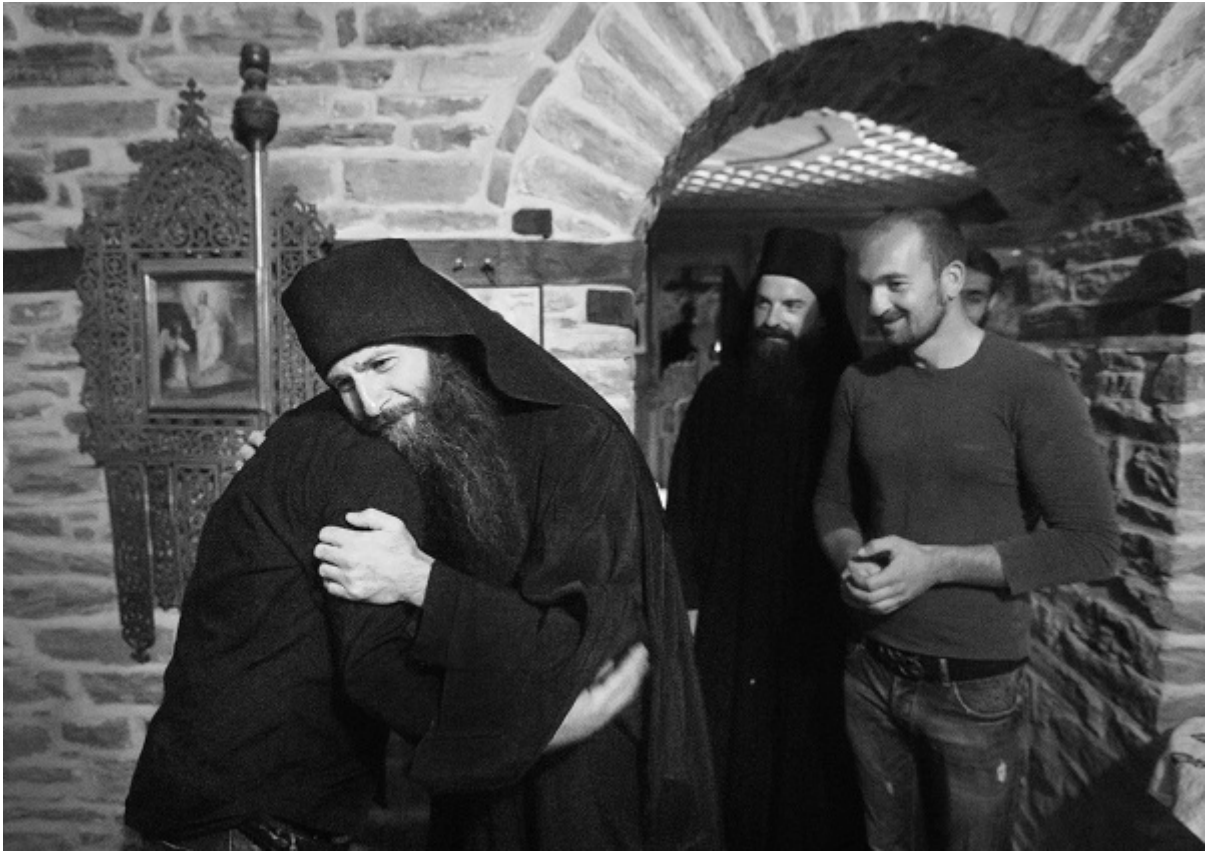


On Love (Saint Isaac the Syrian)

[Ξένες γλώσσες](#) / [In English](#)

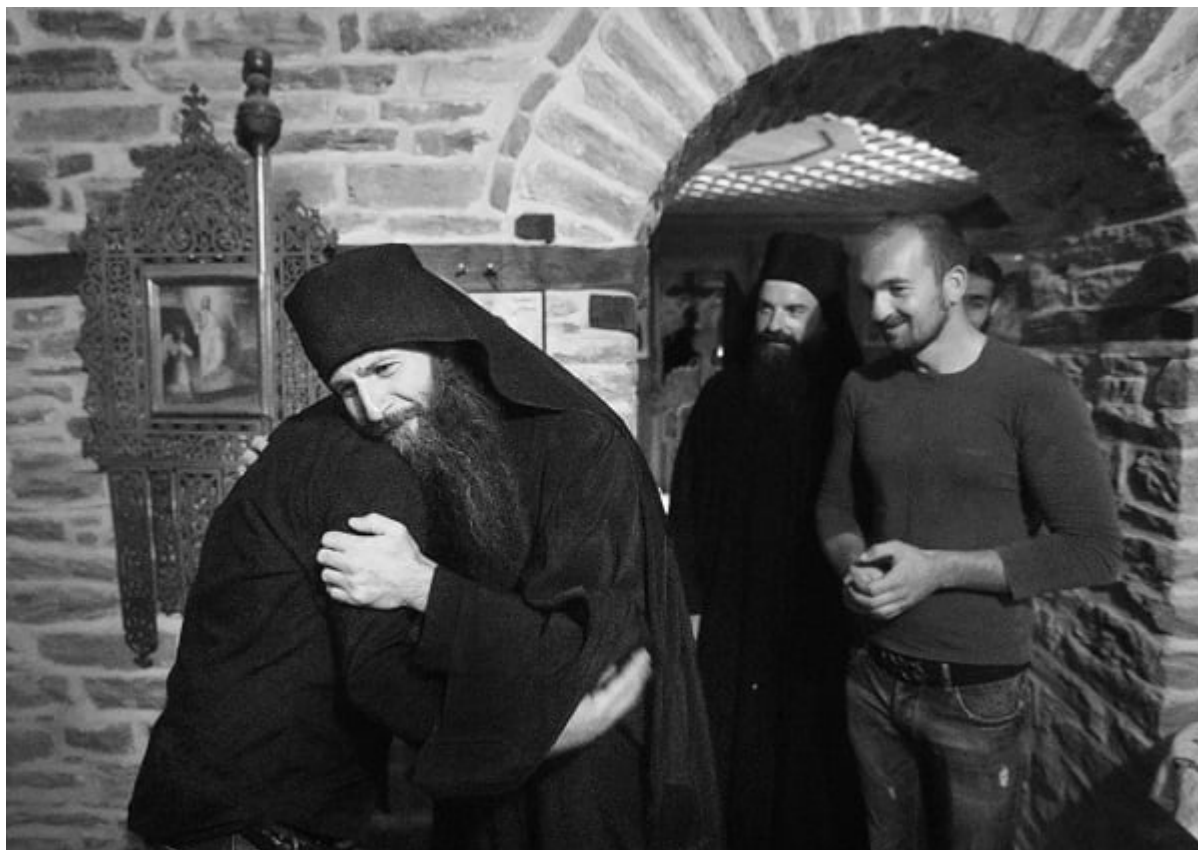


Practical love

Just as oil maintains the light of a lamp, so charity feeds the soul with true knowledge of God. The key for the heart to acquire divine gifts is given through love for our neighbour.

How wonderful and praiseworthy is love for our neighbour, provided, of course, such concern doesn't distract us from the love of God. How sweet is the company of our spiritual brothers and sisters, as long as we can preserve our love for God, as well.

If you're busy making a living, doing manual work, and you receive help from others, you have an obligation to give alms. If you neglect this, your hardness of heart will be contrary to the Lord's commandment.



Suppose a monk's been given a rule to stay in his cell and pray for seven weeks or a week and, when he's completed the rule, he meets up with and keeps company with others and is consoled by their companionship. If he then is indifferent to any suffering among his brethren, thinking that his weekly rule is sufficient in itself, he's being uncharitable and harsh. Because, if he has no charity in his heart, if he's disdainful and contemplates what's false, then he won't condescend to share the pain of his brothers.

If you scorn the pain of others, you aren't going to see the light of God. And if you turn your face from someone who's in trouble, your day will be a dark one.

A famous saint once said that nothing can help a monk to become free of the demon of pride and to overcome the burning passion of fornication as visiting and serving the bed-ridden and relieving them of their bodily pain.

The Lord said that we should behave towards others the way we want them to behave towards us (Luke 6, 31). But if you haven't got the material goods or the bodily strength to put your love for others into practice, it's enough for God if you love them by intent.

God's love is inexhaustible

Love that comes from the things of this world is like the light of a lamp that's kept

going with oil, or like a torrent that flows only when it rains and dries out when it stops. But love that comes from God is like a spring that wells up and never stops flowing. Its waters never fail, because God alone is the source of love.

God's love brings an uncommon change

God's love is, by nature, fervent. And when it falls on someone in abundance, it makes that soul ecstatic. This is why the heart of those who've felt it can't receive it into themselves, can't bear it, but, depending on the amount of love which overshadowed them, an uncommon change seems to hover above them. These are the perceptible signs of this alteration:

The person's face becomes red as fire and joyful, and their body heats up. Fear and shyness ('bashfulness') depart from them and they become ecstatic. The power that concentrates the mind is lost and the person passes into a state beyond thought. Dread death is thought of as joy and the mind never ceases to gaze upon and contemplate things heavenly. Although it's not bodily in the heavens, it speaks as though it were, without anyone else seeing it there, of course. It loses its natural knowledge and its natural sight; it loses the sense of movement within a perceptible environment. Because whenever it does something, it doesn't feel it at all, since the mind is suspended in the contemplation of the heavens. And the intellect appears to be conversing with someone else.

It was this spiritual inebriation which affected the apostles and martyrs. The apostles travelled all over the world, enduring labours, exhaustion and mockery, while the martyrs had their bodies cut up into little pieces. Their blood ran like water but, although they underwent the most terrible tortures, they didn't lose heart. Rather, they bore up with courage and, although in fact they were wise, other people considered them witless. There were also others who wandered in desert places, on mountains, in caves and in holes in the ground. What they did was considered improper by other people, but for God it was most proper.

May God grant that we, too, might attain to such foolishness!

Source: agiazioni.gr