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Saint Joseph the Hesychast was anti-medicines then later opened up to them



My child, I hope you are well.

Just recently, I got somewhat better too. This is how my life has passed, with pain and illnesses. Now I have approached death once again for your sake. I said, “Let me die, only let my spiritual children live.” And I didn’t eat at all.

I was already exhausted, and now I eat almost nothing once again. You sent so many sweets, but I didn’t even taste them. I didn’t have any cheese – only boiled greens without bread. It was only a short time before I collapsed. They had to give me one hundred and twenty injections....

Three times the brotherhood stayed the night thinking that I would die. They called everyone to come to my side. I bid them farewell for the last time. They cried by my side day and night. Finally, I recovered once again. They sent me a special medicine, and it, after God, healed me. I hadn’t eaten for forty days. When I took the medicine, I ate, slept, and got better. Glory to Thee, O God! I began to move

somewhat and to write again.

As long as I live, my child, I shall pray for you, until you write that you are well. And if I die, you will remember that this old man got sick and died to save all of us.

Courage! It's not just you. There are many others. Many people have come to me, and with prayer and fasting they were healed. But now, the Lord doesn't hear me, so that I learn about medicines and doctors and be lenient with others.

I also read the letters of Saint Nectarios, and I saw how much he, such a great saint, paid attention to the doctors and medicines! I am just a poor ascetic, who has grown old in the wilderness, and I wanted to heal only through faith. But I, too, am learning that both medicines and grace are necessary. So now I shall say like the saint, "See to it that you get well." Fix your nerves in any way you can, and you will find your prayer and peace again.

See to it to help yourself as much as you can. Take control of your appetite: don't eat things that you know are harmful to your health: fried foods, salty foods, sauces, pork, meats, salted fish, alcoholic beverages in general. Avoid these things, and it will be considered to be fasting in the eyes of the Lord.

And, my child, don't say in your thoughts, "Why is this?" and, "Why is that?" The Lord's judgements are an abyss. Glory to God because He loves us all. His love is manifest in our illnesses and our sorrows. "For my strength," He said, "is made perfect in weakness."

This love of Christ has also made me grieve and suffer with you. But do not fear temptation. It is a trial. God allows as much as He thinks is best, and in the end, His goodness will prevail.

As for me, I eat one hundred grams of bread a day now and a little bit of food, and I keep vigil all night long. Satan comes from afar and howls, but does not approach. He goes to your brethren and threatens them with fantasies. They should not be afraid. In the beginning of my monastic life, the demons fought with me for eight years in every way, and I wouldn't sleep lying down – only standing up or sitting down a little.

So, don't be afraid. Only, prayer, faith, fervency, and tears. Only someone who commits a sin should fear the devil. Then the enemy can do him harm, because the Lord abandons him.

Based on a letter of Saint Joseph the Hesychast.

In the photo, a glimpse from the pharmacy of Vatopedi monastery, Mount Athos
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