

Sunday, December 4, 2010

Delightful teachings (2)

By the grace of the Lord, we will continue presenting some of the delightful teachings of father Seraphim, the Russian monk, who lived nearly two hundred years ago and was a great model for the fiery work of the Holy Spirit in the life of mankind.

- + We must continually protect our heart from unclean thoughts and impressions; this is how purity is created within it.
- + We should not reveal unnecessarily what is best in the heart, for only then does that which has been accumulated remain in safety from the enemies, visible and invisible, when it is kept as a treasure in the innermost heart.
- + We should free our minds from every unclean thought especially when we offer our prayers to God, such that we don't mix the stench of sin with the aroma of righteousness.
- + We must quickly reject the thoughts that wrestle us, and be especially careful with gluttony, greed, and vain glory.
- + Whoever is vigilant must not rely on his own personal discernment alone, neither should he trust it. But rather, he should measure himself against the Holy Bible, and compare the movements of his heart with respect to it.
- + If we stand fast against the devil words which he plants in our ears, that is work well done. The devil cannot through his thoughts except to those who are led by their desires. He does not dare to come near to those who have been purified of their lusts, except from a far.
- + He who desires salvation must always have a heart inclined towards repentance and contrition. With such a contrite spirit a person can avoid, without trouble, all the artful tricks of the devil, whose efforts are all directed towards disturbing the spirit of a person. By this disturbance he sows tares (i.e., weeds.) But when a person struggles to have a meek heart and to keep peace in his thoughts, then are all the wiles of the enemy are powerless.
- + If the spirit is distracted during prayers, we must humble ourselves before God asking for forgiveness.
- + The leader of faith and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, before He set out to redeem mankind, He fortified Himself with a lengthy fast. And all ascetics, who proceeded to work with the Lord, armed themselves with fasting and did not set out on the path of the Cross without fasting. They measured the very success of their ascetic life by their success in fasting.
- + One should eat daily what is sufficient to strengthen his body so that it becomes his helper and aid to his spirit in attaining virtues, lest the illness of the body weaken the spirit.
- + One must follow the middle road, giving the spirit what is spiritual, and to the body its needs. We should not refrain from social life.
- + At the dinner table, do not look at what others eat, do not criticize anyone, but watch yourself and feed your soul with prayer.
- + Fasting doesn't mean that you only abstain from eating for certain periods, but also means that you eat with a measure.
- + All ascetics armed themselves with fasting before they set out to do any work. They attributed their ascetic success to their success in fasting.
- + Not everyone is qualified to undergo a harsh ascetic discipline, nor to be deprived of all comforts that ease the pains. Do not embark on that which is beyond your abilities, lest you fall and be mocked by your enemy.
- + Guard your self against hopelessness because it is the source of all other afflictions.
- + We need patience dealing with our own selves and to tolerate our own faults as we tolerate the faults of others. Nonetheless, we ought not to be driven to laziness, but rather strive tirelessly to move forward.

Next week, we will conclude this fragrant bouquet of experiences and spiritual teachings. The Lord is able to make it a blessing and enlightenment to many minds.

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