

## "What Disturbs Us Most?"

What disturbs us most?

A darkened soul lost to Hell . . . or a scratch on one's car. Missing Sunday Liturgy . . . or missing a day's work? A Liturgy ten minutes too long . . . or lunch half an hour late? A church with lukewarm Christians . . . or coffee that is lukewarm? Your Bible unread . . . or the newspaper unread? Church work being neglected . . . or housework neglected? Missing a good Bible Study . . . or missing a favorite television program? The cry of the hungry for bread . . . or taking the last bite of dessert? Church offerings at a minimum . . . or one's income being inadequate? Children late for Church . . . or children late for school?

By identifying what disturbs us, it reveals the true state of our souls. Can Christians call themselves followers of Christ and have worldly interests that predominate? To answer 'yes' would be equivalent to believing that one can be an opera singer and smoke three packs of cigarettes a day - it just doesn't work!

The question is, what has happened to our souls, that has created this affair with the world and a neglect of meaningful issues?

The Church has always taught not to perceive the world as an end in itself but as a means of communion with God. The world becomes a "god" when pursuing the pleasures of life consume us. St. Paul wrote:

*"since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)*

The "pleasures of life" are relative to the state of our soul. If while living daily in the world we neglect our spiritual nature then pleasures are adopted that are not proper for Christians.

Our souls are like filters, they are changed by what passes through them. The consequences of this sin are devastating. Our souls are like filters, they are changed by what passes through them. When anything but water runs through a filter, the filter changes color and becomes soiled. It still maintains the appearance of a filter; however, it is dark and has lost some ability to be a filter. Our souls are identical. Only when the pure water of the Holy Spirit fills our souls through prayer, fasting and confession do they return to the beauty and purity that God intended for them to have.

An often unknown aspect of our souls is that they change and can be altered so much by sin that it affects the way our minds perceive the world which leads us down many wrongs roads.

*"With the lusts of passion I have darkened the beauty of my soul, and turned my whole mind entirely into dust"* (Canon of St. Andrew of Crete)

The "lusts of passion" signifies an affair with the world that is void of the presence of God - it is pursuing life as an end in itself. The soul then becomes "darkened" and consequently, our minds are "turned into dust" and begin to desire pleasures which are not proper.

St. John Climacus in his "Ladder of Divine Ascent" clarifies these passions or distortions of our souls.

- gluttony
- lust
- selfishness, greed
- despondency, depression
- anger
- vainglory, conceit
- pride

These passions are also listed at the beginning of this article. We don't think of the attitudes listed as passions but they are.

As we approach the holy Resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ it would be in our best interest to attempt to change that which disturbs us most. If Christ were asked, 'What disturbs You most?' What do you think would be His response? Should our response be any different?

In Christ's love,  
Fr. Andrew