



## Brief Patristic Messages



### The Way of the Cross

“No one has ascended to Heaven with ease”  
(Abba Isaac the Syrian)

† His Eminence, Metropolitan  
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili

**O**UR PIOUS lay brothers and sisters in Christ should not be drawn into the spirit of the world or be overcome by faint-heartedness and impatience when they are tested by involuntary afflictions.

**Distressing** occurrences constitute a great benefaction of God to man, for in them

*“is concealed Divine mercy, which guides him who shows patience to repentance and delivers him from eternal punishment.”*

(Staretz Makarios of Optina)

**The benefit** gained from involuntary afflictions is so great that virtuous souls are grieved when they are not vouchsafed this Divine gift: they consider it to be to their misfortune and an abandonment by God.

**The Holy Elders** tell of a Christ-loving widow in Alexandria who was praying intensely, with tears and lamentation, at the tomb of a Holy Martyr, saying:

*“You have forsaken me.... Have mercy on me, O Master, Lover of mankind!”*

**When asked** what exactly was the matter, she replied with the following wondrous words:

*“God has forsaken me and has not looked upon me. It has been three years now that not I, nor my servant, nor my menial, nor any of my household has been ill, and I suppose that God has turned away from me on account of my sins. For that reason I am weeping, that God might swiftly look upon me according to His mercy.”*

\* \* \*

**True philosophy** is concealed in the Cross of Christ. Devout souls participate in His life-giving Grace through involuntary afflictions and tribulations, for

*“the way of God is a daily cross; no one has ascended to Heaven with ease.”*

(Abba Isaac the Syrian)

**It is more** precious in the eyes of the Lord when we suffer—even if only a little—for His sake than it is when we give alms and do other good deeds without labor or sorrow:

*“A small affliction undergone for God’s sake is superior to a great deed painlessly accomplished.”*

(Idem)

**Temptations** try and test our love for the Lord; lead to introspection and self-criticism; humble our mind; diminish our sense of self-esteem and self-sufficiency; endow us with profound self-knowledge; establish constant watchfulness and self-reproach; train us in blessed patience and bravery; and help towards the acquisition of deep and firm faith that everything occurs in conformity with the good Providence of God and according to His holy Will.

**Finally,** afflictions soften man’s heart, lead to inner repentance, and prepare the heart to receive the seal of God. There is no other path to the acquirement of a heart that is “humbled and contrite”

than the way of pains, illnesses and tribulations: the way of the Cross.

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**Rightly, then**, do the Saints say and continually repeat with emphasis that our progress

*“is manifested in temptations.”*

(Abba Poimen)

**The question** is therefore raised: Do we accept temptations as a Divine medicine without becoming fainthearted and impatient and repining, but calling upon the help of the *Theotokos* and the Saints?

**Furthermore**, do we humbly believe that

*“everything that God does for us, He does in His goodness and because He loves us, and He does well”; “and He does everything for our benefit” “and sparing us”?*

(Abba Dorotheos)

**If the** answer is yes, we are on the right spiritual path. But let us not become proud, for we are still only at the beginning.

**The true** friends of God

Rejoice in temptations

And grieve when they do not have temptations

And pray that the Lord

Visit them by means of temptations!

† *First Sunday of St. Luke*  
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