



Brief Patristic Messages



Enemies and Allies in Our Spiritual Struggle

*“The Lord rebuke thee!”
“An Angel of the Lord was rebuking them.”*

*† His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

IT IS A TRUTH confirmed by experience that the pious Christian who is struggling, with the Grace of God and the help of the Saints, to arrive from a state *contrary to nature* to a state *according to nature*—and then proceeds to be raised to a state *above nature*—is warred upon night and day by the evil spirits—those fallen former luminous angels.

The demons’ envy of mankind is indescribable; for these miserable ones see that people who have been sanctified in Christ, though mortal and material, inherit the places of light and glory and blessedness from which the demons themselves fell on account of their arrogance, and who now inherit gloomy Hades and the eternal fire of Hell.

Spiritual inexperience, a want of faith, and the cloud of passions usually do not allow us to understand our *true* enemies, who, night and day and with various wiles, beleaguer our soul, in order to separate it from the Light of Christ and to subjugate it to the dark passions.

“It was said of a certain Elder that he prayed to God to see the demons. And it was revealed to him: ‘You have no need to see them.’ But the Elder supplicated, saying: ‘O Lord, Thou art able shelter me by Thy Grace.’

“And God uncovered his eyes and he saw [the demons] circling man like bees and gnashing their teeth at him, while an Angel of the Lord was rebuking them.”

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IN THE END, however, when we have overcome the temptation of lack of faith and are convinced that, in essence, our sole enemies are the unclean spirits, we now meet, with even greater intensity, the temptation of anxiety, sorrow, impatience, and indignation; for both the internal and external battle is heavy in the extreme, spontaneous, and unceasing—thoughts, fantasies, and feelings, like a dark cloud, cover our *heart* and *mind*. We have the intense feeling that people, nature, and circumstances are all rising up against us!

An immediate danger that beginners in the life in Christ, in particular, pass through is that of cursing Satan!

It would be good, in these critical moments when the intensity of our inner struggle reaches its peak, to remember how the Chief Commander Michael acted:

“Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said: ‘The Lord rebuke thee’” (St. Jude 9).

In other words, when conversing with the Devil—who was disputing with arrogance of mind, desiring to take the dead body of Moses the God-Seer under his dominion—, the Archangel Michael did not presume to condemn him with oaths and curses, but rather said to the Devil: *“May God punish you for that. May the Lord rebuke you. May the Lord do away with you for the wrong you have ventured.”* And thus did the Devil vanish.

“And consider,” the Saints remark, that “the Archangel Michael indeed banished the Devil, but not through domination or authority, rather by surrendering [in humility] all judgment and the expulsion of the Devil to the God of all.”

Through his example, then, the Archangel Michael showed us that we must **not curse, imprecate, or anathematize even Satan himself**—something that the Sacred Texts of our Faith also teach us:

“When the ungodly curseth Satan, he curseth his own soul.” (Ecclesiasticus 21:27)

The Saints interpret this verse as follows:

“For if I anathematize even Satan himself, insofar as I do such a deed, I anathematize my own self.”

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A SECOND risk faced by the fighter of the good fight is that of forgetting his spiritual *allies*: the luminous Angels of God!

In the revelation to the aforementioned saintly Elder—let us never forget this point!—, it is true that he saw the demons ferociously circling man, but: *“An Angel of the Lord was rebuking them”!*

When, in time, we will be granted spiritual purity by the Lord’s love for mankind, then we will gain intimacy with our Guardian Angel and will noetically hear his holy voice assuring us: *“I am here! Do not lose courage! Just be careful!”*

The Saints teach us—and experience confirms this—that when the soul undergoes afflictions and tribulations, but with patient endurance, humility, and thanksgiving, the All-Good God provides for the soul to be comforted

“by means of the noetic ministers—namely, the Angels—who fortify it by most fervent and sweet tears, refined thoughts, and strength of virtue.”

We must have unswerving faith that, insofar as we remain firm in the accomplishment of the good commandments of our Lord, we mystically receive the *seal* of a Divine Angel. In this way, the swarm of gnashing demons has no power over us; they will attack us, but they will vanish. They will come and they will pass away, rebuked.

“As for you,” the Saints say, “if you remain in the good, God sends His Angel and seals you, so that the one coming and brandishing a sword will pass you by, through the prayers of the Saints. Amen.”

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HENCE, take heed! When the burden of the struggle presses heavily upon us, let us not forget who our *enemies* are and who our *allies* are!

The former are dark and malignant, but weak. Our capitulations and compromises are what give them power, and they wound us, either with pardonable or deadly sins.

The latter are bright and good. The purity of our lives and the fragrance of Grace—Which dwells in our *hearts* by means of *noetic prayer*—attract them, and they protect, comfort, and guide us to the heights of deification.

† *Eighth Sunday of St. Luke*
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