

St. Cyril Orthodox Church

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+ **September 12, 2021** +

Sunday before the Elevation of the Holy Cross.

Leavetaking of the Birth of the Theotokos.

Hieromartyr Autonomos, Bishop in Italy (+313)



MANY YEARS to **Cathy Rape**, who celebrates her birthday today; and to **Nicholas Hendrickson**, who celebrates his birthday on Tuesday. Also to **Lauren, Kendall, and Madison Hunter**, who celebrate their nameday (Sts. Faith, Hope, & Love, with their mother Sophia) on Friday.

FEAST OF THE ELEVATION OF THE CROSS – Great Vespers of the feast on Monday at 6:30. Divine Liturgy on Tuesday, September 14, at 8:30 am.

THURSDAY MORNING – We will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at 8:30 am, praying for the health and salvation of our community.

INQUIRER CLASS after Sunday coffee hour today. We will discuss the saints, holy canons, and the Church's artistic tradition.

TREASURER UPDATE – For September so far, we have received \$3,923, including a grant of \$1,667 from the OCA. Our estimated expenses for this month are \$10,345.

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St. Cyprian of Carthage (+250) – On the Lord's Prayer

After that, we say: “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” - not so that God may do what He wants, but so that we may be able to do what He wants. For who could prevent God from doing whatever He wishes? But because the devil keeps us from always obeying God in thought and act, we ask that that God's will might be accomplished in us. For this to happen, we need God's goodwill – in other words, His help and protection. For there is no one strong enough of himself, but he is made secure through God's grace and mercy.

Now the will of God is precisely what Christ both did and taught us to do. It means being humble in our lifestyle, steadfast in our faith, modest in our words, just in our actions, merciful in how we treat others, disciplined in our conduct, incapable of inflicting harm, but able to bear harm inflicted on us; keeping peace with our brothers; loving God with all our heart; loving Him as Father while fearing Him as God; putting absolutely nothing before Christ, since Christ put nothing before us; clinging tenaciously to His love; and standing, brave and confident, beside His Cross. Under torture we have the courage to fight for Him, and in death the patience for which we shall be crowned. This is what it means to do the Father's will.

A Saint's Advice to a Young Man

Once when St. Niphon of Constantia (whose feastday is Dec. 23) was in a church of the Theotokos, he was approached by a very virtuous young man who always ran tirelessly to sacred services. “Father,” he asked him, “what shall I do to gain salvation?”

“My son, you are a pure soul. Why do you want to hear a salutary word from an old man who has rotted in sin?”

“Father, the word of God says: 'Ask your father, and he will show you' (Deut. 32:7). That's why I, too, ask to hear a good word from you. Therefore, don't turn away from me the unworthy.”

“Are you thinking of becoming a monk, or pleasing God by following the ordinary life?” the saint asked him.

“Father, I'm thinking of training myself first in life and later, whatever God wills.”

“My child, if you want to live amongst people, you must watch the following: Do not criticize anyone at all; do not ridicule anyone; do not become angry; do not despise anyone. Be very careful not to say ‘so-and-so lives virtuously’, or ‘so-and-so lives immorally,’ because this is exactly what judge not' means. Look at everyone in the same way, with the same disposition, the same thought, with a simple heart. Accept them as you would accept Christ. Don't open your ears to a person who judges. More so, don't be happy nor agree with whatever he says, but keep your mouth shut. In other words, be slow to speak but quick to pray. Neither condemn in your thoughts the one who judges. Of course he is doing something wrong. But you should look at your own shortcomings and criticize only yourself.”

“Father,” observed the youth, “what you told me is for the seasoned fighters. How will I, worthless that I am, be able to attain that in order to please God?”

“My son, if youth has humility and purity, it is enough. God asks nothing else of it. For this reason, my lad, be pure and humble. Place yourself beneath everyone else. Then truly you will live in fellowship with Christ.

“Also struggle not to imagine that you've reached the heights of the saints, but say continually: My soul, do you know that we've surpassed even the demons in sins, and up to now we haven't done any good deed for God? Woe to us, wretch! What will become of us on Judgment Day?

“That's why you must always consider your prayer as that of the worst sinner. For we sin worse when we think that our prayer is holy and pure. Besides, even if one performs signs and wonders, he should consider himself without defense because he will sin in prayer anyway, either with the inward movements of the heart or with careless thoughts, in other words, when

the mouth says one thing and the mind runs elsewhere. That's why you should remember to say continually: 'From my secret sins cleanse me, and from those of others spare Your servant.'

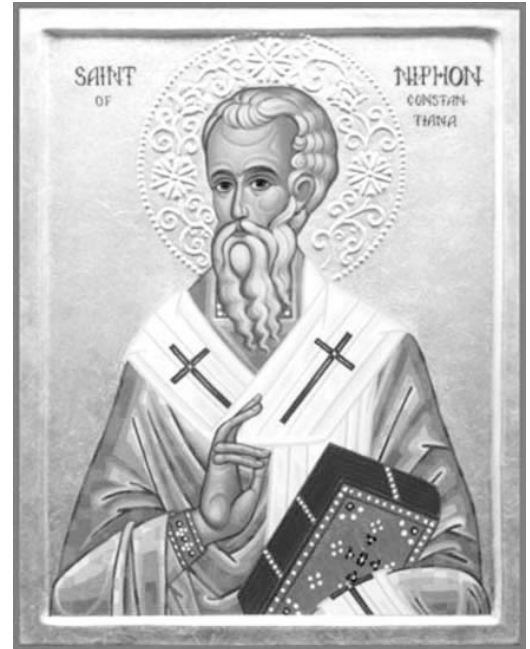
“You must also keep this in mind: Never be happy with your good deeds nor become too smug because of them. You don't know whether they are pleasing or repulsive to God. It's better to place your trust in Him and in His power, considering yourself useless dirt. Ah, my son, how many sins do we commit unawares!

“When you see your fellow man sin, you should blame yourself. And if someone insults you, criticizes you, or scorns you, even to the point of humiliation, humble your thought and criticize yourself as a sinner and unworthy of living! Correction and salvation will follow all this.”

Then the young man again asked him: “Father, how can man overcome each of the devil's temptations?”

“Silence and humility is victory in each temptation. All the deeds of the humble person are known to God and praised by His angels. That's why they are horrible and frightful to the demons. Therefore, become humble and broken in heart, that the Holy Spirit may yearn to dwell within you and give you strength to repel all worldly cares. For I perceive that mostly these draw you away from God's way distracting you with useless things. On Judgment Day, these will not help us at all, my son. The Lord didn't send us to this life to drown ourselves in cares and excessive concerns enticed by the devil - God forbid! Better turn your whole self to God, caring only for your soul; He cares for your material needs as well. Because, as the Lord said, no one 'can add one cubit to his span of life,' no matter how much he worries about his body in this life. What benefit do we have from worldly things, even if we happen to collect everything in our storehouse? In the end we leave it here. And stripped of virtues we dwell in the grave! What material gain can save us then? Certainly none. Darkness, woes, and eternal punishment will surround us from everywhere. That's why it is absolutely necessary for us to pray unceasingly with a great deal of concentration and peace. Understand therefore, my child, and place everything I am telling you well in your heart, and from here on cut the worries and live sensibly and pleasing to your Lord and God.”

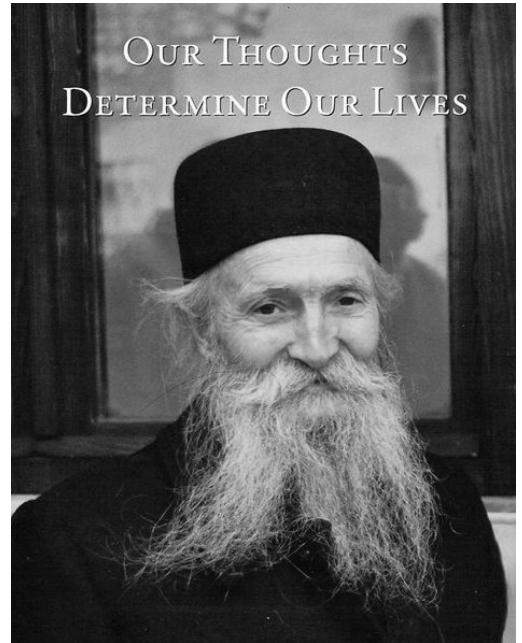
With this advice the blessed one brought deep compunction to the heart of the young man. Finally, as he was leaving, the young man fell at his feet and asked for his blessing. Niphon did the same. He, too, fell at the feet of the young man and then gave him his blessing to leave.



Part 2: Thoughts about Our Thoughts from Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

From the book *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*

(10) “We can keep guard over the whole world by keeping guard over the atmosphere of heaven within us, for if we lose the Kingdom of Heaven, we will save neither ourselves nor others. He who has the Kingdom of God in himself will imperceptibly pass it on to others. People will be attracted by the peace and warmth in us; they will want to be near us, and the atmosphere of heaven will gradually pass on to them. It is not even necessary to speak to people about this. The atmosphere of heaven will radiate from us even when we keep silence or talk about ordinary things. It will radiate from us even though we may not be aware of it.”



(11) “A person who is entrapped in the vicious cycle of chaotic thoughts, in the atmosphere of hades, or has only so much as touched it, feels the torments of hell. For example, we read the newspapers or take a walk in the streets, and afterwards we suddenly feel that something is not quite right in our souls; we feel an atmosphere; we feel sadness. That is because by reading all sorts of things, our mind becomes distracted and the atmosphere of hades has free access to our minds.”

(12) “The Holy Fathers tell us to let our attention be on the Lord immediately upon waking, to let our thoughts be united with Him during the entire day, and to remember Him at every moment. The Holy Fathers prayed to be delivered from forgetfulness, for we often get carried away by the things of this world and forget the Lord... We forget that He is everywhere and that any job we do and any task we perform is His.”

(13) “Your thoughts are burdened because you are influenced by the thoughts of your fellow men. Pray to the Lord that He might take this burden from you. These are the thoughts of others which differ from yours. They have their plan, and the plan is to attack you with their thoughts. Instead of letting go, you have allowed yourself to become part of their plan, so of course you suffer. Had you ignored the attack, you would have kept your peace. They could have thought or said anything at all about you, yet you would have remained calm and at peace.”

(14) “Why does the Lord command us to love our enemies and to pray for them? Not for their sake, but for ours! For as long as we bear grudges, as long as we dwell on how someone offended us, we will have no peace.”