

# The Blessed Father Justin of Čelije

by Reader George Pejnović

DURING THE TIME THAT FATHER JUSTIN was living at the convent in Čelije, there was a nun who served him as his cell attendant. When this nun wished to speak with Father Justin while he was in his cell, she would approach the door of his room in the customary monastic fashion, knocking on the door and saying the words, “Through the prayers of our Holy Master, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” She would then wait for his reply, “Amen,” knowing then that she could enter his cell.

It happened one day that a certain gentleman went to see Father Justin. After speaking to the aforementioned nun regarding his request to see the Elder, she went to knock at Father Justin’s door, in order to convey the message. But as she was about to knock on the door, she heard Father Justin speaking with someone whose voice she didn’t recognize. She immediately became concerned, since she was always, again, the one who arranged all of the visits from those who wished to see him. Indeed, no one could enter Father Justin’s cell without her first knowing.

Still wondering how it could have happened that someone had entered Father Justin’s cell without her having known, she left his cell, only to return sometime later to inform Father Justin, once more, that there was someone waiting to speak with him. She approached the door of his cell, knocked, as before, and recited the usual invocation, waiting for his reply. But again she heard Father Justin conversing with the man with an unfamiliar voice.

When, later, she approached the Elder’s cell for a third time, she knocked, recited the usual prayer, and waited for his reply. This time, there was silence. She heard neither Father Justin’s voice nor the voice of the stranger whom she had distinctly heard speaking the two previous times. Becoming frightened, she began knocking on the door much harder, saying, “Father Justin! Father Justin!” But there was still no reply—only silence. Concerned, now, for his safety, and thinking that the stranger might have been an enemy of Father Justin—because he was, at one time, placed under house arrest at the monastery by the Communist authorities—, the nun opened the door and saw Father Justin sitting at his desk—*stunned*.

“Father Justin! Father Justin, what is wrong? What is wrong? Who was in your room? I heard you speaking with a man. Who was it? Who was it?”

Father Justin turned to her ever so slowly and said, “The Holy Apostle Paul.”\*

\* This event is very similar to one recorded in the accounts of the life of St. John Chrysostomos, to whom the Apostle Paul appeared while the Saint was writing a commentary on the writings of the Apostle.

