SPIRITUAL FOOD

A brother who had sinned was turned out of the church by the priest. Abba Bessarion got up and went out with him, saying, “I, too, am a sinner.” Abba Anthony said: “From our neighbor is life and death. If we gain our brother, we gain God, but if we cause our brother to stumble, we sin against Christ.”

Amma Theodora said that neither asceticism, nor vigils nor any kind of suffering are able to save, only true humility can do that. There was an anchorite who was able to banish the demons; and he asked them, “What makes you go away? Is it fasting?” They replied, “We do not eat or drink.” “Is it vigils?” They replied, “We do not sleep.” “Is it separation from the world?” “We live in the deserts.” “Then what power sends you away?” They said, “Nothing can overcome us, but only humility.” Amma Theodora concluded by saying, “Do you see how humility is victorious over the demons?”

Amma Syncletica said: “Imitate the Publican and you will not be condemned with the Pharisee. Choose the meekness of Moses and you will find your heart which is a rock changed into a spring of water.”

It was said of Abba John the Persian that when some evildoers came to harm him, he took a basin and wanted to wash their feet. But they were filled with confusion, and began to do penance.
THE EPISTLE

Romans 5:1-11
The Lord is my strength and my glory
Verse: The lord has punished me severely
The reading is from Paul’s letter to the Romans

Brethren, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has now received our reconciliation. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than one of these? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.