him from all non-material objects (Ps. 17:12). For the unholy should not be granted what is holy; but since he loved it, God permitted him to take delight in it, leaving him to live by the senses with only faint traces of spiritual life.

26. This is why the struggle to attain communion with intellectual things has become the most arduous for us: for it is not within our power to delight in the intellectual with the mind just as we delight in the sensible with the senses, even though we receive great assistance toward this through baptism, by which we are purified and exalted. Nevertheless, to the extent that it is accessible to us, we must still exercise ourselves in the intellectual, not in the sensory; we must marvel at and desire the intellectual, while marveling at nothing in the sensory and desiring to take pleasure in nothing of the sensory for its own sake (as something sensory and for the satisfaction of the senses): for in truth, the sensory cannot bear any comparison with the intellectual. We see that both the essence of essence and the beauty of beauty are more wondrous. But we must relate to them exactly as they are. Is there any madness greater than to love what is shameful more than what is magnificent, and what is base more than what is honorable? And this is true even when we treat created things this way, whether they be of the intellect or of the senses. But what can be said if we treat even the One Who is above all in this way, preferring to Him formless and insignificant matter?

27. And this, then, is our task now—to watch over ourselves carefully, so that we may always delight in the intelligible, directing both our mind and our desire toward it, and by no means allow ourselves to be

robbed by the sensible, being carried away by sensation to an astonishing degree for its own sake. But if it is necessary to make use of the senses, we must use them to recognize the Creator through His creatures, seeing Him in them just as we see the sun in the waters, since the First Cause of all things is reflected in creation to the extent that it is capable of containing Him.

28. Such is the task before us; but how to accomplish it is a matter that requires reflection. For, as has been said, the body desires to take pleasure in the things proper to it through the senses, and the more it is satisfied, the more it desires. And this is contrary to the soul's aspiration. Therefore, let the soul's first concern be to rein in all the senses, so as not to take pleasure in the sensual, as has been said. Since the body, the stronger it becomes, the more strongly it strives for what is its own; and the more strongly it strives toward this, the more uncontrollable it becomes; therefore, the soul must strive earnestly to mortify the flesh through fasting, vigils, standing in prayer, sleeping on the bare ground, and all manner of other privations, so that, having exhausted its strength, it may be humble and submissive in its spiritual endeavors: this is the main task that lies before it. But since it is easy to desire this yet difficult to carry it out, and many omissions from what is required are committed in the process—because the senses distract one even while one is fully attentive—therefore a third remedy has been wisely devised: prayer and tears. Prayer gives thanks for the blessings bestowed and asks for the forgiveness of sins and the bestowal of strength for further progress; for without Divine help, the soul, as has already been said, cannot do anything properly on its own. Furthermore, it brings about union with the One whom the soul has sought, delight in Him, and a complete, ardent striving toward Him with all one's strength: for this is the most important matter in a virtuous life—that is, this inclination of the will to desire this as strongly as possible. – And tears possess great power: they appease the Lord regarding our transgressions, purify the defilement caused by sensual pleasures, and inspire a longing for the heavenly.

29. So this is the whole matter: the main thing is the contemplation of mental or spiritual goods and the wholehearted desire for them; by virtue of this, the subjugation of the flesh—the parts of which are fasting, chastity, and the like—is all mutually supportive; for this very purpose, and along with it, prayer. Each of these practices is divided into many parts, all of which, however, are interconnected, so that one requires the other, and one cannot exist without the other.

30. Let no one think that the love of glory and the love of money belong to the carnal passions. The carnal passion is solely the love of pleasure, which finds its proper remedy in the mortification of the flesh. The two passions mentioned, however, are the products of ignorance. Having neither experienced nor come to know true goods—whether intellectual or spiritual—the soul has invented false goods, thinking to find solace in wealth amid its poverty of spiritual goods; it cares for wealth both to satisfy the love of pleasure and the love of glory, and for its own sake, regarding it as a kind of good. We may say, then, that all this is the product of ignorance of true goods. The love of glory does not arise from a scarcity of bodily needs: for nothing bodily is satisfied by it ; but rather from a failure to experience and a lack of knowledge of the first good and true glory.

31. And ignorance serves as the root not only of the love of glory, but, in short, of all evils. For it is impossible that one who has properly come to know the nature of things—and where each of them comes from and what purpose it serves—should then, having forgotten his ultimate end, rush toward earthly things. The soul will not desire a good of which it knows for certain that it only appears to be a good. Even if habit tyrannically draws it toward something, it can, by virtue of precise and clear knowledge of the matter, overcome habit itself. But even before habit took hold, it was beguiled by ignorance. Therefore, above all else, and as early as possible, one must strive to acquire true knowledge of all that exists, and then, in accordance with that knowledge, inspire one's will with a longing for the First Good. It is not difficult for one who has truly recognized their complete vanity to despise all present goods.

The Venerable Abba Philemon

A Brief Account of Him

The patristic writings have not told us in what era our most reverend father Philemon—the most sober and tearfully contrite of our godly fathers—lived. But that he was a most devout and experienced man, and loved silence more than any other of the elders—as the most faithful imitator of the great Arsenius—this will become clear to those who wish to see it from the present account. For, remaining patiently day and night in

prayer and supplication within his desert cave, washing himself with the ever-flowing springs of tears and the sweetest weeping, and having risen above all that is sensory and mental in love for God, he always stood before God as one who was deaf and mute, and was deemed worthy of the wondrous enlightenment of His divine grace; from this, as from the radiance of the sun, this ever-memorable one, in his utter silence and stillness, was enriched with the gift not only to speak and reason, but also to perceive and foresee. A faithful witness to this is the account of him presented here, in which his most discerning teaching on holy sobriety is set forth—both in its active and contemplative aspects—based on his own long-standing experience. Therefore, whoever desires to cast off the filthy and vile garments of the passions—or, in other words, to shed the old man and clothe himself in the bright garment of dispassion and grace, or in the new man in Christ Jesus—will readily attain what he desires by frequently studying this teaching of the elder and faithfully putting it into practice to the best of his ability.

A Most Beneficial Account of Abba Philemon

1. It was said of Abba Philemon the hermit that he had shut himself away in a certain cave, not far from the Lavra, called Romieva, and devoted himself to ascetic labors, mentally repeating to himself what, as is reported, the great Arsenius used to say to himself: “Philemon, why did you come here?” He remained in this cave for quite some time. His task was to twist prayer ropes and weave baskets, which he gave to the steward; in return, he received small loaves of bread, on which he subsisted. He ate nothing but bread and salt, and even that not every day. He apparently took no care of his body at all, but, practicing contemplation, he was illuminated by divine enlightenment, and, partaking of the ineffable guidance from above, he remained in spiritual joy. When he went to church on Saturdays and Sundays, he always walked alone, deep in thought, not allowing anyone to approach him, lest his mind be distracted from his task. In the church, however, standing in a corner with his face bowed down, he shed streams of tears, lamenting ceaselessly, and pondering in his mind the remembrance of death and the image of the holy fathers—especially Arsenius the Great, in whose footsteps he strove in every way to follow.

2. When heresy arose in Alexandria and its environs, he withdrew from there and went to the Nikanor Lavra. Upon his arrival, the Most God-loving Pavlin gave him his own secluded place and ensured complete silence for him. For a whole year, he did not allow anyone to see him, and he himself did not disturb him in the least, except when he brought him the necessary bread. The Holy Resurrection of Christ arrived. When, during a visit, a conversation arose between them and the topic turned to the hermit’s life, Philemon realized that this most devout brother, Pavlin, also harbored the noble intention (of living as a hermit). Pavlin abundantly instilled in him words of asceticism—from the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the Fathers—showing everyone that it is impossible to please God without perfect solitude, just as Moses, the God-enlightened father, also teaches—that silence gives birth to asceticism, and asceticism gives birth to weeping, weeping to fear, fear—humility, humility—insight, insight—love, and love makes the soul sound and dispassionate, and then a person comes to know that he is not far from God.

3. He (Philemon) said to him: “You must, through silence, completely purify your mind and engage it in unceasing spiritual work.” Just as the eye, turning to the sensible, gazes intently at the visible, so the pure mind, turning to the intelligible, is captivated by what is spiritually contemplated, so that you cannot tear it away from it. And to the extent that, through silence, it is stripped of passions and purified, to that extent it becomes worthy of knowledge (of those spiritual things). The mind, however, becomes perfect when it enters the realm of essential knowledge and unites with God. Then, possessing royal dignity, it no longer feels poverty nor is it carried away by false desires, even if you were to offer it all the kingdoms of the world. Therefore, if you wish to attain such virtues, flee swiftly from the world and run with zeal along the path of the saints; cast aside concern for your outward appearance, wear simple clothing, and keep your adornment humble. Maintain a simple disposition, speak plainly, walk without vanity, and speak with sincerity. Learn to love living in poverty and being overlooked by all. Above all, take care to preserve your mind’s clarity and sobriety; be patient in all hardships, and in every way preserve the spiritual blessings you have already acquired, keeping them intact and unchanging. Watch over yourself carefully and do not accept any of the pleasures that creep in secretly. For although silence tames the passions of the soul, if you allow them to flare up and intensify, they usually rage even more fiercely, and draw those who permit this toward sin with even greater force. Likewise, physical wounds, when rubbed and torn open, become incurable. Even a single word can turn the mind away from the remembrance of God when demons urge it to do so, and the senses agree

with them. It is a great feat and a great fear—to guard the soul. Therefore, you must withdraw completely from the world and, having detached your soul from all sympathy for the body, become without a city, without a home, possess nothing, have no money, seek no gain, be free from cares, have no companions, be ignorant of human affairs, be humble, compassionate, good, meek, gentle in disposition, and ready to receive from divine guidance enlightening impressions in your heart. For it is impossible to write on wax without first erasing the letters previously inscribed upon it, as the great Basil teaches us. Such was the likeness of the Saints, who, having completely withdrawn from all worldly customs and preserving within themselves an unshakable heavenly wisdom, were enlightened by the divine laws and shone forth with pious deeds and words, *“having put to death the members which are on the earth”* (Col. 3: 5)—through self-control, the fear of God, and love. For through unceasing prayer and study of the Divine Scriptures, the spiritual eyes of the heart are opened and behold the King of Powers—and there is great joy, and an uncontrollable divine desire is kindled powerfully in the soul, whereby the flesh is also drawn there by the action of the Spirit, and the whole person becomes spiritual. This is what those who practice blessed silence and the strictest ascetic life are deemed worthy of—those who, having withdrawn from all human comfort, converse ceaselessly, alone with the one Lord who dwells in heaven!

4. Having heard this, that God-loving brother, pierced in his soul by divine love, (left his place) and, together with him (Philemon), reached the skete where the greatest of the fathers had completed their path of piety. They settled at the Lavra of St. John Kolov, entrusting their care to the Lavra’s treasurer, since they wished to live in silence. And they remained there, by the grace of God, in perfect silence, attending communal church services on Saturdays and Sundays, and remaining in their cells on other days; each of them performing his prayers and devotions privately.

5. The holy elder (Philemon) had the following rule of worship: at night he would chant the entire Psalter and the hymns (the nine included in the Psalter), without haste or restlessness; he would read one passage from the Gospel, then sit down and remain seated, saying to himself, “Lord, have mercy!” with full attention and for quite a long time, until he could no longer utter this invocation; and finally he allowed himself to fall asleep. Then, at dawn, he would again chant the first hour, and sitting on his seat facing east, he would alternately sing (psalms) and read, as he pleased, from the Epistles and the Gospel. Thus he spent the entire day singing unceasingly, praying, and delighting in the contemplation of heavenly things; his mind was so often carried away in contemplation that he did not know whether he was on earth.

6. The brother, seeing that he was so earnestly devoted to his prayerful duties and was sometimes completely absorbed in divine thoughts, said to him: “Is it not difficult for you, Father, at such an advanced age, to mortify and subdue your body in this way?” He replied, “Believe me, God has instilled in my soul such zeal and such love for prayerful service that I am unable to fully satisfy its longing; yet my love for God and my hope for future blessings overcome my bodily weakness.” Thus, all his desire was wisely lifted up to heaven, even during meals, and not only at other times.

7. Once, a brother who lived with him asked him: “What are the mysteries of contemplation?” And he, seeing the brother’s persistence and that he was sincerely seeking edification, said to him: “I tell you, my child, that to the one whose mind has been completely purified, God reveals visions of the most ministering powers and ranks (of the angels).”

8. He also asked him the following: “For what reason, Father, do you take greater delight in the Psalter than in any other part of Divine Scripture, and for what reason, when you sing softly, do you appear as if you are conversing with someone?” To this he replied: “God has imprinted the power of the psalms upon my soul, just as He did upon the Prophet David himself, and I cannot tear myself away from the delight of the manifold contemplations hidden within them; for they encompass all of Divine Scripture.” He confessed this to the questioner with great humility, for the sake of edification, and after much persistent entreaty.

9. A certain brother named John, having set out from the coast, came to this holy and great Father Philemon, and, embracing his feet, said to him: “What shall I do, Father, to be saved?” For my mind wanders and flits here and there, where it ought not to.” And he, after a brief pause, said: “This (spiritual) affliction is characteristic of those who are superficial, and it dwells within them. And it is within you, because you have not yet attained perfect love for God; the warmth of love and knowledge of Him has not yet come to you.” The brother said to him, “What should I do, Father?” He replied, “Go and take this secret teaching into your heart, and it will purify your mind of this.” The brother, not understanding what was being said, asked the elder, “What is this secret teaching, Father?” And he said to him: “Go and be sober in your heart, and in your

thoughts, with fear and trembling, say: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!’” This is how the blessed Diadochus also instructs beginners.

10. The brother went and, by God’s grace and through the father’s prayers, found peace and took delight in this teaching for a short time. But then that delight departed from him, and he could no longer perform this practice or pray with a sober mind. So he went back to the elder and told him what had happened. The elder said to him: “Now you have come to know the path of silence and wise conduct, and you have tasted the sweetness that comes from it. Keep this always in your heart—whether you are eating, drinking, conversing with someone, traveling, or sitting in your cell—never cease to pray with a sober mind and an undistracted spirit, to sing, and to learn from prayers and psalms; even while attending to your most basic needs, do not allow your mind to be idle, but compel it to learn and pray in secret. In this way, you may comprehend the depths of Divine Scripture and the power hidden within it, and give your mind unceasing activity, so that you may fulfill the Apostolic word commanding: *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17). Pay close attention to yourself and guard your heart against harboring evil thoughts, or any vain and useless ones; but always—whether you are sleeping, rising, eating, drinking, or conversing—let your heart secretly and mentally either study the psalms or pray: *“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!”* Likewise, when you sing the psalms aloud, be careful not to speak with your lips while your thoughts wander elsewhere.

11. The brother asked him again: “I see many vain dreams while I sleep.” The elder said to him: “Do not be lazy or fainthearted; but before you fall asleep, offer many prayers in your heart and resist with your thoughts the devil’s temptations to lead you according to his will, so that God may receive you.” Do your utmost to fall asleep with psalms on your lips and wise instruction in your mind, and by no means allow your mind, through carelessness, to accept foreign thoughts; but with whatever thoughts you prayed, learn from them as you lie down on your bed, so that even while you sleep, they may remain within you, and when you awaken, they may converse with you. Also recite the Holy Symbol of the Orthodox Faith before you fall asleep; for believing in God according to the Orthodox faith is the source and safeguard of all good things.

12. His brother asked him again: “Father, out of love, tell me, what is the work of your mind? Teach me, so that I too may be saved.” He said to him, “Why are you so curious to know this?” The younger brother stood up, embraced the saint’s feet, and, kissing them, begged him to tell him. After some time had passed, the elder said, “You are not yet ready to bear this.” It is the nature of a man accustomed to dwelling in the blessings of truth to assign to each sense its proper task; and it is impossible for one who has not become completely pure of the world’s vain thoughts to be deemed worthy of this gift. Therefore, if you truly desire this, keep this secret teaching in a pure heart. For if prayer and the teaching of the Scriptures abide in you unceasingly, the eyes of your soul will be opened, and there will be great joy within it, along with a certain ineffable and fervent feeling, as the Spirit and the flesh are warmed, so that the whole person becomes spiritual. Therefore, whether by night or by day, if God grants you the grace to pray undistracted with a pure mind, set aside your prayer rule, and, with all your strength, strive with all your heart and mind to cleave to God. And He will enlighten your heart in the spiritual work you have undertaken. To this he added: Once an elder came to me, and when I asked him about the state of his mind, he told me: ‘For two years I remained in prayer before God, imploring Him earnestly with all my heart that He might grant me the grace to have the prayer He entrusted to His disciples constantly and undistractedly imprinted upon my heart; and the bountiful Lord, seeing my effort and patience, granted me what I had asked for.’ And here is what else he told him: Thoughts about vain things that arise in the soul are the affliction of a soul that is idle and has given itself over to negligence; therefore, according to Scripture, we must guard our minds with every kind of vigilance, sing sensibly without distraction, and pray with a pure mind. Therefore, brother, God desires that we show Him our zeal, first through our labors (asceticism and good deeds), then through love and unceasing prayer—and He will grant us the path to salvation. It is clear, then, that there is no other path leading to heaven except the complete turning away from all that is evil, the acquisition of all that is good, perfect love for God, and dwelling with Him in holiness and righteousness; so that whoever possesses these things will soon ascend to the heavenly host. But at the same time, it is imperative for everyone who desires to ascend to the heights to put to death the members that are on the earth. For when our soul is delighted by the contemplation of true goodness, it no longer returns to any of the passions aroused by the sweetness of sin; but, having turned away from all carnal lusts, it receives the vision of God with a pure and undefiled mind. Therefore, we need great self-discipline, much physical labor, and purification of the soul, so that we may dwell God in our hearts, that we may sinlessly fulfill His divine commandments, and that He Himself may teach us to steadfastly keep His

laws, shedding upon us, like the rays of the sun, His influence through the grace of the Spirit implanted within us. Through toil and trials, we must purify the image in which we were created—rational and capable of comprehending all understanding and of becoming like God—by refining our senses, cleansing them of all defilement through the refining fire of trials, and thereby being transformed into royal dignity. God created human nature to share in every good, capable of mentally contemplating the rejoicing of the Angels of glory, dominions, powers, principalities, authority, the unapproachable light, and the most radiant glory. But when you have cultivated a virtue, take care that your thoughts do not rise above your brother, because you have cultivated it and he has not; for this is the beginning of pride. When you struggle with a passion, take care not to become discouraged or lose heart because the battle is fierce; but rise up, humble yourself before God, and say with the Prophet from the bottom of your heart: *“Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me”* (Ps. 34:1), for I am not strong enough against them. And He, seeing your humility, will soon send you His help. When you are traveling with someone, do not engage in idle conversation, but direct your mind to the spiritual practice that He followed, so that this good habit and the forgetfulness of worldly pleasures may remain in him, and he may not stray from the harbor of dispassion. Having instructed the brother with these and many other words, the elder sent him on his way.

13. But not long afterward, he came again and, beginning his speech, asked, “What should I do, Father? During my nightly vigil, sleep weighs me down and prevents me from praying with a clear mind and staying awake longer; and I want to take up some work while I sing.” To this the elder replied: “When you are able to pray with a clear mind, do not engage in manual work; but when drowsiness overtakes you, then, making a small effort against the thought and resisting it, take up your work.” The brother asked again: “Father, are you yourself not weighed down by sleep during your service?” The elder said: “It’s not that easy; however, when drowsiness sometimes overtakes me, I make a small effort; but I begin to read the Gospel of John from the beginning, lifting the eye of my mind to God, and it disappears immediately.” I do something similar with regard to thoughts; namely, when one of them arises, I confront it like a fire with tears, and it disappears. You, however, cannot yet arm yourself against them in this way; but rather, hold fast to this secret teaching and strive to perform the services established by the holy fathers—both the daily prayers, such as the hours: the Third, Sixth, and Ninth Hours and Vespers, and the nightly services. And with all your strength, strive not to do anything to please people, and be careful not to fall out with any of the brothers, lest you distance yourself from your God. Also strive to keep your mind undistracted, attentively focused on your inner thoughts. When you are in the Church and intend to partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, do not leave until you have received full communion. Standing in one place, do not move from there until the dismissal; and within yourself, reflect that you are in heaven, standing before God with the holy angels, about to receive Him into your heart; prepare yourself for this with fear and trembling, lest you be unworthy to partake of the Holy Gifts. Having thus well equipped the brother and commended him to the Lord and to the Spirit of His grace, the elder dismissed him.

14. In addition to this, a brother who lived with him recounted the following. Sitting beside him one day, I asked him whether he had been tempted by demonic slanders while living in the desert. He replied: “Forgive me, brother—if God were to allow temptations from the devil to come upon you, such as those I was subjected to, I do not think you would be able to bear their bitterness.” I am seventy years old, or perhaps a little older, and I have endured many temptations while living in various deserts in complete silence; as for what I experienced and endured from these demons, it is not beneficial to recount the bitterness of it to those who have not yet experienced silence. In such temptations, I have always acted in this way: I placed all my hope in God, to whom I made vows of renunciation, and He quickly delivered me from every need. That is why, brother, I no longer concern myself with my own welfare; but knowing that He cares for me, I bear the temptations that come upon me with great ease. And the only thing I offer to Him of my own is to pray unceasingly. It helps greatly in this the hope that the greater the sorrows and misfortunes that assail us, the greater the crowns they prepare for those who endure them: for before the righteous Judge, the two balance each other out. Knowing this, brother, do not give in to faintheartedness. You have entered the midst of battle to fight, and fight on, encouraged also by the fact that there are very many who fight for us against the enemy of God—more than the enemy’s hordes. And how could we possibly dare to stand against such a fearsome adversary of our race if the mighty right hand of God the Word did not embrace us, shield us, and cover us? How could human nature endure his slanders? For as Job says, *“Who can uncover the face of his garment? Who can enter the folds of his robe? From his mouth come forth things like burning torches, and they scatter*

like fiery sparks. From his nostrils comes the smoke of a furnace burning with coals of fire. His soul is like a coal, and flames come forth from his mouth. Power dwells in his jaws; destruction flows before him. His heart is hardened like a stone; he stands firm like an anvil. He stirs up the abyss like a copper furnace; he regards the sea as a distillery, and the depths of the abyss as a captive. He surveys all that is high, yet he himself is king over all that dwells in the waters" (Job 41:4–25). This is the one against whom we wage battle, brother! This is how the Word has portrayed this tyrant! Nevertheless, victory over him comes easily to those who, as they ought, lead a life of solitude—because they possess nothing within themselves that belongs to him, because of their renunciation of the world, because of their lofty virtues, and because we have One who fights on our behalf. For tell me, who, having drawn near to the Lord and received His fear into their mind, has not been transformed in nature and enlightened by the divine laws and deeds, and has not made their soul bright and capable of shining with divine insights and thoughts? He never allows it to be idle, for it has God within it, Who stirs the mind to strive insatiably for the light. And with the soul thus continually influenced, the spirit does not allow it to be corrupted by passions; but like a king, breathing forth terrible wrath and punishment, he mercilessly cuts them down. Such a person never turns back, but through the practice of virtues—with hands raised to heaven and intelligent prayer—wins the victory in battle.

15. That brother also recounted that Abba Philemon possessed, among other virtues, this one: he could not bear to hear idle talk, and if anyone, losing himself, spoke of anything unrelated to the benefit of the soul, he would not respond to it at all. Likewise, when I left on some errand, he did not ask, "Why are you leaving?" And when I returned, he did not say, "Where were you?" or "What did you do and how?" So once I sailed to Alexandria for a necessary errand, and from there, on a matter of church business, I set out for Constantinople without informing the servant of God; then, having stayed there quite some time and visited the devout brothers there, I finally returned to him at the hermitage. Upon seeing me, the elder rejoiced, and after the customary greeting and offering a prayer, he sat down; but he did not ask me anything at all, instead remaining absorbed in his usual contemplative practice.

16. Once, wishing to test him, I did not give him any bread to eat for several days. He, however, did not ask for bread nor say anything about it. Then, bowing before him, I asked: "Please, Father, tell me—were you offended that I did not bring you food as usual?" He said: "Forgive me, brother! "Even if you do not give me bread to eat for twenty days, I will not ask you for it; for as long as I endure with my soul, I also endure with my body." Thus was he absorbed in the contemplation of true goodness.

17. He said: "Ever since I came to the hermitage, I have not allowed my thoughts to wander beyond the walls of my cell; nor have I allowed any other thought into my mind except the fear of God and the judgments of the age to come, keeping in mind the judgment that threatens sinners, eternal fire, and utter darkness, and how the souls of sinners and the righteous live, and what blessings are prepared for the righteous, and how each receives his reward according to his labor: one for the labors of asceticism, another for almsgiving and sincere love, yet another for non-covetousness and complete renunciation of the world, another for humility and perfect silence, one for extreme obedience, and another for wandering. Keeping all this in mind, I do not allow any other thought to take hold within me, and I can no longer be with people or occupy my mind with them, lest I stray from divine thoughts.

18. To this he added the story of a certain hermit, saying that he had already attained dispassion and received bread for food from the hand of an angel, but because of sloth (a weakening of attention) he was deprived of such an honor. For when the soul relaxes the mind's discerning and intense attention, then darkness envelops that soul. Where God does not shine, everything is shrouded in darkness; and then the soul cannot gaze upon the one God or tremble at His words. "*I am the God who is near,*" says the Lord, *'and not a God who is far off. Can a man hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?'*" (Jer. 23:23–24). And he recalled many others who had suffered similarly. He also cited the fall of Solomon, who, he said, had received such wisdom and was so highly praised by all—for, like the morning star rising at dawn, he illuminated everyone with the radiance of his wisdom—yet lost such glory for the sake of a small pleasure. Therefore, it is dangerous to indulge in laziness; but we must pray unceasingly that no other thought, once it takes hold, may separate us from God, and that nothing else may take His place in our minds. Only a pure heart, having become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, beholds clearly within itself, as in a mirror, God Himself, the source of all that exists.

19. Hearing this, the brother who lived with Abba Philemon said, "Observing his deeds, I realized that the passions of the flesh had completely ceased to act within him, and that he was a zealous lover of all

perfection, so that he was always seen being transformed by the Divine Spirit (from glory to glory) and sighing with inexpressible sighs, reflecting within himself and weighing himself (or keeping himself balanced, as on a scale), and striving in every way so that nothing that might come would disturb the purity of his mind and no defilement might secretly cling to him. “Seeing this,” he says, “and stirred by a zeal for such a way of life, I turned to him with earnest supplication, saying, ‘How might I, too, attain purity of mind like you?’ He replied, ‘Go—work hard; for this requires labor and the pain of the heart.’ Spiritual blessings, which are worthy of earnest seeking and labor, will not come to us if we lie on our couches and sleep. Nor do earthly blessings come to anyone without labor. Whoever wishes to prosper must first of all renounce his own desires and acquire unceasing lamentation and detachment from worldly goods, paying no heed to the sins of others but only to his own, and lamenting only those day and night, and having no vain friendship with any of mankind: for the soul that grieves over its wretched condition and is pierced by the memory of past sins is dead to the world, just as the world dies to it; that is, then the carnal passions become powerless, and man is powerless against these passions. Moreover, the one who has renounced the world, united himself with Christ, and abides in silence loves God, preserves His image, and is enriched by His likeness; for from above he receives the gift of the Spirit from Him and becomes a dwelling place for God, not for demons, and presents righteous deeds to God. Thus, the soul, having become pure in life, free from the defilements of the flesh and devoid of any stain or vice, will finally be crowned with the crown of righteousness and will shine with the beauty of virtues. But in whom, at the beginning of renunciation, does no lamentation take root in the heart—neither spiritual tears, nor the memory of endless torments, nor true silence, nor unceasing prayer, nor the singing of psalms and instruction in the Divine Scriptures—in whom has this not become a habit, so that, because of the continuity of this practice, he is compelled—even unwillingly—to do so by reason of his mind—and the fear of God does not reign in his soul: such a one still rests in fellowship with the world and cannot have a pure mind in prayer; for only piety and the fear of God purify the soul from passions and, by setting the mind free, lead it into its natural contemplation and enable it to touch upon theology, which it receives in the form of bliss (*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”*),—which, for those who are becoming like this, already serves as a pledge of the future and keeps their spiritual disposition unshakable. Let us therefore strive with all our strength toward the practical exercise of virtues and ascetic deeds, through which we are elevated to piety—that is, to mental (spiritual) purity—the fruit of which is theological contemplation, which is natural to the mind. For action is an ascent toward contemplation, as the discerning and most theological mind (of Gregory the Theologian) says. For if we neglect such action, we will be alien to all wisdom; for even if someone were to reach the very summit of virtue, he would still need the labor of asceticism, which restrains the unruly desires of the body, and the strict guarding of his thoughts. And in this way alone can we attain the indwelling of Christ. For the more our righteousness increases, the more our spiritual maturity grows; and finally, the mind, having reached perfection, clings entirely to God and is illuminated by the Divine light—and the ineffable mysteries are revealed to it. Then he will truly know where wisdom is, where strength is, where the intellect for understanding all things is, where longevity and life are, where the light of the eyes and peace are. For as long as he is engaged in the struggle against the passions, he has no opportunity to enjoy these things; since both virtues and vices blind the mind: the former so that it may not see the virtues, and the latter so that it may not see the vices. But when he finds rest from the struggle and is granted spiritual gifts, then, being constantly influenced by grace, he becomes entirely enlightened and remains steadfast in the contemplation of spiritual things. Such a person is not attached to anything earthly; but has passed from death to life. Whoever embraces an exemplary life and strives to draw near to God must have a pure heart and clean lips, so that the word, coming forth from clean lips as pure, may worthily extol God, since the soul, having cleaved to God, converses with Him unceasingly. Let us therefore, brothers, aspire to reach such heights of virtue and cease to grovel on the ground, clinging to our passions. He who strives and has attained closeness to God, who has partaken of His holy light and been pierced by love for Him, enjoys a certain and incomprehensible spiritual joy in the Lord, as the divine psalm says: *“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart; He will make your righteousness shine like the light, and your justice like the noonday sun”* (Ps. 36: 4, 6). And what love is as strong and as unstoppable as that which flows from God into a soul purified of all evil? Such a soul, from the true disposition of the heart, says: *“I am wounded with love”* (Song of Songs 2:5). The splendors of divine beauty are ineffable and inexpressible! No word can depict them, nor can the ear contain them. Whether you point to the radiance of the dawn, the brightness of the moon, or the light of the sun, all these pale in comparison to that glory, and are more meager

in the presence of the true light than the deepest night or the darkest gloom is before the purest midday. So testified our own Basil, the most wonderful of teachers, having come to know this through experience and having been taught this.

20. The brother who lived with Abba recounted this and even more. But who would not marvel at the following as well, as proof of his great humility? Having been ordained a presbyter long ago, and having so sincerely touched the heavenly realm with both his life and his mind, he avoided the Divine Liturgy in every way as if it were a burden, so that throughout the many years of his ascetic life he very rarely agreed to preside over the Holy Meal (for the Divine Liturgy). But even the Divine Mysteries—Communion—he did not partake of, despite such a constantly cautious life, when it happened that he entered into fellowship and conversed with people; though in doing so he spoke to them of nothing earthly, but only of what was beneficial to the soul for those seeking conversation with him. And when he intended to partake of the Divine Mysteries, he would first plead with God at length, appeasing Him with prayers, psalm-singing, and confessions. He was terrified by the voice of the deacon, who proclaims at that moment, saying, “*Holy things to the holy.*” For at that moment, he said, the entire Church is filled with holy angels, and the King of Powers Himself, performing the sacrament in a mysterious way and transforming the bread and wine into His own body and blood, enters our hearts through Holy Communion. Therefore, he added, we must approach the Holy Communion of Christ’s most pure Mysteries with purity and holiness, as if existing outside the flesh, without any doubt or hesitation, so that we may partake of the enlightenment that comes from them. Many of the Holy Fathers saw holy angels who warned them (against all that was unworthy); which is why they themselves remained in deep silence, speaking to no one.

21. And here is something else that (that brother) said: whenever the elder himself needed to sell his handicrafts, so that no lie, oath, superfluous word, or any other form of sin might arise—if he were to converse or bargain—he would stand there pretending to be a holy fool; and anyone who wished to buy his handicrafts would take them from him and pay whatever price they wished. He made small baskets; and this wise man would accept whatever was given for them with gratitude, without saying a word.

The Venerable Father Theognostus

A Brief Account of Him

Whether the Venerable Theognostus, the subject of the following chapters, was the Alexandrian exegete mentioned by Photius in the 106th reading, or someone else, and in what era he lived, we cannot say with certainty. But just as a tree is known by its fruit, so too was he among those who lived well *by their “deeds”* and “*mind,*” and who, through the purity of their lives, were deemed worthy to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Enlightened in his mind by the Holy Spirit’s illuminations and inspired by its life-giving breath, he sang a kind of sacred song, uttering these very chapters, which, by virtue of the grace and spiritual contemplations hidden within them, delight both the ears and the minds of readers and stir within them a living zeal to live according to their instruction; for in them a faithful model of an active life is set forth, and an infallible path to the contemplative life is indicated. Furthermore, those who wish may learn from them what a priest, honored by the office of the priesthood, ought to be and how he ought to act. And in general, to those who diligently read them, they will provide rich moral edification and true guidance toward saving sobriety.

On the active and contemplative life, and on the priesthood, the chapters

for which the acrostic reads: *To the Most Reverend Fathers, Lazarus and Barlaam, from Theognostus, who is meager in every way and unworthy above all others living in this present world.*

1. Consider yourself to possess true virtue when you regard all that exists on earth as utterly worthless, always keeping in your heart—with a clear conscience—the readiness to depart to the Lord. If you wish to be known by God, remain unknown to people as much as possible.

2. Beware of excessive bodily comforts, and abstain from them, lest they detract from the value of your labors. Consider it a loss not the deprivation of sensual pleasures, but the loss of what is better through the indulgence in them.

3. With all your being, consider yourself an ant and a worm, so that you may become a person created by God; for if the former does not come first, the latter will not follow. The more you humble yourself in your

self-perception, the higher you will rise in reality. When you consider yourself nothing before the Lord, like the Psalmist (38:6), then you are secretly great out of smallness; and when you realize that you possess nothing and know nothing, then you are rich in both deed and mind, praiseworthy before the Lord.

4. Wipe away the backbone of the sinner and the wicked—that is, sensuality and deceit, from which all evil springs; wipe them away through self-control and humble benevolence: so that, even if sin were to be rigorously scrutinized in you at the time of judgment, nothing of the sort would be found in your deeds; for transgressions are erased when, having come to hate the causes that led to them, we begin to wage war against them, and we will turn our initial defeat into a final victory.

5. There is nothing better than pure prayer, from which, as from a spring, all virtues flow—prudence and meekness, love and self-control, and intercession and comfort descending from above because of tears. Its goodness consists in keeping the mind attentive to what is spoken by the tongue and thought by the mind, and in an insatiable, constant longing for communion with God, when the mind, through contemplation of the Existent, hastens after its Lord and, with ardent love, eagerly seeks to find the Invisible; and when it encounters the darkness that veils Him, it returns to itself once more, with all-reverent humility, content with what is now revealed for its benefit through contemplation, and finding comfort in that; yet remaining in the blessed hope of ultimately attaining the desired goal when the vision “*as in a mirror, in a riddle*” comes to an end, and the pure, unceasing “*face-to-face vision*” of Him begins (1 Cor. 13:12).

6. Refrain from higher contemplations if you have not yet attained the utmost dispassion; do not pursue what cannot be attained, and do not seek what is beyond your strength. If you wish, as someone says, to become a theologian and a contemplative through the way of life, ascend to this level and, through purity, attain purity (Theology). Having mentioned theology, I remind you, —take care not to stretch toward its heights to the point of boundlessness, and know that it is not fitting for us, still nourished by the milk of virtue, to attempt to soar there, lest we waste our feathers in vain, as happens to young fledglings, even though the sweetness of knowledge strongly entices our desire. But when, having been purified by chastity and tears, we are lifted up from the earth, like Elijah or Habakkuk, foreshadowing or prefiguring the rapture that is to come on the clouds, and through contemplative prayer—pure and unworldly—having risen above the senses, we seek God, then, perhaps, we will touch upon theology to some extent.

7. Likewise, if you desire to be deemed worthy of divine vision and the illumination of the mind, first love a peaceful and silent life, and, having detached yourself from everything, come to know both yourself and God. If this comes to pass, then nothing will stand in your way, and—like a gentle breeze (*the voice of coolness*)—within your inner being, which is pure and undisturbed by any passion, you will wisely behold the One who is invisible to all, proclaiming salvation to you through the most profound knowledge of Him.

8. Just as thunder is immediately expected after a flash of lightning, so too, where divine purification has shone forth, the storm of passions subsides. And where this occurs, the pledge of that (future) bliss is established within the one who has attained it. But there is neither a sense of divine mercy nor hope of dispassion in a soul that loves the world more than its Creator, that nurtures attachments to the visible, and that craves carnal pleasures and delights with all its desire.

9. Do not seek the Divine—what it is and where it is—with your mind; for it is supernatural and cannot be confined to a place, being above all that exists. But show within yourself, as in a mirror, the God-Word—who is described through the Incarnation—as much as this is possible; for in this case, He, emitting rays of light through His divine nature, is mentally conceived as being in a specific place, while remaining omnipresent, due to the indescribable nature of the Divine. However, to the extent that you purify yourself, to that extent you will become worthy of divine illumination.

10. Desiring true knowledge and certain assurance of salvation, first learn to sever the soul’s passionate bonds with the body; and, having stripped yourself of attachment to the material, descend into the abyss of humility—and you will find the priceless pearl of salvation, as in a shell, hidden in divine knowledge, and which foreshadows for you the radiance of the Kingdom of God.

11. For one who has faithfully fulfilled spiritual obedience, having subjugated the flesh to the spirit, human obedience is not required; for such a one abides in obedience to the Word of God and the Law, like a grateful servant. But for those in whom there is a struggle and a war of the body against the soul, it is necessary to have a leader and ruler and to obey him, as one who, with knowledge of the matter, knows how to steer the helm of our life and equip us with the necessary weapons in due time, so that invisible adversaries may not take us captive, and passions may not overwhelm us through our inexperience.

12. When no passion disturbs you, the divine desire will grow within you, in your heart; when, moreover, you no longer fear death, regarding it as sleep, but rather long for release from the body: then you will obtain, as is fitting, the pledge of salvation, and you will carry the Kingdom of Heaven within yourself, rejoicing with inexpressible joy.

On the Priesthood

1. Having been deemed worthy of the divine and honorable priesthood, you must first and foremost always offer yourself as a sacrifice by mortifying your passions and carnal pleasures, and in this way dare to approach the life-giving and awesome sacrifice, lest you be consumed by the divine fire like some easily combustible substance. For if even the Seraphim did not dare to touch the coal without tongs (Isaiah 6:6), how can you touch it without dispassion? Through it, you will have a sanctified tongue, purified lips, and a soul that is pure along with your body, and your very hands will shine brighter than any gold, as servants of the supernatural fire and sacrifice.

2. Contemplate deeply the power of these words, for every day you behold this saving mystery of God, which, when the elder Simeon once saw it, he was astonished and asked for death; and if you have not received revelation from the Holy Spirit that you are a favored mediator between God and mankind, like an angel, then do not dare, to your own ruin, to undertake the all-holy and awe-inspiring celebration of the Divine Mysteries, before which the angels bow in reverence and from which many of the saints have reverently refrained, lest, like Zana, they be taken from among the living by the judgment of the Most High.

3. *“Take heed to yourself,”* as the Apostle said (1 Tim. 7:16). Take heed to yourself and always offer up a sacrifice for your past sins, so that whatever was in you—or perhaps still is—that is impure due to weakness may be consumed by the divine fire. In this way, you will be able—as it were, a chosen, useful, pure vessel, worthy of such a sacrifice—to transform yourself from a silver or even a gold vessel, even if you were once made of wood or clay, provided that, through your bold hope, you have God inclined to show you mercy. For where God is ready to hear, there are no obstacles to the transformation of one thing into another.

4. Take heed to the angel-like honor to which you have been raised, and strive with every virtue and purity to remain blameless in the rank to which you have been called. See what became of the fallen Lucifer because of his pride. Do not suffer the same fate by dreaming of great things for yourself, but rather, considering yourself dust, ashes, and shame, always weep that, despite this, you are admitted to Divine Communion and to the performance of the awe-inspiring sacred rite of the Holy Mysteries, by God’s boundless love for humanity and His ineffable goodness.

5. One who has received the priesthood must be pure from all passions, especially from fornication and malice, regarding which one should not even entertain the slightest thought; lest you be subjected to wrath and a curse, like a leper or one defiled by soot, when he dares to touch the king’s body.

6. Washed white by streams of tears more than by snow, with a conscience bright in purity, partake of the Holy Mysteries as a saint, revealing the inner beauty of your soul through an outward, angelic countenance. But take heed: in the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, do not be satisfied with human traditions alone, but may grace be with you, secretly and mysteriously enabling you to comprehend the higher meaning therein.

7. Longing for incorruption and immortality, celebrate the life-giving and imperishable mysteries with piety and reverence, desiring at the same time to depart from this world, having become perfect through faith. But if you fear death, then you have not yet been united in love with Christ, Whom you are privileged to partake of with your own hands, and Whose flesh you are nourished by. For if this were so, you would hasten to go to the place where your Beloved is, regarding neither life nor flesh as anything.

8. Having become a partaker of God’s flesh and a priest and fellow partaker through Holy Communion, you are bound to be united with the likeness of His death, *“no longer living for yourself,”* but, according to the Apostle, for Him who was crucified and died for you (2 Cor. 5:15). But if you live passionately for the flesh and the world, you are preparing yourself for eternal torment after death—unless, before your death, you voluntarily cease to offer this bloodless sacrifice. Who does not know that many who have unworthily performed the sacred rites, having been snatched away from here by sudden death, have been sent straight to the torments of the hereafter?

9. A certain priest and monk, renowned for his piety and revered by many as honorable in outward appearance, but inwardly secretly indulging in lust and defiling himself, while celebrating the Divine and Holy

Liturgy, reached the Cherubic Hymn and, bowing as usual before the Holy Table, began to read, “*No one is worthy*”... he suddenly died, because his soul left him in that position.

10. There is nothing more desirable than sound reason and wisdom. For from these spring the fear of God and love for God: the former purifies through reverence and self-restraint, while the latter perfects through a serene disposition and prudence, and enables the mind to soar freely in lofty contemplations and ascents toward heaven. But without fear, it is impossible to proceed directly to divine love, and, bypassing love, to soar to the hoped-for and rest in it.

11. Go, then, you who desire salvation; run with zeal and without knowing weariness until you reach your goal—seek diligently, ask unceasingly, knock patiently until you succeed, having raised firm faith and humility like a banner at the top of the ladder. But do not consider yourself to have attained what you desire when you receive the forgiveness of sins, but when you cease to fear the uprising of all passions, being ready without fear and with boldness to depart from the body.

12. With many tears, seek to receive assurance of your salvation, but not before your death, if you are humble and wise, lest you later, having become carefree, lose heart regarding the matter of salvation; but then, near the end, to obtain it—which is, however, certain—pray that, having boldly and foolishly imagined that you possess it, you might not find yourself failing to reach the place you dreamed of when the long-awaited time finally comes. Where, then, will you go, wretched one, without the pledge and the certain, saving assurance given by the Holy Spirit?!

13. Having desired God-given dispassion, first seek this desired state through obedience and humility, so that, by taking a different path toward it, you may not cause yourself in vain labor. Those who have attained dispassion, however, must not regard as such the one who is sometimes besieged by passions and at other times is at peace and undisturbed by them, but rather the one who constantly enjoys dispassion, and who, even when the causes of passions are present, remains unmoved by them, and when thoughts of them arise, suffers no distress from them.

14. With insults and reproaches, the enemy boldly attacks the soul that has departed from the body, like a bitter and fearsome accuser of its failings. But one can then see how the God-loving soul, though it was once often wounded by many sins, is not in the least shaken by his attacks and threats, but, being established in the Lord, is filled with joy and boldness, seeing the Holy Powers accompanying her; and, being shielded by the light of faith, with great fearlessness, cries out to the evil one: “What have you to do with me, you fugitive from heaven and slave of the evil one? You have no power over us. Christ, the Son of God, has authority over us, as He does over all things. To Him we have sinned, and to Him we will give an account, having Him as our guarantor of mercy and of our salvation in Him through His glorious Cross. “But you, wretched one, flee from us; you are nothing to us or to Christ’s servants.” At such bold words from the soul, the devil finally breaks, torn by screams, unable to withstand the name of Christ. The soul, after this, having passed through the realm of the princes of the air, is joyfully carried by the Divine Angels to the place assigned to it according to its nature.

15. Let not love for fleeting things draw you down to earth, O wise one of the heavens. For if any attachment to earthly goods binds you, you are like an eagle caught by a net around its talon, unable to soar to the heights. Therefore, regard and esteem all things as “*rubbish*” (Phil. 3:8), in the hope of something better; and when the time comes, having cast off the very flesh, you will freely follow the Angel who leads you.

16. Just as it is impossible to deposit a coin lacking the royal seal alongside ordinary coins in the royal treasury, so it is impossible, without true knowledge and dispassion, to receive the pledge of that bliss, and to depart from here with boldness and confidence toward what is hoped for and to be united with the elect. By “guidance,” I do not mean wisdom, but the infallible knowledge of God and the divine, through which the God-loving person, unbound by earthly passions, is elevated to deification by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

17. Even if you have gone through everything pertaining to the active life, do not rely on yourself in this, as if you had already attained dispassion and could move about the world carefree; lest, in such a case, having taken on passionate dispositions, you encounter something contrary to the order of your life before returning to yourself. But always, under the watchful eye of fear, take diligent care of your changeable and fickle nature, prudently keeping your distance from the causes of the passions. For dispassion, which is utterly unchanging, is found only in those who have attained perfect love and, through unceasing contemplation, are held aloft above all that is sensory and have ascended to the heights of humility—those whom the flame of

passions no longer touches, for it is quenched by the voice of the Lord, so that they (the perfect ones) may be transformed into incorruptibility.

18. Do not desire dispassion before its time, lest you suffer the same fate as the first man, who, being immature, tasted the tree of knowledge; but by laboring patiently in all-encompassing self-restraint and unceasing prayer, and by maintaining, with self-contempt and extreme humility, your active habits and disciplines, you will subsequently, at the opportune time, receive the grace of dispassion—this haven of rest—after storms and tribulations. For God is not resentful; He will open the door to dispassion at the proper time for those who walk in righteousness.

19. “*Go to the ant, you sluggard*” (Prov. 6:6)—and learn from it the love of labor. But do not forget that God has no need of our good deeds, for He lacks nothing and is filled with all things; but He Himself bestows bountifully and graciously, and saves by His grace those who are wise, faithful to Him by choice, and grateful; though He graciously accepts their works according to their ability. Therefore, if you labor as one who is indebted to Him for the good He has previously bestowed upon you, you do well—and God’s mercy is near to you; but if you think of God as a debtor to you for the good you do in your own eyes, then you have gone astray, having strayed from the straight path: for how can a benefactor be a debtor?—Nevertheless, go on as a hired hand; and, progressing little by little, you will attain, by God’s mercy, what you seek.

20. Would you like me to show you another path to salvation—or rather, to detachment? Pester your Creator with all your might through prayer, so that you may not stray from your goal, always presenting before Him, as intercessors, the heavenly hosts and all the Saints, together with the Most Holy Theotokos; and do not seek dispassion, as one unworthy of such a gift, but earnestly seek salvation, and with it you will receive dispassion as well; of these, one is like silver, and the other like pure gold; and have, above all, a secret work, O servant of God, and certain secret mysteries of the Word to God—those who worship you, by whom He is pleased and honored.

21. Strive to receive the pledge of salvation within, in your heart, as an unquestionable assurance; lest, otherwise, at the hour of departure, you unexpectedly encounter fear and trembling. Consider yourself to have received this pledge when your heart no longer looks upon you with favor in any transgression, and your conscience no longer accuses you of your sins; when the wildness of beastly passions has been subdued within you by the grace of God; when tears of consolation flow of their own accord, and your mind prays with purity and without distraction; and when you joyfully and willingly await death—which is terrifying to many, and which they would wish to avoid.

22. “*The words of eternal life,*” which, as the Apostle Peter testified (John 6:68), the Word of God possesses, are words concerning what has been accomplished through Him, by which those who are secretly guided to Him already obtain, even from here, eternal life, the pledge of the Spirit, and an unshameful hope of salvation. But this is not granted to those who prefer the flesh to the soul, who are partial to earthly goods, and who take pleasure in them.

23. A “rational” (logikoz—reasoning) person is not one who possesses the spoken word (the ability to speak articulately): for every human being is such; but rather one who, by rational power, seeks and investigates how to find God. However, he will never find that which is, by nature, Supernatural. This is impossible for any nature; but in the most wise ordering of all that exists, in the providence over it, its preservation, direction, and governance, the “*beauty*” of this “*cunning Creator*” and “*Progenitor*” is, as it were, contemplated and perceived (Wisdom of Solomon 13:1, 4, 5), just as a housebuilder is known by the work of his hands.

24. You cannot attain detachment as you ought without dispassion, nor dispassion without love, nor love without the fear of God and pure prayer, nor these without faith and carefree trust, by which the mind, inspired, casts aside earthly speculation, soars to the heavenly realm, and surveys it, seeking its Lord.

25. Cherish purity as the apple of your eye, that you may be a temple of God and a dwelling place pleasing to Him; for without chastity it is impossible to become one with God. This gives rise to love for God, detachment from the world, and withdrawal from it, and is preserved by humility, self-control, unceasing prayer, spiritual contemplation (meditation on God), tears, and reflection—the benefits of which you will not attain without dispassion.

26. Let no one deceive you into thinking that, contrary to the Apostle’s word (Heb. 12:14), one can behold God without “*holiness*” (purity). For the Lord, who is all-good and surpasses all purity, does not will to reveal Himself inwardly to the impure. Just as one who loves his father or mother, or his daughter or son,

more than Him is unworthy of Him, so too is unworthy of Him the one who prefers something temporary and material to love for Him—and all the more so this vile and foul sin. God turns away from those who do not turn away from this impurity, for *“the perishable must put on the imperishable”* (1 Cor. 15:50).

27. You will not attain divine love without knowledge, nor knowledge without faith; by faith I mean not merely a bare faith, but one born of the practice of virtue. You will attain true contrition when, through self-restraint, vigilance, prayer, and humility, you have dried up the lustful pleasure entwined with your flesh, you will be crucified with the Lord Jesus, and you will no longer live according to the flesh, but will begin to live by the Spirit, in accordance with the hope of *“a higher calling and election”* (2 Peter 1:10).

28. *“In this I know that You have desired me,”* the Prophet cries out to God, *“for my enemy will not rejoice over me”* (Ps. 40:12), as he continues to torment and dishonor me with passions until the end. But before the end, deliver me from his hands, and, having granted me to live spiritually as is pleasing to You, deign, after a blessed departure, to present me, saved, before Your throne—bearing from here the pledge of salvation, by Your mercy, and the unquestionable assurance thereof; for I consider it an unbearable calamity—more bitter and more terrible than death and hell itself—to be found unprepared and trembling at the hour of my departure.

29. Faith and hope are no simple or casual matters; but faith requires a steadfast soul, and hope a righteous character and heart. Moreover, who would readily believe in the unseen without grace? And who will have hope for an uncertain future if they have not had some genuine experience of the Lord’s gifts, from which they might receive assurance of the future as of the present? Both of these virtues require the strength of our will, as well as God’s guidance and help; without them, our labor is in vain.

30. True virtue is born either of knowledge, or of dispassion, or of both together. Therefore, if anyone were to seek this in us in vain, it would be true that our virtue is only an apparent virtue, and not a true one. For if it were not so, it would be rich in fruit, not merely in leaves. Thus, one who is moved to do good—whether by a desire to please others, by self-indulgence, or by something else displeasing to God—is deceitful and does not love God. But if we correct the motivating cause, we will undoubtedly attain perfection in true virtue, which, in due time and in due measure, will bring us both knowledge and dispassion through the grace of our all-good God.

31. *“Discern the enemy’s schemes”* (2 Cor. 2:11) through the enlightenment of grace, and, humbling yourself before God with tears, confess your weakness, considering yourself nothing, even though our deceiver leads us to think that we are something. Do not seek the bestowal of gifts if they do not contribute to salvation and the preservation of humility; rather, seek unpretentious knowledge as the foundation for the knowledge of God, and strive not to be constantly tormented by passions as by tyrants, and to be freed from the flesh through dispassion, or at least through sorrow for your sins.

32. Just as one cannot soar upward without wings, so one cannot attain the hoped-for without certain assurance of it even while still here; and this assurance arises from humility, or from the grace of the Holy Spirit in those who have fully pleased God—to whom impassivity is certainly characteristic, either in part or in full, depending on the degree of their pleasing God and their purification. But those who depart from the body in a different state—as in the winter of the passions or on the Sabbath (that is, without works of virtue) (Matt. 24:20)—are subject to judgment and torment at the time of reckoning.

33. You who are being saved now, give thanks to God the Savior. And if you wish to offer gifts to Him, offer gratefully from your widowed soul two mites—that is, humility and love. And He will accept them—as I well know—more than the great wealth of good deeds that many cast into the treasury of salvation. But if, like Lazarus, you are in need of revival, having died to your passions, send these very virtues, like dear sisters, as intercessors before Him—and you will certainly receive what you seek.

34. Even if you properly maintain the active vigilance of a virtuous life, by this alone you cannot reach the haven of dispassion, so that you may pray purely and without distraction; unless, at the same time, your mind is embraced by spiritual contemplations of enlightening knowledge and understanding of reality, by which, being inspired and enlightened, it would soar rapidly upward in true prayer—breathing entirely of love—toward the lights of the higher, immaterial orders that are akin to it, and from there, as far as possible, to the great Light, to the Triune Godhead.

35. We will not be punished in the age to come for having sinned, nor will we be condemned for this reason, having been created with a changeable and fickle nature; but rather for having sinned and not repented, and for not having turned from the evil path to the Lord, even though we were given the power and time to

repent. God is good and merciful toward those who repent, even though He is portrayed as threatening and wrathful; but this is directed against evil and sin, not against us, whom He is always ready to accept as soon as He sees a tear of contrition on our faces. Indeed, He treats us according to our deeds and dispositions, rewarding each person according to the merit of his or her life.

36. When you happen to stumble from your upright standing, do not tremble, but, straightening yourself as quickly as possible, hasten to return to your former state of well-being through sorrow, regret, self-reproach, and a plentiful outpouring of tears, in a spirit of contrition; by virtue of which, having risen from the fall that has befallen you, you will enter the bosom of saving joy, resolving in your heart to stand firm henceforth, so that, having again provoked the Judge, you may not need tears and contrition for purification: for if this does not happen here, then we will certainly not escape the torments we deserve in the future.

On the Priesthood

1. Once again, we turn to the most honorable priesthood: what angelic disposition and what purity it demands, and how, upon accepting it, it requires even greater steadfastness and chastity than before; for if that which is impure must be purified to some extent, how can that which is pure be allowed to be defiled? Otherwise, if we allow the light to be darkened, and mix something foul with the fragrant oil, then, alas, we are bound to inherit—and ruin, like the sacrilegious, such as Ananias and Sapphira.

2. Even if it seems to you that, from a vessel of perdition and unworthiness, you have worthily entered the angelic and divine order of the priesthood—by virtue of a certain measure of purity, having become a vessel of election pleasing to the Lord, according to the Apostle—nevertheless, guard with all your heart the unblemished honor with which you have been graced. Guard this divine gift as the apple of your eye, lest, having partaken without due care, you be cast down from on high into an abyss from which it will be difficult for you to find a way out.

3. As a wise man, understand that if *“God is the one who justifies, who then will condemn?”* (Rom. 8:34). And if, having been called, you have entered the blessed and exalted order of the divine priesthood, you need not worry about your past life—even if you happened to have sinned—but immediately, with God’s help, purify yourself and make amends. But after this, let your first concern—attentive and sober—be not to tarnish this grace; so that if anyone should foolishly condemn your ordination to the priesthood because of your past deeds, he may hear, as a rebuke, the divine voice crying out: *“What God has made clean, do not you call unclean”* (Acts 10:15).

4. The office of the priesthood is light, and its yoke is a blessing; but only for those who, upon accepting it, begin to amend their lives as they ought, and who have not attempted to obtain the grace of the Holy Spirit through purchase. For if what is unbuyable and unsellable is deemed to have been purchased through human striving and a perishable gift, then just as this calling did not come from above, so too will this burden be very heavy—since it is borne unworthily and beyond one’s strength, and this yoke will harshly wear down the back and crush the strength of the one who bears it, until it completely exhausts and wears him out, unless he lays it down.

5. Having boldly taken up the yoke of the priesthood, walk in the ways of righteousness and speak the word of truth with righteousness, working out your salvation through it with fear and trembling. For our God is a consuming fire: and if you touch Him, whether you are like gold or silver, do not fear being burned, as the Babylonian youths in the furnace; but if you are like grass and reeds, made of flammable material, like one who is wise only in earthly matters, then fear that you may be burned by the heavenly fire, unless you flee from wrath, like Lot, by abstaining from dreadful mysteries, or hasten to wash yourself in the tears of repentance. Only by being drenched with the water of tears will you become impervious and invulnerable to the fire of truth, like the once-frail plant of the thicket. In that case, I do not know if there is any sin—to which we are so prone due to our weakness—that cannot be erased by the divine fire through worship performed with complete purity or through effective purification.

6. Since you have not been able to break away from and purify yourself of your passionate inclinations—due to long-standing habit—how dare you, wretched one, touch that which is even untouchable to the angels? Therefore, either tremble and abstain from the divine liturgy, thereby appeasing God’s justice, or, as an insensitive and incorrigible person, allow yourself to fall into the hands of the living God, Who will not spare you out of love for humanity, but will punish you mercilessly for shamelessly daring to approach

the royal wedding feast with a defiled soul and in rags, when you are unworthy even to enter the royal palace, let alone to recline at His feast.

7. I knew one of the consecrated who dared to approach the Divine Mystery unworthily, because of the lustful passion that possessed him. For this, he fell into a severe and incurable illness and was already nearing death. Since, having done everything in his power to cure his illness, he had not succeeded in the least—and the illness not only persisted but grew worse—he came to his senses and, realizing that he was dying because of his unworthy celebration of the Liturgy, made a solemn vow never again to participate in the sacred service. These words were immediately followed by the healing of his illness, so that not a trace of it remained.

8. The order of the priesthood and the sacred vestments are resplendent, but only if the ordained one also possesses a soul that shines with purity within. But when he defiles himself through carelessness, and the conscience that bears witness to this shame is despised, then light becomes darkness, the cause of eternal gloom and fire, unless, having abandoned this path—which is treacherous on both sides—he chooses another: a virtuous life lived with humility, leading safely to the Kingdom of God.

9. Salvation is attained through virtue even in a lowly state, and not through a noble priesthood that demands a life equal to that of the angels. Therefore, either be dispassionate like an angel, as if existing outside the world and the flesh through contemplation, and thus ascend this heavenly ladder; or, recognizing your weakness, fear the height that threatens a great fall for the unready, and cling to the life the life common to the majority—yet no less than that special life which leads to God and unites one with Him—in which, even if you should happen to fall, it will be easier for you to rise again through repentance, by the grace of our all-merciful God.

10. *“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”* (1 Cor. 15:50). But you, partaking of the flesh and blood of God, are made one body with Him and mingled with His blood; therefore you already have the Kingdom of Heaven within you: how then are you besieged by the passions of flesh and blood? I fear that the Spirit of God will not abide in you, as in *the “flesh”* (Gen. 6:3), and at the hour of Judgment you will be cut in two: then they will take the most honorable priesthood from you, as from one unworthy of such grace, and send you to eternal torment in hell.

11. It is as if the fear of God is absent from your eyes, for you seem to regard the unworthy performance of the priestly office as a trivial matter, being deceived by self-love, which suggests to you that the Deity is good. On this Daphan and Avirron once rested, until the earth swallowed them up. – You, too, should be horrified by this, and truly fear where there is fear (Ps. 13: 5), keep in mind how great a matter the Divine Liturgy is: and either, if you are worthy and pure—not to say, angelic—exercise the authority of the Divine priesthood, or withdraw from this awesome ministry, as a reasonable person; otherwise, if you are now negligent in this matter and deceive your conscience, which accuses you, with sophistry, you will one day—when all is rightly judged and condemned—cry out with a groan: *“The fear of which I was afraid has come upon me, and the terror of which I dreaded has overtaken me”* (Job 3:25)!

12. Soberly and with deep sorrow, first offer up the world-saving Holy Sacrifice for your own purification, with contrition and tears; for who, like you, will grieve for you and offer a sacrifice on your behalf when you die? Therefore, foreseeing what is to come, remember yourself as if already buried, offering these holy gifts to God at the table in intercession for your salvation, recalling His voluntary and merciful sacrifice here.

13. What an indescribable and inexpressible consolation it is when the soul, confident of its salvation, departs from the body, laying it aside as a garment! For, as if already in possession of the hoped-for blessings, it leaves the body without a care, going in peace toward the Angel who descends from above to meet it with joy and gladness, and together with him passes unhindered through the air, without being subjected to any attack by the spirits of malice, but ascending with joy, boldness, and cries of thanksgiving, until it reaches the presence of the Creator, and there receives the decree to be placed among the host of those like itself and equal in virtue, until the general resurrection.

14. I will tell you a terrifying thing; but do not be surprised. — Even if you do not attain dispassion, perhaps because of tyrannical inclinations, yet if, at the hour of your departure, you are in a state of profound humility—no less than that of the dispassionate—you will be carried aloft on the clouds. For though the treasure of the dispassionate may consist of every virtue, the precious gem of humility is more honorable and

exalted than all of them, and to those who acquire it, it brings not only reconciliation with God but also entry, together with the elect, into the bridal chamber of His Kingdom.

15. Receiving from God the forgiveness of your sins, glorify Him, for He does not remember your evil nor take vengeance on you for it, and guard yourself with all your might against willful falls. For although even in such cases it is possible to receive forgiveness every day until the very moment of death, you prove yourself ungrateful if you sin so easily and knowingly. However, if, using the rock of hope to drive away the dog of despair, you implore God's goodness unceasingly and patiently, many of your sins will be forgiven, so that you too may come to love the All-Merciful and Most Blessed One in the age to come.

16. When, by the working of divine grace, you stand before God in prayer with tears, fall prostrate, stretching out on the ground in the shape of a cross, and, striking your head, ask for forgiveness here, as deliverance from corruption and deliverance from temptations; but do not desire to depart as you wish, but as, when, and where God wills; and even with love, express your readiness to depart together with these tears to the Lord in deep humility, so as to quench the flame of your desire and longing; but be willing to endure a delay for the time being, if God sees fit to provide something better. Seek only one thing earnestly and persistently—that you may not fall away from God—by refraining from doing, saying, intending, or undertaking anything that would lead to this.

17. As one who dwells in the flesh, do not attempt to investigate the mental and spiritual realms as they truly are, even though the intellect of your soul inclines you toward this when it is pure. For as long as the incorporeal soul, held in the bonds of flesh and blood, does not cast off this heaviness and does not come to dwell with the intellectual powers, it cannot, as it ought, contemplate them or understand them. Therefore, as you prepare to emerge from your material bonds—as from a second, dark womb—into that immaterial and luminous existence, be of good cheer, praising your benefactor who leads us through death to the better life we long for—remain constantly sober and vigilant, for the impure demons that roam around us, always slandering our well-being and treacherously watching our every step until the very end of life—and until your very end, tremble for yourself, because of the uncertainty of the future, since you were created to be fickle and changeable by your own free will.

18. The enemy confronts us with cruel and terrifying temptations when he senses that the soul has attained the highest degrees of virtue. This is evidenced by the words of prayer and its elevation above the material duality of the flesh and the senses. And then the enemy of mankind tempts us so maliciously that we are even driven to despair in this life. But he, in his vanity, does not know what blessings he brings upon us, making us more experienced through patience and weaving crowns of light for us.

19. There is no other feat as great as that of chastity and virginity. He who honestly preserves celibacy is a source of wonder to the angels and is crowned no less than the martyrs. For how much toil and sweat is required of one who, being bound by flesh and blood, always strives to imitate the incorporeality of the incorporeal through purity? And truly, this endeavor is so great and lofty that it would be impossible—as something supernatural—if God did not manifest from on high His intercession, strengthening and upholding our frail and mortal nature, and in a certain way raising it up from the earth through divine love and the hope of the promised rewards.

20. The flesh, weakened by overindulgence in food and sleep, is a great obstacle to chastity. True chastity, however, remains unshaken even in the dreams of sleep. For if the mind takes pleasure in them while asleep, this is a sign that it harbors this passion deep within. But if, by God's grace, it is granted to converse with God in sleep, it is clear that it remains untouched by this passion; which is why it serves at all times as a vigilant guardian of the soul and body, keeping them in peaceful harmony with one another, like a dog keeping watch over them against treacherous wolves, and thereby averting predation.

21. I will tell you something strange; but do not be surprised. There is a certain hidden mystery that takes place between God and the soul. This happens to those who attain the highest degrees of perfect purity, love, and faith, when a person, having been completely transformed, unites with God—as one belonging to Him—through unceasing prayer and contemplation. At this stage, Elijah seals the heavens against rain and consumes the sacrifice with heavenly fire; Moses parts the sea and, with a wave of his hand, puts the Amalekites to flight; Jonah is delivered from the whale and the depths of the sea. For there is a certain necessity in this for the most philanthropic God, but only to the extent that it is in accordance with His will. He who is deemed worthy of this, though clothed in flesh, has transcended the bounds of decay and mortality, accepting

death as one would an ordinary sleep—a sleep that, to his comfort, transports him to that which he has always longed for.

On the Priesthood

1. Revering the Lord's sufferings, the self-emptying of the Word of God for our sake, as well as the sacrifice and union within us of the life-giving and divine Body and Blood—of which we partake not only in Communion but also in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy—humble yourself like a lamb led to slaughter, regarding all as truly superior to you, and be careful in every way not to wound anyone's conscience. Without first purifying yourself, do not dare to partake of the Holy Mysteries, lest you be burned like hay by the Divine Fire, or, like wax, melt and spill out?

2. And truly, if you perform this divine, most holy, and awe-inspiring sacrament as you ought, and your conscience reproaches you in nothing, then in nothing else will you find such certain hope of salvation as in it. For from it you will receive greater benefit than from any other deed or contemplation. – But if this is not the case, then see for yourself what this means. – And it is certainly better, in recognition of one's own weakness, to renounce the high office of the priesthood than to accept it, bear it, and—while appearing exalted to many—in reality, through one's unworthiness, be like a corpse, worthy of weeping.

3. The ministry of the holy priesthood, its propitiation of God, and its unceasing intercession for all before Him far surpass all psalm-singing and prayer, just as the sun surpasses the stars. For we offer up the Only-Begotten Himself as a sacrifice, —Him, who out of love for mankind laid down His life for sinners, we offer and present in supplication not only for the remission of sins, but also for the granting of all that we need and for which we pray: and the Body, united with the Divinity, like a burning coal consumes every iniquity and enlightens the hearts of those who approach with faith; likewise, the Divine and all-honored Blood, more effective than any hyssop, washes away and purifies every impurity and defilement of those who dare to approach the Holy Mysteries with every kind of contrition and hopeful devotion. Where else can one find anything like this?!

4. The body of God the Word, which has not ascended into heaven—as one of the Saints said—is not consumed after descending from heaven, but the very bread and the very wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, when this is performed with faith, fear, love, and reverence for the divine mystery by those entrusted with the honorable priesthood, in which mystery this transformation from one into the other is accomplished through the action and inspiration of the All-Holy Spirit. What purity and holiness, then, are required of the priest who touches the Divine Body, and what boldness is required when he must act as a mediator between God and people, having as his intercessors, together with the Most Holy Mother of God, the heavenly angelic hosts, and all the saints from ages past? It seems to me that they are angelic or archangelic: for qualities must correspond to rank.

5. You must note, brother, that the Holy Gifts, which are to be consecrated, are left uncovered after the Creed so that they may, in a sense, pray for those who offer them and cry out with ineffable voices to Him who lives in heaven, that He may not despise them, but look upon them, remembering the voluntary exhaustion of His Son for sinners, His ineffable descent, and His philanthropic sacrifice; for He did not grant redemption and salvation to the righteous through His sufferings, but had mercy on us who had fallen and raised us up, as He is good and without malice.

6. Although you strive for pure prayer—which unites the incorporeal mind with God in an incorporeal way—and have already attained the point where, as in a mirror, you see the fate that awaits you after the end of this earthly life, having received the pledge of the Spirit and having acquired the Kingdom of Heaven within yourself with all your senses and with full assurance; nevertheless, do not allow yourself to be released from the flesh without foreknowledge of death, but pray earnestly for this and be confident in your heart that you will attain it, if it pleases God and is beneficial to you, before your departure, —for which you should prepare yourself day and night, casting aside all fear, as if you had already traversed the airy realms and avoided the spirits of malice, so that you might already be in the heavenly realms with boldness and without fear, placed among the angelic ranks and numbered among the righteous chosen from of old, and beholding God, as much as this is possible, or in every way beholding the blessings prepared for us by Him, and contemplating God the Word, who with His rays illuminates all that is above the heavens, worshiped with a single act of worship together with His most pure flesh, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, by all the heavenly powers and all the Saints. Amen.

The Venerable Philotheos of Sinai

A Brief Account of Him

Our venerable father Philotheus was the abbot of the monastic community on Mount Sinai, and thus received the epithet “of Sinai.” It is unknown when he lived or when he died. His present work, divided into 40 chapters, is beautifully composed and filled with—it is impossible to say—such great spiritual wisdom and soul-saving insight. For this reason, it would be unjust to separate it from the collection of other patristic writings on sobriety. – And it deserves greater attention: for if anyone were to call it an accurate interpretation and a true rule for sobriety, clarity of mind, and purity of heart, he would not be erring from the truth.

Our Holy Father Philotheos of Sinai’s 40 Chapters on Sobriety

1. There is a mental struggle within us that is more arduous than the physical one. The seeker of piety must strive for this and pursue this goal with his mind, so that, like a pearl or a precious stone, the memory of God may be perfectly treasured in the heart. One must forsake everything, even the body, and despise this very life itself, in order to acquire the one true God in one’s heart. For St. Chrysostom said that a single intelligent vision of God is sufficient to destroy the evil ones.

2. Those waging the spiritual battle must, with all zeal, choose for themselves—according to the guidance of the Divine Scriptures—spiritual practices and apply them to the mind as healing balms. Thus, from the morning, says one, one must stand courageously and unceasingly at the door of the heart, with a firm remembrance of God and the ceaseless prayer of Jesus Christ in the soul, and with this mental vigilance slay all the sinners of the earth, that is, with a faithful, strengthened, and soul-elevating remembrance of God, to cut down—for the Lord’s sake—the heads of the powerful and the origins of thoughts that stir up strife; for, as we know, even in the ascetic labors of the mind there is a certain divine order and sequence of action. – This is how one should discipline oneself (for the sake of the kingdom) until the appointed time for eating arrives. Afterward, having given thanks to the Lord—who, in His boundless love, nourishes us with both spiritual and physical food—one must occupy oneself with remembrance and reflection on death. And the next day, we must again resolutely set about our morning tasks. For even with such a daily routine, we will barely manage, in the Lord, to escape the snares of the enemy of our minds. Such a practice, however, once established within us, gives rise to the following three virtues: Faith, Hope, and Love, of which Faith disposes us to the true fear of God, and Hope, having overcome servile fear, leads a person to the love of God. If Hope does not put us to shame—for it usually gives rise to a twofold love upon which the Law and the Prophets depend—then Love, for its part, never fails, neither in this age—for here, in its partaker, it is the cause of the fulfillment of the divine commandments—nor in the age to come.

3. It is very rare to find those who are silent in mind. This is the hallmark only of those who employ every means to draw Divine grace to themselves and to be filled with the spiritual consolation that flows from it. – And so, if, like them, we wish to pursue the work of the mind—this philosophy of Christ—in the preservation of the mind and in sobriety, let us begin this path by abstaining from many foods, resolving to take food and drink in as small a measure as possible. Sobriety is rightly called a path, because it leads to the Kingdom—both the one within us and the one to come—and a spiritual workshop, because it refines and polishes the dispositions of the mind and transforms the passionate into the dispassionate. It is also like a small window of light through which God, drawing near, reveals Himself to the mind.

4. Where there is humility, remembrance of God with sobriety and attentiveness, and frequent prayer directed against the enemies—there is the place of God, or the heaven of the heart, in which the host of demons fears to stand, because God dwells in this place.

5. Nothing is more destructive than loquacity, nor more harmful than an unrestrained tongue; and nothing so greatly disrupts and destroys the riches of the soul. For what we build up within ourselves each day, loquacity destroys anew; and what we gather with toil, the soul squanders again through the malice of the tongue. What is worse than this (unrestrained tongue)? It is an uncontrollable evil. We must set a limit on it, rein it in, restrain it, and—to put it this way—compel it to serve only necessity. —And who can express all the spiritual harm that comes from an unrestrained tongue?

6. The first gate leading into the spiritual Jerusalem, into the mind's attention, is the reasonable silence of the lips, even though the mind itself is not yet silent; the second is measured (defined by a small measure) self-restraint in food and drink; the third, which purifies the mind and body, is the constant remembrance and reflection on death. Having once beheld the beauty of this last one, and having been moved and delighted by it—not with the eye but with the spirit—I desired to take her as my companion for a lifetime, having fallen in love with her grace and splendor. How humble, joyful yet sorrowful, and pensive she is; how she dreads the future righteous torment and how she fears the prolongation (by chance) of life! From her physical eyes she usually pours forth healing living water, and from her mental eyes—an abundant spring of wise thoughts, which, flowing and leaping, gladdens the mind. It was this very one, as I said, the daughter of Adam—that is, the remembrance of death—whom I always longed to have as my companion, to sleep with her, to converse with her, and together with her to explore what is to become of me after I cast off this body; but often this pernicious forgetfulness—this darkened daughter of the devil—prevented me from doing so.

7. There is a battle in which the spirits of malice secretly wage war against the soul through thoughts. For since the soul is invisible, those malevolent forces, in accordance with its nature, attack it with an invisible battle. And one can see, in both them and her, weapons, strategies (the deployment of troops and the conduct of battle), deceptive ruses, and terrifying attacks (a swift onslaught intended to intimidate), as well as mutual hand-to-hand combat, victories, and defeats on both sides. There is only one thing missing in this mental battle we are describing, compared to a physical battle: a specific time for declaring war. In a physical battle, a time is usually set, and the rules pertaining to it are observed; but this (mental) battle strikes suddenly, without warning, in the very depths of the heart, and having cast the lot (by choice; or, having gained the upper hand through the heart's consent to what is suggested), it kills the soul through sin. For what reason and for what purpose is this battle and struggle waged against us? It is so that we may not fulfill God's will, for which we pray, saying, *"Thy will be done in us"* (Luke 11:2), that is, God's commandments. And if anyone, having steadied his mind and turned away from wandering through perfect sobriety in the Lord, begins to carefully observe their (the invisible enemies') incursions (into the heart) and their entanglements (clashes with the sobering mind) occurring in the fantasies of the imagination, he will come to know this from experience. Therefore, the Lord, directing His purpose against the malicious demons—and since God foresaw their designs—established His commandments in opposition to their purpose, with a warning to those who violate them.

8. Once we have acquired some skill in self-restraint and in turning away from the visible evils produced by the five senses, we will then be able to guard our hearts with Jesus and be enlightened by Him, and with a certain warmth of disposition, to savor His goodness with our minds. For we have embraced the law of purifying the heart for no other reason than so that, when the clouds of evil thoughts are driven from the atmosphere of the heart and dispersed by unceasing attention, we may, as on a clear day, clearly see the Sun of righteousness—Jesus—and be enlightened to some extent in our minds by the words of His majesty; for these words are not usually revealed to everyone, but only to those who purify their minds.

9. We must maintain this state of mind daily, as befits standing before the face of God. For the Prophet Hosea says: *"Keep mercy and justice, and draw near to your God"* (Hosea 12:6). Again, the prophet Malachi speaks on behalf of God: *"A son honors his father, and a servant fears his master; but if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?" says the Lord Almighty* (1:6). The Apostle also writes: *"Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement, both of the flesh and of the spirit"* (2 Cor. 7:11). And Wisdom instructs: *"Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life"* (Prov. 4:23). And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself commands: *"Clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may also be clean"* (Matt. 23:26).

10. The fruit of inappropriate, empty talk is sometimes hatred toward us from those who listen; sometimes reproach and ridicule, when they perceive the folly of our words; sometimes the defilement of the conscience; and sometimes condemnation from God and the grieving of the Holy Spirit—which is more terrible than anything else.

11. One who, purifying his heart and uprooting sin from it by the Lord, strives to acquire divine knowledge and succeeds in perceiving with his mind what is invisible to many, must not be haughty toward anyone because of this. What among created beings is purer than the incorporeal, and what is more knowledgeable than an angel? Yet even he, having become haughty, was cast down from heaven like a flash

of lightning. God counted his pride as impurity. – It is well known how those who dig for gold act (that is, be beneath all, as they are beneath the earth, in order to obtain the gold of knowledge).

12. The Apostle says: *“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things”* (1 Cor. 9:25). For it is impossible, with a belly full of food, to wage war against the principalities, against the invisible hostile forces—those who are bound by this flesh, which is heavy and always lusts against the spirit. *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking”* (Rom. 14:17). *“The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not submit to God’s law, nor indeed can it”* (Rom. 8:7). It cannot, obviously, because, being earthly and composed of bodily fluids, blood, and mucus, it is always drawn to earthly things and delights in the ruinous pleasures of this age. *“For the mind set on the flesh is death; but those who are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom. 8:8).

13. We need great humility if we sincerely care about keeping our minds in the Lord—first, in relation to God, and (second), in relation to people. We must always and in every way break our hearts, seeking out and putting into practice everything that can humble it. As is well known, the memory of our former life in the world breaks and humbles the heart, if we recall it as we ought. Likewise, the memory of all our sins from our youth, when we review them in our minds one by one, usually both humbles us and brings forth tears, and moves us to wholehearted thanksgiving to God, just as the constant, effective (and deeply felt) remembrance of death does, which at the same time gives rise to joyful weeping with sweetness and a sober mind. Above all, the remembrance of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ humbles our pride and inclines us to cast our eyes down to the ground, when one goes over them in memory and recalls everything in detail. This also brings tears. Moreover, God’s great blessings—especially those bestowed upon us—truly humble the soul when one enumerates them in detail and reflects upon them; for we are engaged in a battle against proud (ungrateful to God) demons.

14. Do not, out of pride, shun these saving remedies for the soul, if you are one who needs them. For otherwise, you are no longer a disciple of Christ, nor an imitator of Paul, who says of himself, *“I am not worthy to be called an apostle”* (1 Cor. 15:9); and in another place confesses that he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man (1 Tim. 1:13). – Do you see, you proud one? Here is a saint, yet he did not forget his former life. Indeed, all the saints, from the beginning of creation until now, have clothed themselves in this ultimate holy garment of God (that is, humility). Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, being God—incomprehensible, unknowable, and inexpressible—was clothed in humility throughout His entire life in the flesh; so that holy humility must rightly be called both a divine virtue and a sovereign commandment and garment. Likewise, the angels and all those luminous divine powers practice and preserve this virtue, knowing by what fall the proud Satan fell, and how he serves as an example of how one ought to fear falling (into this sin), the wicked one lies in the abyss, having been revealed before God as the most dishonorable of all creatures because of his pride. We also know by what fall Adam fell because of pride. Having such examples of this virtue that leads to pride before our eyes, let us always humble ourselves in every way, to the best of our ability, making use of the remedies indicated above. Let us humble ourselves in soul and body, in our reasoning, in our desires, in our speech, in our thoughts, in our outward appearance, both externally and internally. What we must be especially careful about is ensuring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God Himself, who stands in our place, does not turn against us. *“For the Lord resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (Prov. 3:34). *“No one who is haughty is pure before the Lord”* (Prov. 16:5); *“but whoever humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 18:14). *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,”* says the Savior (Matt. 11:29).—We must therefore pay attention.

15. *“Take heed to yourselves,”* says the Lord, *“lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with gluttony and the like”* (Luke 21:34). *“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things,”* according to the words of the Apostle (1 Cor. 9:25). Knowing all these sayings addressed to us in the Holy Scriptures, let us lead our lives in self-restraint. First of all, by renouncing a variety of foods, let us accustom our bodies to a virtuous habit and order, giving them food in moderation. For in this way, the outbursts of lust are easily tamed and brought under the control of reason; and, to speak the truth in all sincerity, so too are the outbursts of anger. But it is also easier to abstain from other sins in this way, since even those who practice virtue through deed and experience regard comprehensive abstinence—that is, keeping away from every kind of evil—as a virtue in itself. Thus, the reason for purity—after God, the source and giver of all good things—is abstinence from gluttony, practiced equally every day and in measured amounts.

16. Just as Satan, in his opposition to God and in his desire to prevent God's will—that is, His commandments—from being fulfilled, wages war against God through us by attempting to hinder its fulfillment: so again, God, desiring that His holy will—that is, as I have said, the divine and life-giving commandments—be fulfilled through us, by His own power, thwarts the wicked one's pernicious intent. God Himself thwarts the enemy's foolish desire to resist Him by enticing people to transgress His commandments, through human weakness. And see, is this not how it happens?—All the divine commandments establish laws for the threefold nature of the soul and make it sound through what they command. For those who strictly follow them, this tripartite nature becomes truly sound. But the devil wages war day and night against this very tripartite nature of the soul. If Satan wages war against the tripartite nature of the soul, it is clear that he is thereby waging war against Christ's commandments; for Christ, through His commandments, imposes the law upon the tripartite nature of the soul—that is, the soul's irascible, desiring, and thinking faculties. – And consider: the warning that whoever is angry with his brother without cause will be subject to judgment (Matt. 5:22), and His commandments that follow—these are remedies for the irascible part. The enemy attempts to subvert this commandment—and the others established along with it—from within through thoughts of strife, resentment, and envy. This adversary (ours and God's) knows that the ruler of the irascible part is the power of thought. That is why he first directs his arrows at it through thoughts—as I have already said—of suspicion, envy, strife, quarrelsomeness, cunning, and vanity, and inclines the mental power to relinquish its inherent authority, and, having handed the reins over to the irascible part itself, to leave it without any control. Then, having cast aside its ruler, irritation unrestrainedly pours out through the mouth in words everything that was previously stored in the heart—what had been treasured there until then by means of hostile thoughts, amid the mind's negligence. The heart is then filled not with the Spirit of God or with divine thoughts, but with (unbridled) malice; for, as the Lord says, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). When, in this way, the evil one leads a person to the point where he begins to spew forth in words what was previously secretly conceived within, then this captive (of the enemy) will not *merely* call his brother “*a fool or a madman*,” but will utter the most vexing words, and will even go so far as to commit murder. – Such are the schemes the Evil One employs against the commandment God has given us not to be angry in vain. – Yet it would be possible to avoid not only hurtful words but also what follows them, if, the moment irritation arises, through prayer and attention to what is happening within, the thoughts (the thoughts that fan the flames). Thus, the destroyer of souls achieves his evil goal only when he finds someone who, under the influence of the thoughts he has planted in their heart, is ready to violate the divine commandment.

17. And what does the Divine Lord's commandment prescribe regarding the desire of the flesh? “*Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matt. 5:24). – And what kind of snare does the evildoer weave in his mind against this commandment, seeing that such a commandment has been given? Since the objects capable of arousing lust are distant, he turns inward, and there he wages a lustful battle against the aforementioned commandment. – He does this by painting and imprinting lewd images in the soul; sometimes even words are heard that stir up passion; and there are many other things known to those who have been tempted in mental battles.

18. What commandment, finally, provides guiding principles for the power of the mind? “*But I say to you: Do not swear at all. Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No’*” (Matt. 5:34). Also: “*Whoever does not renounce all his possessions cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:33). And: “*Enter through the narrow gate*” (Matthew 7:13). Are these the commandments for the mental faculty?—Our adversary, desiring to make even this mental faculty—like some valiant commander—subordinate to himself, first robs it of sound judgment through thoughts of gluttony and indolence; having thus deprived it of its inherent authority over the other powers and having mocked it as if it were a drunken leader, he compels it to carry out his suggestions and desires, using irritability and lust as his accomplices in this. These forces—lust and irritability—being left as mental powers, begin to turn all five of our senses, like obedient servants, into instruments for manifest sins. And behold what sins and downfalls result from this! When the mind does not restrain and bind the senses from within, then the eyes dart about everywhere out of curiosity, the ears delight in listening to trivial matters, the sense of smell becomes indulgent, the mouth becomes unrestrained, and the hands reach out to touch what they ought not to. This is followed by falsehood instead of truth, folly instead of wisdom, fornication instead of chastity, and timidity instead of courage. And these four principal virtues—that is, truth, wisdom, chastity, and courage—are of such a nature that, if they are sound and strong in the soul, they govern the three parts of the soul well; and a well-governed soul keeps the senses from all that is out of place. And then the mind,

abiding in tranquility, while governing the other faculties according to God's will and in obedience to Him, easily prevails in the battle of the mind. But when, through inattention, it allows the other faculties to fall into confusion, then, being overcome by the wiles of the evil one, it transgresses the divine commandments. For the transgression of the commandments inevitably entails, in one way or another, either corresponding repentance or torment in the age to come. And so it is a very good thing for the mind to remain ever sober; for by this, having been established as it ought to stand by its very nature, it becomes the true guardian of the divine commandments.

19. The (sin-loving) soul, being fenced in and surrounded by spirits of malice as by a wall, is bound by the chains of darkness—and because of this darkness that surrounds her, she cannot pray as she ought: for she is bound by it in secret (in her innermost depths, or without even knowing how), and is blinded in her inner eyes. But when she (coming to her senses) begins to turn to God in prayer and strives to remain sober in prayer, then little by little she begins to be freed by the power of prayer from the darkness; otherwise, there is no way to be freed from it. At this time she comes to realize that within her heart there is another struggle, another hidden conflict, another war of thoughts, stirred up by spirits of malice, as Holy Scripture also testifies when it says: *"If the spirit of the ruler rises up against you, do not leave your place"* (Eccl. 10:4). The place of the mind, however, is its firm standing in virtue and sobriety. – There is a firm standing both in a virtuous life and in a sinful one. For Scripture says: *"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners"* (Ps. 1: 1). And the Apostle teaches: *"Stand firm, having your loins girded with truth"* (Eph. 6: 14).

20. Let us hold fast to Christ with all our might; for there are many who seek in every way to drive Him from our souls. And let us not allow Jesus to be led astray by the "crowd" of thoughts *"dwelling in the soul"* (John 5:13). But it is impossible to hold onto Him without painful spiritual effort. Let us strive to follow in the footsteps of His life in the flesh, so that we too may live our lives humbly. Let us take to heart His sufferings, so that, imitating Him, we may patiently endure all sorrow. Let us taste His ineffable, watchful forbearance toward us, so that through this sweet tasting in our souls, we may come to know how good the Lord is. Above all this—or rather, before all else—let us believe in Him without doubt in everything He says, and let us await daily His providence directed toward us; and whatever may happen, whatever we may encounter, let us accept it with gratitude, love, and joyful contentment, so that we may learn to look to the One God, Who governs all things according to the divine laws of His wisdom. When we do all this, then we will not be far from God. (Let us also know that) piety is an endless perfection, as one of the God-bearing and spiritually perfect men said.

21. Whoever makes good use of the time of his life, constantly being occupied with thoughts and remembrance of death, and thereby wisely delivers his mind from passions; such a person usually perceives the constant temptations of demonic influences more keenly than one who lives without the memory of death, hoping to purify the heart through the action of reason alone, rather than by always keeping a sorrowful and lamentable thought. Such a person, imagining that his quick wit allows him to keep all destructive passions in check, without realizing how he is bound by the worst of them all, falls into pride (as one who hopes to succeed in anything) without God. He must remain deeply sober so as not to lose his reason through arrogance. For, as the Apostle Paul says (1 Cor. 8:1), souls who gather knowledge from here and there usually become puffed up before those who, as it seems to them, know less than they do—for the reason, I think, that there is no spark of edifying love within them. But whoever has a constant thought of death is more perceptive than one who does not, noticing the temptations of demons, conveniently driving them away, and trampling them underfoot.

22. The sweet remembrance of God—that is, Jesus, with heartfelt anger and saving sorrow, usually destroys all the allurements of thoughts, various suggestions, words, daydreams, and dark imaginings—in short, everything with which the all-destructive enemy arms himself and with which he boldly attacks, seeking to devour our souls. Jesus, when invoked, easily consumes all these things. For there is no salvation for us in anyone else but Christ Jesus. The Savior Himself said this, declaring: *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

23. And so, at every hour and every moment, let us guard our hearts with all diligence against thoughts that cloud the mirror of the soul, in which only Jesus Christ—who is the wisdom and power of God the Father—should be imprinted and reflected. Let us ceaselessly seek the Kingdom of Heaven within our hearts; and surely we will mysteriously find within ourselves the grain, the pearl, the leaven, and all else, if we purify

the eye of our mind. It is for this very reason that our Lord Jesus Christ said, “*The kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17:21), meaning by this the Divinity dwelling within the heart.

24. Sobriety, leading to radiance, purifies the conscience. And the conscience, thus purified, drives out all darkness from within, just as light suddenly shines forth when the veil covering it is removed. And once the darkness is banished, the conscience, through unceasing true sobriety, once again reveals what had been forgotten or what lay hidden, unrecognized. At the same time, through this very sobriety, it teaches an invisible struggle against enemies known to the mind and a war of thoughts, —teaches how to hurl spears in this single-handed combat, how to skillfully shoot (at the enemies) the arrows of good thoughts, preventing their arrows from striking the mind, and, like an arrow, directing it to take refuge in Christ, who is the desired light instead of the pernicious darkness. Whoever has tasted this light understands what I am talking about. The taste of this light torments the soul with hunger; it feeds on it but is never satisfied, and the more it tastes of it, the more it craves it. This light, which draws the mind to itself like the sun draws the eyes, is a light that is inexpressible in itself, yet becomes interpretable—not through words, but through the experience of the one who receives its influence—or, to put it more precisely, who is pierced by it—commands me to be silent, even though the mind would still like to delight in a conversation about what is now being discussed.

25. “*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*” (Heb. 12:14), for the sake of attaining love and purity: for they themselves are peace and holiness. But we must arm ourselves with anger against the demons alone, who wage war against us in thought and rage. But listen to how we should wage the battle that rages within us at every moment, and act accordingly: combine prayer with vigilance—and vigilance will strengthen prayer, and prayer will strengthen vigilance. Sobriety, constantly watching over everything within, notices how the enemies attempt to enter there, and, blocking their entry to the best of its ability, at the same time calls upon the Lord Jesus Christ for help, so that He may drive out these cunning warriors. In doing so, your attention blocks their entry through contradiction; and Jesus, when called upon, drives out the demons along with their delusions.

26. Guard your mind with the utmost concentration. As soon as you notice an (enemy) thought, immediately contradict it, but at the same time hasten to call upon the Lord Jesus for vengeance. And the sweetest Jesus, while you are still speaking, will say: “I am with you to intercede for you.” But even after all these enemies have been subdued through your prayer, continue to watch over your mind diligently. Behold, waves of thoughts—more numerous than before—will rush at you one after another, so that your soul seems to be plunging into an abyss and is ready to perish. But Jesus, once more prompted by a disciple, rebukes the evil winds (of thoughts) as God does, and they subside. You, having gained freedom from the enemy’s attacks—for an hour or a minute—glorify the One who saved you, and immerse yourself in contemplation of death.

27. With all our heart’s attention and in a spirit of devotion, let us walk our path. Attention and prayer, when combined daily, create something akin to Elijah’s fiery chariot (), lifting those who partake of them to heavenly heights. And what am I saying? For the one who has established himself in sobriety or strives to do so, the pure heart becomes a mental heaven, with its own sun, moon, and stars, and becomes the receptacle of the incomprehensible God, through a mystical vision and exaltation (the triumph of the mind). Whoever has love for divine virtue should strive at every moment to utter the name of the Lord and, with all zeal, to translate words into deeds. Whoever, with some effort, restrains his five senses—by which the soul is usually harmed—makes the struggle and battle of the heart the lightest possible for the mind. And so, strive to ward off all external influences (those harmful to the soul), and fight the thoughts arising from them within using God-given spiritual means, guided by the art of: Through the labor of vigil, rein in the urges toward sensual pleasures; be moderate in eating and drinking; and sufficiently weaken your body so that you may make the battle of the heart easy for yourself in advance. By all this, you will be doing yourself a favor, not another. Torment your soul with thoughts of death, and gather your scattered mind through remembrance of Christ Jesus; especially at night, when the mind is usually clearer and brighter, clearly contemplating God and all that is divine.

28. Let us not shun the labors of bodily asceticism either: for just as wheat springs from the earth, so from these labors spring spiritual joy and experience in goodness. Let us not use false reasoning to set aside the demands of conscience, for it inspires us with what is salvific and active, and always declares what our duty is and to what we are bound, especially when it is purified by a living, active, and subtle sobriety of mind. In this case, because of its purity, it usually renders a clear judgment (on everything that comes before it—a

judgment that is just and decisive)—one that excludes all hesitation. For all these reasons, we must not be led astray by false reasoning; for it proclaims to us within a life pleasing to God, and, strictly rebuking the soul if it has defiled the mind with sins, shows the way to amend transgressions, inspiring the fallen heart to repent, and pointing out to it a remedy with sweet persuasion.

29. The smoke rising from firewood is often harsh on the eyes; but then it reveals light to them and brings comfort to those whom it previously troubled. And attention, keeping the eyes of the mind constantly strained, wearies and burdens the head. But Jesus, when called upon in prayer, comes and enlightens the heart. The memory of Him, together with the illumination (of our inner being), brings the greatest of all blessings (that is, the Lord Himself).

30. The enemy, having grown accustomed to disturbing our minds, desires to lead us to eat dust along with him, so that—though created in the image of God—we might live by the belly. But God said, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman”* (Gen. 3:15). For this reason, we must always cry out to God, so that through this we may go about our daily lives without being struck by the devil’s fiery arrows. *“I will cover,”* says God (through the Psalmist), *“those who know My name”* (Ps. 90:14). And again: *“But near to those who fear Him is His salvation”* (Ps. 84: 10).

31. The blessed Apostle, the chosen vessel, speaking in Christ, having great experience in the inner, invisible, spiritual battle taking place within us, said in his epistle to the Ephesians: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph. 6: 12). The Apostle Peter also says: *“Be sober and vigilant, because your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour; resist him, firm in your faith”* (1 Pet. 5:8–9). Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, speaking about the different dispositions with which people heed the words of the Gospel, said: *“Then the devil comes and snatches the word from their hearts”*—a theft he commits by instilling a wicked forgetfulness, *“so that those who have not believed may not be saved”* (Luke 8:12).—And again the Apostle (Paul) says: *“I delight in God’s law in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner”* (Rom. 7:22–23).—They said all this to teach us and to make known to us what was hidden from us.

32. When the mind loses self-reproach and humility, it usually becomes boastful, thinking that it stands above many. Desiring to gain an awareness of our own weakness, let us be wise in the same way as the one who said: *“Brothers, I do not consider myself to have attained it; ‘but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus’* (Phil. 3:13–14). Again: *“‘I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as one beating the air. No, I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified’”* (1 Cor. 9:26–27). Do you see what humility is, and at the same time, what the pursuit of virtue is? Do you see what humility is like in St. Paul, such a great and noble man? (But listen to what else he says.)—Christ says, *“I came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost”* (1 Tim. 1: 15). – And how can we not be humble, given the wretchedness of our nature? For what is worse than dust? And we must remember God, for that is why we were created; and we must train ourselves in the discipline of self-restraint so that it may be easier to follow in the footsteps of our Lord.

33. It is impossible for one who gives in to evil thoughts to be free from sin in his outward conduct. Those who do not root out evil thoughts from their hearts cannot help but manifest them in corresponding evil deeds. The reason why someone looks with lust is that his inner eye has already strayed and become darkened. Likewise, the reason for the desire to hear shameful things lies in the eager listening, with the ears of the soul, to everything that evil demons whisper within to our ruin. We must purify ourselves in the Lord, both inwardly and outwardly; each of us must guard our senses and purify ourselves daily from the influences of the passions and from transgressions. Just as in the days of our former folly, when we were caught up in the world’s vanity of the mind, we devoted our whole mind and all our senses to the allure of sin, so now that we have turned to a life according to God, we must devote our whole mind and all our senses to the living and true God, to God’s truth and will.

34. First comes *“impact”* (προσβολή—a collision, the action whereby a thrown object strikes the target at which it was aimed); then *“combination”* (συνδυασμός—a union, the mind’s attention is fixed on the object, so that the soul is occupied solely by the object that has struck it and captured its attention); further, *“combination”* (the object that struck and captured the attention aroused desire—and the soul consented to

it—and the union was formed); following this, “*captivity*” (the object took the soul captive, which desired it, and, bound like a slave, leads it to action); finally, “*passion*” (πάθος—a sickness of the soul), which, through frequent repetition (the satisfaction of the same desire) and habit (of the actions by which it is satisfied), has become ingrained in the soul (becoming a trait of character). Here is the battlefield for achieving victory in the struggle taking place within us! This is also how the Holy Fathers define it.

35. And—“attachment,” they say, is a mere thought, or an image of some thing that has just arisen in the heart and presented itself to the mind; “*association*” is a dialogue with what has presented itself (an object or image), whether passionate or dispassionate; “*combination*” is the soul’s inclination toward an object visible to the eye of the mind, accompanied by delight; captivation is the violent and involuntary carrying away of the heart (into captivity), its retention there, and its fusion—as if into a single life (sunousia)—with the object that has captivated it, from which fusion our good state vanishes (peace is lost); Passion, in general, they say, takes root in the soul through a long-standing attachment (to some object). Of all these (actions or states), the “*first*” is sinless, the “*second*” is not entirely so; the “*third*” depends on the condition of the ascetic (perhaps in proportion to the effort and struggle); “*struggle*,” however, is the cause either of crowns (when one stands firm) or of torments (when one falls).

36. *Captivity* is one thing during prayer and another when not praying. Passion is undoubtedly subject either to equivalent (counterbalancing) repentance or to future torment. Whoever resists or remains dispassionate toward the first—that is, the attachment—cuts off all that is shameful in one fell swoop. – Such is the battle waged by evil demons against monks and laypeople alike, in which there is both victory and defeat, as we have said. Crowns await the victors, while torment awaits those who fall and do not repent. Let us, then, wage war against them in our minds so as not to carry out their evil counsel in visible sinful deeds. Let us strive to find the heavenly kingdom within ourselves, cutting off every sin from our hearts. Through such a beautiful endeavor, we will preserve the purity of our hearts and unceasing contrition before God.

37. Many monks are unaware of the delusions of the mind that it endures from demons. They are diligent in their deeds, paying no heed to the mind, and lead lives of simplicity and guilelessness. I believe that, having never tasted purity of heart, they are completely unaware of the darkness of inner passions. Those who do not know the battle of which St. Paul speaks may not have been tested by experience in what is good, and they regard only sins committed in deed as falls, disregarding the mental victories and triumphs that the physical eye cannot see, because they are hidden and known only to God, the sole rewarder, and to the conscience of the one who strives. It seems that the following words of Scripture are addressed to such people: “They say, ‘*Peace, peace, when there is no peace*’” (Ezek. 13:10). We must pray for those brothers who, out of simplicity, find themselves in such a state, and teach them as much as possible to turn away not only from visible evil deeds but also from the evil that works within the heart. For those, however, who have a divine desire to purify the eye of the soul (that is, the soul’s very vision), there is a different work of Christ and a different sacrament.

38. A deep awareness of death truly combines many virtues within itself. It is the mother of tears, the guide to all-encompassing self-restraint, the reminder of Gehenna, the mother of prayer and tears, the guardian of the heart, the source of self-reflection and discernment—whose fruits, a deep fear of God and the purification of the heart from passionate thoughts, encompass many of the Lord’s commandments. In such a heart, then, one beholds a struggle and a feat endured with the utmost difficulty. And this is the very concern of many of Christ’s warriors.

39. Some unexpected misfortune or calamity usually disrupts mental focus and, having torn the mind away from its salvific state of mind—extinguishing the desire for what is best—draws it toward sinful strife and discord. The cause of such a calamitous misfortune for us is that we take no precautions against temptations (which are ready to assail us at any moment, from who knows which direction).

40. None of the misfortunes that are constantly ready to befall us will disturb or sadden us, provided that, realizing their inevitability, we always keep this in mind. That is why the Divine Apostle Paul says: “*I take pleasure in weaknesses, in hardships, in needs*” (2 Cor. 12:10). And again: “*All who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Tim. 3:12). To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Elijah, presbyter and exarch

A Brief Account of Him

It is unknown whether this Elder Elijah, also called Ekdik, is Elijah of Crete, the interpreter of the theological writings of St. Gregory the Theologian, or someone else. However, judging by the chapters that follow, it is clear that he was a man of the highest wisdom—both in outward wisdom and, especially, in spiritual wisdom; and his words are expressive and powerful, though at times somewhat obscure. Therefore, we do not think it would be an exaggeration to call this collection of writings—as the chapters of the wise Elijah are titled—a sort of spiritual garden, filled not only with colorful grains but also with fruit trees—and let us not be ashamed to invite those seeking spiritual consolation into this paradise, in full confidence that all their spiritual senses—sight, smell, and taste—will find rich satisfaction here (abridged from the preface by Grech. Dobrot.). The title of the chapters by Elder Elijah—*Anflogion*, meaning “flower-speech” or “collection of flowers”—suggests that they were composed while reading the Holy Fathers, whose thoughts the elder of God, having assimilated them and wishing to preserve them for himself, recorded, expressing them sometimes in the Fathers’ own words and sometimes in his own. Consequently, readers might have seen in them reflections of one or another of the Fathers, or even attributed them to one of them, as indeed happened in the West. There, in the Vatican Codex of the works of St. Maximus, they are attributed to this Father; and Migne, a recent editor of the works of the Holy Fathers, included them among the works of St. Maximus, following his seven hundred chapters—both speculative and practical—under the title: other chapters, taken from the Vatican Codex of the Works of St. Maximus (Patrologia Graeca, vol. X). We believe that the compilers of the Greek Dobrotolubie found it more convenient to determine to whom these chapters should be attributed, and we follow their lead, recognizing these chapters as the work of a certain Elder Elijah. We note for the record that in the Greek Dobrotolubie, the chapters are divided into two halves (109–140). In Migne’s edition, the chapters are numbered consecutively from beginning to end. We follow the latter in this regard. The reader will notice that in our translation, the chapter numbers are not consecutive, with some omissions. These omissions indicate that the corresponding chapters have also been omitted due to their obscurity. There are, however, very few such instances.

A Flower Garden Compiled with Great Wisdom by Elijah, the Youngest Presbyter and Ecdicus

1. A Christian who truly believes in God should not carelessly give in to complacency, but should always expect temptation and be ready to face it, so that when it comes, he will not be surprised or confused, but will gratefully endure the burden of sorrow, keeping in mind what is said in the Psalter along with the Prophet: “*Test me, O Lord, and try me*” (Ps. 25:2)—and that, in another Psalm, the Prophet did not say, “*Your punishment will destroy me,*” but rather, “*It will set me right in the end*” (Ps. 17:36).

2. The beginning of goodness is the fear of God, and the end is love for God. The beginning of all good is an active mind and purposeful action. For neither is action without reason good, nor is reason without action fruitful (progressive).

3. The work of the body is fasting and vigil, and the work of the lips is psalm-singing. But prayer is better than psalm-singing, and silence is more precious than words. The work of the hands is that which is done by them without complaint; and that of the feet is that which is carried out by them at the first command. The work of the soul is self-restraint with simplicity and simplicity that acts with self-restraint; and that of the mind is prayer in contemplation, and in prayer, the contemplation of God.

4. Mercy and truth preside over all virtues; their fruit is humility, and from it springs, according to the Holy Fathers, prudence, without which none of the aforementioned virtues can see (or attain) its end.

5. Action that despises the yoke of reason turns out to be like a young donkey, wandering uselessly here and there; and reason, casting off the honorable tunic of action, does not appear respectable, even though it goes to great lengths to appear so.

6. A courageous soul, like a wife holding two burning lamps—the active and the contemplative—fulfills her duty throughout her life. The opposite is true of a soul pampered by pleasures.

7. Voluntary suffering is not enough for the soul to achieve complete liberation from sin unless, in addition, it is refined in the fiery furnace of involuntary suffering.

8. Unless the soul, for complete purification from sin, passes—like a sword—through fire and water, that is, through voluntary and involuntary labors and hardships, it cannot remain unscathed when faced with unpleasant misfortunes.

9. Just as there are three main causes of voluntary temptations—health, wealth, and fame—so too are there three causes of involuntary temptations: loss, illness, and slander. All of this serves as a means of edification for some, but of ruin for others.

10. The truly virtuous person has goodness rooted within; for the vain, however, it exists only in thought. The enemy of virtue harbors evil on the surface, while the self-indulgent hedonist harbors it deep within the heart.

11. It is rare and unintentional for one who hates evil to act improperly; yet for one who still harbors the causes of evil, this happens frequently and willingly.

12. Those who are not inclined to repent sin more frequently; but for those who sin not out of inclination, repentance is all the more easily accomplished—and, moreover, the need for it rarely arises.

13. Let feeling and conscience accompany the spoken word, so that the Divine Word, who said, *“He will be in their midst”* (Matt. 18:20), may not be put to shame because of the insolence or lawlessness of what is said or done.

14. One cannot yet say of a person who does not defile his soul by his deeds that he keeps it unstained by his words; nor can one yet say of one who keeps it pure from words that he does not defile it by his thoughts. For the sinner does so in three ways (that is, by deed, word, and thought).

15. You cannot clearly see the face of virtue as long as you still delight in the image of sin. The latter will seem hateful to you only when you desire to taste the former and turn your face away from such an image.

16. Demons first assail the soul through thoughts, not deeds; but, of course, their main focus is on deeds. The cause of deeds is hearing and sight, while the cause of thoughts is habit and demons.

17. The sinful part of the soul is threefold, manifesting itself in deeds, words, and thoughts. But the virtue of sinlessness is sixfold: for it requires guarding the five senses and the spoken word from falling into sin. *“If anyone does not sin in speech, he is a perfect man, able to keep the whole body in check,”* says St. James (3:2). The same applies to the five senses.

18. The inarticulate part of the soul is divided into six parts: the five senses and the spoken word, which, when dispassionate, sobers up all the other parts, being inseparably distributed among them, but when passionate, defiles them all.

19. Neither can the body be purified without fasting and vigil, nor the soul without mercy and truth; nor, likewise, the mind without contemplation and communion with God (that is, without prayer). Of these two, the latter is the most significant.

20. Moving in the circle of these virtues, the soul makes its refuge—which is patience—inaccessible to the arrows of temptation. *“By your patience you will save your souls,”* says the Lord (; Luke 21:19). But if it finds itself in a different situation, then, like a city unprotected by walls, even at the sound of the crash and noise heard from afar, it is greatly shaken by the blows of fear.

21. Not all who are wise in speech are also wise in spiritual matters; but all who are wise in spiritual matters are also wise in external matters. For this external realm (the body, the senses, one’s circumstances), though it holds everyone in its thrall (—taking tribute from all), does not receive the same tribute from everyone; some even refuse to pay it altogether.

22. Reason, which is by nature indivisible, is nevertheless divided into different portions: for one is given a greater portion and another a lesser one; until active virtue, multiplying and expanding with the help of the general virtues, accomplishes all possible good through each of them. For it is always the case that, in proportion to the insufficiency of the active life, a lesser measure of reason is attained.

23. Time and moderation are the companions of prudent silence; its meal consists of truth; by virtue of which the father of lies, having come to the wandering soul (which has withdrawn from everything), finds in it nothing of what he usually seeks.

24. Truly merciful is not the one who arbitrarily gives away what is superfluous, but the one who willingly yields what is necessary to those who would take it.

25. Some acquire the non-material through material wealth, by being steadfast in almsgiving; while others, through the non-material, detach themselves from the material, by abiding in the sense (or taste) of an inexhaustible good.

26. Everyone finds it pleasant to be rich in blessings, but it is regrettable if the one who, by God’s providence, has received wealth is not allowed to enjoy it for much longer.

27. Do not take offense at the one who, against your will, has “operated” on you (i.e., exposed the evil hidden within you through rebuke); but, looking upon the impurity that has been cast out, reproach yourself, and bless God, who was the cause of such an arrangement concerning you.

28. Do not lose heart when you see the severity of your (spiritual) illness; but by employing the most effective remedies against it—namely, arduous spiritual struggles—distance yourself from it, if you sincerely care for the health of your soul.

29. The more you feel your spiritual ailments, the more grateful you should be to the one who has pointed them out to you through his rebukes. For through this, he has become the instrument of your complete purification, without which the mind cannot enter the pure realm of prayer.

30. When you are rebuked, you must either remain silent or defend yourself meekly if the rebuke is slanderous—not to assert your own position, but to correct the error of the rebuker, who may have been led astray, perhaps through ignorance of the matter.

31. Just as the overconfident person is unaware of his own shortcomings, so the humble person is unaware of his own good qualities: for in the former, all self-knowledge is hidden by self-reproach, and in the latter, by what is pleasing to God.

32. Reproach stirs up energy in the soul, while praise relaxes it and makes it lazy in doing good.

33. The foundation of wealth is gold, and that of virtue is humility. And just as one who cannot increase his gold remains poor, though he may not appear so at all, so too, without humility, the virtuous person cannot bear good fruit.

34. Just as a merchant without gold is no merchant, even if he were very capable of it, so too will one who strives without humility fail to see the good fruits of virtue, even if he relies heavily on his own prudence.

35. Just as one must excel in keeping all the commandments, so too must one who fears being found a stranger among those reclining at the wedding feast delve deeper and deeper into humility.

36. Combine self-restraint with simplicity, and truth with humility—and you will find yourself a fellow guest at the table of truth, to which every other virtue loves to be brought, as if to a feast.

37. A good character testifies to the beauty of virtue, and the propriety of one’s conduct to the peace of the soul.

38. The first virtue is to sin in nothing; the second is not to be ashamed to confess one’s sin; yet one must not be shameless about it, but rather humble oneself, and when rebuked, rebuke oneself as well, and willingly accept penance; for if this does not happen, nothing offered to God has any value.

39. Along with voluntary suffering (acts of self-mortification), one must meekly accept involuntary suffering, which consists of slander, losses, and illnesses. One who does not meekly accept these latter things, but is dissatisfied with them and grumbles, is like one who always wishes to eat his bread without salt.

40. Though a master, one who takes on the appearance of a servant is the one who, with divine words, washes the stained garment (of the soul) of his neighbor and mends the torn parts by applying patches. Let the one who does this, however, be careful not to do so out of vanity, but rather so that, by doing so and receiving the reward for it, he does not forfeit the dignity of authority that is his due.

41. *“The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in”* (Ps. 120:8)—through self-restraint in food and speech. For whoever is moderate in food—which enters the body—and in speech—which leaves it—avoids the lust of the eyes and tames unwise anger, which the ascetic must be most careful to prevent from breaking through. From this, active life gains strength, and contemplative life gains steadfastness.

42. Others, however, exercise careful vigilance regarding the intake of food but pay no heed to the words that come out of their mouths. Such people, according to Ecclesiastes, do not know how to root out anger from the heart and lust from the flesh (Eccl. 11:10)—which is how the heart is purified by the Holy Spirit who renews us.

43. Let your stomach burn with the scarcity of food, and let your heart be constrained by the restraint of your tongue; and your energies—both your desire and your irritability—will always be at your service for the good.

44. The ascetic must know when and with what foods to nourish the body—as an enemy—and when to comfort and strengthen it—as a weary friend—so as not to mistakenly offer it friendly nourishment when it is an enemy, or hostile nourishment when it is a friend, and, having provoked it with both, find it, in the hour of temptation, on the side of the warring enemies.

45. When one who partakes of food prefers nourishment to the delight of the throat, then the grace of tears comes upon him and begins to comfort him with such power that he forgets every other pleasure, being fully sated by the incomparable sweetness of these tears.

46. For those who widen their path, tears dry up, but for those who love the narrow path, they flow in a mighty stream.

47. Neither the sinner nor the righteous is without sorrow; but the former grieves that he has not yet completely turned away from sin, and the latter grieves that he has not yet attained all that is good.

48. Prayer and silence are among the virtues that are within our power; fasting and vigil, however, are among the virtues that are not entirely within our power, since they also depend on one's physical constitution. The ascetic must therefore choose what is most feasible and beneficial for him.

49. The house of prayer is patience, for it is sustained by patience; and its nourishment is humility, for it is nourished by humility.

50. Do not bind yourself to small things, and you will not be enslaved by great ones: for it never happens that a greater evil arises before a lesser one.

51. In one in whom mercy and truth reign, all that is pleasing to God is also present; for mercy does not judge anyone without compassion, and truth does not show favoritism to anyone without justice.

52. He who dissolves self-restraint with simplicity will partake of the bliss that awaits there.

53. You cannot cut off the passions that battle against you unless you first cease to cultivate the soil from which they draw their nourishment.

54. Some strive to purify only the body, while others strive to purify the soul as well: for some have received the strength to abstain only from sinful deeds, while others have received the strength to abstain from passions as well; but those who have received the strength to abstain even from lust are very few.

55. A person is passionate if their inclination toward sin is stronger than their thought, even if they have not yet sinned; a person is lustful if the action (energy) of sin is weaker than their thought, even though they are overcome by passion within; a person is partial if they are freely—or rather, servilely—attached to both; one would be dispassionate if such diverse sinful movements and states were unknown to him (if he did not experience them).

56. Passion is driven out of the soul by fasting and prayer; sensuality by vigil and silence; partiality by stillness and attentiveness. Impassivity, however, is established by the remembrance of God.

57. From the lips of dispassion, like honeycombs, drip the words of eternal life. Who, then, will be deemed worthy to touch those lips with his own, to dwell among his breasts, and to be perfumed by the sweet fragrance of his garments? —That is, to enjoy the fruits of the virtues, whose fragrance surpasses all the aromas known to us through the senses (Song of Songs 4:10, 11)?!

58. Every soul will be stripped of the visible; but as for the body of sin, not many of those who have enjoyed the delights of this life will be stripped of it.

59. All who are alive are dead in the flesh; but only those who have hated sin with all their hearts are dead to sin.

60. The rational soul, situated at the boundary between the sensory and the intellectual light, is able, through one, to see and perform bodily acts, and through the other, spiritual ones. But since the intellectual light within it has been dimmed, while the sensory light has become clearer—due to a habit established from the beginning—it cannot fully extend its vision toward divine things unless, during prayer, it is wholly immersed in the intellectual light; but she is forced to remain in the space between darkness and light—in (sensual) darkness, wandering out of habit and inclination, and in (intellectual) light through mere daydreaming.

61. May prayer abide with the mind, like a ray of sunlight; without it, sensual concerns, like waterless clouds drifting about, deprive the mind of its natural brightness.

62. A passionate mind cannot enter the narrow gate of prayer unless it first abandons its sensual, pleasure-seeking concerns; but it will always merely suffer in vain, circling in the shadow of those concerns.

63. If the mind does not cast aside all excessive concern for the sensual, it cannot easily be lifted up by sorrow; nor can it understand its own station.

64. Prayer, strengthened by tears, expels from the soul all thoughts hostile to it; but the wandering of the mind, intensified by idle talk, brings them back again—and with them, the expeller also drives out the all-destructive evil of insolence (lack of restraint in gaze, speech, and movement).

65. Fasting is the image of the day because of its openness, and prayer is the image of the night because of its obscurity and secrecy. Whoever practices both as they should, combining each with the other, will reach the city of their purpose, from which *“sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee”* (Isa. 54:11).

66. Spiritual work can take place and endure without a corresponding physical activity. And blessed is the one who has preferred the better, non-material (i.e., spiritual) work to material (i.e., physical) work. Whoever possesses it makes up for the absence of outward deeds by living a life of prayer, hidden from others but manifest to God.

67. The Apostle urges us to endure through faith, to rejoice through hope, and to persevere in prayer, so that the blessing of joy may remain within us. If this is so, it follows that whoever lacks patience also lacks faith; whoever does not rejoice lacks hope; for he has rejected the cause of joy—prayer—and does not abide in it (Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; Heb. 12:1).

68. Just as in ancient times, having strayed from its realm, the mind forgot its glorious radiance: so now, having forgotten all that is here, it must return there once more through prayer.

69. Just as a mother’s withered breasts are to a child, so is prayer that offers no comfort to the mind. But when prayer is different (that is, when it fills the mind with comfort), then the mind becomes like a child who, overcome with delight, falls asleep in his mother’s arms.

70. One cannot be at one with prayer unless he has renounced all material things except food and clothing (1 Tim. 6:8). Detach yourself from everything else if you wish to be in prayer with a single-minded focus.

71. Not everyone has the same goal in prayer; some have one goal, while others have another. One prays that, if possible, his heart may always be with prayer, and that he may ascend ever higher in it; another, that he may (gain the habit) of not being interrupted in prayer by distracting thoughts; yet all pray (generally speaking), either to be preserved in goodness or not to be led astray into evil.

72. If no one leaves prayer without being humble—for everyone, when praying, is humbled in humility—then it is evident that whoever displays haughty insolence outwardly is not praying in humility.

73. If, while in prayer, you contemplate the widow who compelled the hard-hearted judge to do her justice, you will not *“lose heart”* (Luke 18:3) when the blessings sought through prayer are slow to come.

74. Prayer will not abide with you if you linger in vain thoughts within and in empty conversations without; but it is seen to return quickly to the one who, for its sake, cuts away much within himself.

75. If the words of prayer do not enter the depths of the soul, then tears will not wash the cheeks of the soul.

76. The key to the Kingdom of Heaven is prayer. Whoever holds it properly beholds the blessings set aside (promised) for its friends. But whoever sees only the present has not yet found the boldness to pray.

77. During prayer, the mind cannot speak boldly before God: *“You have loosed my bonds; I will offer You a sacrifice of praise”* (Ps. 115:7); unless, driven by a longing for what is better, it has cast off timidity (fear for one’s life from the constraints of the flesh) and sloth, excessive sleep, and gluttony—all of which lead to downfall.

78. One who is distracted by thoughts during prayer stands outside the first veil (outside the tabernacle in the courtyard); behind this veil, inside the tabernacle (in its front part, called the Holy Place), is one who prays with undivided attention; and into the Holy of Holies enters only the one who, having pacified natural thoughts and movements, abides with the One Who is above all nature, receiving from Him the necessary enlightenment.

79. When the soul, having emptied itself of all that is external, unites with prayer, a kind of flame, as it were, surrounds it and makes its whole being, like iron, permeated with fire. And then the soul—still the same soul—becomes impervious, like red-hot iron, to everything foreign.

80. For those who lead an active life well, prayer sometimes, like a cloud overshadowing them, tempers their scorching thoughts, and sometimes, as if watering them with raindrops, reveals spiritual contemplations to them.

81. The mind, aspiring upward, does not immediately ascend there, but only after it has completely despised all earthly things and devoted itself to divine pursuits.

82. When you free your mind from all attachment to bodies, food, and money, then whatever you do will be counted as a pure gift from you to God. And you will be rewarded for this by the opening of the eyes

of your heart, and you will clearly learn from it the laws of God, which will seem sweeter than honey and honeycomb to your discerning palate, because of the pleasure they bring.

83. You cannot make your mind superior to the desires for the body, money, and food unless you lead it into the pure land of the righteous, in which (or under the influence of which), once the remembrance of death and God has taken root in your heart, it will destroy within you every rebellion of earthly desires.

84. There is nothing more terrifying than the memory of death, and nothing more wondrous than the memory of God; the former instills saving sorrow, while the latter fills one with spiritual joy. For the Prophet David sings: “*I remembered God and was glad*” (Ps. 76: 4); and the Wise One teaches: “*Remember your end, and you will never sin*” (Sir. 7: 39).

85. Until the mind beholds “*the glory of God face to face*” (2 Cor. 3:18), the soul cannot proclaim in its heart: “*I will rejoice in the Lord*” (Ps. 103: 34), “*I will rejoice in His salvation*” (Ps. 19: 6). For the veil of self-love lies upon her heart, which cannot be removed without voluntary and involuntary sorrows and deprivations; and as long as it remains upon her, it prevents her from seeing how all things are and come to be.

86. Not after the exodus from Egypt—that is, not after sin was cut off by action—and not after crossing the sea—that is, not after sympathy for and inclination toward sin were cut off; but after their sojourn in the wilderness—that is, after enduring all manner of hardships, deprivations, and sorrows—the leader of Israel is deemed worthy to behold the Promised Land, that is, dispassion, which possesses a powerful intellectual contemplation (Deut. 34:1).

87. Those who journey through the wilderness—that is, those in whom sin lies dormant—know of the blessings of that blessed land by hearsay alone; those who observe it with their own eyes see these blessings—that is, those engaged in the labors of virtue and obedience embrace them with hope; but those who are deemed worthy to enter it are satisfied by them with all their senses, as with honey and milk.

88. He who still has natural, carnal impulses has not yet been crucified with Christ, nor has he who harbors carnal thoughts and sympathies been buried with Him: how, then, can such a one be united with Him so as to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4)?

89. From time immemorial, it was commanded to bring to the temple “*the firstfruits of the threshing floor and the winepress*” (Exod. 22:29). Now, however, we must offer to God, as the firstfruits of active virtue, self-control and truth, and as the firstfruits of contemplative virtue—love and prayer: using the former to cut off the desires of lust and anger, and the latter to cut off vain thoughts and the sins they engender.

90. The beginning of active virtue is self-restraint and humility, truth and chastity; its end is peace of mind and holy purity of the body.

91. Truly good action requires not only doing good with a good spirit, but also doing it properly—that is, the doer must observe both the proper time and the proper measure in relation to the action being performed.

92. Just as action without contemplation is not firm, so contemplation without corresponding action is not true. Action must be imbued with contemplation, just as contemplation must be confirmed by action: so that, on the one hand, evil may be overcome, and on the other, virtue may be powerfully manifested in the fulfillment of benevolent intentions.

93. The goal of the active life is the subjugation of the passions, and the goal of the contemplative life is the vision of virtues.

94. In the arena of active virtue, many “*run, but only one receives the prize*” (1 Cor. 9:24)—namely, the one who strives to reach its goal with the aid of contemplation.

95. The active person cannot remain in contemplation for long. For, in relation to contemplation, he is like a traveler who has been welcomed into someone’s home but from which he must soon depart.

96. Those engaged in active service enter prayer through the gates of God’s commandments; but those engaged in contemplation dwell in the courtyard of the virtues, singing spiritual hymns and songs: the former give thanks for having been freed from their bonds; the latter, for having taken captive those who rose up against them in battle.

97. Consider thoughts to be the oarsmen of the ship of the mind, and the oars to be the life-giving forces of the soul—vigor (energy) and desire, will, and volition (choice, resolve). The active person always has need of these, but the contemplative does not always.

98. For the active person, due to the multitude of perceptions of sensory things, a veil lies upon the heart during prayer, preventing it from opening because of sympathy for those things. Only the contemplative person, who lacks such sympathy, can, with an open heart, partially behold the glory of God.

99. The courtyard of the rational soul is the senses; the temple is reason; the high priest is the intellect. And so, in the courtyard stands the intellect, entertaining itself with untimely thoughts; in the temple, it is engaged in timely reflections; but the one who has been deemed worthy to enter the Divine sanctuary is concerned with neither the one nor the other.

100. In the house of the active soul dwell “*weeping, lamentation, and sorrow*” (Ezek. 2:10), because of the burden of labor; but in the contemplative soul, “*the voice of joy and praise*” (Ps. 41:5) is heard, because of the comfort of knowledge.

101. Contemplation of spiritual things is paradise. The spiritual man enters it in prayer, as into a house; but the active man, in relation to it, is like a passerby who would like to look inside but cannot, because the fence around that house is higher than his spiritual stature.

102. A man of action cannot adorn himself with perfect moral beauty unless, like the patriarch Abraham, he too “*leaves his home*”—the natural law—“*and his kinship*”—the self-indulgent life that has become like him. For only in this way will he, like a seal, receive the circumcision of the carnal desire (Gen. 17:11; Rom. 4:11), because of which a veil has lain upon us from birth, preventing us from attaining perfect freedom.

103. For the active life, fasting and vigil are “*girding the loins*”; and for the contemplative life, silence and prayer are “*burning lamps*” (Luke 12:35).

104. An imperfect mind is not permitted to enter the fruitful vineyard of prayer; like a poor person, it receives only “*the gleanings of the grape harvest*” (Deut. 24:21)—mere psalm-singing.

105. Just as not all who are deemed worthy to speak with the King are invited to His table, so too not all who approach God for a prayerful conversation are led into a state of prayerful contemplation.

106. The bridle of anger is timely silence; for speechless desire, abstinence; and for uncontrollable thoughts, a brief prayer.

107. Neither the one who desires to descend into the depths to retrieve the pearl of the senses from there, nor the one who desires to ascend on high to find the spiritual pearl there, will attain what they desire and seek, unless the former strips himself of his garments and the latter of all that is sensual.

108. The mind, focusing inward toward the heart during prayer, is like a bridegroom conversing with his bride; but the one who does not enter within himself is like one standing outside the bridal chamber, groaning, “,” and crying out: “*Who will bring me into the city of refuge?*” (Ps. 59:11)? Or who will be my guide, so that during prayer *I may “not look upon vanity and false folly”* (Ps. 39:5)?

109. Just as food without salt is to the throat, so is prayer, when offered without contrition, to the mind.

110. The soul still seeking prayer is like a woman in labor; but the soul that has found prayer is like a woman who has given birth and is filled with joy because of the birth (John 16:21).

111. Once, the Amorite dwelling on the mountain struck down those *who “were moved to ascend to the top of the mountain”* (Num. 14:44–45; Deut. 1:44). But now, wicked forgetfulness drives away those who, before attaining purity of heart, attempt to ascend to the very summit of pure prayer.

112. Prayer, as prayer, is like bread that strengthens beginners; prayer combined with some form of contemplation is like anointing oil; and prayer without imagery is like fragrant wine, which, when drunk insatiably, leads to ecstasy (Ps. 103: 15).

113. The ascetic must restrict his body to a single kind of food—and his mind to a single-word prayer. Then, no longer held back by passions, he will be able to soar in ecstasy toward the Lord during prayer.

114. One who threatens dogs with a stick provokes them against himself; and one who compels himself to pray with purity provokes the demons.

115. When, through unceasing practice in prayer, the words of the Psalms are imprinted on the heart of the one who prays; then, like good soil, he himself begins to bring forth—sometimes roses of contemplation in the spiritual realm, sometimes lilies of understanding the beauty and harmony of the material world, and sometimes violets of insight into the manifold, inscrutable judgments of God.

116. The soul, having completely renounced itself and devoted itself entirely to prayer, descends from the realm where it soars above all creatures—not when it wishes, but when He who disposes of all our being by measure and weight sees fit.

117. A warrior lays down his weapons when the battle ends; and the contemplative lays down his thoughts when he ascends to the Lord in detachment.

118. A commander grieves when he fails to gain spoils in war; but one who leads an active life grieves when he is not granted spiritual contemplation in prayer.

119. A deer runs to the springs of material waters (Ps. 41:2), as if wounded by a beast; but the soul, pierced by the sweetest arrow of prayer, longs for spiritual enlightenment.

120. The stars hide at sunrise; and thoughts cease when the mind returns to its own realm.

121. And the contemplative mind, when, drawn by the needs of nature, descends from heaven to earth, may exclaim the same as he who said: Is there anything more wondrous than Divine beauty? And what thought is more joyful than the contemplation of Divine splendor? And what feeling is as vivid and uncontrollable as love, kindled by God in a soul purified of all evil, which then says from the fullness of its heart: *"I am wounded by love"* (Song of Songs 2:5; 5:8)?

122. To say, *"My heart is warmed within me, and a fire is kindled in my teaching"* (Ps. 38:4), is fitting for one who never tires of pursuing God in prayer and who has chosen not to see *"the day of man"* (Jer. 17:16).

123. Let the active soul also speak, like the bride in the Song of Songs, when, having cast aside all her vices, evil demons, and wicked thoughts, they begin to compel her *"to look again upon vanity and false delights"* (Ps. 39:5): *"I have taken off my garment—how shall I put it on again? I have washed my feet—how shall I defile them?"* (Song of Songs 5:3)?

124. How blessed are you, O God-loving soul, if you can boldly cry out to God: *"Tell me,"* O Good Shepherd, *"where You feed"* Your sheep, and *"where at noon You give rest"* to Your lambs, *"so that,"* following them, *I may not "wander among the flocks of Your rivals"* (Song of Songs 1:6)?

125. The active soul, seeking to hold fast to the word of prayer but unable to do so, cries out like the bride in the Song: *"On my bed at night, I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I did not find him; I called to him, but he did not answer me. "I will rise," then, with the most earnest prayer, "and go about the city, through the streets and the squares, and seek him whom my soul loves"* (Song of Songs 3:1–2). Perhaps I will find Him, in all things and beyond all that exists; *"and I will be satisfied when I behold His glory"* (Ps. 16:15).

126. If one who has welcomed the King into his home thereby becomes glorious and is filled with a joy surpassing all other joys, what then must the soul feel, having purified itself and welcomed the King of Kings into itself according to His unfailing promise (John 14:23)? And will it leave within itself anything that has not been cast out—anything that might seem to disturb those who serve Him? Or will it not take care to receive into itself that which is clearly pleasing to Him?

127. One who expects to be summoned before the King in the morning—what else will he concern himself with but devising words that will please the King?—And every soul that observes this in relation to God will not be found unprepared for the judgment there.

128. Blessed is the soul which, in anticipation of the Lord's coming at any moment, regards the toil of the entire day—and indeed the night as well—as utterly meaningless, thinking that as soon as morning comes, He will immediately appear to her.

129. God sees everyone; but only those who see nothing but God during prayer see God Himself. And those who see God in this way are heard by Him; but those who are not heard do not see Him. Blessed is the one who believes that what is seen comes from God; for such a one will not stray from the path of pleasing Him (Ps. 15:8).

130. The blessings of the kingdom that exists within us have not been seen by a peace-loving eye, nor heard by an ambitious ear, nor have they come to mind in a heart deprived of the Holy Spirit; these are the pledges of the blessings that are to be bestowed upon the righteous in the future Kingdom of Christ. Whoever does not enjoy these fruits of the Spirit here cannot be deemed worthy to enjoy them there either.

131. The thoughts of active men are like those of deer. For just as these sometimes roam the mountain peaks, fearing the hunters, and sometimes descend into the valleys, desiring to enjoy what is there: so too these men—they cannot remain constantly in spiritual contemplation, due to their inability to do so, nor can they always engage in the natural order of affairs, due to their need for rest from them, which those affairs do not provide.

132. It is not so much a matter of blocking a river's path so that it does not rush downward as it is of halting the mind's inclination so that it does not become enslaved to visible things, but rather turns upward toward that which is akin to it, focusing itself in prayer; for the latter is natural to it, while the former is not.

133. A captive freed after a long captivity does not rush home as swiftly as the mind, having been freed from material attachments, which, with joyful steps, hastens toward the heavenly things that are its own.

134. To one who does not pray with attention but is distracted in prayer, the psalm seems to be in a foreign language, and he himself becomes, to the psalm, as one who speaks a foreign language (1 Cor. 14:17). The demons make a mockery of such a person.

135. It is not the same thing for one to be crucified to the world as it is for one to crucify oneself to the world. For some, fasting and vigil serve as nails, while for others, it is non-covetousness and self-abasement. Moreover, without the latter, the labors of the former are useless.

136. One who is possessed by a passion for beauty and ambition cannot pray with a pure heart. For attachment to these things and vain thoughts entangle such a person like ropes and, during prayer, drag him down, just as happens to a tethered bird when it attempts to take flight.

137. It is impossible for the mind to be at peace in prayer unless it first attains fellowship with self-control and love; of which the first strives to destroy the body's enmity toward the soul, and the second the soul's enmity toward one's neighbor, for God's sake: from which ultimately comes "*the peace that surpasses all understanding*" (Phil. 4:7), and makes its dwelling in the one who is thus pacified (John 14:23).

138. The work of righteousness of one who strives to enter the Kingdom of God must abound in good deeds: in almsgiving by giving "*out of one's own poverty*" (Mark 12:44; Luke 21:4); and in labors undertaken for the sake of peace, through self-denial and endurance for the Lord's sake.

139. Some passions are of the flesh, and others are of the soul. Whoever renounces the former but pays no heed to the latter is like a man who, to protect himself from wild beasts, has built himself a high and sturdy fence, yet willingly allows birds to peck at the glorious clusters of the vineyard of his mind.

140. One cannot help but open one's senses, just as one cannot keep the city gates shut. But one must take care that, when they are opened as necessary, nothing enters through them that would benefit our enemies or become a cause of strife.

141. Many ascend the cross of self-inflicted suffering (voluntary physical privations); but few accept its nails (nailing themselves to it forever). Many are slaves to voluntary obedience; but only those who have renounced ambition voluntarily subject themselves to humiliation.

142. In those whose every action is not preceded by the fear of God, their thoughts are in confusion, like sheep without a shepherd; but in those upon whom it descends or precedes them, their thoughts remain in meekness and order, like sheep in a sheepfold.

143. The fear of God is the son of faith; he himself is the guardian of the fulfillment of the commandments, like a shepherd keeping his sheep in a lush pasture. Whoever has not acquired his mother will not be deemed worthy to be counted among the sheep of the Lord's flock.

Volume IV

The Venerable Theodore the Studite

's Ascetic Instructions to Monks

Preface

The fourth volume of our series **Dobrotolyubie** consists entirely of the instructions of Saint Theodore the Studite to monks. Initially, the intention was to compile an excerpt of this holy father's monastic teachings solely from his previously known **Short Catechism**. But before this work was undertaken, God enabled the elders of the Russian Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos to find his larger Catechism on the island of Patmos, at the local monastery of St. John the Theologian, in three volumes, and to transcribe it. – Then the

idea arose to compile an anthology of St. Theodore's teachings for the monks, drawing not only from the Small Catechism but also from the Larger Catechism. And so it was done. The number of these monastic lessons necessitated setting aside an entire volume of our **Dobrotolyubie** for them—which is not to the detriment of our collection. For this will fill a major gap in the lessons on monastic life, namely, the lack of guidance on how to transform the ordinary, visible structure of monastic life into a means of furthering the primary goal of monasticism. All the ascetic writings, both in the previous three volumes and in this fifth and final one, focus on the inner life—and it is explored there in every respect. But the monastic order, in its relation to the goals of monasticism, has been taken into account by no one except St. Theodore the Studite. He, too, discusses the inner life, but only as guiding principles. His main focus, however, is always on something monastic, specifically from the perspective of how it relates to the primary goal of monasticism. He regards even the most menial act of obedience as no less valuable before God than the highest, provided it is performed in the proper spirit. And he constantly inspires everyone with the assurance that every labor of theirs is a step toward the Kingdom of Heaven, toward the martyr's crown. For monastic brothers, this is an invaluable book. But there is also much of value here for the laity. In St. Theodore's writings, a rare teaching passes without his touching in some way upon death, judgment, hell, and the Kingdom of Heaven. For the attentive reader, the picture of these events will be indelibly imprinted on the mind—and for everyone, it will serve as a source of motivation for repentance and inspiration for a virtuous life. – That is why, whereas **Greek Philanthropy** included nothing from Saint Theodore, we felt obliged to present his teachings for the edification of the monastic brotherhood. The numbering of the excerpts runs consecutively from beginning to end, rather than by volume. The volume from which a sermon is taken, and its number according to that volume, is listed at the end of the table of contents for the selected sermon. The sermons of the Small Catechism are listed under the name of the fourth volume. Saint Theodore's sermons do not always address a single subject but cover many, and sometimes touch on unrelated matters, depending on the current needs of monastic life. Meanwhile, the tables of contents for the sermons in the manuscripts indicate a single, more prominent subject; consequently, the full content of the sermons is not entirely apparent from the tables of contents. This necessitated the compilation of new, more detailed tables of contents, which are hereby presented. We consider it worthwhile to include a brief note on the manuscripts of St. Theodore's sermons held in the library of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos, as well as those that are partially in our possession here in Russia. At the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos:

1. *A Large Catechism*, recently transcribed in simple handwriting on plain paper, in three volumes: the first contains 87 sermons, the second 124, and the third 60. A total of 271 lessons. This number includes those from * * that have not survived. The manuscript from which this copy was made dates from the 11th century and is on parchment. The former Metropolitan of Pelusium, Amphilochius, now retired, undertook the task of transcribing it.

2. *The Small Catechism* in a single volume, in an 11th-century manuscript on parchment. It contains 134 lessons. *Note*

3. The library of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy holds a manuscript of the Small Catechism on parchment, dating from before the 11th century—perhaps even the 9th century. It was a gift from the Monastery of St. Savvas near Jerusalem, presented by the late abbot of that monastery, Archimandrite Joasaph.

4. The Moscow Synodal Library holds three ancient parchment manuscripts of the sermons of St. Theodore from the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries. The first contains 126 sermons; the second, 123; and the third, 76. As can be seen from their tables of contents—which were kindly provided by the Most Reverend Synodal Sacristan, Archimandrite Vladimir—they are taken from the Small Catechism. From these Catechisms, anthologies of sermons for church use in monasteries have long been compiled. There are two such anthologies in use at the Monastery of St. Panteleimon:

5. One *containing 105 sermons*, drawn exclusively from the Small Catechism.

6. The other *contains 95 sermons*, drawn almost equally from Volumes 1 and 2 of the Larger Catechism and from the Smaller Catechism. Only the latter are available to us in a translation prepared and published by the Optina Hermitage. They are also available in print only among the Greeks. In Western editions of the Holy Fathers—both earlier ones and the recent ones by Abbot Migne—only the Small Catechism is included, and even then only in a Latin translation. The question may arise: why are excerpts from the teachings offered rather than the complete teachings? – We reply that our aim is not merely to produce a book, but to convey the edifying content it contains. Excerpts better serve this purpose. However, as one can easily see, these

excerpts are almost complete sermons, with minor abridgments—sometimes at the beginning, sometimes at the end, and sometimes in the middle. But everything presented here consists of the Holy Father’s own words. Furthermore, some sermons have not been fully preserved, some have not been preserved at all, and the content of others is unclear. All such passages have been omitted. – Therefore, we must wait until complete manuscripts are found somewhere. Then we can translate the sermons in their entirety all at once. *Note from the Editor of the HTML Version (2006)*

The main text of volumes two through five of ***Dobrotolyubie*** has been edited to bring it in line with modern Russian spelling and pronunciation. Quotations from Holy Scripture have been left unchanged. Their meaning can be clarified, if necessary, using the New Russian edition of the Old and New Testaments. The distinction in the spelling of the words “mip” (society, sometimes—the created universe as a whole), “мир” (peace, order, harmony), and “μυρο” (a fragrant mixture for sacred anointing) has also been left unchanged.

A Sketch of the Life of St. Theodore the Studite⁸¹

St. Theodore, the son of noble and distinguished parents (his father was in charge of collecting the imperial taxes), was raised in the Christian faith, learned all the wisdom of the Greeks, became an excellent orator and a capable philosopher, and at the same time an enlightened theologian. When the iconoclastic persecutions intensified under Constantine Copronymus, his parents renounced the secular life and took the monastic vows; St. Theodore, however, remained in Constantinople to complete his education. After Copronymus, his son Leo—also a heretic—reigned, and after him, his wife Irene reigned with her son Constantine. Irene remained faithful to Orthodoxy, as did her son; and together with St. Patriarch Tarasius, she convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council of the Holy Fathers, at which the iconoclastic heresy was condemned and anathematized. Present at this council was Plato, the maternal uncle of the Venerable Theodore, who, upon the council’s conclusion, took with him to the desert the Venerable Theodore and his brothers Joseph and Euthymius—who had resolved to take the monastic vows—and settled with them in Sakkudion, a beautiful, elevated place surrounded by forest and abundant in water. The place was secluded, and the only way in was along a single path. They grew fond of it and established a monastery there, along with a holy church dedicated to St. John the Theologian. Brothers began to gather around them, and monastic life proceeded in good order under the guidance of the wise Plato.

St. Theodore, who surpassed everyone in education and gifts, excelled above all others in asceticism after his tonsure, mortifying his flesh through fasting, vigils, and the most menial and arduous labors for the monastery : for he chopped wood, carried water, dug the soil in the garden and vegetable patch, and fertilized it, training himself in humility. Above all, however, he was concerned with cultivating a character that was pious and pleasing to God. To this end, he made it a rule to confess to his elder, Plato, every thought and movement of his heart each day, striving to perfect what was approved and to correct what was not. Every day, too, he set aside a certain time for contemplation of God and mental prayer, so that, standing before God alone with an undisturbed mind, he might offer Him a secret form of worship. He loved to read the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the writings of the Holy Fathers, especially St. Basil the Great; and from them, he derived the rules and statutes of monastic life, which he held in such high esteem and considered so essential that he did not recognize as a monk anyone who did not observe them.

The blessed elder Plato, seeing such progress in St. Theodore’s asceticism, decided to ordain him to the priesthood—which St. Tarasius, the Patriarch, carried out upon his recommendation and intercession. Saint Theodore, having thus received ordination not so much by choice as by necessity, not only did not relax his discipline in any way, but redoubled his ascetic efforts; he was an example of virtuous monastic life to all and had many imitators, both in his own monastery and elsewhere.

After some time, the blessed elder Plato, sensing that his infirmities of old age were increasing, desired to withdraw from his duties and spend his final years in silence, appointing St. Theodore as his successor. It so happened that he fell ill, and, having summoned the brothers, he told them that he was sick and that no one knew how the illness would end; which is why he wished to choose a successor for himself—and asked: whom would they prefer? They all replied with one voice: “Theodore.” Blessed Plato then transferred authority and all the responsibilities of the abbotship to him, while he himself withdrew to a life of rest.

⁸¹ This biography was written by the monk Michael. See **Patrologiae Graecae Migne**, vol. 99. The text here is an excerpt.

From his very first days in this office, St. Theodore not only increased his own ascetic efforts but also demanded strict observance of the monastic rules from everyone; in particular, he fought against carelessness, mere outward propriety, and greed. Some of the brethren grumbled, but little by little they improved. And generally speaking, asceticism in the monastery was revitalized.

Things were going so well for St. Theodore within the monastery. Outside, however, sorrows and tribulations soon began. The first cause of this was the unlawful marriage of the young Tsar Constantine, which St. Theodore denounced mercilessly. He was married to Maria, the daughter of the merciful Filaret. But then he fell in love with another woman and married her, abandoning his first wife. The marriage was performed by a certain Joseph, the church steward, against the will of Patriarch Tarasius, who thereafter tried in every way to annul this marriage but did not succeed; and, fearing greater evil—for the emperor threatened to instigate iconoclasm—he ceased to press the matter with him.

But Blessed Theodore did not remain silent; especially since the nobles and dignitaries had also begun to do the same. Fearing that such lawlessness might become law, St. Theodore wrote to all the monks, instructing them to regard the king as excommunicated from the Church, or as having excommunicated himself, since by his own actions he had subjected himself to the penalty of excommunication. This became public knowledge and reached the tsar's ears. At first, the tsar was grieved by this, because his new wife, Theodota, was related to Blessed Theodore on her mother's side. Hoping, however, to reconcile him to himself through flattery, he ordered his adulterous wife to send him a large number of gifts, along with a request for his prayers for himself and his family. But the blessed one refused to even look upon the gifts or the messengers who brought them. The king resolved to find a way to see the saint himself and speak with him. To that end, he arranged to pass by the saint's monastery, as if traveling on official business, in the hope that St. Theodore would come out to meet him with the monastic community to offer a royal greeting and invite him into the monastery.

But when the saint learned of this, he ordered the gates to be locked and not to be opened, no matter how much they knocked. "They knocked and knocked, but left empty-handed. For this, the king flew into a rage against the reverend father and ordered him to be beaten and sent into exile." "They arrived, beat him so severely that his flesh was torn apart by the wounds, and the ground was stained with blood"—and they sent him to Thessalonica. At the same time, all the senior fathers of the monastery—eleven in number—were also sent into exile. St. Theodore bore it all with equanimity; and he wrote to the suffering brethren, comforting them and urging them to bear the sorrow that had befallen them with meek submission. "It is God's will, and whatever comes from God is for our good, if we humbly submit to it." He also wrote to the Pope and received a comforting reply from him, praising him for his zeal for God and his unshakable courage.

Meanwhile, the tsar lived a dissolute life and ruled the kingdom even more poorly. For this, he was deposed from the throne and soon died. The kingdom passed once again into the hands of his mother, Irina, who restored the veneration of icons. She immediately restored all those imprisoned by her son to their former positions. St. Theodore once again gathered his scattered children; and monastic life resumed in good order among them. But a few years later, another calamity befell them—one not so much grievous as troublesome: the Agarians were approaching the Imperial City. Not wishing to expose himself to harm at their hands, St. Theodore left his Sakkudion and moved to the Imperial City—where the empress and St. Patriarch granted him the Studion Monastery, from which the monks had been driven out by the iconoclast Kopronymus, and where new monks had not yet been recruited: there were only about twelve men there at that time.

Having accepted this monastery, St. Theodore renovated what needed repair, added what was missing, settled his brothers there, and monastic life resumed its usual course. The brotherhood grew, and soon numbered a thousand. Unable to oversee everything personally, the saint shared this task with other most worthy elders, to whom he entrusted the maintenance of proper order in the various aspects of monastic duties, and for each of them he wrote appropriate rules. The reverend took special care to ensure that the brethren would not need to go into the city for any reason. To this end, he established all manner of workshops within the monastery: they had their own tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, glaziers, blacksmiths, masons, and so on and so forth. The brothers were assigned to these occupations according to their abilities and inclinations, under the leadership of a special administrator and overseer. Everything was done as in the world, but not in a worldly manner. Order and reverence reigned everywhere: hands were set to work, while the lips were always reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms of David. Any violation of order, great or small, was punished with a specific penance. To ensure that such punishment was rarely necessary, the reverend father

always included, in his teachings—while expounding on general Christian and monastic laws—those rules that governed the order of life in his monastery. This refreshed everyone’s memory of what was proper and rekindled in each person the zeal to prove themselves diligent in everything, even the smallest matters. Meanwhile, the tyrant Nikiforos deposed Queen Irina from the throne, and his first act was to provoke the Church by reinstating Joseph, a court priest who had married Constantine to Theodota and had been defrocked for that very reason—in violation of the canons of the Holy Church. Patriarch Nikiforos, who, according to St. Tarasia, was a most worthy man, resisted this as much as he could; but later, seeing the king’s fury and fearing the worst for the Church at his hands, he readmitted Joseph to communion. But St. Theodore did not yield; he openly denounced the king’s injustice. Enraged by this, the king sent St. Theodore into exile. He did the same to his brother Joseph, to the elder Plato, and to many other monks of the Studion.

At that time, neighboring barbarians attacked Thrace, and the king had to march against them. Before setting out, he sent messengers to St. Theodore, using both flattery and threats to persuade him to agree with him. But St. Theodore, moved by the Spirit of God, replied to him thus: “It was your duty, O king, as you went into battle, to repent and make amends for what you have destroyed in the Church of God. But since you did not do this, know for certain that you will not return alive from battle. Such is God’s righteous judgment upon you.” And indeed, the king was killed in battle. After him, his son Stavrikios assumed the throne; but he, too, soon died from a wound sustained in battle. A certain Michael Kyropalates was chosen to reign, a man truly worthy of royal authority, good and orthodox. He released St. Theodore from captivity, along with all those who had suffered with him; he honored them and abolished the schism in the Church. Joseph, however, was once again excommunicated from the Church as a corrupt element. At that time, the holy and venerable elder Plato departed to the Lord and was buried with honor by the Patriarch himself at the Studion Monastery. After the passing of his spiritual father, Plato, St. Theodore and his brethren lived in peace and tranquility for only two years. Then the iconoclastic storm arose again and stirred up the entire Church.

It was instigated by the new emperor, Leo the Armenian. He had been a military commander in the eastern provinces and rebelled against the pious Emperor Michael, who, to avoid a civil war, had himself laid aside the imperial purple and donned the monastic hair shirt, ceding the kingdom to the rebellious tyrant. At first, this Leo presented himself as pious and meek; but once he had consolidated his hold on the kingdom, he began to blaspheme against the holy icons and to condemn icon veneration. St. Patriarch Nikiforos, explaining to the king the true meaning of icon veneration, urged him not to disturb the peace of the Church by opposing its teaching on this matter. But the king paid no heed; on the contrary, relying on his royal authority, he sought to force everyone to submit to his own reasoning. To this end, he gathered all the prominent priests and monks, along with the Holy Patriarch and St. Theodore, and openly revealed his heresy before everyone, praising those who did not venerate holy icons and rebuking those who did.

He based this reasoning primarily on the second commandment: “*You shall not make for yourself an idol, nor any likeness,*” and so on. He also offered the following arguments: How can one depict the indescribable, or fit the immeasurable into an icon the size of an elbow? How can one call a figure painted with colors a god? The spiritual fathers respectfully explained to the tsar that the Old Testament laws are not unconditionally binding on Christians; that icons depict God not as the indescribable and the inconceivable, but as He chose to reveal Himself to the saints—and especially as He revealed Himself in the Incarnation; and that by “God” they do not mean the canvases and paints, but the One Who is depicted in the icons; and that, by gazing upon His image, they lift their minds to Him. They presented these ideas in various ways; but Saint Theodore, as if uniting all of them into one, delivered a lengthy speech to enlighten the king. “From whence, O king, did this evil intention come upon you—to introduce a heretical decree into the Holy Church and to tear apart her glorious robe, woven by divine grace and the teaching of the Apostles and the Fathers?—Are you drawing wisdom from the Old Law? Then draw wisdom wisely.

Examine all the passages of the Old Testament that forbid the creation of images and likenesses and their veneration—what do they say? – They speak of the fact that, having made any image or likeness, one should not venerate it as a god or offer it divine worship—not that one should not make, possess, or honor images and likenesses at all. The Holy Church, however, does not deify images and likenesses made by human hands, but only venerates them as representations of that which is worthy of honor. Consequently, neither the Second Commandment nor any of the numerous passages in the Old Testament writings similar to this commandment—of which there are many—apply to the icons of the Holy Church. These include—to give an example—God’s command to create images of cherubim and place them in the most honorable place, above

the Ark of the Covenant, and the command to make a serpent and look upon it with reverence for deliverance from the serpent's venom, and the like.

Thus, the Old Law does not reject the creation of icons or their veneration, provided that both are carried out with reason. And what do we see in the New Grace? The Lord and our Savior Himself depicted Himself on a cloth and sent it to Abgar, who was healed by touching it; St. Luke painted an image of the Mother of God holding the Pre-eternal Infant in her arms, and when he presented it to her, she bestowed upon it the blessing of her Son and God; after that, holy icons have never ceased to exist in the Church of God, many of which have been miraculous and remain so to this day. Does not all this show, more clearly than the sun itself, that icon painting and icon veneration are of divine, not human, origin? "And what do you say: 'I do not want the invisible and indescribable Divinity to be depicted with paints'? We, too, believe that the Divinity is invisible and indescribable; yet we depict the Divinity on icons not as It is in essence, but as It was pleased to reveal Itself to us, especially in the Incarnation."

"Whoever condemns the icon of Christ the Savior condemns the very Incarnation of the Lord." Having heard all this, the king became angry and said to the Venerable Theodore: "I have long known how quarrelsome and proud you are, thinking that no one is wiser than you; and now you speak so boldly to me, as if I were a common man, that you ought to be punished at once. But I spare you until the righteousness of our reasoning is more clearly revealed and acknowledged; and if you do not submit then, do not expect mercy." After this, the fathers who were then in the royal chamber decided to say no more. What is there to say to one who seeks not instruction but wishes to impose his will on the faith like a ruler? But Blessed Theodore said: "Understand, O King, and listen! It is not your business to examine and regulate the matters of faith of the Holy Church. Your duty is to uphold the order of the world.

But keeping the faith and the Holy Church in proper order is the task of the shepherds and teachers of the Church. Listen to the Apostle, who says: '*God has appointed in the Church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers,*' and so on (1 Cor. 12:28). Do you see?—Teachers, not kings.—And other passages of Scripture command that the affairs of the Church be governed by the shepherds and teachers of the Church, not by kings." The king said: "Are you the one who will expel me from the Church?" – The saint replied: "No, not I. It is the laws of the divine Apostles and the Holy Fathers that expel one from the Church. Following them, we also affirm that even if an angel from heaven were to preach to us anything contrary to the faith, let him be anathema.

Therefore, if you wish to remain within the Church of Christ with us, who worship the icon of Christ, then follow the Patriarch in all things and the Holy Synod that exists with him." At these words, the king flew into a rage and drove everyone away from him. – Following this, the king's decree began to be proclaimed throughout the city by the Greek eparch, ordering that no one dare interpret or engage in disputes concerning the faith, but that all should follow the king's will. This news reached St. Theodore as well. And he said to those who conveyed this to him: "*Judge for yourselves whether it is right in the sight of God to obey you rather than God*" (Acts 4:19)? It is better to have one's tongue cut out than to remain silent and fail to defend the true faith when attempts are made to distort it." From that time on, he began to teach everyone fearlessly and to urge them to hold fast to the true faith handed down by the Fathers: he called some to him, went to others himself, and wrote letters to still others; he also frequently visited the Patriarch, both to find comfort in their shared faith and to encourage him to endure the impending sorrows and persecutions with equanimity.

These persecutions and tribulations soon came to pass: the Patriarch was deposed and exiled from the Imperial City, and all the other Orthodox bishops were sentenced to imprisonment; the icons were desecrated, thrown to the ground, trampled underfoot, and set ablaze; and widespread turmoil broke out throughout the city. Seeing this, the Venerable Theodore was deeply grieved in his soul, and to counter the open desecration of the icons with their open veneration, he decided to hold a procession around the monastery on the upcoming feast of the Ascension, during which the brethren, taking the icons and raising them high, sang as they walked: "We worship Your most pure image, O Good One," and other similar hymns.

When the emperor learned of this, he sent him a stern warning that if he did not cease defending icon veneration, he would face imprisonment, wounds, and death. Since the saint could not stop doing so, either in word or in writing, he was sentenced to imprisonment, sent to Apollonia (in Asia or Bithynia), and confined in a dungeon in a fortress called Metopa. However, even from there he sent messages far and wide, urging people to strictly adhere to the veneration of icons as upheld by the Church. His messages even reached the king; and he immediately sent a certain Nikita, son of Alexeyev, to transfer the Venerable One from there to

a place called Vonita and to imprison him there, with a strict prohibition against speaking or writing about icon veneration! When the messenger conveyed the tsar's command to him, he replied: "I gladly accept the change of location, for God is everywhere; but I cannot refrain from speaking or writing"; and, after being transferred to another place, he did indeed speak and write. Upon learning of this, the king, in his anger, sent the same Nikita to the Venerable One again—to inflict severe wounds upon him.

When the messenger told St. Theodore of this, he joyfully cast off his robes himself and offered his body to be beaten. But when Nikita saw how emaciated the Venerable One's body was, he could not bring himself to strike him. And he returned without having touched the saint. The saint, remaining behind, once again fearlessly proclaimed the truth regarding holy icons, speaking at length with those who came to him and writing letters far and wide. He also wrote to the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome, describing what was happening in Constantinople and asking them to help Orthodoxy both through prayer and through action. A certain cleric of the Church of Asia happened to visit him; after listening to the Saint's teachings, he rejected the iconoclastic heresy and converted to Orthodoxy—and upon returning to his own place, he converted another cleric as well. When the bishop learned of this, he complained to the emperor about the Venerable One; and the emperor ordered the governor of Asia to inflict severe wounds upon St. Theodore. The governor sent one of his men to inflict 50 wounds upon the Venerable One. But this messenger, too, upon seeing the Venerable One's naked body, was too ashamed to raise his hand; and, bowing to him, he returned without carrying out the king's evil command. No sooner had this messenger returned to the one who had sent him than a new messenger from the king himself, named Anastasius—a cruel and heartless man—appeared before St. Theodore. With his own hands, he beat the Saint, inflicting up to 100 wounds upon him; he did the same to his disciple Nicholas; and having then confined both of them to a dark and cramped place, he ordered that they be kept in dire straits—and departed.

This cruel order was strictly enforced: the place was dark, foul-smelling, and damp; through a small window, they were thrown a small piece of bread—not enough even for one person—and given a mug of water, sometimes once every other day or longer, as if the intention were to starve them to death; the pain from their wounds and the rough treatment by the guards only added to their suffering. In such distress, St. Theodore, inspired by his faith, resolved to sustain himself solely on the Most Pure Body of the Lord from the provisions he had brought with him—yet he gave everything he received to his disciple.

After some time, a certain royal nobleman was passing through that area; upon learning of the plight of the Reverend Father and his disciple, he ordered that their suffering be alleviated, that they be given more food and drink, and that they be treated more mercifully. Thus more than three years passed. Then one of St. Theodore's letters fell into the king's hands, in which the king's wickedness was denounced and he was exhorted to hold fast to Orthodoxy and courageously endure persecution and torment for its sake. The king flew into a rage and sent a certain beast-like nobleman to show the message to the Reverend Father; and, upon verifying that it was indeed his, to beat him to the point of death. The Reverend acknowledged the letter as his own—and was beaten mercilessly, left barely breathing. The same fate befell his disciple. Having sated his malice, the messenger returned to his master; and the martyrs, having suffered cheerfully for the truth, began to care for one another.

St. Theodore could not move and lay exhausted, barely breathing, taking neither food nor drink. The disciple was somewhat stronger, and, forgetting himself, devoted all his care to the Saint, feeding and giving him barley broth mixed with some kind of herb. When the saint had recovered somewhat, he in turn helped his disciple, especially in tending to his wounds. They cleaned each other's wounds and cut away the hanging shreds of flesh, washed away the pus, and applied ointment to the sores with whatever they could find. Thus they suffered for ninety days, and before they had fully recovered, another messenger arrived from the king—cruel and inhuman—with an order to take the passion-bearers to Smyrna. This was carried out under harsh guard, amid deprivation, abuse, hardship, and every kind of exhaustion.

Only God's special help gave the martyrs the strength to reach their destination. There they were handed over to a bishop—a wicked man and a teacher of heresy—and confined in a low, cramped, and dark hut, where they endured all manner of hardships and privations. Not long afterward, the king's former unmerciful official, Anastasius, arrived; after inflicting a hundred lashes on the Venerable One, he returned. The Venerable One, however, endured all this with equanimity, giving thanks to God. At that time, the province of Smyrna was ruled by the king's nephew and like-minded associate. He fell ill and was nearing death. One of his servants, a faithful believer, reminded him of St. Theodore, who possessed the gift of healing.

The sick man sent a message to the Reverend Father asking for his prayers. The Reverend Father, having recounted all the atrocities the man had committed against the Orthodox, for which he was bound to suffer eternal torment, urged him to repent, even at the very end. The governor was horrified by what awaited him and turned to the Reverend, asking for forgiveness and promising to convert to Orthodoxy if he were healed. St. Theodore sent him an icon of the Most Holy Mother of God, commanding him to venerate it for the rest of his life. Upon receiving the icon, the governor immediately felt relief and began to recover. His recovery was already nearing its end when he once again fell back into his former superstition, having been led astray by the heretical Bishop of Smyrna. Then the sick man received holy oil from this bishop as a blessing. But as soon as he was anointed with it, he relapsed into his former illness—and breathed his last in agony. The Venerable One suffered in Smyrna for more than a year and a half.

And he would have suffered longer, but the wicked king was killed, and Michael (Travlius or Valvos), who succeeded him, was indifferent to the faith and allowed everyone to believe as they wished. Under his rule, all those who had been exiled and imprisoned during the previous reign were set free. An order came to release St. Theodore and his disciples as well. (St. Theodore had spent about seven years in these imprisonments under Leo the Armenian; and before that, five years under Constantine for denouncing the illegality of his marriage.) All of his disciples who had been in exile then gathered around the Venerable One; and he, together with them, made his return home, being joyfully and lovingly welcomed everywhere; for the entire Church rejoiced at his return. Upon reaching Chalcedon, he met with St.

Patriarch Nikiforos; and they comforted one another as fellow sufferers for the same righteous cause of the faith. Together with him, they went before the emperor and persuaded him to embrace Orthodoxy. But the emperor said, “I do not wish to worship icons—nor do I want them to be visible in Constantinople; keep them wherever you wish, and honor them as you see fit.” From there, St. Theodore went with his disciples to the region of Criscentius, and having settled there, he hoped at last to find peace. But due to a rebellion led by a certain Thomas, who sought to seize the imperial throne, he was forced to take refuge in Constantinople for the duration of the uprising; for he did not wish to live permanently in a city steeped in heretical iconoclasm. Once this storm had subsided, he did not return to the regions of Kriskentios, but went to Akritos’ Heronis, to the Church of St. Trifon, where he spent the rest of his life in ascetic endeavors, surrounded by his disciples. Finally, the time came for his blessed passing, in the 67th year of his life. When news of this spread, people began to flock to the Venerable One from all directions—of every rank and station, from near and far. Everyone wished to hear his words, and the Venerable One spoke; but he was so weak from exhaustion that even those standing close by could barely hear him. Therefore, scribes were stationed nearby so that those unable to hear the Saint’s words would not be deprived of his edification. Anyone who wishes may read them in the codex of the Reverend Father’s sermons. His illness, however, subsided somewhat, and the saint was able to walk; he attended church and, on the following Sunday, celebrated the Divine Liturgy, delivered a sermon to the brethren, and dined with them. Likewise, on the following day, November 6, on the feast of St. Paul the Confessor, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy, instructed the brethren, and was present for the singing at Vespers that same evening. But upon returning to his cell, he took to his bed again and began to feel ill. He was ill for four days, and on the fifth day he departed to the Lord, to a life free from suffering.

As the hour of his passing drew near, the brothers gathered around him and wept as if for their father and teacher. Looking at them, he too shed a few tears and said: “Behold, fathers and brothers, the end of my life has come ! We must all drink from this cup—some sooner, others later—but no one can escape it. I am departing by the path our fathers took; I am going to the place of eternal life, where is God and our Lord, whom my soul has loved, whom my heart has desired, to whom I have called myself a servant, though I have not performed my duties as I ought. – You, my beloved brothers and children, abide by the words I have entrusted to you, and hold fast to the true faith and a godly life. You know that I have never ceased to proclaim the Word of God to you—both in the Church and in private. Now, I earnestly beg you: keep this in your minds and preserve it. I have sorrow in my heart because of you, for I must give an account of you. Take care, then, to depart from here so that you may appear blameless before the face of the Lord.” Having said this and taken his leave, he instructed his disciples to take the candles, light them, and sing the closing hymn. The disciples, standing around him, began to sing: “*Blessed are the blameless*” (Ps. 118); and when, singing in turn, they had sung: “*I will never forget Your righteous judgments, for by them You have given me life*” (v. 93), —with these words, the Venerable One gave up his spirit (826). The angels of God received it and carried it to the throne of God, as the Venerable Hilarion of Dalmatia, who saw this in a vision, truthfully testified.

On this day, November 11, in commemoration of St. Mina, while walking alone in his garden and singing psalms, he heard some wondrous voices and smelled an indescribable fragrance. Amazed that such a thing could be, he looked up at the sky and saw a great multitude of white-robed figures, with bright, joyful faces, descending from on high with songs to meet a certain honorable person. Upon seeing this, the blessed one fell to the ground in terror and heard someone say, “This is the soul of Theodore, the abbot of Studion, who suffered to the point of bloodshed for the icons and has now passed away; it is solemnly ascending the mountain, and the heavenly hosts are descending to meet it.” – Blessed Hilarion recounted this vision to other virtuous fathers: they noted the day and hour of this event, and by the timing realized that it was precisely then that the praiseworthy Theodore of Studion had passed away. The passing of St. Theodore was accompanied by many miracles, of which there were not a few—both before his passing and afterward—from his coffin and his holy relics.

1. How exalted is the monastic life

1. 1) How exalted is the monastic life. – 2) Every act of obedience, when performed according to God’s will, leads to paradise, even if it is very simple. – 3) A list of virtues that lead to paradise. [1, 2]⁸²

1. God brought us into the world so that, by pleasing Him with good deeds, we might become heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. To us monks, however, after bringing us into the world, He granted a particularly great grace, consisting in the fact that, having chosen us from among all people, He placed us before His face to serve His kingdom. Let each one now carefully examine whether he is living in accordance with the calling to which he has been summoned, and whether he is concerned with nothing else but pleasing God.

2. In carrying out our duties, we must act as if we had received the command directly from God Himself. God requires of the living that they do what is within their power. And let us do so, taking every care to avoid one thing: that we do not deceive ourselves with vanity before others or with conceit before ourselves, as if we were doing something great. The Lord has a reward ready for every worker: the steward will rejoice with the first martyr Stephen; the baker himself will be pure bread for the Lord; the gardener will enjoy the bounties of paradise, being deemed worthy to dwell there; and every other person—the vineyard keeper, the woodworker, the scribe, the gatekeeper, and in general, whoever performs any duty—if they carry it out as work for the Lord, will receive a worthy reward. The Lord sees everything; nothing is hidden from Him; and He will reward all things in a divine manner.

3. “*Stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong; let love be your rule in everything*” (1 Cor. 16:13–14); die daily so that you may live forever; flee from evil thoughts just as you would from evil deeds; consider loquacity a great sin, laughter an act of fornication, gluttony and satiety slavery to lust; keep your thoughts sorrowful, your eyes downcast; be pure in body and soul; be inspired by hope; do not become attached to anything on earth; fear the One God. If we conduct ourselves in this way, if we maintain this disposition, then we will rejoice with the angels and be glad with all the saints forever.

2. Do not think highly of yourself

2. 1) Do not be conceited. – 2) Live for all your brothers, just as every member of the body lives for the whole body. – 3) Our obedience is not burdensome, but through the renunciation of our own will, we deserve the crowns of martyrdom. [1, 3]

4. You have acted wisely, men called by God, in leaving the world behind and setting the eyes of your hearts on God. Strive, then, to live in a way pleasing to God, and in doing so, “*do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought*” (Rom. 12: 16)—neither in terms of spiritual virtues nor physical advantages—lest you hear: “*What do you have that you did not receive? “But even if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?”*” (1 Cor. 4:7). Whoever does much does so by the grace of Christ, having received power from God above—not for oneself, but for one’s neighbor.

5. You are all servants to one another, helpers to one another, as living members of one body. If the eye does not guide the hand, if one hand does not support the other, if the foot does not walk as the good of the whole body requires, if, in general, each member begins to act according to its own will; then not only will they fail to preserve their own strength, but by disrupting themselves, they will also disrupt the entire body.

⁸² The number above the table of contents indicates the number of the excerpted teaching, and the numbers following the table of contents in square brackets [] indicate—the first the volume, the second—the teaching within that volume. – The items in the table of contents correspond to the sections that follow them, with a separate section for each item.

Therefore, let everyone rejoice when it falls to him to labor more for others, enduring cold, rain, and heat; but let him who sits idle weep and be contrite, like a useless member, living in the body not for the body's sake and worthy only of being cut off.

6. Let not your ears be weighed down by hearing this. On the contrary, consider how little and how few labors are required of us to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. We do not shed blood like the martyrs; our limbs are not cut off, nor are our bones broken; but if we add to our light and few labors a renunciation of our own will, with a desire to please God and to serve our brothers with love, then through this we become like the long-suffering martyrs, and even like the Lord Himself, who endured crucifixion and death for our sake. Take heart, then, as you labor! Martyr's crowns await you.

3. Stay alert: for the enemy does not slumber—as a comfort to the shepherd

3. 1) Be vigilant: for the enemy does not slumber—as a comfort to the shepherd. – 2) Do not lag behind in your labor, for for every labor a reward is immediately set aside in heaven. – 3) Instructions: to the canonarch; – 4) to the lamp-bearer; – 5) to the hospital attendant; – 6) To the sick. [1, 4]

7. I know from the Holy Fathers, and especially from my righteous elder, that the devil never sleeps nor slacks off in his efforts to destroy our souls; but he is always watchful and eager to sow his tares, “*while men sleep*” (Matt. 13:25). So stay alert, my God-called children, and be sober-minded, lest any of you fall into the devil's snare. I love to hear of the progress of each of you; I am comforted by the obedience of one, the humility of another, and the diligence of a third. But my soul hates the disobedient son—the grumbler and the proud, the idler and the sluggard, the whisperer and the chatterbox. “But who am I, speaking thus?” I am your shepherd, though unworthy; you are my sheep, for whom I will give an account to the Lord who has entrusted them to me.

8. Therefore, all of you, tend the flock; tend it well; tend it with one mind and in unity. Let no one fall behind. The enemy will lead the one who falls behind astray and destroy him; just as the wolf snatches up the straying sheep and carries it off into the forest or the mountains. The work of salvation is not easy; the path to it is multifaceted, exhausting, and requires strenuous labor, vigilance, and contentment with little—little food, little rest, poor clothing—and above all, it requires the renunciation of one's own will. The Lord measures each person's reward in proportion to their labors; and crowns are set aside daily for each of those who labor.

9. We must perform the church services with all propriety, reverence, and warmth of heart. And you, my child, the canonarch (master of ceremonies), as the one appointed to oversee this first and greatest of our duties, be vigilant; keep the choir in order; observe precisely the times designated for each hymn, and carry out all other duties as commanded regarding the psalms and stichera, in good conscience. Let those who are able to sing do so; and those who are better suited to reading, assign them to reading. Do not be negligent, but be attentive, and assign to each of the brothers with fairness what to read or sing on one day and what on another—some on ordinary days, some on feast days—judging by their voice, pronunciation, and speed of reading, so that even outsiders, if any happen to be present, may benefit. May everything be done in an orderly and proper manner (1 Cor. 14:40), so that you may be deemed worthy to hear from the Lord: “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much*” (Matt. 25:21), and be numbered among the saints in heaven.

10. And you, lamp-lighter, be diligent and meticulous in fulfilling the duty entrusted to you; for it is from God and divine. Guard the lighting of the temple as you would your own two eyes; for it is performed in the presence of God. If the one who lights candles before a king is entirely attentive so as to please him before his eyes, how much more, my child, should you, with fear and love, light the lamps for God the King of kings, to whom all creation is subject, as well as clean the lamps, maintain the lampstands, and ensure the proper light. And see to the cleanliness of the church: sweep it at least twice a week, dust the icons so they do not deteriorate, and keep everything else in order and tidy, taking every precaution not to damage anything belonging to the church.

11. You are the third on my mind, my child, the hospital attendant. Follow the instructions given to you. You are worthy of great rewards in this most difficult, tireless, martyr-like service—one that is exalted and worthy of the highest reward. Do not wait for or seek rest here in order to receive it there. If you labor well here, you will undoubtedly find peace there. Some read, others pray, still others observe silence, and others perform other praiseworthy deeds; but you, too, keep pace with them—or even surpass them. – As soon as it is light, go from one sick person to another, inquire about the condition of each one's illness, and prescribe

what is necessary and beneficial for each. If you persevere in such labors, you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven as a crowned one.

12. As for you, my children who are sick, accept with gratitude everything that happens to you, being content with what you are given. If, however, you desire anything beyond that, simply mention it; and whatever the brother assigned to you does for you afterward, be grateful with love. Do not grumble: it is enough that your brother serves you like a slave out of love for God and provides what is suitable for each of you, according to the monastery's means. If you do not conduct yourselves in this way, you will be worthy of great torments.

4. Remember death and the day of reckoning, and be zealous for your vows

4. 1) Remember death and the day of reckoning, and be zealous for your vows. – 2) Guard your speech. – 3) The brothers are like the hands, eyes, and feet of the abbot. – 4) Even our physical labor is spiritual; work while encouraging one another.... Christ be with you. – 5) A lesson and encouragement for the cook. [1, 5]

13. Let us contemplate the heights of heaven and the depths of the earth, and our own nature—that we, as human beings, die, being carried from here to the realms beyond, beyond the bounds of this world. Without any concealment, we will then stand before the face of the righteous Judge to give an account of our deeds; after which we will be received either into the kingdom of heaven, if we have acted well, or into the unquenchable fire, if we have remained in sin. Let us therefore continually rekindle that zeal for a God-pleasing life with which we entered this monastery, recalling the words we spoke and the vows we made at that time, and being mindful of our duty to always remain faithful to them; for by these words we will be judged.

14. Keep your lips pure, speaking only what is pleasing to God. Do not allow flattery or unjust reproaches. And *“let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths”* (Eph. 4:29).

15. Those of you who labor are my hands. Labor, then, my hands, and do not grow weary as you reach out to do what is right; for *“the arm of the Lord will strengthen you”* (Ps. 88:22). You are my eyes, set to watch over others. Watch carefully, foreseeing and warning those who might fall, so that you yourselves may become worthy of divine favor. I also have feet. My feet, stand firm on the right path of God's commandments. These are the ones who courageously and cheerfully bear the burdens of their fellow brothers; for this, if they persevere in this good disposition, they will be carried to eternal rest. With these words, I wish to lift up those who have fallen, stir up those who have grown slothful to zeal, and give courage to those who have fallen into despondency.

16. Rejoice, take comfort, and be inspired by zeal. Do not shrink from anything—neither spiritual nor physical labor—for even our physical being, when consecrated to God, is spiritual. Moreover, whoever is diligent in physical matters is also diligent in spiritual ones. Exhort and encourage one another in prayer, in obedience, and in humility. Stir one another up to every good work, conducting yourselves in all things with propriety and decorum. Follow one another's example and help one another; and in this way you will be *“children of Christ and heirs in part”* (1 Cor. 12:27). I firmly believe that Christ is your Head. With Him as your Head, whom do you have to fear? And what will you not receive with Him? You will be rulers of heaven and earth, and you will inherit all that has been promised.

17. And a word to you, my child, the cook—who struggles daily in the fire, chopping wood, cooking meals, carrying water, cleaning and washing vegetables, blackening your face, soiling your clothes, sweating and baking in the heat, striving in every way to provide the brothers with the meals they need—you will share in the glory of the saints, and the warm bosom of Abraham will give you rest. Just endure patiently, spending your day in joy, and be so diligent and conscientious in your work that your service will even appear to you in your dreams. From early morning, rush like a fire to fulfill your duties, and you will emerge victorious, having done your work well.

5. Compete with one another in what is good, but not in what is evil

5. 1) Compete with one another in what is good, but not in what is evil. – 2) We live as if sailing across the sea; the spiritual significance of all the vicissitudes of our voyage lies in this. – 3) The exemplary brother is a source of blessing to the brotherhood, while the wicked one is a source of harm. – 4) The reward is immeasurable; we do not journey in vain; rejoice. [1, 6]

18. These are now days of blessing, a time for action, the summer of God's favor. Let us not allow ourselves to waste not only the summer but even a single day; may our zeal and concern for salvation be unyielding, our mutual competition be for good, and our eagerness to imitate one another's virtues be righteous. If we see an outstanding virtue in someone—meekness, for example, piety, obedience, humility, or anything else praiseworthy—let us be moved by a noble desire to be their equals in this. From this will spring forth among us a bond of peace and a loving disposition. Let us not, through competition, learn what is contrary to this—and, seeing someone careless, let us not be careless; seeing someone gluttonous, let us not be gluttonous; seeing someone talkative, let us not be talkative. But as wise people, taught by God Himself, *“test everything; hold fast to what is good”* (1 Thess. 5:21).

19. Let us hold fast to the anchor of our faith, hoist the sail of hope, and with all our energy cross the great sea of this earthly life; for during this voyage, winds will inevitably assail us—I mean the rebellions of the flesh, —the surging of carnal desires, the whirlpools arising from the depths of the heart, wicked thoughts, and many other things similar to what happens when sailing the sea: pirates—malicious demons; shoals—blindness from ignorance; underwater rocks—unforeseen snares against our soul; the dangerous flooding of the hold—the concealment of sins and sinful thoughts, from which the soul perishes, just as sailors perish who do not heed the flooding of the hold, sinking sleepily into the depths of the sea along with the ship. But we, most honorable brothers, will guard ourselves against all such things and walk vigilantly in the way of God; above all, we will lay bare everything that takes place in our hearts, so that the flood of evil thoughts may not overflow our souls and *“the utter abyss may not engulf us,”* according to a certain prophetic word (Jonah 2:6).

20. Always ready for anything in the brotherhood, both in spiritual feats and in physical labor, he shines like a heavenly star and guides many. Diligent in matters of piety, sincere and worthy of heaven, serious and silent—he is an angel on earth, serving God and the Lord of all creation as if before the throne of the cherubim. He who benefits others with his virtues and stirs within them a zeal for spiritual endeavors is a radiant sun, gleaming with gold and warming the entire community. But who is gloomy, dark, and night-like, who casts a shadow over those beneath him and makes them like himself? Who, if not the one who, through arrogance, sensuality, mockery, idleness, shameful deeds, slander, insolence, and impurity—by associating with evil thoughts—resembles Satan, who fell from heaven? We must not submit to the influence of such people.

21. Your labor is not long, but your reward is eternal; suffering is brief, but joy is everlasting; hardship is temporary, but rest is infinite. There you will rejoice, *“where all who rejoice dwell”* (Ps. 86:7), from where *“sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee away”* (Isa. 35:10), where there is no weeping, but only joy. So are you laboring in vain? Are you laboring in vain? By no means! On the contrary, it is wise, exalted, wondrous, blissful, apostolic, martyr-like, fatherly, angelic, and heavenly, and pleasing to God—you have departed (from the world), come (to us), been born of us through spiritual birth, grown up, become warriors, armed yourselves with spiritual weapons, and are striking down the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, and other tribes of the passions. You have left behind the sea of the world (by renouncing it), crossed the Jordan through the enlightening and purifying second baptism in the reception of the schema (for it is effective repentance), and from here you begin to enter into your inheritance, into the land which our faithful God has shown you through His promise—a land flowing with the honey and milk of immortality and everlasting life. Rejoice in this, exult, and be glad, seeing such love of God for mankind. Before our eyes is life, before us is joy, at our feet is bliss; the door is ajar—*“Run, that you may obtain”* (1 Cor. 9:24). Who, then, can remain indecisive? Who will not rush forward and strive with ever-increasing zeal, seeking to outpace others in obtaining the treasures that lie ahead?

6. Against lust; for by this fire the eternal fire is kindled; and death may overtake one in the act

6. 1) Against lust; for by this fire the eternal fire is kindled; and death may overtake one in the act. – 2) If you stumble, rise up, hating sin and loving what is good. – 3) Avoid minor sins, especially idle talk; topics for conversation are prescribed. [1:7]

22. Be courageous and stand valiantly against the devil's wiles, knowing that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against our invisible and bitter persecutor, Satan, and the apostate forces under him. Therefore, if a lustful thought assails anyone, let him not be troubled or confused; but through prayer, groaning, and the outpouring of tears, let him turn it back and ward it off, recalling that (eternal) fire and the fact that what now burns within us serves as the cause of that (eternal) flame. Therefore, no matter how many

times a day such a thought assails you, root it out completely—and we will not be condemned. If this lust is accompanied by a darkening of the mind and a sense of the burden of asceticism, lift up the eye of your heart in sorrow and cut through this snare of the devil by reflecting on the possibility of dying at any moment. May everyone who labors be strengthened by the thought of rest in eternal life.

23. May the grace of our Lord overshadow you, and may He grant you the steadfastness to endure your present hardships. Strive in the struggle and the battle, and do your utmost to complete the journey without stumbling. But if such a thing should happen—which I do not wish for you, however—rise up quickly. Consider what is visible. *“The heavens are high,”* as it is written, *“and the earth is deep”* (Prov. 25:3). And who among those cast down by sin will ascend to them? Therefore, detest them, hate them, turn away from them; but strive for what is good and do what is pleasing to God.

24. I implore you: just as we avoid major sins, let us also avoid the so-called minor ones—that is, idle talk and frivolity. Be gentle and meek toward everyone; and even when you converse merely to dispel boredom, let your conversation be wholesome. Let your conversation be either about your upcoming work, or about resolving a question regarding some passage of Scripture, or about reading according to the rule, or about the life of some saint, or about our departure from the body, the coming of angels to us, and our account before the Lord and God for our entire life in the flesh; how the saints will depart to unspeakable joy, while the sinful will go to inconsolable torment; and how, ask one another, we may avoid this passion (idle talk) and acquire the virtue opposed to it (wise speech); how does a tear burst forth and flow, and what causes it to dry up? And how, through sincere obedience, humility, and silence of the lips, are the shoots of the soul watered and do they blossom, like the tree of life, in the midst of paradise; but they are dried up by loquacity, laughter, inappropriate and untimely glances, grumbling, harsh speech, oversleeping, overeating, and every other passion to which we wilfully give ourselves over.

7. A high calling; give thanks by keeping your vows

7. 1) A lofty calling; give thanks by keeping one’s vows. – 2) The main thing is to attain God. – 3) Faithfulness to one’s calling makes one a citizen of heaven; the deeds of this faithfulness. – 4) Offerings to God on Epiphany. – 5) Words from Scripture about the greatness of the promised blessings. [1, 8]

25. Behold, the Lord and our God reveals His goodness to people, shining with rays of love for humanity, to draw all to Himself; and He has especially brought us monks out of darkness into the light. What thanks, then, shall we offer to God, who has chosen and called us? – This: that we may live with the aim of excelling in piety, having put aside a life of passion and sensual pleasure. —Let us, then, brothers, be mindful of our calling; let us keep before our eyes what monastic life requires and the vows we have made in the presence of the angels; and let us live in such a way that we are ready, as soon as God calls us, to pass from here—as from a sojourn—to our own dwelling with complete joy.

26. Do you see the insignificance of this present life? Do you see how fleeting and transient human life is? – There is but one good portion, one blessed life, and one insatiable grace—to attain God through the observance of His commandments. But this requires labor and intense self-discipline.

27. You are citizens of Jerusalem, inhabitants of paradise, and members of the choir of the Holy Angels—if you stand firm in your calling, remain faithful to it, love it with all your heart, compel yourselves to do its works, abstain from everything contrary to it, and discipline yourselves in every way. Rejoice, then, in the fear of the Lord, and purify yourselves from every impure disposition; be radiant and shine forth as children of light; show respect, obedience, and meekness to your elders; may brotherly love abound richly among you; and may the pursuit of your own will and self-will be abhorrent to you.

28. Behold, the day of the Epiphany has come! The Lord from heaven—let us meet Him with pure hearts. Let us prepare holy dispositions and, as a gift from all creation to the All-Holy One, let us offer a renewed life, godly contemplations, and a heart burning with love for God; let us also offer—some love for silence, some unceasing vigilance, some frequent prayer, self-restraint, meekness, and patience—all of these, so that you may lack nothing.

29. God, through His Saints, reveals the glory that awaits us in the future. St. Paul exclaims: *“We are unworthy to share in the glory that is to be revealed to us”* (Rom. 8:18); St. David sings: *“Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand”* (Ps. 83:11)—and: *“I will be satisfied when I behold Your glory”* (Ps. 16:15); and among the other prophets, one cries out that from there *“sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee away”* (Isa. 35:10). And how many more such testimonies can the seeker find in Scripture, which reveal to us the

inconceivable delight, the boundless joy, and the indescribable blessings promised by God to those who please Him. Let us therefore stand firm in this, be strengthened, be built up, and be perfected in Christ our God.

8. Do not grow weary: the labor is small; the reward is immeasurable

8. 1) Do not grow weary: the labor is small; the reward is immeasurable. – 2) Do not indulge the flesh, imagining that you are already walking the path of death. – 3) Offer every sacrifice—for the sake of the commandment... without fearing anything. [1, 9]

30. Do not stop or give in to laziness in serving God, and, despite the difficulties of the present time, do not deprive yourselves of the joy that awaits in the age to come. But everything—both words and deeds—endure with good cheer, and arrange your lives so that you may accept one another in God’s love and help one another in difficult matters. Even if you were to live a whole century in heroic deeds, it could not compare to a single hour of the immeasurable fullness of eternal immortality. Moreover, it is both blissful and—to put it in human terms—highly advantageous to suffer a little, as if in a dream, and in return to receive an infinitely blissful life.

31. Let us not indulge the body, which the Saints regarded as an enemy and subdued in every way through self-restraint, since indulging it is contrary to the spiritual life. Soon we will depart from this life. We see examples of this in our brothers, who one by one are laid to rest. — And will we remain here? Certainly not. – But oh! Oh, brothers! How dreadful is the matter of death! Why must we, as if inspired from above, constantly keep ourselves in a state of contemplation, reflecting that we are, as it were, already dying—that any moment the separation of the soul from the body will take place, the Angels will come (let me not say: the demons will also rush in; for that happens to those enslaved by their passions), and the call will be heard: “The time has come, soul, come forth!” What toil and what anguish the breaking of this union will bring then!—Then good deeds and a clear conscience will be a great help, a comfort, and an intercession for those who are departing. Then obedience will inspire boldness, humility will attract favor, a tear will move Him to mercy, the abundance of good deeds will gain the upper hand over the demons, patience will intercede for every deed—and the enemies will retreat empty-handed, while the soul, with the Angels, will go to the Savior in great joy. Then—there is cause for fear if, by any means, the soul, dwelling in the habit of passion, is found to be possessed by sin: for then the demons will gain the upper hand and cast the poor soul down with them into the abyss of hell, into darkness and the tormenting Tartarus. Such is the benefit to that soul (from indulging the passions)!

32. Let us therefore purify ourselves while we are still here. Let us shed blood in our struggles, and let nothing separate us from God’s commandment: neither toil, nor sickness, nor pleasure, nor rest, nor any form of contentment. Even if we were to die every day, we will endure it with joy, striving to live above worldly wisdom. We will fear nothing but God, the dreadful Judge: neither man, nor beast, nor fire, nor sword, nor sea, nor anything else that seems terrifying; for man, created in the image of God, is the lord and master of earthly creatures.

9. To cultivate, sow, and irrigate the field of the soul so that it may bear spiritual fruit

9. 1) Cleanse, sow, and water the field of the soul so that it may bear spiritual fruit. – 2) Moderation in food and sleep, and the fruits thereof. – 3) Endure meager clothing and footwear. – 4) Willingly endure suffering for the sake of the future. [1, 10]

33. Like good soil watered by the rain from the grace-filled streams of the Holy Spirit, bear fruit and cultivate virtues, like ears of grain full of life. Just as you renew your fields, so purify the soil of your soul from the thorns of the mind with the fire of the fear of God and the sword of truth. Sow, then, according to the Apostolic command, not in the flesh, lest you reap corruption from the flesh; but sow in the Spirit, that you may reap spiritual fruit from the Spirit [Gal. 6:8]—learning patience, perseverance, generosity, humility, and mutual love for one another, while hating envy, deceit, seduction, slander, and calumny.

34. Also cultivate self-restraint. Self-restraint means providing the body with food in accordance with its needs, neither overburdening it nor depriving it too much, just as one does when loading a ship; for when it is too full, it may sink, and when it is too light, it is in danger of capsizing. The same applies to sleep: one should get as much as is beneficial. A balanced diet leads to restful sleep, and then to alertness during psalm singing, attentive listening to the readings, and a clear understanding of every word of the divine hymns. When the soul is delighted by all this, it is put in a good frame of mind, warmed, and enlightened, tasting the fruits

of moderation in all things. But from overeating come heavy dreams; from both of these come a clouding of the mind, a failure to understand the words of the hymns, a tightening of the lips, and a darkening of the eyes, the soul, and the body: for the inner state corresponds to the outer. Then the thief of the soul, rushing in, steals whatever he wishes. That is why the Lord said, *“Watch”* (Matt. 26:41).

35. God loves a heartfelt word, a meek reply, a cheerful—not a troubled—face, a gentle disposition, and humble conversation. – Whoever bears hardships more patiently than others, whoever gives thanks when he lacks necessary clothing, shoes, or a head covering—that person is a true servant of God, exchanging temporary and insignificant things for future great blessings. I take care to satisfy everyone’s needs, and I say this so that, when certain things are lacking, no one will be distressed, annoyed, or complain. There are also those who, burning with love for God, voluntarily deprive themselves of other things. But certainly, everyone who gratefully accepts what is given to them, whenever and whatever it may be, does good.

36. The Kingdom of Heaven lies before us, and the reward of eternal bliss awaits those who please God. Who, then, would not rush to seize such treasures that are offered? Who would not willingly resolve to endure suffering, to be destitute, to endure cold and frost, and to mortify himself through ascetic deeds, for the sake of such and such blessings? – But you are not uninvolved in such labors and feats; for by cutting off your own desires, by renouncing everything, by every kind of endurance, you die daily, while at the same time your life is hidden in Christ Jesus, our Lord. When our life, Christ the Lord, is revealed—then you too will begin to rejoice with Him forever (Col. 3:4). Do not, therefore, seek rest here, but regard your suffering here as a guarantee of eternal rest there.

10. The Lord is coming—be patient; and what will sustain you?

10. 1) The Lord is coming—be patient—and find sustenance. – 2) Behold—this is your end—and paradise: there we will forget all our hardships. – 3) There, in the Lord’s palaces, there is rejoicing for those who have suffered for evil: who would not willingly choose them? – 4) Rejoice that you live in hardship and poverty: such is the monastic life. – 5) Help one another in everything—and the Lord is near. [1:11]

1. Walk in the way of God, having the Lord with you daily, as He has promised. For He Himself, through His Apostles, said to all *“who seek His covenant and His testimony”* (Ps. 24: 10) that He would be with them *“until the end of the age”* (Matt. 28: 20). His ways and paths are unfathomable. He is invisibly present to the eyes of the mind and converses silently with those who are pure in heart. Hold fast to your righteous path, avoiding the snares of the envious devil. Take up the wings of God’s love, so that you may soar on par with the clouds, above all earthly snares. Anoint your feet with the oil of joy and chastity, without fearing to walk the sorrowful path of the Lord. If you thirst from faintheartedness, drink the water of patience; if you hunger from spiritual weariness, partake of the bread that nourishes and strengthens the human heart—the word of wisdom, which bestows good strength and courage. You are well-prepared and alert; but as you gaze upon the mountain, do not take upon yourselves burdens that are hard to bear—that is, the enemy’s evil intentions. It is enough for one who walks the path leading from earth to heaven to walk this path without faint-heartedness, without taking on any burden.

2. You have judged well and acted wisely in leaving the world behind; now you are devoutly drawing near to the house of God, laboring for the Lord and serving Him daily, turning away from all that is temporary—family, homeland, and every desire of the flesh. Our work is the work of the angels. We shall endure a little longer, suffer a little more. The end and limit of our life is already drawing near; we shall be taken up by the holy angels, and we shall begin to rejoice forever, having become heirs of the promised blessings along with all the saints. And then we will have no regrets—neither that we triumphed, nor that we were exhausted by our ascetic struggles, nor that we fasted, or deprived ourselves of sleep, or endured cold and frost, or in any other way denied ourselves the fulfillment of our desires. On the contrary, we will bless and praise that day and hour when God was pleased to allow us to flee from the world and take the monastic habit. There, each of us will be rewarded a hundredfold for every suffering endured here, and instead of sorrow, we will find there joy that is all-encompassing and everlasting. Let none of us refuse to endure what we are facing; for in return we will receive inexpressible and eternal joy. May none of us ever hear: *“Remember that you received your good things in your womb”*; and: *“A great chasm has been fixed between us and you”* (Luke 18:26). This is a dreadful voice, separating the sinner from the righteous—dreadful even when one thinks of it. How much more dreadful it will be to hear it!

3. As far as the heavens are from the earth, so far will those who live in sin be from our Lord God. But His friends and true servants will enter into His presence, into His heavenly kingdom, into the heavenly Jerusalem, the great city, where there are unfathomable treasures, boundless glory, and eternal joy. There we will see one another and recognize one another; and I believe that if we always do God's will, we will be there together in unending joy. If this is so, shall we not labor, shall we not willingly endure suffering? Shall we not drink in with joy the mockery and insults, as if they were milk? Shall we not desire to be in the last place and rank, or even to be trampled upon more than all others? Shall we not choose to die every day of our own free will, like the gentle lambs of Christ? Yes, my brothers! Yes, my fathers! It was with such a disposition that the saints pleased God.

4. Let us not seek here a life of complete contentment, free from all trouble and hardship. Rather, let us rejoice when we suffer and be glad when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, when we are wronged, oppressed, or lack the necessities of life—in housing, food and drink, footwear and clothing, or in any other needs. This is our testimony, and for this the monk is blessed, as one who is constantly engaged in struggle and ascetic endeavor. If, however, you are not such, then it is clear that you do not stand on the monastic path, even though you are falsely, pretentiously, and hypocritically called by that name. However, I know of you that you sincerely submit to the monastic rule, skillfully walk its path, and live an angelic life, having the right hand of God supporting you, the comfort of the Holy Spirit strengthening you, and the holy angels and all the God-blessed martyrs and saints helping you.

5. *“Ascend the mountain of God and into His holy house,”* as the most eloquent Prophet Isaiah says (Ps. 2:3). Let no one fall behind, let no one sit idly by; help one another, abide in strong love for one another, encourage one another, compete with one another, and imitate one another. – Let there be among you neither indecent laughter, nor distracting and indulgent entertainment, nor long, idle conversations; and let discord and disobedience not even be mentioned among you. It is desirable that you speak with dignity and honesty, show a warm disposition toward one another, and address one another gently and cordially. *“Test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil”* (1 Thess. 5:21–22). May the Lord of peace grant strength and fortitude to your souls, and may He Himself shepherd you and *“lead you by the still waters”* (Ps. 22: 2), bringing you back to the path of righteousness, protecting you from the wiles of the malicious serpent, cheering you up, delighting you, comforting you, and making you worthy of His heavenly kingdom.

11. The enemy stirs up passions; but resist him, and you will overcome; the Lord is your helper

11. 1) The enemy stirs up passions; but resist him, and you will overcome; the Lord is your helper. – 2) Perform your duties, both in your work and in worship, blamelessly; do not neglect them. – 3) Let us labor and prepare ourselves, so that we may not encounter terrors at the hour of death and afterward—but may see only joy. [1, 12]

6. Come, let us all embrace with renewed readiness and zeal the desire to serve God and please Him again and again. And let nothing hinder us from this or hold us back; but let us renounce the world more completely, conquer the flesh, withdraw from kinship, despise pleasures, choose labor, and perform all other acts of virtue—and continue to do so—so that, having proven blameless in our calling, we may inherit the kingdom of heaven. The dreadful serpent, the all-malicious devil, creeps about relentlessly, desiring our ruin; he sneaks in secretly, enters our hearts, and sows the seeds of evil in each of us: in some, the sweetness of sin, so that for this pleasure and momentary delight he may deprive them of the taste of eternal blessings and cast them into the unquenchable fire; into some, a passion of envy equal to murder, caused by a brother's good reputation, which (envy) clouds his mind and, like one walking in the darkness of night, prevents him from seeing the glory of God, so as to reveal in him a new, ruinous Cain; who is led astray by gluttony, so that, by conquering him with carnal pleasures, he may be drawn away from God; upon whom despondency is cast; in whom he breeds aversion to his vocation, or to his fellow monks, or to the monastery; whom he compels to find psalm-singing, reading, and solitude burdensome—while against another he stirs up an unimaginable whirlwind of passionate thoughts and impulses, to lead him astray from the right path and destroy him. But *“Be strong, and let your heart take courage”* (Ps. 30: 25): for we place our hope in the Lord, who has crushed the power of death and *“given us authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10: 19). We see an example of this in St. Anthony the Great, who so crushed and destroyed the enemy's power that the enemy could not even bear the shadow of his holiness. Indeed, all the God-bearing Fathers conquered him, and all who, in this present age, work wholeheartedly for God, conquer him.

7. I see that you are working diligently, offering your labors as a sacrifice to God. But may your labors be blameless in every respect and worthy of reward. – How so? – Work quietly and silently; let no untimely words come from your lips; avoid boasting; abhor insolence; clothe yourselves in humility; discipline yourselves in every act of obedience. Take care not to bring death upon yourselves through any sin, and do not draw near to one another during the time of passion; do not dare to be alone together, for there is the fire of sin; do not touch any of your limbs, whatever they may be, especially one in particular, for there is wrath, fire, and death. Pay attention to the reading; sing the psalms with vigor; do not doze off while standing before God, and you will receive a gift from Him, for He always bestows gifts upon those who are alert. It is a pitiable sight when, in the presence of the King, some depart having received gifts, while others are sent away empty-handed. Although both groups were engaged in the same work, some labored lazily and sleepily, while others worked sincerely and with all their zeal; thus their fates turned out to be so different.

8. Hurry, strive, run, and reach the goal, lest the door be shut to us, lest the time of our life be cut short, lest we descend into the grave unprepared, lest we be separated from our union with the body as sinners, lest at the hour of the soul's departure we gaze upon the holy angels without boldness, lest that Ethiopian, as tall as the heavens, who was shown to Anthony the Great, seize us for our sins; lest we be swallowed up by chaos, the underworld, Tartarus, the ceaseless roaring fire, or other places of torment where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. But may we find there a peaceful and blissful long life; may we cling to Christ, our Lord and God, and behold that immeasurable beauty, that inaccessible glory of His face, dancing in a circle with the Holy Angels and all the saints, rejoicing there, where *"sickness, sorrow, and sighing have fled"* (Isa. 35: 10).

12. Let us depart from here... that is, from the realm of the passions, through abstinence of the belly, the eyes, the tongue, the ears, the hands, and the feet

12. 1) Let us depart from here... that is, from the realm of the passions, through abstinence of the belly, the eyes, the tongue, the ears, the hands, and the feet. – 2) Instructions for the steward, the foreman, the cellarer, the vegetable gardener and the gardener, the stablemaster, and the miller. [1, 13]

9. I declare to you, just as the Lord once said to His disciples: *"Rise up; let us go from here"* (John 14:31). I say this not in the sense of tearing ourselves away from the body before God—who has bound us to it to test our virtue—calls us, but so that, even while in the body, we may meditate on what is above the body and, as the Divine Paul wrote of himself (Gal. 6:14), —to crucify ourselves to the world; for, as he himself declared, *"Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"* (Gal. 5: 24). Therefore, bear all that is difficult and sorrowful with courage, and be temperate in all things. For if our forefather had been obedient in this regard to the divine commandment, he would not have tasted death instead of life through intemperance. Fast, then, and do not partake of the bitter tree of sin—if possible, not even in thought—but guard yourselves against it in every way through your actions. Do not cast lustful glances with greedy eyes, nor allow yourselves to be ensnared by temptation. Close your ears to foolish talk and useless chatter. Train your lips to speak only what is pleasing to God, and do not be idle talkers. Let your hands, feet, and all your members be protected from all that is passionate.

10. You, who have been entrusted with the task of *"stewardship,"* strive to walk blamelessly and without fault among your brothers, managing all things with humble wisdom. You, who have been entrusted with overseeing *"the fieldwork,"* attend to this task with the wisdom and steadfastness characteristic of you, faithfully carrying out all that is proper to it and keeping everything in order. Be patient and compassionate toward those who are weary, especially the novices. *"Let your speech always be seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to give grace to those who hear"* (Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29). Be honorable, eloquent, comforting, instructive, virtuous, and a guide in your work. *You are the steward* (apparently the chamberlain or disburser); trust in God and *"be strengthened with power according to His might"* (Eph. 1:19). Take the lead in caring for the brethren. By providing for them, you provide for God: for you are not feeding people, but—if you will—the Apostles of God. Prepare and give them food and drink—the best of what you have; but let there be no seasonings, no sweets, and nothing with which those who live for their bellies fill it. This is not fitting for the godly. But vegetables, bread, and water—these are all that is prescribed for them. In this, our Fathers found great comfort. And you, my child, *"good cook,"* take care of the brotherhood by preparing food for them as a comfort, so that you may shine in the kingdom of heaven like the sun. You—*"gardeners and orchard keepers"*—work, and strive to satisfy the brothers by providing them with all kinds of vegetables; and by

pleasing them, you will please God and be deemed worthy to enjoy eternal rest. You who “*serve in the storeroom*,” devote your strength to your work with all diligence and good will, even to the point of shedding blood, and treat the head steward well, for you depend on him. You who manage the affairs of the “*stable yard*,” you perform a service pleasing to God and to us, and you serve the brotherhood twice as much as others; therefore, you will be adorned with two crowns. Each of you who cares more for others, works for them, and labors on their behalf will undoubtedly receive a greater reward. Come to me, too, you who are assigned to the “*mills*”; and I tell you, you must take great care in your work; but do not allow anything superfluous beyond what is prescribed, whether in food, drink, or anything else. As for having to miss the rule, psalm singing, and other services—though we do not wish for this to be the case—we have no choice but to proceed this way due to extreme necessity. However, do not lose heart; we will make up for what you lack in this regard, even though we ourselves are sinners. Just be vigilant and mindful of yourselves, fear God, and avoid worldly conversations.

13. Rising; Matins; the First Hour; Work

13. 1) Rising; Matins; the first hour; work. – 2) Topics of conversation; competition; aversion to rest; warmth toward God and endurance in labor. – 3) Let us be patient, as the Lord is... and we shall receive His mercy. – 4) Pursuing self-serving interests and a lack of love for one’s brothers. – 5) One who is content with the abbot’s directives is honorable; one should not criticize these directives; may the Lord set the disorderly in order. [1, 14]

11. Let us live according to the rules and order established for us, compelling ourselves to be diligent in everything, both great and small. As soon as the bell rings, hasten cheerfully to gather in the church, as if summoned by an angel, to converse with God and serve Him through song, and in return to receive not that which is fleeting or temporary, but life-giving gifts from God. Upon entering the church, raise your voices in unison to praise the Lord God, and then listen attentively to the psalm singing and follow the readings with alertness, so that, enlightened by both, you may remain fruitfully in joy during the Divine Service and put the devil to shame. But at the same time, do not forget to pray inwardly with a sober mind, so that, having been seen as pure and even more enlightened, rather than darkened, you may leave the church. The service has ended; depart quietly and peacefully from the house of prayer. Then, each of you should turn to your studies, taking care not to squander the treasure gathered from the psalm singing through idle talk, but rather to add to that good what you will now learn. Another, if he wishes and has a need, may rest by lying down on his bed; but even then, having made the sign of the cross and lying down properly, let him mentally recite some psalm with reflection, so as not to fall into temptation from the enemy, the tempter. For the demons love to disturb our souls with evil impulses after the Divine Liturgy, to take revenge for the defeat inflicted upon them by our attentive and reverent presence in the church, and to cause us to squander what we have so well gathered from the church hymns and readings. To this end, they darken our thoughts, make the body unruly—due to its weariness from psalm-singing—and give rise to unseemly emotions and fantasies. But, of course, the one who refrains from sleep and engages either in deep reflection on the psalms or in some other activity—rather than rushing immediately to bed, unless sleep irresistibly draws him there—acts better; for in such a case, he remains free from temptation. Having spent this time in this way, we must all be prompt and keep up with one another, hastening to the first hour of the day: for why should we forfeit our reward and burden our conscience? After this, praying to God, “*May the work of our hands be established*” (Ps. 89:17), and may the whole day be spent in good works, set about your tasks as assigned—whether each person individually to their own, or all together to one task, when the need arises. Let your labor and work be accompanied by psalm-singing, prayer, and good thoughts, whether it be work in the field, in the vineyard, in the kitchen, or any other task performed according to the usual order at set times;—and let all this be carried out conscientiously with psalm-singing.

12. Let your speech always be about fitting subjects, whether it concerns bodily life or spiritual life—such as a troparion or some other activity. – Compete with one another in doing good. Each of you has your own good qualities, but what one lacks, another possesses: let him borrow it from the other, like a good bee diligently gathering honey from the flowers. – Let a love of ease be far from us, and let sloth be banished. – Let us be warm toward God and steadfast in our spiritual struggles; and let nothing stand as a barrier between us and our love for God: neither fasting, nor vigil, nor cold, nor heat, nor reproach, nor lack of necessities; but, regarding all else as secondary, let us give preference to our salvation above all else.

13. Let us bear all things cheerfully, remembering what terrible sufferings the Lord endured—for our sake. – What comparison can there be between a servant and his Master? – Indeed, whatever we may suffer is nothing. But the Lord, in His goodness, accepts even our small acts of goodwill; He is near to those who endure for His sake, as it is written (Ps. 144:18), and He is found by those who seek Him; if He opens the heavens to us—if we persevere, He will accept us and lead us into His heavenly joy and into the unmade-by-hands bridal chamber of the Kingdom of Heaven.

14. I cry out to you, calling heaven, earth, and the Holy Angels to witness: do not neglect your salvation; do not despise even a single commandment; do not walk in the darkness of unrevealed thoughts; avoid secret feasting, do not indulge in delicacies, do not pierce your souls with swords—that is, do not kindle in them the fire of insolence, even toward your own members, remembering that they belong to Christ and are therefore honorable, do not slander or become inflamed with anger toward one another; do not harbor envy within yourselves; do not repay evil with evil; do not seek leadership; do not covet clerical ranks prematurely, nor take delight in them in your thoughts; but by willingly revealing everything (to your spiritual fathers), be healed thereby, remain in good health through this, and be obedient in all things from the heart. This is the priesthood, the sacred ministry, and the worship of God!

15. He who, with a pure heart, reveals everything about himself before my humility, who holds a humble view of himself, who considers himself the lowest of all living creatures, and who seeks nothing higher than what he has received from my humility—behold, in my opinion, a noble and honorable person! But to scrutinize my decisions and discuss them in your own way, or to speculate on why I granted one person such a task and another a different one—why I admitted one to the clergy and assigned another to a different post—is neither beneficial to you nor proper. – May our Lord and God, who separates the worthy from the unworthy and “*lifts the poor out of the dunghill*” (Ps. 112: 7), who grants grace and understanding to the humble and girdles the feeble with strength (Ps. 17: 33), may He set you aright, calm you, accept you into His fold, grant you a good life, and strengthen you in all things for the perfect work, for the fulfillment of the commandments, for pleasing God, and for imitating the angels so that you may inherit the kingdom of heaven.

14. Turn to God, and regard nothing else as important

14. 1) Strive toward God, and regard nothing else as important. – 2) Whoever labors diligently in the monastery walks well toward the heavenly city to partake of its blessings. – 3) Your outward appearance is good; but see to it that there are no Judas, Hyesius, or the like among you in your inner order. – 4) Do not say, “I will do this or that, and I will achieve such-and-such”; but work, entrusting all that follows to the Lord. [1:16]

16. Come, my children, listen to me; pay attention to my words and take my humble teachings to heart! I cry out to all; I proclaim to everyone: Lift yourselves up to God; renounce your passions. Thus the prophetic word cries out to you: “*Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob*” (Isa. 2:3)—to the house of dispassion—and let us behold with our spiritual eyes the joy prepared for us, the promises of heavenly blessings. Take up zeal, spread your fiery wings like doves and fly, and soar from here to where virtue reigns; embrace joy and the spiritual love of God’s desire; taste His sweetest love, and in it regard all else as secondary—cast aside vain glory, carnal lust, and savage anger; and nothing that seems comforting here will be able to captivate you; but, as those who are well-girded, we will be light, sharp-sighted, and swift as we journey along the path leading to the kingdom of heaven.

17. It is inevitable for travelers to endure hardship and suffering, and so it is with us. For, as you see, our work demands toil, effort, and weariness: you labor, you grow weary, you sweat, you endure hunger and thirst—some in the fields, some in the vineyard, some at the olive presses, some in the kitchen, some on construction sites, some in the cellar, and simply everyone at the task to which they are assigned. All these are walking in the way of God, drawing near to the great city, and through death will be led into the joy of partaking of the blessings reserved for those who love God.

18. In this: when we clearly see those who walk in righteousness, we are comforted; but when we see those who act disorderly, we are indignant and grieve, and we correct them as much as possible; but what is hidden in your hearts is known only to you and to God. – But let there be no one among you who secretly, as if in darkness, does anything unseemly; for nothing escapes the all-seeing eye, even though it may escape ours. I always think the best of you. But who knows—is there not among you, among the Twelve, a Judas? Is there not, alongside the good teacher Giezius, a wicked one who carries eternal leprosy in his soul? Might

there not be among you yourselves those like the sons of the priest Elijah, who secretly eat and provoke God to anger, whose most pitiful end will be a calamity for me as well, even more so than for the sinful Elijah?—May we not suffer anything either—have mercy, O Lord! – Anything like Ananias and Sapphira, who, having dared to lie to the Apostles, suffered a bitter downfall: for it may well be that among you, too, there are those who, harboring falsehood in their hearts, do not speak the truth when answering a question or in casual conversation. I also fear the downfall of Simon the sorcerer, who, for the sake of human honor and glory, sought to associate with St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, even though outwardly he pretended to be his disciple. Let none of you look back, and let none of you fall away from your original purpose!

19. Let no one say, “I will do this or that, and by such-and-such a time I will have achieved this or that.” You who say this, yet do not know whether you will live through this very day—do you not think you might hear: *“Fool! This very night your soul will be taken from you, and the things you have prepared will belong to whom?”* (Luke 12:20). Let us imitate the unbreakable unity of the Apostles with their Teacher and the God of all, and, as we are always in the sight of the Lord, let us hasten our journey toward our salvation, entrusting all that follows into God’s hands, willingly enduring a little suffering here and sorrow, so that we may rejoice eternally. God calls us to this; the Holy Spirit assists us in this; and the Lord Jesus Christ strengthens us in this. Do not be afraid! The devil has been cast down; Christ is risen, and death no longer reigns.

15. You have fled from the world; but you have not fled from the turmoil of the passions stirred up by your enemies: you must be vigilant and resist

15. 1) You have fled from the world; but you have not fled from the stirrings of the passions, stirred up by your enemies: you must be vigilant and resist. – 2) Examples of those who, through faith, performed miracles of obedience: Dosipheus, Ananias, Zacharias, and others. – 3) Walk in the way of the commandments, bear obedience without complaint, and you will be saved. [1, 17]

20. Although we have fled from all worldly things and, as if entering a harbor, have taken on our sacred monastic habit, we still remain in this world as if at sea, not knowing when a stormy, devilish wind will rise against us, attempting to plunge the vessel of our soul into the depths, —where and how we will encounter the pirates of the mind—what hidden reefs of passion we will run aground on unnoticed, and how, throughout our entire lives, we will complete our voyage from earth to heaven without shipwreck. Therefore, my children, you must pay attention, be on guard, stay alert, and watch out, discerning the deceptions of the devil’s cunning, so that you do not find yourselves unprepared to resist the promptings of passion, repel its attacks, and continue your voyage safely, holding fast to the helm of our faith.

21. Those learning the ascetic life are enlightened by the good examples of the fathers—and through unshakable faith they are strengthened in their labors. – By faith, St. Dosipheus completed his course of obedience, without questioning, faithfully carrying out every command of his mentor and meekly enduring, at times, blows to the cheek and, at other times, ridicule. By faith, the blessed Abba Kir endured beatings, mockery, and persecution for fifteen years with courage and youthful resolve, as if he did not feel the weight of his troubles; and not only did he not complain, but he strongly defended and justified his attackers before the holy father when he questioned him. By faith, Theodore the Sanctified, for having entertained the thought of becoming primate, endured three years of excommunication from the Great Pachomius without resistance or complaint. By faith, he reaped the ripe fruit of obedience, having patiently and zealously tended his father’s staff for three years. By faith, Akakios, the ever-living, sometimes had bruises under his eyes, sometimes marks of blows on his cheeks, and sometimes one limb or another injured; he humbly endured it all without complaint, and for this he was deemed worthy of immortality. By faith, the ever-memorable Zacharias, though filled with the Divine Spirit, cheerfully endured his wounds, yet never strayed from his father. By faith, a certain marvelous man crossed a river carried by a crocodile. And each of the venerable fathers and perfect men, armed with the weapon of faith, passed through the fire and water of the devil’s temptations and entered the realm of eternal rest.

22. If you wish to be saved, there is no obstacle or barrier to it. You have before your eyes the true examples of those who have been saved and are being saved. Do not look to me, but listen to my words: for though I am a sinner, I speak the truth to you and show you the straight path. Strive, then, my children, having set aside disobedience and cast aside unbelief. Walk with reverence along the path of the Lord’s commandments. *“Seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”* (Matt. 7:7). I know this to be

true, and I am fully convinced of it. Bear your duties without complaint. Work diligently at what has been commanded of you without laziness. Do not be disobedient, quick to contradict or seek revenge, or reckless in bringing ruin and destruction upon your souls. Do not seek glory, and you will find it not only in the age to come, but also here and now, in a most brilliant way. Do not quarrel among yourselves, and do not provoke one another with sharp and insulting words over the assignment of duties—some more honorable, others less so—and you will be recognized as the first and will receive the foremost place in the eternal divine abodes. But if we act contrary to this, we will find the opposite—and wrath, anger, and disgrace (Rom. 2:8–9) will come upon every soul that does evil, both now and in the future. May this not befall you!

16. Seeing your progress, I rejoice; but fearing that you might stop, I beg you, do not hinder the flow, turning away from all that is unbecoming and zealously pursuing all that is proper

16. 1) Seeing your progress, I rejoice; but fearing that you might come to a standstill, I beg you: do not hinder the flow, turning away from all that is unbecoming and zealously pursuing all that is proper. – 2) Seeing death before us, let us set our hearts aright; it is difficult for us to undertake great physical feats; but if we preserve a good disposition in our hearts, then even with moderate self-restraint in all things, according to the rule and guidance, we will not fall behind the great men. – 3) The communal brotherhood is wondrous both in its composition and in its miracles: for every victory over passion is the expulsion of a demon. [1, 18]

23. My humble soul yearns and is consumed with a fervent desire for your salvation, as you walk the true path and press forward each day toward progress. Seeing your renunciation of all things and your selfless withdrawal from the world, your irrevocable estrangement from your own people, the dissipation of all your possessions, and the crucifixion of your very will—and the fact that you all, with one voice and one mind, strive toward the same goal—I take comfort in this. But I am also overcome by fear that one of you might in some way be deprived of the blessings you hope for. Therefore, I ask and implore you: do not halt your progress, but strive ever more zealously to do good for your own edification and the edification of your neighbor, presenting yourselves every day before God and the brotherhood as blameless and without fault, and yielding neither to envious zeal, nor to destructive grumbling, nor to godless pride, nor to slavish partiality, but acting obediently, quietly, and peacefully, —without vanity or ambition, wisely and conscientiously, for the sake of goodness itself, for the sake of our holy community, for the sake of God’s commandment and our abbot’s command, and, in short, for the sake of our own salvation, seeking day by day that one thing pleasing to God and striving for it alone, until the end of this present life comes.

24. The final hour has not yet come, but it is fast approaching, and for some it is already at the door. Why, as if standing right before our eyes and at our feet, does it terrify us, humble us, purify us, and turn us away from guilt for any evil or any straying from the right path, teaching us to live in community, in reverence, serenity, and harmonious unity of mind, as well as in the study of the divine Scriptures, in pure prayer, and in labor according to our ability. And fasting is a tool for the spiritual life, though it is bodily in nature—provided, that is, that it is guided by holy humility. It is beyond our power—and indeed unwise—to attempt the great feats of the holy fathers. But let us observe what has been said above (i.e., remembrance of the Lord’s Supper, reverence, serenity, unity of mind, instruction in Scripture, pure prayer, labor, and fasting to the best of our ability), and in our subordinate state choose what is fitting for us, strictly adhering to the communal rules as prescribed by law—in food and drink, —partaking not only of bread and vegetables, but also of wine and oil, and occasionally of fish and cheese, with proper moderation, not according to our own judgment: for that is inappropriate, but as we have established—and acting wisely and sensibly in all other matters, – whether we sleep, rest, walk, sit, gather together and converse, or celebrate—as well as when we plant, sow, build, or do carpentry—we will conduct ourselves in this way, and I assure you, we will in no way fall short of the greatness of those fathers.

25. One of the great spectacles and wonders is our gathering and union, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, of men from different countries and lineages, of different ages and ways of life, into a single body—harmonious and directed toward united action and united service—so that, though many in spirit, with many hearts and many minds, remains of one mind and one heart—not for any evil purpose, but to please God and to work for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Thus, our assembly (brotherhood) is in and of itself great and honorable, on a par with great miracles; but miracles are also actually performed within it, if we live as we ought. For are not demons cast out here as well?—They are cast out, and not on this or that day, but every day and even every hour—they are cast out and scorched. Each of us, by overcoming a passion, scorches and casts

out the demon of that passion: he who overcomes fornication casts out the demon of fornication; he who overcomes sloth casts out the demon of sloth; he who overcomes anger and rancor casts out the demon of anger and rancor; he who overcomes judgmentalism and grumbling casts out the demon of judgmentalism and grumbling. So it is with the overcoming of other passions. Are you not, then, miracle-workers, if you so desire?—And the Lord accepts your way of life as the feats of the desert fathers and the pillar-standers who performed such wondrous miracles.

17. Why did you leave the world? To be purified; and blessed is the one who lives in the spirit of this life, especially in faith in the abbot

17. 1) Why did you leave the world? To be purified; and blessed is the one who lives in the spirit of this life, especially in steadfast faith. – 2) People come to our monastery to be saved: set before them, then, an example of the monastic life and monastic discipline. [1, 19]

26. Let us be mindful of ourselves, remain sober, stay alert, and lift up our thoughts to God. Let us frequently recall to ourselves that ever-memorable exhortation of the Great Arsenius: “Arsenius, why did you come here?” For we, too, have left the world. – Why, then? – Not for the repose of the flesh, not to indulge in pleasures, nor merely to learn to read and write or calligraphy, or to acquire knowledge, or to become good readers; nor to indulge in self-serving activities, to seek glory, to boast, to exalt ourselves above others, or to be domineering, – not for any of these things or anything like them; but for what? – To be cleansed of sins, to clothe oneself in the fear of God, to humble oneself even unto death, a death of the cross, that is, to the point of renouncing one’s own desires and putting to death the lusts of the flesh, to wage war against one’s adversary, the devil, and to fight “*against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world*” (Eph. 6:12), so as not to succumb to the manifold temptations of the flesh, and finally, to acquire strong faith in the intercession of your spiritual father, the abbot, by which we may truly quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Eph. 6:16). Now tell me, how are things with you?—examine, consider, and investigate. And blessed is the one among you and within you who keeps the commandments, who has not surrendered himself as prey to the merchants of sin, who is precise in obedience, who is enlightened by perfect confession, who is illuminated by God-given humility and by golden, Christ-like obedience, and who, as if clothed in a purple mantle, is wrapped in unshakable faith in his spiritual father, the abbot, not wavering in the tasks he has assigned, not prejudging anything before his decisions, and not regarding anything on earth as more salvific for himself than what the abbot regards as such for him. I should note that I do not mean myself here, but those who strictly observe God’s commandments.

27. Souls come to us, truly sent by God, to be saved in our monastery. That is why our observance of the commandments must be the most complete and strict. They have come to be enlightened, not to be darkened. Shine, then, my brothers, even though I am dark; season yourselves with grace-filled virtues, even though I am filled with corruption. – In what should your praise consist? In yielding to your brother in speech, in never contradicting him, in not grumbling about anything, in being lambs without malice, not prickly, but meek before our Chief Shepherd, Christ; to avoid indecent laughter and shameful conversations; to be watchful in psalm-singing and sober in prayer. Strive, then, my children, more and more to purify yourselves, to live in chastity, to perfect yourselves and be sanctified, to become like gods—though this word may seem bold—as the Savior promised through the Psalmist, saying: “*You are gods, and sons of the Most High*” (Ps. 81: 6; John 10: 34).

18. Community life is most praiseworthy; and blessed is the one who lives in the Spirit

18. 1) Community life is most praiseworthy; and blessed is the one who lives in its spirit. – 2) One must strive ever more to excel, not wasting one’s days in vain. – 3) Glory to the fathers! They, heeding the word of truth, lived exemplary monastic lives: imitate them. [1:20]

28. I urge you earnestly—do not be negligent in striving for the salvation of your noble souls. For I do not think there is anything else that could be more beneficial to you than a reminder of our virtuous way of life. And do not be bored that I speak of the same thing over and over again. “What else, then, should we discuss? Have we changed the way of life we have begun, so that we might turn to another subject in our conversation? No; we must not cease to say the same thing over and over again, and to speak of the same thing time and again; and we will never cease to praise what is good and rebuke what is evil—proclaiming how good and blessed is complete withdrawal from the world and the harmonious fellowship of the brethren; and

affirming that there truly is a “world” that “descends upon the beard, the beard of Aaron” (Ps. 132: 2), if anyone, having entered this community, has clothed himself in humility, wrapped himself in obedience, and sought to cut off his own will, has embraced the depths of love for God, rises in spirit from strength to strength, loves all things and patiently fulfills all that is required by the community’s rule, without deceit in anything, and without harboring suspicious thoughts or designs that separate the humble novice from God and the abbot. Let us, then, brothers, lovingly embrace all that exists and occurs in the community as holy and salvific, even if some things seem unpleasant: for through this our rough edges are smoothed away, and we are rounded out so that we may roll more easily toward our goal.

29. Strive to be of benefit to one another and do not seek your own interests, but rather what is beneficial to the community in every way; and as you grow ever stronger and more refined in your souls, keep yourselves in unceasing obedience, renewing yourselves daily and, as the days, months, and years pass, progressing ever toward the better and better, while there is still time to prosper and grow rich. Do not be lazy; do not give in to sleep and carelessness; and do not waste the days of this life in vain. When the time of reckoning comes, we will clearly see the fruits of our labors and the barrenness of our negligence; we will see that, by paying attention to ourselves and our work, we have borne fruit, and that, by neglecting this, we have ruined ourselves.

30. Glory to the blessed souls of our holy and venerable fathers, truly wise and discerning! They did not listen to the word of truth in vain; they did not cast it aside, nor did they trample it underfoot: but they labored sincerely with the sweat of their brow, humbled themselves, subdued their own will, loved to be last, loved simplicity in all things and poverty, and shunned conflict, and bore everything cheerfully with patience; they willingly submitted to their fathers’ commands; they burned with faith; they loved silence; they bore the infirmities of the weak, ready even to shed their own blood for them, like martyrs. And what more is there to say? You yourselves know your predecessors and leaders; imitate them, follow in their footsteps, and may you be deemed worthy to share in their glory.

19. Let each one excel more and more in his or her own virtue: the obedient in obedience; the humble in humility; the diligent in labor

19. 1) Let each one excel more and more in his own virtue: the obedient in obedience; the humble in humility; the diligent in labor. – 2) Whatever duty of obedience you are assigned, be diligent in it. – 3) If you act in this way, the Lord will comfort you both here and in the age to come. [1, 21]

31. Continue as you began, and not only do not cease from doing good deeds, but practice them more and more; let your spirit burn ever more brightly, and hasten toward the heights of the heavenly life. “*Obeying One*,” be ever more obedient, so that you may reap the fruit of obedience, submitting not only to those in authority but also to ordinary people, without fuss or resistance, whatever they may command. “*Humble One*,” humble yourself more and more, yielding in all things and agreeing with everything, in a humble view of yourself, with a plain outward appearance, a gentle voice, and few words, not dwelling on the thought that perhaps you were once of noble birth, or that you have long dwelt in the monastic habit, or that you hold some high rank and carry out many assignments, —I will add to this—without raising your eyes or adopting a stern gaze or a certain air of superiority simply because you are intelligent, stately, have a pleasant manner of speech, are capable of anything, or possess some other praiseworthy quality. “*Diligent*” and zealous in fulfilling the obedience entrusted to him, working as if for the Lord and not for men, he increasingly proves himself to be a worker without shame, taking on the most difficult tasks and rejoicing in exhausting himself for the sake of his neighbor, convinced that through this a great reward is being stored up for him in heaven.

32. Let us all—whether cellarer, hospital attendant, calligrapher, vineyard keeper, gardener, shoemaker, cook, steward, teacher, watchman, wake-up caller, rule-keeper, candle-lighter, baker, carpenter, or anyone assigned to any task, whether great or small—let us, in an unceasing flow toward the future, with an unquenchable longing for eternal blessings, courageously carry out our labors, endure all things willingly, do everything pleasing to God, bring benefit to ourselves, and sacrifice ourselves for one another to such an extent that each one would be ready to lay down even his own soul for his brother.

33. If you act in this way, the Only-Begotten Son of God will comfort you—He who, for the sake of obedience to God the Father, humbled Himself to the utmost degree of humility, so that He became a servant, though He is the Lord of all, and tasted death—the death of the cross— —there will be joy and inexpressible gladness both for me, a sinner, and for you, the keepers of the commandments, not only here, where you are

glorified by all who see your deeds, your struggles against the enemy and your repelling of his attacks and stratagems, but also in the age to come, when you will rejoice in the presence of the glory of Christ God together with the angelic choirs, there where *“the dwelling place of all who rejoice.”*

20. I rejoice in your successes... in some, humility; in others,

20.

1) I rejoice in your successes... in some, humility; in others... (lists monastic virtues). – 2) In the same vein—pushing the thought further and further away: “We still have a long life ahead of us... we’ll have time.” – 3) Do not boast of either natural gifts or acquired possessions, for God will give more; on the contrary, there will be loss. [1, 22]

1. A farmer rejoices in a fruitful field; but abbots are even more delighted by the spiritual fruitfulness of the souls entrusted to their care. You, too, bring me joy, my children, my planting, and God’s harvest (1 Cor. 3:6). I rejoice when I see your diligence, zeal, and eagerness for all that is necessary for salvation. I am gladdened by those who show meekness, tireless diligence, modesty and reverence, the repulsion and overcoming of the enemy’s temptations, uncomplaining obedience in fulfilling the duties entrusted to them, peacefulness and quietness of spirit, simplicity of character, in whom there is faith in my humility rather than in my dignity, in whom there is dispassion and a non-peace-loving disposition—I rejoice in all of you for your spiritual progress and perfection and your loving unity as one body, brought about by God’s guidance from above and by the prayer of my Father and yours. I rejoice in this, and I marvel, for this is truly worthy of all wonder.

2. I fear that, because of my inattention and my deep sorrow over my sins, the Lord might withdraw His providential right hand extended over us—and that something might enter among us that is not only unfit to speak of but even to think of: the sloth and disruption of any soul, or even a fall, whether hidden or obvious. Take heed, then, to yourselves; do not stray from the course you have set, but, remaining steadfast, be transformed from glory to glory and from holiness to holiness. Be steadfast, and do not stray from the circle of deeds you promised before God and the Angels, and before my humility; but rather, add labor to labor. Take care that the thought of a long life does not unsettle you, and that it does not weaken the firmness of your resolve to live in self-denial and self-discipline. This thought is false: for what is our life? A dream and a shadow. This thought is false, yet deceptive: for instead of adding humility to humility and obedience to obedience, it leads one to grant oneself one concession after another, which often leads to the complete disruption of a God-pleasing life.

3. Be on your guard, lest what appears to you as perfection become a thorn of sin, —neither your ability to learn quickly, nor your knowledge, nor some experience in the spiritual life, nor occasional good conscience, nor diligence, nor skill in handicrafts, nor harmonious singing, nor a pleasant voice, nor dignity, nor anything else of this sort. All these are gifts from God, which should serve to increase your fear and humility before God, the Giver. By adopting this attitude, we will make Him even more merciful toward us and even more generous—and we will be enriched with every good thing and become a holy temple to God, adorned with gift upon gift. If, on the other hand, we lift up our heads before God and become proud before our brothers—raising our eyebrows, shrugging our shoulders, adopting a haughty gait, and questioning why this or that is done, why it is done this way and not another, or why I have not been entrusted with overseeing such-and-such a task, and why that person is in charge of such-and-such a task, or that the very same task is completely unnecessary, with labor and time merely wasted on it—if we act this way, we will turn a time of fruitfulness into a time of barrenness, a time of profit into a time of loss, a time of good work into harmful inaction and wickedness—and instead of ascending the mountain of virtue, we will descend deeper and deeper into the abyss of sin.

21. Be good—and do not let the enemy into your heart, lest he cry out: “Everyone has become evil.”

21. Be good—and do not let the enemy into your heart, lest he cry out: “Everyone has become evil.” [1, 28] Keep the path of the commandments pure before the eyes of your soul, humbly recognizing and correcting every stumbling block—whether it be some form of disobedience worthy of condemnation or a contradiction that brings shame; walk in the right path, and you will find peace for your souls. Our enemy uses every pretext to force his way into our brotherhood and stir it up. Do not accept him; shield yourselves with the shield of faith and repel him with the sword of God’s Word—and this destroyer will never find a

place within you nor boast that he has led you into a fall. Show yourselves to be a contingent of God's army, impregnable to him, and let him, instead of boasting, complain as St. Macarius once did: "All the wicked have turned against me." You have Christ the Lord as your commander, and the angels as your helpers and protectors. *"Do not let your feet be shaken—for He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep"* (Ps. 120:3).

22. Everything comes from God; nevertheless, our own effort is also required to persevere and press forward

22. 1) Everything comes from God; yet our own effort is also required to preserve and press forward. – 2) Thus far the Lord has preserved you well—and you have prospered; continue in the same way—in prayer, silence, and so on. – 3) Endure hardship and sorrow; all of life is but a single day, yet through it one may attain eternal bliss. [1, 24]

4. Give thanks to the Lord for all our successes; for from His bountiful goodness comes all that is good in people: *"for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things"* (Rom. 11:36). And if anyone were to presume to boast that he is something, he will hear the words of the Apostle: *"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?"* (1 Cor. 4:7). – Nevertheless, all this requires effort, a strenuous course of action, and unceasing diligence coupled with humility, which affirms, safeguards, and focuses our mind in a godly, devout life, so that we may not stray from our good beginning, nor bring shame upon our previous labors through subsequent sloth, and not to turn back from a virtuous life to a wicked one, but by being transformed for the better, to be purified, enlightened, and to ascend the mountains day by day, becoming brighter than the bright, transforming from stars into suns, and clothing ourselves with the most valiant strength. Cast aside, I beg you, all carnal reasoning and the greatest obstacle to virtue—worldly glory—and with the spiritual sword cut off every passion and every lust of the flesh, clinging to God and ascending to Him along the spiritual ladder, daily laying the godly foundations and deepening the spiritual foundations, while casting aside carnal audacities by cutting off desires, quenching the flames of passion with the outpouring of tears, and driving away the tormenting cravings for food and drink—or any other vanity—through contemplation of future blessings.

5. Until now, through the prayers of my father and yours, the Lord has kept you safe; you have prospered, walking the royal path of virtue, adorned with the beauty of dispassion, and have seen that there is nothing so good and pleasing as to rid yourselves of passions and, rising above them, to reign royally over all things earthly and, as it were, to reign with God. Do not forget this, and do not grow complacent, having abandoned the way of life entrusted to you and which you have walked so well; rather, *"enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise"* (Ps. 99:4) more and more; be enriched by the fruits of your obedience and, in them, drink the wine of contrition that gladdens your holy hearts; do not cease from your other godly deeds; keep your lips silent; do not wound your brother's conscience with the pretense of a false and self-imposed abstinence from any food; do not put on a stern face; do not speak excessively or idly; do not prefer your own peace to the good of your neighbor; be of one mind, one heart, and one will in Christ Jesus our Lord, having Him as your head.

6. *"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"* (Eph. 6:10), and courageously endure all that is unpleasant, sorrowful, and difficult, keeping the mystery of our death before the eyes of your mind and regarding the entire duration of our life as brief. And according to St. Gregory the Theologian, the whole of life is but a single day for those who are earnestly engaged in their primary task of salvation. But on this day, in this fleeting time that passes like a dream, we can attain the Kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of endless joy and gladness.

23. Resist the enemy who stirs up passions

23. 1) Resist the enemy who stirs up passions. – 2) Let the elders help the younger ones. – 3) How many times has it happened... that a passion arises, but resist it with prayer, and everything will subside. – 4) Do not lose heart: the Lord is near. [1:25]

7. Strive, my beloved children, strive, my lords and masters, strive against the devil's wiles, against his daily attacks directed at you, against the fire of lust, against the darkness of despondency, against the calamitous wandering from place to place, against the serpent of envy, against the unrestrained tendency toward untimely speech and mockery, against every passion that opposes and fights against you.

8. The first among the last, the strong among the weak, those who have been tempted among those who are tempted, those enriched with spiritual fruits among the poor in them, the successful among the beginners, the long-standing among the new—help them, extend a hand, instruct them with words, point out what is best, inspire them toward what is beneficial, so that we may all be saved.

9. Recall how many years of your spiritual struggle have passed, and how many and what kinds of temptations you have faced up to now! Let each one recall how many times he was overcome by temptation, grew weary, and lost heart; then suddenly found strength, good cheer, fortitude, a life-giving spirit, and inspiration—whether through a word of admonition or a brother's prayer; then again the struggle—and again strengthening by God's mighty power. So it will be in the days to come of your ascetic life, and even more so—*"we will pass through fire and water and enter into the rest"* of dispassion (Ps. 65:12).

10. Therefore, let no one lose heart, let no one lose courage! Let us help one another, comfort one another, and inspire one another to love, patience, and zeal for the fulfillment of God's commandments. And may our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, the hope of the hopeless, the support of the falling, the healer of the sick, the ready companion of those who journey and the reliever of their toil—and, in short, the hope of all the ends of the earth and those far out at sea—may He prepare and smooth your path, and may He grant you success in every deed and movement, in your straight path toward perfect salvation and the attainment of the city of His dwelling.

24. Against the inflaming of the passions: the Word of God, guarding the senses—especially the eyes—and denying rest to the flesh: be on your guard; you fell after baptism; do not fall again after taking the vows of the schema

24. Against the inflaming of the passions: the Word of God, vigilance over the senses—especially the eyes—and denying the flesh its rest: be on your guard; you fell after baptism; do not fall again after taking the vows of the schema. [1, 27] The climate here is hot and scorching—not by natural fire, I mean, but by a certain invisible fire that burns the soul, which emanates from the embers of sin, ignited by the sparks of passion cast into our hearts by the enemy spirits. But you have, from the divine lips, the outpourings of the Spirit (the Word of God) flowing like a river, to extinguish it, and, like the three youths in the fiery furnace, to remain unburned and untouched by (this) fire. In this, you must guard your senses, especially your sight, through which—when used imprudently—our enemy most often casts the fire of passion into the soul. We must also guard ourselves against other temptations arising from the flesh, which are provoked by a lack of moderation in food, drink, sleep, and every other form of bodily rest. For just as comprehensive self-restraint gives rise to the strength to persevere in virtue, so does negligence in this regard give rise to every form of the tyranny of sin. Take heed, then, and do not return to this slavery, having been freed from it by entering your present calling with the appropriate vows, and do not bring upon your own heads a double torment—for falling after baptism and after taking the schema.

25. To those who conquer their passions—crowns; to those who yield to them—torments; if you are in the first group, well and good; if in the second, hasten to correct yourselves

25. 1) To those who conquer their passions—crowns; to those who succumb to them—torment; if you are in the first group, that is good; if in the second, hasten to correct yourselves. 2) Strive to keep the commandments; let no one be lazy, double-minded, or self-righteous. – 3) Let each one contribute his or her share through obedience; the Lord will accept it, no matter how small it may be. – 4) Do not stop in the face of difficulties; keep going, helping one another. 5) External and internal hardships are fleeting; be patient, and relief will come. – 6) Who has ever been crowned without toil? – But death is at hand, and toil will end; you will join the ranks of the saints. [1:28]

11. Behold the arena of competition! Behold the struggle!—He who fights vigorously, runs well, and keeps his mind detached from all that is sensual and passionate achieves true victory, is crowned with the wreath of immortal glory, is proclaimed a son of God, and becomes an heir to eternal blessings even while still here. But whoever is carried away by the delights of sin and casts himself into the devil's snares suffers true defeat, is covered with shame because of his sins, becomes a son of the devil, and an heir to the fire of Gehenna and various other eternal torments. Take a good look within yourselves, test your faith, and discern what and where your standing and your path are. And if you are on the right path and are walking the royal way, well and very well!—But if you have sinned along the way and fallen into the rapids of sin, hurry to

return before this seventh age comes to an end and the eighth age begins, bringing with it judgment and retribution.

12. Strive to keep God's commandments; sow the seeds of virtue in your hearts, so that, in due time, you may reap the fruits of righteousness. Let no one be idle, lest he hear from the Source: "*Go to the ant, you sluggard, or go to the industrious bee*" (Prov. 6:6, 8). Let no one be deceitful or double-minded, having one thing in their heart and saying another, lest they be struck down by the terrible judgment of the psalmist David, who says: "*The Lord will destroy all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks deceitfully*" (Ps. 11:4). Let no one remain idle or be lazy, lest he fall under the condemnation of St. Paul, who says: "*If anyone is unwilling to work, let him not eat*" (2 Thess. 3:10). Let no one be overly wise, lest he experience what St. James warns against, saying: "*The Lord opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (James 4:6).

13. Let us all walk cheerfully in the Lord and keep His commandments, each of us bringing into the fellowship of our life what is within our power and at our disposal—some as stewards, some in the ministry, some caring for the sick, some in singing, some in reading, some in other ways—as if into our treasury (Mark 12, 43)—whatever is within their power and at their disposal: some through stewardship, some through ministry, some through caring for the sick, some through singing, some through reading, some through gardening, some through calligraphy—and in general, let no one be one who contributes nothing, nor let anyone appear before the Lord empty-handed. The Lord accepts not only great offerings but also the smallest ones; He even accepts the one who recites a verse in remembrance of death, if perhaps he is unable to do anything else, just as He accepted the widow's two mites. God determines the value of deeds, looking upon the will of the one who does them. Since we have a God who is good and most merciful, and who desires our salvation even more than we do ourselves, let us walk in His righteous ways, and we will find peace for our souls.

14. Let none of the chance difficulties on our Gospel path hinder anyone's progress; but even if the path is arduous and difficult, let us press on, let us be of good cheer, let us be courageous, and let us pass from hill to hill, from hillock to hillock, until we ascend the Lord's mountain and stand in His holy place of serenity. Those who walk together make the journey easier for one another. "*Bear one another's burdens,*" as the Apostle says, "*and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Gal. 6:2).

15. It is always the case that today there is timidity, and tomorrow courage; now a melancholy disposition, and suddenly inspiration; at this moment a rebellion of passions, and in the next, God's help and their suppression; You will not be the same tomorrow as you were yesterday, nor will you remain the same forever, my beloved; but God's grace will come to you, and the Lord will triumph through you. You will then say, "Where have You been until now, Lord?" And He will answer you, "I was watching you struggle, and I was waiting." Let us therefore be patient and show a little magnanimity; let us restrain ourselves and subdue our bodies, enslaving them and casting our passions far from us.

16. Who is crowned without having striven? Who finds rest without having suffered? Who reaps the fruits of life without having planted and nurtured virtues in his soul? Plant, graft, labor, and sweat, my children, workers of God, imitators of the angels, competitors with the incorporeal ones! Do you not see the end of these struggles? Do our brothers not die often? Do we not sing funeral hymns for the departed every single day? Why, then, do you torment yourself with grief—you who are faint of heart? Death will come to you as well. Not today—you will die tomorrow. With what immense joy will you depart from this world and ascend to heaven, to God, into the inaccessible light, into unspeakable joy, into inconceivable glory, into the dwellings of the angels, into the courts of the Lord, into the church of the firstborn, into the bosom of Abraham? And whom will you behold there? The Lord God, our Savior; the Mother of God, the Queen of the World; the incorporeal powers; the Cherubim and Seraphim; and all the ranks of the Holy Apostles, Prophets, Hierarchs, Martyrs, Venerable Ones, and all the Saints, whose number is beyond count. Does this not fill you with wonder, inspire you, and lift you above every toil, every sorrow, and every hardship?

26. Looking down upon the world from the heights of the monastic life, you see a sea of vanity surging; rejoice, then, that you have been delivered from this

26. 1) Looking down upon the world from the heights of the monastic life, you see a sea of vanity surging; rejoice, then, that you have been freed from this. – 2) Then, turning your gaze inward, you see the same things (parents, relatives, possessions, and so on), but in a divine and blissful light; so run well, that you

may attain it. – 3) A list of the virtues that lead upward and the vices that lead downward. – 4) A lament over monastic shortcomings. [1, 29]

17. I will now begin my instruction to you with the Apostolic proclamation: “*Rejoice in the Lord always*” (Phil. 4:4). And how can you not rejoice and walk in joy when, by the foreknowing and predestined calling of God, who in all His wisdom ordains all things, you have been deemed worthy to be accepted into this Gospel way of life and now sit on a lofty vantage point of a high dwelling, you look down upon the insignificant and lowly vanities of human life, which are tossed about like the sea and carried hither and thither by the fickle movement of things. As you can see, there is nothing solid there; nothing remains in one position; kings change, princes fall, and the rulers of the earth, like all people, die; those who marry soon part ways, leaving and being left behind; beauty fades, youth flies by swiftly, pleasure soon passes, all possessions vanish like a shadow and a dream; weeping and beating one’s breast at parting with the dead, despondency and despair at separation from loved ones, unbearable torment when one fails in the pursuit of one’s desires—be it marriage, rank, wealth, or pleasures and delights—the anguish of envy and jealousy, of accidental humiliations and disgrace—and so on and so forth.

18. But to what are you called, and, having ascended the Lord’s mountain, what do you see?—This lies before you: instead of the earth, heaven; instead of parents, God, the true and supreme Father; instead of relatives, companions and brothers of like mind; instead of friends, incorporeal and godlike angels; instead of treasures—the wealth of virtues; instead of high offices—the ineffably great and endless kingdom of heaven; instead of the pleasures of fornication—sweet and insatiable dispassion; instead of all worldly satisfaction—inconceivable and ineffable blessings. Knowing this, fear the one living God; fortify yourselves spiritually; clothe yourselves in the armor and full equipment of the commandments; take up the spiritual sword, which is the word of God; and cast down the rulers of the darkness of this age and the spirits of wickedness, so that you may cry out with the divine Paul: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day*” (2 Tim. 4:7).

19. “*They ascend to the heavens and descend to the abyss,*” sings St. David. Taking this spiritually, we learn the following lesson: whoever, little by little, corrects what is right in the proper way ascends to the highest degrees of virtue; but whoever gives in to negligence descends into the abyss of ruin. Now let us consider what lifts us up and what brings us down. The following lift us up: Christ-like obedience, humility united with God, detachment from self-exaltation, from all pretensions, from the love of primacy, from the desire to show off, from cunning, from schadenfreude, from ambition, from mockery and ridicule, from boasting and pride in anything from one’s past life (as happens when someone says: “I used to be such-and-such, I had this and that, I did such-and-such deeds.”—Oh, what a shame! What ought to be concealed, he uses to boast, having forgotten his God-like calling). I will add: composure, sociability with the brotherhood, readiness to apologize, bowing of the head and eyes, lowering the eyes and eyelids to the ground, modest posture of hands and feet, not worrying about what or how one is dressed, and above all—frank confession of every movement of the soul—and, so as not to prolong this further, —every other good feeling, disposition, and deed equivalent to those mentioned. —But the following lead to degradation: the fear of God; where there is no fear of God, there is every kind of sorrow, anger, and blasphemy (Eph. 4:31), according to the Apostle, and their consequences: haughty reasoning, a haughty countenance, a twisted gaze (or a raised gaze), flared nostrils, narrowed eyelids, and bristling hair.

20. Because of my sins, I see some within the brotherhood who have gone astray and forgotten their covenants with God and their solemn promises—and the fact that in the future we are to stand before the dreadful judgment seat. O foolish and slow of heart (Luke 24:25), let us keep in mind what we agreed upon and resolved at the beginning! Did we not vow to thirst, to hunger, to prepare ourselves, to endure ridicule, abuse, wounds, and even death? But where are such people among us now, when the slightest unpleasantness befalls anyone, and he becomes utterly disheartened?—Let us all, then, reflect on ourselves and take the fear of God to heart. Let none of us dare to return to what we have renounced. Let us not allow ourselves, out of pity for the laity because of their waywardness, to be bitterly mourned by them—both in this life and in the age to come—because of our own sinfulness. What good is it when they call you “Holy Father”?! What good is it that people ask for our blessing when we ourselves remain unblessed and unrestrained, like wild beasts?!—May God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve those who walk in His way, and may He lead those who have slipped back onto the path of His commandments!

27. *The daily church services, meager provisions, observance of community rules, fines, and penances require much toil and patience; but since this leads to salvation—and crowns await for it—take heart*

27. 1) Daily church services, meager provisions, adherence to communal rules, fines, and penances require much toil and patience; but since these lead to salvation and bring crowns, take heart. – 2) Strive to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil; above all, let your speech be well-ordered. [1:31]

21. Pray and ask the Lord to grant me the words to speak through my humble lips for the comfort and encouragement of your souls; for I see, my brothers, what great toil you endure daily—in keeping vigil and observing the rule of prayer, rising for this purpose at midnight and before midnight, and then at set hours, seven times a day coming to confess to the Lord concerning the ways of His righteousness, with kneeling and many prostrations, while warding off evil thoughts and revealing them to your fathers, enduring the shame that comes from this, and performing penance for it—through which the fiery arrows of the Evil One are repelled; I will add to this the overcoming of drowsiness, abstinence by cutting off the desire for food and drink, rest, and walks—which the flesh so eagerly craves—interaction with the brethren, and the humble wearing of clothing, sometimes unclean, unkempt, shabby, and full of holes; and furthermore: do not speak of this, do not look at that, do not touch that, do not go there, restrain yourself in this, do not lose heart in that, be always ready for that, do not turn away from that... all this and the like is difficult, burdensome, and bitter. But since all of this is directed toward the salvation of our souls, it ought to be sweet, easy, and comfortable for us, so that we may say of ourselves, along with the Apostle: *“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us,”* the Lord and God (Rom. 8:37). The heavenly crown prepared for us is the crown of martyrdom, along with unspeakable joy and the delight of eternal blessings. *“Be of good courage, then, and let your hearts be strengthened, all you who hope in the Lord”* (Ps. 30: 35).

22. Continue to practice your ascetic and blessed life, so that by abiding in it for a long time you may acquire the riches of virtue and, as you grow in the body, may also advance in spiritual maturity, becoming wise and skilled in humility, obedience, and the subduing of your own will, but unwise and foolish in pride, contention, and deceit: *“For the deceitful will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord will inherit the earth”* (Ps. 36: 9). Do not allow yourselves to become a stumbling block to one another through self-willed acts of service, but strive in every way to choose and do what is harmless to your neighbor. *“Let your speech,”* my children, *“always be seasoned with grace, like salt”* (Col. 4:5)—not ostentatious, not rude, not haughty, not burdensome, not hurtful, not breathing with the passion of malice or vanity, not shameful, not contradictory, not contentious, not verbose, not ridiculous, not careless, and not idle; but respectful, gentle, gracious, sincere, peaceful, accommodating, full of contrite and humble reflection, submissive, quiet, measured, and orderly, so that through it we may serve one another’s salvation and mutual edification. – Suppress the outbursts of devilish lusts, and drive away the hordes of hostile thoughts; for from this come our spiritual health and well-being, our success and the good course of our lives, and our readiness and fitness for every good deed.

28. *You are like good soil, bearing the fruit of virtue, whether this or that*

28. 1) You are like fertile soil; some of you bear the fruit of virtue, while others do not. – I take comfort in that; but I marvel at how some of you, after a life of plenty and prominence, have come to terms with our meager and obscure existence, and also at how all of you have renounced the tyranny of familial attachments and other passions: truly, this is martyrdom. – 2) The reward is great; for its sake, the pain of our life—which is akin to the shedding of blood—becomes bearable. [1, 32]

23. You, like fertile and good soil, receiving the word of my humility, always bear and produce good fruit, like a paradise adorned with the various beauties of virtue. For I see and recognize what is taking place within you and what you are zealous for, and I am comforted by the meekness of one’s character, the warmth of another’s zeal, the silence of one, the poetry of another, the diligence of yet another, and the vigilance of yet another, and still others by other qualities; but all of you by an invincible, unwavering, and unyielding steadfastness in observing the rules of our communal life—and I marvel at how those of you who once lived happily and in comfort, having begun to live for the Lord, have gradually forgotten all that, and having become entirely different people, courageously endure the present hardships and deprivations, thereby balancing and atoning for their former sins. But truly, the love of Christ can do all things, inclining and drawing the proud to humility, those accustomed to abundance to be content with little, and the greedy to become poor and meager. And I am amazed not only by these, but by all who have left everything for the sake of the Lord’s

Gospel: parents, brothers, wives, relatives, their homeland, homes, and customs. Everyone has left behind something dear to them; and not infrequently, the one who, on the surface, has sacrificed little—and cannot be compared to some of the great ones—turns out to have endured the greatest and heaviest hardship; for if nothing else, the very fact that he has broken free from the dominion of familial ties or from arbitrary passions is sufficient to attribute martyrdom to him and to grant him the boldness, like the foremost of the Apostles, to cry out to Christ the Lord: *“We have left everything and followed You; what then will be ours?”* and to be deemed worthy of the honor of hearing in reply: *“In the resurrection... you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”* (Matt. 19:27–28).

24. When such and such great rewards are prepared for us, how can we not all compel ourselves more and more to do and accomplish what is godly? How can we not endure all that is sorrowful and burdensome in life for the Lord’s sake? The labors of self-denial, vigil, self-reproach, obedience, instruction, confession, and everything else, because of which the prophetic word applies to us: *“For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are regarded as sheep for the slaughter”* (Ps. 43: 23). And truly, you are not far from this. For are you not also being slain by the cutting off of your desires, by the wounds of rebuke, and by your mutual obedience to one another in your way of life? And does not blood—though not physically, but spiritually—flow from your hearts in such cases? But rejoice; for you do not suffer in vain, but are thereby preparing for yourselves *“an unfading crown of glory,”* as the Apostle says (1 Peter 5:4). May the light of true knowledge shine within you, along with love for God that detaches you from the world, and a longing for eternal life that puts to death the desires of the flesh. May God guide you and raise you all to the highest degree, to the goal of our piety, in strength of heart and unwavering firmness of mind.

29. *Very soon, and we will depart from here; but may our departure be with a good send-off*

29. 1) Very soon, and we will depart from here; but may our departure be accompanied by a good send-off. – 2) You spend the whole day in the labors of obedience and in prayer, but do not grow weary, for in this lies your salvation. – 3) Live patiently in the monastery amid privations, in the mortification of your will and desires, in humiliation and other painful afflictions... this is martyrdom. – 4) You must endure to the end, hoping to share in the joy of all the saints and to behold the Mother of God and the Lord Himself. [1, 33]

25. Neither am I, I believe, laboring in vain by proclaiming to you the word of my humility, nor are you wasting your time in vain by listening to it. – But not everything is here; for the time of complete silence will surely come. We will not live forever, but in a short while—as God has determined—either I or you will depart from this life. But our aim is that our departure from here may be with good farewells, with the fulfillment of the commandments, and with pleasing our Lord Jesus Christ.

26. I see how diligent you always are in fulfilling your duties: some in preparing and baking bread, others in tending the vineyards, some on errands, others at their handicrafts—sewing, writing, washing, baking, cooking, preparing meals, in the smithy, in the storeroom, in the infirmary, —and yet you never fail to attend all the church services: the Hours—First, Third, Sixth, and Ninth—Vespers and Compline, and when you gather, you stand reverently, sing, and pray—and all this without laziness or neglect. I always keep all your toil, your hardship, and your burden in mind; but do not give in to despondency: for *“in all these things we are more than conquerors,”* says the Apostle, *“through Him who loved us”* (Rom. 8:37): so that, although this labor is very great, since through it eternal salvation and immeasurable joy shine forth for us, we ought to rejoice and be glad in it, and devote ourselves to even greater feats, and stand firm in the struggle of our martyr-like life according to the communal rule, not faltering under any burden, not turning back, and not retreating from anything sorrowful or difficult.

27. I urge you: persevere, strive for every good deed and every virtue, and, according to the Lord’s word, save your souls through your patience. As you look toward the hour of death, renew yourselves daily, and, regarding all else as secondary, keep yourselves in order, in wisdom, and in spiritual love, and in every way shun pernicious insolence, so that you may be obedient to one another, without grumbling, without rivalry, without envy, without arrogance, regarding the good of every neighbor as your own, sometimes bearing with a brother’s inattention toward you on some occasion, accepting with wisdom the reproaches and insults that come your way as spiritual remedies, and doing everything meekly and sincerely, openly, without guile or confusion, in the presence of our ever-living Lord. This is our martyrdom!—And this is why some zealots often seek to suffer for Christ at the hands of external tormentors. – Endure courageously and lawfully here (i.e., in the Kinovia) the torments, feats, and confessions, without bowing your knees before Baal, without

sacrificing your soul to passions, without renouncing what you have promised, without stepping off the path you are running on until the very end, nor from the place where you stand: and you will be equal in stature to those who shed their blood in martyrdom, as the holy fathers bear resounding witness.

28. Do not think that anyone who has endured something just once, or a few times, is already saved; but whoever bears everything that happens with equanimity and will continue to do so until the end—that person will be saved. But if anyone grows weak in the middle or toward the end and renounces blessed obedience, that person will suffer a most wretched downfall, accompanied by sorrow and weeping—not only because he will thereby destroy all his previous labors, but especially because he will inevitably fall under condemnation on the day of God’s righteous judgment. Therefore, keep yourselves pure and blameless in all things and throughout all the days of your life, for the glory of God, for the salvation of your souls, and for a blessed inheritance with our fathers in heaven; so that we may be deemed worthy to rejoice and be glad there, where Anthony the Great, that radiant light, shone; where Euthymius the God-bearer and Pachomius the Christ-bearer are; where Savvas the Much-Praised, Theodosius the All-Blessed, and Dorotheus the God-Enlightened are; where Dometian the Equal-to-the-Angels, the All-Holy Akakios, and Dosipheios the God-Pleasing, where Basil the Ever-Living—I mean the obedient one⁸³—Zacharias, clothed in the Spirit, and Afre, the servant of God; and what is there to say about the others?—where are Peter and Paul, the foremost of the Twelve Apostles, where are the dwellings of the hierarchs, priests, and holy martyrs? For even if we do not attain to stand alongside them, we will by no means be deprived of their vision, their conversation, and their intercession. We hope, then, to behold the presence of the Lady Herself, our All-Ruler and Sovereign, the Mother of God, and to fall at her feet. But we also hope to behold the Lord Himself, the Ruler of all and our Lord, though this may seem presumptuous. For the divine Paul said that after our death, when we are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord, we will always be with Him (1 Thess. 4:17). So, when such glories, such joys, and such lives lie before us, who would not rejoice, who would not be filled with zeal, who would not be set ablaze and inspired by love for God, and who would not be motivated to do all that is fitting, no matter the cost?

30. To avoid fickleness, we must submit to the community rule, which excludes all isolation within the brotherhood, keeps everyone on an equal footing in their duties, and thereby protects us from falling

30.

1) To avoid inconsistency, submit to the community rule, which excludes all isolation within the brotherhood, keeps everyone on an equal footing in their duties, and thereby protects them from falling. – 2) There have been temptations with you before, but the Lord helped you: you overcame them; do not give in now either, and they will pass. – 3) Standing as if on trial before the Lord, conduct yourselves in monastic virtues, and excel in them more and more. [1, 341]

1. Seeing your progress, I glorify God and rejoice in the Lord; but I fear the fickleness and inconsistency of human resolve, caused by weakness of will and thoughtlessness. For it is not only the one who begins a good work who is blessed, but the one who has perfected it, having become accustomed to it and attained perfection in it. But how difficult it is to remain always in the same state of mind and not fall prey to the caprices of the all-malicious sin; therefore I ask and implore that we walk in the true way of God, the royal way—the middle way—without veering to the right or to the left, but according to the rules, commandments, and law of communal life, always doing what is required of us at every moment of life. Community life, however, requires that everyone view everything in the same way and that everyone desire everything in the same way: there are no private desires or individual aspirations within it; no self-importance or selective favoritism; no secret schemes or duplicity; no prying curiosity or prying into everything; no infatuation with many things or striving toward many goals, leading to exhaustion and the depletion of strength; It loves self-restraint, prayer, contrition, sleeping on the bare ground, and other such practices, but in everything it adheres to a single rule of blessed obedience, embracing all things through it and being guided by it in everything, as the Fathers command.

2. I implore you, stand firm on the rock of faith and walk blamelessly along the path of virtue; and may my eyes never see any of you fall prey to the devil because of some sin—whether due to the lust of the flesh, the sickness of self-will, the arrogance of pride, vanity, or any other passion. You have labored and

⁸³ See the Life of Theodosius the Great, January 11, and the Lenten Canon, Sunday, Ode 2.

gathered a wealth of virtues into the treasuries of your souls. Each of you remembers the nature and number of the temptations you have faced since entering monastic life, how you grew weary, lost heart, and despaired of remaining alive, beset and wounded by satanic thoughts or by the difficulties and hardships of communal life; and how our gracious God, through a series of trials rushing one after another, carried you through all of this, delivered you from the ruin that threatened you, and granted you the reward befitting your patience. Looking upon these feats—and upon all that has been endured and attained—let us not forget to turn our eyes also to what lies before us in the present and what is hoped for in the future—and may no sorrowful misfortune, whether from people or from cunning demons, turn us away from our good intentions.

3. I implore you: always look to God and imagine yourselves at the moment of your last breath, seeing the host of angels, giving an account to the Most Righteous Judge, and receiving the due reward for good and evil; strive to do good, overcome temptations, remove every stumbling block and obstacle from your path, and cheerfully ascend the mountain of heavenly life until the long-awaited day arrives. Strive for sincerity, humility, mutual respect, unity of mind, and zeal for service, for manual labor, for psalm-singing, for vigils, and for all good and pious deeds. You already possess these things, but I speak of them so that you may strive ever more earnestly to be enriched by them; you have already acquired them, but I remind you of this so that you may strive for ever greater acquisition, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

31. Whatever we endure here will be rewarded beyond measure there; let us therefore not grow weary on our difficult path, following in the footsteps of the saints who have gone before us, who were people just like us

31. 1) Whatever we endure here, there will be an indescribable reward; let us therefore not be slothful as we walk our difficult path, following in the footsteps of the saints who have gone before us, who were people just like us. – 2) He lists in detail all those who perform various duties in the monastery and gives them all this command: Do your work as if before God, as if it were God's work, for the glory of God. [1, 35]

4. Since you listen so earnestly and attentively to my humble words, I, too, am filled with zeal to instruct you, and I am, as it were, insatiable as I sow the sacred words of my humble lips into your souls. At present, we are both undertaking this labor—I by speaking, you by listening—and putting it into practice and carrying out what is spoken and heard; but when the time comes for the harvest and the gathering of the fruits, then, with joy and gladness, we will rejoice in that for which we toiled, sighed, suffered hardship, grew weary, were sorrowful, knew no rest, hung our heads, lost heart—not knowing, as I shall add, —we hungered, thirsted, left our parents, friends, brothers, relatives, homeland, and every earthly blessing of this world—we will rejoice, receiving our rewards from the righteous Rewarder—God—forever and ever. —And what rewards?! – Glory and honor that never fade and are eternal, joy and gladness and life that are inexpressible and unquenchable, satisfaction that can never be sated, and delight upon delight in these blessings—unseen, unheard, and unspeakable—the Kingdom of Heaven, the sonship and inheritance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true God and King of the ages. Looking to this, let us not grow slothful or lose heart, no matter what sorrows may befall us (here) in our pursuits and labors, when we are compelled to do one thing or another, and when, in obedience and submission, we must endure thorns in our hearts; but, following the Apostle's word, "*forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what lies ahead,*" let us "*press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*" (Phil. 3:13), and compete in divine love with those saints who have been perfected either through martyrdom or through a pure life. What then? Were they not people just like us, sharing the same passions as we do? But since they desired and loved God with all their hearts, it is possible for us, too, if we so desire, to draw near to God and live a noble life.

5. I urge you to pay close attention to your duties and to labor diligently in them: the scribe, in writing neatly and consistently, with love and patience; the steward in managing the storehouse, in tirelessly providing for bodily needs, in giving and receiving without fuss, with due peacefulness, propriety, and apologies when required; the digger, in tilling the vineyard; and whatever else anyone may do—whether in farming, carrying heavy loads, or the like—without grumbling, not forgetting to recite verses (repeating a verse from the Psalter), keeping silence, and avoiding idle talk. The gardener and vegetable gardener shall labor in tending the garden and vegetable patch, and in providing the brotherhood with an ample supply of vegetables and fruits; the cook in preparing meals, enduring the heat of the fire and all the toil of his work without complaint; the infirmarium attendant—in devoting every effort to the comfort of the infirm brothers, providing some with more suitable food and others with words of comfort and peace, to heal both spiritual and physical ailments; the cantor—in

organizing and maintaining orderly and proper singing and clear recitation. In the same way, the lamp-lighter, the parchment-maker, the baker, the knife-maker, the refectory attendant, the goldsmith, the coppersmith, the roofer, the tailor, as well as the gatekeepers, the wake-up callers, the watchmen, the trustees, the teachers—and finally, the steward and the steward’s assistant—and all of you: perform your duties as before God, as God’s work, for the glory of God.

32. The royal path is to do everything according to the rule; whoever deviates strays either into excess or into deficiency; deviation is permissible, but only with the abbot’s knowledge, without which it does not end well

32. 1) The royal path is to do everything according to the rule; whoever deviates strays either into excess or into deficiency; deviation is permissible, but only with the abbot’s knowledge, without which it does not end well. – 2) The feat of the novice is to wean oneself from the things of the soul and the flesh and to become accustomed to the spiritual; but when he tastes spiritual sweetness, other difficulties arise from the demons, the most grievous of all; whoever submits himself to the abbot’s guidance is safe here as well. [1, 36]

6. Just as on any journey, at first the unfamiliarity with such labor makes the journey arduous and difficult; but as it continues, when the muscles become limber and the body grows supple, it becomes less difficult and arduous, and more swift: so it is when we walk in the way of the Lord. God has already granted us, through trials and temptations, to know and see which path is straight and which is astray, and how to gradually reach its end. Let us therefore walk the royal path, measuring its versts as the Fathers have said, and avoiding the pitfalls on both sides, that is, both deficiencies and excesses, which occur when one begins to act contrary to the established rule or the prescribed commandment—in eating, drinking, vigil, chanting, reciting from memory (psalms and prayers), prayer, silence, and the secret workings of the heart. Deviations from the usual order in all these matters are permissible, but they must be done with counsel and with my knowledge. And I will tell you this: although I am a sinner, everything done with my knowledge and everything revealed to me is light; but he who hides from me walks in darkness and does not see how he is rushing toward the rapids of destruction, and, thinking to please God, angers Him, becoming a stumbling block to others as well. Therefore, my children, follow that path which the law of obedience calls you to keep; do not attempt to understand what is difficult for you to grasp, and do not question matters of obedience or my various abbatial directives that are beyond the reach of scrutiny.

7. The feat for the novice is to cast aside worldly customs and habits and to abandon the desires of the heart that were formed earlier; and, as if fleeing from a storm and turmoil, from fickle cares and passionate pursuits, to enter the harbor of carefreeness and love of God. But there is no lesser, or rather, a far greater and more difficult feat: after tasting peace by fleeing worldly turmoil, to keep oneself unscathed; for here certain thoughts rise up within us, while others attack us like pirates on the sea of this life—demons seeking to sink the vessel of our soul along with all the good it carries. But if we diligently make use of the favorable winds of humility and do not diminish the dignity of our helmsman through willful consent (to steer our boat in a different direction), then we will undoubtedly reach the harbor of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us therefore, my children, be “*wise as serpents and innocent as doves*” (Matt. 10:16), doing good and pious deeds and each of us diligently applying ourselves to our own work. Blessed are those who endure and humble themselves, rather than those who wander aimlessly like clouds, idly passing hour after hour and day after day—for such are pleasing neither to us nor to the Lord.

33. When seeking guidance from the Word of God on how to live, we must recall the lives of the saints, who put this into practice—beginning with the fear of God and ending with deep humility

33. 1) When seeking guidance from the Word of God on how to live, we must recall the lives of the saints, who put this into practice—beginning with the fear of God and ending with deep humility. – 2) One should not boast of natural gifts—such as one’s voice, singing, and the like—but should adorn oneself with all humility, from which all good things flow, and for the sake of which all gifts of grace are given. – 3) By practicing humility, excel in all virtues; especially in the struggle against lust, repelling the first temptations and guarding yourself even against them. [1, 37]

8. My words to you, spoken in humility, are neither legislative nor authoritative nor empty, as I believe, but exhortative and comforting, reminding you of the teaching and life of our divine fathers. Divine grace has already revealed to us what is pious, righteous, and godly; and you know exactly where and how to direct your

journey in order to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, recall and remember day by day what God's salvation consists of, and what the divine deeds of the holy fathers were like; and, following their example, vividly painting your souls with the colors of piety, envision within yourselves an imitation of their lives. The beginning and end of their asceticism was a deep, heartfelt fear of the Lord. From this shone forth in them a humility that is exalted before God, by the power of which they not only regarded all Satan's snares as nothing, but, having bound the weaver of these snares himself, they placed him at their feet, to be trampled underfoot and mocked, according to the word of the Gospel (Luke 10:19). Of the many saints, I will give you as an example the one about whom yesterday's morning reading was. The reading was about the Venerable Silvanus, and your ears listened attentively to these words. You know how wonderfully he proved himself after his initial vows, and how he struck down the devil with the weapon of humility and drowned him in a sea of tears; and, having ascended to the heights of our most blessed abode, he alone embodied the perfect image of our great father Pachomius. That is why, even though he did not live long, he was held in high esteem by the sanctified Theodore, the thrice-blessed Petronius, the much-praised Orsisius, and the entire holy brotherhood, for he was taken from here to heaven amid the singing of the angels.

9. So great is the divine gift of humility! And there is no saint who has pleased God without this virtue. Clothe yourselves in it as well; and, turning your attention away from beautiful singing, melodies, pleasant reading, and other natural gifts and abilities, let us direct all our efforts toward achieving this goal. I do not mean to say that we should completely abandon these good qualities, but that we should regard them as secondary and place them in such a way that they follow in the wake of the lady of virtues. For if, because of these good qualities, we boast before those with poor voices, or take pride before the uneducated, or exalt ourselves before those who read poorly or without education, or raise our eyebrows at the voiceless and those who sing poorly; then all our labor is in vain; we do not aim our arrows at the target, but against ourselves, and through such carelessness, we make ourselves the prey of the beast from the abyss, the devil. Not so, my children, not so; but let us speak with humility, work with humility, read with humility, sing with humility, walk with humility, eat with humility, answer with humility—and everything—with humility; and we shall see how sweet, how delightful, how radiant is the fruit of this virtue, which makes us imitators of God, Who says: *"Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matt. 11:29). For in it—truly—rest dwells; for its sake, waves of grace rise up in our souls; through it, purity of heart shines forth; from it comes an abundant outpouring of tears, from it, contrition gushes forth like a spring; in it are wisdom, understanding, reverence, self-control, silence, and every other good—it is found, seen, and glorified.

10. Such is my word on the venerable virtue of humility. You, children of God and children of my humility, having received it as a seed, bear fruit like good soil—some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold—in good deeds commensurate with God's gifts, and guard yourselves against every evil and wicked deed, fleeing insolence, seeking brotherly love, turning away from evil schemes, loving simplicity; for it is said: *"I have clung to integrity and righteousness"* (Ps. 24:21). Let no one love one person more than others; let the beardless not treat the beardless with boldness; let them not remain in hidden, unseen places. But let all of you stand invincible against the devil's wiles, quenching the fire of lusts with divine prayers and supplications. That passions arise is a common occurrence; but it is our duty to repel them the moment they appear. The enemy has come, struck, and fled. Keep the eyes of your soul open when the tempter brings some unseemly fantasy. Cast aside the hook of sweetness when the bitter hunter of sin casts his bait into your heart. Plug your ears when the one who whispered death into Eve's ears begins to extend flattering words toward you. *"Do not touch, nor taste, nor partake"* (Col. 2:21), when the preparer and server of sinful delights approaches you, whether you are sitting or walking (whether you are at home or on the road). Do not accept it; shut yourself off on all sides; be a fortified city; be a wall of bronze and an unshakable rock, so that no matter how fiercely the winds may rage against you, you may remain unshaken. Bravely repel the demons, that you may prove yourself a good soldier of the Lord, a bearer of Christ's wounds, a martyr of grace, and may you have the boldness to say with the Apostle: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness"* (2 Tim. 4:8).

34. To prevent disturbances against the rules, one must inform the superior as soon as anyone notices plots or strikes

34. 1) To prevent disturbances against the rules, one must inform the abbot as soon as anyone notices any plots or strikes. – 2) Otherwise, let everyone go about their own business, enduring and struggling against passions and desires. [1:38]

11. Let us remain in the tasks assigned to us; let us not devise anything that exceeds our measure, and if such a thing should happen, let us not persist in it. My child! If you see frequent gatherings and factions, turn away from them; and if anyone approaches you with such a proposal, turn away from him, and do not even agree to listen to him. Flee as from a fire when you hear any words that might shake your faith in your spiritual father and weaken your love for him. For the harm from this, gradually entering the heart, will reach the very foundations of salvation. Have no confidant or secret advisor other than me, if you wish to be my true disciples, and do not despise evil words as insignificant, saying, “Is this or that so great that it is worth concerning oneself with it?” No, my children, no; but when someone strays into unbelief to the common harm, come to me and tell me everything. Perhaps someone will object ignorantly and foolishly: “But then the brothers will condemn me and hate me!”—But this is not so: for if they are not my true children, what does their praise matter to you? But the true ones will certainly follow you and praise you. In short, I implore you and remind you—rely on me completely and in everything; and let no one have anything hidden or undisclosed from me: otherwise, it will turn into a cruel wound.

12. Continuing in your former good works, strive together and with one mind complete your course in the Lord, and bear all things valiantly—reproaches, labors, afflictions, the stirrings of the flesh, the darkening of thoughts, and the onslaught of laziness and despondency, and everything else that commonly befalls us, having in all things a single source of help: unashamed hope in God and strict observance of the Lord’s commandments, while keeping the memory of death ever present and cutting off our own desires. Thus you will be deemed worthy of the martyr’s crown and will rejoice with the angels in the Kingdom of Heaven.

35. The manifestations of the workings within us of the Spirit of God and the spirit of deceit, pointed out so that, knowing this, we may zealously pursue the former and turn away from the latter

35. The manifestations of the workings within us of the Spirit of God and the spirit of temptation, pointed out so that, knowing this, we may zealously pursue the former and turn away from the latter. [1, 39] The enemy always rushes against us with fury; but he is always turned back by divine powers and the prayers of my Father and your Father; and he finds his prey only when someone gives him a foothold, driving away the Spirit of God and allowing a foreign spirit to enter, which teaches him to do and say whatever it pleases. To help us learn to discern these two influences, I will point out to you the distinguishing features of each. One who has the Holy Spirit manifests joy, peace, patience, and love—and speaks words sweeter than honey and honeycomb; for, as the Lord said, they flow from the abundance of the heart, bringing enlightenment and comfort to those who receive them. One constantly hears them say: “Forgive me, or bless me, Father; I am foolish, a mere sinner, unworthy to be counted among the brethren, lower than any creature.” To speak and feel this way is a sign that we have the Holy Spirit. Do you wish to hear what the signs of the evil spirit are? Here they are: whoever possesses it, his heart spews forth fury, anger, condemnation, slander, unbelief, loathing, hatred, insolence, disobedience, contradiction, and stubbornness. From such a soul, light, holiness, and piety have fled; humility, contrition, and patience have withdrawn; tears, weeping, and heartache have dried up; heavenly contemplation, the remembrance of death and of the angels who are to accompany one after death; and hidden in the darkness of oblivion are thoughts of the universal standing before the dreadful judgment seat of Christ, of the terrible judgment, and of one’s accountability for everything thought, spoken, and done—from the very moment of birth, and not merely from the time of entering monastic life. I am setting all this before you so that you may see what you ought to hold fast to and what you ought to avoid. For I have but one desire and one prayer: that all of you may become sons of light and of the day, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ, vessels chosen and sanctified, united as one by the one Spirit, so that you may know through your deeds and experience in your hearts what St. David said: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 132:1).

36. Good deeds are necessary; but since every deed has its own reward, they do not prevent the wise from prospering

36. 1) Feats of valor are necessary; but since every deed has its own reward, they do not prevent the wise from prospering. – 2) Along with my guidance, apply your own understanding of what is good and encourage one another—for we have a common cause. – 3) Remain in what is good; maintain your zeal; guard your tongue; take care of your tools and belongings, and pray. [1:40]

13. We need labor, spiritual sweat, godly deeds, righteous zeal, and spiritual striving so that, having entered the arena of competition, we may reach its end well and, after a godly death, be crowned with the crowns of victory. You yourselves know that labor brings rest, sorrows are rewarded with joys, groans are soothed by spiritual consolations, and constrictions yield spaciousness; fasting and abstinence cultivate immortal rejoicing, and thirst and the drying up of the throat pour forth that “*water*” “*flowing into life*,” of which the Lord spoke (John 4: 14)—and that, in general, “*those who sow in tears will reap with joy*” (Ps. 125: 5), as the Psalmist St. David assures us. “*You know these things*,” but “*blessed are you if you do them*,” as it is written (John 3: 17). “*A foolish man does not know them, nor does a man of little understanding comprehend them*” (Ps. 91: 7). But you are wise, kind-hearted, prudent, attentive, and discerning. Why have you attained some virtues and are attaining others?—and I will add that you will continue to attain them: for the commandment knows no bounds; but the more one comes to know God, the more one realizes how far one is from the commandment.

14. I give you laws and guide you, restraining you in one thing, affirming you in another, and showing you where to direct your path. You trust me in everything, and, like iron in the hands of a blacksmith, you obey whatever I command of you. — Because of this, your journey is carefree and your life is secure. But you yourselves, too, should discern among yourselves what is good and beneficial, do it, and remind one another of it. For we all have one thing in mind: what is beneficial to all, as if we were on a ship sailing the sea, where both the helmsman and the crew are engaged in a common task. In this regard, this is the relationship between us—you and me. My task is to hold the helm in my hands and steer the ship with vigor, keeping my eyes fixed on the heavens, watching for the stars of truth, and guiding our course by them. But you, too, must stay alert, perform your respective duties, and look around in all directions so as not to run aground on anything that might wreck the ship—such as a shoal or a submerged rock—and keep the rigging in order, tightening where necessary and loosening where needed, and do whatever is necessary so that our ship may safely reach the harbor of salvation for our souls. For this reason, we have left the world, its customs, and all fleshly pleasures and delights.

15. Let us persevere, brothers, in our spiritual struggles, patiently practicing what is right; and I am confident that we will receive our crowns, become citizens of heaven, and find bliss there, where “*all sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee away*” (Isa. 35: 10). Be steadfast, take courage—and may the lamp of your zeal burn with the oil of constant diligence, so that it may not go out, and we may not suffer the unwanted fate of the foolish virgins. Acquire, most honorable fathers, silence; I do not mean that you should say nothing at all, for that is incompatible with our way of life, but that you should not speak of unseemly things or provoke laughter: for “*from much talk you cannot escape sin*,” as wisdom assures us: “*He who restrains his lips is wise*” (Prov. 10:19). Be careful in carrying out your duties, and do not, through carelessness, damage necessary items—such as a cart, a plow, an axe, bowls and dishes, or anything else—which would cause a delay and result in time that could be spent on spiritual pursuits being wasted on trivial matters. Pray also always, that help may be sent to you from above against invisible and visible enemies, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

37. With faith and love for me, be diligent; those in charge of the work, manage it wisely, and those under you, carry it out faithfully

37. 1) Be diligent in your faith and love for me; those in charge of the work, manage it wisely, and those under your authority, carry it out faithfully. – 2) Avoid mockery and mutual grievances; be kind and respectful toward one another, and flee from everything that is reprehensible and seductive. [1, 41]

16. I pray to God that your faith may not grow weak and that your spiritual love for me, a humble one, may not grow cold; but may we all be strengthened in the same understanding (1 Cor. 1:10) and in the same zeal for fulfilling the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ. I know that you suffer hardships, endure privations, take on heavy labors, and pour out your sweat. But do not grow weary, I beg you, for the Lord’s

sake, and continue to strive patiently in good works, so that you may be crowned with joy in heaven. I, too, would like to labor alongside you, were it not for the ailment in my legs; I, too, would like to go out with you to work and humble my body through labor. For it is blessed to labor alongside the brethren to the best of one's ability, and it is pious to participate in their fieldwork. Through such labors you sanctify your bodies and make your souls most dispassionate, as true workers of the Lord—provided that you observe what has been commanded with proper discernment; that is, if the superiors and administrators make their decisions with the fear of God and compassion for the brethren, and the subordinates maintain submission and obedience toward their superiors. – Take heed, then, you administrators: do not impose labor upon labor, and do not govern without compassion or carelessly, but righteously, kindly, with brotherly love, and judiciously; for not all the brethren are equal in temperament, age, and strength. It is on this condition alone that you have received authority over the brethren. And blessed are you if you act in this way; for great gifts and blessings will be yours in eternity. Take heed, you who are subject: humbly accept the directives of your superiors and act submissively from the heart.

17. Let there be no mockery among you that grieves the Lord; let there be no idle talk that grieves the Holy Spirit; let there be no bitterness among you that causes hostility toward one another. For the Apostle said: *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, and every form of malice be put away from you”* (Eph. 4:31); and again: *“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear”* (Eph. 4:29). *“Be kind to one another”* (Eph. 4:32), gentle, loving toward one another, *“bearing with one another in love”* (Eph. 4:2), *“bearing one another's burdens”* (Gal. 6:2), being forbearing, forgiving, honoring one another, and yielding to one another, in reverence and fear of God. If you walk in this way, and if you lead such a life, then you are my saints, and even more so, God's own—you are His angels on earth, worshippers of His power and ministers of His glory, heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, fellow-inhabitants of the saints and dwellers of paradise, to whom it is given to enjoy the unfathomable blessings reserved for them. That is why I pray, ask, and implore, that your steps may always be guided by God, that you may be strengthened by His power, that there may be no temptation or stumbling block among you, no deadly disobedience, no calamitous grumbling, no deadly insolence, no reproachable desire for evil, nor anything else that is forbidden and criminal. May the light of God's wisdom precede you in every movement and deed, may a peaceful disposition guide you, and may the tranquility of brotherly love reign within you. – May the Lord God assign to you the Angel of Peace, a faithful guide and guardian of your souls and bodies, to drive away evil demons from you day and night, and to lead you in a virtuous life!

38. The way of life in obedience is above all others: the Lord Himself has chosen it

38. 1) The life of obedience is above all others: the Lord Himself has chosen it. – 2) Therefore, walk this path well, enduring and never growing weary; for behold, death is coming, and all things will come to an end; yet do not forget other virtues, especially love. [1, 42]

18. I ask and implore you: stand firm, endure valiantly, be of good cheer, and be courageous, reflecting on the glory that awaits the thrice-blessed and holy monastics. Certainly, everyone who has pleased God in whatever way of life will receive their reward in the age to come in accordance with that. But which way of life is better?—Listen carefully! – Great are those who serve God *“in the mountains, in caves, and in the caverns of the earth”* (Heb. 11:38)—hermits, stylites, recluses, and others who glorify God in whatever way they live. But, as you know, our Lord Jesus Christ, the bestower of unfathomable blessings, when He came down to earth, did not choose the life of a hermit, a pillar-dweller, or any other such way of life, but was pleased to live in obedience. For He Himself said of Himself: *“I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me”* (John 6:38). And again: *“What I say to you, I do not speak on My own; but the Father who sent Me—He has given Me a commandment as to what I should say and what I should speak”* (John 14:10; 12:49). He also girded Himself with a towel and, taking on the appearance of a servant, washed the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel, and said about this elsewhere: *“I am among you as one who serves”* (Luke 22:27). If, as you see, He—the Lord of all—was pleased, more than anyone else, to take on our monastic way of life, how can you not rejoice, how can you not exult, how can you not be filled with delight that you live—just like the Lord? After this, is there anything else for you that is more worthy of delight? And can you have a greater inclination toward other ways of life? Therefore, do not delight in any other way of life more than your own, if you live it well. That is why, in the Gerondika, or in the accounts of the holy elders among the Three Laborers, a monastic novice was revealed through divine

revelation to be more glorious than a hermit or a sick person who bears his illness with good cheer and gratitude. Indeed, I tell you, our way of life is great and all-holy; and you, having lived your life well, will be glorified with Abraham, will rejoice with the martyrs, and will dwell with the righteous.

19. Run well, then, without stopping, and do not let the envious eye of the devil trip you up. Anoint your feet with the oil of patience, so that, warmed by the longings of your soul, you may be content to complete your journey. Clothe yourselves in the garments of righteousness and joy; drink the water of purity and chastity; and do not say, “How long?” For this is the speech of the lazy. We are not to live a thousand years: death is here today and tomorrow. Keeping this before the eyes of our minds every day, we do good, walking according to our fathers’ law. Our fathers conformed to this law during the few days of this life. May there be in you, through the holy prayer of my father, mercy, peace, love, lack of envy, lack of jealousy, moderation, good obedience, kind words, cooperation, mutual sympathy, and humility. Live this way, and act this way!

39. Keep the Lord before your eyes, lest you be led into anything evil; strive for what is good, remembering the Last Judgment, and even more so the dreadful judgment and its verdict.

39. Keep the Lord before your eyes, lest you be led into any evil; strive for what is good, remembering the Exodus, and even more so the dreadful judgment and its outcome. [1:43] Maintain love among yourselves in a bond of peace, and have the Lord as your right hand, so that you may not be led into lust, anger, envy, mockery, idle talk, or anything else through which you might fall into any snare of hellish bondage, however small it may be, to keep you in the power of hell. Remember what St. Dorotheus says?! He says that even if an eagle is entirely free but is caught by just one claw, it is still in the net, and the hunter can easily either capture it or shoot it down. Therefore, be mindful of yourselves and discipline yourselves; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who discipline themselves. – What fear and trembling await us at the end of our lives if we live carelessly, especially on that dreadful day when the Archangel’s trumpet will rouse all people—every nation, every tribe, and every tongue?! Consider what will happen then: the heavens will be torn apart; the elements will be consumed by fire; all creation will be transformed. The Judge of all will take His seat on the throne of judgment, and countless multitudes of holy angels will stand around Him, then, before all, exposing the deeds, words, and thoughts of each person—according to their kind, person, place, time, and manner of commission—and all this in a single moment; finally, Scripture says, those who have done good will go to eternal life, and those who have done evil will go to eternal torment, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, unquenchable fire, and an unceasing worm, and the company of dreadful, hideous, and utterly malicious demons. “Where, then, shall we go?” “To eternal life, to dwell forever with the Lord, if we preserve the fear of God and love for God until the end of our lives—such that our hearts cry out: *‘Who shall separate us from the love of God?’*” (Rom. 8:35).

40. The fear of God wards off the swords of our enemy

40. 1) The fear of God turns away the swords of our enemy. – 2) Endure insults. – 3) Do not boast of outward advantages, but be humble and submissive. – 4) For this, you will be with the martyrs. [1, 44]

1. Through long experience, you have fully come to know the God-pleasing way of life in monasticism. Do not waver in any way, nor stray from your sound judgment. Love what has been commanded to you and observe it in everything; remain also in love for me, just as I love you more than anything else in the world. But the enemy has many stratagems, and he readily sows evil among us and within us. And only those who are imbued with the fear of God ward off his swords—which have grown weak to the end—according to the words of the holy David (Ps. 75: 4; 88:44), vigorously devote themselves to acts of piety and wholeheartedly apply themselves to heavenly contemplations and deeds.

2. Behold, as if I were present with you, I see and hear how a harsh word has been uttered against one of the brothers—a rebuke, an insult, or something else. But you, my brother, having received such an insult, do not turn into a ferocious beast, and do not lose heart; be firm and unshakable. For reproach and shame fall upon the one who utters them, but victory belongs to the one who accepts them with equanimity; he is a man of God, while the other is an unrepentant slave, destroying himself in that very moment.

3. I urge you earnestly—do not quarrel, do not insult one another, do not raise your eyebrows in disdain, do not speak boastfully, and do not boast about being better singers, harder workers, more devout, or, at times, more noble in the eyes of the world or more handsome in appearance. There is no need to speak of

such things. But in everything, clothe yourselves in humility, humbling yourselves before the Lord and before the superiors of the monastery through submission and obedience.

4. Walk in this way—and your labor will not be in vain, nor will your efforts be fruitless. I proclaim this to you before the face of the Lord our God, His holy angels, and all creation: that, having run your course well, you will rejoice with the martyrs; Abraham's bosom will cherish you for all eternity, and the choir of the righteous will receive you into their midst.

41. *By treating the steward as an independent authority, you introduce dual authority and division; but where authority is divided, the kingdom cannot stand*

41. 1) By treating the steward as an independent authority, you introduce dual authority and division; and where authority is divided, the kingdom will not stand. – 2) I belong entirely to the brotherhood; nothing else is required. 3) The Lord, who reigns alone, has willed that there also be a single authority in human societies. [1, 45]

5. I do not know whether out of ignorance, inattention, or malice, you praise the steward to my disgrace and hold up his face to my shame, often saying, "If the steward were here, such-and-such a matter would not have been handled this way, but much better. And where is this steward? How would he view this?"—And this is said right to my face. Others add: "Wait, wait! The steward will fix and settle all this."—But is this how it ought to be? And is this good for him, for me, and for you? You have shown yourselves to be the offspring of disobedience; him—as one capable of stepping beyond the bounds of his rank and authority; and me—as one who acted not according to God's will, but according to carnal inclination, that is, out of partiality and excessive favor toward a brother. Do you not see that in this way you are introducing two lords, two rulers, two principles? For the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ has declared that "*a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*" (Matt. 12:25). Dual authority is already a form of multiple authority; and multiple authority gives rise to factions; and factions are the cause of division and decay. Why, then, do you bring trouble upon yourselves by not remaining within your proper bounds and rank, as is fitting, and by causing others to deviate from what is right?

6. I am sinful and unworthy, but, having renounced everything and laid myself bare, I boldly abide in this holy place—in my folly I dare to speak thus—departing in nothing from what is right, neither for the sake of a brother, nor for the sake of an uncle, nor for the sake of a father or mother, nor for the sake of kinship, nor for the sake of anything carnal at all; but even if I were required to surrender my body or shed my blood, I would be ready not to refuse this, with God's help and through the prayers of my father, so long as I do not do anything harmful to you or to myself.

7. There is one Lord and Lawgiver, as it is written, one authority and one divine principle over all. This single source of authority, the fountain of all wisdom, goodness, and order, extends to all creatures who have received their origin from God's goodness; yet, without their own volition, it is granted—in the image of God—to only one human being to freely arrange the order of his life. For the divine Moses, in describing the origin of the world, quotes the words that came from the mouth of God: "*Let us make man in our image and likeness*" (Gen. 1:26). From this stems the establishment among people of every kind of authority and power, especially in the churches of God: one Patriarch in the Patriarchate, one Metropolitan in the Metropolis, one bishop in the diocese, one abbot in the monastery, and in secular life, if you will, one king, one general, one captain on a ship. And if in all this the will of one person did not govern everything, there would be no order or discipline in anything, and this would not be for the good: for discord destroys everything.

42. *Lent requires not only bodily abstinence but also spiritual abstinence*

42. 1) Lent requires abstinence not only of the body but also of the soul. – 2) The measure of fasting for the community is moderate—a little each day. – 3) Let us fear God, the terrible Judge; and may death not find us unprepared. – 4) I am extremely afraid of death and all that is associated with it. – 5) Let us rise up and devote ourselves to works pleasing to God. [1, 46]

8. God, who governs all things in His wisdom and who arranges the seasons and years most excellently and wisely, has designated for us throughout the year certain days of fasting that are salvific and beneficial to the soul, so that we may dedicate them exclusively to Him and purify ourselves from the sinful defilements that befall us. And thanks be to Him who established these days and has granted us life to reach them. We must always live pure and blameless lives and observe every commandment of God; this is especially

incumbent upon us now. Now is the time of purification; let us purify ourselves. Now is the time of abstinence; let us practice abstinence—and not only in eating and drinking, for that is not enough—but let us also abstain from sensuality in the heart, from shameful thoughts, from envying a brother's good reputation, from anger and displeasure toward our neighbor, from an unrestrained tongue, not allowing it to run wild, but setting a limit, a time, and a measure for it to speak only of what is proper, from the lustful glances of the eye, from listening to words that are unkind and displeasing to God. Yes, my children, yes—I implore you, attune yourselves like an organ and a sweet psalter of the Holy Spirit; guard your hands from foolish movements and lustful touches, lest you become dissolute, and be at peace with one another.

9. Let the holy Lent not be too burdensome for the body, but do not lose heart because of this; endure a little, and once you get used to it, you will cease to feel the burden, especially after the first week has passed; for us, bread and water, and something else to sustain ourselves, are enough. Our most blessed fathers, as you know, lived almost entirely without food—some for the entire forty days, some fasted for a week, some for three days, and others ate only a little each day. We eat every day, and our food is varied, but *“may the Lord remember us in our humility”* (Ps. 135: 23), and may He accept this little offering of ours as the work of the Great Anthony. For we live in community and walk the royal path, which the fathers preferred above all else. Just keep yourselves always pure in the innermost sanctuary of the soul and do not allow yourselves to do anything harmful to your souls.

10. Let us fear God, who is to *“bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart”* (2 Cor. 4:5), and *“repay each person”* not only *“according to their deeds,”* but also according to their words and thoughts (Rom. 2:6), and even—which is all the more terrifying—according to sins committed in ignorance. And who can stand before the fury of His wrath? Who is content to appear blameless before His face?—Who, then, will not be zealous to walk in the path of righteousness? Who will not strive to cast aside their carelessness and slumbering laziness?—Arise, you who mourn; the night is past, and the day of future judgment has already dawned. May death not find us unprepared, and may it not leave upon us any incurable and eternal wound.

11. I am poor and more wretched than any man; or rather, I am the one most deserving of every torment. I am afraid, terrified, and tremble at the thought of parting from this body, of the Holy Angels coming for my soul, and of how I will pass through the air and speak to the Ruler of the World, as is written in the life of St. Anthony? O my weakness! What awaits me? And how do I squander my days, indulging in slumber and sleep amidst my sins? What will my appearance be like before God, the Judge of all and the Lord! With what eyes shall I gaze upon Him, whose glance dries up the abysses and whose terrible word shatters the mountains? What shall I say there in my defense? What defender shall I find? How can I implore the unrelenting One? With what bitter tears, what conciliatory words, and what heartfelt sighs will I beseech the mercy of the One who is, by His very justice, unapproachable?!—Woe is me, woe is me, my brothers! I can already see my fate from here. I have but one hope—the prayers of our holy father and your blessed intercession.

12. Nevertheless, let us rise up again and again and compel ourselves to all kinds of God-pleasing deeds, bearing the present with courage and finding solace in the hopes of the future. Let us despise the flesh; let us look neither at labors, nor at sorrows, nor at insults, nor at hunger, nor at anything else but our work. — If we live in this way, we will undoubtedly be saved, and in heaven we will be received into the company of the saints, to rejoice with all the saints who have pleased Christ the Lord from of old.

43. Blessed are those who labor in community: rejoice!

43. 1) Blessed are those who labor in communal life: rejoice! – 2) We live in cramped quarters; but the ascetics of old lived this way, and those of today do as well: do not lose heart, then. – 3) Keep the commandments and rules, help one another, pay attention to the readings, work toward salvation with reverence; avoid conversations with women. [1, 47]

13. Blessed be God, who, through the abundance of His merciful love for mankind, has called us with a holy calling, according to His foreknowledge, into this holy monastic life, to devote ourselves wholly to Him and to dedicate ourselves entirely to the closest and most sincere service to Him and to the angelic praise that imitates His glory, —and who has so disposed our hearts as to renounce our parents, relatives, homeland, and all such things, and to take upon ourselves His good and saving yoke—and who has deemed us worthy, in our humility, to join you in communal life and fellowship, not, of course, in order to guide and shepherd you, which I would not dare even to think of, though it has come to pass. Rejoice always in the Lord, beloved

children; rejoice, citizens of heaven and exiles on earth, inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem and sojourners here, heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven and those deprived of earthly blessings. Rejoice, you who journey swiftly along the path of exile and the hardships of wandering for the sake of God's commandment. Rejoice, you who are last in the eyes of the world, yet possessors of a treasure greater than wealth. Rejoice, O good and God-gathered community, united in mind and heart, a council that loves the Father and the brothers, another angelic host on earth, renewers of the ancient way of life of our most venerable fathers. Rejoice, servants of God, laborers who work day and night with your own hands, so as not to be a burden to anyone, and to provide not only for yourselves but also for the weakest of your brothers and the needy outside the community. Rejoice, unbreakable and exemplary fellowship, a community ordained by God, which was not shaken by the king's threats, the princes' fear, or the prospect of death. Rejoice, you who share in one another's joy, each of whom regards what is good for his brother as a blessing, and among whom there is neither envy, nor strife, nor rivalry, but peace, love, and unity reign. I say this not because we do not face trials: for who is crowned unless they are indomitable and combative, unless they withstand the arrows and wound the one who shoots them—but because we do not fall under Satan's blows. Truly, my children, gathered by God! You are nourished by the gift of the Spirit; you drink the water given by the Lord, and whoever partakes of it *"will never thirst again,"* but it will be for him *"a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4:14–15).

14. Winter has come, and we have few dwellings, and those are poor and cramped. But do not lose heart; for despite this, you are spacious in virtue and commendable in this regard, attaching no importance to what is grievous—even though it is grievous—and caring only that you may always do what is pleasing to God. Moreover, if we recall the ancient holy fathers, or even those who labor in the faith today, we will find that we are living in palaces. Do you not see that even now some of God's servants live in the open air, others shut themselves away in caves and tombs, and still others wear chains and eat very little, contenting themselves with bread alone—or even abstaining from it—and satisfying this need with fruits of the trees every other day? This is indeed the case even now. But do not be disheartened; for you will by no means fall short of them, but will be recognized as their equals, or even superior to them, as the Fathers assure us—provided you remain diligent and willing in every task. Be filled with zeal again and again; strengthen yourselves and take courage more and more. Cast the enemy down, trampling him underfoot with your humility, with the sword of confession, and with the knife of obedience. May the sun of righteousness always shine in your hearts, driving away the darkness of passions; for when it rises, the beasts will retreat to their lairs *"and lie down in their dens"*: understand these words spiritually. As for us, we will go forth to do the Lord's work from the morning of life until the evening of death, fulfilling our task (Ps. 103:22–23). A little while longer, and we will triumph.

15. Observe the rules, commandments, and decrees. Lift up those who have fallen; strengthen those who have grown weak; and in everything, help one another, so that the word of the Wise may be fulfilled in you as well: *"Brothers help one another, for a city is strong and high"* (Prov. 18:19). Pay attention to the readings, and take note of the sayings that are most beneficial to each person. Let everyone do his work with diligence, as if it were the work of God; and all of you, *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Phil. 2: 12). Do not plunge a sword into your own heart, and do not neglect the affairs of the soul. It has been revealed to me about you, brothers, by some of the brethren, that you do not conduct yourselves properly in certain situations: for you gaze at women and engage in conversation with them—those who drove us out of Paradise. Or have you not heard what Eve did to Adam? Flee, then, flee from them, like the Great Martinian—if not in body, then in every way in spirit. – And what is this talk: "Why didn't so-and-so come here on Resurrection Sunday?! But surely they won't forget to come next time." – I ask and implore you, let me always hear good reports about your conduct! May God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who daily delivers me from the depths of sin by the power of His might, through the intercession of my holy father and your prayers, grant you also *"to be wise and to live according to the same rule"* (Phil. 3: 16), and may there be one spirit, one mind, and one purpose among you; and may you, having lived a godly and righteous life, be deemed worthy to receive the promised blessings, together with all the saints who have pleased God from of old!

44. Fear for Oneself Regarding the Abbot's Insistence

44. 1) Fear for oneself regarding the abbacy. – 2) Let us excel in detachment from all things, remembering the judgment; let us compel ourselves to do good—and it will become easy. – 3) Avoid looking at people's faces and passionate contact with others and with one's own body parts. [1:48]

16. I do not tire of speaking to you and strengthening you with words of truth as often as possible, so that none of you, through ignorance or negligence, may be stung by the sting of death—that is, by sin—by transgressing the commandment and doing what is unseemly—if, and when I do so, I find that the crafty Satan succeeds in influencing some of you, for whom I have great weeping and crushing sorrow. For everything you have sinned in any way, I, the unworthy one, will be held accountable on the day of righteous judgment and the revelation of all that people have done before the Lord God, unless I warn you beforehand, unless I strengthen you beforehand, and unless I teach you. *“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel to you!”* (1 Cor. 9:16). But I am especially grieved that, though I am not worthy to be called even a sheep, I hold the office of a shepherd! What justification do I have, what excuse, to enlighten others when I myself am darkness, and to heal those weakened by passions when I myself am led astray and carried away by them?! But, out of love for you and in obedience to my Father’s command, I would rather be fuel for the fire of Gehenna than cause you harm. Every day I reflect on and ponder what God’s judgment is like, and how strictly God demands of every person that he be perfect in all things and filled with every virtue—especially if he is a minister of the Word. What, then, am I to do? To whom shall I turn? Whom should I choose as my companions? There is only one thing left—to rely on your prayers, together with the prayers of my father, so that, strengthened by them, I may be able both to guide you well and to struggle against my own passions, conforming in all things to the will of the Lord.

17. The Kingdom of Heaven lies before us. Let us attain it by keeping the divine commandments. Let us not indulge in sensual pleasures, let us not grow lazy; let us increasingly deepen our detachment from the world and all that is in the world, and overcome the spirits of deceit, until we find saving refuge in the unshakable haven of eternal life. What bitter torment awaits the negligent! What *“wrath and fury against every human soul that does evil”*—against the soul of every Christian, and even more so against that of a monk! (Rom. 2:8–9). For the more we are honored, the greater the purity of life required of us. The sorrow of self-discipline is fleeting, but the delight flowing from it is eternal, if through this brief self-discipline we attain a constant good disposition toward every good: this applies to food, to sleep, to irritability, to evil thoughts, and to everything else. – For if we love what is good and strive toward it, God will grant us the strength to do it; and then the path of virtue will become easy and smooth for us. Sin, however, for those who give themselves over to it, is full of difficulties, rapids, sorrows, darkness, abominations, and ruin. Come, then, my children, let us walk in the way of God—a way that is sorrowful yet joy-filled, narrow yet spacious. In your vigils, maintain a steadfast and cheerful spirit; sing well, pray well, and show love toward your brothers and sisters, along with a certain humble deference.

18. Great evil is boldness in all things and a deadly thing; and the crafty devil, if anyone is not vigilant, quickly attacks through it, sneaks in like a thief, and wounds our souls with the arrow of his malice, drawing our eyes to the beautiful faces of the young, and stirring up the fire of passion in both with sweet smiles. And when he succeeds in seducing one and inclining them toward impure love, he then attempts to entice the object of that person’s passion as well, making them become infatuated and amorously disposed toward him; then there will follow mutual exchanges of glances and gazes, outpourings of the soul, and sensual ardor; and finally, unless there is special help from God, a father’s protection, and an awareness of the temptation on the part of those who have fallen into it, there will be ruin—the burning of Sodom and the destruction of Gomorrah. But let us all flee from this! I, having been tempted myself, am the first to reach out to you who are being tempted. A great strength and protection against this is guarding one’s eyes and sincere confession. — But even in regard to ourselves, we must not allow such reckless boldness: for death lurks here as well—a matter best left undisclosed to the uninitiated. Those who have suffered know what I am speaking of; nevertheless, it behooves everyone to be on guard. Do not touch, nor sit upon it—and do not look upon your own nakedness, lest you fall under the Canaanite curse. For the pillar in the wilderness, of which Anthony the Great spoke, fell by no other cause than this, though the most wise Father did not express it in these terms. Take care, then, how dangerously you walk, lest death overtake you. Poor man! You know what the Apostle says: *“Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* (Rom. 7:24). You live with this flesh as with a wild beast, as with a lion. If you do not thrust your sword at it, it will snatch you away, crush you, and kill you.

45. Demons entice by stirring up passions, and they destroy: one must fight

45. 1) Demons entice by stirring up passions and destroy; we must fight. – 2) Have you fallen? Rise up, having mourned and repented: the Lord will heal you. – 3) Let us heed His voice; let us not be faint-

hearted, but let us arm ourselves. – 4) Flee from everything reprehensible in communal life, and excel in everything that is required. [1:49]

19. How shall we correct our path? How, if not by keeping God's words and the decrees of His righteousness (Ps. 118:9)? But besides this, we truly have a ceaseless battle with the rulers of the darkness of this age; and their bitterness against us is great and unrelenting, as is written in The Ladder (St. 4, 35; 26:126): they attack, provoke, torment with lusts, stir up carnal desires, fan the flames of lust, multiply and diversify evil—and their temptations are deadly. A poor person is ensnared by any of these things if he does not heed himself: whether by envy—which is equivalent to murder—or by vanity, or by secret indulgence, or by associating with those who harbor evil thoughts; for even for this one thing alone, the soul that has suffered this may go to hell. But no matter which of the things mentioned above a person may be ensnared by, he no longer has God, nor does he have the Kingdom of Heaven; he is deprived of eternal life, loses endless joy, and inherits unquenchable fire, a worm that never sleeps, utter darkness, and fellowship with demons. — As for us, brothers, may we not suffer any such fate; let us strive to avoid the enemy's snares, let us fight valiantly, let us endure the fire of lust—and it will surely be extinguished. For God's almighty power does not allow us to be consumed by this fire if we fight—and we emerge into the coolness of the dew of purity, glorifying God with the holy youths. Let envy assail us, but let us arm ourselves against this passion, and it will pass after lingering a little; it may last an hour or three, or perhaps even the whole day, but on our bed it will vanish; and you, having struggled in this way, will be numbered among Christ's warriors, who are to receive not torments but crowns.

20. You have been wounded, but you have also wounded others; you have fallen—though may this never be—so rise quickly; were you led astray by words into what is unseemly, tempted by what your eyes beheld, captivated by daydreams due to the idleness of your mind, or did you burst into laughter? Return once more to what is right; restore yourself to your proper state; become a penitent; give glory to God; make your confession; shed warm tears from the depths of your soul; let sighs rise from the depths of your heart; groan; bow your head; be contrite; and practice humility. Such is the healing of the soul! For it is written: *"When you return and sigh, then you will be saved and understand where you have been"* (Isa. 30: 15); and: *"While you are still speaking, He will say to you, 'Here I am'"* (Isa. 58: 9); and again: *"He was afflicted and went away, and I healed his ways"* (Isa. 57:17). Behold what a gracious God we have, how merciful, how comforting, how quick to hear! *"For He is the atonement for our sins"* (1 John 2:2); for our sake He became poor; for our salvation He exhausted Himself; He endured wounds, insults, reproaches, and mockery, and shed His all-holy blood—and *"by His wounds we are healed,"* as it is written (Isa. 53: 5). Come, then, let us draw near and *"bow down before Him and weep before Him, for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand"* (Ps. 94:7).

21. Today let us heed His voice, and let us no longer grieve Him; let us not be tempted, as the ancients (the Israelites in the wilderness) were, to murmur because of unbelief, but let us press on without delay toward the Promised Land, to which one arrives by a narrow and arduous path. If those people had listened to Joshua, their leader, and Caleb son of Jephunneh, they would have inherited the land promised by God. But since they were weary and fainthearted to walk that difficult path, and feared the resistance of the nations they encountered—despite the help of God's invincible power—they were delivered over to destruction, and their memory perished with a great uproar. The same will happen to us now. For if you obey us, who are unworthy, and do not stand firm, you will likewise sit down at the pots of sensual indulgence, thinking of the slavery of Egypt and the slavery to the passions of this world, from which you have been set free by God's grace and favor, but instead take heart with us and rise up vigorously, with hearts ablaze with zeal, having shod your feet with the readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace, having put on the armor of unshakable faith, and praying at all times with all kinds of prayers in the Spirit (Eph. 6, 14–18): then we, together with you, will successfully complete the spiritual journey, trampling underfoot and overcoming the foreign and barbaric passions we encounter, and we will cross the Jordan in spirit through tears, and we will inherit that land where immortal life flourishes and the mind bears the fruit of blessings beyond measure.

22. I am sowing these few and unworthy words among you now, as always, for the edification of your souls. Accept, however, even this meager offering, and through your good deeds, multiply this small number of words thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. With it, I implore you, bear the hardships of your life with good cheer, and fulfill the duties entrusted to you with all your heart. Rejoice and share in my joy, all of you, and may you all prosper. Let no one grumble; let no one covet another's (duty); let no one be proud before a

neighbor—for such a thing is an abomination to the Lord and to people—let no one commit shameful acts, whether in soul or body; let no one eat in secret; let no one lie; let no one condemn; let no one reproach; let no one be idle; let no one make excuses for sin; let no one be a double-tongued person, a whisperer, a braggart, a boastful person, a hypocrite, one who hates his brother, a sluggard, or a stubborn person; on the contrary, let all of you be gracious in the way of God and virtuous, even-tempered (do not stand out), self-controlled, tireless, humble before Him, obedient, friendly, haters of insolent boldness, loving toward one another, and sincere; so that, by living and conducting ourselves in this way, we may successfully accomplish the task set before us and, having pleased God, obtain the promised blessings.

46. *We are called to a noble life: but do we live as we ourselves have resolved, and as others expect?*

46. 1) We are called to a noble life: but do we live as we ourselves intended, and as others expect? – 2) Let us be steadfast in goodness and not be carried away by passions, not only in our actions but also in our dreams. – 3) Why did we leave the world? To live in deprivation—in hope. [1, 50]

23. *“The grace of God has appeared,”* as the wonderful Paul says, *“bringing salvation to all, so that, having renounced worldly desires,”* especially we who have chosen the monastic life, *“chastely,”* piously and *“righteously, as we await the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2: 11–12), Who to some, *“according to their perseverance in doing good,”* will grant the Kingdom of Heaven, and to others, *“according to their passion”* and the desires of the flesh, who have rejected good intentions and deeds—*“wrath”* and unceasing torment in eternal fire (Rom. 2: 7–8). —Consider, then, whether we are living this way. Are we living according to the intention we had at the beginning? Since we have received the name and title of saints, ascetics—let us not bring shame upon our original calling through our subsequent deeds, nor become like incense, which at first spreads a sweet fragrance but in the end stings the nose with its smoke, nor like a lamp that burns brightly at first, illuminating everyone in the house, but is then placed under a bushel or allowed to go out.

24. The hallmark of true virtue is to preserve one’s character at all times; and in this lies our task. For we humans are all too easily led astray and prone to unseemly behavior, as the divine voice has declared elsewhere: *“The inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth”* (Gen. 8:21). Having renounced the world, let us not again become its accomplices and slaves to passion; having restored our honor, let us not again lose it through malice; having confessed here that we have stripped ourselves of all things, let us not return to desires and blessings that are foreign to us. Why, having forgotten our vow, made in the presence of angels and men, do we seek—some leadership, some teaching, some peace? And others express extreme displeasure if, in any matter, they are shown a certain lack of attention, or are not honored as most reverend men, seeing before them not death, not the dreadful judgment and condemnation of their thoughts and deeds, nor the burden of sins that weighs upon them, but rather what the heart is drawn to and desires, and what a perverse mind conjures up below, which in its dreams ordains one to the clergy, elevates another to the position of abbot, clothes one in the word of wisdom, and entrusts another with the construction and care of the monastery’s needs. Is this not a satanic delusion and deception?! We do not reproach everyone for this, but there are some who are like this; yet our words are generally directed at all, to strengthen them in good thoughts and feelings.

25. Having regarded all honor as secondary and having bid farewell to all earthly things, we will now devote ourselves to that which we have undertaken in their place. For what reason did we leave the world? — We left to live in poverty, to weep, to hunger, to thirst, to be pure in heart and peacemakers, to be reviled, persecuted, and—if it should happen—slandered—to be the refuse of the world; and finally, if the time of persecution comes, to give ourselves up to death for the sake of Him who died for us: for those who have resolved to do this and are always ready for it belong to those who have truly suffered, and together with them they will be glorified; and they will reign with our one God and Universal King, Christ.

47. *Be steadfast in the life you have chosen, and do not deprive yourself of the joys that lie before you*

47. 1) Be steadfast in the life you have chosen, and do not deprive yourself of the joys that lie before you. – 2) What suffering can you endure that the Lord has not already endured before you, on your behalf? – 3) Sorrow over one who fled the monastery, and an exhortation to the elders. – 4) An invitation to pray for the one who fled. [1, 51]

26. I implore you, in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, to be steadfast and unshakable in the faithful observance of the Lord’s holy and life-giving commandments. Let no one

slumber, lest he slip into sin; let no one yield to the temptation of the devil who tempts us; let no one cunningly hide sin from us, saying one thing to us while appearing differently before God, who watches over the ways of men and sees into the secret places of the heart. Do not deprive yourselves of the joy of eternal life that lies before you; be saved from this rebellious and depraved generation; hate the world and the things in the world—all passions, sweet pleasures, your own wills, and self-indulgence. We have broken with the world; we have set out on the path of the fear of God. We have died to sin, and we must not allow anything we have rejected to return, nor follow in its footsteps again, nor accept it. You have come here, having fled from the world and worldly things—take up the good and wondrous resolve to make yourself a slave to obedience, and to endure everything willingly for Christ’s sake, even unto blood. You have already promised this in your very renunciation, before God and His angels. Whether you are such a person, you know. But take heed, O man: *“God is not mocked”* (Gal. 6:7). *“Whoever rejects the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be reserved for those who have trampled underfoot the Son of God, by breaking their vows and defiling the blood of the covenant?”* (Heb. 10:28–29).

27. The Lord suffered for us; how can you, a servant, suffer as much as your Lord? Why, then, my beloved, are you angry? Why do you lose your temper? Why are you indignant? Why?—Have they reviled you? Your Lord endured that as well. Did they strike you on the cheek? Did He not turn His face to the one who struck Him? Did they mock you? The same thing happened to your Lord: for He said through the Prophet, *“The insults of those who insulted You fell upon me”* (Ps. 68: 10); and again: *“They pierced My hands and My feet; all My bones are out of joint”* (Ps. 21:17–18). What heart of stone would not be softened upon reflecting on the life-giving sufferings of Christ the Lord and on His death for us! But have you not resolved to offer yourselves as a sacrifice for Him day by day? This, indeed, is the case, and I believe you are not indifferent to what has been said, but rather imitate the Savior and seek to suffer with Him, so that you may be glorified together with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, one of you is better than another and surpasses him, according to the virtue inherent in him. But may the Lord God grant strength and fortitude to all of you to attain, in accordance with your age, the fullness of Christ!

28. When I rejoice in something, I want you to rejoice as well; and when I grieve, I want you to grieve with me. – I am now in no small sorrow because of Brother Orsisius. He disappeared from our sight yesterday. And the reason for this is none other than my sins, as a poor shepherd who failed to foresee, warn, or prevent the infirm one’s fall. Woe is me! I rightly deserve to face judgment and condemnation and to be subjected to torment and torture. Have mercy on me; but also take care of yourselves, lest my authority over you become the cause of my eternal ruin. Let each of you remain steadfast in the proper rules; and be sure to reveal everything to me in confession. Let each one remain in the calling to which he has been called. Take heed, you elders, who have renounced the world before others, lest something similar happen again due to your recklessness, since you allow yourselves to go beyond what is proper and fail to maintain order in all things, as I want and as I desire, which should apply to every subordinate. For I hear that you are striking people; yet I have not ordered this, as it is forbidden by Divine Scripture, although it was permitted by the holy fathers, out of necessity in certain cases and for certain individuals—though without fanfare and through another’s hand, not to satisfy passions; you are scolding, and in an unseemly manner at that, and for some this has become a habit. – We must lead the brothers to what is right through persuasion, gentleness, and the demonstration of virtue; for we do not exercise tyrannical authority, but one that respects freedom and willingly elicits obedience. But abusive language—such as “foolish Galatians,” “idiots,” “spawn of the viper,” and the like—must not be heard among us, although a stern word, spoken not with embarrassment or passion but with compassion and love, can be a saving remedy. For even a doctor uses a scalpel and a cautery when these are suitable for curing the illness at hand. And we, too, have our own scalpels and cauterizers, namely penances and words of rebuke: we must use them, keeping one thing in mind—that the fallen may rise again and return to their path, and showing the depths of our generosity, especially toward the imperfect. Neither in regard to sleep, nor in regard to food, nor in regard to rest and other matters should those who are accustomed to these things be treated the same as those who are not. That is why I wish that beginners be granted leniency until they become accustomed and begin to do everything zealously on their own. Do we have brothers only for work, for the vineyards and olive groves? By no means; but to enable them to work out their own salvation. The elders must concern themselves first and foremost with this, and only secondarily with material matters. Every humble and contrite soul, according to the Gospel, brings forth good words from the good treasure of

his heart, and the rebuke and reproof of such a soul are sweeter to those who receive them than the sweetness of a sweet drink; but the heart of the proud bears fruit—insults, bitter and harsh words, accompanied by fierce glances, flared nostrils, and savage grimaces. How, then, is the sinning brother healed of this?

29. Pray that the Lord may be appeased and reveal to us where our brother is; for this has brought me deep sorrow and caused bitter tears. Do not think that Orsisius's flight is of no consequence, a trivial matter, simply because he is one of the least. But for me it is a great matter; for Christ died for him.

48. *Death is at hand: prepare yourselves by purifying yourselves of passions*

48. 1) Death is at hand: prepare yourselves by purifying yourselves of passions. – 2) You must excel. 3) Avoid idle talk and laughter; love silence instead; and if you speak, speak of what is beneficial to you. [1, 52]

30. Day after day rushes by, flowing like a river that rushes forward swiftly and never stands still. And there lies death. And *“Who is the man who will live and not see death?”* (Ps. 88:49). *“Man is like the flower of the field; his days pass like a shadow”* (Ps. 101:12; 102:15). Let us not make ourselves a laughingstock by appearing unprepared when the holy angels come for us; but since we may be taken from this life at any moment, let us be most attentive to every deed, every movement, and every word—and let us stand well prepared, eagerly awaiting the signal from God, the Lord of all, to depart this life. If we conduct ourselves in this way, no evil will prevail within us, and forgetfulness will not shield us from God's judgment; we will no longer fight with one another or stir up quarrels; we will not seek greater honor before one another, nor grieve that we have not learned this or that, have not memorized this or that, or have not succeeded in this or that. But *having “counted all these things as loss”* (Phil. 3:8), we will seek only one thing—to purify our souls from passions and become God's own. – I am telling you this not to forbid you from studying; for I require this as well, and I myself have given you detailed rules on what and how to study; but to show that one thing must come first, and this afterward, and that one must be regarded as the main task, and this as an accessory. The Lord our God, who strengthens the weak, *who “lifts the poor out of the dust”* (Ps. 12: 7) and who, day by day, transforms us—newborns in piety—into *“men of perfection,”* may He fill us with the strength befitting that calling and make us appear more perfect than our worth deserves.

31. The Apostle teaches us to seek ever greater and greater perfection (Col. 3:1). Let us not cease to seek what is still lacking in us, but let us strive more and more to prosper and be enriched with every good thing. If you are a star, strive to become the sun; if you are already within the court of God and numbered among the saved, strive to attain the position of being set over five or ten cities. Multiply your talent so that you may stand above many; love abundantly, and much will be given to you; be a faithful servant of the Lord, and you will have precedence over all who are in the house. Such are the divine voices, awe-inspiring—and when you hear them, and when you reflect on them—they foretell glory upon glory to us.

32. Stand firm against the devil and repel his attacks against you. I have heard that many of you indulge in idle talk and, during evening gatherings, engage in frivolity without shame; and this is harmful both to the one who does it and to those who participate in it. If any of you utters a frivolous word, that senseless laughter immediately spreads from one to all. And the devil rejoices: for he is the ruler here, and this brings him pleasure; but the Lord, together with His holy angels, is ashamed at such wickedness on your part. Fear God and be serious. If this is not true, prove to me that I am lying, and I will be silent; but if it is true, begin to guard yourselves against this. Why do you not rein in your talkativeness and keep silent, saying nothing until you are asked? Surely you do not know the sweetness of silence, which fills the soul of the silent one with joy greater than any other joy: for such a person has the Holy Spirit as a companion. You think this is a trifle, and you do not realize that every kind of evil is found here. For, as the divine James said, the tongue is *“an unrestrained evil, full of deadly poison,”* and the one who restrains it is a *“perfect man”* (James 3:2, 8). So do not be upset with me, even though I am upsetting you. I am a father to you; and I will say to you in the words of St. Paul: *“Who is there to make me glad, yet at the same time bear sorrow from me?”* (2 Cor. 2:2). Have you begun to talk? – Fine; but speak about the troparia and stichera, tell holy stories, discuss useful matters and the tasks before you. But why talk about some field or vegetable garden, about an ox or a stall, or about anything else that has nothing to do with you? Who needs to ask about this, and who can give a real answer? – But one asked out of the blue, another repeated the question—and off they went rambling on, with no end in sight. You'd be better off sitting in your cell and keeping silent. I'll say it again: the one who is silent has the Spirit of God as his companion, while the opposite is clearly true.

49. The scene of our Savior's sufferings for our sake: glory and thanks be to Him!

49. 1) The scene of our Savior's sufferings for our sake: glory and thanks be to Him! – 2) On the occasion of a change in duties, a word to those who grumble about it and are disobedient. – 3) In words, everyone is ready to do everything, but in practice, not everyone is: a rebuke. [1, 53]

33. Once again we enter the holy and illustrious week of the active commemoration of Christ's Passion, and once again we learn what, how much, and for what reason the Lord of glory, our God and Creator, deigned to suffer for us. And what heart, no matter how hardened, would not be crushed and tremble at the thought of how the Lord was betrayed by His disciple, handed over to the lawless, bound by the hand of soldiers, led to trial, accused though He is the Truth, and called a flatterer and a villain. The Savior of all—He strikes His cheek and endures it, is spat upon and offers no resistance, is crowned with a crown of thorns in excruciating pain and does not rebuke the insolent, is clothed in a purple robe like a king and, like a criminal, is struck with a reed; finally, He is crucified, pierced with a spear, and tastes death for the life of all; but soon afterward He rises again, raising us up from our fall and establishing us in unending immortality. O Lord, our God and Creator! What can we—dust and ashes—offer You in return?! By Your immeasurably rich goodness, You did not despise Your perishing creation, but deigned to come and save us through the example of the utmost and ineffable humility. And now, in the sense of salvation and strength received from You, with sinful and unworthy lips, we offer You praise and thanksgiving, which fills us to the brim.

34. A change in our assignments has taken place: one has been transferred to a different assignment, and another to yet another, both new to them. This was done according to the rule handed down by our fathers: for in this way, brotherly love, unity of heart, and unity of mind are best preserved and strengthened. – But some of you accepted this without difficulty, while others found it burdensome; because the former were accustomed to setting aside their own will, while the latter were unprepared for this—the former were not attached to any particular duty and did not care where they were assigned, whereas the latter liked one duty but not another, and considered one honorable while the other humiliating. Of these latter ones, however, some, after a little sorrow, overcame themselves and came to terms with their new assignment, while others still persist and stand firm in their unwillingness to submit to the new order. “To all of you, here is my humble word! Those who have accepted our decree as if it came from God, and, having set aside their own will, have willingly set about the task assigned to them, are blessed, pleasing both to us and to the Lord, and are truly—not merely in name—equal to the martyrs.” Those who, having at first accepted it with displeasure and sorrow, soon afterward turned with humility toward what is better—these have shown themselves to be good fighters who have offered a sacrifice of blood to God. But the third group, still remaining in rebellion and concocting excuses for themselves—inspired by their passions, are the apostates, of whom it is just to say that they are not and never were of us.

35. The Lord said: “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21). And again: “*If you love Me, keep My commandments*” (John 14:15). In this regard, I also tell you that not everyone who says to me, ‘Father, Father,’ is my disciple, and that only the one who carries out my commands loves me. Let us not be wise in words, but when it comes to action, let us not prove to be strangers to what we say. How many times have I heard you say: “We will shed our blood, we will die for you; if you wish, we will throw ourselves into the sea; if you wish, we will walk naked; if you wish, we will eat stones; if you wish, we will have our limbs cut off.” Hearing this, I used to rejoice and give thanks to God; but then, when I came and found you not living up to your words, I wept and wailed, saying, “These people bless me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” I do not speak this of all of you; for I have found many to be meek as angels of God, but of those others—though even they are not all, nor are they always, stubborn in their desires. I speak in general, so that we may all be blameless in everything from now on. Seek, then, the ways of our forefathers, to which our fathers always remained faithful before God. Imitate them. If you do not act in this way, then at your departure you will not be deemed worthy of the accompaniment of the holy angels, nor will you be received among your fathers; for as one is here, so will he appear there. I know that you all desire to be saved and are among those who will be saved. Let us therefore be vigilant, and when we face temptation, let us not allow ourselves to fall; and if we stumble, let us rise quickly, and if we doze off, let us awaken. I do not condemn you; rather, I regard you as servants of God and hold you dear in my heart.

50. A Lesson from Seeing the Deceased: Do Not Worry About the Body, but About Heaven

50. A Lesson from the Sight of the Deceased: Do Not Worry About the Body, but About Heaven. [1, 54] What is this mystery concerning us? What dwelling awaits us all? A three-foot coffin. Taken from the earth, we shall return to the earth: the body remains here, but the soul soars upward. What were we before, and what have we become now through our transgression of the commandment? It brought about death, and because of it we have become mortal. We too shall see ourselves in the same way; for we, too, shall die. What awaits us? Where shall we go? What shall we encounter? – Why, then, do we cherish this flesh so much—ours and not ours, our friend and enemy, our slanderer and guardian, our ruin and our salvation? No matter how much we feed it, no matter how much rest we give it, no matter how much we indulge it—will it not still turn into worms and foul mud? What good is it for me to care for ashes and struggle over dust? *“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,”* says Scripture (1 Cor. 15:50). For this reason, let us take good care of ourselves and not allow ourselves to live as beasts do. It is characteristic of irrational animals to love the flesh, to fill their bellies, to indulge in carnal desires, to be filled with bloodlust, to let their bodies run wild, and to gratify all their senses; but for a human being—truly honored as the image of God and desiring to live as he was created—none of this is proper. His calling—an angelic calling—is to contemplate heavenly blessings, to survey the scenes of creation, to burn with love for the true God, to hate demons, and to care little for the body, providing it only with the bare necessities in moderation and sparingly. Therefore, I beg you, let us act wisely, and we shall know that we have not sinned by doing so in the age to come, when all will be rewarded according to their deeds and undertakings—the righteous with eternal life, and the sinful with unquenchable fire.

51. Everyone in the monastery works, contributing their share to the common good; why everything produced by the monastery is considered the property of each individual

51. 1) Everyone in the monastery works, contributing their share to the common good; why is what the monastery produces appropriated by everyone? – 2) Food, drink, and wine are offered to all; but everyone is free to abstain. – 3) In what sense it is good to increase the number of brothers; with what mindset the abbot should accept them; and the brothers have a part in this; it is a duty to take in the elderly and the disabled. [1, 55]

1. *“Present your bodies,”* as the Apostle says, *“as servants of righteousness to God”* (Rom. 6:19). Embrace divine wisdom even more abundantly; truly recognize the angelic dignity of your honorable way of life. Indeed, you have already come to know this and have surrendered yourselves to God completely with humility, and you willingly endure daily labors in both your spiritual and physical endeavors: for both are equally beneficial and complement one another. One is engaged in reading, another prays; one sits at home doing needlework, another works somewhere outdoors; one digs up a vineyard, another prepares the furrows; one busies himself with errands, another does carpentry; and no one is idle, no one sits with folded hands, but all contribute labor according to their strength. In my view, neither the gatekeeper who watches over those entering nor the gardener who scares away the birds should be looked down upon: for each of them contributes to the whole body, occupying the insignificant place of a foot or a finger. – We are all one soul, one will. So let us always conduct ourselves in this way; and let no one cut himself off from cooperation and shared suffering with the brotherhood. Your hands are sanctified; your labor is an offering and sacrifice to God. And am I not right in saying this? Do you not feed the elderly? Do you not provide strangers with bread, vegetables, a cup of *“cool water”* or wine, and everything else that is available in the monastery? Do you not entertain visiting friends? Do you not provide for yourselves? Do you not provide for us as well?—What is all this, if not an offering to God? For it is written: *“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”* (Matt. 9:13). It is you who show mercy when something is given from the monastery. For when this is done, I am not the only one giving, but all of us give—whether money, clothing, or anything else. You are my children and partners in all that is mine, both spiritual and physical. My heart burns for you, and *“you are not confined within my bosom”* (2 Cor. 6:12). I embrace each of you with spiritual love, I have compassion for each of you, and I strive to warm and comfort each of you. Know this: if anyone is against anyone, he is against me; for he is me. Therefore, let there be peace among you, spiritual love, mutual respect, and mutual help. Honor the least as the greatest and the first, just as you would honor me, and obey them in everything with reverence and love; whoever does not obey is not my child.

2. Strengthen yourselves first with spiritual nourishment, performing the prescribed services and sacred prayers with sobriety and alertness; and then, because of the hardship of your work, with physical nourishment—bread, cooked vegetables, and wine in the prescribed measure. This is for those who are not in robust health. But whoever wishes to abstain—thanks be to the Lord!—let him abstain. Yet let not the drinker be ashamed, as though he were failing; nor let the abstainer be arrogant, as though he were doing something great; for *“food does not bring us before God”* (1 Cor. 8:8), especially if we boast about it. Who would dispute that drinking wine is not suitable for the young? But it is beneficial for everyone to abstain from wine, especially for those who are physically strong. I, however, deliberately allow some to drink wine, according to the rule, to humble their minds—not permanently, but for a time.

3. You know that almost every day people come to us wishing to enter our monastery. But I do not accept everyone: for I am not concerned with having more of you here than in other monasteries, nor do I wish to boast about this, even though I am vain. We want you to multiply, but to multiply for the glory of God and according to His will. Those who have gathered many into one, of course, offer greater praise to God—but only when they have gathered them in His name. It is not unknown to me that if God rejoices over a single repentant sinner, does He not rejoice all the more over many such? And if He is present among two or three gathered in His name (Matt. 18:20), does He not all the more dwell among a multitude of them? But, recognizing my own weakness and passion, I do not presume to preside over many, since I cannot even control myself. And only for the sake of the commandment that we must not turn away anyone who comes (John 6:37)—and the other: *“Let the little children come to Me, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven”* (Luke 18:16)—do I humble myself and welcome young children, youths, the elderly, the married, the unmarried, those who are physically whole, the disabled, the one-armed, and the lame. I do this not of my own free will, as one who is doing something great, but as a servant obligated to do so, following the divine Fathers, so that if I do not do this, I will be found guilty of breaking the commandment. What do you say? Do you agree with me, and are you yourselves ready to participate in this?—Yes, or no? – Let each of you answer me, so that I may be all the more zealous in this work: for the fruit of your labor is what feeds and sustains them; or rather, it is a gift from God, *“who fulfills every act of kindness”* (Ps. 144: 17), *“who provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens that call to Him”* (Ps. 146: 9), and who said: *“Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap, yet your heavenly Father feeds them”* (Matt. 6: 26). However, I trust in your good will; I hope that together we will always diligently fulfill all the commandments and will not be found worthy of condemnation in any way. For if I do not welcome the elderly or give rest to the disabled, I will be found guilty of breaking the law—not just in regard to a single commandment; for the commandments form an unbroken chain, each one dependent on the next, and this applies equally to their fulfillment and their violation. Why, if we break even one commandment, we will be called “the least” in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:19); and to be called “the least,” according to St. Chrysostom, means nothing other than to fall into eternal torment. – Let us therefore welcome children, the elderly, and the disabled; and the good God will not despise us, but will provide us with all that we need, both for our souls and for our bodies, just as we have already received from Him from the very first day until now.

52. Let brotherly love endure; may you all be saved by purifying yourselves; avoid idle talk and laughter; it pains me to hear when something is amiss among you

52. 1) Let brotherly love endure; may you all be saved by purifying yourselves; avoid idle talk and laughter; it pains me to hear when things are amiss among you. – 2) Do not pass food to one another without permission from the elders; this is a temptation: whoever fails to comply will receive penance—not out of anger, but out of love. – 3) Do you wish to be blameless in everything at all times? Remember death. [1, 56]

4. Do not allow yourselves to treat one another badly, but show mutual healthy competition and proper brotherly love toward one another. I say this in the hope that we may all be saved. For our Lord Jesus Christ says: *“It is not the will of My Father in heaven that anyone should perish”* (Matt. 18:14). Therefore, may you all be saved; to this end, strive and compete to present yourselves to God as pure, just as you were created in the beginning, bearing the likeness of the divine image. Do not be quarrelsome, and do not indulge in frivolous chatter; when you gather together in the evenings, do not engage in laughter, and when you work together, do not do so in a way that leads one another into sin. *“My heart is in anguish, and the feelings of my heart are in turmoil,”* says the most eloquent Jeremiah (4:19) in his godly words. Here I am, unclean and wretched, crying out to you: a deadly illness overwhelms me, and the arrows of my thoughts wound me when I hear that you

are behaving badly. Fear the terrible God, my children, and do not ruin your long struggle and blessed labor through any negligence. We have completed a great voyage: shall we really be shipwrecked at the very dock? We have traveled a long path: shall we really slumber at the very threshold of the divine dwellings? Understand what I am saying: for God has given you understanding. *“Be strong, and let your heart take courage”* (Ps. 30:25). Strive—and clothe yourselves in humility. Do not indulge your own will, and do not thereby fail to carry out my instructions with joy. For whoever puts his own will to death, no matter how burdensome the task assigned to him may be, does not refuse, does not neglect, does not grow weary, but willingly submits and obeys, agrees and does not contradict, just as an irrational animal submits to its master, according to the word of Scripture (Ps. 72:22). Let each of you examine yourselves to see where you stand with regard to obedience. Moreover, I myself can discern from outward actions what lies within. According to St. Dorotheus, one who has no will of his own regards whatever is done in the monastery as his own task—and such a person is always at peace. But whoever is not like this appears weary and troubled, being drawn by his own desires here and there, enticed by one thing or another, and taking on one form or another. May there not be a single one like that among us; but let us all serve God with a pure heart, in one spirit. For if I am one thing and you are another, then there is strife and division. But if what I am telling you is good, why do you fight against me? Why do you cause me trouble and worry?

5. I have something to remind you of, my brothers—why do you not keep one of my commandments, as the others do? Although it may seem small, breaking it ruins all your great virtues. And why should we say, “This small commandment is great”? Every commandment of God must be obeyed, and every act of disobedience rightly has its punishment. I have said many times, with strict warning, that it is not permissible for any of you to pass on anything to another—whether food or drink. This is the sole responsibility of me, the steward, the assistant steward, the cellarer, or other senior officials to whom I have given and continue to give orders on this matter. Therefore, I reaffirm that from this day forward, no one is to do this: it is subject to any form of penance, just as secret eating is. Take care, then, not to fall into this sin through thoughtlessness. You shame one another to no good end and are gripped by fear where there is no fear. You say that you do not wish to offend a brother, yet in the meantime you offend God and me, who am unworthy. Alas for such “conscience” of yours! It is a sign of a frivolous mind, a lack of love for God, self-righteousness, and carnal fellowship. I dare say that even if someone were an angel, do not accept anything from him. After all, you often receive vegetables as a blessing: let everyone eat them; but if anyone cannot eat them, let him return them to the steward, or, if he wishes to give them to someone else, let him tell the steward about it. Whoever acts in this way is not subject to condemnation. Or do you not know that this gives rise to improper friendships? Or perhaps you are passing them on to those toward whom you harbor impure feelings. But even if there is nothing of the sort—is the act itself not tempting? And does it not give rise to whispers and resentment when one receives while the other merely watches? In every way, the latter may come to think that he is not loved. If, however, you say that you give without the other person present, then you must seek out a special time and place for this; and in this way, you are fostering secret alliances and conspiracies. – But what does St. Basil the Great say? – That exchanging glances and whispering in someone’s ear give your neighbor reason to think that some ill-intentioned scheme is afoot.⁸⁴ Therefore, you are by no means permitted to do this (i.e., to pass on food to others) apart from and without the knowledge of those appointed for this purpose. Whoever is found guilty of this is subject to penance. Do not think, however, that this will be out of anger or irritation. No, I have done this and will continue to do so, motivated by my love for you. In this, I strive to imitate the Lord, of whom the Apostle testifies: *“The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes every son He accepts”* (Heb. 12:6)—and to this very Apostle, who says of himself: *“Who is it that makes me glad, except by bearing sorrow from me?”* (2 Cor. 2:2).

6. Do you wish to be blameless always and in everything?—Remember death, the separation of the soul from the body, the presence of the angels (at the hour of death), of that long journey and wandering (through the torments of purgatory), of the meeting with the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, of the dreadful reckoning for all our deeds, of eternal torments, of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the ineffable blessings promised therein.

⁸⁴ Part 5, Chapter 3 on Asceticism, p. 82.

53. *I am departing, but I leave my soul with you; continue as you were with me, even without me*

53. 1) I am taking my leave, but I leave my spirit with you; continue as you were when I was with you. – 2) Instructions to the steward. – 3) Lessons for the brethren on this occasion. [1, 57]

7. As I depart from you for a time, I leave my spirit with you, and I entrust you to the prayers of my Father and yours, who is able to keep you steadfast and unshakable forever. You have the commandments of the Lord and our God, the traditions of our holy fathers, and my humble instructions and exhortations. *“Take heed, therefore, how you walk—not as unwise, but as wise”* (Eph. 5:45)—as if I were not absent from you but were with you. The absence of a teacher brings joy to false disciples but sorrow to the true ones. You, who are worthy of God, live a pious and righteous life; continue to do so. The Lord says explicitly in the Gospel: *“Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, finds doing so,”* as he was commanded (Matt. 24:46). We are unworthy to address such words to you; but to strengthen you in a good life, we feel compelled to add something that is beyond our understanding. May I find you, when I return, still seeking God, and united in harmony, in like-mindedness, and in unity of heart.

8. You know that Satan has many temptations, and now is the time of spring, when the days are pleasant. Be careful that the arrow of sin does not strike any of you. And first of all, you, my child, who have taken my place in leading the brethren, be helpful to them in everything, showing them leniency, meeting their spiritual needs in my stead, strictly observing the rules regarding psalm-singing and prayer, permitting one thing when possible and forbidding another when necessary; be neither too lenient nor excessively strict, but by balancing the two in all things, use both for the good; sympathize with those who are sick, grieve with those who mourn, and assist those who labor. Do you hear what Paul, the great teacher of the universe, says: *“Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led astray, and I am not outraged?”* (2 Cor. 11:29). Do you understand what I am saying? May the Lord grant you wisdom in all things. But you also have our common father; follow his holy counsel and commands in everything. *“Bring forth what is worthy from what is unworthy, as My mouth shall speak,”* says the Lord in His divine Word. He who presides over a great brotherhood will be called great in heaven, if he governs those under him worthily. What does the Lord say to the holy and great Peter? *“If you love Me more than these, feed My sheep”* (John 21:15 and 9).

9. You are Christ’s sheep, my children, and my brothers. I implore you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, to submit to the elder over you; let no one oppose his commands, for whoever opposes him opposes God’s command. He will have an assistant; obey him as well, and let no one despise him because of his youth; for old age does not consist in the number of years, says the divine Scripture (Wis. 4:8). But whoever has acquired the wisdom of the elderly is also elderly. Therefore, be wise, all of you; be mature in understanding; let no one be a child in knowledge, but *“understand what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Rom. 12:2), and live according to its guidance.

54. *Please God; care for one another, not seeking to please yourselves; do not be wise in your own eyes; be of one mind*

54. 1) Please God; care for one another, not seeking to please yourselves; do not be self-righteous; be of one mind. – 2) Monastic life requires labor, especially humility; there is rest in the future, but here too there is the fruit of labor; and all monasteries live by labor; live peacefully, humbly submitting to this, wherever you may go. – 3) Brother Pachomius has passed away; remember his virtues—his modesty, his self-restraint, his laughter that barely reached a smile, and even then only occasionally... his sobriety... and imitate him. I thank God, who reveals worthy people among us. [1, 59]

10. You know that this is what God requires of us: that we live in a way pleasing to Him, subjecting ourselves in this present age to ascetic self-denial, in the hope of obtaining eternal life. So fear the One who is terrible in His judgments, and conduct yourselves well toward one another; do not put your carnal desires above all else, drawing one another into your passions. – I have learned that you are quarrelsome in your discussions with one another, not reasoning about or seeking what is beneficial to all, but rather following your own inclinations to please yourselves. And in this you are not fulfilling the Apostle’s command to care for one another as members of one body (1 Cor. 12: 25–26). If you are all in agreement regarding what is good, then your cause is favorable; but if you are divided in opinion—and consequently self-centered and wise in your own eyes—then you fall under the prophetic *“Woe!”* For the most eloquent Isaiah says: *“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight”* (Isa. 5: 21). He lives well who is not stubborn in anything, and who speaks or acts not according to his own particular understanding or decision,

but as the need at hand requires. If you are like this, you will not fight one against another, and you will not allow any conflicts among yourselves, nor pride, nor mockery. How many believers there were in Jerusalem at the beginning! Yet, as it is written, they were of one heart and mind, and no one had anything of his own—neither desire nor possessions.

11. My children! The life of a monk is multifaceted and arduous; it requires sweat and patience, but above all, humility. According to the Holy Fathers, one who is distinguished by this virtue is safe from falling, and, like purified gold, being suitable for every task, is of great value. I know that you labor to the point of exhaustion in your work. May the Lord grant you mercy and a good life in the life to come, after you have lived out your life here. But even here we find the fruits of our labor for our comfort and rest in the body. Be assured, moreover, that we are not the only ones who, through our labor, obtain what is necessary for life; but every monastery, too, sustains its life through labor and sweat. For can we render false the Word of our true God, who said to our forefather, *“By the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread”*? (Gen. 3:19). By no means. Whoever humbly submits to this law of life walks well in the way of God. You have the blessing of our father as your comfort and strength. You also have the earnest prayer of my humility, with which—though unworthy—I implore the merciful God daily to preserve you in mutual peace, forbearance, kindness, and love toward one another, so that when the time comes for each of you to depart from this body, you may, with a clear conscience and good hope, pass from this life into the next and receive there your eternal and blessed reward.

12. Yesterday our brother Pachomius passed away. Recall the virtues of this man—how humble he was, and to what extent he practiced self-restraint: for our father said that when he was a gardener, apart from what was served at the meal, he did not allow himself to touch even the most insignificant fruit; and as I have heard from others, he did not even eat in the garden what was set aside for consumption outside of mealtimes, lest anyone suspect him of gluttony. We all know, too, that he never laughed and never went beyond a smile, always maintaining strict self-discipline and a sober disposition. And he was truly a tireless servant of God, laboring, as you know, day and night—he departed in bliss. Do not cease to honor him with the highest reverence. But also strive to emulate his virtues, so that each of you, upon departing from here, may leave behind good memories and an edifying example for the entire brotherhood—for it is within your power to determine how each person wishes to be remembered after death. Whether one wishes to be honored as a blessed one, a saint, a reverend, or by some other name, this is possible for him if he already prepares himself accordingly while still here; and there is no insurmountable obstacle to this, no impossibility, as demonstrated by the examples of those who desired this and proved themselves to be such. You, too, will wish to be called blessed, angel-like, and pleasing to God; and this will be ours if we refrain from our own desires, if we love to compel ourselves to every good deed, and if we choose to be humble in all things. I am certain that you are such and will remain so—and that many of you are offered to our monastery as offerings pleasing to God. I am filled with admiration and every comfort that God, despite my great unworthiness, has granted me such brothers, —I dare say—who in nothing fall short of the ancients, but who, to the same degree, have renounced the world, submitted themselves to obedience, and devoted themselves to the name of God even unto death. Thanks be to God, who in these last days has called and revealed such chosen ones of His! For everywhere and throughout the whole earth there are many who please Him. *“Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice before Him with trembling”* (Ps. 2:11). Seek Him, and you will find Him—He who grants you the kingdom of heaven.

55. He expresses his favor toward zealous workers and asks them to be zealous both in spiritual endeavors and in monastic duties

55. 1) He expresses His favor toward zealous laborers and asks them to be zealous both in spiritual works and in monastic duties. – 2) Hasten to your duties, encouraging one another and not waiting for another call; overcome your passions, and even if you are wounded by them, you will not be deprived of the reward of good warriors. – 3) Be merciful not only to people, but also to animals. – 4) Take care of your belongings—even rags and scraps of wood. – 5) Always be prepared for death; set sail, keeping watch to ensure no water seeps in... This is a temptation through the senses. [1, 63]

13. St. Basil the Great said: The all-good God gave us the gift of speech so that we might reveal to one another the counsel and thoughts of our hearts. And so I reveal to you what is in the heart of my humility—that although I myself am wretched because of my many sins, setting aside my own weakness and the peril of my situation, I direct all my concern toward you; I fear and tremble for you, and strive in everything for your

sake. For whoever among you cares above all else for his own salvation is not my child, but my lord, master, and father—and I mentally prostrate myself at his feet; whoever is diligent and zealous in doing his work is my strength and my fortress; whoever is silent, humble and wise, and trembles at the words of God—that one is my soul, my heart, my mind. But I am annoyed with those who do nothing, who are *not* even “worthy to eat,” as the divine Paul says (2 Thess. 3:10); likewise with the sluggish, the lazy, the grumbling, the sleepy, and those who slumber on the job. I beg you, therefore, to arise—my children and brothers, my fellow travelers and companions on the path leading to heaven. First of all, devote yourselves fervently and steadfastly to spiritual pursuits, burning with zeal like a fire and hastening to the nightly psalm-singing and the daily prayers; and then turn to the physical tasks at hand, rising as early as possible and not allowing the sun to find anyone still in bed, as Basil the Great commanded; during the hottest hours of the day, you may take a nap, but one hour is enough—and rise quickly thereafter. – You hear what is written in the divine Gospels: “*Early in the morning the women came to the tomb*” (Luke 24:1); “*Very early in the morning Peter and John went out*” (John 20:24); “*at midnight*” Paul and Silas rose to pray (Acts 16:25), imitating what is sung in the Psalms (118:62)? And what else does Paul say about himself? – “*Working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you*” (1 Thess. 2:9). Do you see?—here is the Apostle, the preacher of the Gospel, the catcher of the world, who, after such ministry through the word, turned to manual labor, setting before us an example of a life lived according to God.

14. Do not be “*hearers of the word who forget*” (James 1:25), but be doers of the law and fulfillers of what has been proclaimed to us by divine counsel. – Compete with one another and encourage one another. Who is quicker than others to obey? The one who does not wait for a second word from the one who commands. Who is greater in humility? The one who, at the first word, falls prostrate, asking for forgiveness, and accepts every slander. If you are such, then I know full well that you rejoice and are glad, that you are lifted up by hopes of detachment, and that you soar with expectations of heavenly bliss, remaining pure in soul, free from envy, and impervious to passions: for although you suffer the stings and torments of the passions, armed as you are with such spiritual virtues, you repel the demons that assail you. After all, which warrior does not sustain wounds, even while achieving victory? And how could the King of Heaven fail to crown such a one—even if he were covered in wounds—as long as he has not been slain by sin?

15. “*Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful*” (Matt. 6:36). “*The wombs of the wicked,*” as it is written, “*are not merciful; but the righteous show mercy to the souls of their livestock*” (Prov. 12:10). First, show mercy toward one another, and then toward the animals; do not leave them unfed or unwatered, but at the proper time give them food and lead them to water. This is the clearest sign that draft animals belong to monks: when they are well-fed and strong; if they are not, then they do not belong to the monastery but to laypeople—either wicked or foolish ones.

16. Show yourselves to be faithful observers of the rules of your way of life, down to the smallest details. And just as you are zealous in other matters to be faithful to these rules, so observe them with regard to material things: do not throw away vegetables carelessly, nor let fruit go to waste; do not even despise old rags or scraps a pyad⁸⁵ in size, much less clothing; for if a monk is to wear, as written in the Gerondika, such clothing—that no one would take it if it were left for three days outside the gate, then what other clothing can one despise as long as it remains on one’s shoulders? And I am not speaking of this alone, but do not neglect even a single log and do not burn it in vain, nor a scrap of a board that might still be useful for something; likewise, do not spill wine or pour out oil. Ugh! How does this accord with anything?

17. Wait daily for your release from this body. – Then we shall behold the awesome face of the Lord. – For this reason, let “*tears be your bread day and night*” (Ps. 41:4), and, remembering this, pour out your hearts before Him. And I hope that you will “*go into the place of wonderful dwelling, even to the house of God, amid shouts of joy,*” to the spiritual “*echo of those celebrating in heaven*” (Ps. 41:5). Therefore, do not give in to sorrow or be troubled by your passions, even if they greatly agitate you; but, having raised the sail of your soul, continue your voyage with a cheerful heart and strive to cross the vast and storm-tossed sea of this life, guided by the prayers of our Father. If, in the process, evil water enters—whether through small cracks, through the senses, through sight when you gaze passionately, even if unintentionally, or through hearing when it receives pleasant speech or melody, or through the sense of smell—whether from the fragrance of an anointed body or from some fragrant ointment, —or through taste, when it is delighted by some delicacy,

⁸⁵ The Holy Tales, 1846, p. 272.

or through touch that leads into captivity, when you touch your own body or the body of a neighbor, whether intentionally or accidentally—if such a thing happens, pump it out as quickly as possible through confession and tears. If passion blows too strongly, you must lower the sail—that is, embrace true humility; if the rope—that is, the strength of patience—breaks, correct it as soon as possible by restoring the strength of the mind. By acting in this way, you will safely enter, laden with virtues, into the storm-free harbor of eternal life.

56. *Beginners face strong temptations due to the remnants of sinful inclinations and habits*

56. 1) Beginners face strong temptations because of the remnants of sinful inclinations and habits. – 2) Our way of life is great, both because of what we now possess and because of what we hope for, when compared to worldly life. – 3) When temptations arise from without, or from the flesh and passions, stand firm and fight until you are victorious. – 4) Thoughts from the right and left sides are listed, and it is recommended to resist the latter and cling to the former. [1, 64]

18. Do not be surprised that some of you may stumble, and others may even fall away from us entirely—especially those who are still in their probationary period, having recently entered the monastery. They cannot bear the gentle yoke of Christ because of the evil dispositions and inclinations that remain within them—laziness, worldliness, and sinful habits—which is why they turn back, like *“dogs returning to their own vomit”* (1 Peter 2:22). The Lord’s word is not false: the flock to which His Father is well-disposed is small (Luke 12:32)—there are few who enter the kingdom of heaven through the narrow gate and along the difficult path (Matthew 7:13–14), for... *“If anyone does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:25).

19. Great and sublime is the image of our angelic life; blessed is he whom the Lord has chosen for it from the lowly nothingness of the world, and who, having come running at the Lord’s call, has attained this highest order of life, hoping henceforth to behold the Kingdom of Heaven through the contemplation of the mind. For in the lower world there is darkness and gloom; and every person who chooses the vain, the perishable, the fleeting—that which delights only in this earthly life—instead of the eternal and imperishable, the ineffable and inconceivable blessings, is like one in a nighttime battle: he neither knows nor sees from where or how the blows come, nor from what or how adverse circumstances converge and strike him like waves. Whoever, having seen and understood this, breaks free from this crowd ensnared by the devil’s nets, soars like a bird upward and ascends the mental mountain of a godly life, leaving the hunter—Satan—beneath him, mocked and trampled underfoot, according to the word of the Lord, who said: *“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10:19). So tread upon him, and trample his many heads and all his proud, combative power, having put on the full armor of the ascetic life. This is what testifies to your sonship through the Holy Spirit and what makes you sons of God.

20. Do not be shaken in any way by what befalls you, as a test of your godly disposition. Do not be disheartened when strife arises, whether internal or external, but stand firm in your rank even unto bloodshed, in the unshakable hope that through your patience you will be deemed worthy of the crowns. Be courageous as you resist the cunning serpent who is fighting against you. You know the rebellions of the flesh; you know these internal uprisings against the holy temple—that is, against your virtuous soul; you know the fears caused by these Arabian wolves, who, while appearing outwardly in sheep’s clothing, are inwardly malicious destroyers of all: recognize them by their fruits, according to the Holy Gospel, and stand firm in your faith.

21. When thoughts of love for God, chastity, reverence, contrition, patience, remembrance of death, the hour of death, the meeting of the angels, the standing before the Lord, and the account before His judgment arise within you, —I will add to this, placing the first in last place—and thoughts of obedience, humility, subduing one’s own will, enduring ridicule, and the like, then recognize that these are thoughts of the right hand, thoughts of the Kingdom of Heaven, which pave the way of ascent to it and accompany that ascent. The thoughts opposite to these, however, are—worldliness, love of sin, sensuality, insolence, idle talk, excessive sleep, vanity, disobedience, unbelief, and self-willed service—and why recount each of these passions? *“If I were to count them, they would be more numerous than the sand”* (Ps. 138:18). Knowing, then, what belongs to the right side and what to the left, flee from the latter and put it to flight, resisting it as St. James the Apostle teaches: *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7); but unite with the former, be in harmony with him, and live in communion with him, and you will receive what the same Apostle promised: *“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you”* (James 4:8). By no means allow pride, self-righteousness, or self-willedness, for the Father’s word regards all such things as the source of every kind of deception for the novice.

On the contrary, always cling to brotherly love, simplicity, sincerity, detachment from the world, sincerity, forbearance, obedience, godly wisdom, piety, and complete devotion to God.

57. *We are in battle: I, as your commander, urge you with these words: Stand firm*

57. 1) We are in a battle: I, as your commander, urge you with my words: stand firm. – 2) Our feats are not small; but do not look at what is visible, but at what is invisible, and rejoice: for the reward is great. – 3) The Lord gave Himself up for us; let us also give ourselves up for Him, remaining steadfast in our ranks. [1, 65]

22. We are at war, and it is a difficult war, one in which victory is hard-won. For what does the divine Apostle say? *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph. 6:12). Just as a military commander, before engaging the enemy, inspires the soldiers under his command with words and urges them to bravely rush to defeat the foe: so too I, though weak myself, am bound, obligated, and eager to stir up and encourage you, the Lord’s army, not just at one particular time, but always, to repel the demonic hordes and the manifold passions of wickedness.

23. Your spiritual struggles involve no small amount of toil and sweat, yet they are exceedingly intense, warlike, combative, wondrous, and supernatural. For day by day you endure—as if shedding blood—the severing of your own desires;—as if suffering deep wounds—reproaches and insults;—as if engaging in competitive exercises—the imposition of obedience. And none of you is permitted to go beyond the bounds of what is due and commanded; but all of you together enter the struggle and endure hardship to the point of exhaustion, striving and compelling yourselves in every way to do all that is proper for those who labor in the faith—in hunger and thirst, in winter and nakedness, in honor and dishonor, and in everything else of which the Apostle boasted (2 Cor. 6:4–8; 11:27). But rejoice, my children, rejoice, keeping your eyes fixed not on the visible but on the invisible, for the visible is temporary, but the invisible is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18), and remembering that *“your life is hidden with Christ in God”* and that *“when Christ, who is your life, appears”* in the resurrection, *“then you also will appear”* (Col. 3:4), just as you are—and you will rejoice forever; for your Lord, the rewarder, will reward you for your labors in the flesh with eternal and boundless rewards.

24. Abide, my lords and masters, abide in the love of God! And just as He loved us and gave Himself up for us to the condemnation of death—a death on the cross—so too, giving ourselves up for Him, let us give thanks to the philanthropic Lord for having so deigned to grant us this: that in His name we may renounce all worldly affairs and pursuits, all indulgence of the flesh, and everything that belongs to this world. What, then, shall we offer in return to God, who has strengthened us for this? What else but this: that we may not destroy what has already been accomplished through negligence and indifference, nor lose heart in the face of the present, nor fear the future in the least; but even if it were necessary to shed blood, let this be pleasing and most desirable to us. So be steadfast and strengthen yourselves more and more, ever more, acting with greater zeal, greater vitality, in a manner more like God, and with greater love for one another, from now on and forever.

58. *I remember death and all that happens at that time, and I pray that I may be granted purification and not have to endure the fire; but you, rejoice, looking forward to the reward, even though your present circumstances are sorrowful*

58. 1) I remember death and all that happens at that time, and I pray that I may be purified and not experience the fire; but you, rejoice, looking forward to the reward, even though your present life is full of sorrow. – 2) This is Lent: let us welcome it with joy as a time of purification and peace of mind; let us also not forget that this is a time of spiritual sowing, and let us engage in this fruitful sowing; yet, walking the royal path of moderation in all things, let us be more concerned with progress in humility. [1, 66]

25. Recalling the death of one of our revered brothers, I groaned and my soul grieved, pondering what this passing would be like—this separation and division of soul and body, this taking of us to another land, this entering upon some other path, this passing into another world—unfamiliar, untested, unknown, inexpressible, and indescribable. For who can say what encounters we will experience there, what gatherings, what sights, and what events? What servants of God will be sent to us to take us from here to heaven? And might this delegation not consist of evil angels? Let us fear such a possibility! Who will come down to us and accompany us to that land? And where shall we enter—into the land of rest, *“into a place of wonderful*

dwelling, even to the house of God, amid shouts of joy and praise, and the clamor of those who celebrate?” (Ps. 41:5). Or, on the contrary, into fire, darkness, to the worms, and into other countless torments? Thinking of this, I am astonished, horrified, trembling, and I pray that I may be granted here to wash away my countless sins with tears and purify myself a little, before I experience that all-consuming and endless fire. But you, since you are engaged in the struggle for virtue and, hearing and reflecting on this, rejoice, be refreshed, flourish—and live in the Lord. Although your surroundings are disheartening, look to the eternal reward and strive without laziness or faintheartedness to complete your course to the end.

26. Here comes Holy Lent, a time of enlightenment and purification filled with holy days! Let no one be afraid, let no one grow slothful. Sweet are, at this time, devotion, the reception of holy thoughts, the contemplation of heavenly visions, the purification of heart and body, the rejection of the defilement of passions, and the tearful washing of the soul in contrition before God. Let us therefore prepare to receive these days as a time of rest and consolation for both body and soul—and more so for the latter than for the former. – This is also a time of sowing. No matter how much one sows in the flesh, it all turns to decay; and from this remains, if anything, only the kindling of lusts, which stirs up the blood in an animalistic and senseless way. And how we humans err, caring for the fleeting and clinging to the impermanent! In the sowing of the soul, however, nothing that is received is lost, nothing is wasted in vain, nothing perishes, but everything is safely preserved and nourishes your noble souls with food that is truly immortal: in this lie joy, peace, faith, hope, love, enlightenment, purification, sanctification, and, finally, deification. Let us not, however, allow ourselves to indulge in excesses regarding the body or deviate from established practices as we walk the royal path—whether in eating and drinking, in vigil, in solitude, in sleeping on the bare ground, or in other matters. Let us strive all the more to humble ourselves with divine humility, and to that end, let us obey without hypocrisy and cut off our own deceitful will at the root, just as you do. By acting in this way, you will enter the bright days of Christ’s Holy Resurrection in peace and love, and guided by the Holy Spirit. As one who is indebted to you, I have reminded you of this and will continue to do so. Fulfill, then, this commandment and my humble words—and may the Holy Spirit seal you with His seal!

59. Having been amidst the vanity of the world, I gave thanks to God that we have fled from there

59. 1) Having been amidst the vanity of the world, I gave thanks to God that we have fled from there together. – 2) There is nothing more blessed than our present state, both because it is the ultimate goal and because it is granted immediately. – 3) Let us love God: for who is more worthy of love? And what is more blessed than this love? You have set out on this path and begun, but the end is still far off. – 4) The flesh must be put to death, especially its lusts, by avoiding everything that might arouse them. [1, 67]

27. The day before yesterday, by order of our lord, I left the monastery, went up to the patriarchate, and from there to the royal liturgy. I spent the whole day there, and as I looked around, I saw scenes and faces, the whirl of worldly affairs and the hustle and bustle driving people back and forth, their chatter, their many cares, and their worldly schemes—and this during the holy days of Great Lent. This distanced me from my usual state of mind; my ears were filled with strange chatter, and my eyes were distracted by many and varied fantasies. And even now I still feel this within me; and I am taking advantage of this opportune moment to share this with you. Just as raindrops fall from a thickening cloud; so, with a heavy heart, tears dripped from my eyes, and I, having sighed from the depths of my heart and calmed the turmoil of my thoughts, gave thanks to the Lord with a prayerful outpouring of sorrow and commended you for having left the midst of such people and separated yourselves from them, and have renounced even the slightest contact with the world’s impurity, remaining on the path of obedience, daily wrestling with the trials of endurance, and ascending in spirit to the heights of virtue through a God-pleasing disposition and righteous conduct.

28. What is more blessed, more desirable, more glorious than your position and state?—You are truly children of Christ, servants of God the Father, having renounced flesh and blood. The goals of worldly people lie in the earthly realm; your goals lie in the heavenly realm. For them, the world is paramount; for you, heaven is paramount. It is their nature to rejoice in this world without true joy, to grow rich in this world without a sense of wealth, and to take pleasure in this world without ever satisfying their hunger for pleasure. I cannot speak of them otherwise. – But you have joy that springs from hope—rejoicing in what is promised in the age to come—poverty in the temporary, yet riches in the eternal—and through sorrowful self-denial, the tasting of spiritual blessings of unimaginable sweetness. – Let us not, then, seek pleasure in anything else, turn our

eyes and attention to anything else, or desire anything else, except what has been granted to us by divine providence and with which the Holy Spirit has blessed us.

29. Come, let us give glory to Him who has called us. Come, let us love Him who has so loved us. Come, let us serve Him as servants, that we may be made worthy of dominion over all things. Come, let us fear Him, so that the world may fear us, and the angelic hosts may love us. Come, let us purify ourselves from evil deeds and thoughts, so that He—the light that is truly unapproachable—may envelop us with the lightning of the Spirit and lift us up to the high mountain of the divine dwelling, and reveal us to people as a divine city. Have you heard what one of the holy fathers says in the Gerondika: if we honor the One—that is, God—then all will honor us, but if we dishonor Him with our sins, will we not face the opposite?—And who would not love the Lord? Who would not cling to this great and unceasing Light? Who would not rush to this great Giver of Rewards and Bestower of Crowns? Who would not desire to reign with this King of kings throughout the ages? Who would not prefer, above all else, to be adopted as a son by Him, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth derives—the Father of bounties and Lord of all? Who will not yearn to share in the Father’s communion with our Lord Jesus Christ—that communion which is inexpressible in words, incomprehensible to the ear, and unfathomable to the mind? You have chosen this and loved it; you have answered the call and come; you have begun to fulfill it and continue to do so. But the feats (the contests in the arena) are not yet over; the race is not yet finished; we must still strive and strive with all our might; the hour of the contest has not yet passed, as those great and golden lips of the Spirit have declared. Do we not hear what Paul, this light of the world, the Universal Apostle: *“Thus I run, not aimlessly; thus I fight, not as one who beats the air; but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified”* (1 Cor. 9:26–27)?

30. Do you see what the man of God has said? It is necessary to mortify and firmly subdue this untamable steed of the flesh. Let us therefore restrain it and bridle it. I, who am passionate and sinful, beg you for this, so that it does not bite the bit, throw off its rider—the mind—and make us a laughingstock to our enemies. Let us avoid the rapids, so that the journey may be safer. — You understand, of course, what I am talking about. — Woe to the deceitful gaze, for it lets the poison of sin into the soul! Woe to accursed audacity, for it quickly burns down the house of virtues! Woe to the youthful smiles exchanged between beardless and bearded youths alike, for in an instant they cast us down into the lower realms of passion! Woe to the satiation of the belly and to excessive sleep, for they give birth to and multiply the evil seeds of lust! Woe to those who pair off in twos, arranging secret gatherings and conversations, and especially to those who dare in doing so to reveal shameful thoughts to one another, as if for mutual benefit and enjoyment, for in their midst is not Christ, but Satan! But protect yourselves with the fear of God, and rise higher and higher in your heavenly ascent.

60. Arise and seek healing from the Lord, the Healer of all

60. 1) Arise and seek healing from the Lord, the Healer of all. – 2) Our life is exalted—angelic—yet we are carnal and earthly; therefore, to succeed in life, a great feat is required of us. [1,69]

1. Arise and, having set yourselves aright, walk your path well. Whoever slumbers in indifference, awaken to diligence. Whoever has let their hands droop and whose feet limp on both sides, begin to walk uprightly along the paths of the Lord’s commandments. Whoever is blinded by passionate thoughts, wash your eyes in the font of tears, and, having gained sight through dispassion, glorify the Lord. Whoever, like a leper, is covered with the scabs of sin, approach the Lord with fervor, and you will hear: *“I will it; be cleansed”* (Matt. 8: 3), and having been cleansed, guard yourself henceforth against this leprosy. Whoever is deaf in soul and blind in mind, seek to hear and to speak—and you will find it; for the divine Word has the power to heal all who are sick in their inner being. I address these words to you for the sake of the weak among you: for *“it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick”* (Matt. 9:12).

2. The way of our life, great and glorious, does not come to perfection haphazardly, but through much toil and struggle; but the higher it is—divine and angelic in nature—the more it demands toil and effort; for we, being of the flesh, seek to become like the incorporeal, and while living in this world, we strive to lead a life as in heaven, forcing ourselves to dwell incorporeally and bloodlessly while bound by flesh and blood: for, as the Apostle says, *“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable”* (1 Cor. 15: 50). Therefore, we must have great steadfastness, great attention, and intense diligence: *“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are opposed to one*

another,” as the Apostle says (Gal. 5:17). Take care, then, that we do not allow the better part of us to be subjugated by the worse, nor that which ought to reign within us to be enslaved by the servile passions of the flesh, lest we find ourselves walking on our heads, with our feet pointing upward.

61. The midpoint of Great Lent; we have labored, and we see the fruits: God’s mercy; having given thanks, let us press on

61. 1) The midpoint of Great Lent; we have labored, and we see the fruits: God’s mercy; having given thanks, let us press on. – 2) God and the angels and all the saints are watching our race; let us strive, overcoming obstacles and enduring hardship. [1, 69]

3. The grace of the Holy Spirit has faithfully guided us to the middle of the holy Lent with great strength and valor. I believe that it will continue to accompany us in the days ahead and lead us to the life-giving and light-bestowing day of the Resurrection, bringing about the remission of sins and further improvement in your most virtuous progress. Look back and see what your condition once was and how far it has now risen. The soul, once it has embraced the zeal for salvation, moves forward imperceptibly in this endeavor and ascends to the heights of virtue, soaring toward the heavens. So too, brothers, having entered these days together with zeal and having set aside all difficulties and obstacles, we have walked well and righteously until now and have become transformed, having come to love orderliness and the faithful fulfillment of the commandments; we have lost nothing of what we had previously gained, but have been enriched with new things; and my heart has rejoiced, and my spirit has exulted, that the fruits of your divine work have multiplied and your sacred zeal has been granted the best portion. All this, to speak in the words of the Apostle, “*is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy*” (Rom. 9: 16). Through Him, the weak become strong, and the powerless “*are girded with strength*” (Ps. 17: 33). Yet let us not be content with what has already been achieved, but let us press on with youthful zeal, “*and let our youth be renewed like the eagle’s*” (Ps. 102: 5); let us always press forward and prosper, not regarding as sufficient the good we have acquired or the degree to which we have advanced, until we pass through the gates of death from the temporal to the eternal. And we shall truly be blessed, brothers, and receive the lot of the blessed angels.

4. What glory and honor it is when we live, as we ought, according to our way of life. As the Lord of all beholds us, He rejoices; and all the saints rejoice and are glad. Just as we watch with our physical eyes those running in the arena, so God, the entire host of angels, and the assembly of all the saints look upon us and judge the worth of our deeds. Let us therefore persevere, my brothers, let us persevere in this great race along the path from earth to heaven; let us overcome our adversary, strike him down when he attempts to grapple with us, and cast him far away with our valiant zeal against him. He is a coward, powerless, and despicable; that is why God’s brother, James, cries out: “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you; draw near to God, and He will draw near to you*” (James 4:7–8). Let us not allow ourselves to turn back in any respect; for this is unbecoming to those who run with all their might. Let us not proceed sluggishly; for this is unseemly for those who hasten to victory. But having stripped ourselves of both our deeds and our desires, and having lifted our gaze toward heaven, let us complete our race so that we too may say with Paul: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness*” (2 Tim. 4:7).

62. Your order is well established: maintain it

62. 1) Your order is well established: preserve it. – 2) Let each one perform his duty—especially you, the steward, and then all those who follow you: those in authority, manage well; and those under authority, obey willingly. – 3) Love penance and changes in duties. St. Theodore’s Instructions Regarding Permissions. [1, 70]

5. Glory and thanks be to the Lord, who has gathered us together and established us in unity of mind and will. Why do I dare to say that our Head is Christ, to whom, as our Chief Commander, we will refer everything and turn everything to His glory? And who is more blessed than you, if you do not fall away from such a good disposition until the end?—May the Lord grant you always to be in harmony with one another, to be purified and enlightened more and more, and to press forward unceasingly, even through small acts of virtue. Your order is well established: preserve it.

6. Let each one carry out his duties as commanded. Let each one mind his own business and not exalt himself above another, maintaining order in every way. — Pay special attention, my child, to the responsibility that rests upon you as steward, *“correcting those who oppose you with gentleness”* (i.e., the disobedient) (2 Tim. 2:25), and do nothing out of partiality or anger. Persist, says the Apostle, *“in season and out of season”* (2 Tim. 4:2). Understand *“out of season”* to mean: at all times; be persistent and vigilant at all times. — In any case, be as you see me, even though I am lacking in everything. Whatever I permit, permit; whatever I forgo, forgo: if I strike, strike; if I spare, spare; if I show mercy, show mercy; if I forgive, forgive; if I love, love—so that you may hear: *‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Lord’* (Matt. 25:21). Let those who follow you act in the same way—and likewise those who follow them. Here is a wonderful law: that those under authority should be shaped by those in authority, and that, just as those in authority abound in wise care for all, so too should those under authority abound in meekness, non-resistance, humble obedience, and prompt fulfillment of what is commanded.

7. Love penances and changes in duties and tasks, confident that those who ordain them have your good in mind. — But when you fall into transgressions, due to my carelessness and my own sins, do not seek permission from me prematurely; I—though a sinner—am the guardian of these bonds before the Lord, Who, through the great and supreme Apostle Peter, said to me as well: *“Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matt. 16:19). How then—have mercy on me, my children—could I casually release what cannot be released and break what has been bound? Do you not see with what fear I must do this, so that I may always have divine justification assisting me in such bindings and releases? Where, then, can we find that light of discernment so that our imposition of penance and condemnation may be carried out, as it were, in union with God? Though it may seem bold to say so, in the essence of the matter, this is truly how it must be and how it is. I am struck with fear and overcome with shame as I speak these words, and I pray that the earth may not open up and swallow me, or that the mountains may not shift and cover me. Woe is me! Woe is me! What a task I have been assigned! Knowing this, do not press me; for it may happen that I will decide one thing, but God will not, rejecting my prayer, since the Most Pure Nature will not serve my unwise impulses and decisions, but will disapprove of my action and even take me from among the living, as He did with Elijah. May God bear witness to you, my brothers, that I speak thus not wishing to grieve you, nor to oppress you or constrain you with authority, or to *“shepherd the flock of Christ by compulsion and distress”* (1 Peter 5:2). May this not be so for me, O Lord! What benefit would that bring me? My sole concern is to save you, the lambs of Christ and the sheep of God, by every means possible. For the Lord established this as the first and greatest sign of love for Him in His questions to the divine Peter (John 21:15 ff.). As you treasure these words in your hearts and faithfully apply them to your lives, walk in the Lord, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

63. Having celebrated the Passover, let us continue in the spirit of Lent, so that we may not squander what we have gained during this time, but rather multiply it

63. 1) Having celebrated Easter, let us continue in the spirit of Lent, so that we may not squander what we have gained during this time, but rather multiply it. — 2) Keeping in mind where we are heading and what we will attain, let us not indulge in sensual pleasures or cling to physical beauty. — 3) We have received so much at Easter and before: it is not wise now to rush into the opposite. — 4) Our brothers are departing one by one; let us not remain behind either: let us therefore attend to our task. [1, 71]

8. We have now celebrated the Queen of Days, Holy Easter; we have been enlightened by the divine mysteries and have received the sanctification of the Spirit in the bond of peace and spiritual love. Now we once again mark the beginning of the rest of the year. Let us, then, be transformed for the better during these days, becoming even better than before, and let us not allow ourselves to fall back in any way, dishonoring the struggle and spiritual labor of the previous Lenten season, but rather let us build upon our previous virtues and add new ones; and whatever we have rightly acquired and attained—whether in reverence or in silence, in chastity or in sincerity, in fasting or in some other form of devotion—we will thus not only preserve daily in its integrity, but also multiply and perfect it with good additions.

9. We are flowing toward God, reaching for the Kingdom of Heaven, for the light, for life, for inexpressible joy, for that sweet and blissful paradise, for eternal dwellings, for wondrous places of glory, for the choirs of angels, for the rejoicing of the saints, for the inheritance that awaits us. Let us not allow ourselves

to forget the goal that lies before us; let us not allow ourselves to slacken our efforts along the way, nor be carried away by inappropriate thoughts. Let us not indulge in sensual pleasures, nor in worldly desires, nor in carnal lusts, nor be captivated by the beauty of a face, a figure, or a smile. Let us look within ourselves, as the theologian Gregory urges. Do you see how Eve suffered, captivated by the beauty of the sinful fruit? May we never suffer anything like that!—And what do we gain from indulging our lusts and passionate desires? It would be one thing if it were nothing; but in addition to inner turmoil, there is also shame and disgrace before God and people.

10. God has led you, after the great days of fasting, into Holy Pascha, reviving you through the communion of His Holy Body and Blood: how then do you, wretched one, dare to offer the Lord something contrary? How do you allow yourself to turn back to unworthy deeds? Has God not given you a mind? Did He not create you rational? Do you not have the eyes of the mind? Why then do you remain speechless? Why do you not look to the right at the incomprehensible beauty of the Lord and strive toward it with your soul, but instead turn your gaze to base things, to the shame of sin, to the impurities of vile passions? Let us therefore be sober-minded; let us occupy our minds with that which leads to eternal bliss, and direct our intentions and efforts toward it.

11. I do not constantly speak to you merely to flatter your ears, nor simply to fulfill the duty of preaching, nor to hear the sound of praise; but because, filled with fear due to my earnestness, I tremble for your salvation. We serve the living God, and a judgment that is pure and impartial awaits us, along with an endless reward; for *“there the fire never goes out, and the worm does not die”* (Mark 9:44). That is why I cry out to you, and as if clinging to your groans, I implore you—let us not allow the final hour to find us unprepared, and let not the end of our lives be marked by negligence. We constantly witness the mystery of death, and right before our eyes, as you see, our brothers pass away. Seeing this, say to yourselves in your hearts: “What about us? Will it not be the same for us? Will we remain here much longer? And if we do remain, how long will we live? Does not the grave await us as well? Can we not already see our coffin—our final bed and resting place, full of worms and an unbearable stench?” For *“Who is the man who will live and not see death?”* (Ps. 88:49).

64. We have been granted a lofty calling; let us rejoice, give thanks, and act, undertaking every labor for its sake and enduring all things

64. 1) We have been granted a lofty calling; let us rejoice, give thanks, and act, undertaking every labor for its sake and enduring all things. – 2) Let there be many hardships; but eternal life and the kingdom of heaven await us: let us therefore love these hardships and endure them with zeal. – 3) Look to the examples of the holy fathers who were our guides. – 4) Look to the examples of those who have become renowned for their obedience. – 5) And imitate them, so that we may be deemed worthy of a share in their glory. [1, 72]

12. We should rejoice that we have been called by God and chosen for such a holy life—and rejoice so much that we forget the labors of asceticism and regard as light all the sorrows encountered on the path of the virtuous life, in anticipation of future delights. We have not received nor do we possess a military rank, a civil office, the dignity of a military commander, or the royal dominion so coveted by many, but something far greater than all of these: the highest heavenly dwelling—true not in words alone, but in deeds. For *“if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him,”* says the Apostle (Rom. 8: 14; 2 Tim. 2:12). Having thus received this advantage from God—and having received it as a gift, not through our own efforts—how much should we rejoice and be glad, give thanks and pray, and do and say everything necessary to preserve it and keep it safe from the manifold slanders of the ruler of the underworld, directed against us? Therefore, my brothers, let every sorrow be pleasant to us and every labor sweet and desirable as we fulfill the duty that lies upon us; and for this reason, let us accept every ascetic deprivation as a delight: —withdrawal from the world as drawing near to God, —detachment from pleasures as partaking of heavenly blessings, —the constraint of self-restraint as abundant nourishment.

13. Let us drink water and eat dry bread, let us toil with our own hands, let us be exhausted in our thoughts, let us be scorched by the temptations of the flesh, torn apart by desires, mortified by privations, and let us live this life without friends or companions, without kin, without father or mother: what does it matter? Eternal life lies before us, the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared for us, the enjoyment of many unfathomable blessings, all-blessed immortality, the riches of glory and honor, and a multitude of other great blessings that human language cannot describe. Let us, then, strive with vigor and perseverance; let us love the deeds of self-

sacrifice and the labors of virtue, so that we may win crowns and acquire treasures that no eye has seen, of which no ear has heard, and which have not even entered the human heart (1 Cor. 2:9).

14. We must take our cue from the lives of our ancient fathers, follow in the footsteps of their virtues, love their deeds, and reflect the image of their lives within ourselves. Such was our great forerunner, Anthony the Great, the first to defeat our adversary and to pave the way for us to ascetic victories. Such is the blessed and angel-like Arsenius, who attained the highest degrees of ascetic virtue and now stands as a model of glory for us. Such is the holy and divine Pachomius, who is called our forefather. Such is the most divine Hilarion, who shone with virtues like the dawn that breaks every morning. Such is the blessed and all-holy Euthymius, whose name means “blessing,” and with him the most reverend Savvas the Sanctified, the most holy and angel-like Theodosius, and the other brightest luminaries of the universe.

15. But let us now turn our attention to those who have shown the most perfect examples of obedience; for the aforementioned were glorified because they had been prepared in advance by the grace of obedience. Dosipheus, the Son of Light, our God-given father, exhorts us to unquestioning obedience; Dometian⁸⁶, our God-enlightened father, strengthens our love for our spiritual fathers; Abba Kir⁸⁷, our God-chosen father, confirms us in patience amid insults and offenses; Zechariah⁸⁸, our most honorable father, inclines us toward humble wisdom; Silvan⁸⁹, our much-weeping and most humble father, transforms us for the better; Jonah⁹⁰, the hardworking one and a model of fulfilling the Lord’s commandments, stirs up our zeal for manual labor. How can we recall, without striving to emulate them, the godliness of Blessed Petronius⁹¹, the obedience of the divine Afre⁹², and St. Mark⁹³, the simplicity of Paul⁹⁴—all most honorable and humble in virtue?

16. But even an hour would not be enough to list them all. These alone are enough to inspire us to compete with them and to imitate their deeds. Let us, then, act as they did, laboring as if side by side with them and aided by them. And in this way, we will be enriched, just as they were, by pious and righteous deeds; and then we will be deemed worthy to share in their glory and crowns in the heavenly kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

65. Reflecting on what the Prophets, Apostles, and other Saints endured for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, let us be filled with zeal

65. 1) Reflecting on what the Prophets, Apostles, and other Saints endured for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, let us be zealous. – 2) What is there that another would not endure for the sake of carnal love? Should we not endure everything for the sake of the Lord? [1, 73]

17. Do not think that it is no great feat to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. For its sake, as it is written, all the saints “*walked in skins of goats and sheep, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated—wandering in deserts and mountains, in caves and in the caverns of the earth—of whom the world was not worthy*” (Heb. 11:37–38): Isaiah was sawed in two; Jeremiah was cast into a mud pit; Jonah was cast into the sea and swallowed by a whale; Daniel was thrown to the lions to be devoured; the three youths were cast into a fiery furnace; Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, died by the sword; John the Baptist himself was beheaded by the sword as well. And I would not have enough time to recount the story of the divine Paul, who spoke of himself, saying that he had been in hunger and thirst, in winter and nakedness, in toil and struggle, (2 Cor. 11: 27) and in countless other hardships—about St. Stephen, who was stoned to death—about James, the brother of God, who was killed at the temple. And how could I possibly list the sufferings of the other Apostles, the torments of the holy martyrs, and the feats of the venerable fathers? They are beyond number. This is how they were deemed worthy to receive the promised, ineffable blessings for all eternity! Let us, too, as humble ones, strive in the same way. For, according to the great St. Basil the Great, those honors—along with their labors and crowns—are the inheritance of the victors. Let us remain fighters; let us gird ourselves, ever ready for the contest, and resist the adversary; let us not retreat before difficulties, let us not yield to blows, and let us not

⁸⁶ A disciple of St. Savvas. Service on Lenten Saturday.

⁸⁷ Egyptian Holy Father, 6th century. Cheese-Fasting Sunday.

⁸⁸ Egyptian Holy Father, Dec. 5.

⁸⁹ Palestinian Saint, Cheese-Fasting Saturday.

⁹⁰ Possibly the father of Theodora and Theophanes; commemorated on Sept. 22.

⁹¹ Disciple of St. Anthony the Great. Cheese-fasting Saturday.

⁹² Venerable of Nitra, Saturday, Lenten.

⁹³ Egyptian, March 5.

⁹⁴ October 4.

turn back. May zeal, like fire, burn within us, and let nothing stand before our eyes; even the demons will flee: for, as it is written, they melt like wax before the face of this spiritual fire (Ps. 67:3); people, too, will be afraid, or at least ashamed; and we, having overcome all things, will ascend to where our life and our ineffable rest are.

18. We often see how someone, overcome by carnal love, endures everything and takes on every hardship, having but one thing in mind: to draw near to the face of the one whom he lusts after; he is not satisfied by food, nor sated by drink, nor rested by sleep, and desires nothing else that is pleasant or comforting, but this poor soul is ready for all manner of other labors and privations, even to the point of shedding blood, if it should come to that—what does he seek to gain and what does he treasure?—To destroy his soul in the hell of unending fire. Should we, for the sake of our warm love for the good, the beautiful, the ineffable, and the glorified Christ, our God, remain meekly under the yoke of this blessed and holy obedience even into old age, enduring every sorrow and every arrow—be it of thought or passion, insult or attack, temptation or deprivation, slander or contempt, humiliation or defamation, or anything else of this sort? – We, as rational beings, must not be likened to senseless beasts or become like them. But just as we have begun and, proceeding successfully thus far, have reached a certain point, so let us continue to strive vigorously so that we may successfully complete our journey in the Lord.

66. You have been entrusted to me by God; that is why I am zealous to teach you

66. 1) You have been entrusted to me by God; that is why I am so eager to teach you. – 2) I implore you: save yourselves, and by saving yourselves, save me as well. [1, 74]

19. For me, a sinner, what other task could be more important than caring for you, my flock, my portion, my inheritance? For if one to whom a mortal king entrusts the governance of the people or the command of the army devotes all his care to this matter day by day, so as not to incur any penalty or punishment by allowing anything displeasing to the king: how then could I, a poor man, having been entrusted with authority over you—who are truly Christ’s soldiers—indulge in carelessness, not to say for a year or a month, but even for a single day or hour, and fail to show my utmost concern for you in both word and deed, though I am lacking in both? That is why I—though unworthy, feeble, and inadequate—remind, proclaim, exhort, insist, and implore you, my heart, my light, my praise, to live up to your calling.

20. As great a joy as I feel when I think of the salvation of all of you and of the great reward for it, I am seized by an equally great fear and trembling when I consider what answer I must give regarding each one of you. Help me, then, my children, and—despite the weakness and blindness of your leader—be saved, so that you may save me, a wretched man, along with yourselves—be saved by zealously fulfilling all that has been commanded to you and that rests upon you: maintain unquestioning obedience, God-like humility, firm faith, enlightening revelation, steady diligence in your work, reverent attention during psalm singing, self-restraint without burden, modesty in dress, humility, avoidance of laughter and disputes, aversion to ostentation, and mutual love.

67. Because I love you, I rejoice when you prosper, and I grieve when I see what kind of spirit you are in

67. 1) Because I love you, I rejoice when you prosper, and I grieve when I see what state of mind you are in. – 2) You have been deemed worthy of a great calling and have left everything behind for its sake; for this reason, each of you must hear: enter into joy. – 3) How many there are who wish to be like you but cannot: give glory to God, then, and be upright. [1, 75]

21. Someday I will have to fall silent in complete silence. But as long as there is breath in my nostrils, I will not cease to remind you of what is proper, as is my duty, yet with warm love for you. You are my children, by God’s will and grace. Why, then, am I filled with such great joy when I see your piety, your virtue, and your godly way of life? Then I am filled with hopeful expectations and walk as if I were a king, glorifying God, and then nothing else brings me joy. But when I see disorder among you, it is as if a mountain were weighing down on my soul, and I walk, as if struck down, with my head bowed, grieving and reproaching myself for my poor guidance of you, and saying to myself: “Can anything good come from such a shepherd?” as was once said of Nazareth. Have mercy on me, then, my children, and let me always rejoice and glorify God for you, for your success, and for your blessed lot.

22. You have truly entered a holy calling, clothed yourselves in a pious way of life, and been numbered among the angelic ranks, having heeded and followed that divine voice: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell

your possessions and give to the poor... and follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). Thus you have crucified yourselves to the world and are no longer "of the world." For if you were of the world, the world would love you; but since you are not of the world, "for this reason," perhaps, "the world hates you," according to the Lord's word (John 15:19). On that day you will have cause to boast, together with the holy Apostles, saying to the Lord: "We have left everything and followed You" (Matt. 19:27); and indeed, you have loved neither father nor mother, nor brothers nor sisters more than You, "but have counted all things as loss" (Phil. 3:8), considering it a great treasure to gain You alone. — Am I lying? Am I not speaking the truth? Is this not indeed what you have done? — For this reason, you will hear: "Come, you who are blessed by My Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25: 34); or: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25: 21), or something similar to this.

23. Having been deemed worthy of such a great blessing and having entered into such a wondrous and heavenly life, do you not rejoice? Do you not exult? Do you not sing with David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all He has given me?" (Ps. 115: 3). — Yes; but add the following: "I will take the cup of salvation" (ibid.); and this means a readiness to shed one's blood as a martyr when required. — Truly, truly, there are many who long to see what you see, to hear what you hear, and to attain what you have attained; but whether for the sake of marriage, or for the sake of children, or for the sake of carnal friendships, or for the sake of worldly glory, or for the sake of wealth, or for the sake of worldly customs, or for the sake of various other established ways of outward life, they lack the strength to break away from the earthly and strive toward the heavenly—and they remain, outwardly appearing to be happy, yet inwardly burdened by many sorrows. Let us, then, give glory to God and strive always to add good to good and what is pleasing to God to what is pleasing to God, so that, prospering and perfecting ourselves in this way, we may remain, in mutual peace and harmony, in good order in everything—down to the smallest word, the slightest movement, a glance, or a step—and may we always be ready for the blessed passage through the gates of death into our blessed inheritance in heaven.

68. Peace in vain and trivial pursuits; but our goals are lofty, and our labors are fruitful

68. 1) Peace in vain vanities; but our goals are lofty, and our labors fruitful. — 2) Who gave us the strength to renounce the world? God, who blessed our desire. Let us therefore remain faithful to the path we have chosen. [1, 77]

24. Glory to God, who chose us from our mother's womb for this holy calling and called us to the wondrous and blessed heights of the monastic life. To us—though it may seem bold to say so, yet it is not foreign to the aims of monasticism—it has truly been granted to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven more deeply than those living in the world, many of whom, though they see, do not see, being blinded in mind by the earthly affairs that captivate them. For what do they have? They delight in wealth and fleeting glory, rejoice in pleasures and delights, take delight in perfumes and fragrances, wine, soft garments, beautiful horses, a multitude of slaves, magnificent houses, the glitter of precious stones, and other various vanities; they laugh, dance, and leap about like goats and nanny goats, growing sated and fat, as if being prepared for slaughter. I will not mention their many other sinful customs, nor what arises from them or where they lead; let our words end here. For them, this is a source of boasting, pride, and comfort; but not for those who have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires—such as we are, "those who belong to Christ," according to the Apostle (Gal. 5:24), servants and children of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have different desires and a different inclination toward other things. We seek the consolations and delights originally intended for man in paradise, of which thoughtlessness deprived us in ancient times; and for this purpose, let us adopt the way of life of the ancient holy fathers, "who walked in skins of sheep and goats, of whom the whole world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:37), turn away from this alluring world, and draw near to God, gazing upward and striving toward Him. But by striving away from all things, we become rulers over all. Such is the greatness of our calling!

25. Who, then, has separated us from flesh and blood, from parents, relatives, and acquaintances, from our homeland, cities, and villages, and from everything with which we have been familiar since childhood? Who has led us to give ourselves as slaves to spiritual fathers and abbots and to undertake the ascetic labors of abstinence, vigil, and sleeping on the bare ground, performed day after day? Who has enlightened us and taught us to regard gold and silver, splendor and magnificence—even the very royal diadem and purple robe—

as nothing, and to consider it more worthy and more honorable to clothe ourselves in these ragged and patched garments than in shining robes? Who has given us the strength to renounce all that is sensual and carnal, to begin to conform to the heavenly through chastity, and to remain pure and uncorrupted like the angels? God has granted us all this because we have loved Him alone and desired the future blessings, eternal glory, inexpressible joy, unceasing gladness, inexhaustible riches, and all that has been promised from of old to our blessed fathers and prepared for all who zealously seek to please the One God. But if we have resolved to do this, have chosen it, and have committed ourselves to it, then let us strive with all our might to persevere in it, keeping a strict watch over ourselves, lest we somehow turn back and, on the appointed day, find ourselves lagging behind the laity. Let us take care to remain pure, to grow ever more firmly established in chastity, and not to allow ourselves to be corrupted—neither in mind, nor in sight, nor in heart, nor in body.

69. *We must endure all the unpleasant things we encounter; and let us be worthy to join the ranks of the passion-bearers*

69. 1) We must endure all the unpleasant things we encounter; and may we be worthy to join the ranks of the passion-bearers. – 2) Seek God, content with a humble state on earth, like the Savior. [1, 78]

26. I must watch over your souls, caring for you day and night, edifying you both in word and deed, so that I may lead you to the proper measure of perfection. But do not grow weary yourselves: for if I, unworthy as I am to be called your teacher, endure anything for your sake, then you too must endure for my sake and for one another's sake—sharing in one another's suffering and standing together, not regarding it as something alien to yourselves, not being terrified, not fleeing, and not losing heart in the face of the trials you encounter. We *"have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding blood"* (Heb. 12:4), *"have not yet passed through fire and water"* (Ps. 65:12), as the holy martyrs have; we have not yet been wounded or put to the test, as each of the reverend and righteous ones has been. How, then, can we boast in the age to come that we, too, suffered for Christ, when we do not bear even the small troubles that come our way with courage and good cheer: any rebuke, humiliation, shame, dishonor, contempt—and I will add—a meager diet, little drink, ragged clothing, the toil of obedience, waking early for the service, standing during the psalm singing, and fulfilling the imposed penance. – Come now, my children, let us endure with good cheer all that is difficult and unpleasant, so that we may truly sing with David: *"I have patiently waited for the Lord,"* and thereby, by God's mercy, be deemed worthy: *"He attended to me and heard my prayer"* (Ps. 39: 2). In the age to come, others will present different offerings: the thrice-blessed martyrs—their blood; the holy fathers—their greatest feats and virtues; and we—our humble endurance of what has been said above. And I know for certain that we will not be deprived of a share in these, as the divine Anthony attests.

27. *"Seek God above all else, and your soul will live"* (Ps. 68: 33). *"Seek His face earnestly,"* that it may be reflected in your pure hearts (Ps. 104: 4). *"Remember His wonders, which He has done"* (Ps. 104:5) in us in years past and continues to do now, multiplying our brotherhood, nourishing us, and providing for all our needs in this life. And for all that He does for us, let us give Him due honor. Does He seek anything else from us but that we fear Him and love Him with all our heart and all our mind, and, to the best of our ability, imitate His incarnate life? Having come down from heaven, He was a stranger on earth, so that we too might turn our thoughts away from our own desires. He obeyed the Father so that you, too, might obediently listen to me, though I am unworthy. He humbled Himself even unto death so that you, too, might learn to do the same, humbling yourselves and being lowly in your thoughts, words, deeds, and actions. – What is true and divine glory, if not to be dishonored among people for God's sake? What is the honor and good name of a monk, if not to be dishonored for God's sake and counted among the dishonorable? And our Savior and God, having taken on flesh, chose what is humble and lowly in order to put to shame what is glorious and wealthy among people. For this reason, He is born in a cave, laid in a manger, called the son of a carpenter, known as a Nazarene, clothed in a tunic with a simple cloak, walks on foot, toiled, was threatened with stoning by the Jews, was reviled, arrested, crucified, pierced with a spear, laid in a tomb—and then rose again—so that He might inspire us to endure all things like Him in the presence of His angels, and then crown us in the Kingdom of Heaven.

70. What does God require of you? Renunciation of your own will and submission to the single will of your spiritual father; therefore, do not presume to set yourselves apart from others in anything, not even in doing good

70. What does God require of you? Renunciation of your own will and submission to the abbot's will alone; therefore, do not presume to set yourselves apart from others in anything, not even in doing good. [1, 79] What do I seek—or rather, what does the Lord of all and our God seek and require of you? Nothing other than that you submit yourselves well and show unquestioning obedience even unto blood, and in no way deviate from what you promised and resolved to live and act in before the holy angels. You yourselves know what your lips uttered and what vows you made when I tonsured each of you and clothed you in garments of joy and gladness, resolving your remaining unresolved transgressions, in the unshakable hope that through my humble resolution here on earth, God resolves them in heaven. Where, then, do these senseless thoughts, reckless judgments, meaningless words, and inappropriate desires for anything other than what has been commanded and established in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—through the mediation of my father and yours, with the consent of your predecessors—come from? – One wishes to fast as he pleases, another to remain silent as he sees fit, this one to study what he likes, that one to hold the office he seeks—then these are self-willed plans, furthermore, these are individual undertakings—and from this comes general decay? Is this why you came together?—“*Did you partake of Christ? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” (1 Cor. 1:13). – These words apply well to those who, carried away by their own personal desires, do not look at or pay attention to the one thing that is made clear by my humility and thorough consideration of the matter. God does not seek or desire anything great or wondrous from you, but only that you maintain the fellowship to which He has called you—I dare not say, given my unworthiness and sinfulness—and that you live and act in accordance with the will and guidance of the shepherd given to you by Him, to the glory of His worshiped name. Here is the arena for the manifestation of your special greatness and wonder—or rather, the martyr's feat of your noble souls! If you are tempted, what is so wondrous about that? But by no means allow it to gain the upper hand over you, to the devil's delight, and do not heed the cunning and evil suggestions of this enemy of yours and of God, but focus solely on enduring everything to the end, growing rich in humility, and flourishing in love—without putting on a show, without raising your eyebrows, without seeking to be first, not to be harsh, not to stir up quarrels and arguments, to the ruin of those who hear. “*Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil*” (Eph. 6:14–15). – And may the Lord God grant you success and salvation!

71. The causes of sin are pride and disobedience; and from them comes every kind of sorrow; on the contrary, from humility and obedience

71. 1) The causes of sin are pride and disobedience; and from them comes every kind of sorrow; on the other hand, from humility and obedience comes every kind of good. – 2) You who have come to us from among the noble and the wealthy, do not exalt yourselves, but humble yourselves; imitate the Lord, who humbled Himself for our sake. – 3) Let us strive for a life that imitates God. [1, 80]

1. Let us be careful not to sicken in spirit, by distancing ourselves from the causes that give rise to these illnesses and thus avoiding the evil that accompanies them. The first cause of spiritual sickness is pride, because of which the morning star, who shone at dawn, fell; the second is disobedience, for which the first man was cast out of the paradise of bliss; and from both of these arose the darkness of the various kinds and forms of hateful sin. Does anyone, therefore, wish to enjoy prosperity? Stay far from pride and clothe yourself in humility, with unquestioning obedience; and joy and gladness will abide upon your head. For how many blessings will this good garment attract? —Peace, meekness, respectfulness, trust, unquestioning yielding—and all that is good, pleasant, and desirable, which characterizes a true man of God.

2. You who have come to us from a life of pride, do not set your minds on high things; having become humble in a life according to God, do not boast that you have come to us from a noble lineage, and do not boast about what you once had: for perhaps you are poor and lacking in divine grace. But looking to Christ, our Lord and God, the truly rich Lord of all, be humble (Rom. 12:16) in your thoughts and feelings, imitating the way He acted: He was poor in appearance, obeyed His parents, walked on foot, often grew weary, “*when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not resist*” (1 Peter 2:23), endured blows to the cheek, did not distinguish Himself by His clothing, content with a single tunic and a cloak, slept on the

grass or on the bare ground, and a single loaf of bread and running water satisfied His need for food. If now, having far more than all this, we are burdened and weary, what kind of imitators of the Lord are we?

3. Why do I implore you: let us strive courageously for a life that imitates God. As for us, who come from humble (by worldly standards) and not wealthy circumstances, what excuse can there be for us to be burdened and distressed over food, clothing, or other necessities, when we are provided for in all these things just as others are?—Let each of you who are in this situation remember what you were and what you have become. – Having said this, however, I do not wish to divide or distinguish between the first group and the second: for you are all one in essence. But I say this so that you may all willingly carry out what is commanded, and not speculate about my instructions—how, why, and for what purpose this or that is done.

72. How are penances and other corrective measures salvific? They are the path to paradise

72. 1) How are penances and other corrective measures salvific? They are the path to paradise. – 2) Indeed, our life of obedience in the community is more salvific than anything else. [1, 81]

4. How much better it is for us to grieve a little here and rejoice there, to endure punishment here and find joy there, to live in confinement here and in spaciousness there?! We ought to willingly submit to punishment and love those who correct us: for when we stray from God's path, should we not accept the healing remedies for the harm we have caused? For this very reason, it seems to me, our holy and compassionate fathers, moved by divine compassion, employed various strict measures for the salvation of their charges: they imposed penances, excommunications, and even corporal punishment—with what in mind? The salvation not only of those who were subjected to this, but also of those who witnessed it—both contemporaries and those who would follow—because many, even out of human fear, return to the right path. Why, if you endure my harshness, I assure you before the living God that you will be saved in the kingdom of heaven, where sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee; if you bear the yoke of submission, you will be freed from sinful passions and ascend to the sonship of God—you will quench the burning of lust and be deemed worthy to drink the refreshing and life-giving water in the eternal spring—you will successfully complete the path of obedience and receive victory wreaths from the great King.

5. So great and glorious is our communal life. Its yoke is both heavy and light, just as Christ's yoke is, which is the same, according to His word. The very reality of it bears witness to this; the truth itself reveals it. And let no one flatter or call a true obedient one—neither a pillar-sitter, nor a recluse, nor a hermit. I said “true” because a true obedient monk is only the one who has surrendered his soul to the abbot and abides in his will even unto blood. Having obtained such a blessing, we must rejoice and celebrate; for it is truly wondrous. – As for the one who lives apart, there is nothing to marvel at, even if he lives a blameless life. Let us, then, honor our way of life and maintain sincere obedience until death. We will not pay attention to whether others praise or slander us. If we fear God, we will not fear people, nor will we be defeated by their attacks. Keeping our lofty goal in mind, let us strive toward it by the Lord's way, and He will guide our course.

73. The path is arduous and sorrowful; but in return, immeasurable consolations await us: let us persevere

73. 1) The path is arduous and sorrowful; but in return, immeasurable consolations await us: let us endure. – 2) Thus did all the fathers endure; and now they find comfort, having forgotten it: let us imitate them. – 3) Have you heard a harsh word? Bear it; and since the Lord bore it, humbling Himself to the lowest place, you will endure this and every other sorrow. [1, 82]

6. Stand firm in the struggle, in your feat of submission and in your martyr-like obedience, and as day after day passes in this earthly life, enrich your souls with virtues as a pledge of the Kingdom of Heaven, and lay up for yourselves the ineffable blessings promised to us. The path of God is narrow and sorrowful; but the rest that awaits us is broad and spacious. The fiery arrows of the demons fall one after another upon the dwelling of our soul, but the dew of the Spirit, quenching them, directs the flowing water toward us into eternal life. Constriction and sorrow, despondency and faintheartedness, toil and sweat, weariness and exhaustion—and often, along with them, reproaches and rebukes. – This is our lot; yet for all this, an inexpressible joy is treasured for us, along with boundless gladness. – Come, then, let us courageously endure these few days of struggle, and be crowned with the crown of righteousness.

7. What labors did our most blessed fathers undertake as they spent their days in fasting, vigils, tears, prayers, and every kind of suffering? And now they have no sorrow left for the past: they have received

unspeakable joy and all-blessed rest. So let us, too, look wisely upon the sorrows that sometimes befall us, regarding them as insignificant—or rather, as fleeting as a dream or a shadow—and let us not allow ourselves to be disheartened by them, but, undeterred, let us fulfill the Lord's commandments with youthful vigor. Let not strife grieve you, nor reproach shame you, nor rebuke disturb you, nor sorrow crush you, nor pride inflate you; but with eyes cast down and your soul set on heaven, be kind, gentle, patient, and yielding toward one another.

8. Suppose someone spoke a harsh word—so what? Why are you suffering from this insult? Christ, our God, heard, “*You have a demon*” (John 7:20)—and remained silent; He was accused of “*casting out demons by Beelzebub*” (Matthew 12:24)—and was not troubled. But we, who are by nature insignificant and in our lives worthy of every reproach, bristle like hedgehogs at the slightest offensive word. Why do we not taste more fully the sweetness of humility? Why do we not learn through experience the virtue of good submission? Why do we not take up the weapons of true monks? These weapons are not neat handwriting, not sweet singing, not a fair complexion, not tall stature, not elegance, not effeminacy, not a haughty worldly demeanor, not grandiloquence, not bold speech and retort, or anything else of the sort; but rather, to consider oneself the least of all and to regard everyone as superior to oneself; not to be quick to speak, especially harshly—not to be frivolous, but prudent; to pursue what is humble, as they say, and to be humble, be guided by it, to be accommodating, loving, and above all, free from envy. — You, however, know all this, as those taught by God, and you always do what is pleasing to God. Remain, then, as you are; be content with everyone; always be sincerely joyful, inspired by the one hope of our calling.

74. When the king summons guests to a feast, everyone hurries. The King of Heaven has called us; how can we not hurry, enduring all things? Let us not lose heart, but fight courageously against everything

74. 1) When a king summons guests to a supper, everyone hurries. The King of Heaven has summoned us; how can we not hurry, enduring everything? Let us not lose heart, but let us fight courageously against everything. – 2) Recall all that the Lord endured during His life on earth; and rejoice if you have to endure something similar. [1, 83]

9. If people, summoned by a king to glory, prosperity, wealth, comfort, and pleasure, strive toward these things diligently, wholeheartedly, and joyfully—should we not all the more so, being called by God, the King of all, not to these transient and insignificant things, but to the Kingdom of Heaven, to unceasing light, to endless life, to inexpressible bliss, to adoption as sons and the inheritance of eternal blessings—should we not, with joy and tireless zeal, day by day and hour by hour, heed this call and strive, as He directs, to overcome all obstacles, fearing nothing and stopping at nothing—neither sorrow nor hardship, nor hunger nor thirst, nor mortal dangers nor the sword—but marching courageously, alertly, and wholeheartedly along the ascetic path, bearing all things as light, for the sake of the all-blessed hope that lies before us. Losing heart and becoming faint-hearted in the face of trials happens because the soul has fallen asleep. Therefore, I implore you, looking toward the completion of your work, to take heart and patiently endure your humble and laborious station, manifesting its virtues: renunciation of one's desires, prompt action, silent endurance of sorrowful conflicts within the large brotherhood, and at times the reproaches of inferiors and rebukes from superiors—so that the words of the Apostle may truly apply to you as well: “*To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags,*” we know no rest, we are worn out; “*yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through God who loved us*” (1 Cor. 4:11; cf. Rom. 8:34).

10. “*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (Eph. 6:10), and add your present and future trials to your past feats and endurance of temptations, considering it a great joy that you have been deemed worthy to willingly endure these things for Christ the Savior and to become imitators of His sufferings: in this alone, those who understand the matter should see the greatest reward for themselves. Remember how much He suffered for us? Did He not act like a child in the flesh? Did He not flee from Herod's murderous cunning? Did He not obey His parents? At the age of twelve, did He not rebuke those gathered in the temple, even though He had not yet been taught?—He did this for those who were uneducated, so that they might not grieve. Did He not walk on foot, grow weary, and seek food from a fig tree? Was He not reviled by the Jews? Did He not hear, “*You have a demon,*” and, “*O Beelzebub, prince of demons, He casts out demons*”? Did they not want to stone Him, and did He not hide from them? And before that, during the forty-day fast, was He not tempted by the devil, just as a man is? And after that—did He not wash the disciples' feet, as one who serves? Was He not betrayed by a traitor? Was He not arrested by the Jews? Was He not mocked by Annas and

Caiaphas? Was He not struck on the cheek by the hand of a servant? Was He not scourged by the hands of those whom He had created? Was He not crowned with a crown of thorns as a mockery? Did He not ascend the cross? Were His holy hands and feet not nailed to it? Did He not hear many insulting words on the cross? Were His sides not pierced by a spear? Was He not given gall to drink when He was thirsty? Was He not buried, and, as God, did He not rise again on the third day?—Can we, for our part, say that we have suffered anything like this? Show me, brother, has your back been scourged like that of your Christ? Are the marks of the blows visible on your cheeks? Have your ears been struck by countless mockeries, insults, and taunts? Have all your limbs been sanctified by suffering?—Of course, you have none of these things. So at least accept with good cheer and love the small afflictions that come your way, and the Lord, who loves mankind, in His boundless goodness, will glorify you for this in the life to come. Do this for the sake of your monastic vow: for the monastic vow is nothing other than a pledge to endure the cross and death for the Lord's sake.

75. *Seeing the fruits of a good life, according to our rule, hold fast to it more strictly: and you will become a dwelling place of the Triune God*

75. 1) Seeing the fruits of a good life, according to our rule, adhere to it more strictly: and you will become a dwelling place of the Triune God. – 2) Guided by the Word of Scripture, be blameless and pleasing to God in all things, shunning everything reprehensible. [1. 84]

11. Look at the state to which your unity of mind and heart has led you, and the fact that you have gradually disciplined yourselves to do every good deed. And what fruits has this not borne for you?—From this comes peace and quiet; from this comes sincere trust in one another and unbreakable unity; from this comes saving sorrow and beneficial confession; from this comes deep contrition and humility commensurate with it; from this comes brotherly love and a fatherly disposition. “*In everything,*” to quote the words of the Apostle, “*you have shown yourselves to be pure*” in *all that is proper* (2 Cor. 7:11). “*Blessed be the Lord, for He has visited and brought salvation to His people*” (Luke 1:68): “*for you are His people, the chosen ones—and He has raised up a horn of salvation for you*” (Luke 1:69), through your newly acquired good disposition. In this lies your joy and gladness, honor and good reputation, wisdom, sound judgment, and perfect knowledge, so that you may live a life that is praiseworthy and pure before God: of which none of those on the outside (for their judgments are sometimes applicable to our way of life) speak: “I call wise the one who leads an unblemished and blameless life, even if he is illiterate and unable to reason about the things the Greeks love to discuss.”—If even to those whose sole concern is to speak and hear it seems so, should we invent anything other than what has been established by the saints? Therefore, learn to fear and tremble before the Lord God and to keep His commandments; and grace will reveal you as “*vessels chosen by Her, prepared for every good work*” (2 Tim. 2:21). For where the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is present—for the sake of purity of soul—what goodness, what wisdom, what fervor of spirit, what instruction, edification, and guidance are there? But where this is lacking, there are only cold words, mere pretense and self-aggrandizement, and not infrequently deception and error, and always futility.

12. Pay attention to the reading, and let not the word of Scripture fall from you (let it not be forgotten). Keep your tongue from evil, especially you, the youngest ones, who are not accustomed to restraining this tongue—which is fickle and filled with deadly poison—and because of which so many of us constantly fall into sin. Let there be no deceitful associations among you; let not two of you conspire together in a way that is deceitful and Jewish in nature; let there be no falsehood or concealment among you, as with Ananias and Sapphira; let there be no secret schemes or evil plots among you, as with the Pharisees and Sadducees; let there be no “mine” and “yours” among you, filled with countless evils, as St. Chrysostom cries out: “*The old has passed away; behold, all things have become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17). Why should we recall the past (our former life) within ourselves only to avoid those same passions, and not to kindle in one another the fire of evil thoughts? “*I hope that you are better than that and that you are holding fast to salvation*” (Heb. 6:9). Perhaps this is why we fell into what was before—so that, as from the abyss and the storm, and from many tribulations, we might rush into our peaceful and quiet haven, and no longer wish to set out on a dangerous voyage amid the waves, but to remain calm and silent in this humble harbor of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

76. For those who live a holy life, every day is a feast. Do you desire this? Be zealous to please God, and endure everything for His sake

76. 1) Whoever lives a holy life always has a feast. Do you desire this? Be zealous to please God, and endure everything for His sake. – 2) Remember why we left the world, and let that be your goal; above all, guard your purity by avoiding fellowship with those who sin against it. [1, 85]

13. Whoever lives a holy life always has a feast; such a person never ceases to spend their days in celebration, being constantly enlightened, purified, and lifted up, always God-bearing and deified. If you wish to be such—be, I beg and implore you, self-motivated, eager, and enthusiastic for every good deed and every act pleasing to God, lifting your eyes to contemplate eternal blessings, and for this purpose, accept what you must accept, endure what you must endure, and bear whatever you encounter: sorrows, hardships, violence, needs, annoyances, slander, labors, toils, and everything else of this kind, so that we may attain what we desire and achieve that for which we left the world. Oh, how blessed it is, my fathers, to live righteously, wisely, and confidently! And how pious it is to spend our days in contrition, humility, and reverence, preparing for our departure, for the meeting with the dreadful Judge of all, God, and for our account before Him!

14. “Arsenius, for what purpose did you leave this world?” this venerable man would often say to himself as a saving reminder. May we, too, know why we have left the world, and may we strive with all our might to attain that end, adorning our lives with the beauty of virtues and preparing our souls as brides for the Lord—God—by observing the splendor of most holy virginity and keeping ourselves pure, spotless, and unstained: for we are called the temples of God; and “*whoever destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him,*” says Scripture (1 Cor. 3: 17). For this very reason I weep and wail over some, because, as they “*did not deign to acknowledge God in their understanding,*” the Savior, so He “*delivered them over to a depraved mind, to commit what is unseemly*” (Rom. 1: 28). I dare say that “*you have become arrogant, and have not wept enough, so that the one who did this might be removed from among you*” (1 Cor. 5: 2). From this comes negligence, and further, indifference: for you do not turn away from him as you ought. You associate with him and laugh together, becoming like the one of whom the Prophet speaks reproachfully: “*If you saw a thief, you ran with him, and with the adulterer you shared your portion*” (Ps. 49: 18). Do not, however, be angry with me for such a rebuke: for woe to me if I do not rebuke you and stand before you for righteous conduct; woe to you as well, if you do not distance yourselves from those who live wickedly..

77. Life is full of turmoil; but first, pray that your helmsman may be alert and wise; then take comfort in the hope of reaching a good end

77. 1) Life is full of turmoil; but first, pray that your helmsman may be alert and wise; then take comfort in the hope of reaching a good end. – 2) I hear that there is much quarreling among you over trifles—due to a lack of humility. – 3) Saints Dorotheus, Dosipheus, Akakios, and others accepted everything silently and humbly and remained at peace. – 4) We are troubled by our own desires, and their unfulfillment disturbs us: for we have forgotten the reward for renouncing them. – 5) Many among us fall ill: be patient with the sick, and those caring for them should serve humbly. See to it that there is no disorder when the doctor is called. And after recovery, do not remain idle—nor act recklessly. [1, 86]

15. Again and again, remain good-natured, be patient, and take courage as you endure the invisible and visible trials that come your way, whether from demons or from people. Who does not see how full of struggles your life is? Who will not testify to how sorrowful your path is? From there, daily, trials rise up against you, and from there, agonizing misfortunes strike—sometimes conflicts with the brethren, sometimes troubles and ceaseless jostling while fulfilling your duties, pressures from all sides—as if we were being tossed about in the depths, sailing across this vast and calamitous sea of the world, having raised the sail of hope and heading toward heaven. But pray first of all that your helmsman, by divine power and the prayers of the Father, may always keep the eyes of his mind open, and seeing, may see, and watching, may watch, so that he may steer your ship well and guide it by faith to the harbor of life; then rejoice and be glad that, having sailed this sea of life with such toil, you will inherit eternal life. Under no circumstances should you allow yourself to waver, stop, or be held back by anything, but rather proceed cheerfully, vigorously, and resolutely, moving forward and taking up everything that can be used to trample the ancient serpent—the devil—and fulfill the Lord’s commandments. Are you young and just beginning your spiritual journey? Embrace humility and obedience and hold fast to them, so that, having made a good start, you may gradually rise to perfection. Have

you been wearing the monastic habit for a long time? Let yourself be recognized as such by the excellence of your virtue, not by the number of years.

16. I say this to you because I hear that there is idle chatter and quarreling among you, as well as confusion, irritation, and outbursts of anger, along with insults, cursing, and strife—though not among all of you. I ask you, brothers, where does this come from? What are the causes of this? I believe it stems from nothing other than a lack of humility. I therefore implore you with the words of the Apostle: *“Do not be children in your thinking, but be infants in evil”* (1 Cor. 14:20); do not engage in idle chatter without any benefit, and in your desire to have your way, do not resort to rhetoric or idle talk, wearing yourselves out with this and that and putting forward various reasons. *““Who,” asks the Prophet, “is the man who desires life and loves to see good days?” And he himself answers: “Keep your tongue from evil, and let your lips not speak deceit; turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”* (Ps. 33: 13–15).

17. Why did St. Dorotheus see good days and lead a peaceful life? Why did the wonderful Dosipheus, the ever-memorable Akakios, and the entire assembly of such saints enjoy the same? Or—may this not be considered presumptuous—why did some even from our brotherhood—both those still living and those who have departed—live here blissfully, free from turmoil and anxiety? But is this the reason? Is it not because each of them considered himself nothing and was ready to submit to everyone and in every matter?

18. As for me—not to say, “as for you”—vanity, self-will, and sensuality prevent me from living in peace, from being at peace with others, or from spending the few days of this life in simplicity and without malice. Therefore, whoever is troubled and burdened should reproach himself, not his neighbor. Whoever wishes to walk righteously and live in peace should not insist on his own desires—and then sorrows will cease, disputes will fall silent, and wild beasts, as in the book of Job, will be at peace with him. Furthermore, know and believe that for wearing clothes we do not want, for mended shoes, for an unwanted cloak, for a change in obedience, for enduring abuse, for bearing slander—for all these small things—the Kingdom of Heaven awaits you. Let us therefore strive with all our strength to please the Lord! And blessed is the one who maintains, performs, and fulfills his service as if God were watching him.

19. These are trying times for us, and many of the brothers have fallen ill. Take heart, you who are sick; the time for your work has come; do not miss the opportunity to gather greater rewards for the repose of the sick, more precious than gold and precious stones. As for you who are sick, reap the fruits of patience; do not demand more than what is given, lest your soul become sick along with your body. – And why are you still so ill-mannered that, when the doctor comes, you all rush to him, asking questions, showing him your limbs, and naming your ailments? – Aren’t you ashamed before a layman? Perhaps next time, he won’t come here at all. That is why I feel particularly compelled to point this out to you and correct you. Why don’t you follow the proper order? You can all speak in turn about yourselves and your illnesses, and in case of need, you can convey your message through the hospital attendant or his assistant. But this disorder—it’s nothing but evil. Not like this, my children; and let this not happen again. – Furthermore, do not use your illness as an excuse to be idle, and after you recover, do not wander aimlessly here and there, nor be intemperate, lest you fall ill again and become a burden to the healthy. But you who are healthy, for the Lord’s sake and for the sake of brotherly love, serve patiently and bear the infirmities of the infirm.

78. Just as we take every precaution when the Arabs approach so as not to fall into their hands, so let us guard against our mental enemies, putting on the armor of God

78. 1) Just as we take every precaution when the Arabs approach, so as not to fall into their hands, so let us guard against our mental enemies, putting on the armor of God. – 2) Let us not give in, but fight courageously, and we will attain the peace of dispassion. [1, 87]

20. At the present time, the Arabs strike fear into our hearts—they attack suddenly and not only plunder our possessions but also take people captive; and those they do not take away, they mercilessly exterminate, killing men and women, the old and the young. But if we look closely, we will see that we, too, are subjected to no less terrifying attacks and tyranny—only not from people, but from demons. They wage a ceaseless and fierce war against us, knowing neither rest nor a set time: one is struck by the arrow of sin, another is bound by the snares of passions and led captive into a mental Egypt; in one, every limb of soul and body is filled with the poison of sinful desires; in another, they steal the seed of God’s saving word and torment him with hunger; and these predators and tyrants subject us to various forms of abuse and torture. – Blessed among you is such a warrior of Christ who, arming himself with the spiritual sword of faith, strikes but is not struck,

inflicts wounds but does not receive them, conquers but is not taken captive. But let us all take heart, and, taking up the weapons of our warfare—not carnal, but spiritual—let us overcome those who fight against us, holding fast to the ranks and helping one another. Let no one be without armor, which, according to the Apostle, is true faith; let no one be without a shield, which is humility; no one without the sword, which is divine prayer; no one without the helmet, which is obedience; no one without the steed of the soul, which is a lively readiness for every good deed; and no one without the rest of the armor that protects our inner man. Let us not allow our enemies to wound us, strike us down, or cast us at their feet. The Lord, mighty in battle, who with the weapon of the cross struck down the principalities and powers of the ruler of this age, *“has given us authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10:19).

21. Take heed, then, and do not be presumptuous; for those who give themselves over to presumption are struck down as by a spear—and die. Take care not to act according to your passions, for those who act according to their passions die an eternal death. Likewise, do not entertain wicked thoughts in your mind—for such people fall into captivity; do not fall into disobedience, for the disobedient expose themselves to the enemy’s arrows; do not be proud, for through pride you are under the sword of sin; do not be lazy, and do not neglect psalm-singing and manual labor, for by doing so you deliver yourselves into the hands of the devil; this is especially true if you secretly do evil, while outwardly appearing to be something other than what you are inside. The Apostle speaks of all this: *“Be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of the time, for the days are evil”* (Eph. 5:16). Since we are already seasoned, we must also have sufficient military experience; and one who has learned to fight does not fear enemies. Therefore, I urge and implore you, the honorable army of the Lord, His holy people, His chosen warriors: let us not be timid or give in. But if we have been wounded, let us heal our wounds through repentance; if we have been slain, let us be revived through tears and penance; if we have been led captive to a spiritual Babylon, let us be set free through communion with the holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we thus persevere patiently in the struggle, the battle will gradually subside, the enemies will flee, the peace of dispassion will shine within us, and we will be called the Sons of God: for it is said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”* (Matt. 5:9).

79. Time is running out: you must be vigilant, as you are doing, taking special care to cultivate humility and meekness, imitating Christ

79. 1) Time is running out: we must be vigilant, as you are, taking special care to cultivate humility and meekness, imitating Christ. – 2) The angels and the saints are watching; it is shameful not to live as we ought: though it is difficult, “ ” a great reward awaits. – 3) Both heaven and hell lie before us: whoever chooses one will receive it. – 4) Whoever acts according to his passions—his work is wood and hay; he will burn forever without being consumed. [2, 1]

22. Time flies, carrying us toward the end of this present life. But who is wise enough to understand this and seek it—so as not to waste time in life, indifferent to the matter of salvation, due to the cunning of the devil’s schemes? Who walks, heeding himself, not succumbing to carelessness, but in daily preparation for death, presenting every deed of his—spiritual and bodily—before the face of God the Almighty? Who, lifting the eye of his soul upward to heaven and beholding the beauties of the visions there, transfers all his love to the longing for that realm, soaring together with the heavenly powers, and regarding all heavy hardships as nothing, but cheerfully enduring both reproach and humiliation and suffering—hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and moving among the brotherhood like a precious stone, as is written?—Among you, however, I see not just one or two, but many who, with sincere faith and zeal, seek what is worthy, and who are also attentive to guidance, obedient, enduring, open-hearted, trusting, and faithful—even though they have not received a formal education, nor have they made up for this deficiency through extensive reading, reflection, or memorization; they possess only one thing, which is most necessary and by which they conform themselves to Christ—namely, humility and meekness—heeding the Lord’s words: *“Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble in heart”* (Matt. 11:29). Turn your attention, then, to light and truth, to righteousness and meekness, humility and goodness. I beg you, refrain from all irritation and indignation. *“O sons of men,”* cries out St. David, *“how long, O hard-hearted ones? Why do you love vanity and seek falsehood?”* (Ps. 4:3). *“How long will the enemy mock, and the adversary provoke?”* (Ps. 73:10).

23. Forgive me; I am ashamed before the Holy Angels, for they watch over us as our guardians; I am ashamed before the holy and venerable fathers, whose way of life we have taken upon ourselves and whose

example we follow. Let us, then, brothers, perform what is pious in a pious manner and carry out what is holy in a holy manner. I beg you, do not be hard-hearted, disobedient, or contentious; do not be harsh in speech, quick to anger, or boastful; do not be mockers, slanderers, or defamers; do not be talkative, ridiculous, or insolent. Be God-loving, not lustful; be silent, not idle in speech; be content with simple clothing, and do not love to show off; keep your eyes downcast, but your mind on high; look around you, lest the arrow of sin strike you through your carelessness. What, then, will come of this?—Instead of toil, rest will be prepared; instead of feats of valor, crowns; instead of insults, honor and glory; instead of humiliation—praise; instead of piercing—joyful greetings; instead of slavery—rule over ten cities; instead of separation from parents and relatives—the inheritance and joint inheritance of our Lord Jesus Christ; and for renouncing your own will—a place alongside the first martyr, Stephen; and that is temporary, fleeting, and as transient as a shadow, but this is eternal, immortal, and without end.

24. If you desire to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, if you desire to taste eternal life, if you desire to receive adoption as sons, if you desire to be inhabitants of Paradise, if you desire to rest in Abraham's bosom, if you desire to be admitted into the unmade-by-hands bridal chamber, or to receive anything else of this kind, all this is possible for you, accessible, at hand, and ready. – But if you desire the opposite of all this—unquenchable fire, a worm that never sleeps, the flames of Gehenna, gnashing of teeth, the lot of the goats, the fate of the damned—you will encounter all of this; may it never befall you! But it will not be so if we do not live well, if we do not cultivate a good disposition, and if we do not remain steadfast in our calling. Whoever is like this saves his own soul, saves his brothers, and saves me, a poor man. He who acts well and walks in the fear of God is upright before the Lord; his word and his countenance are upright; he is blessed, and he will leave behind a blessed memory.

25. What good does hard-heartedness do to the hard-hearted, defiance to the defiant, disobedience to the disobedient, and pride to the proud? Is he not storing up wrath for himself on the day of wrath and the revelation of God's righteous judgment? And is not his work like wood, hay, and straw, and will not this come to pass upon him: *"His work will be burned up; he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire"* (1 Cor. 3:12, 15)? That is to say, in the age to come, he will be burned by the fire of hell in his body; while his soul will be tormented and his heart torn apart, immeasurably and endlessly, as he beholds the glory of the Saints, longing for it yet seeing himself deprived of it for all eternity. May such a fate and such a condition never befall any of you! Therefore, while we are still here, let us purify ourselves with the fire of the fear of God, so that we may not experience the future flame.

80. I commend your obedience: continue in this way; and both those who assign duties and those who carry them out—act with reverence toward God

80. 1) I commend your obedience; continue in this way. Both those who give instructions and those who receive them—act with reverence toward God. – 2) Abound in acts of mercy, imitating God, without pride if we succeed in what we do, and without discouragement if we do not. [2:2]

1. See how you are growing, how you are rising, how you are improving, what fruits you bear for God and for us, and how, by living a good life, you are winning your souls through obedience. In your humility, you have exalted the horn of your life; in your obedience, you have shown the testimony of your conscience, that you carry out your duties without deceit or hypocrisy. And may you always remain this way. – When, for example, one is assigned to one task and another to another, let this be done, I beg you, neither with partiality, nor with hostility, nor with negligence; but as in the presence of the all-seeing God, let one assign the task and the other accept it prudently, conscientiously, and commendably, so that on that day they may hear: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Lord"* (Matt. 25: 21). Forgive me, but those who do not act in the fear of God—but rather with partiality—whether in providing what the brethren need—clothing, shoes—or in assigning duties, are unworthy of such a voice; but rather they will hear this: *"Cursed is everyone who does the work of God with negligence"* (Jer. 48: 10). For how much evil does this give rise to? On the one hand, servility; on the other, grumbling and the disruption of peaceful relations. I say this not so that those who receive may rebel against those who distribute, but so that you, the distributors, may act in the best possible way in the part of administration entrusted to you, out of the fear of God and out of brotherly love. If you act in this way, then order, peace, and tranquility will grow stronger and take deeper root in our beloved brotherhood.

2. I ask and implore you: fill your hearts with all kinds of good deeds, devote yourselves to mutual love for one another, rejoice in one another's success, and grieve over your neighbor's stumbling. *"As is the earthly man, so are the earthly things; and as is the heavenly man, so are the heavenly things,"* says the Apostle (1 Cor. 15:48). But the heavenly God *"loves mercy and justice"* (Ps. 32:5), and *"the whole earth is full of His mercy"* (118:64), as St. David sings. Let us imitate Him as well, and let us do this today; tomorrow we will strive for something else, and in doing so, let us neither lose heart because of failure nor boast because of success. But for the latter, let us give thanks to the Lord: for this is *"not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"* (Rom. 9:16); as for the former, let us persevere, and it will be ours: for the Lord assures us that *"everyone who seeks finds, and to those who knock, the door will be opened"* (Matt. 7:8). Thus, day by day you will work out the salvation of your souls, ascending ever higher and higher. Now is the time for true, imperishable acquisition—the time for a race (contest), but a spiritual one—the time for enrichment, but with eternal blessings. Blessed is the one who runs; thrice blessed is the one who endures; most blessed is the one who kindles within himself daily the fire of longing for God and love for Him.

81. Let us beware of the uprising of passion, which is more terrible than the sword, by shielding ourselves with the commandments and arming ourselves with aversion

81. 1) Let us be mindful that the uprising of passion is more fearsome than the sword, shielding ourselves with the commandments and arming ourselves with aversion to sin. – 2) Today one demon rises up, tomorrow another: we must repel them all in the name of the Lord and by compelling ourselves to do good; and do not lose heart when penance is imposed. [2, 4]

3. Let them sharpen swords against me, let them inflict wounds, let them cast me out, let them threaten me with death; I do not fear these things as much as I fear the devil's attack rising up in my humble soul, when sin, reigning in my body like an armed host, sends forth against virtue a multitude of frenzied passions. Then I dread the arrow of sinful pleasure, which wounds not the flesh but the heart; then I fear the blood that is shed not upon the earth, but upon the soul by an invisible sword. This is what I fear, and this is what makes me tremble. Let us therefore be vigilant, my brothers, and watch lest any slanderer, or proud thought, or the sweetness of sin, —a predator, or rebellious disobedience, or ruinous self-will, or unrepentant hardness of heart, or unyielding obstinacy, or unconvincing self-justification, or anything else that might disturb the soul. But let us shield ourselves with the divine commandments as if with ramparts; and we will always remain whole and safe. If, however, any such predator should happen to enter, then as soon as we notice it, let us seize it at once, bind it, and cast it far away from us. Let us arm ourselves above all against the passions, embracing the inaccessibility of the heart and the strength of the spirit, so that when we are assailed, we may not fall, but repel and cast far away those invisible enemies who rise up against us.

4. Today one such demon fights against us; tomorrow another will attack; and after that, yet another—such as fornication, gluttony, arrogance, pride, insolence, self-will, and countless other passions. We must stand against them all, wage war against them all, and defeat them all, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will crown us with the victory wreath on the day of judgment. Blessed are you, brother, who hear this, understand it, and keep it—and, I would add, who discipline yourself daily for the spiritual battle. For the work of salvation is necessary, and only those who discipline themselves will attain the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, you should not be surprised when you find yourselves in temptation; for it comes upon you to test you and to train you for battle. Do not lose heart when you are admonished, rebuked, given penance, or, if necessary, excommunicated; but be of good cheer, be alert, and take up the task with great zeal; for in this lies your salvation, in this—your success, in this—your martyrdom, and for this—your crowns.

82. The brother has left. Why? He did not heed himself and succumbed to deceptive thoughts; if he had heeded himself, the psalms' counsel would have set him straight; and his will was not firm

82. 1) The brother has left. Why? He did not heed himself and succumbed to seductive thoughts; if he had heeded himself, the psalms' counsel would have set him straight; and his will was not firm. – 2) The soldiers of the earthly king remain loyal to him for the sake of earthly benefits: should we not remain loyal to the Heavenly King for the sake of the heavenly kingdom? Let us therefore be such, following the example of our fathers. [2, 5]

5. I have urged you to be mindful of yourselves against the enemy's slanders. Now I will point out the evil fruit of not being mindful of oneself: our poor brother Avvakum has fled from us. Of course, this is

because he was not mindful of himself and lacked mental vigilance. He did not hold thoughts faithful to God and pious—thoughts that could have fought for him—but rather seductive ones that hid God and His truth from his soul; that is why he suffered what he did: he excommunicated himself from our midst and followed in the devil’s footsteps. And where does he now wander, like a sheep preyed upon by wild beasts, without guidance or a shepherd?—How can he now sing praises to God, from whom he has fallen away by breaking his vows? How can he sing, *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,”* having set out on such a path? Or how can he say, *“This is my rest forever; here I will dwell, for I have chosen it”* (Ps. 131: 14)? And the words, *“I have waited patiently for the Lord; He has inclined to me and heard my prayer”* (Ps. 39: 2), are far from him. He will find the following words from the Psalms more fitting for himself: *“Cursed are those who turn aside from Your commandments”* (Ps. 118:21). He is cursed, and he will remain so, unless the Lord God, through the prayers of my father and yours, and with your assistance, leads him to repentance. But why does this happen to us? Why does Satan find us as his tools and carry us off? Why do we allow ourselves not to be held fast by the fear of God, nor clothed in the armor of love for Christ our God? Why do we allow ourselves to be overcome by our lusts and thus become cold, adulterers, unstable, and—to put it bluntly—barren? Where is our faith in the fathers? Where is our love for our brothers? And how can you save yourselves from sensual and mental temptations when, at the slightest touch of adversity, you are completely overcome and, without even entering the arena of the contest, turn back?

6. Do you see the soldiers of the earthly king—how they remain loyal to him, fight for him, and shed their blood? And for what reason?—To receive some honors or ranks. Our deeds are not like that. They are for the sake of the one eternal and invisible King of all, God—not for anything earthly, but to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven, to become co-heirs with Christ the Lord, to partake of what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what has not even entered the human heart. And yet we do not all, nor do we always, remain faithful to Him; we can be lured, beguiled, and carried away. But should we not remain sober? Should we not strengthen ourselves? Should we not stand firm even to the point of shedding blood? Is our birth not from above? Are we not children of the Light? How then can we fail to show ourselves to be children of obedience? How can we fail to show that we are holy seed? How can we not bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? How can we not rise above worldly wisdom? How can we not die for Christ, even if we were to die for Him at least once a day?—O my children! Let us be sons of strength, warriors of Christ, truly God’s people, a choir of angels, an unshakable army, following the example of our holy fathers and those blessed ones who lived under their guidance, so that we may have Satan trampled and despised under our feet, just as Saint Silvanus, the Venerable Dosipheus, the ever-memorable Zacharias, and all the disciples of the holy fathers. For it is not only Dosipheus, nor only Silvanus, nor only Zacharias who are glorified, but all their faithful disciples and followers also share in their glory. Let us, I beg you, be like them. Let us not allow ourselves to be overcome by the enemy’s slanders; let us not be intimidated by their threats; let us not allow ourselves to be put to death by sin; but let us live out all the remaining days and hours of our lives, pleasing the Lord our God.

83. Let nothing separate us from the love of God; but let us persevere in our labors and virtues until we attain the measure of Christ

83. 1) Let nothing separate us from the love of God; but let us persevere in our labors and virtues until we attain the measure of Christ. – 2) By renouncing the world, we have accomplished a great deed; let us not bring shame upon this undertaking through negligence and self-indulgence, but rather by imitating the fathers. [2, 6]

7. When some calamity befalls the people, and all are in turmoil, we must turn to God day and night, praying with tears and sighs that He may turn His wrath into mercy and restore peace to the world, for His inscrutable wisdom is revealed through such events—without, however, neglecting our spiritual duties, but rather turning even the common calamity that befalls us to their benefit. For, as the Apostle said, *“all things work together for good for those who love God”* (Rom. 8:28); so that neither the present calamity nor any other more terrible one—or, to use the Apostle’s words, *“neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither powers nor things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 8:38–39). Therefore, as we lift our hearts to God and gaze upon the blessings reserved there, let us perform the task set before us with joy, steadfastness, and zeal, neither slacking off in discouragement, nor growing weary from

fasting, nor becoming exhausted by vigil, nor growing bored with prayer, nor becoming numb from the labors of fulfilling other commandments; but striving and hastening toward all this, as toward some feast and rejoicing, or rather, as toward the light, as toward God Himself; and in this way we shall ascend from strength to strength in the fulfillment of the commandments, and from glory to glory in adorning ourselves with virtues, growing ever richer in divine perfections, *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13), for Whom we have been crucified to the world, and the world has been crucified to us (Gal. 6:14), for Whom we have forsaken all things and counted them as loss, that we may gain Christ alone (Phil. 3:8).

8. See, my children, what a great and momentous deed we have accomplished by fleeing from the world and renouncing all worldly things—kinship and homeland, parents, brothers, and sisters, cities and homes, and everything in general that brings comfort to flesh and blood? – Let us not bring shame upon such a work of ours through laziness, carelessness, and inattention; and this will happen if we begin to fulfill the desires of the flesh and act according to the passions of the soul. Such were not our holy and reverend Fathers, who left us examples of God-imitating humility, unquestioning obedience, sincere faith, aversion to the world, love for God, wondrous feats, and pious deeds. Let us imitate them as well, striving to follow in their footsteps, so that we may be deemed worthy of a share in their blessings.

84. Who are such wicked people? All who live wickedly; especially those dissatisfied with the meager monastic provisions, contrary to their vows

84. 1) Who is not guilty of such wickedness? All who live wickedly; especially those dissatisfied with the meager monastic provisions, contrary to their vows. – 2) One must be content with what is offered at the meal, regarding any worldly comfort as a diminution of eternal comfort, as I myself always feel. – 3) Our meals are not poor; and at the infirmary, both the meals and everything else are very good. – 4) I will add: you yourselves have brought nothing to the monastery, yet you demand this and that; meanwhile, you are capable of almost nothing, while others, who are better than you, labor in every way and endure. The righteous wrath of God is upon you. [2, 7]

9. *“Do not work for perishable food,”* says the Lord, *“but for food that endures to eternal life”* (John 6:27), that is, keep the commandments, *“studying the Lord’s law day and night,”* so that you may be like *“a tree planted by the streams of water,”* according to the words of the divine David; and *may your “fruit” be “given in its season,”* and *may the “leaf” of your salvation “not wither”* in the age to come. *“Not like the wicked; not like them, but like the dust that the wind sweeps away from the face of the earth”* (Ps. 1: 3–4). Let us consider *“the wicked”* to be not only those who believe wrongly, but also all who transgress the Lord’s commandments; and as applied to our order, these will be the disobedient, the proud, the cunning in speech, the vain, the insolent, as well as those who eat in secret, the grumblers, those who love to adorn themselves, curious (always prying and prying for information), idlers, the careless, whisperers, the wayward, slanderers, and above all, the ungrateful and those who demand more than is proper? – They are not content with the gifts given by God (i.e., what is offered to everyone in the monastery), but, having neglected the care of their souls and indulging their bodies, they seek and demand food and drink of which they are unworthy, and they quarrel over them, citing their physical constitution, habits, and infirmities as excuses. And it would be good if they were to actually fall ill; perhaps through this they would be rid of the greatest of all illnesses—ingratitude. – As if they had forgotten, those wretches, what they promised to God when they joined us, and what they confessed before many witnesses, both invisible and visible! Did they not promise to endure hunger and thirst, to bear every kind of sorrow and hardship, famine, persecution, torment, and death? And now they are waging war over wine and food! – But just as they have despised their vow, so will they themselves be despised; and since they have failed to remember that God was the witness and hearer of their promises, I fear that *“He may deliver them over to a depraved mind, to do what is unseemly”* and destructive (Rom. 1: 28).

10. Come to your senses, then, whoever you are; above all, rouse your souls from slumber, from neglect of the divine, from worldly inclination, from being *“neither hot nor cold.”* Be inflamed with divine love and fear. Accept discipline and put on the armor of righteousness. Tremble and fear, and do not quarrel over what is served at the table. I do not speak of times when there is stew, fish, and cheese, but even when only bread with oiled vegetables, overcooked beans, or something similar is offered, consider this a great comfort. And which of the humble-minded would not fear this, wondering how even such comfort might cause them to lose eternal blessings? As for myself, I consider every meal and drink to be provisions for the journey to hell,

especially those given to me during my infirmity. Believe me, even though I speak in madness, that if I had not been overcome by a great fear of disobeying our common father and had not been persuaded by your wise counsel, I would never have altered my usual diet until my very death. It was for this reason alone that I ate and drank various things; but—and I will say this even in my madness—I did so with a heavy heart, with groaning and sorrow, on the one hand because of my unworthiness, and on the other because of my concern for you who are infirm and because of the scarcity in the monastery.

11. However, by the grace of Christ the Lord, we have what we need: give glory to God, you ungrateful ones! We drink wine, eat oil and fish, and rest and receive medical care in the infirmary—and this not just once or twice, but every day. —A chosen brother, who has gained experience in treating illnesses, is our chief infirmarian; he has three, four, or five assistants; a dedicated cook, a dedicated steward, and a dedicated preparer of ointments, plasters, bandages, and dressings; and the work there never ceases for a single minute. And the expenses are considerable: fish is provided every day, obtained either from the condemned prisoners—three or four fishermen—or at the market; a great deal of wine—and of what kind—has been and continues to be consumed; as well as olives, honey, fine bread, and much more. —How can we, the ungrateful, fail to give thanks for all this? How can we fail to give glory to God? How can we fail to sing His praises?

12. I'll add this: we ourselves have brought nothing to the monastery, and our work yields no profit; yet they keep asking us for this and that. —And yet we are good for nothing—neither to stand at the gates nor to serve at the refectory. But we do not even realize—insensitive and senseless as we are—that we may be the last, and that others, more honorable than we, our brothers and fathers, some outside and others inside the monastery, whether in the cold and wind or in the heat and scorching sun, like slaves, dig, plow, prune the vines, wash, sew, forge, and walk on foot on errands to the city, to the fields, to the mountains—they overexert themselves and grow weary; yet they endure it all calmly. —Truly, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these! But you, O blind one, O hard-hearted one, O deceitful one, O desperate one! Take heed, lest you hear on that day: *“Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into outer darkness”* (Matt. 22:13). Woe to you! You disregard God's wrath, seeing that He does not punish immediately. Truly, it is said of you: *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’”* (Ps. 52:2). Why? Because you *“have become corrupt and detestable in your deeds, and you do not do what is good. But the Lord ‘looks down from heaven’ every day, ‘to see who understands and seeks Him’* (Ps. 13: 1, 2), and He inscribes such people in the Book of Life, while He passes over the rest. I fear that if Saint David had not come, he would not have sung of you—and the words of the psalm would not have come true for you: *“I have divided them in their womb”* (Ps. 16: 14). Whom?—these wicked ones from those who walk in righteousness. —But *“Understand this, you who forget God: there is no one to rescue, and there will be no deliverer”* (Ps. 49:22). And forgive me, my beloved children, for in my foolishness, out of love and with tears, I have spoken this to you, thinking that it is better for me now to chastise you with words than to be subjected later to eternal chastisement—from which may we all be delivered by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

85. It is bitter that two more have left

85. 1) It is bitter that two more have left. — 2) Thus, one must not rely on oneself or on others. — 3) We do very little—and yet we do not know how we exalt ourselves—which is why we fall. — 4) Take heed to yourselves; and pray for them. [2, 8]

13. Again temptation, again seduction; again I, poor soul, am in tears and lamentation, that my beloved ones have turned away (two brothers have fled), that those who lived in high esteem have fallen to the ground, that those *“who thought themselves wise”* have been darkened, that those who had endured a great and long struggle and the toil of piety have lost everything in a single moment, and have become for me thorns instead of grapes, sorrow instead of joy, and misfortune instead of the happiness I had hoped for. And I do not know what to say or how to speak of the fall and ruin of our brothers; except perhaps to sit and weep, saying: if this is so, then *“who can be saved,”* O Lord.

14. Thus, one cannot praise a man until the very end of his life. Thus, the path of our salvation is so difficult and full of trials. And who will escape so many snares of the devil? And who will not be preoccupied with himself until the very end of his life? Knowing this well, that holy father, already at the very gates of death, when the devil said to him, *“You have escaped me,”* replied, *“I do not know.”* So fearful was he for himself that even in this final hour of his life, it seemed he did not dare to have firm confidence in his own salvation, despite the great measure of his pious labors.

15. But we, if we live five or ten years in a monastery and become accustomed to the monastic rule, or memorize a few passages from Scripture, or perform so many prostrations, or pray longer and fast more, then we consider ourselves to have accomplished everything and begin to be conceited. For this reason, “*we fall like leaves*” (Prov. 11:14); our “*bones are crushed in hell*” (Ps. 140:7), and we “*wither away before we can rejoice*” (Ps. 128:6). We consider ourselves wise, though we are uneducated; eloquent, though we are speechless: we appoint ourselves as teachers, as zealots for piety, and as its faithful representatives; and we claim that the truth remains only in us. That is why this has happened to us; that is why we take darkness for light; that is why, as if from paradise, we have become exiles from Christ’s court and from His flock.

16. Take heed to yourselves, my brothers, I beg you, and do not let your virtue and your faith dwindle little by little, lest you be completely depleted and fall into the hands of ruin. As for those who have strayed, let us pray earnestly that the Lord may enlighten them and bring them back to us.

86. I take comfort in your steadfastness and perseverance; continue to excel and strive even more—and God’s blessing will be upon you; but those who are not like this are not of God

86. 1) I am comforted by your steadfastness and perseverance; continue to excel, even by pushing yourselves—and God’s blessing will be upon you; but those who are not like this are not of God. – 2) We have been completely transformed and made new through baptism, repentance, and our vow: let us not, then, rebuild what we have destroyed, nor return to the world from which we have come, like the Israelites who, after leaving Egypt, longed for it; may my words stir you to this, and may the Lord help you. [2, 9]

17. Every day I bless God, my Father, who gives you the strength and fortitude to stand firm in your ascetic obedience, and I humbly pray that the Lord may open your spiritual eyes more and more, so that you may see all His ways, come to perceive the longing of divine love for Him, put to sleep every carnal desire, and rise above the power of the passions, so that you “*may be perfect and complete in every good work*” (Col. 4: 12). – And this, as you know, does not happen without strenuous effort, nor without suffering, nor suddenly, but on the condition that, with great toil and self-exhaustion, day and night, we subdue and overcome our nature, and endure all the afflictions that befall us in our communal life, whether from people or from demons. For whoever does not faint under this burden, but with God’s help endures and perseveres through it all, will “*receive the blessing of the Lord and the mercy of God his Savior*” (Ps. 23:5), and will be deemed worthy of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, it is good and blessed to bear such sufferings, to be a bearer of Christ’s passions, and not to turn away from such passions by indulging in worldly things—that is, by giving in to anger and quarreling, insolence and arrogance, conflicts and enmities, disobedience and disputes, grievances and insults, slander, falsehood, and mockery. How can such people be called Christians? Are they not rather sons of rebellion, children of wrath, and heirs not to eternal blessings but to endless torments?

18. Is not your rank, brothers, that of angels? Is not your life holy? Is not your path chosen by God?—But what does the Apostle say?—“*For if I have torn it down, I am building it up again; I am making myself a transgressor*” (Gal. 2:18). We have cast off the old man, decaying as a result of the serpent’s manifold deceptions; we have renounced that which was the fruit of the first bitter taste and of disobedience worthy of expulsion, and through which death, the source of much suffering, entered the world; we have laid aside the guilt of our birth, first in baptism by water and the Spirit, then—through God’s great love for mankind—in the second baptism of repentance and renunciation of the world; and your vows to God are recorded in the presence of the holy angels; they are also recorded with me, a poor man. – So you have been washed, sanctified, freed from the bonds of sin, and clothed in the new man, created in God’s image in righteousness and truth: why are you running back again? Why are you returning to your own filth? Why are you unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven when, according to the Lord’s word, having put your hand to the plow, you look back? (Luke 9:62). – The Lord is my witness that I say this out of love for you, out of compassion, and with deep anguish. What does Scripture say in the Old Testament about the Israelites? That they turned their hearts back to Egypt, for they remembered the onions, the meat, and the pots of Egypt, and their poor life there (Ex. 16: 3). So too have we turned toward the world and toward the things of the world, and what we did there before, we now do here. – Woe is me! How is it that we, who ought to be equal to the angels, are not even equal to devout laypeople, when, through negligence, we are gradually descending even to such actual falls? – May my humble instruction to you, I beg you, serve as a confirmation for those who have not fallen, as a remedy for those who have fallen, as a warning for the negligent, as an encouragement for the zealous, as a stimulus for the despondent, as help for those who are struggling, and in general—“*to all, I have become all,*

that I might save some” (1 Cor. 9: 22). For it is for your sake that I speak and breathe; on my own, I am speechless and not even a man. May God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, correct what is amiss in us, strengthen what is sound, and make up what is lacking; and just as He led us out of the worldly Egypt and guided us through the sinful wilderness, may He carry us through the treacherous sea of passions, having parted it and dried it up, and made the path of virtue passable for us; and just as He has called *us*, so may He continue to call *us* His “*chosen people*” and “*holy nation*” (1 Peter 2:9); and may He settle us in the good land of virtues, and especially, through death, in the land of the meek.

87. Having renounced the world, yet looking back at it—you are acting both foolishly and destructively: come to your senses, I beg you

87. Having renounced the world, yet looking back at it—you are acting both foolishly and destructively: come to your senses, I beg you. [2:10] As people of sound mind, having left everything for God—including relatives, brothers, the world, and all that is in the world—and having taken upon yourselves the light yoke of Christ, why do you become disillusioned, worldly, and even more so, devilish through your own deeds? “*Whoever rejects the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severe a punishment do you think you will deserve*” (Heb. 10: 28–29), you who, according to St. Basil, have torn the covenant of the Spirit by violating obedience, and have “*deemed defiled*” the “*blood of the covenant*” with which you were anointed on the day of renouncing the enemy and the world and uniting with Christ? Is this fitting? Were you truly unable to spend even a single hour of this life (—which is but a moment when compared to the endless ages—) in watchfulness with the Lord? Are these your vows, made before God as a witness, with the Holy Angels listening? Is this what the little scissors given to me by your hands signified, as if from the hand of the Lord? Were these—under the influence of the promptings you received at that time—your tearful, humble, and abasement-filled gestures and glances? O, my children, my children! How have you forgotten yourselves and strayed from your former resolutions? But I ask and implore you, my children, my own flesh and blood, my own members: come to your senses, all of you; be renewed in spirit; unite in one mind, in one hope, in one heart—you with me, and I with you—before the face of the Lord; and let us live and walk in such a way as to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

88. I rejoice that you have settled well; but this is not my doing, but a gift from God; I rejoice because we are one with you: May the Lord keep you and help you to prosper

88. 1) I rejoice that you have settled in well; but this is not my doing, but a gift from God; I rejoice, then, because we are one with you: May the Lord keep you and help you to prosper. – 2) We have chosen the better and more valuable over the worse and the worthless: let us not lose heart. – 3) The crowns of martyrdom lie ahead: let us be courageous; let us bear the yoke of obedience and the weariness of the flesh, looking forward to the honors of our heavenly calling. [2:11]

19. It is good not to conceal God’s blessings, but to proclaim them when the time requires it, so that through this we may become even more zealous in our work. I see such a blessing upon you. For you, by the grace of Christ, through frequent teachings and reminders—all concerning the same work of ours—and through daily exhortations, so to speak, have set out on the path of spiritual progress, with a good disposition and God-loving zeal. That I speak the truth is attested by you yourselves; I also bear witness to it, having found relief from my burdensome afflictions through you, and after many cares, having entered—as into a quiet haven—into the serenity of your pious life, and rejoicing in my heart over this. Truly, the saying is not false: “*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful; later, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness*” (Heb. 12:11) to those who have been trained in this way. But this fruit is not the result of my own efforts, nor of my own care and concern, but a gift from God through your zeal and fatherly assistance. And why, then, am I, an unworthy one, rejoicing and taking delight in the labors of others? It is because we are wholly one—you in me, and I in you—and the individual deeds of each are credited to both. May the Lord, awesome in power and mighty in strength, from now on and forever, grant me to be zealous and strong in the proper study, investigation, and explanation of the holy commandments, and may He preserve you in unbroken submission, in sincere obedience, and in unshakable faith, making you ever more virtuous, ever more zealous, and ready to face every spiritual struggle with courage and zeal—to endure sorrow and hardship, hunger and thirst, to undertaking every labor, and to enduring all that is burdensome and sorrowful, so that, having proven yourselves invincible, you may receive the crowns of patience on the day of the righteous Judge’s judgment.

20. Truly, your purchase is a good one, for by leaving behind the perishable, you have received the imperishable; having been separated from your parents, you have gained the Lord as your Father; having been estranged from your brothers, you have come to have the saints as your fellow citizens; you *are* “*a chosen race, a royal priesthood*” (1 Peter 2:9); instead of the homeland that begot and raised you, the heavenly city has become your homeland, of which “*God is the architect and builder*” (Heb. 11:10); instead of a house that is impermanent and subject to destruction—you now have the dwellings of the righteous and the holy; instead of vain glory and fleeting honor—you have divine and angelic dignity; instead of material contentment and happiness—the enjoyment of eternal blessings; instead of subjugation and the mortification of your desires—rejoicing with the martyrs; instead of solitude and rootless wandering—the closest kinship with all the Saints. Why then should we be disheartened? Why should we lose heart and grieve? Let each one cry out with the divine David: “*Why are you downcast, O my soul, and why do you trouble me? Trust in God, for we will yet confess to Him*” (Ps. 41: 12). “*For if we suffer with Him*” in asceticism, “*we will also reign with Him*” (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12).

21. The crowns of martyrdom are earned even here; and the monastic way of life is rightly called a field of struggle. How blessed, then, is the obedient one? How wondrous is the confessor (who reveals everything about himself)? How venerable is the patient one? How blessed by God is the one who is faithful and steadfast in keeping the commandments? Why should we not turn away or deviate from what we have begun, why should we not be disheartened by the established order, why should we not allow ourselves to turn back or stop, why should we not yield our backbone to our enemies, O fellow believers, O fellow travelers, O fellow fighters! Let us not spare the flesh: time is short, life is fleeting; even if life were to extend to seventy or eighty years, it is nothing compared to the endless ages. Let us give up a sheep, and we shall receive heaps of gold; let us give up a moment of time, and we shall gain endless ages; let us endure an hour’s toil, and we shall receive endless rest; let us weep, that we may rejoice forever with blissful joy; let us weep for the sake of Christ’s love, that we may exult in unending rejoicing. So, keeping your eyes fixed on the honors of your heavenly calling, strive joyfully in good works until the time of your departure arrives, and you pass from this life into eternity, through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

89. Having heeded God’s calling, like Abraham, you have left everything behind: do not grieve, but, inspired by hope, endure all things—for crowns await you

89. 1) Having heeded God’s call, like Abraham, you have left everything behind: do not grieve, but, inspired by hope, endure all things—crowns await you. – 2) Do nothing unseemly—and do not steal: for it is contrary to all that is right and will not go unpunished. – 3) During the Lenten fast: do not make your stomach your god, but rather fill yourselves with virtues. [2:12]

22. What words can I speak that are worthy of you, children of God, who obey the word of the Gospel, have forsaken the whole world, and have taken upon yourselves this great, blessed, and exalted work of obedience? – May God, who comforts the humble, also comfort you through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, may He faithfully guide you along the path of His commandments, and may He make you heirs to His Kingdom. O my brothers! What a good deed you have done, what a wise decision you have made, when, having been called by God, you set out—following the example of the forefather Abraham—from your land, from your kin, from your father’s house, and came to this place of asceticism, which the Lord Himself showed you and guided you to reach? You have overcome carnal thoughts and risen above them. For God’s sake, you did not allow familial love to hold you back, nor your accustomed way of life to stop you, nor your ancestral inheritance to bind you, nor anything else to stand in your way. Therefore, you are blessed and most blessed. Do not lose heart, do not grieve, and do not lose courage. But, soaring above your present sorrows and the hardships of your ascetic life with the hope of the blessings reserved for you, rejoicing and being glad, continue on your path, and with patience, courage, and vigor, endure day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. – And what, then, in the end? – You will be crowned with an imperishable crown of glory when the Lord summons heaven and earth to judge His people.

23. Do not give in to laziness, do not slumber, do not be lukewarm, do not quarrel, do not argue, do not slander, do not engage in idle talk, do not indulge in gluttony—I will add something unworthy of hearing, and this applies only to some—do not steal. —He who begins by stealing nuts will go on to greater things, and he who is accustomed to stealing quills (writing feathers) will eventually reach for clothing as well.—Such thefts occur among us—of clothing, belts, shoes, and other such things. Is this right? Are these the

servants of Christ? Are these those who are strangers to the world? Are these those who seek not an earthly but a heavenly inheritance? Are these the ones called saints and blessed, who receive honorable bows from people? Is this your diligence, your success, your perfection? – This, however, is by no means a widespread sin; and do not be surprised if I turn from praise to rebuke: the word is spoken one way to some and another way to others. – And even if this has happened, let it not happen from now on—I ask, I beg, I command, I threaten. If anyone does such a thing after this admonition, let him be cut off from the Church of Christ, unless he appeases God through repentance and confession. But even before this, one who has stolen can be healed only by acknowledging and revealing his sin. Just as the theft and concealment of certain items once led to Achar’s stoning (Joshua 7:21, 25), so too will those captivated by this passion and who do not confess be struck down by invisible stones; therefore, let the fallen rise up and live in the Lord.

24. Here comes the Fast of Meat. Do not turn your thoughts to what you used to indulge in, and do not imitate those who feed themselves as if it were the day of sacrifice. For whoever is enslaved to the belly, for him *“the belly is his god, and his glory is in his shame”* (Phil. 3:19). Take any one of such people and look at what he is like in soul and body. “Is this desirable?” tell me. “Is this worthy of imitation?” Certainly not; on the contrary, it is worthy of every kind of revulsion and contempt. As for you, be content with the modest satisfaction of your nutritional needs, without meat or wine. Do not concern yourself with filling your body, but fill your soul with the fruits of the Holy Spirit—peace, love, hope, faith, prayer, psalm-singing, recitation of verses, obedience, humility, vigilance, rising early, gentleness, simplicity, pure thoughts, contrition, and purifying tears—and let this be your constant fast.”

90. Just as it is my duty to always encourage you to fight, so it is your duty to always stand fully armed spiritually and fight

90. 1) Just as it is my duty to always inspire you to battle, so it is your duty to always stand fully armed with spiritual weapons and fight. – 2) It is inappropriate to complain that the struggle is dragging on; examples of fighters are given, and you are advised to be courageous. – 3) Do not be afraid of ghosts: fearlessness and prayer are the best remedies against them. [2, 13]

1. It is an urgent necessity for me to always extend words of comfort and exhortation to you, who labor to the point of exhaustion in God’s work, in your blessed and arduous service. If your struggle and your battle against the wiles of the adversary were to cease at any specific time, my comfort and exhortation to you would also cease. But since those efforts never cease and give you no rest, day or night, it is only right that I, in proportion to that, should have the duty to instill in your souls both comfort, encouragement, and hope, giving you strength, vigor, and zeal to destroy the invisible armies arrayed against you. A warrior, as you know, must always act in a warriorly manner and strictly adhere to all that this calling requires. That is why you, as true soldiers of Christ, must always ensure that your weapons are in order—that each of you possesses the sword of obedience, the armor of faith, the helmet of the hope of salvation, the shield of humility, the bow of prayer, and everything else necessary for our spiritual warfare. It is not as wonderful or as awe-inspiring to see a worldly warrior in full armor as it is to see a warrior of Christ possessing all of the above. Therefore, my children, arm yourselves, protect yourselves, prepare yourselves, fight, and defeat the devil who wages war against you; and do not be surprised by anything that happens to you—neither by the blows and arrows you receive, nor by the times you slip and fall—but simply get back up quickly.

2. Some are vexed, astonished, or even fall into despair because they are tormented by shameful lust, anger, blasphemy, envy, fickleness, or something similar. I, on the other hand, am astonished at them. Tell me, brother, do you expect to receive your crowns without toil and hardship, without struggles and victories?—But he says: “I am already so and so many years old; how many times have I fasted, confessed, and received Communion? I have shown this and that, overflowed with tears and sighs, and been of service to my brothers who lived with me in their infirmities.” Alas, what wisdom is this?! Tell me, how many years have you been in this struggle? Three, five, ten? But the blessed Amma Sarra valiantly fought the demon of fornication for forty years and bore it courageously. I dare to mention Abba Pachomius, and how he stripped himself naked in the Church, and another whom Abba Apollos strengthened. And why should I cite countless examples of the feats and struggles through which sincere fighters emerged victorious—one in this way, another in that—yet nowhere was there discouragement, nowhere cowardice, nowhere a loss of courage, until, in their weakness, they prevailed, warding off the enemy’s attacks by a sign from above. We, however, being fainthearted, speak and act in a fainthearted, careless, and untrained manner. – I remind you of this so that we

may rise from our despondency and become alert and steadfast, trusting in God, each one saying to himself: *"Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, in Him I will trust"* (Ps. 26:3).

3. Do not be afraid of the fears and terrors that the devil sometimes conjures up in your dreams at night, showing this or that, transforming and changing his form as he pleases; sometimes he makes a sound, calls you by name, or takes the form of a lion. But strike him boldly with your fearlessness, and you will see that he will scatter like dust. If he appears to you as tall as the roof and immense, turn to prayer, and, like the great Anthony, you will see him vanish. Even if he seems to be coming toward you and attacking you, or shaking your dwelling and bringing it crashing down upon you, do not be afraid, and it will all pass like a mere dream. This happens to those who are subjected to it because they fear where there is no fear (Ps. 13:5). Pay attention, then, and do not be terrified by what is not at all terrifying. Let the one who instills fear be the one to tremble before you, by the power of your hope in God and your prayer to Him.

91. Spring has arrived: be on your guard; I advise you to abstain from wine, not to eat to excess, and to be cautious when going into town, and not to bring worldly things back to the monastery from there

91. 1) Spring has arrived: be on your guard; I advise you to abstain from wine, not to eat to excess, and to be cautious when going into town, and not to bring worldly matters from there into the monastery. – 2) Incidentally, a note is made regarding those who go to the garden and demand vegetables contrary to the rule. [2, 14]

4. Stand firm and unshakable in your hope in God, and having unravelled the devil's intricate schemes, rise above your passions, trampling underfoot the delights and lusts of the flesh, while safeguarding your virginity and purity, both in soul and body. You see, it is now springtime, when every living creature is stirred toward new life. In keeping with this, we must regulate our sleep and our food. *"It is good,"* says the Apostle, *"not to eat meat or drink wine, or to do anything that causes your brother to stumble"* (Rom. 14:21). I, too, my brothers, speak in an advisory capacity, not as a rule, for the sake of your noble souls—and not to those of you who are sick, but to those who are healthy: it is good not to drink wine, especially for you younger ones; for it stirs up the passions. We already have within us the agitation caused by the pleasures natural to our nature; why should we introduce into ourselves the additional stimulants of wine? Taste it and see how good it is to abstain from wine. Those who abstain from it will find themselves not carried away by their thoughts, not inflamed in their souls, but always sober in their love for God and zealous for all that is good and conducive to salvation. Those who abstain from wine carry the Holy Spirit within them; those who drink water are clothed in the garment of humility. — And regarding food as well, I advise you, my children. Flee from senseless gluttony and constant overindulgence, from which spring the seeds of fornication and Sodom; but consume food and drink—while observing all other precautions—in such a way that you may rule over delights rather than be ruled by them, that you may reign over the flesh rather than be subject to its power. The best order in the relationship between the soul and the body is that the lower should not violate the higher. Regarding leaving the monastery, strictly adhere to the rule: do not bring into the monastery worldly conversations that might confuse the brothers.

5. I have learned that some of you, upon entering the garden, demand vegetables from the gardener, and, not receiving them according to the rule, quarrel with him. This is a satanic act and should not be tolerated. Such individuals will be subject to penance. Is what is offered not enough? How will you overcome passion when a vegetable overcomes you? You will be as light as a feather, my humble brother, if you do not strengthen yourself in thought through self-restraint. I trust that just as the intemperate have become and continue to become temperate, and the passionate have become dispassionate, so will we, if we do not grow lazy in strictly disciplining ourselves in all things. May the Lord strengthen and establish you.

92. The Suppression of One's Own Will Is Our Foremost Virtue

92. 1) The subjugation of one's own will is our foremost virtue. – 2) Time is passing; – death is imminent, and after that comes the judgment, at which only the good will be approved: let us therefore be such, avoiding all that is evil. – 3) The foolishness of grumbling that children are being raised in the monastery. [2,15]

6. There are many paths to the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet there is only one path: one, because virtue—being one in essence—is fulfilled and comes to fruition through various good deeds. Let us embrace

this one, all-powerful virtue: let one follow the path of God-imitating obedience—a path unhindered and unbroken; another—along the path of Christ-bearing humility—a path that is smooth and the shortest; both the one and the other should offer the severing of their will as a spotless sacrifice. *“Who is the man who desires life and loves to see good days?”* I too will ask with the Prophet—and I will answer: he who truly severs his will. *“This is the one who will live and not see death”* (Ps. 88:49)—the fall—delivering his soul from the hand of Hades. This is the son of Light, possessing a soul purified of every passion: for he uproots every passion at its very root. Where do our sorrows, troubles, quarrels, disputes, and envy come from? Is it not because we insist on having our own way and defending our decisions and desires? Yes, this is truly so. And there is no other way to deliver us from the devil’s wiles except by this subjugation of our will.

7. Day after day flows by, coming and going; like a rushing river, our life hastens forward and draws near to death. Blessed are you, for by sacrificing what is insignificant and temporary, you gain what is eternal and heavenly. And the day will come when God will sit upon the throne of His glory, with the holy angels standing before Him; He will call you and place you in the dwelling place of the righteous. – But which ones? The obedient, the submissive, the reverent, the benevolent, the pure in heart, the contrite, the tearful, the hardworking, those who love their fathers, those who love their brothers, those who love silence, those who love prayer—and all who diligently pursue every other divine work. There are some among you who are adorned not with one, but with many virtues; and such people are more beautiful in goodness than the sons of men, shining with many gracious gifts of the Spirit. Let us not, then, allow ourselves to draw near to the hideous and corrupting shame of sin; but let us flee from pernicious insolence, malicious scrutiny of one another, unrestrained sneers, satanic grumbling, and spiteful grievances—accepting everything with a good heart—food, drink, clothing, and service—whatever they may be. This is the good deed for you; this is the testimony of your good conscience; this is your success in spiritual warfare; and this, finally, is your crown.

8. I hear that certain foolish people, seeing the children being raised here, say: *“This is why we are doomed! This is why the monasteries are being destroyed!”*—What madness is this? This is nothing other than a condemnation of the Lord Himself, Who says: *“Let the little children come to Me, for to such belongs the kingdom of God”* (Mark 10:14). Was Christ not an infant? Was He not nursed on milk? Was He not a child? Was He not a youth *“twelve years old”*? (Luke 2:42). Was He not a perfect man *“about thirty years old”* when He began to perform miracles? (Luke 3:23). Why, then, does this one remain silent, and why does he not complain even more about himself, since his ruin comes from himself?—Such people—wiser and more sensible than the abbot—follow a path that is more right than the right one, and argue that they love God more than is necessary, while straying outside established rules. – I will add, however: if there is no one who has spoken this way, let these words pass like a gust of wind, and I will not condemn anyone; but if there is, let him correct himself, lest he fall into the devil’s snare. What did that holy elder say? *“Whatever a child commands me, I will accept as if the Son of my Lord had commanded me.”*—Or do you not understand what you are reading?!—

93. You are striving in every good work; the labor is great, but the reward is greater; so press on more and more

93. 1) Strive to do good in everything; the labor is great, but the reward is greater; so press on more and more. – 2) You face many temptations; but do not lose heart: the Lord is near. Keep in mind also the rest that lies ahead, and you will never lose courage. [2:16]

9. As the Lord says: *“By your endurance you will save your souls”* (Luke 21:19); endure the toil and heat of your ascetic life without losing heart, and *“meditate on the law of the Lord day and night,”* so that you may be *“like a tree planted by streams of water”* (Ps. 1: 3). You have many labors, but God’s gifts are greater; much sweat, but your reward is eternal. I know that you strive, mortify yourselves in every way, live a life of martyrdom, are pierced as if by a spear, and are crucified by the mortification of your desires; but rejoice, for the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared for you—blessed immortality, adoption as sons, co-heirship with Christ, a life of goodness, bliss, joy, and endless peace. When such and so great blessings lie ahead, who can lose heart? Who can hesitate before any hardship or struggle, until, through death, they pass on to what they hope for? —Knowing that *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us”* (Rom. 8:18), have you not also endured—the heat of lust, the burden of despondency, the weariness of toil, the hunger of self-denial, and in all other things, hardship and want; so that you can say with the Apostle: *“For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are regarded as sheep to be*

slaughtered” (Rom. 8:36)? You do not fear demonic delusions or the rebellions of lust, but you prosper and ascend to the heights of virtue. — But these words are not meant only for those who are slothful, wavering, and wayward, but also for you, to strengthen and anoint you, so that you may complete your course of piety well. Come, then, all of you; let us add fear to fear, and let us be kind, gentle, loving, submissive, and hospitable toward one another—not envious, not demanding, not proud, not boastful, not disruptive, not grumbling—making patience the foundation of your good life.

10. You face many sorrows every day—I do not deny it—but is this not for your salvation, is it not for the inheritance of eternal blessings? If, then, for this purpose there is toil and weariness, effort and struggle, sweat and hunger, hardship and groaning, confusion of thoughts and waves of temptation—all driven upon us by invisible enemies on the sea of this life—then by no means shall we allow ourselves to lose heart, or be frightened, or fall into despair. Christ is with us; He stretches out His hand and will say to this sea, “*Be still, be quiet*” (Mark 4:39), and there will be a great calm. We, too, will strive again and again to persevere, again and again to hasten, again and again to press forward. And I am fully confident that we will complete our voyage successfully, be saved from misfortune, and safely enter the harbor of the Kingdom of Heaven. And there—“*sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee away*” (Isa. 35:10). —What could be more blessed than such a task and such labor, from which shine forth light, life, joy, peace, comfort, and immeasurable rest? Whoever walks the path of virtue with such faith and such hope never grows weary, never stops, and never turns back—neither because of the burdens and sorrows already borne, nor because of those yet to come, even if they be death, the piercing of the ribs, and the shedding of blood. For this reason, the martyrs subjected themselves to torments and endured every kind of torment; for this reason, the saints sought holiness and undertook every ascetic labor; for this reason, I too invite you and urge you to take up this struggle, so that you may be crowned for your blessed submission and martyr-like obedience. Oh, I beg you, let us not allow ourselves to be deprived of those ineffable and incomprehensible blessings—the title of sons and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, the joys of Christ’s bride, and the place at His right hand, where all the saints, in boundless joy, rejoicing and exulting, delighting in those indescribable divine blessings.

94. You know why we came to the monastery: do not allow anything contrary to that

94. 1) You know why we came to the monastery: do not, then, allow anything contrary to that. You are doing just that; but do not let your labors be wasted in vain. – 2) I care for you and show you the better way: why, then, do you arbitrarily invent ascetic feats for yourselves—chains, deserts? This is not for the good. Our community life is itself the most suitable for asceticism. – 3) Whoever wishes to be above others should strive to surpass everyone in ascetic virtues—both physical and spiritual—in which it is nowhere as easy to excel as in community life. – 4) A list is given of the virtues in which those in the monastery excel; and the zealous are invited to imitate them. [2, 17]

11. Why have we come here, having left the world and separated ourselves from our parents, relatives, and friends of the flesh, from cities, our homeland, villages, and homes? Is it not to save our souls? Is it not to be deemed worthy of the forgiveness of sins committed in the past? Is it not to please God? Is it not to attain eternal blessings? Is it not to live like angels, emulating the incorporeal minds of our holy and thrice-blessed fathers? – How, then, can we do the opposite of this? Laughing instead of weeping, rejoicing instead of being contrite, blaspheming instead of being reverent, busying ourselves with trivialities instead of praying, rushing about instead of resting, fussing instead of being silent, instead of purification, defile ourselves; instead of gentleness, be insolent; instead of fasting, give ourselves over to intemperance; instead of singing psalms, engage in gossip; instead of obedience, act arbitrarily; instead of humility, exalt ourselves? Indeed, our adversary usually entices those who forget their vows into deeds inconsistent with them. But you know well why you have gathered here, and with zeal you strive to achieve your goals: you are cleansing your sins and sanctifying yourselves. I therefore ask you, my children, and I implore you, do not let your labor prove in vain. – How much and in what ways do you endure? How much have you fasted and how much do you fast? How diligently have you striven—and continue to strive—toward vigilance? How much abuse, insult, and deprivation have you endured—and continue to endure? And in general, how much have you already accomplished—and continue to accomplish—in improving your lives? – Do not let apathy or some momentary pleasure ruin these fruitful and much-desired deeds of yours; but add new efforts to your previous labors, so that, having lived this brief life well, you may confidently enter the peaceful harbor of eternal life.

12. The Lord knows how I care for the peace of mind of each one of you, and I adjust my own spirit according to your state: I grieve with those who grieve; I am weak with those who are weak; I am fainthearted with the fainthearted; I fight the good fight with those who fight; I suffer with those who suffer; I am moved to anger with those who are tempted. If this is so, then why do you hinder me in this and fail to comply with what you are commanded, but instead resist and impose your own desires—or rather, your wicked lusts and your proud wills—contrary to the law of obedience and the communal order of life, inventing, according to your own whims, some new rules of your own, and arguing that these very rules are the most holy and divine—when in fact they are wickedness and lawlessness? Some, out of self-will—or rather, at the devil’s command—secretly, without my knowledge, bind themselves with chains and induce others to do the same, with the devil’s assistance in this sin; others extol the hermit’s life, submitting to the devil who seeks to make them empty; still others invent and propose this and that, certainly under the influence of our soul-destroying adversary—which I do not wish to reveal. Why is this done, without paying attention to one’s present way of life—which is appropriate, pleasing to God, and salvific?—Which of the reverend fathers acted in this way? And even if anyone did, he undertook it as a result of some instruction from above, or with the blessing of his spiritual father. But you, not yet cleansed of your past sins—or even if cleansed, yet not yet at peace within and not having tasted the sweetness of discerning things—blinded by recklessness and self-will, rush into this like a ball down a rapid, pushed there by the serpent’s temptation. Not so, my children; by no means should it be so. But believe that for you, the wisest of the wise, the holiest of the holy, and the most beneficial of beneficial deeds is to remain in the calling to which the Lord has called you—in communal life, under the guidance of a father, in fellowship with your brothers, in this God-nurtured spiritual nursery. Whoever leaves it is seized by the beast; but whoever settles in it takes on its distinctive qualities—unity of heart, unity of mind, fellowship, cooperation, shared suffering, and the glorification of God. And you must not devise anything to set yourselves apart from others.

13. Whoever wishes to surpass others in virtue should, in his own mind, consider himself lower than all; let him not contradict anyone, and let there be no flattery or grumbling on his lips; let him be “*slow to anger*,” quick to obey, and even quicker to say, “*Forgive me*,” when met with stubbornness in speech; let his countenance be bright and joyful, because of his inner good disposition and his prayerful turning to God, bowing his eyes downward while directing his mind toward God; let him always refrain from laughter, not going beyond a gentle smile; let him be restrained in speech as well, not allowing a single corrupt word, nor any that does not serve for edification; let him be content with what is offered at the communal meal, and not eat to the point of satiety; let him be content with a set amount of sleep, and let him stand before God in worship sober and alert, striving not to overlook a single verse; let him set a daily limit, and let him not extend the bounds of his life even until evening, always standing ready for the departure of his soul from his body; let him shed rivers of tears daily, especially in the evening, wetting his cheeks with sobs as he reflects on the deeds he has committed through negligence, and on the separation of the soul from the body at the hour of death—how the Angels will take and lead it, how it will pass through the demonic torments, and how it will give an account of everything done in life, in short, in deed and thought—where it will then be determined whether the poor soul will stand at the right hand, rest in the bosom of Abraham, and find bliss in the bride chamber of Christ, or depart to the goats and, together with them, hear: “*Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41).—This is what each of you should strive to excel in, without sloth. But nowhere can you succeed in this as much as in communal life, which, according to St. Basil the Great, is the cradle of all virtues.

14. I wish to speak of the virtues of some of you, without naming them, in order to stir up emulation among those who do not live as they ought. There are some among you who, on certain days, out of sincere faith and ardent love for God, do not sleep at all; there are those who weep so much that not a single day passes without hot tears; there are those who do not even approach Holy Communion unless they have first bathed themselves abundantly in the water of their tears; there are those so devoted to purity that they do not even look at people’s faces, lest they be defiled; there are those who satisfy their need for sleep while sitting; there are those who drink or eat nothing outside of mealtimes; there are those who have never approached me with a request for clothing, or shoes, or anything else of that sort, but only to have me assign them a measure of fasting, vigil, or some other form of self-denial for the sake of salvation. — These are the righteous of heart; these are those who sincerely seek the things above; these are the ones who zealously care for their own salvation and for causing no harm to their neighbors—and not only that, but also for benefiting them in every

way, reminding them of what is proper through their very deeds and thereby stirring the lazy to diligence and the fallen to rise again. Let those who wish to do so imitate such people. But if you have no such desire, be content with generally accepted good deeds: for moderation is salvific, and those who adhere to it in good conscience will undoubtedly receive crowns from the merciful and bountiful God.

95. *We are the army of Christ: see to it that your full armor is ready; for the enemy does not slumber—and fight*

95. 1) We are the army of Christ: see to it that your full armor is ready; for the enemy does not slumber—and fight. — 2) Perform every duty with obedience; our life is but a moment, yet in this moment we can attain eternal bliss. Therefore, labor diligently; do not be slothful. [2:18]

15. We—the army of Christ, a tribute chosen for the Lord from the whole world, an offering consecrated to God—do not wage war against enemies of flesh and blood, but against the principalities, the powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 6:12). Why is it necessary for us to gather together, to consult and deliberate—not once, not twice, not three times a year, but constantly? Because our battle against our enemies is unceasing, and we are constantly subjected to temptations. See, then, soldiers of Christ, whether your souls are surrounded by trenches, whether you have the armor of faith, whether you possess the shield of humility, whether you hold the spear of obedience at the ready, whether the helmet of the hope of salvation covers you, whether the sword of courage is in your hands, and, above all, whether your noble body is well-trained and docile, trained and easily controlled, lest it—biting the bit—throw off its rider—the mind—in the face of the enemies?—Yes, you have all this; I myself will vouch for you. But acquire more and more, for “*many are fighting against us from on high*” (Ps. 55: 3), because the arrows of the Evil One are ablaze, and he, moreover, never slacks off for a single moment—he neither eats, nor drinks, nor sleeps, but fights day and night, as he himself once said to one of the Holy Fathers. His lifeless existence and destructive activity consist in “*oppressing the poor and needy and slaying those who are upright in heart*” (Ps. 36: 14). But “*may his sword pierce his own heart*” and “*may his arrows be shattered*” (Ps. 36: 15). How? By repelling him with the weapons mentioned. As this destroyer of all has himself confessed, humility crushes him, obedience defeats him, prayer puts him to flight, fasting starves him, and brotherly love and the practice of all other virtues bring him down.

16. I beg you, a prisoner of sin, to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Be patient, undertaking every kind of labor with your own hands—in tilling the fields, in digging the garden beds, in making garments, in copying books, in carpentry, in baking bread, and in every other craft and service. For all this, a great reward is prepared for you in heaven. Behold, our life runs like a swift runner and flies like the soaring of birds. Yet, brothers, we can still make a good purchase. In a single moment, we can become heirs to the bliss of all ages. For truly, the span of our entire life is but a moment compared to infinite eternity. Blessed are those who have found wisdom in living as one for the common good; thrice blessed are those who have hated the world; all-blessed are those who, for the Lord’s sake, have forsaken parents, relatives, friends, brothers, and all that is in the world. – How then can you not be glorified when you have done this? For the Lord Himself said: “*I will glorify those who glorify Me, and those who dishonor Me will be disgraced.*”—You truly glorify God in your members, and the members of Christ are sanctified; offer yourselves as a sacrifice and continually bear fruit through your obedience. Let no one, therefore, interrupt the course of his good deeds; let no one give in to despondency or become slothful; let no one slumber or give in to sleep. Be all fellow travelers, all bound together by the bond of love, all of one mind, all of one heart; be good runners in the race of God, zealous and ever-active.

96. *Let us remember what we were before, how we were called, and what we are now—and let us give thanks to God both in word and, even more so, through the righteousness of our lives*

96. 1) Let us remember what we were before, how we were called, and what we are now;—and let us give thanks to God both in word and, even more so, through the righteousness of our lives. – 2) Having come out of the “Egypt” of the world, let us patiently traverse the wilderness of this life, under God’s protection and guidance, hoping to enter the Promised Land. [2, 19]

17. Having within ourselves a burning lamp—a love for the Lord and a longing for eternal blessings—we must continually pour oil of anointing into it, so that this lamp may not go out and leave us in darkness, and so that, as a result, we may not wander aimlessly in the darkness and fall into the ruinous pit of passions.

And what is this oil? It is remembrance, reflection, and contemplation of what was before, what is now, and what will be afterward. – Let us recall those days of our youth, when we either walked in ignorance, as in darkness, or were swept along by the current of vain pursuits, as by the waves of the sea, or plunged into carnal pleasures, as into an abyss of water; then let us recall how the good God called us out of that state, stretched out His hand to deliver us, showed us the path of peace, and inspired us to aspire to this bright and holy way of life; let us also add that, while so many of our relatives, acquaintances, friends, and companions remain in that same bitter condition, we alone—as if from Egyptian slavery—have been delivered from it and raised to the high mountain of this dwelling; and looking down from here, we see how people, spinning as if in some deep abyss, rush about in vain, jostling one another, knocking one another off their feet, toiling in the sweat of their brow for something great—earthly blessings that are fleeting, transient, and perishable—and, what is even more lamentable, receiving as their reward eternal torment in hell. For this deliverance alone, what thanksgiving should we feel and offer to our God, the Giver of all good things?—Let us therefore unceasingly give thanks to God, raising our praises louder than the song of Israel and singing: *“Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously exalted; He has cast the horse and its rider into the sea”* (Ex. 15: 1). But such thanksgiving will be incomplete if we do not make proper use of this blessing—that is, by strictly keeping ourselves in detachment from the world, in separation from our own kind, in regarding earthly goods as nothing, and in blissful submission to the rules of our life.

18. Having freed ourselves from the world, its allurements, and its lusts, we must journey well through the wilderness of this life—being meek, obedient, patient, generous, and lovers of purity and the Lord’s commandments, but by no means grumbling, like that ancient people; not stubborn, not lustful, not pleasure-seeking, not insolent, not contentious, nor rebelling against the Lawgiver Himself, recalling the pots of Egypt, from which, by God’s grace, we have turned away and renounced. Let it not be so, I beg of you. But, as God’s holy people, let us be obedient, willingly going wherever and whenever the call from above commands, always walking according to God’s will, and cheerfully enduring the hardships of the journey—lack of food, scarcity of drink, and all such things. If we are so submissive, the Angel of God will go before us, and the Lord will conquer the passions for us, just as He did for foreign nations, and we will not enter the land of the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, but into the land of the meek and the righteous, into a land flowing with honey and holy milk, and we will inherit all the promised blessings, reigning with Christ the Lord. Behold, brothers, the rewards that lie before us; know the consolations prepared for us, as well as the punishments and torments opposed to them, which await those who live carelessly. Let us therefore press on along the path set before us, with all joy, with all zeal, and with unshakable patience, each of us zealously fulfilling the duty incumbent upon us as a sacred task, just as the sons of Kohath and Merari (Num. 4:15) once set up the sacred vessels. Let no one be disobedient, let no one be grumbling, let no one be insolent, no one be a liar, no one be a mocker, no one be envious, no one be a slanderer, no one be negligent, no one be lazy, no one in any way bring shame upon our holy dwelling, but let all of you strive with all your might to do what is pleasing to God, so that, having completed our good work well, we may finally receive the crown of righteousness in Christ Jesus our Lord.

97. You will undoubtedly inherit eternal bliss for your renunciation of the world, your martyr-like obedience, and your struggle against passions and invisible enemies: stand firm, then

97. You will undoubtedly inherit eternal bliss for your renunciation of the world, your martyr-like obedience, and your struggle against passions and invisible enemies: stand firm, then. [2, 20] May the gate of death serve as a passage for you all to soar into the heavenly and pre-heavenly realms—to the place from which *“sickness, sorrow, and sighing will flee”* (Ps. 35: 10). Thus do I, unworthy as I am, hope that you will depart to that place and find yourselves there, where the dwelling of all who rejoice is found, where there are the faces of the joyful and the voices of those celebrating, having received what was promised to all the saints who have pleased Christ from of old—for your good conduct, for your praiseworthy and blessed life, for your flight from the world, for your detachment from fleshly kinship, for the severing of your own desires, for your daily steadfastness in the struggle and your endurance of martyr-like obedience, in which you truly confess the Lord and renounce the evil-minded devil, receiving and repelling the blows inflicted upon you ceaselessly, both mentally and physically—whether from carnal desires, or from demonic slanders, or from conflicts with the brethren, or from rebukes and reprimands from the stewards, workshop supervisors, and administrators in all manner of other duties—and never in anything breaking your vows before the Lord, but boldly and

courageously walking the path of salvation, putting to shame and driving back the demonic hordes set against you. Such is your feat—and you may cry out with the Apostle: *“Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered’”* (Rom. 8:35–36). Blessed are you, indeed, and thrice blessed—but do not forget—if you continue to uphold such a feat unwaveringly before God until the end: for daily you face a struggle, though at the same time daily you receive crowns.

98. *We are poor; but God provides for us; thanks be to Him; yet we must not be idle; but let each one work according to his calling: then God will multiply our little*

98. 1) We are poor; but God provides for us; thanks be to Him; yet we must not be idle; but let each one work according to his calling: then God will multiply what little we have. – 2) We share everything in common; and the labor of one benefits all, and vice versa; and God’s reward awaits everyone according to their labor and diligence; and those who work externally and physically will receive no less than those who work internally and spiritually. – As for the sick, they will be rewarded for their good-natured patience. [2, 21]

19. The primary focus of my concerns and prayers is that you may be kept pure, diligent, and blameless in your holy and virtuous way of life, so that no one may be led astray by the devil’s slanders, but that all of you may remain sober and alert in performing the worthy and honorable deeds of blessed obedience. For when this is in proper order, I have no sorrow about anything else, though I am usually sorrowful—I mean the narrowness of bodily life as it has been lived until now, regarding, however, this narrowness as spaciousness, poverty as wealth, scarcity as abundance—guided in this by the hope that gives me the assurance that the Lord will not let the souls of the righteous go hungry nor forsake His holy ones, such as you are by the grace of Christ, nourished, quenched, clothed, and warmed by divine providence—not only in spirit but also in body. And who, then, can properly feed such a multitude—consisting for the most part of the poor, who have no human support—and provide them with all they need, unless the finger of God assists? – Lift up your eyes and look—how many of us have entered this royal city, and among us how many elders, the infirm, the sick, youths, and children—and the Lord provides for all their needs: is this not wondrous? Is it not worthy of praise? Indeed, my brothers and children. – Nevertheless, we too must not remain idle, but must do our part by contributing labor and sweat to meet the needs of the brotherhood. For God is moved to mercy when He sees His commandments being fulfilled by all in mutual brotherhood—and from unseen sources He sends the means of sustenance. Therefore, I implore and remind you: let everyone, whatever task they are assigned, strive with all their might to work and bear much fruit, both spiritually and physically; for here one thing is known through the other, and one who is diligent in matters of the body is likewise diligent regarding the soul, just as, conversely, one who is spiritually barren is negligent of external matters as well.

20. Everything is shared among us—not only the physical and sensory, but also the spiritual and mental—and just as the virtues and good deeds of some are shared by all others, and vice versa, so too are our labors, as can be seen from the example of the body, according to the teaching of St. Paul the Apostle: *“There is one body, and many members; and all the members of that one body, though many, are one body; and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Cor. 12:12, 27). And just as in the body, from head to toe, on the right and on the left, every member feels a stirring need and its fulfillment—so understand this in relation to the soul as well. My Father and yours is the first member; I am the second; then, in order, all the way to the last—together, on the Day of Reckoning, we will all receive either praise or rebuke. Knowing this, my children, let us all strive, let us all labor; let each one contribute his or her share to the common cause, and let no one be diminished in this before others, in the service that belongs to him or her and according to the measure of his or her strength. But of course you know that God will not determine the ranks on that day in the same way we do here: for there is God’s judgment and there is human judgment. Perhaps He will place the three-hundredth in third or fourth place, demote the tenth to the middle, and elevate the last to first place—each according to his diligence and virtue. And though it is dreadful to say, it is possible that He might even exclude some from our ranks entirely and send them to hell—certainly those who, even here, had a different spirit, a different mindset, and a different disposition. But I dare to assure you that none of our workers labor in vain, —neither does the plowman plow in vain, nor does the one tilling the furrows till in vain, nor does the cook cook in vain, nor does the baker bake bread in

vain, nor does the cellarer manage the storeroom in vain, and so on and so forth. And all these, though they devote themselves less than others to the solitary practice of psalm-singing and poetry, will be rewarded no less than those sitting in their cells at their work, provided they labor with no less zeal—and, moreover, for the Lord's sake. To whatever extent one measures out his labor and zeal for the brotherhood, to that extent will it be measured out to him. Knowing this, those who labor within should not look down on those who labor without, and those who labor without should not lose heart, as if they were of lesser worth. The measure for each is labor and zeal. But what measure is there for the sick? someone might ask, for he cannot work. His measure is gratitude, meekness, and patience.

99. Teachings are not useless: they awaken those who are asleep, and they strengthen and guide those who are awake

99. 1) Instructions are not useless: they awaken those who are asleep, and they strengthen and guide those who are awake. Thus we all move forward little by little. – 2) In this we acknowledge God's mercy: what is bad among us is diminished, and what is good is strengthened. There are some who fall; but they rise again and correct themselves. Therefore, maintain your good disposition and zeal. [2:22]

21. Some will ask, what good are these teachings if we do not put into practice what they say? For though we often hear that we must not laugh, we do not correct ourselves in this regard; though we are often taught that we must not engage in idle talk, we still do so; though we are frequently reminded not to envy our neighbor, we are still overcome by this passion; though we are frequently reminded not to stand carelessly or sleepily during the daily and nightly psalm-singing and prayers, our minds still wander and we doze off during them—in short: we improve in almost nothing. – But those who speak this way speak unjustly. First, it cannot be that no one improves in anything, and it is impossible for everyone to improve in everything at once; rather, one person today, another tomorrow, begins and continues their work on themselves; second, just as when climbing a staircase, one cannot suddenly step from the first step to the last, but by stepping in order from one to the next, we ascend: so too in the practice of virtue, progressing little by little, we reach its heights. In both of these respects, catechetical instruction is very beneficial, as it stirs up and sustains the zeal for success, offers methods and techniques for achieving it, and thereby helps your honest souls to ascend little by little from strength to strength and from earth to heaven. And here is something else that can be said: if, when so much is said and heard about what ought to be and what must be corrected, for the glory of God, we see no restraint of the passions, then what would happen, and how much worse off would we be, if silence reigned among us, and what is proper were not pointed out and explained as it should be? I, for my part, have been taught by the Fathers that words are the path to deeds—good words lead to good deeds, and bad words to bad deeds. And I know full well that this is so—that speaking of a better way of life always inclines one toward the better. I bear witness to you, my children, that through reading the divinely inspired Scriptures—and to some small extent through listening to my humble teachings—you are all rising up and pressing forward: those who are passionate are awakened from their slumber and set about correcting themselves, while those who are already doing well are inspired to greater and greater success.

22. We profess God's grace in this and do not hide His mercy. For behold, we have almost no quarrels, nor slander, nor condemnation, nor insults, nor disobedience, nor secret eating; and if such things do happen—since we bear flesh prone to evil—those who sin immediately confess, repent, and make amends through the prescribed penances: exclusion from the meal, fasting, standing, and prostrations, depending on what is appropriate for healing the weakness that has arisen. Let no one say, therefore, that there is no benefit in these teachings. We do indeed derive benefit from them and prosper through them, by the grace of Christ and the intercession of the prayers of my father and yours; and, ascending, we climb with virtuous steps the mountain of virtues, being enlightened, sanctified, and deified—which, however, is achieved with great toil and sweat. I therefore ask and implore you: let us remain steadfast in our good will and good disposition; let us cut off all double-mindedness and banish faintheartedness forever; and let us inspire ourselves with good hopes and the expectation of future rewards and eternal blessings, —and this while there is still breath in our nostrils—so that after these present sorrows and hardships, we may be deemed worthy, after death, to be heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven in Christ Jesus our Lord.

100. It is hard to lead; but for the Lord's sake—for our sake, He who suffered even unto death on the cross—I endure; you also must endure

100. 1) It is hard to lead; but for the Lord's sake—who suffered for us even unto death on the cross—I endure; you, too, must endure. – 2) Consider in your mind how the ancients endured. 3) Let us, then, imitate them. [2, 23]

1. If I were to look with my physical eyes upon the sorrowful trials that befall us almost every day, I would have long since grown weary and handed over the reins of leadership to another; but since my humble mind looks to God in all this—for whose sake you have been called here, and for whose sake I have entrusted myself to you—I do not give up or lose heart, and I am ready to endure everything, being strengthened by Christ the Lord, through the prayer of my father and yours, for you, my beloved, and for the sake of my Lord and Master. For if He, who created all things, was pleased—for my sake, by virtue of the mystery of the Incarnation—to be tempted, reviled, humiliated, mocked, crucified, pierced with a spear, and buried, then what is there that I cannot endure? Or rather, what is there that you and I would not willingly undergo? Let sorrows, hardships, wounds, deprivations, and even death come upon us. For what are all these things, given our unshakable faith, if we fight the good fight, stand firm, and resist valiantly, so that we may receive eternal blessings as our reward? When our frail flesh begins to falter, let us remind ourselves that by indulging it, we are storing up wrath for ourselves on the day of wrath and the revelation of God's righteous judgment, and let us rise up to inspired courage.

2. Oh, where are those ancient holy souls now! How the zeal that once inspired them has now dwindled! For them, bodily suffering was joy and gladness; glory and greatness were utter humiliation. They were filled with a burning love for the Lord; they were consumed by an insatiable longing—not to do their own will, but rather to refrain from doing it altogether; they sought not to rule, but to be subject and obedient until their very old age. Where is that blessed elderly abbess who humbly remained standing until the end of the meal? Where is that well-tested pearl of obedience who persevered for thirty years? Where is this one, where is that one?—For behold, like a choir of stars, the entire sacred assembly of saints, radiant with every kind of virtue, stands before my mind. Let us journey in thought through their holy dwellings. Behold the foundations of the great Pachomius. — Let us gaze there upon the ever-memorable Jonah, upon the glorious Petronius, upon the sanctified Theodore. Let us then proceed to the monastery of the great Theodosius, and there too behold the ever-living Basil, the wondrous Aetius, — and such and such a one. From here, let us move on to the sacred places of ascetic struggle of the Blessed Theoktist, the Great Euthymius, and the Sanctified Savvas; and to make a long story short, I will say: let us mentally survey everything that took place in the ancient, medieval, and later monasteries, as well as how and to what extent each one strove to live out his life well within them.

3. In the same way, we too must walk, if we wish to find true life and light, enduring everything, suffering everything, giving *“no cause for offense in anything, so that our ministry may be blameless”* (2 Cor. 6:3); *“above all these things, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”* (Eph. 6:16), remaining invincible, rejoicing and sharing in one another's joy in goodwill, harmonized by the single breath of the Spirit, as the one body of Christ.

101. We are called to be purified from sin through toil, deprivation, and afflictions

101. We are called to be cleansed of our sins through labor, deprivation, and afflictions. It is difficult; but in return, eternal bliss is promised. Let us therefore rejoice in all such things. [2, 24] I wish to briefly remind you of the ascetic life to which we are called, through which we purify ourselves of our past sins and for which we suffer daily. For our path is truly narrow and sorrowful, according to the word of the Lord; but since it holds the promise of eternal life, let us rejoice and strive to walk it successfully, competing with one another in good zeal, running as in a race, and overcoming our adversary, so that we may receive the crown of righteousness on the day of judgment. For this reason, let us regard what is burdensome as light, what is unfavorable as favorable, what is sorrowful as joyful, what is accompanied by deprivation as profitable, dishonor as honor, reproach as praise, scarcity of necessities as contentment, drinking water as drinking wine, and eating late as eating early. In this lies the martyr-like character of our life, and upon this is founded our expectation and hope for future blessings. Let us not, I beg you, weep or lose heart, seeing that our life brings sorrow and grieves the heart; but rather—seeing that it holds for us the status of sonship, the Kingdom of Heaven, and blessed immortality—let us embrace it with greater zeal and be continually renewed in it,

adding labor to labor, feats to feats, diligence to diligence, obedience to obedience, the mortification of our will to mortifications, prayers to prayers, vigils to vigils, contemplation of God to contemplation of God, tears to tears, love to love. Such is our life, distinct from the fleeting one and superior to it, somewhat strange and alien to the worldly wise, who are ruled by the flesh and prefer the present to the future. Such are you who have left the world and all that is in the world—parents, brothers, children, and all worldly things—and who, out of love for the Lord, are always ready to endure hardship, suffer, be reviled, tormented, and put to death. For this, a great reward is stored up for you in heaven: you will be transferred from this world to God, and, leaving behind this temporary life, you will pass into eternal life, if you continue to demonstrate faithful obedience until the end.

102. I bless you for your sincere and successful commitment to the practices of communal life

102. 1) I bless you for your sincere and successful perseverance in the labors of communal life. – 2) Do not believe those who suggest that there are many such people everywhere. – 3) Our foremost weapon is the revelation of thoughts. – 4) It enriches all our ascetic endeavors. [2, 25]

4. I bless you because, in this generation and in these days, you seek the Lord, watch over your hearts, and believe that your spirit is with God; I also commend you for living your lives sincerely and without pretense, having truly renounced the world and not merely pretended to have separated yourselves from it, and in fact being what you are called: for you have truly separated yourselves from all things, dwelling with the one God and serving Him alone in your beautiful abode. Hence your communal life, in which nothing among you is called anyone's property; hence your irrevocable separation from your parents and relatives by blood; hence your genuine faith in my humility, revealed to me through the secret desires of your hearts; hence your spaciousness in confinement, your contentment in poverty, your comfort and joy in the deprivation of bodily needs; and what more is there to say?—Hence the glory of your life and the fact that you are on everyone's lips.

5. I am not saying this to flatter you, but I remind you so that you may remain steadfast and strong, and take every care not to fall from such a height, nor to grow weak in the good resolve of your will, by giving up your monastic struggles or being led astray by corrupt sophisms and the murmurings of people who persuasively suggest that here and everywhere there are many who fear God and serve Him even better than we do. "Such are the temptations"—and for what purpose? "That your abilities may be made manifest" (1 Cor. 11:19). Therefore, holding fast to the good resolve of your will, do not neglect to love the Lord, demonstrating this through good deeds—and seek out what is necessary for our salvation; for much is hidden from us, and we stumble without knowing how, or even without realizing it, as David's word assures us: "*Who can discern his own errors?*" (Ps. 18: 13).

6. I wish, then, for you to know that there is no remedy more effective for salvation than the revelation of one's thoughts—something you yourselves have experienced. – Why, then, do some of you—when the Lord has given you this gift, when such a remedy is at your fingertips—hesitate to approach confession and revelation, and suffocate yourselves with silence, becoming carried away and filled, like worms, with unconfessed thoughts? I pity you, whoever you may be, and I sympathize with your weakness. Why, when you possess the means to be healed, enlightened, and cheered, do you subject yourselves to the opposite? God sees everything; for "*there is no creature un , hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to His eyes*" (Heb. 4:13).—Moreover, I must reveal you; for I need the candor of my children so that I may know them, and they may know me.

7. And this is precisely what constitutes true spiritual kinship: unfeigned obedience, a carefree journey, sweet prayer, unceasing progress, and the ascent toward perfection. Good are the tears of contrition that flow from the eyes; good is pure prayer, whether by day or by night; good is patience in afflictions; good is engaging in needlework; good is attentive listening to readings; good is not being quick to speak and conversing without laughter; good is moderate self-restraint; good is remembering death and the lives of the saints, imitating them as much as possible; good is fleeing passionate audacity and observing divine humility; but best of all—merciless self-examination and confession of one's thoughts.—"*Test everything; hold fast to what is good*" (1 Thess. 5:21).

103. Thoughts and feelings, words and deeds in that world are completely different from ours: we experience all of this as if we were in paradise

103. 1) Thoughts and feelings, words and deeds in the world are entirely different from those we have here: we regard all of this as if we were in paradise. – 2) It is God who has given us what we have; both inwardly and outwardly, everything is different from what it is in the world. – 3) Nevertheless, let us be careful not to turn out to be worse than the laity. [2, 26]

8. Glory to God, who chose us from our mother's womb for this sacred calling! Thanks be to the Lord, who has called us to the blessed and wondrous monastic way of life! – To us—though it may seem bold to say so, it is not far from the truth—it has truly been given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven more than those in the world, many of whom, though they see, do not see how things really are. For look at their judgments and aspirations: they glorify wealth and fleeting glory, rejoice in pleasures and delights, are enchanted by fragrant ointments, soft garments, precious stones, beautiful dwellings, gardens, groves, and all manner of other vanities; they laugh, dance, and grow fat like animals being prepared for slaughter, and do many other things that are best left unsaid, just as the consequences that arise from these—which are not good, yet are praised by them—are best left unmentioned. This is what they praise, what they boast about, and what they rejoice in! – But all this is insignificant and worthy of contempt in the eyes of those who *“have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5: 24); – such as you are in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Holy Apostle, having crucified your flesh. We have a different desire and a different inclination toward other things. We seek and strive for the kind of well-being that existed in the paradise of bliss from which we were cast out: for this purpose, we adopt a way of life close to the original one, turning away from the alluring world and coming to God, casting off the darkness of this life and clothed in the light of the spirit, and by renouncing everything, we become masters over all things.

9. O, what a wondrously great calling! Who has separated us from flesh and blood, from our parents, relatives, homeland, from the customs of this life, and from all that is worldly? Who has persuaded us to submit ourselves as slaves to abbots and spiritual fathers, and to undertake the ascetic feat of abstinence, vigil, and sleeping on the bare ground? Who has enlightened us to view things without distraction or attachment, and not to regard as great anything—gold, silver, beauty, worldly pomp, or even the royal diadem and purple robes—and instead to regard as more honorable and greater the act of clothing ourselves in these ragged and patched garments and taking pride in them, rather than in glittering robes? Who has given us the strength to flee from all that is material and carnal and to unite with the highest order of life, remaining pure and uncorrupted through virginity, like the angels? These are our praises! God has granted them to us, who have loved Him and longed for future blessings—the unapproachable light, eternal glory, inexpressible joy, unceasing gladness, the eternal inheritance, the Kingdom of Heaven, inexhaustible riches, and all the promises spoken of through the angels and the Fathers.

10. Since this is so, let us watch and pay close attention, lest we turn back to the opposite and subsequently find ourselves lagging behind those who live according to the ways of the world. Therefore, let us purify ourselves again and again, and again and again strengthen ourselves in chastity—and let us take care, with mind and heart, not to give the devil any leeway. A word is provoked by a word, a glance is drawn by a glance, negligence is encouraged by negligence, and little by little, as we grow accustomed to this, we find ourselves in the position of night crows, and we bring about sinful death. Not so, my children, not so—I beg and implore you. Guard yourselves from one another, for life and death come from your neighbor. A little negligence, unguarded carelessness, plunges one into the abyss of sin. Pay attention and take heed, young and old, those in front and those behind, rulers and the ruled. Above we were blessed; here we are dishonored; above we were presented as living like angels, here we are likened to Satan. It is said of a certain one that it would have been better for him never to have been born (Matt. 26:24). The same can be said of this one. – But enough of this. – And I have said these things not to sadden you, but to ward off the coming sword of sin by warning you in advance.

104. It is my duty to speak; it is yours to listen

104. 1) It is my duty to speak; it is yours to listen. – 2) You honor me with your lips, but your hearts are far from it: when I told you about our financial hardship and explained the reasons for it, you accepted our situation; but then you began to grumble, especially about why so many are being accepted. – 3) This is what I will explain to you: God is our provider and will help us. – 4) Do not grumble; otherwise, like the Israelites

who grumbled in the wilderness and, because of that, did not enter the Promised Land, you too will not enter the Kingdom of God. – 5) When did anything like this ever happen to our fathers? On the contrary, they all endured hardship, yet they did not refuse others what they needed. – 6) You yourselves were supported here when you came with nothing—why then are you unwilling to show mercy to others now? Dogs dying of hunger are not driven away, yet you want to drive away those for whom Christ died. – 7) Did you not all promise to suffer with me? And now what? Or have you forgotten that suffering is our lot? – 8) Repent; as for me, I will not change; moreover, you are partners in these matters: for we are one. – 9) Recall how many times God has delivered us from need: why then should we fear acting according to the commandments? [2:30]

11. My task and my tireless endeavor are to always bring the word to you, to remind you of what is proper, and to encourage you in the patience of your godly life. For if the shepherds of a speechless flock, out of necessity, take on the labor of sleeplessness and the care of the sheep entrusted to them, leading them out to pasture and guiding them there: how much greater, then, is the need for me—a sinner who has unworthily received authority over you, the sheep of Christ—to keep a watchful eye over your souls and, through the proclamation of the word, as with a flute, to sound the call to you, pointing out what is right and beneficial, and warning you against what is wrong and harmful. But since such a responsibility rests upon me, it is not permissible for you to treat my words carelessly, but rather to listen attentively to my pastoral voice. *“My sheep,”* says the Lord, *“hear My voice, and they follow Me. They do not follow a stranger, but flee from him, for they do not know the voice of a stranger”* (John 10:27, 5). This applies to me and to you as well.

12. But why have I offered you this preface?—I will say this first, so that these words may not be a burden to you—because some of you honor me with your lips, yet your hearts are far from me. Now I will explain why. – We have faced hardship in meeting our physical needs, due to poor harvests in previous years, as well as due to the influx of people sent by God from the depths of the world to the haven of our monastery for salvation, and also due to the increase in guesthouses and other shelters, since we are located in this royal city. I announced this to everyone, and, expressing my deep sorrow and the concern weighing heavily upon me regarding how to meet our needs for the current year, I asked and implored you to be inspired by zeal to increase our handicraft production, beyond what is customary among us, reminding them at the same time that for us, who seek the Kingdom of Heaven, it is entirely fitting to endure in every way the narrow and sorrowful path, on which we face sorrow and hardship, hunger and thirst, toil and sweat, nakedness and poverty, and other such things; and adding that God often allows us to face small trials to test the depth of our love for Him and whether we willingly endure the hardships that come our way for His sake. – You proved yourselves worthy then and lived up to my expectations. But since you did not have a heart truly devoted to God and thanked Him then only with your lips, you soon afterward grumbled, burdened by what had happened, and rebelled—not against some Moses, but against me, a sinner—saying: *“Why does he gather so many of these when he cannot provide for them? And what need is there for this?”* And who is forcing him to gather such a multitude?”

13. It is these very words that I must address and proclaim the truth of God, and point to the sword of God coming upon such people, lest the blood of their destruction be sought from my sinful hands. — And first of all, since they were not my true sons, they did not speak in harmony with me: *“Why are we accepting them?”* but, like strangers’ and wicked children, they said: *‘Why does he accept them?’*—and thereby excluded themselves from fellowship with me. —Furthermore, even though they spoke thus, they are still guilty and deserving of condemnation, for, as it is sung in the Psalms, *‘They slandered God and said, “Can God really prepare a meal for these people?”’* (Ps. 77: 19–20)—to such a multitude? Am I a provider of food, or do I bear fruit, or fill the granaries? And again, do I of my own accord and on my own authority welcome those who come and multiply the brotherhood? —Is not the Lord and God Himself the Provider of the world, *“who opens His hand and satisfies every living thing with His goodness?”* (Ps. 144: 16). Does He not Himself say: *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you?”* (Matt. 6:33). Is it not He Himself who encouraged the faint-hearted, saying: *“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. How much more will He care for you, you of little faith?”* (Matt. 6:26; Luke 12:28). Furthermore, through a certain wise man, does He not inspire us: *“Who has put their trust in the Lord and been put to shame? Or who has sought Him and been forsaken? Or who has called upon Him, and He has disregarded them?”* (Sirach 2:10). And again, through the Gospel, is it not He who promises: *“Whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out”* (John 6:37)? And is it not He who commands: *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the*

kingdom of God” (Luke 13:16)? There are many other passages in Scripture that agree with this. Why, then, do you rise up against me, a poor man, and, in your tongue-tied rage, speak nonsense?

14. You are, it seems, like the Israelites, delivered from the hand of the invisible Pharaoh, from the bitter drudgery of slavery to the passions, and from the dark Egypt of worldly vanity, —who later, while traversing the desert of a sorrowful ascetic life, when they encountered heavy afflictions, did not give thanks to God nor give Him glory, so that, because of such a good disposition, what was needed might come according to God’s providence, but instead murmured against God, saying, as it were: “It would have been better for us to die in Egypt,” recalling the pots of Egypt and each one understanding by this whatever had most delighted him in the world. — But you know what happened to those who grumbled then: none of them was permitted to enter the Promised Land, and all their bones fell in the wilderness. I fear, my children, that we too might suffer the same fate if we were to do as they did. But back then it was the childhood of the Tabernacle and the Law; now, however, it is the perfection of grace and the truth of Christ. And this was done not by laypeople, but by some among us who have ascended to the heights of the angelic life.

15. When was such grumbling ever heard among our venerable fathers? Or did they ever refuse to accept anyone seeking salvation in their monasteries because of a lack of material provisions? Was not their door always open—not merely to those wishing to renounce the world, but to every poor person in need? Did they not also leave specific instructions regarding this in their wills after their deaths? You know what provisions our great luminary Euthymius made in this regard; you have read how it was with our ever-memorable fathers Savva and Theodosius the Great, and with the most blessed Pachomius. Did they ever experience want?—Not just once, and certainly not to a small degree. One of them, for example, did not even have what was necessary to celebrate the Liturgy at Easter; others experienced similar situations in different ways. Thus, they sometimes enjoyed abundance in many and varied ways, and at other times they suffered want; but in both cases they gave thanks to God and bore it with good cheer. Their true children shared in their sufferings, in joy and gladness. But those who are not like them—neither then nor now—fall under the curse and perish. This is why you must pay attention, my children and brothers.

16. And you yourselves who are grumbling, remember that you are not supported by your own labor and that, when you came here, you brought nothing with you. At that time, because you did not have to turn back, you gave thanks and praised God and us. How is it, then, you foolish ones, that you are now unwilling to show others what you yourselves received back then, and are stingy about passing on to others the gift you received? Unfriendly, uncompassionate, merciless! Even if we were to take in speechless dogs dying of hunger, we would still be worthy of praise. For it is written, “*The righteous man has compassion on the lives of his animals*” (Prov. 12:10). Should we not accept rational human beings—our fellow creatures, our brothers—who beg us to bring them into our harbor after their shipwreck and to save from extreme need those for whom Christ died? But such thoughts do not occur to the unwise.

17. Did you not promise to die with me for the Lord’s name? Yet now, at the slightest hardship in labor and need, you deny me and shrink back. Why do you not urge me all the more to ensure that not a single poor person who comes here leaves without having been fed, given drink, and provided with the aid they seek? But you yourselves love only to fill your bellies—and even to overeat—eating fish, drinking wine, not just two or three glasses of Krasavul, but even more, which is forbidden by the Fathers. And the saying comes true for you: “No one can serve two masters”—gluttony, I mean, and the love of God. But, O foolish and hard-hearted ones, understand that—according to all that has been commanded by the Holy Fathers, and which I, a sinner, ceaselessly remind you of—it is fitting for us to suffer and, through many sorrows, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

18. Therefore, repent, for you have sinned greatly and exceedingly before the Lord. — As for me, I will not refuse nor waver; but just as I have begun, so will I continue, welcoming everyone who comes with all warmth and a fervent heart; for it is not only I, but also God, who has commanded this, and then you yourselves with me: for we are all one. Whatever you do to me, you do to me: when I clothe the naked, warm the one who is cold, clothe the one who is barefoot, bring the homeless into my house, feed the hungry, and give drink to the thirsty—and all this in the name of Jesus Christ, our true God, who gave Himself as a ransom for our sins, believing in the truth of His promise that “*He will not let the righteous soul go hungry*” (Prov. 10:3): such are your souls, which have not murmured—for I do not accuse everyone—rejoicing in the fulfillment of God’s commandments and in the growth of brotherhood, patient in God’s trials, having renounced everything, and even ready to stand for God’s cause unto death.

19. Consider—I address you again, you who have gone unpunished—has God delivered us from extreme need only once? And what blessings has He bestowed upon us, through the prayers of my father and yours?—Did He not provide us with grain and wine in times of scarcity? Did He not move kind-hearted people to open their granaries to provide for us? Are not honey, olives, cheese, blankets, garments, and gold still being sent to us from villages, islands, and cities—from bishops, rulers, and even those clothed in purple? – May the Lord forgive you and make you stronger in the days to come, so that, by enduring and persevering with your fellow brothers, you may be deemed worthy, together with them, to receive the crown of righteousness.

105. *The season is now seductive (spring); keep your body under control*

105. 1) The season is now alluring (spring); keep your body under control. – 2) Moderation in drinking and eating. – 3) For self-restraint, heavenly blessings await—before which earthly blessings are nothing. – 4) Look upon the company of virtues that surrounds you; gaze upon heaven: and all will be bearable. [2, 31]

20. Goodness is hard-won, but easily stolen from the inattentive; and what has been acquired over a long time can be lost through a moment’s carelessness. Therefore, pay special attention to yourself during this springtime, when the body is agile and the flesh—being of the earth—seeks to act according to earthly desires. The earth, when fertilized and nourished, yields crops according to its nature; so too the flesh, nourished by various foods and drinks, naturally boils over with the passions hidden within it. Take control of it, then, and restrain it; and, as the Apostle says, “*do not indulge it in lust*” (Rom. 13:14), but, providing it with what it needs in reasonable measure, live in the Spirit.

21. There should be moderation in both food and wine. Wine should be consumed in small amounts for comfort, and then only on feast days, during extremely exhausting labor, during illness, and when the journey ahead is long; at other times, however, you should be content with a single cup, or at most two: for you know what is said about this in the Gerondikon. As for meals, I quote to you the following words of the Apostle: “*Let the meals be abolished*” (1 Cor. 16: 13). I do not say this to turn you away from them entirely, but desiring that you eat and drink in a proper and godly manner, for the salvation of the soul and the strengthening of the body, so that you may perform the tasks that are required of you.

22. Do you not know that through such self-restraint and abstinence from worldly pleasures—such as meat-eating, wine-drinking, baths, hot springs, and other such things—that divine paradise is being prepared for you, with the tree of life and the water of immortality, the delight of the Spirit, and the ineffable beauty of eternal blessings? Rest and every kind of comfort are treasured there for you. Very soon you will reach it through the gates of death and begin to taste and drink of these things insatiably and eternally. Here, however, even if we consider the blessings found in royal palaces, they are not delight (τρυφή) but food (τροφή) for worms—to partake of them is not a good life but lifelessness; to take pleasure in them is not joy but sorrow,—delight in them is not possession but deprivation—and their inheritance is truly vanity of vanities, as the wisest Solomon declared, having fully enjoyed the pleasures of the world.

23. You have self-restraint in your female friends, obedience in your wife, purity, virginity, and charity in your daughters, and contrition and humility in your holy maidens. Look up to the heavens of the mountains, and you will see where our dwelling is, where our Head and the Father of all is—Christ the Lord—and where our city is—the heavenly Jerusalem. Truly, if you endure all things, you will triumph; if you are content with all things, you will be crowned; if you depart this life in this way, the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven will be opened to you.

106. *Let us endure all things in the hope of eternal bliss, according to the word and example of St. Paul*

106. 1) Let us all endure all things in the hope of eternal bliss, according to the word and example of St. Paul. – 2) For we, like him, face trials to endure at every moment. 3) If we endure these, God’s favor will be upon us. [2:32]

24. Work hard and strive, and do not regard the afflictions you face in your life for Christ’s sake as something foreign—something strange and unexpected that has befallen you. Did you not, upon coming here from the world, confess before God and His chosen angels that you would willingly endure every sorrow and hardship for the sake of the kingdom of heaven—in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in insults and revilings, and in other ascetic trials? It is better not to dwell on these things at all, but simply to endure and endure, keeping your eyes fixed on the blessed end of it all. And what is this end?—The inheritance of the

Kingdom of Heaven, the joy of eternal blessings, the taste of immortality, the bliss of unceasing life, sonship, the sweetness of paradise, and every other consolation. Truly, the great Apostle spoke worthily and righteously of this, saying, *“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18). He then wandered throughout the entire universe, as if among lions and tigers, dragged about and torn apart by the unbelievers, in hunger and thirst and in day and night labor, working with his own hands so as not to be a burden to anyone, but to provide through his own labor what was necessary both for himself and for those with him.

25. If, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we bear everything with gratitude and patience—blessed are we—we will not be deprived of a share in it. But if we prove to be fainthearted, discontented, and grumbling, what fellowship will we have with those who have fought against sin even to the point of shedding their blood? And will we not find ourselves on that day worthy of every kind of shame, when we cannot even carry out the smallest tasks calmly and properly?—that is, consistent obedience, work without grumbling, humble service, timely silence, sensible speech, a casual shift to another duty, attention and effort appropriate to the task, the subduing of our own will, the grateful acceptance of the penance imposed, unwavering perseverance in psalm-singing and prayer—both night and day—and the patient recitation of the psalms assigned for the day.

26. All this and much more that cannot even be listed—if we accept, endure, and fulfill it all with meekness, good cheer, and willingness—then our life will be beautiful, and God, being pleased by this, will look upon us with favor and bless us. – Let us not allow ourselves to stray from this way of life; and even if we were to die every day because of it, let us accept it joyfully, *“giving no offense in anything, so that our ministry may be blameless”* (2 Cor. 6:3).

107. It is now Lent: let each one prepare himself as it requires

107. 1) It is now Lent: let each of us prepare ourselves as it requires. – 2) It is not merely outward mortification of the flesh and physical asceticism that are required, but rather the cutting off of all that is evil and of one’s own will—humility and obedience. [2, 33]

27. Now, as you know, it is Holy Lent, which demands of us spiritual feats far greater than at ordinary times, namely: the most zealous readiness for every good deed, goodwill, courage, diligence, patience, heavenly prayer, tearful contrition, heart-rending humility, and appropriate abstinence not only from food and drink, but also from envy, hatred, anger, impetuosity, grumbling, pride, and the most detestable passions. Examine yourselves more carefully, purify yourselves according to what has been said above, and prepare yourselves as chosen vessels, as instruments that speak of God, moved by the Holy Spirit. The time calls for this; this, in fact, is fasting.

28. Let no one say to me: “I sing and recite psalms so much, I pray so much, I eat very little, I drink little, I sleep very little while sitting, I make so many prostrations, and I lift my hands to heaven for many hours.” All of this is certainly commendable. But tell me this: Is your reasoning humbled? Is your spirit broken? Have you set aside your own will so that you may always be obedient, never contradict, never grumble, never argue, never envy your brother, never be vain in thought or speech—asking, “Why this? Why that?” Why is one in such a position and another in such a one?—And because of this, to let one’s heart change, one’s face grow fierce, and to pour out—not from the good but from the evil treasure of one’s heart—words of unbelief, recklessness, and disorder, which can plunge not only oneself but also those who listen into the pit of ruin. Such are not the works of fasting, nor are such the practices of self-restraint. But if anyone possesses within himself the spirit of humility and obedience, then by these two virtues, like two wings, he soars to heaven and becomes a companion of God.

108. Let us not allow ourselves to become slothful, remembering that we work for God, who will reward us according to our diligence and zeal

108. 1) Let us not allow ourselves to become slothful, remembering that we work for God, who will reward us according to our zeal and diligence. – 2) At the same time, let us observe the entire order of life, both inwardly and outwardly, in perfection. – 3) Take courage: we have God as our helper, and the Most Holy Mother of God, and the saints of God, especially our own—St. John the Forerunner and St. John the Theologian, to whom this monastery is dedicated. – 4) Let us refrain from unseemly conversations and speak only of what is beneficial to the soul. [2, 84]

29. Take heed, lest our hearts be weighed down by despondency, laxity, and inappropriate thoughts, so that no internal calamity of spiritual downfall may result from this. But with youthful vigor and zeal, let us strive to live out together the remainder of our fleeting and ever-diminishing life, so that, having accomplished good deeds, sacred practices, and honorable virtues, and having passed from this life into the age to come, we may be deemed worthy to receive the imperishable crown of righteousness from God, the Rewarder. Let everyone therefore examine how he performs his service, and continue to do so until old age as if serving the Lord Himself—not carelessly, not listlessly, not lazily, not hypocritically—knowing that by doing so he offends not a man, but God, to whom the service is dedicated. For what are we here, if not mere fellow servants who remind others of the Lord’s commandments?—so that both those who fulfill them and those who violate them do not sin before us, nor do they please us, but the good Lord and God who gave the commandments. Therefore, whether anyone is copying books, serving, plowing, digging furrows, or doing anything else, let each one do his work as in the presence of God and not of men; and his work will be pure, being measured by God, the knower of hearts, according to the effort and zeal he has applied to it.

30. One must guard one’s tongue from idle talk, shield one’s eyes from unseemly sights, preserve one’s heart from impure thoughts, and temper all one’s senses with the fear of God; one must treat one another with humble wisdom, address one another with unassuming love, engage in proper conversation, look to what is useful, listen to what is fitting, interact with modesty, and meditate on divine things, so that, rejoicing and being glad, we may fulfill God’s commandments and bring our days on earth to a soul-saving conclusion.

31. Take courage: we have God as our helper and intercessor in this journey through life, and as a strong shield we have the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos and the prayers of our Lords, the great saints John the Forerunner and John the Theologian, whose names our monasteries bear. But *“if God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31). *“If the Lord is the protector of our lives, whom shall we fear?”* (Ps. 26:1). If we have the help of the Mother of God and the Saints, who will overcome us? No one, ever. But even demons will keep their distance from us, and people will praise us; our enemies will be astonished, and no one will stand against us. If, however, we are not such, then everything will turn out differently for us.

32. Why should we conduct ourselves with proper decorum, especially while living in such a city? Let us refrain from discussing matters foreign to us. It is foreign to us to converse about kings, to speak of rulers, or to pry into this or that. *“Understand these things that have been commanded to you”* (Sir. 3:22), says the wise one. We have different concerns and different conversations. Worldly people speak of worldly matters; those concerned with daily life speak of daily life; but we speak of God our Savior and of what is beneficial to the soul: of virtues, of the lives of our reverend fathers, of death, of the passing from this life, of the meeting with the holy angels, of the judgment before the throne of Christ, of righteous recompense, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. By conversing in this way, we are enlightened by the angels and enlighten the laity, if they happen to be present; but if we fall into vain conversations, we harm ourselves and expose ourselves to the ridicule and condemnation of others. – Take heed, then, from this time forward, and guard your lips from unseemly talk; rather, spread the word of our good deeds, thereby kindling an even more fervent zeal to love God and to choose even death for His truth. And God, accepting your decisions as deeds, will adorn you with martyr’s crowns on that day.

109. Seek what is not of this world with zeal and all your might: God will bless you

109. 1) Seek earnestly and with all your might what is not of this world: God will bless you. If you persevere in this way, you will prosper; for this is how all the fathers lived. – 2) Again, a rebuke to those who covet material possessions. [2, 35]

33. Some choose one thing, others another as the object of their pursuit: one seeks dominion, another glory from external office-holding, yet another contentment and abundance in homes, servants, and fields; worldly desires are manifold. But you, having left all this behind and transported your soul to another world, desire and seek what is above and heavenly, and abide in it with your heart; your entire care and labor are devoted to this one thing. Nothing troubles you or occupies you except the complete purification of the passions and the acquisition of a contrite and humble heart, unceasing prayer, constant diligence, tearful contrition, and complete detachment—not only from friends and acquaintances, but even from your very parents and all worldly vanities. – Indeed, such is God’s favor toward you! And I see how each of you persists, strives, and compels yourself to cast off the passion that torments you and to remain in communion with the one God. If, therefore, you persevere in this martyr-like struggle, Christ our God will grant you the strength

and fortitude to repel every passionate and satanic opposition against you and to successfully accomplish the thrice-blessed feat that lies before you, just as the holy men and God-bearing Fathers who lived before you did. Did they, though clothed in the body and subject to our nature, pass through life without toil or struggle? By no means; but having endured and overcome many and varied trials, through every kind of obedience and humility, as well as self-control and all other virtues, having subjugated the flesh to the spirit, they ascended to the heights of the holy life and attained what they attained and for which they were glorified. Let us recall the virtues of our most reverend father Savva⁹⁵ for the edification of our souls. As a novice, as you know, he was extremely obedient, meek, and helpful; and when given the most menial tasks, he rejoiced as if accomplishing something glorious. Day and night he labored, carrying water and firewood; he was the first to arrive for psalm singing and the last to leave. Much more has been written about him, but there is no time now to list it all. Let us, then, imitate him, my children; for this is not impossible: one in one way, another in another, helping one another, competing with one another, but above all taking care not to do anything of our own accord—even that which seems good—without proper consultation.

34. I cannot remain silent about one matter; a second—I do not know how—is being committed among you by certain ignorant people who despise all order, even though it is highly reprehensible—I mean the frequent losses, or rather, thefts, that occur among us. For example, when someone leaves sandals, a pen, or other handicraft tools in their cell—whether stepping out briefly or for a longer period on business—they return to find that what they left behind is gone. This is a thoroughly devilish act, vexing and scandalous within the brotherhood: it will lead to suspicions, slander, grief, and even enmity—likely directed more at the innocent than at the guilty. “Listen, you thieves, to the stern warning of the blessed Apostle Paul: *‘thieves... and extortioners’*—*‘will not inherit the kingdom of God’* (1 Cor. 6:10). When he said “*extortioners*,” he did not specify: silver or gold, or precious garments, but he issued a general decree—whatever the object of extortion may be, even the smallest thing, the extortioner will not inherit the Kingdom. Do you hear this, thieves and plunderers?—And I beg you, stop stealing and plundering—threads, needles, awls, pens, small jugs, cups, little knives, belts—and the like: for I repeat to you, all who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. – Or are you not afraid of the Apostles’ judgment? Is it I, a poor man, who utter such a threat? – Therefore, I ask you once more: let us walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called—purely, reverently, and righteously—turning away from the vice mentioned, so that we may be heirs to eternal blessings.

110. Through your fellowship, the good of each one extends to all, and the good of all to each one

110. 1) Through your fellowship, the good of each one extends to all, and the good of all extends to each one. – 2) Let us therefore neither be lazy nor act on our own; but living a communal life, let us strive to abstain from evil and to be zealous for what is praiseworthy. – 3) What we do and experience comes and goes—and is no longer felt; but it remains within, and on the Day of Judgment it will come to light for justification or condemnation. [2, 87]

1. Each of us has our own gift, as it is written: one has this, another has that. But you, brothers and sisters, bound together by the bond of love, through the power of this love, make one another’s labors and virtues your own. You, for example, bear dishonor with equanimity; another is distinguished by diligence; yet another excels in silence, and another in meekness; and through fellowship, each of you possesses not only your own but also what the others have: your goodness passes mutually from one to all, and back again. Therefore, rejoice and share in one another’s joy; and whatever gift each one has, let him excel in it, shunning pride and esteeming his brother’s virtue as greater. If, then, we are such—and so united with one another and bound together by the bond of love—let us strive more and more to excel, and God will be glorified in our work, and our way of life will become known throughout most of the universe.

2. But let no one be self-willed or eccentric. “*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight*” (Isa. 5: 21). Let no one be careless or lazy, lest he hear: “*Go to the ant, you sluggard*” (Prov. 6:6). Nor should anyone be double-minded, lest he too hear: “*A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways*” (James 1:8). But always be active and quick to carry out the commandments, sincere, blameless because you confess your innermost thoughts, not driven by vanity, and not carried away by your own lusts. For such a person is like “*a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*” (James 1:6), like one who is

⁹⁵ This sermon was delivered on the day of his commemoration.

unstable and has no foundation in his heart. But may all such things be far from all of you; *as for “whatever is honorable and praiseworthy,”* strive to acquire it, to be enriched by it, and to treasure it in the treasuries of your souls, for the sake of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. Whatever any of you does each day—whether it is praiseworthy or blameworthy—all of it passes away, swept away like a stream of water, so that in your consciousness almost nothing remains from yesterday to today. Whoever suffers for the sake of the commandments—toils, weeps, endures, sweats, is torn at heart, is oppressed, grows weary, is subjected to insults, or suffers in any other way—feels it at that moment, and it passes immediately; but in the one who has experienced it, all of it remains and is preserved forever and ever for the sake of receiving a reward. On the contrary, whoever indulges in comfort, laughs, enjoys himself, acts recklessly, plays, gives himself over to idleness, disobeys everyone, acts frivolously, envies, gets angry, rages, plots, acts presumptuously, and the like—such a person not only derives no benefit from it now, but also stores up for himself an unpardonable condemnation on the day of recompense and God’s righteous judgment. Let us reflect on this, my brothers, and strive for virtue, while doing our utmost to avoid sin in every way as a calamitous and all-destructive evil, so that we may end our days in a manner pleasing to God and be deemed worthy of the promised blessings along with all who have pleased God.

111. Sermons are preached so that, by listening to them, you may be set aright, yet you all remain just the same: so stop being so inattentive and inactive

111. Sermons are preached so that, by listening to them, you may be set aright, yet you all remain just the same: so stop being so inattentive, and be active. [2, 38] I ask you, for what purpose is a sermon preached? Is it merely so that it may be read at a set hour and tickle your ears, or so that you may praise me, or simply without any specific purpose? For none of these reasons; but so that you may delve into what is said, accept the power of the word with all your soul, and bear fruit through the grace of Christ, with the assistance of my and your Father’s prayers. – Such is my intention and duty; but what do I see? – I see that as soon as the sermon ends, everything immediately vanishes from your memory without a trace, as if nothing had been said at all. That is why, as soon as we step outside after the service, we immediately fall back into the same sins as usual. One begins to talk out of turn, another grumbles, one spreads gossip, another hides in a corner to take a nap and misses the needlework class, and when he returns, his *“hands are feeble and his knees weak”* (Sirach 25:26). I will not speak of the rest. It should not be so, my children; it should not be so, lest you hear me say: “These people bless me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” But when you hear the word of salvation—whether from my teaching or from the Divine Scriptures that have been read—as soon as it happens, may a sense of the fear of God arise in your hearts, a spark of love for Him, a desire to prosper, and a resolve to faithfully fulfill His holy commandments, so that we may be made worthy of His Kingdom.

112. We are in a spiritual race: who are the spectators? What should the runners focus on? Who runs in an exemplary manner?

112. 1) We are engaged in a spiritual race: who are the spectators? What should the runners focus on? Who runs in an exemplary manner? – 2) One should not envy the customary distinctions within the monastery; everything that the discontented say in such cases is unwise: let them correct themselves, for this is a common practice. [2, 39]

4. You are the swift runners of the Lord God, and your race is not on earth, but from earth to heaven; the spectators are not people, but the hosts of angels and saints; the bestower of crowns is the Lord Himself, and the crowns are unfading. Blessed are you who have entered this arena of competition by taking the schema. But here you have only just begun; the crowns, however, are given only to those who have completed the race. Let each of you watch carefully how you are running; let you notice the markers on the racecourse that determine the success of the race—that is, progress in virtue; let each of you keep a watchful eye on the obstacles—and strive to overcome them—that is, the temptations of the flesh, the world, and the devil, drawing strength for this from the Holy Spirit; let no one look to the sides, but, fixing one’s gaze on the single point where the race ends, let each direct all their strength toward that goal. The race is not yet over. You have run well thus far; continue to run from here on with no less zeal and effort, competing with one another and helping one another. Who can outrun the others? The one who is the most humble of all. Who runs in an exemplary manner? The one who is the most obedient, the most reverent, the most patient, most psalm-singing, most silent, most hardworking, most prayerful, most sincere, most humble, most free from malice, most free from

envy, most faithful, most loving toward the Father, and in every other way in which the work of perfect virtue is manifested, both in soul and in body. Let this be your course, and let this be how we ascend from strength to strength, and from the world to heaven.

5. Let love be your distinguishing mark, characterizing you as disciples of the Lord. And as you abide in love, accept with love every difference among the brothers—their preferences and promotions in ministries, crafts, positions, and ranks. Let envy, zeal, and anger give way. Let each of you accept what is favorable to your brothers as if it were favorable to yourself, and rejoice in their successes. Thus God is pleased, and complete victory over all is attained. Love is the crown of virtues. But to be distressed that so-and-so is preferred in such-and-such a matter or in such-and-such a ministry is a rotten and harmful thing and a sign of the opposing side. Not so, my children, not so. It is unjust to say, “I should be honored more than so-and-so,” or, “I am older than so-and-so—therefore, the higher place is mine.” Flee, I beg you, from such devilish snares. But whatever is good, whatever is honorable, whatever is fitting for the saints—whatever is loving toward brothers, whatever is humble and wise, whatever is most excellent—think on these things, pursue these things, strive to attain these things, acting in all things childlike, without malice, and sincerely, as the chosen people of the Lord, allowing nothing except what is commanded. And if any slip should occur, hasten to correct it and atone for it by performing penance, so that on the Day of Judgment you may hear that exalted voice: “*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt. 25:34).

113. You have set a good intention; but that does not spare you from the enemy’s temptations, which you are now experiencing

113. 1) You have set a good intention; but this does not spare you from the temptations of the enemy, which you are now experiencing. But remain faithful to your vow, and God will help you stand firm. – 2) Cast aside the works of darkness and prosper in the works of light: for the former draw God’s wrath, while the latter bring His blessing. – 3) We have many sick among us now: those who are healthy, let us serve the sick; those who are sick, be patient and content with everything. We have no servants: the brethren serve out of love and obedience. Take heart, you who labor: God sees all. [2:40]

6. By God’s grace, all of you are among those who are being saved; all of you have set out on the path to salvation, and none of you have any other desire except to attain salvation; but since the devil exists, the enemy of all that is good, many of us are subjected to his unwanted temptations: he inflames some with lustful pleasures, using the desires of youth as his tool, – others he brings down with self-will, because of which he himself fell from heaven; and still others he lulls into complacency with indifference, binds with despondency, and leads as he pleases and wherever he pleases; he unsettles us with unbelief and, having captivated us with self-will, teaches us to do inappropriate things. And why should we list, one by one, all the ways in which he attempts to pierce us daily, standing by and waiting only for the moment when we allow ourselves to slacken and give in to debauchery? But may the Lord God, who said to the sea, “*Be still, be quiet*” (Mark 4:39), forbid him this, and may He drive him far away from us. This is what happens when we focus on ourselves and constantly keep in mind the primary purpose of our entry into the monastery: for we, with God as our witness, have promised to endure every sorrow and hardship, even unto death.

7. Therefore, cast aside everything that is contrary to the pursuit of salvation: the faint-hearted, their faintheartedness; the domineering, their domineering; the lazy, their laziness; the pleasure-seekers, their pleasure-seeking; the proud, their pride; the vain, their vanity; the insolent, their insolence; the lawless their lawlessness, the talkative their talkativeness, the peace-loving their love of peace, the sensual their sensuality, the sorrowful their senseless sorrow; those who are envious, their envy; those who are quarrelsome, their quarrelsomeness; those who are argumentative, their argumentativeness; those who love idleness, their love of idleness. Such are the works of darkness and the forms of evil—the inventions and suggestions of the evil one! But what is pleasing to the good God is peace, gentleness, humility, obedience, lack of envy, diligence, care, vigilance, love, hope, righteousness, and prayer. Such are the works of light, such are the weapons of righteousness and the valor of the saints! I implore you, for the sake of your love for the Lord, awaken, you who are lulled to sleep by passions; take up vigilance, you who slumber under the spell of the enemy’s allure. If we desire to live a good life and if we love to see good days, let us heed the one who says: “*Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it*” (Ps. 33: 15). Where are the Lord’s gracious eyes? “*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and on those who fear Him*” (Ps. 32: 18). And where is the Lord’s angry face?

“The face of the Lord”—“is against those who do evil, to blot out their memory from the earth” (Ps. 33: 14). And all the following words of this psalm offer wonderful insights, if we care to ponder them.

8. In these days we have many sick brothers: such is the unhealthy state of the times. Those who are healthy—let us help the sick. Those who are sick—let us accept this chastisement from the Lord as salvific, and, bearing our illness with good grace, let us be grateful for all that is given to us. And when we are delivered from our illness, let us not rush about aimlessly here and there, but let us return to our duties. For we have no hired servants assigned solely to serve—as is the case with worldly people—but we are both servants and masters to one another, serving and being served—and each one must take care to serve more than to receive service prematurely. God sees each of you and your deeds and your service; He sees what you were before and what you have become now, how you lived in the world and how you live in the monastery, how you discipline yourself and endure everything, what you wear and put on your feet, and what labor you undertake in performing your duties—and in due time He will reward each of you according to your deeds. Therefore, let no one lose heart. We are known to God, and we will stand before His dreadful judgment seat, where, after giving an account of the life we have lived, we will receive what is due to us.

114. Let us cultivate our souls, doing in a spiritual sense everything that a farmer does when cultivating his field

114. 1) Let us cultivate our souls, doing in a spiritual sense everything that a farmer does when cultivating his field. – 2) Just as warriors conduct themselves and wage war, so shall we wage war and conduct ourselves; just as warriors endure all things in war in hope of rewards, so shall we endure all things in our obedience for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. [2, 41]

9. A farmer, while tilling his field, does not regard the hardship of the labor, lest he slacken his hands or grow lazy, but keeps future benefits in mind and, for their sake, subjects himself to toil, sweat, and exhausting hardships. Since each of us, like a field, has received our soul to be cultivated in this age, we too must cultivate spiritual works within it; and on the Day of Judgment, God, who created us, will demand an account from us for this. Therefore, I ask and implore you: let us all together diligently cultivate the fields of our souls, renewing them according to the laws of piety, so that we may not sow among the thorns of passion; but having first cleared our fields of every weed of sin, let us sow seeds in them, then water them with the spiritual rains of God-broken tears, surround them with strong fences of the fear of God, so that the sprouts may not be devoured by the beasts of the mind, and illuminate and warm them with the sunbeams of love, so that later we may fill our wise hands with sheaves and gather a multitude of the wheat of holy deeds according to Christ’s commandments. For this purpose, the Lord God has called every soul into this life, and us in particular to a life modeled after the angels. May each of you, I pray, show through your good conduct that your fields are blooming, fruitful, and emitting a fragrance pleasing to the Lord—through a complete transformation of carnal habits and relationships, and this through humble obedience and Christ-like humility, perfecting yourselves day by day and being transformed from glory to glory, clothed in the radiant garment of good deeds, casting aside all disobedience and bringing every thought of the mind into captivity to the obedience of Christ, conforming to the common rule of the brotherhood, always embracing self-reproach, by which we may easily trample and slay the many-headed dragon of pride and self-will.

10. To what task are we especially called, brothers? To war and battle—not just any easy battle against insignificant foes, but a fierce battle against the terrifying powers of invisible spirits, as the Divine Apostle says: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, let no one remain unprepared for battle; let no one go out unarmed; and do not shun the marks of war. But do not be surprised when you receive wounds and injuries, or when you face clashes. All such things are inseparable from those who wage war. It is not the one who has been wounded once or has fallen under a blow who perishes, nor even the one who has been subjected to this many times or countless times, but the one who voluntarily surrenders himself to his enemies to be slaughtered. Therefore, brothers and fathers, let us pay attention and stand firm in battle, as soldiers of Christ. Every soldier, as you know, when he sets out on a campaign, encounters many hardships, labors, and troubles—whether from the scorching sun, the rain, or even the cold—he does not lead a pampered life there; at times he would wish to eat a piece of bread or drink a glass of cold water, but even that is not available; All day, or even all night, he is on the move, traveling from place to place, in dust and mud, in weariness and exhaustion—for what? To please the

commander who enlisted him in the army, to avoid being placed on the list of deserters, and so that, when rewards are distributed, he may be unquestionably recognized as worthy of them. – This happens among us as well; only in a different way: theirs are temporary and fleeting rewards, while ours are eternal and imperishable, and are given by God, who reigns over all. – Therefore, let us endure again and again; let us strive and strive, each according to the ministry entrusted to him, serving the Lord purely and blamelessly: the one who manages, with wise and prudent arrangements, and the one who serves, with uncomplaining and zealous devotion. Let us also endure times of hunger and thirst, reproach and humiliation, clashes and insults; especially weariness and lethargy during nightly psalm-singing and prayers, and all manner of troubles—visible and invisible—that assail us and crush us daily as we perform our manual labor and carry out other duties; so that, through the prayers of our Father, having striven with good deeds and completed the course, we may be deemed worthy to receive the crown of righteousness on that day, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

115. Having cast aside all lust and anger, let us cling to the Lord, serving Him faithfully in the duties of our monastic vocation

115. Having cast aside all lust and anger, let us cling to the Lord, serving Him faithfully in the duties of our monastic vocation. [2, 42] Listen attentively and understand what the holy fathers tell us and command us. For this is precisely what I, though unworthy, offer you in my teachings. As for what exactly they say and instill in our souls, I will now present it in the following two passages from the Word of God: one warns: *“Do not deceive yourselves: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor men who engage in sexual immorality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor. 6:9)—and again in another passage: *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice; and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you”* (Eph. 4: 31–32); another calls out: *“Come, let us worship and bow down before Him, and weep before the Lord who made us”* (Ps. 94: 6)—and yet another: *“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise”* (Ps. 99: 4). Therefore, having been strengthened by these warnings and having taken these calls to heart, let us all come together in worship; let us bow down before the Lord and weep before Him over the life we have lived, over our daily transgressions—whether committed knowingly or unknowingly, in our deeds, words, and thoughts, and let us enter His courts with songs and praises, but not with profanity, frenzy, disobedience, or arrogance. Whoever grumbles has sin: let us not grumble, nor lose our temper, nor be self-willed, nor be vain, for we are earth and ashes, dust and ashes, especially those who, in their folly, think of themselves as glorious because of their bodily or spiritual deeds. I see that *“the form of this world has passed away”* from us (1 Cor. 7:31); for we are different from the laity, clothed in a strange garment of some sort, and living in a strange way: unmarried, nameless, without inheritance, elusive, and even more so, incorporeal; for *“those who are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom. 8:8)—we are crucified to the world. Since this is the life we have taken upon ourselves, we must bear its clear marks, so that we may truly—and not merely in name—be what we have called ourselves. Let us therefore be obedient, prompt, God-fearing, good, reverent, loving toward one another, diligent, patient, and grateful for everything that is given to us, so that, having lived well, we may become heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom we so desire and seek.

116. On the occasion of some people’s flight: stand firm and grow in holiness, taking great care not to act according to your own will, even in doing good

116. Regarding the flight of certain individuals: stand firm and grow in holiness, taking great care not to act according to your own will, even when doing good. [2, 43] (Some had fled the monastery: after expressing his sorrow over this, the Holy Father adds...) You, however, take heed from their example and recognize that the Lord has shown you His grace in that you were not led astray by the devil’s wiles, but stood firm through the steadfastness of your faith and did not depart from the holy commandment of obedience entrusted to you. I beg you, then, do not be like them; and as sons of the Light, do not become children of darkness and disobedience, and do not squander your many blessed labors in vain, thereby also delivering your souls to eternal condemnation. For it is written: *“Whoever rejects the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses; how much more severe a punishment do you think those above will deserve?”* (Heb. 10, 28–29)—those who have trampled underfoot the vows, confessions, and covenants of our holy calling and have mocked the mystery of our perfection. Therefore, I beg you to take heed and walk

uprightly in the way of God, praying that they too may be raised up and turn back from the soul-destroying and deadly delusion of the devil. However, it is known that each of you reveals, by your inner disposition, what you are to be—whether a vessel of election or a vessel of perdition. For when, contrary to the common rule and not for the common good, but only by the abbot's command, something occurs among you—whether in reading, in psalm-singing, in abstinence, in vigil, or in anything else that seems good and proper—yet is done by one acting of his own accord, —which is why confusion usually arises throughout the entire brotherhood—it is clear that such a person is an instrument of the evil enemy, breaking the bonds of submission and obedience and walking in darkness in pursuit of his own lusts. Again, one must bear in mind that by righteous judgment the ungodly are separated from the godly, the false from the true, the hypocritical from the sincere, the deceitful from the genuinely devout, and the wicked from the virtuous. For “*What fellowship has light with darkness? What agreement has Christ with Belial?*” (2 Cor. 6:14–15). – So when we, out of forbearance and in the hope of their reformation, do not cut them off, they cut themselves off and separate themselves by their flight. If anyone wishes, let him recall what is written in the Gerondika: “The place itself drives out those who do not do the works of the place.”

117. Those Who Have Fled Again. – How can one avoid such a fall?

117. 1) Those who have fled again. – How can such a downfall be avoided? One must not heed the enemy's suggestions or the words of those he has seduced. – 2) Some, in the evening, demand bread and wine in a disorderly manner: I will issue a general order regarding this; cease your waywardness. – 3) Some arbitrarily switch from one form of obedience to another: let this not happen; one's own will is ruin. [2, 44]

11. (Again, regarding those who have fled.) How can one avoid such a fall? – Do not accept the serpent's counsel, nor harbor the serpent himself in your heart, but expose him as soon as possible—and he will flee as from a fire. If our fugitives had observed these rules, they would not have come to the point of suffering harm. But you, my children, be on guard and keep these things. As sheep of Christ's flock, do not willingly give yourselves up as prey to the devil. Having been led into the paradise of Christ's commandments, do not be deceived by the wiles of the evil serpent in any way, lest you be cast down into the gloomy darkness of sin. Living like angels, do not allow yourselves to be enveloped by the darkness of self-willed flight; but endure patiently, and faithfully fulfill the commandments. “Do not associate with the company of the deceitful, nor sit with the wicked” (Ps. 25:5). Wicked and deceitful is the one who consorts with others and conspires to flee, or to satisfy some other passion, to his own ruin and that of whoever agrees to follow him. Therefore, when such a person isolates you from others and begins to pour the poison of evil into you with his tongue, turn away and stand far from him; cover your ears to save both yourself and him. Even when he sees you grieved by the temptation that has befallen you, do not accept him as he slyly approaches you again, while you are righteously grieving and indignant: for this is the serpent, scheming to draw you to his side. When he begins to condemn your paradise—that is, the community—or to accuse those living with you, who are your brothers, saying, “So-and-so is like this, and such-and-such is like that,” or “This is not good among us, and that is bad,” push him away and rebuke him as is fitting, so that you may keep him in check and save yourself. – But what do such people say? – “Let's break away from the people here: the abbot is harsh; the head of the workshops is uncompassionate; the calligrapher is reckless; there's a lot of work, but the pay is meager; everyone gives orders, everyone commands; we don't have the strength to bear the burden of labor, and there's no way to save ourselves here. Let's run away from here.” – Where? “Wherever our eyes may lead; as long as we can just get out.” – And if any sensible person could see such people as they truly are in their hearts, they would see them as gloomy, terrifying, demonic, lacking anything sound—neither will nor mind—wandering this way and that like lost sheep. “And don't think I'm saying this just to shame them. No—no: on the contrary, there is much more evil in them—so much that it cannot even be recounted.” However, pray, pray with all your heart, that they may be found and return, either on their own or by our hands. As for our own task—may you remain steadfast, avoiding the causes of such a fall, striving in good deeds, for the heavenly reward. – But it has come to my attention that some of you are imprudently defending those who have slipped away, whereas they are unworthy not only of defense but even of being mentioned at all. It is fitting for you to simply name them with regret. For even the Apostles no longer call the traitor an apostle, but only Judas, the traitor, the betrayer.

12. I hear that there is once again disorder among you in the evening hours: some demand bread, others wine—and this during the days of Lent. You know that upon entering this city, we have already slightly altered

our way of life compared to how we lived outside it; I am speaking of the consumption of oil, wine, and cooked food on the days of Lent, as well as on Wednesdays and Fridays.—And that would be enough. — But since I sympathize with you—both because of my own weakness and because of the difficulty of abstinence in the city—I hereby decree that from now on, on the days mentioned above, in the evening, all who wish may receive a cup of wine and a slice of bread. And let there be, finally, absolutely no disturbances, no quarrels—nor such foolish talk as: ‘I should have received this or that: I worked harder than the others.’ Those who violate the rules will not escape the due penances and excommunications. You, too, who oversee the guilds, the guardians of order, the building supervisors, and the other leaders of various departments, take precautions so that the same thing does not happen again.

13. I will also mention one more thing. — Some do not remain in the duties to which they are assigned, but move from one to another without good reason, out of mere frivolity and fickleness; thereby causing trouble for themselves and for those who maintain order; and they also cause the overseers of the workshops and craft rooms undue trouble and labor. — Let this not happen in the future. — But let everyone be patient with the task to which they are assigned, and let them work as prescribed. For inventing one’s own occupations and seeking to satisfy one’s own whims is a sign of disorder, ignorance, and disobedience. Now that this evil has been pointed out and forbidden, let no one act in this way anymore, lest they fall under penance for disorderly conduct. Do you not know what St. Dorotheus says? That whoever has severed his own will has attained the full measure of inner peace. Therefore, whoever wishes to enjoy inner peace should, to achieve this, follow this path—that is, the severing of his own will—and he will receive peace both during his time here and for all eternity to come. — May God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant you all the wisdom to be of one mind and to agree in all things—so that you may patiently endure every ascetic struggle as a preparation for eternal life and the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven.

118. *The struggles are brief, but the rewards for them are eternal; the pleasures of sin are fleeting, but the torments for them are endless: the careless cannot escape them.*

118. Feats are brief, but the rewards for them are eternal; the pleasures of sin are fleeting, but the torments for them are endless: the careless cannot escape them. [2, 45] This life is a time of feats, a time of sorrows and toil—not the kind of feats, sorrows, and toil that anyone would call momentary or short-lived, but those that last day and night, are long-lasting, and do not cease until the end of life. But let us not forget that this struggle of ours is not waged for the sake of any trivial, worldly, or human goals, but for the sake of the divine and for heavenly blessings. For if, through constant patience and the diligent observance of the holy commandments, we succeed in this struggle, we will inherit the kingdom of heaven, endless bliss, and the enjoyment of eternal blessings that are unspeakable, unheard of, and beyond comprehension. But if—God forbid—through negligence and laziness, through attachment to and love of the corrupting pleasures of this age, we do not succeed in it, then we will receive eternal torment, immeasurable shame, and a state of bewilderment, hearing that dreadful voice: *“Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41). But may we never hear that dreadful voice nor experience that most wretched separation from the saints and the righteous—when they are taken into unspeakable joy, into inexpressible light, to insatiable delight, while we are led away with the demons into eternal fire, to the worm that never dies, to the gnashing of teeth, into the darkest Tartarus, into unbreakable bonds—and this not for a short time, not for a few years, not for hundreds, thousands, or myriads, but forever—for all eternity and always the same, according to the Lord’s decree. Where then, as the saints say, is the brother, or the father, or the mother, to deliver and protect?—But *“a brother will not deliver; can a man deliver? No man can ransom himself, nor pay the price for the deliverance of his soul”* (Ps. 48:8). I, however, must ask in another way: where, then, is the carelessness of the careless and the negligence of the negligent? Where, then, is the contradiction of the contradictory, the disobedience of the disobedient? Where, then, is the pride of the proud and the insolence of the wayward? Where is the gluttony of the gluttonous, the excuses of the liars, the renunciation of those who have renounced the vows they made before God?—Those who have trampled on the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant as nothing, thinking that there is neither death nor resurrection, — nor judgment, nor retribution; who have severed themselves from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, have been deprived of the Holy Spirit Himself, and wander to and fro, down the rapids and into the abysses of their lustful desires.

119. We have come out of the world: is it any wonder that we suffer in the world? But this is not a hindrance to us, but a help

119. We have come out of the world: what is so surprising if we suffer in the world? But this is not a hindrance to us, but a help. Let us therefore endure—time flows swiftly, and soon all will come to an end; the Lord sees all things and will render retribution for everything. [2, 46] According to the flesh, you have become without kin and without a city. You have but one Father, God of all; you have but one city—the heavenly Jerusalem—and your fellow citizens are all the saints of every age. What is so surprising, then, that here we suffer evil through ascetic privations and hardships, sometimes being insulted and reviled? Do not be disheartened; for this does not hinder but rather helps the truth to shine forth in us, along with an abundance of peace, light, life, inexpressible joy, and angelic gladness. Therefore, I urge and implore you: strengthen your souls in patience, ground your thoughts in the Lord, and bear and endure all things with a good spirit, in the hope of receiving the great blessings you await. Time flows swiftly, and we are drawing near to death—or rather, not to death, but to a life that never grows old: for death will have no power over you when you have died in advance by your own choice, through renunciation of the world. Let us therefore devote ourselves to our work with all diligence, and let each one strive to fulfill the duty entrusted to him, purely and reverently, presenting it with a clear conscience to God, the rewarder. For the Lord sees everyone—their deeds and their zeal, or their laziness and procrastination. He observes all things and will reward each according to their merits in the Kingdom of Heaven.

120. In our spiritual life, let us reflect the characteristics of the Lord's life on earth in the flesh

120. In our spiritual life, let us reflect the characteristics of the Lord's life on earth in the flesh. [2, 47] What can we “render to the Lord for all that He has rendered” to us (Ps. 115: 3), except to remember this and give thanks? For consider: what happened? From what height and to what degree of humiliation did He lower Himself for our sake? Though He was God and Lord of all, He took on the form of a servant; He was carried in the womb of the Most Holy Theotokos; and after being born, He was swaddled in cloths like an infant and laid in a manger; He was nursed as a child, grew little by little, and from a child became a boy, then a youth, and finally a perfect man, when He deigned to receive baptism, bestowing upon us the bath of rebirth; finally, He completed His ministry, having endured betrayal, life-giving sufferings, crucifixion, death, and the three-day resurrection. All this was done for our sake, so that we too might walk the same path spiritually. Since He, born of the Father before all ages without a body, was later born in the flesh of the Most Holy Virgin for our sake; so too are we, having first been born in the flesh, then born spiritually—all together in Holy Baptism, and especially, in a certain way, those who have taken the holy schema? Why must we act like infants—especially those who have recently received the schema—and imitate the simplicity of children, so that when someone insults or offends us, we do not become angry like wild beasts, but rather act as if we do not notice, just as children do? Christ the Lord obeyed His parents in everything, and we must obey our spiritual parents—our fathers. When Christ the Lord began His ministry, He was reviled and insulted, hearing from the frenzied scribes and Pharisees: “*You have a demon*” (John 8:48)—“*You cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons*” (Matthew 9:34)—“*Is this not the son of the carpenter?*” (Matthew 13:55)—and other similar reproaches; then He endured spitting, slapping, and flogging. And He did not utter a single word in protest, but only gave thanks and prayed: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). Let those who desire to be saved and to be co-heirs with the saints imitate Him. Take heed, then, all of you, from the first to the last; let nothing in you be motivated by zeal, self-will, or disobedience; but in everything, perform your work in a godly and loving manner, so that Christ may be pleased and glorified. May the Lord grant you strength and fortitude to purify, perfect, and enlighten yourselves more and more, so that you may shine like lights in the world.

121. Let no one set himself apart, and do not lose faith in your father; but do not listen to the enemy, the cunning inventor of evil

121. 1) Let no one set himself apart, and do not lose faith in your father; but do not listen to the enemy, the cunning inventor of evil. – 2) You will achieve this by opening your minds—which I implore you to do for your own salvation. [2, 49]

1. I rejoice and am glad when I see your progress; but just as much as I rejoice, I am also overcome by fear and trembling, lest some disorder arise and overturn all that you have acquired through much toil and

sweat. That is why I address these words to all of you: be on guard, stay alert, and pray! Let no one seek to set himself apart or rely on himself; let no one move his feet from the firm rock of faith in his spiritual father; do not slacken in your ascetic labors, nor in any other way allow the many-headed serpent to enter your heart—the all-deceitful and cunning one in tempting others to sin—in this or that way, by this or that means, under this or that plausible pretext. He is a masterful inventor of sin, a sower of evil, cast down from heaven to earth, falling like lightning; he crept in like a thief into Paradise and deceived our forefather Adam, and from that time until now he has been teaching people all manner of wickedness and sin. He has also led the Christian people into heresies and immoral deeds, and he seeks to wound us with the arrows of sin and to kill us.

2. Therefore, I urge and implore you: walk steadfastly in your path, having put on the full armor of God, and do not give him any entry or even allow him to approach you. You will achieve this through good faith—as I have said—in the Father, through unwavering confession to Him and the full revelation of your innermost thoughts, and then through humility, sincere obedience, and patient forbearance. Therefore, brothers, I implore and beg you, for God’s sake, for the sake of the reward, for the sake of eternal life and its joys, and out of fear of the opposite—the unquenchable fire and other immeasurable torments—let us labor again and again, pressing on with vigor, walking uprightly, striving and doing our utmost to cross safely the great sea of this life, so that after death we may receive the crowns of righteousness and blessed immortality.

122. Travelers, looking toward the end of their journey, willingly endure all the hardships they encounter along the way; just as we must endure everything for the sake of the kingdom of heaven

122. 1) Travelers, looking toward the end of the journey, willingly endure all the hardships they encounter along the way; just as we must endure everything for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. – 2) And all the glorified saints endured: for there is no other way. [2, 50]

3. Just as those who undertake a long journey move from place to place, sometimes along a smooth and well-trodden path, and sometimes along one crisscrossed by ravines or made muddy by rain: so too, as we live out this present life, we move from day to day, from year to year, encountering at times what is unpleasant and difficult, and at times what is pleasant and joyful. And just as they are not burdened by the length of the journey nor do they stop because of the difficulties they encounter along the way, keeping their eyes fixed solely on the end of the journey: so too we, who are striving in the virtuous endeavor of a monastic and ascetic life, and walking the good path that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven, must neither lose heart, nor turn back, nor grow weary from the troubles, obstacles, and sorrows we encounter, which are permitted for our benefit by God’s providential care for us. For if they, for the sake of the small and insignificant benefits of this temporary life, do not stop in the face of the hardships of their journey; is it not all the more fitting for us, for the sake of eternal and immeasurably great blessings, to endure everything, to accept and bear all things with good cheer, so that we may be deemed worthy to attain what we hope for? Come, my brothers and children, let us bear with the greatest courage and good cheer all that befalls us and all that is inseparably connected with our way of life: labors, hardships, fasts, vigils, kneeling, sleeping on the bare ground, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, poverty in clothing and footwear, a certain untidiness due to our labors, the urgency of obedience and prayer, and everything else connected with this in our ascetic life. Blessed are you, and most blessed, as you labor in your spiritual struggles and lovingly face the mental and sensual temptations that arise.

4. And is there anyone among the saints who have shone throughout the ages who has lived a true life without toil and hardship, without temptations and sorrows? Take, for example, Abraham, the greatest of the patriarchs, and the patriarchs, prophets, and teachers who came after him; or the Apostles—Paul and the others—or the Fathers who later became renowned: Stephen, the first martyr, and all the others who were martyred with him and after him for Christ’s sake; —Anthony the Great and all the holy fathers who labored alongside him and after him; in all of them we find immeasurable toil, sweat, struggles, weariness, sorrows, persecutions, attacks, slander, and temptations of every kind. *“They wandered,”* says St. Paul, *“in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—people of whom the world was not worthy—wandering in deserts and mountains, in caves and in the caverns of the earth”* (Heb. 11:37–38). And all of them were like that. There is no other way to please God, no way to complete the path of salvation without toil, nor to achieve the desired victory without heroic deeds. How, then, can we—having undertaken the same task as they did—succeed in it any other way than by living the same kind of life that they lived and with which they spent their fleeting lives?

123. In what matters should we compete with one another, in what should we strive to surpass one another, and in what should we agree with one another

123. In what matters should we compete with one another, in what should we strive to surpass one another, and in what should we agree with one another. [2, 51] Come, let us cast aside despondency and laziness and embrace diligence and zeal for the fulfillment of all the Lord's commandments. Come, let us strive to excel one another—not in words, but in deeds; not by insisting on our own way—for that is characteristic of the side opposed to us—but by yielding, enduring insults, abuse, and mockery. – Come, let us compete with one another—not in causing offense or taking offense, nor in raising our eyebrows at those below us or proudly tilting our heads at those above us; for such is pride, which, having risen up against God the Almighty, was cast down from the heights of heaven to the earth below; – but to be peaceful and to pacify, to be gentle and to subdue, to possess the wisdom of the humble and the meek: for such is the Son of God, who became incarnate through obedience and humility and saved humanity through the cross and death. Come, let us imitate one another—not in being lazy and neglecting the divine daily services and nightly psalm-singing, for this is characteristic of the lazy and the immature—but in being eager for God's work, arriving at God's temple before the psalm-singing begins, ahead of others: for such are the zealots of piety and virtue. But, so as not to list everything one by one, I will say in general: let us all imitate one another in what is good; let us unite in humble love, peaceful goodwill, and virtuous humility; let us avoid deceit and mutual suspicion; let us strengthen our souls in mutual trust through spiritual fellowship; let no one be a traitor like Judas, nor two-faced and fickle, nor intemperate and lustful, nor harsh and cruel; Let no one by any means act or behave in this way, but let everyone excel in what is pious, righteous, and pleasing to God, awaiting day by day the hour of their death and looking forward to the day of the appearing of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, on which all things will be transformed and renewed, and we will stand before the dreadful throne of the Judge, in the presence of all the incorporeal ranks of angels, to give an account of all our deeds, words, and thoughts.

124. Be blameless in all things, both inwardly and outwardly

124. 1) Be blameless in everything, both inwardly and outwardly. – 2) Welcome not only townspeople but also villagers into the monastery. [2, 52]

5. (Written from captivity). Rejoice as true servants and ministers of Christ the Lord. He has prepared for you a crown and His Kingdom, if you, too, maintain a good disposition in your hearts and continue to lead the same way of life, living in peace, observing established rules, remaining blameless and pure, meek, humble, diligent in your work, psalm-singing, and reciting verses, opening up your thoughts, and fulfilling all else that is required of you.

6. As for the admission of new brothers, I wish that our brotherhood be filled not only with city dwellers but also with villagers, who are more suited to and accustomed to the labors and work established among us. An increase in the number of city dwellers, I believe, will not be healthy or beneficial for us, both physically and spiritually.

125. Keep God's commandments and our rules, following the example of the ancients—all as one man

125. Keep God's commandments and our rules, following the example of our forefathers—all as one man. [2, 53] (Also). May God strengthen you, my most honorable brothers, in the works of your hands and in the labors of your souls, and may He preserve you in all things blameless and unscathed, granting you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the readiness to fulfill all His commandments and to obey in every way, keeping our eyes fixed on the blessings set before us—those reserved for those who love the Lord's coming—and regarding all earthly things as nothing—glory, pleasures, delights, and the repose of the flesh—but having crucified ourselves to the world and fixed our minds on the contemplation of the heavenly. Thus did all our ancient fathers live, having renounced the world and all that is in the world, and serving the Lord in our sacred and angelic order. Therefore, my children, hold fast to the traditions as you have received them; quench the flame of passions with the dew of chastity and purity; cut off the impulses of your desires with the sword of obedience; and be skilled in both the Lord's commandments and the works of your hands, as your leader now directs. – Let your entire brotherhood, as one soul and as if one man, perform all your works—both spiritual and physical—with vigor, goodwill, and unanimity, as if in the presence of the Lord.

126. Having put aside earthly things, strive for heavenly things, fighting especially against anger and lust

126. 1) Having put aside earthly things, strive for heavenly things, fighting especially against anger and lust. – 2) Instructions for subordinates and superiors. [2, 54]

7. (Ibid.) You have been crucified to the world, and peace be with you: therefore, turn away from earthly things and rise up to the heavenly dwelling, and live for the one God alone, having died to all else. Where your faith is, there let your eyes be turned; where you are captivated, there let your heart be watchful, as the Lord said: *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matt. 6:21). Do you see what blessings you have been granted, and what kind of dwelling you have been deemed worthy of? An angelic one. Walk as angels do, not yielding to the influence of chance: resist anger with meekness; resist lust with chastity. May you not be overcome by that petty pleasure that troubles you every day and every hour. The weapon against it was pointed out by the one who said, *“I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my prayer”* (Ps. 39:2), and delivered me from that passion, though after quite some time.

8. You who are subject to authority know the laws of obedience; and you who are in authority know the laws of leadership—namely, to willingly be last, since you are first—approaching this with compassion and love. You must be accommodating, yet also firm; speak, yet also remain silent; smile cheerfully and warmly to offer spiritual comfort, and then resume a stern demeanor, sensibly avoiding excess on either side. May your eyes be vigilant in observing the rules, yet friendly in your responses; let your nostrils not flare in anger, your eyebrows not rise in pride, your tongue not twist in vanity; let every emotion remain humble, and every limb well-ordered; let your lips be an instrument of psalm-singing; let your mind think only of heavenly things, and your hands perform only works of piety and love. Let no one be disobedient, let no one be wayward, let no one be hard-hearted; come together with one accord, love one another without presumption, and extend your right hands to one another for your God-saved life.

127. I rejoice that you have gathered again from your dispersion and have settled in as you ought

127. 1) I rejoice that you have gathered together again after being scattered and have settled into order as you ought. Remain faithful to your order, both inwardly and outwardly. – 2) Instruction to Sophronius, the vicar—specifically; and to all other superiors and subordinates—in general. [2, 55]

9. (Ibid.) The steward who came here informed me that you have all gathered together again—both superiors and subordinates—and have restored your usual order: the superiors have begun to govern as they should and to assign to each person the obedience that is due, while the subordinates have accepted this meekly and humbly and set to work; and that in all this you are united by love, loving one another with brotherly love in Christ, so that you all have one soul, one mind, and one desire through a peaceful and well-ordered life. How my humble soul rejoiced at this, and how it gave thanks to the Lord—there is no need to speak of it. For there is nothing under heaven so pleasing and comforting to me as that you should live well, fulfilling God’s commandments and remaining faithful to the statutes of your angelic order. Since all this has now been restored among you, I ask and implore that each of you remain in good-natured patience, living day by day in a way that saves the soul through sincere obedience. Let there be no discord among you, nor self-will, nor waywardness, nor worship of one’s own will; nor grumbling, nor whispering, nor quarrels; nor effeminacy, nor insolence, nor mockery; nor idleness, nor faintheartedness, nor pride; nor anything else displeasing to the Lord. For this is why we have left the world and all that is in the world: parents, brothers, friends, acquaintances, villages, cities, marketplaces, spectacles, and all other things that stir up the passions and indulge in pleasure—so that we may acquire Christ and dwell as if in heaven, so that we may eradicate the passions and be enriched by virtues, so that, having lived piously and righteously in this present age, following the example of our holy fathers, we may be deemed worthy to receive the blessings promised to us. Since such is our calling and hope, let such also be your conduct, your manner, and your behavior; may your name and your life shine with good deeds, bestowing grace upon those of your own rank who draw near to you, as well as upon the laity, so that the name of our Father who is in heaven, so that we, the humble, may also rejoice in seeing this or knowing of it.

10. My son, Sophronius! Of all the many, I have chosen you to take my place in leading the brethren. Take care not to appear unskilled, so as not to bring shame and disgrace upon me; but let the light of your virtues shine so brightly that your name may be glorified not only among the brethren but also beyond. For whoever has God within himself through the fulfillment of His holy commandments becomes renowned both in heaven and on earth. Be attentive to the brothers; be kind and instructive; remind them wisely of what is

right; gently rebuke those who act improperly; justly impose penances on those who sin; heal the weak with a fatherly hand; instruct the ignorant; and do everything for the good of the brotherhood: for this is why I have given you the authority that I myself, in humility, have received from God, through His providence. —And all the rest—both leaders and those under their care—faithfully perform your duties in the fear of God, so that God may rejoice over you together with all the Holy Angels. Work diligently, walk in gentleness, and treat one another with simplicity; do not withhold the revelation of your innermost thoughts and desires: for in this lies the salvation of the soul and deliverance from passions; observe, as is proper, the singing of the Psalms, the recitation of verses, vigils, and readings—all according to the rule—as well as the memorization of the Psalms and troparia, as directed by your spiritual fathers. —And finally, pray for my humility, that the Lord may grant me comfort and strength to endure the sorrows that lie ahead.

128. You are living well; and may there not be a single person of bad character among you

128. You are living well; and may there be not a single person of bad character among you. Labor as workers in a vineyard to receive your wages from the householder; fight as soldiers to be deemed worthy of crowns from the Giver of Rewards. [2, 56] (Ibid.) All of you live for the Lord and are storing up for yourselves the abundant fruits of salvation, turning away from all deceit and every temptation toward lawlessness. — And let there be no one among you who is wickedly bold, negligent, pleasure-seeking, sinful, self-indulgent, shameful in spirit, hateful, a thief—even of trivial things—envious, quarrelsome, hot-tempered, grumbling, sluggish, idle, disobedient, proud, disrespectful, a slanderer, a troublemaker, a lover of strife, a gossip, a sluggard, a slave to the flesh and the world, a Judas who plots the betrayal of his own soul and the exclusion of any brother from the brotherhood. Such are those who rob themselves of God, flee from Him, and wander along the byways of sin. They do not wish to endure the toil of the day; therefore, they do not receive a reward from the vineyard keeper. Or they do not wish, as soldiers of God the Almighty, to bear the hardships of battle so that, having fought valiantly, they might please the Lord; therefore, they receive no rewards but are entered on the list of deserters, and in their place they face punishment when they are caught. — Therefore, good soldiers, comrades-in-arms, fellow warriors, fellow travelers! Let us run, let us press on, let us strive and endure all things. The Lord is near—to crown us. He Himself looks down from heaven upon everyone who runs and weaves crowns for those who endure to the end. Therefore, let everyone be pure through confession, peaceful through humility, and eager through love for service. The leader, as the leader, must observe what each member needs, and after determining what each person should do, set everything and everyone in motion.

129. He invites everyone to thank God for having been delivered from prison

129. 1) He invites everyone to give thanks to God for having been delivered from prison. — 2) Our trial, he says, has separated the true brothers from the false ones. — 3) He feels compassion for the latter and prays for them, hoping for their reform; and he urges the former to remain steadfast, giving thanks to God for what they have achieved and striving to succeed in what is lacking. [2, 57]

11. (Ibid.) Our all-good God, swift to show mercy and rich in generosity, having been moved by the intercession of our Lady the Theotokos and the prayers of our patrons, St. John the Forerunner and St. John the Theologian, together with your supplications, has removed the trial and delivered us from our imprisonment. Therefore, let us all together raise a song of thanksgiving to God, the Giver of Grace, who has turned sorrow into joy and destroyed the wiles of the evil one, which were directed against us. However, whatever suffering I have endured, I have endured because of my sins, and for no other reason: with this thought I take comfort, believing that what I have endured will serve as a purification of my sins.

12. In our trial, we have all already been tested, like gold in a crucible, and especially those here. For those who previously lived in the Holy Spirit and with unshakable faith have remained the same, unchanged in the least; on the contrary, they have been further strengthened and established by the calamity that has befallen us. But those who remained cold-hearted, double-minded, carnal, and negligent—as soon as the blow of evil struck them, they fell away like leaves, and, like chaff from a sieve, they leaped out of the monastery of their own accord, so that it might be revealed who were like pure wheat. Understanding this, the divine David spoke in the psalm: “*Divide them in their womb*” (Ps. 16:14), that is, the sinners and the negligent from the virtuous and the pious. But—oh, what a fall!—because of their own negligence, “*their bones are scattered in the grave of destruction*” (Ps. 140:7).

13. Nevertheless, I grieve for them and weep, and I will not cease to cry out for their return as long as there is breath in me. Perhaps some of them, kindled by a small spark of the knowledge of God and turning to repentance, will be freed from the bonds of sin and, like sheep that have gone astray, will return from the path of the wicked. As for you, do not be disheartened by their fall, but stand with even greater boldness in the struggle for piety, in ascetic practices, in manual labor, in the sweat of your struggles, and in the courageous confrontation of the daily afflictions and temptations—even to the point of bloodshed and even to the point of death: for this is what we promised, as you know, when we took the holy schema. Now let each one examine himself and consider which of the things he promised have been fulfilled and which have not yet been. And for the former, let him give thanks to the One who gave him the strength to accomplish all that; and as for the second, let him direct the appropriate effort to bring what is lacking to fruition: so that in this way you may be worthily adorned with the crown of martyrdom; for the Lord says: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46).

130. Therefore, we have forsaken everything to please God

130. 1) Therefore, we have left everything behind to please God. This is what we will continue to do, imitating the saints and following the royal path, on which all virtues abound, while all passions are driven away. – 2) If you are such, then God is in you, and with Him is every good thing, every help, and every protection. [2, 58]

1. (Ibid.) Greetings in the Lord, and may you continue to lead your good life in the usual manner, fulfilling the Lord’s commandments and walking in His righteousness, having nothing else in mind and desiring nothing else but to please God by mortifying your passions and cultivating virtues. For this reason, we have left the world and entered the monastery, leaving behind all worldly vanity, every attachment, every friendship and love—parental, fraternal, filial, and kinship—as well as every carnal pleasure, worldly glory, and everything else that is transitory and vain. Since we have thus resolved and desired to live in this way, we must act in accordance with this goal and this desire, following in the footsteps of the saints, heeding their instructions, and conforming to their examples—without looking this way and that, but walking the royal path, characterized by unquestioning obedience, God-imitating humility, heavenly impartiality, divine purity, angelic dispassion, meekness, righteousness, love, peace, zeal, patience, diligence, and every other God-pleasing disposition and deed; while disobedience, grumbling, pride, vanity, idleness, insolence, partiality, sensuality, and other evil deeds stand in opposition to those virtues.

2. Virtues are born of God, while passions and sins are born of Satan: for there is no communion between light and darkness, nor any harmony between Christ and Belial. Be, then, children of God, children of meekness and obedience, and not children of wrath, rebellion, and destruction. – Let no one set himself apart from others in his desires and thoughts; let no one love idleness; let no one grumble; let no one be hypocritical; but let all of you be quick to do good, all of you be grateful, kind, humble, approachable, joyful, friendly, free from envy, and free from rivalry, so that the Lord may be recognized as being among you: for if two or three are gathered in His name (Matt. 18:23); How could He not be among you, who are so many, if you are constantly zealous to keep His commandments at all times? But if God is in you, what can grieve you, or oppress you, or discourage you? Nothing; but everything will be bearable, though difficult, whether it be of the soul or of the body: for *“if God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31).—And if He *“did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?”* (Rom. 8:32)? Therefore, stand firm without wavering in the certainty that if you maintain your good life without change, you will undoubtedly be heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. – O my children, I earnestly beg and implore you: kindle within yourselves the fire of divine love; be filled with zeal; strengthen yourselves with courage; establish yourselves in purity and blamelessness; illuminate yourselves with prayers, supplications, psalm-singing, vigils, contrition, confessions, tears, and sighs.

131. On the way to the monastery, pray for yourself, and ask them to pray for God’s help in their labors: for the harvest

131. 1) On the way to the monastery, pray for yourself, and ask God to help them in their labors: for the harvest. – 2) He reminds Athanasius and Ephrem to govern the brethren well, taking into account the character and weaknesses of each one. 3) He urges everyone to pursue their goal faithfully. – 4) Let us keep

our fathers' commandments, compelling ourselves to do so through fear of judgment and death: here he recounts how a certain logothete died, drawing edifying lessons from that event. [2, 59]

3. (Also). As we make our way to you, hastening to the monastery, we first ask for your prayers, that the Lord may grant us success on our journey, both on land and at sea, and that He may help us to present ourselves as pleasing to Him, both in spirit and in body; secondly, we remind you that we have not been careless toward you or indifferent to your situation, but have always kept you in our humble hearts with good wishes for you, especially now, when, due to the harvest, you are facing great troubles and labors. May the Lord God strengthen you both inwardly and outwardly, and grant you the strength to bear both external and internal hardships with courage. Moreover, who can fathom the devil's schemes, his snares, and his temptations?

4. Pay close attention, my children, Athanasius and Ephrem, and lead the brotherhood in a manner pleasing to God, providing what is necessary to each and every one—both spiritually and physically—and in your dealings with them, adapt to the character and disposition of each: for not everyone needs the same thing—one needs a goad, another a bridle, one penance, another forgiveness, a third rebuke and admonition; Each has his own passion, his own habits: the methods of healing must be adapted to them.

5. Yet you, my brothers and sisters, are children of God. For His sake you have left the world and come here; for His sake you have severed all ties with flesh and blood; for His sake you have taken up His cross upon your shoulders; out of love for Him you have regarded all things as rubbish and have preferred nothing of this world to the blessings He has promised in the age to come. As pilgrims and strangers, you have come to this monastery and embraced the monastic way of life. Blessed is your choice, and holy is your decision. But, brothers, I ask and implore you to lead a life worthy of this great calling, so that, while you are outside the world, you may not act in a worldly manner, and so that, having fled from the flesh, you may not live according to the flesh—as indeed happens, and you know this even if I do not say it. For if we indulge in sensual pleasures, if we are driven by passions, if we insist on our own desires, if we seek preeminence, if we quarrel over mantles and other garments, over where to stand, over the pen and other trivial matters—are we not then carnal? Is not our struggle worldly? Let us not, brothers, under any circumstances allow our most holy calling to be reduced to ridiculous, childish quarrels. The glory of a monk is to be dishonored, reviled, and slandered for God's sake, without having done anything worthy of condemnation or revile. The adornment of a monk is to wear the ugliest of garments. I will say no more on this matter.

6. Keep your fathers' commandments; do not disregard the words of the saints; and for the sake of momentary pleasure, do not despise eternal bliss. He who is to judge all will come—at last, He will come, and He will not delay; and perhaps even before His coming, the fearsome Angel who is to separate the soul from the body will come—the time of exhaustion and the final breath will come. This, too, is terrifying and so overwhelming that, unable to bear it, we die. What, then, will happen after the soul departs, when the Angels come for it? Which realm will prevail and take us? – To answer this, I will tell you of a small incident that occurred—though involving someone not of our rank—that is nevertheless very instructive. They say that when the time came for that famous logothete Stavrikios to die, as he was taking his very last breaths—sweating, trembling, and gnashing his teeth—he cried out in a loud voice: “Help me, save me, O Lord, have mercy! What a horde of black and hideous demons is emerging from the sea and coming toward me.”—He lived on the seashore.—Although none of those present saw anything, the logothete—who had been merciless toward many—saw it and lamented bitterly. – And so, at the hour of our death, who will prevail—the angelic choir or the demonic host? Those whom we loved here will then embrace us at once. If we loved purity, obedience, humility, and other virtues, then the angels; but if we loved vanity, defiance, discord, luxury, laughter, and spectacles, then the demons. For passions are demons, just as virtues are angels. So who will prevail? Who will take my soul?—“Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, my brothers!”—But let us all love virtues together, so that the angels may triumph and take us; and not passions, lest the demons triumph and take us. And alas! It would have been better then if we had never been born. For “*the strong will be severely tested*” (Wis. 6:6), and especially those among us who wear the schema, the priests, the abbots, and other leaders among us. Do not rebuke me for these words: for I do not speak them to frighten you unjustly; but, fulfilling my duty, loving you, and desiring your good, I proclaim what is right.

132. He exhorts Sophronius to ensure the observance of the fathers' canons: for from this comes every good, and from the opposite, every evil

132. 1) He instructs Sophronius to ensure the observance of the patristic statutes: for from this comes every good, and from the opposite, every evil. – 2) To maintain a balance in the measure of mental and physical labor. – 3) Do not leave any misconduct unpunished. – 4) Such strictness is an act of love, not of anger. [2, 60]

7. (Ibid.) My son and brother, Sophronius! Take up your ministry not carelessly, but with all diligence and effort. – I find it necessary to always write to you about the same things, to stir up your zeal. – Pay close attention, then, and guide your brothers in all things, having Abba Akakios as your helper and counselor, my son. Observe and watch over the conduct of each one—how they behave, how they act, how they live—so that everything among you may turn to the glory of God, and your life may be established according to the rules and statutes of our holy fathers, and according to the commandments of my humility. For where people live and act in this way, there God is pleased; there light shines forth; there peace reigns; there Satan has no place; and passions are kept far away. But where they do not care about this and do not act in this spirit, there everything contrary to this takes root—evil instead of good, darkness instead of light, Belial instead of Christ. Therefore, be vigilant and attentive, scrutinizing the hearts of the brothers through confession and guiding them toward every good deed.

8. Keep the middle way: just as you must not allow silence, prayer, and reading to disrupt the affairs of your earthly life, so too must you not allow excessive labor in this latter sphere to divert your mind from the remembrance of God and the contemplation of divine things, and to plunge it into the material. Such is the law of true piety. And if you yourself were to live this way, then the brethren, following your example, would also embrace it and begin to practice it. For we did not leave the world in order to eat, drink, and clothe ourselves in peace here—or is our salvation in this?—Nor did we put on this monastic habit in order to sit idly and motionlessly, without food or clothing. But so that we might do both, each in its own time, wisely, according to the words of the Apostle: *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor. 14:40). Furthermore, this great Apostle speaks of himself, saying that he never ate his bread in idleness, but that what was earned by the labor of his holy hands was sufficient for his needs and those of those living with him (2 Thess. 3:8; Acts 20:34). Do these things, and continue in them. *“Let no one despise your youth”* (1 Tim. 4:12).

9. Do not overlook what requires correction, lest through such apparent kindness, some small omission, if left unchecked, lead the brothers into greater misconduct. Is anyone eating in secret? Under his penance. Does he have anything privately without a blessing, even if it is the most insignificant thing? Let him be placed under penance. Does he give food to another without authorization, exchange any item with someone, or do anything similar? Let him be placed under penance. Does he grumble? Likewise. Has he disobeyed? Let him be placed under penance. Does he refuse to work? *“Let him eat humbly”* (2 Cor. 3:10). Does he embezzle or steal? Let him be excommunicated. And so on... As is customary among us regarding penances.

10. Hearing this, my children and brothers, do not consider my words harsh, and do not think that all this is established out of ruthlessness. On the contrary, this is done out of a father's love, because I am concerned for your souls, for which we must give an account; and a heavy judgment will fall upon our heads if we do not teach you what is right, turn you away from evil, and strengthen you in what is good. Moreover, it is the duty of a good father not to leave his children unpunished, but to pave the way for them to attain eternal life through gentle warnings and mild punishments. Elijah, a father worthy of condemnation and reproach for failing to rebuke and punish his sons when they broke the law, lost his life along with those sons for this very reason.

133. Our labors are not great, but our rewards are immeasurable

133. Our labors are not great, but our rewards are immeasurable. Let us therefore be zealous, spurring ourselves on by the memory of death and all that accompanies it. [2, 61] (Ibid.) Blessed are we, my children, for by acting well and living well, we secure for ourselves the consolations of the Kingdom of Heaven through our small and insignificant sufferings in the monastic life; for all monastic labor is light, as the Fathers say, and is not worth mentioning compared to the endless, blissful joy. If you now endure this labor with patience, rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven. But we need to be mindful and constantly reflect on where we are and where we are to go, and what our departure from this world, the meeting with the angels, our standing before God, the judgment of the Judge, and, as a result, our being sent to the right or the left will be like. This

is what you should meditate on in the morning, this is what you should reflect upon, this is what you should occupy yourselves with. I testify to you before God and His chosen angels, so that you, walking worthy of your calling, may not stray to the left, be led astray into sin, or fall into the snare of presumption. I will cry out about this and will not cease to cry out. So open your ears, let your hearts be stirred, and understand what I am saying; keep yourselves blameless, so that, as workers in God's vineyard, you may receive a great and immeasurable reward.

134. Be blameless in all things, so that you may serve as good leaven for those who are to enter the monastery after you; keep God before your eyes, along with death and the judgment of God: whether you depart or arrive

134. Be exemplary in all things, so that you may serve as a good leaven for those who are to enter the monastery after you; keep God before your eyes, along with death and the judgment of God: whether you depart or arrive. In light of this, everything else is nothing. [2, 64] (Ibid.) Be strict observers of my precepts, which you received from me upon entering the monastic life with the vow to keep them as long as you live, and make every effort to improve yourselves under the guidance of the Abbot, so that, having improved yourselves, you may be a good leaven for the brothers who are to join you, leavening them with yourselves and your way of life, baking them with the fire of love, and presenting them as bread pleasing to God for the heavenly banquet. Do not waste time on bodily rest and the fulfillment of your own desires, but seek heavenly consolation and peace of mind, after which it is fitting to enjoy moderate bodily comfort: for when such comfort is preceded by spiritual consolation, then it is blameless. Walk in godliness and righteousness, living in peace with one another, always keeping God before your eyes, remembering unceasingly death, the laying aside of the garment of the flesh, the departure from this world, the standing before God, and the hearing of His final judgment that awaits you—which will certainly be one of two: either: *“Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”*; or: *“Come, you who are blessed by My Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matthew 25). Compared to this, nothing—the world, nothing—earthly goods, nothing—human glory, beautiful garments, the fragrance of perfumes, feasts, revelries, pleasures, and everything else. —But you, be filled with God and divine things; be intoxicated with the grace of the Holy Spirit; delight in the words of Scripture, sweeter than honey and honeycomb; adorn yourselves with chastity, righteousness, and self-control; grow rich in good deeds; be renowned for your humility; ascend to heaven through dispassion; glorify God with the angels; strike down the adversary with the fear of God and your holy prayer. Be enlightened more and more, be purified more and more, become more and more heavenly, so that it may be said to you, as if from the Lord's own lips: *“You are not of this world”* (John 15:19).

135. Strive, keeping in mind the Exodus and the Judgment: here, virtuous deeds are indicated, and especially what is necessary for the struggle against carnal lust

135. Strive, keeping in mind the Exodus and the Judgment: in this context, virtuous deeds are indicated, and especially what is needed to combat carnal lust. [2, 65] (Ibid.). Strive, my children, and walk the spiritual path, lifting your eyes of the mind on high, gazing at the heavenly, looking toward the eternal, and seeking to know when and how—in winter or at harvest, by day or by night, now or in old age, this year or next, on this day or at this hour, —my final breath will come: for death will certainly come; those who are to judge the soul will come, the adversary—the enemy—will come; and the victory or loss of all will be determined. By stirring yourselves with such thoughts, you will not be quick to sin, nor will you fall into the abyss of evil, but you will finally behold the blessings of the heavenly Jerusalem and will behold them all the days of your eternal life (Ps. 127: 6). Perform your bodily tasks as well; attend to both these and those; praise God with your lips; speak the truth with your tongue; work with your hands to the best of your ability; and walk the path of peace with your feet. Your whole body is holy, and all your members are members of Christ. *“Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Far be it!”* says the Apostle (1 Cor. 6:15). Flee from immorality; let no one wrong another; let no one speak evil of another. Nothing can be hidden from God: for *“the eyes of the Lord are brighter than the sun, piercing through the darkness, seeing all human ways and examining what is hidden in secret places”* (Sirach 23:27–28). Do not laugh recklessly. Do not sit too close to one another when you talk. Do not inflame your blood by overfilling your stomach. Do not drink wine—I offer this as sound advice to the healthy. We have enough internal turmoil, enough natural fire; but if you add

the fire of wine to it, you will kindle a disastrous blaze: the flesh will not withstand it, it will boil over and demand its due. I warn you of this, forewarning of the disastrous consequences: God has appointed a day of judgment, and He will condemn and deliver to unimaginable torments with the demons those who do such things. Anticipate the Lord in confession, revealing the suggestions instilled by the devil. Do everything in a proper manner, sleep in moderation, and, upon waking as soon as possible, perform the prescribed vigil. And you will be blessed if the Lord finds you doing so.

136. By asking questions about what is proper for them and whether anyone is straying into what is improper, remind them of the entire structure of the obligatory way of life

136. 1) By asking questions about what is proper for them and whether anyone is straying into what is improper, remind them of the entire structure of the life of duty. – 2) Then he exhorts them: you have labored—continue to labor; you have fought—continue to fight; do not let your labors go to waste, inspiring them with the promise of a fruitful harvest and God’s approval at the judgment. [2, 66]

11. (Ibid.) I greet you once again in writing—and ask, how are your affairs going? How does the peace of God protect you? How does the fear of the Lord purify you? How do His justifications gladden your hearts? How does the order of piety unite you? How does sincere faith strengthen you? How does your firmly established vow of obedience bind you together? How does sincere obedience uplift you? What is the Christ-like humility in your wisdom? What are your comings and goings? And how is the confession of your innermost thoughts going?—Furthermore, how are the works of your hands proceeding? Has the harvest begun?... Tell us these things and all the rest, and bring us joy. – We place our hope in you, yet we also fear; and at times we worry, wondering if anyone among you is acting recklessly? Is anyone grumbling? Is anyone indulging in the flesh? Is anyone becoming insolent? Are some not consorting with the devil, plotting just as those who have gathered together against the Lord and His Christ, saying, *‘Let us break their bonds and cast off their yoke from us.’ But the One who lives in heaven will laugh at them, and the Lord will mock them. Then He will speak to them in His wrath and crush them in His fury*” (Ps. 2). For I have been set over you by your free consent, and you yourselves have willingly submitted to my authority. That is why I speak to you in this way, proclaiming the Lord’s command to you.

12. You have labored and still labor; you have struggled and still struggle, enduring the Lord in your asceticism, in your obedience, in the subduing of your wills, and in the suppression of your desires. Do not, then, destroy what you have accomplished before. But just as you have sown and continue to sow amid tears, sighs, and all manner of hardships, so may you reap with joy when the Judge of all rewards each person according to his deeds. *“Hear, O heaven, and let the earth take note, for the Lord has spoken.”* – Oh, may this word not apply to us, brothers: *“I bore and raised up sons, but they rejected Me. The donkey knows its owner, and the donkey at its master’s manger; but Israel does not know Me, and My people do not understand!”* (Isa. 1:2–3). But let it be this: *“Your sons shall be like olive shoots around your table”*—to be understood spiritually. *“Thus shall a man be blessed who fears the Lord”* (Ps. 127:4–5). – Listen, I beg you. Be wise in this matter, and all of you be of one mind, following the guidance of your Abbot. Live as though you were dying every day; do not worry about food and drink, do not be overly distressed, and do not grumble. What does the Apostle say?—*“If bread causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to stumble”* (1 Cor. 8:13). Do not, then, be sons of rebellion, nor sons of fornication, nor children of wrath and sin, provoking God with shameful deeds. – Woe to your hearts! Woe to the eyes of your mind! – *“God is a God of vengeance!”* (Ps. 93:1). *“There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and exposed to His eyes”* (Heb. 4:13). Who will not be terrified? Who will not tremble? Who will not devote himself to pleasing God *“even to the shedding of blood”*?

137. Instructions on how to perform services during the harvest, how to sustain oneself with food and rest, how to spend the night, and how to conduct oneself in general

137. Instructions on how to perform rituals, sustain oneself with food, and rest during the harvest; how to spend the night; and how to conduct oneself in general. [2, 67] (Ibid.) I know full well that you are now engaged in hard labor—being scorched by the sun’s rays and drenched in sweat because of the harvest and the grape-gathering. That is why I deemed it timely to tell you what is appropriate regarding these very labors of yours. – May the Lord’s blessing be upon you, my children, and may the Lord your God bless you from His holy heights, reviving you and strengthening your souls and bodies, so that you may have sufficient

strength for both spiritual service and physical labor, and perform both without extreme exhaustion. I know how hot and scorching the summer days of harvest are, and what weariness they cause; so much so that if the special zeal of the laborers did not give them strength, scarcely anyone would be able to endure them. I therefore beg you, for the love of Christ, to persevere in both of these endeavors. After performing your customary psalm-singing and prayer to God early in the morning with dignity and a cheerful spirit, set about your work and labor, mentally reciting the psalms until the third hour arrives. At that point, cease your work and sing the third hour to the Lord with devotion, raising your hands to heaven to ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit to strengthen your souls and bodies; then, after making three or four—or more—kneeling prostrations with attentive prayer, partake of what the Lord has provided, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, as is our custom. – Take care, however, that during these meals there be no noise or commotion. – And during the harvest work, there must be neither quarrels nor self-will, from which come strife and shouting, nor conversations, nor laughter, nor backbiting—let there be nothing of this sort or similar among you. But may your work be blessed, as it is performed before the face of God. And you must help one another. When someone working near you falls behind, whether from exhaustion or some difficulty, stop as well—and help him, so that the harvest proceeds evenly and everyone maintains the same level of effort. When, at the direction of those supervising the work, you rest at noon, or sleep at night under the trees or under a shelter, see to it that your bodies are not close to one another and certainly do not touch, and that no two of you separate yourselves from the others to go to any secluded places. The foremen must keep watch over this. The sower of tares is here unseen; lest he creep up secretly and pour his pernicious poison into someone, and we thereby provoke the wrath of our Lord God. For this reason, be vigilant. During the service, since there are not many psalms to sing, care must be taken that even these are not performed hastily or haphazardly, but with attention, so that we may be in the right frame of mind for every good work. Let everyone be present; let no one be absent. Anyone who is absent—even if he later works as hard as ten men—is unworthy of the meal on that day. I say this out of concern for your salvation and to remind you that no one should stray from the way of God. If anyone has any sorrow, let him not hide it, but bring it before the elders: they will judge and heal what needs healing. No one should remain idle: such a person has no share with the brothers and is not counted among those who seek the Lord. – Are you too weak to chop wood, or do you not know how, brother? Take up the axe handles; can you not even take up the axe handles? Gather grapes, carry water, or perform whatever else is needed, whether outdoors or indoors. And God will accept this, according to your zeal, just as He accepted the widow's two mites.

138. Upon hearing good news about the brothers, he rejoices and encourages them to excel even more, illustrating how those in authority should act and what all the brothers should be like

138. Upon hearing good news about the brothers, he rejoices and encourages them to strive even more, illustrating how those in leadership should act and what all the brothers should be like. [2, 68] (Ibid.) The brothers came and told me how things are going with you, and this brought me unspeakable joy. For it is no small joy to me to hear that all of you are being saved by the grace of Christ, maintaining your good disposition and fulfilling the divine commandments, by which, as you are enlightened, you become children of the Light and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. O my children! Continue to live wisely, continue to guard yourselves, continue to spend day after day, warmed by divine love and renewed by the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, putting to death every indulgence and every lust of the corrupt flesh, and in their place planting and cultivating, like the Garden of God, the everlasting virtues, covering all things, enduring all things in submission, obedience, kindness, love, and compassion, being kind to one another, rejoicing in one another, and bearing one another's burdens. And first of all, you, my child, Varsanufius, observe the ministry entrusted to you by me without fault, before the face of the God who gives life to all, acting neither out of partiality, nor out of arrogance, nor out of indignation, nor out of foolish self-abasement, nor out of a frenzied mind, but as wisely and kindly as a nursing mother warms her children; and be willing to lay down your soul for your brothers and my children. It is a great task to shepherd Christ's flock. What did the Lord say to the Apostle Peter? "If you love Me, feed My sheep." So too, my child, if you love Christ the Lord and me, a sinner, shepherd my children well—or rather, Christ's lambs. But if some of them leap about like young goats—for I have heard such things—tame their restlessness, and explain to them that if they remain like young goats, on the Day of Judgment they will be placed on the left side of Christ the Lord, among those who are perishing, in Satan's camp; frighten their hearts with this, and strike them with this solemn warning, so that they too may become

lambs: for lambs are meek, gentle, humble, obedient, and quiet, while young goats are restless, unrestrained, stubborn, and ill-tempered. Woe to such; for condemnation to eternal fire awaits them. None of you, my children, should be like this—none, I beg you; for otherwise the shepherd will be compelled either to starve them or to cast them out of his flock. But understand what I am saying, and do the will of God. – You too, my son Daniel, take care how you conduct yourself among your brothers: instruct them, season them with wisdom, and guide them; do not tolerate disorder, innovations, or outbursts; love those who are virtuous, reverent, not bold, dignified, hardworking, obedient, humble, not grumbling, not mocking; but do not tolerate those who are contrary to them without hatred, and correct them by showing them examples of what is better; let no one among you be alien to God or displeasing to Him. For the lawless, the whisperer, the complainer, the mocker, and the secret sinner are alien to God and displeasing to Him. Let no one like this be among you; but let you all be God-fearing, God-loving, and God-seeking. May the Lord preserve you, my children!

139. *The fear of God and love kindle zeal and keep one on the right path; but those who lack them give themselves over to negligence and fall*

139. 1) The fear of God and love kindle zeal and keep one on the right path; but those who lack them give themselves over to negligence and fall. – 2) We must care for and pray for the return of such people to the right path, while at the same time keeping ourselves more strictly in check. [2, 69]

13. (Ibid.) Grace and peace to you, in your good order, in obedience, humility, reverence, and kindness, in your day and night hymns and psalms. See to it that all this remains steadfast among you without fail. This can only be so if you have the fear of God and the fire of His love does not go out in your hearts. For when it goes out in any soul, then faintheartedness and sloth, along with other thorns and thistles of the passions, bodily laxity and licentiousness, sloth and despondency, excessive sleep, insatiable eating, and every other kind of sin—especially burning lusts, darkening thoughts, inclinations, and deeds of a ruinous life. The sign, however, that this holy and incorporeal fire has not gone out is that the soul always strives for what is good and diligently performs all that is required, without weakening or losing heart—obedience, work, psalm-singing, confession, handicrafts, prayer, prescribed abstinence, and all other deeds that fall under blessed obedience. Blessed is such a person, pleasing to God and beloved by all, who, from the good treasure of his heart, like flowers, brings forth manifestations of divine graces, reflected both on his godly countenance and in all his movements and words. Those possessed by improper thoughts, however, gradually stray from what is right, and then completely fall away from their confession (vow) and become the devil's prey.

14. But let us pray that He who daily calls back all who have strayed from the right path may also bring them back into His flock, so that sin may not utterly consume them; yet do not neglect to seek out the lost yourselves. For if those who have lost any of the irrational animals do not easily bear this loss, how much more should those entrusted with the care of rational sheep strive earnestly to seek out those among them who are perishing?—Since these have fallen, let the others stand all the more firmly and hold fast to what is right; for it is written: *“When the wicked fall, the righteous are terrified”* (Prov. 29:16). Take this to heart and continue to walk with greater caution; for on both sides, the devil is setting traps for you. Therefore, let no one harbor unconfessed thoughts or act according to his own will. Let no one be lustful or self-centered; for those who were possessed by these evil dispositions slipped into the pit of destruction and fled; and now, in a state of wretchedness, they wander aimlessly to and fro like lost sheep. Prayer has departed from them: for to whom will they lift up their hands, having fled from God? Psalms and songs fall silent on their lips. To whom will they sing, *“I have waited patiently for the Lord,”* when, through cowardice, they have destroyed themselves? Therefore, pray for their return; but at the same time, pray for your own steadfastness, saying: *“If war rises up against me, in Him I will trust”* (Ps. 26:3). *“Many have assailed me from my youth, but they have not prevailed against me”* (Ps. 128:2). *“This is my rest forever; here I will dwell, for I have chosen it”* (Ps. 131:14)—so that, as soldiers of Christ, fighting but not falling, you may be deemed worthy to receive the crown of righteousness for your endurance.

140. *He grieves over those who break their vows and leave the monastery, and in every way urges them to return to the right path and remain steadfast in the monastic life*

140. He grieves over those who break their vows and leave the monastery, and does everything in his power to persuade them to return to the right path and remain steadfast in the monastic life. [2, 70] Having now learned of what is happening among you, I was both glad and grieved: I was glad for the health and well-

being of your sub-abbots, and for the brothers who are walking in the right path and those who have walked it, in pious humility, in good patience, and in a life pleasing to God; I grieved for those who have strayed from the path and fled, even though they have been called back. May the Lord preserve you more and more, and strengthen you to the fulfillment of the course of your true life; but to those who have strayed from the path, I address the following words of the Prophet: *“O son of man! Why do you love vanity and seek falsehood?”* (Ps. 4: 3)—seeking to fulfill your own wills, driven by your passions, without keeping before your eyes the fear of God, nor the unquenchable judgment, nor the unextinguishable fire, nor the utter darkness, nor the gnashing of teeth and the unimaginably dreadful Tartarus, but so fearlessly and brazenly, so deceitfully and frivolously judging God in your wayward undertakings. How long will you forget His judgments? How long will you fail to come to repentance? How long will you harbor deceitful counsels in your souls, inventing excuses for your sins and indulging in vain hopes? – Rise up, at last, from your fall; dispel the darkness surrounding you; put an end to your foolish desires. From whom are you fleeing? From whom are you turning away? Is it not from the Holy Spirit, whom you received on the day of your deliverance? – But enough of this for now. – Do not persist in this; do not give the devil further cause to rejoice over you; cease to please your adversary. Love the Lord who has loved us; receive the good Lord into yourselves; and He, being all-merciful, will forgive you the past for the sake of your humility. So, I beg and implore you: correct the failings of your souls, strengthen the foundations of your hearts, and gather together your scattered thoughts. Remember your vows. After making them, even if fire and the sword threatened you, even if torments and tortures lay before you, you should by no means have strayed from them; but because of a trifling matter—your own evil desire—you broke the Divine Covenant and your sacred vows; you leaped up like calves stung by a sting and rushed into waterless and impassable places; you settled in a village, associated with worldly men and women, and ate and drank as if at a feast. – What kind of fruit can come from such seeds?! Woe to me, the wretched one! I wish the earth would swallow me up. – Now is the time for me to say with the Prophet: *“Let the mountains fall upon me, and let the hills cover me,”* the lawless and sinful one (Hosea 10:8). For those whom I have begotten have forsaken God’s laws, defiled their bodies, betrayed their virginity, refused to obey, and become a laughingstock to the demons. For does not Satan lead those who obey him here and there, and does he not then devour them with the mouth of sin? – But let us at least come here to sober up, come to our senses, look around, examine the enemy’s deception and our own recklessness, reproach ourselves, humble ourselves, be contrite, fall down in confession, and gradually return to our former beautiful way of life. Come now! I implore all of you who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God! Stand valiantly, march steadfastly, and be submissive to your leader and to the other authorities among you. Whoever rejects them rejects me, and whoever accepts them accepts me—or rather, not me, but God, for whose sake I am what I am, and you are what you are.

141. Urges one to set aside one’s own reasoning and will, and to entrust oneself with faith to guidance, for lasting success in the proper way of life

141. He urges us to set aside our own reasoning and our own will, and to entrust ourselves with faith to His guidance, for lasting success in the life we ought to live. [2, 71] Looking at the attacks being launched against us from here and there, I can say in the words of the Apostle: *“Truly, a ‘thorn in the flesh,’ an angel of Satan, has been given to us, so that we may not become conceited,”* but rather that we may humble ourselves, accept correction, and take refuge under the mighty hand of God, as those who cannot be saved otherwise. When, with all diligence, we subdue our rebellious reasoning and come to know ourselves—that we are utterly wretched, unable to do anything as we ought without God’s help, through the mediation of the one who guides us, whoever he may be—then an Angel will descend into the abyss of our passions, as never before into the abyss of Babylon, will uproot the flame of lust from our hearts, and will bring forth in our souls—like a dewy breeze—the gift of purity. Therefore, let us humble ourselves; down with our reasoning, down with our eyes; let our minds bow their heads; and behold, the mercy of the God who loves mankind is near. — Let no one be unfaithful, no one deceitful, no one insincere, who blesses with his lips but stands far away in his heart, as is the case with one who follows only his own nature and his own reason. *“Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor”* (1 Cor. 10:24). Be wholly light, wholly sincere, wholly true sons; let us walk as children, as brothers, as co-heirs; let us accept nothing that might cause harm to one another, and let us not allow any new transgressions.

142. He invites us to rejoice that we are living a life of poverty, full of privations and sorrows, through ascetic labors, having renounced all worldly things; for this is the sure path to the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven

142. He invites us to rejoice that we lead a life of poverty, full of privations and sorrows, through ascetic labors, having renounced all worldly things; for this is the sure path to the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven. [2, 72] Though it may seem somewhat bold, I will say to you in the words of the Apostle: “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4). Why? Because you are doing God’s work, because you have taken the monastic habit, because you are subject to the law of obedience and fulfill it daily—suffering, enduring hardship, living in poverty, and grieving—whether in fasting, vigils, sleeping on the bare ground, in labors and weariness, in the duties of your obedience, in the curbing of your will, in the unpredictability of commands, in the unwashing of the body, in the wearing of rags, shabby clothes, and shoes; I will add—in penances and excommunications, and even more so, —in ceaseless torments, jostling, stings, as if stabs and arrows, striking us visibly and invisibly from demons—whether through fornication, sloth, gluttony, the restlessness of thoughts and desires, or other innumerable passions. — Judge for yourselves, then, whether I have spoken rightly: “*Rejoice always.*” Indeed, my brothers! Blessed are you and thrice blessed, enduring all this for God’s sake, having chosen this and embracing it. And what follows from this? — In the age to come, truth and abundant peace, life, joy, and eternal rest, adoption as sons, and the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven will shine forth in your hearts: for you have so wisely, so commendably, and so divinely sought and continue to seek these things—having hated the world and all that is in the world, having turned away from parents, brothers, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, having left behind your cities, villages, fields, homes, and homelands, and having clung to the one God, the Lord and King of Glory, the good and most excellent Master, working for Him, standing before Him, serving Him, singing to Him unceasingly; and you have no word for father or mother, no concern for wife or children, no care for male and female servants, no anxiety over wealth and possessions, no strife over ranks and distinctions, no preoccupation with feasts and sparkling wines, nor any other carnal pleasures, —nor about anything earthly and transitory, but only about a life pleasing to God and the inheritance of the eternal blessings promised in heaven. Is it not fitting, then, that God should love you? Is it not fitting that He should call you His children? Is it not right that on that day He will say to you: “*Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit what has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world*”? Such are your deeds, such are your pursuits, such are your hopes!—Therefore, I say again: “*Rejoice always.*”

143. He compares the ascetic life to a race in the arena and gives detailed instructions on how to successfully complete this race and receive the reward

143. He compares the ascetic life to a race in the stadium and gives detailed instructions on how to successfully complete this race and receive the reward. [2, 76] Our spiritual struggle is like a race in the arena, as St. Paul pointed out (1 Cor. 9:24). But in that race, a small space is designated and a short time is allotted. In our struggle, however, the path stretches from earth to heaven, and the time spans an entire lifetime, after which crowns are awarded to the victors. Our contest is watched by thousands and myriads of holy angels—with the Lord of all, seated on His unapproachable throne of glory, as the organizer—and opposed by malicious demons who strive in every way to place obstacles in our path, to knock us down, and to destroy us. — Judging by this, you yourselves can see how attentive and cautious, diligent and tireless we must be, so that we may not only begin the race well but also complete it. Merely beginning will be of no benefit to us unless, with youthful vigor and manly perseverance, we press forward; but even this does not yet mean victory unless, with the same zeal and determination, we persevere until death itself, even if our lives were to be prolonged for a very long time. Let us therefore, brothers and fathers, persevere again and again; let us strive ever farther forward, seeking help and strength from above from the God who loves mankind, so that we may persevere well and successfully reach the appointed line or goal. The Word of God has set before us the most formidable feat, promising unspeakable joy and glory to those who run well and conquer, but threatening the most calamitous and terrifying fate to the negligent and careless, who either do not move from the spot, or stop before obstacles, or willfully stray from the path. “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear,*” says the Lord. Hear this, then, my children, and pay attention: run with vigor, and keep a watchful eye, knowing that cunning demons are always ready to stand in our way and set a stumbling block before us. Know that no one can serve well unless he strips himself of all that weighs him down, retaining only the breastplate of faith—by which I

mean not only the renunciation of all external possessions, but also the removal of the inner diversity of earthly thoughts and desires. In our struggle, no one can succeed unless they train their body to be content with little food and drink; unless, instead of oil, they anoint themselves with steadfastness and tireless patience; unless they undergo, as if it were a course of physical training, the trials and exercises required before taking the schema. During the journey, however, no one should hinder their fellow ascetics, nor envy them, nor slander them; but they must keep their minds and eyes fixed on how to successfully reach the end of the course, adding effort to effort, zeal to zeal, and inspiration to inspiration, without looking to the right or to the left, paying no heed to praise, and not being carried away by vanity, not losing heart in the face of fatigue, obstacles, and conflicts, and not becoming disheartened by setbacks, so that, having thus fulfilled everything in a godly, humble, brotherly, and sincere manner, upon the successful completion of this journey, we may be deemed worthy to receive the promised reward from our Lord.

144. Let us strive for every virtue, and guard against all that is evil, especially that which appears to be good

144. 1) Let us be zealous for every virtue, and let us guard against all that is evil, especially that which appears to be good. – 2) The enemy has many traps. The best way to discern them is through the examination of one's thoughts. – 3) We must arm ourselves against every passion with the struggle of its opposite. The method of combating envy is held up as an example. – 4) We are urged to observe propriety in all things. [2, 77]

1. Come, moved by the desire for what is beneficial to all; let us embrace the warmest zeal for salvation; let us all do what is fitting, desire what is right, and seek what is beneficial—the young and the old, beginners and elders alike; let us purify ourselves from every defilement of the flesh and spirit, let us make ourselves vessels of election, creating holiness in the spirit, avoiding occasions of sin, not allowing pride, disobedience, sensuality, sensuality, and striving to enrich ourselves with virtues—humility, obedience, purity, and brotherly love; let us cast far from our hearts carnal and sensual inclinations, and put an end to relationships that indulge them—not only with those outside us, but also with our own inner selves—that is, let us not love one brother more than another: for such love is deceitful and hateful to God; outwardly it appears brotherly, but in essence it is satanic.

2. You know how many snares the devil has and how intricately woven his nets are—and that no one can be delivered from them except through the confession of thoughts and desires, with faith in one's spiritual father, accompanied by humility and obedience. Those who do not walk this path fall—and have fallen before, as we read; but those who follow this law have become shining lights in the world, having escaped the darkness of sin and the devil by mortifying their desires.

3. I implore you, therefore, by the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be wise for your own salvation. Whoever is tormented by a particular passion must undertake a corresponding struggle against it—against envy, for example, a struggle against envy—namely, hatred of this world's fleeting glory—because this passion arises from the desire to appear better than one's neighbor in some way: whether in the liveliness of the mind, or in melodious psalm-singing, or in pleasant reading, or in some other ability, spiritual or physical; and once kindled, it burns with a slow fire, exhausting and consuming us. But since we are members of one another—for we are all one body—let us rejoice with one another, regarding as our own all that distinguishes others; for when one is distinguished by one thing, another by another, and a third by yet another—yet all are one body of brotherhood—then through all these things the brotherhood is distinguished and becomes all-perfect, and the honor of this extends to each one: one is melodious, and you are loud-voiced; one reads clearly, and you quickly understand what is read; one is more quick-witted, while you are more capable of handling affairs; one is even more useful in managing tasks, while you are more eager to obey; and the latter is far better than the former, for what appears to be something before it truly is such is nothing at all. What is melody, or harmony, or reading, or speed, or calligraphy, or music compared to blessed and most lovely humility and obedience, to kindness and simplicity, before meekness and gentleness, before kindness and patience, before love of God and active prayer, and before other virtues—the acquisition of which is a matter of will and seeking—even if one were voiceless, unable to sing, a poor reader, tongue-tied, cross-eyed, ugly of face, or lame. Thus, our good God has made the gift of virtue easily attainable and accessible to all of us, making it dependent not on physical advantages but on the dispositions of the soul, in which it is sown, grows, and attains perfection.

4. Let us be content with what we have, rejoicing also in what each of our brothers possesses, uniting with one another and living according to God with every kind of order. You see, brothers, that we are growing in number; and it is necessary that everything among us be in good order: for if even a small thing strays from its proper order, the entire community is set in motion and wavers, losing its beauty of virtue, as happens and in every other community. For us, who have gathered as one in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and who live according to the order of the angelic dwelling, complete order in all things is an urgent necessity—that is, to sing and pray, to stand and change places, to sit and rise, to sleep and wake up, to go down and come up, to be silent and to speak, to eat and drink, to enter and exit, to ask and to answer, to gather and to disperse, to seek and to give, to serve and to receive service, to place and to hold, to dress and to undress, to put on shoes and to take them off—all of this is visibly done among us every day. When order is maintained in all of this, then our entire brotherhood appears like a calm sea—though in motion, its gentle waves are stirred as if by the Holy Spirit. But when, through carelessness, some disorder creeps in, then it is tossed and churns with waves, as if stirred up by strong winds and storms. Is this not what we see among us when noise, shouting, laughter, and chatter arise among you—as happened recently during the distribution of holy water and as you were leaving the refectory, when the four deans barely managed to restore proper order among you?—Not so, my children and brothers, not so. You know what is said about God’s will: that it is not only “good,” but also “perfect” and “well-pleasing” (Rom. 12:2), for the good of many. — I said this, however, not to reproach you, but as a reminder of what has happened before, so that such incidents may be avoided in the future. May the Lord of peace and the God of all comfort, who sustains all things in heaven and on earth in order, grant you strength and fortitude for every good work and endeavor, for every peace and unity of mind, for every order and tranquility, in sincere love for one another, so that on the day of His revelation we may be found among the faces of the saints and the host of the sanctified, together with all the saints who have pleased Him from of old.

145. A life of patience in communal obedience is true martyrdom

145. A life of patience in communal monastic life; this is true martyrdom. [2, 78] Guard yourselves against wicked collusion, presumptuous self-will, and the pernicious violation of monastic rules, conforming in all things to the rule handed down to us by the Holy Fathers; for what has been established for us has not been established haphazardly, but through the testing of all things from ancient times, with much toil and sweat; and what has been established has been established in accordance with the requirements and essence of our angelic way of life, and to refute those who interpret the Lord’s commandments differently. Continue, then, in your good work and walk to the end the path of the Lord, anointing yourselves with the oil of meekness and patience and enduring every kind of ascetic hardship, for which a vast enjoyment of eternal blessings is prepared. What, then, are these hardships? The very ones you actually endure every day: vigils and psalm-singing, manual labor, eating and drinking sparingly, the sequential fulfillment of one duty after another, propriety in standing in church and in the order of the procession, in gait, in clothing, in footwear, in head coverings—sorrows arising from privations, from being overlooked, from contempt, and everything of the sort. And many of the Holy Fathers rightly testify—and St. Basil the Great, above all, testifies—that the state of obedience is true martyrdom. – But look, what benefit do we derive from this? And what reward awaits us for it? – The unfading crowns of righteousness, the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, adoption as sons, incorruption, immortality, and every other bliss beyond imagination. Having such promises, my brothers, endure again and again the labor of asceticism that lies before you, without being daunted by the occasional stumbles of some, nor losing heart because of the difficulties and sorrows you encounter, for the sake of our life according to God: for if we do not grieve here, we will not rejoice on that day—if we do not endure hardship and lament here, we will not find spaciousness and joy in the age to come. But the more we grieve and mourn here, the more we triumph and are afflicted, the greater the consolation we will find there: instead of sorrows, we will receive joy; instead of poverty, wealth; instead of meager earthly possessions—many heavenly treasures; instead of bodily sickness, spiritual well-being; instead of leaving the world, the Lord’s call to Himself: for what will it be like for us, and how great will it be, when we hear that blessed voice calling out and saying: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, which has been prepared for you since the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:25). Therefore, if it were required of us to die daily for the sake of Christ’s love, we would choose this and submit ourselves to being beaten, burned, cut to pieces, and to endure every kind of torment, just as the holy martyrs endured. For it was not one thing that they were

called to love and cherish, and another that we are; but we have one struggle and one aspiration, since by nature we are one—God’s creatures, brought into the world for a single purpose: to glorify God by fulfilling His holy commandments. The cutting off of limbs, the shedding of blood, and the torments of tyrants did not always occur everywhere. We have been deemed worthy to embark on this true feat of a noble life in obedience, and we undertake martyrdom in a different way: instead of the severing of limbs, we sever our own will; instead of the shedding of blood, we cast out sinful thoughts and desires; instead of tyrannical torments, we endure the attacks of demons and the hostility of the world; which is why, with hope that is not in vain, we look forward to sharing in the future age with the holy martyrs.

146. On the occasion of an earthquake, you remind us of the shaking of heaven and earth on the last day and offer instruction appropriate to that

146. On the occasion of an earthquake, you remind us of the shaking of heaven and earth on the last day and offer instruction in keeping with that. [2, 79] After the earthquake we experienced yesterday, there is nothing more appropriate for us to discuss than this very event—namely, what causes it and why does it occur? Among the Greeks, some say one thing, others another; but the divine David explains this to us when he speaks of God: *“Look upon the earth and make it tremble; touch the mountains, and they smoke”* (Ps. 103:32). Just as when a master casts an angry glance at a servant, the servant trembles—so the true Lord of all and Creator, before Whom all creatures stand as servants and handmaids—when He chooses to show His righteous indignation toward us for our sins, with the all-seeing eye of His power He gazes menacingly upon creation and *“causes it to tremble,”* so that we, terrified and trembling like servants who have brought wrath upon ourselves, may keep ourselves pure and turn to the fulfillment of His commandments.—Behold, my brothers, how terrible is His power! Such is the manifestation of His indignation, and the fury of His wrath! And if the present is such and so great, what will the future be like at the end of all things? For He Himself speaks with a threat: *“I will once more shake the heavens and the earth”* (Haggai 2:7), showing the extraordinary nature of that event. What terror will be seen, and what trembling will there be when the earth gives up all who have died since the beginning of time, when the heavens roll up like a scroll, the stars fall, the heavenly bodies change, and the sound of the Archangel’s trumpet resounds over all who dwell on the earth, when our God Himself will come openly, with thousands upon thousands and myriads of angels, archangels, and heavenly powers marching before His face, when the thrones are set in place, the judgment seat is established, and the incorruptible Judge and Lord will lay bare all that is hidden, all that we have experienced. When, upon the completion of all this in the twinkling of an eye, the great and terrible judgment is pronounced—calling the righteous into the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life, while sending the wicked into eternal fire, into utter darkness, into the dreadful abyss of hell, into gloomy Tartarus, to the never-sleeping worms, to the gnashing of teeth and all the other dreadful torments? Who can bear all this, brothers? Who can endure such fears and horrors! Who can stand firm before this overwhelming and mind-numbing event! To see the heavens torn asunder, the earth shaken, a multitude of angels, and the Lord Himself, God, coming on the clouds to judge the whole earth!!! – But this long-awaited event is not far off—it is near: the Judge stands at the door! – Behold, the Bridegroom! Go out to meet Him! – But if we have bright lamps of purity and sufficient oil of mercy and love, blessed are we; we will meet the Bridegroom joyfully and enter His palace. If not, however, we will be sent away from those doors, which will not open to us when we knock, having acted wickedly, having dozed off and fallen asleep, and having proved unprepared. – Therefore, so that this may not happen to us, let us who are asleep awaken from the slumber of carelessness; let us who are slacking off rise up from despondency; let us sober up those who are intoxicated by shameful thoughts, purify our souls, which we have defiled with inappropriate desires, and strengthen our hearts with firm faith, for those whose hearts have been shaken by double-mindedness, fickleness, and sensuality. Let us, then, who are already good, become even better; let us who are already enlightened become even more enlightened; let us who are already pure become even purer; let us who are already zealous become even more zealous; let us who are already virtuous love doing good even more; let us who are already humbly wise become even more humble and wise; let us who are already obedient become even more obedient; we will do all that is good and fulfill every commandment, so that we may prove worthy to enter the palace of the Bridegroom of our souls for endless joy.

147. We will prosper more and more in every virtue, striving earnestly and avoiding all that is evil, and adorning ourselves with the deeds of angelic fellowship, following the example of the holy fathers and in the hope of the great promises

147. We will progress more and more in every virtue, striving earnestly and avoiding all that is evil, and adorning ourselves with the deeds of the angelic community, following the example of the holy fathers and in anticipation of the great promises. [2, 80] Let us not bring shame upon the deeds we have already accomplished through our present actions; as if we had only just begun, let us zealously fulfill every duty and every virtue, receiving light upon light and ascending from glory to glory: this is achieved through your good conduct in all things, when you are clothed in the garment of humility, adorned with obedience, and show active love and meekness, and shun self-will and self-indulgence—from which spring death, deceit, pride, and the love of glory—in which swift ruin lies and from which all who have fallen from the beginning until now have perished on this field of obedience. Now, having already been cleansed of all thorns, tares, and weeds, be fruitful and show forth a new life, bringing nothing into it from the speculations of those who have stumbled, lest you too suffer the same fate. Be sincere and pure in all things; bear revilement, humiliation, and abuse with good cheer; all of you show steadfastness in the struggle for what is good, self-control, and perseverance; for in this lies the martyrdom of a life of obedience; and all who endure it will receive the crown of righteousness. As those burning with love for Christ and tested by trials and tribulations, bear with courage all that that happens day by day, and follow in the truly golden life of our fathers, in which we will find no disobedience, pride, contradiction, insolence, reproach, or turmoil, but where the peaceful, angelic state reigns, resting under the breath of the Spirit. You know that what I am saying is truly good; if it is good, then it is also desirable; if it is desirable, why should we not love it, desire it, and strive to attain it?

148. Goodness is hard to instill in us, but evil is more readily accepted

148. 1) Goodness is hard for us to adopt, while evil is more readily accepted. – 2) The path of goodness is like climbing a mountain, while the path of sin is like descending from a mountain. – 3) We must look upward and not descend into earthly thoughts. – 4) We have different gifts and different thoughts; but we will receive our reward according to our zeal and labor. – 5) Let us bear all kinds of privations, inconveniences, hardships, and sorrows with good cheer; for this is what we have set out to do. But this is the sure path to salvation. [2, 31]

5. It usually happens that when someone speaks of something sinful, having mentioned it once or twice, they predispose their listeners toward evil. As for what is good, however, even after speaking many times about what leads to salvation, one barely manages to attract anyone's attention or disposition toward it. It is so difficult to instill goodness in human nature; on the contrary, evil is very easily accepted by it.

6. Walking the path of goodness is like climbing a mountain: how much toil, discomfort, and trouble is involved? In contrast, the path of sin is like descending a mountain: it is easy, and obstacles are not visible because of the speed of one's descent. Therefore, the path of goodness requires special care, guidance, and caution.

7. Here, we must not keep in mind anything earthly or transitory, but only what is heavenly and eternal, if we wish to ascend rather than descend. For just as one who is ascending to a height, if he looks down, experiences a certain dimness of vision—so too, for one who, while ascending the path of virtue, fixates his attention on earthly pleasures, the eye of the soul is dimmed. We must look upward, for there is our Head—Christ the Lord; there is our treasure and eternal life. Let us not grow weak as we ascend, nor lose heart when we see the height of the ascent. We cannot reach the end by our own strength, but God's help and His intercession are near.

8. We have set out on this path and have prospered, and each of us, according to our zeal and labor, now stands at one level or another of virtue. And we differ from one another more in our spiritual dispositions than in our physical appearance: for one loves humility and obedience more fervently, while another loves them less so; or one is distinguished by the gift of love for one's neighbor, while another by zealous care for many—whether through manual tasks, fieldwork, or household duties, or by meeting needs, such as those of the steward, cellarer, refectory attendant, shoemaker, tailor, and others. Each of us walks in the Lord's way, and this path leads everyone to incorruptible crowns.

9. Let us only patiently and humbly endure the labors, sweat, and hardships of our work, the vigils and fasting, the singing of psalms, as well as the cold, the meagerness of our clothing and footwear, and other

discomforts. God is my witness that I do not view this with indifference; I pity you, I sympathize with you, and to the best of my ability, I strive to bring peace to all of you. But you yourselves can see that it is no small task to clothe, shoe, and comfort so many. – However, that is precisely why we set out—to go hungry, to thirst, to be naked, and to live in poverty for the sake of Christ’s love, by which the Divine Apostle himself lived in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, and in other hardships (2 Cor. 11:27); and not only he, but all the saints “*walked in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated... wandering in deserts and mountains, in caves and in the caverns of the earth*” (Heb. 11:37–38). If this was their lot, how can we, living differently, be deemed worthy of the same honor as they? We cannot. But if anyone finds himself experiencing any of the hardships listed, let him rejoice that he has been made a partaker of the life of the saints. This is how everyone should view everything and accept all things with gratitude, as gifts from God given through His stewards, without any grumbling or complaint. If we act in this way, we are blessed, brothers, for because of this we will be granted rest in a place where there is no sickness, toil, deprivation, or sorrow.

149. He rebukes those who yield to the enemy’s temptations and those who fall, and urges them to resist, giving them hope in the Lord’s help

149. He rebukes those who yield to the enemy’s suggestions and fall into sin, and urges them to resist such influences, giving them hope in the Lord’s help. [2, 82] Once negligence takes root, it gradually draws the inattentive person into the pit of destruction. When someone begins to find it difficult to get up and attend to their duties, resisting the call to obedience and shirking their responsibilities—then the enemy supplies them with suggestions and incitements to commit wicked deeds, and they, yielding to these, not only fall themselves but also lead others astray. Alas! What is happening?—How does the demon triumph? How do we bring shame upon our guardians, the holy Angels? How do we cast ourselves over to the side of the adversary, to the disgrace of our great God, the Good Shepherd, who gave Himself for us in atonement through the cross and death? How shall we look upon His face? How shall we endure His wrath? There is no torment commensurate with our wickedness. — Others inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, while we are carried off by our soul-destroyer. Others display the steadfastness of martyrs, while we are subject to the downfall of the rejected. Others are exalted to the heavens, while we are cast down to the depths of the earth. Others set their hearts on ascending the steps of virtue, while we arrange for ourselves a descent along the steps of ruin. Will we never come to our senses? Will we never wake up? Oh, I beg you, let us hasten to the task, let us take up our labors, let us walk in God’s way, avoiding the causes that lead to downfall and performing all that is godly and virtuous: unquestioning obedience, unceasing labor in manual work, humble faith, so that everything—both what is done and what is thought—may be revealed in confession, the swift rejection of impure thoughts, and at the very first attack of the demon, saying: “Depart from my sight, Satan”—whether he lures us toward the delights of lust, incites us to apostasy, inclines us toward sloth, instills impatience, or stirs us up against the faith. For he always and everywhere sets ambushes, lays snares, and digs pits; he never sleeps, nor is he ever idle; he seeks neither food, nor drink, nor anything else; he has but one task, both night and day—to destroy our souls. Our first and foremost weapon against him, however, is the discernment of thoughts through God’s help and intercession. Let us not, therefore, grow lax and expose ourselves to a fall. Let him be great in the power of sin, let him be cunning in his ways of luring us to evil, let him be malicious by nature and the sole inventor and architect of our ruin—but let us not fear him: for after Christ our God took on our flesh and became incarnate, he was rendered powerless, and we sing: “*The enemy’s weapons have been utterly depleted*” (Ps. 9:7), because the Lord who defeated him has given us the power to tread upon his head. Bolstered by faith, let us regard him as no more than a powerless sparrow, or some insignificant creeping creature, trampled underfoot.

150. By defining who we are, why we are here, where we are, and where we will go, it depicts the judgment of the Last Judgment and the fate of those on the right and those on the left, and draws an edifying lesson

150. By determining who we are, why we exist, where we are, and where we are headed, it depicts the judgment of the Last Day and the fate of those on the right and those on the left, and draws an edifying lesson. [2, 83] I remind you: let us ponder, reason, and reflect—who are we, why do we exist, where are we, and where are we headed? – We are God’s creation, the work of His hands, created in His image and likeness, having authority over all that exists under heaven; for as it is written, He “*has put all things under our feet*”

(Ps. 8:7). We are second only to the angels, just as they are first by nature. – Why do we exist? – For no other reason than to be for the glory of His power, like the angels, through the faithful fulfillment of all His commandments—since we *are* “*a little lower than the angels*” (Ps. 8:6), and will be even less so when we cast off corruption and put on incorruption. – Where are we? In a place of exile, because of our forefather’s recklessness, disobedience, and love of pleasure, which has passed down to us, his descendants: for which we ought to weep and wail, grieve and lament, reflecting on from what glorious dwelling we have been cast out, from what angelic abode, from what blissful, heavenly consolation. “Where shall we go?”—To the world beyond, to the thrice-blessed abode of the angels, to the land of light, to the life that never ends; for at the dreadful Last Judgment, the Judge of all and God, seated on the throne of glory, will in the twinkling of an eye judge all things and reward each person according to their deeds: to those who have kept His commandments, He will grant a place at His right hand, unspeakable joy, the enjoyment of eternal blessings, and the Kingdom of Heaven; but to those who have disobeyed Him and, through negligence or lust, have committed evil—fornication, adultery, theft, envy, murder, debauchery, impurity, apostasy, pride, vanity, and every other kind of evil—He will condemn to eternal torment: to the fire of hell, the poisonous worm, the darkening darkness, the bottomless abyss—each according to his own sins. Whoever, in wisdom, having rightly subdued his nature, endures all with courage, and if necessary, even dies for the sake of goodness—that person on that day will shine forth like the sun, will be among the saints, in the company of the angels, in the joy of the martyrs, and in the delight of the prophets and apostles. But woe to him who, for the sake of momentary carnal pleasure, a peace-loving disposition, or fleeting and trivial pleasures, finds himself there in that wretched part of the realm, subject to merciless rejection and irrevocable banishment to endless torments, in unbreakable bonds, where all that is heard is—alas and woe!—that there is no deliverance, no change, no mercy, neither from God, nor from the Angels, nor from the Saints, forever and ever! Let everyone, my children, reflect on this: those who are running well and those who are stumbling, the strong in spirit and the faint-hearted, the first and the second, the lukewarm and the cold, the rich and the poor in virtue, and indeed every person, every tribe, and every tongue. Let us, too, take this to heart, make good resolutions, and walk the path of God with vigor and diligence, rejecting every passion as a plague; let us lift up our hands to God the Savior, declaring our readiness to endure martyrdom daily: shedding of blood, the severing of limbs, the scourging of the flesh, the crushing of bones—and not merely the deprivation of food, or sweet drink, fine clothing, well-made shoes, the honor of a high position, and many other such things, which it is ridiculous even to mention; so that, having lived well here according to the calling of our vocation, in humility and obedience, and having faithfully kept our vows, we may depart from this earthly prison with joy and stand boldly before the face of God, in the blessed hope of receiving the blessings promised to those who live for His glory.

151. Drawing Lessons for Those Engaged in the Invisible Spiritual Battle from the Way Competitors Prepare for Contests in Secular Spectacles

151. From the way athletes prepare for competitions at secular spectacles, we can draw lessons for those engaged in the invisible spiritual battle. [2, 84] Let us observe how competitors prepare for contests at secular spectacles—perhaps we can learn something from their example for our own spiritual struggles. When the time for a public spectacle approaches—and for the most part, long before that—those who are to compete do not idle away their time, but practice in advance what they must do and how they should do it at the spectacle; they rehearse everything that lies ahead, follow a diet appropriate to the task that excludes foods which might hinder their success, and their conversations at this time revolve entirely around the upcoming contests—how to enter the arena and take the first step, where to go next, and who should attack whom. They have so many tasks and concerns—and for what? To win mortal wreaths through victory and receive the prescribed rewards; along with this, and in order to please spectators and friends, while putting the vanquished to shame. If they go through so much labor and discussion beforehand, what kind of feat, do you think, should we and you undertake, what diligence and prudence, and what unceasing concern for this or that? For our enemy, our adversary and opponent, is neither inexperienced, nor ignorant, nor careless; but standing opposite us, it seems he too gives no small thought to what traps to set against us, how to approach, how to attack, how to repel, how to strike, and how to bring the poor monk down? Is not the struggle that lies before us therefore a great one? Should we not exercise great care and diligence? Should we not, raising our hands, cry out in sorrow: “*Look down, O Lord, from Your holy dwelling*” (Ps. 32:14). “*Stretch out Your power,*” or “*Come, O*

Lord, to save us” (Ps. 79:3)? Truly so; and this with humility and a contrite heart, with hope and courage, with sincere faith and proven obedience. The Lord will not forsake the practitioner of virtue if he calls upon Him for help, saying: “My heart trusts in Him, and He will help me; and my flesh shall flourish” (Ps. 27: 7). And when He helps, who can stand against Him? Who is strong enough to overthrow Him? No one. Let there be thousands and multitudes of enemies; such a one will not fear them. In the name of the Lord, he will repel them and scatter them. “Take courage, then.”

152. Using the examples of a farmer, a swimmer, a merchant, and a traveler, he inspires zeal for the acquisition of spiritual blessings

152. The examples of the farmer, the swimmer, the merchant, and the traveler inspire us to strive for spiritual blessings; and, recalling the obstacles posed by the enemy, they give us hope for success through the help of the Lord and Savior, who has arranged and continues to arrange everything for our salvation, provided we prove ourselves worthy of His help. [2, 85] The farmer, the swimmer, the merchant, and the traveler—all labor, toil day and night, grow weary and exhaust themselves, earnestly desiring to reach their goal—and they do reach it. But our cultivation, our sailing, our trading, and our journey are as far removed from those as the east is from the west, or rather, as the heavens are from the earth. Therefore, how much more excellent, zealous, and unceasing must our labors, deeds, and efforts be than those? —For this reason, St. David exclaims in wonder: *“Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place?”* (Ps. 23:3). And again: *“Who will give me wings like a dove’s? Then I would fly away and rest”* (Ps. 54:7). We labor, eat little, sleep little, attend services, and in our cells we pray, read, listen, sing, do needlework, humble ourselves, obey, and endure everything. But why, then, do we not attain what we desire and see no success? — It is due to nothing other than the obstacles to our salvation set by our adversary, the devil. From the beginning of this age until now, he has been rising up against our race to prevent us from entering heaven, from which he was cast down for his pride. Let us not, however, brothers, lose heart or be disheartened by the difficulties of our life. — For we have God as our helper and intercessor, the God *who “lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from the ash heap”* (Ps. 112:7), *who “girdeth the weakness of our nature with strength”* (Ps. 17:33), and who overcomes our enemy, the tempter. Therefore, let us not lose heart when we see how little we can accomplish on our own. Not even a bridegroom loves his bride, nor do parents care for their children, as much as the Lord of all, God, loves us and cares for us. He cares for our salvation, rejoices in our good conduct, opens the eyes of our mind, reveals to it His radiant beauty and His longed-for splendor, and, guided by the angels, lifts our minds to the contemplation of heaven and all that is in heaven, and protects them from invisible enemies under the shelter of the wings of His divine providence. And what more is there to say? —He is so full of love for us sinners that He was pleased, without leaving the bosom of the Father, to bow the heavens, and in humility to descend to us, and to become man, though He is the Lord of all. Containing all things in His Word, the Most Glorified and Exalted One became an infant, born of a humble Mother, while enriching all things. The culmination of this mystery is that He endured a crucifixion for our sake after terrible sufferings and rose again on the third day, rescuing us from the serpent’s grasp and giving us the power to trample him like a crawling worm. What father has loved his son so much, or a mother her daughter, or a husband his wife, or friends one another, as He has—who endured and suffered so much for us, whom He loves so dearly? Yet His boundless love and kindness toward us cannot be expressed in words or measured by the mind. Having loved us so much and suffered so much for us, how can He not be our helper every day and every hour? Our intercessor and refuge, unless we ourselves turn away from Him, carried away by our own passions? Knowing this, let us take care to remain faithful to the Lord, undertaking every endeavor, courageously enduring all that is sorrowful, and doing all that He has commanded;—and He will make us victorious in the struggle against the enemy and enable us to reach the goal we desire without hindrance.

153. It points out how blessed it is to work for the Lord; and, recalling that the brothers entered the monastery for this very purpose, having left everything behind, it inspires them with the Lord’s words: “Seek, and you will find.”

153. It shows how blessed it is to serve the Lord; and recalling that the brothers entered the monastery for this very purpose, leaving everything behind, it inspires them with the Lord’s words: *“Seek, and you will find...”*—laboring humbly in the monastic duties, which in appearance seem merely worldly, but in spirit are spiritual. [2, 85] What could be more beautiful and blissful than to serve the living God in piety and

righteousness, to purify the soul and body, to guard against every sin, to be drawn by the desire for future blessings, to be constantly transported from the world to the heavenly realm, and to have a soul untrapped by any passion, like a bird flying past all the devil's snares and soaring in the highest heavens. Whoever is like this is always joyful and glad, finds delight and is filled with wonder, beginning here to taste the first fruits of future all-bliss. – For this very reason you left the world and came here; for this very reason you renounced the world and all that is in the world; for this very reason you became strangers and sojourners, estranged from your homeland, your clan, and your kin; for this very reason you became different in appearance and way of life, and bid farewell to all worldly cares and concerns: therefore, having joyfully embraced this endeavor, seek and you will find, strive and you will attain what your soul desires. For *“whoever seeks finds, and to those who knock, the door will be opened”* (Matt. 7:8), says the Lord. Seek, without worrying about anything else or being occupied with anything else. Although you are engaged in your usual duties of obedience, these are not worldly or mundane occupations for you, because you do not engage in them out of passion, of your own will, or to please the flesh, but for the sake of holy spiritual fellowship, out of obedience and commandment, and above all, to please God. God accepts this labor of yours as a sacrifice and a burnt offering. And blessed are you, brothers, for having chosen this angelic way of life, which leads to the heavenly Jerusalem, whose co-creator and Builder is God. Walk well, then, strengthened by grace and adorned with virtues: contrition, obedience, humility, readiness for every task, patience, vigilance, sobriety, and prayer.

154. Recalling how heavy the burden of his office as abbot weighs upon him, especially at the thought of being accountable for each one, he asks for help. How? By success in the monastic life

154. 1) Recalling how heavy the burden of his office as abbot weighs upon him, especially when he thinks of being accountable for each one, he asks for help. In what way? Through success in the monastic life. – 2) He then defines what should be considered success. – 3) Finally, he invites them to consider whether they are succeeding, pointing out the signs of those who are succeeding and those who are not. [2, 87]

1. How, do you think, does my humble soul regard my role as your superior? Perhaps it seems to you that I take pride in my modest teachings to you, and that by this alone I hope to fully fulfill my duty as your superior. Not at all. But I will tell you the truth: I spend the days of my poor life in agonizing and tormenting anxiety, not finding peace in merely telling you about a virtuous life, but desiring to see the very essence of life in you. Therefore, when I am among you, I observe your behavior every day—how you treat one another, how you conduct yourselves, how you ask questions and give answers—and from all this, as well as from the look in your eyes and the expression on your faces, I discern the state of each person's soul: in those in whom I find it to be upright, I rejoice and take comfort, and am inspired by hope; but in those in whom I find the opposite, I grieve, mourn, and sigh, being certain that passion has taken hold here. And I cannot do otherwise. For must I not give an account of each one of you? – At the very thought of this, who can remain indifferent? Who will not weep, be terrified, and tremble? – It is a great and fearful thing for a person to stand before God, the impartial Judge, and give an account of the entire flock—whether it has been kept in purity and blamelessness, and whether it has walked faithfully in all of God's commandments, in all that is proper, both toward God and toward one's neighbor? – I have told you this so that, having come to know the anguish of my soul, you might have compassion on me and help me. How, then? – By striving ever more earnestly to excel in a life equal to that of the angels.

2. We must not be content merely with distinguishing ourselves from the laity, but must perfectly follow in the footsteps of the fathers in our lives; nor must we be content merely with surpassing some of our peers, but must strive to be on par with the most perfect. For *“many are called, but few are chosen”* (Matt. 22:14). Nor should we measure our progress by the length of time, thinking, *“We have been monastics for so many years now”*; but rather, we must consider whether the number and degree of our virtues correspond to the length of time. – Nor should we focus on the fact that yet another day has passed, but rather on whether, on this day as well, any good deed has been stored in the heavenly treasury for the sustenance of the soul in the life to come, and whether even a little has been added to the purification of the soul and to the overcoming of the passions that torment us. Thus, a monk by name comes to be a monk in deed, freeing himself from the darkness of passions and the bonds of evil habits, and thereby allowing his soul and mind to freely strive toward the Lord, to soar in love toward Him alone, and to long for communion with Him alone.

3. Let each of you examine yourselves to see whether you possess this sought-after quality, or whether you are still a slave to passions, a prisoner of sins, a captive of thoughts, —which is why he is not in harmony

in his words, deeds, and thoughts, revealing this through disobedience, pride, grumbling, quarrelsomeness, self-justification, self-will, and the greatest of evils, unbelief. But while this is the case with such a person, in one who strives toward the desired goal and succeeds in the struggle against passions, every good quality and every perfect gift is manifested: meekness, peace, love, compassion, patience, humility, lack of envy, gratitude, endurance, prayer, psalm-singing, vigil, contrition, tears, and every other praiseworthy deed and disposition; he does not seek preeminence but flees from it—he does not desire work that pleases him, but rather that which his father assigns, setting aside his own will, whether the task be in the kitchen, the garden, the field, or anything similar, —he does not quarrel over clothing, shoes, food, or drink, but patiently endures all things, even if clothed in rags, shivering, and starving, fixing his gaze on one thing alone—the attainment of that rest in the hereafter.

155. Just as a valiant citizen rejoices when summoned by the king to receive a reward, so too does our brother Chariton rejoice, having been called from here by the Lord, now partaking of indescribable heavenly blessings for the feats and monastic labors he has endured

155. 1) Just as a valiant citizen rejoices when summoned by the king to receive a reward, so too does our brother Chariton rejoice, having been called from here by the Lord, now partaking of the indescribable heavenly blessings for the feats and monastic labors he endured. – 2) Reflecting on this, who among us would not be inspired to do the same, paying no heed to the devil, who usually, through his suggestions, either leads us away from good deeds or tarnishes the good we do with impure thoughts and feelings, no matter what form of obedience we are practicing. – 3) Let us not forget, moreover, that virtue is rewarded even in this life—sometimes visibly, and always invisibly—as a foretaste and anticipation of future glory and bliss. [2, 88]

4. Just as in everyday life, a person accused of grave crimes and sentenced to death is overcome with fear and trembling when told, “The time has come; come out”—so too, for the sinner, the news of the transition from this life to the next is usually frightening and awe-inspiring. On the contrary, just as one who awaits rewards and crowns from the king for his valiant deeds rejoices with joy when he hears the voice summoning him to receive them, so too does the righteous person rejoice when the Angel of Death announces to him his passing from this life, confident that he is departing to receive his blessed rewards. – This is what we dare to say now about our brother Chariton: that, true to his name, he departed from his body with joy and gladness and went to his place of rest. – This, brothers, is how one should strive; this is how one should fruitfully subdue one’s nature; how beneficial it is to endure the ascetic life with patience; how blessed it is to wage the struggle in submission until one’s last breath. For in just a few years—or rather, in almost a single day (for what else is this earthly life compared to the infinite?)—this has brought our brother untold riches, unimaginable glory, incomparable joy, and an endless kingdom. And now he rejoices and celebrates, feeling no sorrow whatsoever for the labors he undertook here for the sake of such a blessing, but, having taken his place among the choirs of the holy ones, in the tabernacles of the righteous, in the courts of the martyrs, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of all the saints, he contemplates the inexpressible and unspeakable blessings: that unceasing light, immortal life, and inexpressible bliss.

5. Reflecting on this, how can we, who are still in the race, fail to be inspired, not be inspired by bold hope, not be zealous, not have our hearts set ablaze, not let our minds soar, not turn our disposition from the world to the heavenly, and not vow to do everything and endure everything out of love for the Lord? Not merely fasting and vigil, not merely sleeping on the bare ground, not merely cold and heat, not merely toil and weariness, not merely humiliation and dishonor; but, if necessary, the shedding of blood, the severing of limbs, the flaying of the flesh, the crushing of bones—anything to attain what we seek. – Indeed, brothers, it is good to think this way, to be so wisely disposed to act. The devil is a predator; he is always lurking nearby, seeking to steal the beautiful thoughts from our minds and draw them into vain, worldly thoughts. But let us not allow him to deceive us; on the contrary, keeping in mind God’s divine promises—which are daily sought, praised in hymns, and depicted in prayers—let us spend day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, striving in every way to present our deeds to God as pure, all peaceful, all loving, untainted by pride, vanity, or the desire to please others. Whether we plow, dig, cook, do carpentry, guard, work in the cellar, tend the garden, transcribe, or engage in any kind of handicraft—whether sewing, weaving baskets, or doing anything else—let us strive to do so in such a way that our work may be deemed perfect by God Himself and placed in the heavenly treasury to receive an eternal reward. But to spoil our deeds with grumbling, insolence, vanity, confusion, and contradiction is an unwise and even inhuman act—that is, unbecoming of a true human

being. For a true man is a great *being*, like the ever-memorable Job; he “*is upright and blameless, and shuns every evil thing*” (Job 1:8).

6. Let everyone also take note of how a diligent and virtuous person is loved by all, honored and praised by everyone—not only among his brothers but also among those outside who hear of him. For virtue, even when it remains hidden and is practiced by an obscure person, is such by its very nature that it will inevitably be revealed, and word of it will spread and be proclaimed everywhere, according to the word of the Lord, who says: “*A city set on a hill cannot be hidden*” (Matt. 5:14). If we persevere a little in good deeds and strive a little, the time of rest will come—not only at the hour of death, but even before that, when dispassion is established within us. For the soul that has loved the Lord with all its heart and put its desires to death through obedience, according to the words of the Holy Fathers, has attained rest and already begins to taste the future bliss.

156. A new abbot was elected at the Dalmatian monastery, for no other reason than humility

156. A new abbot was elected at the Dalmatian monastery, for no other reason than humility alone. Such is the value of humility; it encompasses and preserves every good; and without seeking fame, it becomes known and glorified of its own accord. [2, 89] I think it would be good for me to speak to you now about yesterday’s event. By the command of our Lord, I was to go to the Dalmatian monastery for the election of a new abbot for it. There I was to ask whom the brothers of the monastery and the abbots gathered there desired. And they all unanimously, with one voice, pointed to Abba Hilarion. Why was this? What distinguished him? Not because he was learned, not because he was eloquent, not because he was known for his way of life; but solely because he was humble and wise, God-loving, and did not seek human glory, concealing his virtues through obedience. Although there was another who was more knowledgeable than he and older in years, since he was weaker in the aforementioned virtues, Abba Hilarion was deemed more pleasing to God and capable of wisely guiding the brothers. “Do you see, brothers, how precious the gift of humility is?” It is an all-encompassing virtue that cuts off all inner pride, drives away arrogance, tramples on the love of glory, strikes down self-will, and puts to death the love of pleasure—and in place of all this, it brings meekness, peace, love, compassion, patience, and wisdom; —and needless to say, it is the source of virtues, flowing with every good, or rather, a paradise planted by God, yielding the abundant fruit of immortality. But “*a city set on a hill cannot be hidden*” (Matt. 5:14), according to the Lord’s word: so too, one who has acquired this virtue cannot remain hidden forever, even if in the ordinary course of things he were the last, even if he were hidden underground, even if some, out of envy, slandered him: for here he is recognized all the more, like a light shining on a mountain and drawing the eyes of all who see to itself. This is precisely what happened with the current chosen one, for many, even from outside the brotherhood, expressed their approval of his election.

157. Lent has come; and it has brought order to both the external and the internal

157. 1) Lent has come; and it has brought order to both the external and the internal. Seeing this, I cannot help but say to you: make this way of life a constant habit; for otherwise, there is no way to be saved. – 2) The enemy is constantly striving to destroy us; and we must constantly resist him, for the Lord has granted us the strength to do so. – 3) The best way to overcome the enemy is to imitate the Lord in what He invites us to do: “I am gentle and humble in heart.” His entire earthly life is a testament to His humility for our sake. [2, 90]

7. How beautiful is self-restraint, and the order it manifests in acting according to the divine commandments. We have entered these holy days of Great Lent as if into a quiet harbor, having escaped the turmoil of the preceding days, and now we live in peace, in silence, in serenity; we conduct ourselves with care in the temple, sing the Psalms with devotion, remain sober in prayer, and at the table observe neither a variety of dishes nor their excess; we do all else for the salvation of our souls: no worldly people now enter our midst, nor do we go out to them. – Here I cannot resist the desire that you, drawing upon your sound understanding of what is good, make this way of life a permanent habit, so that even after this you may turn away from all paths leading to sin, and not live in such a way that you maintain a good life for five or ten days, and then, having grown weary of what is good, find yourselves once again destroying what you had previously built up, as the Apostle says (Gal. 2:18). – May it not be so with you, brothers; let us not be so easily swayed by the tempter’s slander; but let us strive to remain in the virtues we have acquired, making ever greater efforts

at good deeds in our righteous conduct, knowing that it is not enough to live righteously for a short time to be saved, but that we must steadfastly hold fast to the work of salvation throughout our entire lives.

8. For such is the tempter, who neither by day nor by night leaves us free from his attacks and the setting of treacherous ambushes to our ruin; he spreads many nets everywhere and sends countless arrows at our soul: the tickling of pleasure, the burning of lust, the turmoil and contrary winds of thoughts and desires—he stirs up the bed of our mind as if on some stormy sea, so that everyone is compelled to confess: *“If the Lord had not helped me, my soul would soon have gone down to hell”* (Ps. 93:17); then he subsides for a time, conceals the torment of lust, and lets in the poison of vanity; or, having weakened our zeal on one hand, strikes us with the arrow of envy on the other; at other times, he stirs up dust from all sides against our humility: for he has an insatiable desire to destroy us. He rages against our Lord God and goes wild when he sees us ascending to the heavenly heights, from which he himself fell because of his pride. — What great care and perseverance are therefore required, what diligence and what strenuous effort, to defeat such a mighty serpent? — *“But take heart,”* says the Lord, *“for I have overcome the world”* (John 16: 33); and after His victory, we, by virtue of the holy Incarnation, have received power over the enemy, as the Lord again proclaims: *“I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy”* (Luke 10:19): so that we may trample underfoot all his attacks against us, all the manifold temptations of sin.

9. How is this possible? By imitating the One who conquered him. We become His imitators when we clothe ourselves in humility and meekness, as He Himself says: *“Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart”* (Matt. 11:29). If He—the King and Lord of all, by nature the one who is most glorified and all-good—took on humility, *“being obedient to God the Father even unto death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:8), what then can we say? Or to what extent, by humbling ourselves, will we become like Him, we who are by nature poor and insignificant? If He, having set aside His heavenly glory, came down to earth, to what extent must we set aside all that is ours, so that there might be at least some semblance of imitation of Him? If He became an infant and was nourished with milk, and fulfilled all that was lawful, obeying His parents as it is written, how much must we act like infants in regard to malice, and obey our abbots, so that we might appear, even in the slightest way, to be like Him? If He hungered and thirsted, walked on foot, and grew weary, how much of the same must we endure so that it might seem we are experiencing something equal to Him? And finally, if He endured insults and scorn, mockery and abuse, betrayal and standing trial, flogging and crucifixion, blasphemy and the piercing of His side, what and how much of the same must we endure to say that we are imitating Him? We must always, brothers, keep this in mind, and as we look to Him, humble ourselves immeasurably; and if we encounter something in which we can imitate Him, let us accept it gratefully; if we do not encounter it, let us seek it out—namely, hunger, thirst, mockery, insults, humiliation, hardship, poverty in clothing, footwear, and everything else—so that in this way, little by little, as we press forward and ascend, building ourselves up and edifying one another, rising higher and higher, *we may “reach the measure of the full stature of Christ.”*

158. Praising the monks, saying that by renouncing the world, they had turned away from pleasures and comforts such as those of the Fleshfast and were called to serve God in piety and righteousness, in which lies true joy and an unceasing feast

158. 1) He commended the monks, saying that by renouncing the world, they had turned away from pleasures and comforts akin to those of the Fleshfast and were called to serve God in piety and righteousness, in which lies true joy and an unceasing feast. — 2) He urges them not to return in thought or desire to those Egyptian cauldrons, assuring them that our lot is the most blessed of all. — 3) In which there is nothing more to desire, except for this one thing: that God may grant us the grace to bear all the sorrows and hardships of our life with equanimity, [2, 91]

10. Now is the time of the Flesh-Fasting, a time for worldly feasting and drinking, revelry, games, and all manner of merriment. What then? Should we reproach ourselves for having none of these things? No; but let us give thanks to the Lord for having delivered us from such a life, as from mire and an abyss, and brought us into our present holy calling, —to serve Him in piety and righteousness—and let us laugh at those, or rather weep for them, who, carried away by these trivial pleasures, deprive themselves of the ineffable joys of heaven. — *“Come,”* then, brothers, *“let us rejoice in the Lord; let us shout for joy to God, our Savior: let us meet His face in confession, and let us shout to Him in psalms”* (Ps. 94:1–2). Behold, a good feast, behold, praiseworthy joy, behold, a joyful celebration! And we may celebrate and rejoice in this way in the house of

God—not just once or twice, but always. Such joy is the forerunner and harbinger of the most blessed destiny that awaits us there. “*As for me,*” says the divine David, “*I will appear before You in righteousness; I will be satisfied when I behold Your glory*” (Ps. 16: 15).

11. Let us not, I beg you, turn our hearts back—as if to some Egypt—to the customs of communal life, nor recall the meats and pots of that place; but let us turn our gaze upon ourselves, upon the beautiful life we are living and fulfilling: for here, above all, “*the Lord has commanded blessing and life*” (Ps. 132: 3), true joy, unfailing hope, and saving celebration. And if the question is one of success, then we are most successful; if the question is one of lot, then we have chosen the better part; if the question is one of bliss, then we have attained it. Having fled from the world and from everything in the world, having rejected all shameful and vain pleasures, having renounced marriage, childbearing, and worldly possessions, we have embraced virginity, poverty, and the renunciation of our own will, in which we strive, day by day crucifying our flesh and crucifying ourselves to the world and all that is in the world. Therefore, we can rightly apply to ourselves the words of the Apostle: “*Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (Gal. 5:24).

12. Who, then, is now more blessed than we? Or what else should we seek in life that would be more pleasant and more comforting than this? Nothing, except this one thing: that for all the remaining days of our sojourn here, we may patiently and courageously endure all that is difficult and unpleasant, and, having preserved ourselves from falling when faced with visible and invisible temptations, may we confidently attain the promises set aside for us. For this reason, take courage, be strengthened, and be steadfast, and do everything in a proper and orderly manner, understanding the nature and extent of the mystery of our monastic life, the kind of life it demands, and how our ever-memorable holy fathers lived it—follow their examples, and model and transform yourselves after them, so that you may rightly be called their sons and become partakers of their future joy.

159. Watch over yourselves; for the enemy may attack suddenly and destroy you

159. 1) Be vigilant over yourselves; for the enemy may attack suddenly and destroy you. – 2) And some of you are living in a dissolute manner. – 3) Let this not happen in the future. Teachers, instill this... so that you may not turn out to be corrupters instead of guides. [2, 92]

13. Let each one look and observe whether you stand firm and unshakable on the rock of faith, fulfilling your vow, on the martyr’s path of communal life, not veering to the right or to the left, but walking the royal path, keeping your soul alert so as not to stumble with your foot over the stone of stumbling, and doing nothing out of self-indulgence or partiality. I see you, but not always and not everywhere: for this is the prerogative of the one true God alone. And I do not know—perhaps some of you, acting secretly of your own will, or rather out of passion, have plunged into the abyss of sin, to the ruin of your soul. Fear and dread this, and while you sail with a favorable wind, remember—as the saying goes—the shipwreck. For in a single moment it may happen—a wind, a storm, a hurricane, a disaster, ruin, death. At times, peace and stability seem to reign, but suddenly—alarm, strife, war, the slaughter not of the body but of the soul, which is most bitter. The Evil One lies low for a time to lull us into carelessness, and then, striking unexpectedly, to pervert our thoughts and destroy us. We have no place for carelessness, no time for rest. Many who had reached the very harbor of salvation were cast to the depths by the crafty enemy. Some who had ascended to the very vault of heaven, because of a slight lapse in vigilance, he brought down to the earth of sin. He has plundered many treasures of virtue, stolen many spiritual feats, and left those who accomplished them destitute. Knowing this, stay alert and do not let the eyes of your mind slumber.

14. But I hear that some of you, out of presumption, behave carelessly: you gaze shamelessly at one another, engage in idle talk, and laugh; while others clasp hands together, and touch lips to lips and cheeks to cheeks. This is a cause for weeping. “*Can anyone kindle a fire in their bosom without their clothes being burned? Or can anyone walk on burning coals without their feet being burned?*” (Prov. 6:27). Likewise, those who do such things will not escape a fall. It is also evil that some adorn their faces, strut about, paint their eyelids and eyebrows, and dress like harlots; they wear embroidered sashes, carefully embellish their clothing, adopt fashionable gestures in their gait, and speak in a affected manner.

15. To all such people I say: do not do this in the future; otherwise, “*He will bind their jaws with bit and bridle*” (Ps. 31: 9): for God has set us not to destroy, but to build up these people. Therefore, observe the laws. Teachers, instill what is proper in those you teach and correct them. I do not say this because I suspect

any of you of being a poisoner instead of a healer, a darkener instead of an enlightener, one who leads astray from the right path instead of a guide, or a destroyer instead of a savior. For teachers stand before their students as a model of piety, an example of salvation, and a picture of every good deed. That is why students are entrusted to them—so that they may learn from the good example of their teachers. But if the opposite occurs, then let such people be rebuked and removed, lest they pass on their corruption to the healthy. “I would rather not speak of all this, but necessity compels me.” “I wish for one thing: that we all walk in righteousness, so that God may rejoice in our good life.”

160. Rejoicing in the brothers’ orderliness and in the fact that everything proceeds according to the rule and everyone is satisfied with the monastery’s provisions,” he adds, “but this is not the most important thing; the main thing is to live in such a way that after death we may enter into God’s rest: toward which we must direct everything

160. Rejoicing in the brothers’ orderliness and in the fact that everything proceeds according to the rule and everyone is satisfied with the monastery’s provisions, he adds: but this is not the most important thing; the main thing is to live in such a way that after death one may enter into the rest of God—and everything must be directed toward this end. [2, 93] Just as a farmer, seeing his field turning green—which he has cultivated and sown through his own labor—rejoices and is glad: so too do I, though not as regarding the fruit of my own labors, rejoice and take delight in your spiritual fruitfulness, because I find it right to confess the truth, seeing that, by God’s grace, you are prospering more and more and becoming better. You yourselves can bear witness to this. Do you not see what order, peace, and tranquility we have? Are you not all united as one soul and one heart, by firm faith and an unbreakable bond? Do you not all strive for an ever fuller fulfillment of Christ’s life-giving commandments? There are no private cliques among you that divide and fragment the united brotherhood to please the enemy, the devil; there is no self-indulgence or self-will among you, so that each might live and act as he pleases; on the contrary, a life in harmony with God reigns supreme; there is no one among you who wanders aimlessly here and there, causing ruin and disruption to the entire body of the brotherhood; but, by God’s grace, everything in your community proceeds according to the rule—in eating and drinking, in waking and sleeping, in work and rest, in coming and going, in conversation and silence, in reading and psalm-singing, in prayer and stillness, in clothing and footwear. Of course, not everything is distributed equally to everyone, for not all are equal in age, upbringing, circumstances, abilities, virtues, or health; but each is given due attention and provided with what is necessary: for you are all members of one body, though not all share in the same honor (1 Cor. 12: 23–24). But all this is not the most important thing; the main thing we seek is that, having done our work well, we may, through death, enter into God’s rest after the toils and labors of this life and taste the inexpressible joy and the indescribable eternal blessings. With this in hope, let us strive ever more to excel, to be mindful of ourselves, to be sober, to be watchful, to walk properly in these days, to rejoice in hope, to endure afflictions, compel ourselves to every good deed, subject the flesh to the spirit, count dishonor for Christ’s sake as honor, regard being last as a privilege, and rejoice in humiliation for the Lord’s sake; so that, having completed this path, we may dwell with the martyrs and be deemed worthy to rejoice with the saints for all eternity.

161. We sing: “I will take the cup of salvation.” This cup is the acceptance of martyrdom, which for us consists in a painful struggle against the passions

161. We sing: “I will take the cup of salvation.” This cup is the acceptance of martyrdom, which for us consists in a painful struggle against the passions. We stand on this path. – Fight the good fight, then, so that you may also be deemed worthy of such crowns. [2, 94] “*What shall we render to the Lord for all that He has given us?*” What else but a psalm of David, sung with true resolve and in accordance with what is sung therein: “*We will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord*” (Ps. 115:3–4). This cup is the acceptance of martyrdom. But our martyrdom does not lie in the shedding of blood, but in an inner, conscientious struggle, when, for example, we do not bow our knees before Baal—that is, we do not yield to carnal lust—and we overcome all temptations, visible and invisible, that are brought upon us: the turmoil of thoughts, the burning of lusts and desires, the sorrow of deprivations, misfortunes, and humiliations. Behold the good martyrs! Behold the soldiers of Christ! Behold those who are in need and the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! Rejoice, be of good cheer, be courageous, run the race well, grow from strength to strength, rise to the very heights of virtue, soar in the highest contemplations, and do so unceasingly until the

end of your life comes and carries you to the joys and gladness prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Blessed and most blessed is the one who, hearing this attentively and putting it into practice, kindling fire upon fire in his heart, ignites within himself the flame of divine love that ascends to heaven. But woe to the one who shuts his ears, loving vanity and seeking fleeting carnal pleasures. However, *let no one “seek only his own”—“these”—but also “look out for his neighbor,”* considering him as his own: for we are members in relation to one another. By this, everyone pleases the Lord and makes himself better and more perfect.

162. After describing the appearance of the departed and mentioning what is seen in the tomb, and presenting a brief account of the departed’s virtuous life, the author draws a lesson on preserving the purity of body and soul, so as to become a bride worthy of Christ

162. 1) After describing the appearance of the deceased and mentioning what is seen in the tomb; and 2) providing a brief account of the deceased’s virtuous life—3) the author draws a lesson on preserving the purity of body and soul in order to become a bride worthy of Christ. [2, 95]

1. The remembrance of death always has a salvific effect, and all the more so when we stand before the face of a departed brother, as in the present case. Here again we behold a wondrous mystery! A moment ago, he was with us, but now his spirit is no longer with us; he who spoke to us with his own lips has fallen into utter silence, even as the sound of his voice still echoes in our ears. What an astonishing sight this is! We see him and yet do not see him: his body is visible here, but his spirit has departed from us. He lies motionless and lifeless, without breath, sight, or speech; all his senses are visible—yet in none of them is there any sign of life; he is like a stone, or some other lifeless object. —Let us look upon the resting place of those who have gone before us: what shall we see there, brothers? Behold and learn. Is this not dust and ashes? Are these not decayed bodies? Are these not withered skulls? Are these not bare bones?—And all this is an unpleasant spectacle, a pitiful and repulsive heap. Can one distinguish here one brother from another, the handsome from the ugly, the young from the aged? Not at all: everything has decayed; everything has lost its form. Let anyone who wishes now examine where here is sensual pleasure, where the enjoyment of feasts, where rest in sleep, and all the rest that is done to please the flesh?—where are the handshakes, the embraces, the kisses? —All has departed from here and been taken away by the one who, like a prodigal rich man, sent it ahead to hell to kindle for himself an unquenchable fire.

2. May none of our brothers suffer harm! And especially he who has now departed in a godly manner and passed into eternal life, having lived his life here well, in blameless obedience—young in years but gray-haired in wisdom—small in age, yet great in spirit, whose inner disposition is known to me, and whose outward conduct is known to you as well—for in him there is every kind of goodness and he is worthy of all praise—Raphael—kind and truly noble, having preserved the image of God and, I dare say, worthy to bear the same name as one of the foremost of the angels. – Such is my confidence in this son of mine; have it yourselves as well, for he is worthy of it. – But let us return to the subject at hand.

3. So too will we, in a little while, depart from here: we will die, be prepared for burial, have a funeral service, and be laid to rest. – Since this is so, and there is *“no man who lives and does not see death”* (Ps. 88: 49), I ask and implore you: let us live piously and blamelessly and conduct ourselves irreproachably and without fault, keeping not only our bodies but also our souls pure: subjugating the former to the spirit, so that it does not run wild or rebel through carnal impulses, and restraining it with the fear of God, so that it may meekly and humbly be content with the measure of food, drink, sleep, and rest prescribed by the rule and by special command; and watching over the latter, so that it does not become entangled with impure thoughts and impulses, but, soaring entirely toward God, contemplates His beauty alone, for He alone is truly beautiful and lovable, while all other beauties are but a phantom and nothing; and also shielding her with prayer and psalm-singing, so that through both she might be presented as pleasing to the gracious Bridegroom, Christ our God. If we conduct our journey in this way, blessed are we: we will not die, but will live, accompanied by a comforting song of farewell: *“Blessed is the path you are walking today; for a place of rest has been prepared for you.”*

163. Our Battle Against the Spirits of Malice and Their Leader, the Devil

163. 1) Our battle is against the spirits of wickedness, with their leader, the devil. – 2) They ceaselessly devise schemes to destroy us: we, too, must vigilantly guard ourselves and resist them, to the joy of the Lord

and His angels. – 3) It is essential to act in this way if we wish to attain dispassion and, through this struggle, earn the martyr's crown. – 4) To succeed in this, we need humility combined with obedience, unceasing prayer, self-examination, all acts of self-denial, and the examination of our thoughts. [2, 96]

4. *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world"* (Eph. 6:12)—and against our wicked adversary, the devil, who, at the very beginning of creation, having crept into Paradise, tempted our forefather to sinfully partake of the forbidden fruit, and thereby caused his expulsion from the sweetness of Paradise to this earth. Ever since then, from generation to generation, he has persecuted the human race, teaching it every kind of evil. Even now he slanders us in every way, slithers about hissing, and fawns upon us, wagging his tail, so that he may more easily deceive us; he enters and exits stealthily, and snares souls that are not steadfast and do not heed him. That is why we need great sobriety, great vigilance, great prudence, and great care against him, so that he may not attack us or bring us down.

5. Knowing his schemes and wiles, let us arm ourselves in every way and stand up to fight and repel him, without slacking off or showing any leniency—neither toward ourselves nor toward him—just as he does not retreat or show any leniency, seeking our destruction. Even if he attacks us many times a day and is defeated, he remains undeterred, as if he had not yet begun the struggle, and attacks again with even greater force, bringing other spirits of malice with him. Likewise, we must not retreat or let up in the face of such daily and hourly attacks against us. Even if we have already shown great attention and intense effort—and with success—let us not change this; but let us always maintain the same zeal, fervor, and resistance against him, so that, seeing our strong opposition to the enemy, God may rejoice and be glad over us, as well as His holy angels, who assist us according to His inspiration and command.

6. For we have not yet attained the degree of dispassion—and with it, freedom from strife—necessary for our mind to remain still within itself, untroubled by inner conflict. This has been and continues to be attained by tireless zealots through much toil, sweat, and ascetic effort. As for us, who are still held back by passion, we must persistently remain in constant struggle and toil, without losing heart or giving up, even in the face of our own fickleness and the enemy's shifting tactics—which force us, day by day and hour by hour, to begin anew. Such is the task of those who strive sincerely: what, then, is the crown for this?—It is holy to attain the heights of dispassion; but it is also blessed not to be defeated in battle, and always to stand firm, gradually advancing toward that height and perfecting oneself. Such a one will also receive the martyr's crown, just as a warrior, upon returning from the battlefield, who shows the king his wounds and sores, is not despised or condemned, but on the contrary receives praise, gifts, and honors.

7. Let us therefore strive as soldiers of Christ, and let us regard our time as nothing other than a time of battle against our enemies, when all that can be heard is the whizzing of arrows and the clanging of swords; for *"many are those who fight against us from on high"* (Ps. 55: 3), as it is written—who attack us all day long and wage war, set snares, dig pits, lay ambushes, and devise all manner of other wiles. Who, then, will escape them, who will hide from them, who will not stumble and fall into their snares? Who else but one who possesses humility combined with obedience, diligent prayer, zeal for the work, consistent submission, uncomplaining diligence, constant vigilance in repelling shameful thoughts and embracing wholesome contemplations, watchfulness, psalm-singing, prostrations—and above all these, or together with all these, the confession of one's innermost thoughts, the avoidance of audacity, and moderation in speech? Through all these and similar things, our inner man is fortified as in a stronghold, and the enemy, having no power to act against him, withdraws.

164. A Description of the Outward Appearance of a Man of God, a True Monk

164. A Description of the outward appearance of a man of God, a true monk. [2, 97] Let us pay attention to ourselves, brothers, and let us not squander our days and our time in vain. Behold, this day has already passed, and we shall never see it again; but the deeds we have done during it are recorded. If they are good, well for us; but if not, alas! Let us guard our senses from being stolen away, keeping our heads bowed most of the time: let our eyes be attentive, undistracted, and not drawn this way and that; for what is seen by the eye is also seen by the soul, because the outer man reflects that to it; let the face be neither gloomy nor distracted, but dignified and gentle, and for the most part sorrowful and bathed in tears of contrition; let the gait be humble, unpretentious, and unproud, without raised shoulders, furrowed brows, loud footsteps, or the shaking of the entire body; her speech, too, should be pleasant, neither too loud nor too soft, with dignity in

her eyes and other features, without flaring nostrils, waving hands, or turning her face. For the man of God is well-ordered in all things, being an instrument of the Spirit who dwells within him, guiding him in speech, in appearance, in eating, and in drinking. And we ought to conduct ourselves with dignity and propriety in all things: in our clothing and footwear, bearing in mind that the Lord our God is always with us, in all circumstances, and in all our deeds.

165. Quoting the Apostle's words, "Now is the acceptable time," he explains that by this the Apostle stirs up our zeal to work out our salvation

165. 1) Citing the Apostle's words, "Now is the acceptable time," he explains that by this the Apostle stirs up our zeal to work out our salvation. – 2) Then he adds: "You are doing just that; well done." [2, 98]

8. What does St. Paul teach us and what does he inspire in us when he says: "*Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2)? "*Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light*" (Rom. 13:12). – It is he, as a good father and teacher, who rouses us from sloth and drives away the drowsiness of the soul from the eyes of our minds, guiding our steps well according to God and leading them onto the path of virtue. Let us heed his divine teaching, rise up with vigor, come to our senses, and press on with ever greater zeal, for the day of each of our lives is already drawing to a close. Let us strive to prepare ourselves, so that we may be blessed and live for all eternity, enjoying unspeakable joy. For if the end of our life finds us unprepared and un ly settled in our souls—alas! alas! truly. And who will rescue us from the hands of the soul-destroying serpent?—or in what shall we find relief when we are tormented for the negligence with which we have led our earthly life in wickedness? Why—let those who forsake us forsake us, and let those who act lawlessly continue to do so—I speak of those who have strayed from us. Or better yet, let us pray for them and strive to call them back: for God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he turn from his ways and live (Ezek. 33: 11).

9. But you, who by the grace of Christ remain steadfast in obedience and faithfully keep your vows before God and man, rejoice and be glad: for a great reward is stored up for you in heaven, if you remain vigilant to the end and faithfully fulfill all that has been commanded you concerning Christ Jesus, our Lord, as His soldiers, whom He has enlisted: for you have enlisted in His service and serve Him day and night, remembering His word: "He who does not say to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but who does the will of My Heavenly Father—he is Mine"—and the Apostle's exhortation: "Do you wish not to fear the authorities? Do what is good, and you will have praise from Him" (Rom. 13: 3).

166. Be steadfast in life and endure all things; for when you are deemed worthy of that eternal bliss, you will still regret not having endured more

166. 1) Be steadfast in life and endure all things: for when you are deemed worthy of that eternal bliss, you will still regret not having endured more. – 2) Remember and keep in mind the day of judgment and retribution; – and you will never fall into idleness or grumbling. – 3) Whoever behaves otherwise is enslaved by passions and is like a beast; but whoever is like this is an angel. [2, 99]

10. It is not necessary to speak to you now as the ancient Prophets did: "You will hear with your ears but not understand; you will look with your eyes but not see"—for the hearts of these people have grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing, and they have closed their eyes (Isa. 6: 9, 10). For you are sobering yourselves and keeping watch, gazing with an unveiled face upon the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18), after having shaken off the sludge of worldly attachment from the eyes of your souls through your obedient, holy way of life, and having come to see things clearly, that is, the vanity of life and the ceaseless turmoil of human affairs in various directions, and have come to understand that there is but one firm, delightful, and supreme good—God—and that we must strive toward Him through a virtuous life. Blessed, therefore, is the Lord and God of our Fathers, who has made us worthy to share in this grace and to lead such a wise life. Let us therefore lift our gaze upward, toward our Head—Christ—contemplating not mere mortal and fleeting things, but heavenly and super-heavenly beauties, and the tasting and consolation of the indescribable and inexpressible blessings there, which no mind has ever conceived, no ear has ever heard, and no heart has ever dreamed of, because of their unfathomable excellence—which, as I can assure you, you too will attain if the Lord grants you the strength to patiently endure the struggle that lies before you to the very end, and you will find rest where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighing. Then you will give loud thanks to the Lord who has called you to this holy way of life; as for the sorrows you have endured, not only will there be no memory of them, but on

the contrary, you will regret that you did not have the opportunity to endure far greater trials, sorrows, and hardships than you did.

11. And what shall we see on that dreadful day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He will come openly with countless myriads of angels and archangels and sit upon the throne of the dreadful judgment, gathering from the four corners of the earth all nations and every living creature, unveiling the deeds of darkness and revealing the counsels of the heart, as a result of which some will be led to joy at the right hand of the Lord, while others will depart in shame to the left, and those will be brought into the bright abodes, into the paradise of sweetness, into the Kingdom of Heaven, while these will be cast into the unquenchable fire, to be devoured by worms, to the gnashing of teeth, into pitch-black darkness, into the depths of Tartarus, into unbreakable bonds, and all manner of torments, according to the sins of each. Then they will shine like the sun and begin to rejoice and be glad with all their hearts, and with ceaseless songs glorify the Lord, having realized what a good and noble cause they served for the Lord. — These are the martyrs who shed their blood for His confession, the Apostles, the Prophets, the confessors, the holy ones, and the righteous; following them, those who demonstrated spiritual martyrdom—bishops, priests, monks, and laypeople—all who lived lives of good deeds, endeavors, and feats. But these will begin to wail and weep, alas! —alas!—as they bring this upon themselves, calling down curse after curse upon their own recklessness, bound, beaten, and reviled by the spirits of the damned, and even more so condemning and branding themselves, tormented by despair, seeing no end to the unbearable torments decreed for all eternity, as it was declared in their hearing: “These will go into eternal torment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Taking all this to heart, can we afford to slacken in our labors and toils? Can we lose heart because of the hardships of our present life? Should we not rather be inspired in our hearts and burn with zeal more fiercely than fire—to remain faithful to the rules of our self-sacrificing monastic life to the very end, no matter what the cost?

12. Let us, then, take all this to heart and abide in it, diligently doing whatever it prompts us to do. For whoever is indifferent to this, be assured that he is ensnared by passions, slumbers in carelessness, is hard-hearted, indulges in sensual pleasures, is envious, frivolous, and lazy, buried, like a bear in its paws, seeking only to eat and drink; roars like a lion when its evil desires are not satisfied; leaps like a leopard from one pleasure to another; schemes like a fox to attain what its heart desires; rages like a camel, in taking revenge on his neighbor for some accidental grievance, neighs like a horse, committing adultery with human and animal bodies, and acts shamelessly like a wolf, in his audacity to destroy his own soul and that of his brothers. And what is there to say about the various passions by which some not only resemble beasts but far surpass them in their bestial nature? – But he who stands on the side of good thoughts, as bright as an angel, as swift as a cherub, as many-eyed as a seraphim—so that, taking advantage of any opportunity, the soul-destroying dragon might not pounce upon him—is as courageous as a warrior, wielding the fiery sword of piercing thought against sin, and scorching demons with the heat of good thoughts; like an ever-flowing spring, he pours forth pure streams of tears of contrition; like a temple of God, he is built of the golden stones of virtue; like a meek lamb, following the example of his Lord, he will not argue or cry out, but, even if death lies ahead, he goes on, obeying his father and brothers. But here life and death are set before you; let each one choose for himself what he will.

167. Our Struggle Is Against Evil Spirits

167. 1) Our battle is against evil spirits. Why must we be on guard, having put on the full armor of the virtues mentioned by the Apostle, which have the power to repel and defeat their enemies? – 2) This battle is mental and is waged with opposing thoughts and prayer to the Lord. – 3) It arises suddenly and makes our inner state as changeable as the state of the air; but this is not a cause for fear for those who are mindful of themselves and adorn themselves with virtues, trusting in God. [2, 100]

13. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this age, according to the Apostle (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, we must maintain sobriety, vigilance, careful diligence, intense effort, and protect ourselves with spiritual weapons—namely: unshakable faith as a helmet, sincere obedience and genuine humility as a shield, and every other virtue, all of which, when applied appropriately, can serve as weapons against our deceivers and have the power to repel our invisible adversaries.

14. This great and terrible battle, as you know, is always in progress, never ceasing even during prayer and Holy Communion; it stirs up and sometimes raises such thoughts that it is not even fitting to speak of them. But a humble soul, wounded by such thoughts, repels them with hatred, countering them with holy thoughts and at the same time turning in prayer to the Lord. Help from the Lord comes immediately, and the Sun from on high strikes and drives away the dragon. Why, then, should we not lose heart or yield in the face of such attacks? For when the heart is fearless, the mind remains impervious to the harm of such attacks—not only during Communion, but at all other times as well.

15. Our enemies attack at all times, and when we least expect it; but when we are in a good and peaceful state of mind—whether from the contrition that has come upon us, or from sincere prayer, or from reading, or from some other form of sacred discourse—he attacks, disturbing and unsettling the heart, as if casting us out from a harbor into the waves, or leading us from the light of day into the darkness of night in our thoughts. In this respect, what happens to us is similar to the state of the atmosphere throughout the day: at times it is clear in the sunshine, at times gloomy when clouds roll in, then it clears up again, and then darkens once more, due to various changes in the air. Is it not the same with us? At times we shine brightly, like a clear day, from good thoughts; at other times we are darkened by evil thoughts; and then we return to the realm of light by devoting ourselves to prayer or some other good practice. And this happens more than once a day. But changes in the atmosphere occur differently than they do in us: there, they happen naturally, as ordained by the wisdom of God, the Creator of all things; whereas in us, they are voluntary and, in part, the result of our own will. For although the devil attempts, through temptations, to deprive us of the light of a good state, we have the power to repel him and always have the Sun of Righteousness illuminating our minds, just as the saints did, and just as all who live righteously do. For even now there are many saints who, like precious stones, walk the earth, distinguished not by the working of signs and wonders—for holiness does not consist in this alone—but in the preservation of the true faith and the precise fulfillment of God's commandments, in sincere love for one's brothers, free from envy, in rejoicing in the well-being of one's neighbor, in rising above human glory, and in every other virtue. Thus holiness is manifested in every person. But you, having departed from the world and been crucified to it, must, above all, be distinguished by non-covetousness and chastity, by the renunciation of your own will, and by the good-natured endurance of all the deprivations and sorrows that are inseparable from our way of life. Living in this way, you will be holy and numbered among the saints, and the host of the righteous will welcome you into their midst—and you will rejoice forever in the dwellings of the martyrs.

168. *As we walk our path, let us not set our eyes on what is earthly and fleeting; but let us fix our gaze on what is heavenly and eternal: for the former weakens us, while the latter fills us with courage*

168. 1) As we walk our path, let us not look upon what is earthly and fleeting; but let us fix our gaze upon what is heavenly and eternal: for the former weakens us, while the latter fills us with courage. – 2) This is how all the Fathers walked; this is how we, too, should walk, adorning ourselves with every kind of goodness, renouncing all that is evil, and purifying ourselves. May our life be worthy of our name. [2, 102]

16. Our life is a journey, and not one that is completed in a single day, two days, or even many days, but one that extends throughout our entire life, until we pass from this world into the age to come. What effort, what strength, what attention, and what diligence are required so that we do not lose courage or give up walking this path, considering its great distance, while at the same time facing an enemy who sets up all manner of obstacles and stumbling blocks for our steps toward God? But never mind; for on the other hand, we have both an intercessor and a guide in our struggles, and a companion on the path—not just anyone, but the Lord and Ruler of all, with the Holy Angels as our guardians and protectors. *“He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep”* (Ps. 120:4). Why, then, do we devote ourselves to our path with intense zeal, with ardent desire, not looking down but fixing our eyes upward: for if we look down, we will certainly fall prey to sloth, faintheartedness, and laxity, because our thoughts wander here and there, and our hearts cling to the vanities and pleasures of this life: to fornication, gluttony, greed, spectacles, feasts, adornments, fantasies, and all other things that are fleeting and perishable. But when we fix our gaze on what is heavenly and eternal, then, even though our present is sorrowful and painful, even though there is toil and weariness here, though there be fasting and vigil, the curbing of the will and privations—all of which are inevitable in our ascetic way of life and ascetic obedience—we will not lose heart, we will not be faint-hearted, we will not falter under the weight of our present sorrows, nor will we yield to our rising passions; but with bold wisdom and a spirited resolve, we will press on and press on, walking onward, gazing toward heaven, fixing our eyes on God, striving

for the Kingdom of Heaven, for heavenly consolation, for the sweetness of its imperishable glory, for the light that never sets, for the bliss of the angels.

17. Thus all the fathers walked in this way and, by overcoming, triumphed: martyrs, the venerable, the righteous, the pious, the God-loving, monks, laypeople, men, women, youths, and elders, regarding their time here as a kind of training. So too, if we desire their glory and bliss, we must also willingly suffer in this God-pleasing way of life. Let us therefore love this, brothers; let us resolve to endure and bear all things with courageous wisdom and unwavering zeal, keeping our eyes fixed on what is above, as the All-Wise One commands (Eccl. 2:14), and not casting them down to the ground. For those who think about heavenly things and are occupied with them truly have their eyes on their heads, while those who bow down to vanity and are occupied with it lower their eyes to their feet. Would it not be pitiful and monstrous if a person's feet were on top and his head below? But it is far more pitiful and inhuman to suffer this in one's soul. Let us therefore walk as befits the wise, with our eyes on our heads, meditating on God and divine things and acting accordingly. The eyes of the head are faith, hope, and love; from them spring steadfast patience, purity, brotherly love, peace, gentleness, modesty, courage, prosperity, self-control, every good deed, and the blossoming and fruiting of every virtue. But for those who think and act contrary to what has been said, the opposite occurs: unbelief, hopelessness, and hatred; from these spring impatience, faintheartedness, fornication and adultery, insolence, sensuality, gluttony, frivolity, self-adornment, mockery, quarreling, envy, murder, and every other satanic deed and act. Let us who belong to God pursue what is of God; let the pure pursue what is holy; let the blameless pursue what is chaste; let the pious pursue what is reverent; let the peaceful pursue what is brotherly; let the humble pursue what is heavenly; and let those who have renounced the world pursue what is supreme. May order not turn into disorder, lest we—who are of the light—pursue what is dark; we—who are of purity—pursue what is licentious; we—who are of piety—pursue what is disorderly; we—who are of humility—pursue what is vain; for this is pitiful, this is deceitful, this is godless, this is senseless, this is fuel for the fire of hell. Let us therefore seek God, as God's own, as we are called by our rank. We are called monks, pilgrims, anchorites, virgins, servants of God, and angels; and everyone understands that this is indeed what we are. Let none of us be unspiritual, attached to the world, or unchaste; let no one be a complainer, a fornicator, quarrelsome, despondent, or fainthearted: for the great wrath of God is near—and He will repay. God is not so much angry—though He is angry—with those who, while living in the world, are wicked at heart, as He is with us, who ought to belong entirely to Him; just as a master is more indignant at those servants who sin in his very presence than at those who, being far from him, turn out to be such. God's wrath, however, does not extend equally to all of us, but manifests itself in various ways: differently toward those who persist in evil, differently toward those who sometimes improve and sometimes fall again; differently toward those who have just taken the schema, and differently toward those long established in the schema: for the longer one remains in the schema, the more evident the distinction of his life should be; therefore, if old age brings no benefit, it becomes a cause for condemnation and a laughingstock—just as it is ridiculous to see a gray-haired man studying in school with children.

169. You are soldiers of Christ; and you must constantly be fully armed—in this way

169. 1) You are soldiers of Christ; and you must constantly be fully armed—here is how. – 2) The root of all evil is pride; but one must fight against whatever is currently battling within: for this is not always the same for everyone. – 3–16) Various thoughts on spiritual warfare. [2, 103]

18. You are soldiers of Christ; and a soldier must consider what is needed for battle and keep his full armor in order, so that he may be ready at all times to engage the enemy. – See, then, if you are ready, and in what condition your spiritual weapons are—are they sharpened, cleaned, and polished? – Namely, the sword of obedience, the armor of faith, the helmet of saving hope, the shield of humility, the quiver of good thoughts, and finally the chariot—that is, your virtuous body, which is also the horse, well-trained to be fit for everything, – and must be neither too fat, lest it be unfit for running, nor too thin, lest it be too weak for the required movement; it must bear the bridle of the fear of God well when it is applied, so that it does not stray from the proper path and does not throw the rider—the mind—off with its unbridled gallops. This is how the Word of God always desires you to be;—for your war is unceasing, your battles are hourly, and your firing is at every moment.

19. Who among you is valiant, who is strong, who is a warrior—one who cuts down opposing thoughts by the thousands and multitudes, having first cast down the proud mind, just as the divine David once cast

down Goliath?—For what comes of this? – The flight of the spirits of malice, that is, the numerous and varied sinful passions. Pride of the mind is the first of evils and the last. Through it, the dragon—who now tempts us all—fell from the heavenly heights and angelic radiance, and from it, as from a root, myriads of sinful vines have sprung up. But we must strive and fight against what is now attacking us: for at every hour, one person is fought by one passion, and another by another: one is afflicted by the passion of fornication, another by gluttony; one by sloth, another by envy; one by anger, another by unbelief; one by rebellion, another by pride; one by inaction, another by frenzy. Yet all this is the work of one and the same satanic spirit.

20. Our struggle is great and varied: we must keep our eyes open everywhere, watch from every side, and surround ourselves with a protective barrier—so that the enemy does not break in, wound us, or take us captive; so that he does not lay hands on us, strike us, or kill us.

21. We must also anticipate; and for our part, we must initiate battles and fight back. It happens that we receive one blow and strike back tenfold—that we sustain a minor wound and repay it with a fatal defeat.

22. Whoever is wounded in the body seeks healing; in the same way, whoever is wounded in the spirit must seek the appropriate healing for the spirit. This healing is confession with penance. Having done this, one must go out to battle again.

23. The one who triumphs in physical battle receives a single reward; but the one who triumphs in spiritual battle receives countless crowns: so there is daily battle, daily crowns, and daily rewards.

24. And blessed are you if you prevail and do not give in, if you remain steadfast and do not lose heart, until the war ends with your departure from this world.

25. Take courage, then, my beloved children and brothers; take courage, for you have God as your helper, an Angel as the guardian of your life, the saints—whose names you invoke—as your intercessors, and the sign of the Cross of Christ as your invincible weapon.

26. Let us not be intimidated by the invisible enemies that assail us from all sides through evil thoughts; let us not bow our knees before the Baal of carnal pleasures; let us not betray to our enemies our chastity, which Christ has betrothed to Himself in the sanctuary; let us not make our members—which belong to Christ, the most pure and immortal Bridegroom—into instruments of fornication and vessels of impurity.

27. Let us not accept the serpent as our counselor, who plots to drive us out of our paradisiacal garden; let us not open the door to thieves—the demons—and let us not allow them to steal the treasure of our soul.

28. How good it is for us to dwell in the city that the Lord our God has built for us out of a variety of virtues! How blessed it is to preserve the dignity of our soul, unenslaved by sin! A soul not enslaved by passions is wholly free, wholly God-like, wholly sovereign, wholly radiant, wholly enlightened, gathered by God, created by God, and heavenly.

29. Not so is the soul enslaved and dominated by passions—those tyrants. It is seen to suffer greatly and terribly, dragged hither and thither by the work of every passion and every reprehensible deed. Taking its behavior from the demon, it unquestioningly does as commanded. It is ruled over by the demon of carnal lust, the demon of envy, the demon of hatred, the demon of rashness, the demon of gluttony, the demon of sloth, the demon of unbelief, the demon of blasphemy, the demon of anger, the demon of pride, the demon of falsehood, the demon of theft, and all the other demons of the passions—whose names can anyone enumerate?

30. By whatever demons one is deceived, by those he is enslaved. His poor soul languishes under their yoke; his life is wretched. It is entirely poor, entirely shabby, gloomy, lightless, godless, hideous, and repulsive to the sight of all right-thinking people.

31. Let us not debase our dignity, my children; let us not sell our freedom. Having become masters, let us not become slaves (1 Cor. 7:22–23). Let us not turn our light into darkness, let us not transform our beauty into ugliness, let us not turn our faces away from God to turn them toward the shameful image of sin; let us not cast off the bright garments of virtue to clothe ourselves in the gloomy rags of lawlessness; being sons of God, let us not transform ourselves into the offspring of the devil.

32. Who, being in their right mind, would dare to enslave themselves while being a master?—Who, having been adopted as a child of God, would agree to be called a spawn of the devil? Who, having cast aside the ineffable nobility of virtue, would choose to be counted among those living a base, passion-driven life? Who, having spiritual wealth, would choose to fall into poverty and spiritual destitution? Who would prefer to lose the Kingdom of Heaven in order to gain fire and darkness, and other dreadful eternal torments? This is not the act of the sane, nor the step of those who have not lost their reason, but of certain madmen and the

insensitive—so that those created in the image and likeness of God to inherit eternal blessings might, of their own free will, through senseless sensuality, descend into the depths of hell for eternal condemnation.

33. Let us awaken, O sleepers; let us open our eyes that have been closed; let us listen, O those who do not hear; let us strengthen our weakened bodies; let us rise up with courage; let us be inspired and set out on the path of salvation. Let us cry out to the Lord—and He will act. For *“the Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth, and He will save those who are humble in spirit”* (Ps. 144:18; 33:19).

170. Compares the care of the soul to the care of a vineyard

170. 1) He compares the care of the soul to the care of a vineyard. – 2) He invites us to such care for the joy of our Lord, the Vine-Grower. – 3) He acknowledges that we have already labored sufficiently in this regard; but he says, “We will labor still more, walking blamelessly in the monastic rules and ascetic labors.” [2, 104]

1. Yesterday, while harvesting grapes, you blessed the vines that bore much fruit and lamented those on which there were no clusters. What does this signify? – It means that you, having become the Lord’s grapes, when you bear spiritual fruit and are, as it were, laden with clusters, are worthy of admiration in the eyes of the Cultivator of our souls; but when you do not, you are worthy of condemnation and cutting off: *“for,”* as the Lord says, *“every branch that does not bear fruit is cut off and thrown into the fire”* (John 15: 6). You see that a vine does not bear fruit by chance; but first it is planted with great labor, tends to grow, reaches maturity, and only then begins to bear fruit; and when it bears fruit, it is pruned, dug around, fenced in, cleared of dry branches, and cleansed of everything that might hinder fruit-bearing—as vine-growers know from experience—and in this way it bears fruit again. – Can we not see the same thing in ourselves? For who will ever bear fruit without having gone through something like this—that is, without having been planted and nurtured, and without having matured to full spiritual maturity in Christ, and for that purpose not having been pruned, weeded, and protected by Christ’s commandments? – Whoever does not go through all this always remains immature and barren; and he is devoured by all the destructive demons passing by on the path.

2. Let us, I beg you, set about cultivating the soul and caring for it diligently; that is, for the ascetic practices and customary disciplines of the ascetic life: the burden of abstinence, the labor of vigil, the shame of confessing inner failings, the wounds of penance, guarding one’s lips, a heart free from daydreaming, unshakable faith, and the unperturbed settlement of one’s thoughts. Whoever does not do all this cannot bear fruit; and such a one should not be called a branch of Christ. – Why have we come here, brothers? Is it not to bear much fruit and to nourish the Lord with our spiritual fruitfulness? The good Lord longs for our salvation, and if He finds us being saved, He rejoices, tasting of this fruit; but if not, He condemns us like a barren fig tree. Every day He comes here and observes what we are like. Therefore, we need: zeal, diligence, a fervent spirit, care, humility, obedience, attentiveness, hymns, meekness, prudence, a love of work, brotherly love, patience, steadfastness, and hope—so that we may prepare ourselves as chosen vessels, perfected in the Holy Spirit.

3. You have labored—I acknowledge this—you have triumphed in the past, endured much, traveled a long journey, put the evil one to shame, repelled attacks, renounced passions, stripped yourselves of the world, crucified your desires, kept the commandments, preserved the faith of your fathers, have become unafraid of human fears, and have prepared yourselves from the heart for death for the sake of love for the Lord; all that you have done is pleasing to God and praiseworthy, all is holy and heavenly. – But just a little longer—if only, if only we can endure—I beg you, most honorable brothers, let us stand firm in the faith, let us stand fearlessly in the face of invisible and visible temptations, let us not yield to the great enemy in his daily battle, for: *“The Lord is my helper; I will look upon my enemies”* (Ps. 117: 7). *“The Lord is the protector of my life; whom shall I fear? When those who seek to harm me draw near to destroy my body—those who insult me and my enemies—they will be overwhelmed and fall”* (Ps. 26:1–2). *“But we have risen and stood firm”* (Ps. 19:9). So let us sing in our minds, so let us be courageous in spirit; let us diligently fulfill our duties, observing piety in all things, without uttering words that are corrupt, grumbling, abusive, judgmental, rebellious, or insolent; let us willingly gather for work, for vigils, and for psalm-singing, let us be in harmony with one another in meekness and humility, in goodwill, in detachment from the world, in striving toward heaven, in brevity of speech, in sobriety, in overcoming through yielding when we hear, “Forgive me”—which is a great weapon against the devil—in kindness and peacefulness.

171. We must be vigilant so as not to stray from the path of the commandments, from which the enemy strives in every way to push us off; and to succeed in this, let us guard our senses

171. 1) We must be vigilant so as not to stray from the path of the commandments, from which the enemy strives in every way to push us off; and to succeed in this, we will guard our senses. – 2) If we guard ourselves in this way, the enemy will retreat in defeat and be tormented, while our soul will rejoice; otherwise, the opposite will follow. – 3) But may this not happen to us; and if it does, let us hasten to heal ourselves through repentance, guarding ourselves thereafter against falling. [2, 105]

4. We must always be mindful of ourselves and, in every circumstance, keep ourselves within God's law, deviating neither to the right nor to the left from the commandments, but walking the royal middle path, where salvation, steadfastness, and prosperity abide. We must keep this in mind, pay attention to it, and understand it; for the cunning serpent, the thief of souls, the devil, is always watching vigilantly, seeking to lead us astray from this path and, by casting us into the torrent of some passion, to take us as his most wretched prey. We will, however, overcome him and remain on the right path if we stay alert and sober, and guard our senses: our eyes from seeing what should not be seen; our ears from hearing the seductive words and whispers of the dragon; our hands from touching, whether our own bodies or those of others, out of passion or lustful impulse; our feet from straying onto treacherous paths and into hidden places, both mentally and physically.

5. If we act in this way and guard ourselves thus, with proper confession, the necessary humility, and the proper disposition, then the dragon will be defeated, and the evil one driven from the heart; and he will gnash his teeth, standing at a distance, for the all-malicious one never loses heart, no matter how many times he is defeated and driven away. The soul, however, rejoices and takes courage, and ascends even more toward God, dwelling in the light, in the highest and most sublime contemplations, being deified and heavenly. But if it behaves contrary to what has been said, it suffers the opposite—that is, it is taken over and enslaved by the very passion that has conquered it, and, darkened by evil thoughts, descends into a certain abyss of evil, being tormented and racked, finding no rest anywhere or in anything, and even here tasting the fruit of the sorrow that awaits her in the age to come.

6. But may we never have to endure anything like that. Let us not allow ourselves to be carried away by the allurements of sin, and if such a thing should happen, let us cut it off at once and cast it aside like an arrow that has inflicted a wound, while healing the wounded place with the medicine of repentance—whether it be the eye, the ear, or the hand—and thereafter guard ourselves carefully. For even irrational animals, having slipped once or twice in a certain place, avoid it or carefully go around it so as not to fall into the same misfortune. But we, who are honored as the image of God and taught by the word of wisdom, will we allow ourselves to prove worse than irrational creatures, loving the very passion from which sin arose and seeking the same precipice and the same chasm where the fall took place? That would be terrible and disastrous. No, but as wise people, let us walk wisely; as pure people, let us live in chastity, so that we may prove stronger and more steadfast even against external temptations. A soul that guards itself in every way and thereby remains invincible against the onslaught of passions fears neither fire, nor sword, nor beast, nor kings, nor authorities, nor sorrow, nor hardship, nor persecution, but is always ready to cry out: *“I will not fear when the earth is shaken, and the mountains are overturned into the heart of the sea”* (Ps. 45:3). Let us guard against internal temptations, and we will not fear external ones.

172. Our daily bread must be to do the will of the Heavenly Father, living according to the rules of asceticism and the order of monastic obedience

172. 1) Our duty is to do the will of the Heavenly Father, living according to the rules of asceticism and the monastic order of obedience. – 2) The enemy is vexed when he sees your integrity and tranquility and finds no way to approach you. – 3) Take courage, then, in resisting the enemy, and do not listen to his whispers; rather, pay close attention to your Guardian Angel. [2, 107]

7. The Lord says: *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to complete His work”* (John 4:34). O brothers! He has granted us, too, the privilege of calling God “Father.” Therefore, our food must also be to do the will of our heavenly Father. What, then, exactly should we do? And what must we do?—You have already shown this through your previous life, living according to the vow you made; and I can answer you: Live as you have lived; continue to bear with cheerful patience the hardships of self-denial, the burden of obedience, the weariness of vigil, the invisible arrows of thoughts, the fire of lust, the gloom of

despondency, the wounds of envy, and everything else with which the devil, the destroyer of our souls, seeks to cast us into the depths of hell.

8. Be bold: for he attacks; but he is repelled by the power of God within you, and does not overcome you; he gnashed his teeth, seeing what a peaceful and steadfast life you lead, but he fails to harm you; he strives to invade you and carry off your soul to destruction, but finds no place from which to enter you, seeing that you are protected, like a wall, by the law of the Lord; He sets snares and lays traps, trying to lure you into them, but failing to do so, he is torn apart by malicious vexation, seeing how you thwart all his schemes through confession. And in general, he has no place where the fear of God is strong, where the commandments are observed, where all the customary rules of our life are in effect, and where penances are willingly accepted and carried out.

9. Therefore, rejoice and remain encouraged; be of good cheer and take courage; be strengthened and grow in strength, by no means giving the frenzied demon a foothold, by no means allowing this crafty serpent to whisper into the ear of your soul; and if he approaches, drive him away and repel him. You know how he deceived the first man, and how he continues to deceive even now those who yield to his temptations. He instills only evil, no matter how plausible a guise it may take—only that which leads either to pride, or to envy, or to carnal lust, or to intemperance, and to everything that defiles the soul. But listen more closely to what the Preserver of your life rightly reminds you of, inspiring thoughts of chastity, courage, and virtue—thoughts of death, of the passage into the next life, of future eternal blessings, as well as of the endless torments opposed to them, and how and in what way you may be deemed worthy of the former, and how to avoid the latter, so that, by constantly engaging in this, you may be increasingly established in virtue and walk more zealously along the path of our Lord God, until the end of our life appointed for us arrives; and the Lord, well-pleased with us, will lead us from here to eternal rest.

173. *The cultivation of the soul does not require a specific time or preparation, as does the cultivation of the land: it is suitable at any time, and all the preparation here consists in the desire and determination to suppress all that is evil and to foster all that is good*

173. 1) Cultivating the soul does not require a specific time or preparation, as does cultivating the land: it is suitable at any time, and all the preparation here consists in the desire and resolve to suppress all that is evil and to foster all that is good. – 2) Let us therefore set about this, imitating the fathers who sought and found, who knocked and the door was opened to them. [2, 110]

10. Any time is suitable for cultivating the soul, unlike the cultivation of the land. Here, neither oxen nor plows nor other farming implements are needed; all that is required is a single act of will and a wholehearted desire, through which good seeds are sown and good fruits are reaped for eternal joy and rest; and this is true not only by day but also by night, in the morning and at noon, while eating and drinking, while sitting and standing, while speaking and in silence, while walking and standing still, while acting and at rest—provided, of course, that we remain sober and alert. This requires that we not wander or be led astray by our own thoughts, letting our minds—or even our bodies—dart here and there; that we not seek to satisfy our carnal desires; that we not engage in disputes and quarrels with one another over such matters; and that we not fall into disobedience and grumbling, into vanity and pride, or into the temptation to have our own way and prevail, regardless of the consequences. For all such things prevent our minds from abiding with the Lord, from meditating on what is fitting, from being humble and contrite, and from accepting all that is sorrowful with patience and joy.

11. Let us not, then, brothers, allow the days of our salvation to pass in idleness, laziness, and neglect, nor spend the time of our lives in vain; but let us engage in the pursuit of virtues and acquire the wealth of heavenly blessings, gaining wisdom as our holy fathers did, who wasted neither a single day nor a single hour, but steadfastly and earnestly strove for the purification of the soul, the banishment of passions, and the cultivation of virtuous dispositions, and who, sparing neither toil nor sweat, sought the one God with all their hearts. They sought and found; they knocked, and it was opened to them: the doors of love, the gates of righteousness, and the entrance to Christ through the path of dispassion were opened to them; they entered and found unfading and eternal joy and gladness. – Come, then, you who are being saved; let us walk in the way of our fathers, keep their commandments to us, and preserve our hearts pure and blameless. “*Let us not envy the deceitful, nor be jealous of those who do iniquity; for they will wither like grass, and like the flower of the field, they will fade away*” (Ps. 36: 1–2). Let us not look to those who are many but live carelessly, but

to those who are few yet zealously strive for salvation and God's favor. Let us imitate them, follow in the footsteps of their virtues, look upon all things through their eyes, reason about everything with their minds, speak with their tongues—and may we be made worthy of their lot, which is blessed and full of joy.

174. Having received, for the sake of renouncing the world and entering a monastery with vows, the strength for a life pleasing to God, give thanks to the Lord who has called you to this—not in word, but in the deeds of the life you have chosen: in this lies victory over the world

174. 1) Having received, for the sake of renouncing the world and entering the monastery with vows, the strength to live a life pleasing to God, give thanks to the Lord who has called you to this, not in word but in the deeds of the life you have chosen: in this lies victory over the world. – 2) The Lord triumphed through His sufferings, the cross, and death, showing us the way to complete victory: following in His footsteps, the Apostles, then the martyrs, and then the holy ones triumphed over the world in this way. – 3) Such is the way to God; and there is no one who does not walk it. – 4) Do not be surprised when you encounter afflictions; rather, rejoice and be of good courage. [2, 111]

12. Nothing is more desirable or joyful to me than to hear and see that you walk piously and conduct yourselves in a godly manner, fulfilling all the Lord's commandments and sincerely observing the monastic life, in which you have been reborn in the Spirit and through which you have been freed from your former sins; and not only that, but you have also received the spirit of strength against visible and invisible enemies, and to face fearlessly whatever may come while serving the living God and keeping His holy commandments. Give thanks, glorify, and sing praises to the Lord who has called you, repaying Him with nothing other than patient perseverance in your ascetic struggle and ensuring that, just as you have striven well thus far, you may continue to stand firm in this even more so, burning with love for God. From the Lord, crowns are woven for you day by day, if in your good will you hold fast to the firm resolve to endure everything rather than change anything of what has been commanded to us. For the Lord's commandment is eternal life, but to violate it is death; therefore, we must confess the truth and not agree with those who oppose it, sacrificing for this sake all worldly advantages, glory, and honor from kings, bishops, and others. For "*what good is it,*" as it is written, "*if a man gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?*" (Matt. 16: 26). This is the purpose of our steadfastness and our deeds.

13. But "*be of good cheer,*" says the Lord, "*for I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). He conquered so that we, following in His footsteps, might also conquer it. As God, He is always the conqueror of the world; but He now specifically says that He has conquered as a man. And immediately after Him, the Apostles conquered the world; after them, the martyrs; then the saints; and all who lived piously and in the image of God. But how was this victory won—both by the Lord Himself and by His saints?—Without a struggle? Without suffering? Without the shedding of blood? Without exile?—No; not only was it not without these things, but it was also achieved through the cross and death. You know of the insults against the Lord, His revilings and mockeries—that He was betrayed, condemned, flogged, spat upon, and crucified—but having risen, He saved the world. Likewise, the Apostles also suffered. And who can describe the sufferings and torments of the martyrs? Or the feats and privations of the holy ones?

14. The Word of God says, "*All who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted, but evildoers will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*" (2 Tim. 3: 12). The path leading to the kingdom is narrow and difficult; the path of destruction is broad and smooth (Matt. 7:14). On the latter—worldly joy, carnal pleasures and delights, contempt for God's laws, carelessness about death, and human fear; and on the former—sorrows from the world, voluntary labors, and all manner of privations, as the Apostle says of those who walk in it: "*those who were persecuted, afflicted, and tormented, wandering in deserts and mountains, in caves and in the caverns of the earth*" (Heb. 11: 37). And there is not a single saint who has walked this path without suffering.

15. Therefore, do not be surprised when you encounter afflictions; rather, rejoice that they have not passed you by, and let your love for God burn ever more fiercely, so that through this you may subdue your passions and drive out the demons. For whoever loves the One leaves all others behind; and whoever fears the One cannot fear anyone else. He who has God is above all others. Be wise, maintain piety, and offer prayers and supplications for everyone. Christ is in your midst: for if He is present where two or three are gathered, how could He not be among you who fulfill His commandments, when there are so many of you?

175. When taking a temporary leave, he asks superiors and subordinates to act and live according to the rules, specifying exactly how

175. 1) When leaving for a time, he asks superiors and subordinates to act and live according to the rules, specifying exactly how. – 2) To encourage this, he emphasizes especially that God sees everything and will hold everyone accountable for everything. [2, 112]

16. As I am away for a time, I ask you, in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to observe the usual rules of communal life during the few days of my absence, in obedience and humility: superiors, do not rule arbitrarily, presumptuously, in a mercantile manner, or in any other human way, but in a godly and beneficial manner, salutary, as those who are seen and judged by God, and who must give an account to Him for everything you say and do; subordinates and novices, carry out what is commanded of you meekly and without complaint, whether from my deputy or from other superiors. You are children of God; walk as children of light. You are Christ's lambs; feed as His lambs do, gently and meekly. Let no one act recklessly or leap about like a young goat, feeding on the thorns of passion; let no one act like Judas, appearing to be a brother among the brethren while secretly plotting betrayal to the ruin of his own soul; let no one be like Esau, despising his salvation and selling its benefits for some stolen food and drink. Let no one remain idle, loitering here and there, nor waste the day in vain, while other brothers labor diligently, enduring the heat of the day and the cold of the night—whether they are on guard duty, serving in the infirmary, working in the shoemaker's workshop, the carpenter's shop, or in some other form of service. It is a terrible offense when, as the Apostle says, such people are *"not even worthy to eat"* (2 Thess. 3:10).

17. Walk in all things according to God's ways, and let not your feet set foot in secret places for evil counsel and vain schemes; for *"the eyes of the Lord, brighter than the sun in the darkness, see all your ways"; "and they scrutinize in secret places"* (Sirach 23:27). Therefore, even if you are in a hidden place, the watchful eye sees you there—with whom you stand, what you speak, and what you do. Take care, then, lest it see you conversing with Satan, plotting wicked deeds, or committing anything shameful. And even if the Lord does not mete out the proper punishment to you at that very moment, He will in every way command that your sin be recorded and your fall be noted—unquestionably and invisibly proclaiming to you: *"You have done this, and I have remained silent; you have committed iniquity, thinking, 'I am like You.' I will rebuke you and set your sins before your face"* (Ps. 49:21). This will be on the Day of Judgment. —Where, then, can we flee from the hands of the One who rules over all? Can we do anything evil that would go unnoticed? Do not even entertain such thoughts; but act in all things in a way that is salvific and pleasing to God, so that, seeing you, the Lord may rejoice and be glad, and may inscribe your good deeds in the Book of Life, and on the day of the revelation of all things may crown you with the unfading and eternal crown of righteousness.

176. Stand valiantly, gazing upward, and with divine contemplations—like arrows—repel the enemies of salvation

176. 1) Stand valiantly, gazing upward, and with divine contemplations—like arrows—repel the enemies of salvation. – 2) If you are troubled by passion, do not give in, but reflect on the shame you will suffer if you yield, and on the fact that the enemy is deceiving you by presenting evil as good. – 3) And in general, discern from your inner stirrings which spirit is near you—good or evil—and listen to the one, while driving the other away. [2, 114]

18. Stand firm, *"having your loins girded with truth, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* (Eph. 6: 14–15), looking upward, striving toward the things above, seeking the heavenly, keeping your mind occupied with heavenly things, caring for your departure from the body, and for the future meeting with the Judge and your account before Him—studying the Divine Scriptures and the lives of the saints, and using what you find that is beneficial to the soul and salvific as arrows against the enemy.

19. Let anyone troubled by passion not lose heart or yield to it: for *"the Lord is near to all who call upon Him"* (Ps. 144: 18), and the soul that seeks Him will find Him (cf. Sir. 6: 16); but let it stand firm, let it sigh and groan, let it shed tears, raising its hands to heaven, let it beat its breast, reflecting on the shame that covers a sinful act—not only before the dreadful throne of God, but before itself and before people—and thereby turn itself away from sin and be established in goodness. For what is written? *"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, nor lose heart when rebuked by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises every son He accepts"* (Prov. 3: 11, 12). And again in another place? *"Do not be disheartened in times of trial"* (Sirach 2:2). It is the Lord who tests our love—whether we are steadfast in it, whether we prefer

His love to a shameful delight, one that is calamitous and deadly, sweet to the taste yet terribly bitter when swallowed—and not as our soul-destroyer presents it: he pretends to be light, but he is darkness; spiritual love, on the surface, seems to be lacking, yet it is the most hateful of hatreds. But you, warrior of Christ, do not be ignorant of his schemes or his wicked plots. If you desire life, seek the light, for God and His commandment are light.

20. By the state of your soul, discern who has approached you—one of ours, or one of the adversaries? If your soul remains serene, unshaken, not neglecting heavenly contemplations, and full of longing for the blessings reserved for us, then by all means, open the doors of your heart to him, welcome him, and spend the evening with him, so that he may nourish you even more toward a greater love of God and divine things. But if his presence troubles your soul, fills it with a multitude of thoughts, turns your eyes toward flesh and blood, toward worldly ties and passions, and toward immediate pleasure, stirring your soul to frenzy and, as it were, bringing it to a boil with the heat of lustful delights: alas! —step back and drive this dragon away. It has come to destroy in a single moment your many years of labor, your ascetic efforts, your many tears, prayers, and valiant struggles and victories over enemies; he has come to make you, a warrior of Christ, a prey to the fleeting delight of lust; he has come to kill such a valiant man for all eternity by making him drink from a cup of sinful delight steeped in poison. – I write this not as one who is dispassionate, but as one who has been tempted, and even more so as one who is full of passions; some things I have learned from what I have read, others from my father’s teachings, and still others from what I have heard from many others.

177. Many passions assail us through the work of the enemy. We must fight, keeping ourselves clothed in the full armor of God

177. 1) Many passions attack us through the work of the enemy. We must fight them by keeping ourselves clothed in the full armor of God. 2) Among these weapons, the knowledge of divine truths—gained through listening to teachings, which, unfortunately, we make so little use of—is by no means the least. 3) Because of this, we are wayward and cling to what is evil, even though all it takes is a desire, and we can spend the whole day doing what is right. 4) So begin to act in this way. [2, 115]

21. Stand valiantly in your arduous life, enduring both the heat of the day and the chill of the night, mentally and physically; but more so mentally, because the fire of lust is inherent in us, stoked more fiercely than the Chaldean furnace by the invisible Nebuchadnezzar; other passions also assail us, each one drawing the poor soul away from the other: anger, rage, vindictiveness, pride, sloth, laxity, partiality, self-love, and the greatest of all evils, unbelief. We need much courage and magnanimity, much unwavering fortitude and strength, patience, good cheer, sobriety, and alertness, so that we may repel the temptations and wiles of the devil raised against us, so that we may not bow the knee before the Baal of lust, so that we may not worship the image of the passions, so that we may not destroy what we have gathered well, so that we may not ruin what we have created with God’s help. How else can we avoid these passions, if not by wholeheartedly relying on the Lord and putting on all the spiritual armor to defeat the forces hostile to us?

22. These spiritual weapons are: prayer and hope, humility and obedience, love and faith, impartiality and the complete turning of the mind away from all worldly things, constant instruction and discourse on salvation, a view and hearing that are neither indifferent nor indiscriminate toward all things, as well as the use of the mouth and hands, constant protection of oneself through the fear of God and meditation on God, with an unquenchable longing for future blessings: for if this is not present in us, how can we avoid falling into the ruin of sin? How can we avoid falling into the hands of enemies who hate us?—Alas! How much do we hear? How much do the Scriptures inspire in us? How much do the godly fathers teach? Yet we forget it all and care not a whit about it. Just as a seed sown on the surface of the ground by a farmer, before the plow buries it beneath the earth, is snatched away by birds: so the cunning birds of the enemy snatch the divine word from us, as if from our very lips; and the spiritual seeds remain inactive within us, and we too remain barren, bearing no fruit of virtue. What else can one think but this, when the fathers preach to us about chastity, courage, truth, or some other virtue, and we, immediately after listening—as if we had heard nothing—find ourselves acting in complete opposition to it? They tell us about judgment and tears, yet as soon as we leave, we begin to laugh and guffaw. They rein in our souls with stern words about purity, yet immediately after hearing them, we give in to lust, casting lewd glances at one another and uttering and accepting the most brazen words. They urge us toward humility and meekness, yet immediately after such a discourse, we become arrogant, act brutally, and show disobedience. They urge us toward moderation, yet we overeat; toward

vigilance, yet we immediately fall asleep; toward gentleness, yet we immediately fly into a rage; to silence, yet we engage in idle talk; to increased labor, yet we shirk our duties; and to put it simply, it is as if on purpose we turn to a path opposite to the one indicated by the instruction. And I am speaking not only of novices, but also of those who presume to be something, and those called to leadership in any capacity, and those ordained as ministers. – Alas! What suffering do we endure from Satan the deceiver?

23. Why do we turn our faces away from the living God, from that unfathomably sublime beauty, and turn toward what is vain and fleeting? Why do we love and cherish what is bitter and temporary, forsaking what is sweetest and eternal? Truly, the eyes and ears of our souls are not purified, so that we fail to see true goodness and deprive ourselves of its enjoyment. Come, then, let us set to work again, though we have already grown completely weak; let us come alive again, though we have already become completely dead; let us stay awake again, though we have already almost fallen asleep. All we need is to desire it—and everything would be accomplished. On the very day we set a good and firm intention, we will attain the measure of salvation. For we are not bound by the affairs of daily life, so that it would be difficult for us to undertake good deeds. But it is convenient for us to devote the whole day to the work of salvation, if only we so desire: in the morning, to sing wisely that psalm of David: *“In the morning hear my voice; in the morning I will appear before You and You will see me”* (Ps. 5: 6); at the third hour: *“Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me”* (Ps. 50:13); at the sixth hour: *“Deliver me from the attack of the midday demon and from the arrows flying by day”* (Ps. 90:5); at the ninth hour: *“Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear me”* (Ps. 85:1); in the evening: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul...”* and the verses that follow (Ps. 103:1). If we act this way every day, encouraging one another and enlightening one another with good words and deeds, rather than relaxing and casting a shadow of careless indifference and empty talk; then we may be saved in this way, for from morning till evening we may perform one worthy deed. Of course, it is impossible not to stray—whether toward a thought that is unwise, a wish that is inappropriate, or some other passionate impulse—but each time this happens, it is atoned for through a heartfelt prayer to God. Thus, as day follows day, let us walk in God’s way, awaiting the time of deliverance from the body, after which come crowns, joy, and gladness for all who labor and discipline themselves for the Lord.

24. Pay close attention, then, to your labor, your struggles, and your battles, casting aside carelessness and embracing zealous diligence, confident that it is possible for everyone who desires it to live a good life, to ascend to perfection, and to be adorned with every virtue. If God is light, life, and truth, how can we not long to strive toward Him, seek living communion with Him, and attain it? And if Satan is truly death, falsehood, and ruin, how can yielding to his influence be anything other than death, darkness, and ruin? Thus, life and death lie before each of us. Let us cling to life, cling to the light, cling to immortality; and let us flee from darkness, gloom, and ruin, that we may be made worthy of the kingdom of heaven in Christ Jesus our Lord.

178. You have now successfully completed Holy Lent and have been enriched with spiritual fruits... Keep them, then, by watching over yourselves closely

178. 1) You have now successfully completed Holy Lent and have been enriched with spiritual fruits. 2) Preserve them, then, by keeping a close watch on yourselves, especially during the days of Easter, when certain comforts are permitted according to the rules. [2, 116]

25. You have labored in good deeds throughout Holy Lent: you fasted to the best of your ability and even beyond, kept vigil as is fitting, studied with sobriety, worked diligently, kept your minds pure, guarded your tongues from condemnation, your lips from idle talk, and all your members from every sin, making them instruments of righteousness and organs of a virtuous and God-pleasing life. You have now observed the fast so well and so favorably as, it seems, never before. Why is this so? Because of your strict attention to yourselves and to the business of your lives, and even more so because of the special grace of God drawn down by this, from which *“every good gift and every perfect gift”* comes, as it is written (James 1:17). In this way, you have prospered in life and been enriched with spiritual fruits.

26. May your wealth be preserved, and may your storehouses of spiritual blessings remain inaccessible to the enemy’s predatory slanders. May grace be granted to you upon grace, and riches upon riches, until the end of your life.—“And so it shall be”—but how?—“If you do not relax the strictness of your vigilance and do not allow slackness or negligence in the days to come, especially when Holy Pascha arrives, when, according to the rule, psalm singing, the usual hours, kneeling prayers, and intensified night vigils are set

aside, and at meals wine, oil, cooked food, and the like are permitted, as well as an afternoon nap, two meals a day, walks, and other such things: so that if the mind does not remain sober and do everything according to the rules with strict attention, it is in danger of ruining what it has rightly acquired, turning a rich man into a poor one, and casting him from the heights of glory into the abyss of a disgraceful fall. That is why I ask and implore you: keep yourselves strictly in check, as if under lock and key, until we escape from the enemies here and the treacherous accidents, and move to a place where we will be safe from falls and theft.

179. Let us not heed the enemy's temptations: our forefather heeded them and was cast out of paradise

179. 1) Let us not heed the enemy's temptations: our forefather heeded them and was cast out of Paradise. – 2) The enemy offers us his temptations at every opportunity: let us always be ready to reject them. [2, 117]

27. *"Be still, and know that I am God"* (Ps. 45:11). Thus, we are called to detach ourselves from all things and to devote ourselves solely to what is necessary. In the course of our lives, we need: an insatiable desire for goodness, unwavering sobriety, steadfast patience, and unceasing resistance to our enemies and adversaries; for always near us are these mental beasts, the kidnappers of our souls, the demons from whom come sins, lawlessness, and all manner of debauchery. Let no one, therefore, through negligence, slacken in their spiritual struggles; let no one wander wilfully here and there, driven by sensuality and self-love, but in all things let them submit to the Lord's commandments, and not to foreign influences. For the Lord Himself says: *"My sheep hear My voice. They do not follow a stranger, for they do not know a stranger's voice"* (John 10:27, 5). Where Christ is, the devil has no place. Where His voice calls the sheep, the hissing of the serpent is not heard. And our forefather Adam, as long as he kept the ears of his soul healthy, dwelt within Paradise, listening to the divine voice, and received lofty contemplations. But when he accepted the serpent's whisperings and tasted of the tree of sin, he immediately felt the shame of his nakedness and hid from God. When asked, "Where are you?" "I heard your voice," he said, "and I hid because I was naked." Who, then, instilled this fear in you, O Adam? And who pointed out that you were naked?—A deceitful ear and a departure from God's commandment. This was followed by his expulsion from that blessed place and his condemnation to toil, sorrow, and deprivation in this life. – Therefore, let us henceforth keep away from the serpent's counsel.

28. Let us not accept the promptings of the passions, which he has prepared through his malice. Having prepared little vessels with various potions, this loathsome instigator of all lawlessness goes about, as one of the saints (St. Macarius the Great) observed, and, seeing which passion each of us is most prone to, offers each person the corresponding potion and makes them drink it; and upon tasting it, that person is inflamed by passion: to one he gives the potion of fornication, to another of envy, to a third of gluttony, to yet another of arrogance, to another of celibacy—in short, to this one this, to that one that, and to each his own. We must therefore be vigilant, brothers, and always be ready to repel such attacks from our fierce enemy; and to that end, we must be constantly armed spiritually, wearing the armor of faith, the shield of humility, the helmet of obedience, and the full armor of all other virtues. Let each one, knowing his own station, act according to his station with a clear conscience. Let us love one another in spirit, not in the flesh. Eyes downcast, mind lifted up.

180. Fasting is pleasing to God when we abstain both in spirit and in the flesh; but if it is only in the flesh, it is displeasing to Him.

180. Fasting is pleasing to God when we practice self-restraint both in spirit and in body; but if it is only physical, it is displeasing to Him. Strive to be faithful in this. [2, 120] The time of fasting is already drawing to a close: examine yourselves, then, to see if you have fulfilled all that is fitting and proper: have we, together with you, attained unquestioning obedience, sincere humility, contrite reverence, unceasing prayer, weeping pleasing to God, deep lamentation, unshakeable faith, hope that brings no shame, good-natured patience, and all-encompassing self-restraint—from every word of opposition, from offensive speech, from arrogance, quarreling, and self-will. —All this is required by self-restraint, and by refraining from these things, we truly walk the path of piety and strive through good deeds in the hope of eternal, ineffable blessings. But if there is anything contrary to this—disobedience, pride, grumbling, backbiting, self-will, licentiousness, quarrelsomeness, hard-heartedness, hatred, anger, and other vile passions of depravity—then even though we fast physically, we do not offer God a pleasing fast, but an impure one—one that is not pleasing to God and is rejected by Him. Having come to know this, strive to keep all the Lord's commandments blamelessly; reject

all that is reprehensible, shameful, and disgraceful, and do everything in a proper and orderly manner: for even what is good is not good if it is spoken or done improperly. *“Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of God is”* (Eph. 5:17)—*“good, pleasing, and perfect”* (Rom. 12:2).

181. Strive to fulfill God’s commandments and the vows of communal life, and you will be filled with indescribable joy from the Lord

181. 1) Strive to fulfill God’s commandments and the vows of communal life, and you will be filled with indescribable joy from the Lord. – 2) Such is the essence of our calling and the hope it holds: let us not grow weary in fulfilling our duties. – 3) These acts of obedience are not in vain; and none of us serves people, but God, who accepts them—and will reward them: so strive in this spirit, and fulfill the work of your calling to perfection. – 4) In this way, let us become imitators of the fathers and of the Lord Himself. – 5) May the Lord establish you in this and keep you. [2, 123]

1. I urge and implore you: stand firm in the holy calling to which you have been called, unshakable and steadfast, fulfilling God’s commandments and His righteousness; always abide in the most zealous and fervent love for the Lord, banishing every foreign passion from your hearts; grow stronger in the fortitude of your asceticism, passing each day with ever greater diligence and sobriety, in vigil and psalm-singing, in obedience and humility, in service and reverence, and in all else, regarding this perseverance in labor and struggle, and this sweat-soaked life of yours, as proof of your success in working out your own salvation. Take heart: eternal peace will finally shine forth for you in place of your present suffering, and unceasing joy in place of your present sorrows. This is how the Apostle encourages us, urging us not to look at the present, because it is temporary and fleeting, but at the future, because it is eternal and blessed (2 Cor. 4:18).

2. Therefore, since we have been deemed worthy of this gift of the angelic monastic habit, since we have desired eternal life and imperishable crowns, since we have ardently loved adoption as sons and the kingdom of heaven—behold, you have both the time and the arena at your disposal. – Let us not lose heart, let us not spare our strength; but even more than those who seek gold and silver, precious stones, and other perishable treasures, let us wholeheartedly and zealously strive for the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven and heavenly blessings. Success in this will come only if we constantly examine ourselves and, continually learning from the Divine, take care to fulfill the obedience entrusted to us in the best possible way, for it is neither carnal nor human, but holy and salvific, if it is performed with excellence.

3. For none of us serves flesh and blood, but the Lord God, who accepts this as a pleasing sacrifice and promises to reward us worthily in the age to come. Let no one think that he is serving a human being, even if he has been assigned the humblest duty, but rather the Lord Himself, who accepts it through His brothers. Therefore, perform it with fear and trembling, having Him Himself as your overseer, *“who sees in the secret places of darkness and reveals the counsels of your hearts”* (1 Cor. 4:5). If each of us thinks this way—as it truly is—and performs our mutual service to one another as divine ministry, then we will perfectly fulfill the work of our calling.

4. From this, the rays of all virtues—love, peace, meekness, gentleness, and humility—will shine forth in us, and we will then realize that we are truly following in the footsteps of our holy fathers, emulating their way of life. Remember, then, those blessed lives, their journey along the path of submission and obedience, the remarkable excellence of their humility and submission—and how zealously they served the Lord, Who Himself said: *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart”* (Matt. 11:29), even though, according to the Apostle, *“He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness; and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:6, 8). And consider: who is among the saved, or the blessed? Only those who imitated Him, who humbled themselves, who were obedient and submissive, who endured all manner of afflictions, humiliations, insults, mockery, or even beatings, exile, and imprisonment—just as some of you, or even all of you, have done; for in one member, the whole body either receives glory or suffers disgrace.

5. May the Lord preserve you more and more as His valiant warriors, as His faithful servants, as men of desire, as a chosen people, as a holy assembly, so that, appearing in this age—truly adulterous and sinful—as unashamed doers of God’s commandments, you may be deemed worthy to be co-heirs with Christ the Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven.

182. You heed neither my teachings, nor my fatherly admonitions, nor the word of God, and you remain unrepentant: the cause of this is your indulgence of the flesh and your indifference toward salvation

182. 1) You do not listen to my teachings, nor to my fatherly admonitions, nor to the word of God, and you remain unrepentant: the cause of this is your indulgence of the flesh and your indifference toward salvation. – 2) We ought to be zealous for all that is good, but what are we like? – 3) Why, then, are we so negligent and have fallen so low? Let us at least make amends from now on. [2, 124]

6. For what other purpose does a farmer sow, if not to reap later? For what purpose does a merchant labor, if not to make a profit? Likewise, for what other purpose does one who is appointed to teach the word of instruction do so, if not in the hope of the success and improvement of those who hear? – As for you, however, because of my sins, my word remains completely ineffective. I sow abundantly and labor hard, yet I see no fruit. I speak, I proclaim, I remind—and sometimes, for a moment, the power of my word reaches the ear of your soul, but you immediately forget it all again and remain in those same transgressions. I weep over this and my heart is torn, having no strength to put an end to your disorder. Of course, such futility stems from the powerlessness of my humble words. Let the blame for this, however, rest with me. But do you not hear the words of Divine Scripture? Do they not proclaim to your ears, day after day, the saving doctrines?—What, moreover, do the holy fathers cry out? What do they proclaim? What do they testify to? What do they warn against? – Do they not bring before your eyes that dreadful and inescapable judgment, that shattering final decree of God, that devastating rejection and endless torments, the unquenchable fire, the poisonous worm that never dies, the pitch-black darkness, the Tartarus of the underworld, and all else that comes to mind in this regard? – Do they not, on the contrary, show you the Kingdom of Heaven—eternal life, ineffable glory, unspeakable light, the unimaginable beauties of paradise, the bosom of Abraham, the tabernacle of the saints, the courts of the righteous, the ranks of the angels, and inexpressible joys? – And yet, we see no sign of reform in you, not even repentance. – What words, however, can we heed when all we seek is to satisfy our carnal passions and inclinations, when we have sunk so low with nothing on our minds but what to eat and drink, what funny remark to utter for the ruin of our own soul and the soul of the listener, what to invent to cover up our guilt, or to shift it onto another—and, generally speaking, when we have made our souls not a garden of piety and truth, but of every kind of lawlessness and injustice?

7. We ought to look upward with sorrow, to seek heavenly wisdom, to seek and behold the things above, to consider what rank and station we have assumed, to whom and in what way we have become bound thereby, for how many and what sins of our former life we have received forgiveness, and for what faults of negligence, after taking the schema, we have been granted absolution? – We ought to tremble, lament, humble ourselves, and be contrite; we ought to walk with a heavy heart and downcast eyes, remembering death, which is ever at hand; remembering our appearance before the Judge upon leaving the body and our encounter with the fearsome Angels. – We ought to imitate our holy fathers, who were extremely strict with themselves in everything—even down to a casual word—and were in all things cautious, sincere, well-ordered, free from malice, meek, peaceful, not quarrelsome, not lustful, not worldly, silent, hymn-singing, grateful, obedient, humble and wise—truly chosen vessels, prepared for every good work—having the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

8. Why, then, are we so negligent, we wretched ones? Why are we so lazy? Why have we sunk so low? Why does the word of God not touch our souls? Why do we not shed tears? Why do we not soften our hardened hearts? Why are we not transformed by a complete change? Why do we not strive daily for the better, so that it may be evident that we have fled from the world and risen above all ordinary human wisdom?—The dreadful and terrifying day and hour of our passing will come, will come, and will not be delayed. Then we will groan bitterly, painfully, and inconsolably, lacking the boldness to say, *“My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready”* (Isa. 107:2). But come, if you will listen to me, let us worship and prostrate ourselves before Christ Himself, our King; let us groan and lament before Him with all our hearts—and He who is near to all who truly call upon Him will grant us help and strength to cast aside sinful habits and enter into a life of virtue, sparing no sacrifice. I am not saying: do not eat, do not drink; I am not saying: do not lie down to rest; I am not saying: “Do not seek comfort or gather with the brethren for conversation”; but I demand that all this be done in a proper manner, in moderation, at the appropriate time and in a fitting place, so that, adding virtue to virtue and progress to progress, we may live a life that is peaceful and angelic.

183. Many of you are as you ought to be: why, then, are not all of you so?

183. Many of you are as you should be—so why aren't all of you? But come, let us all rise up while there is still time. [3 1, 2]⁹⁶ *Some of you are as the Word of God requires; but they are not the majority. Why, then, should we not all rise up and, awakening from the deep sleep of carelessness, strive toward the light of knowledge and desire eternal bliss? Why not "put to death the earthly parts of our nature—sexual immorality, impurity, every kind of passion, and evil desire" (Col. 3: 5), so that we may become temples of God, in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would be pleased to dwell? Why not observe the monastic rule in word and deed, with the utmost diligence, so as not to dare to engage in mockery, deceit, grumbling, pride toward our neighbor, or boastful speech, by which people say, "I was such-and-such and such- ; I had this and that"? – How long will the demon of idle talk have power over us? How long will we be instruments of the flattering spirit of disobedience? How long will our hearts be puffed up, boasting of small and insignificant things and condemning our brothers for lacking them? – But come, my children, listen to me: let us embrace the fear of the Lord and join hands with one another to work together for our salvation. While we are still in the flesh, while the time of our sojourn here still continues, while prayers and supplications, tears and repentance are still appropriate, let us strive to achieve this: that, having despised the whole world, cast aside all carnal wisdom, and put to death all earthly desires, we may direct all our affections toward what is holy, good, and divine.*

184. The way of asceticism in communal novitiate is superior to every other: it is Christ-like

184. The form of asceticism in communal monastic life is superior to any other: it is Christ-like. Run this path well, then. [31, 9] Stand firm, be courageous, and endure all things in the course of your life. Lift your thoughts to the heights and contemplate the heavenly with a godly mind. There, together with Isaiah, you will behold the Lord seated on a high and exalted throne, surrounded by the Cherubim and Seraphim standing before Him and by all the hosts of angels. Thus will we behold Him on the dreadful day of His second coming. – Then those who have faithfully accomplished the task set before them—rejecting bodily pleasures and refusing to let the delights of this age take hold of them—will hear His most blessed voice. Then the righteous will be enlightened like the sun in unspeakable joy, when our Lord and God, the Giver of rewards, distributes gifts according to merit to each and every one. Oh, my brothers, what bliss all the saints will taste, receiving the blessings of that realm in accordance with how they pleased Him here! Great indeed are those who, for God's sake, took refuge in the mountains, caves, and chasms of the earth—the stylites, the cave dwellers, and the hermits. – (I do not intend to speak here of the highest ranks—the holy Apostles, the judges of the universe, nor of the all-blessed martyrs, the divine Prophets, or certain other kinds of righteous people.) But our rank is in no way inferior to theirs. – You know that the Giver of gifts Himself, having come down to earth, did not choose for Himself a life of the desert, nor one of pillar-standing, nor any other such life, but was pleased to live in obedience, as He Himself says in the Gospel: *"I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me"* (John 6:38). And again: *"The words I speak, I do not speak on my own; but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what I should say and what I should speak"* (John 14:10; 12:49). Then, at the Last Supper, having girded Himself with a towel and taken on the role of a servant, He washed the disciples' feet, and shortly afterward said: *"I am among you as one who serves"* (Luke 22:28). Thus the Lord, having become incarnate, chose to embrace none other than our humble way of life. Is it not comforting and joyful for us that we spend our lives imitating Him? Is it therefore appropriate for us to favor other forms of ascetic life over our own? Indeed, if you live this life properly and faithfully, you yourselves will not wish to favor any other. This is why the Gerontikon contains a story in which, of three ascetics, the one living in obedience according to revelation is preferred over the hermit and the sick man who joyfully endures his illness. Indeed, my brothers, our life is truly great, and those who live it will undoubtedly be glorified with Abraham, the martyrs, and the righteous. So walk well. May the devil, who envies you, not stop you, and do not stop yourselves out of laziness. Anoint your feet with the oil of patience, clothe yourselves in the tunic of joy, and drink the water of purity and chastity. Let no one say, "How long?"—for that is the word of the sluggard.

⁹⁶ The third volume of sermons consists of two parts, each with its own numbering system for the sermons. In the citations, 31 refers to the first half, and 32 to the second. The number that follows indicates the number of the sermon.)

185. By comparing those who strive to fruitful grapevines, he stirs up zeal for bearing the fruit of virtue

185. 1) By comparing those who strive to fruitful grapevines, it stirs up zeal for the fruitfulness of virtue, and concludes. – 2) I would like to bring joy to some and bring others to their senses. [31, 13]

9. The vine-grower rejoices when he sees the vine bearing fruit. I, too, rejoice when I see any of you bearing spiritual fruit. Blessed is the branch rich in spiritual clusters, yielding the wine of repentance and bringing joy to God and to people. But let it not be said of any of us that the Prophet Moses spoke of certain people on behalf of God: *“Their vine is from Gomorrah; their cluster is a cluster of gall, a cluster of bitterness”* (Deut. 32:32). For a terrible warning is proclaimed in the Gospel: every branch that does not bear good fruit is cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:2–6)—a fire that is, of course, unquenchable. By the grace of Christ, there are various branches in our God-planted vineyard. One, for example, possesses both deeds and words seasoned with the salt of the Holy Spirit; another is adorned with deep humility. Yet another, through its abundance of fruit, spreads out in branches. Understand by this one who grows stronger and matures spiritually, adding one spiritual feat to another. Another has taken deep root in the earth with many roots; he is abundant, tall, and lush, so that cuttings for other vines are produced from him. Such is the one who, while firmly established in the good ways, also benefits his brothers when he sees someone falling or being afflicted by the enemy’s attacks. But the branches of the vine, having no feeling, do not compete with one another; but you, as living beings planted by God, compete with one another, grow together, and bear fruit together, so that none of you may remain barren, but all may be filled with the fruits of divine cultivation and be pleasing because of the multitude of spiritual clusters—that is, virtues—upon you.

10. With such parables, I wish to bring joy to some and to bring others to their senses. For all of you, I would like to erect a ladder from earth to heaven with my humble words, so that you may ascend to the highest contemplations and descend to the depths of the heart, to the realization of the impermanence and transience of human life, and the vanity and fragility of human affairs. In short, I would like to transport you to the world beyond and show you its ineffable and innumerable blessings. I would like to present you before the face of the living God, the Creator of all things and the Lord—and to help you understand what that realm is like—what eternal rest is there, what indescribable joy, the insatiable joy, the all-blessed fellowship with the Angels and all the Saints—so that, having been captivated and enlightened by this, you may turn away from all that is vain, regarding as true only that eternal good reserved for you, and considering everything here—which is received and vanishes in an instant—as nothing.

186. Remembering why we left the world and entered the monastery, let us strive earnestly to attain that goal, avoiding the stumbling blocks indicated by experience

186. Remembering why we left the world and entered this monastery, let us strive zealously to attain that goal, avoiding the stumbling blocks indicated by experience. [31, 15] Now I proclaim the words of the blessed Arsenius: “Arsenius, why did you come here?” And I invite you to ask yourselves, together with me, why did we leave the world and come here?—I will answer for all: certainly in order to gain God, so that, having become sons of God, we may inherit the kingdom of heaven, and in order to cease being *“flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor. 15:50). The Lord has called us to this through the holy calling. Therefore, take up the cross of Christ, and follow in His footsteps without hypocrisy, not dividing yourselves between Him and the world, but surrendering and dedicating yourselves entirely to Him alone. Strive in the good struggle; persevere and complete your journey, bravely enduring every hardship and sorrow that comes your way, drawing comfort from the hope of the inheritance of the promised blessings. A multitude of evil spirits assail and attack us both from within and from without. *“For from within, out of the heart,”* says the Lord, *“come evil thoughts, adultery, sexual immorality, murder, theft,”* and so on (Mark 7:21). Against the wind of these spirits, let us hoist the sails of our souls to sail our own course, with caution, lest we immediately fall into trouble by running aground on a shoal or striking a submerged rock—which are: ignorance, and especially the failure to confess our thoughts and the concealment of ourselves. We must guard against the dangerous places indicated by experience with all our might, so as not to perish if we encounter them. One must not veer to the right or to the left, but must follow the royal middle path. Therefore, let us not be sluggish in doing good, as if frozen in place—nor too impetuous in the heat of the moment, straying from the middle path as if to the right of the right. What happens when we love to appear better than others, inflamed by conceit, and thus inherit—alas! and woe!—*“wisdom in our own eyes and intelligence before us”* (Isaiah 5:21).

187. Let us all walk in harmony, each excelling in her own virtue, yet not seeking our own interests, and not shirking any labor, confident that for this we will undoubtedly receive the kingdom of heaven.

187. Let us all walk in harmony, each excelling in her own virtue, yet seeking not our own interests and shunning no toil, confident that for this we will undoubtedly receive the kingdom of heaven [31, 15]. Come, let us walk together; let us walk thus: some through obedient submission, some through unwavering patience, some through Christ-like humility, some through guarding their thoughts, some through painful contrition, some through purifying tears, some through brotherly love free from envy (), some through the gift of grace from God—whether through instructive words, edifying psalm-singing, or demonstrating how to act. Let everyone do what they can: if you are able to study, study; if to compose poetry, compose poetry; if to pray, pray; if to bow, bow—but do everything reverently and with patience. Let no one seek his own advantage or follow only his own inclinations; for in this way he will alienate himself from the very best obedience. Let no one among us say, “I cannot,” “I don’t feel like it,” or “I’m not well”—even if someone could truly say such things. I give you my solemn word, before the invisible God and His chosen angels, that by forcing yourselves—according to the Lord’s words that “*the kingdom of God is taken by force*”—by exerting yourselves and restricting yourselves in everything, just as you restrict yourselves because of the narrowness and hardship of your path—you will pass from death to life, from corruption to incorruption, from darkness to light, from slavery to adoption as children of God, from the valley of tears to the heavenly kingdom, which is most radiant and full of joy.

188. Just as the enemy deceived our forefather, so he deceives us, falsely presenting evil as good

188. Just as the enemy deceived our forefather, so does he deceive us, falsely presenting evil as good. Our forefather was deceived by listening to him; we too will be deceived if we listen to him. Let us not listen to him, but let us close our ears to every suggestion of his. [31, 16] Whether we recall our first dwelling in Paradise and our expulsion from there—or the reordering of all things in the age to come—both are matters of the utmost importance for us to understand. You are well aware of how our forefather Adam was expelled. But what was the reason for this? Pride and insolent disobedience toward God, who had given him very existence and life. He did not remain faithful to the commandment given to him, having been led astray in his heart by the eyes that craved sensual pleasure and thinking only that the fruit was good for food and pleasing to the eye; at his wife’s instigation, and even more so through the serpent’s temptation, he tasted of the forbidden fruit and thereby fell from light into darkness. Thus, the bitter taste of what appeared to be sweet disobedience drove him out of paradise and cast him down into a life full of toil and sorrow. But let us take care to avoid what he suffered, paying close attention so that we do not fall into the same snares. – Let us not allow ourselves to be carried away by the allurements and beauties that lead to sensual pleasure, whether by internal mental imaginings or by external, chance impressions on the body and the senses. For although what we see sometimes seems beautiful and good, in reality it is not so; and if we partake of it, it brings about in us what it brought about in Adam—death, decay, and condemnation. He believed the serpent that whispered to him: “*On the very day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God*” (Gen. 3:5). The dragon whispers the same to us—that if we fulfill such-and-such a desire, we will receive boundless joy and complete freedom from all that weighs us down. But he who listened to him was not only deceived in his expectations but lost entirely what he had, having fallen away from God in a disastrous way. And what about us? Should we really listen to him?—Or *do we “not understand his schemes”* (2 Cor. 2:11) and his deceptive lures? Therefore, no matter how much he entices us, no matter how much he calls out to us, no matter how much he stirs up our souls, let him be cast far away from us. For he seeks to deprive us of our divine and most blessed virginity, to expel us from the paradise of the Lord’s commandments, and to strip us of the angelic garment given to us by God, so that he may then cast us into the depths of the earth. Let us therefore bar the gates of our thoughts, shut the doors to them, and refuse to engage in conversation with them. But “*when the sinful devil rises up against us,*” “*we will be still and humble ourselves*” (Ps. 38: 2, 3) before God, and without even thinking that the enemy has approached, let us arm ourselves with the invincible weapon of the cross, and with the words of the God-inspired Scriptures let us strengthen ourselves in the work of our salvation. Let us strive to excel day by day, never growing weary in doing good and in asceticism, not content with what we have managed to accomplish, not regarding it as significant in any way, and not thinking that we surpass so-and-so in anything; but let us strive to fulfill all of

God's commandments perfectly, in every respect. This is our noble endeavor. This is our blessed ascent, our praiseworthy acquisition, our imperishable treasure, and the pledge of our future inheritance of eternal blessings.

189. If the experiences of the harmful consequences of indulging in self-gratifying desires do not teach us to abstain from this

189. 1) If the experiences of the harmful consequences of satisfying self-indulgent desires do not teach us to abstain from this—2) then may the memory of death, ever at hand, teach us: for it inspired the martyrs and strengthened the holy fathers in the rigors of self-denial. [31, 17]

11. Rejoice and be glad; run the race well, and rise above the deceptive allurements of the world, keeping your thoughts fixed on heaven and on the unspeakable glory that awaits you there. You know that all our labor in asceticism is nothing compared to the kingdom of heaven, that the sorrow and need of this life, in the face of eternal rest, are like an unpleasant dream. We have judged well, and we have done well, to have departed from this world by the power of Him who called us into His heavenly kingdom. But let us also live well, gradually progressing in good deeds, and learning from our experiences not to allow vanities to overcome us. “How many times have we indulged in pleasures?”—and nothing of that remains? “How many times have we filled our bellies?”—But we satisfied our bodily desires, and set nothing aside from that satisfaction, except the heaviness of the body. If we indulged in shameful thoughts, we later cursed ourselves, reaping sorrow instead of joy; if we indulged in sleep, we later condemned ourselves as senseless; if we acted rudely, we later reproached ourselves; if we gave ourselves over to laughter, we later mourned it; and in general, there is no good for a person in sensual pleasures. If we wish to always experience comfort and joy, let us keep the commandments: this will be an inexhaustible pleasure for us, bearing abundant fruit of righteousness with the testimony of our conscience.

12. Listen, brothers and sisters—let us not give in to sleep and indifference, nor waste our time in vain. The hour of our departure is coming; or has it not already come?—and an angel is sent for us by God, who will immediately take our soul and lead it away.—But where?—Are we not terrified upon hearing this? Do we not tremble when we think of this? Remembering this, the holy martyrs joyfully surrendered their bodies to torture, to the severing of limbs, to the crushing of bones—truly “*a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men*” (1 Cor. 4:9); but for this they were later crowned. Our reverend fathers, the holy monks, labored as if the body were their enemy—they found delight in hunger; enduring the cold, they felt as if in warmth; enduring privations, they were as if they had everything in abundance; they were not bound by the love of their parents; the affection of their children did not divert them from their purpose; the goodwill of their brothers did not distract them; neither gold nor silver did they covet, nor fine garments, nor food that stirs up the body, but they ate and clothed themselves only to live, and endured all manner of hardships as if they were incorporeal. Let us also strive to imitate them, suffering all manner of hardships—enduring hunger, cold, insults, mockery, and every other affliction—so long as we do not lose the kingdom of heaven.

190. It is difficult for us: the enemy devises schemes everywhere to deceive us; but knowing this, let us be vigilant and resist

190. 1) It is difficult for us: the enemy is everywhere devising schemes to deceive us; but knowing this, let us be vigilant and resist. – 2) Taking heart from the fact that it is only a little while longer—and we will enter into rest. – 3) And drawing wisdom from the Word of God and the writings of the Fathers. [31, 19]

1. Our struggle is great, our enemy is formidable, his malice against us is strong; he neither sleeps at night nor slumbers by day, nor is he distracted by any other concerns, but prowls constantly around our flock gathered by God, seeking to snatch some careless and unsteady soul and devour it. You know his wiles; beware, therefore. — He is the instigator of sin: he casts a thought like a fishing line, disguised as the bait of sweetness. Do not be foolish—like fish, to use the Apostle's words, “*not understanding his schemes*” (2 Cor. 2:11)—do not be deceived by outward appearances; rather, expose his cunning and drive him away; and he, having failed, will return to his own with bitterness. Here are his tempting suggestions: to one he instills envy, to another laziness; to one, a desire to move elsewhere; to another, pride; or both to the same person—in every way drawing them into the snare of death. Let us therefore be vigilant, and—with the Lord at the right hand of our soul, the One Beloved and Desired—let us avoid his snare. May anger—intended only against the enemy, the serpent—not tyrannize you; and may the fire of lust not have the freedom to inflame your hearts

toward shameful and unseemly deeds; but, adorned with meekness and clothed in beautiful dispassion, love one another.

2. Endure a little while longer, and you will be called blessed; strive a little longer—just a little—and you will soon reach that heavenly city, resplendent and adorned, where lies the indescribable bridal chamber of virginal souls, where is the bosom of Abraham, the divine paradise, the kingdom of heaven. Keep this city in mind; let us inspire ourselves to hasten along the path toward it, paying no heed to toil and weariness.

3. Pay attention to the God-inspired words of the Gospels, the Apostles, the Prophets, and the soul-saving writings of the Fathers, and nourish and satisfy your souls with them. As for the tasks and labors—which are given to each of us, let us carry them out cheerfully with patience, brotherly love, mutual aid, and compassion, so that the name of our God may be glorified in all and by all, and to Him alone we serve and worship.

191. Through patience we will overcome the enemy and be deemed worthy of the ineffable blessings for which the martyrs subjected themselves to torments, and the holy ones to every kind of austerity and self-denial

191. 1) Through patience we will defeat the enemy and be deemed worthy of the ineffable blessings for which the martyrs subjected themselves to torment and the holy ones to every kind of self-denial. – 2) Let us imitate them by turning away from all that is evil and striving for all that is good, thereby ascending to perfection. [31, 24]

4. In ceaseless struggle, you stand in the arena of obedience, enduring blows in deprivation and scourging in the afflictions of sorrow, shedding blood in the mortification of your will. – But take courage, for by doing this you are preparing for yourselves crowns, honors, and rewards for a righteous victory. “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you; draw near to God, and He will draw near to you*” (James 4:7–8); “*Put on,*” as the great teacher of the universe, Paul, commands, “*the full armor*” of the Holy Spirit, “*so that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil*” (Eph. 6:11). By your patience he is repelled, defeated, and cast down as powerless, and trampled under your feet: so that the promise is fulfilled in you: “*to tread upon the serpent and the scorpion and all the power of the enemy.*” Oh, my children! If we strive a little longer, what blessings will we receive, what glory, what joy?—Words cannot express this, nor can the mind comprehend it. For this reason, the martyrs, like sheep, gave themselves up to slaughter; for this reason, the saints took upon themselves the most rigorous ascetic practices and carried them out.

5. Let us imitate them as well, encouraging one another toward this and helping one another. May there be no place among us—I humbly beg you—for the disobedience that drove Adam out of Paradise, nor for the pride before Almighty God that caused the morning star to be cast down from heaven, nor for the gluttony that led Esau to sell his birthright, nor for the lust which, through the cunning Delilah, made the invincible Samson a laughingstock before foreigners, nor the envy that made Cain a fratricide. Let us, then, embrace virtue all the more, drawing examples—from one, meekness; from another, zeal; from one, patience; from another, invincibility; from yet another, brotherly love; from another, humility, obedience, and love of God—so that you may be sons of light and of the day, and co-heirs of those whose lives you have emulated. Ascend, my brothers, ascend the lofty mountain of virtues; let the ascent of the Spirit dwell in your hearts, be heavenly ladders; rise like the cedars of Lebanon, seeking the heights, meditating on heavenly things, and gathering your minds there, so that, finding you in such a state, the end of this earthly life may lead you directly into the blessed paradise for eternal life.

192. Let us cry out, and the Lord will deliver us from the bondage of sin and our enemies

192. 1) Let us cry out, and the Lord will deliver us from the bondage of sin and our enemies. – 2) But once you have been delivered, hold fast;—otherwise you will fall back into bondage: to avoid suffering this, have the fear of God and love for the Lord, sustaining them through contemplation of God’s wondrous works, His creation, providence, and redemption. – 3) If you vividly impress upon yourself that the Lord suffered for our sake, then no sorrows or hardships will shake you or lead you astray from God’s path. [31:25]

6. Again and again, “*let us seek God, and our souls will live*” (Isa. 68:33). Let us call upon Him earnestly, and He will look upon us as He did upon ancient Israel, and He will hear the cry and groaning of our sorrowful souls. And although He will not send Moses, He Himself will certainly deliver us from the hands of the Pharaoh of our minds and from the bitter labor of his passions. As long as we remain under sinful

Egypt, so long will the thoughts that serve it inevitably drive and persecute us. But when the good God looks upon our endurance with signs and wonders of His presence within us, He will then deliver us from the ten plagues that afflict us into the land of dispassion; and we will then sing to Him, in all-satisfying joy, a song of victory over our liberation.

7. But know also that a person may once again fall into the hands of his enemies if he grows complacent and fails to remain steadfast in the initial good disposition that reigned within him during and after his conversion—may this never happen to any of you. – The beginning and source of inner transformation for the better and of steadfastness within a person is the instilling of the fear of God in the heart, arising from the knowledge and contemplation of God’s wondrous works and decrees—namely, how He brought all things into being from nothing, and moreover with a single word; how He established the light; how He spread out the heavens, as a vault, how *He “gathered the waters of the sea into a skin,”* as it is written (Ps. 32: 7), how He spread out the air for all living things to breathe, how He established the sun and the moon—like two bright eyes with a multitude of varied stars—in the firmament of heaven, how He brought forth from the earth every fruit-bearing tree, every kind of grass and flower, how He commanded all the beasts to come forth from the earth, and all the fish and birds from the sea, how He created our forefather Adam with His own hands and placed him in the paradise of delight, how He ordained the sun to rise and set, —from which we have day and night, by which the course of our lives is measured—especially from contemplating how great He is and how profound His wisdom is! Let us fear Him alone and tremble before Him alone. But let us also love Him because, for our sake, He became man and was like us in every way except sin; for our sake, He was betrayed and brought to trial; for our sake, He endured scourging, spitting, mockery, flogging, and finally crucifixion and death. He endured all this as a man, yet He rose again as God, having defeated the devil, the destroyer of souls, and saved His beloved creation.

8. Who, after this, thinking that God was reviled, will not accept every reviling not only without distress but even with joy? Who, remembering how the Lord was reviled and slandered, will not willingly endure every kind of slander? Who, seeing the Lord struck on the cheek, will not wish to endure the same with joy, and having received a blow to the right cheek, will not turn the left cheek as well? Who, mentally picturing God crucified, pierced with a spear, tasting gall and vinegar, will not keep himself ready for any kind of death? – Come, my children! Come, I beg you, let us crucify ourselves to the world and our passions, and if need be, let us surrender ourselves even to beatings; and if not, let us meekly endure at least the wounds—the verbal piercings caused by reproaches and slander, and the shedding of blood from the severing of our own wills; and let us be like Christ, suffering for the sake of His love for humanity. Let us all be stirred to the selfless fulfillment of our duties; let us be inspired to prayer, inflamed in them by the fire of the Spirit, with an outpouring of tears and with the groans of humility.

193. Remembering how our life will end, let us be zealous to please God, imitating our fathers

193. 1) Remembering how our life will end, let us be zealous to please God, imitating our fathers. – 2) Though in practice this is rarely seen in anyone, by mutual counsel and cooperation we will not fall short of them, even if not to the full extent. – 3) To this, if you will, there are no insurmountable obstacles, for it depends on our own will. [3 I, 28]

9. Let us recognize, my children, what our life is, whom we serve in this flesh, and to what the mystery of our union with the body leads. Keeping this in mind, let us be diligent in fulfilling God’s commandments and tireless in working out our salvation. Let us show ourselves in this carefree world to be zealous for a life pleasing to God, just as in ancient times our fathers did, who flourished here like a lily of the field and like a paradise planted by God; watered by the waters of the Spirit, they bore the fruits of every virtue and were deemed worthy to be called friends of the Lord. They pleased God, and remaining pure in life and nourished by lofty contemplations, they attained heaven; and making wise use of their sojourn on earth, they formed a single choir with the angels and dwelled with God. 2) Who walks in this way today? *“Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord,”* as it is written? (Ps. 23: 3). Who, taking *“wings like a dove,”* flies by the Spirit and *“rests”* on the mountain of perfection? (Ps. 54: 7). Who is such that *“righteousness shines forth in his days”*? (Ps. 71:7).—But we, by common counsel and mutual exhortation, will take up the task and not fall behind them. We will not allow ourselves to be called *“a stubborn and bitter generation”* (Ps. 77: 8), a people who have not controlled their hearts; but rather, *“a blessed people of the righteous”* (Ps. 101: 2). Let us demonstrate virtues worthy of reward; let us walk in the holy way of our fathers, treading in their footsteps, measuring the

stages of their journey and examining their lives, striving to emulate their deeds and imitate their manner of action—albeit poorly and imperfectly—yet to the extent sufficient for a disciple to demonstrate the practice of imitating his teacher. They are painters of the Godlike image, artists of virtue; as for us, let us at least reflect their shadow; they are pilgrims; let us also become pilgrims; their homeland is heaven—may the heavenly Jerusalem also be our homeland; their treasures are the Lord’s commandments—let us also seek them; they were not bound by love for flesh and blood (of kinship), nor did they delight in the pleasures of this age—let us desire the same. They strove and became such; let us exert ourselves, and we too shall become the same; so that, just as in ancient times their deeds were proclaimed far and wide because of their wondrous lives and reached us, inspiring us to do the same, so may our name also become known to future generations to foster wholesome competition. And what could be more blessed and more comforting than this?

10. And if you wish, there is no obstacle to this. The God of that time is the same as He is now: the Gospel has not become obsolete, the commandments have not changed, and time has not been altered. He who provided for us then and continues to care for us all today. Are not night and day, sowing and reaping, the same even now?—This God of ours, unchanging and immutable, always the same as He was from the beginning, still preserves His creation, illuminating all people with the same rays of love and not desiring the eternal death of the sinner. – Yet it is not uniformity or changeability that determines our free will; that is, it depends on us—and this applies both for the good and for the bad. For what prevents us, having been stirred by a zeal to imitate our fathers, from embracing their deeds and shining with their way of life? We, too, who live in community, can shine in this way if, together with others, we make our lives conform to the lives of the fathers. And this will come to pass if, above all else, we compel ourselves to guard our hearts with every possible care against the slightest deviation from the Lord’s commandments.

194. You are like a good garden, bearing various fruits of virtue: take care, then, not to let yourselves wither

194. 1) You are like a good garden, bearing various fruits of virtue: take care, then, not to let yourselves wither. – 2) These are holy days (Lent), and everything contributes to your spiritual renewal—abstinence, worship, readings, and spiritual competition. – 3) Make use of all these things; above all, be at peace. [31:29]

11. Timely rain is very beneficial for good soil, helping it to bear abundant fruit necessary for the nourishment of living creatures. Whenever our weekly teachings flow from my humble lips, may they also be beneficial for the growth and renewal of the virtues that your honest souls cherish, just as rain is necessary for the growth of nourishing fruits. Indeed, you seem to me like a paradise filled with diverse vegetation: one delights me with humility and obedience, another nourishes me with diligence in his work; one exudes a devout disposition, another delights me with lofty virtues, like a cypress raising its branches high into the mountains; in short, each of you is distinguished by some virtue, producing deeds commensurate with it. Take heed, then, my children: let no one remain barren of fruit; do not allow yourselves to be consumed by the fire of lust, nor be rendered fruitless by pride, which devours every fruit. Let us spur one another on and warm one another’s hearts; with one mind, let us build for ourselves a pillar reaching from earth to heaven, or let us attain virtue that reaches to the heavens.

12. Now are the holy days—and you are being sanctified; fasting and abstinence—and you are being purified in both soul and body; harmonious psalm-singing and readings—and you become a melodious lyre, played by the Spirit; you gather quickly for the services—and form an angelic choir; you embrace one another with love, casting out envy, and are moved by a single desire—to be all together inscribed in heaven; without quarreling with one another and living in sincere peace among yourselves, you imitate the unity of mind of the incorporeal ones; You have but one concern, and in this one thing you strive with others to fulfill what has been commanded as best as possible—and are therefore sons of obedience; you do not grow rich through the accumulation of material goods, having everything and yet possessing nothing, as rulers of the world and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

13. Above all, you demonstrate in your deeds the truth of the prophetic saying: “*What is good, or what is beautiful, but for brothers to live together?*” That is why I call you a “*fragrant offering*,” “*descending upon Aaron’s beard, and the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion*” (Ps. 132:1, 2, 3). See what names adorn you and what praises crown you. Take heed, then, and show that you do not bear names that are not your own, and that you do not live in a manner unworthy of such praise. And now you receive this from

me in words, but then—in the age to come—you will receive a righteous reward in deeds from the righteous Judge and the all-generous Rewarder.

195. You are to be named after your spiritual fathers and live in a unified monastic spirit according to the established rules

195. 1) You are to be named after your spiritual fathers, and live in a single monastic spirit according to the established rules. – 2) Remember the vows you made at your tonsure; and be such both outwardly and inwardly: and let this unity be your distinguishing mark from the laity. – 3) For this, God will grant you rest in His wondrous dwellings. [31, 30]

14. Having left your parents, brothers, relatives, and the whole world, you have come here and become my spiritual children, transforming yourselves through a life pleasing to God. Therefore, you should no longer be called by the names of those who gave you physical birth, but by the names of our spiritual fathers and forefathers, thereby showing that you have completely separated yourselves from the natural order and have taken on a new birth—a spiritual one—of your own free will. Moreover, no one here has a will of their own or acts according to their own reasoning, but we all think as one, all striving with one accord toward God. And what is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles is now being fulfilled in us: *“The community of believers was of one heart and one soul; and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common”* (Acts 4:32). Do you understand what you are hearing?—Examine yourselves, *“whether you are firm and steadfast”* (1 Cor. 15:58). I say this to impress upon you that you must not even entertain the thought of deviating in any way from monastic rules: this is the enemy’s whispering. Let me remind you of one more thing: *“If anyone competes, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules”* (2 Tim. 2:5). And a monk will not attain perfection nor receive a crown if he undertakes spiritual struggles contrary to the established rules.

15. You know and have often heard how the brothers are instructed when they take the schema. The meaning of it all is that here a vow is made and a covenant is established between God and man—to hunger, to thirst, to go without, to endure slander, revilement, and insults, and, if necessary, to shed blood for Christ. Therefore, do not shy away when you have to endure such things, for you are subjected only to what you have vowed to endure. Was what was said then merely a childish joke? Far from it. Those are sacred words, to which God and His chosen angels bear witness. On the contrary, when faced with such trials, we should rejoice that an opportunity has arisen to fulfill a part of what we promised. Just as praise, pleasure, and contentment are attractive to the world, so the opposite of these is desirable and joyful for us. This is what monasticism shows us. They rejoice in worldly things, but we rejoice in divine things; they rejoice in the flesh, but we rejoice in the spirit; they rejoice in pleasures, but we rejoice in self-restraint. What separates and distinguishes us from them? Do you really think that a black cassock and a long beard make one a monk?—Not at all.—But here is who a true monk is: one whose inner disposition and state of mind are in harmony with his outward appearance, so that he can say, *“This is exactly who I am, and I will not change.”* Come now, I beg you, be wise—and embrace self-restraint, silence, poetry, mutual respect, confession, diligence, and every other praiseworthy quality. Let us cultivate these traits within ourselves—and we will bear good fruit. Let everyone compete with his brother in goodness and imitate him without envy. And—as I live, says the Lord—I will glorify those who glorify Me, and I will prepare for them a place of rest, the land of the living, the *“wondrous dwelling place”* (Ps. 41:5). May you hear this and see the light of the world—and behold the Sun of Righteousness, and enjoy His ineffable joy; for He is all sweetness and desire. Let us therefore pray, and add zeal to our zeal, that we may attain that bright day with joy. Blessed is the soul that has gained the Lord through its good life and has found in Him a gracious benefactor, for He will receive it into His eternal dwellings.

196. Sermons speak of the most important matter—the salvation of the soul; therefore, they must be listened to with full attention and eagerness

196. 1) Sermons speak of the most important matter—the salvation of the soul; therefore, they must be listened to with full attention and eagerness. – 2) Otherwise, their teachings will have no effect on the soul; and even if they do, it will be only for a short time; then they will vanish entirely. – 3) Let us, then, listen, keep, and fulfill them; and we will reap good fruits both here and, even more so, in the age to come. [31, 32]

16. When the preached Word of God enters a soul that is sober and vigilantly concerned for its salvation, it immediately warms it and stirs it to greater and more perfect diligence in keeping the

commandments; but if it enters a soul—like mine—that is asleep and carelessly dwelling in evil, it remains fruitless, dissipating idly into the air. Why, I beg you, do not look upon me as insignificant, but upon the dignity of the Church's teaching, for it offers reminders that are of universal benefit—not about some trivial matter, but about the most important matter of all: the matter of our salvation. How can we be saved? How can we walk in God's way? How can we avoid the enemy's snares? How can we purify ourselves of passions? How can we excel in virtue, so that through it we may ascend to the heights of perfection? What and how many good deeds must we perform to attain the Kingdom of Heaven?—Given these subjects, our teaching should be desirable to you and held in high esteem by you.

17. Moreover, if you view him in this way, you will hardly be able to find the benefit you seek in such conversations and gain it. For there is an adversary who opposes us in everything and distracts us from what is right, unless we heed his evil suggestions for the sake of good. Consequently, when our nature is drawn toward what is improper, it fails to retain the teachings with the same disposition or regard for them. But after hearing some edifying discourse, or a reflection on the passage from this life through the gates of death into the next, or on standing before the judgment seat, or on hearing the final verdict regarding our eternal destiny as recompense for our entire life, he immediately becomes contrite, sighs, weeps, and groans; but then, as soon as a little time has passed, everything is forgotten again, and instead of contrition, he becomes hardened; instead of shedding tears, he gives himself over to laughter; instead of groaning, he scatters his attention, turning his face and eyes this way and that. And all that remains is to cry out with the Apostle: "*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" (Rom. 7:24).

18. Oh, no, my brothers, no. But we will listen, and we will be contrite, and we will strive for what is best, and by kindling fire upon fire, we will set our souls ablaze with love for God and for one another, mutually stirring one another up and encouraging one another toward obedience, humility, diligence, and every other good deed of our heavenly life. Now we are only sowing, and as a result we labor, grow weary, and weep; but soon we will rejoice, for with joy we will reap what was sown with tears and begin to reign with the Lord of all and with God, provided we persevere earnestly in our self-sacrificing obedience. – Why should I cease to call out to you? Let us strive while there is still time; let us labor a little longer, let us endure as much as we can, until this life, which is like a dream, comes to an end. And I dare to assure you in the name of God that you will be crowned, enter the choirs of the heavenly hosts, and there begin to rejoice and be glad for all eternity.

197. During war, soldiers have no peace while fighting; they find peace only when they return home

197. 1) During war, soldiers have no rest while fighting; they find peace only when they return home. And we are engaged in a spiritual war, a war that lasts a lifetime: rest from it comes in the next life. – 2) Let us therefore fight with vigor, yielding nothing to the enemy, and fearing none of his illusory threats. [31, 33]

19. For those who are constantly at war, as long as the war rages, there is almost no rest except in battles against enemies both great and small: they are either preparing their weapons for action, standing guard duty, or going out on reconnaissance missions; meanwhile, they sleep little, eat little, are always on alert, and always live in fear of a sudden attack. But when, at the end of the war, they return home, only then will a time of peace, tranquility, and joy come for them; only then will they receive their rewards for military valor and the king's gifts. We can see the same thing here: for are we not in a state of constant war, and do we not maintain military discipline? "Yes," I tell you, "and even more so than they; for everything about us is unique: our weapons are unique—'*not of the flesh, but powerful through God to the point of destroying strongholds*'" (2 Cor. 10:4); and a special enemy—the fallen spirit, the devil, whose army consists of all those who have fallen away with him and through him, and the powers cast down from heaven. Therefore, our present time is not a time of peace and carefree complacency, but a time of struggle. We must therefore arm ourselves with the full armor of God and, taking up the spiritual sword, wage battle. When a certain time of struggle—more or less successful—has passed, then our Creator and God will bring the battle to an end and call us from our earthly sojourn and exile to our true dwelling place and homeland. Of this the Law speaks; of this the Prophets, Apostles, and Teachers write and describe.

20. You now know, brothers, the battlefield; you also know the battle. Let us therefore stand firm and fight valiantly. We are at war with all forms of wickedness—our own: a war against despondency, a war against gluttony, a war against excessive sleep, a war against impure lust, a war against idle talk, frivolity, laughter, insolence, and every other impure passion. Whoever stands firm, fighting and resisting—through

reflection, unceasing prayer, and revelation—and ultimately overcomes the enemy and triumphs—that person, as a warrior of the Lord, will be awarded an unfading crown of glory in the Kingdom of Heaven. I therefore beg you, brothers, my spiritual companions: let us not lose heart, let us not be deceived, let us not grow weary as we cast down the adversary, and let us not fear his powerless scarecrows and spectres. He sometimes appears to be preparing to do something great and terrible, but to those who pay attention, these are mere phantoms and shadows. Was not the one who once rose up against the great Anthony—sometimes slithering like a serpent, sometimes like a lion or a wolf, or some other dangerous beast—just such a thing? Before this courageous young man, he proved to be nothing but darkness and deception, and was cast far away by his prayers. When the enemy subsequently sends something similar against us—raising mountains of thoughts and presenting the rapids of passions—we must not be afraid; but let us make the sign of the life-giving cross in a peaceful manner, and he will flee. At present, brothers, patience is required, as has been said; let us therefore be patient and strive. Each of you, take care how and where you direct your steps: if you act according to my humble commandment, or according to the communal rule, and moreover by setting aside your own will, good for you; he eats without tasting, drinks without getting drunk, sleeps without resting; though he lives in the world, he is above the world, and in the city he dwells as if in the wilderness. But enough of this.

198. We are in a contest on the arena: we must strive; otherwise, we will gain nothing

198. 1) We are in a contest on the arena: we must strive; otherwise, we will gain nothing. – 2) Do not slumber: see, one after another they are departing; hurry to prepare what is necessary for that life. – 3) You seek a great task: to be in communion with God; and you will find it. How? By remaining faithful to your vows. – 4) It was easy in the wilderness; now you have entered the city, and a trial lies ahead of you. Do not bring shame upon yourselves. – 5) I am telling you how you should conduct yourselves. [31, 34]

21. Knowing that a priceless reward awaits us—the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven and eternal life—let us not be negligent; let us not succumb to the slumber of laziness while we live in this age. The arena is open; the tracks are cleared and marked; the prizes are laid out, and the judges are in their places. “Step forward, wrestlers, to compete.” The diligent one, filled with zeal, prevails and is crowned. But the slothful one not only loses the crown but also destroys his priceless soul and, departing from this life with nothing, is sent to eternal torment.

22. Do you not see and take notice of how, day after day, one after another departs from here and, having served in this life, goes to their Lord—the old and the young, the king and the slave, the archbishop and the priest, the abbot and the novice? Whoever sought here finds there; whoever sent treasures ahead from here meets them there; whoever renounced all that is here receives an abundance there. — You have been given the grace to flee from the world and be alone with God.

23. Before you lies closeness to God and the most sincere service to Him in joy and gladness. Your task and your feat, however, is to remain faithful to your vow. Therefore, whatever rank you hold and whatever virtue you are cultivating, remain in them without yielding more and more, and offer your souls as temples to the Lord and Almighty God.

24. I conclude that God accepts you in your good disposition from the fact that you remain the same even after moving from the most silent places (among the mountains) to the noisy and crowded ones (in Constantinople), from the desert to the city. Indeed, virtue, when offered as a sacrifice to God, is honored everywhere like gold—and glory from it and for its sake ascends to God. It has ascended from here as well. “Some,” whether well-meaning or ill-intentioned, “said the very same thing: ‘Well, we’ll see if they remain true to their resolve.’” “But I hope that you will persevere and remain steadfast in it—and, while in the city, you will conduct yourselves as if in the desert, and amid the city’s clamor, preserve peace and serenity in your souls. And this is where your true test lies; and you will truly be worthy of admiration if you endure it.” St. Theologian says somewhere: What is so surprising about winter’s frost and the sun’s rays? They do this involuntarily. So it is with us: there is little praise in remaining silent in the desert or in preserving serenity in solitude. But it is another matter to live in the city as if in solitude and, amid the noisy crowd, to be as if in the desert. Thanks be to God, through the prayers of my father and your father, who keeps you unharmed and steadfast in your calling.

25. Your glory and praise lie within yourselves. — Since this is so, strive, when you go out on the monastery’s business, to carry it out with a reverent attitude, showing godliness in your gait, your bearing, your gaze, your demeanor, your speech, and in everything. Oh, my children, oh, I beg you. Do not allow

anyone to speak ill of you. Many eyes are watching us, many mouths are speaking about us and against us. “Will they not say, ‘Where is their God?’” (Ps. 78:10) Where is their virtue? And who is guiding them there?—How shamelessly they behave, casting their eyes this way and that and bursting into laughter, as if they were some harlot?” Take care not to bring trouble upon the entire brotherhood; fear the immortal God! But speak every word as if the Lord Himself were hearing it, and do every deed as if you were performing it before His eyes, as He looks upon you. In this way, your state will be sufficient; and you yourselves, like stars, will be in the midst of the royal city.

199. The sayings point out monastic virtues and deeds, encouraging one to excel in them

199. The sayings highlight monastic virtues and deeds, encouraging one to excel in them. [31, 35] Abstinence is a monk’s greatest weapon: it is the gateway to every other virtue. But he who has attained obedience is a follower of Christ; the humble-minded are like angels; he who reveals everything to his spiritual father is as pure as the sun. Therefore, let no one be secretive, lest he become incurable. Seek, then, what is beneficial and what would incline you toward humility. Do not allow anything contrary to this. You know where we are and where we will move shortly, and what will become of us after we part from the body. Therefore, let us be attentive and sober-minded; may our mind always turn to God and contemplate there the eternal blessings and the blissful enjoyment of those who are deemed worthy of them, as well as the bitterness of the fate of those who have fallen into hell, where there are terrible and immeasurable torments. The Lord lives, and God be blessed—that we may not come to regret having taken up this holy monastic life, having renounced all worldly things and, as with a sword, cut off all that is carnal; for if we persevere in our good struggle, we shall rejoice and be glad for all eternity. This struggle consists of fasting, vigil, and courageous readiness for all that the ascetic life requires; to this I add—gracious endurance of all afflictions and slanders—insults, beatings, exile, and betrayal for the sake of God’s love. Strive, all of you—great and small, new and old—run the race well; always hasten willingly to vigils, to acts of obedience, and to work. May sloth, anger, impetuosity, envy, discord, suspicion, and all other passions be banished from you. Excel even more in mutual love for one another, “*burning with zeal, serving the Lord: rejoicing in hope, enduring tribulations, abiding in prayer*” (Rom. 12:11–12).

200. Having commended the brothers for their strict monastic life and pointed out the characteristics of martyrdom in it, he urges them to continue in this way, assuring them that in the future they will be counted among the martyrs

200. 1) After commending the brothers for their austere monastic life and pointing out the traits of martyrdom in it, he urges them to continue in this way, giving them hope that in the future they will be united with the martyrs. – 2) Assuring them that in the future, everything we voluntarily deprive ourselves of here, we will receive in its most perfect form, he encourages them to rejoice in all their privations and to hold fast to their path. – 3) Recalling mortality, he invites them to prepare for death; and asks them to pray for the deceased brother who had not cleansed his conscience of greed (since two silver coins were found in his cell)—and prescribes prostrations. [31, 36]

1. I thank you, my children, that, out of your warmest love for God, you are progressing day by day in pleasing the Lord, constantly being devout, showing goodwill, striving, practicing self-restraint, and being content with what is given, bread in moderation and a little wine, while at the same time not lagging behind others in taking up the labor of work, in not neglecting the rule, in rising early and coming to the assembly, in patiently standing until the end of the service—showing meekness, kindness, and uncomplainingness: for if anyone complains, it is a sin for him. Such are the feats of those leading the monastic life in the subjugation of their own will: in their martyrdom, instead of fire, cauldrons of pitch, arrows, claws, swords, and crosses, the aforementioned feats serve, as well as the following: insults, dishonor, a diet of dry bread, the exhaustion of the flesh through abstinence, self-denial, and endurance of scarcity in all things—in clothing, footwear, shelter, and everything else necessary for life. Since crowns await us for enduring afflictions and sufferings, let us courageously carry out our martyrdom in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may find ourselves there in the same rank as the holy martyrs, where, instead of the sorrows, deprivations, and lamentations of this life, we will be rewarded with: eternal life, inexpressible joy, and indescribable gladness.

2. We have no city here, because of our renunciation even of our homeland, but there we will be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; we should not call anyone “father” according to the flesh, but in that age

we will find a Father in God; we are without inheritance on earth, but there we will be given an inheritance with Christ; we deny ourselves the comforts of the flesh—food, drink, and all other sensual pleasures—but you know that there you will enjoy what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human heart has conceived. Therefore, rejoice, and as you contemplate these things, do not lose heart, do not grow complacent, and do not fear either present or future hardships, however much heavier they may be. — But what am I saying? Whether fire, the sword, or death—regarding all these as nothing—hold fast to your path.

3. With the passing of our brothers, you see that we are drawing nearer to death with every hour: yesterday one departed, another a few days before—and there is already someone else at the gates; and who will be next? “Perhaps I,” let everyone say—and begin to prepare. – I wish to share with you the sorrow in my soul over the passing of Brother Vasily, for he departed without having cleansed his conscience, since two pieces of silver were found on him. Alas! What blindness! What did the devil use to ensnare him? He considered two pieces of silver more valuable than the kingdom of heaven. More than once I told him that whether it be a rope, a needle, a pen, or anything else that someone takes and hides away, by this alone he fills the entire space with sin. You have certainly seen this yourself at in the writings of St. Cassian, who says that, according to St. Mark, a single sin fills the place of eleven (measuring the fullness of sinfulness by twelve). By regarding something as his own and possessing it, he has invested his soul and heart in it: for where the treasure is, there also is the soul. Where, then, is renunciation?—Let us pray for him, and for one week let us offer three prostrations for him each day and say thirty prayers, that the Lord may forgive him his transgression.

201. Having portrayed the brothers as perfect in all monastic practices, he adds: let us always be like this, each doing his own work in his own time

201. Having portrayed the brothers as perfect in all monastic practices, he adds: “Let us remain so forever, each doing his own work in his own time.” [3 1, 37] *May God look with favor upon your planting, and may He Himself, who planted this true vineyard of yours, water you with the waters of the Holy Spirit, and bring you to the measure of perfection for every true fruitfulness. As for me, this task is beyond me; the very attempt at it is beyond my weakness. And “who am I, O Lord?” it is fitting for me to cry out, and “the house of my Father”—that You have so exalted me, wretched and unclean, unworthy even to be among the flock? – Yet He accepts me and is long-suffering toward me, seeking and awaiting my conversion and reformation. For who can stand before Him and make atonement for sin? Who can shepherd His flock in safety? Who is so close to God as to bring others to Him? – I am far from this, as far as the heavens are from the earth. – But I rejoice that you are walking in the right path, following God’s commandments, and, imitating one another in goodness, you are all together rising to perfection. Truly, God dwells within you, blessed and served by you, and the Holy Spirit rests upon your assembly. Your singing is the singing of the angels, your psalm-singing is the singing of incorporeal beings, and all your conduct is truly heavenly, in which there is not even a shadow of flesh and blood, nor self-willed desire, nor concern for the perishing, nor vain worry, nor consolation for the outcast, nor anything alluring, nor anyone being allured; but all is filled with silence and peace; you have but one desire, one will, one soul and heart, one course, one aspiration—to attain God; one life—truly, you are a brotherhood called by God, angel-like, which, though existing in the flesh, is above the flesh, and though existing in the world, is outside the world, through dispassion. You have attained a sound balance and, walking the royal middle path, avoid the rapids on either side. Your deeds and your self-restraint, your sleep and wakefulness, your silence and speech, your labor and rest, your prayers and supplications are pleasing to God. If at times we act a little more moderately and leniently toward our own weakness, we soon return to strictness; if the present moment disturbs us a little, the next one will set everything right again: Matins begins, then the Liturgy, the reading of a saint’s life, the sermon, and those who have strayed somewhat from the order return to their proper place. And we are a help to one another, a protection for one another; and there is no place for the devil among us, with God’s help and the prayers of our father. Come, then, let each of us take up our own ministry; let no one perform the Lord’s work carelessly, fearing the punishment pronounced upon the negligent and the complainers. Let everyone act, observing the proper time for each task. When it is time to work, work; and when it is time to rest, rest; when it is time to sleep, sleep; when it is time to pray, pray with purity, weep, and shed tears, for we are called to weep; when it is time to eat, partake of the food offered with gratitude; when it is time to speak, speak wisely: for there is a time for everything, according*

to the word of God. He who spends his days in this way walks the path well. May the Lord our God establish, strengthen, and sustain you in such deeds and dispositions, to the glory of His Holy Name.

202. *By renouncing your own will, offer yourselves as a sacrifice to God: be always like this in everything, and God's mercy will be with you*

202. 1) By renouncing your own will, offer yourselves as a sacrifice to God: be always like this in everything, and God's mercy will surely be with you. – 2) Just do everything purely, humbly, and in a proper manner. – 3) Grow rich in virtues, each according to his or her own gift: for not everything is given to everyone, but we all partake of the fruits of everything, because we are all one body. [31, 38]

4. I pray that you may obtain the blessings you hope for, and that through your obedience you may be a fruitful and pleasing sacrifice to God; for by mortifying your own will, you constantly offer yourselves as a sacrifice and present it on the spiritual altar as a fragrant offering to the Lord God. Why do I burn with divine zeal? May your offering and service be blameless, unblemished, and not deprived of God's gracious favor. – This will come to pass if you remain zealous, patient, and steadfast in prayer, humility, contrition, godliness, self-control, and in the struggle against adversaries and overcoming them. – I therefore implore you: be such, and endure; run and walk in the paths of virtue; fight and conquer—and you will receive heavenly crowns.

5. Do not run in vain or labor in vain, but take care not to stumble, and do not let even small lapses of negligence or minor slips cause you to cast down your hope from on high, and ultimately ruin the spiritual house of your virtues. Therefore, as you are pure, do everything purely for the pure Lord; humbly offer everything to the Lord, who opposes the proud; consecrate everything that is innocent and blameless to Christ the Bridegroom. “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person*” (Col. 4:6); may your character be adorned with kindness, so that it may be a blessing to those who approach you; may your movements, your conduct, and your conversation—as if guided by God—be edifying to those who see you. I wish that all of you would be, not like me—for I am impure and unwise—but like our holy fathers: like Akakios, like Dositheos, like Abba Kyr, like Antiochus, like Petronius, and then, like Euthymius and Savvas—I will add—and like Anthony the Great.

6. Therefore, enrich yourselves with virtues; fill your treasury with tears, contrition, long-suffering, toil, and sorrow, according to the grace given to you; for one person has one thing, another has another—by nature and by God's gift. And if you excel in one area but fall short of your neighbor in another, do not grieve or envy: “*For to each one God has apportioned a measure of faith,*” and so it is. Moreover, no one is deprived of anything: for you are all one body, though many in number, and your virtues pass from one to another and back again, by the boundless goodness of God, Who regards each of us as all, and all as each.

203. *I praise you for leaving everything behind and willingly walking the narrow path*

203. 1) I commend you for leaving everything behind and willingly walking the narrow path. – 2) Rejoice in this; for the reward is great. – 3) Knowing this, take courage to humbly endure whatever comes your way, in accordance with the rules of our way of life. [31, 39]

7. I praise you before God and men for your faithfulness to our rules and your patient following in the footsteps of our ancient fathers. By the power of God and the intercession of our Father's prayers, you have been able to embrace the best life, and, gathered as one, you live a life set apart from everyone and everything, having renounced flesh and blood and been born from above by God. – Thus, though you still live, you have died in spirit; and though you still dwell in the flesh, you strive for what is above the flesh. Love for your parents has not held you back and does not hold you back; home and homeland no longer concern you, and the words of the Apostle are fulfilled in you: “*Our citizenship is in heaven*” (Phil. 3:20). Furthermore, you endure sorrows, suffer afflictions day and night, fast, keep vigils, keep yourselves pure, mortify the flesh, and struggle to subdue your desires. This is the narrow path that leads to life, which few walk, while very many rush along the broad and spacious path that leads to destruction.

8. Rejoice, then, rejoice and be glad, for a great reward is stored up for you in heaven. Therefore, if by persevering in obedience to the end you attain the ineffable light, what could be more desirable than this? If you are deemed worthy to dwell with the angels, what could be more blessed than this? If you become inhabitants of paradise, where there is incorruptibility and an abundance of eternal blessings, where water flows into an endless life—what could be more wondrous and marvelous than this? If, together with all the righteous, you appear shining like the sun, as co-heirs of Christ—what could be more magnificent than this?

If, at the gathering of all creation before the awesome throne of Christ our God, when He comes openly in glory with countless hosts of angels, and when some hear: *“Come, you who are blessed,”* and others: *“Depart, you who are cursed,”* and you are found among the former—what could compare to your joy and astonished rapture at that moment?

9. For this reason, I appeal to you: let us bear all present afflictions with courage; let us bravely resist the battles of the flesh and quench the fire of lust when it flares up in our members; let us patiently endure the labors of vigil, fasting, obedience, and manual work; let us willingly subdue our own wills and humbly bear the insults of our brothers; let us reverently stand firm in the church gatherings of psalm-singing and prayer; let us be content with simple clothing and footwear; let us not love human glory; let us quell anger, drive away despondency and sloth, restrain the impulses of the soul, and silence our talkative tongues, training them to speak only what is necessary and useful—and do all else as befits one in the presence of the all-seeing God. – Above all this, may the Lord our God, who is strong and mighty, and wonderful in His saints, through the prayers of our father, grant us one soul and one heart, preserving us unblemished before Him by the one Spirit.

204. Avoid everything that might stir up impure desire, and endure all that is unpleasant: for this the reward is great

204. 1) Avoid everything that might stir up impure desire, and endure all that is unpleasant: for the reward is great. – 2) How much do laypeople endure while serving vanity? We, however, serve God for the sake of the kingdom: how then can we fail to endure everything that befalls us on this path? [32, 1]

10. I would like to see each of you personally and, if possible, speak with each of you, anxious as I am for your salvation. But since the present persecution does not allow me to do so, I ask all of you in writing—both those who are still here and especially those who are scattered—to watch yourselves more carefully, allowing yourselves nothing except what is commanded, especially insolence in your relationships with one another; do not speak at length with children, and even less so with women; but if it becomes necessary to see them or speak with them, do so with the utmost caution: keep your mind humble, your eyes downcast. For Scripture says: *“Do not gaze upon virgins; do not mingle with singers”* (Sir. 9:5, 4). But since you are aware that God is present and observes your every movement and action—both physical and spiritual—conduct yourselves accordingly wherever you may go, bearing all the hardships of persecution with gratitude, in anticipation of the reward reserved for you because of your patience. *“For God is not ungrateful; He will not forget your work and the labor of love you have shown for His name’s sake”* (Heb. 6:10), from the very first day of your renunciation, when you left the world and all that is worldly—parents, children, and brothers, kin and homeland—and subjected even your own body to the burden of obedience. – How great is your calling! And how much greater still is the reward that awaits you!

11. Do you not see those living in the world, how they are crushed and suffer: some, engaged in agriculture and subject to public taxes and demands, so that they themselves have barely enough to live on; others, entering military service on land or at sea, where they attack and are attacked, strike and are struck. We, however, being free from all this, are deemed worthy to serve the One living and true God. Is this not enough for us as a source of comfort, thanksgiving, and joy?—For if we live attentively, doing everything properly and in order, abstaining from carnal desires that wage war against the soul, immediately repelling their assaults, and preserving the purity of the soul, then we will undoubtedly be deemed worthy of eternal blessings.

205. During Meatfare Week, we must not give in to intemperance, but rather delve deeply into the Gospel we read and, in accordance with it, resolve to live more holy lives, so that we may inherit the kingdom of heaven

205. During Meatfare Week, one must not give in to intemperance, but rather delve deeply into the Gospel that is read, and accordingly resolve to live more holy a life, so that we may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. [32, 2] It is a common practice among believers that, on this day (Meatfare Sunday), worldly people begin their fast from meat. But what do we see? We see that they now indulge in unrestrained meat-eating and wine-drinking, along with various games and entertainments that *are not “fit to be seen or spoken of.”* They ought to partake in moderation of what is offered with thanksgiving to the Lord, preparing for the stricter abstinence in all things that lies ahead; but they, obeying the devil’s promptings, do the exact opposite. – I will tell you, however, that we monks should not even entertain the thought of going there, nor desire what

they covet—for such desires are not worthy of us but deserve every condemnation and abhorrence. – On the contrary, let us devote ourselves all the more to attention and reflection on the Gospel now being read, concerning the great and dreadful day of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He, as the most righteous Judge, will place the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left; and to those on His right He will proclaim that blessed and longed-for call: *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”*; but to those on the left He will pronounce that bitter and devastating judgment: *“Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:34, 41). Reflecting on this judgment—which fills us with fear, trembling, and dread—it is incumbent upon both us and them to fall down in tears and implore the merciful God, before the hour comes to experience what we have heard in reality. – Why, while those people go about their days as they please, should we—having come to our senses through the Gospel sermons we have heard—resolve in our hearts, with great fear and trembling, to serve our Lord, driving every evil out of our souls and replacing it with a disposition of a wealth of generosity, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and every other good and praiseworthy quality—so that, having lived in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, we may be deemed worthy to inherit the kingdom of heaven, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

206. Although we are always in a state of fasting, let each one nevertheless set aside something for the coming fast as well

206. Although we are always in a state of fasting, let each one add something to it, even as the coming fast approaches. Above all, take up the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. [32:3] Let us not put off our repentance from day to day, as the enemy teaches us: *“Do not know what the coming day will bring”* (Prov. 3:28).—The most longed-for days of Holy Lent are already at the door, bringing with them the gift of fasting.—Our Lord fasted for this very length of time, defeating the tempter who tried Him with this weapon. We, however, are not like that; but we spend all the days of our lives in fasting: for we have no sumptuous meat dishes; we do not rush to drink wine in the morning; we do not seek out where feasts are held; we do not sleep on beds of ivory; we do not eat kid goats still being weaned; we do not drink sparkling wines—all of which the eloquent Isaiah attributes to those who are wise in the eyes of the world. All such things are far removed from the devout, and even more so from our honest communal monastic life. We have only a few simple dishes, and there is nothing else that irritates the soul to the point of madness: just bread, and that in moderation, and some vegetable dishes, and even those in small quantities. Therefore, the Most Holy Lent does not daunt us, since its diet is almost identical to that of our other days. Nevertheless, let each of us add a little something to one or another of our Lenten virtues: in devotion, solitude with needlework; in obedience, unflappability; in silence, meekness; in psalm-singing, quiet harmony. Let one devote himself to work with great zeal; let another adorn his silence with timely action; let yet another be a source of joy and comfort to sorrowful brothers: for great is the praise due to the one who speaks if he soothes a brother’s heartache; let another still multiply his bows, or his service, or his necessary arrangements; and in general, let no one be idle or without work. Even if someone contributes only a little, it will be pleasing to God if it is done with zeal, as the widow’s two mites demonstrated; strive also in vigil, in singing, and in every act of piety. Above all these things, take up the shield of faith, so that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil and extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one—and cover your head with the helmet of salvation, being established in Christ Jesus our Lord.

207. One person observes one thing, another another, according to the rule; but let this be common to all: do nothing of your own will, and be mindful not to allow the enemy to enter your mind through your thoughts, so that you may prosper unhindered in every good work

207. One practices one thing, another another, according to the rule; but let this be common to all: to do nothing of one’s own will, and to be vigilant so as not to allow the enemy to enter through one’s thoughts, and to prosper unhindered in every good deed. [32, 4] Our gracious God, who gives us life and guides us year after year along the path of this life, has led us, out of His love for humanity, into this present season of fasting, during which each of the zealous, as has been said, multiplies his spiritual struggles according to his own will: the one who is zealous for abstinence fasts for two or three days; those zealous for vigil spend so much and so much time in vigil; those practicing prostration now perform them in greater numbers; others do the same with other ascetic practices; and, to put it simply, great zeal and diligence in ascetic deeds can be seen in

everyone during these days. But the true monastic, who always acts in accordance with the law of obedience—not just at certain times, but always—maintains the same pattern of ascetic practice. What is this? It is not to walk according to one's own will, but to be guided in one's actions by the direction of one's spiritual father: this is the highest of all devotions practiced with zeal, and it brings with it the martyr's crown. This is what the zealous do. Moreover, who does not know that for this fast, according to ancient tradition, the rule prescribes for all a change in meals, an increase in prostrations, and an intensification of psalm-singing? Therefore, I beg you, let us joyfully accept the gift of fasting, and let us observe it not with a frown but with a cheerful countenance—without malice, without judgment, without anger, without deceit, without envy, and above all in peace and love toward one another, in meekness, in obedience, and in the multiplication of mercy and good fruits. Above all, let us keep a watchful eye on the movements of our thoughts, so as not to open the door to passions and not to let the devil in, as Scripture teaches, saying: *“If the spirit of the ruler rises up against you, do not leave your place”* (Eccl. 10:4): for the enemy has the power to plant thoughts, but he has no power to enter. We are our own masters; if we do not open the door, he will not enter. Let us therefore guard our soul, as the bride of Christ, and preserve it unharmed by the arrows of thoughts; for through this we may become a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and be deemed worthy to hear: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matt. 5: 8). And in general, *“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise,”*—I speak with the words of the Apostle—*“think about these things and do them, and the God of peace will be with you”* (Phil. 4:8–9).

208. Lenten practices are made easier by habit, with patience and perseverance; but above all by godly contemplation, through which the objects of such contemplation are revealed

208. Lenten practices are made easier by habit, with patience and perseverance; but above all by godly contemplation, through which the objects of such practices are revealed. [32, 5] Just as every beginning is difficult, so too the beginning of fasting—due to changes in diet and in the objects of our activity—encounters a certain discomfort and difficulty; but through patience and perseverance in maintaining it, they are made easier and more bearable, as it is written: *“No discipline (training) seems pleasant at the time, but painful; yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”* (Heb. 12:11). Therefore, having been deemed worthy to observe a week of fasting—and having already gained some experience in it—we must be all the more zealous in continuing it, knowing that this zeal strengthens both soul and body, whereas, on the contrary, laziness makes what is light become heavy and what is easy become difficult. However, let us not overexert ourselves in our efforts, so that we may successfully preserve both spiritual well-being and physical health. For what good is it to start off quickly only to weaken completely and come to a halt? It is better to exert ourselves with prudence and moderation, keeping in mind the distance to the finish line. Since a full day of exertion in labor and concentration usually gives rise to a need for some respite; let us (both during and at the end of our work) nourish the soul with godly thoughts and spiritual contemplation, meditating not on worldly and vain things—which are troubling and bitter—but on heavenly things, which are sweet and joyful. *“I remembered,”* as it is sung in the Psalm, *“God, and I rejoiced”* (Ps. 76:4). For our minds are directed toward God, toward heavenly contemplations, toward the beauties of paradise, toward eternal dwellings, toward the assemblies of the angels, and toward our migration there—to the place where the souls of the righteous and the sinful now dwell—when the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ takes place, when, according to the word of God, the heavens will pass away, the elements will be dissolved, and the earth and all that is on it will be burned up—how the soul will receive its body again—what that gathering of people will be like, from Adam to the end of the age; what the face of Christ the Lord will be like, shining brighter than the sun, glorious and awe-inspiring;—what voice of His we will hear—and finally, what the final judgment will be, calling the righteous into the kingdom of heaven and sending the sinners to eternal torment.—This is what we ought to ponder and be concerned about, and on what we should turn our minds, as those who are outside the world and have nothing in common with those who live according to the flesh—and from these reflections to come to contrition and tears, and to be enlightened, learning to lead our life here peacefully and serenely, in the hope of being deemed worthy of the future eternal blessings.

209. First and foremost, we must give thanks to God—for our very existence, for our adoption as children of God through Holy Baptism, for monastic life, and for our witness before the iconoclasts

209. 1) First and foremost, we must give thanks to God—for our very existence, for our adoption as children of God through Holy Baptism, for monastic life, and for our witness before the iconoclasts. – 2) And for the faith, from which all things come, and which manifests itself in varying degrees but is accessible to all, despite poverty and ignorance. [32, 6]

12. God has shown us many virtues that aid us in our salvation; one of the foremost among them is gratitude. The Apostle Paul says: *“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world”* (Rom. 1:8). And everywhere he is seen giving thanks to God for everything. But just as he himself gave thanks for everything, so he commanded everyone: *“Give thanks in all circumstances”*; and lest anyone think that this was merely his own good advice, he added: *“For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus”* (1 Thess. 5:18). It is also said in **The Ladder** that thanksgiving must precede everything in prayer: “First of all,” he says, “let us inscribe sincere thanksgiving to God on the scroll of our prayer.” Having stated what must follow this in prayer, St. John Climacus concludes: “This form of prayer was shown to one of the brothers by the Angel of the Lord” (Ladder 28, ch. 7). Let us therefore give thanks to God, first of all for bringing us from non-existence into existence, *“having created us for good works, which He prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Eph. 2: 10). Let us give thanks to Him for bringing us into adoption as sons through Holy Baptism, as the Gospel says: *“But to all who did receive Him, He gave the right to become children of God—to those who believe in His name—who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God”* (John 1:12–13). Let us also give thanks that He has granted us entry into the most perfect monastic life, having foretold it in His word to a certain young man: *“If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor; and come, follow Me, taking up your cross”* (Matt. 19: 21; Mark 10: 21). Let us also give thanks that He has led us into the coming martyrdom (in connection with the iconoclastic controversy), preventing us from being deceived and falling into heretical error: for we knew and confessed that the only-begotten Son of God, having taken on flesh, is depicted according to the flesh, has a form, and in this form receives worship. How many people are outside the Gospel, in error and unbelief? How many others, even among those who accept the Gospel, are there who have gone astray in the faith and suffered ruin, just like the iconoclasts, who do not confess that Christ is depicted in the flesh and has a form, and that His form is to be worshiped, and thereby deprive themselves of the salvation of His incarnate economy? – Reflecting on this, we have reason to thank the Lord from the heart, to come before Him in gratitude and contrition, to shed tears in contrition, to be enlightened through our tears, and to prosper in the work of our salvation through this enlightenment.

13. Let us give thanks to God for faith, and for the measure of faith that we possess. For faith is one in and of itself, but, depending on the extent to which we embrace it, it is sometimes great and sometimes small. Thus the Lord says to Peter: *“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”* (Matt. 14:31). Elsewhere: *“O woman, great is your faith; let it be done for you as you wish”* (Matt. 15:28). And again: *“I have not found such great faith even in Israel”* (Matt. 8:10). Thus, faith is sometimes great and sometimes small. But let no one say, “I am a simple person; how can I possibly comprehend faith?” The All-Good God extends the rays of His goodness to all. – What does the Apostle say? *“Consider your calling, brothers: not many are wise by human standards, not many are powerful, not many are of noble birth; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put the wise to shame; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put the strong to shame; and God has chosen the lowly things of the world and the despised, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are”* (1 Cor. 1: 27, 28). Do you not see how these words apply to you as well? Do you not remember our blessed brother Thaddeus, to say nothing of others? Was he not a Scythian? Did he not serve as a slave to men? And did he not enter the monastic life only after being freed from slavery? – And yet, how did he prove himself both in his past and present witness? – Since he embraced his faith and was embraced by it, and having embraced it as he ought, proved himself a perfect man, he was deemed worthy to be adorned with the crown of martyrdom, passing from this life to the next three days after his suffering. – Let us be the same; let us not use our ignorance as an excuse, but let us seek to know and increase our faith. And this will be so if a good life accompanies our faith. For faith, accompanied by love, brings about our salvation. Both of them bring about the salvation of the soul; neither faith alone nor love alone saves, but both together, when observed and combined. May we, too, be so disposed that we may attain to the fullness of manhood, to the

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and be made worthy, together with all the saints, of the promised eternal blessings.

210. Let the following serve as inspiration to bear the burden of fasting: its benefits—while maintaining, however, a peaceful and loving disposition; and the great promises for those who endure its hardships

210. Let the following serve as inspiration to bear the burden of fasting: its beneficial effects—while maintaining, however, a peaceful and loving disposition; and the great promises for those who undertake its labors. [32, 7] Fasting is good if, while observing it, one maintains a peaceful, gentle, benevolent, obedient, humble, compassionate state of mind, and every other good disposition. But the devil devises every possible means to instill in those who fast the opposite of this, to make them insolent, angry, fierce, and arrogant, and to ensure that fasting brings them more harm than good... But we, *“not understanding his schemes”* (2 Cor. 2:11), will conduct ourselves peacefully, quietly, meekly, and in good order, *“bearing with one another in love”* (Eph. 4:2), knowing that this is pleasing to God. But if you lack such dispositions, then even if you were to bend your back like a bow, clothe yourself in sackcloth, and sprinkle ashes on your head, you would not be pleasing to Him. Fasting certainly afflicts and withers the body; but it expands and nourishes the soul; *“Therefore we do not lose heart; even though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison”* (2 Cor. 4:16–17): so that, looking forward to the reward, we may cheerfully endure the hardships of virtue, *“giving thanks to God the Father, who has called us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light: who has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love”* (Col. 1: 12–13). – Do we not frequently partake of His most pure Body and Blood? And what could be more pleasing and sweet than this, when in it lies eternal life for those who partake with a clear conscience? Do we not converse daily with the divine David and with the other holy fathers through listening to the readings; and what could be more comforting to the soul than this? Have we not severed all ties with the world and with our kinsmen according to the flesh; and what, again, could be more blessed and exalted than this? *“For our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we also await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself”* (Phil. 3:20–21). Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, despising every carnal pleasure: *“For all flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass; the grass withers and its flower falls away, but the work of virtue endures forever.”* *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray,”* as the brother of God says: *“Is anyone in good spirits? Let him sing”* (James 5:13). Is anyone tempted by an evil passion?—(since the tempter never ceases to tempt us)—let him endure, obeying the one who says: *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been tested, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12). *“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them”* (John 13:17).

211. An Exhortation on Peace and Harmony; on ardent love for God; on zealous labor in working out one’s salvation; and, in general, on the proper monastic life

211. An Exhortation on Peace and Harmony; on ardent love for God; on zealous labor in working toward salvation; and, in general, on the proper monastic life. [32, 8] I rejoice over you, that you walk in unity of mind, live in peace, and patiently endure the season of fasting. This is for your salvation and for the strengthening of your hope. How great a blessing is peace and unity of mind in brotherhood?—By removing the evils of disorder and fickleness, contradiction and condemnation, disobedience and pride, and every other form of deceit, they first bring benefit to themselves, and then to others, setting an example of virtue for them, and thereby gaining even more: for just as those who cause stumbling inherit “woe,” so those who inspire virtue inherit blessing. And may we never stray from such a good disposition and such praiseworthy conduct, or cease to love God. For it is written: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind”* (Luke 10:27). One who loves in this way knows neither satiety, nor weariness, nor exhaustion; but rather adds fire to fire, stokes zeal with zeal, setting in his heart an ascent from virtue to virtue, and passing from spiritual strength to spiritual strength—and this unceasingly. Do you not see those who labor in the flesh, how they toil for what is fleeting and perishable? Do you not see here before your very eyes those building ships, how they spend entire days on this, allowing themselves not even a moment’s rest? For what reason? To earn a little money and provide for their families

what is needed to satisfy their needs. But what of us, who seek to be enriched by what is divine, to attain the kingdom of heaven, to enjoy eternal blessings, and to avoid eternal torment—do we not long to undertake all this with readiness and zeal, willingly sacrificing even our blood, if it were necessary to shed it for the Lord? Therefore, my brothers, let us stand firm, *“rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, faithful in prayer,”* attending to our spiritual exercises—psalm-singing, recitation of verses, and readings—keeping our minds from wandering after vain things through such activities: for idleness is the mother of evil, and work is the guardian of the mind. Let us not allow ourselves to stray from our good disposition, preferring obedience, order, the peace of our neighbor, and everything else that contributes to our salvation, praying always for our brothers who are here and those scattered in various places: for my heart aches for them as well, not seeing with my own eyes how each of them is being saved.

212. I deliver sermons as my duty; but for them to bear fruit, help me through your progress in response to the sermons

212. I preach sermons out of duty; but so that they may bear fruit, help me through your progress, aided by the sermons. — Your progress is mine as well: for we are one. — You have demonstrated this through your confession before the iconoclasts and by enduring their torments. Do not, then, bring shame upon this virtue of yours. [32, 9] One thing is needed to sustain you in the flesh, and another to sustain you in the spirit: the former is provided by the steward and consists of food, drink, and clothing, while the latter is provided by me, in humility, and consists of the word and teaching. And just as that is provided not of my own volition, so this is fulfilled out of duty: so I am doing nothing great by giving you these brief and meager teachings; on the contrary, I fear and tremble, for I must give an account of your souls—not to a king, a governor, or a magistrate, but to the Judge of all and to God, before whom every knee in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld will bow, and every tongue will confess. But please help both yourselves and me, as brothers who love one another: help yourselves by excelling in every virtue, and help me through your prayers. After all, your success is my success, and vice versa: for *“we are all one body, and each member belongs to the whole”* (1 Cor. 12:27); and *“if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Cor. 12:26). And just as I care for yours, so you ought to care for mine: for I am in you, and you are in me, by virtue of our mutual love. Such is the law of true brotherhood. Maintain your good obedience toward me—not a false or insincere one—in which you were born into this new life, grew up, were perfected, and attained maturity, by the grace of Christ in accordance with the measure of your confession of Him. (—This is in connection with iconoclasm.) You did not fear kings, you were not intimidated by rulers, you did not shrink from suffering, wounds, exile, prisons, or death, and through this you have become renowned, as is known to all. Do not, then, betray your virtue, do not bring shame upon your praise, and let your good name not be turned into a bad reputation, but build upon your previous praise with further praise, always guarding yourselves both within and without, and protecting yourselves by keeping the commandments, overcoming every temptation, and enduring every sorrow patiently. Know also that we are still in the midst of struggle and persecution, and we do not know what the coming day will bring. However, *“if God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—how will He not also graciously give us all things with Him?”* (Rom. 8:31–32). So hope, and be confident; and by living in this hope and this confidence, I assure you, you will receive an inheritance and a share with all the saints.

213. Death is near: we must prepare. How? By doing everything for the glory of God

213. Death is near: we must prepare. How? By doing everything for the glory of God; by being of one mind and showing mutual respect; by guarding our emotions; by restraining our thoughts; by zealously pursuing all that is good, in the hope of dispassion. [32, 10] Day by day our life grows shorter, and we draw nearer to death. We are about to depart from this world and join our brothers and fathers; therefore, great sobriety, attentiveness, and heartfelt preparation are required of us. We hear the biblical account of the Flood, and how the Lord applies what happened then to the circumstances of His second coming, saying: *“Just as in the days of Noah people were eating, drinking, marrying, selling, buying—and suddenly the Flood came—so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”* (Matt. 24, 37–39; Luke 17:26–28). We marvel at how indifferent and carefree the people of that time were toward the approaching flood, rather than being filled with fear and trembling. But let us take a closer look: are we not ourselves in the same state of carelessness that we condemn

in them? We are not building an ark that took a hundred years to construct; yet every day we see a tomb being filled, into which we too will be laid; almost every day death snatches away one of our brothers, and he departs. But what happens to us now is far more terrifying than what happened then (during the Flood). That is why we must be vigilant. And I am not saying: do not eat, do not drink, do not clothe yourselves—that is not what I am saying, but *“whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God; so that you may be blameless before Jews and Greeks and the Church of God,”* as the Apostle teaches (1 Cor. 10:31–32). Come now, brothers and sisters—I urge and implore you, *“make my joy complete,”* as the blessed Paul says again, *“be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind; do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility honor one another above yourselves”* (Phil. 2: 2, 3). Let us guard our senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—through which death enters; let us rein in the mind so that it does not wander where it ought not to, does not dwell on what is inappropriate, does not conjure up evil images within itself, and does not give rise to sinful desires from which there is neither benefit nor pleasure. On the contrary, let us be all the more earnest and contrite, keeping one thing in mind and finding comfort and pleasure in it alone, so that we may purify our souls and excel in dispassion. Let us not lose heart, having the hope of tasting dispassion and the joy of attaining it; but let us hasten, pursuing it with all our strength and without ceasing; for zeal corrects and makes up for what is lacking, and God is its helper. *“The Lord is near to those who call upon Him, and the soul that seeks Him will find Him.”*—Living in this way, we will undoubtedly attain the kingdom of heaven.

214. As you remember God, remember death as well

214. As you remember God, remember death as well. – Do not become attached to this life, nor to anything that is valued in it. This is especially required of us who have renounced the world. [32, 11] This teaching is beneficial, like a saving reminder that disposes us to remain sober and vigilant as we perform the duties required of us, and never to cease doing so, nor to stray from thoughts of God, nor from loving Him, nor from the memory of our separation from the body. For very soon we will be separated from it and die, like all our forefathers, and pass into another world, entering into another life that has no end. This earthly life is like a shadow and a dream, and is limited to a few years. I do not mean the time from the creation of the world until the end of the age, but the life of each person, which nowadays rarely even reaches David’s limit, and even more rarely goes beyond that limit, as something extraordinary: All the saints meditated on this throughout their lives. *“They died in faith,”* as the Apostle testifies, *“without having received the promises, but having seen them from afar, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. For those who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. And if they had been thinking of that country from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return; but now they desire a better one, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them”* (Heb. 11:13–16). Behold, this is our city! Behold our homeland! In it are our fathers and brothers, both in the flesh and in the Spirit. Why, then, do we still consider this temporary life here worthy of reverence? Why do we cling to its customs? Why do we find the departure from it undesirable?—It is foolish not to desire a return from a foreign land to one’s own, or to turn from war to peace. But we, beloved brothers, as wise people—having renounced the world and all that is in the world, and having fled from them—will keep the thought of death in our minds throughout our lives, and with this thought we will ward off every desire, every sloth, every laxity, every despondency, every evil, so that, by acting in this way to the Lord’s pleasure, we may become heirs to heavenly blessings.

215. The Lord has given us peace, obliging us to live in peace with everyone outwardly, and inwardly to be at peace within ourselves, free from passions and pangs of conscience

215. The Lord has given us peace, which obliges us to live in peace with everyone outwardly, and inwardly to find peace within ourselves from passions and pangs of conscience. [32 12] Sunday is a day of peace; for on that day, having defeated the enemy, the Lord said to His disciples, *“Peace be with you!”* (John 20:20). Having said this, He did not give peace as an inheritance only to them, nor for just one day; but He proclaims the same peace to everyone always, just as He does to us who are humble. Let us therefore have peace and live in peace within ourselves. — As for our outward nature, let us not allow ourselves to harbor ill will toward any of our brothers, but let us be loving in all things; for the Lord says: *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35); as for the inner person, let us preserve

peace and tranquility from destructive passions. Then we too can say with the Apostle: *"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God"* (Rom. 5: 1:2). Since, however, we are of a changeable nature, we are sometimes subject to calamitous and sorrowful fluctuations and disturbances. Then we will immediately hasten to return to our former state, having peace with God: *"For He is our peace, who has made the two one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, having abolished in His flesh the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the hostility on it"* (Eph. 2: 14–15). So says the Apostle. And this is the work that the Lord accomplished, as He says to His Father: *"I have finished the work You gave Me to do"* (John 17: 4). That is, I have reconciled the earthly and the heavenly—making us, too, sons of peace and love. If anyone were to ask, "How can this be? Are we not in constant warfare?" as the Apostle says: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Eph. 5:12). To such a person we must say that these words point to the nature and extent of the battle, not to the fact that we are waging it; for he himself says elsewhere: *"The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to avenge every disobedience"* (2 Cor. 10:4–5). In this same frame of mind, he has clearly subdued strife and brings about peace.

216. One must listen to teachings and, having believed them, carry out what they inspire

216. We must listen to the teachings, and, having believed them, carry out what they inspire. [32:13] I now present to you, as is my duty, a brief and meager measure of the word—though not to be delayed—so that I may not be condemned for my silence, and you may not be deprived of any edification. For although you are mostly edified through reading the Holy Fathers, you nevertheless have a need for my humble teaching—I dare even say that you have a greater need for it than for theirs: for there are general discussions, whereas here something is said that pertains directly to the individual, something that convicts and corrects. *"I will rebuke you,"* He says, *"and set your sins before your face"* (Ps. 49:21). And the Lord: *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin"* (John 15:22) May it not be that this could apply to you as well: for I speak to you not as to the disobedient and those guilty of sin, but as to sons of obedience, as to beloved children, as to like-minded fellow workers and fellow combatants—may you be of good cheer, may you prosper, *"that you may be pure and blameless on the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"* (Phil. 1: 10–11). And my word is for you. I trust that He who of old brought water from the rock for Israel will also bring forth a brief word from my stony heart, by which, as we are watered, we may give thanks to the Lord who nourishes, quenches, and guides our lives in this present sojourn, as in the wilderness. But since this ancient story has come to mind, let us pause for a moment to consider what happened then to the disobedient, of whom the Apostle says: *"But God was not pleased with most of them; for they were struck down in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things, just as they did. Do not become idolaters, as some of them did; for it is written: 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.' Nor commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. Nor should we test Christ, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. Nor should we grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the Destroyer"* (1 Cor. 10:5–10). Reflecting on this, brothers, let us flee from the causes of God's wrath; let us flee from evil desires; let us flee from grumbling; let us be careful not to tempt Christ.—"But how can we tempt Him?"—By falling into thoughts of unbelief and saying: "Will we have enough for our needs?"—"Will we withstand the enemy's attack?" Will we endure this or that?"—No, my brothers, no. These are words of unbelief and doubt, to which we must give no place. For by believing with firm faith, we can endure all things. Thus Noah believed and escaped the destruction of the flood; thus Abraham became the father of many nations; so Moses crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; so the three youths and the prophet Daniel remained unharmed; and, in a word, so all the saints were vindicated. So too, by believing, we will endure everything and triumph with Christ, and we will be deemed worthy of the crowns of righteousness.

217. Having been freed from the bonds of worldly, secular, and sinful life, let us not allow ourselves to return to them

217. 1) Having been freed from the bonds of worldly, secular, and sinful life, let us not allow ourselves to return to them again. – 2) And let no one think to combine service to God with slavery to sin and passions. [31, 14]

1. To dispel our sloth and stir up our zeal, the Apostle said: *“The Lord is near; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”* (Phil. 4:5–6). Let us not, then, be slothful, but let us be strengthened and take courage to do the work to which the Lord has called us. For it is He who has called us from the common life of the people to the monastic life; it is He who has clothed us in the robe of salvation and adorned us with garments of joy; it is He who has redeemed us from the legal oaths, having become an oath for us. *“For freedom Christ has set us free; therefore stand firm and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery”* (Gal. 5:1). Let us not allow ourselves to become voluntary slaves to our passions again. A slave, ransomed with gold, would never agree to return to slavery; but, having gone far away from the place of his bondage, he rejoices there that he has been granted freedom from the tyranny of slavery—even though slavery is no longer anything particularly evil. For the Apostle says: *“Were you called while a slave? Do not be distressed; but if you can gain your freedom, make the most of it. For a slave who has been called in the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; likewise, a freedman who has been called is Christ’s slave”* (1 Cor. 7:21–22). And yet it is still true that it is not desirable for one who has been set free to live again under the yoke of slavery. – How much more, then, should we—having been freed from sin—keep ourselves as far away from it as possible? Or do we not know what it has done to us? Was it not sin that cast us out of paradise? Did it not make us mortal instead of immortal? Did it not lead us into this life of many sorrows? Is it not through sin that every evil has come and continues to come? Let us therefore avoid it as our worst enemy; let us hate it as something worthy of hatred. Let us love virtue all the more, for it makes people into angels, and even more than that—into gods, as it is written: *“I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High’”* (Ps. 81:6).

2. But what is the essence of virtue?—It is turning away from the world and clinging to God. *“No one,”* says the Lord, *“can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and Mammon”* (Matt. 6:24). We cannot cling to virtue and to sin at the same time; for *“what fellowship has light with darkness?”* (2 Cor. 6:14). Moreover, Christ’s commandments are light and uplifting; but sins are heavy and burdensome. It is even more difficult that we strain to reconcile opposites and suppose it possible both to indulge in carnal desires and to engage successfully in spiritual pursuits. But let us turn to ourselves: if we have attained a measure of perfection, thanks be to God, from whom *“every good gift and every perfect gift”* comes; and take care to remain steadfast, guarding ourselves with the fear of God so that we remain unchanging and unwavering in our most virtuous disposition; but if not, and we are lacking in many ways, then let us hasten and strive to attain perfection while there is still time for action, —being strengthened by faith, inspired by hope, united by love, adorned with humility, rejoicing in obedience, tested by patience, enlightened by confession, and through all our other deeds bearing witness to ourselves that we are true monks, sincere novices, and skilled servants of the Lord in Christ.

218. We must listen attentively to the Word of God: for from it come all spiritual dispositions

218. 1) We must listen attentively to the Word of God, for from it come all spiritual dispositions. – 2) This is what all the saints did, and they bore witness to the good fruits of this. – 3) Let us do the same, remembering how the Lord has blessed us. [32, 15]

3. All people have both eyes and ears, but not all hear and see; only those who have ears to hear and eyes to see do so. That is why the Lord said, *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear”* (Matt. 11:15). The prophet also speaks of those who are hard of hearing: *“God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that cannot see, and ears that cannot hear”* (Isa. 6:9; Rom. 11:8). Therefore, let us listen attentively—and not haphazardly—to what is read to us, so that we may not fall under the threat, but rather so that we may say: *“The chastening of the Lord has opened my ears”* (Isa. 50:5). Thus, the listener pays attention, is humbled, is purified, is enlightened, rejoices, regards all earthly things as shadows, and sets his mind on Christ, when he hears Him saying to His disciples: *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”* (John 14:18). And again: *“You are My friends if you do what I command you”* (John 15:14). And again: *“A little while longer, and the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also”* (John 14:19). And

again: “*You have stood by me in my trials; and I bestow upon you, just as my Father has bestowed the kingdom upon me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom*” (Luke 22:28–30). Hearing such things, a lover of God is ready every day to die willingly for Christ.

4. This is how all the saints lived, and with such resolve they solemnly expressed their love for the Lord. Jeremiah says: “*I have not grown weary of following You, nor have I desired the life of man*” (Jer. 17: 16). St. David says: “*What shall I render to the Lord for all that He has given me?*” (Ps. 115:3). The Apostle says: “*For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake*” (Phil. 1:29). In the same way, all the Apostles rejoiced, for “*they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of the Lord Jesus,*” as the Acts of the Apostles say (Acts 5:41). In short, each of the saints expressed his sincere love for Christ the Lord through such exclamations.

5. Let us also, brothers, listen attentively to what is being read, and let us love our beloved God with all our hearts, always giving Him thanks for all the blessings He has bestowed upon us—that He chose us from the beginning for salvation in the holiness of our present calling—that He has granted us to serve Him in the Orthodox faith—that the teaching of the saints has been entrusted to us as a bountiful feast. It is fitting for us, then, to say in the words of the Apostles: “*If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all—how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is he who condemns? Christ Jesus died—more than that, He was raised to life—and is at the right hand of God, interceding for us*” (Rom. 8:31–34). He intercedes before God the Father, Who grants us the eternal Kingdom.

219. Let us celebrate the Memorial not only outwardly but also spiritually—remembering in doing so that we, too, will depart; and—inspired by this, let us prepare for our departure

219. 1) Let us celebrate the memorial service, not only outwardly but also spiritually;— 2) remembering in doing so that we too will depart; and— 3) being inspired by this to prepare for our departure. [32:16]

6. Yesterday we commemorated our father, and we did so as is fitting; for spiritual children must honor their father. However, one must not think that in the matter of commemoration it is enough to perform the memorial services and then find comfort in the flesh; rather, one must also generate spiritual consolations. Physical comfort, having stirred the emotions for a short time, flees, but spiritual comfort is insatiable and enduring. If any of you wept, if any of you were moved to compassion, if any of you were brokenhearted, then you have succeeded in properly commemorating your father or brother. Recall the days of old, when we had our father with us, conversing and sharing his thoughts with us; then let us imagine where he is now, with whom he dwells, and with whom he shares his thoughts—he and each of our departed brothers. Is it not this—both what is thought and what is heard—that always fills the soul with rapture?

7. Let us then turn our attention to ourselves and consider: will we not, in a short time, depart from here as well, and be remembered by others just as we now remember our predecessors? Indeed, it is so. Such is our lot: we are mortal beings—unaware of what tomorrow will bring. For what is our life? — A vapor that appears for a moment and then vanishes; a spring flower that blooms in the morning but withers by evening. “*Man is like grass; his days are like a flower of the field—it blooms and then fades*” (Ps. 102: 15). “*Man is like a breath; his days pass like a shadow*” (Ps. 143:4). “*All flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man is like the flower of the field*” (Isa. 40:6); “*The sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance perishes*” (James 1:11). Thus we will wither away; thus we will depart from here, as the saints have said. These are their parables, spoken before this.

8. “*But blessed is the one who understands; blessed is the one who seeks God*” (Ps. 13:2). Blessed is the one who daily exerts himself in the labors and toils of obedience—not contentious, not grumbling, meek, prompt in his deeds, not negligent in service, contrite in heart, and always preparing for his departure. For the end will come; it will come and will not be delayed. The dreadful day of death will come; the royal messenger, descending from heaven, will also come—and will say to the soul: “Come now, the King and God of all is calling for you.” But may we, through the prayers of our Father, find ourselves ready at that hour and, without fear, depart from here and pass into eternal life.

220. The end of Lent brings us face to face with Easter; but our whole life, too, stands face to face with Easter—not the temporary one, but the eternal one, immeasurably better

220. 1) The end of Lent brings us face to face with Pascha; but our whole life also stands before the face of Pascha—not the temporary one, but the eternal one, which is immeasurably better. – 2) Look upon it, recalling what the Lord has said about it, and be inspired to undertake ascetic labors, imitating the saints. – 3) Do not pay attention to the crafty serpent, who attempts to lure us with deceit toward what is pleasing and sweet to the flesh. [32, 17]

1. Lent is drawing to a close, and the soul rejoices at the approach of Easter, as a time of rest and of tasting the fruit of the labors undertaken. But why have I spoken these words?—To remind you that our entire life is turned toward the eternal Passover and awaits its coming. This earthly Passover, though great and venerable, is, as our Fathers teach, only a foreshadowing of that Passover. This earthly Passover lasts but a single day—and then passes; but that unceasing Passover is the one from which sickness, sorrow, and sighing have fled, where there is joy, gladness, and eternal comfort, where there are the voices of those celebrating and the faces of those rejoicing, and the vision of the everlasting light, where there is Christ's blessed feast, a table full of eternal blessings and the new drink, of which Christ said: *"I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom"* (Matt. 26:29).

2. As for this kingdom, when He was about to be taken up into heaven, He said to His disciples: *"I am going to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 'You know the way to the place where I am going'"* (John 14:2–4). And in another passage He says again: *"On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you"* (John 14:20). And again in another passage: *"Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory, which You have given Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world"* (John 17:24). And to make it clear that these words were not spoken only of the Apostles, but of all believers, He said again: *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one: just as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You, that they also may be one in Us"* (John 17:20–21). What could be more comforting than these words? And what could be more convincing? What soul could these words fail to soften? What heart would they not break? Some would rightly call such a heart stony, rather than human. – Reflecting on this, the saints cheerfully endured all that they endured, regarding sorrows as joys, confinement as spaciousness, sufferings as delights, ascetic labors as consolations, and death as life. Therefore, since we, too, strive toward the same goal as they did and seek the same of the Resurrection, let us courageously endure all that is unpleasant, not succumbing to its weight or losing heart, but rather being stirred to even more ardent zeal.

3. Do not heed the crafty serpent, who devises various schemes against us through our passions, transforming himself into an angel of light and disguising things as what they are not, presenting darkness as light and bitterness as sweetness. Thus he deceived our first parents, bewitching their eyes and presenting to them as beautiful what was not beautiful, and then, through the act of eating, cast them out of paradise. But we, knowing from experience that he is a flattering deceiver, will not allow ourselves to be driven out of the paradise of the commandments; and when he shows us a beautiful fruit, we will not fix the gaze of our soul and body upon it, but will avoid looking at it in every way, lest we be deceived. What, then, is this fruit that appears red? Carnal love, the evil lust of each of the destructive passions; by avoiding it, we will be saved and will be deemed worthy to celebrate the eternal Passover with all the saints.

221. Just as the plant kingdom blossoms and bears fruit after winter, so too does the soul, after privations, sorrows, and hardships, blossom spiritually and bear spiritual fruit, by which the Lord is delighted and nourished

221. 1) Just as the plant kingdom blossoms and bears fruit after winter, so too does the soul, after privations, sorrows, and hardships, blossom spiritually and bear spiritual fruit, by which the Lord is delighted and nourished. – 2) Let us therefore endure all the sorrows and hardships of our ascetic life, so that we may bear fruit, delight the Lord with it, and nourish Him: for nothing could be more blissful than this. – 3) And the Lord Himself has confirmed that this is so: how then can we not bear every sorrow of our life with all joy [32, 18]

4. Winter has passed; spring has come, and we see God's creation coming to life: plants are blooming, the earth is covered with greenery, birds are singing, and everything else is being renewed—and we take

delight in this and glorify the all-wise Artist of all things—God, who, as it were, recreates and transforms His creation every summer, thereby tangibly confirming that *“His invisible attributes—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly perceived since the creation of the world through the things He has made”* (Rom. 1: 20). We should not, however, stop at this alone, but rather extend our mental gaze further and see within ourselves a reflection of what is happening in creation. — How? Through the following comparison: just as the renewal of this visible creation is caused by winter, during which the earth and everything on it is subjected to the harsh effects of snow, rain, and storms; so it is with the soul; for if it does not first endure the winter of sorrows, deprivations, and calamities, it will bear neither flowers nor fruit; but if it endures all these things, it bears the expected fruit and receives a blessing from God in return, as it is written: *“The earth that drinks in the abundant rain that falls upon it and produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated receives a blessing from God”* (Heb. 6:7).

5. Let us, then, endure every sorrow, every deprivation, and every temptation—whether visible or invisible—that assails us during this Lenten season we are passing through, in hunger and thirst, and in all other afflictions, so that we may prove fruitful and receive God’s blessing; and not only that, but also so that we may nourish and welcome the Lord Jesus: for just as we take delight in the sight of creation growing green, blooming, and bearing fruit, so does He take delight in the sight of our souls, spiritually blooming and bearing fruit. – What, then, are these fruits? *“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* (Gal. 5:22–23). This is what He feeds on, what delights Him. And blessed is the one who nourishes Him in this way, for he will in turn be nourished by Him with eternal blessings. Blessed is the one who welcomes Him in this way, for he too will be welcomed by Him in the kingdom of heaven. If someone welcomes an earthly king into his home, how much does he rejoice and be glad?—Is it not all the more so for the one who welcomes the King of kings and Lord of lords?

6. And that He is truly received is evident from the words He Himself spoke: *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”* (John 14:23). And again: *“Whoever has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and whoever loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him”* (John 14:21). – If such are the promises, then let us not only endure everything, but do so with joy, hearing what the Apostle says: *“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, which is the church”* (Col. 1: 24); and what St. James says: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing”* (James 1:2–4). Do you see that there is joy in trials and gladness in sorrows?—This is how the saints lived; let us also compel ourselves to live this way, so that, by following in their footsteps, we may inherit the kingdom of heaven together with them.

222. After listing the ascetic virtues in which one particularly excelled during Lent, he adds: “Remain this way forever, without changing with the passage of time.”

222. After listing the ascetic virtues in which some particularly excelled during Lent, he adds: “Remain this way forever, without changing with the passage of time.” [3 2, 19] *We have now reached the very end of Lent: for, as you can see, it is coming to a close. Written accounts handed down to us from ancient times confirm that at this time the blessed fathers, who had spent Holy Lent in the deserts within the boundaries of the Holy City of Jerusalem, having spent Holy Lent in the deserts, and now offering as firstfruits to the bountiful Lord and God the lofty virtues in which each had excelled, especially in these ascetic feats. You, too, offer something not insignificant and not unworthy, each according to your strength: one offers the queen of all virtues—love; another, God-illuminated humility; one, Christ-like obedience; another, unceasing vigilance in prayer and psalm-singing during vigils; yet another, special zeal in performing manual labor; nor are the following unworthy of praise: the suppression of distraction, the restraint of untimely glances, modesty in demeanor, prudence in responses and mutual interaction; I will not speak of curbing insolence, of refraining from verbosity, of moderation in food, of avoiding excessive sleep, of attention to the verses, and, finally—which ought to be placed first—of the blessed and martyr-like severing of one’s own will, which, as the one true sacrifice, the Lord demands of us above all else. Each of the qualities listed is a good and pious offering; and I dare say that none of you will appear empty-handed before God, but each will bring his own good deeds. You have thus, through your asceticism, laid up “gold, silver, and precious stones”—deeds that will not be*

consumed by the fire of the coming trial, and not those which the Apostle likens to “*hay, wood, and straw*” (1 Cor. 3:12)—such as love of sin, slavery to passions, obscene speech, impure thoughts, secret indulgence, falsehood, hatred, and everything else of this sort. Since you have, during these few days of fasting, become possessors of such spiritual treasures, let us not allow ourselves to squander them; let us not, through change or because of the changing times, yield to the adversary and our enemy. Let the times change and let different days come; but remain steadfast in your submission to God’s will and in your love for Him. Or, perhaps, be changeable—but only for the better—replacing lesser perfection with greater, becoming a burning lamp from a spark, transforming from a star into the moon, and from the moon into the sun. Just do not stand still or turn back to the comforts of the world, which are as fleeting as a dream but subject one to eternal burning in the fire. Therefore, I ask that, just as you have thus far remained in a godly disposition, so let us celebrate the Feast of Vay, and let us open the gates of the monastery, welcoming those who wish to enter, and arrange our meetings and conversations in such a way that all may serve to the glory of God, and that those who see you may say that God is in you, as in His Temple, according to the divine Apostle (1 Cor. 3:16). – By acting in this way, we will also celebrate the Holy and Great Pascha in a manner pleasing to God, in harmony with the Passion of Christ and illuminated by the light of the Resurrection.

223. It recalls a certain event, as a trial for all, which was well endured by everyone

223. 1) It serves as a reminder of a certain event—a temptation for all—that everyone has successfully overcome. – 2) It explains how the temptation to sin arises and how one should resist sin accordingly: by warding off evil thoughts and so on. – 3) To avoid even the temptation, one must not return to one’s former ways—not even in thought—and outwardly must strictly adhere to the rules of good conduct. – 4) Above all, be careful not to leave the monastery. – 5) In general, may everything among you be orderly and proper—do everything as in the presence of the Lord. – 6) Lent has ended; let us give thanks to the Lord; but let us not cease to improve ourselves.

7. The Lord said in the Gospel: “*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail*” (Luke 22:31–32). Something similar has happened to us, the humble ones. But the all-gracious God did not leave us to be grieved more than we can bear, but “*has provided a way out along with the temptation, so that we may be able to endure it*” (1 Cor. 10: 13). You know what I am talking about. I have accepted your brotherly suffering as pleasing to God, salutary, and praiseworthy, as the Apostle says: “*For what is this, that you were grieved by God, as much as He intended? But a response, but indignation, but fear, but longing, but zeal, but vengeance; in everything you have shown yourselves to be blameless in this matter*” (2 Cor. 7:11). Such is your attitude—truly brotherly, as the word of truth requires; for it says: “*If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it*” (1 Cor. 12:26).

8. But consider for me how diligent and cunning the devil is; how he “*roams about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8), seeking to seize someone—whether in part or entirely—as his prey. For when he seizes someone in part, he is not content with that, but always strives for the worst, until he brings about spiritual death—namely: first, he attempts to make us accept a temptation, then to conceive something evil in our hearts; and having thus defiled and infected the soul, he tempts it to step outside the bounds of nature, and renders it mad, speechless, and blind, striving toward what is unworthy: toward darkness instead of light, toward sorrow instead of sweetness, toward death instead of life. Such is the calamity wrought by the tempter. – But we, brothers, will guard our souls with every means, giving no place to the devil, but immediately driving away even the slightest thought; if we are overcome in this, at least we will not defile ourselves by sympathizing; and if we fail even here, we will not allow ourselves to remain long in that state of mind, lest we be led into sin.

9. This happens to us because of past passions and memories. But let us flee from passions; let us flee from the memories of our youth: for to wander there and dwell there in our imagination is nothing other than a return of the heart to Egypt, which we must guard against through the inner man; as for the outer man, let us do what the Apostle teaches: “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only such as is good for edifying, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you*” (Eph. 4:29–32).

10. At the same time, let us avoid leaving the monastery, as this is a cause of falling away. Alas! Are your brothers within the courtyard, while you are outside? Are your brothers in silence, while you are in idle chatter? Your brothers are at rest, but you wander from place to place, here and there? From this come temptations; from this come falls. What happens to a sheep that has strayed from the flock? Does it not become prey to wild beasts? So it is with one who flees from the brotherhood. But may this not happen, brothers; by no means may it happen.

11. Yet let everything among you be done in a proper and orderly manner; let everything be done with care and caution; all as in the presence of the Lord, who sees both our hidden and our open deeds, and what we do by day and by night, and everything that occurs in every movement of our body and mind; let us thus give no offense to Jews, Greeks, or the church of God. – And that is enough on this subject.

12. Since Lent is coming to an end, let us give glory to God, who has enabled us to complete it and has given us the strength to undertake the customary ascetic practices throughout its duration. The labor has passed, but the reward remains; the body has been refined, but the spirit has been strengthened. Grow stronger and be sanctified more and more, and “*may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thess. 5:23).

224. Let us not cease to remember the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord, lest we be ensnared by passions

224. 1) Let us never cease to remember the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection, so that we may not be ensnared by passions. – 2) Now it is spring, which revives all that is carnal: let us therefore be cautious and strict with the body. – 3) We have labored during Lent; but when Lent is over, the labor is not over: we must labor on ourselves throughout our entire lives. – 4) Let us do so, then. [4, 1]

13. Having been granted by Christ’s grace to celebrate Holy Pascha, let us return to our duties, yet in such a way that we may both work and at the same time remember the life-giving sufferings of our Savior Jesus Christ and His glorious Resurrection; for we must by no means allow the memory of these events to fade away with the passing of Pascha. But let us always bring to mind the Lord’s saving sufferings—His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection—so that, by constantly occupying our minds with such thoughts, we may remain impervious to the passions. But if, through inattention, we are ever caught off guard, let us quickly look upon Jesus the Crucified, the Lord of glory, and healing will immediately shine upon our souls. So too, in ancient times, when Israel was bitten by serpents, they looked upon the bronze serpent and were immediately healed (Num. 21, 11–19). You know well that evil thoughts bite like serpents, pouring poison into the soul, which must be removed as quickly as possible with the utmost care as soon as this happens, lest delay make the wound difficult to heal.

14. You see, it is now spring. Spring is the mother of blood (and blood is the mother of the flesh). “*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*” (Gal. 5: 17); thus, the strengthening of the flesh weakens the Spirit, and the strengthening of the Spirit weakens the flesh. – Let us therefore be prudent and, in our eating, drinking, sleeping, and everything else, observe strict moderation, lest the body gain the upper hand over the soul, but rather that the soul may triumph over the body.

15. A runner in a race is not declared the winner after running just one or two stages, but only after running the entire course (and reaching the designated finish line first). So too, we are not victors merely by observing Lent or Pentecost as we ought; but I tell you that unless we remain vigilant throughout our entire lives, we will not escape the devil’s snares and will not receive the victor’s reward.

16. Why, then, will we strive again and again in good deeds, sweat again and again to acquire virtues, mortify the flesh again and again, subdue the body again and again, and drive away passions again and again—always “*bearing in our bodies the death of the Lord Jesus*” (2 Cor. 4:10), “*always carrying about in our bodies the death sentence*” (2 Cor. 3:7). For, of course, we too will die just as our fathers and brothers did, and we will depart from here—and go to strange places, and see sights we have never seen. This thought is terrifying and drives those of sound mind into a state of ecstasy. —Therefore, while abiding in fear and trembling, let us keep our senses in strict order and guard ourselves in every way against vain hearing, harmful sights, intoxicating scents, and every dangerous step, devoting ourselves entirely to the Holy God, so that, having pleased Him, we may become heirs of eternal blessings.

225. Easter has passed, and the Passion has passed; but the joy of Easter and the memory of the Lord's Passion must remain alive within us; so that, while we live, we may not live for ourselves, but for the Lord who died for us and rose again

225. 1) Easter has passed, and the Passion has passed; but the joy of Easter and the memory of the Lord's Passion must remain alive within us; so that, while we live, we may not live for ourselves, but for the Lord who died for us and rose again. – 2) Therefore, even after Easter, we must persevere in spiritual struggles, without inventing any excuses to stray from them. – 3) He rebukes them, saying that he had told them not to meet privately in secret places, yet some still did so; and he instructs them on how to conduct themselves when they gather together openly for conversation, and how to behave at all other times. – 4) He urges them to remember the good brothers who have departed and to imitate them, citing Brother Dometian as an example [4:2].

17. Easter has passed, and the feast is over; but the joy—or celebration, if you will—has not passed: for spiritually we must always rejoice and celebrate, according to the words of the Apostle: *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice”* (Phil. 4:4). And Holy Week has passed, but may the memory of the sufferings of Christ our Savior always be fresh and alive within us—that is, the memory that the Lord of glory was crucified for us, was buried, and rose again on the third day, raising us up with Him and giving us life with Him, *“so that we who live no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died for us and was raised”* (2 Cor. 5:15), so that we may boldly speak the words of the Apostle: *“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for my sake”* (Gal. 2: 20–21). And here is the conclusion to be drawn from this Sacrament: we must be dead to the world and live for the One God.

18. Therefore, even after Easter, we must remain sober and vigilant, pray and repent, shed tears and be enlightened, always bear in our bodies the death of the Lord Jesus, die daily by our own will, and always separate ourselves mentally from the body and turn to the Lord by turning away from the desires of the flesh. – Do not say, *“It is not Lent now”*: for the sober-minded, it is always Lent. Do not say, *“I have been striving for a long time now, and I need rest”*: there is no rest here on earth. Do not say, *“I am seasoned in virtue, and I am not afraid”*: the fear of change and falling must never depart, for Satan has cast many who were seasoned in virtue into the pit of sin in the blink of an eye; so *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12), and let him who thinks himself well-protected take heed lest he be left without any protection at all. Let us therefore always be on guard and vigilant, exercising strict self-control—in sleep, in eating, in drinking, and in everything else—so that the body may always be kept under control and in subjection, lest it, like a young colt, rear up and cast us into the torrent of sin.

19. In a recent sermon, I warned you not to isolate yourselves or remain alone in secluded places, yet some of you have been there again. *“What do you want? Shall I come to you with a club, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”* (1 Cor. 4:21). I have spoken to you in every way, and you have not listened; you have seen with your own eyes that your brother suffered penance for this, and yet you have not restrained yourselves. Take heed, lest anyone fall into the same kind of sin. It is not in vain, nor is it everywhere, that these teachings are given. *“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace”* (1 Cor. 14:33). *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor. 14:40), so that in everything the Lord may be glorified through us. Brothers coming from here and there, be mindful of where and how you sit, and how you conduct yourselves—not as those who have been given free rein to do whatever they please, but as those bound by the Spirit; not as those unobserved by anyone, but as those observed by the Lord, who sees every movement and every action of yours; do not wander aimlessly, as if driven by some force, but be at rest in your wanderings; pay attention to your work, your prayers, and your psalm-singing; do not hoard anything for yourselves here out of greed, but be content with what you have. For the Lord Himself said, *“I will not leave you nor forsake you”* (Josh. 1: 5); so that each of us may say with boldness, *“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man can do to me”* (Ps. 117: 6).

20. Remember your brothers, *“looking to the end of their journey, imitate their faith”* (Heb. 13:7). Such was the blessed Dometian, whom we have praised, and whose memory is with the saints. What price did he pay? What kind of life did he lead? —With what labors and deeds did he acquire his eternal inheritance? He was a poor and humble man in the flesh; but since he chose virtue and loved God, God exalted him, according to the word of Scripture: *“I will exalt those who exalt Me, but those who despise Me will be brought low”* (1 Sam. 2:30). We ought to rejoice and be glad over such brothers. But what good is this if we do not

contribute something of our own to it? Having contributed according to our strength, we will share in the lot of the saints, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

226. Let us conduct ourselves in the world in such a way as to silence those who are eager to slander our way of life

226. 1) Let us conduct ourselves in the world in such a way as to silence those who are eager to slander our way of life. – 2) Let our motivation for this be the love for the Lord that inspired all the saints. – 3) If we sometimes give in to our passions, it is because of the lukewarmness of our love for the Lord, which we must therefore renew and strengthen. [4, 3]

21. We, the humble ones, rejoice with joy at seeing you come here every year, and we celebrate your arrival as if it were a second Passover. But just as you bring us earthly gifts—each according to what his hand has found—so we, as if in a kind of exchange, will offer you spiritual gifts. – Therefore, I beg you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: walk in a manner worthy of the monastic calling, worthy of the confession we have made, and of the persecution we have endured for the Lord, *“that your good conduct in the world may be a witness,” even “when they slander you as evildoers,”* they may be put to shame when they see your good conduct in action (1 Peter 2:12). Let us strive, both for our own sake and for the sake of those who oppose the truth, to conduct our lives in a steadfast and orderly manner, maintaining good conduct in our dealings with one another and being guided by sound principles in our good deeds. Whether we gather in church, let us observe the Apostolic rule. *“Let each one of you,”* says the Apostle, *“have a psalm, have a teaching, have a tongue... but let all things be done for edification”* (1 Cor. 14:26); or if we are going somewhere out of necessity, let us walk reverently, so that a certain grace may, as it were, shine from our faces for the edification of those who see us; or if we happen to converse with a woman, let us speak to her with full attention, modestly averting our eyes from gazing, lest we receive thorns and arrows in our hearts.

22. In a word, *“everything”* must be *“done for the glory of God, who loved us and gave Himself up for us”* (Gal. 2: 20). Whose love drives the lover to ecstasy, not allowing him to belong to himself, but only to the one he loves: something that can also be seen in those who love themselves emotionally or carnally. – When a husband loves his wife, he gives his whole self to his beloved, breathing, as it were, only for her, and dreaming of her ceaselessly. Even if you point out the sun to him, he will not want to look at it, but only at his beloved; even if you offer him a meal, he will not want to partake of it, out of his desire to be with his one and only beloved. – But what is more beautiful than the Lord Christ? What is sweeter than His blissful love? Is He not *“fairer in goodness than the sons of men?”* (Ps. 44:3). Is He not *“sweetness and all desire?”* (Song of Songs 5:16). Demonstrating this—that is, the warmth of their love for Him—the saints cry out: some, *“As the deer s for streams of water, so my soul longs for You, O God”* (Ps. 41:2); Others again: *“The love of God has taken hold of us, who have been entrusted with this ministry: for if one died for all, then all have died; but Christ died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised”* (2 Cor. 5:14–15). Behold what love with which God loved the world! And behold how strongly and irresistibly He Himself was loved by the saints!

23. But since we do not love Him fervently, we are captivated by evil thoughts and carnal desires, and thus encounter sorrow instead of pleasure, bitterness instead of sweetness, and anxiety instead of peace. – But we must awaken and come to our senses, brothers, and purify our souls of such destructive desires, so that Christ may dwell within us: for where there is purity, there is Christ. Such is the blessed and longed-for life; and by living in this way, we will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

227. Through fasting you have gathered spiritual blessings; now strive to preserve them

227. 1) Through fasting you have gathered spiritual blessings; now strive to preserve them. – 2) To this end, do not give in to carelessness, but pay close attention to yourselves and act with vigilant caution. – 3) Avoid occasions that provoke sin, guard your emotions, and especially purify your thoughts. – 4) If you do not do this, you will fall into sin; and how much harm has sin done to us, and continues to do? [4, 4]

24. Now that the Feast is over, the time calls us back to our discussions and regular teachings; and I set about this with zeal, knowing that I have been appointed for this, and that woe to me if I do not proclaim the words of truth to you with all my strength. – What, then, should I say to you at this time? I will say that, just as before, during Holy Lent, each of you, having gathered spiritual riches as if into a safe harbor, entered into Holy Pascha, bringing with you many and good acquisitions of virtues, such as fasting, vigil, prayer,

diligence, and other similar pious endeavors: so now the object of your care and concern—not just some of it, but all of it—must be the preservation of all these things.

25. For one should not assume that what happens in a visible, physical harbor also applies to a spiritual one. There, as soon as someone enters the harbor and settles in, they give themselves over to inactivity and carefree ease, unconcerned about the waves of the sea and other calamitous accidents; here, on the contrary, the passions rage more fiercely because of the flesh's repose, and the spirits of malice attack more uncontrollably, like storms: the spirit of fornication, the spirit of gluttony, the spirit of greed, the spirit of sloth, the spirit of sorrow, the spirit of pride. And in this situation, fear is very appropriate, lest one sink even in the harbor. Once, St. David cast a careless glance at Uriah's wife, and readers know what he suffered as a result (2 Sam. 11:1 and 4); "*Jacob ate and was satisfied; he grew fat and rejected his God,*" says Scripture (Deut. 32:15); someone acted recklessly, was consumed by lust, and gave birth to lawlessness.

26. Hearing this, pay attention; avoid places and sights that are dangerous because they stir up sin; bind with strict rules your eyes, ears, sense of smell, taste, and touch, as well as your eating, drinking, and sleep, so that the waves of passions do not overwhelm you. You must also know that one who sails the sea of the senses is inevitably exposed to storms and turmoil; but one who crosses the sea of the mind is master of both storms and calm. For if he courageously drives away inappropriate thoughts, he is filled with stillness, having the Holy Spirit as his fellow traveler, as is told of St. Arsenius. But whoever lets his senses run wild, and who does not prevent lusts from rising within him like waves—such a person stirs up the worst storm for himself; and if he does not quickly subdue his agitated thoughts, he will come to the point of crying out in a plaintive voice: "*I have sunk into the depths of the sea, and the storm has overwhelmed me*" (Ps. 64: 3). By this I mean: let good thoughts reign, and let the better not be overcome by the worse; let the spirit reign and be guided toward what is best.

27. Or do you not know what sin has wrought? Has it not brought death into the world? Has it not corrupted the earth? Has it not filled the universe with graves, from the beginning of the world until now?—For man was incorruptible until he transgressed the commandment. And none of what has been said had yet come to pass while the first-created remained steadfastly faithful to the commandment given to him. He is the cause of eternal torments; he is the arsonist of the unquenchable fire of Gehenna; he is the food of the endless worm; he has made man, who was once honorable, like senseless beasts. Since he is so calamitous and deadly, we must flee from him with all our strength; and choose virtue, which makes people like angels, resists demons, drives away all passions, and finally receives the kingdom of heaven as a reward—may we all attain it through the grace and love of our Lord.

228. Do not give in to carelessness: for death is always near; and after death comes judgment and retribution

228. 1) Do not give in to carelessness: for death is always near; and after death come judgment and retribution. – 2) If those who serve an earthly king strive with fear to fulfill everything, both great and small, should not those who serve the Heavenly King do so all the more? – 3) Let us therefore diligently fulfill everything, both in worship and in obedience; above all, let us live in peace with one another, and do so sincerely. [4, 5]

28. The brevity of this life should not give rise to boredom, idleness, or apathy in us, but rather to zeal and the most earnest striving to please God, since we are always close to death. No servant, when approaching his master, nor any messenger sent to give an account to the one who sent him, acts carelessly, but is so preoccupied that he seems beside himself. – What of us? We, too, are approaching our Lord—or rather, the Lord is approaching us—and His dreadful judgment, before which we will all stand naked and exposed, to give an account of our lives and receive either the eternal kingdom or eternal torment. Thinking of this, who can afford to be careless? And will not everyone burn with a zeal even greater than fire to do the will of their Lord, so as not to end up like that servant who, bound hand and foot, was cast out of the wedding hall? (Matt. 22:13).

29. If these examples do not strike fear into us, let us try to picture the future more vividly by comparing it to what happens in the present. Do we not see how the King's enemies—some are tormented in dungeons, others are flogged, some are exiled, some are blinded, and still others are in danger of losing their very lives? – But even those who have done nothing wrong—with what fear and trembling do they stand before him and serve him, being sent here and there to war and other arduous tasks? And there is no one who objects, no one

who disobeys. If this is the case with a mortal king, how much more so with the immortal and one King of kings and Lord of lords—should this not be done with fear and trembling, and should nothing be done except what is commanded? Do you hear what the Word of God says?—*“Or do you disregard the riches of His kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard-heartedness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds”* (Rom. 2:4–6).

30. Let this serve as a warning to us; and let us spend every day with full attention and vigilant self-discipline, rising early in the morning at the signal, immediately and briskly, driving away sleep, and after sober prayer in the cell and in the common assembly, each one taking up his own task—the cell attendant in the cell, the cook in the kitchen, and all the others, each in his own place: nowhere shall there be grumbling, disobedience, shouting, or conflict—nor malice, secretly harbored, so as to appear peaceful on the outside while nurturing hatred within, and, as soon as the opportunity arises, to strike like a viper or take revenge like a vengeful camel. – An offense occurred and has passed. But was there sincere repentance or forgiveness? Do not let your thoughts flare up again, and do not be tempted to *“repay evil with evil, or insult with insult; on the contrary, bless, knowing that you were called to this, so that you may inherit a blessing.”* For whoever desires to love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:9–12).

229. All creation celebrates Christ’s Resurrection, adorned with flowers and spreading a sweet fragrance; and we, too, ought to celebrate this feast of feasts by spreading a spiritual fragrance from ourselves, having prepared it within ourselves through the combination of every virtue

229. 1) All creation celebrates Christ’s Resurrection, adorned with flowers and spreading a sweet fragrance; and we, too, ought to celebrate this feast of feasts by spreading a spiritual fragrance from ourselves, having prepared it within ourselves through the combination of every virtue. – 2) But in these days we ought to exude the fragrance of Orthodoxy all the more, in light of iconoclasm, which is rebuked by the Lord Himself. – 3) Let us, then, hold fast to the true faith and exude the fragrance of a virtuous life. [4, 6]

31. On the feast of Christ’s Resurrection, all creation—as if shedding a kind of lifelessness, a sad winter cloak—blooms anew and, as it were, comes to life: the earth is covered with greenery, the trees with leaves, animals leap about in play, the sea has calmed, and everything has been transformed into a better state. – But why did this come to mind? – Here is why: if even soulless and speechless creatures rejoice so greatly in the most glorious Resurrection and take on such a festive appearance, should we not all the more—we who are honored with reason and the image of God—adorn ourselves with a good life and exude a fragrant spirit? – For truly, the fragrance of Christ is one who is adorned with virtue, as the Apostle testifies, saying: *“For we are the fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: to the one a fragrance leading to death; to the other a fragrance leading to life”* (2 Cor. 2: 15:16). In this regard, it is also fitting to say that Adam, before transgressing the commandment, was a fragrance to God, being adorned with immortality and incorruptibility and enveloped in heavenly contemplations. For, like any tree that is truly flowery and fragrant, he was planted in Paradise, exuding virtues. We may also recall here that Isaac the Patriarch, sensing a pleasant fragrance in his son Jacob, said precisely: *“This is the fragrance of my son, like the fragrance of a field which the Lord has blessed”* (Gen. 27:24), certainly understanding this fragrance in a spiritual sense. – Let us, then, brothers, also exude a spiritual fragrance, which we shall prepare within ourselves through the combination of all virtues, like a skilled perfumer. Such myrrh is blessed; such myrrh is pleasing to God; such myrrh attracts the angels and drives away demons; the pure souls drawn by this myrrh followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord, as is sung in the Song of Songs (1:2, 3). So it must always be.

32. But in these times, we must above all exude Orthodoxy, in the face of iconoclastic impiety. The iconoclasts cry out: “God is incorporeal; it is impossible to depict Him.”—And they think they are uttering words of wisdom, not realizing what wisdom they are speaking of.—O foolish ones! Do you confess the Lord Jesus as God? I suppose you will say, “Yes.”—Listen, then, to what He Himself says: when He appeared to the holy Apostles after His resurrection and, by His ineffable condescension, initiated them into the most

secret and wondrous mysteries of the saving faith, He touched food, to confirm the truth of His resurrection, even though His holy flesh after the resurrection had no need of it—He ate and drank, and was tangible, and to those who thought He was a spirit, He said: “*See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: touch Me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have*” (Luke 24:39).—What will the iconoclastic Christ-fighter say to this?—Does the Lord have flesh and bones? And can He therefore be depicted in an icon?—If the latter is not possible, then the former never was. But by saying that He has flesh, He—whether silently or implicitly—testifies Himself that He can be depicted in an icon: for these two characteristics presuppose one another. Why *will* these iconoclasts, like the Manicheans, “*suffer torment and eternal destruction,*” as it is written (2 Thess. 1:9)?

33. We, however, brothers, in orthodox wisdom, believing that we can see our Lord Jesus Christ in an icon and worship Him there, and resting in this, we will direct all our zeal toward living a life worthy of our faith—pure, blameless, and spotless—so that we may not stumble on either side, but by treading skillfully on both, may attain the kingdom of heaven.

230. Reflecting on how highly our nature has been exalted by the ascended Lord, let us not allow it to be tarnished by an unworthy life

230. Reflecting on how highly our nature has been exalted by the ascended Lord, let us not allow it to be tarnished by an unworthy life. [4, 7] The Feast of Feasts for us, and the Ascension of our Savior, Jesus Christ, which is at hand, is a great and supernatural mystery: for our nature is lifted beyond the bounds of the visible heavens, as it is written: “*God, who is rich in mercy... has made us, who were dead in our trespasses, alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2: 4–6), “*seated at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above every rule and authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come; and He has put all things under His feet; and He has appointed Him head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all*” (Eph. 1: 20–23). Do you see to what heights of glory human nature has been raised? Is it not from earth to heaven? Is it not from corruption to incorruption? How many others labor to become friends of an earthly and mortal king? But we, who were “*once alienated and enemies in our minds through wicked deeds*” (Col. 1: 21), have not only been reconciled to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ as a gift, but have also been exalted to the status of sonship. And now our nature is in heaven, worshiped by every visible and invisible creature. Such is the greatness of the ineffable love for mankind of our good God! Reflecting on this, and knowing that it is beyond the grasp of our minds, the blessed Paul prays, “*May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ grant to the believers the spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of Him.... that He may make known to us what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty strength, which He worked in Christ*” (Eph. 1: 17–21). – But that is exactly what happened! – He came to us, the All-Blessed One, through the virgin birth; He submitted Himself to the laws of nature; He ascended the cross, “*nailing to it the handwritten code of debts against us*” (Col. 2: 14), descended into the depths of the earth, healing mortal infirmities, rose again, having restored human nature in Himself, and finally ascended in glory, revealing Himself as our Advocate before God the Father—such, in short, is the meaning of this holy feast! – As we contemplate this and realize that we are the body of Christ, let us reverently honor this gift, preserve our nobility, not betray grace, “*not turn the members of Christ into members of immorality*” (1 Cor. 6:15), but even more so, we will purify ourselves in both thought and deed; even more so, we will renounce the carnal desires that wage war against the soul, *keeping “our life’s treasure”* within ourselves (1 Peter 2:12)—a life that is peaceful, meek, obedient, humble, and well-ordered—for such a life is indeed a blessed life. But pleasures and amusements, laughter and intemperance, we must leave to those who love the flesh and love life—those who, though they see, do not see, and though they hear, do not hear, having hearts of stone and ears that are heavy, so that they cannot distinguish good from evil, light from darkness, life from death. But we, brothers, will hold fast to the confession “*in which we stand, and in which we boast of the hope of God’s glory*” (Rom. 5:2). Taking inspiration from the ascetic labors in which the saints toiled—among them the blessed Pachomius, whom we now praise in song—let us see soundly, hear soundly, feel soundly, and use all our members soundly, so that we may be heirs to eternal life according to the promise.

231. In the Lord's Ascension, our nature has been exalted: let us honor the greatness of this gift and adorn ourselves with every virtue

231. 1) In the Lord's Ascension, our nature has been exalted: let us honor the greatness of this gift, and let us adorn ourselves with every kind of virtue. – 2) Whoever is not like this is not a member of Christ: therefore, whoever is enslaved by any passion, repent and become like Him; whoever is occasionally subject to the stirrings of the passions, hasten to restore your spiritual serenity at all times. – 3) Hasten; for death is always near, and after death comes condemnation for those who have not repented. [4, 8]

1. We celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, the culmination of the incarnate work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Having accomplished all according to the Father's will, He ascended in glory, and, having raised us with Him, seated us in the heavens in His holy flesh. What *"riches of His glory, and what surpassing greatness of His power"* (Eph. 1:18–19), that He has exalted our humble and insignificant nature to the divine Royal Throne, and every heavenly power worships Him. As we reflect on this, let us be filled with awe and reverence, let us reverently honor the greatness of this gift, and let us live in a manner worthy of our Head, as members of Christ, as His co-heirs, *"in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, in the word of truth, in the power of God"* (2 Cor. 6: 6:7), with all obedience and humility, with all diligence and attentiveness, speaking nothing out of place and doing nothing contrary to the commandment.

2. Therefore, one who defiles the body is no longer a member of Christ; one who harbors malice is no longer a member of Christ; anyone else possessed by any passion is no longer a member of Christ; and therefore is no longer worthy to partake of the Holy Mysteries. For the Apostle says: *"Let a person examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup; for whoever eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon himself, not discerning the Lord's body. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number have fallen asleep. For if we were to judge ourselves, we would not be condemned; but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world"* (1 Cor. 11:28–32). Therefore, let us make ourselves worthy and purify ourselves, so that we may be rightly called members of Christ and may worthily partake of the Holy Mysteries. – If, however, through inattention we happen to be consumed by evil desire, or anger, or envy, or hatred, or anything else that is abhorrent to God, let us not be surprised. But let us quickly restore ourselves to our former good state of mind, come to our senses, and not linger in this evil; for willful delay in this matter brings inexcusable condemnation.

3. Moreover, might death not come unexpectedly?—Just yesterday we visited a sick bishop and found him in great distress, completely emaciated by fever, his gaze wandering here and there, finding no help anywhere. Could we not suffer the same fate at any moment?—And what are these torments compared to those to come? A dream and a shadow. That fire does not go out, that worm does not die, the darkness does not dissipate, the bonds are not loosened, the gnashing of teeth does not cease, and all other torments are eternal. If we reflect earnestly on this, brothers, we will cease to be lustful, envious, angry, judgmental, or slanderous, and we will do no other evil; but rather, let us be peaceful, maintain a good disposition, repent, do good deeds, love one another as God commands, and do all that is commanded with zeal and willingness, so that we may avoid eternal torment and attain eternal life.

232. The Lord promised to send another Comforter: this was fulfilled on Pentecost; this is a great thing

232. 1) The Lord promised to send another Comforter: this was fulfilled on Pentecost; this is a great thing. – 2) How, then, shall we respond? Let us confess the greatness of the King: let us be inspired to do every good deed and to oppose all that is passionate and carnal; in which there is only bitterness, but every comfort is found in God alone. – 3) Let us therefore flee from everything that is unlike Him. [4, 9]

4. We celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, of whom the Lord says: *"You have the Holy Spirit, and I am going away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He comes, He will guide you into all the truth"* (John 16:7, 13). What a promise! What an honor bestowed upon us! He promised not to send an angel or a man, but the Spirit of the same essence as Himself. Thus, the Only-Begotten Son of God, having fulfilled the Father's work, ascends into heaven, and the Holy Spirit descends—not another God—far be it from Him!—but another Comforter, as it is written. And—oh, ineffable love for mankind! God Himself is our Comforter. And He comforts the sorrowful and tormented soul, keeping it from losing heart in difficult circumstances, as the holy Apostle testifies, saying: *"Outwardly we are in conflict, inwardly we are in fear; but God, who comforts the humble, comforts us...."* (2 Cor. 7:5). He comforts *the* heart, terrified by demonic fears, lifting it through bold hope to

invincible courage, as Saint David testifies: *“You, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me”* (Ps. 85:17). – He comforts by inspiring the troubled mind, assuring it that it has been granted peace with God and rest, as the Apostle testifies, saying: *“We implore you on behalf of Christ, as though God were imploring through us: we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”* (2 Cor. 5:20). – Do you see this unfathomable mercy? Do you see this incomparable gift? The Only-Begotten Son intercedes for us before the Father, as it is written: *“He who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us”* (Rom. 8:34). Here on earth, the Holy Spirit comforts us in many ways.

5. What, then, shall we give to the Lord in return for this?—All that remains for us is to take up the psalmist’s song and cry out: *“All my bones say: ‘O Lord, O Lord, who is like You? You who deliver the poor from the hand of those who are stronger than they, and the poor and needy from those who plunder them’”* (Ps. 34:10). And again: *“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth”* (Ps. 123:8). And further: *“If the Lord had not helped me, my soul would soon have gone down to the grave”* (Ps. 93:7). And: *“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man can do to me”* (Ps. 117: 6). Having, then, such a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, an invincible power, the Great Defender—God—and a fellow warrior, we will not fear the enemy’s terror nor be daunted by opposing forces, but, having Him as our helper and ally, we will courageously and steadfastly rush into the struggles of asceticism and confession, enduring them day after day, not being deceived by the serpent’s temptations, and not growing weary under his ceaseless attacks; we will extinguish carnal love, which fills the house of our soul with fire. I assure you that this is not pleasure, but a dangerous disease; not sweetness, but a frenzy of the mind and an evil darkening. Those who have subdued the frenzy of the flesh, washed away its defilements, and clung with all their hearts to the one God—who is the sweetest and most desirable—know this. – Whoever has attained this dwells in the flesh and above the flesh, in the world and above the world; he abides here and lives beyond the visible; in him, the waves of grace, stirred by the gentle breezes of the Spirit, fill the soul with stillness as much as is possible.

6. Why, then, do we allow sensuality, having conquered us, to distort us to such an extent and change us so thoroughly that, bowing down to the earth, to flesh and blood, we become completely estranged from our all-good God? – Let us flee from every passion: let us flee from the love of money, the source of betrayal; let us flee from unbelief, which cuts us off from communion with the Lord; let us flee from every other passion, whatever form it may take in our souls—anger, envy, hatred, pride, self-righteousness, and isolation—so that death may not find us unprepared and alienate us from God; and alienation from God is alienation from the Kingdom of Heaven as well. No one who does not do what is pleasing to God can escape this. May we, therefore, be able to avoid the wrath to come against the sons of disobedience; let us begin to please God unceasingly, purify ourselves, and renew our souls. Take courage! The Lord is near to all who call upon Him.

233. The Feast of All Saints. – Who are they? All the martyrs: some martyrs of the blood, and others—of self-denial

233. 1) The Feast of All Saints. – Who are they? All the martyrs: some martyred by blood, others through acts of self-denial. – 2) We, too, are counted among them: our tyrants (– passions, passionate people, and demons –) demand that we turn away from God and join their side; since we refuse, we endure the sorrows of external deprivations and internal struggles. – 3) But let us remain steadfast to the end; and we shall be deemed worthy of the lot of the martyrs. [4, 10]

7. We have been deemed worthy to celebrate the feast of feasts, Holy Pentecost; now the feast of All Saints lies before us. – How many and what kind of saints are commemorated today? Who can count the stars of heaven and the sand by the seashore? – So countless are the saints of God, the witnesses to God’s truth and the martyrs, who faithfully resisted the hostile power of tyrants opposed to that truth and endured every kind of torment courageously and with joy—fire, swords, wild beasts, wheels, iron claws, and everything else that malice could devise, regarding their torments as comfort and the shedding of their blood as joy—and with this conviction, walking upon burning coals, quenching blazing fires with their blood, and accomplishing many things in their human nature that transcended human nature, thereby striking fear into the hearts of tyrants and kings—as a testimony to what? —That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that eternal life is given through His name, as it is written. But are those who shed their blood the only witnesses to the truth? —No; so too are all those who lived the divine life, of whom the Holy Apostle says that they *“went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering in deserts and mountains, in caves and in the caverns of the earth.”* And a little further down: *“Since we are surrounded by*

such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking to the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus” (Heb. 11:37–38; 12:1–2). Do you see how he calls all those who love piety—who willingly endure a life of sorrow with patience—martyrs?

8. Thus, brothers, we too are numbered among the host of martyrs: for by loving and patiently walking the sorrowful path of the cross-bearing life, by keeping the vow of chastity, and by not denying the many struggles of the obedience that lies before us, we bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we bear witness that there is a judgment and a recompense; we bear witness that we must give an account before the dreadful judgment seat of Christ of how we have lived, resisting the devil, the enemy of Christ, who torments and scourges us with the temptations of evil thoughts and deadly lusts, compelling us to renounce God. And truly, those who, having become corrupted by their lawless thoughts and passions, obey and follow the adversary, declare by their very deeds and their very disposition that there is no God for them, as St. David said: *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’”* (Ps. 52:2). For unless the enemy first instills in people’s souls a forgetfulness of God—and, as it were, a renunciation of Him—he cannot incline the mind toward the lusts of the flesh, toward a license to sin, toward drunkenness, toward debauchery, toward feasting, toward greed, toward idolatry, and toward all manner of other improprieties; but having succeeded in this, he takes possession of the soul, and having torn it away from God, casts it into the unquenchable fire for eternal torment along with himself. How disastrous is such deception, and how dreadful is its end!

9. But we, as witnesses of Christ, will continue to bear good witness; we will continue to profess the true faith, rejoicing with all the saints that we have been deemed worthy to bear witness to Christ, without bowing the knee to Baal—that is, without yielding to the lusts of the flesh and other sinful pleasures; we will not believe the enemy when he plants thoughts of renouncing obedience in our minds, but we will valiantly resist him, being struck down but not defeated. – What fruit does such a martyr’s witness bear? Know this: the witnesses of Christ, who bore witness to Him before all and endured unimaginable torments for their true testimony, will be declared His co-heirs in the age to come, as the Apostle says: *“When Christ, our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (Col. 3:4). Together with them, may we, having continued our witness until the end of our lives, be deemed worthy to receive eternal rewards and to dwell with Christ forever in joy and gladness.

234. On Sunday, may the remembrance of the blessings that the Lord has secured for us through His resurrection serve as a lesson for us

234. 1) On Sunday, may the remembrance of the blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us through His resurrection serve as a lesson for us. – 2) When we recall them, we cannot help but feel moved to love the Lord who has loved us so much, demonstrating this love by keeping His commandments and turning away from everything displeasing to Him. – 3) To strengthen this impulse, let us reflect on mortality; the death of our brother Eudokimus now provides us with an occasion for this. [4, 12]

10. The very day of the Resurrection, which we celebrate today, provides us with sufficient instruction (Κατήχησις), if we pay attention. For on this day our Lord Jesus Christ raised us up, who had been cast down by sin; on this day He brought us back to life, we who had been put to death by our transgressions and by the uncircumcision of our flesh; on this day, He has once again opened paradise to us so that we may partake of the tree of life, which is His life-giving body and blood; on this day, having been raised from the dead, we can cry out with the prophetic word: *“O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”* (1 Cor. 15:55). You have been defeated by the One who said, *“Take heart; I have overcome”* (John 16:33); on this day, speaking through the words of the Apostle, God the Father *“raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace through His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:6–7). O inexpressible gift! From what and to what has He led us? From death to life, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from enmity to sincere fellowship—and He has extended His mercy so far as to make us *“conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom. 8:29). What ineffable grace this is! What overflowing greatness of His love for us! That He gave His only-begotten Son as a ransom for all of us. And how can we not cry out at this: *“Who can declare the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can recount all His praises?”* (Ps. 105:2).

11. Let us therefore love Him who has so loved us, and die for Him who died for us—not returning to flesh and blood, not being deceived by the serpent’s temptations, not being carried away by the pleasures of

this life, and not allowing ourselves to taste the fruit of sin, from which comes death; for it is written: *“For those who sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins; but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fiery indignation that will devour those who oppose Him”* (Heb. 10:26–27). Therefore, let us serve the Lord with caution and reverence; let us lead our lives with wisdom and good order; let us fulfill the duties entrusted to us with prudent patience, strictly adhering to what has been commanded—not only in spiritual matters but also in physical ones, even down to kindling firewood and drawing water.

12. Above all, let us remember that death is inevitable for us. – Even now, our brother Eudokim has departed to the Lord. – If the death of a brother does not bring us to our senses, what will finally turn us around? If the mystery of death does not convince us, what else can keep us from destructive passions? Is it not known that, even while we are speaking and deliberating about this or that, the dreadful hour of death may suddenly overtake us? – A dreadful and unbearable hour for those possessed by sin, for those whose failings have not been cleansed by repentance, for those who live in disorder, who are lawless and wayward—but a sweet and longed-for hour for those who love God, the pious and virtuous, the meek and humble. Therefore, I urge and remind you, brothers, to take these thoughts to heart: let us turn away from passions as much as we can, and, embracing Christ with love, excel in virtue, so that, having lived our entire lives in this way, we may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

235. *Recalling how a certain man, as he was dying, cried out, “I am taken by surprise,” and breathed his last before he could finish his words—he draws the lesson: to live in such a way as to always be ready for death*

235. 1) Recalling how a certain man, as he was dying, cried out, “I am taken by surprise,” and breathed his last before he could finish his words—he draws the lesson: to live in such a way as to always be ready for death. – 2) Then, hinting that this is most easily achieved in a communal setting, he expresses sympathy for those who live alone and praises those who live in pairs or threes, but especially those who live in a community. [4, 13]

13. Today is Sunday; and I am to speak to you about death. You see how often our brothers and fathers, one after another, depart from us. For us, this is nothing other than a reminder that we, too, will soon pass from here—not to some earthly and perishable place, but to incorporeal and eternal dwellings, from which there is no return for anyone who has once entered there. – Truly, death is terrifying when one hears of it; but it is incomparably more terrifying when one sees it with one’s own eyes, as we experienced six days ago at the death of the Abbot of Chalkis. We were with him as he drew his last breath, and we were astonished by what had happened—how he had been with us one moment and, in the next, had departed from us, having succumbed to death. Truly a terrifying account and a spine-chilling sight! While still breathing, the blessed one uttered these words: “I have been taken by surprise”; and with these words, shaking his head and hand slightly, he fell silent, not having had time to explain what had happened. – But we sensed what this astonishing event meant. I have told you this not to cast any shadow upon the departed; far be it from me! – But to warn ourselves and to inspire you—to ensure that the final hour does not catch us off guard, and that the same cry does not burst from our throats at the moment of our passing; but let us always be ready for that hour, and meet it without confusion. For it is written: *“I have prepared myself and have not been dismayed”* (Ps. 118: 60). But we will not achieve this unless we are always mindful of ourselves, and unless we steadfastly preserve the good we do and correct through repentance the sins we commit, always ordering our lives as if we were to be taken up to heaven at once. – For before whom must we appear there? Is it not before the Judge of all and before God, *“to whom every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will bow, and every tongue will confess”*? (Phil. 2: 10). And what answer must we give? Is it not for everything we have done in life—in deed, word, and thought?

14. Whenever I recall this, it fills me with dread and nearly robs me of my senses. But you may contemplate this without fear—you, I say, who are obedient and have entrusted all your care to the power of obedience; for such is indeed the life of true obedience. But what defense will those who turn away from obedience and live in isolation, wandering here and there and finding no firm ground to stand on, prepare for themselves before the dreadful Throne of Christ? Alas, what sorrow! How alluring is evil! How have those who were walking rightly along the path of the monastic life turned back? *“For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy*

commandments entrusted to them. For they have become a true parable: a dog returns to its own vomit, and a pig, after washing itself, returns to wallowing in the mud" (2 Peter 2:21–22). What is this, my friend? Are you bearing the yoke of a slave?! This is how those who leave the monastery to live alone justify themselves, saying that the monastery is slavery. You, who have cast off the yoke of the world, fled from it, and freed yourself from all carnal customs? Are you not going to take a wife as well?! For these two things are inseparable: the things of the world and the things that belong to the world. — But for those who lead a life of the cross, both are foreign. — Yet the reason for this, as usual, is sin. Since we are lustful and greedy for money, a love of women naturally follows. So that there may be no witness or accuser of what happens in secret, we do not want to have a brother as a companion, but choose solitude—or, more accurately, the slavery of greed—as those who have already completely sold themselves to sin and become slaves to flesh and blood. Hence the decay of our inner order; hence the temptations; hence the falls. For me, this is a cause for weeping and lamentation. I denounce and forbid such things; but they do not listen. Yet let such people heed what the Lord says: *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin"* (John 15:22). I am innocent of the blood of such people. I could cut them off entirely from our community, according to the command, *"Treat them as pagans"*; but since there is persecution now, I am postponing this; *"lest, having escaped the devil's snares, they be caught alive by him and fall into his will"* (2 Tim. 2:26). But you are blessed by the Lord—those who live together in pairs or threes, and, what is even more praiseworthy, those who live according to the monastic rule, staying at home and refraining from unnecessary outings except when absolutely necessary, especially to markets and festivals, serving one another, and thereby reigning over the world, doing all things in a godly and orderly manner—may grace and peace be multiplied to you, and may you behold the blessings of the heavenly Jerusalem, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

236. Let us be watchful, nourishing this watchfulness with the word of God and with the expectation of the Lord's sudden coming, when those who are watchful will be caught up to meet Him

236. 1) Let us remain vigilant, nourishing our vigilance with the Word of God and with the expectation of the Lord's sudden coming, when those who are vigilant will be caught up to meet Him. — 2) Who are these people? Those who are adorned with the virtues mentioned in the Lord's Sermon on the Beatitudes. Let us therefore diligently work out our salvation in this way, without fear of the coming persecution, whatever form it may take. [4, 14]

15. We must speak, and by no means remain silent for long. For silence lulls the soul to sleep, and such sleep is the cause of death; praying for deliverance from it, Saint David says: *"Enlighten my eyes, lest I fall asleep unto death"* (Ps. 12). But the Word moving within the heart is a spring of water welling up to eternal life: what could be more beneficial than this? And knowing this, the blessed Apostle said: *"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom"* (Col. 3:16). See how he commands us to teach and admonish one another, and not to be content with our own reminders alone. I humbly confess that every time I speak to you, I derive great benefit from it: I pull myself back from the turmoil of this life, become more sober-minded, and come to realize my own sins. For truly, life here is full of turmoil; every day, evil words and vain rumors are poured into our ears, and moreover, the devil attacks us with thoughts opposed to what is good. All this must be driven away by the word, and we must keep our conscience pure, paying attention to what we are committed to. To what, then, are we committed? —To *"serve the living and true God"* (Heb. 9:14), *"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath,"* as it is written (1 Thess. 1:10). But no servant slumbers, rests, or sleeps while awaiting his master, to whom he is accountable, but rather stays alert and watchful, anxious about meeting him—about which the Apostle again speaks clearly: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we will always be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:16–17).

16. But who are these? The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the pure in heart, the meek, the peacemakers, the merciful, those who have borne the yoke of obedience, and those who have kept their confession unbroken—these will be with Him; but those who have committed evil deeds, the disobedient, the rebellious, those who have fallen away from the faith, those who refuse to obey, and the perpetrators of every other evil—these will neither be caught up in the clouds nor be with the Lord, but—and this is the most tragic

thing— *“they will suffer punishment, eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”* (2 Thess. 1:9): may such a thing never be thought or spoken of us! —Why, then, must we take every possible care to ensure our salvation, knowing that persecution lies before us and that trials are drawing near? But let us not be intimidated or afraid of the trials that rise up against us. *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31). If He was with us in past persecutions, why would He not be with us, the humble, in the present ones as well, granting us strength and power for everything, according to His promise? And what can our enemies do to us?—Will they banish us again? But *“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it”* (Ps. 23:1). Will they imprison us again? But there is nothing sweeter than prison when one is there for Christ’s sake. Will they flog us again? But all the more will they grant us crowns. What if they even put us to death? For our Lord Himself was put to death. That is why the Apostle says: *“If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him”* (2 Tim. 2:11–12). Such was the blessed Theodore, the greatest witness of Christ, whose memory we now celebrate. He endured everything with joy for Christ’s sake. With the same faith, we too, in our humility, will continue to serve the Lord; with the same hope, we will endure every sorrow and hardship of our present afflictions, so that, both for our obedience and for our confession, we may be deemed worthy to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

237. Scattered. Encourages us to rejoice in this

237. 1) Scattered. It inspires us to rejoice in this. – 2) It exposes the absurdity of iconoclastic judgments. – 3) It justifies what is said against them. – 4) And it invites us to serve the truth not only in word but also in deed, or by a life worthy of it. [4, 15]

17. Yesterday we celebrated the feast of St. John the Forerunner of the Lord, and in doing so we reflected on our monastic life. But back then we were all together, *“and in the house of God we walked in one accord”* (Ps. 54:5). Now, however, we are scattered—each to his own place—across various locations and settlements. Nevertheless, since this scattering is for God’s sake, we must rejoice, in accordance with the commandment given; for the Lord said: *“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven”* (Matt. 5:12). Moreover, through this we become like the Lord, who said: *“If they have cast Me out, they will also cast you out; if they have kept My word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not see Him who sent Me”* (John 15:20–21).

18. And truly, just as the Jews, by not receiving the Son, showed that they did not know the Father, so too the iconoclasts, by not receiving the icon of Christ, show that they do not know Christ. The truth is plain; yet only one in a thousand knows it. See how their wicked reasoning is twofold: at one moment they say that it is absolutely forbidden to place an icon of Christ; at another, they say that it is permissible—but only on the same level as the symbols used in war and hunting; but they insist that one must not worship them, just as one does not bow down to the image of a horse, an ox, a lion, a tiger, a snake, a fish, or a bird. Hearing this, who would not groan, who would not shed tears, that they are not ashamed to equate the icon of Christ—before which angels revere and demons tremble—with images of four-legged animals, reptiles, fish, and birds, and, like them, do not consider it their duty to honor it? “What a terrible fabrication, and what an even more terrible audacity!” “And what else?” “They call an image of a man a man, an ox an ox, a camel a camel—and in general, they name the image after the one depicted—but they absolutely refuse to allow the icon of Christ the Lord, the Mother of God, or any of the saints, they absolutely refuse to call by their names, not even figuratively, but simply say “icon,” without adding whose it is, so that, as they think, they may not sin. They are filled with such folly and such blasphemy! But you, brothers, heed what has been said by our holy fathers and know that if the places where Christ was born are holy and venerated and named as such, and anyone—whether they receive a grain of sand or a stone from there—accepts, preserves, and honors it as a sacred treasure; is not the icon of Christ all the more worthy of honor and worship, in which He is clearly seen, as in a mirror, and evokes feelings befitting Him, as if He were present? For such is the nature of an image that it represents the person depicted.

19. Therefore, I, the humble one, grieving in my heart over the iconoclastic delusion and fearing punishment for my silence, am compelled to say what I say, though it is little and brief. If those of other faiths do not cease, in private and in public, in writing and orally, to direct their blasphemous tongues against Christ; why should we, sitting at home, not converse among ourselves about what is fitting under the present circumstances?—And how shall we endure the Lord’s wrath if we act otherwise? And what kind of imitators of our fathers will we be, who rightly called silence and hiding in such a case a betrayal of the truth?

20. Therefore, we must speak and listen, serving the truth in both word and deed. The holy Apostles conquered the world not only through divine preaching but also through their blameless lives, enlightening those who were in darkness and seasoning those who were corrupted with the salt of wisdom, carrying with them only a loaf of bread and a staff. By imitating them, brothers, we too will earn approval, being content with what we have, not coveting silver, but showing ourselves to be ungreedy, not making untimely departures, and not associating with women, from whom comes death. If we conduct ourselves in this way, God will be glorified in us, our confession will be exalted, and our adversaries will, if only a little, be put to shame and be inclined toward conversion. If not, however, there is a danger that, instead of receiving blessing, we may incur eternal condemnation. May God Himself, the God of peace, who transforms all things and turns them to the best, bring peace to His Church; may He keep us faithful to the truth and lead us into His heavenly kingdom.

238. Now is the time of harvest. Our spiritual harvest is similar to it

238. 1) Now is the time of harvest. Our spiritual harvest is similar to it. – 2) Our fruits are virtues. – 3) The granary is humility. – 4) The time is our entire life. – 5) The methods are all our deeds and acts of obedience. [4, 16]

21. The present time is the time of harvest, the time of toil and sweat, when the words of the Psalm are fulfilled: *“Man goes out to his work and to his labor until evening”* (Ps. 103: 23), giving himself no rest until he has finished the harvest, threshed the reaped grain, and brought the harvested seeds into the granary. – What can be said to this? – If such labor is required for earthly gain, is it not all the more necessary for spiritual gain? We, too, have a harvest ahead of us, as the Apostle says: *“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”* (2 Cor. 9:6). Again, the Lord said to His disciples: *“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months until the harvest’?—I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest. The reaper receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life; so both the sower and the reaper rejoice together”* (John 4:35–36). Here the harvest is pointed out to us.

22. Let us therefore go out with all our zeal to the harvest, to gather fruits—not carnal and fleeting, but spiritual and enduring for eternal life: sanctification and peace, love and joy, kindness and patience, mercy and gentleness, and every other virtue. These are the spiritual fruits that must be gathered with discernment—so that nothing evil is mixed in with the good; that is, to love without partiality, to strive for goodness without envy, to speak of one’s brother without hostility, and in general *to sincerely “do the will of God, which is good, pleasing, and perfect”* (Rom. 12:2).

23. As for bringing in the fruits into the granary, this will be their secure storage in the treasury of humility, as the Lord Himself indicated, saying: *“When you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have done what we were obliged to do’”* (Luke 17:10); and as the Apostle also instructs us, saying: *“What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?”* (1 Cor. 4:7).

24. Such is our harvest, and such is our labor—not one that lasts two or three months, but one that extends to the very end of our lives; yet, when compared to the age to come, it will be counted as a single day: for there is no end there; there, everyone will feed on the fruits of their labor for all eternity and will rejoice in this forever.

25. Let us *“put to death the earthly parts of our nature: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed”* (Col. 3:5); only let us humbly bear the yoke of obedience, supporting one another, and *“bearing one another’s burdens, and thus fulfilling the law of Christ,”* as it is written (Gal. 6:2). And blessed is the one who reverently bows his head to all; blessed is the one who has labored the most: for the greater the labor, the greater the reward; and the one who takes upon himself the last service will be honored with the first place, as the Lord says: *“Whoever among you wishes to be great must be the least of all and the servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 9:35; 10:44–45). Let us reflect on this, brothers, and strive to act accordingly, so that we may be worthy to hear that voice: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord”* (Matt. 25: 21).

239. The Harvest. Everyone works without growing weary: so must we—each one working at his own task

239. 1) The Harvest. Everyone works without growing weary: so must we—each one working at his own task. – 2) There, they may cite their infirmities, but we must not; for all that is required is: desire it and seek it. – 3) This is how the fathers acted, and now they are reaping the fruits of it. [4, 17]

26. It is harvest time, as you can see, and every farmer sets out to gather the grain. Neither the strenuous labor nor the scorching sun wearies the worker; but from morning till evening he toils, now bending, now straightening, until he finishes the task set before him. “And we, who call ourselves servants of Christ and lead a monastic life, do we also have a harvest?” “Yes, we do”—and such a harvest as our Lord Jesus Christ indicated to His disciples, saying: *“Do you say, ‘There are still four months until the harvest comes’? I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest. The reaper receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life; so both the sower and the reaper rejoice together”* (John 4:35–36). It is evident, then, that we have both sowing and reaping, and moreover, these do not last for a fixed period of time, but lie before us continuously and forever. Let us therefore, brothers, reap diligently—the teacher in teaching, the overseer in caring for all, the steward in stewardship, the servant in service, the novice in obedience, the one who keeps silence in silence, the one who prays in patient perseverance in prayer—all in everything, to the best of our ability. It would be entirely incongruous if, while those engaged in physical labor devote themselves so diligently to their tasks, we were to approach our spiritual endeavors with laziness and carelessness; if, while they persevere, drenched in sweat, without shirking their labors, we were to feel aversion toward ascetic practices. Is it not the Kingdom of Heaven that lies before us? Is it not eternal life? Is it not inexpressible joy?—And is it even possible, by giving in to laziness, to attain anything great and desirable? By no means. Therefore, we must rouse ourselves from the slumber of laziness and indolence and set to work with all our zeal; for what we seek is not something perishable and fleeting, but something imperishable and eternal; so that it may be said of us: *“You shall reap the fruit of your labor; blessed are you, and good will come to you”* (Ps. 127:2).

27. Let no one say, “I am weak; I cannot reap.” One who is weak in body cannot bear physical labor; but in spiritual work, desire it, and you will be strong to do good: you have tears, you have contrition, you have a sound mind, you have peace, and you have holiness—all of which are most pleasing to God (Heb. 12:14). Let no one say, “I have been crushed by a fall; I cannot rise or walk upright.” You need only desire and seek—and He will lift you up, *“He who lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from the ash heap”* (Ps. 112:7). *“Does one who falls not rise again? Or does one who turns away not return?”* (Jer. 8:4). *“As I live,” says the Lord, “I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that the wicked turn from his way and live”* (Ezek. 33:11). What blessed pretext, then, can we have—what plausible excuse—for not approaching the fulfillment of the commandments with all our zeal, so as to thus obtain the promised blessings?

28. Behold how the holy fathers labored, sowing, reaping, and gathering into their granaries, and now they rejoice, awaiting the coming of the last day, on which they will shine forth like the sun. Let us not, then, brothers, allow ourselves to be separated from those blessed ones, nor let us sell our salvation for a few insignificant and fleeting pleasures, only to be tormented for eternity; but, with all our strength, let us strive to follow in their footsteps, enduring and suffering all things, so that we may inherit the kingdom of heaven in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

240. Laypeople, when they die, leave a will; and monks, too, sometimes leave a will; what kind?

240. 1) Laypeople, when they die, leave a will; and monks, too, leave a will; what kind? – That we are strangers and sojourners here, and must not seek what is of this world. – 2) Let us heed this testament and set about fulfilling it, – 3) imitating the fathers, who all acted in this way. [4, 18]

1. Harvest time weakens the body, makes vigil-keeping difficult, and sometimes even makes one lazy when it comes to listening to teachings. But since, according to the Apostle’s teaching, we must be as though we were dying every day—and a dying person usually speaks his final words, his parting words—and thereby makes his listeners attentive; let us not be lazy in listening either, but let us pay attention to what is being said, as if we were present at the reading of a will. – The will of those who live according to the flesh, like , is carnal and speaks of carnal matters—namely, what inheritance is left to the wife, children, brothers, and relatives, and what other dispositions are made, as is customary. In our way of life, however, a will does not state

anything of the sort; but what does it state?—That we are strangers and sojourners on earth, and that, as “*we brought nothing into this world, and it is evident that we can carry nothing out*” (1 Tim. 6:7), passing from corruption to incorruption, from dishonor to glory, from mortality to immortality; so that one would not be wrong to call such a will the Gospel: for even the Apostle acknowledged that “*to depart and be with Christ is far better*” (Phil. 1: 23). And again in another place: “*I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day—and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing*” (2 Tim. 4: 6–8).

2. You see that he is speaking of our departure from this life, as if preaching the Gospel. Therefore, since our testament is the Gospel, let us listen with delight to what is said in it and by its power, and let us zealously strive for spiritual deeds, turning neither our attention nor our hearts to anything of this world—neither to parents, nor to brothers, nor to relatives, nor to anything created at all, imitating a certain holy father who, when he left his cell, would place a veil over his head so as not to look at the sun’s radiance, and who, when asked the reason for this, replied: “Why should I desire to see this temporary light?” This God-loving man, having stepped beyond the bounds of all creation, is consumed by a single love for God and the contemplation of divine things. He contemplates the creatures beneath the heavens, marveling at and praising the supreme Artist—God; but soon, having left behind all that is sensory, he immerses himself in the contemplation of invisible things, drawing from this the most exquisite spiritual joy and delight.

3. Such was also Patriarch Abraham, for it is written: “*By faith Abraham went into the land of promise as into a foreign land, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God*” (Heb. 11:9–10). Such was also the great Moses, who “*by faith left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible*” (Heb. 11:27). Such were also all the saints, who did not look at the visible but at the invisible, and who sought not the temporary but the eternal, thereby forming themselves in divine imitation, as far as it is possible. – Let us, too, embrace this aspiration, and never allow ourselves to covet the splendors of this age, or to marvel at those who live according to the flesh; but rather, let us lament for them, that, having received the gospel of the inheritance of the promised blessings, they are preoccupied with the acquisition of gold and silver, and with perishable pleasures. But we, brothers, speaking in the words of the Apostle, “*gazing with an unveiled face at the glory of the Lord*” (2 Cor. 3: 18), will seek what is above and will set our minds on what is above, “*where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*” (Col. 3: 1:2), so that it may also be said of us: “*You are not of this world*” (John 15:19), “*and your citizenship is in heaven*” (Phil. 3:20), where may we stand uncondemned on the day of God’s righteous judgment, before the dreadful throne of Christ, and hear the longed-for voice calling us to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

241. Patience is the greatest virtue; it is the path of the saints; let us also excel in it

241. 1) Patience is the greatest virtue; it is the path of the saints; let us, too, excel in it. – 2) Do you wish to excel? – Subdue your will, – and you will easily endure everything; furthermore, – be zealous in patience; for the more you endure, the better and higher you will become. – 3) He reports that, although they are in exile, they live a monastic life and accept those who wish to join them; and he adds: “You who are older and more senior, set an example for the younger ones in everything.” [4, 19]

4. Let us joyfully endure all that is difficult and sorrowful for God’s sake, in the hope of a reward. “*For hope that is seen is not hope,*” as the Apostle says: “*For what does one hope for that he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience*” (Rom. 8:24–25). Thus, patience is the greatest of all virtues; for their patience, the martyrs are adorned with heavenly diadems; through patience, the saints have earned the crowns of righteousness. Let us, too, show patience in obedience, in humility, in forbearance, in performing our duties, and in everything that requires the exercise of patience; and we, too, will receive a reward equal to theirs.

5. I know the yoke of obedience; I know the pain of having one’s will cut off; but I also know the sweetness of such a life. For when one’s own will is cut off, the path is easy, and salvation is at hand; so that as soon as one’s will is cut off, a peaceful and blessed life appears at the same time. In communal life there are labors, but there are also consolations. Who labors more than his brother?—but he will also receive a greater reward. “*Each will receive his own reward according to his own labor,*” says the Apostle (1 Cor. 3:8). Who submits to another out of love? Yet he will be honored with preeminence in due time. For the Lord said,

“Whoever wishes to be first among you must be your servant” (Matt. 20:27). Is anyone unable to take on tasks that are too heavy? Let him not neglect those that are within his power; so that God may be glorified in all things, and no one may be unfit for anything useful to the brotherhood. Although this has often been said, it is still necessary to remind you now: for the task before us is no small one. *“Behold, I have set before you life and death,”* says Scripture (Deut. 30: 19). So that we may cling to life and avoid eternal death—for this purpose are our words and our comfort, our teaching and our exhortation. And I know and am convinced that what is spoken is not in vain, neither for me, the humble one, nor for you who hear it.

6. I do not want you to be unaware that, although we are in exile for the sake of the Word of God, we live as if in a monastery: we do not turn away those who come with a desire to renounce the world. We accomplish this through our brothers scattered throughout the land, who are commanded to receive such people, as far as possible, and to admit them into the brotherhood. It is true that many have departed from us, but many have also joined us; and our brotherhood is growing. God is glorified in us; He will also glorify us in Himself, according to His promise. But as the leaders are, so are those under them—therefore I ask you, who stand at the head as an example to others, to live in a reverent, righteous, and godly manner, guiding others toward righteousness through your own lives, both in word and deed. Let there be no unseemly shouting among us, nor contentious talk; and *“let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear”* (Eph. 4:29), so that your work among them may not be defiled by this, but that, having pleased the Lord, our good God, in everything, we may be deemed worthy to receive the promised blessings.

242. The Transfiguration—a foreshadowing of the age to come... We are destined for such radiance and beauty, just as we were originally created

242. 1) The Transfiguration is a foreshadowing of the age to come. We are destined for such radiance and beauty, just as we were originally created. – 2) Since this is so, let us love this radiance and beauty, turning away from all that is ugly, passionate, and impure. – 3) If, however, such a thing should happen, let us hasten to purify ourselves;—and let no one say, “I cannot,” for God has promised to do this for those who seek Him; and we have many examples. — 4) Therefore, if anyone remains alien to this, it is solely due to willful indifference and carelessness. [4, 20]

7. As we are now privileged to celebrate the vigil of the Divine Transfiguration, we have composed this sermon from it, fulfilling our duty with a few words. All the Lord’s feasts commemorate the mysteries of the incarnation of our Savior Jesus Christ—namely, that He was born, baptized, crucified, buried, rose on the third day, and ascended in glory; but the Feast of the Transfiguration depicts the state of the age to come. For just as at the Transfiguration the Lord’s face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light, so He will come again from heaven like lightning, in great power and glory, to judge all; and just as Saint Peter, James, and John were with Him on the mountain; so too will the elect be with Him in the kingdom of heaven, rejoicing in the ineffable Theophany and inexpressible joy. – And who is worthy of such power? Who is worthy to partake of that joy? Who else but one who has a pure and blameless life? For our God is pure, like the brightest light, and accepts only the pure to Himself; and having placed a pure soul within us, He will demand that same purity from us. For if it is created in the image and likeness of God, it is clear that, being a reflection of divine beauty, it too shares in this beauty. And knowing this, the Psalmist says: *“O Lord, by Your will, grant strength to my goodness”* (Ps. 29:8), that is, to the beauty of the soul, so that, having otherwise succumbed to hideous sinful passions and become hideous itself, it may not fall away from God and be deprived of divine rewards.

8. Since it is thus confessed that we possess such a soul—beautiful and good—and must present it to God as a pledge on the last day of the resurrection; I therefore ask and implore that we love this beauty of hers and preserve this goodness of hers, turning neither our attention nor our hearts toward the beauties of this age or the pleasures of flesh and blood; for these are not true beauties, but mere idols of beauty—or rather, decay and dust. We see this even in what happens before our very eyes: for today’s most virtuous and beautiful person will tomorrow lie in a coffin, emitting a foul odor and repelling everyone. Thus, there is nothing here that is virtuous or truly lovely, except for one wondrous virtue, which we must strive for above all else.

9. If, however, as is often the case, an unstable soul becomes defiled by ungodly thoughts—for *“who can claim to have a pure heart?”* (Prov. 20: 9)—then it must be cleansed as soon as possible and restored to its former good state, lest, by lingering in evil, it bring about death. —And let no one say, “I cannot be cleansed,

being burdened by many sins,” upon hearing what the Lord says: *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool”* (Isa. 1: 18). Do you see God’s ineffable love for humanity, by which He promises not only to cleanse the repentant but also to raise them to the heights of noble beauty? – And examples of this are right before our eyes. The prophet David fell into the sins of adultery and murder, yet he did not despair; rather, having quickly turned to repentance, he regained his prophetic gift. – King Manasseh led Israel astray from the true God for fifty-five years; but he repented—and found salvation. The Chief of the Apostles, after denying the Lord, used the healing power of tears and once again took up the burden of the Apostleship. Mary of Egypt—I will pass over in silence many other countless examples—who had reached the very depths of carnal impurity, yet because she repented as she ought, subsequently ascended to the very heights of virtue.

10. Thus, there is not a single excuse for claiming powerlessness or impossibility, provided that one sincerely desires to be saved and eagerly sets about this task. It is impossible only for those who are utterly insensitive and willfully surrender themselves to death. – Why do we hear: *“Why do you all die, O house of Israel?”* says the Lord (Ezek. 18:31). Why, when immortal life lies before us, do we choose eternal death? Our good Lord cries out daily: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matt. 11:28). But we do not want to cast off the burden of our sins. He cries out: *“I am the light of the world; whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (John 8:12). Yet we turn in the opposite direction, our very deeds spewing out blasphemous words: *“Depart from us; we do not wish to see Your ways”* (Job 21:14).—After this, all that remains for us is to hear the verdict of condemnation and rejection: *“Walk by the light of your fire and by the flame you have kindled”* (Isa. 50:11). Let us know, however, that *“those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Gal. 5: 21), as the Apostle says. – But let it not be that this might justly be said of us as well. – *“You are my friends if you do what I command you,”* says the Lord (John 15:14). Let us, then, do all that is commanded, so that we may be deemed worthy to be friends of the Lord and to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

243. Blessed Michael, Metropolitan of Synada, has departed this life: let us honor his memory, for he is still an intercessor for us

243. 1) Blessed Michael, Metropolitan of Synada, has departed this life: let us honor his memory, for he is still an intercessor for us. – 2) But let us also learn a lesson from his passing—to always keep ourselves ready for the end; for death can come suddenly, as we see in countless examples. – 3) Let no one say, “I cannot”; for this is within our power. [4, 21]

11. Our spiritual father, His Holiness Metropolitan Michael of Synada, has departed to the Lord. His life was praiseworthy, and his word was powerful; and we believe that in the coming judgment, together with other fathers and confessors, we will have him as our intercessor before the Lord. Therefore, let not the infamous iconoclasts exalt themselves, saying that the confessors of Christ are grieved (by the death of St. Michael); but rather let them recognize that the passing of such individuals is an unshakable stronghold for the Church of God, for us who remain a confirmation of the truth, and a rebuke to their deluded falsehood.

12. But since it is *“faith working through love”* that saves a person (Gal. 5:6), I ask you now, as always, to faithfully fulfill the divine commandments and to keep yourselves ever ready for the journey home, since the hour of death is unknown. For you know that our father, mentioned earlier, suddenly seized by severe pains and a burning fever, fell silent the very next day, and on the third day gave up his spirit to the Lord. But even before him, Athanasius, the renowned Abbot of Pavlo-Petrovsky, did not spend even a single day in sickness, but was almost immediately taken from among men. We hear that some, struck by lightning, die; others drown at sea; in short, there are many unexpected accidents, because of which we must be vigilant and fearful, lest the devil, deceiving us day by day with forgetfulness of death, suddenly bring us to our final hour in utter astonishment, after which we will be unable to do anything in the matter of repentance. – Do these examples not frighten us? Does it not fill us with dread when we consider that at that hour our tongue will be tied and unable to utter a sound? And how the soul, separated from the body, will depart, when there may be many present and weeping, yet no one to help but a good conscience? Therefore, I urge and implore you: let us always strive to remain in confession, in tears, in prayer, in obedience, in humility, in diligent obedience, and in every good deed, so that in the final hour, if we are caught unawares by it in negligence and carelessness, we may not *“fall asleep in eternal death,”* from which Saint David prays for deliverance (Ps. 12:4).

13. But perhaps someone will say: I want to, but I cannot. – What kind of talk is this? – If the matter concerns something that goes against the natural order, I agree that it is impossible, for example, for us to fly through the air, walk on the sea, or speak through our noses and smell with our tongues; all such things are impossible and unnatural. But if the matter concerns something that is natural and depends on our free will, then such a statement is false; for just as we can behave frivolously and laugh, so can we be dignified and shed tears; just as we can defile ourselves with sinful desires and the entanglements of inappropriate thoughts, so can we keep ourselves blameless and pure from passions; and just as we can become hardened and persist in evil, so can we be moved to compassion and repent. Even if evil lust, having become a habit within us, has rendered us powerless to do good and strong in evil; yet we must not despair—far be it from us—but willingly take up the task once more, and strive in every way not to spend even a single day, let alone an hour, carelessly, but always to be sober and watchful, to be blameless and pure, and clinging to God, so that we too may say: *“My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me”* (Ps. 62:9); and in this way, having lived our life here well, to depart from here with good hope, and there to receive the Kingdom of Heaven.

244. 1) Returning from the funeral of Saint John of Chalcedon, he praises the brothers for finding them in their usual good order and expresses his wish that they always remain so. – 2) He then denounces the folly of certain interpretations he has heard. The first rumor: the saint was holy both in faith and in life, so how could he have died like that? (from diarrhea). The second rumor is that after the Resurrection we will not recognize one another, for these bodies decay and are scattered to who knows where. – 3) At the end, he offers an exhortation: to keep the faith—for you see how many deviations there are—and to live holy lives—for you know by what winds and how many the enemy blows against us. [4, 22]

14. Having been away from you for only a short time in recent days, and now having returned, I found you living in harmony with one another and in good spirits, and I gave thanks to the Lord for your orderliness, —which is characteristic of skilled and steadfast disciples of the Lord; may you be strengthened in it again and again by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that, both in my humble presence and in my absence, you may always remain sound and unharmed. The reason for my absence, as you know, was the death of the blessed Metropolitan John of Chalcedon, who, having striven in good works, completed his course, and kept the faith, departed to the Lord to receive the crown of martyrdom with the holy fathers and brothers who preceded him.

15. But since he died of a debilitating bout of diarrhea, some, marveling at this, say: “If he was a good man, how could he have died such a bad death?” – Such people are troubled by ignorance of the matter: for whether a death is good or bad is not determined by the manner in which someone died, but by whether one kept the Orthodox faith and led a blameless life; and the deceased was precisely such a person. Whether someone dies of dropsy, of diarrhea, or of some other destructive ailment—on land or at sea—there is nothing to reproach in this; for it does not depend on us, but lies in God’s hidden judgments. God knows what is best for each person and arranges it accordingly, whether it be the prolongation of life or its end. Others, however, insist on a different view to the ruin of those who hear them—namely, that in the last days, when the Son of God comes to judge all, we will not recognize one another; for, they say, how is this possible when we, who are mortal as we are, will become incorruptible and immortal, and when there will be no longer Greek, Jew, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, male, or female, but all will be angelic in form? – I, however, maintain that it will be possible for us to recognize one another, and first of all, recall that *“what is impossible for man is possible for God”* (Luke 18:27); for we confess the resurrection itself, not basing our belief on human reasoning. For human reasoning cannot comprehend how a body that has decayed and been scattered far and wide—devoured by beasts, pecked at by birds, or swallowed by fish—could possibly be gathered together as one and rise again on the last day; and yet, by the ineffable power of God, every body will be gathered into one and will rise again, and every soul will recognize its own body, with which it lived on earth; and if it recognizes its own body, there is no doubt that it will also recognize the body of its brother. Furthermore, such reasoning leads to the denial of the future Judgment: for judgment is passed on known persons; no one brings before a court people who do not know themselves and are not known, but only those who are known, as it is written: *“I will rebuke you and set your sins before your face”* (Ps. 49:21). So, if we do not recognize one another, we will not be judged; and if we are not judged, we will not receive a fitting reward for our deeds. Moreover, how will the words spoken by the Lord to the Apostles be fulfilled: *“You will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”* (Matt. 19:28), if they do not know those whom they are to judge? Thus, it is proven from every angle how inappropriate such an assumption is, and how it is as ungodly as Origen’s

fable. But we, brothers, will continue to believe that we will rise again, and that we will recognize one another not in our present corruptible state, but in the beauty of incorruption, according to God's ineffable will, just as our first parents in Paradise knew one another before the Fall, being incorruptible, and after the Fall, having been subjected to corruption, also knew one another. Why must we believe that in the age to come a brother will recognize a brother, a father his child, a wife her husband, and one another—I will add further, —an ascetic will recognize an ascetic, a confessor will recognize a confessor, a martyr will recognize his fellow sufferer, an Apostle will recognize a fellow Apostle—all will recognize all, so that the dwelling place of all who rejoice may be in God, who grants all other blessings and the recognition of one another.

16. I urge you, then, to hold fast to the holy faith: for you see how many deviations there are from it, and how much we ought to thank God that we have not fallen into any error, but have received and hold fast to the Orthodox faith. Likewise, let us lead a blameless life: for you know what winds the devil blows upon us day and night; but he can do us no harm, finding us always protected by faith and love for Christ the Lord. Why should we stand still any longer? This dragon will flee from us; let us weep and quench the fiery arrows of lust; let us humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, and He will exalt us;—let us remain in perfect patience, and the devil will vanish, and we, having been saved, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

244. *Returning from the funeral of Saint John of Chalcedon, he praises the brothers for finding them in their usual good order, and wishes that they may always remain so*

245. *A feast is both ordinary and spiritual; a purchase is both ordinary and spiritual*

245. 1) A feast is both ordinary and spiritual; a purchase is both ordinary and spiritual. – 2) And we are merchants; pearls for us are virtues; the priceless pearl is Christ the Lord. May each of us, then, be a wise merchant. – 3) Our marketplace consists of acts of obedience, which are all at once the pearls, the purchase, and the price. [4, 23]

17. Here and there, festivals are held from time to time, as is now the case in Nicomedia. People flock to these festivals to buy and sell. But this does not last long; for soon everyone disperses. But there is one spiritual feast, unceasing and extending throughout the life of every person, in which the objects of buying and selling are not gold, nor silver, nor clothing, nor any other of the transitory and perishable things, but the salvation of the soul, eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven—things for which people ought to make every effort, yet few care about them, and even fewer do so; instead, they direct all their attention and all their efforts toward vain and perishable things.

18. But we, brothers, will not allow ourselves to stray from our main goal and from this good bargain; rather, hearing the Lord say, *"The kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17: 21), we will strive with all our hearts every day to attain it—not by hoarding gold and silver, but by cultivating true faith and a blameless life, obedience, patience, humility, generosity, and *"love, which is the bond of perfection"* (Col. 3: 14). The Lord Himself demonstrated this in the Gospel, saying: *"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, who, upon finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it"* (Matt. 13: 45–46). You are good merchants who have left everything behind and, in exchange for it all, have purchased the good, most excellent, and most precious pearl—Christ—when you decided to take up the cross and follow Him in holiness and righteousness. – But since a feast is a time of joy and watchful vigilance, let us also be joyful and alert, purchasing our salvation at this feast here on earth. Good is the seller who acts with reverent care in all things and never loses his composure; good is the buyer who joyfully accepts insults; good is the money-changer who gives his blood and receives the Spirit—through the patience with which he fulfills his duty.

19. But since our discourse has turned to obedience, let us honor those in the kitchen who carry out their duties, as those who labor more, bearing one another's burdens and thus fulfilling the law of Christ through love; let us also honor those who provide for the necessary needs of the brethren, as good and experienced stewards of the Lord; let us also honor those who sing in the psalmody with joy and reverence, as worthy of greater reward. And consider what our life is like, what our deeds are like, and what a blessed purchase our holy fathers made with full zeal—which, having performed well and brought to a successful conclusion, we too will return home with joy, as the holy David said: *"Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you"* (Ps. 114:7). And may we all, at the hour of death, utter such a cry as a final prayer, and thereby attain eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

246. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world as the healer of all our spiritual and physical infirmities and the giver of all good things: what He did while He was on earth, He continues to do now, as everyone knows for themselves

246. 1) God sent His only-begotten Son into the world as the healer of all our spiritual and physical infirmities and the giver of all good things: what He did while He was on earth, He continues to do now, as everyone knows for themselves. – 2) How can we not love such a benefactor with all our hearts? And how can we not hate our enemy, the evildoer and destroyer? [4, 24]

20. The beginning of a new summer has arrived, when the following words are read from the Gospel on this day: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; for He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Luke 4:18–19). Therefore, since the Only-Begotten Son of God was sent by the Father into the world as a healer, let us seek from Him the opening of our eyes as the blind, liberation as captives, and comfort as the brokenhearted. – But who is blind? Who is blinded by passion? Who is a captive? Who is led astray by improper thoughts? Who is broken-hearted? Who is burdened by sins?—The Lord heals all such people: for He is not only a physician of the body, but also of the soul; He was not present in the flesh only to those who lived in the past, but is present now to all invisibly, continuing to preach the Gospel, taking away the sin of the world, and healing every disease and every infirmity. Let no one, therefore, remain unenlightened or unhealed; but let him approach with faith, *“and he shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Savior”* (Ps. 23:5). O, ineffable love for mankind! He brought us into being from nothing, raised us up again after our fall, and granted us a third grace—monastic perfection. But even if we still sin, He does not turn away from us but welcomes those who come to Him: when we are broken, He gives us comfort; when we weep, He consoles us; when we bleed, He anoints us; when we are fainting, He strengthens us; when we are wounded, He heals us; and when we are ready to plunge into the very depths of hell, He stretches out His hand and, in His love for mankind, rescues us from such distress; so that, in all fairness, it would be fitting for everyone to say: *“If the Lord had not helped me, my soul would soon have dwelt in hell”* (Ps. 93: 17). *“I turned aside to graze, and the Lord received me”* (Ps. 117:13). And everyone knows what temptations they have fallen into, and how they immediately found God as their helper in their afflictions. Moreover, He nourishes us who hunger—both physically with the annual fruits of His bounty and spiritually with the most pure mysteries—more than a mother or a nurse, desiring us and embracing us lovingly. A mother nourishes her child with milk for a time; but our true Lord and Father gives us His own body as food and drink—and this is always, O unfathomable goodness! O unsurpassable gift!

21. How can we not love such a Benefactor? How can we not long for Him? And how can we not cling to Him until we are inseparable?—And truly, if we are not so disposed toward Him, heaven will cry out and the earth will groan against us, and even the stones will accuse us of insensitivity. Therefore, to prevent this from happening, let us cling firmly to His love, hating the devil with all our hearts and turning away from him. For just as a benefactor should be loved and desired in proportion to his good deeds, so too should the wicked one be hated and shunned in proportion to his evil deeds. For he is the destroyer of our lives; he is *the “murderer from the beginning,”* according to the word of the Lord (John 8:44); he has divided our race into countless sects according to their schemes, wounds it with many arrows of sin, and seeks to devour it entirely. If we do not hate him, there will be no punishment that, as we deserve, would torment us for this—for yielding to our enemy, the destroyer of souls. But let us flee from him, brothers, let us flee with all our strength. What, then, is this flight? It is abstaining from evil deeds and thoughts, as well as clinging to God and devoting ourselves to good works. Why do we strive for goodness, serving the Lord with all humility, meekness, and obedience, confident that any good not fortified by humility is immature and unstable? If, however, there are those who hold a haughty opinion of themselves, let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that we may not run in vain, but may be deemed worthy of the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

247. Now is the time to gather the grapes: from this we learn a lesson, for we too are grapes

247. 1) Now is the time to gather the grapes: from this we learn a lesson, for we too are grapes. – Like God’s grapes, we must bear clusters of virtues, devoting ourselves entirely to the Lord. – 2) Let us not turn

back, nor walk two paths. – 3) When the enemy begins to tempt us, let us enter the battle and defeat him. [4:25]

22. Now let us briefly touch upon what is before our eyes. What is it? The grape harvest has come; and we see that where the branches are laden with clusters, there is joy and blessing, but where they are scarce, there is sorrow and grief. “What does that have to do with us?” someone among the listeners might say. – It matters very much, because, figuratively speaking, we too are called the Lord’s vineyard. Or do you not know what song is sung during the rite of monastic tonsure? And do we not all join in singing it? – *“O Lord, O Lord! Look down from heaven and see, and visit this vineyard, which Your right hand has planted”* (Ps. 79: 15–16). And does not the Lord say in the Gospel? *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing”* (John 15: 5). Let us therefore be like vines planted by our good Lord—as if planted by Him—and let us bear clusters of virtues for Him, that we may be deemed worthy of His blessing. And may we not, by yielding to the thorns and thistles of our passions, fall under such a condemnatory judgment: *“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”* (Luke 3:9). As for us, this will mean “cut down” through death, and “thrown into the fire”—undoubtedly into the eternal fire—into which all will be cast who commit evil deeds, who fall away from the faith, who corrupt their bodies with vices, *“waterless clouds, carried about by the wind: autumn trees, barren, twice dead, uprooted; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; and wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever”* (Jude 12–13). Why does the Apostle Paul cry out: *“Flee from sexual immorality; for every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price”* (1 Cor. 6:18–20).

23. How, then, can we—who have been bought with the precious blood of Christ—not be ashamed before heaven and earth to turn back again? How can we not blush before ourselves, appearing holy on the outside while being filled with every kind of impurity on the inside? How long will we limp on both feet? When will we finally settle on a single path? For, as the wise one says: *“Woe to the sinner who walks on two paths”* (Sir. 2:12)—sin, that is, and virtue; for they have nothing in common with one another. A household servant who serves his master one moment and his enemy the next cannot be called prudent. We must devote ourselves entirely to God: for only in this way can we become partakers of the life according to God. Why should we not remain fixed on the sensual, like speechless animals, but rather, with the powers of the soul, ascend to the contemplation of the heavenly, turning our senses from the perishable to the imperishable, from the fleeting to the enduring?

24. Nor shall we allow our sophistical weaver of evil to corrupt our hearts with the poison of wicked thoughts; but as soon as he sows the sweetness of lust, or any other evil, let us hasten to cast aside the crafty flatterer. How? Through prayers and supplications, tears and sighs, and heartfelt contrition. Such is our invisible battle, such is our unheralded struggle and feat. Let us, then, imitating earthly warriors and burning with zeal, drive away our invisible enemies—and just as they do not retreat, even when wounded, in the hope of a reward, so too will we, even if covered with countless wounds, not turn back, but will stand and stand, fight and fight, strengthened by God’s help. I implore you regarding this: for this is why I labor, offering you these brief exhortations. – And so I rejoice over those who walk in righteousness and sigh for those who stumble. But let us all walk uprightly, do good, endure with humility, in psalm-singing, in prayers, in worship, in obedience, in humility: and the God of peace will be with us.

248. Having received the gift of sanctification, let us preserve it, fleeing above all from carnal lust; for it is contrary to the state of grace; it casts us into bondage; it fills us with dread

248. Having received the gift of sanctification, let us preserve it by fleeing above all from carnal lusts; for they are contrary to the state of grace; they cast us into bondage; they fill us with dread. Mortifying them, however, brings about the exact opposite. [4, 26]

25. We rejoice with joy when any of the Lord’s feasts arrives. And rightly so: for on such occasions we are enlightened, entering into the contemplation of the mystery for which the feast was established. So it is now, on the day of the Exaltation of the honorable and life-giving Cross. For what joy, and what wonder, that the tree—upon which stood the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon which He, crucified, shed His life-giving blood—that we have been deemed worthy not only to see this tree, but also to kiss and embrace it?

How many others toil to amass as much perishable gold as possible? But for us, the gift is immediate: for as soon as we kissed the Cross, we received enlightenment, sanctification, and deliverance. So swift is grace, so effortless is the gift! – But to preserve such grace, the labor of prayer and vigilant attention is urgently needed, especially because what is easily obtained is usually taken lightly and not properly cherished. That is why I appeal to you: let us guard against such a mistake, and let us carefully preserve this gift. Let us not defile our consecrated lips with false words and vain talk; let us not darken our consecrated eyes with lustful glances; let us not blacken our purified hearts with impure memories. And *“let not sin reign,”* cries the Apostle, *“in your mortal body, so that you obey it in its lusts; nor present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from the dead to life, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Let not sin have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace”* (Rom. 6: 12–14). Do you see that under the law sin reigned, but in grace righteousness, having reigned, delivers us from every sin? —as it is written: *“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor. 6:11). Let us, I beg you, honor our cleansing and preserve our sanctification. Why do we bring dishonor upon ourselves, having been made honorable? Why do we take such excessive care of the body, which we will soon leave in the grave? Why do we consider the pleasure of lust to be delightful, when it is in truth a deadly disease? The pleasure of lust is the devil’s bait; it is the kindling of an unquenchable fire; and yet we, as human beings, are drawn to it like slaves who have given themselves up into captivity. I have heard someone possessed by this passion say that it is better to have a noose around one’s neck than to grovel before this sin; for it, like a cruel despot, commands its slave: “Go,”—and he goes; “Come,”—and he comes; ‘Do such-and-such,’—and he does it; in the same way, this sin commands its subject to do something even far worse, namely: ‘Speak shamefully,’—and he speaks; ‘Do evil,’—and he does it. Usually, such a person groans and trembles like Cain: if he sails the sea, he fears shipwreck; if he travels through the desert, he fears he will fall into the hands of robbers; when thunder strikes, it seems to him that it happened specifically for him; when lightning flashes, he fears it might scorch him; he sees but does not see, and hears but does not hear, his senses being disturbed. What could be more dreadful than such a life? It seems to me that it would be better to be devoured by wild beasts than by destructive passions, because in that case only the body perishes, whereas here both soul and body are lost. But it is quite different for the virtuous person. Being free from sin (I speak not only of the pleasure of lust, but of every other passion as well), he rejoices and finds pleasure within himself: he reigns in righteousness; he fears neither the sea nor the land: for he has God dwelling within him, to whom he cries out in times of danger: *“I will not fear evil, for You are with me”* (Ps. 22: 4); *“I will not fear those who surround me and attack me”* (Ps. 3: 7); *“I will not fear when the earth is shaken, and the mountains are overturned into the heart of the sea”* (Ps. 45:3). Do you see what a good life means? It is the true blessed life. We, too, have received it by God’s grace; it is now the focus of all our care and concern. Let us therefore strive ever more to excel in it, submitting to everything with reverence, demonstrating in our actions every kind of obedience, every kind of humility, and every kind of purity of soul.

249. Observing how fields are sown, let us learn to sow ourselves with the seeds of spiritual dispositions

249. 1) Observing how fields are sown, let us learn to sow ourselves with the seeds of spiritual dispositions. – 2) The nights have grown longer: take care to refrain from sleeping too much, as well as from any excessive indulgence in other bodily needs. – 3) The king has returned from his campaign; but do not lose heart: let us cast our sorrow upon the Lord. [4:27]

26. Now is the time for us to sow material seeds—wheat and others—and we see how people rush to this task from early morning and labor tirelessly until nightfall, doing their utmost both to sow well and to ensure a sufficient harvest for their annual physical needs. But what of us, the sowers of spiritual seeds—why do we sleep and remain unplanted, as we ought to be? And how will we then endure eternal hunger? And what excuse will we offer for our inaction?—Let us rather awaken from our slumber and begin to work even more diligently than those who sow material seeds. *“For whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”* (2 Cor. 9:3).—But what should we sow?—Prayers, supplications, petitions, thanksgiving, faith, hope, and love. These are the seeds of piety; this is what nourishes the soul. But in material sowing, the farmer is patient, waiting for rain, whether it comes in the morning or in the evening. In our spiritual sowing, however, we ourselves are the masters of bringing the rain and watering the soil—that is, of weeping and lamenting whenever we wish and as much as we please. If, then, this matter

is in our power, I urge you: let us sow as much as possible, water more abundantly, and multiply the fruits of our righteousness, so that when the spiritual harvest comes, we may fill both our hands and our bosoms with spiritual harvest, and be deemed worthy to hear: *“The blessing of the Lord be upon you”* (Ps. 128: 8). *“We have blessed you from the house of the Lord”* (Ps. 117: 26). *“Bring in the fruit of your hands; you are blessed, and it will go well with you”* (Ps. 127: 2).—And this is our message on this matter.

27. But I wish to remind you, brothers, that our nights are now growing longer as the days grow shorter. You know well that just as staying awake drains the body, so sleeping too much fattens the flesh; and along with the fattening of the flesh, the passions are nourished. — On this occasion, I have something to say to you. What, then? *“Let each of you have a psalm, have a teaching, have a prayer”*: let all things be done in moderation, *“so that all may contribute to the edification”* of the soul (1 Cor. 14: 26), to the well-ordered life of the spirit, *“so that Satan may not tempt you through lack of self-control”* (1 Cor. 7:5). I say this not only with regard to sleep, but also with regard to food and drink, and to everything else; for everything done in moderation is good, because it keeps us safe from straying in one direction or another and from stumbling.

28. Now a word about this: since the sovereign (the king) has returned from his campaign, perhaps thoughts are arising in your hearts about how the affairs of the church—and ours in particular—will proceed from here on. We have guidance on this in Scripture: *“Cast your cares on the Lord”* (Ps. 54:23), and He will provide a way out; and *“if God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31). Just as in previous years He has preserved our lives, delivering us from various temptations and sorrows, so too, we hope, will He continue to protect us from now on. Let us live in a manner worthy of the Gospel, having our life in heaven, as strangers and sojourners on earth. For who among those who have entered this life from the beginning has remained in it forever? Have not all who came departed again, as from a foreign land? Thus, our sojourn here is but a temporary stay; our true dwelling place and inheritance lie in the life to come—into which, having passed, may we be deemed worthy, together with all the holy heirs, to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

250. Points out how great a blessing we have in Christ Jesus

250. 1) It points out how great a blessing we have in Christ Jesus—the renewal of life. — 2) What is the purpose of the three powers of the soul, and how their fall has perverted them. — 3) It calls us to act rightly with all our powers and to preserve the nobility with which we have been ennobled in the Lord. — 4) In conclusion: this is how the fathers acted; this is how we too shall act. [4, 30]

1. Great and ineffable is the love of our Lord Jesus Christ for us, in that He not only *“came to preach peace to us who were far off and to those who were near,”* as it is written (Eph. 2:17); but also, having ascended into heaven, He left the holy Apostles to preach the same message to us—as Blessed Paul writes: *“For we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. He who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor. 5:20–21). What boundless care for us! What inexpressible love for mankind! *“He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf.”* How and in what way?—He is not speaking of sin as a justly condemned, lawless act. Far be it!—For *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth”* (1 Peter 2:22). But He is speaking of the fact that He took on our sin-corrupted nature, that *“He bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows”* (Matt. 8:17), that He was crucified for us and suffered the most dishonorable death. This is what it means: *“He committed sin for us!”* For what purpose? *“That we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* How? By being freed from sin and the condemnation we deserve, and by living and moving in Him. That is why He urges us, saying, *“We also, as fellow workers, entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain”* (2 Cor. 6: 1). Do you see how He persuades and convinces us?—What does it mean to *“not receive the grace of God in vain”*? It means that we should not turn back, that we should not succumb to the very passions we have renounced, and that we should not break the vows we made before God and the holy angels. — But what? But *“that we may walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6: 4)—a life that is pure and blameless, virtuous and heavenly.

2. Having come to this point, I wish to show you a certain most hidden power of the word. What exactly is this?—The human soul has three powers: the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive. The task of the thinking power is to believe in the Holy Trinity; the task of the irascible power is to be angry at the serpent, the tempter, and by no means to let him near us; the task of the desiring power is to long for and love God, who created us. But the devil, having corrupted and perverted these powers of the soul, began to bring about our ruin through them. How? By tempting the desiring power in our forefather Adam to taste the forbidden

fruit; by stirring up the irascible power in Cain to kill his brother Abel; and by using the thinking power to lead humanity into idolatry. Such is the *modus operandi* of our envious enemy!

3. We, however, will remain true to the purpose for which we were created: by strengthening ourselves in goodness through all three faculties and being adorned by the Spirit, we will not allow ourselves to destroy the nobility with which the Lord has ennobled us, having made us children of God the Father. *“But to all who received Him,”* says the Gospel, *“He gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12). Since, in this way, we have become children of God, we will not allow ourselves to become children of wrath; since we are called heirs of God, we will not allow ourselves to become heirs of unquenchable fire; since we are recognized as members of Christ, let us not make ourselves members of a harlot; let us not set our sights on the world or on the things in the world; let us not turn our eyes to the allurements of this life, which are vain and fleeting. Suppose, I say hypothetically, that we were to satisfy the lusts of the flesh and the blood: *“What profit is there in the blood, when we are destined to decay?”* (Ps. 29: 10). Let us look into the graves, and we will see how the pleasure of lust ends. Let us be surrounded by wealth and money; so what? Did we not enter this world naked?—Naked we will leave it, taking nothing with us except our righteous or unrighteous deeds. That is why St. David cries out: *“One thing I ask of the Lord, this 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 visit His holy temple”* (Ps. 26:4).

4. Behold, a blessed life! Behold, the good portion chosen by our holy fathers, as well as by Paul, the blessed confessor whom we now commemorate—whose struggles and feats we have heard only a little about, and by imitating whom we will zealously continue the labors of our asceticism and bear the burden of the persecution to which we have been subjected, without departing from our usual deeds; let us tirelessly press on in our path; and if we stumble, let us hasten to rise again, overcoming our adversary, the devil, so that we too may receive the crown of righteousness with all the saints, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

251. From his illness—he turns to thoughts of death, and from the suffering of his illness—to eternal torment

251. 1) From his own illness, he turns to thoughts of death, and from the sufferings of his illness, to eternal torment. – 2) He recounts how, during the persecution of that time, some were glorified, while others were put to shame and were completely lost. – 3) To the latter, he addresses words of regret, rebuke, and a warning of the consequences. [4, 31]

5. I was ill, and through your prayers I was restored to health. But how long will we continue to be restored to health in this way?—The hour of death will surely come, when such a restoration will no longer be possible; it will come and take me away from you and send me from here to another place. However, you should not therefore worry about being left orphaned: for He who said, *“I will not leave you as orphans”* (John 14:18), and, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20), did not lie. Moreover, we will see one another on that day—but, if only one could say, in unspeakable joy and in eternal life!—And you know what I endured during my illness: how, seized by chills, I was subjected to unbearable tremors, and how soon afterward I was overcome by scorching fever for an entire day. “Suffering thus, I thought to myself at the time, ‘Is it not so that in the age to come, people will be transferred from the torments of Tartarus to the fiery Gehenna, so that the poor soul will be subjected to two, or even more, torments?’ But whether one or two torments await those there, from the sufferings here we can conclude how unbearable God’s wrath is toward sinners; and, seized by fear and trembling at this, I resolved to do everything in my power to avoid falling into those unbearable torments.

6. Thus, the present persecution *“for some”* has served as an occasion for the manifestation of virtue, and they *“shone like lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, to my praise,”* so to speak, *“on the day of Christ”* (Phil. 2:15–16). How much good did they do? And what perfection did they attain? Not only did they save and continue to save themselves—having gained experience through enduring trials and having been purified, like gold in a crucible, by being refined in the fire of sorrows and sufferings—but they also draw others to the same path, thus becoming saviors of many, both their own and strangers. *“For others,”* however—and these are very few—persecution was a pretext for evil deeds, due to their self-indulgent way of life, unrestrained by the law of obedience and leaving them free to commit their shameful acts. Why is it so fitting to speak of them in the words of Scripture: *“Their appearance is darker than soot”* (Lamentations 4:8)?

7. To such I also cry out: lawless sons, you have forsaken the Lord, violated the laws of the monastic life, and do not know how to walk uprightly, but stagger here and there like the lame; you have fallen behind your companions and become lustful; some of you live alone; others hire servants and even engage in trade, driven by the love of money. Neither the prophet's punishment, nor the apostle's threat, nor my humble exhortations frighten you. One of you, captivated by beauty, has stooped to theft and even to renouncing God. "What are you doing, wretched son of perdition?" "How many times have you sung: *'Where can I go from Your Spirit, and where can I flee from Your presence?'*" (Ps. 138:7). Or, having been completely carried away, do you wish to befriend the serpent who seduced Eve and, together with her, cast our forefather Adam out of Paradise? Do you not yet intend to renounce Christ, with whom you were united through the vow of virginity, and to unite yourself with sin, through which death entered the world? Do you not hear the Gospel crying out about those who act in this way: *"Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched"*? (Mark 9:44) Do you not heed what the Apostle says: *"God judges the sexually immoral and adulterers"*? (Heb. 13: 4)? What do you gain by committing sin? Is it not darkness and a heart pierced as by a sword? Is it not a plunge into the depths of despair? Is it not Satan himself, who deceived you, who now compels you to grasp the noose, as he once did with Judas? Come to your senses, you who are in darkness; flee from the snare of death, O doomed one; do not let yourself be entangled in the net of hell, lest you then live here the life of Cain—groaning, trembling, and fleeing from every familiar face—and in the age to come be condemned to the fiery Gehenna; when the Lord *"comes to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at among all"* (2 Thess. 1:10), to those who have faithfully walked according to His commandments—rewarding them with fitting rewards, while sending those opposed to them to the endless torments prepared for them.

252. The Epiphany brings to mind the greatness of the blessings resulting from the Lord's coming to earth in the flesh

252. 1) The Epiphany brings to mind the greatness of the blessings resulting from the Lord's coming to earth in the flesh. – 2) What shall we offer in return? – We offer our life of cross-bearing in our struggles, and our present witness before the iconoclasts: let us simply stand firm in both. [4, 32]

8. The Feast of the Epiphany is approaching—and a day of joy is at the door, a joy truly great, the like of which has not been seen since time immemorial. For the Son of God is coming to us, not in prophecies and symbols, as we see He appeared to the Old Testament fathers: but by being born of the Virgin, descending and revealing Himself personally to us—a event more blessed than any in the course of generations, and more wondrous than all the miracles God has wrought since the beginning of time. Therefore, the angels proclaim the mystery that has been fulfilled; the star indicates that the One from heaven has been born on earth; the shepherds hasten to see the salvation announced to them; the Magi bring royal gifts, and an extraordinarily new song is sung about God's extraordinarily new work, through which God is glorified in the heavens, while peace is established on earth, as the Apostle also testifies, saying: *"For He is our peace, who has made the two one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, having abolished in His flesh the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the hostility"* (Eph. 2: 14–16). This is what the prophets and the righteous had longed to see from of old, but they saw it only by faith. But we have *"seen Him and touched Him with our own hands,"* as it is written—*"we have seen and proclaim"* this *"Word of life: life has appeared,"* and we have received the status of sonship (1 John 1:1, 2).

9. But what *"shall we render to the Lord for all that He has given us?"* In answer to this, St. David had already proclaimed: *"I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord"* (Ps. 115: 3). But let us rejoice, brothers and sisters—that we, too, have been deemed worthy to give thanks to the Lord for all that He has given us. What, then, is this thanksgiving? The cross-bearing life we have embraced, and *"the confession in which we stand and boast in the hope of God's glory"* (Rom. 5:2). — And this we ought to celebrate not just for a single day, but throughout our entire lives. Those who are ruled by the flesh and held captive by their passions can neither celebrate—though they may appear to be celebrating—nor be free, since they are slaves to their passions, sold into sin, as it is written: *"Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. A slave does not remain in the house forever; a son remains forever"* (John 8:34). Since we, too, have been deemed worthy to be called sons by grace, we will remain in the house forever, *"if only we hold fast to the beginning of our confidence until the end"* (Heb. 3:14). Therefore, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, let us stand

firm in our monastic way of life “*and encourage one another in love and good deeds*” (Heb. 10:24)—in obedience, humility, meekness, and in all other noble endeavors, not wavering in our good resolve, but adding effort upon effort, all the more so as we see the Day of the Lord drawing near. For that great and glorious day is drawing near, on which the Judge of all will appear openly and will be seen in the glory in which He was seen by the Apostles at the Divine Transfiguration—and He will reward each person according to his deeds.—May we, too, together with all the saints, behold Him as He looks upon us with a gracious countenance and welcomes us into His heavenly kingdom.

253. Rest was promised to Israel as they wandered in the wilderness; but not all entered it

253. 1) The Israelites wandering in the wilderness were promised rest; but not all entered it. We, too, are promised rest; and not all of us may enter it. – 2) How can we enter it? – We must not act as they did. [4:34]

10. Thus we move from year to year, from one season to another, from one holiday to the next, and there is no respite throughout this life. – Yet we must certainly reach its end and enter into our rest. “*For whoever has entered His rest has also rested from his works, just as God did from His,*” as it is written (Heb. 4:10). What kind of rest is this?—The Kingdom of Heaven, toward which the Apostle urges us, saying: “*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall into the same pattern of disobedience*” (Heb. 4:11). – What does he mean by this? That just as God promised the Israelites He would bring them into the Promised Land—but because they later proved disobedient and grieved Him, they were not allowed to enter—so too, if we are disobedient to His commandments, we will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven. “*For forty years,*” says the Lord, “*I was angry with them and said, ‘They are always going astray in their hearts; they have not known My ways.’ Therefore I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’*” (Ps. 94:10–11). That was the case with them; for us, however, it is not just forty years, but obedience is expected throughout the entire life of each person. For if we do not strive to fulfill all of God’s commandments, He will say of us as well: “*They shall not enter My rest.*” But the bones of those who did not enter fell in the wilderness; if we do not enter, then both our bodies and our souls will be cast into the fiery Gehenna; and this punishment is incomparably more severe than that, for it is written: “*Whoever rejects the Law of Moses; shall die without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses; how much worse a punishment will be deserved by those who have trampled underfoot the Son of God, and have regarded as defiled the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and have insulted the Spirit of grace*” (Heb. 10:28–29).

11. What, then, was the cause that barred their entry? Unbelief, grumbling, blasphemy, rebellion, hardness of heart, pride, and sexual immorality. This is what destroyed them. – Let us therefore flee from these passions as from a face of fire, not doubting God’s promises, but believing that He is able to fulfill what He has promised; and let us not murmur (1 Cor. 10:10), nor blaspheme, nor harden our hearts, nor rebel; “*Let us, then, be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us*” (Eph. 4:32), “*always bearing in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*” (2 Cor. 4:10), always being ready to die for Christ, always being renewed by prayers, supplications, tears, and the contemplation of heavenly visions. Living in this way, we will enter not a land flowing with milk and honey, as the ancients did, but the land of the meek—the place where the source of life and immortality is found, where the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem dwells, where there is joy and gladness, where the radiance of the blessed and life-giving Trinity shines!

254. Virginity Is Superior to Married Life

254. 1) Virginity is superior to married life. – 2) Giving thanks to God for deeming us worthy of this calling, let us be vigilant so as not to fall. – 3) What is the means to this end? Struggle and the overcoming of the lower by the higher—toward which all our efforts are directed. – 4) I will add one more word: Brother Memnon has returned; receive him with brotherly love, just as in the parable the father received his son who had strayed from him. [4, 35]

12. Those who compete in races at the arena do so once a year—and even then for a very short time; after that, the competition ends: the victors, the vanquished, and the spectators all go their separate ways. But those who run the race of virginity do so not for a single day, but for their entire lives; and their path, and their progress along it, are invisible, just as the battle they wage against invisible enemies is invisible. Chastity is the greatest virtue, reaching the very heights of heaven. – People are divided into two groups according to

their way of life: some live in marriage, and others without marriage. Those who live in marriage constitute the lower world, and those without marriage fill the higher world. The former are subject to decay, while the latter are made worthy to shine with incorruptibility. And just as if someone were to see a man with wings, they would rightly be amazed that he appears at times as a man and at times as an angel: so too, one who preserves chastity through asceticism presents a wondrous sight to both angels and people—in the flesh yet above the flesh; in the world yet above the world; which is why, when someone renounces the world, they say that he has chosen a life of excellence: and the Lord, speaking in the Gospel, said: *“There are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven,”* He added: *“Let the one who can accept this accept it”* (Matt. 19:12). You see that for many this gift is too great to bear, and it is reserved only for those who crucify themselves through their way of life.

13. Let us therefore rejoice and be glad for one another—let us give thanks, immeasurable thanks, that, through God’s love for humanity, we have been called to such a worthy calling, by which God is glorified and at which people marvel. And not only that, but let us also lead our lives as carefully as possible, for many have fallen from such heights—both in times past and now—some having become puffed up with pride, others having been struck down by carelessness and negligence, both of which bring ruin to the soul.

14. What, then, is the means of deliverance from this?—A bird in flight has a means of deliverance from danger; for when it senses the nearness of a hunter, it spreads its wings, flies to another place—and avoids being caught. So too, when the devil, the hunter of our souls, approaches, then, as if winged by the Spirit, soaring in contemplation of the heights, *“let us seek the things that are above and set our minds on things above”* (Col. 3:1–2). Does he offer the sweetness of lust? We will raise up the nobility of the soul. Does he put forth the work of sin? We will embrace the severity of judgment with all our thoughts. Thus, by setting one thing against another and repelling thoughts with thoughts, we will be saved from the destroyer of all. What, then, is the outcome of these struggles? For those who fight for the flesh—a perishable crown; for us, an imperishable one; for them—temporary joy; for us—eternal joy. And blessed are we *“if we hold fast to the confidence and the boast of our hope until the end”* (Heb. 3:6). Therefore, I urge you, let us persevere in prayer and supplication, in contrition and tears, in humility, obedience, confession, and other ascetic practices, and with God’s help, let us gain the victory over the enemy. But enough of that.

15. Now regarding Brother Memnon. Since he has, in some way, come to his senses and returned, we must accept him, *“so that such a one may not be devoured by excessive sorrow”* (2 Cor. 2:7). – I must, however, tell you this: *“Everyone who commits sin is not only a slave to sin”* (John 8:34), according to the Lord’s word, but is also an abomination to lovers of virtue, and perhaps some would be ashamed to embrace him, lest they be defiled by his sin. But since our Lord Jesus Christ did not reject the prodigal son—who had squandered everything on harlots—when he returned, we too will not turn him away, but will welcome this brother with kindness, rejoice at his return with gratitude, and pray for his salvation. – Thus, by fulfilling this commandment as disciples of our Lord and Savior, we will be worthy to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

255. How many of our brothers have died in exile for icon veneration and from torture? They are witnesses to the truth of Orthodoxy

255. 1) How many of our brothers have died in exile for icon veneration and from torture? They are witnesses to the truth of Orthodoxy. Heretics offer nothing of the sort: for they sense how unsteady their foundations are. We, however, are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets. – 2) For our salvation, all that remains for us is to build upon this foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones—that is, a holy and blameless life—purifying it through repentance whenever we happen to sin in any way. [4, 36]

16. Our brother Theodore has fallen asleep—one of the best, skilled in obedience and steadfast in confession, who bore wounds for Christ and ended his life in prison and in exile. What could be more joyful than this? So many of our brothers—their number reaching nearly a hundred and more—were cast into various places, where, shining like stars, they left their holy bodies as a testimony to Orthodoxy for those living today and for future generations. I speak not only of our own brotherhood, but also of the brothers from other monasteries who ended their lives in exile. This is the greatest affirmation of the Church of God! She possesses such a host of witnesses to the veneration of the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Most Pure Theotokos, and all His saints: so that, even if we had nothing else in our hands, this alone would suffice as proof of the truth for those who possess sound minds. Let the opponents of Orthodoxy be put to shame! For which of them,

fighting for their faith, has ever endured such sufferings? None, ever; but they, like nocturnal beasts, prowl and grow bold in the darkness of their heresy; yet when the light of day appears and Orthodoxy shines forth like the morning star, they hide in the burrows of their deceitful scheming. – And let them be led astray by the light of their own fire, which they themselves have kindled. As for us, appointed by the Lord upon the foundation of the Apostles, the Prophets, and our God-bearing Fathers, we will remain firmly rooted for the time to come, without wavering in the least from human threats.

17. To attain salvation, we must still, according to the Apostle's command, build upon the foundation of our true faith with gold, silver, and precious stones—not with wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:12)—which are fuel for the fire. Whoever is thus established can be shaken by nothing in his faith in the Lord. "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us,*" as it is written (Gal. 3:13). Let us not, then, allow ourselves to fall under the curse again. Christ has washed us clean in His blood, through the bath of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit; let us not, under any circumstances, return to the shameful deeds we have renounced. If we do not do this, then on the day of His revelation, He may say to us: "I made you My pillars, but you have turned My members into the members of a harlot; I washed you from your sins, so that you '*might be without spot or blemish, or anything of the sort*' (Eph. 5:27)—yet you have once again burdened yourselves with the stench of passions and defiled yourselves with the filth of sin; I have filled you abundantly with the light of wisdom through the Holy Spirit, yet you have made your minds a dwelling place for wild passions; I have made you co-heirs of eternal blessings, yet you have chosen rather to be co-heirs of My adversary: "*Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matt. 25:41). But may we never hear such a terrible voice or experience such unbearable wrath. Therefore, let us zealously strive to attain purity, tears, and a contrite heart, fulfilling our duties without complaint, keeping watch in God's work day and night, so that the enemy, creeping in, may not devour an inattentive soul. If only we could avoid the serpent's wiles even while keeping vigil! But how can we achieve this while dozing off? But someone will say: our nature is weak and prone to sin. I agree with this—being of the same nature myself. But here is what I ask: as soon as something like this happens, let there be immediate repentance, confession, contrition of heart, and a lively desire to restore our former good state. By acting in this way every day, we will attain what we seek; and having attained it, we will be deemed worthy to hear the longed-for voice saying, "*Come,*" and we will become heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven.

256. *We ought to celebrate feasts with spiritual consolation*

256. 1) We should celebrate feasts in spiritual comfort. – 2) Feasts pass, and all of life will pass: let us not forget this, and let us always be ready for our departure. – 3) By ordering our lives accordingly, both outwardly and, even more so, inwardly. – 4) And let us not neglect anything that is necessary for this. [4, 37]

18. The feasts have passed—both Christmas and the Epiphany—which we were deemed worthy to celebrate in honor of the Lord our God, even in our present circumstances. We do not grieve over this, however, but rejoice greatly that for the sake of Him who "*humbled Himself and took the form of a servant*" (Phil. 2:7), we endure exile and live in a foreign land. And what else does it mean to celebrate, if not to cling to God through detachment from the material world and indifference toward the world and all that is worldly? For what shall we say of those who live in the deserts, mountains, and ravines of the earth? "Do they not celebrate?" "Yes, they celebrate even better than others in their silence—more exalted and more godly than those who have the opportunity to spend their feasts in pleasures, feasts, feasting, and drinking, forgetting that they are deceiving themselves—whom Scripture therefore condemns, saying: "*You have feasted and reveled on earth; you have fattened your hearts as on the day of slaughter*" (James 5:5): for such people have become like pigs ready for slaughter; "*whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame*" (Phil. 3:19); so that we celebrate the feasts better if we keep ourselves in check and lead a life worthy of our calling and of our confession of Christ.

19. Let us not, however, lose sight of the fact that our days fly by as if on horses, and time, like a spinning wheel, bringing some into life through birth and taking others from it through death—not at the same age or at the same time, but sometimes the elderly before the young, and the young before the elderly; fathers before their children, and children before their fathers; and at times, many people of every age together. Thus has God seen fit to ordain that, because we do not know the hour of our death, we should prepare ourselves for our departure at every moment. Let us therefore be sober and watchful, lest death, coming unexpectedly, find us unprepared; for then we will repent, but to no avail and without fruit. Do you not know how, just a few

days ago, I suddenly fell ill? And how my soul nearly descended into hell? And although I have now recovered, this is certainly not for good. It will surely be time for me, now that I am growing old, to finally leave you and go to be with my fathers and brothers; only pray that this may happen while I am fully conscious in Christ, and with a completely clear conscience for my entire life. At that time, wracked with the torments of my illness, I reflected and said to myself: if this suffering is such, what then will it be like in the age to come? If we cannot bear these three or four days of suffering, how can we endure eternal torments?

20. I advise you to reflect on this as well, and to live mindfully, always keeping this in mind—externally, with all reverence and humility, diligence, and patience—and internally, —with all guarding of the heart, not allowing the great, cunning, and evil serpent to whisper to us or attack us, and not making the temple of God a dwelling place for passions, but striving in every way to present ourselves pure before the Lord, and even here, before the age to come, to begin living a blessed life. For what could be more blessed than to live at peace with God with a pure heart? Yet this is impossible without prior toil, prayer, tears, contrition, zeal, and fervor of the spirit; even with these, the enemy does not cease to attack us and stir up strife within us—unannounced, unexpected, and invisible. He does this because he sees that we strive to ascend to heaven and be made worthy there of unspeakable joy. — But since, in truth, *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18); let us strive with all our might, with all the strength of faith and hope, to wage this battle so as to thwart all the devil’s schemes, imitating those who compete in the arena, who exert themselves so fiercely in the race that at the end of the race they are out of breath and near fainting. But their race lasts only an hour, and their crown is perishable; whereas our battle lasts a lifetime, which is why our crown is imperishable, and all our other rewards are eternal—may we be granted to receive them through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

257. One must imitate the holy fathers; but imitate those who share your way of life: otherwise, harm will result

257. 1) We must imitate the holy fathers; but imitate those who share your way of life: otherwise, harm will result. — 2) Here are some examples... which are cited. — 3) Do not take on what is not yours: are you a Kinovite? — Imitate the Kinovites... specific individuals are indicated. — 4) The desert is for hermits; but you must endure the hardships of communal life, just as I do. [4, 38]

21. As we read the lives of our fathers and contemplate them, we marvel at them. And rightly so. For truly our fathers are wondrous, because, dwelling in this flesh like angels with complete dispassion, they pleased the Lord. But we must not only marvel at them but also imitate them as much as possible; and imitate them with discernment—that is, let a cenobite imitate a cenobite, a silent one a silent one, a hermit a hermit, and an abbot an abbot. For what good is it to imitate someone who lives a life of a different order than ours? Not only will we derive no benefit from this, but we will also suffer clear harm. Many, out of love for God, having abandoned their way of life and striving for another, have lost their own and failed to attain the one they desired.

22. As proof of this, setting aside the ancient accounts on this matter, let us recall what has happened in our own lineage. What benefit did climbing the pillar bring to the so-called psalmist? Was he not carried down from there in a fit of madness?—And now he is neither a Kinovite nor a pillar-ascetic. What benefit did that same pillar bring to a certain Saprith? Did he not descend from it for the sake of orthodoxy, only to later fall into heresy, becoming a traitor, and is he not now the most ruthless among the persecutors?—But let us also look at our own brotherhood: did not our Peter, having spent many years as a novice and having excelled in that life, go into the desert, drawn by piety? But how he returned from there, and what became of him, you know, having seen it with your own eyes. Likewise, Amphilochius, who is still alive today—did he not first become a pillar ascetic, then a hermit, and now he brings shame upon himself, staggering back and forth?

23. All this has happened and continues to happen because of the temptation of the devil, who instills the desire to take what is not one’s own, so as to lead one to the loss of even what is one’s own. For this reason, the Apostle cries out: *“Brothers, let each one remain before God in the state in which he was called”* (1 Cor. 7:24). Are you called to be a silent monk?—you need not think about communal life; are you called to be a Kinovite? You need not wonder about silence. Each one, in his own state, should please the Lord. Each one, in his own state, has examples by which he must order his life. Follow the example of those who have shone forth in the monastic community. Who are they? Not only the ancient saints, but also those who have been and are still among us in our brotherhood. Strive to be like Blessed Domitian, whose faith is fiery. Strive to

be like Blessed Zosimus, whose obedience is sincere. Strive to be like Blessed Mark, who, accepting insults and humiliation as a noble honor, knew how to keep his resolve unshakable. Take Terentius as your example, who, having served the sick in the kitchen for many years, never succumbed to faintheartedness nor shirked his labor; indeed, even when offered the chance to transfer to another duty, he refused, preferring to endure hardship in his usual duty. Take as your example also the other brothers, many of whom distinguished themselves in their duties, whose names are written in the Book of Life. These are the ones you should imitate, not the hermits.

24. Let the desert and the mountains be for Abba Ioannikios and those like him; but you, love obedience and the mortification of your own will. He is not currently enduring persecution, but you are being persecuted for the sake of the truth. He is not imprisoned, but you are in prison for the Lord's sake. He is not beaten, but you have endured beatings for Christ. All that you have endured is incomparably greater than a peaceful life in the desert. — I, too, will say something about myself, humble as I am. — Since I have been unworthily placed at your head, should I resign my office and withdraw to the desert, or begin some other way of life, whatever may present itself? But to act in this way is unbecoming both to a leader and to a shepherd, who must lay down his life for his sheep. Nor is it fitting for you to either plan or do anything different from what you are now. For from this comes the barrenness and disorder of the life to come, but from patiently abiding in the established order of the monastic life comes every spiritual fruitfulness. Therefore, let everyone—as God has shown him mercy and as the Lord has called him—walk in that way, live in that way, and please the Lord in that way, so that he may be deemed worthy to hear: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Lord”* (Matt. 25:21).

258. Having explained what a monk is, he describes in what ways today's monks have fallen short of their predecessors

258. 1) Having defined what a monk is, he—2) describes in what ways today's monks have fallen short of their predecessors,—3) reminds us that this is contrary to the word of God, and—4) explains how one may remain upright in this matter,—with exhortations to that end. [4, 39]

25. There is nothing more blessed than our life, nothing more exalted than our way of life; provided only that we live as we are called, and that our way of life is in harmony with our name. A monk is one who looks to God alone, desires God alone, clings to God alone, strives to please God alone, is at peace with God, and is a source of peace among others. But whoever lacks these qualities and instead harbors zeal, envy, and division is *“blind and dim-sighted”* (having closed his eyes), *“having forgotten the cleansing of his former sins,”* as it is written (2 Peter 1:9).

26. You who are at fault know why I said this. And I say that I did not do this to upset you again, but to strengthen you so that in the future you will not fall into the same errors. In the days of our fathers, slander was not tolerated; but whoever heard slander would either cover his ears or turn the slander into something good. Now, however, we readily lend an ear to the slanderer and listen to him with such eagerness as we never listened to the readings proclaimed in church. In the days of our fathers, nothing was spoken in an unseemly manner, but always quietly and decorously; now, however, people speak with anger, shouting, and a contorted face: what could be more disgraceful? In the days of our fathers, there was no grumbling; rather, everyone accepted with gratitude what was given, and because of this, what was bitter became sweet and what was unpleasant became pleasant; but now we grumble, condemning this and that—not only within ourselves but also in public—so as to create more grumblers and to grieve God all the more.

27. This should not be so, my brothers; it should not be so. This is not a monastic way of life, nor is it a small sin—it is the sin of condemnation and vexation: for it is written that *“the vexers shall not inherit the kingdom”* (1 Cor. 6:9). But grumbling is no small sin either—as it is written: *“Do not grumble, as some of them”* (the Israelites in the wilderness) *“grumbled, and were destroyed by the Destroyer”* (1 Cor. 10:10). And slander is no small vice; for it is written: *“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear; and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”* (Eph. 4:29–30). Do you not see what the Apostle warns us about?—that by speaking idly, we provoke the Holy Spirit to anger. Or are we not afraid that on the Day of Judgment we will have to give an account for every idle word, as the Lord Himself said?

28. Why, then, do we not take this to heart? Why do we not prepare ourselves to be in good standing before what is to befall us? Have you been rebuked? Bear the annoyance magnanimously, suppressing your distress—as St. David did: *“I was confounded,”* he says, *“and I did not speak”* (Ps. 76:5). The insult will thus pass, but your virtue will endure forever. Is the food offered not what you would like? Give thanks even for what is there; for what you condemn, considering it unwholesome, others would gladly taste. Moreover, if we never encounter such things, how will we prove our obedience? Why boast of it? For neither by abstinence, nor by vigil, nor by sleeping on the bare ground, nor by any other feat can we prove ourselves as skillful in the way of life as by the subjugation of our will—this martyrdom, inseparable from the monastic life. *“Put away, then, all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander,”* as St. Peter the Apostle commanded, *“and like newborn infants, love the pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up into salvation”* (1 Peter 2:1–3), if we have tasted that the Lord Christ is good, if we desire eternal life, if we do not refuse to follow good counsel, if we do not grow weary or lose heart, always turning away from our sins and failures. For by being thus well-trained, we will undoubtedly be deemed worthy of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

259. Remembering what has been granted to us through the Incarnation—let us live in the renewal of life, according to His Spirit—fleeing from the old nature

259. 1) Remembering what has been granted to us through the Incarnation— 2) let us live in the renewal of life, according to His Spirit— 3) fleeing from the old nature, namely, the pleasures of lust and envy, from which all evil springs—and— 4) zealously pursuing every good, loving it and grieving over its loss. [4, 40]

29. Just as those who are thirsty desire to drink and those who are hungry desire to eat, so must we long to hear the word of God. For by hearing it, we gain very much: from being careless, we become zealous; from being zealous, we become even more zealous. What word do we hear now?—*“Thus,”* it says, *“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3: 16). And not merely *“gave,”* but *“even unto death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:8). How so? We were enslaved to the devil through Adam’s disobedience, subject to death, sold into sin, and destined for decay. The Only-Begotten Son of God came, giving Himself as a ransom for all, and not only delivered us from the power of death, but, having washed us from our sins with His blood (Rev. 1:5), made us heirs of His kingdom, as it is written. Do you see His steadfast and powerful love? Do you see the boundless mercy of His love for humanity? How unfathomable are His mercies, and how inexhaustible are His bounties, which He has poured out abundantly upon us through Jesus Christ, our Savior!

30. What, then, shall we—poor as we are—say to this, and what shall we think? Shall we return to sin? Shall we desire slavery? Shall we choose dishonor, corruption, and condemnation?—Far be it from us.—*“For if we have died to sin, how can we still live in it? Or do you not realize that, inasmuch as we were baptized into Christ Jesus, we were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:2–4). – Let us therefore, brothers, walk in this new life, just as we promised again when we took the schema; let us live *“in righteousness and godliness, as befits the saints”* (Eph. 5: 3), in peace and harmony, in honesty, in nobility and reverence, in holiness and self-control, not being carried away by *“the desires we once had in our ignorance”* (1 Peter 1:14), but fleeing from our former passions as from a fire, having been established on the rock of our faith.

31. This is what renewal is! What, then, is corruption? —The sinful temptation by which our forefather Adam was ensnared, became an exile from Paradise, and fell under the yoke of our present, most sorrowful life—envy, by which Cain, in his pride, killed his brother Abel because his offerings were preferred, after which he spent his entire life groaning and trembling. From these two passions, an innumerable number of evils entered the world: hence the Flood, which destroyed all living things on earth; hence the bitter fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, reduced to ashes by fire and brimstone as a warning of their wickedness. Do you see what sin, lust of the eyes, and worldly pride have wrought?

32. But as has already been said, by God’s grace we have been called, have obtained freedom, and have been raised to the status of sonship. Let us therefore stand firm in the freedom to which Christ has set us free, and in the glory with which He has glorified us, let us preserve ourselves, turning away from all that is vain, and regarding everything as nothing for Christ’s sake, —regarding dishonor as honor, sorrow as joy, wounds as delight, persecution as bliss, and death as life, just as our holy fathers and brothers, whose names

are written in the Book of Life, regarded these things and are now commemorated. Living in this way, we too will *“shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the living Word”* (Phil. 2:15), and in the age to come we will be deemed worthy to be heirs of the kingdom of God.

260. Having shown how the contemplation of the lives of the holy fathers revives all that is good within us and separates us from all that is evil, he invites everyone, according to the nature of their obedience, to imitate them

260. 1) Having shown how the study of the lives of the holy fathers revives all that is good within us and separates us from all that is evil, – 2) he invites everyone to imitate them, according to the nature of their obedience, – 3) so that we may be free from disobedience, laziness, and grumbling. [4:41]

1. In these days, when the lives of our holy fathers are being read, it is impossible to express what great benefit we derive from this, and what joy we experience. For tell me, what could be sweeter than contemplating their immortal deeds, miracles, and victories over demons! It seems to me that even stones feel this benefit, not just rational human beings. Through this, the human mind is enlightened, casting aside the darkening speculations of the flesh; through this, the soul is moved, soaring toward divine love. It can truly be said that this (i.e., the assembly of the saints) is God’s Garden of Eden, filled and adorned not with material plants but with a variety of spiritual fruits, where the breath of life exudes fragrance, where the serpent does not wound but is wounded, does not drive out but is driven out, as is fitting. And if the kingdom of God is within us, then I think no one will err in calling the saints the kingdom of heaven, upon whom the all-good God, like a generous king, bestows gifts upon His servants. What do earthly things matter to me after this kingdom? What is vain glory and a belly doomed to perish? What are gold and silver, and fine garments, and every other vanity?—And all these things are not even worth comparing, just as light cannot be compared to darkness, life to death, or truth to a dream.

2. If all this is so, let us *“rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy”* (1 Peter 1:8) that we have obtained the better part and have come to belong to a chosen race, radiant with heavenly nobility; and not only will we rejoice in this, but we will also strive to imitate their virtues to the best of our ability, so that it may be evident that we do not bear an empty name, *“having a form of godliness but denying its power”* (2 Timothy 3:5). Just as when one goes to a pharmacy, each person chooses a remedy according to their illness; in the same way, we, desiring to imitate the saints well, will choose examples that are suited to each person’s way of life and thus draw benefit for ourselves from their lives. I, being unworthy, will look to those who have pastored worthily; the steward—to those who have managed faithfully and wisely; the cellarer—on those who managed the cellar judiciously and conscientiously. Let the canon, the host, the cook, the refectory attendant, and all others think the same, whatever duty they may have been assigned. Good examples can be found for everyone, if we are willing to see them and imitate them.

3. Let there be no disobedience in anyone. As soon as you are called, appear immediately. To say, “Wait a moment, and I will come”—especially to the steward—is a sin and a matter worthy of condemnation. Nor should anyone refuse to fulfill their duty, but carry it out meekly, even unto death: this will be true monastic perfection. And let no one be grumbling, condemning our place as lacking this or that. Such a one is subject to the judgment of those who grumbled in the wilderness, whose destruction is astonishing (Num. 16).—“But who are these people?” – The ignorant, the impatient, the infantile in mind—unworthy even to breathe the air, let alone to receive so many consolations. – Nevertheless, may our all-good God give understanding to the unwise, increase the wisdom of the wise, and save all in His kingdom, through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

261. Everything desired according to the spirit of the world is fleeting; only virtue is eternally blissful

261. 1) Everything desired according to the spirit of the world is fleeting; only virtue is eternally blissful. – 2) It brings bliss even here, as we see from the daily commemoration of the saints in the church. – 3) What, then, will it be like there? There the saints will be like the sun, and they will be with Christ. – 4) Let us strive to be deemed worthy of this, and to avoid its opposite. [4, 42]

4. Among people, some find bliss in wealth, others in power, some in success, and still others in pleasures. But none of these is worthy of bliss, because nothing lasts forever; rather, it perishes along with this present age. Even here, however, it does not comfort many for long; it merely appears and then vanishes at once, like a dream. Only virtue is worthy of delight, as an eternal possession that makes its possessors blessed.

– Let us recall how many rulers and comforters there have been throughout the ages—and not a single one of them is remembered with praise; but the glory of the virtuous is unquenchable.

5. And this is evident from what we do. Yesterday we glorified Saint Chrysostom; today we glorify the ever-memorable Ephrem; tomorrow we will glorify another saint. Thus, like the heavenly bodies, they shine one after another throughout the year upon the firmament of the Church; in remembrance of them, our lips are opened to glorify them, and they illuminate our steps as we walk with God. Truly, therefore, the sacred word holds true: *“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified”* (Rom. 8:29–30). What shall we say to this? Are we not partakers of such a calling and glory? Of course we are. And to us, the humble, neither the life of the cross nor the prize of blessedness is foreign; for we have endured persecution up to this very hour, in addition to our previous struggles in the good confession of the faith. And oh, how wondrous is the power of virtue! And what does it bestow upon those who strictly adhere to it!

6. But that is here; what of the age to come? Oh, who can describe that bliss and that glory! The Lord says this: *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun”* (Matt. 13:43). Since He Himself is the Sun of Righteousness, He has promised that the righteous, being like Him, will shine like the sun, as the Apostle affirms: *“For if we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him”* (Rom. 8:17). And as the Lord Himself prayed to the Father: *“Father, those whom You have given Me, I desire that wherever I am, they also may be with Me, so that they may see My glory, which You have given Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24). Do you see where we will go?—*“Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God”* (Col. 3: 1), where there is joy and gladness, where the host of angels dwells, and the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven—where our brothers and fathers of the same order as us are—there we will go shortly, and there *“we will begin to rejoice with Him, Who reigns over the ages with His dominion,”* as the blessed David sings (Ps. 65: 7)—not over an age of a thousand or ten thousand years, but over an age that never grows old and has no end.

7. And who is content with this?—The one who is so zealous that he remains sober and vigilant all day and every hour, so as not to let his soul slumber: for, during such slumber, the passions, like beasts, attack us and take possession of the soul. But as long as we remain on guard and watch over ourselves, the predator will not steal from us, nor will the serpent carry us off. – Therefore, we must stay alert and consider with our minds what has been said above, as well as its opposite—the torments that threaten those who oppose God’s will: unquenchable fire, utter darkness, the never-sleeping worm, and all the rest; so that, being filled with and embraced by such thoughts, we may avoid the enemy’s snares, pass from here blamelessly, and attain the kingdom of heaven.

262. We have received many blessings from the Lord during our journey from the desert to this place: we must give thanks not only in words but also in deeds

262. 1) We have received many blessings from the Lord during our journey from the desert to this place: we must give thanks not only with words but also with deeds. – 2) What, then, shall we offer in return? – Let us live for the glory of God—let us be the fragrance of Christ; let us ascend the mountain so that others may see. – 3) To this end, let us leave behind the things of this world and adorn ourselves with heavenly things. – 4) This is not far from us, for it is within us. [4, 43]

8. Always rejoicing in God’s blessings, we must always thank Him from a warm heart in earnest prayer. For consider what a blessing we have even now! When we were forced to flee, fearing the Agarians, did He not sustain us, just as in the desert, in that place where we were cast out—and this for many days? Did He not then open the door of rest for us here, where there is a beautiful temple and suitable dwellings; the very one who welcomed us—our brother of one mind? – How great is God’s care for us! Is there anything He ought to have done that He did not do? – Throughout our flight, He provided us with bread, wine, fish, and other necessities—as much as we needed, and even more than we needed—so that those who witnessed it were amazed. For all this, we poor souls must not only give thanks, but also lay down our very lives. Therefore, I beg you, let us kindle within ourselves the strongest love for Him, cling to Him with all our hearts, and offer Him the most gracious thanksgiving.

9. How, then, shall we repay Him?—Let us live here as well for the glory of His name, so that what He said may be fulfilled in us: *“Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good deeds and*

glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Elsewhere, the Apostle says: “Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ Jesus and reveals through us the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are the fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” (2 Cor. 14: 15). Do you see that the virtuous person is the fragrance of Christ, wherever he may live? Virtue, by its very nature, is not something to be hidden; but whoever practices it becomes evident to all: for it is written, “A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14). The city is the human soul; the mountain is the height of virtues, upon which those who have ascended “shine like lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life for their own praise on the day of Christ” (Phil. 2:15). Let us, then, brothers, also ascend this holy mountain.

10. But we cannot ascend there unless we first leave behind the things of this world—that is, the desires of the flesh and the thoughts of the mind, and the pernicious pleasures of this life, from which turning away is the ascent to virtue. Therefore, let the heart be cleansed of impure thoughts, let the eye be chaste in its gaze, let the ear be closed to evil speech—let the tongue be forbidden to speak vainly, let the hand be restrained from improper touch, let the foot be directed toward the path of peace, and let all the members be trained in the corresponding good and sanctified by the beauty of Christ. The earthly king graciously welcomes the one who is beautiful and adorned in body; but the Heavenly King favors the one who is adorned in spirit, even though, outwardly, he may be poor, blind, lame, or have other visible defects that people consider despicable. In this sense, the ignoble become noble, the inglorious become glorious, and the poor become rich; for this very reason, the blessed Apostles, who were fishermen, became leaders throughout the earth; hence St. Anthony, though uneducated, was wiser than the wise; hence—to take an example closer to us—our Thaddeus, a Scythian and a slave, as you know, rose to the heights of confessing Christ and became renowned throughout the world.

11. And oh, the ineffable love for mankind shown to us by our good God! What a convenient way He has granted us to come to Him! For this requires neither a mediator nor money, nor waiting for some favorable opportunity; one need only desire it—and all is done. – So, do you wish to be great in heaven? Choose to be the least here. Do you wish to be called a son of God? Calm your soul from its passions. Do you wish to be seen by the eyes of God? Stand up for the truth. – But who is content with these things? – Those who willingly accept the teaching, who love to do what is right, who strive to be enriched with heavenly blessings. – May we, too, by fulfilling the life-giving commandments in this spirit, attain the kingdom of heaven with all the saints, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

263. Let everyone perform his duty wholeheartedly, as before God

263. 1) Let everyone perform his or her duties wholeheartedly, as before God. – 2) I will do mine, and you will do yours: and we will be a help to one another, working together for the common good. [4:44]

12. Both those who carry out their duties and those who oversee them must, with all attention and diligence, —with ascetic devotion—carry out their duties—whether steward, assistant steward, cellarer, cook, refectory attendant, or anyone performing any other task—so as not to fall under the terrible curse that declares: “Cursed is the man who does the Lord’s work carelessly” (Jer. 48:10); but rather, that they may become most worthy of the Lord’s favor, Who said: “Who is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master will set over his household? Blessed is that servant whom his master, upon coming, finds doing so. “Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions” (Matt. 24:45–47). Do you see what kind of honor and how great an honor He bestows upon those who serve well? It is clear, then, that those who do not serve well will receive the opposite fate. Therefore, I urge each of you to faithfully fulfill the duty entrusted to you, thereby glorifying God and securing your own salvation. Steward, provide for the physical needs of the community with prudence, giving each person what is due—not out of favoritism or partiality, but always with goodwill and brotherly love. Steward, see to it that the brotherhood is provided with food, performing your duties sincerely with the sole desire to comfort them, and keeping nothing spoiled in the storeroom. Cook, keep a clear conscience in preparing and seasoning the food, as if you were offering your service to God Himself. Refectory attendant, keep the refectory and all the vessels needed there clean, serving the brothers as you would serve the Lord. Let the others also act in this way in their respective duties.

13. I say this not to set some of you against others, but so that each one, in whatever role he has been called to, may strive to fulfill his duty to serve others, keeping God before his mind’s eye, from whom all reward is to be expected. – “And have I, a humble one, not been entrusted with the building up of my own

household?” – “Yes, and indeed the greatest task of all.” – “Therefore, just as it is my responsibility to care for and watch over your souls, to entreat and instruct each one, and to proclaim to you—both privately and in public—the truth of God and the coming sword, so too must you fulfill your duties without laziness.” – And in this way we will be one body and one spirit, just as we are called in the one hope of our calling—loving one another as members of the same body, bearing with one another, caring for one another, and bearing one another’s burdens; so that at the time of our departure we may not regret the time wasted in negligence; but let us always be well prepared for this departure, and sincerely confident that, having departed from here with a clear conscience, we may attain the kingdom of heaven.

264. They got into a fight: this exposes

264. 1) They quarreled: he rebukes them. – 2) He points to pride as the cause, which first instills the thought: “Go ahead, touch him; I’ll get him”—and then manifests itself in action. – 3) The remedy for this is to root good intentions in the heart. [4, 45]

14. I was away from you for only a short time; but upon my return, I found disorder among you, which I deem necessary to make known to all—such disorder that some, stretching out their hands, seized one another frantically, with anger and shouting. – As for one of them, this is not entirely surprising, since he is still a layperson and has not been accepted into the brotherhood; but as for the other, this is extremely surprising, since he did this while already a monk, who ought to have crucified the world and had his flesh nailed to the cross. How is it, then, brother, that you came down from the cross, as if freed from the nails, and laid your hands upon Christ Jesus in the Jewish manner? For He Himself said, “*Whatever you did for one of the least of these My brothers, you did for Me*” (Matt. 25:40). And were you not afraid of the One who spoke these words? Were you not ashamed before the Angel, the guardian of your life? Were you not afraid of the brothers and bystanders watching you? “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven,*” the Lord commanded (Matt. 5:16). But your evil deed has instead shrouded you in such darkness that through you the name of God has been blasphemed. Woe to me, a sinner! To what heights of life are we called, and to what depths have we fallen, bringing shame upon ourselves like wicked laypeople. You say that he started the fight; but have you not heard how gently the Lord said to the servant who struck Him on the cheek: “*If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike Me?*” (John 18:23). And again on the cross: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). Knowing this, you ought to have blessed those who rebuke you, prayed for those who strike you, and remained silent when blasphemed (1 Cor. 4:12–13). But you, not imitating the good—whose imitator have you become? – Look at the commandment given by the Apostle: “*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice*” (Eph. 4: 31); yet you have come to blows, pulling each other’s hair and choking one another? – Thus has God’s law been despised. “*The blacksmith forges silver in vain,*” as the prophetic word says (Jer. 6:29). In vain do I, too, labor humbly until I am exhausted. Nevertheless, even so, I will not cease to do my work, all the more so because at times I have many attentive listeners.

15. But where, then, lies the cause of such wickedness? For one must not only expose sin but also point out the remedy. An evil conscience has devised this wicked innovation—a proud self-assertion, a scheme of an evil heart. “If he says such-and-such to me,” says the impetuous one in his heart, “I will answer him this; if he treats me this way, I will repay him in kind.”—Then, when irritation arises for whatever reason, we bring out into the open what we had been pondering in secret. For it is true what was said: “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good person brings forth good things from the good treasure of the heart, and a wicked person brings forth wicked things from the wicked treasure of the heart*” (Matt. 12:34–35).

16. Let us make our hearts a treasure trove of good intentions. Then not only will we bear no malice and refrain from fighting, but even if someone strikes you on the right cheek, we will turn the other to him as well (Matt. 5:39), and whatever else may happen, we will act in accordance with the Gospel commandment. – “*Why are you perishing, O house of Israel?*” (Ezek. 33:11). It is fitting for us to ask ourselves the same question here. Why do we spend our lives day after day in vain and idleness, showing ourselves to be connoisseurs of food and drink, yet remaining ignorant when it comes to keeping God’s commandments? Would it not be better for us to strengthen ourselves from now on: not to be distressed, not to be angry, not to rage, and not to shout—for from these, like arrows, offensive words fly forth, and sometimes even something worse than that. – This I “command” you “*before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus,*

who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate: to keep” you “the commandment unstained and blameless” (1 Tim. 6: 13–14), so that I may not be compelled to subject you to the most severe penances, but rather that, by always acting in every way with propriety and in accordance with the rules, you may bring peace to me, a sinner, please God, and be made worthy of eternal blessings.

265. He further rebukes those who have quarreled; and—he invites everyone to peace, drawing inspiration for this from Holy Communion

265. 1) He further rebukes those who have quarreled; and—2) he invites everyone to peace, drawing inspiration for this from Holy Communion.—3) To this he subtly adds a word about virginity, which he praises, and—4) for which he prescribes repentance in the fire of the fear of God and self-sacrifice in tears. [4, 46]

17. Neither should I ever feel sated by this salvific discourse, nor should you by this soul-nourishing listening. But both of us must have an insatiable longing for both, like those thirsting to draw water. And this is a sign of progress, a condition, and an act of salvation. For words lead to deeds—good ones to good deeds and the opposite to the opposite. Since we desire to do good, we must make use of good teachings and wholesome conversations, so as not to err in what is right. Teaching this very thing, the Apostle says: “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only such as is good for building up faith, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” And further: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:29–32). Do you see what He commands? How precise is the definition of this commandment?—Here is what He says even more strictly in another passage: “Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24), that is, they remain, as it were, unmoved by sinful actions. If this is so, then consider what condemnation our quarreling brothers deserve. They not only quarreled but also laid hands on one another. And you, still a layperson, merely counted among us, are you raising your hands against a monk?—And you, a monk, dare to strike with a stick one who is preparing for the vows of obedience?—No; you are no longer a monk, but a gladiator; not an ascetic, but a robber; not a son of peace, but a child of wrath. Did not the blows arise from abusive words, and do blows not sometimes lead to murder?—Why should those who have acted thus be subjected to the appropriate penance, lest they come to something worse?

18. But you, beloved, as disciples of the meek and peace-loving Lord, live meekly and peacefully among yourselves—“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Be mindful of the Lord’s body and blood, which we are deemed worthy to partake of. A soul that receives these most pure gifts must not allow turmoil, frenzy, or inappropriate desires to enter it. The mouth, drawing from the immortal spring, must not utter unclean and foul words. The eyes, sanctified by precious blood, must not gaze with beastly intent or allow lewd images to be imprinted upon them. The hand that has received the divine treasure must not touch anything unworthy.

19. But all the members, as the limbs of Christ, must be kept and preserved in purity. Certainly, every virtue is great and desirable, but none as much as virginity. Virginity first shone forth in Paradise, before the serpent deceived our first parents with his sophistry; virginity was deemed worthy to be the mother of Christ; virginity makes people into angels; virginity elevates the world to incorruptibility.

20. At this point, someone will ask, “How, then, are we to attain it?”—How else, if not through countless labors and sweat?—For where a great task lies ahead, there must also be great diligence and no small amount of toil. Just as a sharp sword effectively cuts down attackers, so too must the soul—in the fear of God, as if forged in fire and tempered in the water of tears—cut down demonic thoughts, seizing them as prey. If it becomes dull, it must be sharpened again, so that it may slay not by the thousands, but by the multitudes, as is sung of David; for “many are those who fight against us from on high” (Ps. 55: 3), and the spirits of wickedness, waging war against us, are innumerable; resistance to them until the end reveals the true warrior of Christ and makes him a crown-bearer. May God’s mercy grant forgiveness to those who have sinned, and to you who are walking in righteousness, may He strengthen your zeal, so that you may fulfill every commandment of God again and again, and thereby attain the kingdom of heaven.

266. The zealous person refrains not only from evil deeds but also from evil thoughts; through this he attains the peace of God, in which he delights through divine contemplations

266. 1) The zealous person refrains not only from evil deeds but also from evil thoughts; thereby he attains the peace of God, in which he is delighted by divine contemplations. – 2) Let us therefore be mindful of ourselves and not allow thoughts to linger in our souls—especially lustful and angry ones. [4, 47]

21. The careless and the well-off consider it a sin to actually commit lawless acts, such as adultery, fornication, sodomy, impurity, and every other evil deed, against which the law is severe. But the zealous person, desiring to conform to the commandments in every detail, does not consider even unseemly and improper mental fantasies—from which unwholesome bodily movements arise—to be blameless, and strives in every way to destroy all of this within himself and to remain at peace from destructive passions: which is to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle says (Rom. 5: 1), in which, having found her rest, the soul rejoices with great joy and is delighted by an insatiable sweetness, loving to dwell in thoughts of God and to delve into the contemplation of His ineffable greatness, to the point of forgetting herself. But when it happens that the soul emerges from this state and is stirred by unspoken desires, it is then tossed and agitated like a ship in distress on a stormy sea; and if the Lord does not come to its aid, it is in danger of suffering shipwreck.

22. Therefore, we must be vigilant, not allowing wicked thoughts to linger within us, but immediately uprooting them. For if the serpent finds a place to penetrate and gradually make its way in, it will not depart until it has brought about death. Why does Scripture say that the serpent will strike at the heel of man—that is, the end of his actions—while man will strike at the head of the serpent—that is, the first intrusion of a sinful thought into the soul (Gen. 3:15)? Let us therefore stand valiantly against the invasion of thoughts, destroying them before the lust they kindle can take hold, and thereby stemming the flood of sin, so that we too may say with St. David: *“We have gone through fire and water, and You have brought us to a place of rest”* (Ps. 65:12). – However, it is not this one passion (i.e., lust) alone that disturbs and corrupts the soul; but even more so, anger; for it is said: *“My eyes are troubled by wrath”* (Ps. 6:8), and again: *“Their wrath is like that of a serpent”* (Ps. 57:5); and again: *“Fury lies in the hearts of fools”* (Eccl. 7:10); and finally: *“The rush of fury leads to his downfall”* (Sir. 1:22). From what, then, does such a passion arise? From a mindset that is proud of itself and contemptuous of others, thinking itself to be something (Gal. 6:3), towering above those below. For the one who is humble of heart, imitating the Lord, is meek and gentle, not quarrelsome or loud; and if it happens, he would rather suffer an offense than cause one—he accepts a blow but does not return it.

267. Acts of obedience are interconnected; why we must help one another and always, without refusal or delay, obey those in authority through acts of obedience

267. 1) Acts of obedience are interconnected; therefore, we must help one another and always, without refusal or delay, obey those in authority through acts of obedience. – 2) Do not give in to disturbing thoughts: for they come from the evil one. – 3) To this end, cultivate patience, which is necessary in all things. [4, 48]

23. What shall we discuss today? I will speak about the outward appearance of our life, or life according to the rule: for although we are in exile, we live as in a monastery—not just one or two of us, but many together. And although we do not have the comforts of a monastery, we manage to obtain what is necessary, albeit with difficulty—and not only for ourselves, but also for others. For brothers and fathers, as well as travelers and the poor, constantly come to us. To welcome and provide for everyone requires no small measure of spirit and no small amount of labor. Therefore, the steward must be prudent and vigilant, as a steward of God. But this will serve no purpose if the steward does not have an assistant steward who is in harmony with him and equally vigilant. Nor will the assistant steward succeed in anything if he does not have a storekeeper who follows his lead in everything. Nor will the steward’s affairs proceed as desired unless he has a good assistant in the cook. Nor will the cook’s affairs—and by extension those of the others, and through them, all the rest—go smoothly unless each of them has fellow workers among the others. Just as there are many members in a single body; yet the members care for one another, so that if one member suffers, all members suffer with it, and if one member is honored, all members rejoice with it: so too in the brotherhood, if the same order is not observed, there will be no fellowship, no peace, and no unity of mind, but there will be outcasts, divisions, and decay. – If this is indeed the case, how dare anyone act according to their own private desires, or, when it has become necessary to attend to their private affairs or handicrafts, fail to engage in the common and beneficial work? Or how dare anyone, when called upon for any task, refuse and disobey

those in authority over them? Such a person is no longer a disciple but a rebel, no longer a brother but a stranger. But if this has happened, beware of it in the future, so that whoever falls into such guilt will not have to bear the penance prescribed for such misconduct. – Do you not hear what the Apostle commands? *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you”* (Eph. 4:32). Let us, then, be like this toward one another, bearing one another’s burdens and thus fulfilling the law of Christ, as it is written (Gal. 6:2).

24. I have asked you before, and I ask you now: let us not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the weight of our thoughts, but with the joy of the Holy Spirit let us carry out the struggle set before us, looking to the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus, who grants prayer to the one who prays and victory to the one who desires to win. Do you not remember how, not long ago, a storm suddenly arose, and then the air cleared up again immediately? So it is with thoughts: they disturb us a little, and then they pass away again. Oh, if only they would never trouble us at all! And why shouldn’t we always have peace in our souls? But this is impossible, because we are fickle, and we do not even remain the same from one day to the next; how much less can this be the case always. But look, my friend, at the devil’s relentless malice: even when driven away, he returns; and though he is darkness, he transforms himself into light before the Angel, attempting to deceive us. But may the serpent depart from us, and may we always say: “We will not deny You, Christ, nor will we make our confession false.” Or do you not know from what state we have passed into what state? Have we not passed from the unseen to the seen? From ignorance to knowledge? From dishonor to honor? And we have the word, and knowledge, and praise; and you are sons, truly honorable, clothed in gold, according to your golden obedience.

25. What, then, is still lacking?—Patience, *“for you need patience,”* says the Apostle, *“so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise”* (Heb. 10:36). What, then, is this promise?—The Lord Himself said: *“I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know that I am going, and you know the way”* (John 14:2–4). *“And no one will take your joy from you”* (John 16:22). Reflecting on this and beholding the glory—inexpressible and beyond comprehension—that is to be revealed in the saints, let us endure everything with a generous spirit: if we must go hungry, we will go hungry; if we are to have enough of everything, we will be content; if we are to die, we will die, so that we may inherit eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

268. During Shrovetide, the indulgence in sensual pleasures is contrary to the spirit of Christianity

268. 1) During Shrovetide, the indulgence in sensual pleasures is contrary to the spirit of Christianity. – 2) Let us give thanks to the Lord for leading us out of the world and into our quiet life, from which so many saints have shone forth, whom we also imitate. – 3) Let us therefore be faithful to Him, preparing ourselves for the upcoming trials of our confession. [4, 49]

26. The coming days (Shrovetide) are usually regarded by people as some sort of holiday, because of the feasts and revelries that take place during this time, without realizing that these days, through abstinence from meat, proclaim general self-restraint, not gluttony and drunkenness. For these are characteristics of a Hellenic festival. As for Christians, although they may consume everything in moderation, they must not indulge the flesh in lust, as the Apostle teaches (Rom. 13:14). Evil, however, having entered into the laws of daily life, leads the world wherever it pleases. We, however, will avoid intemperance even in those things whose use is permitted to us, knowing that intemperance is the mother of sin. Thus, our forefather Adam, as long as he refrained from tasting what was forbidden, rejoiced and was glad in Paradise, filled with divine insights and inspirations. But when he broke his self-restraint and tasted from the tree of disobedience, he was immediately cast out of the Paradise of bliss. And intemperance became for him the mother of death. So the Sodomites, raving with shameful passions from their satiety with bread, brought upon themselves the wrath of God and were consumed by fire and brimstone. So the detestable Esau, carried away by his greedy eyes, gave up his birthright for a single meal. So it is with the people of God: *“The people sat down to eat and drink, and then rose up to play”* (Ex. 32:6). The same is true even today: feasts and drunkenness, shouts and demonic dances, not only by day but late into the night. Such is the evil of intemperance; through it, death entered the world.

27. We, however, must thank God that He has delivered us from such vanities and led us into a blessed life, where there is not intemperance but moderation, not drunkenness but sobriety, not riot but peace, not

noise but silence, not obscenity but thanksgiving, not lewdness but purity, holiness, and chastity. It is from this very life that all our divine fathers shone forth, who, with God's help, subdued their passions, cast out demons, became like angels, performed miracles, attained heavenly glory, and became objects of wonder in the world—among whom was the blessed Anthony, whose life we have just read and seen how God glorified him in heaven—so much so that earthly kings considered it a great honor to write to him and to read the words he wrote. We, too, the humble ones, follow in the footsteps of these blessed ones; and that we also strive to emulate them in deed is attested to by the perfection of our monks, their renunciation of the world, their separation from their homeland, their kin, and all their acquaintances, their humility and obedience—this is the confession set before us, for which we also endure persecution.

28. Let us therefore rejoice and share in one another's joy, that God has granted us all these things, and that we lead a spiritual life in which, if we so desire, we may celebrate every day and rejoice with unfading joy. Therefore, I urge you: let us hold fast even more firmly to our struggle and to the confession that lies before us; for word has already spread that the ruler is examining our case, and it seems the king's envoy may arrive soon. But let us not be intimidated by such rumors: *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31). If He has helped us in past circumstances, He will certainly help us in the future as well: let us only stand firm, let us heed only ourselves, and He will give us strength in all things, so that we may live as is pleasing to Him until the end and attain the kingdom of heaven.

269. Persecution at the door: let us face it with equanimity, trusting in God's help and taking heart from the promises for enduring persecution—for the sake of the faith

269. 1) Persecution at the door: let us face it with equanimity, trusting in God's help and taking heart from the promises for enduring persecution—for the faith. – 2) We must not associate with heretics, and especially avoid those who are faithful in word but heretics at heart. – 3) Iconoclasm wages war against the dogma of the Incarnation of the Word of God and against the commandment to honor and worship God. [4, 51]

29. We ought now to be speaking about abstinence, since Holy Lent is just around the corner. But the rumors spreading everywhere prevent us from doing so and divert both our thoughts and our words to other matters. I have already told you that the ruler is examining our case; and now, as they say, he is issuing threats through the governor of Nicomedia—to which, if we respond in a godly manner, he will not tolerate it and will hasten to carry out what he has planned. There is nothing to say in response to this, but we must prepare for new persecution, confident that where sufferings abound, there also the consolations of the Holy Spirit abound, as the Apostle says: *"For just as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also through Christ our consolation abounds." If we are grieved, it is for your comfort and salvation, which are brought about through the endurance of the very sufferings we ourselves endure; and our hope for you is well known. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort and salvation, knowing that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort*" (2 Cor. 1:5–7). In these words, the Apostle has shown us that we share with one another in sufferings and consolations, as though we were one body and one Spirit, *"just as"* we are *"called to the one hope of our calling"* (Eph. 4:4). Let us not lose heart or become discouraged, but let us resolve to stand firm together for God's cause, as good soldiers of Christ, taking up our weapons—*"not of the flesh, but powerful through God for the destruction of strongholds"* (2 Cor. 10:4)—that is, prudence, courage, chastity, and truth—and thereby fulfilling what the Lord said: *"When they persecute you in one town, flee to another"* (Matt. 10:23)—and as we go there, let us not *"worry about what we will eat, or what we will drink, or what we will wear"* (Matt. 6:31). For He Himself said: *"I will not leave you nor forsake you"* (Joshua 1:5); so He will open the doors of mercy for us there as well, and He will be our helper in all things. How then can we not rejoice, having such promises? How can we not be glad that we are disciples of the Lord? The holy Apostles were also persecuted, to whom the Lord said: *"Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven"* (Matthew 5:11–12). Therefore, the present is joyful and gladdening: for it brings us inexpressible joy, eternal life, and an everlasting kingdom.

30. *"Do not go into the roads of the Gentiles, and do not enter any town of the Samaritans"* (Matt. 10:5). We must understand this in relation to heretics: therefore, we will not enter their churches or their homes. But wherever there is a son of peace, a seed of piety, there we will stay, and there we will receive food, just as in previous years. Let us guard against those who pretend to hold the truth, who claim to be righteous

leaders but are not such, but are led astray, *“deceiving and being deceived”* (2 Tim. 3: 13), *“whose judgment is just”* (Rom. 3: 8). Let us preserve an unwavering faith and a blameless life, neither diminishing nor offending one another, but remaining whole and perfect in both.

31. The subject of the present confession is the dogma of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ may be depicted in a painting does not confess that He was visible in the flesh; for to be visible in the flesh and to be a subject suitable for iconographic representation are one and the same thing. Furthermore, whoever does not worship the holy icon of the Lord does not worship the Lord Himself. For what is depicted on the icon is the original, and whoever looks at the icon sees the original before him. Therefore, whether one honors or dishonors an icon, or worships or does not worship the image, this applies equally to the original and—if the icon depicts the Lord—to the of the Lord. Thus, whoever venerates the icon of the Lord and worships His image venerates the Lord and worships Him; but whoever does not venerate this icon and does not bow before the image does not venerate the Lord and does not worship Him. – Although iconoclasts claim to worship the Lord, they are lying. The words of Scripture apply to them: *“They claim to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him”* (1 Tim. 1:16). We, however, worship Christ and His icon—we worship the Mother of God and her icon—and the saints and their icons. And this is the apostolic teaching that we have received from our holy fathers. I urge you, my children and brothers, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, to preserve this pledge of faith whole and unharmed. —Pray, then, for us who are humble, that the Lord may grant us *“the word”* to *“open our mouths”* (Eph. 6:19), with boldness to speak the truth, so that we may not put our hope to shame, and together with you may flawlessly accomplish the task set before us, and that all of us may attain the kingdom of heaven.

270. Another rebuke of the excesses of the Olive Feast, and of worldly life in general, and thanksgiving that God has delivered the monastics from this

270. 1) Another rebuke of the excesses of the Feast of Olives, and of worldly life in general, and thanksgiving that God has delivered the monastics from this. – 2) We must grieve for the laity who live according to the spirit of the world, imitating the Apostles, the Prophets, and all the saints. [4, 52]

1. I often speak well of your life; but I do so not out of flattery, but in truth, desiring to express my pity for those who live according to the world, and with the aim of making you even more zealous. You yourselves know what is happening there now: feasts and drunkenness, songs and dances, and all the other such inventions of the enemy’s works in the world—*“whose judgment is just,”* as it is written. But our way of life is not like that: day and night we praise the Lord, according to the law handed down to us by the holy fathers; psalm singing follows psalm singing, reading follows reading, prayer follows prayer; then—in our thoughts, vigilance over our thoughts; in our hearts, instruction in the divine words; as well as timely silence and proper conversation; furthermore, we serve one another; everything among us is regulated by measure and weight, though on feast days some comfort is usually offered. For listen to what the Lord says to Judas: *“What you are going to do, do quickly.”* But none of those reclining at the table understood why He said this to him. Some were perplexed, since Judas was the treasurer, as Jesus said to him: *‘Buy what we need for the feast,’* or *‘Give something to the poor.’* Do you see that they were concerned both about the feast and about the poor? This is what we, too, as you can see, strive to fulfill in humility. But blessed be God, who has made us worthy to share in such a life; *“not because of righteous deeds that we have done”*—for we have done nothing good on earth—*“but according to His mercy”* (Titus 3:5), He has called us to it. That is why each of us, with a contrite heart, must always say: *“Who am I, O Lord, O Lord, and what is my father’s house, that You should love me so much?”*

2. And such is our calling; yet in the world you will rarely find anything like it. For there, night is followed by day amid the cares and affairs of this age, in self-deception through wealth and other troubles; so that a person has no time even to breathe: now they conspire with one another, now they clash in hostility; *“oaths and lies, murder, theft, and adultery have spread throughout the land,”* as the prophetic word says (Hosea 4:2), and many other things that are not easy to recount. Having recalled all this, the blessed Chrysostom said that scarcely even a single soul would be saved from this world. A terrible statement, yet true. And a person of good conscience cannot help but grieve and mourn over this. For are we not all brothers to one another? Are we not all of the same blood? Were we not all formed from the same dust?—If, upon seeing an animal rushing headlong into an abyss, anyone involuntarily feels pity for it, is it not all the more pitiful to witness the destruction of our brothers and fellow believers? For this reason, the blessed Apostle

wept for the enemies of the cross of Christ, praying for them with unceasing anguish of heart (Rom. 9:2–3). The prophet Jeremiah wept for Israel, and his weeping is described in full detail in Scripture. The great Moses cried out to God: *“And now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of Your book”* (Ex. 32:32); and every one of the saints, being equally filled with compassion, never forgot to pray for people who were in a similar state. – So too, if we wish to follow in their footsteps, *“let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”* (Phil. 2: 4), but also pray for the world, feeling compassion and sorrow in our hearts for those living dissolute lives, for those possessed by heresy, for those darkened by paganism, and in short: *“to make supplications and prayers for all people,”* as the Apostle has told us (1 Tim. 2: 1). By acting in this way, we will first and foremost benefit ourselves, repenting and purifying ourselves from passionate habits; having been freed from them, we will be deemed worthy to attain eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

271. Lent has put an end to the clamor and gossip, and has called the laity to a life of piety

271. 1) Lent has put an end to the clamor and gossip, and has called the laity to a life of piety. – 2) Fasting renews the soul and makes it a dwelling place for God; we must welcome it with joy and observe it. – 3) But while fasting physically, we must also fast spiritually, abstaining from passions and lusts, which the enemy presents as seemingly attractive, whereas in reality they are both hideous and bitter. – 4) Let us, moreover, diligently observe the rules of fasting, both within and outside the Church. [4, 54]

3. The season of Lent, compared to the rest of the year, is like a calm harbor where, gathering together, all people find spiritual peace. For this time is salvific not only for monks but also for laypeople, for the young and the old, for rulers and subjects, for kings and priests, for every kind of person and every age. Cities and villages are calmed from noise and gossip; instead, psalm-singing and hymns of praise, prayers and supplications are proclaimed everywhere, through which our good God, being appeased, pacifies our spirit, if we fall down before Him with a sincere heart, in fear and trembling, weeping and promising future correction and improvement. – But let the church leaders address the laity; as for me, having been appointed head over you, the most honorable ones, I will address you to briefly state what is fitting.

4. Fasting is the renewal of the soul; for the Apostle says: just as *“our outer self is wasting away,”* so *“our inner self is being renewed day by day”* (2 Cor. 4:16). If it is renewed, then it takes on beauty in the image of original beauty; and as it becomes beautiful, it lovingly draws to itself the One who said: *“I and the Father will come and make our home with him”* (John 14:23). If such is the beneficial effect of fasting—that it makes us a dwelling place of God— then we ought to embrace it with joy, without being burdened by the simplicity and frugality of the diet: for we see that the Lord, who is able to provide varied and abundant food, fed thousands of people in the desert with nothing but bread and water; moreover, the unfamiliarity with such a diet, when clothed in zeal, will cease to be unpleasant.

5. However, fasting is not limited to mere scarcity of food, but requires abstinence from all that is evil, as our holy fathers have taught. Let us therefore abstain from despondency, carelessness, laziness, envy, zealotry, ill temper, self-indulgence, and self-will; let us also abstain from carnal lust, for this multifaceted serpent attacks even those who fast. The fruit that put me to death was *“beautiful to the eye and good to eat,”* as we hear of it in Scripture. But note that it is called *“red”* in appearance, not in nature. Just as if someone, taking a pomegranate of a pleasing red color on the outside, were to find it rotten inside—so too is the sweetness of lust: it falsely promises unheard-of sweetness, but once satisfied, it turns out to be the bitterest gall—sharper than a double-edged sword, devouring the ensnared soul: just as our forefather Adam suffered, deceived by the serpent, who, having touched the forbidden fruit, found death instead of life. The same fate has befallen all who, from that time until now, have been deceived in the same way. For just as he himself, being darkness, transforms himself into an angel of light, so he knows how to transform evil into good, the bitter into the sweet, the ugly into the beautiful, the deadly into the life-giving—and in this way, ever malicious, he never ceases to deceive the world. But we will not allow ourselves to be deceived by such baits of his, nor will we suffer anything like what befalls birds, which, rushing greedily upon visible food, fall into the hunter’s net; rather, we will strip away the alluring veils from evil through reason, we will behold it naked, as it truly is, and thus easily avoid it.

6. Let us, moreover, be alert during the singing of the psalms, zealous in hymns, and attentive to the readings; let us kneel at the appointed times for each hour and work with our own hands, for it is good to work, and those who do not work are deemed unworthy to partake of food; let us bear one another’s burdens, and

above all, let us strive to be “*kind to one another, compassionate, humble, gentle, and full of patience and good deeds*” (Eph. 4:32; James 3:17). “*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 4:7); and here may you be deemed worthy to reach the bright day of the Lord’s resurrection blamelessly, and in the age to come, after the resurrection of the dead, to attain the kingdom of heaven.

272. The house of the soul must be built with greater care than a worldly house

272. 1) The house of the soul must be built with greater care than a worldly one. – 2) The materials for the house of the soul—virtues—are the fear of God and others, among which self-restraint is particularly significant. – 3) Daily fasting is better than fasting for two or three days, as both divine instructions and the examples of the Fathers attest. [4, 55]

7. Worldly men, when they build themselves an expensive house, give themselves no rest, day or night, working, planning, and worrying until they have completed their desired project; and their zeal for this is such that their whole mind is there (on the construction) and dwells there, devising every possible way to improve the ceiling and roof, to adorn the floor with various marbles, and to give fitting splendor to everything else, so that all may present a pleasing sight to lovers of such things; and if anyone were to try to distract them from such labors and pursuits, they would meet it with displeasure, as if it were a great insult. – But we, who are building a dwelling not of perishable but of imperishable material, not constructed of stone and wood but skillfully woven from spiritual virtues and graces—will we really grow lazy and, in our zeal for this work, lag far behind them? Would this not be the greatest of all injustices? That building, after having received so many and so many sensual people, and after having seen so many masters come and go, will eventually be abandoned, fall into disrepair, and be ruined; but it welcomes the Holy Spirit, for “*we are the temple of the living God, and the Spirit of God dwells in us,*” as the Divine Apostle says (1 Cor. 3: 16; 2 Cor. 6:16); and when those who possess Him depart from here, He will descend to them and abide inseparably with them for all eternity.

8. But of what material is such a building constructed?—Of virtues that are received and established in the heart. —Take, first of all, the fear of God, laying it down as a foundation, for “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Ps. 110: 10); then prudence, courage, chastity, and truth, which, holding fast to one another and being united by love, are “*built up and made complete*” (Eph. 4:16) and “*grow into the holy Church in the Lord*” (Eph. 2:21), as it is written. Let us always build such a temple within ourselves, brothers, and never cease to adorn it with every beauty of virtue, so that we may be deemed worthy to have the Holy Spirit as its inhabitant, and draw the eyes of the angels and the saints to ourselves through the attractive beauty of our lives. – But since abstinence is also one of the virtues, and we are now practicing it more than the others, let us give glory to God that we have already completed one of His trials. Let our faces have changed from what they were before; but this is a good change, glowing with the pallor of abstinence. Let our mouths be filled with bitterness from bile, due to eating late; yet our spirit is richly sweetened, being uplifted by hope. So let us rejoice, having chosen the better path and set our hearts upon it.

9. Perhaps someone will say that eating daily detracts from the perfection of fasting. – Not at all; for if that were so, the Lord would not have commanded us to ask daily for our daily bread; the prophet Elijah would not have been fed daily by ravens in the desert; St. Paul, who began living in the desert before the divine Anthony, would not have received daily bread from above; nor would St. Anthony the Great himself have preferred a daily meal to a fast lasting more than a day or a week. And it seems to me that this is the reason. – Since our body, laboring throughout the day, grows weary and exhausted, and requires rest and nourishment; so the Creator arranged it so that it might be strengthened by daily food intake and be capable once more of further labor—rather than being exhausted and enfeebled, as happens to those who go without food for two, three, or more days, —as a result of which they are unable to bow in worship alongside others, to sing loudly as they should, or to perform other acts of obedience. Thus, the daily intake of food is not permitted only to the infirm, but is also granted to the perfect, according to the rule handed down to us by our forefathers. You see now that everything among us is established according to our fathers’ tradition. And may we be granted, again and again, health of body and strength of spirit, so that we may serve the living and true God, as we await the last day, on which may you shine forth with all the saints like the sun and inherit the kingdom of heaven.

273. The week of fasting has passed. Having subdued the flesh, we have imbued the soul with virtue, that it may be pleasing to Christ the Bridegroom

273. 1) The week of fasting has passed. Having subdued the flesh, we have imbued the soul with virtue, so that it may be pleasing to Christ the Bridegroom. – 2) The soul is the bride of Christ: let us therefore keep her pure for her Bridegroom. – 3) And to this end, we must discipline the flesh. – 4) This is sorrowful, but the reward is great. [4, 57]

10. Having fasted for the first week, we now appear somewhat different to one another than we did before—we have lost weight and grown pale. But *“even though our outer self is wasting away,”* as the Apostle says, *“our inner self is being renewed day by day”* (2 Cor. 4:16). For just as the body is usually seen—when well-nourished—to be flourishing and full, so too does the soul become spiritually renewed through abstinence, so that by subduing the body, we have bestowed beauty upon the soul—that very beauty for which Saint David prayed: *“O Lord, by Your will, grant strength to my goodness”* (Ps. 29:8). It is with this very beauty that the blessed Paul affirms that he has betrothed us to Christ: *“For I have betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that, just as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ,”* (2 Cor. 11:2–3). Do you see the greatness of the gift that we have been deemed worthy to have Christ as our bridegroom? Do you see how the one who betroths us fears for our steadfastness?

11. Thus, our soul is like a betrothed maiden. Just as such a maiden refrains from seeing men, exerting every effort to preserve her purity until the time of the wedding arrives, so too must the soul, with all diligence, keep itself pure from the corrupting passions of sin until the very end, when, having departed from the bridal chamber of its body, if it is beautiful, shining with good deeds, it will gladden the holy angels; but if it is disfigured by sins, it will delight the demons to the insult of Christ—a thought and a subject of lamentation.

12. For this reason, we mortify our bodies and treat them strictly, even to the point of harshness, thereby restraining the impulses of the flesh—as with a bridle—so that it does not cast the helmsman—the mind—overboard, not only during this present season of fasting, but throughout our entire lives. For what is the ascetic life, if not the restraint of passions, dominion over thoughts, and a ceaseless struggle against invisible enemies?

13. This is painful for the flesh; but *“for our present light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen”* (2 Cor. 4:17–18). Therefore, for the sake of these invisible blessings, *“which the angels long to look into”* (1 Peter 1:12)—for the sake of Christ the Bridegroom, to whom we are betrothed—I beseech and implore you: let us keep our souls pure from evil deeds and from impure thoughts that defile us, as the Lord has said, never even entertaining any evil thoughts; for from thoughts, like fire, lust is kindled. But let us continue to keep ourselves from passions, repelling the tempter at the very first stirrings of their attraction, and let us illuminate our souls with good deeds, wholeheartedly embracing the self-restraint set before us, so that, having departed from here in purity, we may ascend to heaven in unspeakable joy and there be deemed worthy to enjoy the delights of Christ’s heavenly bridal chamber.

274. There was an onslaught from the iconoclasts. They stood firm

274. 1) There was an onslaught from the iconoclasts. We stood firm. He encourages us, assuring us that God will accept this willingness to endure everything as the deed itself. – 2) On fasting. We will continue willingly, but not of our own volition. – 3) He praises the labors of fasting, and – 4) invites us to do every work in its proper time. [4, 61]

14. Yesterday there was turmoil, today there is silence; yesterday there was agitation, today there is peace. But blessed be God, who drove away the temptation and strengthened us to remain steadfast, even while awaiting what we were threatened with. Such are true Christians! Such are genuine monks! They always keep themselves ready to face tribulations for the sake of virtue and set nothing above God’s commandments. Those (enemies and persecutors), having come, said what they had to say—and departed, not so much striking us with fear as being ashamed of their own conduct. But the Lord will fully reward you for choosing to be persecuted for His sake. For, being rich in mercy, He usually crowns those who choose what is good, even for a single resolute intention. The temptation has not yet dissipated, but still looms; for everywhere there are decrees from the authorities that no one should remain uninvolved in heretical speculation. Therefore, let us heed what the Apostle says: *“Walk wisely toward those on the outside, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person”*

(Col. 4:5–6). Here he instructs us not to throw ourselves into temptation haphazardly, nor to remain silent about the word of God; for “*if anyone draws back,*” says the Lord, “*My soul has no pleasure in him*” (Heb. 10:38). But enough of that.

15. Lent has already progressed quite a bit, and it urges us to press on with ever greater zeal, each as he chooses, “*for God loves a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:7). However, the law of communal life does not allow everyone to behave as they please; but here is the general limit of self-restraint for the obedient: the subjugation of one’s own will.

16. Fasting is good, for it tames the passions and subjugates the flesh to the spirit; tears are good, for they wash the heart clean of sins and present it pure before God; prayer is good, for it uplifts the mind and makes it a conversational partner with God; love is good, for it universally despises its own interests in favor of its neighbor; zeal is good, for it lightens our labors, makes the spirit youthful, and enables the elderly to act with youthful alacrity.

17. Let us, then, be cheerful and zealous: when it is time for psalm-singing, let us hasten to it with zeal; when it is time for work, let us work diligently; when it is time for silence, let us be silent wisely; when it is time for conversation, let us speak in moderation; in short, let us do everything in a proper and orderly manner, as we have been commanded, refraining from all confusion and impetuosity. Let there be as many bows as are customary, and let the usual chanting be performed, as much as our strength allows, while preserving our physical health. – And may the God of peace lead you to the Queen of Days, the Glorious Resurrection of Christ, and grant you the kingdom of heaven, where there is “*neither eating nor drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 14:17), with which may God enrich us through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

275. Do Not Associate with Heretics

275. 1) Do not associate with heretics. Even though we are persecuted for this, we endure it with God’s help. – 2) Blessed are those who share in Christ’s sufferings. – 3) Let us take heart. [4, 62]

18. While outside the monastery, we settled here as best we could and as circumstances permitted. Now, however, since our persecutors no longer pursue us for Christ’s sake, we must heed the prophetic words: “*Go out from among them and be separate, says the Lord*” (Isa. 52: 11; 2 Cor. 6:17). If others act differently in this regard, they themselves will give an account to the Lord on the Day of Judgment. It seems to me, however, that walking with them is tantamount to indifference in our relations with heretics. See how failing to follow them distances us from the world, and at the same time leads to sorrow, to hardship, to hunger, to prison, to death. “*But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Rom. 8:37), Who, when He sees a soul thirsting for Him, grants it the strength to endure sufferings for His sake, as the forty martyrs, whose memory we now commemorate, bear witness along with others; for we cannot say that they were of a different nature than we are; but since they loved God with a sincere heart, they were clothed with the strength, in their frail flesh, to defeat the invisible enemy and to accomplish such a great feat, which all Christians extol.

19. And truly blessed is the one who has been deemed worthy to share, even in the slightest degree, in Christ’s sufferings: persecuted as He was persecuted; beaten as He was beaten; having endured scourging as He endured it; reviled as He was reviled; imprisoned as He was imprisoned. See now why it is written: “*If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself*” (2 Tim. 2:11–13). You see what the nature and extent of the promises and warnings are.

20. Let us, then, take heart and press on—lest we bring shame upon the sufferings we have already endured through the grace of Christ: exile, imprisonment, flogging; and what more need be said? Have we not all been in prison? But such a sharing in life is also a sharing in suffering. For “*if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it*” (1 Cor. 12:26). Let us, then, always be “*one body and one Spirit, just as we were called to the one hope to which we were called*” (Eph. 4:4), with Christ as our head, so that we may please God and attain the kingdom of heaven.

276. It recounts the story of how, in Bulgaria, faithful Christians were more willing to suffer death than to eat meat during Holy

276. A legend recounts how, in Bulgaria, faithful Christians were more willing to suffer death than to eat meat during Holy Lent; and from this we draw a lesson—to stand firm against iconoclasm until death. [4, 63] In this sermon, I wish to offer you comfort through a certain legend. This legend is as follows. In Bulgaria, as those who know the matter well say, an evil decree was issued by the ruler there, ordering that Christians and our brethren held captive were to eat meat during the holy days of Lent; furthermore, those who obeyed this were to be spared, while those who disobeyed were to be put to death. The wicked ruler's decree took effect; the people gathered with their wives and children; there was much weeping and wailing—some in defense of Christian law, others out of fear of physical death; finally—alas! what pitiful news!—they were defeated and yielded to the wicked decree. But fourteen of them, separating themselves from the crowd, stood opposite them and began to urge them not to yield or submit—and, contrary to Christian law, not to agree to eat meat. At these words, cries and pleas arose from the people to yield to necessity and then atone for this sin through repentance, but not to deliver themselves to death so easily. But this did not convince or soften them in the least: they stood their ground, fixing their gaze on God and the promised bliss. The Scythian, seeing the unshakable resolve of these men, decided to use one of them to unsettle the others and win them over to his side. And after killing one of them, he sold his wife and children into slavery to the Scythians, hoping that the others, seeing this, would waver and yield... But they became even more unyielding, crying out: "We are Christians, and we stand with our departed brother." In this confession, they were all slain and died in the Lord. Do you see how the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is still powerful today?—*"Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,"* says the Lord; *"and whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me..."* And again: *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matt. 10:37, 38, 28). They obeyed the Gospel commandments, remained submissive to the Lord, and were crowned with the crown of martyrdom, following the example of the holy Maccabees—in double the number of their opponents, since there were seven of those and fourteen of these; and those suffered because they refused to eat pork, while these suffered because they refused to eat any meat whatsoever during fasting, contrary to Christian law. – O blessed men! O blessed bargain! To attain eternal rest in a single moment! What will those say to this who do not consider communion with heretics to be apostasy? If there was an apostasy of the people due to their consent to eat ordinary meat during Lent, then all the more so here, where there is communion in a sacrifice offered unlawfully. Where are those who say that suffering for the icon of Christ is not martyrdom? If there, those who suffered for refusing to violate the law of Christ's Church performed a martyr's feat; is not an even brighter act of martyrdom being performed here, when we refuse to renounce Christ Himself in His icon?—But such are the words of ignorant people, whose minds are clouded by their heretical speculations, who, through their own falls, attempt to hinder others from orthodox faith and righteous conduct. – We, however, will glorify our good God, who glorifies those who glorify Him, and who even in this generation reveals martyrs—bearing in mind that if people who are outwardly poor, uneducated, and have wives and children have left everything out of love for Christ, should we not all the more—being unmarried and having left the world behind—be prepared, when the time comes, to prove ourselves worthy of these holy defenders of the faith and piety? But this will be in due time, when Christ requires it. For now, let us stand firm in the martyrdom that constantly takes place within our consciences; let us not bow our knees to Baal; let us not yield when assailed by thoughts, but let us quench the fiery arrows of the evil one with tears, prayers, contrition, and fitting indignation against the flesh, so that we too may say with the Apostle: *"I die every day; this is my boast, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:31); and with Saint David: *"For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are regarded as sheep for slaughter"* (Ps. 43:22), with whom may we be deemed worthy to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

277. The Annunciation, the beginning of the Incarnate Economy, obliges us to celebrate it spiritually

277. 1) The Annunciation, the beginning of the Incarnate Economy, obliges us to celebrate it spiritually; – 2) and in doing so, to pray and mourn for those who do not accept it or benefit from it; – 3) imitating St. Paul the Apostle and the Prophet Moses. [4, 64]

21. The Annunciation has come—the beginning of the Lord's feasts; and we must celebrate it, not merely as many do, but with an understanding of the mystery for which we celebrate and revere it. What is

this mystery?—That the Son of God became the Son of Man, choosing the Most Holy Virgin as the mediator for this, dwelling within her and establishing a temple for Himself through her, and becoming fully human. —For what purpose? *“That He might redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons”* (Gal. 4:5), as it is written; so that we might no longer be slaves but free, no longer driven by passions but dispassionate; no longer lovers of the world but lovers of God; no longer walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. *“For those who walk according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who walk according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not submit to God’s law, nor indeed can it. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom. 8: 5 – 8). Such, in short, is the power of the sacrament! And therefore we must celebrate in a spiritual manner in his honor, and conduct ourselves spiritually in accordance with him—in truth and godliness, in love, in meekness, in peace, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit—so that the incarnate household of our Lord may not be shown to be fruitless and ineffective in relation to us.

22. And not only that; but we must also pray and mourn for the world. Why? Because the Son of God came to save the world, yet the world rejects Him: tribes and nations reject Him; barbarian peoples reject Him; even those who call upon His holy name reject Him—some through the unrighteousness of their faith, others through the wickedness of their lives. —What was He supposed to do that He did not do? —This God became man; He humbled Himself, being obedient even unto death, even death on a cross; He gave us to partake of His Body and drink His Blood; He has made us worthy to call Him our Father, Brother, Head, Teacher, Bridegroom, Co-heir, and has done many other things, which need not be mentioned in detail here. – And yet He is rejected; He is rejected, and yet He endures it: *“I did not come,”* He says, *“to judge the world, but to save the world”* (John 12:47).—What, then, should we say in this regard? That true disciples grieve over the denials of their fellow disciples, thereby showing their love both for the Teacher and for their fellow disciples; in the same way, true servants suffer in their hearts at the unfaithfulness of their brothers.

23. Therefore, the great Apostle commands us to *“make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all people, for the king, and for all who are in authority”* (1 Tim. 2:1–2). And here is what he says about himself in another passage: *“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, as my conscience testifies to me through the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart; for I could wish that I myself were cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh”* (Rom. 9:1–3). Do you see the power of love? Do you see the height of love for humanity?—Moses said the same thing to God: *“If You will forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book You have written”* (Exodus 32:32). – So too must we, as true—and not false—disciples, not only care for ourselves but also for our brothers and for the whole world, grieving for them and praying for them. For by doing what is pleasing to the Lord in this way, we will become heirs of eternal life.

278. On the Feast of the Annunciation, he extols virginity

278. 1) On the Feast of the Annunciation, he extols virginity and—2) recalling how the enemy wages war against it—urges us to guard it diligently. [4, 65]

24. On the Feast of the Annunciation, I will try to say a few words to you about the Annunciation—namely, to show just how great is the vow of virginity that we have been deemed worthy to take upon ourselves. For to whom did the Archangel Gabriel say, *“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you”*? (Luke 1:28). “Was it not to the Most Holy Virgin Mary?” And through whom did God Himself and the Word become incarnate and take on human form? “Was it not through this blessed Virgin?” Thus, this virginity gave birth to the Life of all. This virginity is the Queen of Virtues. This virginity is the Bride and Bride-Maid of Christ. And if you wish, let us hear what Blessed Paul says: *“The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but the married man is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife. Let the married woman and the virgin be distinguished: the unmarried one cares for the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit; but the married one cares for the things of the world, how to please her husband”* (1 Cor. 7:32–34). Do you see the power of these words—that marriage leaves no time to concern oneself with pleasing the Lord, but only with worldly matters?—Thus, virginity, as an inheritance, is entrusted with the better part. – But even in the Kingdom of Heaven, virginity is given precedence. For in the Revelation of Saint John it is written: *“These are the ones*

who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these will follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev. 14:4).

25. Such is the privilege granted to those who have chosen and preserved virginity! – They will follow Christ and rejoice with Him. – But let us not forget that the higher and more supernatural this matter is, the more the destroyer of our lives, the devil, strives to bring us down—more so than with other passions—through a passion opposed to his own. And who can count how many he has already brought down since the beginning of time? – And what could be more pitiful than this? – We, however, will guard our souls like the apple of our eye, keeping them pure for Christ the Bridegroom, without betraying the treasure of virginity entrusted to us, and we will not allow ourselves to suffer as fish do, who, deceived by bait, swallow the hook and meet their death. For the pleasure of the flesh is a hook that corrupts rather than nourishes, —deadly, not life-giving— from which may we be delivered by the power of God, and may we remain pure and blameless for the time to come, as long as breath remains in our nostrils, so that, departing from here in victory, we may attain the kingdom of heaven in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

279. The Passover—the feast—is longed for; but the spiritual Passover

279. 1) The Passover is a longed-for feast; but the spiritual Passover—purification from sins and passions—is even more longed for. – 2) Whoever lacks this cannot celebrate the Passover. – 3) But you are not like that; we have good practices that lead to God. – 4) Let us therefore strive earnestly for the spiritual Passover, so that we may be deemed worthy of it in the age to come. [4, 67]

26. Having passed the midpoint of Lent with God’s help, we see Passover approaching. – But why do we so earnestly long to reach this Passover, which comes and goes? Have we not been doing this for many years already? This present Passover, too, will pass. For nothing remains unchanged in this age; but our days pass like a shadow (Job 8:9), *“and our life flees faster than a swift-runner”* (Job 9:25), until it reaches its end. What then, you might ask, is Easter not something to be longed for? Of course it is—and greatly so; and how could it be otherwise? But the one that can be celebrated daily is even more to be longed for. What is it? The cleansing of sins, a contrite heart, tears of repentance, a clear conscience, the mortification of the earthly members of fornication, impurity, passion, evil lust, and every sin committed in deed. He who is granted such a disposition celebrates Passover, the much-desired feast, for the Lord not just once a year, but every day.

27. But who lacks these qualities and is instead possessed by passions—how can such a one celebrate Passover? How can one celebrate who has made his belly his god, or who is consumed by the lust of the flesh, or gnawed by envy, or immersed in the love of money, or enslaved by vanity, or gripped by other passions? Would anyone claim that a man consumed by fire is resting peacefully—or that a shipwrecked man is sailing safely? Such talk is unacceptable. For just as one who dwells in darkness is not in the light, so one who abides in sinful deeds does not celebrate Easter.

28. *“But as for you, beloved, we hope that you are in a better state and are holding fast to salvation”* (Heb. 6:9). For our life is nothing other than a preparation for the feast; for look, what is happening among us? —Psalm after psalm, reading after reading, teaching after teaching, prayer after prayer, like a circle leading us to God and uniting us with Him. How beautiful is such a way of life! How blessed and thrice-blessed is such a life!

29. Therefore, since the Passover we long for has now been set before us, let us strive toward it, and let us endeavor, to the best of our ability, to celebrate it daily—namely, the mortification of the passions and the resurrection of the virtues, in imitation of the Lord; for *“He Himself suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we might follow in His footsteps”* (1 Peter 2:21). I say this, not as one who sets himself up as a judge of others: *“For each one will bear his own burden”* (Galatians 6:5); but, as those who are aware of the grace given to us by God, let us give thanks to the Giver and glorify the Benefactor, who not only provides all that is necessary in the present, but will also grant to those who labor diligently for Him until the end all the promised blessings, that eternal Passover in heaven, which may He grant to all of us through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

280. Blessed are those who suffer with Christ; let us therefore take heart and prepare ourselves for suffering

280. Blessed are those who suffer with Christ; let us therefore take heart and prepare ourselves for suffering. [4, 70] Lent is already drawing to a close; and approaching, as its glorious crown, is the

commemoration of Christ's life-giving Passion, from which we may draw great comfort. For if our Lord and God was scourged for our sins, is it so great a thing if we, His unworthy servants, are also scourged for His sake? If He was bound, led away in chains, and imprisoned, what is so surprising if we, too, suffer for the Lord and Master? But even if we were to be flogged, we will endure the flogging; if we were to suffer ear-cutting, we will endure it; if we were to be spat upon, we will bear the spitting; finally, if we were even to die, we will surrender ourselves to such an ever-blessed death. And blessed is the one who is deemed worthy to share in any of these sufferings of Christ! This is bliss! This is immortality! Do we not hear what the Apostle says: "*Let no one cause me any trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*"? (Gal. 6:17)—as if to say: let no one despise me, for I bear upon my body the adornments of Christ, the King of kings. Such was Saint Ignatius, who called himself the "God-bearer" because he bore the sufferings of Christ upon himself. Such was Saint Eustratius, who cried out during the very midst of his sufferings: "Now I know that Christ lives within me." O blessed exclamations! O thrice-blessed souls!—For whose memory do we commemorate? Whose birthdays and days of passing do we celebrate? In whose honor do we erect sacred churches? Whose relics do we venerate?—Are they not the martyrs? Are they not the confessors? Are they not the venerable ones?—And if here they have been deemed worthy of such glory from the Lord, what brilliant glorification will they receive in the age to come? This is beyond comprehension and beyond expression.—Behold, a good bargain! Behold, a blessed exchange! —To acquire eternal and endless blessings through small labors and deeds. Let us, too, imitate them; let us mix our blood with the most holy blood of the Lord. For this is possible even now, since neither nature has changed nor has He who said: "*I am the Lord your God, and I do not change*" (Mal. 3: 6). He loves everyone equally, died for everyone, awaits everyone as inexhaustible sweetness, desires everyone's salvation—and this is wealth for Him: for He, as the Apostle says, is "*rich toward all who call upon Him*" (Rom. 10: 12). Therefore, let us call upon Him in these circumstances, and He will give strength and fortitude to our souls; let us embrace Him, and He will humble our enemies, both visible and invisible; let us endure Him, and He will crown us on the day of the resurrection of the dead, on the day of His appearing in glory, on which day may we also be deemed worthy to stand before His throne without condemnation, and, having given a good answer, receive the kingdom of heaven!

281. Contemplating the sufferings of the Lord, let us be stirred to share in His sufferings

281. 1) As we contemplate the Lord's sufferings, let us be stirred to share in His sufferings. – 2) You have already shared in His sufferings, but continue to do so, and persevere in all other virtues as well. – 3) Inspired by the hope that we too will be glorified with Him: for what joy will there be then for those who have shared in His sufferings, and what sorrow for those who have turned away from this?! – 4) Reflecting on this, let us keep ourselves pure and excel in every good deed. [4, 72]

1. This day (Holy Wednesday) is holy, and we worship: for on this day the Lord begins to endure the sufferings of the Cross for us, according to the words of David, who said: "*Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth have risen up, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ*" (Ps. 2:1–2). They gathered, plotting evil against their Lord, upon whom the treacherous Judas denied his Teacher and betrayed Him. This was followed by the traitorous kiss, the binding, and the leading of the Lord of all to His enemies for judgment; when brought before them, the Judge of all was questioned and answered, and having answered—oh, how dreadful to hear!—He was struck on the cheek by a servant and endured it with great patience, saying: "*If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?*" (John 18:23); then He is slandered and condemned; then He endures insults, mockery, taunts, spitting, ear-cutting, blows to the head with a reed, flogging, and nailing to the Cross, upon which, having ascended, He prays for His murderers: "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34); finally, He is given gall mixed with vinegar to drink, and the immortal One dies, commending His spirit to God the Father, and after His death, His side is pierced. Such, briefly recounted, are the sufferings of the Lord! – And whoever listens wisely to the Gospel accounts of these events will no longer be angry, grieved, or frenzied; nor will he be proud, look down on his brother, envy others, or seek glory; but will strive in every way to humble themselves, to be contrite, to consider themselves as dust and ashes, to desire communion with Christ's sufferings, to be conformed to His death, so that they may share in the glory of His resurrection.

2. Take courage, I say to you, for you too have already been made partakers of the Lord's sufferings and remain in fellowship with them. Consider where you are: Is it not for His word and His testimony that

you are in exile and persecution? But even before this, did you not experience imprisonment? Did you not shed blood amid insults and abuse? Have not some of our brothers died valiantly in the midst of their sufferings?—This is our praise in the Lord! And this is our gift!—But since our steadfastness is uncertain because of our fickleness, and we cannot say with certainty what the coming day will bring; therefore I urge you to stand firm for the Lord, steadfast and unwavering, striving with one heart and one mind for the faith of the Gospel, “not *wavering in the face of any opposition*” (Phil. 1: 28), “*and giving no offense in anything*” (2 Cor. 6:3), “*but in everything presenting yourselves as servants of God*” (2 Cor. 6:4) in obedience, in humility, in gentleness, in generosity, “*with great patience; for you need patience, so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a very little while, and he who is coming will come and will not delay*” (Heb. 10:36–37).

3. But if He comes and does not delay, why should we “*be discouraged by our afflictions*” (Eph. 3: 13), rather than be ready to die for the Lord every day? – For it is written: “*If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful—for you cannot deny Him*” (2 Tim. 2:11–13). What joy will the saints have when they behold the Lord coming from heaven with the angels of His power, calling them to unspeakable joy, crowning them, and reigning with them for all eternity? And what torment, on the other hand, will those who did not believe the Gospel and transgressed His commandments experience then—those who, as it is written, “*will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from His presence and from the glory of His might, when He comes to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed*” (2 Thess. 1:9–10).

4. Contemplating this with our minds and meditating on it, “*let us purify ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Cor. 7:1), striving for what is best and advancing toward perfection (Heb. 11:16; 6:1), “*hating what is evil and clinging to what is good; showing love to one another; giving preference to one another in honor; not being slothful in zeal, but abounding in the Spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer*” (Rom. 12: 9–12); so that, abiding sincerely in such purity, we may celebrate the coming Passover in a worthy manner and be deemed worthy to partake of heavenly blessings for all eternity.

282. Is it not astonishing that the Lord—such as He is—should suffer so?

282. 1) Is it not astonishing that the Lord—such as He is—should suffer so? – 2) All creation has trembled; shall we remain indifferent? – 3) For such great love toward us, let us repay Him with love and a willingness to endure all things, both in the ordinary course of our lives and in persecution. [4, 73]

5. And the remembrance of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ always leads the soul to contrition and tenderness, especially during these days (Holy Week—Friday), when each of these events took place. What, then, are these sufferings?—The murderous plot against the Lord, His arrest by the Jews, His being led to His death, His appearance before Pilate’s court, His trial, the questioning, the striking of His ears, the spitting, the insults, the mockery, His being lifted onto the cross, the nailing of His hands and feet, the tasting of gall, the piercing of His side, and all the other things that took place in between—things that the world cannot contain, nor can they be worthily described, not only by human language but by all the languages of the angels. For let us imagine how great and inexpressible this mystery is! – The Lord, who openly sees the counsels of the heart and guides every human thought, – He Himself is led into the council where they condemn Him to death; He who “*upholds all things by the word of His power*” (Heb. 1:3), He Himself is delivered into the hands of sinful men; He who binds up the waters in the clouds and waters the earth in due season, He Himself is led away bound; “*He who measured the heavens with a span, and the whole earth with a handful, and set the mountains in place with a measure*” (Isa. 40:12)—He Himself is struck by the hand of a servant; He who adorned the earth with varied flowers—this very One is crowned with a crown of thorns as a sign of shame; He who planted the tree of life in the midst of Paradise—this very One is nailed to a tree as an object of scorn. Oh, how dreadful and supernatural are these visions.

6. The sun saw this and grew dark; the moon saw it—and was eclipsed; the earth felt it—and trembled; the stones felt it—and crumbled; all creation shuddered at the sight of the Lord’s humiliation. —So the soulless and insensate elements, as if animated and sentient, out of fear of God and at the sight of these visions, departed from their proper order and were transformed: shall we, who are endowed with reason—for whom Christ died—not be crushed and weep in these days? And will we not, after this, be more speechless than the

speechless and more insensitive than stones? May it not be so with us; may it not be so; but rather, having been filled with godly wonder and transformed by a good change, let us shed tears, offer up our passions as a sacrifice, repay the Lord's insults with our own endurance of insults, and endure wounds for His wounds—some in the work of obedience, and others in the confession to come.

7. Do we not see in all this countless incentives to divine love? Who has ever been imprisoned for this? Who has ever offered himself up to be slain for the sake of his beloved? Yet our all-gracious God has endured not one or two, but countless sufferings for us who are condemned. Righteously, therefore, the blessed Apostle, reflecting on this and being filled with a deep love for God, said: *"I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither powers nor things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:38–39). For God so loved us *"that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16–17). Having nothing worthy to offer in return for such love from their own deeds, the saints offered themselves, their bodies, and their blood; and in the labors of asceticism and in their sufferings, they sang with the blessed David this song: *"How shall I repay the Lord for all He has given me?"* (Ps. 115:12). – With such a voice, let us also cry out to the Lord always, serving Him ceaselessly with an insatiable longing for Him in our souls and striving ever more for what is best, so that, together with all the saints, we may be heirs to eternal blessings.

283. I Rejoice in Your Progress in Goodness

283. 1) I rejoice in your progress in goodness. – 2) But do not stop there; press on toward what lies ahead, imitating the saints and being inspired by the promises. [4, 81]

8. I speak to you of my own free will, not under compulsion, even though I am under obligation to speak to you. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, even though I am a sinner, and I rejoice with great joy over your progress. Even if I sometimes have to rebuke you—as I did not long ago—it is so that you may recognize the love I have for you in abundance, [for a loving parent, in carefully guiding their children, does not neglect discipline. *"For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"* (Heb. 12: 7)],—*"that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing"* (James 1: 4). For I confess that you are obedient and submissive and strictly fulfill your father's commandments, as perhaps no one else in this order of monastic life does. I say this without flattery, but as it truly is. And who is so united with the Father and so obedient to the abbot in everything, in accordance with the Lord's commandments, as you, who are skilled in both? Proof of this is found in the persecutions, exiles, prisons, hostilities, and *"standing firm to the point of bloodshed"* in the struggle *"against sin"* (Heb. 12:4).—And this is not of you, but a gift from God, to whom be praise. Let others have money and possessions, monasteries, and other securities; but for me, it is enough to have you alone for my good reputation and to be adorned by you: for you are my joy and crown of glory, my life, and every other good.

9. I only ask that you not stray from your good resolve, that you set no limit on goodness and on your ascent through the degrees of perfection; but just as those who pursue material possessions never find satisfaction in the increase of wealth, so too, in spiritual excellence, do not cease to press on toward the goal until your very last breath. *"For the passions of this present time are unworthy of the glory that is to be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8:8). Do you not see in the lives of the saints with what toil and sweat they completed their life's journey? Do you not see with what shedding of blood and amid what sufferings the holy martyrs ended their lives? Why? So that they might be united with Christ. *"For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:18). Is the sun not good? Yet even it will eventually fade. Is the moon not good? Yet even it will cease to give light. Are the stars not good? Yet even they will fall. Is the sky not good? Yet it, too, will wear out like clothing, and everything will change—and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, as it is written—and an indescribably blissful life in Christ and with Christ will begin. Such are the promises given to us. And with such reminders, let us help one another to overcome the sensual with the supersensual, to subdue carnal love with divine love, and, as the Apostle teaches, *"to seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things"* (Col. 3:1), not wallowing in the mire of lusts, not drowning in the swamp of passions, *"whose end is destruction. But our life is in heaven, from where we also await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 3:19–20).

284. Having been wounded, I sought medical treatment, and—behold, I am speaking with you

284. 1) Having suffered a wound, I sought healing, and—here I am speaking with you. —I draw a lesson from this: as soon as anyone suffers a wound of sin, hasten to the healing of repentance. — 2) Do not delay; for death may overtake you, and it is dreadful to die without being cleansed and to appear before the judgment seat in that state. — 3) Pay attention to yourself, and do not listen to the enemy who teaches procrastination. [4, 82]

10. The wound in my leg has grieved you, and rightly so. For you sympathize with me in both joy and sorrow, as those who love their brothers and their father. I, for my part, take from this a lesson to teach you. In what way? When I received a wound because of my sins, I immediately needed medical treatment and appropriate rest; that is why, for three days, I was unable to communicate with you. But now that, by God's mercy, the illness has been healed, I am with you again—and here I am, speaking to you. — The same is true of spiritual wounds. — Has anyone been wounded in the heart by what they have seen or heard? Or has anyone been led astray by a demonic thought and consumed by evil lust, anger, rage, hatred, envy, strife, disobedience, or some other destructive passion? — He must immediately begin treatment—that is, repentance, contrition, weeping, sighing, and heartache—along with other remedies of repentance; and, having been properly healed, return to his former state of well-being. If this is not done, however, sin will follow sin and wound will follow wound; the passion will become incurable, and we will die in our sin.

11. But may it not be so with us, my brothers. First of all, we must guard ourselves against sinning; for what is sweeter and more blissful than having a pure soul and a mind unharmed by passions? And when we do happen to sin, due to the inclinations of our nature, we must correct ourselves as quickly as possible, leaving nothing within us unhealed even for a single hour: for death is a thief, and you do not know at what hour this thief will come—at midnight or at the sound of the bell; to depart from the body unprepared is a great misfortune, and to appear before the judgment seat of Christ in this state is exceedingly terrifying. For, as the Apostle says, *“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom and to Him we must give an account”* (Heb. 4:12–13). *“And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”* (1 Pet. 4:18). If the prophet Daniel, having seen God's judgment in a vision, was filled with dread and amazement, what will become of us when we actually stand before this judgment seat? *“A river of fire,”* it says, *“was flowing out before Him; thousands upon thousands were serving Him, and myriads stood before Him; the court was seated, and the books were opened”* (Dan. 7:10). When this happens, who will stand firm, and who will retain their courage? No one except those who have true faith and good deeds, and those who have acquired courage, righteousness, and chastity—the children of obedience.

12. Therefore, we must be vigilant with the utmost care and await the outcome with fear at every moment. And our murderous enemy, who steals from us, will not be concealed; he always tempts us to spend the present time in carelessness and negligence, while postponing obedience to the commandments until the future. Such is this serpent, who entices us with the alluring appearances of sin. But let us always repel him and turn him back by the power of God. For this reason, I, in humility, address you at this very moment with these words, so that, having heard even five words from my lips, you may be comforted and mutually encouraged by the reminder offered to you. For a reminder is good in that it always renews the soul. And by doing this in imitation of our fathers, I know and am confident that we will succeed in working out our salvation, appease God, and be deemed worthy to attain His kingdom.

285. He invites us to give thanks to God, who, even in a foreign land, provides for them with every kind of sustenance

285. 1) He invites us to give thanks to God that, even in a foreign land, He bestows upon them every kind of provision. — 2) And so that we may not lose such grace, he urges us not to grow lax in our zeal to please God, nor in our faith and hope. [4, 83]

13. We must thank the Lord for the blessings He bestows upon us, especially during our stay in a foreign land, that even while in exile we live as if in a monastery, and not only satisfy our own needs but also provide for those who come to us. For do you not see how many of our brothers come to us ceaselessly from here and there?—Where else can they turn but to God and to our humility? Do you not also see how many

other wandering fathers and brothers come to us, suffering poverty and want in every respect? – Hardly a day goes by without us welcoming someone; yet, despite all this, we have never lacked what is necessary; on the contrary, we have had everything in abundance. What else can we say, then, except that the one who made the promise is truly not a liar: “*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*”? (Matt. 6:33). – And indeed, we have been granted “*the fruit of the wheat, the wine, and the oil*” (Ps. 4:8) and other necessities—all beyond our expectations; so much so that we lack the strength to raise a voice worthy of giving thanks for God’s goodness. Even if we are somewhat constrained and burdened by such practices, consider what the reward is—and what praise for this ascends to God? Even the abbots of the monasteries themselves marvel that what they lacked the strength to do, God has enabled us to accomplish. Why? So that God’s power may be made known through our faith and hope. And it seems to me that what is happening to us now is very much like what happened during Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness. It is now the fourth year since we have neither sown nor reaped, and throughout all this time God has provided us with food that has never run out. He did not rain manna down upon us from heaven, but opened the granaries of those who had more than enough to feed the hungry. He did not bring water gushing from a rock, but poured out wine from the vessels of the pious with their own hands. And He has blessed us in many other ways, which it is not appropriate to speak of now. Is this not wonderful, is it not astonishing, is it not praiseworthy?—I will say something else in the words of the Apostle: that we are “*as though we were poor, yet making many rich; as though we had nothing, yet possessing everything*” (2 Cor. 6:10).

14. Such are the gifts of our gracious God, and such are His blessings! And it is frightening to think that, through our failure to appreciate how He has honored us in this way, we might offend our Benefactor—but let us take heed, brothers, —all together: both those who are here and those who are absent—let us earnestly fulfill the Lord’s commandments, “*and let us encourage one another in love and good deeds*” (Heb. 10: 24), not allowing ourselves to live carelessly, not yielding to the desires of the flesh and our own thoughts, not giving in to grumbling like the ancient complainers, not tempting the Lord as those tempters did back then—whether He can do this or that for us in the future. “*All things are possible to him who believes*” (Mark 9:22), as it is written. For if we believe sincerely, the Lord will grant us, according to our petitions, all that is necessary both for our salvation and for our physical life. And we will successfully traverse the wilderness of this life, enlightened by the light of truth; we will put the invisible Amalek to flight, armed with powerful spiritual weapons; and we will enter not the Promised Land—for we do not seek what is temporary and fleeting—but the Kingdom of Heaven; for He who made the promise is faithful: “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 5:10).

286. Human temptations are external and easy

286. 1) External temptations are human in nature and are easy. – 2) Demonic temptations are more severe; but we will overcome even them with the Lord’s help, if we do not grow lax in our zeal to resist them. – 3) This is a ceaseless struggle and martyrdom. [4, 84]

15. In the face of the sorrows that have befallen us, it is fitting for us to say with the Apostle: “*No temptation has overtaken us except what is common to mankind*” (1 Cor. 10:13). We say this for the sake of Theoktist, the good elder, who is dear to us in every way. What, then, is this trial? It is that he is imprisoned on an island called Chalkis, while his elder, slandered by those under his authority as if he did not pray for those in authority, was subjected to the most severe beating. Temptations are flaring up; and we are mostly held responsible for such temptations: for how can we allow the one entrusted with the administration of the monastery to fail to pray for those in authority of his own accord? Or how can we allow the brothers and fathers, having escaped imprisonment, to remain in the city and not disturb the heretics? – “*Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean*” (2 Cor. 6:17). Those who act contrary to this experience grievous tribulations. That is why we, in humility, have withdrawn from those living within the city and dwell in its outskirts, so as “*not to give occasion to those who desire occasion*” (2 Cor. 11:12); and the Lord has kept us unharmed until now. But He will continue to preserve us if we watch over ourselves, do not speak indiscriminately about this and that, and do not expose our ears to vain and disapproving words. As the Apostle says: “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person*” (Col. 4:6). – And what does the brother of God say again: “*Speak thus, and do so, as those who are free from the law, to be judged?*” (James 2:12). So we can be

sure that we will not fall into temptation at the wrong time, but will rid ourselves of these evils as if from a snare.

16. And this is precisely what human temptation is—that is, it is light. But demonic temptation—oh!—is very heavy and insidious. The enemy lies in wait every day, every hour, and every minute to tempt us, and in doing so makes resisting him very difficult and victory hard to attain. But since diligence and zeal can accomplish all that is necessary and desired, let us zealously resist and triumph with Christ's help: for He endures temptations alongside us; which is why He said, *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Let us therefore strive not to fall into this temptation and not to be at the devil's mercy. This confinement here on the island—and for such a short time at that—is, in truth, no true confinement. True confinement is to be cast out from God and cast into utter darkness. Likewise, what is this flogging here—a certain number of lashes?—True flogging is where the blows are countless and the suffering from them is endless. And *"those who have done good,"* says the Lord, *"will come forth to the resurrection of life, but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment"* (John 5: 29). Let us therefore fear this and tremble, striving with all our strength in the power of the Spirit who dwells within us, *"casting down arguments,"* as it is written, *"and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and being ready to punish every act of disobedience"* (2 Cor. 10: 4–6); and this we do unceasingly.

17. Behold, an unceasing battle! Behold, a martyrdom full of suffering! For whoever, constantly assailed by thoughts, does not yield to them and does not bow the knee to Baal, but resists and overcomes the passions—lust, anger, rage, fear—that person endures torment day by day and can say with the Apostle : *"I die daily; this is my boast, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:31); and at the end of his struggles, to boldly add: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day"* (2 Tim. 4:7–8). – May we all be worthy to say this, and then, through our deeds, be adorned with the crown of righteousness and enter the kingdom of heaven.

287. Our nature is sleepy and lazy. The word about the promises stirs it up

287. 1) Our nature is sleepy and lazy. The word about the promises stirs it up. – 2) The saints and martyrs demonstrated this in practice. – 3) But why are we sleeping? Let us rise and go forth to freedom from lust and passions – 4) And let us taste the joys and delights of paradise. [4, 85]

18. The Apostle shows what kind of dedication a teacher should have toward his students when he says to Timothy: *"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching"* (2 Tim. 4:2–3). For since our nature is clouded, worldly, and forgetful of the teaching, it always needs to be stirred up, as it were by a sharp prick, by the blow of the word, so that, awakening as from sleep, it may see the joy that lies before it. For what is it? Is it not the kingdom of heaven that is promised to us? Is it not immortal life? Is it not inexpressible joy? Is it not the sweetness of paradise? Is it not honor equal to that of the angels? Is it not eternal rest?

19. For what reason are there chains and dungeons? For what reason are there exiles and persecutions? For what reason are there torments and death? Is it not so that we may be deemed worthy of the promised blessings and avoid terrible torments? See with what joy the martyrs shed their blood, with what readiness they go to the sword, into the fire, to the beasts, and to all manner of other sufferings. See also with what delight the righteous mortify and subdue their flesh, esteeming nothing more desirable than virtue itself.

20. But why are we slumbering? Why are we giving ourselves over to destructive and corrupting passions, the sharp arrows that pierce the heart? *"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord"* (2 Cor. 6:17). Let us therefore depart from them, as from Sodom and Gomorrah, which were consumed by fire and brimstone; let us cast aside the reasoning of the flesh, which opposes and wars against the Spirit; let us free ourselves from laborious passions—and we shall find rest for our souls. What could be more peaceful than a soul undisturbed by passions and at peace with God?

21. Is this what joy and gladness are? Is this what blessed comfort and sweetness are? Do we wish to taste this sweetness?—Then let us flee from the pleasures of the flesh, which bring decay and death. For *"he who sows,"* says the Apostle, *"into his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh; but he who sows into the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit"* (Gal. 6:8). Do we wish to be glorified?—Let us despise vain

human glory, clothed in humility and adorned with every good deed. In this way, we will live this life well and be made worthy of future blessings, through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

288. *The present persecution is milder; yet we must endure it; and the present generation finds praise in this*

288. 1) The persecution we face today is less severe; yet we must endure it, and the present generation is commended for this. – 2) Let us, however, always be ready to face attacks for the sake of Orthodoxy without fear. – 3) Let us fight unceasingly against our invisible persecutor. – 4) Let us be steadfast in our hope in God, and He will give us strength. [4, 26]

22. During these three years, we have been experiencing a new kind of life: we are not entirely persecuted, yet it cannot be said that we are not persecuted; we see one another and visit one another's homes. And this is a work of God's love for humanity. Since He saw that we were growing weary under the previous persecution, He has now closed the prisons, yet He has not ceased the persecution for Orthodoxy, according to His inscrutable ways. – And this is indeed so. – However, looking at the matter as a whole, I think there are few who are persecuted for the Lord's sake. And seeing how many of our brothers come here every day, I feel a certain relief in my heart that there are so many who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but have preserved themselves for the Lord, like bright stars, in every place of His dominion. – Thus, this generation is a source of praise for those who follow; for God is truly within us, and the Church has not lost her strength, according to the Lord's unfailing promise. All those who have attacked her from time immemorial have been scattered like the foam of the sea, while she, like an indestructible rock, remains steadfast in the same faith and the same confession.

23. We should rejoice and exult in this; but at the same time, we must remain sober and vigilant, and be ready, lest temptation should suddenly arise again: for it is not enough to preserve our confession through just one, or two, or even many trials, but throughout our entire life until its very end—without being daunted by evil rumors, nor frightened by the scourges that seem ready to tear the body apart, nor by prisons that crush the flesh, nor by any other human attacks; but truly revering the One God, by whose will all things move, and fearing only eternal torments, the experience of which is unspeakably painful; for all that is present—both joyful and sorrowful—soon passes away, like dreams; which is why it is written: *"Their arrows were like sores to a child"* (Ps. 63:8).

24. Nevertheless, we must still fight against them, especially against our invisible persecutor, who attacks us daily—who ceaselessly strikes us not with physical whips but with invisible thoughts, and burns us not with material fire but with evil desires, and tempts and besieges our souls with all manner of other passions. – *"Therefore, take up the belt of truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness, and put on your feet the readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace. Above all, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Eph. 6:14–17). Such are the Apostolic commandments! We, too, in our humility, proclaim them, and we ask that you not lose heart in tribulations or grow weary in temptations, knowing that the more temptations you endure, the greater will be your crowns.

25. May God grant us strength: for He is mighty to accomplish what He has promised; He is mighty to strengthen us, not only to endure wounds, but also fire, the sword, wild beasts, and all such things. Convinced of this, the Apostle says: *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I know 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:37–39). If we resolve to act in this way, we will be engaged in a ceaseless act of martyrdom—and we will share in the lot of the martyrs.

289. *Persecution is a gift: one must live in persecution in a manner worthy of this gift; instructions are given on exactly how to do so*

289. 1) Persecution is a gift: one must live in persecution in a manner worthy of this gift; it is explained exactly how. – 2) In contrast to this, living in isolation is particularly condemned, due to the harmful consequences it brings—self-indulgence, negligence, and moral lapses. – 3) Everyone is exhorted to lead a sober and prudent life. [4, 87]

26. God has given us the greatest gift in this persecution, as He Himself said in the Gospel: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:10). Let us therefore be careful not to turn this persecution into a condemnation for ourselves by living in a manner unworthy of such a blessing. First of all, one who is persecuted should not live in isolation but should live together with other brothers. For the Lord says: *“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them”* (Matt. 18:20). Furthermore, he should not go out except when absolutely necessary, but should remain where he is welcomed, as a stranger, and engage in prayer, supplication, reading, psalm-singing, handicrafts, and other good works customary among us; he should avoid seeing women, *“withdraw from any brother who walks in disorder”* (2 Thess. 3:11), be good-natured, grateful, hopeful, content with what he has, and ready to accept sufferings for Christ: for where there is persecution, there are usually sufferings as well.

27. Those who live in isolation have sorrow as their inheritance: for the wise man says, *“Woe to the one who is alone!”* because *“if he falls, there is no one to help him up”* (Eccl. 4:10); those among them who have servants destroy monastic freedom; those who buy fields, vineyards, oxen, and mules bring upon themselves the leprosy of Gehazi. From this spring forth the love of money, greed, fickleness, a reluctance to live with fellow brothers, the habit of behaving in a peculiar manner and according to one’s own will, *“the blasphemy”* through us *“of God’s name among the Gentiles, as it is written”* (Rom. 2:24), and spiritual downfall: for how can one who lives carelessly avoid falling? *“Do you not know,”* says the Apostle, *“that you are God’s temple, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him”* (1 Cor. 3:16–17). And again he says: *“Do not deceive yourselves: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor swindlers, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor. 6: 9–10). Can we allow ourselves to be counted among those of whom it is said: *“Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal. 5: 24); and again: *“You are not of the world”* (John 15: 19); and further: *“Our citizenship is in heaven”*? (Phil. 3: 20).

28. Why, then, are we ruining our own bliss? Why are we so degrading the nobility of our calling? Why do we not imitate our brothers who live righteously, whose lives are glorious and praiseworthy before God and man? Is it not time for us to come to our senses at last? Is it not time to call ourselves back to our proper order? Is it not time to concern ourselves with our salvation, keeping before our eyes our final destiny and how we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Since we must give an account for every idle word, what answer will we give for great and grave sins? – But let us come to our senses, even if it is toward the evening of our lives; let us cast aside our passions, *“put away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light”* (Rom. 13:12), guarding our hearts in every way, and striving in every way to please the Lord, so that, having been saved in this way, we may become heirs of eternal blessings.

290. The one I saw has passed away, and the same will happen to us; why then do we cherish the flesh?

290. 1) The man I saw has passed away, and the same will happen to us; why then do we cherish the flesh? – 2) He was in distress on his deathbed: for at such times the thoughts one has cherished assail one—the good ones bring comfort, while the evil ones torment. – 3) Let us not, then, ensnare ourselves, neither with passions nor with passionate thoughts. [4, 88]

1. What could be more beneficial and salvific for the soul than the remembrance of death? This is what prompts me to speak to you today, on the occasion of the death of the Bishop of Eneia, whom you did not see as he was dying, but whom we did see; and we derived great benefit from that experience, and our hearts were moved, recognizing in ourselves what was also present in him. – So he departed and passed away, and will never return to this life. He no longer needs the heavens, the earth, the sea, the sun, the moon, or the stars; he no longer breathes this air, utters a sound from his throat, sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, smells with his nostrils, feels with his hands, walks with his feet, or does anything else characteristic of this life, whether great or small; its doors are closed to him forever, and he now awaits judgment and recompense. Reward is still in store, being treasured up, as it is written: *“And all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect apart from us”* (Heb. 11:39–40). – What, then, is to become of us? – Nothing else. Will we not suffer the very same fate? Will we not return in the same way to the earth from which we were taken? Will we not die in the same way, and become dust and ashes? Let us look into the coffins and see what becomes of our living bodies now. – Why, then, do we cherish this poor body so much, which we will soon consign to the

earth and the worms? Why do we burden ourselves with passions that we will encounter at the hour of our departure?

2. The dying man, still breathing, said that two figures—a woman and a man—had appeared to him and were mercilessly accusing him, causing him to groan, cry out for help, and tremble in terror at the prospect of leaving his body. Do you see what the sentence of death is?—Demons act as our accusers and judges. And it is so that whatever thoughts we willingly accept and put into practice, those we will see at the hour of death: if *“I set the Lord always before me”* (Ps. 15: 8), if we picture the Angel, the guardian of our life, as being near us, if we imagine such and such saints, then we will see them at our last breath; but if, on the contrary, we conjure up sinful images within ourselves and harbor demonic thoughts, then we will encounter them at that time—which is pitiful and ruinous.

3. Why, then, do we strive not to be overcome by such idols at the hour of our departure, but to find ourselves then with a pure heart, so that we too may say with boldness: *“I will sleep and rest in peace”* (Ps. 4: 9)? For to the virtuous, death is sleep, as the Lord said: *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going to wake him up”* (John 11:11). If, then, death is sleep, it is clear that it is both the cause of rest for him and the beginning of eternal life, as the Holy Apostle says: *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”*; and again, a little further on: *“Death has been swallowed up in victory. ‘Where, O death, is your sting? Where, O Hades, is your victory?’—The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor. 15:20, 54–57).—Behold, death has been swallowed up! Behold, victory has been granted! For the Lord says: *“To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”* (Rev. 2:7). Has the path to the kingdom of heaven been opened? Behold, the thrice-blessed struggle lies before us! To the victor, a crown and the taste of eternal life. Let us also strive to defeat the devil, subdue our passions, purify ourselves completely from all evil, and acquire virtues, so that we may become inhabitants of paradise and be deemed worthy to partake of the tree of life.

291. We must work toward salvation unceasingly and with willing zeal

291. 1) We must work toward salvation unceasingly and with willing zeal. – 2) Soldiers strive to serve the earthly king for earthly gain; should we then be lazy in working for the heavenly King for heavenly gain? – 3) Look at the saints: what kinds of people are not found among them, yet there is not a single lazy or negligent one. There are those among them who have fallen, but they are those who, having repented, zealously and diligently pleased God. – 4) Arise, then, you who are negligent; listen to the Apostle and be zealous. [4, 89]

4. *“There is a time for everything under heaven,”* says the Wise One (Eccl. 3:1). And the time for working out our salvation is always and everywhere. For the Apostle says: *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances”* (1 Cor. 5:16). Our salvation is defined by these three virtues: for joy is a sign of the fulfillment of all righteousness; unceasing prayer leaves no room for the devil to attack us; the gift of gratitude is a testimony to our love for God. Having thus fortified ourselves on all sides with these deeds, let us zealously please God, not losing heart under any circumstances, and not slacking off through negligence—neither in the performance of our duties, nor in psalm-singing, nor in manual labor—but doing everything with a willing spirit, *“as good builders, using the various gifts of God”* (1 Peter 4:1).

5. Do we not see with what zeal soldiers rush alongside their king to their task? And what task is that?! To war, to slaughter, to death. And yet, for the sake of fleeting glory and transient wealth, they readily throw themselves into everything. But we, who are called to the kingdom of heaven, to unspeakable joy, to eternal life—will we present ourselves as good soldiers of Christ with laziness and carelessness, rather than with all zeal and vigor?

6. Read the book I hold in my hands—and you will see and come to know the virtues of the holy fathers depicted in it. How great is their zeal! What a fierce burning of the spirit! What feats! And how the All-Good God glorified them, revealing them as if they were gods themselves, through the signs and wonders they performed. Here shone not only those who were good from the beginning and knew no sin—but also those who strayed from the right path and fell into grave sins, yet were set aright by the most sincere repentance, so that no one has any excuse for carelessness or neglect regarding salvation; their condition stems from nothing other than an insensitive and hardened heart, created within themselves by their unrepentant lives.

7. To such people the Apostle cries out: *“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light”* (Eph. 5:14). *“Or do you disregard His riches, His kindness, His patience, and His long-suffering, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you to repentance? But because of your hard-heartedness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds”* (Rom. 2:4–6). Behold this, O careless one; fear the threat, and arise from the sleep of carelessness! – Thus has the venerable Brother Candid departed; before him, it happened to another, and after him, someone else will follow. And there is no one who will remain here forever. We will all pass away. But blessed is the one who has lived well, for he has successfully completed his purchase and will receive an eternal reward, having acquired the best through zeal and diligence. But since the market is still open, and the exchange for the kingdom of heaven is yet to come, I urge you, brothers and fathers: let us all stay alert, let us all be sober-minded, let us all hasten to purchase the divine and imperishable blessings, so that together with all our brothers we may become heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

292. I command everyone to strive for salvation without fail

292. 1) I command everyone to strive earnestly for salvation without fail. – 2) Moreover, one must refrain from judging others by outward appearances: for what matters most is one’s inner state. – 3) Let everyone be zealous for this inner life, rejecting evil thoughts and not indulging the movements of the passions, for this disrupts everything within. [4, 90]

8. I urge those who are zealous for salvation to be ever more zealous; and I implore the negligent to rise up from their negligence and carelessness. For *“now is the time”* (this life) *“the favorable time; now is the day of salvation”* (2 Cor. 6:2)—which, if we lose, we will never find again. Let not even a single day pass for us in negligence and carelessness, but let us take every care to continue treasuring something of the eternal treasures: prayer, supplication, entreaty, thanksgiving, tears, contrition, enlightenment of the mind, and heavenly contemplations.

9. Moreover, let us not judge what is in our brothers based on what is within us; but let us rather think that each one is working out his own salvation secretly within himself, even though outwardly he may appear different. Did it not happen in the time of our fathers that many who did not appear to be anything shone incomparably brighter than those who did? And in our brotherhood it has happened many times that those who were of humble and obscure origin shone more brightly than others, especially during times of martyrdom. – And why is that? It seems to me that this is not so much due to outward diligence and zeal as to one’s inner disposition. For where there is inner peace and purity of heart, meekness and silence, there is the kingdom of virtue; and it is there that the Lord looks, as it is written: *“Whom shall I look upon, but the meek and silent, and those who tremble at My words?”* (Isa. 66:2)?

10. Let everyone strive to present himself pure before the Lord in good conscience, without opening the door to the devil by entertaining sinful thoughts. For when we entertain them, you know how we suffer, how we run wild, how we change, and what bitterness we gather under the guise of pleasure; but when we come to our senses and return to what is right, what peace we taste once more, and what sweetest, honeyed stillness, as if taking refuge in a harbor after a storm. It is therefore worthy of wonder how we—when virtue is so sweet, lovely, and desirable, and sin so bitter, ruinous, and repulsive—are captivated by sin rather than clinging all the more to virtue. For the most part, this is due to the weakness of our nature, and to the fact that *“the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth”* (Gen. 8:21). Nevertheless, let us not delay, and let us spare no effort to return ourselves to the right path; and the Lord, seeing our labor, will avenge us, and for our painful efforts will reward us with eternal rewards, and for our patience in these afflictions will crown us with the crown of righteousness, will number us among the saints, and will make us worthy of His kingdom.

293. Let us be vigilant and fight with zeal: for our enemies are many and ever watchful

293. 1) Let us be vigilant and fight with vigor: for our enemies are many and relentless. – But there is no need to fear them: for we have mighty helpers and weapons of victory. – 2) In visible battle, there are crowns for victory; but in our invisible battle, whoever does not yield to the enemy is already a victor and receives crowns. – 3) Let us therefore show valor in the struggle, and we shall be blessed. [4, 91]

11. Let us watch over ourselves intently and unceasingly: for day and night, those waging war against us do not retreat. Who, then, are they? The spirits of malice, the rulers of the darkness of this age, whose

number is immeasurable and whose fury against us is indescribable. — Yet let us not fear them, nor be terrified by them. We, too, have a fellow warrior and intercessor, the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who “*took our infirmities and bore our diseases*” (Matt. 8:17), Who, “*having Himself suffered when tempted, is able to help those who are being tempted*” (Heb. 2:18), to whom we cry out with boldness: “*Judge, O Lord, those who wrong me; defeat those who fight against me. Take up the spear and the shield, and rise up to my aid; draw the sword, and hold it against those who pursue me*” (Ps. 34:1–3). — For indeed, our enemies persecute us and seek our destruction, setting snares in our paths and attempting in every way to cast us into the pit of sin. But we, too, as warriors, oppose them, “*clothed in the armor of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation*” (1 Thess. 5:8); for with these weapons the enemy is put to flight.

12. And here is what is marvelous: that for us, the very battle itself is the crown. In physical wrestling at the games, if the wrestler does not defeat his opponent, he is not crowned. Here, however, if the one being fought against is not defeated by his opponent, he is thereby already crowned. This is evident from what was revealed to one of our holy fathers concerning a certain disciple who was tempted seven times to retire to rest without the elder’s blessing, and seven times overcame this temptation; and for such endurance, he received seven crowns. — Therefore, if there are crowns to be won in the struggle itself, let us, I beg you, courageously resist our adversaries, without growing weary from the length of the struggle. Was not Saint Sarah severely afflicted by the demon of fornication for forty years? And yet she did not grow weary nor lose heart. Is it not also known how a certain novice, struggling in the same way, when his abbot asked him, “Do you want me to pray for an end to this struggle?” refused, realizing that victorious crowns are prepared for those who endure such struggles?

13. Nothing is as powerful as prayer, tears, and a contrite heart in overcoming this battle. Therefore, when the enemy attacks—or even strikes us, through our own inattention, by letting the arrow of lust enter our hearts—let us immediately turn to prayer against him, and he will flee without delay; let us shed tears, and the ember of seductive pleasure will be extinguished; let us humble ourselves, and the Lord will lift us up. — And blessed is the one who ceaselessly exerts himself for God’s work, enduring the hardships of obedience and keeping his purity unblemished. Having reached the end of his struggles, with complete joy and unspeakable delight, he will depart from here, and “*he will not fear the report of evil,*” as Saint David sings (Ps. 111:7). Do we not see how warriors, having demonstrated their valor in battle, return home with triumph and joy, displaying the marks of struggle and victory? — So we think of those who have shown their valor in the invisible battle and have labored in it with good deeds—that they will be glorified in the great city, of which God is the architect and builder, and will be praised by the angels, crowned by the Lord, and inherit eternal consolations. May we, too, be deemed worthy to attain these things through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

294. God sends sorrows and persecutions as trials; but after the trial, He puts an end to them

294. God sends sorrows and persecutions as a test; but after the test, He puts an end to them. Our persecution continues because we have not yet reached the shelter. [4, 92] The desire of our hearts and our prayer to God is for the peace of God’s Church. For what could be more beneficial than peace, that we might live a quiet and peaceful life in our monasteries?—But even the prolongation of persecution may not be without benefit in that it provides an opportunity to prove ourselves most skilled in the faith. Why does the Apostle say: “*I take pleasure in weaknesses, in hardships, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor. 12:10)? So, setting aside the questions: “How long?” and “To what end?”—let us entrust all our sorrow about this to God, Who knows how to arrange the duration of these or those circumstances for the good. Listen to what Scripture says: “*God tested Abraham*” (Gen. 22:1). You might say: “He tested him, but only a little?” No, on the contrary: for many years, and with many trials; and when He saw that he had become perfect in faith, He said to him: “*Now I know that you fear God, and that you have not withheld your beloved son from Me*” (Gen. 22:12). He also tested Job with even greater trials, over many years. And when He saw that he was perfect in patience, He said to him, “*Did you think I had created you for any other purpose than to prove that you are righteous?*” (Job 40:3). In the same way, He tested the other prophets, the Holy Apostles, the blessed martyrs, and all the reverend and righteous ones—through many sorrows and over the course of many years—and He bore witness to them and accepted them. The same must be assumed regarding us. “*We have not yet come to the blood of Christ, having striven*

against sin” (Heb. 12:4); we have not yet been burned enough in the fire of afflictions; we have not yet sufficiently demonstrated the sincerity of our faith through trials.—That is why the persecution still continues!

295. No matter how sinful a person may be, they can repent: examples

295. 1) No matter how sinful a person may be, they can repent: examples—David the Robber, Mary of Egypt, and others. – 2) Do not think that they have now enjoyed sin here and will taste the blessings of paradise in the future. There is no joy for sinners: only virtue brings joy. [4, 93]

14. There is no insurmountable obstacle to salvation for those who sincerely desire it; nor is it impossible to repent and turn to God, even for those who have reached the very depths of evil. And there is abundant evidence that this statement is true. One of the many such testimonies is the repentance of David, the leader of the bandits—the story of whom was recently read in the church lectionary. Here we see what this murderer, once filled with every kind of evil, was like, and how, having repented and turned to God, he attained such perfection that he even healed those possessed by demons. For the Angel said to him:

This also reveals God’s boundless love for humanity, for He not only forgave him his murders but also made him a bearer of miracles. —Do you wish to see another testimony? Look at Manasseh, who for fifty-two years led Israel astray from God and forced them to serve soulless idols; yet even he, having repented sincerely, was saved, and in spiritual joy sang a hymn to God, which the Church of God still sings to this day. – As for those who indulged in carnal love and later repented, there are so many that they cannot be counted. Among them is the divine David, who, after committing adultery and murder, once again received the gift of prophecy; then Mary of Egypt, who, after insatiably sinning in this manner, ascended to angelic likeness and was granted the gift of clairvoyance, and so on and so forth. Thus, no one has any reason to think or say that anyone who has sinned cannot, through repentance, ascend to salvation.

15. Keeping such examples in mind, let us also take on even greater zeal for salvation and greater hope in attaining it, believing that if God, through His ineffable mercy, called and saved those who had fallen into such depths of evil, all the more will He save us, who serve Him day and night. – When you hear, however, of a sinner’s conversion, let no one say:

? – One who is enslaved by sin tastes neither the delights of this world nor those of the next. What delight, tell me, is there in fornication, gluttony, greed, theft, and being enslaved by other passions? Do not such lustful people burn as if in a fire, like those afflicted with a fever? So it would be more accurate to say that such people are already suffering punishment here, and in the age to come will be subjected to eternal torments for their pernicious and corrupting pleasures here on earth. To wail and tear at one’s garments, rather than to taste sweetness—this is the lot of the sinful and the depraved. But those who love virtue and live virtuously always possess these and other blessings, tasting the ineffable sweetness of dispassion, just as all the saints, who always rejoice in the Lord and regard everything else as secondary compared to love for God. – By imitating them, we too will rejoice and share in one another’s joy, being zealous for our own salvation, and for that reason diligently practicing the virtues: patience, obedience, the subjugation of our own will, and other forms of self-discipline; and, having been perfected in them, we will become heirs of eternal life.

296. People in this world endure much for the sake of trivial benefits: should we not endure for the sake of eternal blessings?

296. 1) Many worldly people endure much for the sake of fleeting benefits: should we not endure for the sake of eternal blessings? – 2) Besides, what sorrows do we have?! And what is to be expected?! – 3) Let us therefore bear everything cheerfully, with unfailing hope. [4, 94]

16. That the monastic life is narrow and sorrowful is evident from what the Lord said: “*If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*” (Matt. 16:24). And that worldly life is also painful is clearly attested by what we see in it. But let us leave worldly people to deal with their own sorrows; let us look, as we ought, to our own. Our sorrow is accompanied by the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that even what seems sorrowful to us shares in joy, through the hope reserved for us in heaven. Is it not, then, a shame for us if, while others endure so much for the sake of some trifling glory or reward, we do not cheerfully bear the insignificant sorrows that befall us for the sake of such great heavenly blessings?

17. And what sorrows do we have?—Some task assigned against our will, some command we do not like, something unpleasant in food, drink, clothing, footwear, in the place or manner of obedience, and other such things that weigh us down. But all such things, though they may be sorrowful, are not such as to divert

us from what is right: for *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us”* (Rom. 8:18), for which—even if we were burned at the stake every day—we ought to endure everything, and not merely such light and bearable trials. I say this not to stir up feelings of sorrow, but so that we may come to know the love with which our good God has loved us—He who has taken us out of this worldly life and raised us to this sacred and heavenly calling—and who, even in what He requires of us, does not require it for Himself; for He lacks nothing, being rich in all things, but for our own sake, so that, having been blessed by Him, we may be saved.

18. Therefore, having cast aside all double-mindedness, let us, through our endurance, win our souls, keeping ourselves above every temptation that arises and not allowing any thought to prevail over us when, for the purpose of testing and instructing us, something sorrowful is permitted to befall us and cast a shadow over our lives; so that we too may have the boldness to say with the Apostle: *“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of the Lord Jesus”* (2 Cor. 4:8–10); and that, by pleasing God with such a good disposition and such a well-ordered life, we may become heirs of the kingdom of heaven, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

297. All travelers endure hardships in the hope of rest; let us also endure all things in the hope of eternal rest, so that God may be glorified through us

297. 1) All travelers endure hardships in the hope of rest: let us all endure hardships in the hope of eternal rest, so that God may be glorified through us. – 2) But when is God glorified through us? – When our good deeds are seen. – And let us be such. – 3) And to this end, let us imitate the holy fathers, the Apostles, and the Lord Himself. – 4) The Lord endured everything for our sake: let us also endure; otherwise, there is no salvation for us. – 5) I have endured: humble yourselves, too, under the mighty hand of God. [4, 95]

19. Everyone who travels a long and arduous path labors and endures, facing various hardships of the journey, but, in the hope of a peaceful haven, bears the sorrow and overcomes the difficulties, pressing forward with all zeal and effort. – What does this parable teach us? That we, too, are on a journey in this life—a journey that is narrow and sorrowful, long and arduous. And this path cannot be any other way, since throughout our lives we must preserve virginity and chastity, and observe submission and obedience; and at the same time, *“cast down every argument and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor. 10: 4–5), and do everything else that is inseparably connected with this, according to the rules of the monastic life. But here, too, there is a happy ending. What is it? Eternal life, which the faithful God has promised to those who endure His . Let us therefore, for the sake of this eternal life, bear all the sorrows of this present life with gratitude and patience, glorifying God both in our bodies and in our spirits.

20. And how we glorify God, I will explain by citing a single instance. Two days ago, some laypeople came here to see us, and upon seeing how we live in unity of mind—performing the labors of obedience with our hands and repeating the psalms of David with our lips—they glorified God and gave thanks, having been edified. – Thus has been fulfilled in us what the Lord said: *“Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven”* (Matt. 5:16). – And so you have glorified God in body and spirit on this occasion. But strive also to glorify Him always, in all circumstances, conducting yourselves in a godly manner and shunning what is unseemly, as St. David exhorts: *“Do not envy the wicked, nor be jealous of those who do iniquity; for they will wither away like grass, and fall off like the green of the field”* (Ps. 36: 1–2). But be zealous for the righteous and those who do good.

21. In everyday life, those who have devoted themselves to a particular art strive to learn the principles of their chosen craft not from the worst but from the best masters: a carpenter from a skilled carpenter, a painter from the most accomplished painter; and in general, no one will imitate the unskilled or the ignorant in anything, but if they do imitate, it will be the most skilled and knowledgeable. If this is the rule and law regarding material and transitory things, how much more so in the art of arts and the science of sciences must we order our lives according to the examples of the holy men, rather than be guided by those who are their opposites. Let us, then, imitate those who, from youth to old age, remained obedient—not merely the ancient saints, but also those who have shone forth in our brotherhood; let us imitate those who, through their simplicity, thwarted all the wiles of the devil; let us imitate those who, through unquestioning obedience, guided their ascetic path well; and if you will, let us imitate the One who commanded: *“Be imitators of me,*

just as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1); and in another place: *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God, a fragrant aroma"* (Eph. 5:1–2).

22. Thus Christ gave Himself to God as a sacrifice and offering for us; should we not, then, endure a little sorrow for His sake with thanksgiving? Christ accepted every reproach, as it is written: *"The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen upon me"* (Ps. 68:10); should we not endure a few reproachful and insulting words? How then can we dwell with the saints if we do not follow in their footsteps? How can we reign with Christ if we do not conform to His death and share in His most pure sufferings?—*"And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* (1 Peter 4:18).—See how clearly it is stated that *"the righteous are scarcely saved."* And one who is impatient, intolerant, and holds onto past insults—and thereby becomes inflamed and agitated, having no peace with God—cannot even be called righteous. – Where, then, can he be saved? – Are we not, therefore, by necessity cut off from the fellowship of the Kinovites because we act this way? And, upon departing from here, will we not inevitably fall under eternal condemnation?

23. In my madness I say: Was I not also a novice? Did I not have an abbot, a treasurer, a spiritual and earthly father? Did I not have spiritual and earthly brothers? I moved among them as if in a fire, tossed back and forth and locked in battle with two opposing ways of life. But I could not be saved in any other way except through patience, proper confession, and attributing all blame to myself—for otherwise it is impossible to have a peaceful soul in times of sorrow. *"Humble yourselves"* and submit *"under the mighty hand of God"* (1 Peter 5:6); and you will find rest and peace. It is written: *"Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2). Let us therefore cast away deceit from our souls, learn to do good, and present ourselves pure before Him who has blessed us, before that dreadful day comes when we must give an account for every idle word, so that, having departed from this life with a conscience as clear as possible, we may prove worthy of the inheritance of eternal life.

298. No matter how much I explain, restlessness still breaks through in some of you

298. 1) No matter how much I explain, restlessness still breaks through in some of you. – 2) This is due to a lack of love; and without it, what kind of disciples of Christ are we? – 3) Let us therefore seek peace, embracing a zealous love for what is good. [4, 96]

24. It would seem that, since I often speak to you, there is no longer any need to instruct you further, assuming that you are sufficiently inclined toward proper conduct and have no need to be reminded of that. However, I now see that this is still extremely necessary; for, despite my frequent exhortations to you, restlessness and stubbornness continue to prevail in some of you. And I am amazed that those who, given the time, ought to be teachers, are still acting like infants, speaking nonsense and behaving foolishly for no reason.

25. The reason for this is a lack of love. For if, according to the Apostle, *"love is patient, love is kind; it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs, it does not rejoice in injustice but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"* (1 Cor. 13: 4–7): then it is clear that when love is absent, the opposite takes hold within us—unbelief, despair, impatience, discord, and insolence. – But how, while in such a state of mind, can we rightly call ourselves disciples of the Lord, when He Himself says with decisive words: *"By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35); And again in another place: *"If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:31–32). Therefore, if we do not have true love, but instead harbor enmity, strife, and discord, then we are not Christ's disciples but Christ's enemies, though this is a harsh word. After this, why should we, poor souls, even live? Why should we breathe this air if we do not do what pleases the Lord?

26. *"Whoever leads you astray will bear the penalty, whoever he may be"* (Gal. 5:10). I beg you, therefore, to seek *"peace with all"* and *"holiness,"* for without it no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of God's grace; see to it that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, defiling many" (Heb. 12:14–15). What, then, is this?—It is a godly zeal that will prompt you to show, toward those who are deceitful, that you hate evil and turn away from it, yet regard them *"not as enemies, but as brothers to be admonished"* (2 Thess. 3:15), so that you may be worthy of the Apostle's approval, expressed elsewhere as follows: *"in everything, show yourselves to be blameless"* (2 Cor. 7:11).—I am telling you this out of love

and concern for you, and also out of fear for the fate of Elijah. But if you do not reason this way, then, before long, the days will come when this tongue will be taken from you, and then you will realize that what I, the humble one, told you was true. – May the God of peace, who desires all to be saved, preserve us all in peace on the path of His commandments and lead us into His eternal kingdom.

299. St. Theodore did not accept what had been sent to the monastery by those who had repented of iconoclastic heresy but had subsequently fallen away again

299. St. Theodore refused to accept what had been sent to the monastery by those who had repented of iconoclastic heresy but had subsequently fallen away again. Some of the Orthodox reproached him, saying that by doing so he was stirring up hostility toward the Orthodox and persecution. St. Theodore justifies his conduct. [4, 97] Once again, they say, a war has broken out—an iconoclastic war, a civil war—and what could be more disastrous than when Christians exterminate one another? But we must always pray to God to bring peace to our fellow citizens, both in worldly matters and in matters of faith. For this reason, we sit here in humility. Yet we must not simply sit idly by, but with great attention and faithfulness to our purpose, lest, while preaching otherwise to others, we ourselves prove unworthy (1 Cor. 9:27). We say this with those in mind who, having undergone penance, have once again gone over to the side of the heretics. We recently refused to accept what they sent, deeming it harmful and dangerous to the soul; upon learning of this, some of the fathers among us were indignant, as if this had sparked a disturbance. We, however, deny any intention to stir up turmoil; yet we cannot, simply because some are in turmoil, diminish the truth in any way or defile the confession of Christ—fearing the sin of indifference in the faith, which one of the Prophets condemns thus: *“They have not distinguished between the holy and the profane, nor have they separated the unclean from the clean”* (Ezek. 22:26). In accordance with this, the Holy Apostle says: *“What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what communion has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the Church of God with idols?”* (2 Cor. 6:14–16). And again: *“We command you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from any brother who walks in disorder, and not according to the tradition that you received from us”* (2 Thess. 3:6). And again: *“If any brother is found to be a fornicator, or a greedy person, or an idolater, or a slanderer, or a drunkard, or a swindler—do not even eat with such a one”* (1 Thess. 5:11). All this terrifies and oppresses our hearts, and for this reason we have resolved to endure every sorrow and hardship rather than betray our faithfulness and salvation. But since it is written: *“If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Cor. 12: 26)—and you yourselves are our true members and the innermost parts of our hearts—we found it necessary to inform you of what is happening, so that you may know, and knowing, may share in our suffering as you reflect on what has taken place here. Judge for yourselves what is being said: Is it right to regard as equals those who were expelled from their own monasteries for the sake of the truth and those who took possession of the monasteries through betrayal of the truth, and to have fellowship with both groups alike?—So, have those who were expelled endured their exile in vain?! Did we, too, labor in vain for the truth in the past?! Moreover, we turn out to be deceivers, saying one thing to some and another to others. Those who faithfully hold to the confession of the faith will rightly lament against us if they see that we associate with those who have led the Church of God astray. But let us not be led astray by them and, together with them, bring ruin upon ourselves. In the past, we stood firm, as the times demanded; and now we must likewise stand firm, without wavering; for the Apostle says: *“If the righteous man stumbles, my soul takes no pleasure in him. “But we have not the faith that leads to destruction, but the faith that leads to salvation”* (Heb. 10: 38, 39). Do you see how he called wavering “destruction”?—Why else does he say in another place: *“I am innocent of the blood of anyone; for I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God”* (Acts 20: 26–27). So too, grounded in the Apostolic teaching and the teaching of our holy fathers—which is in harmony with the Apostolic—we refrain from fellowship with heretics and those led astray by them, and we defend the true confession, *“in which we stand and boast in the hope of God’s glory”* (Rom. 5: 2), striving to walk uprightly and to excel in all other virtues, *“so that we may be complete and whole, lacking nothing”* (James 1:4), *“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:7).

300. Let us endure all afflictions, both external and internal, using the means customary to us for this purpose, above all prayer with unshakable faith

300. 1) Let us endure all afflictions, both external and internal, using the means customary to us for this purpose, above all prayer with unshakable faith. – 2) Our provisions had run low; but the Lord soon helped us. Let us hope that He will continue to help us, as He did James, Elijah, and others. [4, 98]

1. No one becomes a martyr without enduring suffering, and no one is crowned unless he has successfully endured the struggle in the proper manner (2 Tim. 2:5). Let us not grow weary, but bear all things with equanimity: rebukes and reproaches, like lashes from a whip; the curbing of our desires, like the shedding of blood; and the intrusions of thoughts, like fires kindled by the devil. Fire is extinguished by pouring water on it, and the flame of lust by the shedding of tears. Weariness from labor passes with peaceful rest on a bed; and the burden of the mind caused by thoughts is healed by confiding them in trust. These are the saving remedies. By using them wisely, be healed more and more in the Lord. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask,”* as the brother of God exhorts, *“from God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without any doubting; for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. Let not such a person think that he will receive anything from God. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:5–8). Let us not, then, be double-minded, nor let our petitions be swayed by doubt. But let our requests be made to God with thanksgiving and sincere faith (Phil. 4:6), and we will certainly receive what we ask for: the foreign fire will be extinguished; frenzied thoughts will dissipate, and with God’s help we will successfully accomplish the task of obedience that lies before us.

2. I would like you to know that our treasury has very little left (John 12:6); meanwhile, expenses are mounting, but income is not increasing; now even the wine has run out, which of course causes the most vulnerable among us great sorrow. But take heart: the Lord has already provided for us from the harvest of wheat and wine, and other necessities, and He will provide again if we place our hope entirely in Him and always do what is pleasing to Him, without wavering in our confidence in Him. For He Himself said, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Josh. 1:5); and again: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”* (Matt. 6:33). And even if we sometimes fall short, it is no surprise: this is a trial and a test of virtue. Was not Patriarch Jacob righteous? And yet, pressed by hunger, he sent our forefathers to Egypt to buy wheat. Was not the prophet Elijah righteous? Yet even he, having come to Zarephath of Sidon, cried out to the widow: *“Bring me now a little water, that I may drink, and a morsel of bread, that I may eat”* (1 Kings 17: 10–11). He asked for nothing else but the most basic and necessary food. And who is this? Elijah, who sealed the heavens with his words to withhold rain, and who again, through prayer, ended this famine. – As for us, who are insignificant both in outward circumstances and in inner disposition, even if we suffer such things, there will be nothing improper about it; and we should not be burdened by them, but always be grateful, both in times of abundance and in times of scarcity; for this is the mark of Christ’s disciples, and by adopting this attitude, we will not only bear the sorrows of this present life with ease but also be deemed worthy of future blessings.

301. Enemies surround us and attack us unexpectedly, always and everywhere: we must protect ourselves

301. 1) Enemies surround us and attack us unexpectedly, always and everywhere: we must protect ourselves. – 2) How? Through the fear of God and trust in Him, through tears and instruction in the Word of God; by guarding the mind and refuting evil thoughts. – 3) Yesterday you sang in an unruly manner. This offends the Holy Spirit, and instead of benefit, it causes harm to the soul. From now on, sing in a proper manner. [4, 99]

3. During the recent raids by the Agarians, we were all filled with terror, fearing that we might fall into the murderous hands of these godless men. And this fear was not unfounded. But as for the raids on us by demons, we neither think about them nor fear that, through our carelessness, we might fall captive to the spirits of malice; although we know that attacks by visible enemies occur at a specific time, and word of them, coming in advance, gives those who desire freedom the chance to flee somewhere; whereas with regard to invisible enemies, nothing of the sort is possible, because day and night, and at every hour, they are occupied with nothing but attacking us, barely allowing us a moment’s respite; so there is greater fear here, and greater self-protection is therefore required, so as not to fall prey to these enemies and to avoid their soul-destroying slanders.

4. Where, then, can we flee? Certainly to God, as St. David sings: *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble”* (Ps. 45: 2); and: *“The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them”* (Ps. 33: 8); and again: *“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever in Jerusalem”* (Ps. 124: 1). Therefore, if we have the fear of God and confidence in Him, we will not be afraid of our enemies. But let us bear in mind that fortresses are taken by enemies for the most part because of a shortage of bread and water. What do we have instead?—tears and the word of God, by which and in which the soul is nourished and saved, but when these are lacking, the soul decays and is taken captive. *“Let the word of God dwell in us richly,”* as it is written (Col. 3:16), and may our tears never run dry. There is, however, also what is called “internal betrayal.” And what is this, again?—The passions dwelling within us and the thoughts stirred up by the wiles of the flesh, which treacherously open the door to hostile demons. They must be cast out immediately, and we must guard ourselves with every care so that our city—that is, our soul—is not taken, and so that we are not carried away by sin, nor become captives of destructive passions, but remain in the virtue in which we were created, to the glory of our Creator, and to the praise of me, a sinner.

5. Yesterday you angered me with your psalm singing. I therefore ask and implore you to sing properly and in order, and not haphazardly or in a disorderly manner, so as not to offend not me, a sinner, but the Holy Spirit; for this is His commandment: *“Sing with understanding”* (Ps. 46:8). But one cannot sing sensibly unless the following order is observed: do not begin a new verse in unison before the singing of the previous one has ended; whether the psalm singing is loud or soft, drawn-out or quick, above all, order must be maintained; for if the observance of order is the best quality in every matter, is it not all the more so in conversation with God—since disorder gives rise to absurd fantasies and a distraction of the mind, while order preserves attention, sobriety, and the sweetness of which St. David testifies, saying: *“How sweet are your words to my throat, sweeter than honey to my mouth”* (Ps. 118:103). Therefore, I ask and implore that we practice this virtue with the utmost care, admonishing one another and correcting one another in our singing. By singing wisely in this way, we will find peace for our souls, set a good example for one another, and—by pleasing God in this as in all else—become worthy heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

302. So that the mind does not become idle or be enslaved by sinful thoughts, it must be kept in contemplation of God—contemplating the attributes and works of God, the angelic orders, the dwellings of the saints, and this visible world: in this way, the beauty of the soul is preserved

302. 1) So that the mind does not become dull or ensnared by sinful thoughts, it must be kept in contemplation of God—contemplating God’s attributes and works, the angelic orders, the dwellings of the saints, and this visible world: thus the beauty of the soul is preserved. – 2) The beauty of the soul, with which it was created, lost in the Fall, is restored through baptism, through repentance, and through the ascetic life. [4, 100]

6. This is where the mind should always be, this is where the heart should dwell!—In alert attention to God’s work, on the path of asceticism, by no means allowing oneself to be dragged hither and thither like a captive. Does the sea ever run dry of water, or the air for those who breathe?—all the more so, then, should good thoughts never run dry within us, as the eyes of our mind gaze upon the boundless sea of God’s wondrous works; for as we delve deeper into them, the mind will have no time to be distracted by worldly matters or to become entangled in evil thoughts. For the mind, being ever in motion, cannot remain at rest, but wherever we direct it, there it rushes uncontrollably—whether to the right or to the left: and if to the right, then it must cry out with David: *“O Lord, by Your will, grant strength to my goodness”* (Ps. 29: 8); but if to the left, then the verse that follows: *“But when You turn Your face away, I am troubled”* (v. 9). God’s turning away occurs when the mind is occupied with vanities, and the soul’s ruinous turmoil occurs when it engages in sinful designs. Let us therefore always strive to guide it to the right and allow it to behold good visions. What are these?—The heavenly angelic powers, the ineffable blessings there, the radiant abodes of the holy Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, and all the righteous; as well as this heavenly vault, the shining sun, the bright moon, clusters of stars, and all other things perceptible to the senses—not so that he may dwell upon them, but so that, through them, he may be lifted up to the Creator of all things, God, and preserve his beauty unblemished.

7. For God has graced us with beauty, first by creating us in His image and likeness; and although we have defiled and disgraced ourselves through disobedience, He once again clothes us in beauty through grace, *“the bath of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He has poured out abundantly upon us through*

Jesus Christ, our Savior” (Titus 3: 5); and when we proved unworthy even here, He provided us with a third means of regaining our beauty through repentance in the vow of virginity, *“having forgiven us all our transgressions, having wiped out the handwritten code of debt against us”* (Colossians 2: 13–14) through a life of the cross, just as in baptism. – May our soul abide in its beauty, so that we may be deemed worthy to hear: *“You are all beautiful, my beloved, and there is no flaw in you”* (Song of Songs 4: 7). But should it happen again that it becomes defiled by sin [since we are fickle and *“no one is clean from defilement”* (Job 14:4), *“no one can boast of having a pure heart”* (Prov. 20:9)], let us hasten to cleanse ourselves with tears of repentance. *“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,”* prays St. David (Ps. 50:9); *“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the wickedness from your souls,”* God calls out through the Prophet Isaiah (1:16). And blessed is the soul that thus always purifies itself, having renounced every evil inclination, loving and longing for the one God, and awaiting death daily with joy. – Death will certainly come to us as well; we, too, must pay this debt common to all. – But oh, if only we, having lived a pious and righteous life, might be deemed worthy that, when the remains of each of us lie before our brothers for a final kiss at the funeral service, our soul might be taken up by the Angels of God and carried to heaven for eternal bliss.

303. Mentioning those who left the monastery, subsequently fell into heresy, and became depraved

303. 1) Recalling those who left the monastery, subsequently fell into heresy, and became corrupt. – 2) He urges caution, pointing out that the enemy seeks nothing more than to lead a monk astray and destroy him. [4, 101]

8. Few are listening now, due to the departure of several brothers; but even if there were only one listener, one should not neglect to teach; for the Lord says: *“Take care not to despise even one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my heavenly Father. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”* (Matt. 18:10–11). Oh, how inexpressible is God’s love for mankind! The Lord came in the guise of a servant to the runaway slave, to free him from slavery to the devil. The true Light came to seek the lost drachma, to bring him out of the darkness of sin. Is it not therefore necessary for us, too, in humility, imitating the all-good Lord, to grieve for each one of you, to speak to you, and to lay down our very souls for him? Oh, if only I had wings to fly and rest in every brotherhood—to see them and speak to them as is fitting—and not only them, but also those who *“have gone the way of Cain and have rushed for the wages of Balaam’s deceit”* (Jude 11). Whom, then, do I call such?—Leontius, Jeremiah, and Nectarius, who have fallen away both from us and from the faith; and who, as a reward for their apostasy, have received positions of leadership—whom, if I, in my humility, were to see and speak with them, then, even if I did nothing else, I would lay down my very soul for them. I would also like to see those who, because of my sins, have cast off the holy monastic habit and clothed themselves in the garments of lawlessness and sin, so that I might weep for them once more: one of whom, that Pigasius, as they say, has sunk so low into evil that, by royal decree, he became a leader of the people, raised a rebellion, committed murders, and lost his life in battle. What a misfortune! Into what an abyss did this wretched man plunge! First he turned away from the brotherhood, then he followed his lusts, being corrupted by one thing and then another like a speechless beast; then he cast off his monastic vows, and finally met such a tragic end as we have heard.

9. Having recalled this, I ask you to pray for them, and to hold fast to your own path, without in the least diminishing your ascetic perseverance, for even small indulgences and slackness lead the soul to ruin. That is why I pity those who live in isolation and mourn for them as prey ready and waiting for the devil; for even if a wolf snatches a sheep from the sheepfold, is it not easier for him to devour one he finds outside the flock? – Do you not know what kind of frenzy the devil breathes against us? He attacks every person, not just humble monks; he rejoices in the ruin of many, but he takes no greater delight in this than when he succeeds in bringing down a single monk. Why does he tirelessly strive, lie in wait, and struggle, as if to tear the obedient away from obedience, the silent one from silence, the pillar-dweller from the pillar, the recluse from seclusion, so that, after such a disturbance, he may then lead them as he pleases: for those who remain steadfast in their disciplines and in their places, cultivating virtues, are elusive to the devil, being carried above his snares. Therefore, making use of the power given to us against the devil, let us turn him back, shielding ourselves with the fear of God and casting him down with heavenly thoughts, not allowing his own thoughts to take hold of us, so that by thus gaining victory over him, we may be deemed worthy of the crown of righteousness from our Lord Christ, the Giver of Good Deeds.

304. Let us be especially vigilant in the face of persecution: for here the enemy attacks more fiercely

304. 1) Let us be especially vigilant in the face of persecution: for here the enemy attacks more fiercely. How many has he already destroyed since the beginning of the world? And he continues to do so now. – 2) How can we avoid his snares? Through humility and submission to the commandments. Here the proper way of life is depicted—both outwardly and inwardly—with a reference to the reward, as an encouragement. [4, 102]

10. Let us lead a life worthy of persecution for Christ *“in all godliness and purity”* (1 Tim. 2:2), *“as obedient children, not conforming to the former desires of your ignorance”* (1 Pet. 1:14), and without slacking in the intensity of your ascetic efforts. For you see, *“the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8); and now that he sees us torn apart by persecution, he presses in much more fiercely, hoping that it is now easier to snatch our souls. But we will remain sober and vigilant at all times and in every place, protected by God’s commandments. And he, finding no foothold in us, will depart in disgrace. But if he does find a foothold, he will begin to press in more and more; and he will not retreat until he has struck and destroyed us. Or do we not know how many he has already destroyed since the creation of the world: did he not lead the first man to expulsion from Paradise by ensnaring him with the sweetness of sin? Did he not arm Cain to commit fratricide? Did he not cast Judas out of the company of the Apostles, making him a betrayer of the Life of all? Did he not condemn to death countless others as well?—Even now he beguiles, incites, and compels us to commit every kind of evil, and he devours nearly the entire universe; and avoiding him is very difficult and requires the utmost vigilance: for he attempts not only through a dissolute and base life, but also through intense asceticism, to lead us astray from what is right and draw us toward the opposite, transforming himself in various ways, devising various schemes and deceptions, spreading many nets everywhere across the earth to ensnare us, as the blessed Anthony saw in a vision and was told from above that only humility can help us avoid them.

11. Therefore, clothed in humility, let us avoid straying from the right path and stepping over it, walking the royal road and not veering to the right or to the left, but conforming precisely to the rules of the holy commandment entrusted to us and following in the footsteps of the holy fathers who went before us, whose dwelling is in heaven. May our minds refrain from evil thoughts, our hearts be instructed in the divine words, our lips open only to glorify God, our eyes see what is right, our ears not listen to vain talk, our hands reach out to our labors, our feet walk in an orderly manner, our food and drink be moderate, our sleep be regulated by a set schedule, no departures be permitted except those that are necessary, there be no room for presumption—which brings about death—and nothing else inappropriate take root within us, but everything be done in a reverent and wise manner. This path is not long, and the goal of our struggles is near. But what is the reward for our labors? – The Kingdom of Heaven; for its sake we will strive and struggle again and again; if we stumble, we will hasten to rise; if we doze off, we will awaken and be alert once more, subdue our nature, put to death the members that are on the earth, and acquire virtues. I say all this to myself as well, for I too am beset by weaknesses, being of the same nature as you. May the Lord grant all of us, having labored sincerely and lived blamelessly, to depart from here with hope and be made worthy of blessed eternal life.

305. Having pointed out the commandments of the Law and the Gospel, along with their differences, and having said that those who do not fulfill either of them cannot inherit the kingdom of God

305. 1) Having pointed out the commandments of the Law and the Gospel, along with their differences, and having stated that those who do not fulfill either cannot inherit the Kingdom of God—2) he reminds them of their dreadful fate in death, at the judgment, and after condemnation, and—3) He then invites them to turn to the Lord in repentance before the doors of His mercy are shut. [4, 103]

12. God, who created us and brought us into being from nothing, has led us into this life as if into a school, so that we might learn the Gospel commandments of His kingdom. That is why, when He sent His disciples out to preach, He commanded them, saying: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”* (Matt. 28:19–20). What, then, are these commandments that He has commanded us?—According to the Old Testament, it was commanded: *“You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness”* (Ex. 20; Deut. 5); but in the New Testament, He gave commandments that are higher and more perfect than these; for He says: *“It was said to the ancients, ‘You shall not murder’; for whoever murders is liable to judgment. But I say to you that anyone who is angry*

with his brother without cause is liable to judgment; for whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' is liable to the council." – Again: "It was said to the ancients, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Again: "It was said to the ancients, 'You shall not swear falsely, but you shall fulfill your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all." Again: "It has been said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:21–44). Do you see the difference between the two Covenants? One forbids actions, while the other forbids the very dispositions of the heart from which those actions arise, so that sin may not take root here. Now, if we find ourselves living neither according to the Law nor according to the Gospel, but—so to speak—in a pagan manner, what will we experience on that day? – "Do not be deceived," says the Apostle, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor men who engage in sexual immorality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

13. Why, as I have often told you before, do I now proclaim with determination: let no one live according to his own will; let no one be indifferent to the matter of salvation; let no one hoard gold, acquire slaves, breed horses and oxen, or burden himself with any other possessions, for from these arise the greatest and most destructive sins. And yet there are still some among you who persist in their obstinacy and resist the truth. But I, humble as I am, am innocent of your blood; for I have not ceased to proclaim God's truth to you and have ceaselessly warned of the sword that is to come upon the sons of rebellion. "*Or are we provoking the Lord? Are we eating His most precious food?*" (1 Cor. 10:22). "*For the axe is already laid to the root of the tree: every tree, then, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (Matt. 3:10). Are you not afraid of this example? Do you not tremble at this threat? Are you not afraid even of death, which we will inevitably face in a short while? How will we meet the fearsome angels who usually come to take us from our bodies? How will we travel that long journey without having acquired the necessary provisions? How, with an unclean conscience, will we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess? If we are found to be such there, we will inevitably be sent to the place of unquenchable fire and undying worms, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

14. But so that this may not happen, let us come and worship, and fall down, and weep before our good God, presenting ourselves before Him in confession, in supplication, in contrition, in tears, in prayers, in fasting, in purity, and in righteous conduct. For He is the atonement for our sins; and He has not yet closed the door of His mercy to us; He does not turn away those who turn to Him, but graciously receives them—the harlot, the thief, and the prodigal son. Come, I beg you, let us rise, let us awaken, let us strive, so that, just as well-behaved children, having been dismissed from school, joyfully hurry to their homes, so may we, as sincere disciples of the Gospel, having renounced this life, joyfully pass into eternal life.

306. Praising obedience as the most fruitful deed and rebuking those who do not live in obedience

306. 1) Having praised obedience as the most fruitful deed and rebuked those who do not live in obedience—2) he urges his followers to excel more and more in obedience, reminding them that the One who is about to come will soon arrive and reward each person according to their deeds. [4, 104]

15. By the grace of the all-good God, you believe and submit to my humility, doing nothing except what has been commanded of you: in this lies joy and a crown not only for me, but also for you, who have set virtue as the goal of your life even before me. For what could be sweeter, more desirable, or more joyful for a disciple than to live according to the commandments and do nothing of his own will? In this lies true obedience; this is the blessed life; this is a labor both sorrowful and carefree: sorrowful as long as one is still enslaved by one's desires; carefree when one succeeds in completely cutting off one's own will, and who therefore has the boldness to say, in the words of the apostle: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20). For, not living according to his own will, he lives according to God through the mediation of the abbot, and "*beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, he is being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Cor. 3:18). Such a person does not concern himself with the world, does not fear death, and leads a carefree life unburdened by anything, having surrendered himself entirely to God. But whoever relies on his own desires and pushes the laws of obedience into the background, yielding to his own will and self-indulgence, leads a tormented life, "*having been taken captive by the devil to do his will*" (2 Tim. 2: 26)—and even though at times such a person may appear to be

fasting, or keeping vigil, or doing some other good *deed*, all of this is unacceptable: for “*whatever is not from faith is sin*” (Rom. 14: 23); and whatever is not done according to the common rule is the doer’s own affair and is foreign to godly piety pleasing to God.

16. Therefore, I rightly rebuke such people, but I praise you and urge you to persevere ever more in the best obedience, in patience, in the subjugation of your own will, in faith, hope, and love, and in all other monastic endeavors for your own salvation and as a good example to the entire brotherhood. I implore you: for “*yet a little while, a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay*” (Heb. 10:37); the last day will come, on which “*the works of darkness will be revealed and the intentions of the heart will be made known*” (1 Cor. 4:5). The terrible and true Judge will come, who will bring the novice before the novice, the abbot before the abbot, the bishop before the bishop, the nobleman before the nobleman, the king before the king, and through one another will condemn or justify them, and “*will repay each one according to his deeds: to those who, through patience in doing what is good, seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will grant eternal life; but to those who, in their zeal, oppose the truth and obey unrighteousness, He will grant wrath and fury. Sorrow and distress for every human soul that does evil*” (Rom. 2:7–9). We must fear this greatly and take every possible care to ensure that the hour of death does not find us empty of good deeds, but rich in the fruits of righteous works. Let the enemy oppose us in our good deeds [—such is his nature; “*for he has been a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him,*” as the Lord said (John 8:44)]; but let us wield courage and magnanimity against him, opposing him with labor, sweat, prayers, supplications, and tears—and he will succeed in nothing against us, through the assistance of our struggles and the intercession of the Lord for our weakness, who grants us eternal victory.

307. Having spoken of the fruitfulness of the teachings, he invites everyone to build up one another—in mutual cooperation—in the dwelling place of God

307. 1) Having mentioned the fruitfulness of the teachings, he invites everyone to work together in building up the house of God. – 2) He then urges us, having become the temple of God, not to allow it to be corrupted within us; the means to achieve this are also indicated. [4, 105]

17. Let no one say that our teachings are a futile labor. No, we derive great benefit from them: for just as the plow is to the earth, and water is to the thirsty, so is our instructive word to the one who listens to it with an open heart. What usually causes the soul to become corrupted? What causes strife, quarrels, and divisions in the brotherhoods? Is it not because there is a lack of teaching and exhortation? Where there is instruction and exhortation, there is peace and order; and where there is peace and order, there the Holy Spirit dwells: for this reason, I, in humility, with fear and love, strive to speak to you, to exhort, to comfort, and to remind you, so that both I and you may be helped to be saved from the devil’s many and varied temptations. – I confess that you yourselves help me greatly, especially the foremost among the brethren; you are all my collaborators for the good. “*I,*” says St. Paul, “*planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth*” (1 Cor. 3:6): so this good work is not mine alone, but yours as well, and even more so—God’s, from whom all that is good in people proceeds. Therefore, I ask you, in accordance with the obedience given to each of you, to direct everything toward the common good and to build one another up in God’s dwelling place through the Spirit. For the Apostle says: “*No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each person’s work will be revealed, for the Day will bring it to light, since it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each person’s work to see what it is*” (1 Cor. 3:11–13). Do you see how he likens virtue to gold, silver, and precious stones, and vice to wood, hay, and straw? Of these, when subjected to the trial of the fire of judgment, some—the perishable ones—will burn up, while others—the enduring ones—will remain.

18. To this, using even more solemn language, he adds: “*Do you not know that you are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple*” (1 Cor. 3:16–17). What a gift it is that we are deemed worthy to be called and to be the temple of God! But what a threat it is that, if we destroy the temple of God, we will be destroyed by God! Let us not, then, destroy the temple of God within ourselves, and having been deemed worthy to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, let us not allow ourselves to become a dwelling place for passions; just as, having been set free from sin, let us not allow ourselves to be enslaved to the devil again. But “*let us be pure and blameless, filled with the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God*” (Phil. 1: 10–11). May our hearts, therefore, be alert, filled with the fear of God, and nourished by constant

thoughts of death; for where there is such fear and such thoughts, there is no room for sin to enter. But when the heart is insensitive to this and hardened, then lust easily takes root within us, provoking and troubling us, and does not leave us until we return to our former state of peace. Let us, then, endure hardship so that, having labored to excel in goodness, we may subsequently find unceasing peace; let us endure weeping so that we may find joy in the Lord; let us endure the narrow and sorrowful path of this life so that we may find the refreshing life that springs from it. – And here is the greatest of all bargains. Here is the most sublime of all blessings—to acquire, through a few labors and efforts in the pursuit of virtue, immeasurable and eternal blessings—may we all be deemed worthy of them.

308. *Our life is like a voyage across the sea*

308. 1) Our life is like sailing the sea. – 2) How should the mind, as the helmsman, steer the ship of life to avoid sinking? – 3) These lessons are not only for the youngest, but also for the oldest: for danger is not far from them either. – 4) Let us therefore pay close attention, lest we lose what we have gathered through long toil. [4, 106]

19. Human life is another kind of sea, across which we—having entered this body as if into a ship—sail in our minds, and we sail not just occasionally, as those who sail the sea in ordinary ships, which sometimes sail and sometimes take shelter in harbors, but we sail ceaselessly, day and night, in bad weather and storms; and this sea is perilous, and not only perilous but also long, commensurate with the duration of our lives; and in it, so many terrible, stormy waves are stirred up by spirits of malice, so many pirates—demons—attack us, attempting to drown us, that it is impossible to describe. Why, then, does St. David, seeing this, cry out in prayer: *“May I be delivered from those who hate me and from the deep waters; may the stormy waters not overwhelm me, nor the abyss devour me, nor my enemy speak against me”* (Ps. 68:15–16). – If even David, such a great man, feared and prayed that he might not be drowned—though he did suffer once when he fell asleep—what then can we, the humble ones, say, and how much more should we fear and pray so as not to suffer the same fate?

20. And our mind, like a helmsman, when it is watchful and alert, wards off the storms of the passions, barely being sprinkled by the spray of assailing thoughts; but when it succumbs to laziness and negligence, it then yields to passion, which strikes with a raging torrent; and, having been overwhelmed by it, it finally suffers a great and sinful shipwreck—one that is pitiful even to hear about, and even more pitiful to experience. So terrifying and so perilous is the voyage of our life, and therefore let us hold its helm attentively and alertly, keeping passions at a distance and immediately casting out any intrusive, inappropriate thoughts, lest they, if we linger on them, sink us.

21. I say this, keeping in mind not only the very young but also the elders who have long been engaged in asceticism; for the devil does not leave even them untouched, and often brings them to a pitiful fall—as the great and godly Basil says elsewhere: “Truly, it is the most pitiful sight—after fasting, after a harsh life, after prolonged prayers, after abundant tears, after twenty or even thirty years of abstinence, to find oneself suddenly deprived of everything due to inattention and the negligence of the soul!” (Vol. 4, p. 222, – in the Russian translation). – It is I, the humble one, who have heard and seen this, and have wept and continue to weep, pondering how such a wealth of virtues, gathered over so many years, was plundered in a single moment by the cunning devil, leaving the ascetic of piety empty and worthless. – So great is the mystery of our salvation, and such is the fury of the devil against us, who cannot bear to see us ascending to heaven, from whence he fell.

22. But let him be as he is and arm himself against us with such fury; we, young and old, juniors and seniors alike, shall all unanimously and resolutely resolve, with God’s help, not to allow ourselves to be led to ruin through neglect of what we have gathered through many labors and deeds—namely, renunciation of the world, obedience, chastity, tears, and the first and last confessions; but we will also remain vigilant without ceasing, holding aloft the sail of our hope and guided by the winds of the Spirit, so that when we reach the end of our lives and enter the harbor of immortality, we may attain the kingdom of heaven through the wealth of our virtues.

309. A messenger from the king arrived yesterday; and we were all alarmed, knowing that the king is displeased with us

309. 1) Yesterday, a messenger from the king arrived; and we were all alarmed, knowing that the king is not well-disposed toward us. If we had known that he was well-disposed, you would have received the messenger differently. So the soul will meet the herald of death: joyfully, if it is confident in God's favor, and with terror, if it is not. – 2) Let us therefore be reconciled with God and make the angels our friends. To this end, let us offer tears of repentance, self-examination, mutual prayers, and above all, partaking of the Holy Mysteries. – 3) Here it is explained how one should approach the Holy Mysteries, how salvific this is, and how regrettable it is that people rarely receive Communion, with the instruction to receive Communion more frequently. [4, 107]

23. Yesterday, as soon as the tsar's envoy arrived here, we were immediately thrown into great alarm, struck by the unexpectedness of his arrival. But when we later learned that he had not come for our sake, we shook off our fear even more quickly. I now ask: why were we so frightened? Was it not because we realized that the king is not only displeased with us, but even hates and despises us? On the contrary, if we were dear to the king and numbered among those close to him, would we not have rejoiced at the arrival of a messenger from him, knowing that he has always been favorably disposed toward us?—But why am I bringing up this subject? – To this: that in the same way, a soul that has earned God's favor through a good life will, at the moment of its departure from the body—when an angel sent by the King of all comes for it—not be afraid, but will look upon him with pleasure and go joyfully to its Lord. But if it is not such a soul, it will be seized by confusion and terror, lacking inner strength and expecting no help or comfort from anywhere. For here, both a brother and a friend can comfort the soul and dispel its fear; but there, nothing of the sort is possible, and the Angel will take the poor soul mercilessly and cruelly. – Upon hearing these words, do we not feel a stir of fear in our souls? If merely hearing about this causes fear, what will we suffer when we actually find ourselves in such a situation? – And how will the soul then appear before the judgment seat of Christ? – “*A river of fire,*” according to the prophet Daniel, “*flows out before Him; thousands upon thousands serve Him, and multitudes stand before Him*” (Dan. 7: 10)—and the Judge is terrible and implacable, and every word, even a idle one, will be called to account, as it is said in the Gospel (Matt. 12: 36). How, then, will the soul endure all this?—Truly, “*it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31). And it is even more dreadful when it hears the most righteous judgment, condemning it to endless torment.

24. For this reason, I ask and implore: let us be reconciled with God before death and earn His favor; let us make friends with the angels who are to come for us—let us keep our inner eye vigilant and our mind invincible, not yielding to the temptations of the passions; if we ever slip, let us rise again as quickly as possible; with many tears let us quench the fiery arrows of the Evil One and instead let us raise up our love for Christ.—“*The prayer of a righteous person,*” it says, “*is powerful and effective*” (James 5:16); which is why we need to pray for one another and to remember one another in prayer. Tears and contrition can also do much, and above all, partaking of the Holy Mysteries—toward which, seeing you, for some reason, treat it carelessly, I am extremely astonished. On Sundays, there are still those who approach the sacraments; but when the Liturgy is held on another day, no one comes forward. Even in the monastery, it used to be that those who wished to receive Communion did so every day; but now this happens very rarely, and you will hardly ever find it anywhere at all.

25. In saying this, I do not at all wish for you to receive the Sacraments casually, as if it were no big deal. For it is written: “*Let a person examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon himself, not discerning the Lord's body*” (1 Cor. 11:28–29). No—that is not what I want; may it never be so! But let us, burning with the desire to partake as much as possible, purify ourselves, and in this way become worthy of this gift. For the bread set before us is the communion of life, as the Lord says: “*I am the bread of life, which has come down from heaven; whoever eats of this bread will live forever. And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*” (John 6:51); and again: “*Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*” (John 6:56). Do you see this ineffable and immeasurable gift? Not only did the Lord die for us, but He also offered Himself to us as food. What could more clearly reveal His mighty love for us? And what could be more salvific for our souls? – If no one now deprives themselves of ordinary food each day and, having not tasted it, is greatly distressed by this; then how is it consistent—when what is offered to all is not ordinary bread but the bread of life, and not an ordinary cup but the cup of immortality—to be indifferent

as to whether anyone has tasted them, not regarding this matter as necessary? What folly and senselessness this testifies to! If this has happened until now, from now on, I beg you, let us resolve to prevent it any longer, knowing the power of this gift from God; but always, to the best of our ability, purifying ourselves, let us approach and partake of the holy and sanctifying mysteries. – And this, as I believe, and as is truly the case, will greatly help us to keep ourselves pure, spurred on by our preparation for Communion and our anticipation of it. When we are indifferent toward Communion, however, the passions are given greater freedom and scope to ensnare us. – May this also serve as a constant guide for us toward eternal life, which may we all be deemed worthy to receive, through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

310. *Forward—forward—along the path of virtue*

310. 1) Forward—forward—along the path of virtue. – 2) How? By spending every day doing what is right: for which a model program is presented. – 3) Motivations: the beauty and sweetness of virtue, and the destructiveness of sin. – 4) What prevents success? Insincere desire. [4, 108]

1. Virtue is a constantly evolving process that never ceases to move forward, but always draws its followers toward perfection. Illustrating this, the Apostle says: *“Not that I have already attained this, or am already perfect; but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me”*; —and further: *“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:12–14). Thus, there must be no pause in the pursuit of virtue; for a pause here is the beginning of a turn toward evil. Let us, then, not stand still on the path of virtue, but let us always be diligent and, ever renewed, grow from strength to strength, *“until we all reach maturity, the measure of the full stature of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13).

2. How, then, will this come to pass? If we spend every day zealously doing what is right. Let us take the following as an example: upon rising from sleep, let us hasten to prayer; coming from there, let us set to work diligently—singing and praising the Lord in our hearts, and working with our hands as well. Has the day passed? Let us go to sleep with thanksgiving and contrition; and through this succession of deeds, may the words of Saint David be fulfilled in us: *“Day to day utters speech, and night to night reveals knowledge”* (Ps. 18:3). May not a single day pass for us in indifference to our duties and in the captivity of our thoughts and hearts—nor a single night in indulging the flesh’s desires and in shameful acts—I do not speak of deeds: let it not be!—but even in thought: for the word of truth demands that not only our bodies be pure, but our souls as well.

3. If we wish to desire anything, then let it be the virtues we long for, the taste of which is sweet and insatiable. If we love to delight in beauty, then what is more lovely than the Lord, in whose beauty all things are adorned? Evil desires, however, drive the soul to madness and devour it more cruelly than any beast: so that they bring not pleasure, but a life of torment. *“Flesh and blood,”* says the Apostle, *“cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable”* (1 Cor. 15:50). And tell me, whom has sin, having captivated, not shamed, not humiliated, and not delivered to death? And whom, having revealed, has virtue not exalted and made wondrous in the world? Take two from among many—Amnon and Joseph. Did not fornication lead the one to mortal disgrace, while the other’s preservation of chastity before the Egyptian woman did not make him a king?—Thus virtue is so lovable, so desirable, so salvific! But sin is vile, repulsive, and ruinous! And yet we humans are led astray by a great delusion, choosing death instead of life, embracing darkness instead of the light, and loving corruption instead of incorruption. What could be more worthy of regret than this?

4. Why, then, do we—desiring to be lovers of the good—fail to be so?—Because we do not desire it with a true desire, but with a feigned one: since, being self-willed, we desire whatever we please and choose accordingly; therefore, if we truly desired the good, we would choose the good. – It is true that a life of vice from youth endows us with passionate habits that are impossible to shake off; but what does the Apostle say? – *“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh: just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness”* (Rom. 6:19). That is, in contrast to our inclination toward sin, we must show zeal for virtue. Let us therefore continue to press on, and the all-gracious God will surely open the door for us, working in us what is pleasing to Him and granting us eternal life.

311. Someone has passed away to general acclaim: a lesson is given to emulate him

311. 1) A certain person passed away to general acclaim: a lesson is given to emulate him. – 2) We are inspired to rekindle our zeal by remembering the last moments, as all the saints did. – 3) Blessed is the one who acts in this way, and the exhortation follows: let us be like that as well. [4, 109]

5. We are now fully certain that our brother Theosost has passed away; and it is necessary to say a few words about him, for he was a man of great virtue, highly praised by many—both monks and laypeople—who both listened to others and compelled others to listen to him; and having been tested through his sufferings, he was able, to speak in apostolic terms, to be a help to those who are being tested. Through this, having gained for himself many good children in the Lord, he subsequently endured sorrows and hardships, persecutions and trials—considerable and not easy—for the sake of the truth; and having passed away in the midst of them, he departed to the Lord. – But why am I saying all this? – So that in this brother of ours we may see our own future: that is, if we live well and piously, we will be praised by others after death, just as he was, and will serve as examples of godly zeal for those who follow; but if we do not live well, then not only will we not be praised, but we will also justly be subjected to endless torment: a thought that is terrifying, not just to speak of but to even contemplate.

6. But look at this: how we pass from here one by one, and where we go, and what kind of life is prepared for us here for a few short days—to live only as long as is necessary to test and prove our virtue, and then to pass on to the place where we will dwell forever. To ponder this is the task of the prudent; and whoever ponders it is always afraid and trembling, dying daily by choice, daily awaiting release from his body, and thereby stirring up within himself zeal for the tasks ahead, in accordance with the obedience entrusted to him, and ceaselessly adding labor upon labor. For where else do the natural feats of the saints come from? Where does their obedience until death come from?—Where does the invincible patience of the martyrs come from, as their limbs are cut off and their blood is shed? —Is it not from this—is it not from the thought of the transience of life and sudden death, of standing before the dreadful judgment seat, and of the endlessness of eternal torments?—From this comes everything in them; from this comes their endurance of the most cruel sufferings, as if in a foreign body.

7. And blessed is the soul that meditates on this day and night, living out its temporary life as a stranger, sojourning here and awaiting that blessed and endless life of which the Apostle speaks: *“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”* (Rom. 8: 19–21). Do you see what is promised? That all things will be transformed into incorruptibility, and that creation will be changed from bondage to freedom? – What, then, will that day be like, of which Saint David speaks: *“Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand”* (Ps. 83: 11); and Saint Peter the Apostle: *“one day... is like a thousand years”* (2 Peter 3: 8). There, too, shall we direct our minds and hearts—there we shall turn our longings, there we shall set our thoughts and desires, so that, by engaging in such matters, we may take refuge from the prince of this world, who has the power to tempt us but is powerless to overthrow us when we are protected by the weapons of our asceticism, —whom I, in my humility, wish for you not only to avoid but also to overcome, and to receive the crown of righteousness from Christ Jesus our Lord.

312. Only true monks can rejoice, because they are free from worldly cares, concerned solely with pleasing God, and for the preservation of their virginity

312. 1) Only true monks can rejoice, because they are free from worldly cares, concerned solely with pleasing God, and for preserving their chastity. – 2) They have nothing to grieve about: their sins are forgiven; the wounds inflicted by thoughts and passions are cut off by the struggle that prepares them for their crowns; they need only fight valiantly and defeat the enemy. – 3) Let us take heart; soon the Coming One will arrive. [4, 110]

8. The Apostle commands everyone to *“rejoice in the Lord always”* (Phil. 4:4). And it is usually only the true monks who rejoice, for they are not concerned with a wife, children, servants, money, property, or anything else that preoccupies the lovers of the flesh. They have but one concern: how to please the Lord; to be concerned with this is to rejoice always in the Lord. For where there is marriage, servants, and all the cares that arise from these—this is the burden of the spirit that God has given to the sons of men, so that they may be crushed by it, as Solomon said (Ecclesiastes, chs. 1–2): it is difficult to rejoice in the Lord when the things

mentioned above distract the mind from the reverent remembrance of God, in which alone it is possible to rejoice. Since we belong to the number of those who rejoice in the Lord, let us rejoice and share in one another's joy always, hoping for a reward from God, the Rewarder, for our chastity and non-covetousness—He who has promised to give a reward even for a cup of cold water, and not only for such great and supernatural deeds. For truly, the work of chastity is great and supernatural: it touches upon the angelic realm and restores a person to the original state that existed in Paradise, when there was neither marriage nor slavery, but life flowed in a state of needlessness and carefree ease.

9. If anyone says that he is not rejoicing but is grieving, then I ask: What is the cause of this grief?—That he has committed many sins in the past?—But those have already been forgiven because of his confession, his renunciation of the world, and his acceptance of the yoke of obedience. — “Is it because you are daily wounded by your thoughts?” — “But if you cast them aside, this is a foretaste of your crown. For they never crown one who has not entered the battle, but the warrior; nor do they reward with gifts one who has not fought, but the one who has valiantly contended and prevailed.” Do you see that what we might point to as a cause of sorrow is, in fact, a source of joy for us? Let us therefore rejoice with spiritual joy, rising up and valiantly resisting the devil's wiles, repelling his attacks with prayers and supplications, breaking his snares with humility and obedience, drowning him with tears and contrition, just as Pharaoh was drowned; driving him far from us through self-reproach and confession; and, with God's help, overthrowing him through all other good deeds. Thus, let him be diverse in his schemes; let him be cunning in his malice; let him know the time when it is most convenient to attack us, seeking to destroy us; let him be able to feign defeat, so that, later, by unexpectedly attacking a soul unprepared for it, he may do with it as he pleases. But we, standing at our post, will remain sober and vigilant, keeping the eye of our mind ever watchful and our heart ablaze with love for God, and thereby remaining invincible and unshakable.

10. Let us, I beg you, not lose heart in battle, nor falter in the struggle against the enemy; for the end of our struggles and deeds is near; there is but a very little while left until what is to come arrives without delay—whether at the hour of each person's death or at the end of the age, when He will appear from heaven with the angels of power in blazing fire and in unspeakable glory, and *“every eye will see Him,”* and those *“who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn for Him”* (Rev. 1:7). How terrifying and indescribable is that sight! — Then those who have striven in good deeds, who have remained steadfast in temptations, who have loved godliness, who have been perfect in obedience, and all who have pleased the Lord in everything will rejoice. But may we also be numbered among them, and together with them enjoy the eternal blessings in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

313. Earthly life is fleeting, having become so from the very first act of disobedience

313. 1) Earthly life is fickle, having become so from the very first act of disobedience. — 2) By renouncing the world and committing ourselves to obedience, we free ourselves from such changeability; but this requires a valiant stand in our spiritual struggles. — 3) Let us therefore be sober and watchful, keeping ourselves pure; and if we sin, let us repent and make amends. [4, 111]

11. Let us listen to what the Apostle says: *“I say this because the time is short; henceforth, those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who mourn as though they did not mourn, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who seek the things of this world as though they did not seek them. For the present form of this world is passing away”* (1 Cor. 7:29–31). What does it mean that *“the present form of this world is passing away”*? It means that it passes by, flees, and has no permanence even for a single day: yesterday it was clear, today it is cloudy; yesterday the weather was fine, today it is stormy; one rises to heights, while another falls from the heights of his dignity; one who was rich becomes poor, and another who was poor becomes rich; and our poor life is subject to countless changes and vicissitudes, never having a firm footing in anything. — Why has this come to pass? Because of our ancient recklessness: since we disregarded the Holy Commandment given to us in Paradise, having been deceived by the serpent's sweet flattery, we have been justly consigned to this long-suffering and changeable life, — which is why the incarnate work of our Lord Jesus Christ came to pass, restoring us to our original state and reestablishing that sorrowless and carefree dwelling. For it is a wise and prudent thing to be steadfast amid change and to remain unshaken amid vicissitudes. To whom, then, does this apply?—To none other than those who have crucified themselves to the world and followed the Lord.

12. But such are we, by the grace of Christ, having renounced the world through a noble renunciation and having surrendered ourselves to perfect obedience, through which our ascent to our original state is accomplished. For just as we were cast out of paradise because of disobedience and rebellion, so our all-good God has willed that we regain it through obedience and submission. Let us therefore rejoice that we abide in obedience, for it leads us into eternal life. But this requires perseverance in our efforts and patience in our trials. For if victory over the flesh is attained through much toil and sweat, how much more can the race of a life such as ours be run victoriously by anyone other than those who are courageous and valiant?

13. Let us, then, I beg you, stand firm, remaining constantly sober and vigilant, directing our longing toward God alone and constantly occupying our minds with the contemplation of Him, being washed by tears and contrition, enlightened by prayers and supplications, and thereby drawing down the grace of the Holy Spirit. For nothing delights God more than a soul purified of passions; and no multicolored meadow emits such a fragrance as a soul fragrant with virtues. If, however, we should happen to doze off, let us awaken as soon as possible; even if we sin seven times a day, let us repent seven times—and we will be accepted; even if we suffer this seventy times seven, let us repent just as many times, and we will not be deprived of the hope of mercy, according to God’s promise: only let us, I beg you, remain steadfast and not be lazy in raising ourselves up from our falls. The end of our struggles is already near; joy, gladness, and the crowns of righteousness are already near—may we all be deemed worthy of them, through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

314. A brother passed away suddenly: hence this heartfelt exhortation to be ready for our departure, and, always keeping it in mind, to remain engaged in works pleasing to God

314. A brother has passed away suddenly: hence this heartfelt exhortation to be ready for our departure, and, always keeping it in mind, to remain engaged in works pleasing to God. [4, 112] Come, let us make a saving covenant concerning the last day; come, let us be reconciled to God before the urgent hour of death arrives: for it is said, *“In death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave, who will give You thanks?”* (Ps. 6:6). Do we not see how our brothers are taken from us every day? Do we not see that we, like sheep destined for slaughter, are alive today but gone tomorrow? Brother Liberius has also been taken, and news of his passing has crushed my humble soul: for, as they say, he was found in his cell, having died suddenly, lying on his side as if asleep. – Such was his end! – We do not know what ours will be, nor do we know by what kind of death we will die: will it come suddenly, or with some forewarning? On land or at sea? – Will we be alone, or surrounded by our brothers? Who has fathomed the mind of the Lord, and who has been His counselor, so as to know the day and hour, the place and manner of our death? – Truly, the certainty of death is terrifying, and it is terrifying to fall into the hands of the living God. Therefore, I urge you: let us always be zealous, always vigilant, and always engaged in works pleasing to God. They say that one has attained a high rank, another has become rich, and yet another has even become a king. – And what is all this? – It all passes like a dream—*“They fell asleep in their sleep, and all men found nothing of their riches in their hands”* (Ps. 74: 6). *“All the glory of man is like the flower of the field”* (Isa. 40: 6). But God’s chosen ones have made a wonderful purchase—and have received ranks that cannot be taken away. And what are they?—Some are apostolic, others prophetic, some martyr’s, others monastic, and still others, though the lowest of these, are nonetheless salvific. Their names are written in the Book of Life; their glory is unfading, their joy inexpressible. Let us imitate them, and we will certainly receive one of these ranks: for grace is not envied, and to everyone who desires it, a good gift awaits—whether small or great, wise or unwise, old or young. But if we do not imitate them, the Lord of the House will not admit us into the heavenly bridal chamber, and He will shut its doors before us. *“Woe,”* says the Lord, *“to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born”* (Matt. 26:24). It is clear to everyone that this saying refers to the betrayer; but it can justly be applied to anyone who betrays his own salvation. Do we not think about the coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ? Do we not consider the terrible judgment that the incorruptible Judge will pronounce against all who stand on the left? Do we not envision the unquenchable fire and the unimaginable torments of eternity? Who can comprehend this? Who is the wise helmsman who will steer himself well and save his soul from being overwhelmed by the spirits of malice? As for us, since by the grace of Christ we have chosen a quiet and peaceful life, we will continue to navigate our course well, enduring everything that comes our way with equanimity, guarding every part of ourselves with the fear of God. Let the eye be forbidden to look with curiosity; let the ear not accept vain hearing; let the tongue not be permitted to condemn: for

“whoever slanders,” says the brother of God, *“a brother, or condemns his brother, slanders the law and condemns the law”* (James 4:11); let the hand work, for *“whoever is unwilling to work should not eat,”* according to the apostle’s decree (2 Thess. 3:10); let the feet walk uprightly on the path of peace; let the heart *“not turn to deceitful words, nor excuse guilt for sins”* (Ps. 140:4); but *“let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor. 14:40), so that, having lived well, we may be made worthy of eternal blessings.

315. While preserving the faith, we must also excel in a good life; especially in chastity, against which the enemy wages war most fiercely among us

315. 1) While preserving the faith, we must also excel in a virtuous life; especially in chastity, against which the enemy wages war most fiercely among us. – 2) He begins with shameful thoughts; then, having kindled lust, he leads one to act on it; and furthermore, he makes the lustful person resemble one afflicted with scabies. – 3) How can we avoid this? – Resist these thoughts by turning to prayer at the very first stirrings of them. – 4) Be inspired to resist by the thought that, having received adoption as a child of God in grace, through this sin you become a slave to the devil—and resist both this passion and all others. [4, 113]

14. There are two virtues that bring about a person’s salvation: faith and love. If I saw that you were erring in any matter of faith, I would speak to you about it, striving in every way to guide you toward orthodox thinking. – *“For without faith it is impossible to please God, since whoever comes to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him”* (Heb. 11:6). Since, by the grace of Christ, your faith is sound, I will set aside the topic of faith for now and speak to you briefly about a life of active service, which must be driven by love. – Therefore, I ask you, as I always have and continue to do, not to neglect asceticism, nor about mastery over your thoughts, nor about the priceless treasure of virginity, which we have graciously received by God’s mercy, and against which the enemy directs his schemes with the greatest zeal, seeking to steal our salvation by stealing it from us. For he knows that by this virtue we become like God, whereas, conversely, by losing it we become like senseless beasts, as it is written: *“A man of high standing who lacks understanding becomes like senseless beasts and is likened to them”* (Ps. 48:13).

15. Oh, how many since time immemorial has our deceiver ensnared with carnal lust! But even to this day he does not cease to deceive not only the young but also the elderly, and not only the careless but also the most diligent; and he uses this weapon against almost every soul. He begins to prepare this poison by instilling inappropriate thoughts; then, having inflamed the heart with the lusts of the flesh and blood, he prompts it to utter something forbidden, and then instills the audacity to touch the member; for this leads to death: for, as the Apostle says, *“When lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death”* (James 1:15). Let us therefore avoid this death—eternal death—and let us avoid this soul-destroying disease. It seems to me that this disease is like scabies. Just as a person with scabies, when scratching himself with his fingernails, seems to be giving himself pleasure, but in reality receives not pleasure but agonizing wounds—and the more he scratches, the worse it gets—so too, one possessed by lustful passion receives not pleasure but torment, not satisfaction but emptiness, not contentment but numbness. Such a person is worthy of pity—hopeless, fearful, afraid even of a shadow, not just of the future judgment.

16. But how, then, can one avoid this evil? The first thing is to resist these temptations with all one’s might and without fail whenever this passion arises. That it arises is no surprise; but it draws its strength either from the inattention of the mind, which is not occupied with good thoughts, or from the envy of the enemy. But however this may happen, rise up quickly from your wound, pray, sigh, shed tears, and resolutely reject the passion; and the passion will soon subside, while you will find peace in the Lord. Then you will realize that nothing is so bitter for the soul as not being besieged and enslaved by passions.

17. Have you not heard what the Lord says? *“Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin; but a slave does not remain in the house forever; a son remains forever”* (John 8:34). Having been freed from sin and having received the status of sonship, shall we once again enslave ourselves to sin? Having come under the strong hand of God, shall we become subjects of the devil? Far be it from us. *“For if I destroy what I have built, I prove myself to be a transgressor”* (Gal. 2:18), the Apostle says elsewhere. Let us not, then, allow ourselves to be transgressors of God’s commandments and become enslaved to the devil again, after we have already received freedom from him, *“thus storing up wrath for yourselves on the day of wrath and the revelation of God’s righteous judgment”* (Rom. 2:5). For it is written of such people: *“Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”* (Mark 9:44). *“For freedom Christ has set us free; therefore let us stand firm”* (Gal. 5: 1), abhorring the vile schemes of the serpent, daily resisting and fighting not only this passion

but all others as well, suppressing envy, subduing deceit, hatred of one's brother, and every other form of malice, so as to avoid eternal torment and attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

316. He extols the monks, calling them a chosen race and the army of Christ

316. 1) He extols the monks, calling them the chosen race and the army of Christ. – 2) In all heretical persecutions, both past and present, who defends the faith? – All the monks. – 3) But since we are such, let us keep ourselves pure and rise above all passions. – 4) Do not be disheartened that monasteries are being destroyed, or that we are unable to restore them as quickly as is needed. Let us take care to defend the faith, and everything else will fall into place for us. [4, 114]

18. Brethren and fathers! – I will not cease to call you by these good names of “brethren” and “fathers,” knowing that this title is truly fitting for you, and that this name is not false. For true fathers and brothers are those who, having loved God more than their parents, more than their brothers, more than their own kin, more than their own homeland, and more than all that is visible, have embraced a life of community in which there is one heart and one soul, one Father—God—and one homeland—heavenly Jerusalem. Such are you also, my beloved brothers in the Lord. I will also call you by the words of Scripture: *“A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”* (1 Peter 2:9). For truly, the monastic life is a marvelous light, to which we are called and in which we proclaim the praises of Him who covers the heavens with His virtue. Here dwell wisdom, chastity, courage, and righteousness; here are the trophies of victory over the evil one in Christ Jesus. *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor. 10: 3–5).

19. If we consider visible enemies, we will see how many and what kinds of persecutions have been waged against the Church of God! —And who has been most persecuted, beaten, and killed, if not those who have crucified themselves to the world? I will leave aside the distant past; in the present age, and in the midst of the heresy that continues to this day, who *“stood firm against sin, struggling even to the point of shedding blood?”* (Heb. 12: 4). Are not our fathers and brothers—both in our monastery and in others—blessed? And truly, such deeds and feats are the prerogative of monks above all; monks are the sinews and pillars of the Church. Such is the dignity bestowed upon us by God's goodness.

20. But since where there are treasures, thieves will also lurk, —and since the treasures of the soul are virtues—I remind you and urge you: let us remain sober and vigilant, so that we may not be carried away by the sweetness of sin, nor be enraged by anger, nor be darkened by unbelief, nor be hardened by unconfessed sin, nor yield to the dominion of any other passion; but, keeping ourselves above these destructive passions, let us strive earnestly toward the goal until we reach the end of our lives.

21. Perhaps some are saddened by the news that our monasteries are being destroyed by the enemies of the Lord. But why grieve over this? For we ourselves are the temple of God, to whom it is said: *“If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him”* (1 Cor. 3:17). The fact that these temples have often been destroyed by our persecutors is indeed a cause for regret and sorrow; yet for the most part, they have been restored again by God's providence. Perhaps it troubles some that we are unable to restore and renovate as many monasteries as are needed to compensate for those that have suffered persecution. But since the present persecution is undermining the faith, all our efforts must be directed toward defending it and restoring it to strength—and as long as this has not been done, but the name of our God is still being blasphemed and the holy fathers are being anathematized, what good is there in restoring them? – Who, in a race, has ever received the prize after running only half the course? – For it is said: *“No one is crowned unless he competes according to the rules”* (2 Tim. 2:5). Therefore, setting aside such thoughts, let us hold fast to the confession of our faith with both heart and word, trusting in the unfailing promise: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”* (Matt. 6:33). May we be made worthy of this through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

317. One brother has died; another is on his deathbed. Are we, then, immortal?—Let us therefore remember this hour

317. One brother has died; another is on his deathbed. Are we, after all, immortal?—Let us, then, remember this hour. Where there is the memory of death, all is holy; where it is absent, there are only passions.—But we are overcome by lust. Now is the time; do not put it off until tomorrow; repent now. Stand and pray against your passions, as Moses did against Amalek. [4, 115] Behold, two of our brothers, Jacob and Vassian—one has already departed to the Lord, the other stands at the very gates of death. Are we, then, immortal? Will we not drink from the same cup that those who have gone before us drank? Blessed is the one who occupies his soul with this matter, making the remembrance of death the very soul of his life. For where there is the remembrance of death, there are feelings of repentance, contrition, tears, indifference to all earthly things, delight in heavenly things, enlightenment, and a longing for what is better and heavenly. Where all this is lacking, there arise evil thoughts, which the Lord condemned in the Gospel (Matt. 15:19), by which those who love life are ensnared and held captive. We, however, must always and in all things remember death, and take every care to ensure that we *“do not live the rest of our time in the flesh according to the inappropriate desires of the flesh, but according to the will of God. It is enough for us”* that *“in the past we lived according to the will of the flesh and our own desires”* (1 Peter 4:2–3); we are tempted by the deceptions devised by the devil, who turns us away from good intentions and endeavors and agitates us with evil thoughts, from which we have never derived any benefit, but only troubles and humiliation. *“Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Cor. 6:2). *“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,” cries out the Holy Spirit* (Heb. 3:7). Since He saw the inclination of our nature toward sin—which does not remain steadfast even for a single day—He mercifully designated *“today and today”* for repentance, so that no one might have an excuse to turn away from it; but so that everyone—whether they have sinned much or little, whether they have been sinning for a long time or are just beginning—upon hearing this saving call, might daily renew and purify themselves through repentance with all their heart. Behold the love of our good God, who grants us a swift and easy healing from sin. Physical wounds are also healed, but this requires a greater or lesser amount of time for treatment so that the wounded may later rejoin the ranks against their enemies. But for us, as soon as a wound is received, it can be healed immediately, if we wish to turn against our enemies again without delay. Let us not fail to repent daily and be renewed in spirit, and let us not allow any fall—whether in thought, word, or deed—to become a cause for slackness or discouragement; but no matter how many times we are struck down, we will rise up just as many times, and, fearing God’s judgment, we will arm ourselves again with all our strength against our passions. When Moses, the servant of God, was praying on the mountain with his hands outstretched toward heaven, Amalek was being defeated; but when he lowered them, Amalek gained strength. In the same way, when our mind, beset by passions, ascends the mountain of prayer and, like hands, stretches out its thoughts toward God, it strikes down the invisible Amalek; but when it fails to do so, it is itself overcome. “Do you see now what we must do? Nothing else but, in the hour of the enemies’ attack, to lift up our minds and hands to God, who has the power to save us from death. By this alone, the enemies will be put to flight, and we will win the crown of victory and inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

318. Upon hearing of impending new persecutions for the faith, he expresses an enthusiastic readiness to endure everything

318. 1) Upon hearing of impending new persecutions for the faith, he expresses an enthusiastic readiness to endure everything. – 2) He then turns to the inner struggle and calls upon us to don the armor of righteousness and fight valiantly, inspired by the help that is ready from above. [4, 116]

22. I think that trials and sorrows await us once again. But, in the words of the Apostle, which are fitting to recall here: *“I do not regard my life of any account to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20: 24). So we too, according to the measure of faith given to us, will act wisely and speak, rejoicing in our sufferings for Christ, and being willing even more to suffer for Him, rather than refusing to endure persecution again, for we have already been persecuted many times. Hearing that *“we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22), let us desire more and more to suffer, to endure more and more, so that we may be more assured of receiving that blessed entrance. Perhaps, by God’s grace, nothing undesirable will happen to us; but it is good to prepare ourselves for suffering beforehand, so that when it

comes, we may meet it as is fitting. For a soul that is not prepared is easily overcome if, not being properly disposed, it is suddenly thrown into struggle.

23. But why do I speak of struggles as if they were something accidental? We face a daily struggle, a daily war—not visible, but invisible; one that inflicts wounds not on the body but on the soul, seeking to destroy it. Therefore, having girded the loins of our minds and, as soldiers of Christ, having put on the armor of righteousness, let us fight earnestly and without slumber. For no one, while sleeping, deserves trophies, nor, lying on one's side, reaps a rich harvest; but both require great toil and sweat. If this is so, is it not all the more inevitable in our battle, in which arrows—like bolts of lightning—rush in: from here, evil lust besieges us; from there, the mania for glory; from another direction, envy; and from yet another, blasphemy? The devil has many other wiles, attempting in every way to shake the soul and seeking, as it were, to devour it; so that it is fitting for everyone, in amazement, to cry out: *“If the Lord had not helped me, my soul would soon have gone down to hell”* (Ps. 93: 17). *“But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Rom. 8:37); and, in the words of David: *“Through God we will gain strength, and He will bring down our enemies”* (Ps. 107:14). *““For He is our peace, who has made the two one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility”* (Eph. 2: 14); that is, He who has conquered and subdued the devil, and who gives us the strength to overcome him with the promise of eternal life in return, which may all of us receive in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

319. Two leopards have appeared in Bithynia and are kidnapping people. This gives me cause to remind you of the invisible beasts prowling everywhere, seeking to devour us

319. 1) Two leopards have appeared in Bithynia and are abducting people. This gives me cause to remind you of the invisible beasts that prowl everywhere, seeking to devour us. – 2) What, then, should we do? Take refuge in the shelter of God and hide within, keeping our senses alert. – 3) Behold, Memnon has been abducted, and I mourn him as though he were dead. Why did this happen? Because he lived on his own, isolating himself from everyone—a practice against which I will never cease to cry out. – 4) He rebukes the brothers for having revealed what he had said not long before (presumably concerning heresy and persecution). [4, 117]

24. It is my earnest desire to always offer you words of comfort and edification, seizing every opportunity to do so. And now, having heard that something extraordinary has happened in Bithynia, I will take this as the subject of my message to you. What, then, has happened? They say that not one, but two or three leopards appeared suddenly there, and they are not preying on oxen, sheep, or other animals, but on people alone: so that the local inhabitants, struck with great fear, lock themselves in their homes all night long until dawn. Such a calamity is clear evidence of God's wrath. – But I will tell you why this news particularly caught my attention. Because we, too, have many beasts, fierce beasts—I mean, spirits of malice: the evil beast is anger; a wicked beast is lust; a wicked beast is envy; a wicked beast is vanity; wicked beasts are all the other passions, which not only at night but also by day boldly attack, rushing to snatch the soul as their prey. Why does the blessed Apostle Peter command: *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8); and *why* does Saint David pray: *“Lest at any time the lion snatch away my soul, when there is no one to deliver or save”* (Ps. 7:3).

25. What, then, are we to do in this situation?—What else but *“dwell in the shelter of the God of heaven”* (Ps. 90:1), and keep ourselves inwardly focused, without being distracted by the wanderings of the senses. For when the eye wanders here and there, the ear takes in corrupting rumors, the mouth utters unseemly words, and the mind indulges in inappropriate thoughts—then the soul wanders as if through desolate places and easily becomes prey to wild beasts.

26. Now poor Memnon has also suffered this fate, having been snared by the devil; I do not see his bloodstained garments, as the Patriarch Jacob once saw the garments of his son Joseph, but his very soul, slain by the sword of sin. For sin is the mother of death; the sin of our forefather Adam, who was immortal by grace, made him mortal; sin brought universal destruction upon the world through the flood; sin consumed Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them; and sin even now condemns everyone who commits it to eternal death. Let us therefore flee from it as from fire: for it is better to fall into fire, under the blows of the sword, or into the jaws of beasts, than into the hands of destructive passions. “Why, then, did our poor brother mentioned here fall?” “For no other reason than that he isolated himself from everyone.” “For the word of truth is not false when it declares ‘woe’ to such a one, because ‘when he falls,’ there will be ‘no one to raise

him up' (Ecclesiastes 4:10); fearing this, I, in my humility, have not ceased to repeat to him, as to others, and I repeat it now: let no one remain alone with himself; let no one love to walk alone; let no one wander aimlessly here and there; let no one be alone with women, for from this, like fire, evil love is kindled. The obedient son heeds this, obeys, and is saved by the Lord; but the disobedient son is seized alive by the devil and delivered over to death. I consider myself guilty of the blood of this poor man, though I am innocent, because I did not remain silent but foretold the sword that was to come upon him; yet I weep and wail as if for a member of my own body.

27. But, beloved, I have something to reproach you for as well. What is it?—In the Acts of the Holy Apostles it is written: *"It came to pass, about three hours after"* Ananias had died and been buried, *"that his wife,"* Sapphira, *"not knowing what had happened"* (5:7). She did not realize it—even though the event took place openly, and there were many people present—because order and the fear of God reigned there in all things, and everyone exercised prudent caution. But here among us, a few days earlier, I said something in secret; and immediately this word spread from here to Constantinople, and from there to Brussels. And I feel constrained, whether I speak or remain silent: when I speak, because things are revealed that ought not to be made public; and when I remain silent, I do not know how best to act without seeking the advice of others. And why are we so unrestrained in our speech? Why do we bring trouble upon ourselves before its time? This is not the mark of sincere disciples, but rather of hostile people. And I beg you, stop subjecting yourselves to such shame; but from now on, let us exercise self-control over our tongues, maintain propriety, fear God, and keep order in all things, so that, having lived according to God's will and pleased Him in every way, we may become heirs to eternal blessings.

320. They are occupied with their worldly affairs; but we are occupied with ours, which is above all

320. 1) They are occupied with their worldly affairs; but we are occupied with ours, which is above all else. – 2) Let us therefore remain faithful to our calling, fighting against everything opposed to it. – 3) To this end, let each one do his own work, and in his own time. [4, 118]

1. Some people take delight in and boast about various topics: soldiers speak of military affairs, sailors of maritime matters, farmers of agriculture, and those engaged in other crafts and arts speak of what pertains to them; and generally speaking, there is no one who does not take delight in the affairs of their own calling. But we find joy in stories that are not about such things: for our whole being is not carnal, but concerns the salvation of the soul, the pleasing of God, the departure from this world, and the settling there; and, as the Apostle says, *"whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise"* (Phil. 4:8), these are the subjects of our conversations, as well as of our cares and concerns. And could there be anything more joyful or more blissful than this?—Everyone can see this from the outcome of both kinds of things; those things have both their beginning and their end within the bounds of this age; but ours have their beginning in another, higher world, and their end beyond its limits—infinite and eternal. For their very essence is virtue, which makes those who practice it gods: for true is the saying: *"I said: 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High'"* (Ps. 81: 6). Oh, what great mercy we have been granted! – *"Let us rejoice in the Lord; let us shout for joy to God, our Savior; let us come before His presence with thanksgiving and shout to Him with psalms"* (Ps. 94: 1, 2); *"for He chose us from the beginning for salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit and the faith of truth, in which He also called us,"* through our reception of the schema, *"to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14).

2. Let us therefore stand firm in the faith, embrace true obedience, and preserve our chastity unbroken. We have but one object of love—Christ the Bridegroom, *"more beautiful in goodness than the sons of men"*—and one inheritance—the kingdom of heaven, the blessings of the heavenly Jerusalem. May flesh and blood, wealth and glory, and all vanity be far removed from us. – However, as long as we are in the flesh, struggle is our lot: for there would be no virtue if there were no struggle. If we happen to be captivated by foreign thoughts, let us quickly call ourselves to sobriety, fearing above all sin in deed, as a deadly poison, and a step that leads us far away from God. Let us repel thoughts with thoughts, and counter desires with desires. And let us do this without laziness or complacency. The goal of the demon who fights against us is to plunge us into despondency and laxity through the relentlessness of the battle, so that we may give up resisting him. But if we remain steadfast in our struggle against the devil, resisting him so that we need not suffer because of him, we will undoubtedly triumph over him and receive the crown of victory prepared for us in heaven. For

the brother of God says: *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been tested, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12).

3. Therefore, rejoice in the Lord. – You who are engaged in various duties know that there is a great reward for you in them. You who are engaged in study, take care not to offend God by it. Is it time to work? Let us set to work. Is it time to study? Let us take up our lesson. But if your brother sets out to work while you take up your lesson, you are not walking in love but are alienating yourself from the brotherhood. Or do you not hear what the Apostle says: *“If my brother is caused to stumble, I will never eat meat again, lest I cause my brother to stumble”*? (1 Cor. 8: 13). And you not only cause your brother to stumble; but even when you are called, you do not appear, making excuses for yourself and not considering that, by acting this way, *“you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment”* (Rom. 2: 5). But so that this does not happen, let us heed the Apostle, who says: *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor. 14: 40): first, deeds, and then teaching. Let us help one another, as befits the saints, and lay down our lives for one another as sincere brothers, so that God may be glorified in us, and we, acting for His glory, may become heirs of eternal life.

321. The final hour is approaching: let us not be negligent

321. 1) The final hour is drawing near: let us not be negligent. – 2) Let us seek God by keeping His commandments: for then there will be no other protection except virtue. – 3) Let us therefore remember the hour of death, and there put to death the members that are on earth: the flesh and all that is carnal are perishable; only virtue abides forever. – 4) A sign is given to distinguish true signs from apparent wonders. [4, 119]

4. When death—that penance common to all—undoubtedly lies before us, when on the one hand there is hope of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven, and on the other the fiery Gehenna looms; is it fitting for me to be idle in speaking, and for you to be idle in listening? By no means. On the contrary, this is precisely why we must always do both; and all the more so as we see that day drawing nearer. For the last day of every person draws nearer unceasingly, every hour and every minute, and *“a certain dreadful expectation of judgment and the fervor of fire to consume those who wish to resist”* (Heb. 10: 27), as the holy Apostle says. Let us not be lazy, then, and let us not allow a single day to pass in idleness and folly; but let us always be sober and watchful.

5. *“Let us seek God,”* as the Psalm says, *“and our souls will live”* (Ps. 68:33). How, then, do we seek God?—By keeping His commandments, as directed by the Beatitudes of the Gospel, that is, through humility, mourning, meekness, purity of heart, *“peace and holiness”* (Heb. 12: 14). When one who seeks God attains these, he finds Him—and having found Him, he remains fearless during the exodus, fears no demons, is not dismayed by the presence of angels, approaching them as his own, and joyfully departs to his Lord, having a good conscience as his faithful companion. But one who is not prepared in this way will fall into inescapable extremes, having no one to turn to and no one from whom to seek help. Here, for example, when someone falls into the hands of evil people, or into the waves of the sea, or into the calamity of an earthquake, or into some other extreme, they do not lose hope of being delivered from it; but there, all hope of salvation is taken away, and there is no one to deliver or help—neither an angel, nor a human, nor a father, nor a mother, nor a brother, nor a friend, absolutely no one; and the poor soul, in shattering terror and inconsolable heartbreak, departs from here, and there encounters that which no word, even figuratively, can convey the true reality of. For just as the blessings prepared by God for those who love Him are such, so too are the things contrary to that, prepared for the sons of rebellion—such that no eye has seen them, no ear has heard of them, and no heart has conceived them.

6. That is why I ask you to keep death ever in mind, and thereby *“put to death the members that are on the earth”* (Col. 3:5), and to root out sensuality from your soul. What do we gain from this love of the flesh, from which we derive no benefit whatsoever, but only painful torment? – Let us look, if you will, into the graves and experience the stench that is there. Such is all flesh: it begins with decay and ends with decay. And all human glory is like the flower of the field. Only virtue is indestructible and inalienable. By loving it, the saints pleased God, and for this reason their spirits are in heaven in glory, while their bodies serve as a refuge for us on earth, through signs, wonders, and miracles.

7. Since my words have touched upon signs, I will mention that signs still occur today, as we hear. And this is not surprising: for the grace of the Spirit, just as it worked then, so does it work now without ceasing. However, one should not indiscriminately believe everything spread by rumor; for it is written: *“Do*

not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). – And to many heretics and violators of God's commandments, both in ancient times and now, through appearances that are the work of God's providence, it has been and is permitted to perform wonders resembling signs. Therefore, one should not be carried away by such things, but must test whether they are true disciples of the Lord according to the signs that the Lord has given us. What, then, are these signs?—"By this," He says, "everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Having been taught by these words, the Apostle later wrote: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1–3). Do you see how exalted love is? How it is like a queen, standing above all the gifts of the Spirit, and can never fail; but those who perform signs sometimes fall away: for the Lord says in the Gospel, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord! Did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matt. 7:22–23). How dreadful is such a response! And how disastrous is such a judgment! – Let us therefore strive to acquire love and its companions—faith and hope—rather than the gift of signs, so that, having lived well in their spirit, we may be recognized as true disciples of the Lord and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

322. Time is running out, death is approaching: why are we wasting our time in vain?

322. Time is running out, death is approaching: why are we fussing over nothing? – A rebuke of greed among monastics follows. [4, 120] Our days pass like hours, weeks like days, months like weeks, years like months. Thus time flies, driving everyone toward the last day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, on which "every thing is naked and laid bare before His eyes" (Heb. 4:13), as the Word of God says. Why then does a man fuss in vain? Why does a king put his trust in gold and his army? Why does a ruler boast of his possessions and pastures? Why does the rich man hope in his fleeting wealth? Why does the sensualist wallow in the mire of sin?—We must weep and mourn daily and, with all our strength, purify ourselves before the judgment of death comes, so that we may escape the wrath coming upon the sons of disobedience. "These people," to use the language of Scripture, "slander what they do not see, and what they do see—as though they were senseless animals—they are corrupted by. Woe to them, for they have gone the way of Cain, have rushed headlong into the deceit of Balaam's wages, and have perished in the rebellion of Korah" (Jude 10:1). I fear that this word, while condemning them, might also apply to you, "who think you are something" (Gal. 2:6). For while one, concerned about his father's inheritance, undertakes long journeys, another, desiring to increase his "income," worries about making a living, goes to great lengths, and exerts great effort; yet another, in order to acquire this or that, acts out of greed, not in a monastic manner—do they not deserve the same judgment as those? And those can still offer some, albeit weak, justification for their behavior, since they are responsible for their wives and children. But what excuse remains for you, who have crucified yourselves to the world and have all your treasure in the cross alone? Are you not worthy of the most severe torments for acting in this way? For it is written: "The mighty will be severely punished" (Wis. 6: 6); and: "The judgment is most severe for those in authority" (Wis. 6: 5); and again: "To whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12: 48). "O sons of men, how long will you be hard-hearted? Why do you love vanity and seek falsehood?" (Ps. 4: 3), inventing excuses to defend your passions? "Look upon the generations of old, and see: who ever trusted in the Lord and was put to shame? Or who ever remained in His fear and was forsaken? Or who ever called upon Him, and He despised him?" (Sirach 2:10). Was not Abraham the patriarch a stranger in a foreign land, by God's command? And yet he became the father of many nations. Did not Jacob the patriarch go down to Mesopotamia with nothing but a staff?—And yet he returned from there a wealthy man. Was not Joseph taken to Egypt to be sold? And yet he became as great as the king there. Did not the prophet Elijah, persecuted by Jezebel, flee without even a bag? Yet he was fed by ravens. Did not the blessed Apostles set out to preach with nothing and without weapons? Yet they conquered the entire world. Have we ourselves not suffered persecution and plundering in years past? Yet even in our case, you must acknowledge that God's promises are true. Where, then, does this evil come from? And what is this vanity? It seems we have forgotten God's blessings, just like ancient Israel, and are tempting God, as some of them did. But what is said about them?—"For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, 'They are always going astray

in their hearts; they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest' (Ps. 94:10–11). See how the same might be said of us as well, because we prove ungrateful to our benefactor, not being content with what we have. Because of this, our feet find no rest here, and we wander to and fro; because of this, we have disputes and quarrels among ourselves, just as laypeople do; because of this, we prefer to live alone rather than with a brother, and even if we do live with a brother, it is only in pretense: for how, having the love of money as a companion, can anyone live with a brother in sincere unity? Not at all. Woe to such foolish people! I am not speaking of you, my brothers, nor of those who live godly lives here and there; but of those who live poorly and not according to the commandment given to them, whom I urge to finally begin to walk in the right way and become better, so that none of us may perish, but that we may all be saved together.

323. An elder of exemplary life has passed away. After praising him for his asceticism and endurance of the torments inflicted by the iconoclasts...—he gives the brothers a lesson—to use the remembrance of death to turn away from all worldly things and to stir up zeal for the pursuit of all virtues

323. 1) An elder of noble life has passed away. After praising him for his asceticism and endurance of the torments inflicted by the iconoclasts, – 2) he instructs the brethren—to use the remembrance of death to turn away from all worldly things and to stir up zeal for the acquisition of all virtues. – 3) He encourages them to do so by pointing out the good fruits of such conduct and the bad fruits of the opposite. – 4) He mentions that the brother who returned from Jerusalem has been sent back there to pray for us. [4, 121]

8. Although there are many edifying stories that move the soul to tenderness and contrition, none of them offers as much edification as the news of death. For death is a terrifying mystery to us, both when we hear of it and when we reflect upon it. Since a venerable elder has now passed away, it is necessary to say something—albeit briefly—for the edification of all. The very fact that he served the Lord in monastic life from his youth until his advanced old age is sufficient praise for the elder; furthermore, the fact that he was one of the courageous confessors, captured by the wicked Leo and severely tortured: his back and chest were lacerated by thirty lashes, his face was beaten with jabs and slaps, and two of his teeth were knocked out; after this, several years later, he was released from prison and set free. He then returned to his former way of life—namely, the life of a pillar hermit—and shut himself away in his cell, where he lived in great hardship and confinement until the end of his life, and peacefully gave up his spirit to the Lord. The wicked persecutor acted lawlessly in vain; but the valiant warrior ascended to heaven adorned with the crown of martyrdom.

9. And we, brothers, what shall we do, and what shall we think? How much longer will we live? —Is it much, or little?—And who knows what the coming day will bring?—But for now, let us take to heart the lesson taught by the elder's death. For what we have seen in him will soon befall us as well. For there is no one who has ever crossed the boundary of death set for him. Let us therefore never forget death, lest eternal death take us by surprise. Let us not love this present age, lest we come into enmity with God. For it is written: *"Whoever wants to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God"* (James 4:4). Or do you not know that love for this world prevents the soul from longing for the departure from the body? For just as Israel longed to be freed from Egyptian slavery and to enter the Promised Land, so too must we earnestly desire to be freed from the toil of corruption in this body, and to enter *"behind the innermost curtain, where Jesus, our forerunner, has entered on our behalf"* (Heb. 6: 19–20), that is, into the treasury of the blessings of the heavenly Jerusalem. – Let us therefore abhor the vanity of the world, acquire virtues in abundance, and enrich ourselves with divine treasures—prayers, tears, purification, enlightenment, and dispassion—which are the guides to eternal life. As for food and drink, clothing, and everything else necessary for the body, let us concern ourselves with them only to the extent necessary to live and work according to God's commandments.

10. If we spend our time in this way, every day will be a feast, every day a celebration. And even if countless sorrows befall us, nothing will be able to cast a shadow over our clear conscience. But if, on the contrary, we live in malice and envy, in cruelty and all manner of deceit, then, alas!—we will face death every day, and judgment and condemnation even before the final judgment. Then death will come like a roaring lion; and how will the poor soul endure its eternal misery? – For it is written: *"It is time for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who oppose the Gospel of God? And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* (1 Peter 4:17–18). Let us therefore always be watchful and alert, always courageous and steadfast, *"abounding in the work of the Lord at all times, knowing that our labor is not in vain before the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58).

11. As for our brother Socrates, you know that he came from the East, having fulfilled his duty and apologizing for the delay. We wanted to keep him here as a skilled brother. But since it is written, *“Blessed is the one who has offspring in Zion and relatives in Jerusalem,”* we decided to send him back there, hoping to receive mercy through him. And we should rejoice that one of our brotherhood, in holy Zion, the mother of all churches, has been ordained a priest by the Most Holy Patriarch there. May the good God preserve both him and us, and *“fulfill every good purpose of goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified”* (2 Thess. 1:11–12).

324. When attacked by invisible enemies, let us take refuge in the One who is mighty to save us; and He will protect us

324. 1) When attacked by invisible enemies, let us turn to the One who is able to save us; and He will protect us. Let us only be steadfast in serving Him. – 2) Do not be surprised that evil thoughts and passions arise. This stems from Adam’s fall. Although we are renewed in Christ Jesus, if we are inattentive, the old nature rears its head again. – 3) Nevertheless, the saints of God, by God’s grace, have overcome all kinds of sinful rebellions. Let us imitate them. [4, 122]

12. *“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might; put on the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil”* (Eph. 6:10–11); for he does not sleep, but always stands vigilant against us, and all the more persistently when he sees souls valiantly striving against him. So when he attacks us—and he attacks both day and night—let us stand against him with vigilance, turning to the One who is mighty to save us from the death of sin, with earnest prayer and warm tears, and the enemy will soon flee. For it is written in the Psalms: *“Call upon Me in the day of your distress, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”* (Ps. 49: 15). Has the enemy wounded us? But the Lord will heal us. Has he troubled us? But He who said to the sea, *“Be still, be quiet... and there was a great calm”* (Luke 4:39), will also calm the turbulent thoughts within us. – And how great is God’s benevolence! No sooner do we call upon Him than He—the Good One—is already near with mercy and generosity; He grants the prayer of the one who prays, dispels the cloud of sorrow, and fills the heart with light through good thoughts. – And is there anything He does not do for us?! Indeed, it could not be otherwise. For if He gave Himself up for us even unto death—a death on the cross—how could He not grant us everything thereafter? Therefore, let us remain steadfast in wholehearted service to Him; let us quickly rise from our occasional falls; and let us strive earnestly in the arena of asceticism, knowing that crowns await us at the end of our struggles. Let us make the greatest use of confession, for confession is a bridle against sin; let us preserve humility, for by it all the fiery arrows of the evil one are broken; let us guard the faith, for *“without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Heb. 11:6).

13. Perhaps some may wonder and be astonished: how is it that, despite our zealous efforts, we are still overcome by unwholesome thoughts?—But we suffer this because of the transgression in Adam. We fell in him, and our nature has become deeply afflicted by sensuality. But then, through the coming of Christ in the Incarnation, receiving strength in the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, it returns to its original state. Yet since, having fallen ill once, it has learned to be sick, it easily slips into sinful pleasure if we are not careful.

14. Nevertheless, the holy men strengthened themselves so much with the fear of God and love for God that they were not only content to stand firm in their own steadfastness, but also extended a helping hand to others—casting out demons and performing many other miracles. – Although we are far removed from their way of life, we will strive to imitate them to the best of our ability; and may our gracious God accept this small offering of ours, just as He accepts their great good deeds, and together with them, may He deign to grant us His kingdom.

325. Like ordinary travelers, we too—pilgrims on earth striving toward our heavenly homeland—must not become attached to anything here, must not burden ourselves with anything, and must strive directly toward our goal, inspired by the indescribable blessings that await us there and by the horrors that await us if we do not reach it.

325. Like ordinary travelers, we too—strangers on earth, striving toward our heavenly homeland—must not become attached to anything here, must not burden ourselves with anything, and must strive directly toward our goal, inspired by the indescribable blessings that await us there and by the horrors that await us if we do not reach it. [4, 123] Ordinary travelers should encourage one another and spur each other on to continue

the journey, without veering to the right or to the left, but proceeding along the royal road; and not only that, but they should eat, drink, and sleep in moderation, so that by balancing their diet they may make the hardships of the journey as light as possible for themselves. – You can surely see for yourselves what this example implies—namely, that we, too, are travelers in this life, navigating its course filled with countless difficulties—and that we, too, must comfort and inspire one another in our endeavors, walk without straying, and be moderate in food, drinking, and sleep, so that, burdened by them, we do not become too lazy to continue our journey and do not return to the pleasures of this earthly life; for even ordinary travelers do not turn back or veer off to one side or the other, but keep to a single course, striving to reach the place designated for their rest. Oh, how beautiful is the place of our rest! And how blissful is our sojourn there! It is not temporary but eternal, and full not of perishable but of imperishable blessings—where there is joy, peace, and unceasing celebration. This is what the Lord says about this in the Gospel: *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And if I go, you will know, and you will know the way”* (John 14:2–4). See what an ineffable and inconceivable promise this is! Who, then, will not rise up, who will not hasten, who will not long to reach those eternal dwellings? – The blessed David, longing for them, sang: *“How lovely are Your dwellings, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longs and faints for the courts of the Lord”* (Ps. 83: 2, 3). These are truly the longed-for abodes. Here, however, we are as if in exile; and our stay here is not long. And the whole of this present age, compared to the future, is like a single day. Why then should we be friends with the world? Why marvel at the present? Why turn our gaze—not merely to this or that thing, but to the sky, the earth, and the sea; to the sun, the moon, and the stars; and to all other visible things? For what will we leave behind in a short while—why cling in vain to such things?—*“One thing I have asked,”* says St. David, *“of the Lord, that I will 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 visit His holy temple’”* (Ps. 26:4), and whoever is deemed worthy to enter it is delivered from that heavy day of which one of the Prophets speaks: *“Why do you call this day of the Lord? For it is darkness, not light”* (Amos 5:18). But the blessed Apostle also called it a day of wrath, saying: *“You are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment, when He will render to each one according to his deeds”* (Rom. 2:5–6). To give, by way of an example from our own experience, at least some semblance of the torment of that day, let us recall, if you will, a man who came here not long ago, who, having been possessed by a demon, was tormented by it in his soul and burned all over his body—how he cried out day and night, finding no comfort or relief in anything. Do you think such torment was easy for this man?—Certainly not. But it is but a dream compared to what lies ahead. How, then, shall we endure the latter—the unquenchable fire, the never-sleeping worm, and the countless other eternal torments? But by Your mercy, O Lord, through the prayers of Your Saints and of our blessed father, grant that we may be delivered from all of them and receive the blessings promised to the faithful.

326. Where is the refuge from the snares of the enemy? In turning away from all that is sinful, from wicked thoughts and desires

326. Where is refuge from the snares of the enemy? In turning away from all that is sinful, from wicked thoughts and desires. – And let us do so, inspired by the bliss of inner peace and the ruinous nature of passionate agitations. [4, 124] Fearing that we might fall into the hands of the Agarians, we fled from our former dwelling and now live here. But how much greater should our fear be of falling into the hands of invisible enemies? And how much farther, and to what safer place, must we flee from them? What, then, does this flight consist of?—In distancing ourselves from sin, with which the devil, like a sword, seeks in every way to slay the soul. —Let us therefore avoid it most diligently, even down to our thoughts; for sin begins with thoughts, then passes from thoughts to words, and from words to deeds. It is difficult not to be caught up in inappropriate thoughts: and you will not even notice when it happens. – But as soon as we notice that we are carried away by them, let us hasten to rid ourselves of them as quickly as possible, through prayers, tears, heartfelt anguish, and the fear of God; for if we allow them to linger within us, they can cause the death of the soul—and this at every moment. For a war rages within us ceaselessly—a silent one; and we cannot avoid defeat except through unrelenting and constant resistance to the sin of the mind with help from above. Do we not see how the waves raged in the sea during these three days? So too is the turmoil of the passions; only it is far more disastrous, since the shipwreck of the soul is more ruinous. But God is the cause of the turmoil of

the sea, for He sends winds upon the sea for our benefit at the proper time; whereas we ourselves are the cause of the turmoil of the soul. It is better for us, as if in some harbor, to remain at peace and not open the doors to our passions; for as soon as we open them, the spirits of malice will blow in like stormy winds, and a great turmoil will arise within us; and we will not be saved unless we hasten to quell this turmoil. What need is there for us to allow ourselves to fall into such turmoil, to be subjected to such agitation, and to live in fear, as if we might suffer shipwreck? – Is it not better to enjoy peace and tranquil stillness, without wilfully bringing upon ourselves a misfortune that could easily be avoided? – Do we not reproach as foolish those who, during a storm at sea, leave the harbor and expose themselves to the danger of being drowned by the waves? But we must consider ourselves incomparably more foolish when we plunge ourselves into the turmoil of the passions. For does not evil lust, breathing into our hearts, stir up a terrible turmoil within us? Does it not toss us this way and that, as if completely drowning us and plunging us to the bottom? Does not envy, in the same way, drive us out of our right minds, wounding both heart and body? Does not unbelief also darken the soul, making it sluggish and listless? And does not every other passion drive a person out of his natural state and make him utterly foolish? Let us therefore avoid these destructive passions, lest the same be said of us that God said of those before the Flood: *“My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh”* (Gen. 6:3). God called them “flesh” not because they had physical bodies—for in this sense, God Himself is *“the Word became flesh”* (John 1:14)—but because of their carnal reasoning, mired in unseemly lusts and lacking both the strength and the inclination to ascend to God. – But we, having consecrated ourselves to God, according to what is written: *“Our citizenship is in heaven”* (Phil. 3: 20), let us hear moreover: *“These are not of the world, just as I am not of the world”* (John 17: 14). Can there be anything more blessed—not only in regard to the age to come, but also to the present one—than to be free from unwholesome desires, not to be ruled by the flesh, but to be led by the Spirit? This is bliss, this is sweetness, this is well-being; this is an angelic way of life. Whoever is like this, outwardly lives as everyone else in the world does, but in spirit is more worthy than those who wear a diadem; he is the ruler of the world, adorned with heavenly distinctions, always ready for the journey and unafraid of death. Let us strive to become like this ourselves, to the best of our ability; for this is possible if we desire it with all our hearts. And having become such, we will enjoy a joyful state of mind throughout our lives here, no matter what external sorrows we may encounter; and in the age to come, we will inherit the kingdom of heaven with all the saints.

327. He urges unquestioning obedience: proving through examples how beneficial obedience is and how harmful disobedience is

327. He urges unquestioning obedience: 1) by demonstrating through examples how beneficial obedience is and how harmful disobedience is; – 2) by likening the brotherhood to a body in which each member attends to its own function—and the body lives because of this; and by concluding from this: “Do the same,” and all will be well. [4, 125]

15. Fearing the condemnation of the one who buried his talent in the ground—to whom the Lord said, *“You wicked and lazy servant... you ought to have entrusted my silver to the moneylenders, and when I returned, I would have received my own with interest”*—I am compelled to give you these brief instructions; and it is up to you, as good stewards, to put these words into practice—which you do, by the grace of God, through your good obedience. – However, there are some among you who not only fail to increase what has been entrusted to them, but are even on the verge of squandering what is their own. – Who might these be? – They are those who refuse to obey, and offer only one excuse: *“Forgive me.”* – What are you saying, brother? You promised obedience even unto death, and now you are refusing to do what you are capable of by God’s grace. But when you say, “I was afraid to cross the sea,” this stems from unbelief; there, *“you feared where there is no fear”* (Ps. 13:5). For if you had been faithful to obedience, you would not only have sailed across the sea on a ship, but, having cast off your clothes, you would have swum across the water naked, imitating that ever-memorable monk who, relying on his father’s command, was not afraid to cross a raging river, and having crossed it, emerged unscathed, to the amazement of those who witnessed it. Obedience even tames wild beasts. Proof of this is , who, at the command of his elder, bound Gehenna. Obedience works miracles even among the dead: as confirmed by Akakios, who cried out from his tomb. But why speak of either of these? The Only-Begotten Son of God Himself, *“being obedient even unto death, even death on a cross,”* accomplished the work of salvation for the world. Such are the wondrous deeds and fruits of obedience. Do you now wish to learn of the ruinous consequences of disobedience?—Remember Adam, who, by disobeying

God and tasting the forbidden fruit, brought death into the world; remember Saul, who, having disobeyed the holy Samuel, lost not only his kingdom but also his life in the hills of Gelboe; and remember that man of God who, having been deceived by a false prophet, fell into disobedience to the commandment and was therefore thrown to the lions. And Peter, the blessed Apostle, having out of reverence refused to allow the Lord to wash his feet—did he not hear: *“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me”* (John 13:8)? Likewise, in the life of St. Euthymius, did not the herdsman who refused to obey—for reasons he deemed blessed—immediately become possessed by a demon, *that “foam” of his mother-in-law*? Such is the judgment upon those who refuse the obedience given to them, upon those who are rebellious: *“For every rebellious disciple will stir up strife,” and “the Lord will send an unmerciful angel against him”* (Prov. 17:11).

16. Generally speaking, *“we are many parts of one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”* (Rom. 12:5): one serves as an eye, another as an ear; one as a nose, another as a tongue; one as a hand, and yet another as a foot. If all the members do not each perform their own function, but begin to quarrel—the eye demanding to hear, the ear to smell, the nose to speak, the tongue to touch, the hand to walk—will not the whole body be thrown into disorder and fall apart? If this is so, then let each one fulfill his or her duty, and let each use the gift received from God for the common good, keeping in mind that our fate is in God’s hands. It is not because someone sails the sea that his end is there, nor because another remains on dry land that death awaits him there; but just as our good God, from the foundation of the world, has determined for each person the time, place, and manner of death, so will the end of each person come. I have set forth this not so much for those of whom I speak—for I have already accepted them for the sake of their humility—but for all who hear, that we may take it to heart carefully, and that whatever vows we have made before God and His chosen angels, we may fulfill them diligently, without wavering, even if what is commanded presents some mortal danger. This is what the Fathers teach, and above all, the Great Basil. Living in this way, we will not fall prey to sinful death, but will live in righteousness and be deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

328. According to the economy of the Incarnation, death is a joy for Christians if they have prepared themselves to meet it

328. 1) According to the Incarnate plan of God, death is a joy for Christians if they have prepared themselves to meet it. – 2) Let us therefore prepare ourselves as we ought. [4, 126]

17. I have been a little ill of late: my heart faltered, and it seemed to me that I would depart from you. – How much longer will I, a humble man, have to live? You see that my old age has already come, and my peers have passed away; and in due course, my end awaits me. – So what? Should we grieve over this? Let it not be so. Let those who live according to the flesh grieve, if they wish, as they are separated from their wives, children, servants, possessions, and all the pleasures of this life by which they are captivated. But for us, for whom the world has been crucified and who are surrounded by the cross alone—by virtue of our renunciation of the world and our commitment to obedience—the mystery of death should be not a cause for sorrow but a source of joy. And what am I saying—“for us”? All Christians must regard their passing with joy. Before the coming in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, death—reigning over our race through Adam’s transgression—was dreadful and abhorrent even to the saints. But after Christ, the Life of all, *“tasted death for everyone”* (Heb. 2: 9), He opened and *“renewed”* for us *“a living and new way through the curtain—that is, His flesh”* (Heb. 10: 20), as it is written: *“Death has been swallowed up in victory”* (1 Cor. 15: 54), —when we die, we are no longer cast down into the kingdom of Hades, but are raised up into the Kingdom of Heaven, and are not *“laid in darkness and the shadow of death”* (Ps. 87: 7), but ascend into the inaccessible light and into the unceasing life which God has promised to those who love Him. Thus, death itself is no longer something to be feared, but rather something to be joyfully embraced—provided, of course, that we are prepared for it through the preparation of our hearts. – For without this preparation, it is still a terrifying prospect if, at the hour of our departure, we must lament the years that have passed and seek more days of life to perform good deeds. This is dreadful and disastrous, because one caught in such a state will be troubled in heart and fall into utter ruin, passing not to the rewards for good deeds but to the retribution for sins. Oh, what a dreadful sight he will encounter!

18. Lest the same fate befall us, I remind you and implore you: let us keep ourselves always ready for a blessed departure, regarding every day as the last day of our lives, as St. Anthony teaches us? For if we resolve to act in this way, we will never be dissolute, careless, lazy, idle, argumentative, rebellious, unrestrained, or ridiculous; but on the contrary, we will be submissive, self-controlled, contrite, well-disposed,

meek, peaceful, sincere, blameless, and ready for every good deed, following the example of the saints, who, having lived in this way, were deemed worthy to receive the heavenly blessings promised. – I have set forth all this, seeking to strengthen not only you but also myself in what is good, so that, having lived our lives in such preparation for our departure, at the time of our departure we may not be troubled by fear and trembling, but may cry out with David in joy: *‘Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you’*; and: *‘I will be pleasing before the Lord in the land of the living’* (Ps. 114:6, 8). May this be granted to all of us.

329. The mortification of one’s own will is the greatest feat, Christ-like and apostolic, though not everyone now perceives its loftiness

329. The subjugation of one’s own will is the greatest feat, one that imitates Christ and the Apostles, although not everyone today recognizes its greatness. [4, 128] The exhortation to grieve compels those lacking in virtue and, at the same time, teaches them to heal their weaknesses. For this very sorrow over the lack of virtue imperceptibly disposes the soul to seek self-improvement. *“For godly sorrow,”* as the Apostle says, *“produces a repentance that leads to salvation”* (2 Cor. 7:10). But let us consider: what is it that causes us sorrow? Is it that unwholesome thoughts rise up within us and, like a hostile army, besiege our soul?—But it is written: *“Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, in Him I will trust”* (Ps. 26:3). Or is it that the yoke of obedience is heavy?—But again it is written: *“It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth”* (Lamentations 3:27); and further: *“My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:30). Or is it that this life under the yoke of obedience does not allow one to have anything of one’s own? But here is the word of the Apostle: *“We have left everything and followed You; what then will be ours?”* (Matt. 19:27).—And they were given a promise as awesome as it is glorious. – And have we not, like them, left everything and followed in the Lord’s footsteps? Did not one leave his parents? And another, his brothers and sisters? One—his wife and children; another—his houses and fields? And all of them—that which is most precious of all—their own will and their own desires—which is the most difficult thing for people to accomplish. For name for me a strict fast or a vigil, or sleeping on the bare ground, or abstaining from a bath, or the desolation of a place, or any other of our devotions to God—all these things happen of the doer’s own free will. What happens of one’s own free will, though difficult in itself, is easily accomplished when one desires it; but what is done by setting aside one’s own will, though easy in and of itself, is accomplished with great difficulty. The holy fathers called this act “the shedding of blood”; and it is characteristic of no one else but the one who is truly a disciple and can say with the Apostle: *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”* (Gal. 2: 20). For insofar as he does not live by his own will, in that same measure, through the abbot’s will, he lives for God, and imitates Him who said: *“I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me”* (John 11: 38). Do you see the loftiness of our way of life? Is it not Christ-like? Is it not apostolic? Or am I speaking to you in this way merely to flatter you? No; the truth itself testifies to the sincerity of my words. If people do not heap praise upon those who live this way, their glory is in no way diminished; for God does not see as man sees. But there is God’s judgment, and there is human judgment; and how many who are considered insignificant in this world will, on the day of reckoning, prove to be the most glorious of all, as it is written: *“Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first”* (Matt. 19: 30).—Therefore, rejoice and tremble: the former because of God’s gift, and the latter because of the fickleness of the mind, for we do not remain the same forever. Why *“let us encourage one another in love and good deeds”* (Heb. 10: 24), without being burdened by the suppression of our own will—which is the whole point of the message—and without growing sluggish in the performance of our duties, but rather being inspired by zeal, supporting one another, bearing one another’s burdens, as brothers, as those of one mind, as fellow laborers. By striving in this way day after day and conducting your lives in this manner, you will, as I well know, undoubtedly receive the unfading crown of glory.

330. In the invisible spiritual battle, a fearless and spirited struggle against the enemy, waged with hope, always prevails: enemies flee from such people

330. 1) In the invisible spiritual battle, a fearless and spirited struggle against the enemy, waged with hope, always prevails: enemies flee from such people. – 2) In the battle against heresy, one should not associate with heretics or mention them by name: which is what I have forbidden. [4, 129]

1. Although I am weak in both word and deed, it is my duty to comfort you and inspire you spiritually, to the best of my ability. For if those fighting a war against visible enemies need encouragement from their comrades-in-arms, how much more do you, who are waging war against invisible enemies, need to be anointed with words of exhortation and uplifted in spirit; since your battle is not for a single day, but for your entire life; and moreover, if you are victorious, you will receive an indescribable crown of incorruption, but if you are defeated, an eternal burden of immeasurable shame?—But may we not suffer this or be put to shame in our hope! On the contrary, let us not doubt that, with God’s help, we will triumph over the devil through constant vigilance and unceasing resistance to the enemy. You know that even ordinary soldiers, when they enter battle, are in a state of extreme excitement; their countenance changes, and they seem entirely different from before; and at that moment they no longer think of their wife, children, parents, or brothers—or anyone at all—but their mind and heart, like their whole body, are wholly focused on the struggle. In the same way, we too, in our inner being, must be so disposed, not fearing our adversaries in the least, but rushing upon them with zeal and fervor of spirit, as good soldiers of Christ. When our enemies see us this way, they withdraw, not daring to attack; but when they see that our courage is waning and our strength and vigilance are weakening, then they draw their bows and wound our souls with arrows—that is, with unwholesome thoughts. – But even in such a case, we must not despair; rather, having recognized our lapse, we must repent, and, having gathered our strength once more, enter into unceasing struggle. – So it is always.

2. But now a different kind of heretical battle is raging throughout the universe. And if you wish, lift up the eyes of your mind and you will see the entire world filled with those wounded in this battle. For the serpent takes under his power not only unbelieving heretics, not only fornicators and adulterers and others who commit such debauchery; but also those who are indifferent to all such people and associate with them: for true is the saying that *“he who touches pitch will be defiled, and he who associates with the proud will be crushed”* (Sir. 13:1). For this reason, although I am reproached for it, I have forbidden an Orthodox Christian to commemorate in the sacred commemorations and at the Divine Liturgy a certain person who pretended to be Orthodox yet never ceased to have communion with heretics and heresy. For if he, even at the hour of death, had confessed his sin and partaken of the Holy Mysteries, then an Orthodox Christian could offer a prayer for him. But since he departed while in communion with heresy, how can such a person be admitted into Orthodox communion?—The Holy Apostle says: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the Body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we, though many, are one body; for we all partake of the one bread”* (1 Cor. 10:16–17). Judging by this, partaking of heretical bread and the cup makes the partaker belong to a faction opposed to the Orthodox, and all such partakers together form one body, alien to Christ.—*“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what communion has light with darkness? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? Or what fellowship has the Church of God with idols?”* (2 Cor. 6:14–16), as the same Apostle exclaims elsewhere. – But for such people we ought to weep; for those among them who are still alive, we ought to pray that they may be delivered from the devil’s snares; and for ourselves, we ought to give thanks, for *“God has chosen us for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth”* (2 Thess. 2: 13), so that we may serve Him in the Orthodox faith until this very confession of faith, for which— if we fulfill it blamelessly and without fault—may He deign to grant us His heavenly kingdom.

331. Other matters have their time; but the work of salvation must always be attended to

331. 1) Other matters have their time; but the work of salvation must always be attended to. – 2) Let us not delay, seeing how death reaps everyone, and reflecting in this regard on the wise and foolish virgins. – 3) Let us therefore arise and be zealous to prepare everything for the coming of the Bridegroom. [4, 130]

3. For other matters, specific times are set: a time for sowing and a time for reaping; a time for peace and a time for war; a time for trade and a time for abstaining from trade. But for the work of spiritual salvation, every time is suitable, and every day is favorable, if we so desire. – Let us therefore be ever eager to do good, of good disposition, and filled with youthful zeal to put God’s words into practice: *“Not, for those who hear the law are righteous before God, but those who do the law will be justified”* (Rom. 2: 13). – Therefore, whether an invisible battle lies ahead, we must fight cheerfully and, with God’s help, drive away the demonic thoughts that rise up against us, lest, by lingering within us, they cause us spiritual death; or is the spiritual harvest at hand? Then we must reap diligently, gathering sufficient provisions for eternal life into our spiritual

granaries, so that we may not die there eternally from hunger. There is always a time for prayer, a time for tears, a time for purification from our failings, and a time for the rapture of the Kingdom of Heaven.

4. Why are we hesitating? Why are we delaying? Why do we put off day after day the work of our own reform? *Is not "the form of this world passing away?"* (1 Cor. 7:31). Are not countless people departing from us every day? Do not the coffins that are ceaselessly opened celebrate a victory over our poor nature?—Does not the earth do the same, receiving our bodies, which are of the same substance as it?—And will we remain here until the end?—Do we not see how many of our brethren have already departed? Where are our blessed fathers? Where are our brothers, both spiritual and earthly? Where are our friends and companions in labor, in manual work, and in psalm-singing? And how forgetful we are!—When the death of a brother or father occurs, we immediately come to our senses, are overcome with grief, and vow to walk righteously henceforth; but when a little time has passed since then, we forget both our grief and our good intentions. — But the saints of God did not act this way: throughout their lives they meditated on death, died daily, crucified themselves daily to the world, and turned daily by their own free will toward God; and now they live there a blessed and everlasting life. — Does the parable of the ten virgins not frighten you? — *"Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him."* The wise ones met Him, *"and went in with Him to the wedding feast."* But the foolish ones, for lack of good deeds, were late, and when they cried out: *"Lord, Lord, open to us,"* they heard in reply: *"Truly I tell you, I do not know you."* And so they remained outside. To this the Lord added: *"Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour"* of His coming (Matt. 25:6, 10–13).

5. Therefore, we must watch; we must awaken our souls from sleep, be sober-minded, repent, keep ourselves blameless and pure, and walk in the light, lest death overtake us suddenly and the doors of mercy be shut before us—and there will be no one to open them or help us. Let us therefore hasten to prepare works pleasing to God for our departure: you who are lazy, arise to work; you who are disobedient, begin to obey; you who are haughty, humble yourself; you who are hard-hearted, soften your heart; you who are unrepentant, be contrite; you who do not confess, begin to confess; you who are idle, begin to work; all of you, set everything right—and strive for good deeds. I will add one more thing: you who love women, be moderate; do not associate frequently with women, and do not spend time with them for too long; for from this the fire of sin is kindled, as we hear in Scripture, which says: *"If anyone binds fire in his bosom, will not his clothes be burned? Or who can walk on burning coals without burning his feet? So is the man who goes in to another man's wife"* (Prov. 6:27–29). But even a virgin is a married woman if she has entered monastic life, just as one who has taken monastic vows—whose Bridegroom is the Lord of Glory. — I say this to those who have scattered here and there and live as they please, inventing excuses for their sins, and forgetting that the Lord commanded us to remove even the eye that causes temptation (Matt. 5:29), let alone anything else. — And this is what I have to say to you: *"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak"* (Rom. 15:1), and to set an example of virtue for those who are not yet well-ordered. You are already such by the grace of Christ; but continue to be so—and you will be saved in our Lord Jesus Christ.

332. Pointing out that the goals and pursuits of monastic life are higher than those of all other states and ranks, and—that it draws everyone to itself despite its hardships—he invites those who have been deemed worthy of it to rejoice and give thanks to the Lord, and to strive to be true monks

332. 1) Pointing out that the goals and pursuits of monastic life are superior to all other states and ranks, and—2) that it draws everyone to itself despite its hardships—3) he invites us to rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for those who have been deemed worthy of it, and to strive to be true monks. [4, 131]

6. Let us give glory to God that we have been deemed worthy to *"choose the better part,"* and, as it were, to *"sit at Jesus' feet and listen to His Word"* (Luke 10:39). Others worry and talk about many things—that is, about wives and children, about possessions and money; but we have but one concern: how to please the Lord. Others wage war for the earthly Caesar and are compelled, in every way—even to the shedding of blood—to grovel before Caesar's commands; but our warfare is voluntary, in which we freely fulfill the commandments of Christ, the King of kings, in the hope of receiving the endless Kingdom of Heaven. Others undertake long and arduous journeys for the sake of trifling and fleeting gains; but our task is, whether by day or by night, to hasten only to the temple of God, so that we may offer there praise to God's majesty, and thereby acquire not perishable gold, but spiritual treasures that cannot be stolen and are eternal.

7. Although we sometimes encounter something sad and distressing—whether due to external circumstances or our inner state—when this happens for the sake of the Word of God and our hope, we bear

it well, for we know how to rejoice in our sorrows and not feel constrained in our trials. Such is our life that it draws those of understanding to itself through its very sorrows. Who does not love their parents and feel affection for them? Yet, out of love for God, leaving them behind, the sons of men flock here. What bond is closer than marriage, when, according to the Lord's word, the two become one flesh? But even such people are cut through by the sword of the Gospel and sent here. Here the ruler lays aside his dominion; the wealthy man, wise in his ways, renounces his wealth; the poor man forgets his poverty; the orphan ceases to be an orphan; and I will add: the king lays aside his purple robe and is counted among the others as their equal. For our brotherhood is the body of Christ, in which all are equal; and our common dwelling is the harbor of salvation, equally salvific for all. – Everything here is different, not as in the world. Thus, when death occurs, there is no weeping or wailing here, as among those who love life, but the burial of the departed takes place in silence: for here neither the wife wails, nor the children cry out, nor do the relatives compose lamentations, recalling this or that; but the departure takes place with joy, and the burial with good hope; though there are tears, born of spiritual love for the departed: in which there is nothing inappropriate; for even the Lord wept at Lazarus's tomb, in accordance with the nature of our being (John 11:35). Has there ever been any other life more blessed than this one?—Has there ever been any other way of life that has brought people closer to God? Why, then, is it fitting for us to proclaim, in the words of David: *"Here the Lord has commanded the blessing—life forevermore"* (Ps. 132: 3).

8. Let us therefore rejoice and share in one another's joy; let us give thanks and give thanks unceasingly; let us love our all-good God and love Him boundlessly, for He has called us out of darkness into light, from humiliation to glory, from obscurity to distinction. Each of you knows from whom you came into the world, and from where you set out for here, with whom you subsequently entered into fellowship, whom you call brothers, and with whom you dwell together. And these blessings are but the prelude to future promises: so that, if we faithfully accomplish the task set before us, striving in every way to endure hardships and bear the fruits of obedience, according to the order and rule at work within us, then in the end we will obtain what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what has not entered the human heart—what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9). May we all come to receive this.

333. Those who frequently contemplate death strengthen the remembrance of death; the remembrance of death and its implications instills the fear of God; the fear of God purifies the heart of passions

333. 1) Those who frequently contemplate death strengthen the remembrance of death; the remembrance of death and its implications instills the fear of God; the fear of God purifies the heart of passions. – 2) Let us walk this path toward blissful dispassion. [4, 132]

9. News of deaths is becoming more frequent—both from afar and nearby—and especially news of the deaths of our spiritual brothers and fathers. Among others, Brother Gregory has left us; his life was praiseworthy, and his passing was blessed, for he died in exile for Christ's sake. – So what? – Surely we too must depart from here, young and old, elders and youths alike. For death is the same penance for all, and some depart from this life before others, while others follow afterward. How, then, can we not think about death and what we are to encounter when the soul leaves the body? How will we endure the presence of the angels if we have not clothed ourselves in the armor of light? – How will we walk that path if we do not bring with us the provisions for eternal life? How shall we pass by the prince of this world, of whom the Lord said, *"The prince of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me"* (John 14:30), if we are not free from the passions that enslave us? *"Blessed is that servant,"* says the Lord, *"whom his master, upon coming, finds doing so. 'Amen, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.'"* Behold, a voice from above! *"But if that wicked servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with drunkards: the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the unfaithful; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 24:46–51). Does this parable not terrify us? Does this threat not wear down our bodies? For this is no fable and no empty talk; on the contrary, words fall far short of accurately expressing what is to come: for that weeping is not like this weeping, and the gnashing of teeth there is not like the gnashing here; but the difference between them is as great as that between dreams and reality; furthermore, the fire there will not be quenched, whereas the fire here is quenched, and that worm does not die, whereas the worm here dies. But who thinks about this and reflects on it? Who sees this and hears it? For it is possible to see and yet not see, and to hear and yet not hear, because of the hardening of the soul and the

lust of the heart. – Who has the weeping that is pleasing to the Lord, and daily purifies himself from the defilements that come from there and from here, without putting off this purification until tomorrow? “*For,*” it is said, “*each day has enough trouble of its own*” (Matt. 6:34). Who, by setting their desire upon God, rejects every earthly passion, to the point that they can cry out with David: “*My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me*” (Ps. 62:9). O blessed dispassion! This is how we must be, brothers! This is how the Word calls us to prepare ourselves! Let us be fervent in spirit, clothed in the armor of faith, winged by hope, and fully prepared for the journey.

10. Therefore, I ask and implore you: as those who die daily, let us discipline ourselves in all that is proper, to the best of our ability, knowing that discipline is by nature a virtue, yet it brings sorrow, whereas self-indulgent sin casts us down into the abyss. Let us shed the purifying tears born of a contrite heart and humble reflection. Let us make the holy angels our friends through a life of self-denial, so that they, too, may kindly lift us up to the Lord at the hour of our departure. – I say this not as one who has done good, but as one who desires to do so together with you; as one who ought to speak rather than remain silent; and as one who loves you with the love of God, so that all of us, by doing good, may become heirs of eternal life.

334. *He rebukes them for ceasing to lay bare their thoughts*

334. 1) He rebukes them for having ceased to lay bare their thoughts. – 2) Then he cites examples of God’s terrible punishments upon the unrepentant, as an incentive to confession. [4, 133]

11. I am grieved by you these days, with unbearable sorrow. For you have ceased your regular confession, which is the greatest and most salvific act in our lives. – And if I saw that you had become better and more perfect, I would rejoice, as if relieved of my burdens; for healing the infirmities of others requires no small amount of effort. But since I see the opposite of that in you, I can guess what the reason is. For tell me, where do your audacities come from, and the disorder they cause? Is it not because you do not confess, but hide your pernicious thoughts? For the beginning and root of our sins is an improper thought, which, when revealed, is driven away by God’s mercy, but when concealed, gradually turns into the works of darkness. From this come spiritual death, from this come divisions among one another, and from this come self-justifying words born of ignorance and delusion.

12. But, O man! Animals, which lack reason, know of their own accord, as we see, which foods are harmful to them and avoid them; should we not expect this all the more from a human being, who, from the very moment of baptism, has been enriched with all knowledge of what is good?! – Have you not heard what Scripture says, that God “*did not spare the world of old, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly*” (2 Peter 2:5)? Have you not read that the Lord “*condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by burning them up, setting them as an example to those who would live in ungodliness?*” (2 Peter 2:6). Have you not often heard the Apostle cry out: “*Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor men who engage in sexual immorality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Cor. 6:9–10). How, then, can you, having heard this, say that you do not know what is evil?—This is pretense and evasiveness.—Are you not afraid of the threat? Do you not tremble before Him before whom all creation trembles?—Let no one, then, shrink from confession!

335. *Having said that he loves his brothers and is certain that they love him as well, he invites them to give thanks to God for such a bond, and to be patient when he must severely rebuke them*

335. 1) Having said that he loves his brothers and is certain that they love him as well, he invites them to give thanks to God for such a union and to bear with him when he must severely rebuke them. – 2) Then he urges them to willingly endure the hardships and sorrows involved in working toward salvation: for there is no other way; Moreover, because of the great promises associated with this, it will not greatly diminish the joy proper to the saints. – 3) Let us therefore faithfully walk in God’s way; and if we happen to stumble, let us hasten to rise again. [4, 134]

13. The word of Divine Scripture is: “*I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me will find favor*” (Prov. 8:17). Elsewhere, it also points out the sign of love, saying: “*He who loves disciplines diligently*” (Prov. 13:25). Since I have been humbly appointed to preside over you, I was compelled in my previous exhortation to rebuke and chide you—not so that you might take offense—but I dare to say to you in the words of the Apostle, “*so that you may know the love I have in abundance for you*” (2 Cor. 2: 4), grieving with you in your

sorrow and rejoicing with you in your joy. For whom else should I look to? Or for whom else should I grieve and rejoice, if not for you? You are mine—my brothers, my children, my fathers, my friends, my relatives, my beloved, my longed-for ones, my joy, my crown, and everything else that can express the sincerity of my fellowship with you. I therefore bear witness to my conviction that you feel the same way toward me, and that you are not attached to your parents, your brothers, your kin, your homeland, or anything else that is visible, but only to God, and through God to my humility. And thanks be to God in the Holy Spirit, who has thus united us, that we may love and be loved in return, *and be “one body and one Spirit,” since “we have been called to the one hope of our calling”* (Eph. 4:4). Let us therefore rejoice and share in one another’s joy; and even when it happens that I must sometimes speak to you in rebuke, let us not turn away from one another, but—as is fitting—out of love and for the common good, let us bear the discipline patiently. For it is written: *“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, nor lose heart when He rebukes you; for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises every son whom He accepts”* (Prov. 3:11–12). To this the Apostle adds: *“If you endure discipline, God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline—of which all have become partakers—then you are adulterers, and not sons”* (Heb. 12:7–8).

14. Furthermore, wealth, power, and other things that people desire are not obtained for free, but require great toil and effort: can we really suppose that attaining God and divine rewards would be an easy and comfortable endeavor, rather than one filled with immeasurable toil and effort? And would not such an assumption be evidence of extreme naivety and short-sightedness?—Why do we hear that *“we must enter the Kingdom of God through many tribulations”* (Acts 14:22), and that *“the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to eternal life”* (Matt. 7:14)? And for what reason is this?—Because we ourselves did not wish to remain in the carefree life and boundless joy given to us at the beginning in Paradise; but, through our own folly, we chose instead to fall into this present life of many passions and sorrows, and we cannot return there again except by passing through the school of afflictions, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. *“Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame”* (Heb. 12: 2). However, since afflictions for God’s sake are made easier for us by the hope of eternal blessings, they are usually not too grievous; which is why the present time is called a feast for the saints. Saint David testifies to this, saying, *“Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous”* (Ps. 32:1), pointing to everlasting joy. Likewise, the blessed Apostle confirms: *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice”* (Phil. 4:4). And this was said to those who grieved and wept, who labored and remained in the struggle, and who suffered in many ways; for sorrow for God’s sake is a cause for joy for the virtuous.

15. Let us, then, as if celebrating a feast every day, bear our sorrows for God’s sake with a cheerful heart, without being weakened by the devil’s wiles and attacks. And if we should ever fall asleep or be led astray by something improper—whether in thought, word, or deed, let us hasten to rise up, return to our former good disposition, and once again begin to serve the Lord with warm zeal, knowing that even from kings, the warrior who fights and resists receives honor, not the one who flees the battlefield. In the same way, as we remain in this invisible battle until our last breath, we will be deemed worthy of eternal rewards by God’s grace, and we will receive the kingdom of heaven in Christ Jesus, our Lord.