



Brief Patristic Messages



The Patron Saint of Monastics

*† His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

THE narrative printed below (a simplified version of a manuscript at the Monastery of Docheiariou) quite convincingly makes the following two points:

a) that St. John the Forerunner is the Patron Saint of monastics; and

b) that those who inveigh against monasticism—that is, those who despise and do battle against monastics—sin greatly.

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At one point, someone by the name of Amos became Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, who, through the working of the demons, was a hater of monastics, despite the fact that he had formerly been a monk, though an unworthy one.

By God's dispensation, a certain monk fell into sin. Instead of counseling him so as to bring him to repentance lest he be damned, Amos seized him, took off his Angelic Schema, lay hold of a pig, dressed it in the Schema, and let it loose in the middle of the city—an action which greatly saddened our Lord.

So that night, St. John the Forerunner appeared to the Patriarch, threatening him and saying:



“Since you have acted thusly and dishonored ‘my’ Schema, I shall bring about just retribution on the Day of Judgment before the dread tribunal of Christ!”

The Patriarch woke up with fear and trembling and began to build a Church dedicated to St. John the Forerunner outside of the city, across from the Church of St. Stephen, to the East.

When he had finished the Church and had richly adorned it, he gave himself over heart and soul to prayer, fasting and keeping vigil, that his sin of dishonoring the holy Schema might be forgiven.

But what happened? St. John appeared to him a second time and said to him:

“Verily I say unto you, that even if you build five other Churches to me, greater and more splendid ones, you will not be forgiven for the sin you have committed, but I will bring about your just retribution on the dread Day of Judgment!”

Shortly thereafter, Amos died, and his name was struck off by an unseen hand from the Diptychs of the Church of the Holy Resurrection of Christ our God!

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A Monastic has dedicated his existence to God, and he no longer belongs to himself but constitutes a precious possession and holy member of the Angelic Order.

Through monastic consecration and the ceremonial clothing of the blessed Schema, the Monastic receives a *second Baptism* and becomes an *“altar of the Lord”*—a holy and blessed altar

“in which and from which pure prayers are offered to the Most High God; a spiritually founded altar.”

(St. Neilos the Ascetic)

St. Ephraim the Syrian says that:

“Just as he who has made a vow to God and offered some gift to Him through the Priest no longer has the authority to take it back, even if he should regret his action, and if he is seized while surreptitiously attempting to retrieve it, will not be forgiven as if one taking back what is his own, but will be punished for sacrilege, so in the same way, those who have dedicated themselves to God no longer hold dominion over their own body.”

How, then, could we presume to disdain, dishonor, condemn, and, worst yet, to denigrate, scoff at, and pour scorn on those spiritual altars, that is, Monastics, their sacred Schema, and, more generally, the Angelic Life?

*Twelfth Sunday of St. Matthew
Beheading of St. John the Forerunner
29 August/ 11 September 2005*

