



Concerning Unclean Thoughts*

From the teaching of St. Neilos of Sora

(Commemorated on 7 May)

DO not be inordinately consumed by grief, and do not be afraid with regard to what you told me concerning unclean thoughts, which are produced by the enemy of our souls; for the Fathers say that not only do they cause us, the feeble and passionate ones, to stumble, but also those who are spiritually advanced, lead a praiseworthy life, and have been vouchsafed, in part, the Grace of the Spirit.

They, too, endure fierce warfare from such thoughts and struggle greatly on account of them. Only by the Grace of God do they banish them, zealously and continuously devoting themselves to cutting them off.

And you, taking comfort in this, be diligent in cutting off wicked thoughts! Be unceasingly victorious against them through prayer, calling upon the Lord Jesus! For, banished by this invocation, they hastily withdraw, as St. John Klimakos says:

“By the Name of Jesus scourge your adversaries, for there is no stronger weapon than this.”

When those warring against you become stronger and more vehement, then rise up and, lifting your eyes and hands to Heaven, say with fervor and compunction:

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak. Thou, Lord, art strong and the struggle is Thine. Do Thou fight for us and gain the victory, O Lord.”

And when you do this assiduously, you will learn by experience how they are vanquished by the power of the Most High.

Busy yourself with any kind of handicraft, because wicked thoughts are also banished thereby. This teaching was transmitted to one of the great Saints by an Angel.

Learn something from the Scriptures by heart, keeping your mind focused on it. These things impede the demons from making incursions against us. This is also a stratagem of the Holy Fathers.

Keep yourself from saying, hearing, or seeing unseemly things, which stimulate the passions and reinforce unclean thoughts, and God will help you.



* See St. Neilos of Sora, *The Complete Extant Ascetical Works [in Greek]* (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis "Orthodoxos Kypsele," 1985), pp. 229-230.