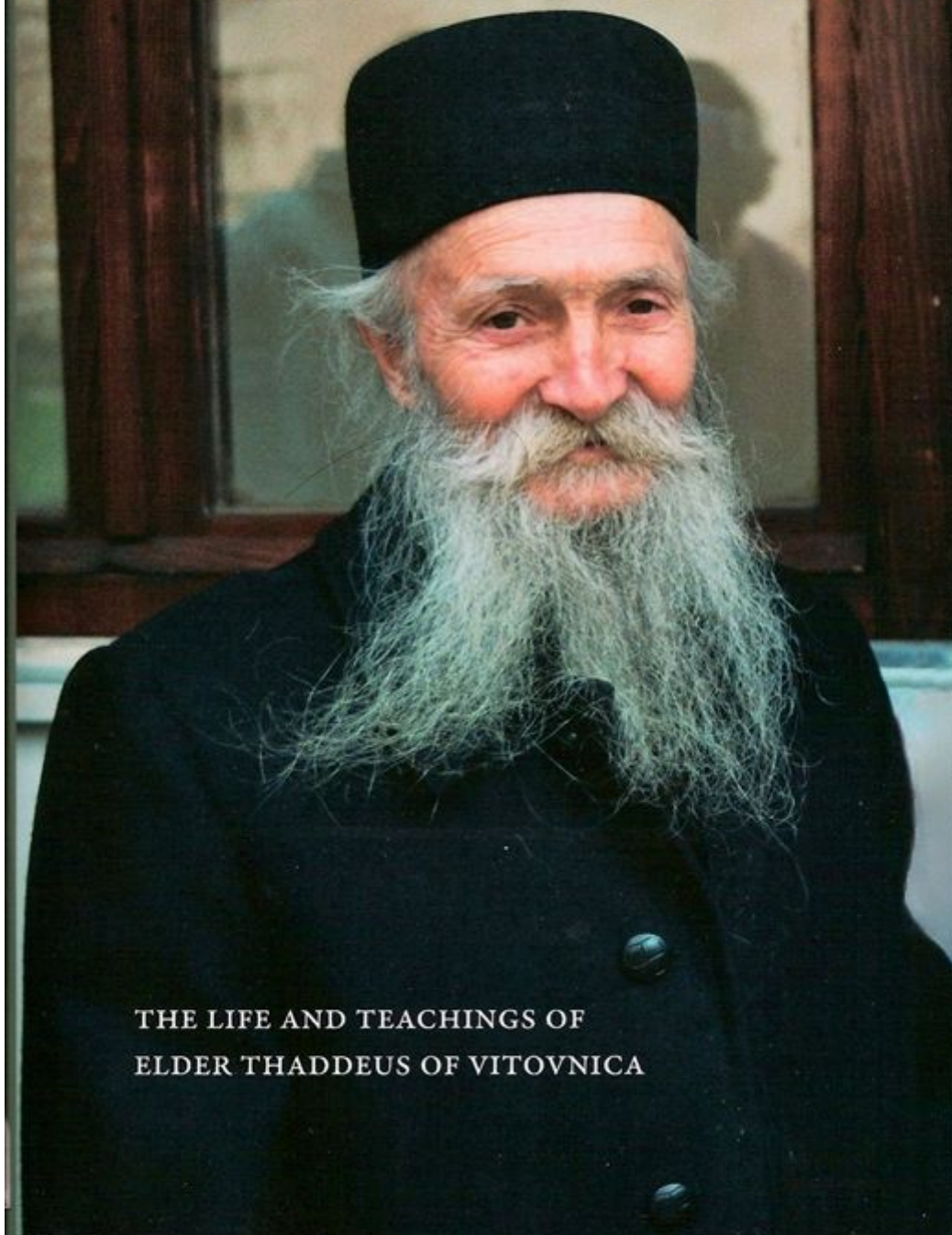


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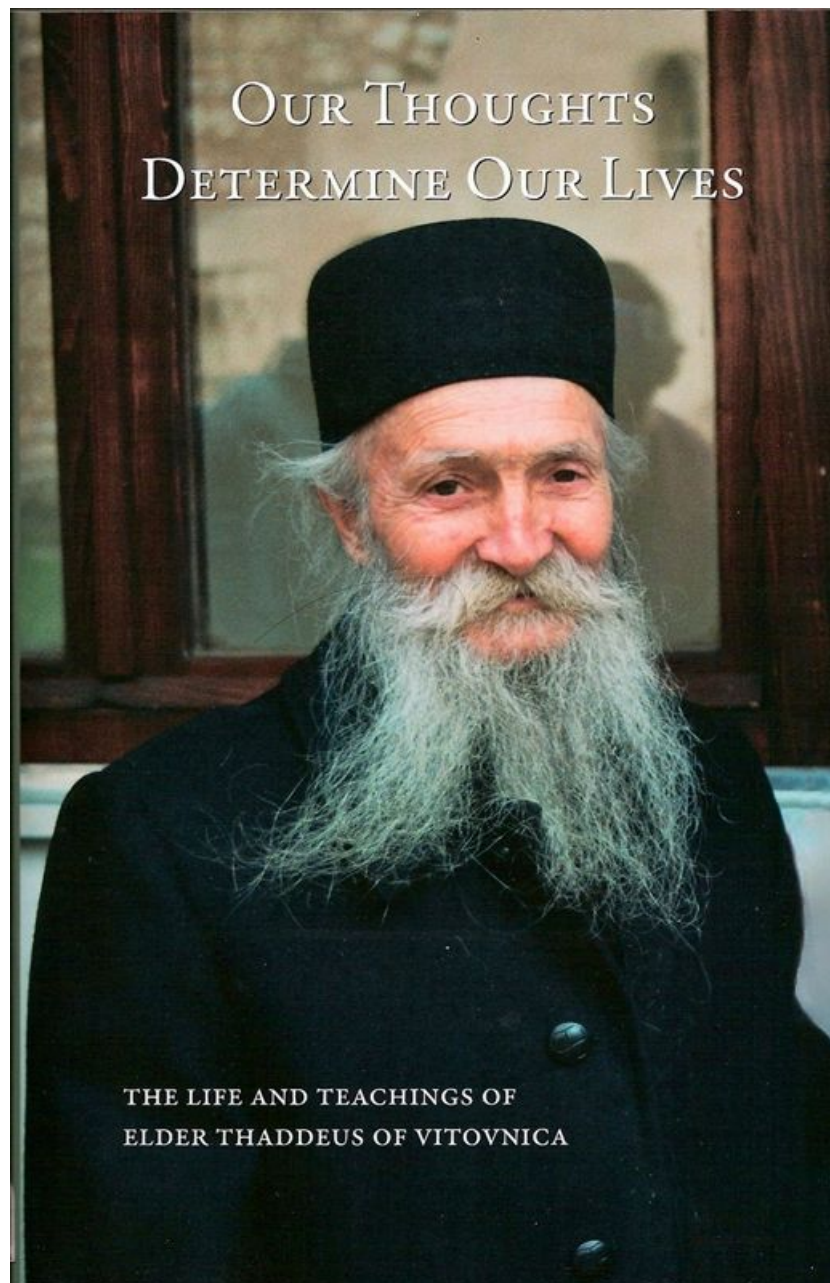
## **Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: the Life And Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica (Emma Cazabonne)**

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)

OUR THOUGHTS  
DETERMINE OUR LIVES



THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF  
ELDER THADDEUS OF VITOVNICA



### **MY THOUGHTS ABOUT "OUR THOUGHTS"**

I went one Sunday to a very small Russian Orthodox parish in Wisconsin, in fact like a family parish, in a church built by the priest on his own property. The church was gorgeous, all in wood. The Divine Liturgy was heavenly, so prayerful and contemplative. After the Liturgy, all attending were invited to join the family for their Sunday lunch. The son of the family was reading a spiritual book aloud, just like in monasteries, Orthodox or Catholic, for that matter. They were reading this book. I enjoyed very much the excerpt, bought the book, and read it all.

I was really struck by how modern this book was. Of course, this Elder lived in the 20th century, he actually died in 2002, but still, sometimes you don't have the

feeling that writings are that appropriate to our modern age. This one sure is, focusing a lot on the impact your thoughts can have, not only on your own lives, but also on people around you, and even on the world at large. Whether your thoughts are positive or negative, they will determine your life and the lives of many.

This is an element used in new-age spirituality, but it is of course also a basic Christian fact, underlined by many Fathers; I'm thinking for instance about St Seraphim of Sarov, saying: "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and around you thousands will be saved."

So many people are afflicted by depression these days; doctors tell us this is caused by some chemical imbalance in the brain, but they hardly speak about the major role of the thoughts in that disease, yet spiritual Fathers have spoken and written about it for centuries. I hope that this very accessible book may be of help to our troubled world.

It also helped me become more aware on my own thoughts, and work on not letting the negative ones overcome me and my relationships with others. I work a lot in contact with lots of people, and of course some are going to be unhappy about this or that and upset me. Then is the time to pay attention to my upset and stop it by turning to another person with fresh and positive thoughts.

## **WHAT IS IT ABOUT**

Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica was one of the most renowned spiritual guides of Serbia in the twentieth century. As a novice he lived in obedience to Elder Ambrose of Miljkovo Monastery, a disciple of the Optina Elders. From him Fr. Thaddeus learned the Prayer of the Heart and the selfless love that came to characterize his whole ministry to the suffering Serbian people.

Born in 1914, Elder Thaddeus lived through all the suffering endured by Serbia in the twentieth century. Over the course of two World Wars, during the Communist takeover, and through the nato bombings of 1999, he co-suffered with his people. He taught, counseled, and prayed for all who came to him in pain and sorrow. His words of love and hope provided spiritual balm for people from all classes of society.

In 2002 Elder Thaddeus reposed, leaving behind a large collection of his teachings, preserved by his faithful spiritual children. His life, teachings, and spiritual conversations are here presented for the first time in English. **[Goodreads]**

## **EXCERPTS**

We cannot achieve salvation unless we change our thoughts and make them different... This is achieved by the work of Divine power in us. Our minds thus become deified, free of passions, and holy.

p.60

Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility.

p.63

If our thoughts are kind, peaceful, and quiet, turned only toward good, then we also influence ourselves and radiate peace all around us – in our family, in the whole country everywhere. This is true not only here on earth, but in the cosmos as well. When we labor in the fields of the Lord, we create harmony. Divine harmony, peace, and quiet spread everywhere.

However, when we breed negative thoughts, that is a great evil. When there is evil in us, we radiate it among our family members and wherever we go.

p. 63

We have Divine Power, Divine life, and Divine energy. On the day of the Final Judgment we shall have to give an answer for the way we have used this Divine power, life, and energy which have been given to us: whether we have contributed to the harmony in the universe, or have sown disharmony.

p.64

He who has the Kingdom of God in himself will imperceptibly pass it on to others. People will be attracted by the peace and warmth in us; they will want to be near us, and the atmosphere of heaven will gradually pass on to them. It is not even necessary to speak to people about this. The atmosphere of heaven will radiate from us even when we keep silence or talk about ordinary things. It will radiate from us even though we may not be aware of it.

p.66

We Christians have been called to spread Divine peace and the atmosphere of heaven. There are very few of those who realize that this is how we should be – a source of goodness, peace, and joy.

p.135

**There can be no peace in the world**

**unless there is inner peace in each one of us.**

p.153

Our wicked thoughts generate evil and disturb the peace in the universe.

p.203

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

“Fr Thaddeus was born in Serbia in 1914. Aged 15, he was told by doctors that he had only five years to live. The young man entered the monastery of Milkovo, where he became a monk, the disciple of Russian monks who had taken refuge there. They had come to Serbia as a result of the Bolshevik coup d’état in Russia and the neo-calendarist persecution of Orthodoxy at Valaam Monastery, then in Finland. Among the Russian monks at Milkovo was the well-known Fr Ambrose, a disciple of St Ambrose of Optina. It was from him that Fr Thaddeus soon learned the Jesus Prayer.

“After the repose of his revered elder, the saintly Fr Ambrose, Fr Thaddeus moved to the monastery of Gorniak, where he was tonsured by its Russian Abbot Fr Seraphim. Two years later Fr Thaddeus was ordained priest. After this he was given various obediences and until the outbreak of the Second World War served at the Patriarchate in Pec. From here he returned to Belgrade where he was arrested by the Gestapo, who had already arrested Patriarch Gabriel and the future St Nicholas (Velimirovich). They considered Fr Thaddeus to be one of the leaders of the Serbian resistance to the Nazi occupation. However, these charges were dropped, Fr Thaddeus was released and he set off for the monastery of Vintovitsa.

“Fr Thaddeus was to remain in Vintovitsa for most of the rest of his life. He became known as an elder and every day received all who came to him for advice, support and consolation. However, he was persecuted by those jealous of him and spent the final years of his life with spiritual children.” **[Goodreads]**

*This article was originally posted in [Words And Peace](#) on September 30, 2011 and is posted here with permission.*