

***Abba Agathon**

1) It was said concerning Abba Agathon that some monks came to find him having heard tell of his great discernment. Wanting to see if he would lose his temper they said to him 'Aren't you that Agathon who is said to be a fornicator and a proud man?' 'Yes, it is very true,' he answered. They resumed, 'Aren't you that Agathon who is always talking nonsense?' 'I am.'" Again they said 'Aren't you Agathon the heretic?' But at that he replied 'I am not a heretic.' So they asked him, 'Tell us why you accepted everything we cast you, but repudiated this last insult.' He replied 'The first accusations I take to myself for that is good for my soul. But heresy is separation from God. Now I have no wish to be separated from God.' At this saying they were astonished at his discernment and returned, edified.

Abba Ammonas

2) Abba Ammonas was asked, 'What is the "narrow and hard way?"' (Mt. 7.14) He replied, 'The "narrow and hard way" is this, to control your thoughts, and to strip yourself of your own will, for the sake of God. This is also the meaning of the sentence, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." (Mt. 19.27)

Abba Arsenius

3) It was said of him that he had a hollow in his chest channelled out by the tears which fell from his eyes all his life while he sat at his manual work. When [Abba Poemen](#) learned that he was dead, he said weeping, 'Truly you are blessed, Abba Arsenius, for you wept for yourself in this world! He who does not weep for himself here below will weep eternally hereafter; so it is impossible not to weep, either voluntarily or when compelled through suffering.' (i.e. the latter suffering in [hell](#))

4) It was also said of him (Abba Arsenius) that on Saturday evenings, preparing for the glory of Sunday, he would turn his back on the sun and stretch out his hands in prayer towards the [heavens](#), till once again the sun shone on his face. Then he would sit down.

*5) One day Abba Arsenius consulted an old Egyptian monk about his own thoughts. Someone noticed this and said to him, 'Abba Arsenius, how is it that you with such a good Latin and Greek education, ask this peasant about your thoughts?' He replied, 'I have indeed been taught Latin and Greek, but I do not know even the alphabet of this peasant.'

Abba Copres

6) Abba Copres said, 'blessed is he who bears affliction with thankfulness.'

Abba Evagrius

7) (Abba Evagrius) said; 'Take away temptations and no one will be saved.'

Abba Hyperechius

8) It is better to eat meat and drink wine and not to eat the flesh of one's brethren through slander.

Abba Isaiah

9) (Abba Isaiah) also said that when there was an agape and the brethren were eating in the church and talking to one another, the priest of Pelusia reprimanded them in these words, 'Brethren, be quiet. For I have seen a brother eating with you and drinking as many cups as you and his prayer is ascending to the presence of God like fire.'

10) When you pray to God in time of temptation do not say, 'Take this or that away from me', but pray like this: 'O Jesus Christ, sovereign Master, help me and do not let me sin against Thee...

Abba Isidore

'11) Abba Isidore went one day to see Abba Theophilus, pope of Alexandria and when he returned to Scetis the brethren asked him, 'What is going on in the city?' But he said to them, 'Truly, brothers, I did not see the face of anyone there, except that of the archbishop.' Hearing this they were very anxious and said to him, 'Has there been a disaster there, then, Abba?' He said 'Not at all, but the thought of looking at anyone did not get the better of me' At these words they were filled with admiration, and strengthened in their intention of guarding the eyes from all distraction.

Abba Ischyriion

*12 The holy Fathers were making predictions about the last generation. They said 'What have we ourselves done?' One of them, the great Abba Ischyriion replied, 'We ourselves have fulfilled the commandments of God.' The others replied, 'And those who come after us, what will they do?' He said, 'They will struggle to achieve half our works.' They said, 'And to those who come after them, what will happen?' He said, 'THE MEN OF THAT GENERATION WILL NOT ACCOMPLISH ANY WORKS AT ALL AND TEMPTATION WILL COME UPON THEM; AND THOSE WHO WILL BE

APPROVED IN THAT DAY WILL BE GREATER THAN EITHER US OR OUR FATHERS.'

Abba Isidore the priest

*13) (Abba Isidore the priest) said, 'If you fast regularly, do not be inflated with pride, but if you think highly of yourself because of it, then you had better eat meat. It is better for a man to eat meat than to be inflated with pride and to glorify himself.'

Abba James

*14) He also said, 'We do not need words only, for, at the present time, there are many words among men, but we need works, for this is what is required, not words which do not bear fruit.'

Abba John the Dwarf

15) It was said of Abba John the Dwarf that he withdrew and lived in the desert at Scetis with an old man of Thebes. His Abba, taking a piece of dry wood, planted it and said to him, 'Water it every day with a bottle of water, until it bears fruit.' Now the water was so far away that he had to leave in the evening and return the following morning. At the end of three years the wood came to life and bore fruit. Then the old man took some of the fruit and carried it to the church saying to the brethren, 'Take and eat the fruit of obedience.'

16) It was said of Abba John the Dwarf, that one day he said to his elder brother, 'I should like to be free of all care, like the angels, who do not work, but ceaselessly offer worship to God.' So he took off his cloak and went away into the desert. After a week he came back to his brother. When he knocked on the door, he heard his brother say, before he opened it 'Who are you?' He said, 'I am John, your brother.' But he replied, 'John has become an angel, and henceforth he is no longer among men.' Then the other begged him saying, 'It is I.' However, his brother did not let him in, but left him there in distress until morning. Then, opening the door, he said to him, 'You are a man and you must once again work in order to eat.' Then John made a prostration before him, saying, 'Forgive me.'

Abba Joseph

17) Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, 'Abba as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?' then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, 'If you will, you can become all flame.'

Abba Macarius the Great

18) The same Abba Macarius while he was in Egypt discovered a man who owned a beast of burden engaged in plundering Macarius' goods. So he came up to the thief as if he was a stranger and he helped him to load the animal. He saw him off in great peace of soul saying, 'We have brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.' (1Tim.6.7) 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' (Job 1.21)

Abba Pambo

19) The same Abba Theophilus, the archbishop, came to Scetis one day. The brethren who were assembled said to Abba Pambo, 'Say something to the Archbishop, so that he may be edified.' The old man said to them, 'If he is not edified by my silence, he will not be edified by my speech.'

*20) Go and have pity on all, for through pity, one finds freedom of speech before God.