

## A Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, you who are present in all places and filling all things, the treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurity, and save our souls, O Gracious Lord.

## Trisagion Prayer

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3 times)  
Glory to the Father... now and always... Amen.

All-holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, pardon our sins. Master forgive us our transgressions. Holy One visit and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father... now and always... Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## A Lenten Prayer

Almighty Lord, You have created all things in wisdom. In Your inexpressible providence and great goodness You have brought us to these saving days, for the cleansing of our souls and bodies, for control of our passions, in the hope of the Resurrection.

After the forty days You delivered into the hands of Your servant Moses the tablets of the law in characters divinely traced. Enable us also, O benevolent One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the fast, to keep the faith inviolate, to crush underfoot the heads of unseen tempters, to emerge victors over sin and to come, without reproach, to the worship of Your Holy Resurrection.

For blessed and glorified is Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. Amen.

## The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

*During Great Lent, we customarily we make a prostration at the sign ❖*

Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of laziness, meddling, the desire for power, and idle talk. ❖ Give me instead, a pure and humble spirit, the will to be patient with other people and to love them. ❖ Yes, O Lord and King, let me realize my own mistakes and keep me from judging others. For You are blessed now and forevermore. Amen.

## The Lenten journey 2013



The prayers of the Church are filled with references to the devil. The Lord's own prayer ends with the petition: Deliver us from the evil one! The life of a person who wills to be with God and to live in His Kingdom is, by definition, a life of struggle against the devil and his armies of evil spirits. The lenten season is especially the time for waging this spiritual battle.

One cannot read the Bible without being reminded that the evil spirits exist and wage fierce warfare against those who love God. Jesus Himself said that He "saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). He cast out many evil spirits as an essential sign of His messiahship. And He gave this power to His disciples as well, warning them to be watchful and attentive in their spiritual lives, lest they too be led astray by the evil spirits. At the end of the ages, Jesus teaches, the wicked shall enter into "eternal punishment" by being cast "into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:46, 41). And the apostles of Christ give the very same teaching.

"Put on the whole armor of God," the apostle Paul commands, "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers,

against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:11-12).

A letter ascribed to the apostle Peter warns: “Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

All of the saints of the Church had direct spiritual contact with the devil and the host of evil spirits. Not one saint has escaped this conscious confrontation. Those who went off alone into the desert to battle with Satan face to face, on his own territory so to speak – for the traditional idea was that the barren wastelands were the special habitations of evil spirits – had especially vivid and violent experiences. It could not be otherwise, since there was little or nothing at all in the wilderness through which the devil could tempt and ensnare them. He had to attack directly and openly, with all of his wiles.

St. Anthony the Great is known for his particularly vicious battles with the evil spirits. In letters attributed to this “father of fathers” among the ascetic (monastic) saints, we find the following testimony about the actions of the evil ones:

*I want you to know, my children, that I cease not to pray God for you night and day, that He may open for you the eyes of your hearts to see the hidden wickedness which the evil spirits pour upon us daily. I want God to give you a heart of knowledge and a spirit of discernment, that you may be able to offer your hearts as a pure sacrifice before the Father, in great holiness, without blemish. Truly my children, they envy us at all times, with their evil counsel, and hidden persecution, and subtle malice and spirit of seduction, and their blasphemous thoughts, and their hardening of heart, and their many sorrows, which they bring upon us at every hour, and the faintings which they make our heart to faint daily, and all the anger and mutual slander which they teach us, and the self-justifications in what we do, and the judgments which they set in our hearts, causing us...to judge our fellows...and the contempt which they set in our hearts by pride, when we are hard-hearted and despise each other, when we are bitter against each other with our hard words, grieving at every hour, accusing each other and not ourselves, thinking that our toil is from our fellows, sitting in judgment on what appears outwardly, while the robber is all within our house [i.e., the devil is in us] and the disputes and divisions wherein we dispute against each other until we establish our own way, to appear justified in the face of each other.*

*The evil spirits make us jealous for works, which we are not able to accomplish, and cause us to faint in tasks in which we are engaged, and which are profitable for us. They make us laugh when it is time for weeping and weep when, it is time for laughter, and simply turn us aside at every time from the right way... But when they fill our heart with these deceits, and we feed on them and they become our food, then God is patient with us and He comes to us to bring us back again... Therefore weary not of praying the goodness of the Father, if perchance His help may come upon you, that you may teach yourselves to know what is right...*

*In truth, my children, I tell you that every person who delights in his own will, and is subdued to his own thoughts, and takes up the things sown in his heart, and rejoices in them, and supposes in his heart that these are some great chosen mystery and justifies himself in what he does—the soul of such a man is a lair of evil spirits, counseling him to evil, and his body a store of evil mysteries which it hides in itself: and over such a one the demons have great power, because he has not dishonored them before all men...*

*For they know that our condemnation is from our neighbor, and our life also from our neighbor... For this cause, therefore, he who sins against his neighbor sins against himself, and he who does evil to his neighbor does evil to himself; and he who does good to his neighbor does good to himself... Therefore, let us rouse up God in ourselves by support of one another, and deliver ourselves to death for our souls and for each other; and if we do this, we shall be manifesting the very substance of God’s compassion for us. Let us not be lovers of ourselves so as not to become subject to the power of evil spirits.<sup>1</sup>*

Near to our own time, St. Seraphim of Sarov, who also dwelt alone for decades in the wilderness and in monastic enclosure, taught that “the temptations of the devil are like a cobweb. You only need to blow at it, and it will be destroyed. It is the same with our enemy, the devil. You only need to shield yourself with the sign of the Holy Cross, and all his wiles will vanish completely.” And when asked if he had ever seen evil spirits the saint replied simply with a smile, “They are hideous! Just as it is impossible for a sinner to look upon an angel, so it is a horrible thing to see the devils. They are hideous!”

Fr. Thomas Hopko, in The Lenten Spring

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<sup>1</sup> Letter VI, St. Anthony.