

Examination of the Heart

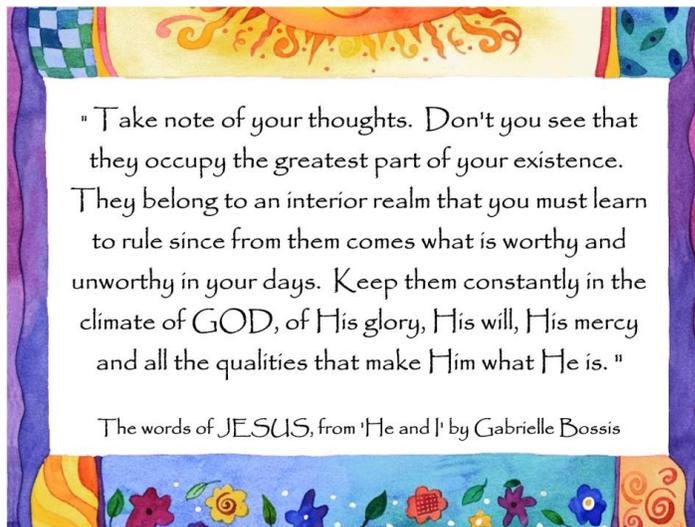
A Reflection

"But what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, **from their hearts**, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. **All these evils come from within** and they defile."

Mark 7:20-23

The word "unclean" as used in the Gospel of Mark 1:23-27, means unfit for worship. To live in perpetual spiritual communion with GOD who is All-Holy, we must guard our hearts in the utmost purity and humility. Every day, we must examine our hearts to see if we have thought, said, or done (or failed to do) anything that has offended GOD.

And the first place to examine is... **our thoughts**...



The human spirit is known by its thoughts.

Throughout the Gospels, JESUS continually disregarded what men said or did, for He could read their hearts.

He knew what they were thinking in their hearts, and their thoughts revealed their **true** self.

We live primarily in the world of our thoughts as we live in our deepest and truest selves. Our thoughts lead to spoken words and actions, with all their consequences for good and evil. Temptation conceives a thought, and that first thought is the beginning of all sin.

Spiritual tradition teaches that the human spirit can be influenced by thoughts that come from spirits outside of itself - the spirits of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

These spirits can speak **their** 'thoughts' in your mind and heart, and if you consent to them, they can be spoken and acted upon as if they were your own.

So it is important that you are able to discern when the thoughts of your heart are under the influence of GOD's Holy Spirit, or the spirits of the World, the Flesh or the Devil himself!

The first clue that your thoughts may be under the influence of any of these three spirits, is that you lose your peace and tranquility of heart.

You may also lose your desire for spiritual things - your desire to pray and to contemplate GOD. Worst of all you can lose love in your heart - for GOD and for your neighbor.

If you do not discern these spirits in your heart and resist them valiantly, the danger is that your own human spirit will become their slave and become - by your own consent and volition - just as they are.

So how do you discern thoughts that come from the spirits of the World, the Flesh and the Devil? Well, when you have thoughts like these! ...

The World

Thoughts of vainglory; ambition for ephemeral honors; power; wealth; the admiration and approval of others; vanity and pride - of beauty, wisdom, intelligence, ability...etc

The Flesh

Thoughts of physical comfort and pleasure; sex; food; drink; sleep; clothes; entertainment - which when they become inordinate lead to gluttony, lust, intemperance, dissipation, soft-living...etc

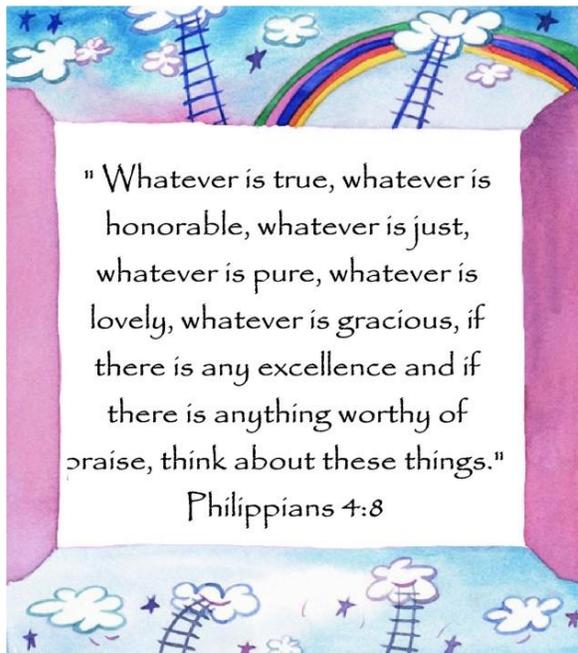
The Devil

Thoughts of malice, wrath, wickedness. Eg: Suspicion, mistrust, criticism, jealousy, envy, murmuring and complaining, bitterness, scorn, contempt, impatience, slander, gossip & accusation, anger, violence, cruelty, melancholy, hatred, rebellion, retaliation, revenge, lying, murder...etc

In the end it does not matter where your thoughts come from - whether they are the thoughts of your own heart, or sown there by an enemy - all you need to ask yourself is - do your thoughts lead you to GOD and the things of GOD?

Do they bring peace? Do they bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit?
(Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Long-Suffering,
Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-Control, Chastity).

If not - resist them and flee from them, as from the devil himself.



Through the **Children of the Divine Indwelling, Book of Prayer & Reflections...** you will learn to direct all your thoughts, desires and passions toward the Three Divine Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, indwelling your soul through the sacraments of the Church. First through a rule of prayer - and then through love.

For whatever you're thinking, whatever you're feeling, whatever is within you and around you, through the recitation of the prayers of the **Rule of Daily Prayer**, you can be recollected into the merciful, healing, delivering, purifying, sanctifying presence of the living GOD...

...GOD who is the Light that scatters the darkness of your heart. The Word that calms the storms of your soul. The Truth that sets your mind free. The Fountain of all holiness.

GOD who is able to do far more for you than you could ever hope for, ask for or imagine, ("exceedingly abundantly" more! Ephesians 3:20.)

GOD who will fully supply whatever you need - for He is gloriously rich (Philippians 4:19) and nothing is impossible for Him. (Luke 1:37)

Then, moment by moment, day by day, as you continue to stand in the presence of GOD and gaze "...with unveiled face on the glory of the LORD" you, with all your thoughts and passions, will be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory." cf: II Corinthians 3:18

For, in the end, YOU choose where to rest the eye of your soul. You CHOOSE the object of your love and contemplation. YOU CHOOSE where you will fix your gaze and your thoughts. Your mind can be a prison or a paradise. You choose.

Note: If you examine your heart and know you need cleansing and healing...

See: The Hours - Spiritual Visit #9 (and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at your parish church).

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