

DIVINE LOVE

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**GOD IS THE PARADISE
OF MY SOUL**

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**In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
One God, Amen**

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THE NEED OF THE ONE

If God planted the garden for the sake of the man, (Genesis 2:8), so, the body which is correlated with the soul that is dwelling in it, will not be happy unless the soul is also happy! And the soul, which is a breath from the almighty, will find its pleasure only with its creator!

The soul looks to the world and its pleasures, to the sky and everything in it, but it will be way far for the soul to feel satisfied, unless if it is with its creator.

If the soul loves anything, it is because it is from the hand of a good heavenly father, but the soul will not be contented without being with Him.

The soul is like a bride waiting for her groom, so it will rejoice and be delighted, not with the gifts that he presents, but because it is from the hand of a groom, who loves her and she loves Him. She refuses to be pleased with his presents, unless if being with him, regardless of the amount of the presents or its considerable price!

The soul considers God its own paradise where it takes pleasure in Him, even if it did not gain any of the pleasures of the world. For the soul, being separated from God is like being in hell, even if it was inside a paradise!

These are Adam's feeling in the Paradise, where he finds himself embraced by the Lord his beloved in the garden, so his soul melts in the Lord's love, he forgets all what is around him, even himself. As if there is none in the presence except God his beloved!

But, once Adam sinned, his soul turned to be in a well of anxiety, experiencing a feeling of ponderous toward paradise and himself, eager to escape and run away, but to where? Even the voice of the Lord turned to be a source of terror, and Adam would like to escape from it. There was no rest for him, whether, inside or outside the paradise; there was no comfort for (Adam), by being with Eve or without her, by having kids or not. He was striving and struggling hoping to find happiness to fill himself, but he is in need for just one who is able to make him feel satisfied!

THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST

Where is Jesus Christ?

He is always present in the midst of His church, for He is the **head** of the church, and the church is His body, He restores to her what she has lost in the first Adam.

He is present in the heart of the true believer: "kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:1), He does not take the believer back to the lost

Eden Garden, but He sets up in his depths what is greater than this garden.

3. **He is present in His priests;** He works in them by himself, for He is the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep.

4. **He is present on the altar;** He offers His body and blood to His people.

5. **He is present in all the church sacraments:** He is overflowing His grace on His people, He is the one who baptizes, He is the one who gives the unity to the couple through His Holy Spirit, and with His Holy Spirit also, He grants forgiveness in the sacrament of repentance and confession, etc... He is the heavenly groom who embraces to Him His bride, the church, to bless the believers. He furnishes the church with His treasures of knowledge, He reveals to it His secrets, and awards it with what He has as He promised: "He will take of what is mind and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

THE NEED OF THE ONE

We are, the descendants of Adam, have inherited the anxiety which grew and multiplied with our thirst, because of the deprivation of the most precious thing that God provided for us, which is to enjoy being with Him!

There should not be any wonder if most of the modern philosophies confirm that the man is an anxious animal, as if the anxiety is a substantial trait that accompanies the human soul. Peguy said that the man is a well of anxiety.

The man yearns for money or people's praise or power, and as much as he attains of what he seeks, his anxiety increases as the gap between what he desires and what he attains grows bigger. He is incapable to reach the reality of his problem; his soul is in need for its true paradise, God who is infinite!

Napoleon recognized achieving victory over many nations of the world, but was not satisfied, and if he invaded the rest of the world, he would have asked to reign over the moon and the other planets. And if he reached to those, he would have felt thirstier.

As much as the science and the modern technology have provided us with a broad knowledge and prospects that the man had never dreamt of, one day, still, the man has found the gap of his primitive ignorance to learn more things and to desire for more inventions. And as much as the modern industries had provided us with production that meets the needs of our bodies, however, the cases of mental illness of anxiety, weariness, and panic have increased alarmingly.

I don't mean by this to deny the role of the scientists, and I do not claim that God wants the man to be lazy and inactive in working, or searching, or discovering, but I want to say that the immortal soul will not be contented unless with the immortal God, it longs for the infinite in everything, eager to own the one who is eternal, perfect and unlimited. Therefore, even the atheist, if he lives for 1,000 year, he will ask to live longer, and if he is offered all the earth, he will ask for the heaven, and if he also gains the heaven, he won't be comforted unless he meets with God. Therefore, **St. Augustine said:** [my God... you have created us aiming to be heading toward you, so, our heart won't find rest unless if it is resting in You.]

❖ O, my poor soul, what are you seeking?!

If you want wisdom, Jesus is the source and spring of wisdom, indeed He is the wisdom itself!

And if you are seeking power and might, He is the mighty!

If you are calling for pleasure and happiness, He is the fountain of the true joy!

If you are longing to be drunk, His love will get you drunk!

If you are hungry for bread, He is the bread of life!

If you are fascinated to be rich, He is the creator of all!

If you search for rest, in Him only, you will find your comfort... go along with Him for there is no one else to make you feel satisfied.

St. Augustine

This is why the son was prompted to incarnate among us, to proclaim Himself to us, and to present Himself to be a paradise to those who have been deprived of it.

Lord Jesus – the incarnated word – He came to call in every opportunity: "I am He...", these are words of a loving God who offers Himself to souls that unaware of Him, if someone else said these words, he would have been an arrogant man presenting himself to human souls taking the position of God, the creator, who satisfies the souls of His people.

This is the essence of Christianity: the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Himself – who is the love who gave Himself for us – and accepting Him as a paradise for the soul, for this He called, saying: "if anyone thirsts, let him come to me" (John 7:37), "and let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Thus, whilst the soul is in need to **know the road**, managing to be in the midst of the sweeping currents of the world and the body deceptive

lusts, it finds her beloved who presents Himself as a ladder on which she goes up to heaven, her final destination, so then, He talks saying: "I am the way, the truth" (John 14:6).

And while the soul is in need for **food** to give her the strength with which it grows and lives, it finds, in its beloved all the satisfaction and the source of its life, He longs for her to agree to eat him and have life through Him, for He assured her: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

And also, while the soul feels the **joy, the pleasures, the worries, and the weightiness of the world**, perceiving the lusts of the body and its emotions, and war and deception of the devil, hence, Jesus proclaims to her: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

While the soul is in need of a **leader** for support and care, He reveals to her: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

When the soul feels empty from inside, and starts whining, it looks for a **friend** who is beloved, just, gentle, and patient, it wishes for a **groom** who listens to her secrets and talk with her, a groom who introduces himself as a buddy for the sinners and tax collectors, and a groom for those who believe in Him.

He is the paradise that will never dry; it overflows with no limit and fills us as much as we can take. He is beseeching all to accept Him, imploring: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20). And if he did not open for me, I will insist more than once perhaps his heart might soften and open for me because I love him!

He came and incarnated to restore happiness to the soul, to fill its needs, and to take away its anxiety.

GOD IS EVERYTHING TO EACH ONE!

❖ God will become everything in the life of each person, in a way to dominate the mind so, the man may feel or understand, or think, that all of him belongs to God. When the man is pure from all residues of blemishes and becomes absolutely free from every cloud of evil, then his mind won't feel anything beside God or anything else. This mind thinks of God, sees God, and hangs on to Him. God reins over each movement and its measure. In this way, God becomes all in all in that person's life.

Origen

GOD IS THE CENTER OF THE SOUL.

St. Paul talked to the Athenians about God saying: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He is the one who gives life to all, He gives them breath, and all things.....though He is not far from each one of us; **for in Him we live and move and have our being**,"(Acts 17:24-28).

God is not far from our souls, He is in the midst of it! Even though heaven and earth are not big enough to contain Him, he does not mind for the human soul, which is on His image and according to His likeness, to be His throne. The soul also is filled with Him and resting in Him!

He seeks the heart (Proverbs 23:26), and while the believer offers it to the Lord, the Lord sees it as a small bed (Song of Solomon 3:1) and He enlarges it (Isaiah 57:8), but He is jealous, He does not bear another groom to take His place.

The comfort of the heart is only in the Lord, and its fullness is set to be in Him, because this heart is heavenly and cannot be filled unless with that heavenly. It is like a ring which is made particularly for a triangle stone, it does not take another stone, the same for the soul, it does not find its happiness unless with the Holy Trinity, its creator.

Therefore we say, if the sin had not entered our life, it would have been no need for the commandment of love, because **the soul in its nature is attracted to God**, the same as when a heavy stone naturally moves toward the earth under the influence of earth gravity.

But since the sin has entered the heart, there have been a need to purify the heart through the blood of our Lord Jesus, and to sanctify the spirit, while enjoying the commandment of love. It became necessary for the man to know that God is the center of his life and happiness, in Him found all the satisfaction and the comfort needed for the soul.

This issue was known naturally by Adam who did not need to know about it at that time. But now – after falling – God never refrain from reprimanding our ignorance declaring His truth saying: "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And when themselves cisterns--broken cisterns that can hold no

water (Jeremiah 2:13). Therefore, Jesus Lord of glory came and called us saying: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mathew 11:28).

GOD IS ALL MY LIFE!

❖ My God... I yearn to know you, O who You know me, I wish I know you, O the strength of myself!

Reveal yourself to me, O the comforter of myself!

I wish to see you, O the light of my eyes!

Hasten to me O the joy of myself, so that I meditate in You, O the delight of my heart!

Fill myself with Your love, for You are my life!

Shine upon me for my true delight lies in You. The sweetness of my comfort is in You. My life is found in You, and the perfection of my glory is in You.

I yearn to find You, O the pleasure of my heart!

I am longing for you, O my beloved!

Do not forsake me, O heavenly groom, for upon Your presence my entire being –within and out – becomes full of super joy and cheer.

Grant me thyself, O everlasting kingdom, so that I enjoy having you, O the holy source of life, the incomprehensible and the joy of myself.

"I love thee, O Lord my strength, the Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer" (Psalm 18:1).

Yes. Please help me to love you, for You are my God. You are my refuge. You are my strong fortress. You are my sweet hope in the midst of my troubles.

Let me stick to you, for You are the only source of goodness, and without You there will be no goodness! May You fulfill my happiness, O the God of all goodness!

You may open my ears so that I can hear You, O the Divine Word, who penetrates into me like a two-edged sword!

O, my God! With your strong voice send thunder from your heaven! (Psalm 11:13), Let the sea and all its waves roar, let the earth be trembled, and make everything to be terrified. Send your lightning to destroy them all. And at the end reveal to my ear the channels of the water and the foundation of the world (Psalm 18:15)

O, invisible light, I ask You to give me the eyes which with it I could see you!

O, fragrance of divine life, give me a new sense of smell that pulls me towards your good scents!

My Lord... Purify in me the sense of taste so it can taste you, acknowledge you, and find out the greatness of Your pleasure which preserved for everyone who wants to sip from the nectar of Your love!

Give me a heart that beats with nothing, but with your love, a soul that adores You, a life that honestly remembers You, a sense that recognizes the depth of Your mysteries, a mind that finds its comfort in You and gets to be united with Your life giving wisdom constantly, and knows how sincerely to be in love with You, O the love in which all the wisdom is stored!

O, fountain of life, every creature will live to glorify You. You have given me life, and my life is in You. With you I live, and without You I die!

With Your support I am awake, and without You I am lost! With You I am filled with joy, and without You I die in sorrow!

You are the life, the source of life, nothing can parallel with Your gentleness and beauty!

I beseech You: tell me where You are?! Where I can meet with You to disappear completely in You, and won't have life except in You!

Please come... For I am sick with love. Living apart from You leads to my death, while remembrance of You gives me life!

Your fragrance restores my strength, Your remembrance relieves my pain, and Your apparition gives me satisfaction (Psalm 17:10)!

O, the life of my soul... my heart is running behind You, O, the source of life, and the joy of my heart!

Why do You turn Your face away from me, O You, the only source of my happiness?!

Where You disappear, O Lord of beauty, the goal of my ambition ends by You?

Your fragrance that I breathe, makes me drunk, although I have not seen You yet, for it is written: no man shall see Me and live (Exodus 33:20).

Well, if I follow this warning I will not see You.

But, Lord, I would rather die and see You. I would like to see you O Lord before I die, so when I wish to live, I will want to die, "having a desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phillipians 1:23)!

I choose death in order to see You. I don't want to live anymore in order to have life with You!

Jesus my God... receive my life, for You are my life!

Steer my heart toward You, for You are my joy!

O You rich food, please fill me up!

O dear divine leader, please make me strong!

O You true light that gives light to my eyes, please enlighten my path!

O You sweet hymn, fill my soul with joy!

O heavenly fragrance, revive my spirit!

O Word of God let me walk before You in truth with my heart.

Let the soul of Your servant rejoice...O true light, come to my soul, so it rejoices in You!

O true sweetness, come in to my soul, O everlasting light, fill my soul up with the brightness of Your light, so that I acknowledge You and perceive Your love!

Why my soul is not in love with You?! It is in a state of lukewarm mess because it does not know You. This lack of knowledge is a result of its inability to understand You. The reason behind its inability is its rejection to Your light, "for the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5).

You are the light that enlightens the soul, You are the gorgeous truth, Your brightness is truly magnificent, You give light to every man in the world, You came to the world, and the world did not love You.

My God...disperse the thick darkness that hanging over me, so that I can see You when I recognize You. And I acknowledge You when I receive You, and I love You when I get to know You.

Anyone who knows You loves You! And forgets about himself! Will love You more than himself! Will be attracted to You to find his pleasure in being united with You!

My master... If I don't love You the way it should be, that is because I did not know You well. The lack of my knowledge made my love to you listless, and made my joy, that I enjoy, weak!

Woe to me! While I am becoming a slave to the world's temptations, I get busy; O you are the joy who is living within me. By being occupied with these temptations, I deprive myself from being with You, and I leave you in order to seek defiled ties with the worthless stuff of this world!

In my misery I gave my heart to the worthless things, while this heart should be just for You to reign over it with all its emotions, sensations, and sacrifices, and thus, I became useless because of being

fond of the worthless things! Therefore, You are no longer to be my joy, for I left You and rushed behind the love of the outside world! However, You don't find comfort except deep in myself!

I would like to enjoy the work of the flesh, but You do like my spirit to rejoice in You!

I fill my heart with the work of the flesh, I keep my mind busy with it, and I make it the center of my talking, but, my dear God, You live in the intangible and immortal oneself!

You rule in heaven, and I crawl on earth!

You adore the most high, but, I seek filthy things!

You are interested in the heavenly, and I am sinking in the earthly!

So, when would these contradictory tendencies meet?

❖ My God... You have made myself capable to contain Your unlimited greatness, so only You and nothing else will be able to fill it!

❖ My God... the human soul is the work of Your hands... You have made that soul rational, intellectual, spiritual, immortal, and constantly active.

And when its delight has not laid in the beauty of Your face, You have sanctified it with Your baptism so that it has spacious room for Your greatness, and no one else can satisfy it except You!

When You take control over myself, You will meet all its needs, and nothing from outside will be able to satisfy its desires!

Aren't You the surpassing goodness, and all goodness is derived from You?

The heart that is not willing to have You, what does it ask for? Would it ask for richness that will never fill the world, or, would it wish for earthly creatures? ...but this desire of possessing earthly creatures is like a perpetual famine which does not satisfy the soul. The soul cannot be satisfied except with You, my dear God, because You have created it on Your image...

O my dear Lord and my God... You are exceedingly mighty...now I know where You find Your pleasure. It is in the soul that is made on Your image, the soul that does not ask for someone else, and does not yearn to anyone but You!

St. Augustine

THIRST OF THE SOUL TO HIM

The believer is like the deer that does not stop running unless it finds the spring of water, and not like the camel which carries sufficient water in him during his slow movement in the desert. The psalmist did not

hesitate to liken his longing toward God with thirst (Psalm 42:2, 63:1), for the pain of thirst is more bitter than the pain of hunger.

Jesus said, as a representative for us: "I thirst" (John 19:28) to refer the thirst of the believers toward God!

- ❖ "My soul thirsts for You" (Psalm 63:1). Watch, how David thirst for God?!
- ❖ All humans are dying by thirst, but rarely someone can say "my soul thirsts for You", but they thirst for the world.
- ❖ We should yearn for wisdom, and we should be longing for righteousness.
- ❖ "My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land". The soul and the flesh thirst for God... therefore God gives the soul its food which is the word of truth, and gives the flesh its needs, because God created both of them!

- ❖ Ah! I will not be satisfied unless Your glory manifests before me!

Yes my God, You are the only one who is able to restore happiness to my life.

I admit that I am miserable since the day I was sunken between many of the worthless things in the world, and being deprived from You, though You are my only love. On that day, my feelings were scattered longing toward deceitful pleasures.

And how plentiful these pleasures which carry endless tiredness in its joy! These pleasures promised me with many things; however it did not bring me anything but destitution. I moved from one pleasure to the other hoping that one of them might fill up myself, but it failed, because my soul does not live unless within You!

Truly, the beauty is in You, You are the only immortal, Semitic, and perfect one forever!

Those who follow Your steps will never go astray! Whoever reaches to You will never hit by desperation!

Whoever owns You, his desires will be met!

But, how much unpleasant is my agony! Woe to me my God, my heart tends to run away from You, although You are the true richness and the true joy, but my heart is running away, to follow the world that has nothing but sadness and pain.

- ❖ Here is the wilderness where thirst is abundant. You can hear the voice

of who is thirsty now in the wilderness. But if we experience ourselves when we are thirsty, then we can see ourselves when we drink too. For who is thirsty in this world will be filled in the coming world. As the Lord says: "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Mathew 5:6).

Therefore it is befitting for us not to like to be filled in this world, for we will be filled somewhere else.

But now, in order not to be weak in this wilderness, the Lord sprinkles us with the dew of His word, and He does not leave us entirely to get dry... He sprinkles us with His blessings somehow, however we are still thirsty.

- ❖ Run quickly to the creeks, yearn for the water creeks, hurry to God the fountain of life, the fountain that will never dry, and the fountain that who drinks from it, his inward thirst will be filled.

Run to the source, be eager to have a strong desire toward Him, but don't do it just as in any case, don't be content with running like an ordinary animal, but hurry like a deer...

What does it mean "like a deer" i.e. don't be slow in your running, run with all your force, yearn to the fountain with all your might, for we find in the deer the symbol of speed...

Listen also to what is unique about the deer, they kill serpents and after the killing they become extremely thirsty, and consequently they run to the water creeks where they feel thirsty more than ever.

Serpents are your transgressions; kill the serpents of wickedness that you will be more interested in the spring of the truth...

Accordingly, there is another thing which is noteworthy about the deer... when they walk in a group like a herd or when they swim in the water to reach another area, they lean their heads on each other, so one is leading and the other is following in sequence till the end of the herd. But if the leader who carries the weights of the heads gets tired, he goes to the back of the line and leans his head on the last one in line to get some rest from his labor. Aren't deer likened to those whom the prophet said about them: "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2)?!

- ❖ My soul thirsts for the Living God...I am thirst in my sojourn, thirst in my running, and will be filled when I reach my destination.
- ❖ Let our souls thirst for Him saying: "when will He come?"...you are yearning for His coming, perhaps He finds you ready?!

St. Augustine

- ❖ I am thirsty to the living water, because I have not run yet to the fountain of life!

He called me out with my brethren saying: who was thirsty, let him come and drink!

Behold, the prophet is severely punching me, and almost lost his voice crying out and saying: all who are thirsty, go to the living water, for those who drink from it without being filled, out of their heart will flow rivers of living water.

- ❖ Don't you like to be filled? How this can be? The flesh is looking to be filled up but it feels hungry again after digestion, so that Jesus says: "whoever drinks of this water will thirst again" (John 4:13). Then let's hunger and thirst for the righteousness so that we can be filled...

May our inward parts feel the hunger and thirst till it finds the appropriate food and drink.

The (Lord) has said: "I am the bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41). This is the bread of the hungry! May we also yearn for drinking such those who are thirsty, "for with You is the fountain of life" (Psalm 36:9).

St. John Saba

- ❖ There is living water speaking within me saying: "Come to the Father."

St. Ignatius of Antioch

- ❖ When Jesus said to the (Samaritan) woman: "the water that I shall give will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life", the woman said at once: "**Sir, give me this water**"(John 4:15).

Have you seen how the woman ascended little by little to reach the top teachings? At first, she thought that Jesus was a Jewish person who was deflected from his Law... **but when the woman heard "living water"** (John 4:14) she thought the saying was to describe perceptible water, and she believed that this water was able to put an end to the thirst, while she did not even know what was this water. But the woman was confused also and thought that this water was more valuable than the perceptible water, and said: "**give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw**". Have you seen how the woman preferred Jesus over the Patriarch when she expressed her perspective about Jacob and his magnificence, and meantime she knew who the best was?

- ❖ Here she gained an insight that was more evident. But she had not yet realized the full picture, for she said; "**Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.**" (John 4:15).

Now it is clear that she considered Him more superior than Jacob. As she was saying: "I am not in need for this water well as long as I get this water from You..."

After she showed her appreciation to Jacob, she realized who was better, so that her previous thoughts did not obstruct her... and she did not argue or rebel.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ It was truly clear that the saying: "you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" is sincere. Because when she said: "**give me this water**" (John 4:10) she received the living water, so she is not lost when she is thirsty, also she won't come to the water well of Jacob to draw water.

She can now think of the truth, away from the water of Jacob, in an angelic way surpassing human, because the angels are in no need to drink from the water well of Jacob.

Each angel has inside him a water fountain that leads to an eternal life, this fountain is found by the Word and declared by Him and by the wisdom itself.

Under any condition, it is not possible for the person, who is not trying seriously to come to the water well of Jacob and draw water from it when he is thirsty, to accept the water given by the Word which is different than the water from the well of Jacob. Therefore, many of the people strongly failed this side in training themselves for a long time to draw water from Jacob's well.

Origen

- ❖ Truly God is the fountain, may the one who is longing to this fountain, would pour himself to get it, that he would not leave anything in him under the sovereignty of the flesh, but he would show (love) abundantly everywhere.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ Many of the people are thirsty: the righteous and also the sinners, the first ones are thirsty to the truth and the others to the pleasures. The righteous thirst to God and the sinners to the gold.

Ceaserius Bishop of Arles

❖ God thirsts for your thirst to Him.

St. Gregory of Nezuanzus

❖ This (divine) beauty is hidden from the physical eyes, could only be recognized through the mind and soul. When it sheds light on one of the saints, it leaves him with a fiery feeling of unbearable pain of yearning, and when he realizes that life is worthless he would say: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech" (Psalm 120:5), "When shall I come and appear before God" (Psalm 42:2), also "having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23), "my soul thirsts to the living God" ...truly, it is because of their unsatisfied eagerness to enjoy seeing the divine beauty, they pray in order to consistently meditate in enjoying the Lord all the eternal life.

St. Basil the Great

❖ The man who drinks intensively from this wine, if it is taken away from him; he is the only one who can acknowledge the value of what he lost because of his laziness.

St. Isaac the Syrian

THE SOUL CLINGS TO HIM, WHEREVER THE MAN IS FOUND

The psalmist says: "**O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water** (Psalm 63:1).

It is not unusual to exclude the men of God like David the prophet and others, from enjoying taking part with the holy group of the canonical service (Hebrews 11:37-38). Excluding them physically will more likely enkindle their hearts and souls, and also their flesh in yearning toward God.

In the midst of the wilderness where there is no chance to find human support for the believer, he is looking at God as if He is his personal god; he opens his eyes in the morning to declare his strong desire toward God.

In the midst of his distress, the psalmist felt that he lost temporal things and became fugitive, persecuted, and deprived, even from the group of worship, but all these circumstances cannot take him away from the almighty God, the Pantocrator, and **his personal friend**. All human fountains had been dried, and were not able to offer condolences and

support to David, but the divine fountain remained opened for him, which will never dry.

- ❖ The prophets often attributed to themselves the one who is the God of all using these words: "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You" (Psalm 63:1). Furthermore, this kind of language teaches us that each individual owes Christ magnificent gratitude, as if Jesus had come particularly just for this individual. Christ would have not mind to come even if it was just for one individual

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ This is the voice of the saints themselves whom God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is their God. No one can say that the Lord God is his God, if his stomach is his god, or if his greediness is his god, or if the magnificence of this world is his god, or if the pride of this world or the power of the temporal things is his god. Because if the man devoted himself to worship something more than anything else, it is considered his god.

Origen

- ❖ The prophet repeats the name of God to express his great longing to Him. And when he says "**My God**" he is more specific, and expresses that the God of all is particularly the God of righteous.

He says "**Early**" as if he says: my strong desire to You wakes me up early, and I come and pray to you before any physical work.

His saying: "**my soul thirsts for you**" means: You are the one who calls for the thirsty to fill them up of the living water. As the thirsty wish for the water, thus my soul wishes to reach You by praying or by going back to Jerusalem.

Fr. Onesimus of Jerusalem

SPIRITUAL WATCHFULNESS AND THIRST OF THE SOUL TO GOD

When the psalmist is thirst to God, he stays up all night, where the soul declares it's longing to God so the sun of righteousness shines upon it. Thus, it is befitting for our souls to perpetually stay up and declare its strong desire to God.

- ❖ Although my soul thirsts to You, but with the toil of the flesh I look for You, however I am not able to look at You in Your sanctuary.

St. Jerome

- ❖ You can see how (Jacob) did continue in his struggle until daybreak (Genesis 32:26). In fact, there is no struggle for those who live in the light. It is befitting for those who reach such kind of greatness to say: "O God, You are my God. Early will I seek You" (Psalm 36:1). Also he adds: "my voice You shall hear in the morning. O Lord in the morning I will direct it to You and I will look up" (Psalm 5:1).

When the morning light (i.e. Christ) shines in our minds and sends in His glory to our hearts, we wait as noble souls and we get ready to receive the divine attention, " the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous" (1 Peter 3:12). The strife ends at daybreak.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ When we rejoice in praying and when our thoughts are calm, not because of the world's possessions, but with the light of the truth...then our souls rejoice in God, and won't be away from Him, for as He says: "for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). I paced about as though he were **my friend or brother** (Psalm 35:14)!
- ❖ God gave the flesh the ability to sleep in order to renew the energy of the members of the body, thus they become able to support the soul in its perseverance.

But we need to pay attention to keep ourselves awake, because the sleep of the soul is considered evil.

Useful is the sleep that keeps the body healthy, but the sleep of the soul reflects its forgetting to her God. When the soul forgets its God, it falls asleep. Therefore the apostle says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:14).

- ❖ "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." (Ephesians 5:14)

Was the apostle trying to awaken a man who is physically asleep?

No, he was trying to awaken a soul that was asleep so that it can be enlightened and illuminated by Christ.

Thus in the same way, this man says: "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You" (Psalm 63:1).....so Christ enlightens our souls and keeps it awake, but if He takes his light away the soul will fall asleep.

Therefore, another psalm says: "Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalm 13:3).

St. Augustine

- ❖ O my God and my life! My mind had been captured by talking with you, for I have no one else to talk to, what do I do? My soul is thirst to You and my flesh is interested in You.

By talking with You, we are able to reach you, and by meditating in You, it will lead to seeing Your face.

- ❖ I am thirsty to the living water because I have not sought to find the fountain of life yet.

He called me with my brethren saying: if someone is thirsty, let him come and drink!

And here is the prophet who is losing his voice due to calling me and prodding saying: behold, you who are thirsty, go to the living water for those who drink from it with a great desire, rivers of living water should flow out of their hearts.

- ❖ Now, you who labor and are heavy laden, place your head on your Lord's knees!

Relax and lean on His chest! Inhale the smell of life to mix life with your creation!

Lean on Him for He is the table where you find your food!

Purify your inheritance, i.e. your bed, and without doubt the Trinitarian unified light will manifest to you.

Keep this in your heart that you will feel that God is alive in you! Behold O man; you are the image of God.

St. John Saba

- ❖ Rebecca came to the water well to fill her pitcher with water, for the Bible says: "And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up" (Genesis 24:16). Thus, the church or the soul has gone down to the spring of wisdom to fill its pitcher, and to lift the teachings of the pure wisdom that the Jewish declined to lift from the overflowing spring.

Hearken to Him, for the fountain Himself says: "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13).

The souls of the prophets thirst to this fountain, David says: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:2-3), so he can water his thirst with the richness of the knowledge of God and wash the blood of the crap act by the spiritual running water. This is the flow of the blood as indicated in the Law (Leviticus 20:18) which conducted when a man lies with a menstruating woman. The woman here (indicates) the pleasure and the beauty of the flesh. Beware, not to undermine the firmness of your mind which might be softened by the physical pleasure

of lying, so the soul will melt completely by embracing this pleasure, its fountain will open while it should be shut and locked by a jealous intention and a balanced mind. You are "A spring shut up, A fountain sealed" (Songs of Songs 4:12). If the firmness of the mind starts to fade, the extreme harmful thoughts of the physical pleasures will strike, threatening toward an uncontrollable and deadly lust. But when we are awake and conscious to guard the lively thought, the (physical pleasures) will be under control.

St. Ambrose

DELIGHT AND THE JOY OF THE SOUL ARE IN GOD

The book of "The Happy Life" has an eminent position among the works of St. Augustine. In this book he says about the "happy life": {this book has not been written to be among or after the group of the books that respond to "Reacting to the skeptics". The idea of this book started on the occasion of my birthday as it is mentioned in the book itself, and the idea was fulfilled through three days of continuous talk.}

- ❖ He who possesses God is happy.
- ❖ First, come back to yourself and bring yourself back to your creator, for He is the provider of our happiness and our full goodness.

Worshiping God is to love Him, and to be anxious to see Him with hope believing that you will see Him. A strong desire to happiness is to reach Him for He is the happiness itself.

Ask yourself: to what extent does your love increase? The answer is, your heart is the scale for your progress.

Now we see Him in an ambiguous way while our love is increasing, but afterward we will see Him clearly.

O my dear ones, this love does not happen out of our pure choice, but through the Holy Spirit that is given to us. For how could we stick to God unless the Holy Spirit talks to our hearts?

Up there, no sin will be there yet nor anything that is worthless, but we will stick to him through love, He to whom we cry yearning for Him. We will live forever in that city that is lit by God, and in Him we will find that happiness which we are struggling now to get it.

- ❖ If you follow God, you will be longing for happiness, and you will reach Him for He is the happiness itself.
- ❖ My God, I love You, and I wish for my love toward You to grow perpetually.

Truly, You are better than milk, sweeter than honey, and brighter than any light.

Gold, silver and precious stones cannot be compared to You inside my heart.

All the pleasures of the world do not appear to me except as bad smell and tasteless...for I tasted your sweetness once and I saw the beauty of Your house.

O, divine fire, who with a ceaseless flame which is permanently in a heat.

O, the love that is always in a heat, O who never weakens.

O, the divine love, hug me, have control all over me, that I will stick to You completely...

To love You, O my God, for You have loved me first.

- ❖ The man, the rational creation, is a great and an honorable creature, thus, even in case of his fall, **no one less than God could satisfy him to give him the joyous comfort.** Even his own self cannot bring him happiness. Therefore, I say happy he who possesses God.
- ❖ There is no man who does not seek this (joyful life), all, strongly and jealously demand it and prefer it more than anything else. Who he desires other things, in fact; he wants it for this only goal.
- ❖ In my opinion, you cannot be happy if you are not capable to possess what you like, whatever, this thing is. And you cannot be happy unless you love what you have and what is good.
If you are seeking what you cannot possess, you will suffer. And if you are looking for what you don't need, you have been deceived. And if you don't seek what you need to find, then you are not mentally normal. There is none of these cases that are not accompanied by the feeling of being miserable. Misery and happiness cannot dwell within you together.
- ❖ Let's hang on to God through love, and reach Him through prayer. The conclusion of all our goodness, **and our full goodness, is God.** It is befitting for us not to fail in this, and not to ask for more than this. The first is dangerous and the second is impossible. **Following God is the desire of happiness, and reaching to God is the happiness itself.**
- ❖ First, **return from outside yourself,** and then present yourself again to Him who created you. He is the source of our happiness and our full goodness.
- ❖ O, you beloved ones, it is to understand that **the joy of all joys happens through the delight in the Trinity who created us on His image.**
- ❖ Wherever the soul of the man is heading, if it does not turn toward You, it will gather sorrows to its heart, even if it sticks on to what it likes.
If what the soul likes, lies outside God, then the soul will be posted to sorrows. Because these pretty things do not exist without You...

Please, let me praise You for these things, O my God, the creator of all. But don't let the love of these things to hang on to my soul.

There is no place of rest in these things because they are impermanent, they pass and disappear from our senses.

St. Augustine

❖ I wanted to write (about the love of God), but I couldn't! The ability I used to have has been gone!

The gift I used to have had been run away! And when I tried by many ways to visualize it (the love of God), I failed.

I wanted to plant it with lines and display it on paper for the benefit of my people, but I couldn't.

In the external world, there is nothing comparable to it, and in the internal world, who can realize it!

In our world, it has no likeness, and in the world of spiritual ones, who is able to come up with an example?!

I don't know how to sooth down the flame of my heart which is boiling and burning...

With words, it can't be uttered, with a signal, it can't be portrayed, and with the motions of conscience, it can't be heard!

I have been strongly conquered by it! I have been defeated by it like someone who does not know it!

Of this, I became speechless, like he who does not sense it! I did not give it attention, as if it cannot be described!

Of this, I became wordless, like he who is not qualified for it!

How much I feel very sad that I am unable to display it (the love of God), or to liken it!

And if it is incomparable, seek it, o my brethren. Claim it. Ask for it, so that it will blend with you.

It is a beatitude that is on top of all beatification, its pleasure is unprecedented!

This is its explanation, it is said, you o my father in me, and I am in you, and also for them to be one in us...

Blessed is he, who tasted this beatitude! Happy is he, whom his soul with his flesh and bones tasted this immeasurable pleasure. It is like moisture united with the flesh... It blends with the soul of its buddy and his flesh, to give an explanation to its mystery (by its provider) for each self that seeks it, Amen.

❖ Blessed is he who perpetually carries Your memory in his heart, because

his soul always gets drunk with Your sweetness!

Blessed is he, who talks with you every hour, inside him, he is given the life to enjoy!

Blessed is he, whose eyes are always fixed on You, his heart lights up so that he can see the unseen!...

Blessed is he who is seeking for You inside him, his heart is (lit) by Your light, and his flesh as well as his bones are burnt with a pure heat!...

Blessed is he who keeps his thoughts in You, O my Majesty, in him, found a fountain of the spirit of rivers of the living water for his pleasure and for those who are thirsty to see You!...

Blessed are those who burnt their cheeks with the tears of Your love! These tears soften the spoken lands that were burnt with the deceitful fire. It then, gives fruits of joy, and those who eat it will never die.

Blessed is he, who mixed his sleep with Your love, because the defiled devils that desecrate those who are lazy, run away trembling from him! ...

Blessed is he who is ready to receive Your mysteries without laziness, then, out of him comes the aroma of life that draws a delight to the hearts of the activist through Your Holy Spirit!...

Blessed is he who forgot the talk of the world by talking with You, for it is by you all his needs are met.

You are his food and his drink! You are his house and the shelter of his comfort; to You he comes in all the time to get cover!

You are the sun and the day for him, with Your light he can see the unseen!

You are his Father! You have given him in his heart the spirit of Your Son, this spirit encourages him to ask You for all what You have, as in the case of a son asking from his father! He talks with You all the time, because he has no other Father except You!

❖ If you grieve when you request for Him, then you will be glad when He is present!

If you are suffering with tears and hardship to see Him, He shows you His loveliness (beauty) inside you, so you forget your sorrows!

Don't look for Him outside you, His home and His own place is inside you!

Have you ever met a prudent who is seeking for his bliss outside himself? How would it befitting to live outside yourself?!

Who is he that you serve? To whom do you pray? Before whom you cry out?

To whom you cry saying: "Father, hasten to my help"? Before whom you pour your tears? Isn't it before Him who by Him we live and move?!

But, why you don't feel your bliss inside yourself? Isn't it because, you did not blend your works with Him?

When you sit, look at His beam of light that is united with you... And when you get up, purify yourself with the cloud of His glory...

And when you walk, lift your eyes off the ground; let your path be in the light of the Lord as a pure place... And when you sleep, cover yourself with His bright light...

When you drink, mix your drink with the image of the lover of all...

Fly with the bird in the atmosphere of its purity, and with fish, swim with the profound of its greatness, from the iron learn the secret of its combination with fire, with the breath of your mouth, let yourself inhale its lover, with the spirituals ones sanctify the heaven inside you and over there look at His dwelling.

- ❖ How amazing is Your invisible work. How great he who believes in it. I forgot myself through the demeanor of those saints whom I am not one of them.

I strive to grasp the Holy God, but He can't be caught.

To have an image of Him, but He cannot be portrayed.

While I am full, however, I feel I am empty...

And while I feel I dwell in Him, He is the one who dwells in me.

While He is hidden from me, I find myself hidden in Him.

If I seek Him, I see him within me.

From any place and wherever I go with Him, He does not forsake me!

When I listen to Him, He talks to me, and if I beseech Him, He does not move...

Praise be to You, You are hidden from all, but for Your lovers, You always shine!

Praise be to You, have mercy on us forever, Amen.

St. John Saba

ENJOYMENT WITH GOD, THE SOURCE OF BEAUTY

The man in his nature is fascinated with the beauty of the nature, those who are occupied by their researches and experiments in their labs do not refrain from stepping back, or even being forced, to be dragged toward nature, and enjoy being alone in quiet periods in which our souls enjoy the beauty of the nature.

If the beauty of the nature, which is considered a creature, is able to capture the mind, attract the will, and release fatigue, then, how much more would it be the glamour and magnificence of the beauty itself, the creator, whose beauty is immeasurable?!

Indeed, those who meet with God and understand the truth of His beauty, their hearts are captured by the fountain of all beauty, and they are saying about those whom the beauty of the world kept them busy to meet the source of beauty Himself, what the Book of the Wisdom says: "With whose beauty if they being delighted took them to be gods; let them know how much better the Lord of them is: for the first author of beauty hath created them" (Wisdom 13:3).

My God... how dare that I compare Your beauty, O You, the true love, with the beauty of Your creation? Its prettiness is called beauty because it is Your hand made. Its beauty is temporary, for it is there today like the blossom of the grass which soon withers and run dry, but Your beauty is personal and eternal, it remains forever. The beauty of the creation is good because of Your attention and Your words, for all what You did is good.

Perhaps we compare the man with his shadow, but who dares to compare You with Your creation? The Beauty of Your creation captures our minds and captivates our souls, how much more should our hearts be wandering in Your love, singing:

"You are fairer than the sons of men" (Psalm 45:2). "Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant" (Song of Songs 1:16). "The Shulamite My beloved is white and ruddy... His mouth is most sweet, Yes, he is altogether lovely... This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Songs 5:1,16).

St. Basil the Great says that when the prophet stared at the

splendor of the glory of the Divinity of the Son, he spoke with this saying, longing for the glorious of His Divinity, while the grace has overflowed on the mouth of the Son, as it is stated in the Holy gospel that, all marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth (Luke 4:22). He joyfully attracted his listeners, convinced them, and led them to His discipleship, so that within a short period of time His Gospel preaching had spread to the entire world.

The church talks to its heavenly groom saying: "**The Shulamite Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green. The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir.**" (Song of Songs 1:16). Through the Holy Spirit the church has looked at its groom, the king, and indeed, she found Him sweet and perfect in His love. As if she realized that all of its beauty is attributed to Him. As the **Scholar Origen** says: {it seems like the bride has looked, more closely, the beauty of her groom and through its eyes that were called "the two doves", has experienced the serenity of the word of God and its sweetness. it is truly, no one can ever understand or acknowledge the greatness of the highness of the Word unless if he accepts first to have the eyes of a dove i.e. he will be blessed to have the spiritual understanding. }

LET'S GET BUSY WITH THE BEAUTY ITSELF

If the nature is the a book that records the works of God and reveals His beauty, so, let's close this book after a bit of reading it, so it does no keeps us away from its goal.

Let's sense through the nature, the touches of God's beauty and His sweetness, let's enter to a deep partnership with a pure heart so that we ourselves could see His beauty! "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Let's clean the heart from everything so that it focuses only on God, the real love, and the eternal beauty, listening to His words: "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26). "Love the Lord you God from all your heart".

We are in need to see "only Jesus" in His transfiguration (Mathew 17:8). We forget Mount Tabor and what is there, being fascinated with only the beauty of the Lord, saying with Peter the prophet; "it is good O Lord to be here". Thus, we seek in everything to enjoy our Lord Jesus Christ who is capturing our hearts.

The Psalmist looked at the wedding and saw a unique groom where there is no comparison face between Him and the human, so he said: "**You are fairer than the sons of men**" (Psalm 45:2). Thus, He is fairer in His

nature of being the Word of the only God who is of one essence with the Father; the magnificence of His beauty is in His salvation work and the shedding of his blood to the last drop for the salvation of His beloved man... His work for salvation will remain the subject of praise for the heavenly and the earthly.

- ❖ Which beauty? It is the beauty of Resurrection, for He is fairer than the sons of men.
- ❖ The son of St. Mary and the groom of the holy church, His beauty exceeded all the beauty of the sons of men. He made the church in likeness of His mother, for He allowed it to be a mother for us and kept it a virgin for Himself.
- ❖ I wonder: why (he didn't say): fairer than the angels too? Why he says: "He is fairer than the sons of men", unless, because He became a man?!... Even as a man, He is fairer than the sons of men. Even though He was among the sons of men and became one of them...however, He still fairer than the sons of men!

St. Augustine

- ❖ My Lord and my God... my right hand is not capable to portray Your mysteries with pictures, but as a wise I proceed to write ...
I come to You now and be delighted! We climb to Your holy mountain to enjoy Your glorified beauty.
Your light is molten, it is very bright, and wondrous in kindness, whoever looks at You is impressed.
You are called the "Sea", and the "the fountain for the entire world".
Your majesty is greater than any deep.
They likened You with the fire because it gives without diminishing, it cleans without getting dirty.
- ❖ Someone said to me: while he is praying, in the beginning and at the end, he forgets himself and all what he possess, he wonders, and he delights in the beauty of His creator.
He, who understands, let him understands, and he, who does not understand, May the Lord gives him understanding.
- ❖ A song that I sang and enjoyed its sound ... my beloved heard it, he woke up, he listened to it, and he liked it more than anything else, he jumped from his sleep and by being awake, he stands by me forever.
He gladly said: sing more, let me enjoy your hymns! Open your

gates, so we enter to your own place!

- ❖ How pleasant You are, I love You, O You, child (Jesus).
Your charisma captures the souls.
My soul went out behind You, for, it is in You, it finds itself, and Your beauty shines upon it.
You are righteous.
You are beloved like Your Father.
You are sweet and delightful; Your taste is not known to anyone except for he who just tasted You.
I inhaled Your sweet aroma, my heart was delighted, and who is that able to explain.
- ❖ Close your door, O Jerusalem, so that the one who is circumcised (the groom) your Lord would stay inside, put on your pride, O Zion (O my soul), so that the smell of your fragrance appears.
- ❖ Blessed is he who while he is drinking, would see You mixed with his drink, so that he will drink and be happy with Your loveliness.
Blessed is he who came to You, saw Your marvelous spectacle, and wondered with Your astonished beauty which springs up inside him.
My heart was so angry over the pen; I was too close to break it, because it cannot portray the marvelous beauty that I see, the rivers of the living water that flows from the source of the beatitudes.
Every talkative mind, upon entering this place, it will commit to hold the talking and the movement because of being astonished with the mysteries. Here where God reveals His beauty to His beloved.
Here where the soul catches sight of itself, and of Christ who shines in it, and becomes delighted in Him.
Here where the Holy Trinity is secretly seen.
- ❖ My pen has been burnt because of the intensity of Your fire O Jesus. My right hand has stopped writing. My eyes have been enlightened with the beam of Your beauty. The earth and all on it have gone away from me.
I am mentally marveled with Your wonder.
The flame has been enkindled in my bones.
And the springs emerged in order to water all my flesh so that it won't burn.
- ❖ Praise be to You, as You are wondrous, Your mysteries are also wondrous. Blessed are your beloved ones whose shine every hour by your beauty.

❖ Before leaving this body, give me O Lord the beauty of Your view to eat, and the vision of Your hidden mysteries, which in the bosom of Your essence, to happily drink it.

❖ Blessed are those who became drunk because of Your love O my God, because of being drunk, they were able to enjoy Your beauty. My brother, taste and take a look at the sweetness of our good Father and enjoy its pleasure.

❖ But those who did not experience the pleasure of being drunk with God, and being delighted in Him, they are helpless and miserable.

God has given them His love as a spice to get them drunk and excited. He Himself rejoices, and with them He is glad. He is their bridal, and the secret of their joy. They see Him inside themselves and they rejoice. He, who is inside them, shines in them and astonishes them with His beauty.

❖ Love is a fire that ignites in the heart, where the heart is being gladly served.

For many times I heard one of the brethren, when he was under intoxicated with the love of Christ, he could not stop himself from the effect of the divine love blazing in his heart, and from the joy of his heart that rises from brightening of praising God...he cried out and said: "Your love has stirred me, my life has been faded, by Your love O Lord, and I could not wait".

And he cried out many other times and said: "blessed are those who are under intoxication with Your love O Lord. How marvelous is Your unspeakable benevolence, O my father".

❖ O, the man of God, until when you comfort yourself with blackness only. Turn all yourself into a flame and burn all what is around you, so that you can see the beauty of (God) that is hidden within you.

Cry out with a calm and quiet voice saying: "O, You, who is hidden and concealed within me, manifest in me Your hidden mystery. Reveal to me Your goodness that is inside me. O You, who has made me a temple for His dwelling, I ask You to overshadow me with the cloud of Your glory that is in Your Temple".

St. John Saba

❖ His divine, with its brilliance and greatness has disappeared under the

veil of the flesh, and has sent its luminosity on the physical features of the flesh, so He captured all those who were anxious to see at Him.

St. Jerome

- ❖ Lest to understand that He is talking about the physical beauty (psalm 45:2), the psalmist says it is based on obedience, and this is not identified as a beauty for the body but for the soul, for he says, if you do this, you be fit with beauty and you will be loved in the sight of your groom.

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ Truly, it is befitting for our groom, who is fairer than the sons of men, not to find any of the aforementioned sins within us, so it does not offend the eyes of His pride.

Father Ceaserius Bishop of Arles

The Psalmist related the connection between the beauty of the Master Jesus Christ, the warrior king, and yanking the sword to succeed and reign saying: "**Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty**" (Psalm 45:3) **yank it, succeed and reign**. This does not apply with any warrior man, because there is no relevance between the beauty of the man and his ability to fight?! It is obvious, here, that the talking is about the battle of the cross, because our Lord Jesus Christ is the leader of our spiritual war against Satan, the enemy of good, He is the only one who is blameless, perfect in His beauty, He draws His sword as a handsome heavenly groom to kill everything that is ugly and corrupted in us. At this point, he set up His kingdom in our hearts, proclaiming Himself that He is the truth, the meekness, and the righteousness. This was what prompted **St. Augustine, St. Ambrosias**, and others to identify the beauty as it is the beauty of resurrection, as St. Ambrosias says: {truly, the beauty of Christ is holy, for it is written that He was resurrected: "fairer than the sons of men". He is the first among those who rested in peace, and His horn is like the unicorn. If His sword was His cross with which He crushed the Satan, destroyed the thorn of death, and defeated the hell, so those who are being saved consider it the "power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18), and it is said about Him: "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (in the cross)" (Colossians 2:15). By His resurrection, we became righteous, i.e. He gave us His righteousness, and we gained the beauty of His resurrection! In other words, we interpret the words of the Psalmist: "**with Your beauty, yank it, succeed, and reign**" O, the first

among those who rested in peace, yank the sword of the cross, and with it, strike our old and corrupted human, so that we enjoy the power of Your resurrection and its joy, i.e. we will carry its beauty in us, and by this way You will reign over us, and the word of the evangelism will succeed. }

PORTRAYING JESUS CHRIST

I spoke previously regarding the "**Icons of Jesus Christ**" in the book of "The church is the house of God", please, refer to this book.

Since an early era, the church has given more attention to portray our Lord Jesus Himself. Some of the theological were worried that portraying our Lord Jesus might take the attention of the believers to focus on Jesus humanity at the expense of His divinity. But, as the Word was pleased to become a man, so a portrayal of Him does not offend Him as some might think. Portraying Him is a remembrance of His perpetual presence with us.

Due to His love, He became a man, and because of His modesty He accepted to be among us, as one of us, He is like us in everything except the sin. Therefore, the pride that the believer carries for the icons of Christ, especially the icons of His crucifixion and His resurrection, it inspires us to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and praises to the one who died and saved us.

THE BEAUTY OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ being the Incarnated Word of God, He carries a divine beauty that is indescribable.

Opinions were varied in regard to the beauty of the feature of Christ. Some of the theological believe that the consent and the modesty of the Word, to become a servant for us, has made Him not to carry the beauty of physical features, for He wanted to carry all the human to the internal beauty, which He grants us as a kind of sharing in His glory. The psalmist has sung and said: "all the glory of the king's daughter from within" (Psalm 45).

We spoke previously about the reasons that prompted **the church to take some precaution regarding the portraying of Christ**. When **Asterius the Bishop of Amasea** talked to the Christian rich women, He criticized them for simulating the heathen rich women, by wearing fancy clothes made of gold strings and garnished with pictures from the New Testament instead of the pagan tales, so he said:

[By doing so, they consider themselves pious, wearing clothes that please God!

If they are to accept my advice, they should sell these clothes and spend the money on buying the live pictures of Christ.

Don't portray Christ; it is sufficient for him, His modesty by the incarnation that He accepted freely for our sake!]

So often, the Fathers of the Church focused on the beauty of the works of Christ for salvation, we mention as an example what **St. Augustine** said:

[Lovely is God, the Word with God (the Father)!

He is gorgeous in the womb of the Virgin, He manifested in His humanity without losing His divinity!

Fabulous is the Word born as a child, the angels are praising Him, and the star is guiding the magi to worship Him in the manger!

He is wonderful in heaven and terrific on earth,

Adorable, when he was whipped.

Magnificent, when He grants life to human,

Mighty, when He did not fear death!

It is beautiful when He lays down His life, and it is marvelous, when he takes it!

He is mighty on the cross, wonderful in the grave, and fascinating in heaven!]

[He is gorgeous on earth, clothed in the human nature,

Fascinating in the womb, and sweet between His parents' arms,

Magnificent in the miracles, and mighty in being lashed with the whip,

He is fascinating in giving life and wondrous in His readiness for death.]

Others seem to believe that He is the full God and the full man at the same time. In His incarnation before carrying the beautiful physical features, the beauty of the divinity that is indescribable meets with the beauty of His human soul and the beauty of the body, so that He is magnificent in everything!

The Shroud of Turin is genuine, because many studies and experiments had been conducted on it, however, it still carry magnificent physical features.

Under any condition, the Word has descended to us so we can experience the marvelous beauty of Christ personally, and with being united with Him, we enjoy the reflection of His beauty. We can say that He summarized His beauty by saying: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12,

9:5), the light that is without blemish, it is fully gorgeous, shines upon, so we get enlightened and be ready to carry the icon of His beauty.

THE REFLECTION OF CHRIST'S BEAUTY ON HIS BELIEVERS

❖ How could you be able to see a beautiful picture in a mirror unless the mirror takes the reflections of a pretty figure? It is the same case as in the mirror of the mankind nature. That nature cannot become beautiful unless it is approached by the lovely (God), and being formed by the image of the divine beauty. When our mankind nature fell on the ground and looked at the serpent, it carried its image. And now, it is rising and looking at the righteous, giving its back to the sin, carrying the image of the benevolent that it is facing. While our nature looks at the genuine beauty i.e. the dove, heading toward the light, it carries the image of the light, and through this light it carries the figure of the beloved dove, I mean the dove that symbolized the Holy Spirit.

St. Gregory Of Nyssa

WITH HIS GRACE, HE FLOODED ADAM WITH BEAUTY

❖ The free will succeeded to turn Adam's beauty to ugliness,
Because while he was a man, he wanted to become a god.
But the grace has turned his weakness to be fine, and God came to become a man.
The divine had descended in order to raise the mankind up high.
Because the son has made the weakness of the servant pretty, and thus, he became a god exactly as he wanted.

St. Ephream the Syrian

GOD IS THE LIGHT OF THE SOUL

God said: "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:3). That was the first work of God for the sake of the man. God is the light of lights, He made the light for the man, with which he can see, comprehend, and enjoy what was offered to him by the divine love.

This is the light that was created, the physical eye enjoys it to see the physical stuff, but the heart of the man is heavenly and it is longing to see the heavenly stuff. He is in need for the light with which he can see God. And, what is that light, except God Himself "**in Your light we see light**" (Psalm 36:9).

O, You, the light of lights, by You only we are able to come to You, You are the true light (John 1:9). You reflect Your light on everyone comes on your way, presenting yourself to all without favoritism. But, no one can be enlightened by You, unless if he accepts You inside him, and believes in the Son of God "That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9). **The angels are luminous** they shine with light wherever they are (Acts 12:7), **that is just because of being permanently in the presence of God, the light of lights.**

The **man** is able - with the support of God's grace – to enjoy the light of God, due to standing permanently in His presence. In the Old Testament, they did not have the opportunity to possess the true light inside them; however, it was adequate for them to stand in the presence of God. **Abraham**, the father of the fathers, the secret of his greatness was because of being in the presence of God, so that the impressions of God's perfection and God's lights were reflected on him. He implemented the words of God to him: "walk before me and be perfect". And the issue of being perfect, it means that the perfection is imperative when he walks before God. And **Moses the prophet**, when "he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 34:28), when he came down from the mountain of Sinai, "he did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked" (Exodus 34:29), even Aaron and all the children of Israel were afraid to come near him. So, Moses put on a veil on his face when he talked to them, and he would take it off when he went in before the Lord to speak.

And **Joseph** the young lad, who did not have a Bible, or a priest, or a place to worship, he had not learned anything except standing in the presence of the light of lights, therefore, his small heart was lit with fire, lightened with a wondrous light which was sufficient to burn the thorns of the wife of Photifar. He was able to dissipate the power of darkness that was in her heart, also her tricks, her deception, and her threat.

And **Elijah the prophet**, the secret of his light is that when he was standing in the presence of the king and the people, he said:"as the Lord lives, before whom I stand". And **Nehemiah**, was trained to lift his heart to be in the presence of the light of lights all the times, he said to respond to the king's question: 'I prayed to the God of heaven and said"...as if, in the presence of the king, his mind was occupied with asking the light of lights to have mercy on him.

These were examples of the men of the Old Testament, who were able to capture the light of God, on the hope of reconciliation with the cross. As a result, the darkness dissipated before them because the darkness does not have power of the true light.

As much as the true light reflects on you through the work of the truth within you courageously and powerfully, you will worship without fear or feeling of shame, and you become a witness for our Lord Jesus without being embarrassed echoing the prophet Micah: "Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, **The Lord will be a light to me** I will bear the indignation of the Lord, Because I have sinned against Him, Until He pleads my case And executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness. Then she who is my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the Lord your God?" Micah 7:7-10).

This is how all darkness dissipates before all the men of prayer, the darkness of the Satan and his power, the darkness of the sin and its deceptive pleasure, the darkness of others' reproaches, and the darkness of the lusts of the flesh.

But in the New Testament, in the fullness of time, God the word came in flesh and called out:" I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). The true light came, who cover yourself with light as with a garment (Psalm 104:2), God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1John 1:5), He came to shine in the darkness with His light (Isaiah 58), calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Peter 2:9), so we walk in the light, and

become sons of light and sons of the day (1Thessalonians 5:5), and also we become light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

We are blissful to keep the Lord in our hearts, so that the spirit of truth discloses to us the mysteries of God which are beyond words, we recognize the unlimited love of God, **realizing the truth itself** "I am the way, the truth, and the life". Therefore, the darkness and the storms become incapable to sweep the heart from inside, and the heart rises to a high mountain to be above the entire world with all of its pleasures, pains, flesh and its lusts, and people with their praises and their criticism. The heart rises to be with Peter, Jacob, and John where our Lord Jesus manifests Himself, so that the heart would see Him clothed with light, His face shines like the sun, and His clothes as white as the light, then the heart will cry out with Peter saying; "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Mathew 17:4).

He, who rises with the Lord, by the Lord, would find out deep mysteries, that he will recognize the depths of himself and will sense the depths of the divine love, will understand the hidden aspects of life, and the secrets of the other life will be revealed to him, he will be firm in his faith and his hope in the Lord. Then, "we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; 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. **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God". (1 Corinthians 2:6-11).

Nathanael saw the Lord incarnate, but what was absent was that the Lord reveals to him other mysteries, "you will see greater things than these: (John 1:51). It was necessary for him to know who the word incarnate was in order to recognize Him deeply in his heart. He needed to sit with Mary, Lazarus' sister, at the feet of the true light to enjoy the good part that won't be taken away from him. He was in need for His friend Jesus to disclose His secrets to him like when the groom discloses his heart to his bride. "No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Mathew 11:27). Thus, the true groom shows His bride the secrets of wisdom (Job 11:6).

It was mentioned in the Bamidbar Rabba: the Israelites said to God:

O Lord of the universe, You have commanded to kindle lamps for Your sake, You are He, who is the light of the world and where the light dwells. And the author of the Book of "Al-Daragat" said: {those who fight the Satan and defeat him, are worthy for this high church which is above all and it is where our Lord shines distinctly, they recognize the light of His glorious face.}

- ❖ He is not one of the prophets, but He is the master of the world, He is not from Galilee, nor Palestine, nor Judea, but He "**the light of the world**" (John 8:12).

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ If we were the bishops of God and Christ, there is no one that obliges us to follow him more than God and Christ, for He Himself, in His Gospel assured saying: "**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life**" (John 8:12).

St. Cyprian the Martyr

- ❖ I believe that the saying of the Lord: "**I am the light of the world**" (John 8:12), is fully clear to those who have eyes by which they partake in this light, but those who don't have eyes, except the eyes of the flesh only, they stand in wonder to that saying of the Lord Jesus Christ: "**I am the light of the world**" (John 8:12).
- ❖ There is a light which is the creator of the sunlight. Let's love this light and yearn to become aware of it and thirst for it, so that it will lead us to reach Him, thus, we will live in Him and will never die...
He shines upon us so that you can see Him, He is particularly (the fountain) that fills you up so that you are not thirsty anymore..
Even when our Lord Jesus Christ does not declare Himself to all through the cloud of His body, but as everything is under His control with the power of His wisdom...He is your God which is fully present everywhere, if you don't leave Him, He won't leave you.
- ❖ O, You, the invisible light! O, You, the glory that is not seen by any other glory!

You are the light which before You, all other lights may fade! You are the glamour which before You all external glamour would vanish!

You are the "light", the source of all lights, and You are the "glory", the fountain of all glory! You are the light and the glory, in Your presence all the lights turn to become darkness, and every light compared to You, is nothing but darkness!

You are the glory by which the darkness turns to become light, and with You the darkness sparkles with brightness!

You are the exalted light that cannot be hidden by any cloud, and cannot be disturbed by steam. The darkness of the night is incapable to fall in Your presence, there is no barrier able to hamper You, nor any shading to drown You!

Ultimately, You are the light that shines upon the inner universe all the time, take me to the core of Your greatness so that I can see all Your inmost by the power of the glory of Your divine itself, and by the work of the glory that reflects on me from You!

Don't ever leave me, lest my ignorance might increase and my wickedness might multiply. Without You, I am empty and miserable! Without You, no one can attain goodness, for You are the truth and the only true goodness!

This is what I acknowledge and this is what I know, O God, my God, that wherever I am, being without You, nothing is left for me except misery, inside as in outside, because any richness that is not from God is considered destitution for me.

"Oh, send out **Your light and Your truth!** Let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle" (Psalm 43:3). "The light" and "the truth" actually, are just two names that express the only one (God). For what is the divine "light" except that it is the divine "truth" and the divine "truth" is only the divine "light"? And hypostasis of Christ is both of them. He says: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12). Also he says: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). He Himself is the "light", and He Himself is the "truth", let Him come and guide us.

But "His holy hill" (which Christ comes to it), is the holy church. It is the hill according to the vision of Daniel (Daniel 2:35), the small stone that became a great mountain and filled the whole earth, crushing the (great statue)!

❖ My God...You are my light. Open my eyes to see your divine glory, so that I can walk in my path without stumbling in the snares of the enemy! Truly, I cannot avoid his snares unless if I see it!

And how can I see it unless if I am directed by Your light?!

In the midst of the darkness (the father of all darkness) hides his snares in order to hunt for those who live in darkness. This is the enemy who likes his people to be deprived from Your light and Your full peace.

If anyone walks in the daylight, he won't stumble, because he sees

the light of the world, but if anyone walks in the night, he will stumble, because there is no light in him. What is the light, except that it is You, O my God!

You are the light for the sons of light! Your day does not know the sunset! Your daylight guides your sons so they don't stumble! But those who are away from You, they walk in the darkness and live in it!

So, let's hold on to You, You are the light of the world!

Why do we need to try to stay away from You every day? Whoever is staying away from You, Oh, the true light, will fall in the darkness of the sin, and when he is surrounded by darkness, he cannot distinguish the traps that are laid for him along the way!

Let's hope not to stay away from You so that we don't fall in the deadly traps of the enemy. But what is more miserable and brutal: is that we fall in the traps without being aware of it. We believe that we are ready to stand off and then we stop striving to stand again.

My Lord and my God... Oh, the light of my soul...don't stop guiding my steps with Your light so that when I find danger, I stay away, and my enemy (the Satan) won't find faults for me, because he is doing his best to lead me to death. But, let the enemy scattered before Your face as the wax melts before the fire!

I am talking about that thief who, first and last, wanted to take Your glory, but due to his arrogance, he cast himself in the hell that he set up for himself!

You have driven him out from the holy hill; cast him away from Your throne, and You throw him out of the midst of Your stars, which are shining with glory at the sky!

And now, my Lord and my life, it is since his great fall, he is just busy with the chasing of your sons!

The hatred that the Satan carries toward You, O You the great king, makes him seek the corruption of Your creation that You made on Your image! O Lord my strength, take him away from our eyes for we are Your sheep, and shine upon us with Your light so that we avoid his deceitful traps, and with joy, we come to You!

Oh God...You know all these things more than me!

You know to what degree of the stubbornness and insanity has the pursuer of our souls reached.

You are not in need to be told about this, because nothing is hidden from You. But listen to my complaint, O You are the judge forever. I file my complaint against my enemy at the feet of Your greatness.

Denounce him O God, and save your kids, for You are the strength! He is a malicious and a deceitful enemy, without Your light we cannot recognize his serpentine ways and the multiple figures of his face. Sometimes we see him here and other times we see him there!

Sometimes he appears like a lamb and other times like a wolf! At times he looks like light, and other times like darkness! He knows how to change his appearance, and he sets his plans according to the circumstances and the times of the man. In order for him to con the people who are tiring, he grieves with them! And to attract the joyful hearts, he tarnishes the scope of their happiness! To kill those who are zealous in spirit, he appears to them like a bright angel! To strip, those who are spiritually strong, off their arms, he appears like a lamb! To harm those who are humble, he turns to a wolf!

In all his deceit, he frightens some people by night fears and others by arrows that fly during the day. For some people, he descends with them to evil at night, and for others, he fights them publicly at noonday (Psalm 91:6)! So, Who is he that is capable to recognize his various deceitful ways?! Who is able to count his terrifying tusks?!

He hides his arrows in his pouch, and keeps his tricks until the appropriate moment of falling!

My God... You are my hope... Without Your light – which with it we see everything – it is hard for us to find out the movements of the Satan and his tricks.

❖ O the true light that Tobias has enjoyed when he was teaching his son, even though he was blind.

O the true light that led Isaac who was blind to announce to his son, by the spirit, about his future.

O the invisible light, who examines the human depths.

You are the light that enlightened Jacob's mind and helped him to reveal different things to his sons!

Darkness has filled myself to the depth of its hidden places, but You are the light! The thick shadows have surrounded my heart, but You, You are the truth that is always shimmering.

O the Word, the creator of all, before all the creation... You are the one who set up the universe, and without You, it has no existence.

You are the Word who said: "let there be light, and there was light". Please say this phrase again now, so my eyes will be lit with Your true light and I will be able to identify Your light from other lights. Without You how can I tell light from dark, and dark from light?!

Yes... by being away from Your light, the truth escapes from me, the sin which fills me with pride comes near me, and the truth escapes! Understanding will turn into confusion within me, ignorance will replace knowledge, and insight will be substituted by blindness, there will be no other way to lead to life.

❖ **"Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us"** (Psalm 4:6). This light is the perfect and real benevolence which is for the man, the light which the man sees by the heart not by the eye.

He says: "lift up the light" (or placed His seal on us), likewise when the image of the king is stamped on the Fils "penny". The man was made on God's image and according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26), but was corrupted by the sin, therefore, the man is stamped by the real and eternal goodness (the light) in the second birth (the baptism).

And I believe this is what he meant when the Lord says – when He sees the currency of Caesar's – "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21). As if He says: as Caesar asks you about the seal of his image, thus also God! **it is His currency which is stamped, will return to Him by lighting the self through God, and stamping it with the light of His countenance (Psalm 4:6).**

❖ "Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." (Ephesians 5:14). Was the prophet trying to awaken a man who was physically asleep? No, it was a sleepy soul that he called in order to walk and be enlightened by Christ... **because Christ enlightens the souls and keeps them awake**, but if His light is taken away, the soul will fall asleep. Therefore, another Psalm says: "Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalm 13:3).

❖ He did say to His (disciples) "you have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in you should not abide in darkness". This saying is not acceptable under any condition. All saints are as lights, but they were enlightened by Him through faith, and whoever is separated from Him will be surrounded by darkness. But this light that enlightens them will never be separated from itself because it is immutable.

St. Augustine

❖ I look at just one lamp and with its light I will be enlightened, and now I am so astonished, I rejoice spiritually because the fountain of life is within me, the one who is the purpose of the unperceived world!

- ❖ Carry the yoke of your Lord in your heart, and always be marveled of His greatness in your mind, so that the brilliant light of your Lord, which enlightens your heart, will be pouring in you!

St. John Saba

- ❖ The prophet says: "light" and he means "joy", because distress and sadness are darkness that lead to the darkness of the heart. It means, send your true joy and your support to take me to the Mountain of Zion and to Your place, i.e. to Your holy tabernacle. That was the demand of those who were captured in Babylon, who were beseeching to be released from their capture.

Fr. Onesimus of Jerusalem

- ❖ This is the demand of the prophets (Psalm 43:3) to God the Father, to send His only begotten son our Lord Jesus Christ who said: "I am the light of the world", who is to guide us to the highest heaven and to the heavenly tabernacle.

St. Athanasius

- ❖ Notice the order, the individual should go through acknowledgement first so that he can accept the beauty and the blessing, and then, afterward, he accepts the light. The following words in the Psalm are as this: "Who cover yourself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2).

St. Jerome

- ❖ The garment of light is the immaculate body that has been worn by the Son of God, so that it felt hungry and thirsty. And at many times He hid this garment and let His divinity manifested for a while when He performed wonders.

Fr. Onesimus of Jerusalem

- ❖ He is the one who set up the sky for the earth with the glittering stars which reflect His glory in heaven as in a mirror. Thus, the multitudes of the prophets, martyrs, and the priests, they shine like glorious stars and they are light for the world.

St. Ambrose

GOD IS THE SPRING OF GOODNESS

"No one is good but one, that is God" (Luke 18:19). God is the only one who is entirely full of goodness, He is able to reflect His goodness on His creation, and it turns to be good creation. "Be holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

O my soul, acknowledge this truth, drown in the depth of His goodness, enter to His unchangeable true goodness, and let my innards be like a burning coal, where its flame rises to reach the goodness of God!

He gave you the capability of being good, He made you according to His likeness so you tend to be attracted to Him and be filled with Him. But even though that you fell in the sin, with the fact that the Satan couldn't take away your love of goodness, but he fooled you in knowing the concept of goodness, so, you thought of what is not good as it is good, and you counted the goodness as it is not goodness.

You became like a fish that thinks the bait is a good thing, not knowing what is hidden in it. Thus, you believed that the love of dignity and praise, and the tendency toward each of the worthless richness, glory of the world, and pleasures of lusts; all of this you considered it goodness!

Now you became **in need of wisdom** to be perfect and complete, so ask God who gives to all liberally and without reproach (James 1:4-5). The Lord orders you with your father Abraham: "**walk before me and be blameless**" (Genesis 17:1). If you walk before Him, in His presence, and hang on to Him, surely, you will be perfect.

❖ If it happens that there is anything right within me, it is from You, any goodness that I have, it is from You, O, the good one, it is from You, and I have received it!

Who's there to help me to stand except You, Oh, my God?!

And what is it that makes me fall except the reliance on myself?!

I will remain buried in the mud unless You pull me out! I will stay blind unless You open my eyes!

I will continue to be falling in sin, never be able to get up, unless Your hands are there to support me! I will be completely perished unless You provide me with Your attention and care!

❖ How miserable I am?! My God.. When will I get rid of this corrupted

nature, and your strength works within me?!

My God... pleasant is the solitude, the silence, the truth, the purity, which are all for you! But for me, I have fun with the noise, clamor, worthless things and the sin!

What do I say? You are the real goodness, You are merciful, holy, and just... but me, I am a wicked, love myself, a sinner, and an oppressor!...

You are the light, but I am the darkness! You are the life, but I am the death!

You are the physician, but I am sick! You are the joy, but I am the sadness!

You are the sincere truth, but I am the real nullity, I am like any other man on the earth!

With which language You want me to talk to You, O my creator?! I beseech You to please hearken to me, I am Your hand made, and the destruction of me is a terrible thing!

I am Your creature, but I am dying! You have made me with Your hands, but I am falling toward nothingness!

If there is an existence for me, it is because You granted me that presence, "Your hands have made me and fashioned me" (Psalm 119:73). Your hands that were nailed on the cross, they may give peace, so, do You despise the work of Your hands?!

Ah! I look at Your deep wounds, for You have inscribed my name on Your hand! Read my name and save me!

My soul that whining before You, is the work of Your hands. Make me a new creation, for this is your job. Therefore, my soul won't refrain from crying out to You saying: "O, You, who are the life, give me a new life!"

It is Your hand made, it comes to You beseeching You to restore its first beauty!

Forgive me O my God, as long as you allowed me to talk with You. Because, who is the man to dare talking with the Lord His creator?!

Yes. Forgive me! Forgive my defiant! Forgive Your servant who dared to raise his voice before His master!

The need does not know a law! The pain forces me to talk with You! And the calamity that struck me makes me call the physician because I am sick!

I ask for the light because I am blind! I look for life because I am dead! And who is that, the physician, the light, and the life, except

You?!

O Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy upon me! O Son of David, have mercy upon me! O source of mercy, hearken to the cries of the sick! O the light, that passing by the road, support the blind and hold his hand, so that he comes near You! With Your light O Lord, make him see the light, and through You he will live!

I beg You to order the dead to come out of the grave!

Ah, O my God! I will seek Your assistance before I perish, or at least I ask for help so I won't die, so that I become worthy of dwelling in You! You feel the pain when I talk to You about my misery, and without shame I admit that I am nothingness!

Hasten to help me, You are my strength, my support, my goodness, and my fortress!

Please help me Oh, the eternal glory, You are my joy, reveal to me Yourself O my God, so that I live!

St. Augustine

❖ Because God is good, it was said that He is "love" (1 John 4:8,16).

St. Clement of Alexandria

GOODNESS OF GOD NEVER FORGETS US!

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

❖ After the first man was fooled by the serpent, he agreed on the counsel of sin, and due to the sin he had to face death that led him to misery, but God has not forgotten him. The goodness of God has never forgotten us in spite of our cruelty toward his kindness, and our intense resistance to the beneficent. Despite all of this, we could not blot out His love to us, for we rose from the death and we came back to life by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself...

Thus, it was not enough for Him to call us for life again, but also, He prepares us for the eternal repose, which is a great joy that exceeds any human thought.

St. Basil the Great

GOODNESS OF GOD IS THE SUBJECT OF OUR PRAISE

"I will praise You forever, Because You have done it; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good" (Psalm 52:9).

"I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, **for it is good**" (Psalm 54:6).

"For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

"Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 106:1).

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, **for He is good! For His mercy endures forever**" (Psalm 107:1, 118:1, 2).

"Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant" (Psalm 135:3).

The goodness of God, which is steady, calls upon us to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praising without ceasing.

❖ Before these physical acts, comes Your spiritual acts which are heavenly and sparkling... But I am hungry for You, and thirsty to you... to You, Yourself, O **the truth "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning"**

St. Augustine

❖ Be glad with the goodness of God, because God takes control on your life despite that you are not worthy. Although, your debt to Him is very big, but He is not seen asking you to fully pay Him back, and through your simple acts He rewards you greatly.

Don't call God, a Just, because his fair does not show in matters that relevant to you. Though, David had called Him just and upright (Psalm 24:8, 144:17), thus, **His Son tells us that He is Righteous and Gracious.**

St. Isaac the Syrian

GOODNESS OF GOD AND THE CONCEPT OF GOD'S WRATH

❖ There are many parts in the Bible where God carries some of the man's characters. If one day, you heard "**anger of God and His wrath**" don't suppose that the anger and the wrath are characters and emotions that belong to God, but it is a way by which God humbles Himself and talk, in order to discipline His kids and correct them

Because we too, when we guide our children and correct their mistakes, we look terribly awful, with a strict and firm face that does not match our real feelings, but it matches the way of discipline.

If we show on our faces the forgiveness and the easiness that match

with our feelings inside ourselves, toward our kids all the time, and without changing the features of our faces in accordance with the kids' demeanor, we will mangle them and turn them to the worse.

With this way, we talk about the wrath of God, when it is said that God gets angry, the purpose of this anger is to lead to your repentance and your discipline, because God truly does not get angry or mad, but you are to bear the results of the wrath and madness when you fall into the cruel and horrible torments due to your sins and wickedness, **in the case of God's discipline for you which we call it the wrath of God!**

Origen

- ❖ When we read about the wrath of God and His discontent, we should not understand the words literally according to the meaning of the worthless human emotions. But, in a way that is appropriate to God, who is **flawlessly and faultless**. And therefore we should understand that He is the judge and the avenger for all unjust matters that are being conducted in this world.

Out of these terms and its meanings, we should fear Him for being the fearful, who rewards us for our acts. Also we should pay attention not to do anything against His will. Because the human nature is used to fear those whom she knows they are discontented, and she gets panic of offending them, as with some of the judges who reach the peak of the justice.

Those who suffer from the guilt of their conscience, usually are worried about the wrath that is in purpose of avenge. Of course this tendency has no place in the mind of those who are committed, to be fair in their judgments. But, while they are in the midst of this fear, the judge tends to be fair toward them without any bias, respecting the law that he is applying.

And this one, no matter how he conducts himself by being nice and compassion, he is faced with all kinds of discontent and anger from those who were punished with justice.

- ❖ We have heard some who are trying to justify this sickness that is very harmful to the soul using an awful explanation from the bible for this justification. As when they said that there is no harm at all to be angry with our brethren who make mistakes, as long as God Himself – as they said – was said about Him that He gets angry and becomes discontented over those who did not know Him, or those who knew Him and then rejected Him, according to the statement: "**Therefore the wrath of the**

Lord was kindled against His people, So that He abhorred His own inheritance", (Psalm 106:40) or according to the words of the prophet praying and saying: "**Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure" (Psalm 6:1).** Those do not realize that they are seeking excuses to commit an awful and harmful sin; they attribute to the divine dignity, which is the source of all the purity, the shameful human emotion.

St. John Csiyan

- ❖ We are the human, if we remain good according to our likeness to God, we will be united with Him. But if we become evils, by not being in God's likening, we will be separated from Him.

If we live with holiness, we will be in connection with God, but if we are evils, we become God's enemies. God is not the one who turns to be angry in His relationship with us, but our sins block the light of God from shining within us. As a result of this, we give the devils a chance to torture us.

But if by praying and acts of merci we repent and get rid of our sins, that does not mean that we have God in our side and we force Him to change (in His emotions), but the truth is that, by returning to God, we get healed from our wickedness, and thus, we enjoy the goodness of God again.

If we say that God is the one who turns away from the wicked, it sounds like we are saying that the sun is blocking its light from the blind person.

WHAT IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE MAN?

- ❖ The goodness of the man does not lie in the richness, otherwise, we may fear poverty, or in the physical health, otherwise we may be scared of illness, or in how people look at you, because on the other hand, you may be worried when people say evil about you, or in the life itself here, that you may be frightened of death... But goodness of the man lies in clinging to the true teaching and sticking to righteousness in life, which no one, even the Satan he, is able to take it away from the man as long as he is keen to care for it as it should be.

This is completely understood, even by the demons that are the best in deceit and harm. Therefore, the Satan stripped Job off his physical property, not to make him poor, but to force him to speak with blasphemy against God. He tortured his body, not to humiliate him with illness, but to defeat his righteousness. But when he ran out of tricks and

he made that rich man poor...he made him lose his sons, he brutally tore his body in a way that the executioners cannot bear, because the tools of torture cannot tear all parts of the body as did the worms in his body. The Satan offended his reputation among his friends whom they said that he was paying for his sins, and also they charged him with many accusations.

All of this did not harm Job, but on the contrary, he was more blessed on the expense of these tricks that he cast on him.

- ❖ A good act could be practiced but with a motive that is not good. This conduct, not only does not have a reward, but it does have a punishment. For they preached with Jesus in purpose of the preacher of Christ to fall in great danger, those, not only, don't get a reward, but also they fall under the curse and the punishment.

St. John Chrysostom

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AND TEACHING THE SINNERS

"Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way" (Psalm 25:8).

"Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness" (Psalm 143:10).

- ❖ Our wickedness takes place when we lose to be in the likeness of God and due to our unawareness of Him. Our great righteousness takes place when we are in likeness with Him.

St. Methodius Bishop of Olympias

A CALL TO UNLIMITED PERFECTION

The Christian is called to walk in the path of the eternal perfection, his perfection has no limit, and his way has no end. He walks joyfully in this path till meeting with his Christ, the everlasting "way"!

But regarding the virtue, insisting to be perfect has no limit. The divine prophet, the man who is great and firm in spirit walks in the path of virtue to reaching forward to those things that are ahead (Philippians 3:13).

He feels stopping at the road is not safe. Any goodness in its nature is not limited, and it is not disturbed unless there is something contrary to it. For, life stops by death, and light ends by darkness.

Thus, all that totally good, stops only at the point where its own contrary starts...

We have explained that all that could be limited is not a virtue.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

There is no man who is perfect in his goodness; therefore, the Holy has become a man to lead the man to righteousness.

- ❖ Christ is the goodness which people were waiting for.

Origen

- ❖ When Job explained the righteousness of his work, he added "**When His lamp shone upon my head**" (Job 3:29). This lamp that is for each one of us, it is lit by the oil of the righteous works. But if we practice evil and we became wicked, it is not just we won't be lit, but we will switch off the lamp that we have, and the words of the book will come true: "**But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness**" (1 John 2:11).

Isn't clear that he, who switches off the light of love, will switch off the lamp? But he, who loves his brother (1 John 4:21) will abide in the light of love, and with certainty he can say: "**But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God**" (Psalm 52:8), "**Your children like olive plants All around your table**" (Psalm 128:3).

- ❖ Christ is the only righteous with absolute goodness in everything, and He is the only one among all who is with wisdom and understanding, He is distinguished, not by learning, but it is His character.

Every goodness is naturally in God, it is in Him, not from outside. Thus, the wisdom is in Him too, but He, Himself is the wisdom, and particularly, He is the spring of wisdom, He gives wisdom partially to those who are partakers with Him, among the rational heavenly creatures and also the earthly creatures.

St. Cyril the Great

- ❖ I have never met a man who is perfect in everything...and he is still a man, except He, who is just for our sake, wore our humanity.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ He did not tell us to sell what we have on the ground that these things are evil in its nature, God did not make it. He did not ask us to throw it away as bad things, but to share it. No one is condemned because he owns something, but because he corrupts what he owns. Therefore, according to commandment of God, we cast away from us what we have

for the forgiveness of sins and to enjoy the kingdom of God.

St. Basil the Great

- ❖ He cannot hide His light, or keep His glory without a witness. He cannot leave His goodness for no one, to enjoy it, or keep all what is related to the divine nature without being used for the good of the man, in order to enjoy it and share it.

If the man has come to life for this purpose, i.e. **to take part in God's goodness**, so it is necessarily that when he was created, he was given the ability to enjoy all what is good. The eye enjoys seeing the true light by the natural light that is in it, which attracts to it what is similar, by its ability given at birth.

Similarly, it was necessary for the human nature to be in likeness with the divine nature, so that through that similarity, the human nature can unite with what it is similar with the divine nature.

It was necessary for the irrational beings, whether that live in the water or in the air, to have a system that adapts to the surrounding environment. Each being is to find its type and its likeness, one in the air, and the other in the water. Thus, it was also necessary for the man, who came to life to enjoy the goodness of God, to have something in his nature similar to what he was going to share. Therefore, the man was given the qualifications of life, mind, wisdom, and all the qualities that are befitting with God, so that, through all of this; he can build the desire toward what is similar.

- ❖ Who looks at the current status of the (man), may believe that our discussion was wrong, objecting that we don't see the man currently likewise (in partnership with righteousness of God), but it is totally the opposite.

Where is the element of likeness with God?

Where is the freedom of the body from the lusts, i.e. enjoying the everlasting life?

Behold the life of the man passes so fast, he gives himself up to the lusts, his destiny is death, and he is subjected to face all kinds of suffering for both the body and the soul...

If the life of the man is not normal, for the time being, it is not evidence that one day he was not created surrounded by goodness. Because, if the man is God's work and God brought him to the existence with His goodness, it is not reasonable to imagine that God creates him surrounded by evil, goodness is the reason behind his existence... **God**

made the man to partake in His unique goodness, and He supported him with natural ability for every kind of perfection, therefore, if he is in accordance with the likeness of God, then, he will direct his attention to what is similar to him.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ Under any condition, the everlasting life is given as a reward of good work, because God does good work in the righteous people, it was said about them: "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13), even the Psalm says: "who crowns you with loving kindness: (Psalm 103:4), for through His mercy, the good works are implemented, by which crowns are obtained.
- ❖ What is important in this subject is not what we receive, but it is the individual who receives that thing...the good things could be harmful, and the harmful things could be useful based on the personality of who receives it. You can see that evil had come through righteous (the Law), as long as the one who receives it, he understands it in a wrong way.
- ❖ We will be in full peace when our nature becomes connected without separation from its creator, as a result, we will have nothing in ourselves that is contrary to us.

St. Augustine

- ❖ David the prophet has explained that sequence in the following saying: "Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14).
"Depart from evil" i.e. avoid all evil in general. Run away from every work that drives you toward sin.

But the prophet has not stopped at this limit, he added saying: "**do good**", because the man sometimes does not do evil, but also at the mean time he does not do good...

Pay attention to these words, and note the accuracy the St. has shown. When the man is given the ability to avoid evil, and with the support of God, he struggles in doing the good things, he is subjected to become a prey and a target of the enemy attack. Therefore, he has to toil, strive, and grieve, at times, as a **servant** motivated by fear so he does not go back to do evil again, and other times, as a **worker** demanding to be rewarded for righteousness.

But when he receives God's assistance and becomes accustomed to be doing good things, then, he will feel comfort in (doing good acts), and will taste the peace. Thereafter, he will find out, what that

distressing fight means, and what is the meaning of the joy of peace and its happiness, afterward, he will "seek peace", and struggle persistently inside him.

St. Dorethius

- ❖ God is righteous, **the only one who is full of goodness**, and because you are His image, it is befitting for you to be righteous. He is generous with all, so that you ought to be generous, you are to avoid being greedy, be generous when you give others anything physical which will pass away, otherwise, this will be a great disaster and it is foolishness.

Father John of Cronstadt

FROM WHERE DID THE EVIL COME?

Some wonder: if God is full of goodness, so, from where did the evil come?

Some of the Eastern philosophies tried to penetrate to the beliefs of Christians, like, to believe there is a god of evil, or, it is God who created evil. But the fathers of the church were cautious to confirm that God is full of goodness and not a source of evil.

- ❖ You may ask: how did the replacement with what is evil take place onto who was honored to take all these exalted gifts, i.e. the righteousness?

The reason is clear: there was never origin for the evil in the divine will.

If God were the creator of the evil and its father (its source), there would not have been a blame for committing evil.

Yes, the evil appears in a certain way, from inside, and is evident in the will when the soul gives up goodness.

Sight is a natural ability, but blindness is just being deprived from the natural ability, thus, there is contrary between virtues and evil. So, evil is the absence of virtues. By taking away light, darkness could take place, and there is no darkness in the presence of light. Thus, since goodness and nature are clinging to each others, evil will not take place.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

- ❖ He, who plants all goodness, has planted all righteousness, i.e. He planted the righteous life to those who will gather it. But he, who is the envious and hates human, planted evils in this world, like tares among the wheat. Two farmers, one is God, and the other is Satan, so, give your field to which you choose out of those two. There is one who plants life for the soul, and the other one who plants death for those who gather it.

- ❖ From God comes all righteousness, but if we commit the evil, it comes back on us.

St. Jacob of Serugh

EVIL AND MISERY

St. Gregory of Nyssa dealt with the problem of evil that destroyed the life of the man and made him lose all happiness, until sometimes, he wishes for death over life. If the man was to feel death as end of the human life, he turns to be in great misery. What did God do with the first man? He covered him with a shirt from the skin! He covered his flesh with the nature of death (a skin of a dead animal) as a garment to be taken off after reforming his nature, and afterward, he will carry immortality in his spirit and his flesh. This is what the Word of God – the savior - has offered to the man!

- ❖ The man reaches the intensity of grief when he thinks precisely about the dissolve of his body; he considers the end of our life a cruel thing and the extinction of our human existence through death is a great evil.

Let him then think through this black look toward the exceedingly divine goodness, those who are partners in life (with God) enjoy the good part of it; they love life and find it worthy to live it. But the man who spends his life in pain, his judgment will be different, because for him, he finds the nonentity to be much better than the life that is full of pain.

Now let us find out, if this who prepared our life, had planned this life for us to be a happy life or not.

It is we whom by our free will, has entered in a covenant of friendship with evil, and while we mix our nature with evil by being engaged in pleasures, the same as, when a harmful substance is sweetened by honey, thus, we move away from the path of happiness which is related in our mind with being relieved from pain and its reasons. Therefore, the man goes back to dust as pottery pots in order to be released from the evil that he committed, and to be reshaped again to his original image by resurrection.

The Law has presented these teachings, in a vague frame represented in a historical story...Moses tells us how our first parents, first of the human race, were implicated in rebellion that led to losing their first happiness. Then, God covered them with clothes of animal skin. In my opinion, Moses did not mean literally the animal skin! What kind of animal is this, that is slaughtered and his skin is given to make

clothes for our first parents?

The skin of the animals is removed from the animal while it is dead, therefore, it is meant that, God who heals us from evil by His wisdom, has given the man the physical death after falling, and this is a trait that is relevant to the irrational creation, but this case does not stay with him forever. The garment is an outside object, we wear it to use it temporarily, and it is not a normal thing (perpetual). The trait of destruction has marked the nature that is made for immortality... the garment covers the exterior not the interior. It is attached to the outer element of senses (the flesh), not by the actual image of God. The element that is relevant to the senses decomposes, but it does not disappear, because disappearance means nonentity, but decomposition is a return to dust, which the man has come from.

(The element that is relevant to the senses decomposes to our nature so that it could be reshaped to its first image and strange things would be removed.)

As the soul and the body are involved in the wrong pleasures, so, there is similarity between the death of the body and the death of the soul.

For the body, death is the end of life that relate to the senses. But for the soul, the word death is the separation from the real life... the soul cannot be resolved because it is not a composite (but simple), so how does it break down? But the imprints of the sin must be taken away from it, and should be treated by the virtues in our current life in order to be healed from the blots of the sin...

If we keep in mind the purpose of God who is fully in His wisdom, and the final, with the lack of our wisdom, and by our misunderstanding, we should not consider that the creator of the man is the "creator of evil"...for He knew what was going to happen (the falling of the man) and He did not stop the motive to what had already happened...because what is the replacement? Could it be, not creating the man because of His previous knowledge that the man will drift from the path of right? Or, could it be restoring him to his first image, i.e. to the status of the original grace, through repentance, though, he had been corrupted?

It is foolish to call God the "creator of evil" just because of suffering physically, for, this has happened as an inevitable fruit to fluctuation of the human race. And if we refuse to believe that God, the creator of the man is not responsible for what caused our suffering, so, this thought is the climax of the foolishness, which identifies those who judge things as

good or bad, based only on their senses. Those do not understand that the inner goodness is not relevant to the human senses and evil is actually alien for righteousness and truth...

Who was he that cared for the return of the man to the status of the original grace?

Who was he that sought to help the falling, to call the stray, and to hold the hand of the lost to lead him to the right path?

Who is He? It is our great Lord. **God who gave us life in the beginning, He is the only one who has the ability and the right to restore what was lost.**

His birth in flesh, His growing from childhood to maturity, His actions of eating and drinking, His tiredness, His sleep, His sorrow, His tears, the false accusation against Him, His trial, His crucifixion, His death, and His burial, all of these things that are mentioned in the divine declaration, has weakened the faith of the foolish, so they deny the final result (the Resurrection) because of the painful beginning. In their perspective, they believe that the Resurrection does not correspond with the divinity due to the inadequacy of His death circumstances.

I believe that it is necessary to put aside that thought of considering the body as an ugly thing, and to pay more attention to what is good itself, and what it is contrary to it, wondering about what distinguishes each of them.

I believe, who thinks carefully regarding that thing; will not argue if there is a shameful thing (the flesh), because what is really shameful is the bad demeanor. But anything that is free of bad behavior is completely strange to what is shameful. And anything is not related to what is shameful is considered good, and what is good, is not related to its contrary...

(This is how the St. defended the incarnation of the savior. His humanity or His life among us as a man is not considered something shameful to Him, because these things are not a sin or a shame as some might think).

St. Gregory of Nyssa

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE THRONE OF GOD AND EVIL IS THE CHARIOT OF SATAN

- ❖ The sinner, who is evil, denies the righteousness that is favorable, and which is the **throne of the righteous Lord**, while the evil carries the chariot of death.

As God is present where goodness is taking place, comfort of God is found in the goodness, thus, **the comfort of the sinner is found in evil.**

As the just judge makes His throne perfect, by applying righteousness, the righteousness has become a footstool under His feet, thus, **the sin has been made a throne for the evil who sits on it, and the unrighteousness have become the footstool under his feet.**

Stay away from the evil which is the throne of the enemy; love the good which it is the comfort of the Lord of the most high.

Keep the envy and the maliciousness away from you, for they represent the chariot of the evil, also, keep away each of the enmity and the hatred that lead to death, the hatred and the anger which draws the sword to kill, theft, lying, and adultery...

This is the chariot that the evil is trying to keep perfect; he is using it to bind the human.

This is the chariot of the crowned, and its power will lead to the darkness and the hell.

This is the chariot that gives its worker the wage with the ones who live in bottom places: where there is gnashing of teeth!

Break the yoke of the enemy and tear it off, cast away the bonds of sins that he ties you up with it.

Put on your neck the yoke of your sweet and comfort Lord, and tie yourself to that chariot which carries life.

It gives life, carries light, and brings the good, i.e. God who is the life for those who hold Him.

St. Jacob of Serugh

THE GOOD KING IS NOT PRESENT WHERE EVILS ARE

❖ The love of His divine has left you, and you became deaf, and all evil actions for you are to be seen as good actions.

You believe that insulting, mocking, and all the bad curses are kind of good demeanor, despite that they are evils.

If you are disturbed, when you are insulted by your neighbor, you are showing that you have closed the door, and because you are not pure, He will not come to you.

If your response to the insulting would be insulting also, there will be no room for Him in you, because for those who return evil by evil, they have no room for His presence.

If the soul full of detestable anger and hatred, He will be staying away from you, you are like a pottery full of demons.

O man, are there envy, deceit, and lying in you? He comes and passes by you, you are like a house full of sludge.

You live in a clean and pure house, and you will be insulted if you live in a dirty house.

How does the King of kings and the Lord of Lords come in a soul that is full of stink sludge?

Throw away all the wickedness of the evil desires. So, the king and His great army will dwell in you.

St. Jacob of Serugh