



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 930-9681 / 907-9447

Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **June 8, 2014** ✠

Holy Pentecost

St. Theodore Stratelates (319)

Fast- Free Week

➤ No services this week / ➡ No Vespers next Saturday

O Believers, let us celebrate Pentecost!

This Feast which follows and concludes the Feast! This is the pre-ordained fulfillment of the promise! For on this day, the fire of the Comforter Descended upon the earth in the form of tongues, enlightening the disciples And showing them knowledgeable of heavenly things! The Light of the Comforter has come and enlightened the world!

Today ➡ *The Kneeling Vespers of Pentecost, after Liturgy and the Blessing of the Crosses to adorn the new Temple!*

The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:13 - In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...

Ephesians 4:30 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Titus 3:5 ... not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...

2 Corinthians 1:21-23 ~ Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

1 John 2:27 ~ But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

WHAT ARE "OUR TRADITIONS"?

What are "our traditions"? They are everything that the God-man Christ, He Himself, and by the Holy Spirit, gave the commandment to hold and to live according to Them; whatever He delivered in His Church, in which He dwells continuously with His Holy Spirit. (Mt. 28: 19-29). "Our traditions" are our whole life in grace in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the life of us Christians, which began in the Church of Christ, through the Apostles, by the descent of the Holy Spirit. All of this life of ours is not from us, but from the Lord Jesus, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, or, more precisely, our entire life is from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit... Thus our "traditions" are the new life of the grace in the Holy Spirit, which is the soul of the Church, the life in the Eternal Truth of God, in the Eternal Justice of God, in the Eternal Life of God. Here man is not creating anything, nor can he create the Eternal Truth, the Eternal Justice, the Eternal Love, the Eternal Life, but they are for him to accept, to change into his own. In Christ and in His Church all of these are given by the grace of the Holy Spirit to man, are given and "delivered." Man is obligated to accept these "traditions" and live according to them.

God the Holy Spirit

Rev. George Mastrantonis

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of the same essence and equal rank as the Father and the Son. *"And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree"* (1 John 5:7-8). The Holy Spirit as God is revealed in many verses in scripture: *"Why has Satan filled your hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit. . . you have not lied to men, but to God"* (Acts 5:3-4); also *"there are varieties of gift, but the same Spirit . . . the same Lord. . . it is the same God"* (1 Corinthians 12:5, cf. Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Godhead of the Holy Spirit comes directly from the Father. As the Son is begotten by the Father, the Holy Spirit also is proceeded from the Father, for *"When the Counselor (the Holy Spirit) comes, whom I (Christ) shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me"* (John 15:26). The Church has proclaimed this truth that the Holy Spirit is of the same substance with the Father and the Son in the Godhead of the Trinity. The Church has incorporated this truth in the Nicene Creed as pronounced by the Second Ecumenical Synod (381). It states *"And (I believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the prophets."*

The Holy Spirit in truth remains in the Church, protects and preserves its Truths and sanctifies its members. The Holy Spirit is the Power and Comforter of the believers, and was promised by Christ. Being the third Person of the Holy Trinity does not mean He is not equal in substance with the Father and Son. The Spirit is the life-giving energy and power which makes the Church *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15). The Holy Spirit was the divine instrument in the birth of Jesus Christ as God-Man. *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you (Virgin Mary), and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35).

The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible and the Source of inspiration for its writers through those years. This is why the Bible although it was written by different persons and in different eras over the span of 1000 years, is coherent and consistent in substance and meaning. This is a remarkable and overwhelming fact. There is no other literature in the world which has this outstanding coherence, while written over such a period of time and by different writers. What was prophesied in the Old Testament, dating back hundreds of years, was fulfilled in time, and in detail, in the New Testament. This is an extraordinary phenomenon. This coherence of the Old with the New was an evolutionary process in the course of time between the divine promise and its realization. This was not because of any change of the Truth as such, but because of its development for human acceptance, for *"when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son. . . God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts"* (Galatians 4:4-6).

The Holy Spirit throughout the centuries revealed the divine Truths and inspired chosen Prophets and Apostles to spread and proclaim them to all peoples of the inhabited earth. It was in the Design of Almighty God that chosen personalities were indispensable in teaching and preaching these Truth to "all nations." These chosen personalities did not proclaim their own ideas or philosophies, but personalities did not proclaim their own ideas of philosophies, but only used their own abilities, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to serve The Will of God. These chosen personalities proved themselves outstanding co-workers of God. The Prophets, Apostles and all chosen personalities considered themselves instruments of the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with authority, as Christ said to the Apostles: *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (John 20:22). The "gift" of the Holy Spirit is not a static one, but a transforming and sanctifying power leading the chosen one to accomplish the Will of God. Chosen personalities are exhorted to *"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord"* (Acts 20:28). This "gift" of the Holy Spirit is given to both the clergy and laity who belong to the true Church.

Everything which was delivered to the Apostles by the Savior Christ and the Holy Spirit, constitutes exactly "the tradition," the holy tradition, namely the whole teaching of the Savior and all of the life-giving energies for the realization of this teaching in the life of man. All of these were delivered to us "whether by word or by letter." The tradition is in part written, while the most part was given orally, but all in common constitute the divine Revelation, namely the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of salvation, given by God in the Church for the salvation of the human race "from now and forevermore." The entire Gospel was delivered to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit, and precisely for this the Gospel is "the tradition" of God in all of its broadness. The written Gospel becomes complete with the unwritten Gospel of the Church and by it is interpreted through the energy of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which resides within the Church. In reality, all of these in the Church constitute one entirety, one living spiritual body, namely the written and the unwritten tradition. Therefore, as Saint John Chrysostom says: "Tradition is to seek nothing more because in it is formed everything which is necessary for the salvation of men and for their eternal life, in the present and in the future age."

In one word, the divine, the God-human tradition is the deliverance through the centuries and the generations of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, with all of His divine truths and commandments, His mysteries and virtues, as living God and Savior, in the Church and as the Church. And this exactly is the Church of Christ as His God-human body, namely the living, and the Holy Tradition extended throughout all the centuries, the eternally living God-man Christ and everything He has in Himself and whatever He brings with Him.

"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter."
- (2 Thess. 2:15).

- Blessed Father Justin Popovich (+1979)

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**SAINT SERAPHIM OF SAROV:
ON THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE POWER OF PRAYER**

How great is God's compassion to our misery, that is to say, our inattention to His care for us, when God says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." (Rev. 3:20), meaning by "door" the course of our life which has not yet been closed by death. Oh, how I wish...that in this life you may always be in the Spirit of God! "In whatsoever I find you, in that will I judge you," says the Lord. (An unwritten saying of Christ - according to St. Justin Martyr - Dialogue 47).

Woe to us if He finds us overcharged with the cares and the sorrows of this life! For who will be able to bear His anger, who will withstand the wrath of His countenance? That is why it has been said: "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation

(Mark 14:38), that is, lest you be deprived of the Spirit of God, for watching and prayer brings us His grace.

Of course, every good deed done for Christ's sake gives us the grace of the Holy Spirit, but prayer gives it to us most of all, for it is always at hand, so to speak, as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit. For instance, you would like to go to Church or the Service is over, you would like to give alms to a beggar, but there isn't one...you would like to do some other good deed for Christ's sake, but either you have not the strength or the opportunity is lacking. This certainly does not apply to prayer. Prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and humble, strong and weak, healthy and sick, righteous and sinful.

You may judge how great the power of prayer is even in a sinful person, when it is offered wholeheartedly, by the following example from Holy Tradition. When at the request of a desperate mother who had been deprived by death of her only son, a harlot whom she chanced to meet, still unclean, from her last sin, and who was touched by the mother's deep sorrow, cried to the Lord: "Not for the sake of a wretched sinner like me, but for the sake of the tears of a mother sorrowing for her son and firmly trusting in Thy loving kindness and Thy almighty power, Christ God, raise up her son, O Lord!" And the Lord raised him up.

You see...great is the power of prayer, and it brings most of all the Spirit of God, and is most easily practiced by everyone. We shall be blessed if the Lord God finds us watchful and filled with the gifts of His Holy Spirit. Then we may boldly hope "to be caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17) Who is coming "with great power and glory" (Mk. 13:26) "to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet. 4:5) and "to reward every man according to his works" (Mt. 16:27).

- from a conversation with N.A. Motovilov,
a spiritual son of Saint Seraphim

WHY TALK?

"With what difficulty I work to control my tongue," a young monk agitatedly said one day to Abba Nistherios.

"When you talk, do you find peace?"

"Never."

"Then why do you talk? Learn to be silent. When it is a matter of something of profit, it is better to listen to others than to speak," the wise elder advised him.

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Abba Poimen said: "A man may seem silent, but if in his heart he condemns others, he is talking ceaselessly. Yet there may be someone else who talks from morning until night, who, because he says nothing unprofitable, is truly silent."

St. Porphyrios of Kavso-kalyvia

When he entered into our space, he did not speak the language of our logic. He did not comment on our views. He simply opened a window, and a fresh cool breeze came in and carried away the spiritual indolence and gloom. It revitalized the inward parts of the world.

He did not give either lenient or strict advice, but rather poured out the grace of the Spirit who "looses bonds and cools the flame." This is Athonite and Orthodox theology.

His behavior, the movements of his soul and body were not regulated by an attempt to avoid scandalizing anyone, nor by any intention of appearing good and pious. All this – the business of putting on a front – was alien to his Athonite upbringing and ethos...

Everything is new-born, authentic and without end. Quite outside anything standardized, dull and familiar, it is the new wine which bursts the old bottles. New behavior, speech and movement, the madness and joy of a Saint, which fills you with contentment. It expands the space of your life.¹

--Archimandrite Vasileios
Former Abbot of Iveron, Mt. Athos



On the morning of December 2, 1991, St. Porphyrios entered into his heavenly homeland. His death was not a distancing himself from us but an opening of our relationship with him which is beyond time. Born in Evia, Greece in 1906, he lived through the troubled 20th century with its wars, communism, and all that occurred in their wake. At a time when humanity was struggling simply to save its soul, he was a sign that the Resurrection is *the* present reality. He came from a poor farming family, yet was later to enrich us all. He became a monk on Mt. Athos at a young age, only to have poor health force him off the Holy Mountain--though he never left the childlike innocence of his inner cell. He served as a confessor for years, easing people's burdens and slowing down our exhausting pace of life. As the chaplain of the Polyclinic Hospital in Athens, he "served for thirty-three years as if it were a single day, devoting himself untiringly to his spiritual work and to easing pain and suffering."²

¹ Archimandrite Vasileios *Hymn of Dismissal*, Alexander Press 2012 p. 80-81
² *Wounded by Love: The Life and the Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios*, Denise Harvey, Evia, Greece 2005, introduction p. xi

Towards the end of his days he worked on founding a monastery, and, in his simplicity, returned to the place of his spiritual birth, reposing on Mt. Athos with the words of Christ on his lips: *that they may be one.*

His life was simple. It was as simple as the gospel. It was so profoundly simple that we, who make our lives so complex, marvel that such a life can exist. Are his words--words which open our heart and make us fully alive--really true? Can this new experience of light, rather than darkness, become a reality for me also? Such is the experience of those who read his words of hope and share in his joy. He is a sphere which drops into our linear plane of existence, giving to our flat vision a new dimension of depth. Like a poet who brings to bloom the flower of language, St. Porphyrios draws the best out of each person and gives fragrance to the Church. As he himself says:

"Whoever wants to become a Christian must first become a poet... The soul of the Christian needs to be refined and sensitive, to have sensibility and wings, to be constantly in flight and to live in dreams, to fly through infinity, among the stars, amidst the greatness of God, amidst silence."³

Though the common dictum runs, "It takes a saint to write about a saint," with St. Porphyrios things are different. With our words we reach into that undistorted inner space, where a trustful innocence and guileless freedom of spirit has never left our souls. His memory is an immediate presence where the mystery of forgiveness puts the heart at rest. He teaches us to love life.

"There are many who chose the hard path and 'shed blood in order to receive Spirit' until they attained great virtue. I find that the shorter and safer route is the path with love. This is the path that you, too, should follow...Do not fight to expel the darkness from the chamber of your soul. Open a tiny aperture for light to enter, and the darkness will disappear. The same holds for our passions and our weaknesses. Do not fight them, but transform them into strengths by showing disdain for evil. Occupy yourself with hymns of praise, with the poetic canons, with the worship of God and with divine *eros*.... When you devote yourself to this effort with intense desire, your soul will be sanctified in a gentle and mystical way without your even being aware of it."⁴

St. Porphyrios could live in this joy because he had no fear. Death, our "last enemy", posed no threat or thought to him. His eye was on a greater reality, one which he experienced in his life in the Church:

"The Church is the new life in Christ. In the Church there is no death and no hell. St. John the Evangelist says: *Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.*

³ *ibid.* p. 107

⁴ *ibid.* p. 135-136

Christ does away with death. Life is one, an unbroken continuity: there is no end, no death. Whoever follows Christ's commandments never dies... With Christ, death becomes the bridge which we will cross in a instant in order to continue to live in the unsetting light."¹

There is a little demon in the Western psyche which wants us to feel guilty for simply rejoicing in the goodness of existence. Guilt is a product of the Fall, yet somehow this snake slithered back into religion. If we desire to crush the head of what can only look to the grave of the earth, we must everyday recreate an entirely new being. It takes a noble soul to look past the corruption of daily experience and into resurrection which holds eternity in the present.

"Make the most of beautiful moments. Beautiful moments predispose the soul to prayer; they make it refined, bold and poetic. Wake up in the morning to see the sun rising from out of the sea as a king robed in regal purple. When a lovely landscape, a picturesque chapel, or something beautiful inspires you, don't leave things at that, but go beyond this to give glory for all beautiful things so that you experience Him who alone is *comely in beauty*. (ps. 44) All things are holy-- the sea, swimming and eating. Take delight in them all. All things enrich us, all lead us to the great Love, all lead us to Christ."²

A person can become a saint anywhere... At your work, whatever it may be, you can become saints--through meekness, patience and love. Make a new start every day, with new resolution, with enthusiasm and love, prayer and silence--not with anxiety so that you get a pain in the chest. --St. Porphyrios

Writing about a modern day saint breaks through all the hagiographic paradigms which the modern, fundamentalist mind cannot absorb. When he addresses modern man's loneliness and angst, we feel the pain deep in our soul, and mere information becomes superfluous at that point. Yet his words are a light of hope, a transformation of being, and a living joy for our life in Christ. 'Porphyrian' fatherliness makes one an innocent child again, able to receive every person as he is. In an age where religion is seen as either oppressive or fanatical, St. Porphyrios gives us a new vision:

"Fanaticism has nothing to do with Christ. Be a true Christian. Then you won't leap to conclusions about anybody, but your love will 'cover all things.' Even to a person of another religion you will always act as a Christian. That is to say, you will show respect for him in a gracious manner irrespective of his religion. You will care for a Muslim when he is in need, speak to him and keep company with him. There must be respect for the

freedom of the other person. Just as Christ stands at the door and knocks and does not force an entry, but waits for the soul to accept Him freely on its own, so we should stand in the same way in relation to every soul."³

We live in a time where innocence is being lost at a younger and younger age. Distrust arises at dawn, cynicism at daybreak, loneliness at the third hour, and at noonday sun the light is eclipsed by the darkness of individualism. To come across a soul like St. Porphyrios who never lost his childlike innocence and whose eye was only directed toward the Good astounds us. We wonder at his simplicity when he says, "From the moment I became a monk I believed that death does not exist. That's how I felt and how I always feel--That I am eternal and immortal. How magnificent!" To have entered so deeply into eternity is unusual for our ears to hear. "When Christ unites us, distances don't exist. When I leave this life it will be better, I'll be closer to you." And indeed we feel close to him!

Like a monk waiting for death, or a virgin waiting for her wedding night, those who have lived with great expectation will be able to understand the *eros* which fills St. Porphyrios' speech. On the other hand, if our senses are saturated and our attention scattered, we will be unable to become, as our elder says, "a sensitive receiver of signals from God."

"Christ is the summit of desire; there is nothing higher. All sensible things lead to satiety, but with God there is no satiation. He is everything. God is the summit of desire. No other joy, no other beauty, nothing else can rival Him. What is higher than the highest?"⁴

We encourage everyone to read *Wounded by Love*, a modern spiritual classic which breathes the fresh air of tradition into our Orthodox faith. We conclude with a final word from Archimandrite Vasilios which captures the spirit of this truly great saint:

*He is and remains something unique, from beginning to end. He was born by going away, disappearing, not existing. And he ended his life by going away, disappearing, not existing. That is why he expands and becomes by grace a place of the Uncontainable. He does not express a view. He does not belong to one particular group of people. He does not express a certain mentality. He does not push himself forward or advertise himself through human activity. All of us stand in need of his blessing and enlightenment."*⁵

¹ *ibid.* p. 90

² *ibid.* p. 218

³ *ibid.* p. 187

⁴ *ibid.* p. 100

⁵ *Hymn of Diemissal* n. 86

St. Seraphim of Sarov – Conversation with Motovilov

"But when our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished the whole work of salvation, after His Resurrection, He breathed on the Apostles, restored the breath of life lost by Adam, and gave them the same grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God as Adam had enjoyed. But that was not all. He also told them that it was better for them that He should go to the Father, for if He did not go, the Spirit of God would not come into the world. But if He, the Christ, went to the Father, He would send Him into the world, and He, the Comforter, would guide them and all who followed their teaching into all truth and would remind them of all that He had said to them when He was still in the world. What was then promised was "grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

"Then on the day of Pentecost He solemnly sent down to them in a tempestuous wind the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire which alighted on each of them and entered within them and filled them with the fiery strength of divine grace which breathes as with dew and acts with gladness in souls who partake of its power and operations (Acts ch. 2). And this same fire-infusing grace of the Holy Spirit which is given to us all, the faithful in Christ, in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, is sealed by the Sacrament of Chrismation on the chief parts of our body as appointed by the Holy Church, the eternal keeper of this grace. It is said: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

On what do we put our seals, your Godliness, if not on vessels containing some very precious treasure? But what on earth can be higher and what can be more precious than the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are sent down to us from above in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism? This baptismal grace is so great and so indispensable, so vital for man, that even a heretic is not deprived of it until his actual death; that is, till the end of the period appointed on high by the providence of God as a lifelong test of man on earth, in order to see what he will be able to achieve (during this period given to him by God) by means of the power of grace granted to him from on high.

"And if we were never to sin after our baptism, we should remain for ever saints of God, holy, blameless, and free from all impurity of body and spirit. But the trouble is that we increase in stature, but do not increase in grace and in the knowledge of God as our Lord Jesus Christ increased; but on the contrary, we gradually become more and more depraved and lose the grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God and become sinful in various degrees, and very sinful people. But if a man is stirred by the wisdom of God, which seeks our salvation and embraces everything, and if he is resolved for its sake to devote the early hours of the day to God and to watch in order to find His eternal salvation, then, in obedience to its voice, he must hasten to offer true repentance for all his sins and must practice the virtues which are opposite to the sins committed. Then through the virtues practiced for Christ's sake, he will acquire the Holy Spirit Who acts within us and establishes in us the Kingdom of God. The word of God does not say in vain: "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21), and it "suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). That means that people who, in spite of the bonds of sin which fetter them and (by their violence and by inciting them to new sins) prevent them from coming to Him, our Savior, with perfect repentance for reckoning with Him. They force themselves to break their bonds, despising all the strength of the fetters of sin - such people at last actually appear before the face of God made whiter than snow by His grace. "Come, says the Lord: Though your sins be as purple, I will make you white as snow" (Is. 1:18).

Teachings of St. Dorotheos of Gaza (5th Century) – On the Incarnation (Part 2)

"The aim of our Master Christ is simply to teach us how we came into all these sins, how we fell into those evil days. First, as I have already said, He freed us through Holy Baptism --- granting us forgiveness of sins. He gave us the power to do good - if we wish - and not to be forcibly drawn, so to speak, to evil. For whoever is under the dominion of evil, is constrained and drawn by it. As it says, everyone 'is caught in the chords of his sins' (Prov. 5:22). Then, through the Holy Commandments, He teaches us how we can be purified from the passions, so that we will not fall into the same sins again. Thus, He shows us the cause of our disdain of - and disobedience to - even these commandments of God. In this way, He gives us the cure for the cause; so that we should be able to obey and be saved."

"What is the cure and what is the cause of this disdain? Hear what the Lord says, 'Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls' (Matt. 11:29). Here briefly, in one word, He has shown us the root and cause of every evil; and the treatment for it, and also the cause of every good. He has shown us that arrogance defeated us, and that it is not possible to receive mercy other than through its opposite: humility. As arrogance produces contempt and destructive disobedience, so humility produces obedience and the salvation of our souls. I have real humility in mind, not that of words and external forms but of a true humble disposition that is cultivated in the heart itself and within this mind-set. This is what He means when He says, 'for I am gentle and lowly in heart'.

"Therefore, whoever wants to find true rest in his soul must learn humility; and he will see that all joy - all glory and all true rest - are to be found there, while it is just the opposite in pride. How have we come into all this affliction? How have we fallen into all this misery? Is it not because of our pride? Is it not because of our senselessness? Is it not because we took the wrong decision? Is it not because we chose to impose our bitter will? Why? Was not Man created with every luxury, in all joy, in all rest and in all glory? Was he not in Paradise? God said, '*Do not do that*', but he did it. Do you realize the enormity of his pride? Do you see his obstinacy? Do you see his insubordination?

Therefore, when He saw his impudence, God said: '*He is a fool, he does not know how to be happy. If he does not have a hard time, he will be totally lost. If he does not learn what sorrow is, he will not learn what rest is.*' Then He gave him that which he deserved, and He expelled him from Paradise.

Thus, Man was given up to self-love and to his own desires, which would crush his bones, so as to learn not to trust himself, but the commandments of God. The hardships from disobedience will teach him the calmness that comes from obedience. As the Prophet says: '*Your own wickedness will correct you*' (Jer. 2:19)."

St. Dorotheos - On Humility

"One of the Elders said, '*We need humility more than anything else, and to be prepared to say, "Forgive me", upon hearing any word.*' ... The Apostle [St. Paul] says: '*Without faith, it is impossible to please God*' (Hebrews 11:6). If it is impossible to please God without faith and almsgiving, and if sins are purged through faith, if one can depart from evil by fearing the Lord, and if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and - again - if the person that struggles practices self-restraint, why does he say: '*We need humility more than anything else?*' Why did he leave out all of the other virtues that are so necessary? The Elder wants to show us that neither the fear of God, nor almsgiving, nor faith, nor temperance, nor any other virtue can be obtained without humility. ... All the temptations of the enemy are destroyed by humility."