



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **March 16, 2014** ✠

St. Gregory Palamas

Martyr Sabinas of Hermopolis, Egypt (303) Martyr Papas of Lycaonia (305)

Hieromartyr Alexander, Pope of Rome (119 AD) St. Christodoulos, Wonderworker of Patmos (1093)

"O wise Gregory,
thou hast burnt up
the error of the heretics,
and has revealed in its true beauty
the faith of the Orthodox,
bringing light to all the world!
Thou art triumphantly victorious,
A pillar of the Church
and a true bishop!
Never cease to intercede with
Christ, that we may all be saved."
~ Sessional Hymn, from Orthros

Third Week of Great Lent

- ✠ **Tuesday** **March 18 6:30pm** Inquirer's Class
- ✠ **Wednesday** **March 19 6:30pm** - Presanctified Liturgy
- ✠ **Friday** **March 21 6:30pm** – Presanctified Liturgy {Potluck Supper on Friday}

+ **Children's Lenten Retreat – Saturday, March 29 10:00am - 5:00pm** for all Sunday School children from Kindergarten through Middle School. The theme is "The Sundays of Lent." Children's confessions will be available during the day and Children's choir will sing for Vespers that night.

Volunteers and helpers will be needed.

+ **Youth Trip to Atlanta – March 29 with Fr. Deacon** - youth group to visit Atlanta Orthodox churches

To be truly and fully human...

The life of Great Lent comes from Classical Christian culture. That culture remembers and preserves what it is to be truly and fully human, created in the image of God. Lent is a journey that, rightly practiced, slowly restores our true humanity. A good Lent should sing and dance. The song of Lent often has the sound of "bright sorrow." It remembers our journey into bondage and grieves it. It remembers our deliverance from sin and death at Pascha and stretches toward that great prize. But the song must still be sung.

The dance of Lent may sound like a strange way to describe devotional actions, but making prostrations, bowing, allowing the body itself to enter into the ritual of humility is a necessary movement. We are not disembodied souls who are instructed only to "think" of God. Such diminished devotion becomes less than human in its efforts to divorce itself from physicality.

From the earliest times Christians have been instructed to stand in prayer, facing the East with eyes and hands uplifted, and to do this three times a day (or more). From this posture the dance proceeds with bows and prostrations as we humble ourselves before God and beg for His help. The Fathers said that the body should be an "icon" of the soul, mirroring outwardly what the soul is doing inwardly. The latter is almost impossible without the former.

~ Fr. Stephen Freeman

- **One should nourish the soul with the word of God:** for the word of God, as Saint Gregory the Theologian says, is angelic bread, by which are nourished souls who hunger for God. Most of all, one should occupy oneself with reading the New Testament and the Psalter, which one should do standing up. From this there occurs an enlightenment in the mind ... which is changed by a Divine change.

~ Saint Seraphim of Sarov - *Spiritual Instructions*

Wisdom of the Holy Fathers

Run with Reverence the Race of Godliness!

"As you have entered upon a good and most glorious path, run with reverence the race of godliness. For the Only-begotten Son of God is present here most ready to redeem you, saying, 'Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Mt. 11:28). You that are clothed with the rough garment of your offenses, who are 'held with the cords of your own sins', hear the voice of the Prophet saying, 'Wash, you, make you clean, put away your iniquities from before My eyes' (Is. 1:16): that the choir of Angels may chant over you, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered' (Ps. 32:1)."

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*

For we are all in Christ

"The assertion that the Word dwelt in us (Jn. 1:14) is a useful one because it also reveals to us a very deep mystery. For we are all in Christ. The common element of humanity is summed up in His person, which is also why He was called the last Adam: He enriched our common nature with everything conducive to joy and glory just as the first Adam impoverished it with everything bringing corruption and gloom. This is precisely why the Word dwelt in all of us by dwelling in a single human being, so that through that one being who was 'designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness' (Rom. 1:4) the whole of humanity might be raised up to His status so that the verse, 'I said, you are gods and all of you sons of the Most High' (Ps. 82:6) might through applying to one of us come to apply to us all."

St. Cyril of Alexandria

THIS CHURCH

"This Church was established, blessed by the God-Man Himself - by our Savior Jesus Christ, it was built on the rock-strong foundation - on the Divinity of Jesus Christ, which was confessed by the Apostle Peter (Matthew 16: 18-19), and that is the reason that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ Himself, as the Founder and Cornerstone of the Church (Ephesians 2:20, Corinthians 3:9-11)"

- St. Alexis Toth (1907)

"An Orthodox Christian is a person, who follows the faith and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, preserves and confesses it as the Lord Himself has ordered, and as His Holy Apostles, the Holy Fathers, the Holy Seven Ecumenical and the Ten Local Councils were teaching, were missionizing and as they have ordered us to its pureness without any additions and human inventions and it must be preserved as such until our death!"

- St. Alexis Toth (1907)

The Life-Giving and Bloodless Sacrifice

"We celebrate the holy and life-giving and bloodless sacrifice in the churches, not in the belief that the offering is the body of an ordinary man like ourselves, and similarly with the precious Blood, but instead accepting that it has become the very own Body and Blood of the Word Who endows all things with life. The Savior Himself testifies to this when He says: 'The flesh is of no avail; it is the Spirit that gives life' (John 6:63). Because it became the Word's own flesh it is therefore regarded as life-giving and actually is so."

St. Cyril of Alexandria (444)

Blinded by Ignorance

"Those who sit in the darkness of passions and whose minds are blinded by ignorance, or, rather, those who have not acquired the 'mind of Christ' (I Cor. 2:16), think that he who has the mind of Christ is foolish, and that he who has it not is sensible. Of these the Prophet David rightly states, 'The ignorant and foolish perish together' (Ps. 49:11). Therefore such men twist the whole of Scripture according to their own desires (cf. II Pet. 3:3, 16) and corrupt themselves in their own passions. But it is not divine Scripture that suffers from this, but those who disfigure it!"

St. Symeon the New Theologian (The Discourses)

How to Prepare for a Salvific Confession {Conclusion}

From *The Path to Salvation*, by St. Theophan the Recluse (+1894)

The Penitent Approaches the Mystery of Holy Communion

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Father, having received his penitent son who has returned to him, falls on his neck and kisses him as a sign of forgiveness; after this he orders that he be dressed and a bright, joyful feast be prepared. His parental heart was not satisfied with only forgiving - it wanted to decisively assure his son of his peace with him and express more strongly his joy at seeing him after being so sorrowfully separated from him. His fatherly love gave his son what he had not even hoped for. What sinner could expect something grand after receiving forgiveness? But he is nevertheless invited to the Lord's Supper, where the Lord Himself gives him His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. This is the crown of compassion for the returning sinner; however, it is not an over-abundance, but an essential requirement for uniting with the Lord.

The Christian life is life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer puts on Christ and lives through Him. He who falls after Baptism loses this grace; when rising up from his fall and returning to the Lord, he has to become worthy of it again, and this he does through Holy Communion. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him," says the Lord (John 6:56)

This is the beginning of life in Christ Jesus for the penitent. The Lord said that He is the Vine, and those who believe in Him are the branches (John 15: 1-6). The branch does not live unless it is on the vine; so the faithful do not live unless they live in the Lord. There is no true life anywhere except on this Vine. Whatever is not on it is dead.

Therefore, whoever wants to truly live should cultivate it in himself, receive its live-giving juices and live on its nourishment. This cultivation is done through Holy Communion - here the Christian becomes one with the Lord. When the Lord guided the sinner to complete repentance, he only knocked at the door of his heart. When it is opened by contrition and repentance, He enters in and feasts with the communicant.

Now the man is born again. An entirely new life begins for him. Life cannot continue without food, and it must be customary food at that. Such food is the Body and Blood of the Lord. He himself said: My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed an. 6:55). One who is beginning a new life should begin with this. It is especially necessary to taste this Food at the outset, at the first, so to say, movements of his new life. They say that the first food an infant eats has an effect on the character of his physical life, and from then on comprises his continual bodily requirements. What should be the character of the life of a penitent? A life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What should be his constant requirement? The need for communing with the Lord. Let him hasten in the first movement of this life to taste the Body and Blood of Christ, so that he might lay the foundation of a Christ-like life and generate a true need for constant communion with Him by means of this partaking. The partaker, after tasting the sweetness of this heavenly Manna, will ever more hunger and thirst to partake again.

Thus, having received mercy and forgiveness in repentance, come forward to Holy Communion for full revivification of your inner man.

There is no need to prescribe any particular rule of preparation for this. The repentant sinner has already done everything necessary, and he naturally continues on to Communion. Whoever has wept over his sins and confessed is ready to approach this great Mystery. The Apostle also has nothing more to prescribe. He says only: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (I Cor. 11 :28). It could be said this way: have what there is, or, do not lose what you have, and that is enough.

According to our established order, there is usually little time between Confession and Communion, most often only evening, morning and Liturgy. During this time it is important to carefully preserve the good frame of mind with which you left the church after Confession, and apply it to your communion with the Lord in Holy Communion.

1) Preserve your attention undistracted and your heart undisturbed. Take care not to become scattered or anxious over cares, and remove yourself from everything; go within and remain there with one thought about the Lord, Who is able to come to you. Put away all thought processes, and, concentrating on the One Lord, pray to Him with undistracted prayer of the heart.

2) If your thought cannot reside only in this, occupy it with thoughts of Communion itself; and so that it will not stray too much, bind it with the words of the Lord and the holy Apostles about this Sacrament.

3) Contemplate a saying of the Lord or the holy Apostles; glean some edification from them and dispose yourself to contrite prayer. When prayer comes, fall down before the Lord and do not abandon the prayer as long as it is present.

4) Occupy the evening in this way until sleep closes your eyes. Morning comes. As soon as you come to yourself upon awaking, first of all resurrect your awareness of the greatness of the dawning day. But do not bustle about, do not be distracted with many things; and keep your attention focused on that which is necessary to be with you and in you. Beware! The enemy will be trying to tempt you in every way, to put your soul in a bad mood, to either scatter your thoughts, or generate some worry or dissatisfaction with something, or inspire some displeasure against someone. Attend to yourself, praying to God, and you will escape these stumbling blocks.

5) Entering the church, feel as though you were in the upper chamber at Zion, where the Lord communed his holy Apostles, and heed more than ever what is being sung and read, directing everything to the thought that the Lord Himself is preparing a Supper of salvation for you.

6) Warm your faith in the actual presence of the Lord and Savior Himself in the Mysteries. Going from this faith and concentrating on the Lord Himself as if already approaching you, in self-abasement call out: I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under the roof of my house. From self-abasement pass to the fear of the Prodigal Son, not cutting you off, but bringing you to a state of reverent soberness. Inasmuch as the Lord Himself invites you and asks you to approach, be ready to approach with good hope, desire and thirst, like the deer panting after the fountains of water, and longing with assurance to receive the Lord Himself, together with all the treasure of life that is hidden within Him. From this longing, which will not be put to shame, again turn to yourself in readiness to meet the Lord, and fan ever stronger the flame of heartfelt contrition, repeating the promise to turn away from sin, even if you have to die doing it.

7) Work hard to stand through the whole service, passing from one of these feelings to another. In this good state finally approach the chalice of the Lord, and upon seeing it, make a bow to the Lord Who approaches you. Opening your lips and heart, receive Him, humbly and reverently calling out with the Apostle Thomas: *My Lord and my God! Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God!*

Having approached the chalice of the Lord with such a disposition, and stepping away from it, you will feel in your heart: *It is truly said, that having communed of divine grace, I am no longer alone but with Thee, my Christ, the three-sunned Light that enlightens the world.* From this moment you will begin to bear Christ within yourself. Take care to zealously guard Him there and hold Him within yourself. If Christ is in you, who can be against you? And you will be able to do anything in the Lord Who strengthens you. With this we close the lesson on spiritual life for the Christian who has fallen into sin and then returns again to a God-pleasing life.

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THE SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

On this day, the second Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate the memory of our Father among the Saints, Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica and Wonderworker.

Our Holy Father Gregory, the son of the Divine and unwaning Light, true servant of the true God and initiate of His wondrous mysteries, was born in the imperial city of Constantinople. His parents were noble and renowned persons who took care that he be taught both the secular sciences and divine wisdom and that he learn every virtue.

St. Gregory's father reposed while the Saint was still at a young age; but his mother continued to rear him and his brothers and sisters in the law of the Lord, instructing them in the divine Scriptures and in the rules of good conduct. She arranged for them to be taught by learned teachers, and thus her son acquired much knowledge. The youth was by nature diligent and possessed a keen mind, and in a short time he became acquainted with every branch of philosophy.

Gregory disdained everything worldly as a deceptive dream - and wishing to cleave to God, the well-spring of all wisdom -- at the age of twelve resolved to take up the monastic life. He revealed his intention to his pious mother, and although she was saddened at first, she gave her consent. In time, she came to rejoice in the Lord over Gregory's desire and decided to follow him in embracing the monastic life; moreover, with God's help, she persuaded all her other children to do likewise. Thus she could repeat the words of the prophet, "Behold, I and the children which Thou hast given me" (Is. 8:18) shall follow after Thee, O Lord."

St. Gregory, who despised with his whole heart the sweet and attractive things of this world and earthly glory, gave his possessions to the poor in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel and followed after Christ, forsaking

his mother, brothers, and sisters. After leaving his mother and sisters in a convent, he went with his brothers to the Holy Mountain of Athos where they took up their dwelling in one of the monasteries. He gave himself over in complete obedience to a wondrous and perfect holy man named Nicodemus, who instructed him in the commandments of God. Under his guidance, Gregory advanced in the virtues, and because of this, the Virgin Theotokos deigned to appear to him, receiving him under her protection and promising to be his mediatrix.

After the repose of his spiritual father, the holy Nicodemus, Gregory went to the Great Lavra of Mount Athos and lived for several years in the fear of God, with obedience toward all and perfect love for the entire brotherhood. He then left the Lavra and settled in the wilderness, where he led a most severe life, burning with boundless love for God, to Whom he cleaved with his whole being. Thus he succeeded in prevailing over all the devices of the demons and was vouchsafed divine revelations. God bestowed upon him the gift of healing the souls and bodies of the infirm and of working miracles.

St. Gregory lived for a number of years in the wilderness and then, in obedience to God's will, was elevated to the priestly rank. He served the divine Mysteries like an angel of the Lord, and those who beheld him celebrate the Liturgy were moved to compunction and tears. Many holy men marveled at his virtuous life and began to call him the "Godbearer," "the exorcist of demons," "he who brings forth fruit from barren trees," and "the holy prophet." Nevertheless, Gregory was still subjected to numerous trials and temptations in accordance with the words of the divine Scriptures: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions" (2 Tim. 3: 12). He endured all things gladly, however, that the trial of his faith, "being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tested with fire, may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ," as the holy Apostle Peter said (2 Pet. 1:7).

For twenty-three years, Gregory bravely bore the innumerable sorrows and attacks he suffered at the hands of the God-hating heretics, who were more savage than the demons themselves. The trials he endured beggar description, for it was at that time that another serpent, the heretic Barlaam of Calabria, began to wage a fierce war against the Church. (This Barlaam was an Italo-Greek monk from Calabria, Italy, who opposed the practice of hesychasm. Briefly, hesychasm is a technique whereby its adherents pray the "Jesus Prayer" and are sometimes counted worthy to behold the presence of God in His uncreated light. Barlaam did not believe one could behold the uncreated light of God saying that this light was created and an earthly one and not the uncreated light of God. St. Gregory formally pronounced that this light was the authentic uncreated light of God, the same light in which the righteous shall shine in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the same light in which Christ was seen during His Transfiguration upon Mount Tabor. He firmly held that this light was the light of God's action or energy but not the light of God's nature or essence.

Thus, St. Gregory expanded on the teaching of earlier Fathers, making the distinction in Orthodox dogma between the essence and energy of God, saying that His essence was invisible and incomprehensible, whereas His energy was visible and perceivable. (Therefore, we are able to behold God through His energy, but not in His essence.) This man, Barlaam, whose mind was filled with vain reasonings, blasphemed Christ our God. He taught that the super-essential and supremely divine grace and might of Christ are not eternal, but temporal. Therefore, the blessed Gregory, the defender and spokesman of the Orthodox Faith, who was full of the Holy Spirit and renowned above all others for his great struggles on behalf of piety, was appointed to represent the Church of Constantinople at the council summoned by the pious Emperor Andronicus Paleologus. When Barlaam appeared before this council with his disciples, impiously spewing forth accusations against the Orthodox and belittling them, the great Gregory, clothed with invincible power from on

High, opened his lips and swept away all heresy like dust from the face of the earth. His fiery and inspired words and writings burned up the arguments of the heretics like thorns and brushwood, utterly putting the enemies of God to shame.

Barlaam was unable to endure his disgrace, so the reviler of piety and schismatic fled to the West, from which he had come. Then Acindynus, a second heretic, appeared, whose name means "he who inflicts no hurt" but who more aptly might have been called "Policindynus" or "he who brings much harm." Another council was convened, and St. Gregory prevailed over Acindynus in debate before all the assembled fathers, scattering the tares of the heretic's teachings by his divinely inspired words. Nevertheless, the disciples of these heretics, who were hard of heart, continued to do battle with the Church of God.

In response, all the bishops, clergy, and the Emperor himself compelled St. Gregory to accept the rank of archbishop. The Saint ascended the throne of the holy Church of Thessalonica and became its pastor. As Archbishop, Gregory labored and struggled still more on behalf of the Orthodox Faith, for the impious followers of Barlaam and Acindynus continued to multiply and sow their pernicious teachings. The Saint uprooted and utterly destroyed their evil doctrines by his divinely wise words and writings. He disputed with them not at one or two local councils but at many, refuting them before three successive emperors and as many patriarchs.

While the holy and most wondrous Gregory, victor over the enemies of Christ's Church, was traveling from Thessalonica to the Imperial City to ensure that the Christian Empire would remain unshaken, he was captured by the Turks. In accordance with God's awesome judgments, he remained their captive for a year, in this way becoming a teacher for the lands of the East. Gregory was compelled to travel from place to place and was sold from city to city, since it was the will of God that he preach the Gospel of Christ like an Apostle, confirming the Orthodox and teaching them to stand fast. He strengthened the faith of those

plagued by doubt, expounding the mysteries of God's wisdom in such a way that they could be readily understood, and was truly like an Apostle in every respect. With great boldness, he disputed against unbelievers and those who had foolishly separated themselves from the Church of Christ, abandoning the teaching of the Orthodox Faith concerning the incarnate dispensation of Christ our God, the precious and lifegiving Cross of the Lord, and the veneration of the holy Icons.

He also disputed with the Moslems, answering firmly, wisely, and with great discretion every question put to him. Some of those with whom he debated marveled at his wisdom and the grace which flowed from his lips, but others beat the Saint furiously and would gladly have killed him. He would certainly have suffered a martyric death had God not preserved him from his enemies and had the Turks not hoped that he would bring them much gold. At length, the Saint was ransomed from the Hagarenes by a fervent Christian. Having endured martyrdom even though his blood was not shed, Gregory returned to his flock in honor.

St. Gregory, the chosen vessel of Christ, who ever sought to emulate the great Apostle Paul, was adorned with innumerable divine virtues, among which were meekness, quietness, and humility. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to upbraid the enemies of God and of the Orthodox Faith, subduing them with the sword of the Word of God. He held no rancor against others, sought both to say and to do only what is good, and always returned good for evil, thus conquering wickedness with virtue. He gave no heed to those who told him how his enemies slandered him, and his patience and nobility of soul remained apparent despite the many misfortunes and difficulties he faced. He despised the sweet and beautiful things of this world and counted hunger and thirst as satiety, poverty as wealth, sorrow and tribulation as joy, and mockery and persecution as honor and glory. Christ's true disciple faithfully bore the Lord's light yoke, becoming a marvel not only to the faithful but to unbelievers as well.

Because of the tears he constantly shed, his eyes always caused him pain. From the time Gregory received his calling to follow Christ, he took up arms against the demons and the passions and fought the good fight even until his repose. Heretics and apostates he drove far from the Church of Christ, thus bringing her peace, and he adorned the Orthodox Faith with his divinely inspired words and writings. His most wise teaching was stamped as if with a royal seal by the dogmas of the Holy Fathers and his angelic life as like that of the greatest of the monastic Saints; therefore, both his teaching and life are held in honor by the Orthodox and revered by them.

After the intercessor for the Orthodox and their common benefactor had shepherded the flock of Christ for thirty years in a manner pleasing to God, he received his reward. St. Gregory surrendered his spirit into the hands of the Lord and was translated unto celestial life. His body, which shone most gloriously with angelic purity, was left to his flock as a rich inheritance of great treasure, and through it healings are unceasingly bestowed upon the ailing, who come to it from every land. It ever performs miracles beyond number, unto the glory of Christ God, one in essence with His Father, and the most holy, good, and life-creating Spirit. His holy relics lie today in the Cathedral church dedicated to his holy memory in Thessalonica, Greece. St. Gregory (1296-1359) was glorified as a Saint in 1368 by Patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople, who composed the service that is chanted today. He is also commemorated on November 14, the day of his falling asleep in the Lord. Through the holy intercessions of the venerable hierarch Gregory, O Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us! Amen.

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**By the grace of God, O Blessed Saint,
thou becamest the great glory and
strength of the Orthodox, a good shepherd,
a second Gregory the Theologian,
the ever-watchful keeper of thy flock!**

~ Matins – Canon, Ode 4

Elder Paisios – On Life's Tribulations (Part 2)

Geronda answers this question:

Can we say that the various temptations which occur in our life are the will of God?

"No, we should not confuse the will of God with temptation and all that the evil one brings. God leaves the devil free - up to a certain point - to tempt man, and He leaves man free to do what is good or to do what is evil. But God is not responsible for the evil which man may do. For example, Judas was a disciple of Christ. Can we say it was the will of God for Judas to become a traitor? No, for Judas himself allowed the devil to enter him."

"There are very few instances where God permits certain devout people to be tested, so that someone else who is living a sinful life will come to his senses and repent. These people will have a double reward. In other words, God allows for some - who all the while complaining as they pay off their sins in this life, with the very tribulations or hardships they undergo - to be helped by the patience of those who are indeed suffering, but are not paying off sins or complaining. Let's say that a very good and pious man is at home with his family, and suddenly an earthquake brings the house down upon the family --- killing all of them. Why did God allow this? So that others, who are at fault and being punished, will not complain and grumble."

"For this reason, those who recall the great crosses of the righteous will never worry over their minor trials and tribulations. They see that, while being at fault in their life, they are nevertheless suffering less than those righteous; and so they paraphrase what the repentant thief said on the Cross: 'They did nothing wrong and suffered so severely; what should happen to us?' Unfortunately, however, there are some who resemble the thief crucified to the left of Christ, and they say: 'They were proceeding with the cross in their hand, and look what happened to them!'"

"The best medicine for our every trial or tribulation is the greater trial of our fellow human beings --- particularly when we compare it with our own trial and distinguish the great difference, and the great love that God shows us in allowing only a minor trial for us. Then we will thank God; we will feel the other's greater pain and will pray from the heart for God to help them. For example, have I lost one leg? I should say: 'Glory to You, O God! I still have one leg; the other man has lost both.' And even if I end up a stump of a human being without arms and legs, I can say: 'Glory to You, O God! I walked and used my arms for so many years, while others were born paralyzed.'"

Geronta answers the question: *Does one's patient endurance of another's slander or injustice bring to us any cleansing of our passions?*

It certainly does! It makes him shine! Is there anything more sublime than that? You see a criminal who is beaten, locked up in prison, where he carries out his small rule of retribution; and if he sincerely repents, is spared the eternal imprisonment. Is it a small thing to pay off an eternal debt through such a trial?"

"Endure every sorrow with joy. The sorrows afflicted upon us by others are sweeter than all the syrups offered to us by people who love us. You see, in His beatitudes, Christ does not say: 'Blessed are you, when you are praised...' but: 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake' [Matthew 5:14], and in particular, falsely.... Therefore, not only must we endure the one who grieves us, but we must also feel gratitude; for he provides us with the opportunity to struggle in love, in humility, in patience."