

**Excerpts from Antirrheticus (Evagrius)**  
**Translated by Dr. Luke Dysinger OSB**

**PRIDE**

8.49<sup>6</sup> For a soul being oppressed by the demon of pride and not understanding how to cast it out.

+ Mk 9:29 *And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."*

8.50. For the proud mind that yearns to become first among the brethren:

+ Mar 9:35 *And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."*

**AVARICE**

For the [tempting-]thoughts that seek to collect anything beyond the necessities and desire the amassing of wealth:

Heb 13:5 *Keep your mind free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never fail you or forsake you.'*

3.57. For the avaricious [tempting-]thought that does not wish to show mercy [give alms]among the brothers as if they are not in need - and so it denies the love of God in deed (1 John 3:18):

+ 1 John 3:17 *If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how can God's love abide in him?*

**SADNESS**

4.42. For the soul concerning the [tempting-] thought of sadness which portrays before our eyes the father's old age, the mother's weakness, and the relatives' inconsolable sorrow.

Ps 54.22[3] *Cast your cares upon the Lord and he will support you; he will never permit the righteous to be tossed about.*

4.11. For the soul that is cast into gloom because of disturbances at night and imagines it will become perpetually dismayed [i.e. mentally unbalanced] because of its terror:

+ Lev 26:6-7 *And I will give peace in your land, and you shall sleep, and none shall make you afraid; and I will destroy the evil beasts out of your land,*

## ACEDIA

6.6. For the soul that takes in thoughts of acedia if the body is afflicted with a mild illness:

+ **Deu 7:15 15** *The Lord shall remove from you all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Egypt which you have seen, and all that you have known, will he lay upon you but he will lay them upon all who hate you.*

6.25. Against the thought of acedia that paints for us images of a long time and a year of bitter living -.

+ **Ps 102:15** *As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so shall he flourish*

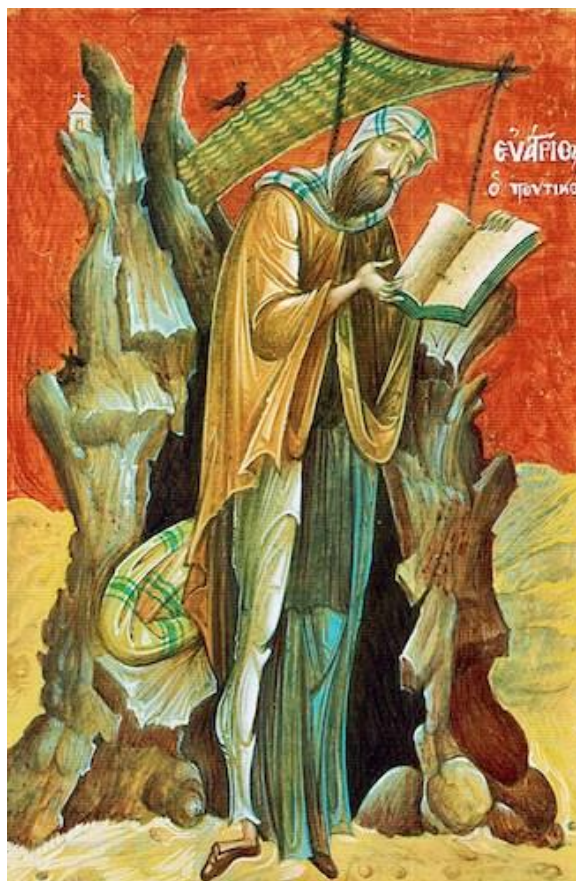
## VAINGLORY

7.41. For the [tempting-]thought inspired by vainglory that encourages us to teach about the soul's purification or about understanding truth, without our having achieved either one:

+ **Ja 3:1, ff.** *Let not many of you become teachers my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness, for we all make many mistakes,*

7.2. For the [tempting-]thought inspired by vainglory that arouses within me jealousy of the gift of knowledge the brethren receive from God:

+ **Num 11:29** *But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!'*



## Contemplation and Action for Lent From Evagrius to Dot Cotton

### Prelude

### You Are The Centre (Margaret Rizza)

### History

The earliest written accounts of the life of the Desert Fathers and Mothers come from the 4<sup>th</sup> century when in the Roman Empire people were allowed to practice their Christian faith. These prayerful people preferred to go out into the desert to live a life of fasting and prayer. However they did not leave their distractions behind. Like all people their minds were invaded regularly with thoughts and chatter. What we would now call the internal video played in their imagination and their dialogue with this inner drama robbed them of the stillness they sought. Anything familiar about this?

How did they deal with these distraction? They used 3 tools in their prayer to help recover this inner peace even momentarily – sitting, breathing and a prayer word. We do the first two all the time but we don't always notice what we are doing.

1. Becoming aware of how we sit in prayer is important – no slouching, nothing artificial, simply a good posture with back support if necessary
2. We take breathing for granted except when we are under pressure and we notice we are gasping or hyperventilating. It is useful when praying to begin with 3 or 4 deep breaths – in through the nose and out through the mouth. Then breathe normally.
3. It's time to introduce the prayer word. The Jesus Prayer has a long tradition – Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner. I find that a bit long myself and it doesn't quite connect with where I am at this time. We are all different.

This brings me to Evagrius (345 – 399 A.D.) Evagrius moved from Constantinople where he had a brilliant career in the Church to live in the Egyptian Desert where he became an inspirational writer on desert monasticism and prayer. He followed the tradition which was inspired by Jesus' temptation in the desert – the Gospel of the First Sunday of Lent. Jesus did not engage with the devil but answered with scripture quotations. Evagrius devised a compilation of scriptural quotations to counter various thoughts and passions in his work called the *Antirrheticus* (*Talking back*). These phrases act as antidotes to the distractions. We will take a look at some of these now.

## Instrumental      Inis Oirr (Walsh)

### Reflection

'Teresa's (of Avila) famous image of the silk worm expresses what contemplative practice is for. As the silk worm spins its own silken cocoon, from which it will one day emerge transformed into a butterfly, so the soul, who gives itself diligently to spiritual practice, is responsive enough to the promptings of grace to cooperate in its own process of transformation.' *Into the Silent Land (Martin Laird)*

### Song                      All Will Be Well (St. Julian of Norwich)

**All sing:**      All will be well and all will be well  
All manners of things will be well.

### Reflection

'At no time are we trying to push away our judging thoughts. Nor do we indulge them by getting caught up in their narrative. Instead we 'look over their shoulder', as the author of the Cloud of Unknowing tells, 'Try to look over their shoulders, as it were, searching for something else – and that something is God, enclosed in a cloud of unknowing'. *Into the Silent Land (Martin Laird)*

### Song                      Nada Te Turbe (Taizé)

**All sing:**      Nada te turbe nada te espante; quien a Dio tiene nada le  
falta. Nada te turbe, nada te espante; sólo Dios basta.

### Reflection

'Evagrius approached the famous monk, Macarius, and said, "Father, give me a word to live by. Macarius responds, "Secure the anchor rope to the rock and by the grace of God the ship will ride the devilish waves of the beguiling sea." Macarius said "The ship is your heart; keep guard over it. The rope is your mind; secure it to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the rock who has power over all the waves...because it is not difficult, is it, to say with each breath, 'Our Lord Jesus, have mercy on me: I bless thee, my Lord Jesus, help me.' *Into the Silent Land (Martin Laird)*

### Song                      O Lord, Listen To My Prayer (Margaret Rizza)

### Reflection

While constant repetition of the prayer word is useful training, Theophan reminds us that "the words are only the instrument and not the essence of the work".'  
*Into the Silent Land (Martin Laird)*

## Instrumental      Irish Traditional

**LENT 2018**  
**INVITATION TO PRAY, FAST, GIVE**

The colour code of Green, Blue, and Red fonts indicates the invitation to **GIVE**, **PRAY**, **FAST** inspired by the Gospel of Ash Wednesday (Matt 6:1-616-18)

*All quotations are from the readings of each day from Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday - Scratch off the date to reveal your daily challenge*

**GIVE**

These quotations challenge us to take some positive action in keeping with Gospel values. Giving of ourselves is an essential element of the season of Lent no matter how small the idea. Saint Paula, born in 4<sup>th</sup> century Rome, later settled in Bethlehem where she built a hospice, a monastery and a convent.

**PRAY**

These days offer quotations for reflection or contemplation. They can also be used as a mantra to calm our minds and to suspend the inner dialogue with our thoughts. This recalls the tradition of Evagrius, a 4<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian Desert Father, who collected a large number of scripture passages to counter different kinds of distracting thoughts.

**FAST**

These suggestions point to ways of fasting from habits that are not wholesome or Christian. They recall the tradition of fasting during Lent as a time of Baptismal preparation. Saint Catherine of Alexandria, who lived in 4<sup>th</sup> century Egypt, undertook vigils of fasting as she waited for her initiation into the Christian community.

**February**

- 14            **Don't parade your good deeds**
- 15            **Choose life**
- 16            **Shelter the homeless poor**
- 17            **Jesus said, 'Follow me'**
- 18            **Repent, and believe the Good News**
- 19            **I was hungry and you never gave me food**
- 20            **In your prayers do not babble**
- 21            **Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness**
- 22            **Knock and the door will be opened**
- 23            **Go and be reconciled**
- 24            **Love your enemies**
- 25            **This is my Son, the beloved, listen to him**
- 26            **Do not judge**

