

Parish Prayer List (Living)

(Parish)

Evangelos	Carolyn	Robert	Sharon
John	Maria	Anamay	Ron
Lawrence	Dianna	Efthalia	Denny
Anthony	Pauline	Kathleen	John L.
Beverly	David	Michael	Anastasia
Nina	Walter	Nathan	Mary
Joseph	Duncan	Thecla	Michael
Reader Mark	Jason	Silouan	Susan Mary
Maximus	Emily	Clint	George
Magdalini	Connie	Emil	John H.
Barbara	Yevgeniya	Roman	Ilija
Olga	Marina	Seraphim	Maria
Sophia	Danny	Katina	Jeffery
Andrea	Subdn. Gregory		

(non-Parish)

Alexandra	Rachael	Jessilyn	Amanda
Christopher	Fr. Michael	Paige and Paul	Sean
James	Nicholas B.	Karin	Meg
Barry Pierce	Rick P.	Susan K	Rdr. David
Anna	Brian	Hugh	Salvatore
Travis	Megan	Alma	Charles Kahn
Peter	Maria	Michael	Timothy
Petrese	Mary	Clyde	Dan Brown
Pietra & Piero	Michael	Tad and Terra	Valentina

Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)

Richard Lynn (+10/11)

Lois Lynn (+10/24)

Nicholas Georgeopoulos (+11/3)

Thoughts from the Fathers

Do all in your power not to fall, for the strong athlete should not fall. But if you do fall, get up again at once and continue the contest. Even if you fall a thousand times because of the withdrawal of God's grace, rise up again each time, and keep on doing this until the day of your death. For it is written, 'If a righteous man falls down seven times' — that is, repeatedly throughout his life — 'seven times shall he rise again' [Prov. 24:16]. ~ *St John of Karpathos*

I suppose that it is sometimes better to fall oneself and rise, than to judge one's neighbor; because one who has sinned is

incited to self-abasement and repentance, while he who judges one who has sinned becomes hardened in an illusion about himself and in pride. Therefore everyone must guard himself, as much as possible, so as not to judge.

Abbot Nazarius of Valaam

Before any fall into sin the demons bring upon a man the following passions: dark forgetfulness; fierce anger, that is, inhuman and beast like malice; and ignorance, like darkness which has no trace of light. These three passions precede every sin. For a man does not perform a single sin before he has become disposed towards every sin, towards every evil, either by forgetfulness or by anger or by ignorance. From these proceed insensitivity of soul, that is, the mind, which is the eye of the soul, remains dark and is then captivated by all the passions. The first to be born is a weakness of faith; weakness of faith gives birth to self-love, the beginning and end, the root and origin of every evil.

Saint Paisius Velichkovsky

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HOW ARE THE PASSIONS BORN?

Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, reasoned one of the friends of Job the Much-Suffering (Job 5:6). Because for the Christian, woe and trouble is first of all sin and the passion that precedes it, it could be said that passion “does not come from the dust”, and sin “does not grow out of the ground”, but rather springs from the soil of the human heart. The Lord Himself warned us when He said, *From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man* (Mk. 7:21-23). That is, according to the Gospel teaching, not only is sin what is committed in deed, but even the longing for sin—which we call passion—is not altogether innocent by itself and is also a sin.

Having achieved victory in the struggle with their passions, the holy fathers of the Church left us a detailed description of this struggle. Part of this was their scrupulous study of the stages of the passions’ formation in the human soul.

“A thousand-mile journey begins with one step,” say the Chinese. So also every passion begins with one thought, which is called logismoi, or “suggestion”. This term describes a thought, but also an image, a feeling, a desire, or a state that suddenly arises in the human soul; however that is not

to mean all thoughts or states, but only those aimed at separating us from God. It is not possible to completely avoid logismoi, but it is within man's power to either accept them or reject them. The Ancient Patericon (sayings of the holy fathers) describes the following incident: "A brother came to Abba Poemen and said to him, "I have many thoughts, and I am in danger from them." The elder took him outside into the air and said, "Open your collar and lapel, and do not let the wind in!" "I can't do this," answered the brother. "If you cannot do that," said the elder, "then neither can you prevent the thoughts that come to you. But it is your job to withstand them."

According to patristic teaching, the most reliable method for warring with the passions is to cut them off at the very beginning; that is, to reject the suggestion. "If we cut off the thoughts we will also cut off the sin," taught St. Tkhon of Zadonsk. "Sin comes from thoughts like the tree grows from its roots."

The next step in the strengthening of the passions in the human soul bears the name "**conjunction**" and consists in the interchange with the thought. The thought draws the attention of the one being tempted, who is now in danger of being drawn into sin. Therefore, **conjunction** is not always without blame. If a person feels some pleasure from the interchange, then the will is already inclined towards the sinful thought and is leading the person to the next stage.

That state is called acceptance of the thought. At this stage happens the complete acceptance of the illicit thought, which attracts and fills the person's mind, feelings, and will so that sin begins to act in the human soul and prepare it to actually commit the sin in deed.

By lingering in this state a person is taken to the next step, called "**captivity**"—a state that has a qualitative difference from the former states. If up to that point the person could through his own efforts not only withstand the sinful thoughts, but also overcome them (*If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him* [Gen. 4:7]), now even the very desire to abandon the sinful thought disappears. If this comes up, then the person is no longer capable of getting rid of the illicit desire that has taken him over—unless he have some outside help.

The final step of this ladder into the abyss is the passion itself, which paralyzes the will, and like a kind of inner despot draws the person into sin. Incidentally, even if the passion does not result in the deed it is nevertheless destructive and requires great effort, prayer, and both divine and human aid to be rid of it.

The venerable Abba Dorotheos illustrated the difficulty in struggling with rooted passion through the following story: "A great elder was walking with his disciples in a certain place where cypresses grew, both large and small. The elder told one of his disciples to pull up a cypress. That cypress was small, and the brother pulled it up quickly with one hand. Then the elder pointed to another one larger than the first and said, 'Pull up this one also.' The brother wrenched it back and forth with both hands and

finally uprooted it. Again the elder pointed to another, even larger tree, and the brother pulled it out with great effort. Then he showed him yet another, yet larger tree, and the brother yanked it about this way and that, and although he worked hard and sweated over it, he could not tear it out. When the elder saw that he did not have the strength to do it, he asked another brother to rise and help him. The two of them were barely able to tear out the tree. Then the elder said to the brothers, “You see, brothers, it is the same with the passions. While they are small, if we want we can easily root them out. But if we are careless about them when they are small, they will gain strength, and the stronger they become the more effort is required of us to uproot them. When they have become very strong in us, then even with great labor we will not be able to tear them from ourselves, unless we receive aid from certain saints who help us according to God.”

Because the lingering in sin and sinful thoughts becomes worse for the person than the sin itself, the holy fathers call us to go to confession as quickly as possible, even if the fall is repeated many times. In the *Ever-memorable stories of the ascetic saints and blessed fathers* we find the following: “A brother asked Abba Sisoës, “What should I do, abba? I have fallen.” The elder answered, “Rise up.” The brother said, “I rose and fell again!” “Rise up again,” the elder answered. The brother again asked, “How long will this go on?” “Until you are taken from this life, either good or depraved,” said the elder. “For in whatever state you will be at that time, that is how you will be when you go there [to the next life].”

The question may arise as to why the majority of us do not do this; that is, why don’t we have recourse to repentance immediately, right after committing a sin? And even if we repent, it is rare if we do not return, as the Scriptures say, “to our own vomit” (cf. Pet. 2:22).

Probably this happens by force of our inner division, our disintegration, which in turn leads to the inability to make a willful resolution—that is, to a lack of resolve. It is namely this lack of resolve, according to the teachings of St. Seraphim of Sarov, that does not allow us to imitate the ancients. This resolve must be shown in the very early stages of the passion’s development—against the *logismoi*, or suggestion. If our indecision does not allow us to take this comparatively easy but necessary action, our strength will be spent on the struggle with the passions, which can grow to monstrous proportions.

Of course, the holy fathers taught that prayer is the most necessary and effective means of conquering thoughts. Here is what St. John the Dwarf writes: “I am like a man who sits under a tall tree and sees that that a multitude of beasts and snakes are coming towards him. If he cannot fight them he will climb the tree and be saved. That is what I do: while keeping silence in my cell, I see evil thoughts attacking me. When I cannot fight them I run to God in prayer, and am saved.” But what at first glance looks like a simple exercise is something that a Christian has to learn his whole life.