

**W**HAT OUGHT NOT HE TO EXCEED IN PURITY, who hath the benefit of this Sacrifice, than what sunbeam should not that hand be more pure which is to sever this Flesh, the mouth that is filled with spiritual fire, the tongue that is reddened by that most awful Blood? Consider with what sort of honor thou wast honored, of what sort of table thou art partaking. That which when angels behold, they tremble, and dare not so much as look up at it without awe on account of the brightness that cometh thence, with this we are fed, with this we are commingled, and we are made one body and one flesh with Christ. “Who shall declare the mighty works of the Lord, and cause all His praises to be heard?” What shepherd feeds his sheep with his own limbs? And why do I say, shepherd? There are often mothers that after the travail of birth send out their children to other women as nurses; but He endureth not to do this, but Himself feeds us with His own Blood, and by all means entwines us with Himself.

St John Chrysostom, *Homily LXXXII on St Matthew*,  
NPNF, First Series, Vol X, p. 495

**H**OW CAN WE OVERCOME the sinfulness that is already firmly established within us? We must use force. A man labours and struggles, and so by the use of force he escapes from destruction, always striving to raise his thoughts to holiness. We are not forbidden to resist force with force. If in any ascetic task we exert force, however slight, then, ‘remaining in Jerusalem,’ we can wait for the ‘power from on high’ which will come down upon us (Luke 24:49). In other words, if we persevere in unceasing prayer and the other virtues, there will come upon us a mighty force, infinitely stronger than any we can exert. This force cannot be described in human language; in its great strength it overcomes our worst faults of character and the malice of the demons, conquering both the sinful inclinations of our soul and the disordered impulses of our body. ‘There came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind’ (Acts 2:2); and this force from Heaven drives out the evil that is always forcing us into sin.

St John of Carpathos, #50, *Philokalia*, Faber & Faber, Vol. I, p. 310

**A** DISCIPLE OF ABBA AMMON told the following story: “On one occasion when we were singing the service, my mind became confused, and I forgot the verse in the Psalm; and when we had ended the service Ammon answered and said unto me, ‘Whilst I was standing up during the service it seemed that I was standing on fire and was being consumed, and my mind was unable to make me turn aside either to the right hand or to the left. And as for thee, where was thy mind when we were singing the service? for thou didst omit a verse from the Psalm. Didst thou not know that thou wast standing in the presence of God, and that thou wast speaking unto Him?’”

*Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, tr. Budge, Vol. I, p. 56, #251

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS  
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