

A psychologist once asked 3,000 persons, "What are you living for?" He was startled to find that most of them were simply enduring the present while they waited for something better in the future. Actors doing small parts were waiting for the "big chance". People in business were thinking of their present jobs as drudgery, a mere marking of time, until fate opened the door to something better. One middle aged mother said, "I only hope that my nerves can stand the ordeal until my husband retires and the children get homes of their own, and then I can get a little rest." When this all happened, this same mother was a very unhappy person. She looked back to the time when she was busy and the house full of children as the happiest period of her life... "Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2) Now— not tomorrow— is the time to live. Now— not tomorrow— is the time to be saved, to be made whole. Our time on earth is limited. Every moment is unique and unrepeatable. Tomorrow is not ours, today is. Now is the time to do the compassionate act. Now is the time to say the word of forgiveness— before our time runs out. Now is the most glorious period of life. God's time is always now. (Fr Anthony Coniaris) The Lord, before His incarnation, let man experience all the bitterness of sin, all his powerlessness to eradicate it; and when all longed for a deliverer, then He appeared, the all-wise and all-powerful healer and helper.

When men hungered and thirsted after righteousness as it grew weaker, then the everlasting righteousness came.... This is indeed the miracle of miracles; this reveals the infinite mercy, wisdom, and omnipotence of the Lord towards His creatures, that He Himself, the Lord of all, the infinite, the unbounded, was pleased and was able to become man that we might be saved, that

the Word, by whom all things were made, was made flesh and dwelt among us
, living with men, and made like unto man in everything, sin alone excepted.

(St John of Kronstadt)

You keep writing about your troubles and your inner disorder. Realise that it cannot be otherwise in the temporal life, and do not try to find out from whom and through whom they come, for they do not come without God's permission.

If not even a hair of our head will perish, how much more sure is God's protection of man.

It is also said: "By your endurance you will gain your lives."

(Luke 21:18-19)

I have already written to you before that there is just one way to deal with sorrows: prayer and patience.

At a time of trouble wait for peace, and when there is peace prepare for trouble. In this temporal life peaceful and troubled times alternate.

Even the holy men of God were not free from these changes.

But you want to find some new path in order to escape hard experiences.

This cannot be.

You haven't had abuse hurled at you or been struck on the cheeks, have you?

Just remember the patience of the God incarnate: the blows on the cheeks, the hitting on the head with a stick, the spitting in his face and many kinds of ridicule.

And he endured all this for the sake of our salvation.

But we do not want, for the sake of our own salvation, to suffer even small annoyances.

(Father John, a Russian monk)

Hallowed Be Thy Name. We sanctify the name of the Father in grace who is in heaven by mortifying earthly lust, of course, and by purifying ourselves from corrupting passions, since sanctification is the total immobility and mortification of sensual lust. Ar
rived at that point, we quiet down the indecent howling of anger which no longer has, to excite it and persuade it to be carried over to familiar pleasures, the lust which is already mortified by a

holiness conformed to reason.

Indeed, anger, as a natural ally of lust, ceases to rage once it sees that lust is mortified.

Maximus the Confessor, Commentary on the Our Father

A basic condition for the spiritual life is that we should understand that, on our own, we can do absolutely nothing. No matter how hard we try, the spiritual life is something that someone else gives to us. And the “someone else” is the Spirit of God, the Comforter, the “treasury of good things and the giver of life”, the treasury from which all the riches of spirituality come forth, the source from which the spiritual life emerges and overflows. Of course, sometimes we get confused, and think that to be spiritual means to be a “good person”: not to steal, not to kill, not to go to bad places or with bad friends, to go to Church on Sunday, to read spiritual books, and so on.

But no, this is not the spiritual life. A spiritual person, a true Christian, is someone whose entire life is sworn to God. Initially by means of his baptism, and later, in his heart, such a person swears an oath to God, to live for God, and to remain with God forever. A spiritual person is an athlete who has burst into life, who stands out from the crowds of human beings, and runs with all the speed of his soul to heaven. A spiritual person is one who with shining eyes and chest thrust forward, has set his course and races to heaven. He is not a “good man”. A spiritual person knows that, in order to succeed, he needs strong wings: the wings of the Holy Spirit. A spiritual person must therefore do everything possible to attract, to win over, the Spirit of God, because only the Holy Spirit, God himself, has the gifts of the spiritual life. According to St Gregory of Nyssa, the “distribution of the royal gifts” of the Holy Spirit takes place in the Church through the Sacraments.

Fr Aimilianos of Simonopetra

Do not say: "I do not know what is right, therefore I am not to blame when I fail to do it." For if you did all the good about which you do know, what you should do next would then become clear to you, as if you were passing through a house from one room to another. It is not helpful to know what comes later before you have done what comes first. For knowledge without action "puffs up", but "loves edifies", because it "patiently accepts all things" (1 Cor. 8:1; 13:7).

Mark the Ascetic in Philokalia, volume 1

St Luke tells us that the Transfiguration took place while Jesus was praying. Is it not in periods of prayer that we are most likely to witness the glory of God? Is it not prayer that produces an inner change in man which becomes reflected in a transfigured life?

Fr Anthony Coniaris

St Silouan declared that the Spirit brought him through torments of doubt to the firm conviction that "Jesus Christ is God." This Spirit, who bestows the gift of faith, fills every aspect of our life and leads us progressively toward the twin goals of Knowledge of God and Love of Enemies. If we can know anything at all of God, and even enter into the most intimate communion with Him, it is only because God grants us this mystical knowledge by His Spirit, who dwells within the temple of the heart. If we can love even our enemy, it is only with the compassion and mercy of

God Himself, who infuses our heart with the transforming grace of the Spirit. This is a grace that lifts us above our passions- corrupted feelings of victimization and shame, of anxiety and defensive rage- and enables us, in the power of the Spirit, to embrace with love even those who hate us, who threaten us, and who, on a purely human level, inspire our contempt and loathing...One of the greatest and most illuminating gifts we receive from the Spirit is recognition and acceptance of the fact that we are often our own worst enemy. It is that burdensome fact that can lead us to make enemies even of those who are closest to us. Little irritations can transform an insignificant incident into a household drama that creates tension, alienation and rejection. The ascetic life is made up of struggles against just these kinds of temptations. There needs to be a change of heart that only God can accomplish. "The Lord's love," Silouan declares, "is made known in no other wise than through the Holy Spirit."

Taken from the book Longing for God, by Fr John Breck

