



## Brief Patristic Messages



### *“We Are Unable To Do Good...”*

*His Eminence, Metropolitan  
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

**T**HIS EXCUSE is a common one. We hear it particularly from the devout Christian of our day, whom the consumer society—in which the principle of minimal effort nearly universally reigns—has rendered slothful and cold to lofty struggles: struggles which require that we give “blood” to receive the “spirit.”

**What is** this excuse?

**“I am** unable to do good, if I do not manifestly receive the Grace of the Holy Spirit.” I do not have the strength to do the will of God, if Divine Grace does not sensibly help me!

**That is** the excuse put forward by one who is, on the one hand, ignorant of the empirical teaching of our Holy Fathers on the subject; and, on the other hand, who caresses and cultivates self-love, refusing from the outset from doing good according to his strength.

**Our Lord,** however, has placed in our nature the desire for the good, as well as the strength that will help us to work within the measure of our endurance.

**Indeed,** when a person receives Holy Baptism, he is mystically and freely granted Divine Grace, which henceforth continuously helps, strengthens, and comforts him in the good fight of the life and perfection in Christ.

**The self-loving** person who seeks to gain the gifts of the Holy Spirit without fulfilling the Divine commandments, or forcing himself, resembles one who expects to have a harvest without having first ploughed, sowed, and watered.

**We ought**, then, to labor, in order to receive the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and we must never forget that only

*“Pains undertaken for the sake of piety are followed by”*  
Divine “help” and spiritual consolation.

**If we** have a good disposition and struggle “according to our strength,” humbly and from our whole soul calling upon Divine aid, we will quickly perceive that the “good” is not unattainable.

**May** the wondrous teaching of St. Macarios of Egypt ceaselessly rouse our slothful souls to fine spiritual struggles for the attainment of the state of “the likeness” of God:

*“One who desires to approach the Lord, to be vouchsafed eternal life, to become the dwelling-place of Christ, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, in order to bear the fruits of this Spirit and perform the commandments of Christ in a pure and blameless fashion, must begin in this manner...*

*“He must force himself to do good, even if his heart does not desire it, always awaiting His mercy with unwavering faith; and he must force himself to love without having love; force himself to be meek without having meekness; force himself to be compassionate and have a merciful heart; force himself to bear contempt and to be forbearing when despised, and not be indignant when demeaned or dishonored; and force himself to pray without having spiritual prayer.*

*“And, in this way, when God sees him struggling and forcing himself thus, though his heart does not desire it, He will grant him the true prayer of the Holy Spirit; He will grant him genuine love, genuine meekness, a compassionate spirit, and genuine goodness; and, in a word, he will fill him with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.”*

