



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 205-930-9681 / 205-907-9447

Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **January 17, 2016** ✠

St. Anthony the Great (356)



✠ **Note: Tomorrow, January 18: Inquirer's Class resumes, 6:30pm**

➤ **House Blessings are on! See Father to schedule this blessed event!**

St Anthony the Great: Thirty-Eight Sayings (Part 1)



1. When the holy Abba Anthony was living in the desert, he was in a state of melancholy (ακηδία) and his mind was darkened by a multitude of imagined things (λογισμῶν), and he said to God, Lord, I want to be saved, but these thoughts will not leave me alone. What shall I do in my trouble? How will I be saved? A little later, when he went outside, Anthony saw someone like himself, sitting and working, then rising from work and praying, and again sitting and plaiting a rope, then again rising for prayer. It was an angel of the Lord, sent for the correction and insurance against stumbling of Anthony. And he heard the angel saying, Do this, and you will be saved. And when he heard this, he had great joy and courage, and did this, and was saved.

2. When Abba Anthony meditated upon the depth of the judgments of God, he asked, saying, Lord, how is it that some perish when short-lived, and some live to extreme old age? And why are some poor, and yet others rich? And why are the unrighteous rich, and yet the righteous are poor? And he heard a voice saying to him, Anthony, keep your attention on yourself, for these things are the judgments of God, and they will not benefit you to learn them.

3. Someone asked Abba Anthony, saying, What must we keep in order to be pleasing to God? And the elder answered, saying, Keep what I tell you. Whoever you may be, always keep God before your eyes. And whatever you do, do it from the witness of the Holy Scriptures. And in whatever place you live, do not leave quickly. Keep these three things, and you will be saved.

4. Abba Anthony said to Abba Poimen that this is the great work of man: always to reproach himself for his own faults before God, and expect temptation until the last breath.

5. The same said, No one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven untempted. He said, Remove the temptations, and no one would be saved.

6. Abba Pambo asked Abba Anthony, What should I do? The elder said to him, Do not put your trust in your righteousness, nor regret past actions, but control your tongue and stomach.

7. Abba Anthony said, I saw all the traps of the enemy spread over the earth, and groaning, said, What can get through these? And I heard a voice saying to me, Humility.

8. He also said that there are some who have worn out their bodies in asceticism, and because of this they do not have judgment, being far from God.

9. He also said that from a neighbor is life and death. For if we gain a brother, we gain God. And if we scandalize a brother, we have sinned against Christ.

10. He also said, Just as fish die on dry land, thus also the monks loitering outside their cells or spending time with those of the world lose the intensity of quiet (ησυχίας). And so, like the fish to the sea, so we must hurry to the cell, lest we loiter outside and we forget our inner guard.

11. He also said that one living in the desert and in quiet (ησυχάζων) is delivered from three battles: of hearing, and speaking, and seeing. He only has one: fornication.

12. Some of the brothers came to Abba Anthony to tell him the dreams they had seen, and to learn from him if they are true, or from demons. Now they had a donkey, and it died on the way. When they finally came to the elder, he said to them first, How did the little donkey die on the way? They said to him, How did you know that, Abba? And he said to them, The demons showed me. And they said to him, That is why we came to ask you, lest we be led astray, because we have seen dreams, and many times they are true. And the elder fully convinced them by the example of the donkey, that they are from demons.

13. Once someone had been hunting wild animals on the desert, and saw Abba Anthony joking with the brothers [and was scandalized]. And the elder, wanting to fully convince him that it was sometimes necessary to relax (or "condescend" συγκαταβαίνειν) with the brothers, he said to him, Put an arrow to your bow, and shoot. And he did thus. He said to him, Shoot again. And he shot. And he said again, Shoot. The hunter said to him, If I shoot without limit, the bow may break. The elder said to him, So it is with the work of God. If we shoot more than the limit of the brothers, they will promptly shatter. Therefore it is necessary for one to relax with the brothers. The hunter heard these things, was pierced by remorse, and being greatly helped by the elder, went away. And the brothers, strengthened, went away to their place.

14. Abba Anthony heard about a certain young monk who had performed a sign (or "miracle" σημειον) on the road. As this one saw some elders walking along and struggling on the road, he ordered wild donkeys to come and carry the elders, until they came to Anthony. So the elders told these things to Abba Anthony. And he said to them, It seems to me that this monk is a ship full of goods, but I do not know if he will come into the harbor. And after a time, Abba Anthony suddenly began to weep, to pull out his hair, and to mourn. His disciples said to him, Why do you weep, Abba? And the elder said, A great pillar of the Church has now fallen (for he spoke about the young monk). He said, But go to him, and see what has happened. So the disciples went, and found the monk sitting on a mat, and weeping for the sin he had committed. Seeing the disciples of the elder, he said, Tell the elder to entreat God to give me only ten days, and I hope to have defended myself (απολογησασθαι). But after five days, he died.

15. A certain monk was praised from among the brothers before Abba Anthony. So when he came, he tested him, whether he could bear insult. And finding that he could not bear it, he said to him, You seem like a village which is beautifully adorned outside, but plundered by robbers inside.

16. A brother said to Abba Anthony, Pray for me. The elder said to him, I will have no mercy on you, nor will God, if you yourself do not make every effort and beseech God.

17. Some elders came to Abba Anthony, and Abba Joseph was among them. And the elder, wanting to test them, put forward a saying from the Scriptures, and began to ask from the youngest, What is this saying? And each spoke according to his own ability. And to each the elder said, You have not found it. Last of all, he said to Abba Joseph, How do you explain this word? He answered, I do not know. So Abba Anthony said, Most certainly, Abba Joseph has found the way, for he said, I do not know.

18. Brothers were coming to Abba Anthony from Sketis, and got into a boat to come to him, finding there an elder also wanting to come to him. And the brothers did not know him. And they sat in the boat, speaking the words of the Fathers, and from the Scriptures, and also about the work of their hands. And the elder was silent. When they came to the dock, they found the elder also going on toward Abba Anthony. When they came to him, he said to them, You found a good fellow-traveller, this elder. And he said to the elder, You found good brothers with you, Abba. The elder said, Good they may be, but their courtyard has no door, and whoever wants to enter the stable may let loose the donkey. And he said this, because they were saying the first things that came to their mouths.

19. Brothers came to Abba Anthony, and said to him, Speak a word for us. How may we be saved? The elder said to them, You have heard the Scriptures. You have the means well enough. But they said, But we want to hear from you, Father. And the elder said to them, The Gospel says, If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, also turn to him the other. They said to him, We are not able to do this. The elder said to them, If you are not able also to turn the other cheek, then permit just one to be struck. They said to him, We cannot do this. The elder said, If you are not able to do this, do not give as you have received. And they said, We cannot do this. So the elder said to his disciple, Make them a little soup, for they are weak. If you cannot do this, and will not do that, what can I do for you? You need prayers.

20. A brother renounced the world and gave his possessions to the poor, keeping a little back for his own reason, and went to see Abba Anthony. And learning this, the elder said to him, If you want to be a monk, go into the village, and buy meat, and place it around your bare body, and come back here thus. And the brother did so, and the dogs and birds tore his body. And when he came back to the elder, he wanted to learn if he had done as he had advised. When that one showed his torn up body, the holy Anthony said, Those who renounce the world, and want to hold onto possessions are thus torn by demons battling them.

21. Temptation once happened to a brother in the monastery of Abba Elias. And, cast out, he came to the mountain, to Abba Anthony. And the brother remained near him for a time, then he sent him to the monastery he had been expelled from. When they saw him, they expelled him again, and he returned to Abba Anthony, saying, They did not want to receive me, Father. So the elder sent to them, saying, A ship was wrecked in the sea, and lost its cargo, and with difficulty came safely upon the shore. And you want to cast back upon the sea what has made it safely to the shore. When they heard that Abba Anthony sent him, they quickly received him.

22. Abba Anthony said, I think that the body has a natural motion entangled with it. But it cannot act without the soul being willing. And it only signifies in the body a passionless motion. And there is also another motion, from nurturing and caring for the body with eating and drinking. By these the heat of the blood arouses the body toward action. So the Apostle also said, Do not be drunk on wine, in which is debauchery. And further the Lord in the Gospel commands His disciples, saying, Watch, lest your hearts are weighed down in indulgence and drunkenness. And there is another motion of those who struggle (or "compete" ἀγωνιζόμενοις), coming from the plotting and envy of demons. You must understand that there are three bodily motions: one is natural, and another from negligence of intake, and the third from demons.

23. Further, he said that God does not send the same wars upon this generation as upon the ancients. For he knows that they are weak and cannot bear them.

24. It was revealed to Abba Anthony in the desert that in the city was someone like him, a physician by profession, who gave his surplus to those having need of it, and who all day sang the Trisagion with the angels.
{to be continued}

CHRISTIAN WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS ... for the New Year

An Angel says, 'Never borrow from the future. If you worry about what may happen tomorrow and it doesn't happen, you have worried in vain. Even if it does happen, you have to worry twice.'

1. Pray
2. Go to bed on time.
3. Get up on time so you can start the day unrushed.
4. Say No to projects that won't fit into your time schedule, or that will compromise your mental health.
5. Delegate tasks to capable others.
6. Simplify and unclutter your life.
7. Less is more. (Although one is often not enough, two are often too many.)
8. Allow extra time to do things and to get to places.
9. Pace yourself. Spread out big changes and difficult projects over time; don't lump the hard things all together.
10. Take one day at a time.
11. Separate worries from concerns. If a situation is a concern, find out what God would have you do and let go of the anxiety. If you can't do anything about a situation, forget it.
12. Live within your budget; don't use credit cards for ordinary purchases.
13. Have backups; an extra car key in your wallet, an extra house key buried in the garden, extra stamps, etc.
14. K.M.S. (Keep Mouth Shut). This single piece of advice can prevent an enormous amount of trouble.
15. Do something for the Kid in You everyday.
16. Carry a Bible with you to read while waiting in line.
17. Get enough rest.
18. Eat right.
19. Get organized so everything has its place.
20. Listen to a tape while driving that can help improve your quality of life.
21. Write down thoughts and inspirations.
22. Every day, find time to be alone.
23. Having problems? Talk to God on the spot. Try to nip small problems in the bud. Don't wait until it's time to go to bed to try and pray.
24. Make friends with Godly people.
25. Keep a folder of favorite scriptures on hand.
26. Remember that the shortest bridge between despair and hope is often a good 'Thank you, Jesus.'
27. Laugh.
28. Laugh some more!
29. Take your work seriously, but not yourself at all.
30. Develop a forgiving attitude (most people are doing the best they can).
31. Be kind to unkind people (they probably need it the most).
32. Sit on your ego.
33. Talk less; listen more.
34. Slow down.
35. Remind yourself that you are not the general manager of the universe.
36. Every night before bed, think of one thing you're grateful for that you've never been grateful for before. GOD HAS A WAY OF TURNING THINGS AROUND FOR YOU. 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31)

Man: The Image and Likeness of God **(Though he bears the scars of sin...)**

Man has both his beginning in God and his ultimate aim in God. St. Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian) says that man is the only created being who received the order to be godlike. This is why, scripturally, a man is not a singularly defined being in himself alone, but can be defined through his relation to God. We find a truly beautiful Christian definition of a human being in one of the funeral hymns, "I am an image of Thine ineffable glory, though I bear the scars of sin."

In the Old Testament we find two different attitudes regarding human nature in relation to the Creator. On the one hand, there is the all-powerful and eternal God opposed to the inferiority of man, "dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27); and the condemnation of death, "for dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19). On the other hand Scripture says: "God created man in the image of Himself" (Gen. 1:26), and, "Thou hast made him little less than a god, Thou hast crowned him with glory and splendor" (Ps. 8:5).

This situation is superseded in the New Testament by Jesus Christ—the New Man—Who attributes great value to man in suffering and dying for mankind's salvation. St. Paul says, "we are all His children" (Acts 17:28).

The Origin of Man

Holy Scripture clearly states that both the unseen world (the angels) and the visible world were created by God. In the Creed, the Symbol of Faith, we confess that God is "maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." Man, according to Scripture, did not come into being through command as the rest of creation, but he is created by the very hands of God Himself, "the dust returns to the earth as it once came from it, and the breath to God Who gave it" (EccI. 12:7, cf 1 Cor. 15:47-8); while woman was made after man and from him (Mk. 10:6-8; 1 Tim, 2:13; I Cor. 11:8).

Holy Tradition continues in the same thought, for St. John of Damascus says, "God fashioned man with His own hand, from the seen and unseen natures, in His likeness and image, endowing him with a rational and mindful soul from His own breath."

According to Scripture, all of humanity is descended from one couple: Adam is the "father of the world" (Wis. 10:1), while Eve is the "mother of all those who live" (Gen. 3:20). For Orthodox Christians, the unity of the human race is a dogma and a truth of the faith upon which is also based the universality of the ancestral sin and the universality of Christ's salvation.

In relation to God, man's mission is to willingly and consciously direct himself toward the Creator through knowledge, love, and glorification. In regard to himself, man develops and perfects himself unceasingly, striving for likeness with God: "Be ye holy because I am holy" (Lev. 11:45). In regard to external nature, man's mission is that of an intercessor between it and God; for man brings sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God in behalf of all creation.

Man and Nature

Although man is superior to nature which surrounds him, he is not separated from it, but is rather a part of nature. He is made from dust like that of the rest of creation (Gen. 18:27; Job 10:8-9). Through man's fall into sin, nature also fell under the curse of corruption (Gen. 3:17-8). St. Paul says, "From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us" (Rom. 8:2).

Man, together with all creation, is dependent on the mercy of God. Nature serves man and man serves nature. "The Lord God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it" (Gen. 2:15).

The Structure of Man

The holy Fathers say that the material and spiritual—body and soul—are united in a human being. The body was created with the mission to be the bearer of the spiritual life. The end of man's life does not bring about a final separation of body and soul, for at the fearful Judgment Day the body will rise to live in eternity together with the soul. Though the body is weak through the debt of sin, it still serves as the instrument of virtues. Only through unity with the body can the soul perform works which are good or evil (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10), and the soul can make the body either a stained vessel, or the "temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16).

Man's Image and Likeness to God

God endowed man with spiritual gifts such as virtues, mind, knowledge, understanding, speech, etc. These are all instruments to give glory to God and through which man communicates with the Creator. Not only the soul, but the body also forms part of the "image" for they were created together in the image of God. Therefore, the image of God forms the whole of human nature.

We bear the image of God in ourselves from the moment of creation but our likeness to God must be obtained through our own free will and our own efforts in fulfilling his commands. Like Adam, we received from God everything necessary for body and soul.... being called to aim at a perfection which could be touched only through obedience to God.

The entire religious history of man, from the banishment from Eden to the time of Christ, is the history of fallen man's salvation. Through the Prophets in the Old Testament, God kept alive the hope for messianic deliverance: while the end of this history is found in our Savior Jesus Christ—the New Adam—Who, through the Cross and Resurrection, restored man, bestowing upon him the radiance of the Holy Trinity.

+ Reprinted from Life Transfigured Vol. 14, #2 1982 – Holy Transfiguration Monastery

"Your Lord is love: love Him and in Him all men, as His children in Christ. Your Lord is a fire: do not let your heart be cold but burn with faith and love. Your Lord is a light: do not walk in darkness and do not do anything in darkness of mind, without reasoning or understanding, or without faith. Your Lord is a God of mercy and bountifulness: be also a source of mercy and bountifulness to your neighbors. If you will be such, you will find salvation yourself with everlasting glory."

~ St. John of Kronstadt

This and That

No believing Muslim can ever profess to respect the U.S. Constitution above all other systems or documents, because it would be an act of apostasy. It would be a mortal sin, because the Sharia—to a believing Muslim—is the only universally valid, eternally valid law of any land. The Sharia system is of course based on the Kuran and the Sira, ...

This war is being fought, on the Islamic side, with the deep condition that the West is on its last legs, spiritually, morally, and biologically. That view is reinforced by the evidence from history that a civilization that loses the urge for biological self-perpetuation is indeed in mortal peril.

Once upon a time the West and the Muslim world could clearly define themselves vis-à-vis each other in a cultural and political sense. What postmodernity and secularism have done, since replacing Christianity as the guiding light of the West, is to cast aside any idea of “our land,” of a space that is European or American in the ethnic, geographic, and cultural sense, a space that has an external boundary and that should be protected from those who covet it but to whom it does not belong.

Srjda Trikovic

The mother who loves her children corrects them and bids them obey their father. The mother who coddles her children and mocks their father does not. The mother who loves her children forgives them their sins. The mother who excuses their sins does not. The mother who loves her children teaches them the truth and holds them to it. The mother who lets her children do as they please, and calls it good enough, does not. There is no strength in effeminacy. When the wolves come, the effeminate flee. That, too, is an old story.

Anthony Esolen

George Orwell said, “There are some ideas so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them.” If one wants to discover the truth of Orwell’s statement, he need only step upon most college campuses.

New Categories of “Sin”

Oberlin College proposed that its teachers be aware of politically controversial topics such as “racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, capitalism and other issues of privilege and oppression.” The presumption that students must be protected rather than challenged in a classroom is at once infantilizing and anti-intellectual...

From the Nazis to the Stalinists, tyrants have always started out supporting free speech, and why is easy to understand. Speech is vital for the realization of their goals of command, control and confiscation. Free speech is a basic tool for indoctrination, propagandizing, proselytization. Once the leftists gain control, as they have at many universities, free speech becomes a liability and must be suppressed. This is increasingly the case on university campuses...

Western values of liberty are under ruthless attack by the academic elite on college campuses across America. These people want to replace personal liberty with government control; they want to replace equality before the law with entitlement. As such, they pose a far greater threat to our way of life than any terrorist organization or rogue nation. Leftist ideas are a cancer on our society. Ironically, we not only are timid in response, but also nourish those ideas with our tax dollars and charitable donations.

Walter Williams



YOU ARE INVITED
to our usual Sunday afternoon meal
and a special presentation by
IOCC Development Officer Lou Zagami.

Lunch after Liturgy to Benefit IOCC

Sunday, January 24, 2016

Learn how your support is touching lives through IOCC's humanitarian work at home and abroad—in the United States, as well as in Ethiopia, Greece, Syria, and around the world.

***St. Symeon the New Theologian
Orthodox Church***

3101 Clairmont Avenue S • Birmingham, AL 35205

Free-will offerings will be accepted.

All donations will benefit
IOCC's global
humanitarian work.

To donate online, visit
iocc.org/birmingham

For more information,
please contact Maria Keeton:
(205) 283-2374 or
akeeton802@gmail.com

