

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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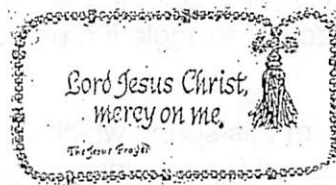
September 25, 2016

**St. Sergius the Wonderworker
of Radonezh (1392)**

St. Euphrosyne, Nun of Alexandria (5th C)

Let us travel along the narrow way, being both confident and in fear: in fear because of the precipices on either side, confident because of Jesus our guide. Let us travel on, sober and wakeful.

- St. John Chrysostom



- **Tuesday, September 27 ~ Inquirer's Class** ➤ Iconography concludes this week!
- **Next Sunday: Protection Sisterhood Anniversary Breakfast after Liturgy**
Plus: Marriage Blessing: George and Tamara Zannis - 2:00pm

God Allows Pain

† Those of us who have passed through pains, either [those of the soul] or physical, know that we never prayed as hard as we did when we were in the bed of pain or when some heavy psychical sadness tested us. While, when we have everything, we forget prayer and fasting, and many things. It is for this reason that God allows pain.

~ Blessed Elder Epiphanius of Athens (+1991)

From the Fathers - On God's Providence

✠ No matter what happens to you, accept everything as good, knowing that nothing happens without God.
St. Symeon the New Theologian

✠ Believe that everything that happens to us, even the least thing, happens according to God's Providence, and then without trouble you will endure everything that comes to you.

Abba Dorotheos

✠ When temptation comes upon you, seek not whence and wherefore it came, but be concerned about enduring it thankfully, without sorrow and without remembering evil.

St. Mark the Ascetic

✠ God does not leave men forever either in unhappiness, so that they would not grow weak, or in happiness, so that they would not become careless; but by diverse means he arranges their salvation.

St. John Chrysostom

✠ Remember God at all times, and He will remember you when you fall into calamity.

St. Isaac the Syrian

✠ While remembering God, increase your supplication, so that when you forget Him, He would not forget you.

St. Mark the Ascetic

✠ Acquire God as a friend for yourself, and you will not require human help.

St. Symeon the Studite (spiritual father of St. Symeon the New Theologian)

You Move About Within God

✠ God is not seen in other ways except through spiritual knowledge. This knowledge is theoria. That is, when you understand that God is near you and that you move about within God and that He sees whatever you do, and you are careful not to sadden Him – since He sees everything inside and out – then you don't sin because you see Him, you love Him, and you are careful not to sadden Him, "for He is at your right hand (Ps. 24:18)." Therefore, everyone who sins does not see God, but is blind.

Elder Joseph the Hesychast

Pearls of the Holy Fathers {13}

If you see a man pure and humble, that is a great vision. For what is greater than such a vision, to see the invisible God in a visible man?

St. Pachomius the Great

If prayer is cold, it does not mean that it is unpleasing to God. Sometimes such prayer can take the place of struggle if a person humbles himself and condemns himself in everything before God.

St. Joseph of Optina

From this spring which you perceive with your senses, let faith lead your mind upwards to the fair and desired Spring which God has promised through His word. That Spring, in which the bodies of the faithful who have slept like seeds since the beginning of the world, will bud forth and rise and clothe themselves with beauty. Then will they receive the crown of goodness from the hand of God; they will shine with beauty like a bride and will flourish like the earth bringing out its blossom. And their heads shall be crowned with eternal joy. So this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Thus, rapt in spirit to this desired Spring, sow now in faith and hope, and with the help of God, the seeds of the blessed harvest, that then you may reap with joy.

St. Tikhon of Voronezh

Since this land consists of such beautiful works, how much more truly the heavenly country must also consist of such; for the other is ever new, and grows not old. For this 'land' passes away, as the Lord said; but that which is ready to receive the Saints is immortal.

St. Athanasius the Great

Concerning the various kinds of food: we should take a little of everything, even sweets. This is a wise rule, says Gregory of Sinai. We should never pick and choose or push our food aside, but should thank God for everything and perfect ourselves in humility. We shall thus avoid the pride which disdains the good fruit created by God.

St. Nil Sorsky

For this, the Only-begotten Son of God took on the form of our weakness; for this, the Invisible not only appeared visible, but even despised; for this, He bore mockeries and insults, derisions and disgrace, suffering and torments, namely, that the humble God could teach man not to be proud. Therefore, how great a virtue is humility, when Christ, Who was great beyond measure, was made small, even unto suffering, in order to teach this virtue truly?

St. Gregory the Great

It is necessary to take great pains, and anyone who does not do so, cannot come to his God. For He Himself was crucified for our sake.

Abba Elias

One who desires salvation must first of all suffer at the hands of other men all vexations and insults and ignominies, and other tribulations, in the likeness of our Lord, and come in this manner to perfect silence, which is hanging on the Cross — in other words, complete mortification.

St. Barsanuphius the Great

And why am I daily forced to drink bitter things, when I can hasten to the sweet? What therefore remains except to give thanks with tears amidst the scourges we suffer for our sins? For the very One Who created us is also made our Father through the spirit of adoption whom He has given. Sometimes He nourishes His sons with bread, other times He corrects them with the scourge, since through sorrows and wounds and gifts He trains them for their eternal inheritance.

St. Gregory the Great

God judges our repentance, not by our labors, but by our humility.

St. John Climacus

St. Sergius, Abbot and Wonderworker of Radonezh

Saint Sergius of Radonezh was born in the village of Varnitsa, near Rostov, on May 3, 1314. His parents were the pious and illustrious nobles Cyril and Maria (September 28). The Lord chose him while still in his mother's womb. In the Life of St Sergius it is reported that even before the birth of her son, St Maria and those praying heard the thrice-repeated cry of the infant at the Divine Liturgy: before the reading of the Holy Gospel, during the Cherubic hymn, and when the priest pronounced: "Holy Things are for the Holy." God gave Cyril and Maria a son whom they named Bartholomew. From his very first days of life the infant amazed everyone by his fasting. On Wednesdays and Fridays he would not accept milk from his mother, and on other days, if Maria used oil in the food, the infant also refused the milk of his mother. Noticing this, Maria refrained altogether from food with oil.

At the age of seven, Bartholomew was sent to study together with his two brothers: his older brother Stephen, and his younger brother Peter. His brothers learned successfully, but Bartholomew fell behind in his studies, even though the teacher gave him much special attention. The parents scolded the child, the teacher chastised him, and his classmates made fun of his lack of comprehension. Finally, Bartholomew besought the Lord with tears to grant him the ability to read.

Once, his father sent Bartholomew out after the horses in the field. Along the way he met an angel sent by God under the appearance of a monk. The Elder stood at prayer beneath an oak in a field. Bartholomew approached him, and bowing, waited for the Elder to finish praying. The monk blessed him, gave him a kiss and asked what he wanted.

Bartholomew answered, "With all my soul I want to learn reading and writing. Holy Father, pray for me to God, that He may help me to become literate." The monk fulfilled Bartholomew's request, offering up his prayer

to God. In blessing the child he said to him: "Henceforth, my child, God gives you to understand reading and writing, and in this you will surpass your brothers and peers" (See the famous M. Nesterov painting "Vision of Bartholomew").

Then the Elder took a vessel and gave Bartholomew a piece of prosphora. "Take, child, and eat," said he. "This is given to you as a sign of the grace of God, and for the understanding of Holy Scripture." The Elder wanted to leave, but Bartholomew asked him to visit at the home of his parents. His parents received their guest with joy and offered him their hospitality.

The Elder replied that it was proper to partake of spiritual nourishment first, and he bade their son to read the Psalter. Bartholomew began to read, and his parents were amazed at the change that had occurred with their son. In parting, the Elder prophetically said of St Sergius, "Your son shall be great before God and the people. He shall become a chosen habitation of the Holy Spirit."

After this the holy child read without difficulty and understood the contents of books. He became immersed in prayer with a special fervor, not missing a single church service. Already in childhood he imposed upon himself a strict fast. He ate nothing on Wednesdays and Fridays, and on the other days he sustained himself on bread and water. About the year 1328, the parents of St Sergius moved from Rostov to Radonezh. When their older sons married, Cyril and Maria received the monastic schema shortly before their death at the Khot'kov monastery of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos, not far from Radonezh.

Later on, the older brother Stephen was widowed and became a monk at this monastery. Having buried his parents, Bartholomew and his brother Stephen withdrew into the forest (12 versts from Radonezh) to live in the wilderness. At first they made cells, and then a small church, and with the blessing of Metropolitan Theognostus, it was consecrated in the name of the Most

Holy Trinity. But soon, unable to bear the difficulties of life in the wilderness, Stephen left his brother and went on to the Moscow Theophany monastery, where he became close to St Alexis, afterwards Metropolitan of Moscow. (February 12).

On October 7, 1337 Bartholomew was tonsured by Igumen Metrophan, taking the name of the holy Martyr Sergius (October 7), and he started to build a new habitation to the glory of the Life-Creating Trinity. Suffering temptations and demonic apparitions, St Sergius advanced from strength to strength. Gradually he became known to other monks seeking his guidance. St Sergius accepted all with love, and soon a brotherhood of twelve monks were gathered in the small monastery.

Their experienced spiritual guide distinguished himself by an extraordinary love for work. With his own hands he built several cells, he carried water, he chopped wood, baked bread, sewed clothing, prepared food for the brethren and humbly took on other tasks. St Sergius combined the heavy work with prayer, vigil and fasting.

The brethren were amazed that with such severe exertion the health of their guide did not deteriorate, but rather became all the more hearty. It was not without difficulty that they implored St Sergius to accept the position of igumen of the monastery.

In 1354 Bishop Athanasius of Volyn ordained the Saint a hieromonk and elevated him to the rank of igumen. Just as before, monastic obediences were strictly fulfilled at the monastery. With the expansion of the monastery, its needs also grew. Often the monks had only scant food, but through the prayers of St Sergius unknown people provided the necessities.

Reports of the exploits of St Sergius became known even at Constantinople, and Patriarch Philotheus sent to the monk a cross, a "paraman" (monastic clothing, a four-cornered cloth tied with cords to the chest and worn beneath other garb, and adorned with symbols of the Lord's Passion) and schema-robe in

blessing for new deeds, and a grammota of blessing, in which the Patriarch counseled the chosen of God to organize a cenobitic monastery. The monk set off with the patriarchal missive to St Alexis, and received from him the counsel to introduce a strict manner of cenobitic life. The monks began to grumble at the strictness of the monastic Rule, and St Sergius was compelled to forsake the monastery. At the River Kirzhach he founded a monastery in honor of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos. Matters at the former monastery went quickly into disarray, and the remaining monks turned to St Alexis that he should get the Saint to return.

St Sergius unquestioningly obeyed the holy hierarch, and left in place of himself at the Kirzhachsk monastery his disciple, St Roman. Already during his lifetime St Sergius had been vouchsafed the gift of wonderworking. He raised a lad, at a point when the despairing father had given up on his only son as lost. Reports about the miracles worked by St Sergius began quickly to spread about, and the sick began to come to him, both from the surrounding villages and also from remote places. And no one left from St Sergius without receiving healing of infirmities and edifying counsel. Everyone gave glory for St Sergius, and revered him on an equal with the ancient holy Fathers. But human glory did not hold allure for the great ascetic, and as before he remained the example of monastic humility.

One time St Stephen, Bishop of Perm (April 27), who deeply revered St Sergius, was on journey from his diocese to Moscow. The roadway passed eight versts distant from the Sergiev monastery. Intending to visit the monastery on his return trip, the Saint stopped, and having recited a prayer, he bowed to St Sergius with the words: "Peace be to thee, spiritual brother." At this instant St Sergius was sitting in the trapeza for a meal with the brethren. In reply to the blessing of the holy hierarch, St Sergius rose up, recited a prayer, and made a return blessing to St Stephen. Certain of the disciples, astonished at the extraordinary action of St Sergius, hastened off to the indicated place, and became convinced of the veracity of the vision.

Gradually the monks began to witness also other similar actions. Once, during Liturgy, an angel of the Lord served with the Saint, but St Sergius in his humility forbade anyone to tell about this until after his death.

St Sergius was connected with St Alexis by close bonds of spiritual friendship and brotherly love. St Alexis in his declining years summoned St Sergius to him and besought him to accept to be Russian Metropolitan, but St Sergius humbly declined to be primate. The Russian Land at this time suffered under the Mongol-Tatar Yoke. Having gathered an army, Great-prince Demetrius Ioannovich of the Don went to monastery of St Sergius to ask blessing in the pending struggle. St Sergius gave blessing to two monks of his monastery to render help to the great-prince: the Schemamonk Andrei [Oslyaba] and the Schemamonk Alexander [Peresvet], and he predicted the victory for prince Demetrius. The prophecy of St Sergius was fulfilled: on September 8, 1380, on the feastday of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, Russian soldiers gained a total victory over the Tatar hordes at Kulikovo Pole (Kulikovo Field), and set in place the beginning of the liberation of the Russian Land from the Mongol Yoke. During the fighting St Sergius and the brethren stood at prayer and besought God to grant victory to the Russian forces.

For his angelic manner of life St Sergius was granted an heavenly vision by God. One time by night Abba Sergius was reading the rule of prayer beneath an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Having completed the reading of the canon to the Mother of God, he sat down to rest, but suddenly he said to his disciple, St Mikhei (May 6), that there awaited them a wondrous visitation. After a moment the Mother of God appeared accompanied by the holy Apostles Peter and John the Theologian. Due to the extraordinary bright light, St Sergius fell down, but the Most Holy Theotokos touched Her hands to him, and in blessing him promised always to be Protectress of his holy monastery.

Having reached old age, and foreseeing his own end six months beforehand, St Sergius

summoned the brethren to him and designated his disciple St Nikon (November 17), who was experienced in the spiritual life and obedience, to be igumen. In tranquil solitude St Sergius fell asleep in the Lord on September 25, 1392. On the night before, the great Saint of God summoned the brethren a final time to give them his final instruction: "Brethren, be attentive to yourselves. Have first the fear of God, purity of soul and un-hypocritical love...."

Venerable Euphrosyne of Alexandria

Saint Euphrosyne of Alexandria was born at the beginning of the fifth century in the city of Alexandria. She was the only child in her family of illustrious and rich parents. Since her mother died early, she was raised by her father, Paphnutius, a deeply believing and pious Christian. He frequented a monastery, the igumen of which was his spiritual guide.

When Euphrosyne turned eighteen, her father wanted her to marry. He went to the monastery to his spiritual guide to receive his blessing for the planned wedding of his daughter. The igumen conversed with the daughter and gave her his blessing, but St Euphrosyne yearned for the monastic life.

She secretly accepted tonsure from a wandering monk, left her father's house and decided to enter a monastery in order to lead her life in solitude and prayer. She feared, however, that in a women's monastery her father would find her. Calling herself the eunuch Smaragdos, she went to the very same men's monastery which she had visited with her father since childhood.

The monks did not recognize Euphrosyne dressed in men's garb, and so they accepted her into the monastery. Here in a solitary cell, St Euphrosyne spent 38 years in works, fasting and prayer, and attained a high level of spiritual accomplishment. Her father grieved over the loss of his beloved daughter and more than once, on the advice of the igumen, he conversed with the monk Smaragdos, revealing his grief and receiving spiritual comfort. Before her death, the nun Euphrosyne revealed her secret to her grieving father and asked that no one but he should prepare her body for burial. Having buried his daughter, Paphnutius distributed all his wealth to both the poor and to the monastery, and then he accepted monasticism. For ten years right up to his own death, he labored in the cell of his daughter.

3rd Page of Ethics and Technology by St. Nikolai (omitted by mistake)

Ethics are long-lasting and unchanging, that is, evangelic ethics, but technology is always changing. Ethics are likened to a lady, and technology like her handmaiden. That is why ethics have to control technology. Eternal values are the territory of ethics and not technology. It is devastating for an entire people to put the purpose of their lives in technology, and all of their labor and sweat they sacrifice to the advancement of technology, dragging behind them ethics, like Achilles dragged the dead Hector tied to a chariot. A people like that can succeed to build all of their cities from ivory and gold, but if people like Ahab and Jezebel live in them, dogs will have the last word and not people. Between honor and skill it is easy to choose. An honest man even without skill is more respected in our time than a skillful man without honesty.

Technology changes man's relation towards nature, but not towards man and God.

Whoever thinks otherwise values things more than people, and dust more than the spirit. A horrible tragedy of our time is the war between men and God.

God wants to raise up and exalt man's identity above dumb and lifeless materiality, while men want to bury their identity and forget their Creator, and make the sole purpose of their lives technology and material wealth.

Many people who are spiritually and morally handicapped by their unbelief in Christ, create out of modern technology idols that they worship, and call upon all peoples and nations to bring sacrifices to those idols.

From the Complete Works of Bishop Nikolai [in Serbian], Book 12, p. 23. Translated from the Serbian by Marija Miljkovic.

~ St. Justin Popovich on 1 John 3:4:

Sin defiles man and his being, which is in the divine image of God and God-given. It is the fundamental impurity, proto-impurity, and the origin of all impurities. Purity is, in reality, purity from sin and its impurities. That is holiness. For only through the help of the holy energies, which are received through the Holy Mysteries and holy virtues, is man able keep himself from sin. For such purity, such holy purity, is the divine law of man's being. This purity is achieved and maintained by living in goodness, in love, in prayer, in righteousness, in meekness, in fasting, in self-restraint, and in the rest of virtues of the Gospel—simply put, in holiness, conceived of as the synthesis and unity of all the holy virtues and grace-filled energies. In opposition to purity, to holiness as law, to the divine law of man's being, stands sin as the first and fundamental lawlessness. Sin, with its entire being, tells God defiantly: I do not want your law; I do not want to know of it or of you; I want to be far from you and outside of anything that is of you. In sinning, man breaks all of God's laws and brings about lawlessness, and through lawlessness comes anarchy, disorder, and chaos. Sin is the transgression of the law, it is transgression of the law of God. The law is from God, while lawlessness is from the devil. The law of God is the Gospel; lawlessness is in. Its only law is to be without the law of God and against the law of God. In essence, the law and that which is lawful is only that which is divine and of the Gospel; lawlessness is everything that is in opposition to that which is divine and of the Gospel.

This is sin and the father of sin—the devil. He is the only truly lawless one; but lawlessness among people came about from sin and through sin. What is the law for God? Holiness, love, righteousness, goodness, wisdom and the rest of the perfections. Such is the law for men because they are beings in the image of God. There is one law for God and for man: the Gospel. That is why our people call the Gospel the law, and the foremost mighty act of the incarnate God—Holy Communion—they call the law. "I have received the law" is what our people say when they commune (1). Whosoever does not live by this law is a lawless one. Sin is lawlessness, virtue is the law. Whosoever committeth sin committeth lawlessness also.

(1) Fr Justin is referring here to a local Serbian tradition.

This and That

☞ In the Dome of the Rock, built by Muslims over the Jewish holy place, replacing the Old Temple of Jerusalem, an inscription which precisely denies the Trinity stands out. Islam proclaims in that inscription: “God has no son.”

Islam was born precisely in negating the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Triune God. It is the most radical and violent attack at the heart of the Christian Faith that has ever been seen. Can we then say that there is no difference in the conception of God between Christians and Muslims? It is St. John the Apostle who clarifies that those who do not acknowledge the Son, do not possess the Father either:

“Who is a liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is Antichrist, who denieth the Father, and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. He that confesseth the Son, hath the Father also” (1 John 2: 22-23).

- Antonio Socci

A Life of Constant Stimulation

Since perfect peace cannot hold our attention for long, accustomed as we are to a life of constant stimulation, we tend, or feel the need, to focus our minds on the dramatic. Without violent manifestations of discontent and criminality somewhere in the world, we should soon grow bored. Universal contentment is our worst enemy and greatest fear.

So we are predisposed to see in infrequent and dramatic events not merely the events themselves, but signs of the times, a glimpse of the future, a future that makes us shudder in the same way as a horror film makes us shudder. Infrequent and dramatic events have transcendent meaning for us, so to speak, in a way that reigning peace, however preponderant, does not and cannot have.

Aldous Huxley: Adrenaline addiction is rationalized as Righteous Indignation and finally they [who suffer from it] are convinced, unshakably, that they do well to be angry....” ~ Theodore Dalrymple

Stop Delegating

The time is coming when the church will have to forget the old playbook and stop delegating the defense of its essential liberties to lawyers and politicians. It will have to take direct action, in much the same way that Christian defenders of civil rights once did. — David French

“Religious freedom shields the one kind of institution in civil society that has the standing to rebuke the state’s claim to being the ultimate sovereign, the arbiter of all claims to be acting in service of the good. Only religion can remind us all of a good that encompasses and then transcends political life. Only religion can remind us that the temporal ultimately answers to the eternal.”

-Matthew Franck, *Touchstone*

The modern world is the most “moral” time in history. What I mean by that is not that we behave ourselves well (we don’t), but that thinking in moral/legal/forensic terms, rooted in the grounding philosophy of Nominalism rules the day. (*Ed. Most nominalists have held that only physical particulars in space and time are real.*) People don’t have another way of speaking about things. So, if they want to say something important, they get very moral about it. Of course, morality when based in Nominalism, only works if someone enforces it. Violence and force are required to make a law/rule be of any use. And so, we get political correctness, public censuring, and all of the anger of our culture that is the expression of highly moral people trying to control all of the other people who are “wrong.”

- Fr. Stephen Freeman

The Importance of Reading the Bible Daily

In his book, *The Arena*, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov exhorts us, "Never cease studying the Gospel until the end of your life. Do not think that you know it enough, even if you know it by heart." There are many reasons why it is important to read the Bible and read it daily. We learn about who Christ is, we are granted encouragement and direction in life, and we learn about how to live a Christ-centered life. By studying God's Word, we are drawn closer to God and grow in our Christian life. St. Paisios in his book *Epistles* tells us that, "A chapter from the Gospel is necessary for our sanctification, as it drives away all evil" (Monastery of St. John the Theologian, 2002, p. 74).

We can start small and build upon that foundation as we are able. If we are limited by time, we can simply read the daily Scripture readings noted on Orthodox calendars and websites. As we begin to center ourselves around the words of the Church, we will see how beneficial they are in our daily lives. By reading the Bible, we learn about Christ and the basis of our faith. We get to know the life of Christ as well as His teachings to us, and hopefully that helps increase our faith in Him. St. Paul writes to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is God's Word to us, given to us in order to know Him and how to live our lives.

It is so beneficial for the soul to hear the words of the Savior. It is encouraging because we realize we are not alone; Christ is always with us and our sins are forgiven. As Blessed Theophylact in his commentaries says, "It is called Gospel, because it announces to us things that are good, namely, remission of sins, being counted as righteous, ascent into Heaven, and adoption as sons by God" *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*, (Chrysostom Press, 1992. p. 8). The Bible also provides spiritual nourishment, directing us on the level path.

For example, as Psalm 118:105 reminds us: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The Psalms become our support and can help us through the most difficult situations. By reading the Bible daily, we can have the words of Christ always in our hearts, offering comfort, encouragement, and direction.

Finally, we learn through reading of Holy Scripture how we ought to live as Christians. We have the Ten Commandments written down by Moses, and Christ teaches us in the Gospels how we must live and follow these commandments. We learn about how we must treat our neighbor without judging or condemning. For example, in the Gospel of John, we learn about the adulterous woman that the scribes and Pharisees, based on the Law of Moses, wanted to have stoned. But Christ said, "He who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone" (8:7). In another example from the Gospel of Matthew, Christ teaches, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (7:1). This further teaches that by living as a true Christian, we must focus on our own sins and not those of others. St. John of Kronstadt also reminds us that, "In the Holy Scriptures, we see God face to face, and ourselves as we are." Seeing ourselves as we really are is very difficult; however, it is necessary on the path to our salvation.

Learning how to live as Christians includes learning how to fight temptations which come from the devil. Even Christ does this when He is tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11). Both recite verses from the Old Testament, but Christ defeats the devil and his temptations with the Truth. When we are tested by evil, it is very helpful to have the Bible as our weapon. We can follow Christ's example and use "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

Whether it is to teach us about Christ and our faith, provide encouragement and direction, or equip us for the Christian life, the Scriptures are a necessary part of the daily Christian life— there is such a depth to what they teach us. If we open our hearts and listen to their inner meaning, we are better able to tackle the various cares of the day with a peaceful and prayerful spirit. Read them daily, and may the Lord supply His saving grace and transform your life. (*Holy Transfiguration Monastery*)