

Instructions of the Holy Fathers on Spiritual Life

Part III.

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As an introduction, we have included an article by the talented church writer, archpriest Fr. Nicholas Deputatov, "Startsi (Elders) and their instructions." In this short work, the author paints a typical profile of a startsa-spiritual father, at one time so accessible and close to the spiritually disposed Russian person. While the author's vista only encompasses the last Elders of Optina, his portrait has become one of a universal nature. This is because the spirit of love and sagacity, which radiated from the pre-revolutionary Saints of Russia, was absorbed by them from the more ancient ascetics of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Athos. Consequently, we believe that Fr. Nicholas's writing may assist

the reader to more actively visualize the images of these Saints, whose instructions are the subject of this booklet.

The Elders and their instructions.

Eldership unveils a deep spirit of sanctity, the spirit of Christ. The elder leads his pupil by the arm so that he doesn't fall into the abyss of sin. He approaches him with kindness, enlightenment and a blessing for his forthcoming struggles. The elder sketches a representation of the future and points out the present joy in communing with God. The elder speaks of illnesses as a ready source of salvation; of forging humility through sufferings, which redeems even without any other good deeds. The elder lives the joys and sorrows of his pupil, as though merged with his soul. The elder teaches that prayer is the suspiration of the spirit. If there is a prayer — the soul is alive; if there is no prayer — the soul is dead. The elder is competent, authoritative and experienced in many things. His voice is firm, clear, penetrating into the poor and ashamed soul of the sinner.

As an example, let us take the instructions of some of the last Russian elders and attend to their unpretentious words, which are remarkably calm, yet firm and soul-penetrating: "You once told me that your enemy is sending his arrows against you. Do not fear! Not one of them will touch you; do not fear any trash, as trash will remain trash. Only accept my advice as a rule: before your morning and evening prayers read Psalms 26 and 90 — and before them, the Archangel's rejoicement — Virgin Mother of God, rejoice... If you do this, no conflagration will ever consume you, nor water will drown you... A bomb will not blow you apart" (Elder John of Optina).

"When you are besieged by people and despondency overtakes you, genuflect 100 times with prayer to God, then not only grapeshot but cannons will not frighten you" (Abbot Anthony of Optina).

"To be humble in spirit — this is such a blessing that there is none greater! A humble person resides on earth as though he is in Heavenly Kingdom, always joyful and content with everything." "An intrepid soul is afraid of no one or any thing, except of God alone." My advice is that instead of having longings, nourish your soul with prayer to God and trust in Him, without Whose will, even birds do not perish, let alone a human being. Be calm in spirit (Abbot Anthony of Optina).

"One wise elder said: Illness has overtaken me — praise be to You God! The illness has intensified — praise be to You God! The illness has become incurable — praise be to You God! For it's better for me to be in Heaven with You than with people on earth...and should it happen that a person dies the same day he had Holy Communion, the Holy Angels will receive that soul on their hands, in honor of the Sacraments" (Abbot Anthony).

"Let us mentally censure and condemn ourselves over everything, but not others; because the humbler you are — the more profitable it is for you: for God loves the humble and showers His blessings upon them! That is why no matter what distress befalls you, whatever unpleasantness occurs, say; I am enduring this for Jesus Christ! Just say this and you will feel much easier, because the name Jesus Christ is powerful; with it, all unpleasantness abates, the demons disappear; your sorrow will abate and your faintheartedness will settle down — when you repeat His sweetest name!" (Abbot Anthony).

Father Barnabas of the Gethsemane Abbey says: "It is senseless to cut out a section for every name during Proskomedia. One drop of the Divine Blood of Jesus Christ washes away sins from the souls of millions of people. " "But I am glad" — says an elder to a visitor — "that you are ill: you will be more humble" — and shakes him affectionately by his shoulder. The pain disappeared as though in one swipe. "May Christ deliver you from the sickness of the spirit — depression, sadness, pride, envy, hatred against others. These illnesses, which happen through the demons' directives, are more frightening and dangerous than physical ailments... Tell your heart: Why are you being impetuous — you will not reform anyone with anger but only harm yourself. Do not let your heart be impetuous, be patient; we will do what is necessary tomorrow, tomorrow we will speak with those that we have to. A quietly spoken word will convince and exhort quicker than anger. Act this way and with God's help you will conquer the demon of anger."

Elder Sche-Abbot Anthony of Optina instructed one woman: "Here God is sending you temptation — so that your passion will perish. ...The Lord sees all your deeds quite clearly, attentively, into your very soul, like we view a person's face. Observes and tests, to see how you reveal yourself in grief. If you endure it, then you will be His beloved. And if you do not sustain it and complain, but then repent — you will still be His beloved... Only God decrees when and who receives sorrows, whether at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of their lives... do everything according to your capacity; do not value your own achievements and do not enumerate your good deeds; but notice your own weaknesses and sins and the Lord will never abandon you... That you are living incorrectly — do not despair, but abase yourself and the Lord will accept your humility, more than great deeds that are not humble... Exert yourself according to your strength; render with humility and contrition; you will grow accustomed and will get to love prayer so much that they will not be able to forcibly tear you away from it. Because it is sweet and joy-creating."

"A person needs enlivenment, inspiration... So, in order that a lamp shine — it is insufficient to only clean the glass, it is necessary to have a lit candle inside it. This is what the Lord did with His Apostles. Having cleansed them with Truth, He enlivened them with the Holy Spirit, even though they were already chaste, and they became the light for humanity.

This process has to be undertaken with every Christian. First, cleansing with the Truth, and then enlightenment by the Spirit. Truth rejects the inborn inspiration as polluted and destroys it, so that upon arriving, the Spirit will resurrect in its renewed state.

If a person directs his own self-inspiration before being cleansed by the Truth, then he will emit to himself and to others, a mottled and false light, because his heart does not contain plain goodness, but one that is more or less mixed with evil. Anyone, look into yourself and check my words with your heartfelt experiences: you will see how precise and right they are, copied from nature itself...

It is desirable that a person who displays selflessness be moored to the quay of Truth, which is the beginning of all spiritual blessings. For this reason, in relation to religion, I advise all my friends to read only the writings of the Holy Fathers, who, having amassed the knowledge of purification and enlightenment — like the Apostles — only then wrote their books, from which pure Truth emanates and which communicate to the reader the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Outside this initially narrow and afflictive path for the mind and heart, everywhere is darkness, everywhere are declivities and chasms!"

We will augment this with the words of elder Siluanus: "In Heaven as on earth, the Lord is discovered through the Holy Spirit and not science... When grace is within us, then night and day

the spirit strains towards God, because grace binds the soul to love God, and because of this, it does not want to be separated from Him, as it cannot satiate itself with the sweetness of the Holy Spirit... The proud and the willful do not allow grace to abide within them and therefore never have spiritual tranquility, while the Holy Spirit enters easily into the soul of the obedient, giving it joy and tranquility... It is possible to return this bliss through atonement."

The instructions of the Elders are a bottomless pool. We have carefully saved only one drop and now present it to the reader as a gift from the Elders — a gift of deliberations and grace. Let us be grateful to these God-inspired fathers, before whose spiritual eyes, all our inner secrets and hidden thoughts are exposed. Although they lived among us, their lives wore a character that was beyond time and space. Let us lovingly learn from them eternal salvation.

Archpriest Nicolas Deputatov

Saint Maxim the Confessor.

Saint Maxim was born in Constantinople of noble parents and received an excellent education. He was one of Emperor Heraclius's (610-641) advisers. Witnessing the spread of the Monophysite heresy (they rejected the human will in Jesus Christ, which diminished the importance of His suffering on the cross) which the emperor himself embraced, he left the royal court and entered the Chrysopolis monastery, where he accepted a monastic tonsure. He subsequently became the monastery's father superior.

A deep-thinking theologian of that time and a strict defender of Orthodoxy, Maxim very skillfully and successfully proved the incorrectness of the Monophysite heresy [Monophysites wrongly maintained that the human nature of Jesus Christ was absorbed by His Divine nature] this is said in the first paragraph. For this, the enemies of the Church subjected him to persecution on many occasions. Blessed Maxim's arguments in favor of Orthodoxy were so convincing that after a public debate with the Monophysite patriarch Pyrrhos of Constantinople, the latter renounced his previously held heresy.

On a number of occasions, Blessed Maxim was sent into exile, only to be recalled to Constantinople. From admonitions to promises, the heretics often turned to threats, abuses and even physical assaults on Blessed Maxim. However, he remained resolute in his religious beliefs. Eventually, they cut off his right hand and his tongue so that he would be unable to defend the Truth either by the spoken or written word. Following this, they exiled him to a prison in Caucasus, in Lazov (province of Mingreli?). Here, on the 13th of August, 662 Blessed Maxim reposed, knowing beforehand the day of his death.

Blessed Maxim wrote many theologian works in defense of Orthodoxy. Especially precious to us are his instructions on a spiritual and contemplative life, which were included in the "Philokalia" in the form of 400 instructions on Christian love. Also known are his 700 chapters on the Holy Trinity and on the incarnation of God-Word, on virtues and passions and discourse on the Lord's Prayer. Directives on asceticism reveal spiritually deep and penetrating thoughts of Blessed Maxim.

He is remembered on the 3rd of February by the new calendar.

God's Mercy, Grace, Faith, Prayer.

1. In remembering God's greatness and boundlessness, let us not despair and think that we are too insignificant for His love. Similarly, in recollecting the frightening depth of our fall, let us not doubt the possibility of restoring within us virtues that have been deadened by sin. Both one and the other are possible with God: to descend and enlighten our mind through guidance, and also to restore virtues within us.

2. If suddenly temptation overtakes you, do not blame the person through whom it came but endeavor to understand the reason for its coming — then you will achieve reform. Be it through him or some other person, you still had to drink the bitterness from the cup of God's judgment.

3. In reflecting upon the benefits of God's judgment, a wise person gratefully endures all misfortunes that befall him, not blaming anyone or anything except his own sins. The unwise person, when he sins and then suffers for his sins, grumbles at God or people, not comprehending God's wise providence.

4. Like doctors, when treating various physical ailments, do not prescribe one medicine to everyone, so does God, in treating our spiritual ailments, apply more than one suitable type of ministrations. But He does cure every soul with medicines that are specifically beneficial to it. Let us thank Him for curing us, even though the medicine did inflict suffering upon us.

5. He who has perceived the weakness of his nature has also perceived through experience the helping power of God. And such a person, having already accomplished some good deeds with this help and endeavoring to perform others, will never try to abase others. Because he knows that just as grace had helped and liberated him from many passions and misfortunes, by God's will, it is powerful enough to help all the other people, and in particular those that have given themselves unto God. Although the person is not released suddenly from his passions, the Merciful and Mankind-loving Physician does heal everyone that hastens to Him.

6. He who believes and doesn't fulfill God's commandments is one that believes blindly. Because, if God's commandments are light, then it is evident that he who does not fulfill them remains without it, supporting a groundless and not genuine knowledge of God.

7. Fear of God is twofold: one is born from the threat of punishment. This engenders sequentially in us: abstinence, patience, hope in God and absence of passions, from which love is born. The other fear is joined with love itself and brings about a feeling of veneration, so that this love does not exceed itself in boldness and start neglecting God. In this way, one type of fear is virtuous and the other — impure. Fear that arises from sinning and the expectations of suffering is impure. Having its beginnings from the acknowledgment of sinning, it will not last forever but disappear with the dissolution of sin through repentance. But virtuous fear, free of dreaded agitation caused by sins, will not leave and always remain in the soul because it's mysteriously bound with God, manifesting a natural reverence before His greatness.

8. A pure prayer produces 2 types of elevated consciousness. One is experienced by people leading active lives, the other — contemplative ones. The first type of elevated state that comes to one who prays is from fear of and genuine trust in God, while the other — from love of God and great purity of heart. The symptom of the first is that a praying person can exclude from his mind all earthly thoughts, praying without any distractions or disturbances, standing before God Himself. The

symptom of the second is when the mind of the person praying becomes enlightened with God's great light. Then that person feels absolutely nothing — neither himself nor anything around him — except The One Who, by His love, is enlightening him. Being in such a state of enlightenment, the person receives pure and clear knowledge of God.

Learning about God.

9. In wanting to theologise, do not attempt to understand God in His essence because that is unattainable, not only for the human but any other mind. As far as possible, ponder over His nature: eternal, infinite, unfathomable, virtuous, wise and His almighty power that directs everything and justly judges everyone. After all, he who learns — even a little — about God's nature, is already a great theologian among people.

10. Self-centeredness closes the path toward knowledge. If you want to be genuinely wise and not be a slave to your own self-centeredness, then attempt to learn that which is concealed from your mind. Then, in realizing how many things are completely unknown and strange to you, you will be amazed at your own ignorance and subdue your conceit. Having acknowledged your insignificance, you will be able to learn about many great and wonderful works.

11. Among us there are many talkers, but few achievers. Yet nobody should dare distort the word of God for his own benefit. It is better for him to acknowledge his own weakness and not hide God's truth, than to become guilty of violating the commandments by warping God's Word.

12. The Saints attain that, which is unattainable to nature, because nature does not possess qualities to understand that which transcends it. Indeed, the feeling of adoration is not accessible to nature because it is incapable of knowing God. Only God's grace possesses the ability to communicate adoration to creatures through means accessible to them. Then their nature shines with extraordinary light and through their surfeit of glory, is elevated beyond their natural boundaries.

Striving toward righteousness, self-centeredness.

13. The believer fears God, the fearful acquires humility, the humble becomes meek, through this becoming inaccessible to unnatural movements of anger and passions, the meek observes the commandments, in observing them is cleansed, the cleansed is enlightened, the enlightened becomes worthy of being with the Bridegroom-Word in the treasury of mysteries.

14. Repress the feelings of irritation in your soul with love, deaden the powers of the senses with temperance, and let the power of thought soar with prayer. Then, the light in your soul will never dim.

15. The images of the earthly person (*Adam*) — are major vices, such as: senselessness, indifference, intemperance, and falsehood. "Images of the Heavenly person" — are major virtues, such as: sensibility, fortitude, chastity, and fairness. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. 15:49).

16. I think to call the end of this life as death is unfair. It should be called more readily as liberation from death, the distancing from the domain of decay, freedom from slavery, cessation of anxieties, severing the struggle, exodus from darkness, rest from labors, shielding from shame, freedom from passions: in a word — the termination of all evil. Having endured them and reformed themselves

through the mortification of the flesh, the Saints made themselves strangers to this life. Because in struggling valiantly with the earthly and the flesh — with the turmoil that emanates from the emotions having empathy with feelings that generate temptations — and in crushing them both, they preserved the unconquered worthiness of the soul within themselves.

17. He who conquers the source of passions — egoism, with God's help, would easily conquer the other passions: anger, sadness, rancor and others. He who is conquered by egoism, becomes ulcerated with other passions, even if he did not want this.

18. Beginning of all passions is egoism and the end — pride. Egoism is the foolish love for the body. In severing egoism, the rest of the passions that emanate from it are severed.

Passions, cleansing of the conscience, non-accretion.

19. There are physical passions as well as spiritual ones. The physical ones are caused by the body, while the spiritual ones from external subjects. However, love and abstinence severs one and the other: love — the spiritual, while abstinence — the physical.

20. Vainglory and avarice mutually give birth to one another, because some are enriched through vainglory, while others, having become rich, become boastful.

21. Do not neglect your conscience, which is always advising you for your own good. It offers you Godly and angelic advice, liberates you from clandestine defilements of the heart, and at the departure from this world, will give you boldness toward God.

22. There are three reasons for the passion toward riches: indulgence, vanity and disbelief, among which disbelief is the most powerful. An indulgent individual loves riches because it helps him enjoy himself; the vain individual — so that he can become famous; while the disbeliever, so that he can save it for a "rainy day." Fearing famine, old age, sickness, eviction etc., he relies more on his accumulated wealth than on God, Who created everybody and cares for all, even the smallest creatures.

Humility, acceptance of grievances, temptations.

23. If you are holding a grudge against someone, pray for him so that the prayer — in banishing your sorrow from the inflicted hurt — halts any rancor developing within you. If you are friendly and loving, you will completely drive out this passion from your soul. When another person is angry with you, be gentle and humble with him, fraternize in a friendly spirit, thereby helping him to rid himself of malice.

24. Depending on how you pray for the one that has denigrated you, God will assuredly reveal the truth to him accordingly.

25. When somebody insults you, beware of angry thoughts, so that in excluding you from love they do not transfer you into the realm of hatred.

26. When the demons observe that we despise earthly things and because of them are unwilling to hate others or fall away from love, they begin to raise slander against us, so that through not being able to endure the vexation, we would hate our slanderers.

27. God is not glorified by that person who reverently honors Him in words only, but by the one, who for His sake and His commandments, patiently endures sufferings and trials. He glorifies God with his life. In receiving the blessing of not having passions — as a reward for attaching himself to the Savior's virtues — such a person is reciprocally exalted by God's glory. Because, everybody who glorifies God within himself through sufferings for righteousness, and while in a contemplative state — is himself glorified through God's pure rays of enlightenment. That is why our Lord, in voluntarily submitting Himself to sufferings, said: *"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself"* (John 13:31-32).

Struggles with thoughts.

28. Just as it is easier to sin in thought than in deed, correspondingly, it is more difficult to struggle with thoughts than with deeds.

29. Not to have a passion for possessions is a great thing, but greater still — is to remain dispassionate when reflecting over them, because the war waged by evil spirits against us through thoughts is much more burdensome than through the objects themselves.

30. Do not misuse thoughts, in order not to misuse objects by necessity; for if we do not originally sin mentally, we will never sin in deed.

31. The items we passionately think about are those items, which we were at some time attached to. Why is it that in conquering imaginings of passions, the individual naturally despises those objects of his imagination? For the struggle with remembrances about things is equally as difficult as to struggle with the objects themselves, just as it is more convenient to sin mentally than in deed.

32. When the mind begins to flourish in its love for God, the blaspheming spirit commences to tempt it, instilling such thoughts that no human being could think of but only the devil — their father. And he does this from his jealousy of the God-loving Man, who in accepting such thoughts as his own, he would become despondent and cease having the boldness to turn to God with prayer. But the cunning one obtains no gain from his wiles, because he makes us more resolute, because in warring against him, we become more experienced and more sincere in our love toward God.

Spiritual peace, sagacity.

33. Do not corrupt your body with shameless acts and do not defile your soul with evil thoughts. Then God's peace will descend upon you, bringing with it love.

34. Many deeds that are good in essence may turn out to be bad under certain circumstances eg. fasting and vigilance, prayer and singing of Psalms, charity and welcoming strangers — by themselves are good deeds, but if they are done through vainglory, they become evil.

Love towards God and neighbor.

35. He who loves God, lives an Angel's life on earth, fasting and being vigilant, praising God and praying, having kind thoughts about every human being.

36. He who loves God does not inflict grief on anyone, and he himself doesn't feel aggrieved over temporary things. He inflicts grief and is aggrieved only with that redeeming sorrow about which Apostle Paul wrote and who aggrieved the Corinthians, being aggrieved himself (2 Cor. 2:4).
37. He that loves something, will attempt to secure it in every way possible, setting aside anything that impedes its possession. Likewise, a person that loves God is concerned about having pure prayers, and banishes every passion that is an impediment to him.
38. You must love every human being with all your heart while placing your trust in God only, and serving Him with all your might. Because while He is protecting us, our friends will favor us and our enemies will be powerless to do us harm. When He forsakes us, all our friends will leave us and our enemies will take charge over us. While friends of Christ genuinely love everybody, they are not loved by all. Worldly friends do not love everybody and are not loved by everyone. Friends of Christ retain their love to the end, while worldly friends for a while — before something occurs between them that creates a conflict over some worldly matter.
39. If you hate some people, treat some indifferently and greatly love the others, then you should conclude from this how distant you are from complete love, which induces a person to love everyone equally.
40. Absolute love does not differentiate between even one personal characteristic in human beings but loves all people equally. It treats kind people as friends, and the unkind, as enemies (in accordance with the commandments), doing good to them and patiently enduring everything that is inflicted by them — not only refraining from responding with evil for evil, but through necessity, suffering for them so that as far as possible, to make them your friends. Likewise, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, revealing His love toward us, suffered for the whole humanity and gave all of us the one hope of resurrection. Incidentally, every person makes himself worthy of either glory or sufferings of hell.
41. He who is inquisitive about other people's sins, or through suspicions judges his brother, has not laid even the beginnings of repentance and is not attempting to recognize his personal sins, which are truly heavier than a massive lead weight. He doesn't know why a person should "love worthlessness and seek falsehood?" (Psalms 4:2-3). That is why, having forgotten about his personal sins, he wanders in the darkness like a senseless individual, concerned about others' real or imaginary ones.

Elders Barsanuphius and John.

Saint Barsanuphius, an Egyptian by birth, lived in the 6th. Century during the reign of Emperor Justinian. He first lived in a monastery near the township of Gaza and then, lived without the monastery in a small cave, spending his time in prayer and silence. Nobody saw him for 50 years. For his great humility, God honored him with the gifts of wisdom, perspicacity and prophecy. It has been told that, like Apostle Paul, he ascended into Heaven and witnessed the indescribable blessings of God's Kingdom. Being a miracle worker, he raised the dead and like the Prophet Elijah, could control the heavens. Such were the great gifts he obtained through unbelievably difficult temptations

and sufferings. At the closing stages of his life — for the good of the Church — he was invited by the Patriarch of Jerusalem to visit the city, where he convinced the emperor to abandon his erroneous thinking and restore the concordant relationship with the Church of Jerusalem. He died in the year of 563.

Venerable John also practiced a life of silence and earned the gifts of prophecy and perspicacity, for which he received the designation of prophet. His place of birth is unknown. During an 18 year period up to his death, he lived near the Elder Barsanuphius. Knowing the date of his demise and in response to Abba Elianus' request he postponed his death for two weeks in order to instruct him how to run the cloister.

Saints Barsanuphius' and John's instructions have been preserved in the form of questions and answers posed by individuals of various callings — Archbishops, priests and laity.

Saint Barsanuphius instructed Abba Seridus to record all his answers without having any fear of making mistakes, as the Holy Spirit would direct him to chronicle everything correctly and in sequential order.

Prayer. Finding out the will of God.

1. How can you be moved in prayer, reading and singing of Psalms? In prayer, the feeling comes from recollecting your sins. The praying person must bring to mind his deeds, how sinners that have committed similar sins will be judged and the terrifying words of the Judge: *"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire"* (Mat 25:41).

During the uttering and singing of prayers, the feeling comes when the person compels his mind to be attentive to the words and grasp with all his soul the power that is enclosed in them. If despite this, that feeling is still absent within you, do not weaken but persevere patiently because merciful, generous and long-patient God will accept our endeavors. Always remember the Psalmist's words: "I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry" (Psalms 40:1). Act in this way and have trust that God's mercy will visit you.

2. How many times does one pray in order to receive advisory thoughts as to what course of action to take? If you are unable to ask an experienced elder, you then have to utter your prayer on the given subject three times. After this, examine your heart and if it leans by even a hair's breadth — act accordingly. This type of communication is noticeable and fully understood by the heart.

3. How do you pray three times: at different intervals or all at once? Sometimes you can't defer them. If you have spare time, pray three times over three days. But if there are urgent circumstances like that with the betrayal of Christ — where He went away three times to pray and uttered the same words each time — then use that as your guide.

4. When you intend doing a God-pleasing deed and a contrary thought opposes it, this lets you know that the intended act is truly pleasing to God. Pray and observe, whether during prayer your heart corroborates the goodness and this goodness grows and does not lessen, and accordingly, whether the opposing thought increases or not. Know that every good deed definitely has bitter opposition from the devil's jealousy, while a good deed through prayer gains ascendancy over it. If an ostensibly good deed is implanted by the devil and then be opposed by him, — then prayer will weaken this illusory good deed, together with its illusory opposition. In this instance, it is apparent

that the reason why the devil opposes the thought he himself had implanted, is to beguile us into accepting his concept as good.

5. When in thinking about something, you see confusion in your thoughts, and after calling upon God this confusion remains — even slightly — then know that what you are thinking of doing has been motivated by the deceiver. Then, under no circumstances are you to do this — because nothing is pleasing to God that is done with confusion. In a situation where there are opposing thoughts to this type of confusion, then there is no need to immediately regard the matter as evil. Examine the subject, is it good or evil — if evil, then leave it and if it's good, carry it out and reject the confusion.

Repentance, temperance, meekness, sorrows.

6. You ask how to lay the beginnings of repentance. —If you wish to begin repentance, look at the woman sinner: she washed Christ's feet with her tears (Luke 7:38). Tears wash away sins of every person. But a person acquires tears by internal efforts, through the diligent study of the Holy Scripture, through patience, meditation on the Last Judgment and eternal shame, and through self-denial, just as the Lord said: "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*" (Mat. 16:24). To deny one's self and to take up the cross — means to sever your own will in everything and regard yourself as nothing.

7. Regarding temperance in food and drink, the fathers teach to partake of both in lesser quantities that is required i.e. not to fill your stomach fully. Each individual has to determine his own measure in both food and wine. Moreover, the measure of restraint is not limited to food and drink, but extends to talking, sleep, clothing and to all the senses. There must be its own measure in all of this.

8. If upon starting a conversation, you realize that it is sinful — terminate it by saying: "No, we won't talk about this," or, having remained silent for a few moments, say: "I have forgotten what I wanted to say," — and switch the conversation to a different non-sinful topic.

9. Do you wish to free yourself of sorrows and not be burdened by them? Expect bigger ones — and you will calm down. Remember Job and other Saints — what sorrows they had endured! Acquire their patience and your spirit will be consoled.

Humility, vile thoughts, discretion.

10. Let us always have recourse to humility, for the humble lies on the ground, and where would one who lies fall? Whereas a person that has ascended to a great height, can easily fall. If we changed and reformed, it is not from us but is God's gift, for: "*The Lord lifts up the humble.*"

11. You must regard yourself as the greatest sinner among sinners, who has done nothing worthwhile before God, and reproach yourself at all times, everywhere for everything.

12. To the question that should we argue with thoughts that perturb us, I will answer: Don't argue, because the enemies precisely want this to happen and seeing our altercation, will not cease their attack. It is better if you prayed to the Lord, opening your feebleness before Him and He will not only drive out these thoughts but will eradicate them completely.

13. It is more beneficial to humbly pose questions than to persist with your own will, because the Lord Himself helps the asker what to say — for the sake of his humility and righteousness of heart.

Love for your neighbor, mercy, non-condemnation.

14. Do not despond in sorrows and physical labors, which you have to perform within the society, because this also means that you have laid down your soul for your brothers (1 John 3:16) — and I hope the reward will be great for this labor. Just as the Lord placed Joseph to feed his brethren during the famine in Egypt (Psalm 32:19), He placed you to serve society. I am just repeating the words of the Apostle: *"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ"* (2 Tim. 2:1).

15. When you want to do a charitable act but a thought not to give creates doubt, test your thought, and if you find it being suggested through stinginess, then give — increasing the amount that you originally intended.

16. You are troubled by thoughts that incite confusion in others and find yourself confused. Know my brother, that if somebody offends you in word or deed, that person himself will be offended one hundred times worse sometime later. Be forbearing in everything and beware of ascribing your will to anything. Examine your thoughts attentively, so that they do not infect your heart with the murderous poison of anger, and that they do not tempt you into accepting a mosquito as a camel, or a pebble for a cliff. Because then you will be like a person who has a plank in his eye yet looks at the speck in another's.

Tutoring.

17. Sometimes, silence is better than any convincing and instructive conversations. Let us utilize words in moderation, remembering: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression" (Prov. 10:19). So as not to fall into conceit and self-praise, let us remember that in not practicing what we preach, we preach toward our own condemnation.

Abba Dorotheus.

Saint Dorotheus was born in Gaza, in Palestine, and lived at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th centuries. In his youth, he had learned many secular sciences and was well to do. He was in contact with the Elders Barsanuphius and John, and through their influence became a monk in the monastery of Abba Sveridus. Later he became abbot of a neighboring monastery. All his 21 instructions and some epistles have been preserved. He died in the year (circa) 620.

God's providence.

1. Do not wish for everything to be done according to your determination, but wish that it is how it should be, and in this way, you will attain peace with everyone. And believe that everything that happens to us, even the most insignificant, occurs through God's Providence. Then you will be able to endure everything that comes upon you without any agitation.

Yearning toward goodness.

2. Everyone that desires salvation must not only avoid evil, but is obliged to do good, just as it says in the Psalm: "*Depart from evil and do good*" (Psalm 34:14). For example, if somebody was angry, he must not only not get angry, but also become meek; if somebody was proud, he must not only refrain from being proud but also become humble. Thus, every passion has an opposing virtue: pride — humility, stinginess — charity, lust — chastity, faintheartedness — patience, anger — meekness, hatred — love.

3. Don't think that the virtue is beyond your strength and is unrealizable for you, but having enlivened yourself with prayer and laid the beginnings, present your good efforts before God — and you will see what help He will give you to accomplish your virtuous deeds. Imagine two ladders: one leading upward to Heaven while the other, down toward hell and you are standing on the ground between them. Do not think and do not say how can you fly up from earth and find yourself in Heaven i.e. on top of the ladder. Just beware of going down by committing evil. Try to rise little by little, doing any good, which comes along. Your every good deed will be a step upwards. Thus, rising from one level to another — with God's help, you will eventually reach the top of the ladder.

4. He, who performs a deed that is pleasing to God, will undoubtedly be visited by temptation: because every good deed is either preceded or followed by temptation. In fact, everything a person does for God's sake cannot be called substantial, until it has been proven through temptation.

5. Just like a shadow follows a body, so does temptation follow good deeds — for no one will enter the Kingdom of Heaven without temptation. Thus, endure without anxiety and pray — the good Lord will reward you for your diligence and patience.

6. You must travel along the passage mentioned by the Fathers: "*Give blood and receive the Spirit.*"

Struggles with deficiencies.

7. Who resembles a person who satisfies his passions? He is like a person who, after being struck down with his enemy's arrows, then takes them with his hands and pierces his own heart with them. He who opposes passions is like a person that is showered with his enemy's arrows, but remains untouched because he is dressed in steel. One who has eradicated his passions, is like a person that although under a torrent of arrows, either shatters them or returns them into the hearts of his enemies — just as the Psalm states: "*Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken*" (Psalm 37:15).

8. One elder was walking with his pupil among cypress-trees. Some of them were tall while others small. Pointing to a very small cypress, he invited his pupil to pull it out. The pupil promptly did this with one hand. The elder suggested he do the same to a slightly larger tree. The pupil complied by using both hands. The next tree the elder nominated was larger still and the pupil uprooted it, but with great difficulty. Finally, the elder nominated a much larger tree. Try as he may, the pupil was incapable of pulling it out. The elder then spoke: "So are our passions: while they are small, we are capable of pulling them out easily; if we neglect them, they will strengthen and the stronger they become, the more difficult it will be to rid ourselves of them."

9. If even one passion becomes a habit with a person, it will torment him. Sometimes, even one evil habit can surmount many good deeds performed by a person. For example, if even only one talon of

an eagle's foot gets entangled in a net, he would be captured. Similarly, a soul can fall into the hands of the enemy because of one passion. Consequently, don't allow even one passion to turn into a habit, but constantly pray to God so as not to succumb to temptation. If through our weakness we find ourselves conquered, let us force ourselves to arise immediately, begin to lament before God's goodness and begin again to be vigilant and dutiful. And God seeing our good intentions, humility and penitent heart, will offer His helping hand and will deal with us according to His mercy.

10. It is not he that got angry once can be called wrathful, and it is not he that fell once to lust as lustful, and it is not he who showed kindness can be called kind — but as with benevolence and as with iniquity, it becomes a habit with repetition. And it is this habit that later either torments or calms. Benevolence calms because the more we do good, the more we acquire the habit in virtue and through it, return to ourselves the natural qualities and ascend to our primordial soundness. Whereas iniquity torments, because through it we are receiving an alien and damaging habit into our nature, which does destroy us.

11. The soul, according to the extent of the sin becomes fatigued, because sin weakens and brings the person that has succumbed to it into exhaustion. That is why a person is overburdened with everything that happens to him. If a person thrives in goodness, then according to the measure of his success, everything that previously seemed burdensome has now become much lighter.

Guarding the conscience.

12. When God created man, He planted something divine into him — a certain conception — a spark that has both light and warmth. The conception that enlightens the mind and indicates what is right and what is wrong is called conscience. Conscience is a natural law. Living in times before any written law, patriarchs and saints pleased God by following the voice of their conscience.

13. It is in our power to either "bury" our conscience, or allow it to shine within us and enlighten us through our subordination to it. Because when our conscience tells us to do something and we ignore it, or when it advises us to do something and we don't do it, we burden it or, as though, bury it so that its voice becomes fainter from the weight on it. Just like it is impossible to see your reflection in muddy water, so do we cease to understand what our conscience says to us when we sin consciously. It is even possible to imagine that the conscience has perished. Nevertheless, there is not one human being that has lost his conscience, for it is something divine and can never be eradicated totally.

Temperance, meekness.

14. Not only should we observe moderation with food, but we must also abstain from every other sin so that just as we fast with our stomach, we should fast with our tongue. Likewise, we should fast with our eyes i.e. not look at agitating things, not allow your eyes freedom to roam, not to look shamelessly and without fear. Similarly, arms and legs should be restrained from doing any evil acts.

15. It is impossible for anyone to get angry with his neighbor without initially raising himself above him, belittling him and then regarding himself higher than the neighbor.

Sorrows and God's Providence.

16. When we suffer something unpleasant from our best friend, we know that he did not do it intentionally and that he loves us. We must think likewise of God, Who created us, for our sake incarnated, and died for our sake having endured enormous suffering. We must remind ourselves that He does everything from His goodness and from His love for us. We may think that while our friend loves us, in not having sufficient good sense in order to do everything correctly, he therefore involuntarily hurt us. This cannot be said of God because He is the highest wisdom. He knows what is good for us and accordingly, directs everything for our benefit, even in the smallest things. It can also be said that although our friend loves us and is sufficiently sensible, he is powerless to help us. But this certainly cannot be said of God, because to Him everything is possible and nothing is difficult for Him. Consequently, we know that God loves us and shows clemency toward us, that He is eternally wise and omnipotent. Everything that He does, He does for our benefit, and we should accept it with gratitude as from a Benefactor, even though it may appear to be grievous.

17. When a person — crushed with grief — sins, then what benefit does he receive from this grief? The point is that the reason why we sin is because we are impatient and do not want to endure anything that goes against our will. However, God would never send us anything beyond our strength, just as the Apostle says: *"God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able"* (1 Cor. 10:13). But we do not have patience, do not want to endure even a little, do not attempt to accept everything with humility and therefore become overburdened. And the more we attempt to avoid these attacks, the more we suffer from them, get exhausted and are unable to rid ourselves of them. Does this section refer to sailors or swimmers, or does it matter? Something similar occurs with temptation. When a person endures temptation with patience and humility, it passes by without harming him. If he starts to be fainthearted, agitated and begins to blame others, then he will be burdened needlessly, inflicting upon himself even greater temptations without receiving any benefit.

18. Temptation is beneficial only to those that endure it without agitation. For example, when some type of temptation disturbs us, don't be agitated, because agitation arises from senselessness and pride, and from the fact that by not knowing our spiritual composition, we avoid the ordeal of self-denial. That's why we don't succeed in our spiritual life, because we don't know our spiritual dimension and have insufficient patience, yet want to become creators of good deeds without effort.

19. You human — why are you disturbed when a passion disturbs you? After all, you yourself formed it! It is better to endure, struggle and entreat God to help you, because it is impossible to satisfy your passions and then not suffer from them.

20. Believe that dishonor and censure from people are medicines that remedy your pride, and pray for those who censure you as genuine doctors of your soul. Be assured that he who hates dishonor also hates humility, and he who avoids those who distress him, shuns meekness.

21. There are people that are so worn out from sicknesses and assaults of life that they prefer to die, just so that they can be rid of their sorrows. This occurs through their faintheartedness and great lack of reason, because they do not think about the great need that will overtake them when the soul leaves the body. This is what the book "Paterikon" has to say: One zealous novice asked his Elder: "Why do I want to die?" The Elder replied: "Because you wish to avoid sorrows and do not realize that the forthcoming sorrows are much heavier than the present ones." Another novice asked: "Why do I fall into apathy and despondency when I am in my cell?" The Elder responded: "Because you have not yet realized the anticipated peace or the future suffering. For if you genuinely knew about this, then even though your cell was full of worms so that they came up to your very neck, you

would endure this without weakening even slightly." But succumbing to laziness — yet wanting to be saved — we exhaust ourselves from sorrows, whereas at the same time, we should have been thanking God and count ourselves blessed for being able to grieve a little over here, so that we could discover peace over there.

Attaining spiritual peace.

22. Let us examine as to why a person sometimes gets annoyed when he hears an insult, and other times he endures it without getting agitated. What is the reason for this contrast? And is there one reason or are there several? There are several reasons, although they are all born from a main one. Sometimes it happens that after praying or completing a benevolent exercise, the person finds himself in a kind spiritual disposition and therefore, is amenable to his brother and doesn't get annoyed over his words. It also happens that a person is partial to another, and as a consequence, endures without any annoyance, everything that the individual inflicts upon him. It also happens that a person may despise the individual who wants to insult him, and therefore ignores him.

23. I will relate the following event. There was a novice living in the cloister with me and whom I have never seen annoyed or angry, even though he was plagued and insulted by many. This youth endured everything as though it wasn't happening. Once I asked him to disclose to me the thought that he retains in his heart that makes him so patient. He responded with great contempt: "Why should I accept insults from them as I would from humans? After all — they are barking curs." Upon hearing this, I staggered away and thought: "Some path this brother had found!" Crossing myself, I departed, entreating God so that He would preserve him and me from such thoughts. And so it happens that one doesn't get annoyed because he despises the insulter, and this is obvious perdition.

24. People usually get annoyed either because they are in a bad mood, or they are nurturing unpleasant thoughts about another. However, the main reason for our annoyance is that we don't reproach ourselves: this incurs spiritual disturbance and loss of inner peace. The true and genuine path toward a calm disposition is continual self-reproach. Even if a person had accomplished many good deeds yet doesn't hold fast to the path of self-reproach, he will never cease being annoyed and insulting others, thereby losing the fruits of his good labor. In contrast, what joy and tranquility that person acquires who reproaches himself! Wherever he goes and whatever unpleasantness happens, or whatever insults he hears; he has convinced himself beforehand that he deserves all types of sorrows. That's why when something unpleasant does happen, he doesn't get annoyed. What more sorrowless condition can there be?

Humility, vile thoughts.

25. There are two facets to humility. The first is composed of you regarding your brother as more sensible than yourself and more superior to you, or according to the advice of the Holy Fathers, "regard yourself as being lower than everybody." The second is comprised in ascribing your self-imposed meritorious ordeal to God — this is the complete form of humility of the Saints. It is born naturally in the soul through fulfilling the commandments. Because it is like the branches of a tree that sag downwards when they have abundant fruit on them. However, branches that have no fruit strive upwards and grow straight up. There are trees in existence that will not bear fruit unless their branches are bent downwards: if somebody attaches a stone to them so that they grow toward the ground, they yield fruit. Similarly with the soul, when it becomes humble, it brings forth fruit, and

the more fruit it produces, the humbler it becomes. The closer the Saints get to God, the more they realize their sinfulness.

26. Know that if a person is oppressed by some thought and he does not confess it (to his spiritual father), he will give the thought more power to oppose and torment him. If the person confesses the oppressive thought, if he opposes and struggles with it, instilling into himself the desire for the opposite to the thought, then the passion will weaken and will eventually cease to plague him. Thus with time, in committing himself and receiving assistance from God, that person will conquer the passion itself.

27. Being prone to passions, we mustn't believe our own heart because a crooked precept will warp the upright.

Love towards your neighbor.

28. I heard of one person that when he came to one of his friends and found the room in disarray and even dirty, he would say to himself: "Blessed is this person, because having deferred his concerns for earthly cares, he has concentrated his mind that much toward Heaven, that he doesn't even have time to tidy up his room." But when he came to another friend's place and found his room tidy and neat, he would say to himself; "The soul of this person is as clean as his room, and the condition of the room speaks of his soul." And he never judged another that he was negligent or proud, but through his kind disposition, saw good in everyone and received benefits from everyone. May the good Lord grant us the same kind disposition, so that we too may receive benefits from everyone and so that we never notice the failings of others.

29. The main thing to avoid when meeting people is to be suspicious — from which comes adjudgment. I have many examples, which prove that everyone judges others according to his spiritual circumstance. For example, imagine that it was necessary for a person to stand by the roadside at night, and walking past him were three people. On seeing him, one of the three would think that he is waiting for an illicit rendezvous; another would imagine him to be undoubtedly a thief — he looks suspicious; the third would think that no doubt the person arranged to go to church with someone and was now waiting for him. Thus, the three saw the same person, in the same place, but concluded about him entirely differently. And this evidently, corresponds to their spiritual situation. Just as a sick body converts any food it ingests — even though it might be most nutritional — into harmful juices, so does a soul with corrupted morals, receive harm from any matter that it has dealings with, even from the very good. But the one who has good morals is like a person with a healthy system, who even if he consumes something that is not completely healthy, will still convert it into healthy juices. If we will have good morals and build ourselves up correctly, so will we be able to receive spiritual benefits from every matter.

30. To annoy, judge and spoil — whose works are they other than the devil's? And we appear as the demons' helpers — to our and our neighbor's perdition. Why is it so? Because there is no love within us! Because *"love will cover a multitude of sins"* (1 Peter 4:8). The Saints don't judge a sinner and do not turn away from him, but commiserate with him, grieve for him, enlighten, console, administer to him like a sick part of a body, and do everything to save him.

31. There must be an endeavor to completely purge the inner pus, so that the affected area would heal in such a way as to be free of any remaining ugliness and it would be completely impossible to recognize it as the area where the wound existed. How can you achieve this? By praying with all

your heart for the offender, saying: "Lord, help me and my brother for the sake of his prayers!" Praying in this fashion for your neighbor, the person shows compassion and love simultaneously. Asking help for yourself, for the sake of his prayers, mollifies him. And where there is compassion, love and humility, can there be irritation, rancor or any other type of passion? And Abba Zosima said: "If the devil raises all the wiles of his hatred, together with all his demons, they will all shatter and disappear against humility — according to Christ's commandments."

Isaac the Syrian.

He was born in Nineveh in the 6th century. He entered the monastery as a youth. Having perfected himself and succeeding in good deeds, he isolated himself in a desert cave to maintain silence, heeding only to himself and God. After a number of years, God summoned him to serve as the ruling bishop of the Nineveh Church. However, after being tonsured, Saint Isaac did not remain very long at his cathedra. This occurred because of the disobedience of a moneylender, who refused to act according to the Gospel. The Saint thought: "If they are not obeying God's directives in the Gospel, then what remains for me to do here?" He returned to his beloved hermitage in the desert. Here he lived in silence up to his death, abiding in deeds of self-denial, in struggles with the flesh and temptations of the demons.

Saint Isaac wrote much, relying on his vast spiritual experiences. His instructions came to us in the form of 91 homilies. He reposed in the 6th century.

Faith, God's providence, prayer.

1. To whatever extent a person draws close to God with his intentions, is to what extent God draws close to him with His gifts.
2. A handful of sand, thrown into the sea, is what sinning is, when compared to God's Providence and mercy. Just like an abundant source of water is not impeded by a handful of dust, so does the Creator's mercy not defeated by the sins of His creations.
3. The natural that precedes faith is the path toward faith and toward God. Being implanted by God into our nature, it alone convinces us for the need to believe in God, Who had brought everything into being.
4. Those, in whom the light of faith truly shines, never reach such unashamedness as to ask God: "Give us this," or — "Remove from us this." Because their spiritual eyes — with which they were blessed by that genuine Father, Who with His great love, countlessly transcends any fatherly love — continually view the Father's Providence, they are not concerned in the slightest about themselves. God can do more than anyone else, and can assist us by a far greater measure than we could ever ask for, or even imagine.

Obeying God.

5. To select a good deed depends on the initiator; to realize the intention — that is God's deed. Consequently, let us adhere to the rule, so that every good intention that comes to us is followed by frequent prayers, appealing to God to not only grant us help, but also if it is pleasing or not to Him. Because not every good intention comes from God, but only those that are beneficial.

6. Sometimes, a person wishes something good, but God doesn't help him — maybe because the intention came from the devil and is not for our benefit; or maybe because it is beyond our strength as we have not attained the necessary spiritual level; or maybe because it doesn't correspond to our calling; or maybe because the time is not right to initiate it; or maybe because we don't have the necessary knowledge or strength to accomplish it; or maybe because circumstances will not contribute to its success. Besides this, the devil contrives in every way to paint it as something good so that having inclined us toward it, he could upset our spiritual tranquility or inflict harm on us. That's why it is necessary for us to diligently examine all our good desires. Better still, do everything after seeking counsel.

Hope, striving toward the truth, patience.

7. Not having distinctly experienced God's patronage, the heart is in no condition to commune with Christ.

8. A person cannot acquire a reliance on God if prior to this, he hasn't fulfilled His will according to one's own strength. Because hope in God and fortitude is born from witness of the conscience (in God): and only with genuine witness of our mind (in God) can we have trust in Him.

9. God demands not only the fulfillment of the commandments but also — more importantly — reformation of the soul, which is the reason why the commandments were given. The body participates equally in good as well as bad deeds, and reason, by its behavior, becomes either righteous or sinful, judging by its disposition.

10. Life in this temporary world is akin to writing letters on a tablet. Everyone, when he wants to, can add or delete words on it or rearrange the letters. But the future life is akin to a manuscript, written on a clean sheet, on which it is forbidden to add or delete and stamped with the king's seal. That's why while we are in this inconstant world, let us be attentive to ourselves. And while we have authority over the earthly manuscript, on which we write with our own hand, let us endeavor to make good additions from a righteous life and delete on it, all the failings of our past actions. This is because while we are in this world, God does not affix His stamp neither to the virtuous nor the evil — up to the hour of our leaving this life.

11. When in remembering his sins a person punishes himself, God looks upon him with affection. God is pleased that for turning away from His path, the individual has conferred punishment upon himself — this serves as a sign of genuine repentance. And the harder the sinner compels himself, the greater the increase in God's affection for him.

Patience, fortitude.

12. The will of the Spirit is for everyone that loves Him to abide in labor. God's Spirit does not dwell in those that are living peacefully. The sons of God are distinct from others, because they live in grief while the world boasts of extravagance and tranquility. God did not deign for those who love Him to rest while they are still in their bodies, but for now, to dwell in grief, burdened, in labor,

in scarcity, in bareness, in want, in humiliation, in insults, in bodily inconveniences, in sad thoughts. Thus are the words fulfilled about them: *"In the world you will have tribulation"* (John 16:33). God knows that those who live peacefully, are incapable of loving Him and therefore, denies the righteous this temporary peace and enjoyment.

13. Fire does not inflame on wet firewood, and God's flames do not ignite in the heart that loves peace.

14. If you are unable to perform a deed physically, then at least grieve about it mentally.

Habits, moderation.

15. If you have become strongly attached to something, regard that as an acquisition not only in this world, but know that it will go with you into the next world. And if it is something good, be joyous and thank God; however, if it is something wicked, then be distressed and lament. Endeavor to rid yourself of this attachment, while you are still alive.

16. While the bad behavior is still in its infancy and hasn't developed, destroy it before it spreads its branches and matures. While the defect seems minor to you, do not succumb to indifference, because consequently you will find in it an inhuman master before whom you will run like a slave and captive. But the one, who at the beginning opposes the passion, will soon rise above it.

17. He, who in the hope of repentance intentionally sins again, is being deceitful before God: death will befall him unexpectedly and he will not have the time, during which he had hoped to realize his good intentions.

18. Clear your room of all surplus items so as to forcefully teach yourself self-restraint. Sparseness in everything teaches a person self-restraint.

19. He who voluntarily denies himself earthly blessings, to what extent he denies them, is the extent to which God's mercy shall follow him and support the individual's God-given love of his fellow man.

Sorrows.

20. Good deeds are intertwined with sorrows. He who walks away from sorrows, undoubtedly separates himself from good deeds. If you desire to perform good deeds, surrender yourself to every type of sorrow, because sorrow gives birth to humility. As long as we haven't attained a true direction, we will be drawing closer to humility through temptations. A person, who enjoys his good deeds without sorrow, is a person to whom the gates of pride are open.

21. A small sorrow for God's sake is better than a great deed achieved without sorrow. What is done without effort, i.e. Earthly people's "correctness" (being benevolent for the outside world, while not acquiring anything beneficial within themselves). But you commit yourself privately and imitate Christ, so that you may become worthy to savor His glory. The mind will not be glorified with Christ if the body doesn't suffer with Him.

22. If a soul is feeble and lacks sufficient strength for enduring great temptations and therefore asks God not to be exposed to them, and God hears it — then know surely, that by whatever measure the

soul lacks sufficient strength for great temptations, is the same measure it lacks sufficient strength to cope with big endowments. Because God does not grant big endowments without great temptations. God determines temptations commensurate to endowments.

23. God is close to the heart of the one that cries out to Him in sorrow. Even if a person is sometimes exposed to some type of physical deprivations or other sorrows, God manifests all types of compassion to the soul, commensurate to its level of suffering.

Humility.

24. As a form of resistance to the fine feeling of self-exaltation, confess sincerely in prayer to God, your weakness and rudeness, so that you do not find yourself abandoned (by God) and not be exposed to the temptation of evil desires, because lust follows after pride.

25. A good deed is a mother of sorrow. From sorrow comes humility, and humility receives a blessing. The reward then follows not after the good deed, or the effort because of it, but after the humility that came through them. If there is an absence of humility, then the good deeds are useless.

26. In a humble person, there is never any haste, hurry, confusion, agitated or petty thoughts — he dwells in tranquility at all times. There is nothing that could astonish, confuse or terrify him — because he is not terrified in sorrows and does not become dispirited, nor does he advance into a state of amazement or rapture when he is joyful. But all his joy and gladness are found in that, which is pleasing to His Lord.

27. Do not rely on your own strength so that God doesn't allow you to fall because of your weakness — and thus learn of your feebleness through bitter experience.

28. In whatever a person is lauded, God allows him to change by sending him a failure so that through it, he may learn humility.

29. He who strives for honor has honor running away from him, while he who runs away from honor has it chasing him.

30. A person who has attained an understanding of the measure of his impotence, has attained completeness in humility.

31. Genuinely righteous individuals continually think that they are not worthy of God. And that they are truly righteous is precisely because they acknowledge themselves as damned and unworthy of God's solicitude, and having been made wise by the Holy Spirit, they admit to this privately and openly. The Holy Spirit predisposes them to think this way, so that they may always abide in activity and narrow path while they are in this world. God is preparing tranquility for them in the next world. That's why everyone that has Christ abiding in them, doesn't want to live in peace or free himself from sorrows, although occasionally he does receive a mysterious spiritual comfort.

32. When can it be said that a person has reached purity? — When he regards all human beings as good. He is truly pure of heart, when no one appears impure or vile to him.

Love towards your neighbor, mercy, non-judgmentalness.

33. Do not demand love from your neighbor, because you will suffer if you don't receive it; but better still, you indicate your love toward your neighbor and you will settle down. In this way, you will lead your neighbor toward love.

34. Don't exchange your love toward your neighbor for some type of object, because in having love toward your neighbor, you acquire within yourself Him, Who is most precious in the whole world. Forsake the petty so as to acquire the great; spurn the excessive and everything meaningless so as to acquire the valuable.

35. Shelter the sinner if it brings you no harm. Through this you will encourage him toward repentance and reform — and attract the Lord's mercy to yourself. With a kind word and all possible means, fortify the infirm and the sorrowful and that Right Arm that controls everything, will also support you. With prayers and sorrow of your heart, share your lot with the aggrieved and the source of God's mercy will open to your entreaties.

36. When giving, give magnanimously with a look of kindness on your face, and give more than what is asked of you.

37. Do not distinguish the worthy from the unworthy. Let everyone be equal to you for good deeds, so that you may be able to also attract the unworthy toward goodness, because through outside acts, the soul quickly learns to be reverent before God.

38. Do not annoy or hate anyone — neither for faith, nor for his evil deeds... If you want to convert someone to truth, then grieve over him, with tears and love say a word or two to him, but do not burst out in anger, and may he not see any sign of hatred on your part, because love is not able to hate, or become irritated, or reproach anyone with passion...

39. A merciful heart — is a heart afire for all creation: for people, bird, animals, (even) for demons and all of God's creations. At the recollection of them or at looking at them, the eyes of the person shed tears. From a great compassion, his heart is moved and he is unable to hear or witness any type of harm or even minor sorrow that the creatures endure. That is why he is continually praying for the irrational animal, for the enemies of the truth and those that have brought him harm, so that they would be saved and granted mercy. And he prays for the dumb animal with such great sorrow, which his heart evokes, that it is without bounds and akin in all respect to God's.

40. He who shows kindness toward the poor has God as his guardian, and he who becomes poor for the sake of God will acquire abundant treasures. God is pleased when He sees people showing concern for others for His sake. When someone asks you for something, don't think: "Just in case I might need it, I shall leave it for myself, and God — through other people — will give that person what he requires." These types of thoughts are peculiar to people that are iniquitous and do not know God. A just and generous person would not compromise the honor of helping and relinquish it to another person, and he would never pass up an opportunity to help. Every beggar and every needy person receives the necessary essentials, because God doesn't neglect anyone. But you, having sent away the destitute with nothing, spurned the honor offered to you by God and thereby, distanced yourself from His grace.

41. Through God's providence, he who respects every person for God's sake, privately acquires help from every human being.

Teaching.

42. In order to teach others, always regard yourself insufficiently intelligent — and throughout your whole life, you will appear wise.

43. Do not relate to anyone anything that you have not experienced, so that you will not be ashamed of yourself and your lie is not exposed by your careless life.

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