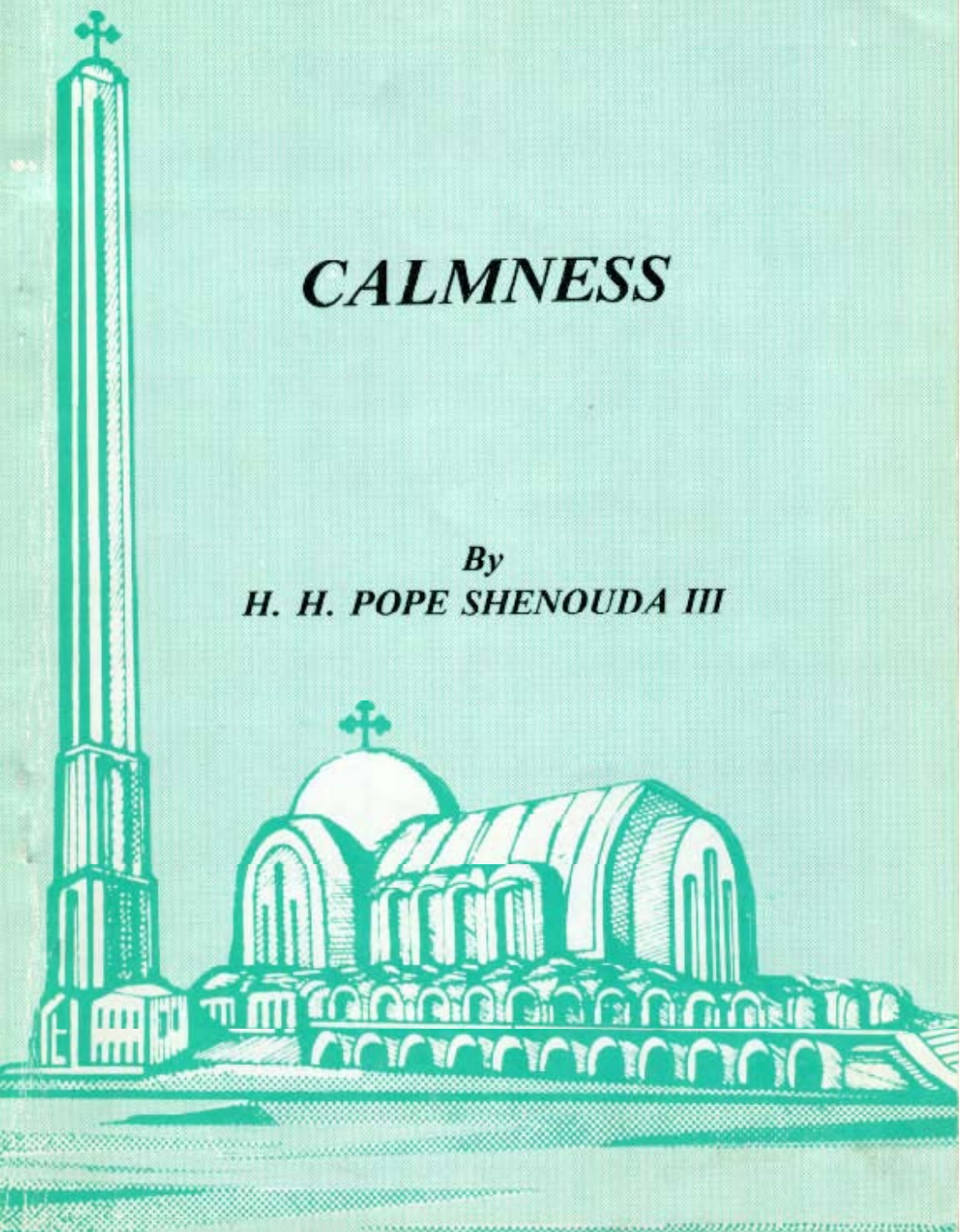


# *CALMNESS*

*By*  
***H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III***





**COPTIC ORTHODOX  
PATRIARCHATE**



*See of St. Mark*

**CALMNESS**

**BY  
H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III**

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**Author** : H. H. Pope Shenouda Ill.  
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***H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of  
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark***



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***In the name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.***

## **Forward**

This book is the result of four lectures, two of which I gave at the Cathedral in Cairo along with two others which I gave at the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun on 27th August and 3rd September, 1983.

All four lectures are available as tape recordings, which you can obtain from the tape libraries at the Monastery of Anba Reweis and from various churches.

This book is about calmness, and is part of a larger spiritual compilation, *'Landmarks of the Spiritual Way'*, which we hope will be published shortly, if God wills.

**Pope Shenouda III**

This noisy, clamorous period in which mankind lives on the earth cannot be compared in any way with the peace which has existed since eternity and which will last forever .  
It is but a troubled drop in the ocean of that endless peace.



Maybe the angels are looking at our world in astonishment and perhaps they are saying:

*What is all uproar on this planet?!*

*And why do the people live in such a tumult?!*

*When will they calm down?*

*It is certain that they will not calm down unless they reach us, because calmness is the way of life in heaven.*



## **CHAPTER I**

### **The Beauty of Calmness and its Sublimity**

**The History of Calmness**

**The Elements of Calmness**

**True Calmness**

**Virtues Connected With Tranquillity**

**The Benefit of Calmness**

**The Disadvantages of Lacking Calmness**

**Examples of Calmness**

## The History of Calmness

Peace is the original state of this universe. It was also the original state before the world was created. Since the beginning of time, God alone has been in perfect peace. Millions of years have passed or millions of millions of years, more than that even; in fact before time existed and before its dimensions were known, the original state was peace.

God began to work in peace and His first work was the Creation. In perfect peace God created everything... "Then God said, *"Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good;*" (Gen. 1:3-4).

"Then God said, *'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, ';* and it was so. ... *And God saw that it was.*" (Gen. 1:11-12). Thus each stage of the Creation was accomplished in peace. God created the world and the world lived in peace. As an example of that there are the heavenly bodies moving in the celestial sphere, with total precision and order, in total peace, without any confusion; day followed by night, night followed by day, without noise and without struggle.

So when did the world begin to lose its peace?

That was after God formed creatures with a mind and possessing free will.

These creatures who were endowed with intelligence, spent a period of calm in which no one quarrelled and no one argued with anyone else, no one raised any objections and no one disagreed or rebelled. There was no one who provoked a problem or disturbance in any form.

Then there was the first loss of peace, for which Satan was to blame.

Satan lost the peace of his heart from within, when the concept of pride entered him. (Is. 14:13-14). A desire to be like God entered his heart, and this desire rendered his whole heart troubled thus he lost his calmness. Not content with that, though, he in fact led a rebellion in heaven and brought down with him angels of various ranks. A result of the free will which he had misused.

Satan and his angels were banished from heaven and heaven became peaceful.

As far as human beings were concerned, Adam lived first of all in peace, while he was in the Garden of Eden. Even the wild beasts lived with him in peace, there was no enmity or strife between them. They did not kill him as their prey or attack him and he did not hunt or pursue them. He did not fear them, but rather a bond of harmony and peaceful coexistence united them. The same situation occurred with the wild beasts and creatures which were with our father Noah in the Ark.

Predatory animals were not predatory in Adam's time. Hunting for prey had not yet entered the world since the world still

retained its peace. The wild creatures at that time used to eat grass (Gen.. 1: 29), they did not hunt down animals that were weaker than themselves or prey upon a creature of a different species such as Adam. There was not that 'wildness' in them which was to earn them the name of wild beasts. They were peaceful, and so was man.

The amazing thing is that man lost his peace while he was still in the Garden of Eden, which happened after he sinned.

When he sinned he was afraid, and he hid behind the trees. When he sinned he felt ashamed of his nakedness and sewed fig leaves together to cover himself. And God banished Adam and Eve from Paradise.

Then there was the sin of Cain when he lost the peace of his heart because of his envy of his brother Abel. His inner feelings developed to the point that he, *"rose up against Abel his brother and killed him."* (Gen.. 4:8).

When Cain killed his brother he lost his peacefulness forever, and he lived as a restless wanderer and a fugitive on earth, afraid of God and of people. (Gen. 4:12-14). The psychological disorders of fear, anxiety and confusion began to disturb him deeply. He was the first to exhibit these disorders and the one who introduced them into human nature. Cain's fear of God was surpassed by his fear of people, and his bitter cry was: *"My punishment is greater than I can bear! ... anyone who finds me will kill me"*(Gen.4:13-14).

Cain's killing of Abel was the introduction to the wars which were to sweep over the earth later, and which caused the world to lose its peacefulness.

Lamech, one of the descendants of Cain, was also a murderer. And having confessed this to his two wives, he said: *"If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."*(Gen.4:24)

This is how vengeance was introduced to the earth and the world was filled with evil and lost its peace. Tyrants and oppressors populated the earth and God drowned the raging world with the Flood. And after the Flood, there was Nimrod who *"he began to be a mighty one on the earth."* (Gen.10:8).

After the Tower of Babel, the peoples on earth became dispersed and struggles broke out between the nations. (Gen.11:9). Human nature became corrupt and lost its peace, which was encouraged by the rivalry and contention between people. Eventually, on account of the quarrelling of the shepherds for grazing land, we hear in connection with two righteous men, Abram and Lot that, *"Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together."* (Gen. 13:6).

It is a tragic story, in which man was changed from the depths of peacefulness to restlessness.

Therefore what is calmness? What are its elements? What are its effects? What are the virtues that are linked with calmness and which are lost with its loss? How can man obtain peace

and remain in it? These and other things are what we wish to deal with in this little book.

## **The Elements of Calmness**

Calmness has to involve the human being's whole life: inwardly and outwardly; what is apparent and what is hidden. Thus it must include:

1.     **Inner calmness:** which is made up of tranquillity of the mind, serenity of the heart and calmness of the thoughts.
2.     **Calmness of the body:** which consists of the stillness of the senses and calmness of movement.
3.     **Calmness of the nerves:** which consists of the serenity of the features and the spirit of cheerfulness.
4.     **Calmness of speech:** which also includes calmness of the voice.
5.     **Calmness of behaviour:** which consists of a serenity in practical matters of life and in private behaviour, and a calm approach to solving any problem which the individual might meet.

There are other things which are connected to all these kinds of calmness, which are:

- a. Peace of nature, a peaceful environment and quiet place in which to live.
- b. Virtues associated with calmness
- c. Nature of calmness: is it true peace or just a superficial or temporary calm, or the calmness of inexperience?
- d. Practical examples of true calmness.

## **True Calmness**

1. We cannot judge whether a person is calm or not until his calmness has been tested.

A person may appear calm, because the external conditions which surround him are calm. No problem or provocation has yet occurred to put his calmness to the test. Though if you clash with him he will probably show his real self, and show whether he is calm or not.

It is only when one person clashes with another over a matter of opinion or behaviour, or when insult or injury befalls him or he is faced with hurtful words that, according to how he behaves, he can be judged as to his calmness.

It is the same situation if he falls into a problem or into adversity, or becomes ill or faces some difficulty. All of these could be a test for his disposition and his nerves. How does he behave, how does he react? Does he lose his calmness, or does he endure and solve the problem calmly?

This is the first test of true calmness. Any person can be calm when circumstances are calm.

2. The second test, however, is how long the calmness lasts. Real calmness is a continuous tranquillity, something like a characteristic. It is not to be calm for a period of time after which a person loses that calm and changes its way of holding out in the face of problems.

True calmness is not just training for endurance for a specific period of time. It is a tranquil nature which continues in its calmness however long the time and however the situation changes.

True peace is not a veil behind which a restless character hides, only to be brought to light by unexpected events!

The person who is tranquil by nature is not hurt by problems or clashes, rather the contrary, they show up his compassion, his gentleness and kindness of heart.

Saint Paul the Apostle lived in difficult surroundings, *"in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments,..."*, nevertheless he said in the introduction to all this, that it was, *"in much patience,"* (2 Cor.6:4-5) And he said, in the spirit of faith, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."* (2 Cor.4:16). He also referred to all his problems and hardships by the phrase, *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment"*. (2 Cor.4:17).

3. True calmness is not external but internal. This calmness does not only show on the outside whilst a volcano rages within. On the contrary, a person's internal peace is the source and origin of his outer calmness. We will speak about this point in greater detail when we talk about the tranquillity of the heart.

4. There is a difference between true calmness and impassiveness, which might well be a kind of coldness that is meant to provoke.

The calm person, one who loves peace, is not only calm himself, but tries to make others around him calm to spread peace around them. But it might sometimes happen that a person with strong nerves may put up with a fretful friend, replying to him very calmly or very coolly in a way that actually provokes his nerves even more, and makes him more agitated. This increased agitation is then met with even greater calmness and cold composure on the part of the one with the stronger nerves, who takes pleasure in provoking his unfortunate friend and making him an object of criticism in front of those present.

This sort of calmness is not at all what is meant by spiritual calmness.

The spiritually calm person does not demolish another through his own calmness. His fretful brother is entrusted in his care. He is responsible for safeguarding his brother's nerves and reputation and to lead him to find peacefulness too. Consequently, he would not provoke his friend because he

himself is a lover of peace. He wants peace for others just as he wants it for himself. He does not let the Devil of False Glory attack him with a 'bogus peace', in which he would provoke his brother to become his angry and agitated adversary by maintaining a false, proud, superior calmness at his brother's expense. Satan would indeed be pleased to see him induce such an angry and exasperated state in his opponent.

The successful person does not gain spiritual satisfaction from seeing the downfall of another, but rather, as a result of his own calmness, spreads peace to all. He meets others calmly, whether they are for him or against him. If he finds that the other person is angry, he placates him with a gentle reply and not one likely to rouse his anger. (Prov. 15:1)

5. The peaceful person may be calm by nature by being born that way or, his calmness may have been acquired.

The naturally calm person does not make great efforts to arrive at a state of calmness, because he shuns all that is not peaceful.

As far as acquired calmness is concerned though, this requires effort and practice and is a subject which we will discuss later, God willing. Every effort that is made to reach a state of peace has its own reward.

A person who needs to strive to acquire calmness may attain such a state gradually. But having attained it, he no longer has to make such strenuous efforts because at this stage, he will have become firmly grounded, stable and experienced in the

life of peace. Thus he retains that which he has acquired by hard work and of course by the great assistance of God's grace.

Saint Moses the Black is a good example of someone who acquired calmness through training. He was not born like that, but in fact he started life as a cruel murderer. Then when he entered the monastic life, he began to discipline himself in calmness until he mastered it so well that when he was called for his ordination as a priest, and the Pope ordered him to be sent away in order to test him, Saint Moses left quietly, blaming himself without feeling upset inside. Then, when they allowed him to return, he went back quietly without hurting his dignity.

In view of this, it was not so strange that one of the saints saw him in a vision being fed on honeycomb by the angels.

If you are not calm by nature, do not make excuses saying:  
*"What can I do?! I was just born that way!!"*

Even if **you were** born that way, or inherited a lack of calmness from father or mother, that is no excuse. You can **change** what you inherited. Someone who has not obtained natural calmness can acquire calmness by training himself, and striving hard to gain it. The qualities which a person is born with are not as a fixed rule unable to be changed. They are so easily changed if the good intention exists, accompanied by a sincere determination, hard work and effort, then the Lord will give you a new heart, removing from you the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh as he promised. (Ezek.36:26)

## **Virtues Connected with Tranquillity**

**1. Tranquillity has a relationship with love, to which it gives and from which it takes.** The loving person is tranquil in his relationships with people. He does not react against them, because he loves them. As for hatred, if it enters the heart, it is like a raging volcano which never quietens, it wants vengeance and wants to demolish. It does not subside until it has achieved what it wants and has ruined everything else.

The world needs love and peace in order for its problems to be solved. They can be solved by reconciliation and peace with calmness. In the calmness of a discussion that is soaked with love, people can come together in order to solve their problems, however much their views differ. If calmness disappears, however, love disappears with it, since love cannot exist alongside confusion and disorder, sharp voices and discourteous behaviour.

You can love the peaceful person, his calmness attracts you. The features of his face alone make you love him. His calm manner of dealing with things makes you love him too. If you should get irritated with him for any reason, his tranquillity will overcome you and avert your irritation. Thus the Lord spoke well of the meek in heart, that they will inherit the earth by which is meant the earth here, and heaven. They will obtain people's love on earth because of their meekness and peacefulness, just as they will obtain the land of the living too. (Ps.27:13)

**2. Thus the virtue of calmness is also connected to peace:** the calm person is always peaceful and the peaceful person is also calm. The calm person, "He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets." (Matt. 12:19), as was said about the Lord Jesus. Thus he lives peacefully with people because he does not quarrel with anyone or raise his voice at them, and because he does not solve his problems with people by using force but calmness.

Peace may well be lost between one rude person and another, but it is not lost between a rude person and a calm one, because the calm one can withstand the rude.

It is rather like the saying that fire cannot be extinguished by fire, but by water. If the calm person by his calmness can pacify the rude, then it goes without saying that peace can exist between two calm people.

Calmness is one of the manifestations of inner peace, it is also a factor which contributes to it. Whoever maintains his calmness maintains his inner peace.

**3. The relationship between calmness and gentleness is self-evident,** since calmness is a branch of gentleness, or one of its outward signs, so that one could say that they are interchangeable. When you speak about the calm person, you are also speaking about gentleness. The person who loses his calm obviously loses his gentle temper. When we speak of the relationship between calmness and gentleness, we are just speaking about the relationship between the part and the whole.

**4. The relationship between calmness and depth:** the calm person, through his calmness, can reach the depths, if he has a gift for contemplation. But it is not necessarily the case that a calm person is deep.

It would be more correct for us to say that every deep person is calm. Here I marvel at an expression given by one of the spiritual men of letters, which I have probably repeated to you on more than one occasion, which is: "When God cast me as a pebble into the lake of life, I caused bubbles at its surface and circles rippling out to infinity. But when I reached the bottom, I became calm."

The waves are turbulent on the surface of the sea, just as the depths of the sea, or the bottom of the ocean are calm, so too is the person. When he is going through a unimportant period and living a superficial and shallow life, he wants to cause ripples on the surface of life with circles rippling outwards to infinity, but when he reaches a more mature age and can think more deeply, he becomes calm.

The shallow, superficial person is restless, he goes around trying to 'find' himself, or trying to fulfil himself, whichever way he can.

**5. At this point I would like to distinguish between depth and intelligence, in relation to calmness.**

Some intelligent people have an intelligence which is just intellectual ability. Their spirits and hearts are not on the same

level as their minds, so they do not reach the full depth that is meant here, by this I mean depth of thought, heart, mind and spirit. Not every intelligent person is deep. But the deep person is intelligent. The intelligent person who lacks depth may fall into errors that make him lose his calmness.

Therefore the intelligent person can comprehend that which another cannot and as a result regards this other person as his inferior, and piles blame and scorn upon him if he works with him or under his command, thus losing his calmness in his dealings with him. Sometimes, on account of his intelligence, he detects many other people's mistakes and so becomes angry with them or becomes annoyed within himself at their errors, and in this way loses his peace from both inside and outside.

Intelligence, by itself, has troubles of its own if it is not accompanied by meekness and humility.

If the mind is boisterous and thinks too highly of itself, it loses its calmness. And if the mind is pompous and proud, it loses its calmness and peace in its relationship with God and with people. Whoever has been given intelligence by God must pray that God will give him the meekness and humility of heart so that intelligence does not degenerate into arrogance and make him lose his peace.

**6. The relationship between calmness and the virtue of humility:** Saint Dorotheus said: "The humble person does not anger anyone, nor is he angered by anyone. " He does not make anyone angry because he asks for the blessing and prayers of

everyone. He is not angered by anyone because he always lays the blame for everything on himself. Whoever is in this situation lives in peace with all people. If he loses his humility, he loses his calmness. Likewise, the humble person does not lose his calmness because of running after desires, as he does not see himself as deserving of anything and he does not want to be raised above the situation which he is in already.

**7. The relationship between calmness, faith and surrender:** Whoever lives a life of faith, lives in peace, surrendering his whole life to God, accepting everything in faith from His loving hands, is not upset or annoyed by anything, , but rather is continually peaceful, saying with the Prophet David: *"Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear."* (Ps.27)

In faith he says, *"All is for the best"*. If a problem surrounds him he has faith that God will solve it, which is why his heart stays calm. If troubles exhaust him, he says, *"Their course will come to an end,"* and his heart once again becomes calm.

In contrast to this is the person who is remote from the life of faith and surrendering to God, whose thoughts tire him and who never becomes calm. If problems occur they completely exhaust him because he does not put before him the help that comes from above. Those who do not live a life of faith try to disturb other people's tranquillity by the harm and damage that they bring upon them.

**8. The connection between calmness and living with God:** How beautiful are the words of Saint Augustine in the book of his confessions, when he addresses the Lord with this beautiful, deep phrase: *"Our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you."* This is because the source of the heart's tranquillity is not the world, with its passions and desires, but God alone. No one who lives far from God can live in peace, his heart remains troubled as if stopped by the winds of his desires, until he comes to know God and experiences the sweetness of living with Him. Only then does he find calm and peace, like a traveller on a troubled sea who reaches the port of safety.

### **The Benefit of Calmness**

In calmness, a person can think in a balanced way. With calmness he can solve his problems, with no agitation or confusion of thoughts. In calmness he can deal with people and they accept his words. Generally speaking, the peaceful person is loved by others. How beautiful are the words of Saint Peter the Apostle: *"the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit"*. (1 Pet.3:4) Calmness, then, is something which beautifies the soul.

A life of calmness and quietness is a holy commandment to which the Bible calls us. Saint Paul the Apostle said: *"aspire to lead a quiet life"*. (1 Thess. 4:11). The Bible also says: *"Calmness can lay great errors to rest"*. (Eccl.10:4).

Even in practical matters of life, whatever is done calmly tends to produce better results.

The Communion bread which is baked over a gentle flame turns out perfectly, while that which they bake over a fierce flame gets burnt on the outside and is underdone on the inside. In the same way, any food that is cooked over a gentle flame turns out better and is more beneficial to the health. In farming there is the example of land which is irrigated gently.

In dealing with people, the calm way is more effective for the soul and brings the right result. In contrast to this, forceful methods bring bad reactions. We will talk about the benefits of calmness in more detail in the coming chapters.

### **The Disadvantages of Lacking Calmness**

The person who is not spiritually calm places the worries of the world on himself, thus causing him many problems. He loses his inner peace and experiences anxiety and mental frustration because of the troubles involved. He may also experience depression, sadness and confusion. As a result, he may become afflicted with numerous illnesses such as mental fatigue. Loss of peace causes nervous tension and this results in a person losing his peace of mind. Each is a cause and effect of the other. The person whose nerves are not calm does himself harm, physically, emotionally and socially.

He changes his personality and loses other people's respect for him. The teacher who is calm and firm is respected by his

pupils. The one who rants angrily with threats, reprimands and harsh words towards his pupils, loses their respect for him and is not taken seriously by them. Whenever they want to provoke him they can do so easily.

Likewise a mother who shouts loudly, scolds, yells, smacks and threatens her children, imagining that by doing this that she is bringing them up properly, instead makes her relationship with them a constant row and struggle.

The person who is not calm loses his composure with other people. He gets angry with them and they get angry with him. If he loses his calmness and clashes with them, how easy it is for them to react in the same way! He loses their friendship and love and he may also lose their respect. He may be confronted with their hostility and enter into bad relationships.

If he loses his calmness he may become noisy, unruly and start creating trouble. He may become rebellious and rude. By losing his peace, his internal confusion may also become apparent externally with his behaviour appearing unbalanced. Because he is not calm, the slightest word bothers him, the slightest action of another provokes him.

He may have a desire for revenge, to defend himself, to prove his existence, or to preserve his dignity, becoming agitated without achieving any result, and thus clashing with others. The calm person, even if provoked, replies calmly and wins the situation as a result of his calmness.

A person who is not calm loses in a conflict and mistakes are pinned on him. Perhaps he is the one who was originally wronged, but replying rudely or answering with the wrong reply results in the situation being reversed. He becomes the aggressor rather than the injured party!!

The calm person, however, even if the discussion gets overheated, can calm it down. As the Bible says: "*A soft answer turns away wrath.*" (Prov. 15:1) and also: "*The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools*" (Eccl. 9:17). The person who is not calm is prone to many errors, while the Bible says: "*Calmness can lay great errors to rest*" also: "*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,*" (Prov. 15:4).

We cannot calculate the damage and negative effects that result from handling things with violence, forcefulness or tension. A restless person might imagine that by expressing himself so forcefully, he is expressing his masculinity and strength of character!!

A forceful and aggressive approach does not in any way prove masculinity or strength of character. The calm person is always stronger because he is able to control his temper and words, stronger also because he has risen above the level of being easily provoked or incited, stronger because in his calmness he is able to control the situation and think of a way of solving the difficulty without getting upset. Thus the Apostle says: "*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak*". (Rom. 15:1).

What a deep stumbling block it is for children whose parents quarrel. The house loses its calmness and the father and mother are tense, perhaps they are abusive or fight each other. Each wants to prove that they are stronger, that they are right, that they can give as good an answer as the other. The result is that they lose their children's respect because of the stumbling block and bad example they represent. These parents also lose their good reputation with the neighbours, who may start to say "that is a house which has lost its peace"! Perhaps the following pages will clarify in greater detail the negative effects of losing one's calmness.

## **Examples of Calmness**

The most outstanding example is God Himself, blessed be His name. If only we could contemplate the tranquillity in which God created the world and the peace the Bible speaks about in the events of the Creation.

For example, the Bible says: *"And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness."* (Gen. 1:3). This wonderful event is conveyed by the simple phrase, *"and there was light"*.

The peace of God in the face of paganism and atheism is something quite marvellous. There are those who deny the existence of God or who worship stones and statues instead of Him, yet no rebellion is raised in heaven against them. God does not send down fire from heaven to burn them or destroy

them. People blaspheme against God, but He is calm. Yet these blasphemers remain alive to live and enjoy themselves, as if nothing has happened.

Indeed, men seek their revenge against God, but God does not seek to avenge Himself! God is leaving them all until the Day of Judgement, and for now, he still offers them opportunities to repent and return.

In fact, even more than this, the Bible says of God that He: *"He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."* (Matt. 5:45), which means that the wicked and the unjust enjoy his universal blessings too, just as if they had not broken his commandments!!

How great is God's calmness also in his dealings with Satan!! This evil being who opposes the Kingdom of God so violently and with such indifference, trying with all his craftiness to keep people away from God and to spread corruption on earth. Nevertheless, Satan still exists. Although it has always been within God's power to destroy him and wipe him out, God has not done that. He confronts all Satan's disobedience calmly and has left him on the principle of giving him his equal opportunity to test the believers until he obtains his punishment on the Last Day.

Sometimes the Devil goes too far and God calmly stops him when he has reached the limit. He often removes Satan's evil and trials far away from us, so calmly that we are not even aware of it.

Look at the stillness in which the miracle of the Incarnation was performed. The Lord came to our world very quietly, not in a procession of Cherubim or in the midst of psalms and hymns from the angels, but in such quiet circumstances that Herod did not realise it or know where he was to be found! Many people on entering a place are preceded by their noisy fuss, they raise their voices to indicate their arrival or call to others from here and there.

Further, look at how quietly God performs miracles. Miracles often happen in secret without anyone seeing and without God announcing them, and people only learned of it later. So many miracles have taken place which have not been written about in the Bible, *"if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."* (John 21:25).

As an example of this there are the miracles which happened during the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt, which were performed quietly and not recorded in the Gospels. We only know of a few of them that history has recorded.

Look also at heaven with its serenity, filled with the angels and the saints. They are a wonderful example of calmness. All the angels who are there carry out God's commands with amazing swiftness and quietness. They have put before them the phrase, *"Thy will be done"*. The angels also work on earth with us and around us, in such wonderful calmness that we may be unaware of them and their actions. Even so, *"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"* (Heb. 1:14). In the same quiet way the

saints work with us. They have learned serenity from the Lord Jesus.

Reflect also upon the tranquillity of the Lord Jesus when he lived as a man on earth, the calm replies he gave to his adversaries among the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, high priests and elders of the people, and the remarkable calmness with which he faced their challenges, insults and false accusations. Look at how he replied to them objectively and persuasively without rising at their hurtful words, when they said to him, "*Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?*" Or when they said of Him that He was, "*a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*" (Matt. 11:19).

What is more amazing still is the Lord's calmness during his arrest. He waited calmly for that hour, and faced it calmly: both inwardly and outwardly. He stood saying calmly to them, ""Whom are you seeking?" And when they replied, "*Jesus of Nazareth*", He said, "*I am He*". On account of his extreme composure the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground. (John 18:5-8)

Calmly he received the kiss of Judas the Traitor without hurting his feelings in return. In fact He said to him, "*Friend, why have you come?*" (Matt. 26:50).

All of Christ's behaviour at that critical hour was extremely calm. He was concerned for the safety of his disciples and said to the soldiers, "If you seek Me, let these go their way". (John 18:8). When Peter the Apostle wanted to use force and drew

his sword and struck the servant of the high priest cutting off his ear, the Lord charged him to preserve the peace saying, *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."* (Matt. 26:52).

During His trial He was very calm *"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth."* (Is. 53:7). In the council of the Sanhedrin they confronted him with accusations, *"But He kept silent and answered nothing."* (Mark 14:61). Before him were false witnesses whose testimonies did not agree. Before Pilate, He was also very calm. He stood silent and when He spoke His answers baffled the governor so that he said: *"what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him."* (Luke 23:22).

When Jesus was buried, he rose from the dead in such a remarkable, quiet way, at an hour of which no one knew, without any noise, without any announcement before the people and without any outward show of greatness and power, that the Jews even doubted his resurrection. Thus they spread rumours that his disciples had come by night and stole his body (Matt. 28:13-15). What a wonderful thing?! We do not have the time here, nor are we able to speak about all that took place so quietly.

From the example of the Lord comes the calmness of the martyrs during their martyrdom; remarkable calmness during their arrests, during their trials and torture, in their periods of imprisonment and at the hour of death. In fact, they used to sing hymns and psalms in praise of God while in the depths of prisons, just as Paul and Silas did when they were in the inner

dungeon with their feet bound (Acts 16:24-25).

How did they face death in such total calmness and total joy? Their stories which are long and have many aspects, give a shining picture of tranquil spirits whose peacefulness was derived from a deep faith in a better life after death, or perhaps from visions and revelations which provided assurance to the soul on its eternal course.

The stories of the tranquillity of the saints during their lives are long and wonderful, but perhaps we can just present a few examples of them here.

There was the peacefulness in which our fathers lived in the desert, the wonderful tranquillity of nature, the stillness of the soul within that they showed and the serenity of its thoughts and contemplations. There is also the calmness with which they faced the attacks of the Devils, without fear or distress. Also the calm in which they conducted their lives, so that it was said of them that they were 'earthly angels or heavenly humans'. This was due to the excellence of the gentle way of life by which they were characterised and the calmness of nature which they showed by not rebelling or getting angry however much external factors pressed upon them and however much they were exposed to insults and false accusations.

How wonderful was the tranquillity of Saint Marina for example, when she was accused of adultery - as a man - and of having fathered a son from a young girl like herself! And how she spent a period of repentance for a sin she did not commit, all without the least complaint or grumble!

Then there is the example of the saint whom they called AI-Habila (ie foolish), in the days of the Saint Anba Daniel. How she endured continuous insults with total serenity and joy as though they were crowns upon her head.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Types of Calmness**

1. Calmness of Temperament
2. Calmness of the Nerves
3. Stillness of the Tongue
4. Inner Tranquillity-Calmness of the Heart and Thoughts
5. Serenity of the Features
6. Stillness of the Body and the Senses

Calmness is composed of various elements: calmness of temperament, tranquillity of the nerves and stillness of the body, which includes the serenity of the senses, movements and features. There is also inner calmness, the peacefulness of the soul, which is made up of the tranquillity of the heart and thoughts. From this also comes calmness of speech and behaviour.

The person who is really calm, is calm in every way. His behaviour is calm, his dealings with people are calm. He lives with an inner peace which radiates as peace on the outside. Whatever peace there is inside him overflows as peace outside him. If he speaks he speaks calmly, even if he is being firm and correcting another, he does so calmly.

He does not lose his calmness whatever the reason might be, whatever the provocation from outside, because he is accustomed to being calm, and calmness has become part of his character.

## **Calmness of Temperament**

Some people may be born calm by nature or temperament, or might have inherited calmness from their parents, while others have trained themselves to be calm by practising it and making it a habit so it became their nature.

Others, however, are the opposite, they have no calmness in their character, their nature is fiery. Wherever one of them stays, tension accompanies him and the temperature rises. His unrest precedes him. He is tantamount to a burning flame which wherever it is cast, ignites and burns and explodes in sparks. His glances are full of fire, his words are bombshells, his requests are orders and threats that have to be carried out immediately.

When someone with a fiery character finds a quiet-natured person, he tries to provoke him, but if the calm person encounters a fiery one he tries to pacify him.

What is your character like? Is it a fiery one or a peaceful one? If the former is the case, and you have a fiery nature, do not despair and do not give up and submit to it as if it were something unchangeable even if you were born with it. Characters can be changed and when trained can become their opposite.

Saint Moses the Black at the start of his life had a harsh frightening, murderous nature, but he was transformed into a gentle, calm person who loved people and was loved by them, a welcoming person, smiling and meek.

Saint John the Beloved did not begin his life that way, for both he and his brother James were nicknamed Boanerges, meaning Sons of Thunder. (Mark 3:17). When one of the Samaritan villages refused to accept the Lord, James and John asked him if they could, *"call fire down from heaven to destroy them"*. (Luke 9:54). But with time and through the actions of the Holy

Spirit, this fiery nature calmed down and John was turned into John the Beloved who spoke of love.

When it comes to calmness, what a difference there is between the nature of the roots and the nature of the boughs and branches. The branches, by their very nature, bow and bend with the winds to left and right according to the wind's direction, and may cause a soft or loud sound as they bend. But the roots extend into the ground quietly without a sound, drawing in their nourishment and feeding the restless branches too.

Let us now move from calmness of character to another point which is:

### **Calmness of The Nerves**

There are individuals whose temper is calm, and others whose temper is inflamed. The person with a calm temper does not get upset quickly and perhaps even slowly. It is as if he is an unshakeable mountain, or like the six great stones which are exposed to the Nubian Nile which, however much the waves surge against them, remain calmly fixed in their place, unaffected by the disturbance around them.

But the person whose nerves are raw is easily agitated, he rants and raves perhaps for the most trivial of reasons, or for no reason at all, just because of his inner doubts and imaginings.

The person whose temper is calm is a strong person because external factors cannot provoke him but rather his strong nerves are able to resist them. And because of this inner strength, he gains people's respect and admiration.

As for the one who is agitated and shouting, however much he rages and creates a fuss, abuses and threatens, and seems to frighten others, he does not gain anyone's respect. His agitation indicates the weakness of his temper, or the weakness of his character.

If anyone wishes to make a spectacle or an object of ridicule of this weak person, he can. For example, if there is a teacher whose nerves are weak, he is unable to bear a mistake or outburst from a student, so that any pupil could say to his classmate, "Do you want to see me make this teacher get all worked up? " He isn't dreaded to the pupils at all. He just looks ridiculous. So then he behaves in a way that he knows will provoke the teacher and then sits back to watch!

Calm nerves depend on two things: the physical state and the psychological. There are many physiological reasons for the nerves to become exhausted but we will not go into them all now. We will turn our attention here to a physical cause which often drains people's nerves, even the best of people, and that is tiredness. If the body is exhausted because of tiredness and strain, then the nerves get to the point of being unable to bear anything.

My advice to you if you find yourself in such a situation is, not to enter into a long conversation or lengthy discussion with

anyone, especially with those who hold rigid views, and who are not easily persuaded. It is not right, in such a state of exhaustion, to try and decide important matters or solve problems. Take care not to get into arguments when you are exhausted, for you may lose your temper.

The state of exhaustion requires sleep, or at least rest and relaxation. Your loved ones must take note of your state of tiredness and not draw you into a discussion or try to solve problems while you are in such a state.

One of the ways to aid calmness of the nerves is the spirit of joy and cheerfulness. Cheerfulness produces in the body a state of relaxation which soothes the nerves. All those who are characterised by a cheerful spirit have tranquil nerves and do not get agitated easily. They may meet provocation with a sense of humour that makes those who are trying to provoke them laugh too, so that the matter subsides. Those who are narrow minded and straitlaced, who imagine that laughter is a sin, you will often find that their nerves are tense. The strict severity with which they meet people's behaviour often makes the atmosphere lose its tranquillity and the situation become aggravated. I hope to return to this point, God willing, when we speak about the factors which contribute to calmness. But let us continue on straightaway to talk about the harm which results from nerves that lack tranquillity.

The person whose nerves are easily agitated harms himself as a result, and also harms others. He harms himself with mental illnesses, heart disease and high blood pressure and also various psychological illnesses which result from his over

reacting and angry outbursts. He may be forced to take tranquillisers, and sleeping pills to try to calm his nerves for a while, then the stress returns once again through psychological motives from within and external provocation, and he again resorts to tranquillisers! His nerves become like elastic, which through constant stretching and slackening loses its elasticity and is ruined.

Such a person enters the whirlpool of problems caused by nervous illnesses. Although medicine tries to treat the symptoms, the more important thing is to treat the reasons behind the nervous problems, and at the outset try to convince the person of the need to be calm. Calm souls do not suffer from nervous illness and have no need for tranquillisers because they are peaceful by nature.

The person who can control and calm his nerves can also control his words and not make mistakes. Likewise he can control his behaviour and be in command of himself, thus winning rather than losing in situations in which he is involved.

All these things require a healthy spiritual attitude and an inner conviction in the individual that he can preserve his character, his rights and his dignity by being calm. He must realise that nervous outbursts are a clear mistake. This is an obvious weakness before other people which loudly proclaims that the individual concerned is unable to solve his problems using reason and logic in a calm way and thus resorts to nervous outbursts. The person whose nerves flare up is giving an indication that evil has got the better of him and he has been unable to resist it, which is why he flared up; while the Apostle

says: *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Rom.12:21).

Someone who has irritable nerves is a person who has no resistance and who has collapsed inside, while someone who has calm nerves is a resilient and fully composed person.

## **Stillness of The Tongue**

Someone with a peaceful manner of speaking is loved by all, but a restless tongue makes its owner make many errors. There are various outward signs of a restless tongue which we may mention:

**1. The talkative tongue**, which never stops talking, while the Bible says: *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking,"* (Prov. 10:19). It is a tongue which talks continuously on any subject, even on things that are beyond its scope and knowledge. It cannot keep quiet. It cannot control itself to within its lips and teeth. It has to go out and talk, and just cannot stop at all, even on the finer points of science and politics! The main thing is that it talks and that is enough, even about other people's affairs, their secrets and personal matters. It is a restless tongue. And due to its restlessness, its owner cannot control it or subdue it. The Apostle James says: *"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless."* (James 1:26). Therefore every person needs to curb his tongue and not leave it free to wander restlessly from one subject to another, without restraint. If he is unable to do this,

then let him pray and say: *"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips."* (Ps. 141:3).

**2. From a restless tongue comes a sharp, raised, loud voice.** The Bible gives us an example of calm speech in the conversation between God and the Prophet Elijah: *"and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, ... and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. .. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"* (1 Kin. 19:11:13) , and this was God's voice speaking to him.

The calm person speaks in a quiet voice like a passing breeze, but the restless person speaks with a voice like a gusty wind.

There are preachers who, even in a sermon, preach with a high, sharp voice and reprove the congregation harshly. What was said about the public speakers of old applies to them, that they 'shook the columns of the pulpits' and had their listeners sitting on the edge of their seats. Such methods of preaching tends to upset the people instead of having spiritual effects.

The spiritual preacher convinces the congregation through calm spiritual teaching and through the action of the Spirit in him and in them, kindling them with God's love through the effectiveness of the Spirit, and not the agitation of the bodily senses. Many people are affected during the sermon by a preacher who himself is over-excited. But after a while they

lose this effect. On the other hand, calm spiritual persuasion has a more permanent and has a greater effect within the soul.

Although a loud voice has to be used sometimes in the middle of a crowd of people so that they can hear, there is no need at all to use it in private conversations! The calm person does not raise his voice when he is talking with others. He does not use a voice that is louder than his listener requires. Thus in his discussions there is no noisiness. Is it not sometimes the case that when some people are holding a discussion, they raise their voices and interrupt, so that those who hear think that they are quarrelling?! Yes, to be sure, there are some people who shout when they talk and shriek when they whisper. They talk rapidly and their voices are noisy.

**3. Among the outward signs of a voice that lacks calmness there is also the tendency to use hurtful, harsh words.** There may be a person, for example, whose speech is harsh and difficult, whose words are bitter, hurtful, critical, biting, and destructive. Whose words are expelled from his mouth as if they were a shell from a rocket. He could express the same opinion and intention with calm words.

**4. One of the aspects of calmness of the tongue is calmness in conversation.** The calm person discusses quietly and in this way wins others over. Just as Saint Didimus the Blind used to do when he debated with philosophers and heathens with the utmost politeness, without attacking them. His method was to win them, not crush or embarrass them.

The restless speaker turns the conversation into a fight or a quarrel in which the discussion gets heated and the atmosphere tense and extremely electric.

You find a readiness to pounce and attack in his manner, and a strong tendency to reply before he has heard the opinion in full. He converses with you not to understand you or to arrive at the truth with you, but in order to dumbfound you by his own arguments and to defeat you and shatter your opinions and expose your weakness. During the conversation he feels that he has to ridicule you and your views and make you a laughing stock, as if you are an enemy and he wants to get his revenge.

On the other hand, the person who discusses calmly, wins you over as a friend during the conversation. He talks objectively, with complete calmness, not interrupting during your speaking or being too personal, and if you become too excited he calms you down.

He may persuade you so that you come to agree on his opinion without you feeling that you have gone away defeated. His calmness does not in any way make you feel that you are adversaries, but rather that you are two friends trying to arrive at the truth together. In contrast to this is the highly-strung speaker whose eyes redden during the discussion, whose voice is raised and who gets exasperated raising objections irritably and rudely. He may even use words which imply an insult.

People who are not calm are always interrupting each other when they are discussing. There may be five in the discussion, four talking at once with just one listening to the noise. None

of them are prepared to listen any of the others. They all interrupt each other, whereas if there were a hundred calm people having a discussion it would be done in strict order, you would not hear an outside voice.

Though many ideas wrestle with each other, there is only one truth. Yet each person thinks that the truth is his personal view. If there is calmness you can come together with people, however different their views, in a conversation that is filled with love.

**5. What we have been saying about discussion we can also say about reproof.** The quiet reproach leads to peace, while the loud one only exacerbates the division and contention. We have a beautiful example of the Lord Jesus rebuking Peter after the Resurrection. He did not say to him, "Come here, you traitor, you who were afraid of a servant girl, you who swore and cursed and said, 'I don't know the man'. Is this what you promised me before when you said, *"If everyone denies you, I will not deny you'?"*

The Lord Jesus did not say a single hurtful word to him, he just asked him quietly, *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"* He said to Him, *"Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."* He said to him, *'Feed My sheep.'* He said to him again a second time, *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" ... 'Feed My lambs.' ... 'Tend My sheep.'"* (John 21:15-17). And he repeated the question three times, until Peter understood. The rebuke had its effect and love was established, without Peter's heart being wounded.

**6. It is not only desirable that the tongue should be calm, but even more so that it should be calming.** As an example of calming speech we have the words of the Bible: "*A soft answer turns away wrath*". (Prov. 15: 1)

Another example is the comforting father confessor, who soothes the soul of the one confessing and gives him peace of the heart, releasing him from his heart's unrest that has occurred on account of his sins. In contrast to that is the father confessor who sends the penitent away feeling that he has lost his peace, overcome by despair and feeling that he must inevitably be doomed.

The calm person's serenity overflows onto others, and soothes them if they are distressed. But the restless person infects them with his turmoil and unsettles them if they are calm.

### **Inner Tranquillity**

It is not enough that the person be calm just on the outside, in his speech and nerves, but he must also be calm on the inside. His spirit must be tranquil. Serenity on the outside springs from calmness of the soul on the inside. As for the soul which is boiling from within, wherever it settles comes tension and a rise in temperature. It lives like a flame which burns and spreads its fire here and there wherever it is thrown. It reaches the point that when some people see this type of person entering a place they whisper to each other, "Oh Lord help us".

But with the person who is calm from within, we can see his inner calm overflowing as tranquillity on the outside. You find his voice calm, his walking graceful, his behaviour and his discussions calm and restful. Due to his calmness he does not shout or quarrel rather his relations are good with all people, as he does not resort to arguing or rudeness with anyone. And that is just on the outside.

As far as the inside is concerned, he enjoys calm thoughts and a peaceful heart. You find that the many thoughts of the person who is restless inside are surging and confused, coming and going, not settled at all. One idea pulls him one way, another pulls him the other way. His mind is always changing and his thoughts affect him because he is unstable.

The restless person also suffers from a lack of calmness in his feelings. His emotions and feelings are restless, his desires and hopes inconstant. Imagination sometimes pulls him to heights which he can never reach, but practical thoughts bring him down to his reality which is remote from his hopes. He remains confused between desire and reality, and his emotions disturb him. He may be prone to a number of psychological disorders. There are various examples of this which we can mention such as the person who loses his peace of mind by living in anxiety. Anxiety points to a lack of peace in the soul. Anxiety gives rise to fear and the anxious person's thoughts are not calm, or stable.

Anxiety may invite doubt and doubt does not make the soul tranquil. A person who doubts can never be calm at all from within. He continuously asks himself whether he is right in his

misgivings, or whether it is possible that his suspicions are untrue and wonders how he can prove the truth in these doubts and confirm them. His thoughts continue to lack calm and may exhaust him and torture him psychologically. This exhaustion increases his lack of tranquillity, and this doubt can also exhaust the person in his relationships with others.

There are various types of doubt, all of which cause loss of peace, whether it is doubt about facts or individuals, doubt about relationships, doubt about faith or even God Himself. Sometimes the person's doubt is over his future and what he anticipates in it. But in every case the mind is troubled and the soul disturbed.

Whatever the situation, a peaceful heart brings peaceful thoughts. If someone's heart is relaxed and tranquil, his thoughts will be relaxed and tranquil too, and if his heart becomes troubled so do his thoughts. The condition of the thoughts depends on the heart. If there are storms and volcanoes in the heart, you find that the thoughts are jostled about as if they were goods in a market being bought and sold. If, however, the heart is tranquil, the thoughts will be peaceful too.

There are individuals whose dispositions are so weak that they become upset for the most trivial of reasons, perhaps just because of an illusion, and for no real reason. In such confusion their heart loses its calmness, their thoughts lose their tranquillity, their inner peace is lost and their behaviour appears restless.

One of the signs of restlessness of thought is a state of wandering, changeable thoughts. Calm thought is focused on the subject of its consideration, it has a depth of reflection. But thought that is not peaceful goes round and round from one subject to another, and strays to numerous issues, for example someone whose thoughts wander during prayer. As one of the Fathers put it, "If the food of the fire is fuel, the food of the mind are its little stories."

Inconstant restless thought is always eager for stories and moves from one report to another, from one tale to another, from one person to another and even from one city to another without calming down, even during prayer. It reminds us of Satan whose work is: *"going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."* (Job 1:7).

Another sign of a lack of calmness of thought is a critical attitude. A person with this type of thought is displeased with everything and everybody and is continually rebelling against circumstances in which he considers that the truth has been lost. Thus he criticises all that comes before him. Even if it has nothing to do with him and even if he has not studied the subject or understood it, he still gets annoyed at everything, grumbles at everything and criticises everything, thus losing his tranquillity.

When thought has lost its calmness it acts to spread a lack of calmness in the minds of others. It spreads its restless, anxious thoughts by pouring them into other people's ears, getting all worked up over them and striving to persuade people by them. A person with such thoughts may be successful or he may not.

Even if he is not successful in spreading his restless views, he disturbs any calmness because of his unsettling discussions.

Another type of restless thought is persistent thoughts, in which an idea forces itself on the person's mind, putting pressure on him in a troubling way. The individual tries to escape from it but cannot, and through this pressure his calmness is lost. This is especially so if those thoughts are with him whether he is awake or asleep, and urge themselves upon him even during his work, prayer, and during his rest, without letting go, and without relaxation.

Persistent thoughts are often a war from Satan, because spiritual thoughts are always tranquil. As for Satan, though, he imposes his ideas unmercifully, and drives the person to act hastily. With his insistence he bears down heavily on your nerves and exhausts them so that you believe that the easiest way to find rest from his urging is to act upon them straight-away. Persistent thoughts are thoughts that cause trouble, they do not want to give the person a chance to seek advice, a chance to pray or a chance to examine the ideas and discuss them! It is just as though they want to strongly force the person!

Among the different types of restless thought are changeable kinds of thoughts, adopting one thought and then its opposite, sometimes agreeing with the issue, sometimes opposing it, sometimes being over enthusiastic about the subject and at other times losing interest, like waves of the sea coming and going without rest. This is undetermined, indecisive thought that causes its owner lack of peace and balance. Tranquil

thought, on the other hand, is like the ship which travels its course calmly in one direction without confusion, without diversion to the left or right.

Restless thoughts make the heart lose its calmness. Likewise a restless heart upsets the thoughts. Sometimes the heart is restless with the emotions, feelings and sensations inside it such as sadness, passion, lust, tiredness, anger, resentment and envy, the desire for revenge and the desire to possess or dominate.

Someone whose heart contains such feelings as these cannot be peaceful, nor can his thoughts. But what makes the heart lose its calmness most of all are desires which demand to be fulfilled quickly while in realistic terms there is not the opportunity available for such swift action, and therefore the heart loses its calmness. The tranquil heart regards everything calmly, it does not get upset at anything. The restless heart, however, sees everything as a cause of trouble which is why it becomes disturbed and provokes confusion wherever it settles!!

The tranquil heart is not upset by external problems. It accepts them calmly, deals with them with reason, analyses them, examines them and solves them quietly. It does not allow outer confusion to enter inside the soul to disturb its serenity!

Someone who has a tranquil heart does not let the problem overcome him, but rather he overcomes it. He says to himself: "I do not want this problem to bother me, or to make me angry, anxious or sad, or to make me lose my peace of mind. I want this problem to remain outside and not enter inside my soul".

The tranquil heart is a deep sea. Troubles may float on its surface and not disturb its calmness, and if they descend to its depths, they dissolve and disappear.

If the person is upset inside and loses his calmness, he is incapable of solving his problems, they bother him and he shows a lack of calmness in his behaviour and in his dealings with people and situations.

The tranquil heart is suitable for spiritual activity. But if someone's heart loses its peace, he is unable to reflect. If he tries to pray his thoughts are distracted. If he reads a book his mind wanders during reading. For this reason our Fathers used to search for peace and quiet, since only in a calm atmosphere and a quiet place can they practise their spiritual life.

The tranquil heart spreads its tranquillity over the whole person: calmness of the heart results in calmness of the thoughts, calmness of the nerves and calmness of the features. We have previously spoken of calmness of the nerves and thoughts and now turn our attention to calmness of the features.

### ***Serenity of the Features***

Few people can control their facial features. Most often the features reveal the state of the heart, whether the person likes it or not. If his heart is troubled, his confusion shows in his features. If he is angry, annoyed, disgusted or afraid, all these states appear on the features of his face or in the look of his eyes, even if he is distracted daydreaming, his features reveal it.

A person's features are an involuntary admission of what is inside him! He may deny that he is troubled, but his features show that he is not telling the truth with his denial. Sometimes the person loses his composure, and if people ask him for a reason he denies it. But the tone of his voice, the movements of his hands, the look in his eyes, perhaps the movements of his lips and the colour of his face all speak of what is inside him, in a way that leaves no doubt.

Do not imagine that the heart is a locked treasure house which conceals its secrets! It is often revealed and openly expressed by way of the features. A person's eye is in most cases a mirror in which his inner feelings can be seen and in which his thoughts can probably be read also. Any observant person can see it, which is why some people wear dark glasses so that those with whom they are sitting cannot see the impressions or feelings in their eyes.

The person with a tranquil heart has relaxed, serene features. You like to sit with him and regard his face, contemplating the wonderful calmness which overflows from his heart and covers his features. Thus it is hardly surprising that one of the monks said to Saint Anba Antonious: "It's enough for me simply to look at your face, Father", for in the saint's face he could see the inner peace which filled his heart and saw all the purity and godliness there.

But the person with a restless heart has tense features. There are people whose features are unrelaxed when they are in a state of anger or emotion, and also when they are in a state of sadness or depression, since they are lacking their inner peace

and calmness. All this appears in their facial features. Their condition might reach the point that their features become too distressing for you to look at them for long. Because their expression is tense, they do not contribute to the calmness of those who look at them.

It is therefore necessary to have control over the features and calm them down. It is best for the person to calm his heart and then his features will automatically become calm.

### **Stillness of The Body And The Senses**

There are people whose bodies are restless, who cannot settle in one place. They want to come and go, to get up and sit down, to go out and come in. Even at home they do not settle for very long, there have to do visits and outings and recreation for the body and moving from place to place. These people have changeable, restless bodies. This is the opposite of the monks who discipline themselves to stillness of the body. The hermit monk can stay in his cell for days or weeks, without leaving it or moving unless it is essential, and if he moves, it is for something worthwhile.

There is a great difference between these people who have bodily stillness and those who move without a reason. Even if a restless person sits alone in a place, you find his body moving continuously. If he speaks with anyone you find his hands moving and his feet and his head also. He may point with his hand or raise his finger as he talks, or continually wave his hands about. If there are two people having a discussion you

might look at their hands and find them moving all the time. This is quite the opposite to being in the army, where the soldier has to keep still when he talks, and if he moves his hand they say to him, "Keep still!".

Sometimes a little movement is necessary to express an inner feeling, but it should not be continuous, restless movement.

Many people's movements suggest a lack of calmness! If such a person comes in or goes out, he causes a noise and racket simply opening and closing the door. If he walks, he walks noisily. If he drinks, you can hear a noise while he sips. Even if he wants to dissolve some sugar in a cup of tea, you would think he was ringing a bell. There is no stillness in his movements at all, whereas the calm person stays quietly in his place and he doesn't make a sound.

In a calm country you find that even the protest demonstrations themselves are calm! Demonstrations, according to our dictionary, however, mean noise and uproar, here and there: a great throng of demonstrators shouting and chanting slogans, waving their arms and upsetting everything and everybody as if it is a kind of revolution. But in a calm country the demonstrators go out and express their views with banners bearing their demands and their ideas and they move from one street to another carrying their ideas quietly.

Calmness of the senses accompanies calmness of the body. Calmness of the senses helps their owner to think calmly. The alternating senses of seeing, hearing and smell produce thoughts and thoughts have an effect on feelings of the heart.

Thus a person might be sitting in a meeting but his eyes are darting here and there looking to see what this one or that one is doing.

It is so easy for a person to be influenced by what he sees and hears. In fact even sitting at the table his eyes might be going around to see what everyone else is eating, and how he eats, and a whole chain of thoughts follow from this. This is why the desert Fathers said: *"If you enter a brother's cell, don't look at what is inside it. And if you sit at a table let your eyes look only at what is in front of you"*.

Inquisitiveness of the senses concerning the secrets of others is called adultery of the senses. If the ear tries to hear what it has no right to hear, the Desert Fathers would call it adultery of the ears, and the same goes for spying, which would suggest that the ear is not calm. Also the eye which tries to see that which it has no right to see, is a restless sense and its business has become like that of Satan: *"going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."* (Job 2:2).

Changeable, restless senses are at the root of nervous agitation. This is especially true of the ear which goes around in search of exciting news and the eye which looks for an interesting sight and the mouth which is often asking, "What's the news?". By doing so the senses bring to the individual's heart, ears and thoughts something that wears him out and makes him lose his peace of mind.

The strange thing is that the senses may not calm down even during prayer! The eye goes round looking here and there and

breaks its connection with God, also the ear may be sensitive to what it can hear during prayer, which distracts the thoughts. This is all because the senses are restless and come from a body that is restless and thoughts that are restless also. However, the senses may not be the body's only problem. The body's restlessness may come because of its lusts.

The unrest of the body may come because of a physical desire for food or the lust of the flesh, so that it loses its calmness and roams from place to place searching for satisfaction of its desires. In their writings the Fathers call these kinds of lusts, pains or aches of the flesh; for the body suffers and is restless because of sin. The body's restlessness may also be due to health reasons.

### **Calm Behaviour And Problem Solving**

The calm person solves his problems calmly. In the most difficult situations he does not lose his calmness, rather he behaves rationally and in a well-balanced way. His behaviour is thus mentally healthy and acceptable and does not cause violent reactions.

Even when he protests or raises objections he does so calmly, in an objective and convincing way, governed by logic not nervous tension. In this way he is successful in gaining an advantage in the situation and not clashing with his opponents.

On the other hand, another person, if he protests, does so noisily, making a fuss with a loud voice, accusing the other

side with harsh accusations, and dealing with people and their wishes and intentions very rudely! Look how easy it is for him to make a mistake in all this and disadvantage his position!

The peaceful person, even if he resigns from his job, does so calmly. When he finds himself unable to cooperate with his colleagues, he withdraws quietly without causing them any trouble and without disturbing the atmosphere around them. But if the restless person resigns he wants to disrupt the whole world because of his resignation. And if it does not cause an outcry, he gets angry and says: "How can I resign and everything remains the same? Why hasn't so-and-so or so-and-so become angry in support of me? And why haven't the others acted like me?!"

Through his conduct, the calm person is an example to others. They learn peacefulness and good behaviour from him, and gain experience in how to deal with problems and annoying people. They remember the words of the Apostle: *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."* (James 3:13-16).

Saint Paul says in dealing with the mistakes of others, *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness"*. (Gal. 6: 1).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Causes of Restlessness**

#### **Causes from Within:**

- The Fiery Temperament - The Depressive
- The Way of Thinking
- Exhausted Nerves
- Psychological Disorders

#### **External Causes:**

- Causes Connected with the Body
- Causes Connected with the Mind
- Causes Connected with the Soul

There are many reasons for a person to lose his calmness: some come from within the soul and others are external.

## **Causes From Within**

These include the person's temperament, whether he is of a fiery or subdued nature, or particularly sensitive. It might also be his way of thinking, which might work against him, or his nerves, which might be exhausted. In addition to this, there are other causes such as psychological disorders and struggles like fear, confusion, depression, lust and anger. Yet another reason for restlessness is a liking of causing noisy disturbances.

## **Temperament**

A person's temperament has its first effect on his calmness or lack of calmness. There are people who have a peaceful nature and others who are excitable, and others in between the two. The calm nature does not get overexcited. If it finds something over-excited it calms it down. But the excitable nature gets worked up for no reason! This excitable temperament they call a 'fiery' nature. It does not like peacefulness at all, and cannot live with it. If it finds a calm atmosphere it soon sets it ablaze, stirs it up and provokes it. You will never find someone who has this temperament calm. His restlessness does not have an external cause, it arises from his natural disposition. He is always irritable, highly strung, tense and excitable.

One's nature may be continually pessimistic. This person may look dejectedly at everything and expect the worst on every occasion. He is suspicious of the intentions of all those around him, he has misgivings about what they are up to and is afraid of what they are doing. He may end up in a state that they call a 'persecution complex', and thus he loses his calmness because of his pessimism and negative expectations.

A person with such a nature imagines that his pessimism has various causes. He loses his peace of mind if the date is the 13th or any multiple of it, whether it is the Arabic or Christian calendar, and he keeps on saying, "*Oh God, help me*". This also happens when he has to repeat this number, for an address, or identity card, or seat number or bus or telephone number, or when his age reaches any multiple of it. He also becomes restless if he hears the hoot of an owl or if he meets someone whom he thinks it is bad fortune to meet!! Or if he meets a person whose name is connected with some incident which caused him distress. Likewise, he loses his calmness if he anticipates bad luck from reading what it says in the 'Your Stars' column in the newspapers or magazines.

You try to calm him down but your effort goes in vain! These things which are deeply rooted in his nature cause him continuous anxiety and disturb his peace of mind. They cannot be outweighed by any thought or persuasion.

A person may lose his calmness because of being too sensitive. The person who is, for example, very sensitive about his dignity or his rights might see the slightest word or action from others as an infringement of his rights or a slight to his dignity.

You see him getting disturbed from within. His nerves are affected and he may get angry. As a result of all this he loses his inner peace and may behave towards people in a disruptive way.

## **Way of Thinking**

There is a type of person who thinks in a calm way, while another thinks in a confused or angry way, which will never lead him to a solution, but only causes him to lose his inner peace. Here the question of thinking positively or thinking negatively comes into it. The one who thinks positively about everything that happens and all that he hears about thinks calmly within, and makes everything pass peacefully. But the one whose thoughts concentrate on the negative aspects of things, loses his calmness, his thoughts grow restless and he shifts restlessly from one idea to another.

Besides negative thinking, a person's thoughts may be troubled by doubts or because the conclusions which he has arrived at are wearing him out. What a lot of wrong conclusions can spring from an anxious disposition; and there may not be a shadow of truth in any of them. You might even say in surprise to someone who is like that, "Why do you think in this way?! Why do you interpret words in this way?"

It is because of a person's state that his thoughts work against him. It is his way of thinking which wears him out. He needs another person to correct his train of thought for him so that he can think in a calm way that soothes him.

One of the troublesome ways of thinking is that of exaggerating problems, by attaching too much significance to the troubles that come along, supposing them to have unfavourable and dangerous results and by having a fertile imagination for surmising possible dangers. A person who exaggerates thus lives in fear and loses his calmness.

## **Exhausted Nerves**

Tranquil nerves make the person think calmly and peacefully. But nervous exhaustion leads to loss of tranquillity, intolerance and a susceptibility to anger and nervousness. This exhaustion may arise from physical tiredness or from illness or psychological reasons, or from too much thinking or reading over a long period without rest. It is therefore best not to enter into heated discussions when in these types of situations and to not think of solving problems with exhausted nerves. Those in positions of leadership, for example, ought not to decide the fates of others when in this condition.

If you find someone exhausted do not argue with him, because he may not be able to bear the discussion and may get angry, and also do not insist on him responding to a specific request, because he may not be able to bear to be pressed, and may thus refuse simply because he does not have the strength to think of an answer. He may then use harsh words in a desire to end the conversation.

If a husband returns tired from work, for example, it is not in the wife's interest to present him with subjects which require

thought, while he is in need of rest. If she confronts him at that time he may react angrily towards her. If he does, she might wrongly think that he is in a bad mood. It would be better for her to realise that she had simply chosen an unsuitable time to talk to him.

Among the other causes of a person losing his calmness are psychological troubles and disorders. Of these we might mention the following:

### **Fear and Confusion**

If a person is afraid, he loses his calmness and if he loses his calmness he becomes afraid. In a state of fear a person imagines problems and dangers, whether they exist or not, and thus becomes disturbed. The more he thinks about these dangers, the greater his fear and confusion become and he imagines the worst, yet all his fears may be his own doing.

The calm person does not become disturbed however much the circumstances around him get troubled. He is just like the house built on rock of which the Lord said: *"and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."* (Matt. 7:25).

Peter the Apostle was thrown into prison, while Herod was determined to kill him. Nevertheless he slept so soundly even in such circumstances, that the angel who came to save him had to prod him in the side to wake him (Acts 12:3-7).

On the other hand, the person who is afraid and disturbed, loses his peace of mind. In his fear and troubled state he is incapable of healthy, calm thinking. Things before him become complicated and seem to be irresolvable. and he loses his calmness completely. To regain this calmness he needs outside help and a solution to be found for him. If he discovers a solution, his fear will decrease and subside.

Prayer and seeking advice will benefit him in this state. Through prayer he will feel the divine power solving his problems for him, so he does not fear. Through asking advice he will find a wise and loving heart beside him, presenting him with a solution and dealing with him in faith; so he does not fear but grows calm.

Perhaps some may want to ask about those who fear death. In actual fact, someone who fears death is more likely to be afraid of his fate **after** death, and where he will go. But the believer who trusts in God's love, and who always repents over big things and small, is not afraid of death but rather says with the Apostle Paul: *"having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."* (Phil. 1:23). Thus we find that the martyrs looked forward to death joyfully without being troubled, and were very peaceful at the hour of their death.

This does not mean that there was something wrong when some of the saints spoke of death with a certain fear, but if they did so it was out of a kind of humility, so that their hearts should not be raised too high because of their godliness and worthiness to wear a crown.

## **Desires or Lusts**

Saint Augustine was right when he said: "I sat on the summit of the world when I felt within that I did not desire anything or fear anything."

Someone who runs after his desires is exhausted and enslaved by them. They cause confusion within him, and he keeps on thinking of how he can achieve what his heart desires. How can he attain them? And what are the difficulties which stand in his way? Who are his rivals and how can he triumph over them? Or perhaps what tricks can he use to achieve his desires? This is how lust disturbs him from within and makes him lose his calmness in his thinking, his efforts and his feelings.

Also the scope of desires is never-ending. As soon as one has been fulfilled, others appear and so on !!

We see tranquillity in the hearts and thoughts of ascetics, monks and hermits because they have rid themselves of the pressure of desires and become free within their souls.

## **Anger and Nervousness**

Nervousness in relation to restlessness is both a cause and an effect. The person who loses his nerves loses his calmness too. As once a person has lost his calmness it is really very easy for him to be angry and speak with obvious irritability.

The calm person, however, does not become influenced so quickly or get worked up or exasperated. He deals with people and problems calmly, with a cheerful face. His inner peace appears also in his outward behaviour.

### **A Liking for Causing A Noisy Disturbance**

There are some individuals who can only live in a state of clamour and cannot bear quietness at all. If they go somewhere their commotion precedes them, and they announce their presence with their loud voices and noisy company. If they sit in a quiet place they soon grow bored and leave it, and if they are with people who are silent, one of them shouts, saying to them, "Why are you sitting so quietly?! Is this a sad occasion?!"

They constantly look for problems and excitement. If they become members of any club or association, they have to make their presence felt; something has to happen, a difficulty has to be raised and the atmosphere charged, they then feel that it has some interest for them. If they sit in a meeting they have to raise their voices and search for a subject to object to.

They expand any difficulty and provoke crises for the most trivial reasons. If they are put in a position of authority they wear out their subordinates with so many orders and prohibitions, too many checks, and by keeping them occupied with unimportant affairs. The whole world has to be disrupted if they have to investigate something and if they find a mistake they explode in fury.

The existence of a calm atmosphere obviously depends on one's love of peacefulness. Those who do not love peace show it on every occasion: their wedding celebrations are noisy affairs and can be heard from afar, with their loud voices, singing and whistling and perhaps even accompanied by the bangs of fireworks going off. Even their funerals are noisy affairs. The whole town or district has to be turned upside down if one of them dies!! They imagine that they are not honouring the dead if they do not spend long nights in weeping and wailing in loud voices for them. All this is simply in the desire that others should share their affliction.

Sharing sorrowful emotions is necessary, but to overdo it is to destroy any chance of real calmness. There are ways of expressing one's mutual support which do not involve a lot of noise and which are characterised by peacefulness. Sometimes silent grief and quiet tears are a deeper expression of sentiment than loud wailing.

We have talked of the importance of inner reasons for losing one's calmness, and will now go on to speak about those reasons which come from outside.

## **External Causes**

There are external factors which may make the person lose his peace of mind and calmness, his smile and cheerfulness, his joy and happiness. The spiritual person, however, can triumph over external reasons, as we will explain later. Perhaps the most important external reasons are to do with the body, the senses, and with the mind and the spirit.

### **a. Against The Senses**

There are several reasons for the body to lose its calmness because the senses have become exhausted, by this we mean reasons that are particularly connected with our homes, such as the sounds, lights, colours, traffic, telephones etc.

#### **Environs:**

1. Overcrowding in the city, any city, bombards the senses with noise and bustle, especially in the shopping streets of the city, where the people are crowded together unnaturally. This is also true of the places where there are many factories, workshops, universities, schools and hospitals (or what they call the 'service sector' in the city).

2. Following on from this there is the vast number of traffic routes and all the noise and racket which they cause. This is especially so in the periods of peak hours and ending in various offices. They call this the 'rush hour', when thousands of employees, students and business people leave work, either by their private cars or in search of buses, trams or taxis. At this time the bustle of the city appears at its greatest and it is this which exhausts those who love peace and makes them lose the tranquillity of their senses.

The traffic may be brought to a halt because of the great crush of people, especially in large overcrowded cities, with all that this entails in the way of problems, upsets, the closing of some people's departments and wasted time.

3. Because of all this some people prefer to live in the suburbs. The population of the city of London exceeds 12 million, and so some of its inhabitants prefer to live outside the city in the areas known as 'suburbia' (this applies to Cairo too). If people are unable to live in the suburbs, then they might at least spend the weekends there for a period of rest and recuperation far away from the noise of the city.

4. In search for peace, some cities have made laws which prohibit the building of homes over the whole area. In some cities they only allow a land owner to build on a third or a quarter of the area of his land, and leave the rest, for example, as a garden. Thus the houses can be spaced out and there can be some greenery which helps calm the nerves and the spirit and which provides areas where there is less crowding and noise. Some cities restrict the height of dwellings to perhaps just 12 metres (3 or 4 stories). The quieter areas of the city are examples of these residential districts.

In view of the increase in the price of land at the present time, the vast number of inhabitants and the housing crisis, these kinds of comfortable, quiet homes are hard to come by, except for those who are financially able to afford it and who also love peace and quiet.

In order to remedy this shortage, some cities are trying to allocate special areas within the city to be public parks as places of refreshment for the people. These parks, however, in spite of their healthy and scenic aspects, are often noisy places because people tend to see them as places for recreation rather than relaxation.

5. Due to this, peace lovers resort to the Monasteries where the desert is quiet. Even though the Monasteries in the desert are essentially tranquil places, they lose their peacefulness because of the large number of people visiting them. It is therefore necessary to lay down firm regulations for preserving the peace of the Monasteries. There is a great difference between a large party of 50 people going to a monastery just for an outing, to visit and receive a blessing, causing a good deal of noise because they are unfamiliar with the calmness there, and a few individuals going to a monastery to spend a period of peace and worship, and who stay in retreat houses.

In order to preserve their calm atmosphere, the monasteries try to group the visitors' areas far away from the monks' cells, and from the retreat houses, which helps the visitors to become accustomed to the quietness.

6. On the other hand, the monks who desire even greater quietness go to live in isolated cells and desert caves. It is in these places, far away from the bustle of the guests and even from the other monks' living quarters, that they are able to attain a degree of solitude and peace which does not exist in the community of monks.

## **Machinery:**

Something else which disturbs the peace is machinery, which even if it facilitates the world's production and help to spread civilisation have nevertheless made the world lose much of its tranquillity. The quietness of sounds has been lost and this has happened so quickly that the calmness of the nerves has been lost.

Machines in our mechanical age work quickly and accurately and require their operators to be just as quick and precise. Because of this, their nerves are always keyed up in case they make a mistake or the machine does something dangerous, which would affect their production, their livelihood, their pay bonuses and reports.

Often machines are to blame for the problems of unemployment. One machine may be able to do more work than 20 or 30 or even 50 workers.

The appearance of machines at the beginning of the Renaissance, five centuries ago, was known in history as the "Industrial Revolution". But how much greater is the development of technology in our present age!

Unemployment undoubtedly affects the peacefulness of the world, since there exists a class made up of a vast number of workers who are anxious about their fate and livelihood. Mahatma Gandhi used to hate the use of machines and called his people to work with their hands.

There is a big difference between the age in which the peasant used to water his field from a water wheel, calmly and happily following the water as it ran peacefully through the field, and the age in which the water descends in a fast, forceful jet which he runs panting behind in order to transfer it from one trough to another, before it overflows and is drowned by the water.

We do not want at this point to discuss the subject of technology from the economic point of view; this is not the aim of the book in your hands. Its aim is simply to show the effects that machines can have upon calmness, from the aspect of their noise and effect upon the senses, and from the aspect of the unemployment which they can cause and the effect which this can have upon disturbing spiritual peace.

In addition to this, machines which pollute the environment with smoke and fumes, and the adverse effect that this can have upon health can also make the individual lose his tranquillity.

### **Sounds, Lights and Colours**

Loud sounds disturb peace, whether they come from trains, cars, alarm clocks, motorcycles, aeroplanes or loudspeakers at parties and meetings, even the sounds of people passing in the streets and the sounds of the sellers in the over populated suburbs.

The clamour of sound in the city makes people lose the calmness of their senses, especially if these sounds are loud and invasive and continually unchecked.

Even in people's ordinary conversations, there are some who talk quietly so that you can hardly hear their voice, and others who cause such a racket when they talk that the place loses its peace and their listeners feel as if they are caught up in an argument or a fight.

The calm approach to conversation means that the person speaks at the level required by his listener, without raising his voice unnecessarily. This is what calm people do. Peace lovers do not feel relaxed when loud or sharp voices are used as this disturbs their senses.

The recluse Saint Arsanious, when he heard the sound of reeds moved by the wind, said: "What is this earthquake?" because his ears had become acutely sensitive, , being accustomed to a calm atmosphere.

Telephones then can sometimes be a reason for making some people lose their calmness. If someone uses them too much or for too long, telephones can make him lose his awareness of the value of his time, or make him feel that he has lost his peace of mind or that his actions are unproductive. Therefore those who wish to spend time quietly should keep far away from telephones and avoid using them, or use them sparingly, only for emergencies.

Colours also have a certain effect on the soul besides influencing the one who looks at them. The green colour, for example, is a peaceful colour, as is light blue, and comes in contrast to the colours like red, which can be glaring unless it is

simply part of a pattern and just used to give it a particular beauty.

This explains why many people choose colours for the walls of their homes that are restful to the eyes, and the same goes for the colours of their furniture and clothes; and choose flowers of soothing colours for their gardens.

Just as we mentioned colours, we can also mention lights. Strong lights irritate and tire the eyes and nerves. Strong headlights on cars, for example, strain the eyes of drivers coming in the opposite direction. We might perhaps see some streets in the big cities fitted with softer lights in a special colour which is kinder to the eyes, a kind of yellowish colour.

Also churches, when they are lit by candles, have a calmer atmosphere which is more conducive to awe and peace, than when they are lit by the glare of artificial lights.

We have spoken of the factors that work against calmness of the senses, let us move on to another factor which disturbs peace:

## **b.      Against The Calmness of The Spirit**

1. There are many factors which disturb calmness of the spirit and these include the mistakes of others. Their behaviour may be hurtful, worrying or irritating to the individual and result in a loss of tranquillity. Their mistakes may be actually harmful. Perhaps they may cause fights or struggles or make

attempts to annoy the other. Thus the person can lose his tranquillity, because of a quarrelsome neighbour, or an annoying colleague at work, or even at church. This occurs because people's mistakes have caused him harm or put him in a state of constant strain or tension because he is anticipating problems as a result of these mistakes.

The teacher may lose his calmness because of a pupil's behaviour. A father or mother may lose their calmness because of their child's errors. The behaviour of certain individuals among people might harm the peace of the entire country.

2. A person may lose his calmness because he is living with people who are not calm. If he lives with a person who is anxious, disturbed or afraid, he may be affected by that person's mistakes. That person's fear or disturbed state may also be passed on to him. On the other hand, living with calm people brings calmness to the spirit.

There are many psychological aspects that a person absorbs from others, good and bad. One of the famous men of letters wrote, "Tell me who your friend is and I will tell you who you are."

Therefore it is not unusual for you to feel upset if you remain for a long time in a place where there has been a disturbance because of what you hear of other people's conversations. It is equally likely if you live with a person who is very sceptical, that his misgivings will flow into your heart and thoughts without your intending it.

3. Another element that causes loss of peace is the news and the media. Look at how often the radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, magazines and publishers present upsetting news that disturbs people. It affects their thoughts and senses so that some of them start to imagine that the world is going to end soon, or that disasters are about to happen.

These news reports may follow in rapid succession, so that no sooner has the person recovered from listening to one piece of news than another equally upsetting follows it. Thus the individual lives in a state of constant tension.

There are journalists who think that to stir-up the people is the sign of successful news broadcasting. They therefore choose dramatic titles that arouse or news items that provoke, irrespective of the effect they might have on the hearts of the people!

The same applies to the news people relate to each other in their conversations: their tales of problems, adversities and pains, on a general level, or on the individual and family level. There are some who relate such things so dramatically that they convey their emotion to the listener and he gets upset too.

People live in a state of constant tug-of-war, being pulled this way and that by a succession of news reports. If someone wants to live quietly he should try his utmost to get as far away as he can from upsetting news, or to keep its influence over him under control.

4. Personal problems are the most serious thing that make someone lose his peace of mind.

Young people's minds are disturbed by the slightest problem. Adults, however may be upset by a problem which seems to be irresolvable, if they then arrive at a solution their mind again becomes calm.

The restless person wants all people around him to be thoroughly upset if a problem ever occurs, and he may say, "I won't let this matter go by just like that! I know what I'll do!!". It may well be that his rude behaviour causes another problem worse than the original one. A person may lose his calmness in the face of a personal problem or one that affects people in general, such as bad transport for example, or a boring routine or economic problems and rising prices.

We can cite a third kind of factor which disturbs peace which is:

### **c. Against The Calmness of The Soul**

Sin disturbs the person's spiritual calmness. As the Divine Inspiration said: "There is no *peace*," says the *LORD*, "*for the wicked*." (Is. 48:22) and, " *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked.*" (Is. 57:20-21).

The sinner lives in an internal struggle which gives him no peace. He loses his peace of mind **before** the sin, when planning it and thinking it through, and **after** the sin he loses it

because of fear: fear that the sin may be discovered, fear of punishment and fear of getting a bad reputation.

Cain lost his peace after he killed his brother Abel, and said: *"My punishment is greater than I can bear!...anyone who finds me will kill me."* (Gen. 4:13-14).

The factors which disturb calmness from within are mostly connected to sins or faults like lust, fear and lack of faith . The spiritual person is always characterised by his tranquillity. In the forefront of the fruits of the Spirit are *"love, joy, peace.."* (Gal. 5:22) and with joy and peace there is calmness.

Something else which makes the sinner lose his calmness is fear of judgement. Striving to live the best life of all gives the children of God hope in a happy eternity and makes them *"rejoicing in hope,"* (Rom. 12:12) as they listen to the words of Saint John the Apostle: *"abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."* (1 John 2:28) But sinners live in fear whenever they think of their eternity. As Saint Paul the Apostle said, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Heb. 10:31)

The spiritual person has a good relationship with God, but the sinner is always caught up in a fight or struggle with God, which makes him lose his calmness. Talking about death, eternity or judgement disturbs him a great deal; these are words which he cannot bear to hear. Sometimes he runs away from them, but when they catch up with him and press upon him, his heart grows dispirited.

**There is another spiritual fault which disturbs calmness: this is the suspicious restless conscience. Whoever has this conscience can never live in calmness.**

This conscience "*strain out a gnat*" (Matt. 23), and imagines evil where it is not, or enlarges the weight of sin beyond what it actually is.

This conscience lives always in suffering, in doubt and remorse. It is not calm from within.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **How We Can Obtain Calmness**

1. Love of calmness
2. The calmness of nature
3. Tranquillity of the heart
4. Don't be easily provoked
5. Faith
6. Living with calm people
7. Joy and cheerfulness
8. Humility and gentleness
9. Exercising calmness

There are many ways of obtaining calmness, but at the top of the list we must put the love of calmness and the conviction about its importance.

## **1. Love of Calmness**

You cannot live in peace unless you are convinced that it is the right way to live. This is because your conviction unquestionably affects your behaviour. You must then be convinced that settling affairs or solving problems is not achieved by force, worry, by getting upset or by fear or despair. On the contrary, only the calm person can think in a balanced way and solve his problems and behave well. Once he loses his calmness, he becomes disturbed and cannot find a solution.

There are some people to whom distressing news or events brings on ill health, for example, such problems as diabetes, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers or nervous damage, which causes them to need psychiatrists and general practitioners.

Their lack of tranquillity may last a long time during which they become the object of people's pity! Besides harming themselves those who are restless can harm others too.

If you are convinced, then, of the harmful effects of a lack of calmness, try always to be calm, and follow the ways which will lead you to peace. Know that the thoughts of the person who thinks calmly are sound and strong and will enable him to understand, draw conclusions, grasp a subject and solve his

problems. The tranquil heart gives peaceful solutions and does not cause problems.

## **2. The Calmness of Nature**

Nature, being calm, conveys its calmness to the spirit, and the calmness of nature aids the calmness of the individual's character. It is on account of this that people go to parks and gardens, where beautiful natural scenes soothe their nerves. If they are not able to do this regularly, as a matter of course, at least they can do it on holidays from work. Some people can travel to a rural areas with beautiful scenery. Many people, at the very least, like to put flowers in their homes in special containers or decorate the walls of their homes with some peaceful natural scenes.

Some people choose their homes in quiet areas and live in the less crowded suburbs where there is not so much in the way of machines, vehicles, noise of traffic and noise of factories, shops and such like to disturb the peace. As we have mentioned above, some suburbs insist that building should not be carried out over the whole area, and restrict the height of dwellings so that around each house there can be a garden with trees and flowers, to give the place beauty and so each person can enjoy a sufficient amount of fresh air and beautiful natural views which bring calmness to the soul. If there is no overcrowding, noise is decreased and this is another factor that aids tranquillity.

Those who are unable to live in more peaceful surroundings are advised at least to take breaks from their environment, in search of calmness for their nerves.

I read once during the war, that Eisenhower, when he was president of America, went to spend a holiday at one of the lakes where they took a photograph of him fishing. He was relaxing despite his massive responsibilities, for he knew well that calmness of the nerves would help him to be relaxed in bearing his responsibilities, and would give vitality to his thoughts and tranquillity to his soul.

We recall that Our Lord Jesus used to take his disciples to secluded places. Sometimes he would take them to fields and orchards, sometimes he would talk to them on the hills or at the seashore. The miracle of the five loaves and two fish took place in a secluded spot. I wish someone would study the subject of nature and Jesus' relationship with it.

## **The Monasteries**

The Desert Fathers have always lived in the peace of the desert, and thus have lived peacefully, without any external factors to arouse or disturb them. Therefore their dispositions have always been tranquil and they have had the serenity of thought and heart to be able to contemplate deeply on how to deal with situations. Thus they have been able to give calm advice to anyone who has sought their guidance. They have put this monastic principle before themselves: "With stillness of the body we acquire tranquillity of the soul".

A monk who did not find sufficient peace in the monastic order used to resort to a life of solitude in a cave or hill dwelling where he lives with tranquil senses and calm emotions. That is why some Fathers call the monastic life, 'the life of silence'. The Fathers have always preferred the calm of the night to the bustle of the day. Their prayers in the quietness of the night can be deeper and more contemplative than they are in the glare of the day. Saint Isaac the Syrian said, "Night is set aside for the act of prayer", and the writer of the Psalms says: *"Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord."* (Ps. 134) I remember that I wrote in my diary one night in my cave in the mountains (perhaps it was in 1960), the following couple of lines:

*"The peace of the night is music and secrets whispering to me, the sound of the wind gently pouring the melody into my ear".*

Unfortunately some cities have spoilt the calm of the night and instead have made the night a time of noisy parties and nightclubs with all their entertainment, and in so doing they have removed night time far away from peace and from God.

Therefore, for the sake of creating peace, the monasteries have set up retreat houses. The intention is that young people can spend a quiet period there for meditation and prayer, far from the noise of the city and far from the stimulations which make the soul rise and fall. During this period they can recharge their inner calmness which will revitalise their spiritual strength and fortify their hearts.

It is important for those who go to the monasteries for the purpose of finding tranquillity should not cause the monasteries to lose their peacefulness. The visit is not simply for a change of atmosphere or to receive a blessing from the holy places, but rather for the spiritual benefit which it can bring, and for spending time in prayer reading, meditation and examining the soul. It is better if one goes alone, and not with a group of people to spend time discussing and chatting with them!!

The visitor to the monastery will benefit from following a spiritual programme and therefore not disturb the peacefulness of the monastery.

### **3. Tranquillity of The Heart**

The wide-open heart can accept many things, without getting annoyed at them.

The tranquil heart produces calm thoughts and also calm emotions. It never thinks of the difficulties of the problem but only how to solve them. Someone who is overwhelmed by his pains becomes exhausted by them, but someone who thinks of how to solve his problems, works his way out of his pain and relaxes as soon as he reaches a solution. If he does not find a way out of his difficulty, then he leaves it to God, trusting that God has many solutions. With faith, the heart grows calm, trusting in the work of God.

The important matter is not the problem but the way in which you deal with it and your response to the problem. What

matters is how much you let yourself become upset by the problem and the kind of effect it has upon you. Is it affecting you deeply and troubling you or is it floating on the surface of your thoughts without you allowing it to trouble or pre-occupy you? What is your reaction to the problem and your inner response?

The tranquil soul faces things calmly, no matter how complicated they are. If we get disturbed, then everything in front of us gets disturbed. And if we are calm then everything in our view appears calm. So the type of interaction between ourselves and the problem is the basis of our feelings. The restless soul is always pessimistic and expects the worst, but the calm person receives the most difficult news with composure and deals with the matter calmly, because he is used to behaving this way.

If you are secure within, you will be fortified against any disturbance, like a person who is immunised against a specific virus. Even if the germ enters the body, it will not harm the person. You will be like this. As long as you live in the world you cannot escape problems, so the practical solution is to train yourself to rise above the provocation that they can cause.

You will come to realise fully that getting upset does not solve problems, but that they are solved by calm, balanced thought which arrives at practical, and feasible solutions.

We want tranquillity of the heart in order that we obtain outward calmness in dealing with practical matters and in our daily behaviour. All kinds of outer peace which we can practise or benefit from will contribute to our inner peace.

#### **4. Don't Be Easily Provoked**

Accept everything calmly, no matter how troublesome it is. Do not let external causes arouse you on the inside. Don't be easily incited and don't be volatile or easily manipulated. Be calm and train yourself for internal peace and tranquillity of heart.

There is a kind of person who, if you tell him some news, shows signs of panic in his features; his eyes, his expression, his voice, so much so that you say to him, "Don't worry, nothing's happened..." or you leave the conversation unfinished.

But you must not be like this, for Our Lord Jesus said: *"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14:27).

Do not be easily affected, and if you do become upset, put a limit to it and try to calm yourself. If you throw a stone at a mountain you will not shake it, nor will it be affected by the stone. But if you throw the same stone at a pane of glass, the glass will be smashed and shattered into pieces. Be like the mountain, not like the glass. I want you to be strong, resilient mountains, not easily shaken, in fact completely unshakeable.

A lit match set against some straw quickly sets it on fire, while a flame placed in water does not burn but is extinguished. Which of these are you like?

## 5. Faith

In the midst of problems a person can be calm by means of faith; as long as he believes that God exists, that He upholds, directs and protects and that He also judges the wrong doers (Ps. 146:7). If he believes that God will certainly intervene with love and create a solution for him, or intervene with his justice and raise the oppression from him. If he puts before him the words of the Lord: *"I will not leave you nor forsake you."* (Josh. 1:5).

He leaves everything to God and is neither afraid nor troubled, trusting in God's actions on his behalf.

Those who believe in the action of God and His protection never get upset. Their reliance on God gives them inner peace. In fact, their faith makes them see good in everything; even what appears to be distressing or troublesome, they believe that God will certainly change it to good. In their trust in God they live a life of total submission and inner peace.

The meaning of faith is not that the person adopts a passive stance. On the contrary, he does all that he can, without getting upset, putting the matter in God's hands right from the start and putting before himself the words of the Bible: *"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."* (Luke 18:27) As long as God sees everything and wants the best for everyone, and is able to bring this about, why lose one's calm?!

If someone loses his tranquillity of heart as a result of problems, there must be a flaw in his heart that needs to be

treated. This flaw might be a lack of faith that has given rise to doubt, then fear and then confusion. This is until he enters into the element of faith - faith in strong prayer and its effectiveness. Prayer, to whomever believes in it, cures fear and disturbance.

With prayer you feel that you are not alone, you are surrounded with divine power helping you, therefore you become calm and feel secure.

## **6. Living with Calm People**

If one lives with calm people one tends to gain their calmness. And if one lives with disturbed or volatile people one tends to be affected by their emotions. Thus psychological disorders can be transferred by influence through living in close proximity. In this way, fear or doubt or anxiety is transferred from one person to another.

On the other hand living with calm people gives trust, reassurance and peace. You might read some disturbing news and become worried, and then you meet someone calm and find that he meets this same news with complete faith, absolutely sure that nothing awful will happen at all. And as he explains it to you, his assurance begins to rub off on you and your mind becomes calm.

If you live with calm people you can absorb their faith and tranquillity and obtain peace for yourself from their inner peace. You can also use their calmness as an example and model and try to emulate this because you like them and they make you feel comfortable. And you will also become

accustomed to their way of thinking when faced with problems and difficulties. You learn how the mind can grasp a problem and digest it from their intelligence, and how things can be understood and problems solved and the best way of dealing with them can be found. As well as this, you will learn from their faith, from their patience, endurance and ability to hold out. Thus you can learn the practical sources of calmness from living with them.

Living with calm people is the best kind of tranquilliser: they are calming, peaceful souls. We can add to this a calming Father Confessor to whom anxious souls come and confess and obtain relief. He is also a means of obtaining calmness, through meeting with him you relieve yourself of a burden and become calm.

## **7. Joy and Cheerfulness**

The spirit of joy and a cheerful face gives the person mental calmness and relaxation, and wards off trouble and depression. However charged and noisy the atmosphere, the person who has inner joy and cheerfulness can make everyone laugh with his gentle humour, or at least make them smile, and with his joy remove the atmosphere of tension. We recall here the words of the Bible: *"a time to weep and a time to laugh "*.

Yes, there is a time for laughter, perhaps to remove tension from people, or from the individual himself, or to defuse anger.

If someone hears an unkind word from a person, instead of getting angry, he can reply with humour, and so the two can laugh and the anger disappears. Thus the joyful person is loved by all, and always lives in peace and wherever he goes his dealings with people are peaceful.

You find that people who are characterised by joy have calm nature. It is not easy to provoke or anger them. They are not only calm themselves, but are able to calm others too. Joyfulness may sometimes be one of the elements of "*the gentle answer*" which turns away wrath (Prov. 15: 1).

There are some people who always read the jokes first in the papers, because it makes them feel cheerful and calm so that the less pleasant news does not affect them so much.

You can find a type of person who makes you smile even before he speaks, because you are already expecting him to say something funny or something that will make you happy. You feel particularly happy when you meet this type of person at the beginning of your day.

May you all have smiling, cheerful faces which spread serenity to others. People cannot bear to see a person with a gloomy or depressed face. It makes them lose their calmness and inner peace.

## 8. Humility and Gentleness

Calmness is one of the natural characteristics of the gentle person, The gentle person is calm, *because "A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench,"* (Matt. 12:20). He does not get angry or annoyed or raise his voice because he is calm.

The gentle person has a kind heart, he does not fight or argue, he is not *"self-seeking"* (1 Cor. 13:5), he does not resist evil (Matt. 5:39) and even in his discussions he is calm, not interrupting when someone else is talking, not getting annoyed or upset.

The gentle person is pleasant natured, and not harsh or rude in any way. He does not put pressure on other people, or insist, he makes things easy, not seeking his own comfort but rather that of others, which is why he is calm.

The gentle person is tolerant, for example, he does not answer back or hurt another or insult him, he does not talk down to him, but talks calmly with him. He does not rebuke or condemn anyone, but expresses his opinion with strength of conviction, not with pride or irritability.

For all these reasons, the characteristics of the gentle person are completely in accord with those of the calm person. If you acquire gentleness you will automatically have the characteristics of calmness. So try to acquire the quality of gentleness and its traits, and train yourself to be gentle. If you do, you will certainly arrive at calmness.

Calmness is also one of the features of the humble person. The humble person does not make anyone angry or allow himself to be angered by anyone, and so deals peacefully with people.

Since he is characterised by a humility of spirit, this humility cannot have the feature of sharpness or anger because they would conflict with it. Rather, you find that the humble person is gentle in his behaviour, calm when he talks and not disruptive at all.

The humble person always finds himself at fault and blames himself for everything. By not blaming anyone else, instead of making an issue of a possible offence from others, he reduces it by letting it pass by, out of the contriteness of his heart. Instead of fighting or entering into conflict he remains calm.

The humble person asks for blessing for everyone, thus he lives in love with all, dealing with them gently and peacefully. He also bears everything, without making a fuss on account of defending himself. Whatever harm befalls him he says, "this is because of my sins", and then he is silent and does not rebel against it. He therefore lives in peace with people.

The basic reason for loss of calmness is being self centred, too much concentration on the self. Humility is being selfless, being remote from oneself. In humility there is self-denial, and any concern over one's 'honour' and 'rights' (which are the causes of a person losing his tranquillity if he is not humble) is kept at a distance. As long as the humble person is unconcerned about matters which relate to his personal honour,

he does not lose his calmness because of these things, they simply pass by.

Also, the humble person does not surround himself with the noise and fuss that those who are eager for praise are so keen on. Read about the reasons for loss of calmness and compare them with humility and its characteristics. You will then see how humility contributes to calmness, and you will also see that whoever loses his humility loses him calmness.

## **9. Exercising Calmness**

1. Get yourself into the habit of entering and leaving calmly. Open your door and shut it quietly without causing a sound. Move your furniture and belongings inside your room quietly.

2. Let your walking be graceful, without any running, without any fuss or awkwardness, without letting your shoes cause a sound, like those whose shoes announce their arrival long before they appear. It says in 'Paradise of the Fathers', "Tread lightly with a soft sound".

3. Get into the habit of talking quietly, not rushing your words or sharpening your voice, do not get into the habit of shouting and using a loud voice. Let your words be peaceful. If you feel like saying a harsh or rude word, hold your tongue and don't say it. Think of its awful consequences.

4. If you write an angry letter, do not send it in a hurry. Leave it for a day or two then read it again and change whatever needs to be changed in it.

5. Do not obey any idea which urges you to act quickly. Wait until you have examined it calmly from every aspect.

6. Train yourself not to rush and plunge in hastily. Know well that impatience indicates the person's lack of peace inside. The calm person is patient. If someone gets worked up, he loses his ability to be calm; he cannot wait. He wants to do something or say something now, anything, or make a decision, without being calm about it.

If someone says to you, "I lack the virtue of patience," say to him, "Then you also lack the virtue of calmness," because they both go together.

7. Give your body rest, don't exhaust it. The nerves of a person who is in a state of exhaustion have little tolerance, so that it is easy for him to lose his tranquillity and behave angrily or nervously for the most trivial of reasons. So do not enter into sharp discussions if you are tired.

8. Take advantage of the fasting periods to practise being tranquil. The Bible says: "*Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly*". (Joel 2:15) Remember that the Lord Jesus spent 40 days fasting on the mountain peacefully. (Matt. 4) Our problem, however, is that although we have many fasts, we are surrounded by noise and bustle on all sides and so do not derive the full benefit intended from the fast!

9. Avoid stimulants as much as you can and things that upset you. If you lose your composure or are attacked by a lack of calmness, look to see whether the reasons are inside you or outside, and avoid the situations which give rise to such a state, especially in your dealings with others. As one of the Fathers put it: *"Don't have anything to do with a person through whom the enemy fights you"*. Steer clear of sharp discussions, obeying the words of the wise man: *"Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go. Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul."* (Prov. 22:24-25).

Also avoid noisy places and reading things, or listening to news which can upset or annoy you and make you lose your peace of mind.

10. Don't suppose that other people are perfect or ideal. Don't expect too much from them. If others do wrong, don't be upset. People are like that; they can be good or bad. Don't imagine that you are dealing with angels and saints, but with ordinary human beings. It is no good to let their mistakes towards us make us upset.

11. Do not reply to anyone while you are angry, but wait until you have calmed yourself down, then finish the conversation, or if you cannot postpone it, then at least be silent and say to yourself, "It's not good for me to talk with him while I am not calm".

12. Do not resort to drugs to obtain calmness, such as tranquillisers, sleeping pills, alcohol or narcotics, because they

will all mislead you, without solving your troubles. Try to solve your problems inside yourself by practical solutions and spiritual means. Know well that a person who gets into the habit of taking tranquillisers becomes addicted to them and they do him no good. In fact he is forced to take more and more and wakes up from them only to find himself just as tired as before but **without** a solution!

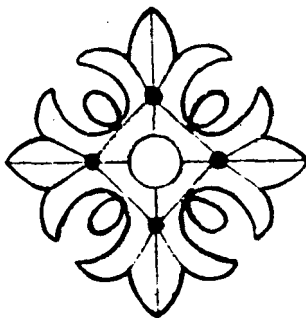
13. Also, do not search for calmness by escapism or introversion. Do not imagine that by keeping to yourself and escaping that you will become calm. No, not at all; that is an unhealthy kind of calmness. Inside yourself you will be far from calm, and your problems will still be far from solved.

If you have a problem at home, do not imagine that the solution to the problem is to escape from the house to a cafe, club or bar, for example. The problem will still be there to face you when you get back, because it needs a practical solution.

14. Avoid using rudeness or force of any kind. Do not reply to rudeness with rudeness. This is not the spiritual way and the Bible says: *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Rom. 12:21)

15. If problems become complicated, and you cannot find a solution, and you feel that your mind is unable to think in the face of these problems, don't lose your calm. Try to seek advice. Perhaps you will find something in the advice that will calm you and give you peace. It may give you a fresh, new idea that may lead to the solution to the difficulty, and which will make you feel that a door has opened before you.

16. The ascetic spirit gives peace in the matters where the person loses his peace of mind through the pressure of desires upon him and the frustration he feels because of not being able to achieve them. If you are really convinced of the transient nature of the world you will become calm.





*In  
This Book*

*In the name of the  
Father and of the Son and  
of the Holy Spirit, One  
God. Amen.*

There is no doubt that  
the whole world is striving  
for calmness.

— Calmness of The  
Character

— Tranquillity of The  
Heart

— Stillness of The  
Senses

— Calmness of The  
Nerves

and peacefulness of the  
thoughts and the mind.

This book tells you  
about all these things, and  
describes to you the beauty  
of calmness and the factors  
which impede it. It also  
describes to you how you  
can obtain calmness. This  
book is a little offering to  
a world which lacks peace,

