Passions
Passions

What are passions?

When sin is repeated often and lurks in our soul for a long time. Like a bad habit.

Movement that takes place in our soul.

Jesus says “from within, out of the heart evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder…” (Mark 7:21-23)

Derived from “pascho”, “to suffer” - indicates an inner sickness.

Remember the parable of the sower?
“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some *fell along the path*, and the birds came and ate it up.

Some *fell on rocky places*, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed *fell among thorns*, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.

Still other seed *fell on good soil*. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.” (Mark 3-8)
What are the thorns?

Passions.

Jesus explains it like this:

Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. (Mark 18-19)
Paul speaking of our condition before Baptism writes, "While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit for death." (Rom 7:5)

What is living in the flesh?

Passions

Paul says, "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like." Galatians 5:1-21.
Instead called to **live by the Spirit** - **not the Flesh**

*If you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*  
(Galatians 5:13)

**What is meant by live by the Spirit?**

*If you walk by the **Spirit**, you will not carry out the deeds of the flesh; For the **flesh** sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these **are in opposition to one another**, so that you may not do the things that you please.*  
(Galatians 5:16-17)
Passions

Passions are desires to satisfy the flesh that are not in accord with the Commandments.

Lurk in our soul waiting to cause us trouble and suffering.

Tarnish the soul and block our relationship with God, and work of Holy Spirit in us.
Passions

Are Passions natural to mankind?

Yes.

Not forces that enter into us that we must root out. Natural powers of the soul that are corrupted.

We are “sick” need “healing.”

Gregory says passions are when the satisfaction of our desires are foreign to the demands of nature.

What are the demands of nature?
Basic human needs

1. Clean environment
2. Adequate supply of water
3. Clothing
4. Nutritious food
5. Shelter
6. Health care
7. Communication
8. Fuel and lighting (Energy)
9. Access to education
10. Cultural and spiritual engagement

Sarvodaya identified ten basic human needs that must be satisfied for all individuals in a just society.
Example: **Desire for nourishment**
When does it become a distorted passion?
- when we use it for **pleasure** of our sense of taste.
- Examples of this?
- What is the nature of the pleasure we get from seeking this kind of pleasure?
- What are implications for our eating habits? Does it mean no more Starbucks?
- Passionate when we must have prime steak or Starbucks while we are not willing to support the church and those in need or do harm to our body.
Natural Passion

✶ Natural passion is appetite for food to **nourish our bodies**.
✶ When we **mindfully** select what we eat to nourish our bodies we are glorifying God by **caring for his creation**.
✶ We honor this through our **prayers** for blessing and thanks before and after meals.
✶ Our Father... We seek you blessing for you are holy now and always and unto the ages of ages.
✶ The poor eat and are filled and those who seek the lord will praise Him. Their hearts shall live forever. We seek your blessing....
After Noon Meal

We thank Thee Christ our God, that Thou hast filled us with thine earthly goods; deprive us not also of Thy Heavenly Kingdom, but as Thou came in the midst of Thy disciples, O Savior, and give them peace, come also among us and save us.

Glory....
Thou hast gladdened us, O Lord, by thy deeds, and in the works of Thy hands have we rejoiced.

The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, hath been signed upon us; Thou hast given gladness to our hearts.

from the fruit of wheat, wine, and oil have we been filled; in peace in the same place shall we lie down and sleep, for thou, O Lord, alone hast made us to dwell in hope.
Mealtime Prayer

* Passion of hunger is **put in divine context** through prayer.
* Once we eat for pleasure we have distorted the natural passion God has given us.
* The food industry is very good at creating unnatural foods that will lead us to habits to choose them.
* What is their aim?
  * To **create habits** using their products for **profit**. They advertise to build habits in our children.
* When you set down to eat, develop idea you are **glorifying God** through the nourishment of your physical being.
Attitude Counts

- Issue is our **attitude** towards food.
- Natural desire is for nourishment focusing on necessity to maintain the health and life of the body.
- **What is sinful?**
- Seeking after delight in food and placing our desires for the pleasure we get from it above the desire for God.
- **Why?**
- Changes our sense of taste and nutritive function into the center of our being, what is most pleasurable to us.
- Food takes on a value itself, takes on worship due God only. Certain kinds of food become our idols.
Communion Fast

* One of main excuses why people do not take Holy Communion is that they did not fast.
* What does this imply?
  * our desire for food overrides our desire to be in communion with God.
* Do you see the aim of the Communion fast?
  * Where does God stand in our lives?
* Of course you have to first believe in the truth of the Sacramental life of the Church and not view it as an obligation but as a divine gift, the true Blood and Body of Christ, true communion with God.
Once we have devoured that chocolate cake (my fav) how long does the pleasure last?

Often there are negative effects as well after the pleasure is gone.

Such pleasure of the flesh has nothing to do with true joy that we seek out of life.
Are we cured of the passion when the pleasure subsides?

No. Does not lead us to take action to temper the pleasure, but does the opposite.

We **form habits** and seek even more pleasure.

Try to make something that is impermanent permanent.

Cycle continues without satisfaction.

Fr. Dimitru says,

*The pain which follows pleasure, instead of making him avoid pleasure, as its source, ...pushes him anew into pleasure as if to get rid of it, tangling him even more in this vicious chain.*
Misuse of natural desire for food creates the passion of **gluttony, intemperance** and **drunkenness**.

Controls our decision making, taking away our free will and we **become enslaved** to such passions.

In a sense we **lose our free will** and instead develop **bad habits** that can separate us from God and the grace brought by the Holy Spirit.
All Creation is Good

* When is our desire orientated to sensible things worthy?
  * When when our love for them is according to nature, the way God intended them.
* Remember, everything God created is Good. Contemplate the purpose of everything He made and discern its intended purpose He had for it.
* Gregory: When used contrary to nature it becomes “a deceitful desire (drunkenness, fornication, adultery, impurity, greed, avarice, hatred, anger, gossip) and an all-embracing evil passion.” (Homilies 55)
Such desire gives birth to sin. James says:

“...each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.” (James 1:14-15)

What are some examples from our own lives where our desires lead us into sin?
Is temptation sin?

Orthodox Tradition says the temptation is not sin.

For sin to take place requires our consent.

Temptations test the authenticity of our life in faith nudging us along path of spiritual growth.

As we grow spiritually we increase this power of will to resist temptations.
How it Works

Saint Maximos puts it this way:

✶ 1. Memory brings a passion free thought into the nous. **Cue**

✦ 2. When this thought lingers, passion is set motion. We link it with desired outcomes. **Desire and rewards.**

✶ 3. Next is assent which leads to the actual sin. **Routine.**
How It Works

How does this compares with habits?

Cue: a lingering thought is linked in mind to a potential reward in terms of a pleasure or desire.

The passion is triggered which plays out in a habitual routine.
How Emotions Work

Antonio Damasio - *The Feeling of What Happens*

- Something from our senses initiates a response.
- Brain sends commands to other regions of the brain and most everywhere in the body proper.

1. **Bloodstream** - commands are sent in the form of chemical molecules that act on receptors in the cells of body tissues.

2. **Neuron pathways** - commands take the form of electromechanical signals which act on other neurons or on muscular fibers or on organs which in turn can release chemicals of their own into the bloodstream.

- Results in global change in the state of the organism.
- Then we become aware of a feeling or a passionate desire.
Lesson: We *can’t wait* for our feelings to develop to control our behavior. We need to interact at the time of the stimulus and work to change the automatic response of the emotional response.

This is called *watchfulness* demanding continual attentiveness.
Watchfulness

- Two places we can interrupt the cycle
- When we first receive the sensual stimulus
- or when we notice the emotional feeling but before we automatically take an action. - from science we know this to be too late.
- Church Fathers advise us to especially do the first Guarding the Heart or Watchfulness.
Passions

* Passions are an **inner state** - a corruption of our soul - a improper wiring of our brain.
* They arise when our soul is enslaved by **unnatural** desires that lead to sinful habits.
* We can trace them back to the **Fall** where Adam and Eve were tempted by the snake.
* What happened there?
  * Snake raised a thought related to desired pleasure. They sought pleasure based on their own desire and turned away from obedience to God.
Our Aim is not denying life but orienting our desires toward God, glorifying Him. Everything should be done to glorify God. Then our desire is “divine passion”

Theotokos is the best example of a human being whose life is in accord with “divine passion.”

Gregory: She lived “a way of life without belongings, without care, without dealings, bereft of sorrow, not participating in the base passions (but leading a life) above this pleasure that is not without pain.” (Homilies 53)
Passions

- Aren’t most of us chasing after and pursuing the pleasures of this world?
- Gregory: This is how man “covers his soul with all the multifarious ugliness of the passions.”
- What happens when we become corrupted by sinful habits through passions?
- Our mind becomes scattered and wanders constantly in fleshly and earthly things. It knows no peace. Even prayer becomes difficult.
- In such a state soul loses control and is said to be dead.
- Body, senses, and intellect take over forming the well known ego center and we become pleasure seekers instead of God seekers.
Saint Theophan calls it a **God pleasing life rather than a self-pleasing life.**

When one lives a life with the aim of pleasing God, he lives in a unity with God. Is not distracted by the passions.

As is written in Psalms:

*Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened; seek ye His face at all times* (Ps 104:4)
Role of Senses

* Each of the bodily senses directs, feeds and immediately influences specific passions.

* Sense of **taste** influences the passions when it is not limited to meeting the need of nourishment but ends up in “that immoderation in which one delights.”

* Leeds to passions of **gluttony, voracity, intemperance** and **drunkenness**. Gluttony is origin and core of all passions and source of every carnal sin.
Role of Our Senses

- Our **sexual desires** are of this type. We do not want to remove this instinct. It’s a passion innate to man. When handled rightly it is not sinful but natural.
- When does it become sinful?
  - When it turns from a natural desire to one where we strive to a perverse state of ‘**love of pleasure**’.
  - Casual sex, all sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, even distorted desires within marriage.
What is the Churches view of sexual intercourse in marriage?

Chrysostom: "The goal of sex in marriage is spiritual union. Through the joining of two physical bodies in marital love comes a unique oneness of soul. Their intercourse accomplishes the joining of their bodies, and they are made one, just as when perfume is mixed with ointment" (12th Homily on Colossians).

Even in marriage sex can become distorted when it is sought for individual pleasure instead of a union of love, uniting two bodies and souls as intended by God.
Love of Pleasure

What’s wrong with “love of pleasure”?

- Our **soul becomes body loving** when we seek sensual delights by every means for pleasure through touch, taste, and the other senses.

- **No longer seeking delight from God** but from worldly things.

- We love worldly pleasure more than we love God.
Things

✱ **Love of body** which pursues “pleasurable sensations by every means and gathers material from all over to delight the touch, taste, and other senses, **begets acquisitiveness and love of money**, which give rise to theft, extortion and every form of **greed**.”

✱ Instead of seeking to satisfy natural needs we seek to acquire more things and lose ourselves in them.

✱ What happens to the soul?
✱ Drowned by a friendly disposition towards riches and material goods.
✱ Creates additional needs that are far from what is needful according to the Gospel.
Anyone ever own a boat?

Once had a sailboat - kept at a yacht club on Belle Isle in Detroit.

Idea was purely pleasure. But was it?

Had to be paid for, had to be cleaned every year, had to be stored in the winter, when you least expected the motor would not start, the sails need to be replaced, the kids had different priorities, the days off it rained.

How was this energy draining pleasure stopped?

Transferred. Boat sold. **Liberation**

Best boat is one you have sold.
Pleasure?

- 2nd home, a cottage, is another burden with limited pleasure and added stress.
- How about fancy sport cars? Expense and maintenance costs
- Large houses? Heating and cooling, maintenance, cleaning....
- Electronic gadgets? Tablet becomes more of a friend than family. Home theater becomes a burden on family budget.
- What is needed to glorify God?
Simplicity

- My first trip to Greece
- Visit to village homes in Guatemala
- Visit to poorest of the poor in Bangladesh
- Visit to Auroville in India and Sri Lanka
- Saw life based on basic needs, saw happiness as well as other human sufferings but not different from our affluent life style in the US.
- Happiness is not dependent of material possessions beyond a sustenance level.
When I grew up in the 50’s average house size 983 square feet

In 2000’s over 2300 square feet - more than double
Instead of yearning for the Heavenly Kingdom which is lasting and eternal, we desire earthly wealth for happiness.

Is this bringing us what we desire? Are we more satisfied with our life now in 2013 than we were in 1950?

Unfortunately our primary life focus is geared to satisfy false needs - distorted passions.
Simplicity

James:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

You lust and do not have.

You murder and covet and cannot obtain.

You fight and war.

Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:1-3)
Passions of Imagination

* Passions also come from the **imagination**.
* Conceit, self-esteem and arrogance.
  We imagine our self-importance
* Also **complex passions** formed as mixture of Sensual pleasure and imagination.
* Desires to **please people**, **vanity** and **pride**.
* Leads us to **unbelief**, **vainglory** that makes us pursue glory and praise of others, and pride that can destroy all good works.
* Instead of acting out of virtue, in doing good things, we act out of pride desiring recognition and acceptance of others.
Lesser Passions

There are also what Gregory calls the *lesser passions*. Fastidiousness, foolish talking, obscenity and others that disclose or generate other passions that are more severe.

Witty jokes can sow confusion and distraction in the soul. Foolish words reveal pride. Obscenity or profanity can spur one to fornication.

Even the lesser commandments according to the Gospel are essential and a basic component in life of a believer.

“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.” (James 2:10)
Worldly Mindset

* Passions found mainly in those who are imbued with a worldly mindset.
* What is a worldly mindset?
  * Not easy term to understand. We are immersed in it.
  * Shall we say our normal way of life?
Worldly Mindset

* Jesus says, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lost of the flesh, and the pride of life, is not of the Father.” (1John 2:15-16)

* James says, “Friendship of the world is enmity to God. Whosoever therefore will be a friends of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4)

* Love of God and love of the world are two opposing forces. “Love for the world springs from love for the body, ... love for God comes from love of our spirit, our soul, for we love God on account of the comfort and good fortune our souls will have in the world to come.” (Homily 33)
Glorify God

Paul: “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit”, meaning soul, “and the Spirit against flesh.” (Gal 5:17)

“When God is at work in us, every kind of virtue becomes our own, but when He is not, everything we do is sin.”

Jesus: “Without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)

“These who truly act virtuously are aware of this, and do not pride themselves on any of their achievements, but humbly glorify God, the fount of virtues, by whom they are filled with the light that becomes goodness.”
Where does our soul’s delight come from?

“from God and things divine”

Free from passion.
This world offers enjoyment accompanied with pain because each person only gets a small part.

Gregory: “there is only one world, and it is divided among innumerable millions of people, each of whom desires and strives to possess it all and have its power.

If someone is enamored of the world and desires the whole of it, whether he has almost all of it, or just a small share, though still more than someone else, he himself sorrows of what he lacks, and causes distress to the person with less, because of his wealth.”
Spiritual and divine enjoyment and bliss are shared by all, **there is no limit**, there is no suffering because of division. If one receives everything that is no loss to anyone.
Source of suffering

* When we are trapped by the love of our body and worldly things, we are unaware that the world is the source of our suffering, our dissatisfaction, our emptiness.

* “they cannot grasp that the world they dote upon should be utterly shunned, and when they are discontented with the grief inherent in the world, being ignorant, like people fighting in the dark, of the cause of their misfortune, they blame one another each time difficulties arise.

* This gives rise to abusiveness, slander, false accusations, anger, hatred, strife, envy, and all kinds of bitterness filled with malicious desire.
Heavenly Desire

- Instead of seeking pleasure for this world we should long for the world above.
- Our desire needs to be redirected to the kingdom God promises us.
- Need to liberate our soul from the passions, all the excessive desires of this world.
Passions

✶ Principle Passions:
  ✶ gluttony
  ✶ lust
  ✶ love of money
  ✶ sorrow
  ✶ anger
  ✶ Spiritual sloth or apathy.
  ✶ vainglory
  ✶ pride
✱ Principle source is egotistical love of self
Questions?

Next Week: Life and Death of the Soul