

The Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959) Struggles, Experiences, Teachings (14)



Continued from (13)

The Elder very often stressed the importance of vigil as the most practical method in the spiritual life, essential in all three states in the struggle. When the monk is starting out, at the first stage, which is the period of purification, all the systems of what is called practical work are used. At that stage, when the beginner is struggling with bodily afflictions, the most beneficial factor in subduing the passions and suppressing the actual commission of sin is keeping vigil. This applies particularly to unnatural movements, which are often intensified by the vigour of the body which is naturally overabundant in strong people. No other method of struggle helps as much as deprivation of sleep. Truly, vigil dissolves the body, as the ever-memorable Elder used to say.

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