

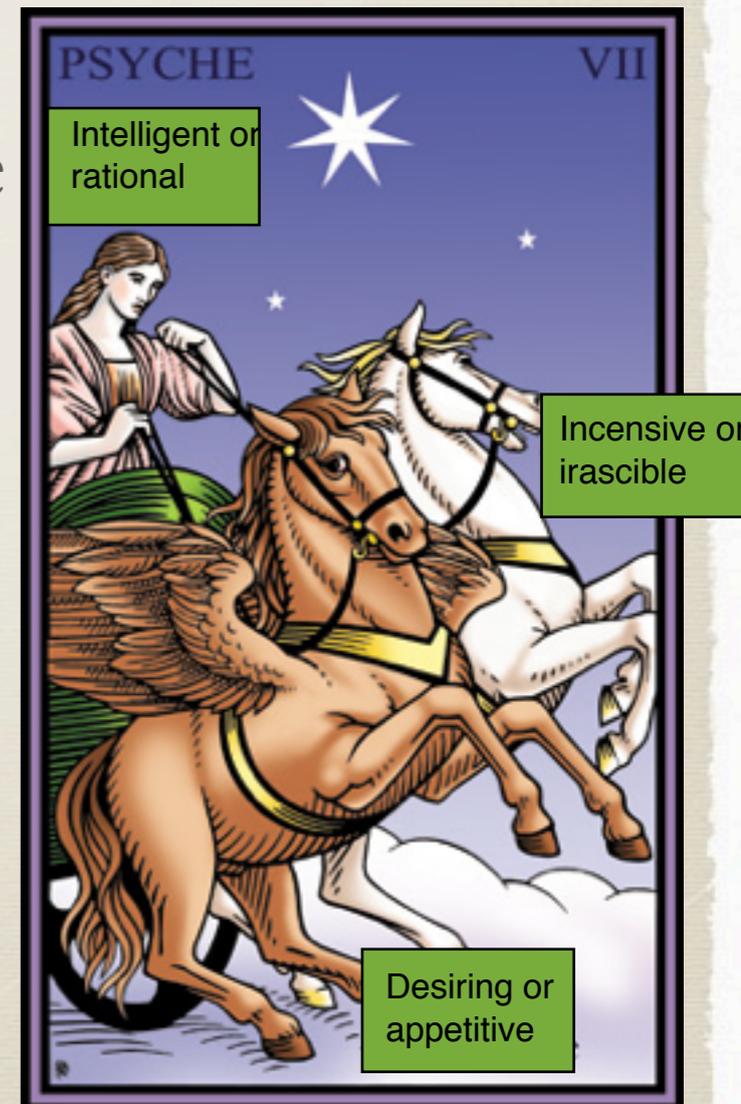
Nature of Soul And Its Purification

Can We Agree?

- * Find ourselves in **fallen condition**
- * Our soul is **captured by the passions**
- * To gain the kind of life we desire we **must liberate it**
- * Liberated we **will have power** to get rid of bad habits and gain good ones, living the virtues commanded by God.
- * This is the **main purpose** of the Church.

Nature of the Soul

- * What is the nature of the soul?
- * Lets examine Nature of the Soul according to Gregory.
- * There are three faculties of the soul that are held in harmony and healed in Christ through His Incarnation.
 1. **Intelligent or rational aspect** ⇒ reason
 2. **Incensive or irascible aspect** ⇒ anger or vehement emotion
 3. **Desiring or appetitive aspect** ⇒ desire



Nature of the Soul

- * All three need to be turned towards God.
- * St. Dorotheos says *“the intelligent soul works naturally when its appetitive part longs for virtue, the incensive part strive for it...”*
- * What must **intelligent part** do?
 - * must be devoted to seeking **knowledge of God**.
To know Christ so we can desire to be with him and to carry out His will with joy and properly control the other aspects.
- * The other two aspects **must be controlled** with self-control and dominated by love.

Nature of the Soul

- * How do we misuse intelligence?
- * Problems come from misuse of intelligence where it is not engaged in the control of the other two aspects.
- * Loss of control by intelligence over incensive and appetitive aspects leads to what condition?
 - * **Self-centeredness**, human centeredness - dominate idea of our culture.
- * Loss of this control **lets passions run wild**, a perversion of what God intended.

Nature of the Soul

- * Where did these passions come from?
 - * Product of our fallen state which Christ came to liberate us from.
- * What happens to 3 aspects when dominated by passions?
- * **Intelligence** corrupted by **pride**,
- * **Appetitive** by the **desires of the flesh**
- * **Incensive** by **hatred, anger and rancor.**

Natural Life

- * What is the natural way to live?



St. Maximos the Confessor says, the natural use of **intelligence**: *“movement towards God in the simplest seeking”*, **desire**: a *“direction towards God alone in clinging”*, **incensive power**: *“struggle to attain God alone”*,

- * When we are Living naturally **we want to know God** completely, **we desire only God**, and **we struggle to attain communion** with God.
- * This is a life of joy, w/o stress.

Love

- * Bottom line is **love**.
- * As Christ commanded, “*Love God with **all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.***” (Mark 12:30)
- * In our natural state we can love God with our whole heart and our neighbors as ourselves and even our enemies.
- * What happens when the soul is corrupted?
- * This love is directed towards our selves - **self-love**

Self-Love

- * Paul gives advice about the importance of the passions. Letter to Timothy describes **nature of people in “last days”**.
- * *“For men will be **lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant..., lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it**”* (2 Tim 3:1-5)

Corrupted Souls

- * Let's examine how these three powers work in our corrupted souls.
- * **Self-love** is the basic passion in our corrupted souls.
- * What becomes our priority?
 - * **We idolize Ourselves**
 - * We become our first interest instead of God.
It's my will be done instead of "*Thy will be done*".
 - * We act like we are god.

Passions

- * From **self-love** are born three general passions:
 - * **love of glory**, (achievement, seeking honor for self)
 - * **avarice** (desire for wealth and material gain),
 - * **self-indulgence** (Having or doing things you enjoy very much but are not essential)
- * From these three arise all the other passions.

Powers of the Soul

- * From this Gregory teaches:
 - * From the appetitive part is love of possessions followed by avarice (greed).
 - * From intelligent part is love of Glory.
 - * From incensive part is gluttony.

Appetitive

- * What was Christ' first human effort?
 - * Fasted for forty days going into the desert
 - * Why?
 - * Sought to control of appetitive aspect of the soul
 - * Our appetite leads to a powerful desire that if unsatisfied fuels the incensive power.
 - * When both are sick they produce distraction of the mind away from God.
- * To heal incensive aspect we must **first** tame the **appetitive aspect** - the intelligence will not be healthy until the other two are healed.
- * Why fasting so central to Orthodox Asceticism

Material Possessions

- * The first offspring of the appetitive power is love of **material possessions**. Meaning?
- * Paul termed this the *root of all kinds of evil* (1 Tim 6:10)
- * What is Nature of one taken over by love of money?
- * What happens to one's desire for spiritual work?
 - * soul that has **no zeal for spiritual work**.
- * **Without a belief in God's providence** it's difficult to eradicate passions that arise from love of possessions.
- * This lack of faith leads us to **trust in material things** instead of God.

This is why the Lord said, "*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle that for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt 19:24)



Conspicuous Consumption

- * Conspicuous consumption is norm today:
"keeping up with the Joneses", has brought the lifestyles of rich and famous to suburbia.
- * Examples?
 - * Smart phones, cable HD TV, high speed internet, home computers, home theaters....
 - * Maid services, and landscapers
 - * Cosmetic surgery, pleasure boats, McMansions, restaurant quality kitchen appliances, professional quality home gym equipment, and second homes
 - * Gucci or Vera Bradley purses, etc.

- * What does it mean to be worldly?
- * Didn't God create every thing to be Good?
- * Didn't He want us to enjoy the material benefits of this world?
- * What is the real issue?

Financial Troubles

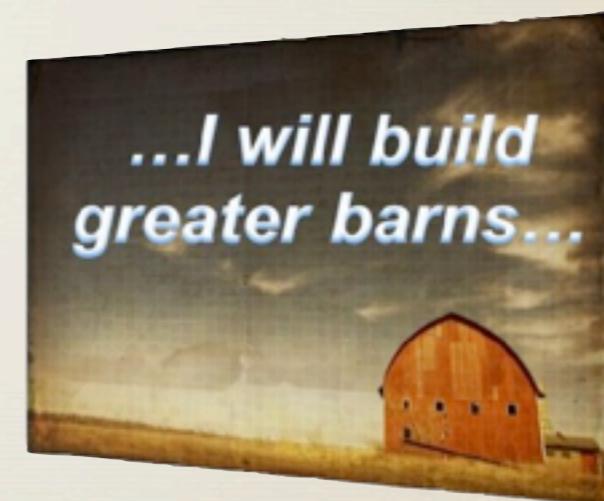
- * Tragedy is because we rely on material possessions most are deeply in **debt**
- * If you ask friends how they are doing, they tell you they are just barely getting by.
According to a Federal Reserve Board study, **43%** of American families spend more than they earn.
- * Millions of **bankruptcies** each year
- * Surveys show, less you earned the **fewer items you listed as necessities** - items could not live without.
- * Money issues are **most common** issues disrupting family life.

Material Possessions

- * Saint Paul says, “*Those who **want to be rich** fall into the temptations and snares of the devil.*” (1 Tim 6:9)
- * Does this have any meaning for us?
 - * Probably not if we have put our **trust in material things** and long for worldly, perishable wealth, instead for a kingdom that is heavenly and eternal.
- * Are we willing to **trust in God** instead of material well being? What does this mean?

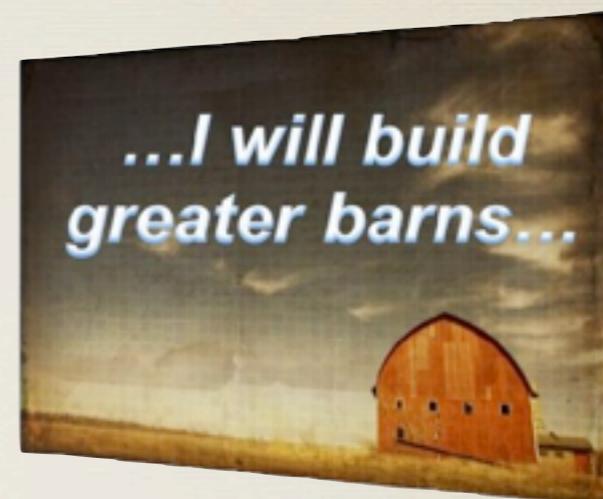
Material Possessions

- * Love of material possessions is **not love** and **does not come from need**.
- * What is it we are seeking from material goods?
- * Some kind of **self-comfort**
- * Is it not a love of folly like Christ described the foolish man who pulled down his barns and built greater ones. (Luke 12:18-20)



Material Possessions

* Luke 12:18-20: *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.*



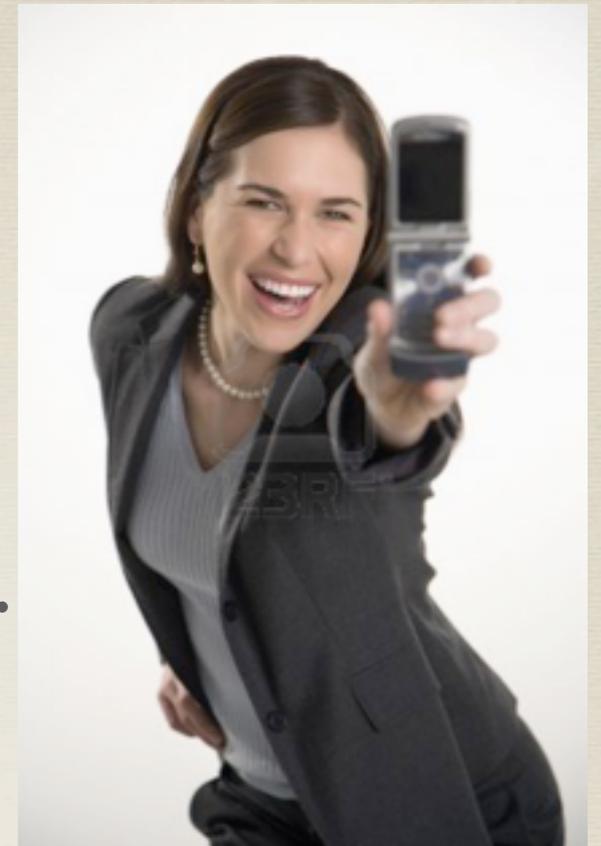
* *And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

* *But God said unto him, **Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?***

Material Possessions

- * Gregory says
*“There is no justification in **aspiring to become rich** even for a good cause.*
- * *The truth is that people are frightened of being poor because **they have no faith** in Him who promised to provide all things needful to those who seek the kingdom of God.”*
- * Jesus says, *“**Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.**”* (Matt 6:33)
- * The Lord also said, *“**Where your treasure is, there will your intellect be**”* (Matt 6:21).

Self-Flattery



- * **2nd** offspring of evil desire is **self-flattery**.
- * What is clamor for fashionable clothes and efforts to decorate our bodies about?
Seeking awards and self-recognition? Others?
- * This is called by Fathers, '*worldly vanity*.'
- * We also seek praise from others for our virtue - called **self-conceit** or hypocrisy.
- * We should **esteem God's glory** above all else. and ascribe our achievements to His will.
- * Psalmist writes, "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory*" (Ps 115:2)

Self-Flattery

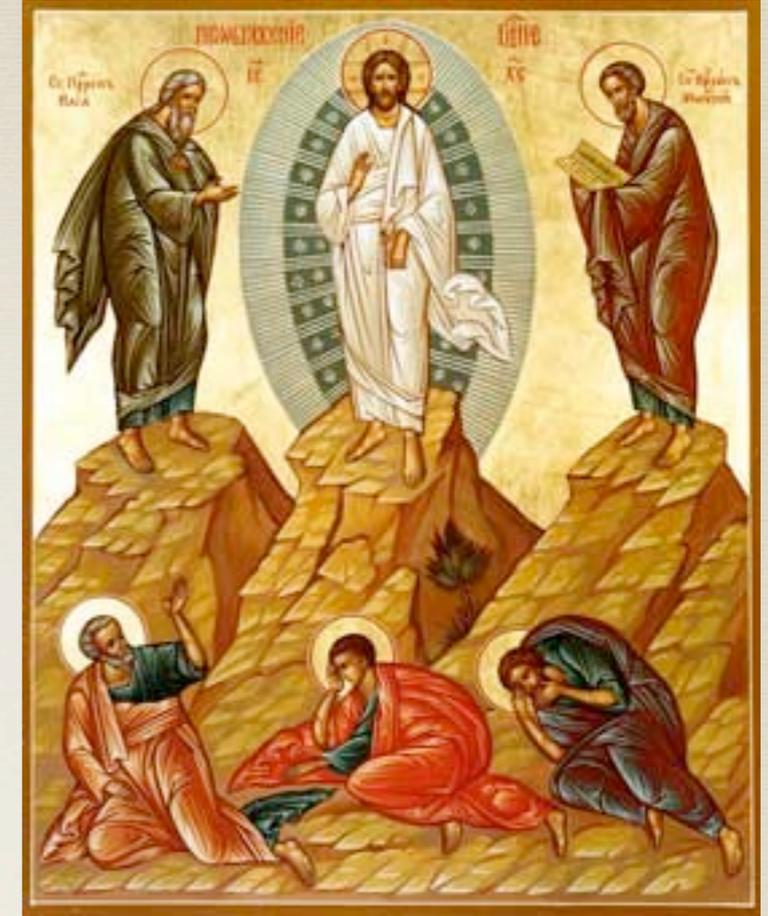
- * What should we do when we feel we have done something praiseworthy?
- * Gregory's advises: *"If you feel that you have done something praiseworthy, you should **attribute it to God**, proclaiming Him as its cause and **gratefully praising Him** for it and not yourself.*
- * *In your rejoicing you will regard each virtue as a **gift**, and will not become conceited about it, since it is not your personal achievement..."*
- * Once you recognize the disgrace such self-flattery brings upon you, you will spurn it with all your might.
- * Leads to envy, anger and even murder.

Praise

- * The same applies to those who **pursue virtue to be praised** by others.
- * “She is such a good citizen”, “he is such a pious man”, can all be statements we subconsciously seek.
- * Must ask ourselves if we are doing things out of **sense of obligation** or **desire to stand out** instead of out of love for God, to glorify Him.
Our **motivations do matter**.



Divine Glory



- * To counteract this tendency we must consciously **long for divine glory** with an sense of our own **unworthiness**,
- * Learn to endure the scorn of others **as a blessing**, always esteeming God's glory over our own.
- * Always **attribute our virtues to God** and not our own efforts.



- * **Third** offspring of a sick soul is **gluttony**.
- * The source of this passion is a **natural one** created by God who only created what is good.
- * Natural passions such as desire for food does not in itself indicate any sickness of the soul, but how does it become a sickness?
 - * becomes a sickness when we **misuse them** and seek bodily pleasure.
- * If we have a habit of rewarding ourselves with food, we will find ourselves overweight subject to many health problems. Becomes habit like the Febreze after cleaning or tingle in mouth after teeth brushing.



- * When desiring faculty is misdirected and oriented towards sensual pleasures man's very existence becomes corrupt.
- * To be united with God, **rational aspect must rule.** When the passionate aspects are not subject to the rational, we encounter what is called **slavery** to the passions.
- * When one of the soul's faculties is enslaved to a passion the **entire soul** is enslaved.



- * Its not sufficient to simply fast to make the body suffer, but we must **get at the root** of its cause.
- * Our **inner thoughts** have to be dried up through prayer and humility.
- * Fasting is an important **aid** in this process but Jesus connected prayer with fasting.

Enslaved by Passion

- * Enslaved by passion, **what happens to our mind?**
- * Scatters itself and wanders amid diverse pleasures and passionate thoughts.
- * Suffer anxiety, despondency, inadequacy, and seek some kind of worldly pleasure to offset our frame of mind.
- * Our desire to acquire things grows along with an insatiable love for gain.
- * Become subject to every form of fleshly desire, knowing neither barrier nor limit to pleasure.

Enslaved by Passion

- * Gregory says,
*“We received the mind (nous) as a leader and self-governing king, but we have made it instead **slave of irrational passions.** We were honored with reason, but having made it the servant of passions, we have become now more dishonorable than the irrational beasts.”* (Homilies 43)

Enslaved by Passion

- * Once the mind (nous) loses control, insatiable desire follows that leads to a sinful life. **Desire becomes directed toward the passions** rather than to God.
- * With its desire unsatisfied it seeks non-essential food for our bodies, money or material things beyond basic needs and glory for ourselves which is vain.
- * This unsatisfied desire **fuels the incensive power** where the unsatisfied desire leads to anger and stress further distracting the mind (nous).
- * This arouses envy, hatred and enmity towards others and we **lose our capacity for love.**

Enslaved by Passion

- * Mistakes of our neighbors or friends, whether voluntary or involuntary, can be seen as an **encroachment on our own pursuit of self-love, pleasure and self-centered wellbeing.** Anger and jealousy is ignited and **love for our neighbor is destroyed.**
- * What causes a friendship or a marriage to break up?

Enslaved by Passion

- * **Desiring aspect** is most easily seduced.
- * Love of **worldly things** is the first offspring.
- * Love of **flesh** is the second.
- * Worldly **vain glory** follows
- * Then **gluttony** ushers in all the carnal passions.
- * We cultivate the '*love for pleasure.*'

Nature of the Soul

* Questions?

Purification

Purification

- * Knowing nature of soul how can we purify it?
 - * Orienting three aspects of the soul **towards God** and **freeing them** from control by our passions.
- * Involves **entire person**: body and spirit.
Have a synthetic nature; therefore, purification concerns our whole nature.
- * Soul **cannot** be separated from Body.
Essential to understand idea of purification and ascetic practices of the Church.

Purification

- * **Cannot be attained by human effort alone.**
- * Our efforts can **only attract** the grace of the Spirit which may cleanse our heart.
- * Our renewal and salvation comes only from God.
- * The framework within which we collaborate with God's grace is the **Church and its mysteries.**
- * Its a process that takes place **over time** through our involvement in the Church, its sacraments, its guidance, and our cooperation with the Holy Spirit.
- * Not a simple process, not linear, not purely rational.
- * We **must do our part** to develop self control, overcome our bad habits and develop good habits.

Purification of Passions

- * Primary tools are **prayer, repentance, spiritual mourning, ascetic practices** and **sacramental life**.
- * Normally result of **gradual and progressive repentance** where there is a death of the “old person” and the resurrection of “the new”.
- * **Does not** happen with a **simple declaration of faith**, but an ongoing effort, a struggle, to become Like God.
- * Remember, We always have opportunity to cleanse our soul and to be saved - God **never takes this away**.

Purification

- * Begins with **acknowledging** our enslavement to sinful passions and then **opposing them** with virtues.
Getting rid of bad habits and creating good habits.
- * Involves **God's grace** but requires our **cooperation** or 'synergy'. - It's linked to our proper use of free will.
- * Free will is a **fundamental** aspect of being made in God's image. Never taken away.

Its Progressive

- * We proceed from an active world driven life
- * to life of rooted in inner prayer and divine vision
- * where we are able to turn our inner gaze to the Kingdom of God that is within us.
- * From a focus on worldly ways and things to one where God and His Kingdom is always in our sight.
- * What does this mean?

Weapons

- * **Daily prayer and psalmody** - lightens and transforms each attack, giving us strength to turn aside the fleshly desires.
- * **Participation in the sacraments and liturgical cycle** of the Church. This is a **necessary** precondition
- * When we participate we enter into **mystical** and **experiential** realm where our human freedom meets grace of God.
- * Helps us **overcome our individuality** and develops **communion with God** and our fellow man.

Weapons



In **mystery of Holy Confession** we are given the opportunity to bring our falls, defeats and defilement and place it all in repentance before Church. Prepares soul to receive divine grace and helps it to become fit for the cultivation of the virtues.

- * **Obedience to will of God** is what is **expected**. Disobedience is source of our estrangement from Him.
- * **Obedience to spiritual father** is necessary for confession and spiritual healing.

Weapons



Purification and response to God culminates in the **Holy Eucharist.**

Not a sentimental or ethical act.

Not done out of obligation.

Way we truly commune with God.

- * We make **choice to unite with Him** and commit ourselves to live out purity of Church **through communion with Him** and others.
- * Participation **increases our concern** for inner purification.

Repentance

Our first step in Purification

The first teaching of Christ was “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**” (Matt 4:17)

Repentance

- * Gregory sees worldly **life as a period of repentance.**
- * Required to recover from Fall according to Scripture and Fathers.
- * Think about significance:
Every **sinful** person allowed to live & has chance to repent.
- * This is reason we should not despair or deny our sinfulness
- this is how the devil leads us away from God.

Repentance

- * Being allowed to live and given the opportunity to repent is **our greatest guarantee** God will receive each of us and have mercy on us.
- * Our **freedom to choose** between the way of life and the way of death is a **permanent** feature of the present life.
- * God's **love** is so great that He even allows for the repentance of those who have fallen into serious sin.
- * Examples from Scripture?
- * If a sinner decides to turn away from sin and return to God he **will not be denied eternal life and salvation.**

Repentance

- * We have to also be aware of the **little sins** as they lead to greater sin.
- * When & where do we experience sin?
 - * Our whole life is subject to sin, so must live every moment with **watchfulness** and **repentance**, constantly **seeking grace and mercy of God**.
- * Repentance is the **beginning** and **foundation** of life in Christ. It leads us to a new way of life.

Repentance

- * Repentance is given as a promise **before** Baptism, experienced **at** Baptism and remains necessary **after** Baptism.
- * At Baptism we are called to confess that *“we ally ourselves with Christ who is good and above all good and renounce the evil and arch evil enemy. We promise to cling to God’s beneficial commandments with all our strength and to refrain from every evil thing and way of thought.”*
- * Baptism is a burial and resurrection with Christ Himself
- * Afterwards we are called to do what?
 - * **Go forth in repentance** and fill life with its fruits.
 - * What are the fruits?
 - * Virtues

Repentance

- * We are no longer subject to temptation of the tree of good and evil in Paradise like Adam and Eve or even God's command not to eat of the tree, but we are now subject to a similar command.
- * What is the command?
 - * We are commanded to **repent**

Repentance

- * Saint Gregory writes
- * *We were expelled from the land of divine light, we were justly shut out from God's paradise, and we have fallen into this pit where we are condemned to dwell together with dumb creatures without hope of returning—in so far as it depends on us—to the paradise we have lost.*
- * *But he who initially passed a just sentence of punishment or, rather justly permitted punishment to come upon us, has now **in His great goodness, and mercy descended for our sake to us.***"

Repentance

- * Out of His love He became man to teach and redeem that *which is similar by that which is similar*.
- * To do so Christ offered the redeeming commandment of repentance:
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt 4:17)
- * These were also the words of John the Baptist since repentance is the **foundation** of a life lived in Christ.

Repentance

- * The entire tradition of the Church stresses repentance referring to a deep inner as well as outer change in man.
- * Not some **short lived** contrition arising from the awareness of a sin that has been committed.
- * **Constant turning to God** seeking recovery, forgiveness, healing and support in undertaking the spiritual struggle.
- * **New frame of mind** and spiritual course that must accompany us **until moment of death**.
- * Path for a **dynamic transition** from the unnatural state of passions and sin to the natural state of virtue.

Repentance

* St. Gregory put it simply,

* *“Repentance is*

hate sin and to love virtue,

avoid what is bad and to do what is good.” (Homilies 59)

* Get rid of bad habits and create good habits.

* Simple?

* Double movement:

Utter repulsion of sin combined with intent to **do what is good**, returning to do God’s will.

Repentance

- * For Gregory Repentance is not a routine or mechanical change but a renewal of human nature.
- * How does this differ from going to court to pay a fine?
- * It is a personal departure of the soul from sin and arrival at God's presence.
- * Gregory: *The man repenting with all his soul reaches God by both his good predisposition and his opposition to sin.*
- * Not an external gift or some superficial state.
It is deep and personal. A personal overcoming of sin.

Repentance

- * Repentance is both a **beginning** and **end** and the very **aim of this life**.
- * **Everything** we do should be done in this context.
Rejecting sin and embracing good seeking inner change.
- * How can we make this “everything we do” ?

Unworthy of God's Mercy

- * What precedes repentance?
 - * **Awareness of our sins.** Must see our shortcomings and be sorry (contrition) before God.
- * Must **truly believe we are unworthy of God's mercy** and to be called His son like prodigal son.
- * We attract God's mercy by an awareness and sense of our sinfulness.
- * We receive complete remission through self-reproach and Holy Confession.

Three stages

- * St Gregory identifies three stages in repentance.
 - * 1. Awareness of our sins
 - * 2. Self-reproach
 - * 3. Sorrow on account of our sins.
- * This **godly sorrow** leads us to a redeeming confession and sincere supplication to God with a contrite heart promising to abstain in the future of this sin.

Repentance

- * Repentance is a new condition in the life of man accompanied by certain consequences that in biblical language and the writings of the Fathers are called “*the fruits of repentance.*”
- * The first fruit of repentance is **Holy Confession.**
- * In Holy Confession the believer’s **soul is healed and purified** creating a new life.
- * Important recognize the **sacramental nature** of Holy Confession.

Repent!

- * To be continued.....
- * Questions?
- * Next time: Spiritual Sorrow and Prayer