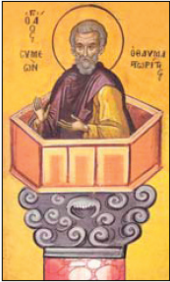


**AN  
ELDER  
SAID...**



**Edifying Stories  
and Teachings from  
Ancient and Modern Times**



## What is the Work of a Monk?

*Saint Symeon of the Wondrous Mountain\**  
(Sixth Century, Commemorated on 24 May)

**T**he work of a monk, I believe, is abstinence, so that the pleasures of the body are quieted in him, peace reigns in his soul, he chants uninterruptedly, and prays unceasingly with his *nous*. The work of a monk is love and humble-hearted obedience, through which Christ chose death, being obedient unto death, even death on the Cross, that we might by means of this obedience put to death the desires of our flesh, and then weep in confession and pray with a contrite heart like the Publican. The monk's voice should be measured and his speech restrained, and his demeanor meek and quiet. The work of a monk is not to make even the least of oaths, apart from "believe me" and "forgive me." He must flee from scandal and avarice; must give things away; and not only must he not slander anyone, but not even abide another who slanders. He must sympathize with those in pain, wash his brothers' feet, and serve them in their needs. He must not be conquered by the fearsome passion of pride, but should consider himself to be the least of all.

The work of a monk is chastity of body, but also of soul. If an unclean thought should enter any one of you, my brothers, let him tearfully call out the following to God, with attentiveness of spirit and lamentation of heart:

*"O Master Christ, the God of compassion and mercy and Lord of all supplication, Who art ever existing and abideth unto the ages; the only loving Father, Who putteth not to shame those who trust in Thee, deliver me from the hand of mine enemies; be attentive unto my soul; save me by Thy mercy. O my Rejoicing, rescue me*

*from them that have encircled me. For Thou knowest, Who alone knowest all things, from Whom it is impossible to hide the secrets of one's heart, that these thoughts have not been sown in me by mine own inclination, but have been engendered against my will. Remember that I am dust, and reckon me not unto condemnation. Lord, O Lord, Thou strength of my salvation, overshadow my head in the day of battle. Because of my desire, O Lord, deliver me not up unto the sinner. Have mercy, O God, have mercy on my, for in Thee hath my soul trusted and in the shadow of Thy wings have I put my hope. My God, do not remove Thyself from me; my God, be attentive unto helping me. My helper and deliverer art Thou, O God; make no tarrying.*

One warred against by unclean thoughts should pray with such words as these. Then, cast your infirmity before His goodness, and He will straightaway cover you. Thus, my brothers, abhor unclean thoughts, which are engendered by a full belly. Seek, rather, peace and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord, Who did not conceal the wiles of the enemy from us; for, He says, we are not ignorant of his designs

Resist, therefore, you valiant strugglers, while continually examining yourselves, and the power of sin will depart from you. May even the words of your mouth be seasoned with the tears of your heart.



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(\*) Source: Ἅγιος Κυπριανός, No. 332 (May-June 2006), p. 304.

Nicephoros Magistrou of Antioch, *The Life of St. Symeon the New*, ch. 4, §§31, 33, 34, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVI (2), cols. 3013-3017.

- May the voluminous and very edifying edition of his complete life some day be published!