

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

73. 'Then the devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him' (Matt. 4:11). It does not say that the angels were with our Lord during the actual time when He was being tempted. In the same way, when we are being tempted, God's angels for a time withdraw a little. Then, after the departure of those tempting us, they come and minister to us with divine intellections, giving us support, illumination, compunction, encouragement, patient endurance, joyfulness, and everything that saves and strengthens and renews our exhausted soul. As Nathanael was told, 'You will see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man' (**John 1:51**); in other words, the ministry and assistance of the angels will be given generously to mankind. [V1] 316 St. John of Karpathos

93. Whoever renounces the world and worldly things with unhesitating faith in God believes that the Lord is compassionate and merciful and that He receives those who come to Him in repentance. But he knows, too, that God honors His servants with dishonor, enriches them with the utmost poverty, and glorifies them by means of insults and scorn, making them through death participants and inheritors of eternal life. Through such trials the servant of God is impelled like a panting hart to the deathless fountain (cf. Ps. 42:1); and through them he climbs upwards, as though up a ladder on which angels ascend and descend (cf. Gen. 28:12; **John 1:51**) in order to help those who are mounting. God is enthroned above, observing the strength of our intention and diligence, not because He enjoys seeing us struggle, but because He wishes, compassionate as He is, to give us our reward as if it were something He owed us. [V4] 44 St. Symeon the New Theologian One Hundred and Fifty-three texts

In short, this is why all the saints, 'of whom the world was not worthy', left the inhabited regions and "wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth', going about 'in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented' (**Heb. 11:37-38**). They fled from the sophisticated wickedness of men and from all the unnatural things of which the towns are full, not wishing to be swept off their feet and carried along with all the others into the whirlpool of confusion. They were glad to live with the wild beasts, judging them less harmful than their fellow men. They avoided men as being treacherous, while they trusted the animals as their friends; for animals do not teach us to sin, but revere and respect holiness. Thus men tried to kill Daniel but the lions saved him, preserving him when he had been unjustly condemned out of malice (cf. Dan. 6:16-23); and when human justice had miscarried, the animals proclaimed his innocence. Whereas Daniel's holiness gave rise to strife and envy among men, among the wild animals it evoked awe and veneration. [V1] 241 St. Neilos the Ascetic

Yet just as it is impossible for someone engaged in business to make a profit on the basis of faith alone, so it is impossible for anyone to attain spiritual knowledge and repose before he has labored in thought and action to acquire the virtues. And just as business men always fear loss and hope for gain, so should we, until our final breath; and as they exert themselves not only

when they make a profit, but also after suffering loss and taking risks, so should we as well, knowing that the idle man will not eat from the fruit of his own labors and so will become a pauper, perhaps even falling heavily into debt. It is because of this that the prophet says, 'Thou hast made me to dwell in hope' (Ps. 4:8. LXX); and the apostle writes, 'Through hope were they made perfect' (cf. **Heb. 11:39-40**). [V3} 225 St. Peter of Damaskos

42. The purgative stage pertains to those newly engaged in spiritual warfare. It is characterized by the rejection of the materialistic self, liberation from material evil, and investiture with the regenerate self, renewed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Col. 3:10). It involves hatred of materiality, the attenuation of the flesh, the avoidance of whatever incites the mind to passion, repentance for sins committed, the dissolving with tears of the bitter sediment left by sin, the regulation of our life according to the generosity of the Spirit, and the cleansing through compunction of the inside of the cup (cf. Matt. 23:26) - the intellect - from every defilement of flesh and spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1), so that it can then be filled with the wine of the Logos that gladdens the heart of the purified (cf. Ps. 104:15), and can be brought to the King of the celestial powers for Him to taste. Its final goal is that we should be forged in the fire of ascetic struggle, scouring off the rust of sin, and steeled and tempered in the water of compunction, so that sword-like we may effectively cut off the passions and the demons. Reaching this point through long ascetic struggle, we quench the fire within us, muzzle the brute-like passions, become strong in the Spirit instead of weak (cf. **Heb. 11:33-34**), and like another Job conquer the tempter through our patient endurance. [V4] 151 Nikitas Stithatos On Spiritual Knowledge