

Homily on Fasting and Prayer

By St. Nikolai Velimirovic

This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29).

This is the saving prescription of the greatest Physician of human souls. This is the remedy tried and proven. There is not another remedy for madness. What kind of sickness is this? This is the presence and dominance of an evil spirit in a man, a dangerous evil spirit, who labours to eventually destroy the body and soul of man. The boy, whom our Lord freed from an evil spirit, had been hurled by it at times into the fire and at times into the water, just in order to destroy him.

As long as a man only philosophizes about God, he is weak and completely helpless against an evil spirit. The evil spirit ridicules the feeble sophistry of the world. But as soon as a man begins to fast and to pray to God, the evil spirit becomes filled with indescribable fear. In no way can the evil spirit tolerate the fragrance of prayer and fasting. The sweet-smelling fragrance chokes him and weakens him to utter exhaustion. In a man who only philosophizes about faith, there is spacious room in him for the demons. But in a man who sincerely begins to pray to God and to fast with patience and hope, it becomes narrow and constricted for the demon, so the demon must flee from such a man. Against certain bodily ills there exists only one remedy. Against the greatest illness of the soul, demonic possession, there exist two remedies, which must be utilized at one and the same time: fasting and prayer. The apostles and saints fasted and prayed to God. That is why they were so powerful against evil spirits.

O gracious Jesus, our Physician and Helper in all misfortunes, strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may be able to adhere to Thy saving precepts concerning fasting and prayer, for the sake of our salvation and the salvation of our fellow men.

To Thee by glory and praise forever. Amen.