



## Brief Patristic Messages



### Blessed Spiritual Sorrow\*

*His Eminence, Metropolitan  
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

**The following** question is often heard from our brothers in Christ:

*“How is it possible, being in the world with so many distractions from people, work, children, disturbances, and temptations, to pray with contrition, to weep over our sins, and to find peace of soul?”*

**Truly**, the world, our environment, has not only changed (and continuously changes) in relation to the past, but it has become alienated [from God]—it has literally become desanctified.

**The godless** functioning of the framework of society, every form of pollution and destruction of the ecological realm, the speed, the noise, the growth of the concrete jungle around us, eudaemonism, overabundance, and the withdrawing of our neighbor into self-sufficiency and egocentricity all cause suffocation and put deadly pressure on the soul of the believer who wishes to live a life in Christ.

**After an** exhausting day, the believer tries to gather his mind at the hour of prayer, but in vain does he labor. All day long, the “world” has entered in through his senses and dominated his heart.

**Over the** course of the day, the enemy has been imperturbably sowing in the field of the soul and now hastens to reap—what



else?—slothfulness, coldness, vain and sinful distractions, fantasies, yawning, and a sense of being overwhelmed. And the poor soul remains dry, has no role, is not changed, does not overflow with the Grace and blessing of God.

**What do** our much experienced and perpetual spiritual instructors and teachers, the Holy Fathers, advise us?

*“If he who lives among men cuts off his own will and does not pay attention to the sins of others, he will acquire spiritual sorrow.”*

**Blessed and** godly spiritual sorrow is the resurrection of the soul. Whoever has tasted, albeit once, of the wondrous sweetness of spiritual sorrow in Christ and its transformational properties comprehends these God-inspired Patristic words.

**Living in** an alienated world, let us force ourselves to cut off our will (in the narrow and the broad sense) and not to pay attention to the sins and weaknesses of others.

We should submit ourselves to the will of God, which reveals itself in our daily lives in various ways, and deny our own will, our own thoughts and likings, in order to maintain equanimity, peacefulness, love, and unity with our Lord and our neighbor.

**Let us never** judge or denigrate our brother. May our tender compassion cover our neighbor. Let us be forbearing and ready to say a prayer for him and a good word.

**This spiritual** training—that is, the continuous denial of our own selves and our own desires for the benefit of our neighbor and the avoidance of preoccupation with the faults of others—, when joined with and supported by the *Jesus Prayer*, surely will lead us to turn decisively to ourselves: to blessed introspection, to an awareness of our wretchedness, to self-knowledge, to self-reproach, and to blessed spiritual sorrow.

**Then our** thoughts will begin to be gathered and our heart will begin to revive and bear fruit. Then we will feel like Adam, who mourned outside of Paradise for the loss of godly blessed-

ness. Then godly sorrow will come, along with the blessed tears of joyful sorrow.

**And these** tears will increase humility, and humility will multiply the tears. Then the mind will be restored to health, will be illumined, and will ceaselessly remain lovingly attached to God. And it will fear to withdraw any longer from the Life-Giver, since it will know that the *“mind distanced from God becomes either bestial or demonic.”*

*“Brother, embrace spiritual sorrow with your whole heart; it is a part of the good inner work. Force yourself to cut off your will on all occasions; this is reckoned for man as a sacrifice. And that is the meaning of the verse: ‘For Thy sake we are slain all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’”*



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\*Source: Άγιος Κυπριανός, No. 224 (May-June 1988), pp. 285-287.