

**AN
ELDER
SAID...**



**Edifying Stories
and Teachings from
Ancient and Modern Times**

**The Discretion of a Chaste Woman Saves a Monk
From the Double Bite of the Sensible and Noetic Snake***

An Elder recounted to us how a poisonous snake once bit a certain well-known ascetic. Considering the danger, he left for the city to be examined and healed.

There, he was received by a most pious and God-fearing woman, who nursed him with great tenderness. When the pain started to subside and the monk was regaining his health, the Devil arrived and began sowing evil thoughts in his heart about the pious and virtuous woman. Indeed, at one point, his passion provoked in him a desire to touch her hand. As if reading his thoughts in the motion of his hand, she immediately understood and said to him:

“Not so, Father. You have Christ inside of you. Recall what sorrow will come over you afterwards, and what a burden you will have to lift in your repentance as you grieve, repenting in your cell. What is more, think of the sighs, labors, and the tears you will have to shed in order to return once more to your former condition and spiritual state.”

Hearing these words, and many others along the same lines, spoken by the chaste and prudent woman, the monk sensed the warfare leaving him at a speed greater than her words. At the same time, however, he blushed from shame and wished to depart that very minute, no longer being able to face the luminous countenance of that modest woman!

Seeing the holy Elder fall to his knees under the weight of his sorrow and shame, the God-fearing and honorable woman began to speak to him with words that would raise him up and consol him in his fall:

“Do not be afraid, Father, and do not be ashamed about that thing that agitated your thoughts. All of those things did not come from your

pure and unblemished soul, but were sown in you by the envious and wicked Devil. You, then, are not to blame for all that.”

And, in this way, she healed him from the other bite, and sent him, pacified, to his cell. Then his thoughts and heart were grateful to God for the woman’s discretion.



(*) Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 325 (March-April 2005), p. 176

P. B. Paschou, *Women of the Desert, a Small Gerontikon*, Vol. III, § 44:
On the Double Bite (Athens: Ekdoseis “Akritas,” 1995), pp. 125-126.