



The Fathers on Repentance

"This life has been given to you for repentance; do not waste it in vain pursuits."

St. Isaac of Syria

Excerpts from the Evergetinos

No one should despair ever, even if he has committed many sins, but should have hope that through repentance, he shall be saved.

A. From the Holy Palladios

Our holy Father John, who lived in asceticism on a mountain near the city of Lycus and about whom details are cited in another chapter, relates to us this about the need [for monks] to avoid many interactions with women [or nuns with men].

1. There once lived in the city, it was said, a young man who committed many and frightful sins. However, this young man was piercingly censured by his conscience, on account of his manifold sins, and, with the help of God, came to repentance. Under the power of repentance, he went to a cemetery, where he established himself in one of the tombs and lamented for his former life, falling down with his face to the earth and continually groaning from the depths of his heart.

When he had passed a week in this state of unrelenting and persistent repentance, demons, who had before brought his life to destruction, gathered around one night making noise and shouting: "Who is this impious man, who used to pass his time in lustful things and immorality and now wants us to think that he is sober and a doer of good deeds? And he wants to be a Christian and become virtuous, now that he can no longer have fun and fulfill his pleasures? What good can he expect in his life, since he is filled with our evils?"

"Hey you! Will you not get up from there at all? Will you not come with us to your customary places of sin and depravity? Fallen women and wine await you; will you not come to indulge your desires? After all the sins that you have committed up to this day, all hope for salvation is lost to you, and therefore, O struggler, you will only march on full speed to your damnation if you continue killing yourself this way. Why are you so intent and in such a hurry to be damned? Whatever transgression that there is, you committed it; together with us, you fell to every sin. Yet now you dare to flee our company? Do you not agree? Will you not go along with our offers?"

Meanwhile, however, the young man persisted in the sorrow of repentance and, appearing not to hear the exhortations of the demons, did not answer them at all. So the demons, seeing that they had accomplished nothing with their words, fell upon him, beat him cruelly, and, when they had wounded him all over, left him half-dead. But still the youth remained immovable in his place, groaning, and steadfast in his obdurate repentance.

During this time, the young man's relatives sought him out, finally finding him. Having learned the reason for his appearance—that is, of the brazen attack of the demons—, they tried to take him with them to their home. He, however, refused to abandon the place of his repentance.

The following night, the demons again attacked him and tormented him even more greatly. His relatives visited him for a second time, though without persuading him to leave his place of punishment and follow them. To their proposals on the matter, he answered patiently and with resignation:

"Do not pressure me. I prefer to die than to return to my former prodigal life."

The third night he almost died from the cruel torments of the demons, who attacked him with greater severity than all of the other times.

After that, the demons, having accomplished nothing with their threats and torments—for the young man would not change his mind at any scare tactic—, departed and left him alone.

Fleeing from him, they cried madly:

"He conquered us! He conquered us! He conquered us!"

From that time on, nothing bad happened to the youth; rather, with a clean conscience he came to realize every virtue. Until the end of his life, he remained in the tomb, which he made his hermitage, coming to be honored by God with the gifts of miraculous doings.

B. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The blessed Synkletike said: We should laud remiss and indolent souls who are easily exhausted in the struggle for good, as well as those souls who are easily discouraged and fall to despair. Indeed if such souls should display even the smallest good deed, we must praise it and marvel at it, giving them encouragement in their struggle for the good. Contrarily, the most serious and greatest of their faults we must characterize, in front of them, as the least and unworthy of note. For the Devil, who wishes to destroy all things, or rather to succeed at our spiritual destruction, resorts to the following ruse. On the one hand, with accomplished and ascetic monks, he tries to cover their sins and to make them forget them, so as to create pride in these men. On the other hand, he constantly exposes the sins of neophytes whose souls have not yet been strengthened in the ascetic life, before them and exaggerates these sins, so as to drive such neophytes to despair, until they abandon their ascetic efforts.

For this reason, then, these still irresolute souls we must care for with tenderness and remind them continually of the boundless compassion and kindness of God. Among other things, we must emphasize that our Lord is merciful and long-enduring and that he annuls his righteous judgments against wrong-doers, as long as they surely repent.

To render this teaching of ours convincing, we will bring forth examples from Holy Scripture,

which will reveal to the souls of our listeners the endless compassion of the Lord towards those who have sinned and repented. For example, let us recall that Raab was a prostitute, but was saved through her faith; St. Paul was a persecutor, but through repentance became a chosen vessel; and the thief who was crucified together with Christ on Golgotha, who had stolen and murdered, first opened the door of Paradise with one word of repentance: "Remember me, Lord, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Moreover, let us cite the instance of St. Matthew, who was appointed to the Apostolic ranks by the Lord and who, even though a former tax collector, relates the parable of the tax collector as well as that of the Prodigal Son. So in general, let us bring to mind all of the stories in this regard which emphasize the worth of repentance and which extol the compassion of God towards the repentant man.

On the other hand, we must correct those souls who are ruled by pride by providing them with greater examples, just as we give the weaker souls encouragement, so as not to be ruled by despair. Let us take an example from the work of the best gardeners, who, when they see that a plant is of small stature and sickly, water it profusely and care for it greatly, so that it will grow and be strong; while, when they see in a plant the premature development of sprouts, they immediately trim the useless sprouts, so that the plant does not quickly wither. Likewise, physicians give rich nourishment to some patients, prescribing that they walk, while to others they give a strict diet and require them to remain at rest.

C. From the Holy Palladios

From various stories, I learned the following about St. Moses the Ethiopian, who was well known among the Fathers of the skete. It seems that he, before becoming a monk, was the servant of a certain freeman. His master, however, threw him out of his house, since Moses was very cantankerous and his manners were offensive and savage. When he was dismissed, Moses became a thief; and, because of his exceptional strength, he became the leader of other thieves.

Among his other exploits as a thief, which show his fierceness, it is told: He once got it into his mind to get even with a certain shepherd, since the shepherd's sheepdogs had prevented him, one night, from carrying out a crime which he had planned. To this end, he carefully scouted out the region, in order to find the shepherd and his flock and to murder the shepherd.

As soon as he learned that the shepherd was on the other side of the Nile, he decided to go there to fulfill his criminal intent. At that time of the year, the river had flooded and the current had reached its high point. So, Moses took off his short tunic, which he happened to be wearing, put it on top of his head, held his knife in his teeth, and awesome and astonishing though it be, jumped into the river and, swimming, crossed to the other bank. When the shepherd from far off saw Moses come swimming towards where he was, he took off running and found a hiding place.

Therefore, Moses was unable to get even with the shepherd, as he had planned. So, he directed all of his mania against the herd. As though he had the shepherd in his hands, he seized the four best rams and tied them up, one-by-one. He then again crossed the Nile swimming. Afterwards, he came to a knoll, skinned the sheep, and lighted a fire where he roasted the best meat from the carcasses. Simultaneously, he exchanged the skins for a good wine from Sain in Egypt and drank a great amount. When he was more than filled with this food and had satisfied his anger, he departed for his hide-out, which was about fifty leagues distant.

Then this fearsome and mighty thief, after some time and thanks to a fortuitous event, accepted the visitation of Divine Grace, tasted of the salvific feeling of contrition, and repented for his former life. Indeed, so deep and sincere was his repentance, that he embraced the monastic life, went to the skete, enclosed himself in a cell, and gave himself over to severe and strict asceticism.

It is further said, indeed, that at the beginning of his monastic life, when he had settled in a cell, four thieves set upon him, evidently not knowing that the monk whom they had decided to rob was Moses. And so what happened during this attempted robbery of the former thief? Moses overcame

them immediately with amazing ease, tied them up, and put them over his shoulders with such ease that it seemed as though he were picking up a sack of straw. He then proceeded to take them to the Church, where he said to the brothers:

"Since I no longer allow myself to do wrong to anyone, what do you advise me to do with these four here, who attacked me in order to rob me?"

The astonished brothers of the skete untied the thieves and allowed them to go free.

Then the thieves themselves recognized Moses. And seeing his repentance, they, too, wished not to return to their former lives of thievery, and, following the example of St. Moses and abandoning the life of sin and crime, became monks and were distinguished for their struggles in asceticism and the virtuous life.

St. Moses, thereafter, exhibited the same perfect asceticism, about which yet other things are written in other books. He warred with great firmness against the demons and was distinguished in all the arenas of ascetic endurance, such that he was quickly ranked among the older and perfected Fathers, being ordained a Presbyter and enriched by the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit. At his death, he left behind seventy disciples.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Mios was asked by a soldier: "Father, God then accepts the repentance of the sinner?" The Elder, after counselling him with many instructive words, suddenly asked him:

"Tell me, my beloved, when you tear your uniform, do you throw it away?"

"No," the soldier answered, "I sew it and use it anew again."

Then Abba Mios also thoughtfully told him:

"If you take pity on your clothing, will not God take pity on His own creation?"

2. A brother asked Abba Poimen:

"Father, I committed a great sin. Is it enough for me to repent for three years?"

The Elder answered:

"That is too long a period of time."

Those in attendance asked, with a certain curiosity:

"Is forty days of repentance a long enough period of repentance?"

To the question of these observers, the Elder answered:

"Again, this is too long. It is my opinion that, if a man repents with his whole heart and does not repeat the sin, within three days only, God will accept his repentance and forgive him."

3. Yet another brother asked Abba Poimen:

"If someone falls to some sin and repents, does God forgive him?" Most pensively, Abba Poimen answered: "Would not He who gave to men the commandment that they must forgive, Himself fulfill this? It is well known that He gave an order to the Apostle Peter to forgive those who do wrong and repent, even seven times seventy."

4. And a third brother asked Abba Poimen:

"Father, what is repentance for sin?" The Elder replied to the brother's inquiry:

"Repentance signifies a firm resolution not to return to a sin. For this reason precisely the righteous are called blameless, for they have abandoned sin and have been proven righteous."

5. A certain brother asked Abba Sisoos:

"Counsel me, Father, for I have fallen to sin. What am I to do?"

The Elder said to him:

"When you fall, get up again."

With bitterness the sinning brother continued:

"Ah! Father I got up, yet I fell to the same sin again."

The Elder, so as not to discourage the brother, answered:

"Then get up again and again."

The young man asked with a certain despondency:

"How long can I do that, Father?"

The Elder, giving him courage, said to the brother:

"Until the end of your life, whether you be found in the commendable attempt at lifting yourself up from sin or falling again to it. For, wherever it is that a man is found at the last moment of his life on earth, whether it be in things good or evil, there he will be judged, proceeding either to punishment or to reward."

6. A brother lived in a cell in Egypt and, with all humility, spent his life in asceticism. This monk had a sister who lived in the city and who was a prostitute. She had been the cause of many losing their souls each day. Thus, many times the Elders had urged the brother to go meet with his sister. At last one day they convinced him to go, that perchance his brotherly admonitions might have the desired effect and she might cease the sin that she was committing.

As soon as he arrived at the place where the sinful woman was staying, a certain acquaintance of theirs saw the monk and ran to inform her, saying: "Your brother is asking for you at the door below." The sister, on hearing this news, abandoned her sinful compatriots and, just as she was, ran down to greet her brother, without bothering, in fact, even to put a covering on her head. When the brother and sister saw one another and she, out of joy, tried to embrace her brother, he said:

"Truly, my sister, I pity your soul, beholding how you will suffer the bitter and unending torments of Hell, for not only have you lost your soul, but many others have also done so because of you."

The sister listened attentively to the sincere counsels of her brother and, overwhelmed by them, with true repentance said to him:

"Are you sure that, even now, I can be saved?"

"If you wish so, there is salvation," the kind brother answered with certainty.

With tears in her eyes, she then fell at the feet of her brother and doggedly entreated him to take her with him into the desert to be saved.

The brother, also moved by her sudden conversion, told his sister:

"Put a scarf on your head and follow me."

She, however, said to her brother:

"Come, come, let us go quickly. It is preferable for me and better for my soul if I leave this vile place and set forth on the way bare-headed, and not enter again into this workshop of sin."

They thus departed for the desert, and the brother advised her tenderly, enumerating for her the fruits of repentance. She listened with silent attention, while Divine Grace slowly won over the soul of the repentant sinner.

Then at a certain point in their journey, they saw some wayfarers coming toward them from the opposite direction. So the brother, in order not to cause scandal to them, told his sister:

"Since not everyone knows that you are my sister get off the road just a little until these people pass by, so that we do not cause them scandal."

The sister immediately went away some distance from the road.

When the caravan had passed, the brother called to his sister.

But he received no answer at all. Curious, he searched the place where he expected her to be and, astonished, saw that she was dead. He noticed at the same time that her feet were torn to pieces from the trip, since she was barefoot.

The brother related these incidents to the Elders. They, taking counsel regarding the matter, all disagreed, some maintaining that she was saved, others insisting that she had lost her soul.

Finally, after praying, one of the Elders, who appears to have been more virtuous and insightful than the others, received the following revelation from God: "This sinner was saved, for as soon as Divine Grace, at the counsels of her brother, moved her heart, she repented and thought of no material thing. But rather, she gave no heed to her body and did not complain about the pain and wounds inflicted by the journey. For this reason, her repentance was accepted."

E. St. Amphilochios on Avoiding Despair

A certain brother, overcome by the passion of immorality, sinned every day. However, each time, with tears and prayers, he would fall before the Master and Lord and receive forgiveness from Him. And as soon as he had repented, the next day, being misled again by shameful habit, he would fall to sin.

Afterwards, having sinned, he would go to the Church, where he would prostrate himself before the honorable and revered Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ and tearfully confess to Jesus: "Lord, have mercy upon me and take away from me this fearful temptation, for it troubles me fiercely and wounds me with the bitter taste of the pleasures. O my Master, cleanse my person once more, that I may gaze upon Thine Icon and see Thy holy form and the sight of Thy face, brighter than the sun, that my heart might be sweetened and thankful."

And though his lips had just whispered these words, no sooner would he leave the Church than he would fall once again to sin.

Despite this, however, he did not despair of his salvation, but, returning from his sinful deed, would cry out in the Church the same words to God, to the Lord, Who loves mankind, adding the following: "My Lord, I swear to Thee on my word that I shall no longer commit this sin. Only forgive me, Good and Most Merciful Lord, whatever sins I have committed from the beginning to this moment."

No sooner would he utter these awe-inspiring words, than he would find himself the captive of this evil sin. Let no one cease to marvel at the sweet love of God towards mankind and at His boundless goodness, with which He each day tolerated the uncorrected and evil transgression and ingratitude of the brother. Indeed, God, because of the greatness of His mercy, persistently accepted the repentance of that sinful brother and his inevitable return. For this happened not for one or two or three years, but for more than ten years.

Do you see, my brother, the measureless forbearance and boundless love of the Master? How He continually endures, showing to us kindness, tolerating our terrible transgressions and sins? And what evokes astonishment and wonderment with regard to the rich mercies of God is that He did not become wrathful with the brother in question, though the brother, agreeing not to fall to sin again, continually broke his word.

At any rate, one day when all that we have described again occurred, the brother, having fallen to sin, rushed to the Church, lamenting, groaning, and crying with anguish, to invoke the mercy of God, that He might have compassion on him and take him from the sin of immorality.

No sooner had he called on God, the lover of man, than the Devil, that evil of old, destroyer of our souls, seeing that he could gain nothing, since whatever he accomplished by sin, the brother expunged by his repentance, became infuriated and appeared visibly before the brother. Facing the Icon of Christ, the Devil said to our compassionate Savior: "What will become of the two of us, Jesus Christ? Your sympathy for this sinner defeats me and takes the ground I have gained, since you keep accepting this dissolute man and prodigal who daily mocks you and scorns your authority. Indeed, why is it that you do not burn him up, but, rather, tolerate and put up with him? ... It is because one day you intend to condemn all of the adulterers and the dissolute and you will destroy all sinners.

"Actually, you are not a just Judge. But by whim your power is sometimes applied leniently and overlooks things. So, while I was cast from the heavens down to the abyss for a little breach of pride, to this fellow here, even though an immoral man and a prodigal, you calmly show your sympathy, just because he throws himself down in front of your Icon.

"In what way can you be called a just Judge, then? For, as I see it, you receive individual people with great kindness, but ignore justice in general."

The Devil said all of this, poisoned with great bitterness, whilst there poured forth from his nostrils a black flame.

Having said these things, he fell silent. A voice was heard in response, coming forth from the divine sanctuary, saying the following: "O, all-cunning and ruinous Dragon, are you yet not satisfied with your evil and destructive desire to gobble up the world? Now you have even the nerve to try to do away with this man here, who has come with contrition to entreat the mercy of my compassion to devour him, too? Can you offer up enough sins that, by them, you can tilt the balance of justice against the precious blood which I shed on the Cross for this man? Behold my murder and death, which I endured for the forgiveness of his sins.

"You, when he turns again to sin, do not turn him away, but receive him with joy, neither chastising him nor preventing him from committing sin, out of the hope that you might win him over; but I, who am merciful and love mankind, who counselled my laudable Apostle, Peter, to forgive sins seven times seventy (St. Matthew 18:22), do I not show him mercy and compassion? Indeed, simply because he flees to me, I will not turn him away until I have won him over. Furthermore, I was crucified for sinners and for their salvation; my immaculate hands were nailed to the Cross, that those who so wish might take refuge in me and be saved. For this reason, then, I neither turn away nor reject anyone, even if he should fall many times a day and many times return to me; such a person will not leave my Temple saddened, for I came not to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repent."

During the time that this voice was heard, the Devil was fixed in his place, trembling and unable to run away. The voice then again began to say: "We have heard from all that you say, O Seducer, that I am not just; to the contrary, I am just beyond all. In whatever moral state I find a person, in that state I judge him. Look at this man who a few moments ago repented, having returned from sin and having fallen at my feet with a sincere resolution to abandon sin, and thereby having conquered you.

"Therefore, I will accept him immediately and save his soul, since he did not lose hope in his hard toil for salvation.

"Look how much he merits by his repentance before me, for which he is honored. As for you, let your hate be shred to pieces and you disgraced."

While this was being said, the repentant brother had thrown himself before the Icon of the Savior. With his face to the ground and lamenting, he surrendered his spirit to the Lord. At the same time that the repentant brother departed to the Lord, a great tempest fell upon Satan, like a fire from Heaven, and devoured him. From this incident, my brothers, let us learn of the limitless compassion

of God and of His love of man—a good Master we have—, that we might never again be disheartened by our sins, but rather look after our salvation with zeal.

2. Again another brother, having repented of all of the sins that he had committed, attained peace (he no longer fell to any misdeed or sins). It so happened that almost immediately thereafter he stumbled on a rock and injured his foot. So much blood flowed from the wound that he lost consciousness and died. After his death, the demons immediately came, wishing to take his soul.

However, the Angels stopped them and told them:

"Look at that rock and see his blood, which he shed in struggle for his love of the Lord."

When they had said this, the Angels ascended with him to Heaven, his soul free of sin.

3. Satan appeared to a brother who had fallen to sin and said to him:

"You are not a Christian."

The brother, without being ensnared by this thought of the Devil, answered:

"Regardless of what I am today, from now on I will flee from you."

Satan, attempting to cast him into despair, spoke again to him:

"I tell you that you are going to Hell."

The brother, not losing his courage, answered a second time:

"You are neither my judge nor my God."

So, Satan took leave, having accomplished nothing.

The brother then repented sincerely before God and became a valiant struggler.

4. A brother, possessed by sadness and melancholy, went to an Elder and asked of him:

"What am I to do? My thoughts present me with the idea that perhaps in vain I denied the world and that I cannot be saved."

Thoughtfully, the Elder answered as follows:

"My child, even if we do not succeed in reaching the promised land, it is better that we should give our carcasses to the desert than return to the Egypt of fearful enslavement" (Numbers 14:29-33).

5. Another brother asked the same Elder:

"Father, to what does the Prophet refer when he says, 'there is no salvation for him in his God' (Psalm 3:2)?"

The Elder gave the following response to the brother's inquiry:

"He is referring to thoughts of despair, which the demons place before the sinner, saying: 'Neither now nor hereafter is it possible for God to save you.' With such counsel they try to cast the sinner into despair. But a person must contrast these thoughts with the words of Holy Scripture: 'The Lord is my refuge and He shall free my feet from the snare' (Psalm 24:15; 25:15 KJV)."

6. One of the Desert Fathers relates the following beneficial story: In Thessaloniki, there was once a convent of virgins. One of the nuns of the convent, by virtue of the works of the Tempter, left the monastery and fell to prostitution. She remained in this loathsome sin of immorality for a number of years. Yet after some time, with the help of God, Who loves mankind, she repented and returned to her convent. But before she was able to enter into the convent, she fell dead at the gates. In the meantime, her death was revealed to a certain holy man. In this revelatory vision, he saw—among other things—the Holy Angels who had come to take her soul and the demons following behind the soul. On the one hand, the Angels claimed that the nun had returned to the convent repentant, and thus her soul belonged to them. But the demons answered: "She has worked so many years for us,

and therefore her soul should be ours. Moreover, she did not even manage to enter into the convent. How, then, can you claim that she repented?"

The Angels, however, cut them off, saying that from the moment that God, Who is omniscient, perceived that the nun's intention was aimed at repentance, He gladly received her and she was justified. "She was master over her repentance, in reaching the goal which she had intended; the Lord over her life, however, was the Master of all."

After hearing these words, the demons were thwarted and departed, leaving the soul to the Angels. The holy man who beheld this vision related it to others.

7. Abba Alonios said: "If a man but so desires, he can return to the divine standard and repent anytime, whether early or late."

8. A brother posed the following question to Abba Moses:

"Let us suppose that a man beats his servant for a certain transgression; what should the servant say?"

The Elder replied:

"If he is a good servant, he will say: 'My Lord, have mercy on me, for I have done wrong.'"

The brother asked again:

"Should the servant say nothing else?"

And the Elder answered again:

"Nothing else. For, having admitted and confessed his fault and having said, 'I have done wrong,' immediately his Lord will take pity on him from the depth of his soul and forgive him."

9. A brother said to Abba Poimen:

"When I fall to some deplorable sin, my conscience eats me up and sharply reproaches me because I have fallen to that sin."

The Elder answered the brother as follows:

"If, at the very moment that he commits a sin, a person says, 'I have sinned,' his conscience ceases to be troubled."

10. The parents of a young girl by the name of Taisia died and left her an orphan. The young woman converted her home into a guest house for the Fathers of a neighboring skete. For many years she thus welcomed them and showed them care through her hospitality.

After some time, however, having spent all that she had in her hospitable work for the Fathers, she fell into need and became poor.

So it was that she fell in with some perverted people who led her to change her way of life and to abandon the path of virtue. The result of these destructive associations of hers was that Taisia flourished ever more in the way of sin, ending up, in time, in prostitution.

When the Fathers heard of her plight, it much saddened them.

So, they called upon Abba John the Short and said to him: "We have learned that our sister Taisia is living in sin. It is well known that, when she was still able, she showed us her love and hospitality and gave us rest. It is now time for us to help her as much as we can. Take upon yourself the task, then, of meeting with her and try, with the wisdom that God has given you, to set her aright and to pull her out of the mud of debauchery."

The Elder thus went to the den of sin where Taisia was staying.

"Inform your mistress, please, that I am asking for her," he told the old woman who was the

doorkeeper of the house of ill repute.

"Get out of here, monk," the old woman told him angrily. "You monks early on took all that she had and have left her poor now."

"Please go and do as I asked you," the Elder insisted, "because I aim to bring her great benefit."

The old woman finally stubbornly went upstairs and yelled to Taisia. that some monk wanted to visit her.

"Those monks," Taisia thought, on hearing who it was who was asking for her, "frequently live near the Red Sea and find valuable pearls."

Having adorned herself with special care, she lay down on her bed and said to the old woman porter:

"Bring the monk to me."

So, in fact, shortly Abba John entered the appointed room and sat near her. Looking carefully into her face, he said emotionally:

"What is it that you have against Jesus, and why do you blame him for coming to such a state as this?"

She, upon hearing these words, was totally paralyzed. At the same time, the Elder lowered his head and began to weep in sobs.

Shaken, Taisia then asked him:

"Abba, why are you crying?"

Abba John, raising his head a little, and then lowering it again, said:

"How can I see Satan playing on your face and not cry?"

At this remark, the sinful Taisia asked:

"Is there such a thing as repentance, Father?"

"Yes, there is," the Elder replied.

"Then take me with you," Taisia said, " and direct me as you will."

"So, let us go now."

At the beckoning of the Elder, the repentant sinner immediately arose to follow him.

The Elder was beset by astonishment, since he saw that Taisia had no interest in settling her household matters, but left things just as they were and followed him.

By the time they reached the desert, it had become completely dark. Abba John prepared a little place to sleep for her and, having made the sign of the Cross on it, told her:

"Sleep here." And after he had prepared for himself an improvised place to sleep on the ground, a short distance away, he completed his prayers and lay down to rest.

During the middle of the night he awakened and saw a strange spectacle; he saw a shining pathway leading heavenward from the spot where Taisia was sleeping and Angels of God leading the soul of the repentant sinner upwards along it.

Immediately he got up and, rushing toward Taisia, tapped her lightly with his foot. Once he realized that she was indeed dead, he prostrated with his face to the earth and entreated God to reveal to him whether He had accepted Taisia's repentance. Praying in this manner, he heard a voice from God, which said to him:

"The single hour for which this women repented was more quickly received than that of many who

spend years in repentance, since the repentance of the latter is not as earnest as hers."

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