



## Brief Patristic Messages



### *“A Fault May Be Counted as Righteousness”*

*His Eminence, Metropolitan  
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

**O**NE of the countless diamonds of Patristic wealth is the following apophthegm of St. Anthony the Great:

*“From one’s neighbor come life and death.”*

**Do you** face your brother with love, humility, and respect? The springs of the life in Christ will be opened unto you. Do you thrash your neighbor’s conscience, scandalize, condemn, and deprecate him? The gate to the Kingdom is shut to you.

**A particular** weakness that marks devout Christians is condemnation, and indeed the kind based on a cursory judgment, primarily on the strength of suspicions.

**We have** many times touched upon this subject, but we will now approach another aspect of the matter.

**Condemnation** assuredly stems from a lack of love and fraternal affection; but, what is more, as the holy Fathers instruct us, man’s superficiality and arrogant trust in his power of discernment lead him to condemn, deprecate, and degrade his brother.

**But who** are you, wretched man, who anticipates God’s judgment? Have you forgotten that only our Lord, Who is a knower of hearts, sees the hidden and the secret things in man, and that only His judgment is unerring?

\* \* \*

**Let us** convey here the holy thoughts of Abba Dorotheos, in order to become deeply conscious of the entire subject and to fear to the end the great sin of condemnation.

*“It happens that a brother does some things out of simplicity. This simplicity of his, moreover, is more pleasing to God than your entire life. You, however, sit there condemning him and damage your soul. And if it should happen that your brother should fall into sin, how could you know how much he struggled and how much blood he shed before he acted badly, so that ‘this fault is almost found to be as righteousness before God’? For God sees the toil and sorrow which the brother suffered before his fall, and He has mercy on him and forgives him. And while God has mercy on him, you condemn him and lose your soul. How could you know how many tears he shed before God for what he has done? And while you have seen his sin, you are ignorant of his repentance....”*

**Let us**, therefore, abstain from soul-destroying condemnation and let us not become hasty judges—and strict ones, at that—of others.

**Let us** emulate that holy Elder’s thinking when he saw his brother sinning:

*“Woe is me, for today he has fallen, and tomorrow surely it will be I. And he will repent of his sin, but I shall not....”*

**Let us** not be superficial and quick to condemn. As we have seen, it is possible for our fellow man’s fall to be almost righteousness before God.

**No one** but our Lord knows the other’s intention; and our intention is that which gives weight to our actions.

† *Sunday of the Blind Man, 23 May / 5 June 2005*

