

**ABBA ISAIAH OF EL ESKEET**

**HIS LIFE,**

**TEACHINGS,**

**AND WRITINGS,**

**By**

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## **Preface**

### **Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet and the Holy Bible:**

Abba Isaiah lived the Holy Bible; thus the Holy Spirit poured on him the wonderful meditations which filled his writings.

### **His Spiritual Belief:**

In El Eskeet, the spiritual belief depended totally on the teachings of the Holy Bible, and this is the reason why this saint lived according to these teachings. In his instructions to the monks living with him, he always reminded them to:

- Deal in the fear of the Lord
- Follow God's commandments
- Pray continuously
- Not busy oneself with worldly matters
- Remember the day of departure
- Flee from anger, and forgive trespassers
- Realise that God sees the hidden and the visible
- Realise that God is the Alpha and the Omega
- Live a life of correctness
- Not judge that you might not be judged

### **His Monastic Belief:**

1. It was always towards strictness, seriousness and commitment without reluctance, clinging to the Holy

Bible's teachings and the sayings of the fathers, as well as obedience to the spiritual father in the Lord.

2. Fear God to the end was very important in his life, and thus he mentions it often in his writings.

3. To give an account of one's deeds each day was the compass he used in ensuring correctness along the spiritual path.

4. Practical knowledge according to the saint is discernment, wisdom and meditation in the soul's situation. Blessed is he who yields his soul to God in wisdom, also, he who has no knowledge, does not have the fear of God.

5. Practical humility from the heart, in life, attitude and speech.

6. To submit the soul before God is the only treasure of the ascetic.

7. Be gentle with the brothers. In this regard the saint says, "A monk's gentleness and meekness lifts the monk above all things."

8. Hatred of the world: to love the world is to dim the soul, so be watchful.

9. Gentleness: Beware of proud thoughts, for because of this, the angel became a devil

10. Your mind needs the following:
  - To abandon anger, and to take on strictness and courage
  - To differentiate between good and bad, to test all things before executing them, and to not yield to strange matters
  - Do not count the evil of other person, do good to whoever does evil to you, and accept everything without murmuring
11. Give a daily account of your deeds
12. The monk should possess the fear of God
13. Love of God
14. Purity: an enlightened mind and the yearning of clinging to God
15. Asceticism: in food, drink, clothes, and belongings
16. Yearn to cling to the Lord
17. Humility: to believe that you are a sinner, to be quiet always, to count yourself as nothing, and to love humility for it will preserve you from sin
18. To deny one self – to despise praise – and to abandon your desires
19. Do not judge:

- Do not despise a sinner
- Do not listen or blame your brother for his weaknesses
- He who does not judge is blessed

20. Controlling one self:

- Do not be stubborn lest evil attack you
- If you control yourself, you will gain humility

21. Accept others, admit your mistakes

22. Work: do hand work in your cell

23. Love:

- Love the believers in order to gain God's mercy
- Love the saints and imitate their good deeds
- Love everyone in order to rid yourself of jealousy

24. Mercy:

- Give to the needy cheerfully, for not having mercy means we do not love God
- Love the poor in order to rid yourself of the love of money
- Know that you own nothing, it is all God's gifts, so do not let anyone who asks anything of you, go away empty

25. The Spiritual Guide:

- Do not do anything in your repentance without consulting your spiritual guide
- Disclose any thought that attacks you, and do not be embarrassed
- Disclose your thoughts to the elders in order to be supported by their advice

26. Stay away from the world: Abba Isaiah said that once he heard Abba Macarius the Great responding to some questions to the monks...

‘Tell us how can we be saved?’ and, ‘Wicked thoughts always attack us although we want to be saved, what should we do?’

To which the saint responded: ‘If you are monks, why are you living as laymen? He who has abandoned the world and put on the clothes of monasticism, yet the world still lives in his heart, deceives himself. Your title of a monk is false, you will only gain the rest of the body if you dwell as those in the world, thus you will lose the fear of God which is in your heart.’

27. Flee from people: stay in your cell and weep for your sins

28. Self rebuke: Abba Isaiah rebuked himself saying:

- Woe to you miserable soul, do not forget death for it will come without delay

- If you live in your cell, eat moderately and give some rest to your body, that you may be able to serve God in your prayers (Proverbs 25:16)

### **Abba Isaiah, his monastic life and spiritual struggle:**

The saint struggled deeply in his monastic life, until he won the inheritance of eternal life. Thus, all his guidance and writings are a result of practical life, which proceed from the heart to one's heart. God's grace supported his spiritual struggle. The saint was diligent in the following:

#### **1. Monastic life and struggle in prayers:**

- Love to pray at all times, so that the mysteries of God may enlighten your heart.
- Do not be reluctant in praying the Agbia lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.
- Do not be careless when praying the Agbia.

#### **2. Fasting and being Vigilant:**

Fasting is to sacrifice the body, being vigilant is to purify the mind, but too much sleep results in the loss of the mind, dryness of the eyes, and hardness of the heart.

**3. Repentance:**

My dear brethren, if you want to become closer to God and despise the vanities of this world and repent, take care not to break your promise.

**4. Toil of the Body:**

Hate all things in the world that give rest and enjoyment to your body.

**5. Do not get bored:**

Beware of boredom for it ruins the fruits of a monk.

**6. Retreat:**

- Do not make friends with popular people in the world, lest they pull you away from God.
- If you want to be known to God, be unknown to people.
- Do not have favours with others
- Do not wander around aimlessly, but stay in your cell.
- Those whom you left behind because of your love to God, do not remember them in your heart.

## 7. Chastity:

Preserve your eyes concerning what you see, and preserve your ears concerning what you hear, and let your tongue always mention the name of the Lord.

## 8. Eating Habits:

- Remember your sins lest you enjoy your food.
- Eat only from what is in front of you, eat slowly and without haste.

Abba Isaiah said: I know a brother who eats and drinks normally with us, while his prayers are ascending towards God as fire.

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- My miserable soul, do not forget the day of death, at which time you will be rewarded according to your deeds.
- My miserable soul, remember the saints, and the torture of the sinners.
- My miserable soul, hasten to repent as long as you are still on earth.
- My miserable soul, be watchful, because the Lord will come at an unexpected hour.
- My miserable soul, do not belittle God's patience because eternal torture is endless.
- My miserable soul, remember that you will give an account of your deeds and thoughts.

➤ My miserable soul, do not forget the eternal joy which God has prepared for the saints, which no eye has seen and no ear has heard of. No one can imagine what You prepared, O God, to those who love Your name, for You are plenteous in mercy and grace, because of Your great love to mankind. Grant me a share with all Your saints who pleased You ever since the beginning, because You are my hope and my support.

Glory and honour be to You with Your gracious Father, and the Holy Spirit. Now and forevermore, Amen.

Commemoration of the great saint Abba Isaiah of El  
Eskeet  
11 Abib, 1717  
18 July, 2001

With the grace of God  
Bishop Asheia  
Bishop of Tahta and Gehina  
18 July, 2001

**CHAPTER 1**

**THE LIFE OF SAINT ISAIAH**

**OF EL ESKEET**

## **Isaiah:**

Is a Hebrew name meaning “the Lord save” or “God saves”.

### **His Birth and Monasticism:**

Abba Isaiah was born around the year 337 A.D. He was brought up in the fear and love of God. He was always keen to read the Book of Isaiah the Prophet, putting constantly before his eyes the salvation of God, which can only be achieved through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

When he could not fulfil what he was reading whilst living among his family, he decided to enter into the desert. He journeyed to the wilderness of El Eskeet in 355 A.D, where dwelt the stars of the wilderness, together with their spiritual father St. Macarius the Great.

Abba Isaiah became one of Abba Macarius’ disciples, during which time, he felt like a thirsty land, in need to consume every drop of water provided by Abba Macarius. The grace of God was upon Abba Isaiah, to the extent that Abba Macarius delegated him to be the spiritual father to many novices. Abba Isaiah was also a disciple of Abba Akhilas the Elder, (who was also a disciple of Abba Macarius). Abba Akhilas trained Abba Isaiah in the life of strict asceticism.

Abba Isaiah lived the life of devoutness and order. It was said that he once told his monks, “If anyone wishes to abide with us, he must abide by the traditions of the

fathers, which were passed down to us by them. Do not ask me to be lenient with you, for this will not be constructive for your salvation. If there be anyone who is not willing to abide by these rules, then let him depart in peace.” He even mentioned to his disciple Peter: “You must abide by these traditions, otherwise I cannot allow you to stay with me.”

Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet was well renown amongst the hermit fathers who dwelt in the wilderness of Scetis (Sheheet).

Abba Amonious speaks about a letter written to him by the Apostolic Abba Athanasius, in the year 363 AD: “...and the Pope asked me concerning the saintly hermit fathers, Paisos and his brothers, Paul, Bishoy, Isaiah, Piseer, and Isaac the priest of Scetis...”

### **With Abba Arsanius:**

One day, Abba Zeinon went out on a very hot day in order to cut some palm branches. When he returned to his cell, his throat was so dry that he found it very difficult to swallow. He therefore took some bread and after soaking it in water for a while, ate it with some salt. While he was eating, Abba Isaiah came to visit him. Embarrassed by the situation, Abba Zeinon hid the plate of food from sight, but because of Abba Isaiah's spirituality, he was aware of what took place, and used the situation as a means of providing a lesson to St Arsanius regarding the acceptable diet of monks. (Prior to monasticism, Abba Arsanius lived

in the palace of the king and was well acquainted to the life of luxury. Even in his cell, he would cook two different types of food, and this was unacceptable in monastic life).

As soon as Abba Isaiah rang the monastery bell, all the monks gathered together. He then addressed Abba Zeinon, saying: “My brother Zeinon, you have forsaken everything to come here, because of your love to our Lord and for the sake of your salvation, however, if you so much enjoy eating soup, then you must return to Egypt, for we do not deal in luxury here.” Upon hearing this, Abba Arsanius felt this message was for him. He then ordered his disciple to cook nothing but legumes for him.

Interestingly, Abba Isaiah, in his early monastic life, lived a similar life to Abba Arsanius, until Abba Akhilas taught him the same lesson.

### **Lessons in Spiritual Struggle:**

It so happened that one day Abba Isaiah went to a field and asked the owner for some wheat. The owner said to him: “Father, did you sow anything?” To which he replied, “No.” So the owner responded, “Then how do you expect to reap what you have not sown? He who does not work, does not deserve wages.” Abba Isaiah learnt a lesson from this experience and applied it to one’s spiritual life – if you do not toil in your spiritual life, you cannot expect to receive any reward from God.

A great famine occurred during those days, and so Abba Isaiah prayed and wept in earnest, being naked all night wandering through the desert, pleading with the Lord to have mercy on His people and save Egypt from the famine. Upon seeing his suffering, the Lord had mercy on him, and sent an angel to one of the hermit fathers dwelling in the wilderness, to take a robe in order to cover Abba Isaiah's body. When Abba Isaiah saw him, he said: "Is there no one else naked in this whole world except me?" But when he refused to take the covering, the hermit advised him that the order had come from God. Upon hearing this, the saint wept and then heard a voice coming from heaven saying, "Be assured Isaiah, there will occur no more famines in the land of Egypt, so long as you shall dwell."

### **Abba Isaiah in Syria:**

Following the first barbaric invasion in El Eskeet, in the year 407 AD, Abba Isaiah, together with some of his monks, journeyed to Syria, where he established monasticism south of the city of Nasibeen, by the River Muscas. He dwelt there within his cell for forty years, without ever departing from it.

### **The Era of Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet:**

The era in which dwelt Abba Isaiah is acknowledged as being a golden age, by all means:

Politically: Following a period of intense persecution, the church was finally in a period of peace, due to the decree issued in the year 313 AD, by the righteous King Constantine, acknowledging Christianity. It was during this time that monasticism increased and flourished.

Religiously: Abba Isaiah was a contemporary to some of the great pillars of the Orthodox faith, such as St. Athanasius the Apostolic, who was the 20<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria, St. Timothy of Alexandria the 22<sup>nd</sup> Pope, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Gregory the Bishop of Nisus, St. Cyril I, who was the 24<sup>th</sup> Pope and granted the title ‘the Pillar of Religion’, and many others. For sure all these great saints had influenced the life and teachings of Abba Isaiah, who always advised against mingling with heretics, and to hold fast the true Orthodox faith.

Spiritually: Monasticism thrived and flourished greatly during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries in Egypt.

Abba Isaiah was a contemporary saint to many great hermit fathers who had preceded him, such as:

- ❖ Abba Anthony the Great (250 – 356 AD)
- ❖ Abba Macarius the Great (300 - 390 A.D)
- ❖ Abba Shenouda the Archmandrite (333 – 451 AD)
- ❖ Abba Bishoy, the beloved of our gracious Saviour Jesus Christ (320 – 417 AD)
- ❖ Abba Bakhomius, the Father of the Community
- ❖ Abba Amonius
- ❖ Abba Paphnatius
- ❖ Abba Arsanius, the tutor of the King’s children

- ❖ Abba Moses the Black
- ❖ Abba Isaac, the priest of the cells
- ❖ Abba Bemwa
- ❖ Abba Isidorus, the disciple of St Amoun
- ❖ Abba Isidorus, the priest
- ❖ Abba Isidorus, of El Farma
- ❖ Abba Paula of Tamouh
- ❖ Abba Beamen
- ❖ Abba Setwanis
- ❖ Abba Serapion the Great
- ❖ Abba Serapion of Sinai
- ❖ Abba John the Short
- ❖ The two saints - Maximous and Domadius
- ❖ Abba Joseph the Great

### **His Departure:**

Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet was reposed in the Lord, in the year 447 AD. He was 110 years old.

The Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates his feast day on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the blessed month of Abib.

May his blessings be with us all. Amen

**CHAPTER TWO**

**WRITINGS OF ANBA ISAIAH OF EL  
ESKEET**

**WITH SOME OF HIS TEACHINGS**

## **Writings of Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet:**

Abba Isaiah wrote many articles relating to monasticism, and due to the fact that his teachings were all Biblically rooted, his writings were a source of deep inspiration and knowledge and therefore widely spread and read by monks throughout all Eastern Christian countries. His writings were translated into various languages, including Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian and Greek. Eventually, the western countries also came to know him through his sayings, which were mentioned in Benoit D'Aniane's book entitled, 'The Laws of Attitude'. In 1558, his writings were then translated into Latin and read amongst the Venetian monks, and then finally, they were translated into French in 1970 by the Bel Montagne monks, and entitled, 'Asceticism of D'Isaiah', that is, 'The Asceticism of Isaiah'.

## **Abba Isaiah's style in writings:**

Abba Isaiah is a very eloquent writer. He engages the use of similes and metaphors, in order to produce conciseness and precision in his expression and meaning.

When speaking about **LOVE**, he says: **“Love is the image of the True King. A soul cannot enter into the peace and rest of the Son of God, unless it has the image of the King.”**

Unless a coin is stamped with the image of the king, no merchant would consider it of value, likewise, the soul who does not have the imprint of the King of kings Jesus Christ, is of no value. (Matthew 22:12). The sign of the image of Christ is love, and therefore He says, ***“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”*** (John 13:35).

**When speaking about preoccupation with worldly concerns, he says: “Just as a bird that cannot fly with one wing if the other is caught in a trap, likewise, one’s soul cannot grow in the love of God if it is trapped in worldly affairs.”**

**Concerning sufferings, he says:** “If a fortified city has a hole in the wall, then unless it is mended the enemy can easily come through and attack. Likewise, if a monk is under the control and influence of his sufferings, then he will not be able to resist his enemies.”

**Regarding the roots of evil he says:** “These are the afflictions which attacked Adam, and which the Lord Jesus Christ crushed through His Cross.

These are the old wineskins in which new wine is not poured in to (Matthew 9:17).

These are the foxes that spoil the vines (Song of Songs 2:15).

These are the shroud wrappings of Lazarus (John 11:14).

These are the old men whom the Apostle Paul asks us to rid ourselves of (Ephesians 4:22)

These are the thorns of which Isaiah the prophet says: “*I expected it to bring forth good grapes, it brought forth wild grapes*” (Isaiah 5:4)

**He warned against heresies, saying:** “Although you wish to defend your faith, keep yourself from arguing with heretics, lest the poison of their shameful words affect you. Heed the words of the Apostle Paul, who said, ‘*Beware of any teaching that is contrary to sound doctrine.*’ Do not read their books, and advise your brothers not to stray from the true faith. If anyone followed them at one point, but realising their fault then returned, do not despise him because he followed in ignorance.

### **Abba Isaiah and the Holy Bible:**

The Holy Bible was the foundation and basis of his monasticism and spiritual life in the wilderness of Scetis. He writes to his monks saying, “From the beginning, when God created man, he ordained him with stable intellect. But when Adam fell, the intellect acted contrary. The Lord, in His great love however, had mercy on mankind, and being incarnated, the Word became man (John 1:14) and dwelt among us and was like us in all things, but without sin (Hebrews 4:14). Through His grace, He restored us back to our original image.”

### **Anger:**

The purpose of anger in the human nature is for feeling holy zeal against that which the enemy sows (Matthew

13:25). In the Book of Numbers, we read how Phinehas the son of Eleazar, felt anger towards the couple who clung to the idol of Baal. He killed them both, and so stopped the plague amongst the children of Israel (Numbers 25:7). Now, however, anger has been the cause of wrong deeds.

**Desire:**

Within human beings is a desire and yearning for the Lord; without this yearning there would be no love. For this reason was Daniel called to understand the vision (Daniel 9:23). However, the enemy transformed this holy desire into something disgraceful in which we desire things impure.

**Zeal:**

Holy zeal is necessary if we are to progress in our spiritual life towards the Lord. However, this zeal became jealousy and feelings of envy towards others.

**Pride:**

Pride is present in the human soul for the purpose of standing against the devil, however, this type of pride has now become feelings of haughtiness and superiority. Let us strive, my beloved brethren, to rid ourselves of these feelings in order that the beloved Lord may abide in us, for so it is written that He finds rest in His saints.

**Hatred:**

The feeling of hatred is present within the human soul. It was through the feeling of hatred that Elijah the Prophet was stirred and so killed all the prophets of Baal (1 Kings

18:40), likewise did the prophet Samuel with Agag King of Amalek (1 Samuel 15:23). The soul has no glory unless it hates the devil and all his evil works. Now, however, our hatred is directed towards our family and relatives. This type of hatred destroys and dismisses all virtues.

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### **Abba Isaiah and His Spiritual Concept**

His life and teachings were all Biblically founded. He advised those living with him...

✠ Remain in your cell and live in the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7)

✠ Do not neglect the works of your hands (Acts 20:35; 2 Thessalonians 3:8)

✠ Do not be neglectful in your contemplations, and pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

✠ Be watchful, lest you become preoccupied with worldly affairs (2 Corinthians 10:5)

✠ Always remember death, and contemplate on the day of your departure (Luke 12:40)

✠ Do not harbour envy or hate in your heart towards your relatives, and do not be a hypocrite, for the Lord

cannot be deceived for He sees the hidden and the visible  
(Galatians 6:7)

✠ If anyone talks to you harshly, prostrate before him, lest feelings of blame begin to grow in your heart (Romans 12:21)

✠ Recite constantly the words of the Lord; when you first awake, and before commencing any work (Proverbs 8:17)

✠ Do not praise what you have not seen, and do not speak concerning rumours, as if you yourself have witnessed the occurrence (Ephesians 5:15)

✠ If you know of a sin your brother is committing, do not tell anyone concerning it, for his sin will be for your death (Proverbs 25:9)

✠ It is through abandoning the world that we are able to enter through the gate to a new creation.

✠ If you have truly abandoned the world, strive hard to rid yourself of your sins, and do not despise the Lord's commandments.

✠ If you want to be a disciple of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, it is necessary to abandon the world.

✠ There is a path which leads to life, and another which leads to death; he who walks upon one cannot also walk upon the other.

‡ He who desires the Kingdom of God will do the deeds of the Kingdom.

‡ He whose heart blazes with God's love will not tolerate evil and sin.

‡ No one can achieve salvation if his care is for the world.

‡ We cannot look at heaven with one eye and look at earth with the other eye at the same time. Likewise, the mind can not be occupied with God and with the world at the same time.

‡ The beloved Lord Jesus loves those who come to Him with all their hearts. To them He says: "***Abide in Me... If you love Me, keep My commandments.***" What separate us from Jesus are the desires of our wicked hearts. If you say that you have abandoned the world whilst your heart still clings to the world, then you deceive yourself. Our Master and Lord Jesus Christ says: "***He who does not carry his cross and follow Me can not be My disciple.***"

Thus, we notice how the wise Abba Isaiah is basing all his ascetic principles on the Bible. He ensures that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only sphere for all the deeds of asceticism, the only goal for all those dwelling in devoutness, and the only power supporting the recluse.

To carry the Cross is to die to human desires. Abba Isaiah says that, carrying the Cross means crucifying the heart and mind towards the desires of the world and the evils of the body. The Cross is our heart which we preserve from all bad desires and evils, until we are rid of them thereby gaining liberty; the liberty of the Spirit which was assured to us by the Lord Jesus who said, “...*and where I am, also My disciple will be.*”

### **Crucifying bodily desires prepares the soul to put on Jesus Christ**

Abba Isaiah very simply applies the teachings of the Apostle Paul to spiritual living:

✠ If you have truly risen with Christ, then give care to what is above, and not to earthly matters. Take off the old man and all its deeds and put on the new man, which is the Lord Jesus Himself! You have been baptised with Christ, so put on Jesus Christ!

Let us examine ourselves, my brethren, have we put on Christ or not? Through Him our souls are sanctified, so that we are no longer followers of worldly desires.

Abba Isaiah then explains the words of St. Paul concerning the Cross and crucifixion of the Lord, in such precision and effectiveness...

✠ The Lord Jesus says: “*He who loves Me keeps My commandments*”, he who loves Christ walks with Him to

the Cross. But what is the Cross? The Cross is the place in which our desires have been crucified. For this reason the Apostle Paul says, *“I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”* This means that whoever conquers evil desires, Christ will abide in him.

### **Crucifying worldly desires prepares the soul to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit:**

The goal of spiritual devoutness is for the purpose of attaining the Lord and Master Jesus Christ, which can only be accomplished through the Cross.

‡ Those who conquer the desires of the world, will receive the promise of the Lord, which is that the Spirit of God will dwell in them. It is the Spirit of holiness which the world cannot comprehend. The gentle, quiet Spirit can only dwell in the gentle, quiet heart, and so it bears the fruits of the Spirit. May the love of Jesus Christ, rather than the affairs of the world, dwell within our hearts.

### **Living the Resurrection is the pledge of complete purity:**

‡ The Lord’s objective was His holy resurrection and the achievement of eternal happiness, which He fulfilled. The Holy Bible also preaches the same objective.

Abba Isaiah applied this goal completely in his life of devoutness...

✠ In order for us to achieve complete peace, we must have the Son of God, who is the perfect peace; He is without death and without corruption; He is the resurrection. In order for us to have this Perfect Peace, we must follow the Lord with sincerity – we must follow His life, His sufferings, and His crucifixion. In this way, not only will we achieve peace, but also the Lord will find rest in our souls. He who clings to the Lord becomes one with Him. Our beloved Lord will then teach the soul how to pray without ceasing, and how to worship Him, without feeling any boredom.

### **Regarding Confession he says:**

✠ Do not be afraid to reveal the thoughts which war within you, to your confession father, for when you confess, the war will lighten. To hide your thoughts will make the devil rejoice, for he rejoices in a person hiding their thoughts; whether they be good or bad.

✠ Reveal your thoughts only to your confession father, and not to anyone else, lest you feel depressed in your heart.

### **Regarding honesty he says:**

‡ He who reveals in part and conceals the rest in his heart, to him is his service of no avail.

### **Regarding humility he says:**

‡ A humble person does not occupy himself with the deeds or words of others, for he is too preoccupied with his own sins.

### **Regarding Prayers he says:**

‡ Do not be negligent in your prayers, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.

‡ Strive to be vigilant in your prayers, for these prayers will enlighten your soul.

### **Regarding Holy Communion he says:**

Holy Communion is unity with God, however, if we do not conquer the feelings of anger, jealousy, pride and self-righteousness, then we are far from God and not yet united with Him.

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## **Abba Isaiah and His Ascetic Concept**

### **Respecting Ascetic Rules:**

He was very particular in saying:

✠ If anyone wishes to abide with us, it is necessary for him to follow the rules, which have been passed down to us by the early fathers, otherwise, allow them to depart in peace, and before God, I will not be responsible for them.

✠ When I lived with my saintly father Akhiles, together with the brethren, we always abided by his rules, which he wrote to us.

In the introduction to the book “Asceticion” (The asceticism of Abba Isaiah), which was printed in Moscow, there is a summary of Abba Isaiah’s principles. It is written that he was always keen to accept monks, so long as they abided by the rules. He wrote down these rules for his monks, so that there would be no confusion in following them...

The fear of God unto the end, was the basic guideline in his ascetic concept. He repeated this concept several times in his writings, for example, as in the following:

- . We cannot escape the fear of God for He sees everything
- . Remember God in all things, for He always watches you

- . God sees everything you do
- . Reveal your thoughts to God that He may preserve you

### **Self Account:**

The best compass that can guide you towards the path of righteousness is giving yourself an account of your deeds.

✠ Remember your sins daily, ask for forgiveness and test yourself, and reveal all these things to your confession father, for in so doing will you come to know yourself and ensure you travel upon the correct path.

### **Practical Knowledge:**

According to Abba Isaiah, practical knowledge is discernment, self control, and meditating on one's self. He always says:

✠ Blessed is he who knows what he is doing.

✠ Blessed is he who yields himself to God knowingly.

✠ He who does not have knowledge does not know God.

### **Humility when dealing with others:**

According to Abba Isaiah, humility is a practical attitude which one cannot develop except through dealing with others. We will never feel inner peace unless we live in

peace with others, and we can never achieve peace with others unless we become humble.

### **Monastic life can be peaceful and calm if you:**

- ✝ Surrender your selfishness, and acquire humility
- ✝ Be obedient without feeling anger or murmuring. In this way you will be obedient to God, and not to people.
- ✝ The most precious monastic advice, which is for your benefit is: “Be obedient to your father”
- ✝ He who insists on what he knows, lacks knowledge.
- ✝ God never listens to a person who does not have control of his own desires
- ✝ Do not depend on your self-righteousness or your many deeds.
- ✝ Do not depend on your personal power when fighting and struggling against sins.

### **Pouring Yourself Before God:**

The only benefit for a recluse, according to Abba Isaiah, is to depend totally on God.

- ✝ Pour yourself before God, ask of Him from the depth of your heart, and talk to Him frankly, pleading: ‘Hasten to me oh Lord, for without You I can do nothing!’ Thus He will come to you quickly.
- ✝ Always pour yourself before God, for this is the strongest defense against Satan.

✠ Yield yourself to God's love and mercy, for in so doing, you will rid yourself of your slavery to sin.

### **Be gentle with the brethren:**

Abba Isaiah never ceases to advise being gentle with the brethren:

✠ Beware not to hurt the feelings of any of the brethren, because of their deeds or thoughts.

✠ Ignoring your brother's pain is an indication of a hard heart.

✠ Beware not to grieve the heart of any brother.

✠ Always put the will of your brother before your own, and so make him happy.

And hence, in spite of Abba Isaiah's strict asceticism and regulations concerning the monastic commandments (to the extent of dismissing the disobedient), he was gentle with the novices, and with brethren who were weak.

### **Work:**

✠ Abba Isaiah abided by the Biblical example, which stated: *"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

✠ Do not be reluctant in your work, but put the fear of God before your eyes lest you fall into sin (1 Thessalonians 4:11)

## **Vigilance:**

‡ Be venerable while praying at night. Finish your prayers, but do not prevent your body from rest, lest too much vigilance affect your prayers and struggle. Spend half of the night in prayers and the other in sleep.

## **Food:**

‡ Do not eat to satisfy a desire, regardless of whether this food is good for you or not (Proverbs 13:25).

‡ If you are living in a cell, eat moderately, give your body just what it needs to be able to serve God in your prayers (Proverbs 25:16).

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## Teachings of Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet

### Spiritual Struggle:

The soul which desires to stand before God with no sin, should be keen, like a merchant who flees from loss and looks for profit.

The loss of Christ's merchants are:

Seeking praise from others, self-righteousness, annoying others, the love of taking and not giving. It is impossible to please God if these feelings are in our hearts. He who wants to come to the peace of monasticism should abandon all of these matters. He should not give praise, insult or judge anyone and refuse that any evil enter his heart. A godly person likes all people to be godly, but he who has evil in his heart will never see any person as being godly.

Such feelings give birth to sin: low self-esteem, boredom, fulfilling one's desires, ambition, worldly talk, murmuring, tale bearing, judging others, and so on. So, he who wants to progress in good deeds, let him preserve himself from all these matters and be cleansed from every evil. Let us strive, and may the Lord sustain our weakness.

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## 1. PRAYERS

### **Struggle in Prayers:**

✠ Pray without ceasing, so that your heart may be enlightened with the mysteries of God.

✠ In order for your mind to be uplifted to the Cross, pray constantly, plead with tears and submission at all times before the Lord. In life are many tribulations, but these can be overcome through unceasing prayers, a strong heart, and hope in God unto the last breath.

✠ If when you stand to pray, there are no evil thoughts in your mind, know then that you are free.

### **Contrite Prayers:**

Struggle always to pray with contriteness and tears, so that the Lord may have mercy upon you and free you from the old man, and grant you the Kingdom of Heaven.

### **Prayers of the Agbia:**

✠ Do not be reluctant in praying from the Agbia, memorise the Psalms, for they keep you from sinning

✠ Whilst praying, do not lean on the wall, or constantly change feet, but stand straight in awe and reverence, in order to please God rather than to disappoint Him.

### **Spiritual Discernment:**

Beware of the devils, even if you are released for a while from their warfares. Be aware that they are only preparing for a fiercer battle with you. If they notice you abandoning the virtue of humility, they will invade and surround you. Do not cease to call upon God for help, and even if He does not respond quickly, do not give up. And rather than praying, “Oh God, take this temptation away from me..!”, pray to God saying, “My Lord Jesus Christ, You are my hope and support. I am within Your hands. You know what is good for me, so please help me and do not leave me. I have sinned against You and followed my desires, so do not reject me because I am weak, do not deliver me to the hands of my enemies. I come to You, have mercy on me and save me, because You are the Almighty. Glory be to You forever, amen.”

### **Repentance:**

My beloved brethren, if you have abandoned the world of vanity and come closer to God by repenting from your sins, beware of breaking your promise of keeping the Lord’s commandments, lest your past sins may not be forgiven. If a person says ‘I want to repent’, but he is still committing the same sins, then he is a liar.

## **Holy Communion:**

In the Liturgy, take care of your thoughts, and let your body and senses stand still in God's fear, in order to deserve the Eucharist, which is the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. So will the Lord will heal you.

If you approach the Holy Communion, your heart should be void of any envy or hatred against any person. If any thoughts about a person disturbs you, go to that person and be reconciled with him first, lest your communion become your condemnation.

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## **2. ISOLATION**

### **Stay away from the infamous:**

✠ If you want to make friends with the infamous, then the fear of the Lord is not in your heart.

✠ If you want to be known to God, do not be famous among people.

### **Live alone:**

✠ If one of the brethren asks to live with you because he is not at peace living with the brethren, advise him to seek another place, and refuse to accept him.

‡ Do not live in the place where you have sinned before God.

### **Quietness:**

‡ Do not venture out and wander aimlessly.

‡ Proceed to your cell after your meal, and do not talk with anyone.

‡ Those people whom you have left because of your love to God, do not remember them. Remember only the day of death and judgement, on which day none of these people can help you.

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## **3. CHASTITY**

Chastity is a work of the heart and is the watching of our senses.

### **Preserving the senses: The Eyes:**

‡ Take care of your eyes and your heart, so that you will not be hurt all the days of your life.

‡ When walking with the brethren, keep silent, pray the psalms, and do not allow your eyes to wander

# ARTICLES OF ABBA ISAIAH

## 1. COMMANDMENTS TO THE BRETHREN

### LIVING WITH HIM

For those who wish to live with me, listen in the name of God:

✝ Let everyone sit in his cell in God's fear, do not neglect your handiwork, for this is the commandment of God.

✝ Do not be negligent in continuous prayers and meditations. Take care that no strange thoughts enter your mind, lest your heart become preoccupied with any person or any worldly matter. Always ask the Lord, with tears and contrite hearts to forgive and preserve you from falling into sin.

✝ Always be mindful of death and bear in mind the day your soul will depart your body

How will you escape the powers of darkness trying to haunt your soul in the air? How will you meet the Lord without any obstacles? Meditate on that great day of Judgement, the day in which the Lord will reward everyone according to his own deeds, words and thoughts,

because, *“All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account”* (Hebrews 4:13)

† Do not talk unless there is a real need to: Whether you are sitting at the table eating, or even if you are in church - do not correct a person if they are praising incorrectly, unless he asks you to do so.

† Do not enter your brother’s cell, and do not ask to see him before the appointment.

† Do not compare yourself to your brother, seeing if he has worked more or less than you.

† When you are working, do not talk: Work quietly, while memorising your prayers in your heart.

† After eating, go straight to your cell, without talking to anyone.

† There should not be any disputes among you. Do not condemn or despise anyone.

† Do not seek to hear about the news of others, and do not lie about others. Take care regarding your salvation, for this is the reason you have abandoned the world. Be watchful, lest you struggle in vain and be disgraced before God and His saints.

Keep the following commandments and do not disdain them:

- ‡ Do not eat with a woman
- ‡ Do not befriend a youth
- ‡ Do not sleep with another on the same bed.
- ‡ Take care of what your eyes see
- ‡ Beware of living in the same place where you have committed sin
- ‡ Train your tongue to say always “forgive me”, thus attaining the spirit of humility
- ‡ Evil will dwell in the heart of a negligent monk, so pray with tears, and plead with the Lord to have mercy on you, so that He may grant you the Kingdom of Heaven.

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## 2. CONCERNING THE ORIGINAL STATE OF THE SOUL

### AND CHRIST'S SALVATION IN RETURNING

#### THE SOUL TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE

‡ I want you to know, my brethren, that in the beginning, God created man and placed him in Paradise with stable senses, but when man sinned, his senses began acting contrary to what the Lord first ordained, and so man lost his glory. But, because of God's great love and mercy to mankind, He sent His only begotten Son in whom "***The Word became flesh***" (John 1:14). He was a perfect person, incarnated in the form of man, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:14). He came in order that He may restore our souls to their original state, through His holy body. Thus man regained his access to Paradise, together with all those who act in accordance to the Lord's commandments (1 Peter 2:21).

Sins which are contrary to our original status:

‡ There is a natural yearn within the soul towards God, and without it there is no love. For this reason, Daniel was called by God "***the beloved man***" (Daniel 9:23). The devil turned this yearning into something disgraceful; a yearning which urges us to desire every

unclean thing, such as jealousy, anger, pride, hatred, and so on.

As for us, my brethren, let us try hard to rid ourselves of these pains and hence gain our Lord Jesus Christ, because He is holy and finds rests in His holy saints.

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### 3. ADVICE FOR THE NOVICES

✠ We need humility before all things. Always be ready to say “Forgive me”, because through humility, you can defeat any attacks of the enemy.

✠ Be cheerful with strangers, so that the fear of God may dwell in you.

✠ When walking with the brethren, keep some distance and remain silent. Do not allow your eyes to wander, but rather, lift your heart and pray to God.

✠ Take things seriously, and do not be favourable among others

✠ Whatever food is presented to you, eat it as if you have been forced to eat, and do not feed others.

✠ Before sleeping, pray much, and do not share the cover with another.

✠ If you tire from too much walking, anoint your feet with some oil, (not the whole body so that you do not uncover yourself). Do not let anyone anoint your body unless you are sick and truly in need of it.

✠ When sitting to eat with others, do not praise a specific type of food and ask others to eat from, lest you

enjoy what you are eating. Just eat from the food in front of you, but do not stretch your arm to eat from the food in front of your brother.

✠ Let your clothes cover your feet, and keep your knees close to each other.

✠ If you have visitors, present the food to them gently when they stop eating, and say to them twice or three times, “for the love of God, eat a bit more”.

✠ Do not look at your brother while eating, and do not talk; do not make any sound while drinking.

✠ If you want to take something out of your mouth, go out and remove it, and do not do this in front of the brethren.

✠ Do not yawn or stretch out your body in front of anybody. If you do not open your mouth, you will not yawn and the urge will go away.

✠ When laughing, do not open your mouth widely, for this is an indication of the lack of fear within you.

✠ Do not wish for something owned by your brother, whether it is clothes or anything else.

✠ If you have sinned, do not be slow to prostrate before your brother and say “forgive me”, then your sin will be wiped away.

✠ If someone speaks to you harshly, hasten to prostrate before him, lest anger find a place in your heart.

✠ If someone is unfair to you, again, prostrate before him and ask for his forgiveness.

These are all the practices that lead the novice to progress...

✠ Carry out your handiwork with enthusiasm in God's fear.

✠ If someone is teaching you something, always ask him to check your work, whether it be good or bad.

✠ After eating, go to your cell quickly and finish your prayers, do not tarry or talk needlessly with anyone. If there are elders speaking the word of God, ask your spiritual father whether you should stay and listen, or return to your cell. Then do whatever he advises.

✠ If your spiritual father sends you on an errand, ask him exactly what is needed and where you need to go. Then carry out his instruction exactly; no more and no less.

✠ If you then hear of any news, do not repeat it to anyone once you return. By preserving your ears, your mouth will never sin.

✠ If you want to do something which does not please the brother living with you, give it up for the sake of not grieving him or having disputes.

✠ If you are living with a brother, do not order him around and make yourself the leader.

✠ If you are in a group of monks and there is hard work to be done, do not have mercy on your body.

✠ As soon as you awake each morning, and before commencing your handiwork, repeat the words of God, and if there is anything which needs amendment, do it without reluctance.

✠ Be obedient to your brother, because he who is obedient is the greatest.

✠ If a new comer arrives, greet him cheerfully and unload his luggage. Likewise, if he is leaving, farewell him gently. Beware of asking him unnecessary questions, other than, "How are you?", but rather pray together. Give him a book to read and if he is tired, wash his feet and allow him a rest.

✠ If he begins talking inappropriately, say to him in love, "forgive me, for I am weak and this talk will cause me to stumble".

✠ If his clothes are dirty, wash them, if they are torn, mend them for him.

✠ If someone asks you to mind something for him until he returns, do not open it. If it is something precious, allow him to open it and show it to you before leaving.

✠ If you are visiting a person, and he must leave you alone for a while, do not look at his belongings, and do not open anything such as a box, a door, or even a book, but ask him to give you something to do until he returns.

✠ Do not praise something you have not seen, and do not talk about something you have not heard as if you personally witnessed it.

✠ Do not despise anyone because of his clothes.

✠ When standing to pray, do not be negligent, for in so doing, you will disappoint God rather than honour Him. Stand in the fear of God. Do not lean on the wall, and do not stand on one foot and relax the other. Struggle that the Lord may accept your sacrifice.

✠ If you are praying together, let everyone say his prayers. If there is a visitor among you, invite him in love to participate in the prayers.

✠ During the Holy Liturgy, concentrate on the prayers and stop your senses from being lead astray, so that you might be worthy of the Holy Sacraments, and of the Lord's healing.

✠ Always ensure that your body is clean. Do not wear new clothes lest you be attacked by vain glory.

‡ Drink no more than three cups of wine if necessary, and do not show your teeth when laughing, but rather look at the ground in fear. Beware not to touch any part of your body, for this may cause you to stumble, if the heart agrees to it.

‡ When a monk walks, let him place his arms beside his body, and not to swing them like laymen.

‡ When walking with someone older, do not proceed him. If he is standing talking with someone, do not sit down, but wait for him to tell you what to do.

‡ Do not spend the night in a place in which you might sin with your heart.

‡ If someone has invited you to a meal, and you know there will be a woman present, do not go. It is better to grieve him than to commit adultery in your heart. If possible, do not even look at women's clothes, and if while walking a woman greets you saying, "Peace to you," reply to her in your heart and keep your eyes to the ground.

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## 4. FOR THOSE WHO DWELL IN CELLS

✝ If walking with a weak person, allow him to be in front, so that he might sit if he needs to do so.

✝ If you are asking for the advice of an elder, be honest and clear in revealing your thoughts, and be sure that it will remain confidential.

✝ If you are aware about a sin committed by one of your brethren, it will be death for you if you reveal it to anybody.

✝ If people tell you things that might wage war within you, then do not listen to them.

✝ Strive to pray much at night, for prayers will enlighten you.

✝ Pray each day concerning sins you have committed, and God will forgive you.

✝ If one of the brethren judges another in front of you, do not hesitate to say humbly: “Forgive me, for I am a weak person and I cannot bear what you are saying”.

✝ If a person was nasty with you, and another came to judge that nasty person in your presence, then ensure that your heart is clean, lest you should remember the insult.

Think of your own sins. If you want God to forgive your sins, do not remember the sins of others.

✝ If you know of a person who speaks badly about you in your absence, do not confront him with it, but rather, greet him cheerfully, for it is written: “He who harbours envy contradicts the Law”.

✝ As a group, if you go to visit a poor brother, buy what food is needed along the way, so that you might leave some for him.

✝ When living with the brethren, ensure to care for them and listen to them, for you will give an account of them before God.

✝ If you joined monasticism because of God’s love, do not try to befriend any of the country’s residents, otherwise it would have been better for you to have stayed with your parents.

✝ If you want to visit the brethren in the monastery, take their permission first. If they do not agree to your coming, refrain from going until permission is granted.

✝ When living in your cell, do not attempt to make friends with too many of the brethren. One is enough in case you need help if you are sick. Do not spoil the virtue of solitude.

✝ If you have done a good deed for a poor person, do not ask him to repay you, lest you lose your reward.

✠ If you enter a monastery which you are unfamiliar with, remain where you are and do not enter any cells without first being invited.

✠ If someone asks something of you which you have in your cell, give it to him and do not break the commandment of love.

✠ If you have left your family for the love and sake of God, resist remembering them, but rather, remember the day when your spirit will depart from your body, for on this day, none of your family will be able to help you.

✠ While in your cell, if you remember an offence someone has committed against you, stand up quickly and pray that God might forgive him, thus the spirit of revenge will depart you.

✠ If you are to partake of the Holy sacraments, take care of your thoughts, lest you condemn yourself (1 Corinthians 11:29).

✠ If the thought of adultery attacks you at night in your sleep, preserve your heart during the day from thinking of those night dreams, lest you defile yourself. Pour your weakness before God and ask His help and He will sustain you because He is merciful and has pity for human weaknesses.

✚ If you carry out spiritual deeds, do not rely on them protecting you, but say to yourself, “The Lord might look at my humiliation because of the weakness of my body”.

✚ If someone insults you, do not answer back until he is silent. If you meditate within yourself, then you will find that what he has said about you is correct (or that you are in the wrong). Thus, as a person who recognises their fault, prostrate before him, and the goodness of God will accept you both.

✚ While walking with the brethren, be sure that you do not show favouritism with one, lest this cause jealousy amongst the others and you be a cause of stumbling and sin.

✚ When going to visit the brethren, do not assume that they will rejoice to see you. If they do accept you, then give thanks to God.

✚ If you become sick while living in your cell, do not be disheartened, but say to yourself, “Why are you troubled? This disease is better than being cast into Hell,” in this way will your soul be calmed.

✚ If one of the brethren asks that he may live with you because he does not find comfort in his cell, do not agree lest you should cause him to stumble, but rather advise him to dwell elsewhere.

✚ When living in your cell, eat moderately and give your body its needs moderately, in a sense that you could

serve God in your prayers. Do not be anxious to leave your cell.

✠ If there is an urgent need for you to visit another cell or monastery, do not indulge in any delicious food you might find there, but rather, rush back to your cell, lest you be deceived.

✠ Do not give opportunity for the devil to occupy your mind with worries and anxieties, for in so doing, you will fall victim into their hands.

✠ Eat once a day, and give your body only what it needs. Resist the urge to eat, even if you still feel like eating

✠ Give your body what it needs of rest and sleep because too much vigilance might darken your mind and bore you. It is enough to pray for half of the night and sleep the remainder.

✠ Keep vigilant for two hours prior to sleeping, by praying, and praising, then rest a while, and when the Lord awakes you, continue your prayers fervently.

✠ If your body begins to tire of praying, say to yourself, “Would you rather rest in this short life and spend eternity in everlasting torture?” In this way, your strength will come back to your body.

✠ If people praise you for your spirituality, then change your pattern, lest you toil in vain. Flee from vain

glory, be concerned only for making God happy, and do not give care to what others may think.

✠ If you have borrowed something from your brother, return it as soon as you have finished using it. If it was broken, fix it or replace it, then give it to him

✠ If you have given something to a needy brother, do not pressure him to return or repay you.

✠ If you built a cell for yourself, and after leaving it for a while, another brother came and dwelt within it, do not ask him to leave, lest you sin before God, but build for yourself another cell. If, however, this brother leaves the cell of his own accord, then no one can blame you if you return to it.

✠ If you are to partake of the Holy Communion, take care that you do not feel any enmity towards a person, otherwise you deceive yourself.

✠ If one of your brethren, out of being deceived, followed a particular heresy, but realising his error returned, do not despise him, for he was misled in ignorance.

✠ Beware of arguing with heretics for the sake of defending faith, lest the poison of their shameful words affect you.

✚ Do not read heretic books, but rather abide in the faith of your baptism, and do not add to it or delete from it.

✚ If you are a novice and hear about the virtues of the elders, do not just dream of acquiring them, but toil and work hard to achieve those virtues, for they do not come without hard struggle.

✚ Beware of discontentment because it spoils the fruits of a monk. If you are still struggling against one of your sins, do not belittle yourself, but pour yourself before God, pleading with Him from all your heart saying: “Help me Lord, I am a weak person, I cannot face these warfares.” Then you will find rest.

✚ If the enemy tries to defile your thoughts whilst you are sitting in your cell, force yourself to remember God, for He sees you, and all your thoughts are uncovered before Him. Tell yourself, ‘If I am ashamed to reveal my thoughts to another human being, then how much more God who sees everything?’ Thus, the fear of God will enter your heart, and you will feel calm, as it is mentioned in the Psalms: ***“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever”*** (Psalm 125:1).

✚ When struggling against the devil, do not rejoice to think that you have conquered him, but know that he is preparing an even fiercer battle with you. If your heart becomes proud when overcoming evil, the devil will attack you again. Thus, the only solution is to pour

yourself before the Lord and surrender yourself to Him. Then will He deliver you from the attacks of Satan.

✠ When praying to God to save you from a Satan war, do not despair if He does not respond quickly, but know that whatever Good does, He does for your good. Do not pray saying, "Take away this struggle from me!", or "Lord, grant me this!", but rather pray: "My Lord Jesus Christ, hasten to help me, do not let me sin against You, because I am lead astray. Do not let me follow my desires and sin. Have mercy on Your creation and do not reject me for I am weak. Heal my soul, because I have sinned against you. I have no comfort but You. Save me in Your mercy. Let all those who fight against me be disgraced, for you are the Almighty. Glory be to You forever. Amen."

✠ Your conscience will then guide you, for God always respond to us, unless we disobey Him. God is not distant from us, but it is our desires that distant Him and prevent Him from listening to us.

✠ Do not be deceived, a land cannot give fruits without sowing and watering. Also a human being cannot gain fruits without humility and struggle.

### **Follow Your Conscience:**

✠ Let us abide then my brethren in God's fear and practice the virtues until our conscience becomes free,

thus it will become our guide, warning us before we commit sin.

✠ Let us be watchful, my beloved, lest we yield to the desires of the body.

### **Examples of Saints:**

Let us contemplate the saints who refused to follow sin till death, and obeyed their pure conscience, thus did they inherit the Heavenly Kingdom.

#### **Jacob:**

Abba Isaiah El Eskeeti meditates on the personality of Jacob, the father of the tribes, the beloved man, who obeyed his parents and left after having their blessing. *“Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take for yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and cause you to multiply, that you may be an assembly of peoples, and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.” So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau”* (Genesis 28:1-5).

This may be considered a lesson to all those who begin in the service of God: in the beginning he may see virtues before him, but he will never achieve these virtues or reach God if he does not toil in striving for these virtues. Jacob then promised God to be His servant all the days of his life, so God strengthen him saying, ***“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go”*** (Genesis 28:15). Then Jacob went to Pafan Aram to choose a wife for himself. When he saw Rachel his cousin, he fell in love with her and served for seven years before marrying her. However, Rachel was not given to Jacob, so he married Leah. But Jacob served another seven years in order to marry Rachel, although she was barren

This is the interpretation: the place was called Mesopotamia “Between the two Rivers” because it existed between the Degla River and the Euphrates River. The first river symbolised discernment and differentiation, but the Euphrates symbolised humility. We consider Leah a sign of bodily works; Rachel of contemplating the truth. Such occurrences happen to every human who dwells between the two rivers. Through discernment we guide and control the desires of the body, and through humility we reach true contemplation.

### **Genesis 29:31-35:**

Rachel did not have children, while Leah gave birth to all her children. Jacob served another seven years before marrying Rachel. Likewise, a person who does not fulfil

all his ascetic struggle, will never enjoy true contemplation.

### **Genesis 29:27:**

Although Jacob had two wives, he loved Rachel more than Leah. Leah had poor eyesight, whereas Rachel was very beautiful. The poor eyesight infers that so long as we are occupied with body desires, we will never see or attain true contemplation.

### **Genesis 30:9-24:**

When Leah realised that she could not bear children, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. Zilpah then bore Jacob a son and called him Asher which means “happy”. In addition, when Leah could no longer bear children, God gave Rachel children. This signifies that if we control body desires, we will free ourselves from the pain of sin, and hence the glory of true contemplation will reveal itself to the human soul.

### **Genesis 32: 23-33:**

Having crossed the ford of Jabok with his two wives, two maidservants and eleven sons, Jacob stood alone, received the blessing of God who told him: “*Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel*”. He was called Jacob because he followed the enemy in order to take the

blessing and redeem his senses, which were under the authority of the enemy, but when he became free, his name was changed to Israel, meaning, the soul that saw God.

### **Genesis 33:1-4:**

The enemy always fears the soul who sees the glory of God. When Esau, who was full of wrath and hatred, went to meet Jacob, Jacob's humbleness conquered the enemy, so Esau didn't want to fight him any more, but rather bowed himself to the ground before Esau. The enemy always envies human being for the great glory he has, yet it can never hurt him because God is the Supporter.

We see this in the story of when Esau, who was full of wrath and hatred, went to meet his brother Jacob. And yet, because of Jacob's humility, Esau had no longer the desire to fight him, but rather prostrated himself before Jacob. The enemy always envies humans for the great glory the Lord gives them, and for His support.

### **Genesis 33:18-20:**

Finally, Jacob went to Sechem, where he bought a field and built an altar for the Lord, who heard his prayer on the day of his affliction. Sechem means 'peace'. A person always feels peace having conquered a battle with the support of the Lord. He builds an altar consisting of twelve stones and offers the fruits of his service.

## **Moses:**

The beloved Moses led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and saved them from Pharaoh's hands. They crossed the Red Sea and witnessed the death of all their enemies. Amalek was fighting against Israel, during which time, Moses had his hands outstretched in prayer, (resembling the sign of the cross), being supported by Aaron and Hur. Moses stood with hands outstretched until the setting of the sun when Joshua defeated Amalek. ***“And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, “Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation “ (Exodus 17:15-16).***

Amalek means ‘bored’ or ‘impatient’, for when a person begins to control his desires, abandon his sins and return to God, he may feel bored or impatient at the beginning of his struggle. This is because the devil wants him to return to his sins. Yet, it is only through experiencing being feeling of always being in God's company, that boredom can be defeated. Experiencing God's company can only be attained through controlling one's desires and thoughts, and chastity. Then would one pray God saying, “My Lord, I am weak, but You are my help from generation to generation.”

## **Elijah:**

Elijah the great prophet was only able to defeat the prophets of Baal by purifying the altar with twelve stones, and offering upon it the holy sacrifice where God sent His fire and consumed everything. At this moment Elijah felt confident before his enemies. When they were all destroyed, Elijah thanked God saying, ***“You are the One who works in all this.”***

If a person takes care of his senses, God will reveal to him His glories. Elijah’s disciple saw the comfort of the Paraclete when he saw a small cloud upon the sea. When God sees and accepts the spiritual struggle of a human soul, the enemy would not dare to come close to that person.

### **The Accepted Prayer:**

***“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come“*** (1 Corinthians 10:11) These words are also addressed to us, because we are following in the footsteps of the saints. They struggled to attain eternal life, they submitted their souls totally to the Lord, and thus He kept them safe from the arrows of the enemy.

✠ They knew that they were weak and can do nothing without God’s support, they were humble, saying together with the Psalmist: ***“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards***

*the city the watchman stays awake in vain.”* (Psalm 126:1).

‡ When God see that the soul is submitting itself completely to Him, and that He is the only supporter, He strengthens it saying, ***“But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, Fear not for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you”*** (Isaiah 43:1-3).

‡ If the soul comprehends these comforting sayings, it can stand before the enemy saying, ***“He is near who justifies me; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near me. Surely the Lord God will help me. Who is he who will condemn me? Indeed they will all grow old like a garment: the moth will eat them up”*** (Isaiah 50:8-9).

May the Lord count us among those whose humility shielded them against the arrows of the enemy.

Glory be to God forever, amen.

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## **5. USEFUL TEACHINGS FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO DWELL TOGETHER IN PEACE**

✠ If you are walking together as a group, care for the weak person amongst you, whether it be giving him a rest, or feeding him before the usual time.

✠ If you are building a cell or working inside the cell, leave everyone to do their job as they feel it is appropriate. Give only help or advice if it is asked of you.

✠ If one of the brethren prepared some food but it was not cooked well, do not blame him, but rather tell yourself, “If I was the one being blamed, how would I feel?”, then immediately you will be comforted.

✠ If someone makes a mistake while praising, do not correct him immediately so that you do not disturb him. Correct him only if it is asked of you.

✠ If whilst during a meal, you do not feel like eating, do not mention it, but rather, force yourself to eat a little, and the Lord will for sure give you comfort.

✠ If someone has left their work unfinished, do not rebuke him, but rather, show him gentleness and kindness.

✠ If some of the brethren are coming to visit you, do not ask them concerning any news, and if you do hear anything, do not relay it to others, because gossip is like poison.

✠ If you enter your brother's cell, do not look at his handiwork, or compare how much he has done in comparison to yours or others.

✠ Beware of doing anything that might upset your brother.

✠ If you require something from your brother, ask of him gently. If he does not give it to you, do not be sad or murmur within your heart, and so attain true purity of the heart.

✠ If someone asks you to explain something in the Holy Bible, respond in humility.

✠ Let us meditate on the Judgement Day, so that we will not be unprepared.

✠ Be an altar for the Lord through being pure, raise your incense upon that altar each morning and evening without ceasing, through your inner priest who would never leave the altar without incense.

✠ Ask God to grant you purity and simplicity, and to remove from you any deceit, curiosity, egoism and cunningness, for such things destroy your soul.

✝ In conclusion, if a person fears God knowingly, and his ears are attentive to his conscience which is in accordance to God's will, then God Himself will teach him more and more. But, if the Lord of the house is absent, then this miserable person will be led by his own will and desires, submitting himself to his enemies.

✝ If you want to go out, do not leave without asking your brother. If he is not ready to go or feeling tired, do not push him, but rather wait for a while and then ask him again if he wants to go with you.

✝ If you are living with an elder, do not do any works of charity to a poor person without first consulting him.

✝ If you are revealing your thoughts and struggles to an elder, tell them honestly, and be ready to do whatever he tells you, otherwise, you deceive yourself, not the elder.

✝ If while living with some brethren you do not find comfort for any of the following reasons: the handiwork, boredom, impatience, you wish to live alone, you cannot tolerate the burden, or you wish to be more ascetic in your practices, take care not to leave saddened, or to escape secretly, but rather tell them in peace, and blame yourself, not them.

✝ If you move to another place, take care not to be hasty in building a cell for yourself, but first examine the atmosphere and circumstances, in case they do not suit you.

✚ If you have a guest brother in your cell for few days, do not think that he is now under your authority.

✚ If you are carrying out a certain practice, such as not eating anything cooked, take care not to reveal it to the others during meal time, by saying, “Forgive me, I do not eat this”, for in so doing, you struggle in vain. Our Lord says to us to work secretly and He who sees secretly will reward you openly. Hence, let us not spoil our deeds.

✚ If you are living with some brethren who work hard all day, relieve them a little by offering them food before the time of eating.

✚ Do not care about yourself and your body, but put the Judgement Day always before your eyes.

✚ If you move to a place and feel it does not suit monastic life, do not criticise it. If the situation does not change, move to another place and watch your tongue lest you judge others, for this will be death for you.

✚ If you feel that the Lord is revealing His anger in the world these days, do not be troubled, but rather compare it in your hearts with the everlasting anger in the place where we deserve to go because of our many sins.

✚ For the sake of God’s love listen to all that has been said, because in so doing you will enter joyfully to the rest of the Son of Man, but if you do not listen and follow, you will live in misery here and in everlasting punishment. Our Lord Jesus Christ will come as He has promised, but

it is because of the hardness of our hearts, that we follow our desires, which we prefer to God's love.

✠ My beloved brethren, love each other and control your tongues lest you hurt your brethren's feelings.

✠ May the Lord help us to fulfil His commandments in order to enjoy His mercy, with the rest of the saints who pleased Him.

Glory and honour be to Him forever. Amen.

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## **6. FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO DWELL IN TRUE SOLITUDE, CARING FOR THEMSELVES, AND NOT SPENDING THEIR TIME IN TRIVIALITY**

‡ If you sit in your cell, trying to read the Bible and ignore your sins, then you are committing sin. First pour yourself before God concerning your sins, and then meditate on the Holy Bible.

‡ He who keeps God's commandments knows God (1 John 2:3) and can fulfil the commandments.

‡ He who depends on his own knowledge will live in despair, boredom and grief.

‡ Do not disclose your thoughts to everyone, but only to your spiritual elders, lest you fall into grief.

‡ The love of human glory results in lying. Teach your tongue truth and lying will flee from you. Refusing to lie creates the fear of God in your heart. Do not yearn to make friends with the great people of this world, lest you belittle God's glory.

‡ If someone insults and despises your brother in front of you, do not take his side, lest you commit something you do not want to do.

‡ Through simplicity, one's heart is cleansed of evil.

‡ He who preaches one thing and practices another, his service is in vain. Do not make friends with such a person lest you become affected by his hypocrisy. Always keep company with pure, simple people, so that you might share their glory and purity.

‡ Have a pure heart towards everyone. Do not begrudge anyone, as the poison will flow in the whole body, and it is exactly the same with the heart, if there is any evil or grudge against your brother, the poison will affect your soul and you will be in danger.

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## 7. VIRTUES

✚ Three virtues keep the mind clean: natural zeal, courage and strong will.

✚ Another three virtues, if attained by the mind, a person is sure to live in a godly way: discernment, proper thinking before decision making, and to never allow strange thoughts to enter one's mind.

✚ Three virtues enlighten the mind: to do good to those who are wicked to you, to never know evil, and to have peace within you.

✚ Four virtues purify the soul: silence, keeping the commandments, humility, and tranquillity.

✚ The mind is in need of these four virtues: continuous prayers without boredom, pouring oneself before God, not judging others, and overcoming evil thoughts.

✚ Four virtues strengthen the soul and preserve it from the enemies: mercy, not yielding to anger, patience, and rejecting the seeds of sin.

✚ Four virtues support the novice monk: to continuously memorise the praises, strong will in prayers, being vigilant, and denying oneself.

## Vices:

‡ Four things blemish the soul of a monk: looking at everything, befriending women, befriending the great people of society, and contacting relatives.

‡ Four things excite the body: too much sleep, gluttony, joking, and fancy apparel.

‡ Four things dim the soul: hatred, despising others, envy, and complaining.

‡ Four things dry the soul: moving from place to place, the love of things meaningless, the love of ownership, and stinginess.

‡ Four things result in anger: too much talking, stubbornness, the love of having authority over others, and thinking oneself to be wise.

‡ Three things preserve all virtues, however, it is rarely gained: weeping for one's sins, contrition, and to always be mindful of death.

‡ Three things take authority over a weak soul: worldly matters, laziness and forgetfulness.

Our beloved Lord Jesus Christ says: ***“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it”*** (Matthew 10:39), and He is the Prince of Peace: ***“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one,***

*and has broken down the middle wall of separation”* (Ephesians 2:14), yet He says: *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword”* (Matthew 10:34); also, *“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!”* (Luke 12:49). This is the fire of His Divinity which works in those who follow His commandments: *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17). Those who care about Jesus and how to please Him, deserve to be His holy sheep, sacrificing themselves and fulfilling His commandments. When He will appear in the glory of His Divinity, He will call them to sit on His right (Matthew 25:24-35).

### **The End of Sinners:**

Those who were deceived with the vanities of the world and followed their desires, will face disgrace on the Judgement Day, hearing, *“...Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25:41).

### **Everyone should do their best to fulfil the commandment:**

‡ Let us test ourselves, my beloved. Do we strive to fulfil the commandments to the best of our abilities? All those who put money in the money box were rich, but Jesus praised the poor woman who put two pennies, because the Lord appreciates our good will. Do not give

room to anger in your hearts, lest the envy of the devil separate you from God.

Jesus had pity on the daughter of the ruler and so raised her (Matthew 9:25), He also had pity on the lady who had the flow of blood for twelve years and healed her (Matthew 9:22). He healed the Centurion's servant because of the Centurion's faith (Matthew 8:13). He also had pity on the Cannanite woman and healed her daughter (Matthew 15:28). Jesus raised His beloved Lazarus (John 11:4), and raised the only son of the poor widow because of her tears (Luke 7:15). He never despised Mary who anointed His feet (John 7:15), and He never rejected the sinner woman who anointed His head and wiped His feet with her hair (John 12:3). He called Matthew the tax collector, and Peter and John from the boat, saying, "**Follow me**" (Matthew 4:18). Jesus washed His disciples' feet, when Judas was with them (John 13:1-8). When the Paraclete descended on the Apostles (Acts 2:4), it also descended on Cornelius (Acts 10:11). He spoke to Ananias in Damascus, concerning the Apostle Paul, saying, "**This is a chosen vessel for Me**" (Acts 6:15). He also spoke to Philip concerning the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27), for, "**There is no partiality with God**" (Romans 2:11).

The Lord does not look at whether one is a youth or an elder, poor or rich, He only cares for our good intention, and for us to have faith in Him, and fulfil His commandments, giving love to everyone. Truly, this is the seal of the soul at the time of its departure from the body, according to the teaching which He gave to His disciples

saying: ***“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”*** (John 13:35). Whom does He mean by, ***“all will know you”*** but the powers on His right and left? If the devils on His left will see the seal of love stamped on one’s soul, they will immediately withdraw trembling, while the angels on His right will rejoice with all the heavenly hosts.

### **The greatness of the Word of God:**

Let us do our best, my beloved, to attain love so that our enemies will not hinder us. We should act zealously and in knowledge, hence fulfilling His words, ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him and We will come and make Our home with him.”*** As the Apostle says: ***“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rules of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”*** (Ephesians 6:11-12). Let us strive for this my brethren in order to rid ourselves of the evil powers, and to hear His joyful voice calling us to the Kingdom of Heaven. May His holy name accompany us and makes us capable of tolerating any hardships, so that we may find mercy with those who deserve His blessings.

Glory be to Him forever, amen.

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## 8. POPULAR SAYINGS OF ABBA ISAIAH

✝ Abba Isaiah says: I think of myself as a horse without an owner, whoever finds it has a ride on it, then comes another and has a ride, and so on.

✝ He also says: I think of myself as a bird whose feet are tied to a string held by a boy. If the boy let the bird go, the bird starts flying thinking it is free, but once the boy pulls the string, it falls again to the ground. What I want to say is that we should alert to the last breath of our life.

✝ If you lend something to a person, and do not ask for it back again, then you resemble Jesus' nature. But if you asked for it to be returned, then you resemble Adam's nature.

✝ If anyone accuses you of something, whether you did it or not, if you keep quiet, then you resemble Jesus' nature; but if you argue saying, "What did I do?" then you act contrary to His nature.

✝ If you pray in a spirit of contriteness and unworthiness, then God will accept your prayers, but if you think you are more spiritual than another person who may be sleeping or doing something other than praying, then all your prayers are in vain.

✝ Concerning humility Abba Isaiah says: A humble person does not say anything negative about a person,

even if they are negligent, he does not have eyes to see the mistakes of others, or ears to hear things that hurt his soul. He does not think of anything other than his own faults. A humble person likes to live in peace with all people, for this is the Lord's commandment.

✠ If a monk fasts for six days in a week and does great works, yet he follows strange teachings, then he toils in vain.

✠ When the soul rises up out of its slumber with the Lord Jesus Christ, then it can begin to discern between good and evil. The enemy will then try to fight with this soul more and more, just like the two thieves who ascended the cross next to the Lord. The one on the right blasphemed Jesus saying: ***“If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us”*** (Luke 23:39), while the one on the left pleaded with the Lord until He responded saying, ***“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise”*** (Luke 23:43).

✠ He also says concerning the Holy Communion: We call it a community with God, but if we are full of anger, jealousy, pride or any other sin, and therefore far from God, how then could we call it community with God?

✠ If you truly want to live in peace and tranquility and not give the enemy a chance to snatch these away from you, keep away from people, so that you do not hear their praises or insults towards you.

✠ He who depends on his personal righteousness and holds fast to his opinion will never find rest.

✠ Above all things, cling to God strongly at all times with all your heart and strength, have pity on everyone, and pray to God always, so that you are preserved by His mercy and support.

✠ This is the sign by which to know if your sins are forgiven: if you no longer feel tempted to commit past sins, and if you are not affected if someone speaks to you concerning your sins. But if these feelings are still within you, then weep and rebuke that sin.

✠ If a person is talking nonsense to you, do not listen, lest you cause destruction to yourself. Do not be shy to interrupt him and flee.

✠ If someone performs great wonders and miracles and is very knowledgeable, but has sinned, then he must repent. If, while repenting he judges another person, then all his repentance will be in vain, because he has disgraced one of Christ's members and judged him. He did not leave the judgement to the only judge, who is God.

✠ We are all like patients in a hospital suffering various kinds of illnesses: one suffers from eye pain, another from an ulcer, another from a wound in his hand, and so on. If while the wound is healing we eat or do something to aggravate the wound, then the pain will occur again. Likewise with whoever is repenting. If he condemns others, then his repentance is in vain. In

hospital, each person is concerned with their own illness and recovery. In the same way, we should only be concerned with our own sins and repentance, and not be concerned about the sins of others.

† Do not exceed your limit by trying to ascend the cross without first repenting and being healed, otherwise the wrath of God will be upon you.

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## 9. ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ABANDONED THE WORLD

✠ If you have abandoned the world, and repented, do not be preoccupied by your previous sins as if they were not forgiven. Do not despise the commandments, lest your old sins not be forgiven.

✠ Keep these advices till death and do not neglect them: do not eat with a woman, do not make friends with youth. If you are a youth, do not lie with another in one bed, except if he is your father or brother (in this case, also in God's fear).

✠ Do not sin with your eyes when you are taking off your clothes.

✠ If there is a need to drink some wine, do not exceed three sips, and do not break the commandment for the sake of friendship.

✠ Memorise the Psalms, because they keep your mind from going astray.

✠ Beware of lying, because it takes God's fear out of your heart.

✠ Love humility, for it preserves you from sins.

✠ Obey your elderly fathers, thus God's grace will dwell in you.

✠ Do not think that you are wise, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies.

✠ Train your tongue to say always "Forgive me", thus humility will dwell in you.

✠ Each day tell yourself, "This is my last day in this world", then you will never sin before God.

✠ Do not be greedy when eating, lest your rekindle your old sins.

✠ Push yourself to pray, and the comfort of God will quickly come to you. In the same way that an isolated house which is outside of the city is a dumping ground for rubbish, a monk's soul, if it is lazy, and empty of prayers and praises, will be a dwelling place for every shameful and unclean matter.

✠ Push yourself, to be vigilant in prayers and tears, so that God will have mercy upon you and release you from the old man within you, who has sinned.

Our good Lord and God, You are capable to make us read and follow this, so that we may gain Your mercy, together with the hosts of saints who have pleased You by keeping these commandments. Amen

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## 10. OTHER SAYINGS

God revealed to St. Peter that he should not condemn any person as being unclean, for as long as the heart is holy, then it sees everyone as being holy. But if sin is still dwelling within the heart, then the person is not pure. So, beware of blaming others either in your heart or openly.

A person had two servants whom he asked to plant some wheat, and appointed a time in which this work is to be done. The first servant worked as hard as he could, but did not finish, while the other one complained saying: "Who on earth could finish this task in such a time?" He was very lazy and did next to nothing. When their master came, he praised the zealous servant even though he was unable to complete the work, and he sacked the lazy, negligent servant.

† Let us do our best, therefore, so that the Lord may accept us together with His saints.

† We should pray always to God, with great contrition and humility. Do not think that any of your deeds are worthy, do not believe any praise people may give you, but always remember your sins. Take care of your senses, protect them from worldly vanity, and blessed is he who only thinks only about his own sins.

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## 11. THE MUSTARD SEED

### The Mustard Seed and Christ:

He told them another parable saying, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches”* (Matthew 13:31-32). Christ is the mustard seed and so all the characteristics of a mustard seed apply to Him, and He wants us to be like Him in everything.

### Explanation of the Parable:

He says: *“It is the least of all seeds”*, and that is because humility creates servants of people. A mustard seed is soft, signifying meekness and patience. It is red, symbolising purity, and it has a bitter taste which represents the hating of worldly desires, for the world is bitter to those who love it. A mustard seed only appears when it is gardened, and this denotes mortifying ourselves.

### Conclusion:

This is truly the aim of our beloved, incarnated Lord Jesus, that we may resemble Him as much as we can. Are we

like Jesus in His love, humility, gentleness, meekness and sweetness, or not?

Through His mercy, glory be to Him, He can strengthen us according to His will.

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## 12. ABOUT DRINKING WINE

### The process of fermentation can be liken to one's spiritual progress:

There is a hidden mystery in the process of fermentation, which is liken to the human nature that wishes to meet God in purity, and keeps his deeds clean so that he Lord might accept them.

✠ The basin in which the wine is kept is well painted and varnished, which is likened to the purity of the body, whose members are pure and protected against all the shameful sins. A person who is still a slave even to one sin can never serve the Lord. Likewise with wine, it cannot be poured in a cracked basin or a basin which is not well varnished.

✠ Let us test ourselves, for we cannot please God if there is any hatred or envy within us, because these hinder repentance.

✠ In the beginning, the wine is fermented, and this signifies our youth; it is a period of restless until we settle down.

✠ The wine remains for a while in order to settle down, in the same way that a youth can never attain calmness and meditation unless he retreats and mortify his senses according to God's will.

‡ If any seeds or germs are left in the wine, it becomes vinegar, so to the nature of the youth: if he lives among those who do not have the fear of God, he spoils the traditions which were passed down to him by his forefathers.

‡ If we leave the wine pot uncovered, flies and insects will be attracted to it and rot the wine, in the same way that our souls will rot if we give room to talking, laughing and murmuring.

‡ If we expose wine to the air, its colour and taste will change, so to does pride destroy any good fruits in a human being. In cellars, wine is hidden and covered, and this is the way that we should retreat and deny ourselves.

‡ Having made wine, the wine maker rejoices to see the fruits of his labour. In like manner, a person should care to produce spiritual fruits so that God might accept his works. If there is any crack in the wine pot, the wine will seep out and onto the ground, even without the owner noticing. Likewise, a small sin that may seem unnoticeable in the soul, may destroy all the fruits of a monk if he is careless.

### **Prayer:**

Let us beware, my brethren, of those who hurt us. Let God's mercy and grace make us worthy to say on Judgement Day: "Lord, we did our best according to our

weakness. You are the merciful and the kind God; I am but nothing, You who delivered me from the hands of the evil one. I have nothing to offer You my Lord because I am a weak sinner and am not worthy of Your gifts. You preserved me from the hands of my enemies.”

You are my Lord and God. Glory, honour, mercy and power are due to You forever. Amen

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### 13. FOR THOSE STRUGGLING TO REACH PERFECTION

Miracles performed by our beloved Lord Jesus before His crucifixion:

✠ He said: ***“Go and tell John all the things which you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me”*** (Luke 7:22-23). John the Baptist, who baptised the Lord Jesus, received this message, and many were the miracles performed by the Lord.

✠ ***“The blind see...”*** The blind refer to those dwelling in the world, but those who abandon the vanities of the world and abide in God, will see. ***“The lame walk”***; the lame refers to those who yearn for God but at the same time follow their bodily desires. But if he does not follow his bodily desires, and rather love God with all his heart, he will walk. ***“The deaf hear”***, meaning that he who lives in recklessness is deaf, but if he wakes up from his sinfulness, he will hear. ***“The lepers are cleansed,”*** as written in Moses’ law: ***“Nothing unclean should enter the house of the Lord”***. Here the Lord is saying that anyone who dismisses hatred, envy or jealousy from his heart will be cleansed. Generally, if the blind sees, the lame walks, and the leper is cleansed, then the person who

was dead before because of his carelessness, will be renewed and will thus gain the virtues he did not have.

In baptism, we mortify ourselves, thus we gain humbleness and calmness. It was written about John the Baptist, ***“Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey”*** (Matthew 3:4). He dwelt in the wilderness, and this is a sign of mortifying one’s self in order to be purified. Through purification, one can ascend to the cross with complete freedom.

### **The Lord’s Sufferings:**

The Lord Jesus did many things in order to show us how to follow and imitate Him. As St Paul says, ***“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”*** (Philippians 3:10).

✠ The bitterness which He had tasted was for our sake (Matthew 27:34), so that He may destroy all the evil desires within us, and prevent them from becoming actual deeds.

✠ The vinegar He tasted was to abolish our vanities.

✠ He endured those who spat on His Face, in order to destroy any worldly pride and desire of glory within us.

✠ The crown of thorns which He endured on His head is an example for us to tolerate any blame or insult.

✠ The reed that struck His head for our sake is an example for us to wear the helmet of humility.

✠ Before His crucifixion, He was scourged so that we may endure any human reproach or insult.

✠ He endured them tearing His clothes and casting lots, so that we will not worry concerning the things in the world, before ascending to the cross, as the Apostle says, ***“For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven”*** (Hebrews 10:34).

These are the things which a human being should do, so that he can ascend to the cross with the Lord.

### **On the Cross:**

✠ ***“Now it was the Preparation day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’”*** (John 19-14). In great courage and strength of heart, Jesus tolerated the sufferings of the cross in order to give us an example in tolerating fear and suffering, until we overcome sin, as it is written: ***“And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity”*** (Ephesians 2:16).

✠ ***“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”*** This teaches us that we must endure sufferings and pains, and cling to God pleading and with tears.

✠ ***“And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father into Your hands I commit My spirit,’”*** (Luke 23:46). This means that if the soul is freed from the desires of all worldly matters, then the sin has died.

✠ ***“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split”*** (Matthew 27:51). Meaning that if the soul is completely freed, then God will reveal to it those things which were initially concealed.

✠ ***“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised”*** (Matthew 27:52). Meaning that all the bad things which hinder the human soul are there no more; the sick soul is now healed and is victorious.

### **Burial and Resurrection:**

✠ ***“When Joseph had taken the body, the wrapped it in a clean linen cloth”*** (Matthew 27:59), and (John 19:40). This teach us that if a person is wrapped with purity, he will find rest and will not be corrupted.

‡ ***“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby”*** (John 19:41-42). Meaning that if the mind is freed from all worldly matters, it will celebrate the Saturday, and live in a new world of eternity.

‡ Finally, ***“For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together”*** (Matthew 24:28). Also, ***“Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”*** (Hebrews 1:3). This also applies to us, for the Apostle says: ***“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”*** (Hebrews 1:3).

Our beloved Lord gave an example of all things that the saints ought to follow. If we follow them He will support us in our weaknesses, and if we abandon our sins, He will have mercy upon us. Amen

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## 14.

### **Lamentation of a Sinner:**

Woe to me, for I have not yet rid myself of the sins which will drag me to Hades:

The forces pulling me towards Hades are in my heart, and I am influenced by their deeds. I am still ignorant of the right way, and so cannot rid myself of the powers capturing my soul in the air. I have still not comprehended the Second Coming of the great Saviour who will free me from the evil powers.

### **The Criminal in Gaol:**

An evil person does not rejoice if he is imprisoned; he whose hands and legs are tied are not free to do as they please. He whose neck is in chains does not think about or desire delicious food, he only cares for how he can become free. Likewise, a sinner who is chained by his sins, should weep for his sins. He should not care to judge others, but think only about himself when he stands before the Lord on the Judgement Day.

### **Judgement and Condemnation:**

‡ The criminal in gaol does not care about what is happening to others, or whether they are good or bad, because, *“Each one shall bear his own load”* (Galatians 6:5).

‡ When they take the criminal to be judged, he does not utter a single word, for he is aware of the wrong he has done, and is aware that he must now be punished.

‡ The hardness of my heart made me careless, the needs of my body made me forget the hour of darkness. I have no friend who can speak in my favour. My sins are still light in my eyes, and I cannot feel their wounds within my heart...

### **A Patient Who Resists the Doctor:**

‡ My wounds are engrossed within my body, yet I do not ask for a remedy. I hide the wounds which were caused by the arrows of the enemy. The doctor waits for me, but I do not go to him.

‡ The doctor is gracious; He never asks for payment, yet I am too lazy to consult Him. He comes personally to me, but finds me worsening my wounds. He asks me to stop, but my repentance is not honest. He sends me His medicine saying: “Take, in order to be healed quickly”, but my bad habits always resist the advice.

‡ Finally, I do not know what am I doing...

‡ Let us all weep, my brethren and relatives, and may the great Lord, who is our support, sustain us and make us worthy of being His disciples.

To whom glory and honour is due forevermore. Amen.

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## 15. DISPOSSESSION

† Let us care about our souls, my brethren, because, ***“The time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none”*** (1 Corinthians 7:29). No one can care for his soul if he cares too much for his body.

† In the same way that no one can look up to heaven with one eye, and to earth with the other, we also cannot care about God and the world at the same time.

† Remember always that God is watching everything we do, whatever we are ashamed to do in front of people, it is a shame to think of it secretly.

† In the same way that you can tell the tree from its fruits, you can know the mind and soul from what they are thinking of and wishing to do.

† Look after your body for it is the Temple of God: Look after your body as you will give an account for it before God. Fear God in your body, you should be able to give an account for everything that you do. If you are sick, you hasten to take medicine in order to recover. In like manner, sacrifice your body in order to make it healthy and without blemish, ready for the day of resurrection.

✠ Meditate on your works daily, consider which sins you had conquered, before starting to pray.

✠ The land cannot bear fruits unless it is first sown. Likewise, a person cannot be repentant without humility and sacrificing the body.

✠ Plants bear fruits because of good weather. Likewise, it is through keeping the commandments, that a person's soul can flourish.

✠ He who believes that he will be judged on Judgement Day can never judge anyone, as it is written, ***“For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”*** (2 Corinthians 5:10)

✠ He who believes that there is a kingdom of heaven for the saints, will take care to ensure that he will be ***“a chosen vessel”*** (Acts 9:15). It is written: ***“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away”*** (Matthew 13:47-48).

✠ He who believes that his body will resurrect on Judgement Day will care about purifying this body of all impurity, because it is written that He will change our earthly body into a glorious image of His body.

‡ Nothing in this world can separate the God fearing person from God, for it is written: ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ: Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*** (Romans 8:35)

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## 16. ABOUT THE HAPPINESS OF THE SOUL WHO WORSHIPS GOD

### Looking forward to everlasting happiness:

‡ A merchant rejoices when he gains profit; an apprentice rejoices after learning the skills of his workmanship; he who finds a righteous wife lives happily because he trusts in her; and a soldier sacrifices himself willingly for the sake of this country. All these things are worldly matters, and people rejoice when they successfully perform them.

‡ How much more then would be the happiness of the soul who worships the Lord and fulfils His commandments? At the time of his soul's departure from this world, the angels will proceed him and accompany the soul, who faces the powers of darkness, and then it will be the good deeds of that soul – not the angels – who will fight against them. These deeds will protect the soul. After conquering the powers of darkness, the angels will accompany the soul with hymns and praises till it meets God, then, at this moment, all the works and weary of the world are forgotten.

### Struggle to gain the Virtues:

‡ Let us struggle my brethren and do our best to do goodness in this short time, so that we will be able to

conquer the devils, for they are wicked and have no mercy. Blessed is he in whom the devils will find nothing for themselves, his rejoice and peace will crown him.

✠ So, let us strive with tears, may God's goodness have mercy on us, and sustain us against the powers of darkness.

### **While departing from this world:**

✠ To love and be yearning for God with a steady heart will deliver us from the grasp of the devil of adultery, who will come out to meet us.

✠ Being merciful to the poor will deliver us from the devil of loving money.

✠ Living in peace with everyone will deliver us from the devil of hatred.

✠ Being patient in all things will deliver us from low self esteem...

✠ To love all our brethren and not envy any one, to "***Repay no one evil for evil***" (Romans 12:17), will deliver us from pride...

✠ Humility and tolerance will deliver us from haughtiness...

✠ Consideration and honour towards all will deliver us from the devil of murmuring...

✠ To despise the vanity and glory of this world, will deliver us from envy...

✠ Memorise the words of God at all times in order to be delivered from the devil of lying...

✠ We must purify our bodies in order to be delivered from impurity...

All these sins come to grasp the soul at the moment of its departure, yet the virtues sustain the soul (if the soul had attained these virtues during its life on earth).

The wise person is one who would sacrifice himself while on earth, in order to rid himself of all these powers at the moment of his soul's departure.

The power of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ will support us in our weakness, for He knows that we are weak, and for this reason He gives us the chance of repentance till the last breath.

✠ Let your thoughts be united with God so that He may preserve you; do not give care to this world as if it is the means of your salvation, because in the end you will leave the world and all the things in the world behind. You find the good hope at this difficult hour, through the good deeds you have done for God's sake.

### **Various Sayings:**

‡ Do not love the world, so that your heart can concentrate only on the Lord.

‡ Do not be lazy, lest you feel dismayed on the day of the Resurrection of the righteous.

‡ Preserve your tongue so that your heart might illuminate

‡ Be charitable to the needy, lest you be despised among the saints.

‡ Do not desire food, lest it should hinder you.

‡ Do diligent in your service, lest the enemy should pursue you.

‡ Do not love wine, lest it should hinder your love to God.

‡ Love the believers, for through them you will have mercy, make friends with the saints and imitate their zeal.

‡ Remember the Kingdom of Heaven so that it encaptures you, also be mindful of Hell in order to hate and reject its works.

✠ When you awake each morning, remember that you will give an account of all your deeds, then you will never commit sin before God, and His fear will dwell in you.

✠ If you prepare yourself to meet Him, you will always do His will.

✠ If you judge yourself everyday, you will never grieve at the hour of death.

✠ Let your brethren see your good deeds, so that your zeal might kindle within them.

✠ Everyday, check which sin you have conquered, and do not rest to overcome them, for this is the work, grace and mercy of God.

✠ Do not feel that you are safe until you have passed the powers of darkness.

✠ Rejoice only if you are walking on God's path. If the enemy says to you, 'You have no hope of repentance for you are a sinner', and you grieve, then this grief is against God and saddens Him. God is always saying to you, "Come again to Me, and do not be afraid," for God knows our weakness.

✠ To not judge others is a protective fence for those who are struggling, but to judge and condemn destroys that fence.

‡ To control your tongue is an indicator that you are working hard, but not controlling it means you do not have any virtues within you.

‡ Goodness gives birth to purity, and hard heartedness to anger, but gentleness brings forth mercy.

‡ Better to sleep and be silent, than to be vigilant and speak nonsense.

‡ To praise people creates within them pride gradually.

‡ Meditating on Judgement Day creates fear in the soul, but to ignore the conscience creates remorse and dismisses virtues from the heart.

‡ As rust destroys iron, praise destroys the heart.

‡ Humility is the first of all virtues, and the love of food is the first of all sins.

‡ Just as a worm creeps within the wood and destroys it, evil creeps into the heart and destroys it.

‡ To pour oneself before God will enable one to be tolerant towards any humiliation, in peace, and the tears one cries should be sincere and free of any worldly desires.

‡ If you do not blame yourself, you will not be able to tolerate other people's anger.

† If you do not depend on your own strength, the support of God will accompany you.

† Do not have enmity with any person, lest your prayers should be rejected.

† Be accommodating with all people, so that you will find favour in the eyes of God when you pray.

† Do not wish to hear bad news about someone who had upset you, for in so doing, you rejoice with evil in your heart.

† Continuous prayer leads one to be closer to God, but reluctance in prayer lead to negligence.

† If you always expect your day of death, you will care not to sin. But the person who thinks they will live forever will commit many sins.

† Always ask for your father's advice, and you will find rest.

† Beware of despising your brother, but rather humbly prostrate before him. Do not have a hard heart, because the enemy can pursue anyone of you.

† If you are wise, beware of pride.

✠ If you think favourably concerning your body and it occupies your thoughts, give thought to how it will rot in the grave, and then you will find rest in your thoughts.

### **Discernment:**

First comes quietness, then devoutness, then tears. With tears comes fear and humility, and these lead to knowledge and love.

### **Summary:**

Whoever wishes to repent should keep himself from drinking wine, for much drink dismisses the fear of God from the heart. Rather, he should ask the Lord to put His fear in his heart in order that he may conquer all sins.

✠ Never think for a moment that you will find rest while you are still in the body, and take care, for even if you have a little rest from spiritual warfare, it is only because the devils, who are cunning, are devising a plan. They will war against you yet again, and will humiliate and torture you.

✠ Let us abide and so complete our earthly struggle in God's fear, giving attention to virtues, for through them we can resist the enemy. Our earthly struggle will prepare our souls to receive the heavenly crown on the day we depart from our bodies.

## **The Lord's Promises and Encouragement:**

✠ Our holy teacher Jesus Christ, because of His great love and kindness, asked us to always, ***“Watch therefore for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming”*** (Matthew 24:42), and, ***“Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping”*** (Mark 13:36).

✠ When the disciples returned to Jesus joyous because of the miracles they performed, He rejoiced with them and said, ***“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”*** (Luke 10:18)

✠ When Christ sent them, they were afraid and weary, but when they acted according to His words, He granted them power and authority.

✠ Also, when they kept His words, He said to them: ***“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”*** (John 14:27); and in order to give them serenity and confidence, He said: ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him”*** (John 14:23). Strengthening them against the tribulations of the world, He said: ***“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”*** (John 16:33). To put happiness in their hearts He promised them, that those who suffer tribulation with the Lord, the Lord will prepare

for them a kingdom, with His Father, and together they will eat and drink at His table.

‡ These sayings are not only for the disciples, but also to whoever keeps His commandments, for the Lord in His infinite love said, ***“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”*** (Luke 12:32).

### **Abiding in Christ in Tribulation:**

Those who abided with Him in tribulation are those who overcame the vices which are contrary to godly nature. When going to the Cross, Jesus said that whoever wants to sit at His table, must follow Him to the Cross. The true cross of Christ is to overcome sin. The beloved Apostle St Paul conquered these vices, saying, ***“I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”*** (Galatians 2:20). He also says, ***“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires”*** (Galatians 5:24).

‡ The Apostle also writes to Timothy his disciple: ***“To which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day”*** (2 Timothy 2:11-12).

Who are those who deny Christ? Those who deny Christ are those who follow after their bodily desires and despise the Holy Baptism.

✠ Through His holy name we are granted the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38), but yet the enemy traps us through bodily desires and sin. Our great Lord Jesus Christ granted us the chance to repent up until our last breath. If there was no chance for repentance, then salvation would not exist.

### **Preparing for the Second Coming and Judgement**

If we are sealed with the Holy Baptism, let us hasten to abandon our sins so that, ***“The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day”*** (2 Timothy 1:18). The Lord is near, ***“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory”*** (Matthew 25:31). Each one of us knows his own oil lamp, he who has no oil will be thrown into the outer darkness but he who has oil in his lamp will proceed into the kingdom of Heaven to be with the Lord (Matthew 25:1,13).

✠ Let us hasten, my beloved, and fill our lamps with oil as long as we are in the body, so that our lamps may be illuminated and so gain entry into the Kingdom of heaven. The vessel (lamp) denotes repentance, the oil denotes the practice of virtues, and the lit lamp is the pure soul. So, the soul carrying the light of its good deeds will enter into

the Kingdom with the Lord, while the soul dimmed because of its evil deeds will proceed to Hell.

‡ Let us flee, my brethren, from the world in order to inherit the heavenly riches, because the riches of this world, such as gold, silver, clothes and houses, we will leave behind. Yet, God's inheritance is immeasurable, ***“But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him”*** (1 Corinthians 2:9); it is for those who live their earthly life in obedience to Him that the Lord will reward. They receive this inheritance because of the good they did on earth, such as feeding or clothing the poor, helping the needy, giving love to all, and keeping their hearts and bodies pure.

### **Conclusion:**

Our Lord is capable of supporting us in completing His works, and keeping us from every evil so that we might be able to be saved at the hour of judgement. ***“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth”*** (Revelation 3:10); also, ***“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work”*** (Revelation 22:12).

## **A Final Word:**

Do not grief my brethren when reading these sayings daily, for through them we might find mercy and be considered amongst those whom Christ has counted worthy. ***“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in the mirror”*** (James 1:23), but he who hears and keeps these words, are like, ***“Others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.”*** ***When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”*** (Luke 8:8)

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## 17. THOUGHTS THAT A MONK SHOULD ABANDON

### **Initial struggle against exile:**

This will be the first struggle for those who wish to leave the world and live as a sojourner, they must be armed with a steadfast will, strong heart, faith and hope. The enemy will surround you on all sides and frequently try to frighten you. They will approach you saying, “How is it that you live here alone, with no one to care for you or know of you?”. But persevere, for God in His goodness is testing your zeal and love.

✠ The demons will constantly bring to mind your family, and in bad weather they will frighten you about being sick, but through the love and hope of God abiding in your heart, you will be able to conquer them.

### **Struggle against vain glory:**

It is a great joy to conquer vain glory and to grow in the knowledge of God. He who falls into the deception of vain glory will lose his inner peace and his heart will harden. This then results in pride. But if you are an honest believer, escape vain glory and let your good deeds be done in secret.

✠ He who loves the praise of people will always suffer from the sins and temptations of the body; he gives into temptation and so is whom the Apostle refers to saying: *“Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things”* (Philippians 3:19), but he who overcomes the sins of the body through repentance offers himself as a pure sacrifice to God.

### **Struggle against anger:**

To a humble person, the Lord reveals his weaknesses, and if he regrets and weeps for his sins, then the Lord will fill him with true glory and bestow upon him blessed fruits, “...” (Mark 16:9).

✠ Such a person is not affected by people’s reproach, for bearing in mind his own sins protects him as a shield from anger and revenge, and so he is able to tolerate all things.

If, however, you are not able to tolerate another’s reproach, but hasten to reply back, then you give room for warring in your heart.

✠ Struggle then to attain long sufferance, for through it you will be able to conquer anger and love which heals grief. Through praying in the fear of God, you will be able to retain these virtues and tolerate anger. Hence, instead of becoming angry with your family, you become angry with the devil, and so keep your peace with your family.

‡ If you are able to tolerate a hard word, then you are the son of peace (Luke 10:6). You will gain the peace of the body, mind and spirit, and the Holy Spirit will abide in you and never abandon you.

### **Struggle against cowardice:**

‡ The devil of cowardice hinders every good deed. He spoils the soul who dedicates itself to God, and leads it to laziness. But if we have love and patience, the devil will never succeed in any of his deeds, thus the soul needs to take care of cowardice and laziness and reject it.

### **Struggle against the spirit of grief and poverty:**

Beware of the devil of grief who attacks you because of your poverty, for it can hinder you attaining the great virtues of tolerance and self denial, through which your crown is prepared.

### **Discern your thoughts:**

‡ Control your heart and watch your senses, so that you can resist the devils when they attack you and try to defile you.

‡ Those who have patience, long suffering and love, thank God in any condition, while those who always

complain and love the praise of people, have a weak will. Keep the commandments with a simple heart, so that you can discern which are the evil thoughts planted by the devils who desire to bring you down.

✠ Submit your heart completely to God's obedience saying, 'here I am Lord, before You, let me act according to your will, because I do not know what is good for me. Fight for me because my enemies are so deceitful and I am oblivious to their deceit.'

✠ If you submit to Jesus' will, He will preserve you from sinning. However, if you keep only one commandment and ignore the rest, you must know that you have not yet yielded your life totally to Him.

✠ In the same way that a field is not able to combat a person plucking weeds from the ground, a person who submits himself to God should not work against God, but yield himself to God. He should pour himself before God, asking Him to purify his soul from the roots of every evil, and to plant good plants in him, for good plants and weeds can never grow together, as the weeds will strangle the good plants.

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## 18. DO NOT ENVY OTHERS

Abba Isaiah El Eskeeti says:

✠ St Paul the Apostle ordered his disciples saying: ***“Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”*** Also, ***“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful”*** (Colossians 3:15). The Lord says to His disciples in the gospel of St Mark, ***“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses”*** (Mark 11:26). This is a frightening verse because if your heart is not pure towards everyone, you cannot ask anything of the Lord, for you cause Him disdain, and your prayers will not be from the heart but from the mouth. Let us test our hearts first before standing before the Lord praying. If you ask the Lord to have mercy on you, you should have mercy and be kind with others first. Your prayers are in vain if you have not yet purified your heart towards everyone. Whatever you want the Lord to do with you, do also unto others.

Abba Isaiah El Eskeeti addressed his children saying: ‘Forgive me, for I am void of any goodness and full of sins. I am so ashamed. These are the evils which trouble the whole human race: pride, glory, and ornamenting the body. All these will perish. Blessed is he who has crucified his desires and is resurrected in the newness of

life, for he will follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ regarding, humility, submission, poverty, peace, forgiveness, tolerance, self denial and courage. He who achieves these virtues is God's son and Jesus' brother. '

Glory be to Him forever. Amen

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## 19. EVIL DESIRES

### **The dwelling of the Holy Spirit is an indication of conquering sin:**

† I would very much like to say with Isaiah the Prophet: ***“I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself. Now I will cry like a woman in labor, I will pant and gasp at once”*** (Isaiah 42:14).

† If you notice that a source of the Holy Spirit is flowing within you, then it means that the sins have been taken away from you, as our Saviour says: ***“Nor will they say, ‘see here or see there’, for indeed the kingdom of God is within you”*** (Luke 17:21). The Apostle also says: ***“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power”*** (1 Corinthians 4:20).

† There are only few in whom the Kingdom of God dwells, and in those the Holy Spirit dwells; in whom the saying of St. John is fulfilled: ***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”*** (John 1:12-13). Those who have Christ rejoice, just as St. Mary rejoiced.

† Those in whom the Kingdom of God dwells, are released from the bitterness which descended on Adam: ***“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the***

*voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it", cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life". Those in whom the Kingdom of God dwells, are the ones who rejoice, as St. Mary rejoiced when she heard the angel's message: "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:35).*

✠ Just as grief descended on Eve and her descendants, joy descended on Mary and her descendants. So, being aware that in the beginning we were the sons and daughters of Eve whose curse came upon us because of our sinful thoughts, we should also be aware that we have been born from God through the thoughts of the Holy Spirit and the sufferings of our Master Jesus Christ. It is written: *"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified"* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

✠ When we were born with the image of the man of dust (1 Corinthians 15:49), we knew that we were the children of dust, because of the sinful thoughts which occupied our mind of dust. But those who bear the image of the heavenly know that they are the children of the Heavenly because of His Holy Spirit that dwells in them. Isaiah the Prophet cries out: *"We have been with child, we have been in pain; we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not accomplished any deliverance in the*

*earth, nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen”* (Isaiah 26:18). Also in Ecclesiastes, *“As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything”* (Ecclesiastes 11:5).

✠ As St Mary had conceived Him in the body, also those who accepted the grace of the Holy Spirit carry Him inside their hearts as the Apostle says: *“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height”* (Ephesians 3:17-18). Also, *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us”* (2 Corinthians 4:7).

### **The soul which is betrothed to the Lord:**

If you reach this level: *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Apostle’s saying is fulfilled: *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful”* (Colossians 3:15). Also, *“Let your waists be girded and your lamps burning”* (Luke 12:35), and, *“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

‡ If you feel that on the day of judgement, your body, soul, and spirit will stand without blemish, and that your conscience will be clear, you will be like a child whom God spoke about saying, ***“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 19:14). In this case, your soul will be betrothed to the beloved Lord Jesus. And while you are still in the body, His Holy Spirit will prepare you to inherit His kingdom. If you do not believe you have achieved this stage yet, weep for yourself, for you will be disgraced before the saints.

‡ Try hard my brother and struggle in purifying the body and the heart, in knowledge and comprehension, to attain the eternal joy, for few are those who deserve it, so, ***“Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*** (Ephesians 6:17), and, ***“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”*** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

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## 20. HUMILITY

Abba Isaiah was asked once: “What is humility?”

✝ He answered: “Humility is to consider yourself a sinner who has done nothing good before God.”

✝ The works of humility are: silence, to believe that you are unworthy, submissiveness, to always remember death, to keep yourself from lying, to not occupy yourself with vain conversations, to not argue with the elders, to not be stubborn, to tolerate humiliation and despise laziness, to push yourself to work, and to not respond to your desires, and to not upset anyone.

✝ Be watchful my brother, and try hard to fulfill these commandments, lest you become inhabited by many types of sins. Be vigilant, lest your life end without you attaining any fruits.

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## 21. REPENTANCE

Abba Isaiah was asked once: “What is repentance? And how can one flee from sin?”

✝ He answered: “In life there are two paths upon which one may travel: one path is for life, and one is for death (Deuteronomy 30:19), he who walks upon one cannot walk upon the other, and he who tries to walk upon both wastes his time.”

✝ He who wants to inherit the kingdom should watch his deeds, for to inherit the kingdom is to rid yourself of every sin. The arrows of the enemies can never affect him who is shielded with the virtues of the spirit.

✝ Thus, if a person knows the glory of God, he will also know the bitterness of the enemy, if he knows what love is, he will certainly know what hatred is. Likewise those who yearn to be with God, reject the world, being mindful of what is pure and what is impure.

✝ Such a person causes the angels to rejoice because of his good deeds, as opposed to a person who causes the devils to rejoice because he partakes in their evil.

## **God's Fear is the Mother of all Virtues:**

He who attains God's fear will bring forth other virtues, which in turn will uproot all types of evil. So strive eagerly, my beloved, to gain God's fear so that you will spend the rest of your life in peace.

## **How to measure the progression in virtues:**

A person must constantly watch himself to see whether he is still struggling to overcome sins, or whether he is growing in virtues. If a person is still under the influence of any sins, then he has not yet attained virtues, for it is written: *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness”* (Romans 6:16). Also, *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified”* (2 Corinthians 13:5). Also, St James the apostle says: *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless”* (James 1:26).

✠ The Holy Spirit teaches us how to flee from anything contrary to Godly nature. St. Paul says: *“Do you now know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it”* (1 Corinthians 9:24). To those who struggle for repentance: *“Who competes for the prize is temperate in*

*all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Corinthians 9:25).*

**Abba Isaiah was also asked: “What is the World?”**

He answered: “The world is the attraction to and commitment of a sin, in giving heed to bodily cares and desires, rather than the soul. St. John advised us: ***“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”*** (1 John 2:15-17). ***“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil”*** (1 John 3:7-8). ***“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”*** (James 4:4).

✠ Our beloved Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that we ought to abandon sin. He assures us by saying: ***“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me”*** (John 14:30). Also, ***“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one”*** (1 John 5:19).

## **Flee from the world and be united to the Lord Jesus:**

‡ He who wishes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ has to flee from the sins of the world, if he does not abandon worldly desires, God can never dwell in him, and he will never taste the sweetness of Jesus.

‡ The Lord Jesus Himself says: *“The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness”* (Luke 11:34). The Lord says that if the spirit is not healed from evil, then it can never know the Light of Divinity, for evil is a barrier dimming the spirit.

‡ This is why the Lord Jesus teaches His divine commandments to those with enlightened spirits: *“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back”* (Luke 6:27-30).

‡ The Lord says these words to those who abandon the world and the things of the world, in order to follow their Saviour.

✠ These are the ones whom Jesus loved to the end, to whom He said: ***“Arise, let us go from here”*** (John 14:31). To where is He taking them? Why did He say, ***“Let us go from here.”*** It is because He will lead them to abandon the works and deeds of the world, and grant them eternal rest in His Kingdom. For this reason He encourages them saying: ***“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing”*** (John 15:4-5).

✠ He said these things to those who abandon the world, for the Spirit dwells in them. Thus He says: ***“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”*** (John 14:18).

✠ The Lord has given a sign to those who abandoned the world. ***“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it”*** (Matthew 10:39). Also, ***“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”*** (Luke 14:27).

✠ He also comforts those who die to worldly desires: ***“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My father will honour”*** (John 12:26). It is only through rejecting the world and so fulfilling the commandments that one can serve God. It is only then that one can say with St. Peter: ***“See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”*** (Matthew 19:27). And the Lord answer them saying: ***“Assuredly I***

*say to you, that in the regeneration, when the son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters, or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first"* (Matthew 19:28-30).

### **The importance of rejecting to the world:**

Our Lord Jesus knows that if we do not abandon the world completely, we will not be able to ascend the cross. For this reason, when a young man said to Him, *"Lord I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house"* (Luke 9:61), Jesus answered: *"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"* (Luke 9:62). He knows that if we lean towards the world again, our heart will inevitably return to it.

✠ When He prepared a great banquet, those whom He invited could not attend because of their love to the world, so He said in grief: *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple"* (Luke 14:26).

## **Faith should be accompanied by deeds:**

✠ The Lord warned us of depending on faith alone without deeds: ***“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ and he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”*** (Matthew 22:11-13). They were called Christians, but because they had no deeds they were cast out.

✠ St Paul the Apostle knew that nobody can love both God and the world, so he wrote to his disciple Timothy: ***“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules”*** (2 Timothy 2:4-5), and in order to strengthen him in the hope that this will not be in vain, he says: ***“The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops”*** (2 Timothy 2:6).

Let us do our best my brethren in order to wear the robe of virtues, and not to be cast out, for on that day, ***“There is no partiality with God”*** (Romans 2:11). The Apostle also speaks to his children of the fruits of the Holy Spirit: ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law”*** (Galatians 5:22-23).

‡ Our beloved Lord Jesus Christ shows us that our deeds will be exposed on that day, so, ***“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and know at the day saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us’, and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from’”*** (Luke 13:24-25). He also speaks about those who have faith without deeds, ***“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned”*** (John 15:5-6). Also, ***“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit”*** (John 15:2).

Let us examine ourselves my brethren, in order to determine whether we are of this world or not. If we are not, then the Lord will protect us from the evil one: ***“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me”*** (John 17:20-21). Also, ***“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Mew before the foundation of the world”*** (John 17:24).

## SAYINGS CONCERNING SALVATION

✠ Look how much the Lord loved us, and if we struggle against our worldly desires, we will reign with Him forever. St John meditated in this great glory: *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2), also, *“And where we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight”* (1 John 3:22).

✠ St John also says: *“Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death”* (1 John 3:13-14), and, *“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteous is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother”* (1 John 3:10). Also, *“If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.”; “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God”* (1 John 2:29, 3:8-9).

✠ Let us do our best, my brethren, according to these testimonies, and may He in His goodness have mercy upon us, and grant us the power to rid ourselves of the burden of this defiled world.

✠ As for our enemy, he will never stop warring against us, but will pursue us always, so therefore, ***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”*** (1 Peter 5:8). But our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, and through Him we can defeat the evil one. Through abiding in God’s powerful words, the enemy will be defeated, even without us noticing. St Peter the Apostle teaches us that a person’s deeds can deliver him: ***“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins”*** (2 Peter 1:5-9).

✠ St John the Baptist also says, ***“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”*** (Luke 3:8-9).

✠ Our Lord Jesus also says, ***“Therefore by their fruits you will know them”*** (Matthew 7:20).

✠ In another verse, St James the Apostle says, ***“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!”*** (James 2:17-19).

✠ St Paul the Apostle assures his children that deeds should accompany faith: ***“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God”*** (Ephesians 5:3-5), and he also tells us: ***“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light”*** (Ephesians 5:6-9), also, ***“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”*** (1 Corinthians 11:1); ***“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice”*** (Ephesians 4:31).

## **Christ accepts those who are purified by repentance:**

✠ Let us examine ourselves my brethren; have we put on Jesus Christ or not yet? Christ finds rest in His saints, and the only way He can find rest in us is if we purify ourselves. The moment we repent with a contrite heart, God will accept us joyfully and never remembers our old sins. The Lord Jesus gave us the example of the prodigal son in the Gospel of St Luke (chapter 15), in order to let us know that if we want Him to joyfully accept us again, we must first cleanse ourselves by leaving behind the food of the pigs.

## **Continuous Prayers:**

In order to urge us to go back to Him, the Lord encourages us saying: *“There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, Get justice for me from my adversary, and he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, “though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me”* (Luke 18:2-5). The Lord mentioned this parable lest we should give up on our pleadings and prayers...

✠ Let us then repent and never give up on our prayers, and He will respond quickly, for He Himself says: *“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”* (Luke 11:9).

‡ So, let us abandon laziness, my brethren, and continue pleading with Him, and when He see our persistence, He will answer our prayers, because He is merciful and yearns for our repentance. ***“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance”*** (Luke 15:7).

### **Complete Love Through the Cross:**

‡ And so my brethren, as we enjoy all this mercy from our beloved God, let us purify our hearts while we are in the body, in order to attain the eternal joy, because the days of our life are few.

‡ The Apostle knows that there are virtues which are done without love and perfection: ***“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth”*** (1 Corinthians 13:1-5).

‡ If you want to walk on the path of love, you should not concern yourself with any person, regardless of whether they be good or bad, but yearn always to be concerned and occupied with the Lord. In this way you will join the Apostle Paul in saying, “*What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 21:13).

‡ Blessed is the soul who acquires this love ...

‡ The Lord Jesus is merciful, thus He gives rest to each one according to their deeds and struggle, for He says: “*In My Father’s house are many mansions*”. Although it is only one Kingdom, yet there is a place for everyone according to his level of struggle.

‡ Let us struggle my brethren to see the light of repentance, and may the Lord help us according to His great mercy, to keep our bodies pure without sin. And let us be assured that God will have mercy on us during our tribulations.

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## 22. THE LIFE OF THE NEW PERSON

‡ My beloved brethren, a Hebrew is known by keeping three things: circumcision, the Passover and the Sabbath.

### The Circumcision:

It is written in the Book of Genesis: ***“He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broke My covenant”*** (Genesis 17:12-14). Abraham was circumcised first, meaning that the deeds of evil are dead in him. The old man (prior to the act of circumcision) died and was buried, and now he is a new man, as St Paul says, ***“And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations”*** (Colossians 2:19-21), also, ***“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the***

*old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (Ephesians 4: 22-24), and, *“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose strips you were healed”* (1 Peter 2:24). This is circumcision, so he who has not yet achieved this, has breached the faith which the Lord Jesus established with His precious blood.

### **The Passover:**

The Passover was not allowed to be eaten except roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:9), also St Paul says, *“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breast-plate of righteousness”* (Ephesians 6:14), here he speaks about the body being purified from any defiled relationships; he speaks about preparing the feet (Ephesians 6:15) in order to escape from any sins which hinder the soul from seeing and meditating. The rod symbolises the courage of hope, and walking in the way – without fear – heading towards the Promised Land.

✠ Examine yourself my brethren: Are you circumcised? Have you signed the posts of your house with the Blood of the Unblemished Lamb? Have you abandoned earthly thoughts and desires? Are you ready to enter the Promised Land?

## **The Sabbath:**

There are great things which we could say here: the Sabbath concerns those who deserved the true circumcision, had eaten the Holy Passover, and have rid themselves of the hardships of the Egyptians, and saw them drowning in the Red Sea. They have celebrated the Sabbath after the bitter slavery. God said to Moses: ***“Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death”*** (Exodus 31:15).

✠ Our Lord Jesus celebrated the True Sabbath, and taught His disciples how to celebrate it when He perfected all preparations and ascended on the Cross on the preparation Day, that is, the sufferings He tolerated for our sake, ***“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine. He said, “It is finished!” and bowing His head, He gave up His spirit”*** (John 19:28-30).

✠ Finally, God rested on the seventh day, ***“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done”*** (Genesis 2:2), His works through which He demolished the human sins, as the Apostle says, ***“For He who has entered His rest has Himself also***

*ceased from His works as God did from His”* (Hebrews 4:10).

How miserable am I, because I disobey the holy commandments and bear the heavy burdens on the Sabbath, although, ***“We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”*** (Romans 6:4). What are these heavy burdens that I am still carrying? Anger is a heavy burden, hatred, envy, dispute, egoism ... As for the body, the heavy burdens are greediness, ornamenting our bodies, bad desires... All these things, and many others, the Lord Jesus abolished from the bodies of the saints, because he killed these things in His Body first, ***“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity”*** (Ephesians 2:14-16). This is the holy Sabbath.

### **The Light of the Lord Jesus**

✠ Let us be aware my brethren, lest we be destroyed because of our negligence, for our enemy is trying to pull us towards him everyday, in order that we not see the Light of the Divinity.

‡ Test yourself, you who have been baptised in Christ's Blood, for: ***“Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”*** (Romans 6:2-3). If you are following in His steps show me your life and how you deal with people! He lived as a poor person, can you tolerate poverty? ***“And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head”*** (Matthew 8:20). Do you tolerate insult? When He was in pain, He was tormented but did not complain, but you get angry whenever you suffer. He was so calm even while being disgraced, and yet you always worry even if you are not disgraced. He was humble and comforting to those who sinned against Him, but you hurt even those whom you love. He tolerated tribulations happily, but you become troubled over the least bad news. He was gently with the sinners, but you feel proud of yourself and higher than others. He delivered Himself to those who sinned against Him and offered Himself as a sacrifice for their sake and you are not ready to sacrifice even for those who love you. All these things and more He did for you, but what have you offered Him so far?

### **The Light of the Commandments:**

Let us be watchful of our desires, my dear brethren, and listen and follow in the light of His Holy Commandments. If we just love those who honour us, we are no better than the idolaters, ***“And if you greet your brethren only, what***

*do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?"* (Matthew 5:47).

### **Examine Yourself and Remember the day of Judgement:**

You who have been baptised in His holy name, examine yourself: Are your deeds the deeds of Jesus Christ? If not, how do you suppose yourself to stand on the Day of His glory, and receive your crown if you have not been crowned with the crown of conquering sin here on earth? These are the sins which your King conquered for you. If you have not conquered, you will hear the Lord saying, "I do not know you" (Matthew 7:23), while at the same time, you will see all the saints who died for His holy name bearing His sign. But as for me, the sinner, who indulges in all kinds of rest, what will I say on that Day, when I see the prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and all the saints who tolerated difficult sufferings?

† My beloved brethren, test yourself thoroughly and watch your thoughts: How will you stand before God? At that hour, you will be unable to hide anything, for your deeds, whether good or bad, will speak, and then will each one know his place.

† Blessed is he who struggles to conquer all the attractions which lead to Hell, and keep that which leads to the Kingdom, as St Paul says, "*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building*

*from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).*

✠ Our life on earth is nothing, daily we are deceived, and the hour will come when we weep forever. But then it will be too late.

✠ We should not be neglectful, but strive, and plead for the goodness of our God at all times to support us, and not resort to anger against people who speak harshly towards us.

### **Humility and Controlling our desires:**

✠ Be humble in everything, tolerate insult patiently and try always to control your desires and will, because insisting on them might lead to the destruction of all virtues. Blessed is he who controls himself in humility, for disputes dim the soul and prevent it from seeing the light of virtues.

✠ Thus, judge yourself first in order to gain humility, control your anger towards your brother knowingly, for this is humbleness.

✠ Purity is praying to God.

✠ Judging yourself gives room for tears.

✠ Love is not to condemn others.

- ✠ A heart which loves God, never returns an insult.
- ✠ Controlling your thoughts is not to think of things that are not your business.
- ✠ Humbleness is to have a simple heart.
- ✠ Peace is controlling your senses.
- ✠ Humbleness is tolerance.
- ✠ Mercy is forgiveness.
- ✠ What leads to all these virtues is humbleness, for it unites them all and gives peace and satisfaction.
- ✠ Finally, in all the Books of the Holy Bible, what God asks of us is humility, to have self-control, and to continually plead unto God for His support. He advises us to beware of negligence. May God preserve us all and unite us to Him through repentance. Glory to Him forever Amen.

## ADDITIONAL SAYINGS

‡ These are the things which create dispute and destruct the soul without mercy: too much talking, hypocrisy, giving favours, betting, and so on...

‡ If we do not try hard to gain virtues, then we will never be able to enter the rest of the Son of God. Let us be watchful my brethren, and not yield to laziness and evil doings. Beware, because the days are short lest you miss out on entering into the rest of the Son of God. Be humble, have purity of heart, love everyone, and ignore any matter which is not from God, and be mindful of your sins.

Amen.

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## 23. PERFECTION

### The Way of Salvation And its Conditions:

One of the Elders said: A person can never be saved if he does not:

- believe in God
- yearn to God always with a simple heart
- ***“Repay no one evil for evil”*** (Romans 12:17)
- True love of all human beings
- Self denial
- Humility
- Long suffering
- Pleading with God daily with a contrite heart
- ***“Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead”*** (Philippians 3:13)
- Not depending on one’s prayers or good deeds.
- Asking God’s help on one’s daily life. Your enemies, my dear brother, never rest.

✠ Thus, do not be reluctant, or depend on yourself as long as you are still living in the world where your enemies are

✠ Perfect love towards God conquers the unseen wars, the inner purity conquers the hidden battles, and prepares the soul to enter into the rest of the Son of God.

✠ If you thank God during your tribulation, this will dismiss the bad thoughts which are attacking you.

### **Signs of Victory:**

✠ If you feel that your conscience is clear when you are praying, then, truly you have become free and have entered into the holy rest of the Son of God according to His will. If you notice that the good seed is giving fruits and the weeds of the enemy are not choking your fruits, and if you notice that, ***“The cloud is covering the tabernacle”*** (Numbers 9:15), and that, ***“The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night”*** (Psalm 121:6), then be sure that victory will come from God because now He is the One covering your tabernacle, and he is proceeding and leading it to His Kingdom.

✠ We need the fear of the good God who is guiding us, His continuous remembrance gives us power. Never depend on yourself as long as you are in the body.

✠ If someone says that he is weeping for his sins while he is still doing one of them, then he is ignorant and deceiving himself. If someone ignores his own sins and keeps himself busy with other's sins, then he cannot pray with a pure heart or plead to God. The power of a person comes from his struggle and prayers for the forgiveness of his sins.

✠ Blessed are those who do not depend on their own deeds, who fear the hour when they will meet God. They

comprehend His glory and know that they can never complete their struggle exactly as what He wants, they know their weakness and are just concentrating on their own sins.

✠ Abba Isaiah also says: “This is the victory to him who dwells in righteousness, as he acts according to God’s commandments and will. His name is written in the Book of the Living, and the heavens will witness for him that he is saved from the evil powers, thus his mind will totally be occupied with the heavenly.

✠ But as long as the battle is still on, he will always be in fear, winning one day and losing the other because the devil is still surrounding the heart. A winner is the one who has conquered and united the three: **the soul, body and spirit**. St Paul says (in 1 Thessalonians 5:23), if these three became one as a result of the Holy Spirit’s work, they will never be separated, *“knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him”* (Romans 6:9). His death became life to whoever abides in His faith; He healed His followers from all their pains in order to live in God and act righteously.

✠ So do not think that you have totally conquered sin, as long as you are still in the body, because the enemy is always warring against you, both when you are awake or asleep. You are not safe yet so do not depend on your deeds.

✠ That is why when our Lord sent His disciples to preach He said to them: ***"Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. 'But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 'And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you'"*** (Luke 10:4-6).

✠ Also, Elisha the Prophet said to his disciple Gehazi, ***"Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child"*** (2 Kings 4:29), because he knew that Gehazi did not have the power to raise the body. But as for Elisha the man of God, ***"When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord"*** (2 Kings 4:32-33), he struggled with all his senses, ***"And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes"*** (2 Kings 4:34-35).

✠ So, what could we, the miserable sinners say, who prefer the glory of the world to God's love, we never know how to struggle, but rather hasten for our rest, and we never comprehend God's long suffering with us (Matthew 13:24-30).

‡ As for Gehazi, he took all the trouble running to the lady, but he could not raise the boy because he loved the glory of the world more than the glory of God.

### **Abide in God's fear:**

‡ Blessed are the eyes that do not dare to look at God, but rather look at their own sins, they plead to God always to remit those sins. But woe to those who waste their life thinking that they are without sin, ignoring the conscious remorse, not knowing that it is easy for a person to be deceived, even over the smallest matter.

‡ The sower considers all the seeds as being decayed if they are not ready for harvest, and he grieves for all his toil was in vain. Likewise, a person who understands all mystery and all knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:2), or performs miracles and healings, or tolerates many sacrifices, is still under the threat of fear because his enemies are still following him and preparing traps for him. However, *“Love never fails... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

### **The Way of God needs hard toil:**

‡ Our Lord says: *“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”* (Matthew 7:14). But, as for us, although we are supposed to struggle, we are looking for rest, because we cannot carry the yoke about which Jesus told us, *“Take*

***My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”***  
(Matthew 11:29-30).

‡ Wise is the man who is full of God’s fear, who struggles with all his effort, mortifying his desires in isolation, vigilance and care, and not daring to utter the name of God!

‡ If someone sees a poisonous or dangerous animal, such as a scorpion or a snake, he will escape frightened, but the miserable impudent soul stands still before the things that cause its destruction, and rather enjoys them and obeys them with all his heart, thus wasting his life and becoming barren from all good fruits.

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## 24. LIVING WITHOUT PAIN

‡ There are many hurdles that one encounters on the way of virtues: there is rejoicing, sadness, weakness, happiness, distress... , for it is a long way until we reach the final rest.

‡ The person who lives without sin does not know the enemy anymore, there is no fear because he is living in God and God is living in him.

‡ Such a person has the love which Jesus taught His disciples

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## 25. A MESSAGE TO ABBA BOTROS, HIS DISCIPLE

✠ You need to abandon the world if you really want to serve God:

When you wrote to me saying: “I want to offer true repentance if God will deliver me from this bitter care which links me to the world”, I think you are speaking perfect truth, because, ***“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”*** (Matthew 6:24). Mammon (money) here means the world; if a person does not leave the world, he cannot serve God. What is serving God? It means that nothing strange exists in his heart while he praises God, or any evil thought in his mind while praying, or any hatred while reciting the prayers, or any deceit while doing his prostrations, or any evil preventing him from talking to God, or a shameful desire... All these matters are the bolts of darkness which will meet the soul in the air and block its way to God.

✠ There are two matters deceiving the soul: one from outside and the other from inside. The outside matter is the care about this world and luxury for the body, the inside are the sins which delay the virtues. The soul could never discover the inner sins unless it is freed from the outer luxury first, that is why the Lord says: ***“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot***

*be My disciple*” (Luke 14:33). The things that are from the outside (the worldly) are of the will, and the inner things (the sins) are of our attitude and behaviour, and as the Lord Jesus knows that the will controls both, He ordered us to discipline it.

‡ If the soul cares about the world, the spirit is dead, and the inner sins exist, but if the soul listens to Jesus’ words and commandments, it will cut off all the lust of this world. The spirit will awake and keep watching lest the soul should go back.

‡ As a wife who cares for how to please her husband, and does her best for her children, so does the spirit if it is alert, watching and guarding the soul, then the two become one and obey each other. These are the people who deserve to become one with the Lord, being one within themselves first, they pray with entire purity, they praise God with a holy heart and receive their light from the Lord. They are, *“The true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him”* (John 4:23). About these He says, *“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body [with] [her]? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh”* (1 Corinthians 6:16). Also, *“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 18:19).

‡ The Lord wants His own to be pure on the outside as well as on the inside, and to conquer whatever the Lord had conquered with His body through His incarnation, as

He says, *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me”* (John 15:4).

✠ Thus you can see, my brethren, that God want us first to abide in Him through our attitude, then He will abide in us according to the level of our purity.

### **Baptism is being freed from sin:**

✠ Someone might say: Yes, I abide in God through baptism, but I cannot continue living on the same path. Listen my beloved, as St Paul says: *“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be [in] [the] [likeness] of [His] resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with [Him], that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”* (Romans 6:4-6), baptism has abolished sin because Christ and sin could never dwell together, *“And if Christ [is] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin, but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness”* (Romans 8:10), as the Apostle says: *“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members”* (Romans 7:23).

‡ Thus, if you want to know if Christ is dwelling in you, check your thoughts, because as long as sin is deceiving your heart, God could never dwell therein, and the Holy Spirit could never find rest in this heart.

‡ The Lord truly abides in a person if he obeys the commandments, and a person abides in God if his soul becomes free, as the Apostle says: ***“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body [with] [her]? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with] [Him]”*** (1 Corinthians 6:16,17). If the soul is freed from all the powers that could hinder it from meeting Christ in the air, thus it can abide in God and the unity of His Spirit, as it is written, ***“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him”***. The Lord then teaches this spirit how to pray; He guides, leads and comforts it continuously, and reveals His glory and utmost grace, it lives its second birth through baptism and the breath of the Holy Spirit, as it is written, ***“We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him”*** (1 John 5:18); this is because he is born of God as the Bible says: ***“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 18:3); also, ***“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”*** (1 Peter 2:2).

## **How do little children act?**

‡ A little child, if he is hurt will cry, but if he sees people around him rejoicing, he will rejoice. If he is insulted, he will not become angry, and if he is praised he will not become puffed up; if someone else is honoured he will not become jealous. If he inherits anything he will not be able to comprehend it, and he is never in dispute with anyone. He does not grieve if he is poor or rejoices if he is rich; he never desires a woman or look for pleasures, neither does he condemn or fear. He is never troubled by wars or fears any beasts....

‡ For this reason the Lord Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3).

## **Advantages and disadvantages of Childhood:**

‡ When the child starts to grow up and evil begins to find room in his heart, the Apostle rebukes saying: *"That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ"* (Ephesians 4:14-15). Also, *"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual [people] but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still*

*not able” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2); also, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world” (Galatians 4;1-3); and, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).*

✠ The Apostle teaches us to give up the lust of youth, *“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature” (1Corinthians 14:20).*

✠ Those little children act according to the Apostle’s words: *“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:12).*

### **The Lord’s saying concerning imitating little children:**

✠ The Lord’s saying, *“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3),* is very fearful because the Lord says: *“Assuredly”,* and He is the *“Amen, The Faithful and True Witness” (Revelation 3:14),* thus the Apostle says: *“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely*

*blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you" (Hebrews 6:13-14).*

✠ If we consider this very carefully, let us remember it fearfully and with awe whenever the enemy hits us with one of his arrows, for example, if he wants to infuriate us against anyone, or dims our souls with envy and anger in any situation.

✠ This verse is a burden to those who insist on their will, those who do not know the gift of the Holy Spirit, because if it ascends on them, they will forget their anger and envy and learn the gifts, which are gentleness, instead of anger, peace instead of enmity, humbleness instead of dispute, and love instead of hatred...

### **True Perfect Childhood:**

✠ Let us hasten to purify ourselves and be like little children, because those who reach this level are the ones who struggle towards perfection, those who, *“glorified God in their bodies”* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

### **We have to pray continuously so that the enemy might not mislead us:**

✠ Let us pray and plead without ceasing that the Lord might preserve us from the envious enemy, who is trying always to mislead us and never gives up.

✠ Let us pray with David the Prophet: *“They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; With flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things, who have said, “With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; Who is lord over us?” “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise,” says the Lord; “I will set him in the safety for which he yearns”* (Psalm 12:2-5). If the enemy attacks us, we must cry out, “O Lord, who is like You? You are the Almighty, Your enemies are trying to attack me!”

✠ If a person is advanced in his spirituality, he might pray with David the Prophet: *“O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind! As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire, so pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; yes, let them be put to shame and perish, that they may know that You, whose name alone is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth”* (Psalm 83:13-18).

### **Prayers during tribulations:**

✠ If you find the enemies surrounding you cunningly, either trying to make us bored, or creating anger within us against someone else, or pushing us towards lustful desires, or any other evil matters, we should not be

troubled, but rather cry out with David with a steadfast heart: ***“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple”*** (Psalm 27:1-5).

✠ Let us do everything in awareness, because the soul is moody by nature, as Isaiah the Prophet says, ***“Says the Lord who has mercy on you. O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest and not comforted”*** (Isaiah 54:10-11). The soul is like a piece of iron, if not attended, it becomes rusty, but if it is put in fire, it becomes pure, and it keeps inflamed and nobody can touch it. Likewise the soul, if it abides in God, it blazes like fire and burns all its enemies who caused its rust when it was reluctant. The soul then finds its rest in God’s nature, not the world’s, because now it deserves this nature from which it has originated at the very beginning, but if it changes its original nature again, it drowns in the world. Those who deserved to attain those gifts consider the world as a prison; they do not want to mingle with it lest they should die.

✠ A soul is like a city attacked by an enemy who starts reigning and setting new hard rules for everyone to follow and forcing people to worship him and his statue.

But if the inhabitants of this city asked the true king to hasten and help them, he will come immediately with his army full of anger towards this enemy and destroy the statue and release his people. He will protect it from any other invader and teach the inhabitants how to fight their enemies.

✠ After baptism, the enemy comes and tries to reign over the soul again, but because of the goodness of the Lord Jesus, He accepts our repentance, which opens the door for the Great King Jesus Christ. The soul regains its liberty, and is taught how to fight against its enemies.

### **The Picture of the True King is Love:**

✠ The soul can never enter into the rest of the Son of God unless it has the imprint of God's image, in the same way that a merchant cannot deal with money that does not bear the image of the king. The angels cannot rejoice with one who does not have the mark of the King, for the King will dismiss him saying, ***“Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless”*** (Matthew 22:12).

✠ The sign of this picture is Love: Jesus Himself says: ***“Thus everyone shall know you are My disciples if you love each other.”*** We can never have love if the soul is divided between the love of the world and the love of God; a bird cannot fly with one wing; a ship cannot sail if it is missing any of its equipment; also the soul cannot sail over the waves of sin if it is missing one of the virtues.

The sailors cannot swim in the water unless they rid themselves of their uniforms, likewise the soul cannot pass through the waves and the winds of evil unless it takes off all the worldly lust. A soldier cannot fight his enemies without weapons, also the monk cannot resist sin if he is lacking one of the virtues.

‡ If a fortified city has a hole in one of the walls surrounding it, then the enemies could easily get into the city, because the guards guarding the doors cannot resist the enemy unless this hole is closed; also a monk cannot resist his enemies as long as he is under the authority of one sin; he will not be able to comprehend perfection.

### **Biblical references confirming the importance of practicing virtues:**

‡ These are not my own words, but those of the Bible; it is written in Genesis: *“Then the Lord said to Noah, ‘Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation’”* (Genesis 7:1); also the Lord said to Abraham: *“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless’”* (Genesis 17:1); also, *“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, ... ‘All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin’”* (Numbers 6:2,4); *“When the army goes out*

*against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing” (Deuteronomy 23:9), and, “But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 20:16-18), and if we say, how can we conquer them when they are so many, the Lord says: “If you should say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?’ You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the Lord your God brought you out. So shall the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed” (Deuteronomy 7:17-22)*

† The Lord always ordered His people, *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them [and] utterly destroy them. You*

*shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son*” (Deuteronomy 7:1-3), when Joshua, son of Nun went to besiege Jericho, the Lord said to him, *“Now, the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it”* (Joshua 6:17). When Joshua wanted to fight the city of Ai, the children of Israel fled and could not fight the enemy because Achan the son of Carmi took of the accursed things, so Joshua fell to the earth on his face crying and saying, *“O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?”* (Joshua 7:8), so the Lord said, *“Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you’”* (Joshua 7:13), and they never went back to war except after killing Achan.

† We see also how God deposed Saul from his kingdom because he brought accursed things from Amalek (1 Samuel 15:15), also when Jonathan dipped his rod in the honeycomb and put it in his mouth, God did not answer Israel on that day (1 Samuel 14:27, 37).

† The Book of Ecclesiastes also declares that any sin, however trifle abolishes the power of virtues: *“Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honour”* (Ecclesiastes 10:1). Ezekiel the prophet also says: *“But when a righteous man turns*

*away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked [man] does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die”* (Ezekial 18:24). St Paul writes, *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage”* (Galatians 5:9). Ananias and Sapphira his wife lied to the Holy Spirit and died instantly (Acts 5:1-10). St James also says, *“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2:10).

### **An Invitation for Repentance:**

✠ In order to give us the power to return to Him, the Lord says: *“Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die ... Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,”* says the Lord God. *“Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?”* (Ezekial 18:27-28, 30-31). Jeremiah the Prophet also says: *“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding” ... “Indeed*

*we do come to You, for You are the Lord our God”* (Jeremiah 3:22); *“Moreover you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: Will they fall and not rise? Will one turn away and not return? Why has this people slidden back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit, they refuse to return’”* (Jeremiah 8:4,5); and *“Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. ‘Return to Me, and I will return to you,’ says the Lord of hosts. But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’”* (Malachi 3:7).

† The Lord Jesus Himself says, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward”* (Matthew 6:14,15).

† The Apostle says: *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel”* (Galatians 6:1), and St James says, *“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back”* (James 5:19).

**Heavenly Support comes if you forgive the sins of others:**

‡ All these biblical references encourage us to test ourselves: do we forgive or do we keep our anger, thus destroying all our struggle, and consequently Jesus will not grant us His support when our enemies face us. Jesus rebuked those who follow this path. ***“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ‘Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses”*** (Matthew 18:32-35).

‡ Examine yourself my brethren and look deep inside your heart daily: What is inside it before the Lord? Murmuring, hatred, insult, envy, pride? If you say, ‘I cannot tolerate seeing this person!’, then poison is running in your heart! Hasten and remember our Lord Jesus’ words, ***“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses”*** (Matthew 18:35).

‡ He who does not want to be thrown in Hell, let him purify his heart of all these evils.

## **Beware of False Prophets:**

‡ Watch for your enemies my brethren, for they are tricky. They deceive you by saying, ‘You can never do good as long as you still sin, and you can also do evil things hidden in the form of good deeds’; that is why our Saviour urges us to watch these enemies, ***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide [is] the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?”*** (Matthew 7:13-16). What are their fruits except all things contrary to God’s commandments?

‡ But as for those who love God from the depth of their hearts, the false prophets cannot deceive them, as the Apostle says: ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”*** (Romans 8:35-39).

## **The Bronze Serpent is a symbol of Christ:**

‡ So, nothing in the whole world can separate God from those who love Him, thus watch yourself lest the love of gold, money, desire, hatred or any of these matters would separate you from God's love.

‡ Even more, let us compel ourselves to fix our eyes on the bronze serpent which Moses made according to God's order, ***“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived”*** (Numbers 21:8-9).

‡ Our Lord Jesus Christ is a symbol of this bronze serpent, because the serpent is the enemy. When Adam obeyed it, enmity came between him and God. Our Lord Jesus was then incarnated as a human being exactly like Adam yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15), in order to abolish the poison of the serpent given to Adam when he ate from the forbidden tree. Our Lord came to renew our nature, ***“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel”*** (Exodus 17:6).

‡ So, he who follows in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ could turn into a rod, after being an enemy and a

serpent, and none of his enemies can have authority on him. This Mystery is great, if the serpent puts its poison inside us, let us fix our eyes on Him who was hanged on the Cross, because He was crucified for our sake, He never rebuked or got angry with His crucifiers, but rather kept silent exactly as the bronze serpent.

✠ If we meditate and follow His steps, we will get healed of the stings of the inner serpent, because the power and help come from God who says, ***“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”*** (John 3:14-15).

That is how we walk in His path, following His footsteps in order to be healed through Him, for how can we be healed if we do not have faith in Him that He is capable of healing us? The bronze serpent did not have the power of healing in itself, but whoever was bitten by the serpent in the wilderness, when he looked at the bronze serpent with faith, lived (Numbers 21:9). That is why the serpents bit many and they died because they did not have faith in God’s words. As the Apostle says: ***“Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents”*** (1 Corinthians 10:9).

✠ You know my brethren that now there are many serpents inside the soul who want to tempt Christ. What does “to tempt Christ” mean? It means to ask Him for the commandments but not to follow them, as the Pharisee who asked Jesus: ***“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher,***

*which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets’* (Matthew 22:35-40).

‡ A person who submits himself to repentance is like a babe in his mother’s bosom:

‡ Control your heart, do not say while you are angry: ‘How could I keep the virtues and the commandments and I am a sinner?’, because if you return to God and repent, the repentance will renew you, as the Apostle says: *“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man”* (1 Corinthians 15:49).

‡ See how repentance can change us, and make us entirely new people! The little child, if he is in his mother bosom, is kept from any evil, if he cries she nurses him, and as he grows up, bit by bit she starts teaching and punishing him as much as he can tolerate, so as not to learn to rebel. But if he weeps, she pities him, because he is her offspring...

‡ If the little child is offered anything he becomes busy with it, but when it comes to nursing him, he leaves everything and just yearns to be nursed.

✠ If when he grows up, he abides with his father and rejects what his father rejects, then his father will grant him all his riches. But if he is careless and rebels, thereby uniting with the enemies, his parents will deprive him of their love and kindness and dismiss him out of their house and leave nothing for him to inherit.

### **Repentance in the Old Testament:**

✠ As for us, my dear brethren, let us care for our soul, to find rest in the bosom of repentance, and be fed by the milk of its blessed breasts, let us abandon everything to be able to taste its sweet milk in our mouths. Let us pray and cry for repentance to sustain us in conquering our enemies.

✠ Let us control all the desires of our heart and live in expatriation in order to be saved, like Abraham (Hebrews 11:9). Let us submit to repentance like Jacob to gain the blessing of our Father (Genesis 27:4). Let us hate our worldly lust as Moses did and so it preserved him and gave him victory over those who wanted to kill him (Exodus 2:3). Let us not despise repentance lest it should refuse us like Esau (Genesis 25:26). Let us keep its purity in order to be honoured in the country of our enemy, like Joseph (Genesis 41). Let us take repentance as our resort as it was to Joshua the son of Nun who was a young man who never departed the tabernacle (Exodus 33:11). Let us not give room to anger inside our hearts lest we become deprived from inheriting the Promised Land (Numbers 13:31). Let us love humility in everything and toil hard like Caleb to enter the land that pours honey and milk

(Numbers 14:24). Do not desire anything that ends in destruction, lest we become destructed, like Achan (Joshua 7).

✠ Let us despise greed in eating lest we should perish like Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:12-13). Let us preserve our conscious against any iniquity like Samuel who was never remorseful by his conscious for any iniquity against anyone (1 Samuel 12:3).

✠ Do not love being envious towards others, lest repentance should refuse us like Saul (1 Samuel 18:9)

✠ Do not love pride and vain glory lest we are taken far from our Father like Absalom (2 Samuel 14:25), but let us rather be humble and moderate to be able to avenge our Father's enemies like Solomon (1 Kings 2:5). Let us deny ourselves in everything mortifying our senses in order to gain a good heart against our enemies like Elijah (1 Kings 17, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 6:1). Let us reject desires lest they destroy us like Ahab (1 Kings 21:21). Let us obey our spiritual fathers in everything, not insisting on our own will so that their blessing may be upon us like Elijah (2 Kings 2:15). Let us not be greedy or deceiving in order to please people lest the curse should fall on us like Gehazi (2 Kings 5:7). Let us love our faithful brethren more than ourselves so that repentance might bless us like the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:9). Let us not desire disgraceful matters, lest repentance would destroy us like Zedekiah and his sons whom the king of Babylon put out their eyes (2 Kings 25:7). Let us hate sin

till death so that help and support might reach us when we are in trouble, like Suzanna, whom Daniel helped.

Blessed is the God of repentance, and blessed is whoever loves it and submits to its will, until he is reborn and renewed from above according to God's will.

### **Beware of all the enemies of repentance:**

✠ We need to discern carefully in order to cut off all our bodily desires, because the enemies of repentance are numerous. The soul that wants to meet God without hindrances, "*Approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ*" (Philippians 1:10), keeps itself busy with all useful deeds, but if it knows there is one of these deeds not useful but harmful, it avoids it lest it should be hurt.

✠ What about you my brethren, who call yourself a merchant of Jesus (Matthew 13:45), beware, because the merchandise of this Good King is far from any deeds that lead to non-profit. These negative deeds are: praise from people, pride, despising others, anger, luxury...

✠ Examine yourself my dear brethren: What do you have? Watch your senses: which ones give fruits and which yield to sin? (Romans 7:4, 6:12-17). Do you rejoice if someone praises you? Does your heart enjoy listening to the faults and mistakes of others? These are the deeds with no profit, so, test yourself lest you are led to destruction.

### **The soul that is purified becomes a bride to the Lord:**

These are the words of those who love Jesus and are waiting for Him; their souls are ornamented with virtues and have His Holy Image as if looking in a mirror as St Paul says, ***“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”*** (2 Corinthians 3:18), and, ***“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known”*** (1 Corinthians 13:12).

‡ Those who have become His bride through purity, look to themselves as in a mirror for fear of finding something that deforms their image and grieve their Groom, He seeks virgins, who are those with, ***“pure souls without blemish”*** (2 Corinthians 11:2), as it is written about Rebekah, ***“Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up”*** (Genesis 24:16). David the Prophet also says: ***“She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace”*** (Psalm 45:14-15) : ***“enter”*** denotes His Blessed Incarnation; ***“her companions”*** denotes becoming united with Him because the rebirth through the Holy Baptism renews them from every slavery, repentance purifies them

and makes them holy virgins who have abandoned the old deeds. They will not remember anything old following Him who says, ***“So the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him. And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your favour”*** (Psalm 45:11-12). The Hosts of heaven are amazed at their purity which they acquired through repentance, and has made them one body with Christ. The Beloved of heaven will say, ***“Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; There she who bore you brought you forth. The Shulamite to her Beloved ”*** (Song of Songs 8:5).

### **The work of Christ’s Salvation:**

✠ Let us try very hard and do our best with tears and pleadings in order to abandon the life of the old man so that His love is poured inside us, and take the man of dust to become entirely pure as the Apostle says, ***“And as we have borne the image of the [man] of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man”*** (1 Corinthians 15:49).

✠ The Apostle knows that there is no person without sin since Adam’s fall, but repentance can renew us. That is why he is urging us to follow our Lord Jesus Christ’s commandments; the commandments of Him who had mercy upon us, and tolerated the human slavery to regain him to Paradise and granting the human race all His holy

virtues. He gives peace to the believers and preserves them. He protects their ears from listening to the words of the evil serpent. He reminds them of their bitter slavery (Galatians 5:1) and makes them give thanks (Ephesians 5:20) without ceasing, to Him who bought them with His Blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). He wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us (Colossians 2:14). For those whom He called ‘My friends’ (John 15:14), He poured His Spirit on them with grace; He comforted their hearts saying, ***“I am ascending to my Father and Your Father, and to my God and your God”*** (John 20:17); also, ***“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world”*** (John 17:24).

✠ It is clear that He is not talking about everyone, but only those who abandoned their will and yielded to His holy will, as He says, ***“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”*** (John 15:19).

✠ You see that those who abandoned the world are worthy to become His brides, and abide in His unity, as the Apostle says, ***“Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord”*** (Ephesians 5:21-22); also, ***“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel”*** (Ephesians 3:6).

‡ They are not only One Body with Him, but His Holy Spirit also dwells in them. It sustains and helps them, ***“For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you”*** (Matthew 10:20); also, ***“But God has revealed [them] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God”*** (1 Corinthians 2:10); also, ***“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ”*** (1 Corinthians 2:16). So how could “the mind of Christ” think of any evil?

**We have to follow Jesus commandments if we want to be united with Him:**

‡ Meditate in this mystery inside your heart: Every type of creature on earth generates from its unity with another one of its same type, not from a different type, whether it is an animal, a beast, a bird..., that is why God brought them all before Adam, ***“but for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him”*** (Genesis 2:20), so God took one of his ribs and made into a woman; she was called a woman, because she was taken out of man.

This is a great mystery to those who became His brides: for they became of His same nature after their rebirth, they became related to His Holy Body as the Apostle says, ***“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”*** (Romans 12:5), also, ***“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones”*** (Ephesians 5:30).

✠ Thus we see that He wants man to be exactly like Him in everything, as Eve was exactly like Adam. The soul knows its thoughts out of its attitudes, so if it follows Jesus, the Holy Spirit will dwell in it, as the Lord says, ***“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever,... the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”*** (John 14:15-17), and, ***“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you are disqualified”*** (2 Corinthians 13:5).

✠ All the virgins prepared their lamps, but those who did not have good deeds were left out (Matthew 25). The net which was cast in the sea collected fish of every kind, but only the good ones were chosen (Matthew 13:47-48). Also the wheat and the tares grow together, but at harvest time the tares will be thrown into fire (Matthew 13:25-30). The sower sowed his seeds, but he rejoiced with those which fell on the good ground, and gave double fold of fruits (Matthew 13:3-9). All were invited to the wedding, but he who did not have on a wedding garment was cast into outer darkness (Matthew 22:11-13).

✠ The sayings are addressed to us, because we all call ourselves believers, but those who do not have His divine Life will be cast out, as He says: ***“For many are called, but few are chosen”*** (Matthew 22:14).

## **Be Courageous and have confidence:**

✠ Let us examine ourselves my brethren before meeting the Lord. Do not look at those who fulfil the desires of their bodies.

✠ Meditate on those who spent their life in vain, they inherited Hades, because they did not want to follow the Lord.

✠ Let us struggle then, with tears and pleadings, with all our hearts lest we should fall in disgrace.

✠ Keep your courage, and ask the Lord to sustain you, there is much fog covering the earth, let us plead with the Lord not to be destroyed.

✠ Moses the Prophet could not truly praise the Lord except after crossing the sea, and watching the corpses of those who wanted to enslave his people in Egypt, when they all crossed the sea and were saved, he chanted: *"I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"* (Exodus 15:1).

## **The Lord is Honest and Capable of saving us:**

✠ If the mind saves the senses of the soul from the bodily desires and crosses the sea, then the pillar of Divine fire will separate the soul from the lust of the body. When

God sees how hard the soul is trying to resist the body, then He will send His support and abolish all the temptations, as it is written, ***“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea’”*** (Exodus 14:15-16).

✠ God is honest, may He stretch out His hand today to Moses (the mind) to save Israel (the soul) from the slavery of the Egyptians (the bodily desires), so that we might become worthy to sing a new hymn, ***“Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: ‘I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!’”*** (Exodus 15:1).

✠ How could we sing “For he has triumphed gloriously” while we are still yielding to our enemy and going back to Egypt willingly, we still desire the food we ate when we were slaves to Pharaoh, and we still ask Aaron to make other gods for us to worship!

✠ God is capable of making Moses come down to us from the mountain, to destroy the golden calf, which put us in enmity with God, and to grant us the repentance to go back to Him.

✠ Power, sustenance, protection, and discernment are coming from our beloved Lord Jesus Christ.

Glory be to Him, the Father and the Holy Spirit  
forevermore Amen.

My dear brethren, if you read this, try hard to follow the  
Lord, so that he might protect you at the hour of  
temptation. Amen.

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## 26. SAYINGS HEARD BY ABBA BOROS, HIS DISCIPLE

### My father Abba Isaiah El Eskeeti said:

- ✝ Be courageous in straightening what is crooked.
- ✝ If you are pure, you will have favour before God.
- ✝ The fear of God and humbleness remit sins.
- ✝ If you keep revenge in your heart, your prayer is in vain.
- ✝ Listen always to your thoughts, and plead with the Lord to let you know which thought you should follow and which to ignore.
- ✝ Do not speak with words different than what is in your heart.
- ✝ Pouring yourself before God and following the commandments in humility will lead to love, and love leads to overcoming the pains.

I asked Abba Isaiah for a word of benefit, so he said:

- ✝ If you want to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, keep His words, and crucify your old man, abandon anything

that pulls you down from the cross. Prepare yourself to be insulted and comfort those who do evil to you. Be humble, and submit your will to God. Preserve your mouth in order not to judge anyone in your heart (Matthew 7:1).

I asked Abba Isaiah: What is humility my father? How could I acquire humility? He answered:

✠ Humility is obedience, it is denying oneself in submission and without sin. It is purity, tolerating insult, accepting everybody's word without murmuring; this is humility.

✠ Blessed is he who adorns the new man before meeting the Master Christ, because the Apostle says: "***For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?***" (1 Corinthians 3:3).

✠ We suffer from our enemies, because we know our mistakes quite well. If we look deeply at our mistakes, we will really feel disgraced. The prostitutes would be better than us because they sin out of their ignorance of God, but as for us, though we call ourselves believers, our hearts yield to sin.

✠ Let us ask the Lord to declare our sins to us, to try as much as possible to avoid talking to people in vain lest darkness would dim our souls before God.

✠ One of the fathers said: it is impossible for a person who talks and listens to worldly matters to find favour before God.

✠ He who puts his sins always before his eyes, does not have a tongue to talk of others.

✠ Hate everything in the world, hate the rest of the body because these things bring enmity between you and God.

✠ Be sure that toil, poverty, expatriation and abiding in silence leads to humility, which leads to forgiveness of sins.

### **Abba Isaiah also said:**

These things dismiss God from the heart: anger, cowardice, the desire to teach others, vain talk (Matthew 12:36), while patience and gentleness create love and purity in the heart.

### **He also said:**

A person needs to have great humbleness, and to pour himself before the goodness of God (1 Peter 5:7), to know the invisible thieves (John 10:8) and flee away from them.

✠ If there is no peace (Romans 12:18) God cannot dwell, but he who sees his sins, will have peace. It is said

that when David sinned with Uriah the Hittite's wife (2 Samuel 11:2), he could not find any sacrifice to offer God except: *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, these, O God, You will not despise"* (Psalm 51:17).

✠ Impatience and blaming others trouble the mind to the extent that it can not see the Light of God (1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 1:5-7).

✠ When you sit in your cell and the thought of judging others attacks you, look first at your own sins, consider them more than your neighbour's sins, and if you think you are doing any good deeds, do not believe that they are pleasing to God.

✠ The strong member in the body cares for the weak member until it is fit, but he who says "what do I have to do with the weak?" is not a member of Christ's body, because the strong pities the weak until he is healed. A hard-hearted person might say "I have never fallen" while a humble person puts on himself the weakness of others saying "I am the fallen one."

### **He also said:**

✠ He who does not find help from God at the time of war, cannot be comforted at the time of peace.

Once Abba Isaiah was very sick and I went to visit him. When he saw me so sad, he said: This sickness is nothing

as long as we have hope, but what really disturbs me is the hour when I will find myself before God, where no one will listen to me, and there is no hope at all.

**Concerning the Holy Communion he said:**

Woe to me, if I have community with the enemies, how could I have community with God? Thus, while I am having the Holy Communion, I am disgracing myself, *“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body”* (1 Corinthians 11:29). We say, *“The Holies are for the holy”*, so if I am really holy, how is it that I still suffer from these sins inside me?

I asked him: Who is God's servant?

He answered: if you are still under the authority of sin, you are not God's servant, but you are a slave to whoever has authority on you (Romans 6:16). How could you pray for the sake of others while you are still under the rule of even one of the sins, you are not yet a friend or son or servant to God. It is better for you to pray without ceasing to God to save you from your slavery to that particular sin. Then you will see your disgrace and weep when you find yourself unworthy to be called the son of God; that is real purity which God is asking for from us.

✠ Woe to me, because I am not struggling to purify myself to find God's mercy! Woe to me because I am not struggling to win the battle and reign with Christ! Woe to

me, I carry Your name my Lord while I am serving your  
enemies!

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## 27. “ONLY TAKE HEED TO YOURSELF AND DILIGENTLY KEEP YOURSELF” (Deuteronomy 4:9)

✠ Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great God of glory and honour, gave us the example to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). He humbled Himself as a slave, tolerating torture and disgrace, as it is written, *“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken”* (Isaiah 53:7-8), and, *“The place in the Scripture which he read was this: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth”* (Acts 8:32). So, we also should tolerate whoever insults or is unjust to us; it is better for us to pray as much as possible, and to keep silent in humbleness.

### Abiding in God’s Fear:

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Be sure that God is watching you at all times, so whatever you are doing, standing or sitting, abide in God’s fear so that you might not lean towards pride and haughtiness, but

always dwell in gentleness and contrition, without anger or oppression.

**Tolerate insult and do not love praise:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Be sure that whatever insult and revile which you accept for God’s sake is a great win and salvation for your soul. Tell yourself always: ‘I deserve more than that because of my many sins’; also ‘I was found worthy to suffer and tolerate for God’s sake, so I may learn patience like my Lord.’

✠ If anyone praises you, grieve and weep, pray to the Lord to relieve you from this heavy burden. Tell yourself ‘I am not worthy.’ Consider yourself the least and most sinful person amongst everyone. All these things are of great benefit to your salvation.

**Refrain from any vain glory and desire:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Pride, love of positions, praise and vain glory all lead to the destruction of the soul and eternal torture. Cut off any bodily desire, even if it is trifle. Do not remember anyone unless you will benefit from this. Do not touch anybody and do not ask about anything. Never eat before the designated time.

‡ If you take heed of the minor matters, you will not stumble in the major ones, but if you neglect the minors, you will start falling bit by bit.

### **Humbleness in Everything:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Examine yourself always concerning your sins; be humble in everything as a person sitting on a rubbish dump. Consider yourself as dust and ashes; the least among everyone (Mark 9:35), and a sinner more than all the Christians. Also tell yourself that if God would not have mercy on me, I will definitely be worthy of eternal torture, for I am full of vices.

‡ Wait for death everyday; cry to the Lord from all your heart so that He might pity you and have mercy on you; do not laugh or talk nonsense, ***“Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom”*** (James 4:9).

### **Fear hell:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Remember always the eternal fire and the endless torture... Consider yourself as one of those being judged, but as long as you are still living, there is a chance for repentance, through which we could be delivered from these dreadful things. Struggle in your prayers, fastings and hard work; be the last and be a servant to each one and

remember always *“the weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 8:12). As much as you can read the Bible and memorise its verses, with prayers and tears, be like one serving the Holy Liturgy without ceasing so that the devils cannot find any chance to put their evil thoughts in your heart.

### **Life for Christ Who Died and was Resurrected for us:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Resemble the slave who is always standing before his master in fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). In great humility he stands always close to his master. He is always ready to fulfil his master’s will. Be the same, either sitting or standing, alone or with others, fear the Lord and purify your mind and heart.

### **Consider Yourself as a slave before God:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Resemble the slave who is always standing before his master in fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). In great humility he stands always close to his master. He is always ready to fulfil his master’s will. Be the same, either sitting or standing, alone or with others, fear the Lord and purify your mind and heart.

**Do not talk while you are angry:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”, if anyone upsets you and your heart is full of sorrow and grief, be quiet and take care not to utter one word, then after you calm down talk to your brother, if you need to do so, come into dialogue with him. Imagine you can see God always before your eyes, fear His Glory and Greatness, for we are, *“A worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people”* (Psalm: 22:6).

**Submit totally to the Lord who sacrificed Himself for your sake:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself knowing that the rich Lord became poor for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9); He died and rose (Romans 14:9); He bought us with His Blood (Romans 3:25). You were also bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23). So, do not live for yourself anymore, but for the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:15) in order to be totally His servant, submitting yourself always to your Master giving up every desire (1 Peter 2:11).

**Expect temptations everyday and tolerate them patiently:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself” Expect daily temptations and tribulations, tolerate them patiently and happily, remembering that, *“Strengthening*

*the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:22).*

**Ask for God’s will at all times and follow it:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”. Either in talking, working or thinking, do not ask for your own will at all, but rather meditate on God’s will and fulfil it. If it seems that you have to labour and suffer, also fulfil it for the sake of the Kingdom of God, being sure from all your heart, that it is very useful to you because, *“I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”* (John 12:50), and, *“The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing”* (Psalm 34:10).

**Wait for the Lord alone in everything:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself”, because you are standing before the Lord every day. Do not trust anyone except God only in faith. If you need something ask God to grant it according to His will. Thank Him always for what He gives you, never depend on a human being and never object or murmur, but rather tolerate happily. Tell yourself ‘I deserve it because of my numerous sins’, and if you think in that way, God will pour on you whatever you need and will satisfy you.

### **Do not accept the fruits of injustice:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself” Never accept anything unless you are sure that God sent it to you as a fruit of justice, but if it was a fruit of injustice, fight, deceit or hypocrisy refuse it saying “*All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble*” (Proverbs 15:15-16).

### **Practice Silence:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself” Push yourself to practice silence, so that the Lord might give you power to struggle. Talk only if it is necessary, and do this in God’s fear bowing your head and in a low voice. If someone needs to talk to you, just listen and do not say anything.

### **Refrain from any bodily desire:**

“Take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself” As you refrain from adultery, also refrain from “*the lust of the eyes*” (1 John 2:16), and the lust of the ears, mouth and touch. Do not look at any person and just concentrate on your hand work; do not gaze or look at a woman or a youth and do not listen to useless talks.

If you read all this, my beloved, try to fulfil it as much as you can, so that God might keep you at the hour of judgement. Amen.

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## 28. THE BRANCHES OF EVIL

You should know the branches of evil quite well:

Talking about the branches of evil is very important so that a person might know what are the sins and sufferings that separate him from God, and to ask His goodness to remove each one of them. So blessed is he who rids himself of them to become, *“A living sacrifice holy acceptable to God”* (Romans 12:1), on God’s altar, that He might hear the joyful voice of our good Lord, *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord”* (Matthew 25:21).

‡ As for those who want to follow their bodily desires and the lust of the flesh and refuse to cure themselves with the holy repentance to become pure, they will find themselves naked of the robe of virtues on the Judgement Day (Luke 15:22, Revelation 6:11), thus they will be cast out in the outer darkness (Matthew 8:12, 22:11-13), where they will find Satan wearing the robe of vices which are: adultery, lust, love of money, envy, vain glory, pride, and all other sorts of the branches of evil.

### What is Adultery?

It is having no control on the body, the tongue, the eyes, etc.

### **What is Love of Money?**

It is disbelieving of God's promises, loving rest and vain glory, not caring for others, losing self remorse and ignoring God's judgement.

### **What is Slander?**

It is ignorance of God's glory, envying your relatives, murmuring, jealousy, false witness, etc.

### **What is Anger?**

It is insisting on what you want, disputing, love of teaching others, love of worldly matters, cowardice, impatience...

### **What is bearing a Grudge?**

It is envying your brother, not blaming yourself, laziness, disgracing your relative, love of food, and mixing with the world.

### **What is Vain Glory?**

It is the love of this perishable world, to be a monk in order to be famous, to love the glory and praise of the people more than God, not knowing the things that hurt your heart, to show your deeds to others so that they might praise you. ***“And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”*** (Matthew 15:9)

### **What is Pride?**

It is to become upset if not praised; it is insisting on your opinion; being proud that you are not in need of anyone, and depending on your power (2 Corinthians 1:19), and it is the wish to have a famous name among the others.

These are all the deeds of the deceitful devil who plants them in the hearts of people in order to separate them from God. These are the heavy burdens which Adam carried when he ate from the tree (Genesis 3:6,7), about which it was said, ***“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted”*** (Isaiah 53:4).

These are the diseases which hit Adam, and our Lord Jesus Christ defeated them on the Cross (Ephesians 2:6).

These are the old wineskins in which we cannot put new wine (Matthew 9:17).

These are the foxes that spoil the vines (Song of Songs 2:15).

These are the clothes in which Lazarus was wrapped (John 11:44).

These are the demons which Jesus cast out into the herd of swine (Matthew 8:31-32).

This is the old man which the Apostle asks us to rid ourselves of (Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:9); about which he says, ***“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption”*** (1 Corinthians 15:50), and also, ***“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”*** (Romans 8:13).

These are the wounds which the robbers gave to the man going from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30).

These are the thorns and thistles which the land brought forth to Adam when he was dismissed from Paradise (Genesis 3:18).

This is the rejected sacrifice of Cain because he did not do well, when God rejected his sacrifice, he killed Abel his brother (Genesis 4:3-8).

This is the heritage which Esau loved and sold his birth-right because of simple food (Genesis 25:29).

This is the Egyptian whom Moses killed, then he became Pharaoh's enemy and fled to Midian, where he was freed

by God and when he returned and stood before Pharaoh he redeemed his brethren (Exodus 2:11, 5:3,5).

This is the Egyptian leaven about which God said to Moses, ***“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel”*** (Exodus 12:15), so that the soul might become free from the seven pains and celebrate with the Lord God, ridding himself of the old evil, ***“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth”*** (1 Corinthians 5:8), and comes into partnership with God.

These are the false prophets who resisted Elijah the Prophet, those, who unless he had killed the rain would not have fallen on the earth (1 Kings 18:40-45).

These are the lions that snatch the stray sheep (1 Samuel 17:34).

These are the thorns about which Isaiah the Prophet says: ***“What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?”*** (Isaiah 5:4).

This is the vine about which Jeremiah the Prophet says: ***“Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest***

*quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?"* (Jeremiah 2:21).

### **The Yoke of Christ is Not Heavy:**

But the yoke of Christ is very light, which is: Purity, controlling anger, gentleness, the joy of the Spirit, love to everyone, discern, faith, holiness, patience in temptations and hardships, to consider yourself as a stranger in the world, to have the desire of getting released from the body and meeting Jesus Christ.

### **These are the light burdens which the Lord commanded us to carry:**

That is the way, and for this way, the saints tolerated many tortures. No one can walk in this way unless he takes off the old man first, and acquires love that is without weary. Love can never dwell in us as long as we love worldly matters, as it is written, *"But if anyone says to you, 'This was offered to idols,' do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness"* (1 Corinthians 10:28).

Isaiah the Prophet also says: *"The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his*

*hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He will dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; Bread will be given him, His water will be sure” (Isaiah 33:14-16).*

**You need to toil in order to gain God’s protection and care:**

Meditate in the honour granted by God to those who struggle in this short life, and tolerate all tribulations in patience. Do you notice God’s sustenance to those submitting their lives into His hands and following His will?

And on the contrary, those who insist on their will cannot conquer their enemies. They toil for nothing.

According to all the books of the Holy Bible, no one will receive a response from God without toil and struggle.

It is written in the Bible, *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matthew 7:22-23), this is because they are doing the work of atheists, but not from all their hearts.

We lock ourselves inside our cells, yet the inner man (2 Corinthians 4:16) is reveling in iniquities. We pray while

being preoccupied in other matters; we fast and condemn others; we feed the hungry and hate our relatives... All these things happen because we are not abiding in God's will, thus He says, "*I don't know you.*"

Let us do our best, my brethren, to complete our struggle, and pray to God to send us His fear to keep us, lest we find ourselves void of virtues at the time of our departure of this world, and fall in the hands of the beast, for the enemy is full of hatred, deceit and has no mercy.

Now let us meditate in the lives of all the saints. They abandoned the world in order to fight the enemy, but he fled away as a coward when the Lord disgraced it before them. When Daniel went out in a battle with the enemy, the lions could not smell the odour of evil...

Job also tolerated the struggle after getting freed first of the worldly matters. He proved that the devil who says: "*I came from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it*" (Job 1:7), is just a coward who can be knocked down by a child's hand.

### **Conclusion:**

**Let us plead to God's goodness with tears, let us yield to everyone for the Lord's sake; let us be humble before our brethren considering them more pure than ourselves, "*not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling*" (1 Peter 3:9); let us all have one heart.**

Do not say *“this belongs to me”* (Acts 4:32), concerning any worldly thing, but let us watch our daily spiritual growth, keeping our souls away from evil thoughts, refusing the lust of the body, *“Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1Thessalonians 5:22-23).

Let us struggle then my brethren to be confident when we stand before God, so that we may hear Him saying, *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ”O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me”* (John 17:24-25).

The eternal Holy Trinity is capable of having mercy on us, to gain the rest with His Saints on the Judgement Day.

Glory, honour, and dominion be to Him, forever, AMEN.

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## 29. LAMANTATIONS

‡ Woe to us, because we love the lust of the world although we will leave it one day. We deprive ourselves from seeing the glory of the Lord just for a perishable body wicked desire.

‡ Woe to us, because, “*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption*” (1 Corinthians 15:50), and as we despise incorruption we slip into corruption.

‡ Woe to us, we feed our bodies with sins, those bodies which will perish through worms and rot, and we do not fear the eternal fire, “*And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh*” (Isaiah 66:24).

‡ Woe to us, because the righteous Christians have blessings from our bodies, while we are, “*whitewashed tombs*” (Matthew 23:7), and the smell of rotten sins comes out of our bodies.

‡ Woe to us, instead of God dwelling in our souls, we yield them to the devil.

‡ Woe to us, we are so gentle if someone praises us, while we lose this virtue if someone upsets us.

‡ Woe to us, for we cannot differentiate between corruption and incorruption and belittle the horrible Judgement.

‡ Woe to us, who are lazy to do good and hasten to do evil.

‡ Woe to us, our bodies were prepared for the Eternal Light, but we prepare them for eternal darkness.

‡ Woe to us, for He who was incarnated and is equal to the Father, “...*has nowhere to lay His head*” (Matthew 8:20), while we have room for wicked and evil deeds.

‡ Woe to us, we ask for the honour of saints in ourselves while we are full of desires and lust.

‡ Woe to us, sinners and full of iniquities, and we live amongst the righteous as free saints.

‡ Woe to us, we deserve rebuke and reproach, while we do this to those better than us.

‡ Woe to us, for the speck in our eyes, (Matthew 7:4), yet we blame our brethren as if we are spotless.

‡ Woe to us, we, “*bind heavy burdens, hard to bear and lay them on men’s shoulders*” (Matthew 23:4), yet we ourselves cannot touch one of them, excusing ourselves with weak bodies.

‡ Woe to us, we do not thank God for His gifts; we forget all the hardships and tribulations which He had saved us from and we do not deserve His grace and mercy.

‡ Woe to us, we care for our bodies a lot, while we are supposed to be fasting and praying with tears and pleadings.

‡ Woe to us, we are neglecting our divine monastic rules, while we are teaching virtue to others.

‡ Woe to us, we neglect our old sins and are never troubled by committing them.

‡ Woe to us, we began with the spirit, and now we are, *“being made perfect by the flesh”* (Galatians 3:3).

‡ Woe to us, we eat and drink greedily, ignoring the war that will start against us.

‡ Woe to us, the devil finds us totally ready whenever he starts reminding us of impure thoughts and desires.

‡ Woe to us, godliness within us is only of speech and appearance.

‡ Woe to us, we neglect prayers and praises and waste our days in saying nonsense.

‡ Woe to us, our hearts became so hard to the extent that when we ask for humbleness and contrition of heart

with tears, we cannot acquire them because of our extreme reluctance.

✠ Woe to us because God says, “*A soul that sins will die*”, yet we do not care and we sin daily.

✠ Woe to the soul that declines itself willingly, because it is pulling itself away from the heavenly glory and is making friends with the defiled devils.

✠ Woe to us, we feel and suffer from our bodily pains and diseases, yet we never feel the wounds and pains of the soul.

✠ Woe to us because our souls – with all its authority – has yielded totally as a servant, to the body. The will of both is not to serve the Lord, their Creator.

✠ Woe to us, because the evil thoughts renew our sins, and the bad spirits come and invade us.

✠ Woe to us, in our ignorance and recklessness we ask for the honour of the saints, yet we do not follow their lives and deeds.

✠ Woe to us, in fulfilling God’s commandments we do not have the fear of slaves, nor the zeal and energy of the workers, not the filial love.

✠ Woe to us, we never refrain from saying or doing anything to please people, yet we neglect doing good deeds to please God.

‡ Woe to us the monks, we used to live in devoutness in the world because we were poor, but here in the monastery we care about filling our stomach and resting our bodies.

‡ Woe to us, while the angels are encamping around those who fear God (Psalm 33), and the devils around those who disobey God, we join the devil's camp.

‡ Woe to us because we are not weeping here, so we deserve the torture of bitter tears and unquenched everlasting fire.

‡ Woe to us, we hasten to meet and please the rich people, but we ignore the poor when they come and ask us for something, as if they are so annoying to us.

‡ Woe to us, we care much for cleaning the ground of weeds and thorns that are harmful to the plants, yet we neglect cleaning our souls – through God's fear – from the evil wicked thoughts that destroy the holy virtues.

‡ Woe to us, we spend our days in negligence forgetting that we will give account on the horrible Judgement Day for all the deeds of our life, all nonsense and every defiled thought.

‡ Woe to us, not only because of the sins and iniquities that we committed, but also for our recklessness and disbelieving in God's promises.

‡ Woe to us, because we indulge in corruption as if we have no senses at all, although we can share in the incorruption in a life according to the Holy Bible. It is because of our love of earthly matters that we are bound to corruption and we are becoming strangers to the eternal incorruption.

‡ Woe to us, although we have the ability to conquer every desire, just to please ourselves we are conquered by our desires.

‡ Woe to us, we act like obscure animals who cannot think, we do not use our experience and discernment in our thoughts and deeds, we follow what satisfies our desires.

‡ Woe to us, because the Highest Almighty God was manifested to us to destroy the works of the devil, (1 John 3:8), but we go back and cling to the devil again.

‡ Woe to us, we are ashamed to sin before the people, but we are not afraid or care to commit sins and iniquities before God who sees the hidden.

‡ Woe to us, we do not season our words with the divine salt, yet we always talk rudely to our brethren.

‡ Woe to us, we abandoned the world, and here we are surpassing the children of the world in vices.

‡ Woe to us, because sleeping too much makes the devil steal contrition from our hearts.

‡ Woe to us, although we desperately need chastity and good behaviour, we correct other people's mistakes.

‡ Woe to us, we are too busy with the lust of the world and we forget all about struggling against Satan.

‡ Woe to our souls, empty of discernment and repentance, because on Judgement Day they will weep bitterly because of the horrible and painful tortures of the Eternal Fire, then we will not know what to do with our sinful bodies.

‡ Woe to us, we were given numerous chances to repent, yet we are reluctant, until we are cut off like the barren fig tree (Luke 13:7).

‡ Woe to us, we spent our days in loving disgraceful desires, without remembering the happiness of Paradise, we belittle the Heavenly Kingdom.

‡ Woe to us, because we resemble the foolish virgins in the hardness of our hearts, we have done nothing good to our brethren (the oil) to enlighten our lanterns (Matthew 25:8-9).

‡ Woe to us, we call God day and night saying, "O Lord O Lord" and we do not do what he has commanded us (Matthew 7:21).

‡ Woe to me, the writer of these lamentations, because I am also a victim to all what I am saying, and I do not feel the least remorse or regret.

‡ Woe to him who grieves for others, and do not grieve for himself.

‡ Woe to us, in spite of our rotten deeds, we love people praising us.

‡ Woe to us, God tolerates us patiently, He does not destroy us because of our deeds, yet we do not make use of this to improve ourselves.

‡ Woe to us, because we do not remember our sins now, but when our souls depart our bodies, then we will regret in bitterness, when we see all our thoughts, deeds and sayings written and engraved in our minds and memories.

‡ Woe to us, although the Apostle assures us saying, ***“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.... For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body”*** (1 Corinthians 11:27,29) yet we partake of the Holy Communion while we are indulged in iniquities, and forgive ourselves for our countless sins.

‡ Woe to me, the writer of these words, because I have not started repentance yet.

‡ Woe to me, I talk about truth and never do any righteous deeds.

‡ Woe to me, I praise good deeds, and then I commit wicked and evil deeds.

‡ Woe to those who insult and get angry, because they are depriving themselves from the praised love.

‡ Woe to those who envy and grudge because they make themselves strangers to God, enemies of His goodness.

‡ Woe to those who do not fear God, because they will become involved in endless sins, they will be scorched here in the world and in eternal life.

‡ Woe to us, we cannot tolerate a mosquito, flea or bee bite, yet we are not struggling to receive support against the bites of the evil beast who swallows us, as if we are easy food. He scratches our bodies with its poisonous claws.

‡ Woe to us, although we are almost at our end, instead of weeping and asking for repentance for our youthful sins, we are adding more sins, worse than the others.

‡ Woe to my miserable soul, ***“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like***

*this?'"* (Romans 9:2). I weep for myself, because evil has damaged my conscience; the corrupt conquered the incorrupt, lying hindered truth, and death overcomes life. The perishable world has substituted the eternal heavenly glory, what is awful and disgusting looks to me sweeter than the true love of Christ and holiness. I chose disgrace and shame for myself rather than hope and praise; I preferred hardness rather than gentleness; I loved the earth and its dust more than heaven and its kingdom. The darkness of the enemy which hates good things is dwelling in my heart, and wiped away from my mind the light of knowledge.

✠ Woe to me, woe to me: what are those traps that Satan had prepared for me and made me fall in them from the highest?

✠ Now who would not pity me, after losing the race, who would not weep bitterly for my situation, because I nearly drowned close to the shore...

✠ My brethren, pity me and plead to Jesus Christ, who is long suffering, to have mercy on me and clear the darkness which Satan put in my mind, so that I can see where I fell from. Ask the Lord to give me hope and repentance in the time left for me on this world.

✠ There is no grief greater than mine, no wound deeper than mine, because my sins are so heavy over my head. The burning arrows of the enemy had stricken me, I am drowning and there is no rescue...

‡ Woe to me, my soul, look and consider the quick time passing in your life; it is soon coming to an end in weariness and bitterness and the future will also be horrible.

‡ Meditate my soul in losing all your hopes, and when the Judgement Day comes with all its tortures, it will be too late for any comfort.

‡ Hasten my soul, before the light goes off, pour yourself before Him who grants eternal light. Pray and plead that He may save you from the Eternal Fire because He is the one who forgives our sins and grants us every goodness, although we do not deserve His mercy.

Glory and honour be to Him forever. Amen

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### **30. FROM ABBA ISAIAH'S SAYINGS ABOUT THE CONDITIONS OF LIVING IN PEACE TOGETHER**

Father Yohanna told me: Abba Anoub and Abba Beamen and their other five brothers were all monks when the Barbarians came and destroyed the place where they were living in El Eskeet. So they moved to a place called Tarnouti where they found an old temple and decided to live there.

Abba Anoub asked that all his brothers should live by themselves for the first week. And so they did. In this temple, there was a huge statue of an idol. Every morning Abba Anoub would throw dust on the statue's face, and in the evening he would come and say, "Forgive me." He continued doing this for a week, On Saturday when they all gathered together, Abba Beamen would ask Abba Anoub to explain his actions. Abba Anoub answered: "What I did was for our benefit. Now when I threw dust on its face, was it angry or shouted at me?" Abba Beamen answered: "No". So Abba Anoub continued, "When I asked it to forgive me did it talk to me or forgive me?" he said, "No." So Abba Anoub continued, "Here we are seven brothers, if you want to live in peace together, let us be like this statue who does not care about glory or humiliation. But if you do not like to live in this condition, let everyone of you go his own way." They all prostrated before Abba Anoub saying, "We will do

whatever you want father and follow all your commandments.”

Abba Beamen added: “We lived together obeying Abba Anoub the elder; we had our rules; whatever was offered to us at meal time we ate and never objected or complained.”

And so they lived together in peace all the days of their lives until they departed in peace. As for me I repeat the words of Abba Anoub, “If you do not live like a statue, you cannot dwell peacefully with your brethren.”

### **Relationship Between the Monks:**

Abba Amoun told me: Once I asked Abba Beamen, ‘when I go to any of my brethren’s cells, unless there is an urgent need, we never talk together lest we slip into worldly matters, is this right?’ He answered, ‘This is perfect because you have always to be alert.’

### **Vigil and Submission:**

I asked Abba Botros, who was Abba Lot’s disciple: ‘When I am alone in my cell, I have a peaceful heart, but if one of the brethren comes and speaks to me about the people outside, I lose my inner peace, what should I do?’ He answered, ‘You are the one who brings this uncomfortable feeling to yourself, because if you start asking your brother: how are you? Where are you coming from? How

are the rest of the brethren? What is happening nowadays... and so on, then you will hear what you do not want to hear and this will cause your disturbance.’ So I asked what to do if one of the brethren visits me? He answered, ‘Submit yourself totally to God and do not follow your will desiring to know things about others, thus the Lord will have mercy on you and give you comfort that will be with you all the days of your life.’

Abba Abraham once told me this story: There was a brother called Martirious living with us, and once he found some salt which fell off one of the sachets carried by a camel while transferring it from El Eskeet to Tarnouti, so he brought it back to his cell. When Abba Agathon saw the salt he grieved badly and asked Martirious to go back and put the salt where he found it (which was about 12 miles away from his cell), because it is a sin for the monk to take anything that he has not work for. Martirious said to Abba Agathon, ‘Why are you fussing about some salt? Is it a sin to take a little amount of salt?’ The elder answered, ‘Yes, it is a sin’, and he did not rest until Martirious returned the salt. To this extent did he consider even the most trifle matters.

### **Abba Agathon’s Departure:**

He would always say: ‘A person must always remember the Judgement Day.’ When he was about to depart, he kept his eyes open without moving for three days. When the brethren asked him where he was, he answered: ‘Before the Judgement of God.’ So they said: ‘Do you also fear

this hour?', and he answered: 'Till now, I did my best to keep the commandments, yet I am a human being, how can I know that I pleased God? I will never find rest until I meet God, because God's judgement is different than that of the people.' The brethren then asked him to tell them more, but he said, 'Please I do not have enough time left to talk', then he departed happily and the brethren saw him as if greeting his beloved ones.

Abba Agathon used to say that no one can grow in any virtue if he is not alert and watchful. Once, one the brethren asked him: 'Which deed requires the most struggle?' So he answered: 'Forgive me, but I consider that there is no struggle greater than that of praying to God. Once a person stands to pray, the devils start distracting him because they know that only prayers can overcome them. If you struggle in anything, you will find rest after a while, except for struggling in prayers because the devils will always fight you while praying till your last breath.

### **The Personality of Abba Agathon:**

✠ Abba Agathon was so wise concerning the spiritual issues and so vigorous concerning bodily struggle. He used to do everything and was self sufficient in hand work, cooking, cleaning, and clothing.

✠ He was careful with what he saw, he never allowed his eyes to wander so as not to allow nonsense into his cell.

✝ He used to give to his brethren happily whatever they needed, and advised them to not be reluctant in giving things to people who need them.

✝ If anyone insulted him, he would keep quiet as if he did not hear it. When we would ask him, ‘Did not you hear what he said?’ he would answer, ‘Yes, and I consider his words true because I am exactly as what he said because of my sins, and I am a sinner.’ Then if we asked, ‘Why did you not offer him a prostration’ he would answer, ‘So that he might not get embarrassed.’

✝ He was so peaceful with everyone and they all loved him and followed his example.

### **About Abba Shishoy:**

One of the trustworthy brethren said to me: We were seven monks who went to Abba Shishoy asking him for a word of benefit, so he said, ‘Forgive me I am an ignorant person and I came to visit Abba Or and Abba Ethra’, so we went to Abba Or (who had been sick for eighteen years). I prostrated before him and asked him for a word of benefit, so he said: ‘What can I say? Go and do what you see good because God reveals Himself to those who seek Him.’

Abba Or and Abba Ethra were not of the same origin but they were best friends to their departure. Abba Or was so humble and Abba Ethra was so obedient.

✠ I spent some days with them and I witnessed this amazing incident: One day, someone brought a fish so Abba Ethra wanted to cook it for Abba Or but as he started cutting the fish, Abba Or called: ‘Ethra, Ethra!’ so he left the knife in the middle of the fish and went to see why was Abba Or calling him. I was astonished by this great obedience for he did not even ask Abba Or to wait until he cut the fish.

✠ I asked Abba Ethra, ‘Where did you get this great obedience from?’ He answered, ‘It is not from me, it is from the elder Abba Or, come and watch.’ He cooked a part of the fish and burnt it on purpose, then offered it to Abba Or who ate it without saying a word, then he asked him, ‘Is the fish nice Abba Or?’ And he answered, ‘Very nice.’ Then he presented the other half of the fish very well cooked saying, ‘Sorry father but I could not help it, this part is not cooked properly’, so Abba Or answered, ‘You are right, it tastes a bit strange.’ Then Abba Ethra said to me, ‘Have you seen the obedience of Abba Or?’

Let us struggle, my brethren, and build our lives on the foundation of our fathers, because if we belittle their lives, we will be condemned. But if we build our lives on their foundation, then mercy will come to us, together with all the saints who please God.

Glory, honour, and dominion be to Him forever. Amen

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## **PART TWO OF THE ARTICLES**

# 1. EXPLANATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS OF ABBA ISAIAH

## **Instruction 1:**

A person needs to be patient when praying before God, asking His Support, in order to acquire the eternal heavenly comfort.

## **Explanation:**

Some claim that God only wants the outer fruits of our deeds, and He will then fix the inner deeds. However, this is not true because just as you are mindful of your attitudes with others, you need also to be careful of your thoughts. God is asking you to strive in order to rid yourself of evil thoughts. As for uprooting sins and iniquities, God alone is capable of doing this, for if we had the power to do it, then the Lord was incarnated in vain.

✠ In the same way that an eye cannot see without light and a mouth cannot talk without a tongue, we cannot be saved or enter the Kingdom of heaven without our Lord Jesus Christ.

✠ If you say that you have no need to struggle against certain sins like committing adultery, stealing, and so on, then you deceive yourself. Take care lest you become

overcome by pride, dishonesty, envy, and hypocrisy, and so result in struggling against these sins as well.

**Instruction 2:**

Keep God's commandments and do not be reluctant in following them, otherwise, your sins will not be forgiven. Watch these two things till death: Do not eat with a woman, and do not have friendship with a youth.

**Explanation:**

A recluse or hermit should stay away from any place where there are women or youth, because out of all the temptations facing the monk, adultery is the most fierce. It makes the monk distant from Christ's love; it is like death to the monk. For this reason, the fathers insisted on living in the wilderness where there are no women or youth. Young monks fall into the sin of adultery if they dwell where women or youth reside, because of their young age and fierce battle. As for the older monks, their inner pride can also cause them to fall into this sin.

**Instruction 3:**

If you are tempted by the dreams of marriage at night, beware to think of these dreams during day time lest you should defile yourself and bring forth hard times on yourself.

### **Explanation:**

Those, such as the elders, who struggle diligently, are relieved from the temptations of marriage which come to haunt them at night. But the young monks may still encounter such dreams because of their past sins. If, during the day, the devil fails to tempt them of such thoughts, they appear to them at night, acting as though they are involved in a marital relationship. For this reason Abba Isaiah instructed the young monks to pray and plead without ceasing, so that the Lord may save them from such attacks.

### **Instruction 4:**

Love all works of asceticism and abstinence so that your sins may decrease.

### **Explanation:**

We say that as long as you are healthy, allow your body to be accustomed to fasting till evening. Continuous asceticism, refraining from eating rich food and wine, drinking less water, wearing simple clothes, walking bare-foot, lying on the ground, praying the seven prayers of the Agbia, many prostrations, continuous inner prayers, crying and weeping for your sins and always humbling yourself before God and the people, all lead to controlling your bodily desires through the Divine power hidden in following the Commandments. Abba Isaiah warns of over

eating, for this is the cause of many struggles and temptations of adultery.

**Instruction 5:**

Drink less water so that the devils will be less fierce with you.

**Explanation:**

If a monk controls his body by eating and drinking less, then the devil will not find a place within that monk. Also beware of drinking wine, for this gives room to temptations of adultery.

**Instruction 6:**

If anyone presents wine, do not by any means drink a lot and do not break the commandments for the sake of friendship.

**Explanation:**

Stay away from wine as much as possible; do not add fire to other fires, lest you should fall into the sin of adultery. This instruction is very useful to both youth and elders who love purity. Wine creates desire and anger, because if the veins are full of wine, a person will be unable to control himself, thus falling into the sin of anger.

### **Instruction 7:**

Do not be reluctant in your prayers, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies. Be careful and active in your service, lest the beasts devour you.

### **Explanation:**

Nothing protects a monk from the harm of the devil, whether he is living alone, or is in a monastery, except completing his seven prayers and working for the rest of the time.

### **Instruction 8:**

Force yourself to read the Psalms because this preserves you from profanity.

### **Explanation:**

Force yourself always to complete the seven daily prayers and when you sit to do your work, eat, drink or walk throughout your day until you go to sleep, continually pray the Psalms so that you can conquer the fights of the devil.

### **Instruction 9:**

The soul of a lazy reluctant monk is definitely a dwelling place for all vices.

### **Explanation:**

Feelings of complaint and boredom can never attack a monk while he is praying, prostrating before the Cross, reading, or working. This is because they can never do their work and resist the inner Divine power hidden in following the Commandments.

### **Instruction 10:**

Do not spoil yourself when living alone in your cell.

### **Explanation:**

You have to be organised in your cell and very strict with yourself. Do not look at your naked body because this causes sin. Live in purity and chastity in your cell; fear God because He sees you and protects you. Beware of the devil who hates you.

### **Instruction 11:**

Train your tongue to say: “Forgive me”.

### **Explanation:**

This is a very useful instruction which began from the days of Abba Antonious. If the brothers ever forgot this teaching for a while, the father would remind them saying,

“You will lose the virtue of humbleness if you do not say “Forgive me”, because this virtue prospers if you say it continuously.

**Instruction 12:**

Do not live in a place where you have sinned before.

**Explanation:**

If you have sinned while living with other brethren and this caused you to stumble, leave the place and offer repentance and do not go back to that place again, in order that you may rid yourself of that memory. This also includes any place where there are temptations to sin; leave the place and go elsewhere.

If, due to the devil’s interference, there occurs disagreement between the brethren, and you feel you cannot restrain your tongue from causing them harm, leave that place, and try again to rid yourself of the habit and learn to control your tongue.

**Instruction 13:**

Preserve yourself from lying, because not telling the truth dismisses the fear of God from within yourself.

**Explanation:**

Lying is a very bad habit for it means a person is not able to control his tongue. This sin is the result of too much talking, and for this reason Abba Oghris said: “Be careful not to be deceived by too much talking, because there is lying in it. Our Master ordered us that our words be only Yes, or No. Anything extra is from the evil one.

**Instruction 14:**

Do not disclose your thoughts to anyone, lest you cause them to stumble.

**Explanation:**

Do not disclose the thoughts of adultery and blasphemy which attach you to the young monks, for they will not be able to help you, and you may be the cause of them stumbling. Only reveal such thoughts to the fathers the elders.

**Instruction 15:**

Do not be friends with a person who you feel may cause you to sin

**Explanation:**

If you have a friend who is a layman or monk living a life other than asceticism, they may cause you to participate

with him in sin. Depart from him and end this friendship lest you destroy yourself.

**Instruction 16:**

Beware my brethren not to condemn anyone, either by thoughts or by words. Do not go to sleep with hatred or envy to anyone in your heart.

**Explanation:**

You struggle in vain if you do not care for the purity of your heart. If you have bad feelings in your heart or thoughts towards others, you will never attain the complete love of God nor the love of your brother who is created in the image of God. You will never taste the sweetness of Divinity nor the revelation of our Master.

**Instruction 17:**

If you are troubled by too many spiritual struggles, tell yourself, it is better to struggle here on earth rather than suffer the eternal fire. Then will your soul be calmed.

**Explanation:**

Do not feel disheartened by evil doers, devils, temptations, insult, or injustice, but be patient in all these things, making sure that you are the one profiting from these struggles. Bear in mind that these conflicts are more

tolerable than enduring Hell. Have great faith and know that without any doubt, through them your sins are forgiven.

**Instruction 18:**

Do not make friends with people who have changed their faith, lest they cause you to stumble.

**Explanation:**

Do not deal with a person who changes his doctrine and faith, or is known for his bad reputation, because you will always be restless and doubting, and this will lead to your fall.

**Instruction 19:**

If you are following a specific rule to control your body, and others became aware of it and praise you for it, make haste and change your practice, lest you struggle in vain. Do it just to please God and not people.

**Explanation:**

If you are practicing, for instance, fasting, or standing for long hours praying, or wearing heshin clothes, and others become aware of it, they may praise you for your effort. Therefore you must quickly hasten to change your practice. If for some reason, however, you are unable to

change your practice, then you must do your best to ignore their comments and focus on the love of Christ, for whom you are striving and wait for this praise and glory.

**Instruction 20:**

If you are still a youth and struggling to control your body, do not look to acquiring the virtues of the elder fathers. These virtues only come after much work and toil.

**Explanation:**

I refer here to the highly spiritual virtues, such as always being in the presence of God, controlling the thoughts in order not to think of any worldly matters, mentioning the holy name of Jesus Christ without ceasing, and praying without boredom. If you are still a novice, you must first try to calm your senses, and try not to look or talk or listen to anyone. Then, once your senses are calm, then you may begin calming your mind, and gradually you will attain the virtues.

**Instruction 21:**

If anyone insults or disgraces you, bear him gently and happily, bearing in mind Judgement Day and that you are a sinner. The fathers say that all the good and the bad things that you do are judged according to God's justice. Everything has its reward or punishment.

**Explanation:**

If someone hurts you, consider God's judgement which will be just, and accept that the hurtful experience is for your own salvation. In this way, you will be able to bear the insult.

**Instruction 22:**

While praying and asking for God to free you from your sins, do not ask to see God's wonders.

**Explanation:**

If you are a novice, standing to pray, do not ask to see God in His glory or ask boldly to see our Lord's light that surrounds us while praying. Do not resemble the haughty Pharisee who lifted his eyes to pray and was proud of himself. Rather be like the humble tax collector who beat his chest in sorrow asking for God's mercy.

**Instruction 23:**

Do not befriend a rich person lest you belittle God's glory.

**Explanation:**

If a rich person tries to be your friend, stay away from him, because your heart will become troubled while

praying and you will constantly think of the riches of the world.

**Instruction 24:**

Do not give room for distress or boredom in your heart, but rather fulfil God's commandments, because all that God asks of us is to have strong will, faith and love.

**Explanation:**

If, while you are struggling, you notice God's grace and support to others, do not murmur and say, "God is helping those strong ones, while he is abandoning me, the weak". You will be unable to do even the little that you were struggling with, and you will be far from God's love and lose your reward. If you have good will, believe in God's promises and keep His commandments according to your abilities. He will then give you your reward when it is time for this and He will glorify you.

**Instruction 25:**

Do not be content with keeping one virtue and disregard others, preferring for your mind to be preoccupied with other matters.

**Explanation:**

Do not try to practice one virtue and ignore other virtues completely. Rather, balance your thoughts. Never be negligent in any of the virtues, but follow the commandments in strictness.

**Instruction 26:**

Meditate within yourself so that you may be freed from eternal death and destruction.

**Explanation:**

Do not desire leadership, think clearly and be alert. Do not exercise authority over others, for in so doing you bring destruction upon yourself. Do not just hate being authoritative, but despise it totally.

## 2. HUMILITY AND THE VIRTUES WHICH LEAD TO IT

### **Humility:**

Humility is to consider yourself a sinner who has done nothing good before God.

### **Kinds of Humility:**

- ✚ Humility before God
- ✚ Humility before people

On the contrary, there are two types of pride:

- Pride before God
- Haughtiness over people who are created in God's image.

✚ Humility before God is to consider yourself a sinner who has done no good deeds before the Lord. About this Abba Oghris wrote: "Evil cannot overcome the power of Christianity, as long as we are dealing in humility." As much as you progress in a virtue, think of yourself as a sinner more than anyone else.

✚ Humility before people is to consider yourself less than all other humans. This is real humility.

✠ The foundation of humility is quietness. How beautiful is what was said by one of the Elders: “Quietness is the head of all virtues and result in humility before God and the people.”

✠ True humility comes from the heart and the conscience, as our Master and Saviour Jesus says: “*Learn from Me, for I am humble and lowly of heart.*”

### **Virtues which lead to humility before people:**

✠ Do not compare yourself with others, as St Macarius says: “Humility is to consider yourself the least among all people; do not cause trouble with others by insisting on your will or opinion. Obey everyone and always look down.”

✠ This Instruction is very useful, because looking down creates chastity, and the remembrance of death at all times.

✠ There is nothing better than to remember death, for it could stop you from sinning and help you in acquiring humility. In addition, preserve yourself from the sin of telling lies, because if your tongue becomes used to lying, you will lose the virtue of humility, and acquire pride. Also, do not argue with an elder, because this is mere impudence and it also takes away humbleness. Train yourself to tolerate insult for God’s sake, obey your brother and submit your will in love. If you force yourself

to experience all these practices, you will go well towards attaining the virtue of humility.

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### 3. LOVE OF CHRIST AND TRUE AIM

✠ In this article Abba Isaiah teaches us about the love of Christ, as being the aim and objective of monks, for whom they toil and purify their hearts from all pains, so that their conscience is enlightened with the Divine Light and they enjoy God's love.

✠ Abba Isaiah said: "The Cross delivers love." For this reason a monk should always pray and carry the cross of tolerance, patience and control of his body. Thus the love of Christ will be delivered in his heart and he will enjoy the community of the Lord.

✠ Without the love of Christ, you will not be able to control the body or the mind. Even the gifts that are granted from the Holy Spirit are useless without the love of Christ.

✠ As for those who are waiting for Christ's love, if they strive to follow the commandments, our Lord will give them the greatest gift, which is for them to always enjoy the love of the Lord, and to witness His glory according to their daily mediation.

✠ As the Apostle says: ***"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith,***

***so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing***” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). This is for sure what Abba Isaiah was referring to when he said that without love, even the cross cannot support you.

✠ Do not try to practice asceticism, if you are not doing this for the love of God. When all the saints yearned for the love of Christ, they abandoned everything and went to dwell in the wilderness and mountains. They followed the holy grace because the name of Jesus Christ was in their mouths sweeter than any other thing in the world.

✠ When we remember always our Master’s love and sacrifice to us the sinners, we will be able to strive in keeping His commandments and love Him in order to enjoy His Kingdom.

✠ For this reason, many saints tolerated great tribulations and afflictions, and it was the love they had for the Lord that freed them from the old man and made them enjoy true freedom.

✠ Abba Isaiah concluded by saying: “The love of Christ can never dwell within us if we are still loving the things of this world”, in other words, you cannot drink from the Lord’s cup and the devil’s cup. The Lord’s cup and His banquet gives joy and happiness and Love. But

the devils' cup and banquet gives the pains of desires and sin.

‡ You can never overcome the pains and hidden sins of the heart, and at the same time enjoy the Lord's delicious, divine love. You can only achieve Christ's love if you rid yourself of the worldly love from your heart, and practice quietness and struggle against evil thoughts.

‡ Encouraging those who have little work, he said: ***“There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory”*** (1Corinthians 15:41), yet they are all in the Holy Heaven, all the glory is for God.

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## 4. ABOUT VIRTUES

St Abba Isaiah clarifies the virtues which the brethren living in solitude should acquire:

1. Humility occurs through one blaming and judging themselves:

If you continuously consider your sins and blame yourself for upsetting Jesus, your soul will be humbled, and in your eyes, you will see all people as being righteous, and you the only sinner.

2. Control your desires through discernment and strong will:

If you pray without ceasing, with a pure body and heart, asking Him to give you power, sustenance and salvation, in order to fight your old thoughts and sins, then the divine Light will shine inside your heart and you will be ready to enjoy Jesus' love and company.

3. Love is not to condemn anybody:

If you want to attain love towards your brethren (which resembles one's love to God), you must act according to our Master's words: "***Do not judge***". Do not detest or despise anyone or think about their faults, but consider that everyone else is better than you. In this way you will be ready for the grace of God's love.

4. A heart that loves God does not return evil for evil:

This virtue makes the monk worthy of Christ's love and glory.

5. Quietness is to not be deceived with things that are inappropriate for you:

True quietness is to stop arguing with others, and to stop thinking of worldly pleasures.

6. Surrendering is a heart without evil:

Surrendering everything does not concern material issues only, but it is also giving up the sinful thoughts by which we can control the heart and mind.

7. Peace is in controlling your senses:

If you want to keep your peace while being outside of your cell, preserve your senses very cautiously, especially your tongue, because it is the cause of disturbing the mind and grieving the heart. Do not allow your tongue to talk or insult anybody. Also take care of what you hear, do not listen to things that stir your heart. Be like a mute person who does not hear any insult or praise.

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## **5. ABOUT RESTING**

As long as you are still in the body, my brethren, do not look for rest and do not be comforted thinking that you are relieved from spiritual warfare. The devils leave you for a while, in order to prepare attacking you during your resting time, because they have no mercy.

As long as you are in the body do not fill your stomach with food and drink, as if you have already conquered sin and the devil of adultery, but always keep the rules of your devoutness and humbleness. Also beware of anger because it is darkness to the soul, it deprives the soul of the light of the knowledge of God.

If you intend to return evil by evil, then all your spiritual struggle is in vain. Beware of this sin, because together with the sin of adultery, these two warfares are the most fierce. If you struggle and conquer them, through God's grace, then you will acquire the purity of heart witnessing God.

Prepare yourself to tolerate disdain and insult, and to calm down those who are aggressive towards you. Have discernment and always be quiet.

The purity of the body and heart lead to the strong weapon of humility, by which you can tolerate any evil. Bow your head and ask the forgiveness of him who insults you, remembering your Lord who bowed His head and never

complained. Doing this, the devil of pride will escape and the light of the grace of humbleness will cover you.

- ✠ In solitude you have to practice three things:
- 1) Control of the body;
  - 2) Control of the soul;
  - 3) Virtues: (fasting, prayers, alms giving)

✠ Control of the body: fasting and giving up delicious food. Continuous prayers before the Cross and self sacrifice.

✠ Control of the soul: Piety with giving up evil devilish thoughts. Pray with concentration in praises and Psalms. Forgive the sins of others with all your heart.

✠ Virtues: Rid yourself of all the worldly memories and desires while practicing fasting, prayers, and helping others through alms giving.

Spiritual ecstasy is indescribable, because it surpasses words. Like the angels, it occurs to the monk when he is praying, and the divine light shines in his heart and mind, according to our fathers' sayings.

The mercy that is bestowed upon the spiritual person is also indescribable, because it is the mercy towards the whole creation when he prays and pleads for every single creature.

✠ Blessed is he who suffered, was crucified, died, was buried and resurrected with Christ in joy. He will find

himself loving the Way; the Way that is of the Son, and following in His holy footsteps of humbleness, meekness, patience, and quietness. Through struggling against his sinful nature will attain all these virtues, and know that he belongs to Christ.

✠ The suffering are all the works of bodily devoutness; the crucifixion is the struggle against the thoughts; death is overcoming the sins; burial is the purity of the heart, and resurrection is the spiritual ecstasy.

✠ No one can overcome sin through his own struggle and power, for victory comes from God. For if you can be victorious on your own merit, then Christ was incarnated in vain.

✠ If the devil comes to fight you, awaken your conscience, resort to our Master Jesus Christ through prayers, tears and pleadings, and little by little you will gain victory over the devil, conquering the pain of adultery and attaining a pure heart. You will discover the light within you which was once hidden because of the veil of sin.

✠ Three virtues a monk has to acquire:

1. The natural holy zeal: the natural resistance and holy zeal against the devil's temptations and trials. Always dismissing evil thoughts and desires from the heart and the mind.
2. Courage: tolerating afflictions and temptations.

3. Not to be bored: never to be reluctant in prayers and pleadings.

✠ Do not consider any evil doing of any person, and never return evil by evil, be patient and of long sufferance.

✠ We feel the grace of our Lord the moment we repent, for He accepts us joyfully and remits all our old sins. Never be bored and say, “When will the Lord listen to me?” but rather be persistent in your prayers. Ask Him to release you from your enemies; never stop struggling and the Lord will know the perfect time to answer your pleadings.

✠ Jesus says, “*Ask and you will be given to you,*” so let us return to Him with all our hearts. Ask Him to help you in overcoming the most torturing sin (whether it is anger, adultery, or so on). Do not ask for numerous virtues at one time, but rather ask for the ones you need the most.

✠ Jesus speaks concerning those who, “*Have continued with Me in my trials*”, towards the Cross, So who are those who have continued with Jesus in His trials and temptations, but those who died to the desires of the world? Whoever wants to enjoy the banquet of the Heavenly Kingdom should go with Him to the Cross. The Cross that Jesus wants us to carry is that of mortifying our desires. St Basilios calls it ‘the narrow life’. That is the mark of the Cross in one’s life. St Mark said that the Cross is to ‘tolerate all tribulations which happen in one’s life’.

✝ Abba Isaiah calls the Cross ‘the inner hidden struggle against the thoughts’, through which sin is defeated, the heart is purified, and the monk sees the light of God.

✝ We can never continue towards crucifixion unless we calm our desires, keep our senses clean, keep away from any sin whether by words or deeds. Then, we will pray without feeling boredom, we will conquer sin, and stand like angels before God.

✝ The devil will keep warring against us, but even if we yield to one of his temptations (maybe because of our weak nature), the angel of the Lord will dismiss the devil and we will regain our calmness through remembering Judgement Day.

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## **6. IF YOU WANT TO LIVE IN CALMNESS, EXAMINE YOURSELF**

✠ Examine yourself thoroughly if you want to live in calmness, so that you might rid yourself of those who will try to capture you in the air. Collect and concentrate your thoughts in one person, that is Jesus Christ our Saviour. Look to Him all the time, talk and yearn for His company and fulfil His commandments. Keep your heart pure at all times and lift up your heart and eyes to heaven. Look to our Master through your prayers, then you will be relieved from the devil's attacks.

✠ If you purify your heart, then you will be deserving of the Divine company. You will fly quickly to heaven when your soul departs your body. The angels accompanying you will dismiss the devils that hasten to snatch your soul in the air.

✠ Thus, if you are a monk seeking calmness and tranquillity, beware of being reluctant to follow the Lord's commandments. Ensure that that your eyes and hearts are enlightened in order that you may ascend to heaven without obstacles.

✠ Abba Isaiah call this deservedness "mercy", that is, to conquer your bodily desires and keep your heart pure.

✠ If you do not struggle to bloodshed, resembling our beloved Jesus, you will never rejoice. Here Abba Isaiah

wants the monk to resemble our Master in His purity,  
rather than in His Perfection, for it is impossible for us to  
be perfect.

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## **7. FROM THE TEACHINGS OF ABBA ISAIAH, PRESERVING THE SENSES**

✠ If you want to acquire grace and reach perfection together with humbleness, you should:

➤ Preserve your ears from hearing any word that interrupts your struggle and progress.

➤ Preserve your tongue, not only from blaming or rebuking, but also from teaching those who are younger than you, and are novices in monasticism.

✠ Stay away from arguments, from blaming or praising others. Rather, stay quietly in your cell, persisting in prayers with tears.

✠ Imitate the saints who preceded you in monasticism, and with obedience and humility, you will defeat the many traps of the devil.

✠ Do not be reluctant or negligent in following the commandments, do not slip into minor sins, because this is the door through which the devil will attack you. You will then fall into major sins. But, you can defeat both through abiding in God's power.

✠ If you see a person who is struggling against much attacks, however, he is still blaming and belittling sinners, be sure that he is not pure in heart, and that all his struggles are given to him for the benefit of others. But if

you see a person with little bodily struggle, always working quietly, having great mercy and kindness to others, blaming himself as being the worst sinner, be sure that truly he is pure in heart and on a very high spiritual level.

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## **8. CONTROLLING DESIRES**

It is the struggle through which one controls all his bodily desires and thoughts. Hate yourself and crucify your will. For the beginners (novices) they must practice this bit by bit, through the guidance of an experienced spiritual elder, who will direct them on this path, which is full of traps set by the devils.

✠ Our Lord Jesus Christ used to pray and plead. He lifted His eyes to His Father saying, "***Why have You forsaken Me?***" also, "***Father forgive them..***" He did not speak to any of those who crucified Him, but spoke only with St Mary and John the Beloved, and the right thief. He also tolerated the torture, the bitter and vinegar. It is the same with the monk who sits in calmness in his cell. After preserving his senses, controlling his thoughts and desires, he would lift up his eyes to our Master, praising, thanking, and pleading. He should just concentrate on God and His angels and saints who are in Paradise; also he should care thoroughly about reforming himself, meditating daily on his sins, remembering death and judgement and lifting up his mind from any worldly concern.

✠ "Crucifixion", because there are wicked devils creating warfare regarding this type of struggle, and they never give up. Therefore, novice monks should first practice controlling the body, then strive to attain quietness by keeping the senses completely occupied with

the remembrance of the Lord. Those who believe they can commence attaining the latter virtues on their own without any spiritual guidance from the elders, become an easy target for the devils.

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## 8. STRUGGLING TO REACH PERFECTION

✠ Abba Isaiah mentioned five virtues that one must acquire through struggle in order to reach perfection: devoutness, love, purity of heart, chastity, and having no rest. Devoutness gives relief from sin, God's love conquers the devils, purity of heart gives one a spiritual insight, chastity and humility keep virtues, and having no rest saves one from bad thoughts.

✠ Do not give the chance for thoughts to linger in your mind, but extinguish them by continuous prayers.

✠ If while you are praying your conscience does not rebuke you concerning any matter, know that this is a clear sign that you have entered into the rest of the Son of God. This means that you have conquered your thoughts and your heart is pure.

✠ Very few hermits reach this level, in which they ascend to the tower of all virtues, even though they consider themselves just starting in the way of righteousness.

✠ How wonderful are those who enjoy the divine light and revelations, and weep and plead as if they had committed all the sins of the whole world.

‡ Therefore, we must grieve and plead at all times in quietness, thus resembling our fathers who tolerated lots of tribulations and pains, in patience and long suffering, fearing the awesome day of Judgement. If we remember this Day, we will never fall in the sin of pride. Even if during our warfare, we are victorious one day, we may not be the next.

‡ A monk should never depart his cell. He should strive diligently and never despair of hope, regardless of whether he feels he is victorious in his struggle or not. Through prayers and tears, God's grace will visit him at a certain time, and then will he enter the hidden space of freedom from struggle. Thus he will acquire the crown, which is a token of the eternal life in perfection.

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## 10. CONCERNING SATISFACTION

‡ Eat only a little of the basic food, and do not indulge in the luxuries. If you have a visitor and the devil tempts you to honour him by preparing many different kinds of food, do not heed the temptation for this is the beginning of your distraction from worship. The Lord will blame you if you obey the devil, as He said to Martha, ***“You care about many things, but the need is only for one”***, that is, listening to God’s commandments and following them.

‡ Be like the widow who offered only bread to Elijah the Prophet.

‡ Do not desire to be wealthy in order to help the needy, because this is a devilish trick in order to make you fall into vain glory. We all know the story of the widow who gave only two coins, and with that she was considered better than those who were rich.

‡ Do not desire to have nice clothes, but be content with just what covers your body. If you need a robe and someone offers it to you, take it, lest if you refuse you should fall into the sin of pride and arrogance. Also, give to the needy whatever is more than what you really need.

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## **11. CONCERNING CRUCIFIXION**

✝ All that occurred to our Master, glory be to Him, occurs to the hermit fathers, but in the sense that, the cross is the struggle; His death is their death to sin; His burial is their living in quietness away from evil thoughts; and His Resurrection is their stage of attaining perfection without sin. His Resurrection is the spiritual state in which the hermit is worthy of the grace of the Paraclete.

✝ If the hermit struggles diligently over a long period of time in order to overcome evil thought and strikes of the devil, then he is considered as having died, buried and resurrected secretly, and his heart will be opened to the inner Light in his nature, which was once hidden because of sin. Therefore a hermit must consider this Light as his goal for which he struggles and toils all the days of his life.

✝ The evil thoughts result in the darkness of the soul. When our Master sees that the hermit is living in quietness, works hard with humility, and prays and struggles against evil thoughts, he will always look towards the Light which is his goal, and so our Master will have mercy on him and release him from the slavery of the devil.

✝ Abba Isaiah said that God supports those who control their desires and follow God's will. A monk must push himself in the beginning, with tolerance of spirit and

long suffering, until he is strengthened and then does not fear the attacks of the devils anymore. Instead, he prays to God with a pure heart, and increases in virtues, hence destroying the power of the enemy.

✠ No one can progress in virtues without hard struggle, and each person will receive a crown according to their struggle. But as for those who pray in one breath, and annoy the brothers in another breath, who praise the Lord in one instance, then judge others, we will hear His voice saying, “*You defiled My house*”.

✠ Remember your own sins so that you will not judge others. You will never find peace and comfort if you return evil by evil, accept vain praise, or gossip about anyone (whether it be good or bad). Also, the indications of whether the old man is still residing inside you or not, is if you seek to know matters about other people, or if you feel offended if one insults you, or if you rejoice when someone praises you.

✠ If you try to keep all the commandments of our Master Jesus Christ, keep saying to yourself: “I have not yet pleased God.”

✠ My beloved, let us all strive to please the Lord with all our hearts, and with warm tears, so that He may have mercy on us and send us power in order to overcome the devil.

✠ A monk must be vigilant, lest in spiritual warfare he lose what he has already gained. He must be quietly

vigilant all the days of his life, until he sees the Light within himself. He must grieve when remembering the hour of his death and his soul's ascent, lest the devils who war against him prevent him from entering into heaven. He must grieve in remembering the hour in which he will stand before the throne of God.

‡ We have to lift up our minds to heaven, to enter and kneel before our Master, glory be to Him. I know quite well that when my soul departs my body, the devils will try to stop it from entering Paradise, which is the token of the Kingdom of heaven, thus I must struggle hard with tears and pleadings.

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