A Few Gems from the Book Our Thoughts Determine our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

★ Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility.

★ The Lord is present everywhere, and nothing happens without His will or His permission, either in this life or in eternity. When we accept this idea, everything is made easier. If God would allow us to do everything the way we desire, this would certainly result in catastrophe. One cannot even imagine the chaos that would occur. God reminds us in different ways of His presence. We, however, quickly forget about it, especially when things are going well for us. We forget that we are here for short time only, and we think that we will be around forever, but when misfortune strikes, we cry, “Lord have mercy!” This is why we should try hard to change our character for the better.

★ When we talk to our fellow men and they tell us about their troubles, we will listen to them carefully if we have love for them. We will have compassion for their suffering and pain, for we are God’s creatures; we are a manifestation of the love of God. However, we often consider this a great burden, for we are oppressed by our own cares, worries, and weaknesses. We need to rest from all these cares, but only God can give us rest. He is the Bearer of all our infirmities and weaknesses. That is why we must always turn to Him in prayer. That is our only source of comfort. Then we will be relieved of our burdens and the burdens of our neighbors’ troubles as well, for we will have taken all of them to the Lord. As we take more concern for our neighbors’ cares and problems, they soon become our own. And our thoughts immediately become occupied with them. If we listen to our neighbor with only half our attention, of course we will not be able to answer them or comfort them...We are distracted. They talk, but we do not participate in the conversation; we are immersed in our own thoughts. But if we give them our full attention, then we take up both our own burden and theirs.

★ Meekness means having a heart that is humbled and peaceful. Children are meek. This is why the Lord says, “If you do not become as children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3). A proud person is never satisfied; everything bothers him, and he follows his own will. We must be obedient to the will of God in order to learn humility and meekness while we are still in this life, while there is still time. A heart that is full of love thinks not of itself, but of others. It prays for all living thing and for the whole world.
At that time, a young man came up to Jesus, kneeling and saying, "Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you call me good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."