

excessive anxiety about one's future, from attempting to control life by relying only on the self and not on God. Saint Basil the Great teaches that melancholy is a sign of the weak in spirit, since they lose spiritual equilibrium, inflict spiritual suffering on themselves, and thus risk definitively losing their hope in God.<sup>481</sup>

767 The Spirit-Comforter (or Advocate) is the source of the virtue of Christian joy, which liberates from the passion of melancholy. He grants one the joy of experiencing closeness with God. The apostle Paul exhorts, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about thing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil 4:4-6).

*e. Anger and Its Opposite Virtue—Long-suffering*

768 Anger as a passion is not merely a feeling of malice. It is the state of a person who aggressively defends his or her existence without hope in God and to the detriment of one's neighbour. The Holy Fathers differentiate between three types of anger: 1) anger that burns within - is a state of the soul in which a person loses internal tranquility and is overcome by feelings of malice, offence, and irritation; 2) anger manifested in word and deed, in speech that is coarse and devoid of gentleness and love. The most common manifestations of this anger are flash of rage, the intentional humiliation of one's neighbour, giving offence to another, and calumny. Saint John Chrysostom teaches: "When you inflict insults, then you are defeated, not by another person, but by what is far more disgraceful, by the slavish passion of anger. However, if you remain silent, then you will conquer;"<sup>482</sup> and 3) anger that seethes for a long time or resentment - this sort of anger is particularly ruinous to a person, since he or she consciously refuses to forgive an insult or wrong and burns with a yearning for revenge.

769 Anger is an especially dangerous passion because it gives rise to violence, murder, division, and war. In The Shepherd of Hermas, anger is called the angel of evil which rules over a person: "When anger comes upon you, or harshness, know that he [the angel of malice] is in you.

770 The virtue of long-suffering, which we also call patience or quiet gentleness, is characterized by confidence in the protection of God,

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<sup>481</sup> See Bnsrr. THE GREAT, Homily on Thanksgiving, 5-6: PG 31, 227-234.

<sup>482</sup> JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Homilies on Romans, 22: PG 60, 612.

<sup>483</sup> HERMAS. The Shepherd, Commandments, 6, 2: PG 2, 929.

thus, allows one to resist human anger. "Fret not yourself because of the wicked, be not envious of wrongdoers! ... Hope in the Lord, and do good; so you will dwell in the land and be fed with its wealth ... Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Ps 36[37]:1, 3, 7). Saint John Chrysostom teaches: "For if we show patience, we shall be invincible; and there is nobody either great or small, who will have power to hurt us."<sup>484</sup>

### *f Acedia (Despondency) and Its Opposite Virtue—Cheerfulness of Spirit*

771 The Holy Fathers described despondency (in Greek, akedia) as exhaustion and fatigue of the soul. A melancholic person underestimates the power of the Lord, but a despondent person underestimates God's mercy. Melancholy drives a person to rely only on his or her own strength, while acedia completely deprives him or her of hope. The Holy Fathers called acedia the "noonday demon" (see Ps 90[91]:6). It extinguishes one's vigour for spiritual development. Acedia gives rise to feelings of desolation and aversion for life, and a sense of its emptiness, as well as to a loss of confidence in one's salvation. It leads to a person's psychological and physical exhaustion; one succumbs to laziness and becomes discouraged and incapable of spiritual combat.

772 Evagrius Ponticus describes the manifestations of acedia:

[The noonday demon] instils in the heart of a monk a hatred for the place, a hatred for his very life itself, a hatred for manual labour. He leads him to reflect that charity has departed from among the brethren, that there is no one to give encouragement... This demon drives him along to desire others places where he can more easily procure life's necessities, more readily find work and make a real success of himself... No other demon follows close upon the heels of this one (when he is defeated), but only a state of deep peace and inexpressible joy arise out of this struggle.<sup>485</sup>

Prayer, work, and constant spiritual training (ascesis) help to combat acedia.

773 The virtue of cheerfulness of spirit or sobriety of mind gives a person the means to renew one's spiritual strength and continue spiritual combat with the help of God's grace. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed" (1 Pt 1:13). Saint Isaac the Syrian

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<sup>484</sup> JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Romans*, 22: PG 60, 175.

<sup>485</sup> EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, *The Praktikos*, 12: PG 40, 1274.