

SELECTED SAYINGS ON HUMILITY BY OUR CHURCH HOLY FATHERS

What is humility?

1. Humility is a major divine work, a conduct that is physically tiring.
2. A tested man once said that humility consists of forgetting every good deed a man has done. Another said that humility is to regard oneself as the least worthy among men, the most despicable, and the most sinful. And a third said it takes roots when the mind knows its weakness. But I say that **humility is a blessing of the soul that is revealed only to those who have acquired it.**

Saint John el-Daragi

3. What is humility?

- It's a conscience that is not self-glorifying.
- How is it consummated?
- It is consummated when man entertains no thought that he is wise.
- What is its crown?
- When man thinks that no one is more sinful than him and when he realizes that he is the lowest of all!

Saint John el-Tababisi

4. Humility is achieved when man thinks that all mankind is superior to him.

Saint Basilus the Great

5. Humility is to deem all humankind better than you, being certain in your heart that you are more sinful than all.

Saint Antony the Great

6. But the humble man considers all people to be better than he is.

Saint Bakhomius.

- 7, Humility is to be self-despising in everything.

Mar Isaac

8. Look how traits have overcome deeds! The Pharisee possessed all the traits of righteousness and justice but he lost them by his pretension and make-believe. The tax collector on the other hand, just by demonstrating his verbal humility earned justice and righteousness. For true humility is when man, though great and honored, humbles himself. He was honest when he said that he had sinned for being a tax collector. For there is no trade that is more evil than collecting tithes in tax collection.

Tell me: Is there any one who is more wicked than he who shares the monies of others who have earned them by their hard work and toil and becomes a partner in their trade and the things that are not his, sharing their profits but not their toil? There is no doubt that collecting tithes is a shameful sin.

His utterance was truthful; there was no deceit or duplicity in it. And he did not say it out of humility. So, if saying the truth earned him such a great gift, how much more would a truly humble person earn?

Saint John the Golden Mouth

Humility is the home of divinity; God will abide in it wherever it is!

Mar Yacoub el-Serougi

10. What is perfection?

- It is the depth of humility.

And what is humility?

- It is abandoning one's likings and acquiring tranquility.

How to acquire humility?

By remembering one's falls and mistakes, waiting for an impending death, putting on a beggarly garment, retiring to a quiet spot, and acquiring permanent silence. One should avoid crowds, striving to be unknown and unaccounted for, abiding by himself, hating intimacy and meeting and mixing with people, loathing profits, and barring his mind from blaming or bringing down anyone. He should not have any interaction with anyone, but should be solitary. For all these bring forth humility.

Saint Isaac

11. What is humility? Humility is to look on oneself as dust and ashes. The humble says, "Who am I? And who considers me to be anything? Who am I to deal with people for I am powerless?" He does not say, "What" or "What is this?" but walks submissively in his ways, never deeming himself equal to others. And if he is despised and rejected he does not get angry.

12. Humility is to hold oneself as guilty and to find that one has done nothing good before God. It is to maintain silence, looking on oneself as nothing. It is to reject one's inclinations, to look down to the ground, bearing death before his eyes, safeguarding himself from lying. It consists in not speaking falsehood or arguing with someone who is older than you are, enduring insults joyfully, detesting comfort and training oneself in hardship, never distressing anyone.

Saint Abba Isaiah

Honor of Humility

13. The armor of humility honors its bearer.

Saint John el-Tabasi

14. The honor of humility is so great and the fall of the proud so terrible. I advise you to be always humble and you will never fall.

Saint Esizorus.

15. God befriends the naïve and reveals Himself to the humble.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

16. He who does not want to enter through the door of humility will never find the divine pasture.

Saint John el-Daragi

17. Be clothed, my brother, in humility at all times because then you will be clothed in Christ who grants it.

Sheikh Rohani

18. All humble people are beloved to God like the hosts of Seraphim.

Saint Mar Isaac

19. Wail to those who would not humble themselves willingly as the children, for the low gates of heaven will not be accessible to them. Wail also to the rich who say that their comfort is here and now, for when the poor enter the kingdom of heaven they will be standing outside lamenting. Rejoice all you humble and be glad all you poor for the kingdom of heaven will be yours if you conduct yourselves in righteousness.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi.

20. If pride is the worst sin because it has caused a heavenly host to tumble to the earth, **humility is the greatest of all virtues, because it lifts man up to heaven from the depths.**

21. If Satan fell from heaven by pride alone, humility alone lifts man to heaven.

Saint John el-Daragi

22. If humility were to descend to Hades it will be lifted up to heaven, and if pride were to be lifted to heaven it will descend to earth.

23. Would we reproach God for all these blessings? Or would we disparage Him, deeming Him less than He should be, because He had wrapped a towel around His waist and washed his disciples' feet, thus demonstrating that **humility is the surest road to true glory?** He had humbled Himself for the sake of the soul that had inclined to earthly things in order to lift up that soul which had fallen under the burden of sin.

Why do those proud men accuse Him of eating with tax collectors and choosing disciples from among them? What did He gain in the process? If you asked me about that gain, I would say the **Salvation of Sinners.** For if that contention were true, we would be blaming a physician for bending over pains and enduring foul smells until health is restored to his patients. And we would be blaming someone who, in compliance with the law, bent down over a hole to rescue a sheep that had fallen in it.

Saint Gregorious the Theologue

24. **Humility is the tree of life; those who eat of it will never die.**

25. With what words shall we bless the love of God and how can we express our thanks? He has loved us so much that for our sake He, who is eternal and older than the universe itself, has become younger than most of his servants in the world! Like an infant, he cried speechlessly, even though He is the "Word" without whom the most eloquent people become speechless!

Behold, man, what God has become for your sake! Keep in your heart a lesson from this great humility imparted by a speechless infant! You were in paradise one day and you were eloquent giving each creature a name but your creator, for your sake, laid down speechless unable to call his own mother by her name!

While in a paradise abounding in fruits you perished yourself through disobedience. But in total obedience, He came down as a dead person to a humble and lowly abode so that through His death he could restore life to the dead. But you, even though you were human, wanted to be god and so you were lost. And He, even though He was God, wanted to be man in order to find he who was lost. Human pride brought you down so that divine humility alone can lift you up.

Saint Augustine

26. One of the brethren once asked me, "Tell us about one of the scenes you have sighted so that we can profit from it." In response I said, "Anyone who is a sinner like me does not have scenes to recount. But if you want to see a glorious scene that can truly benefit you, I can tell you where to find it. It is that of a man humble of heart and pure. This is a scene more splendid than any because through it you can see God who cannot be seen! Do not ask about a scene greater than this."

Saint Pachomius the Great.

27. There is nothing better than humility and love! For humility lifts up, as the Lord said, and love keeps the loving person up. As the disciple put it, the loving person does not fall and love does not cease.

Saint John el-Daragi

28. Internal work is a heartache that brings forth purity, and purity generates a lull of the heart that brings forth humility. By humility man becomes a dwelling for the Lord.

Saint Barsanuphius

29. Repentance uplifts man and lamentation knocks at the door of heaven, but humility (humility of the thought) opens the gates of the kingdom.

Evil of Pride

30. Detest power because it is a deadly fruit. For Adam ate of it in Paradise and it killed him. By it Satan fell and with it he brought Adam down from Paradise. For God there is nothing as filthy and detestable as power.

Mar Yakoub el-Serougi

31. Be always careful so that your mind is alert all the time. Never think of power or even entertain that thought, for through it the arch-angel became a devil.

Saint Abba Isaiah

32. Without humility some angels became devils, and with humility some devilish people became angels.

Saint John el-Daragi

Humility as the Basis of Holy Struggle

33. First and foremost, we must lay down a solid foundation of profound humility to serve as the foundation of the **tower of virtues that will rise up toward heaven.**
Saint John Cassian.

34. There is no other way to lay down a strong foundation of virtues save by humility and self-stifling.

35. He who has mastered humility has mastered all virtues.
Saint Maximos

36. The humbleness of the heart comes ahead of all virtues.
Saint Moses the Black

37. Humility is a virtue-bearing land. It will perish if it runs out of virtues.
Sheikh Rohani

38. Let us hold fast to humility in every matter and every work.
Saint Moses the Black

39. Let it be known to you that if in your life you have mastered every virtue and every good deed such as mercy, prayer, fast, and other virtues but have no humility in you, your toil will be in vain. For humility in all these virtues is the solid foundation. Without it, we cannot master any of the virtues and all these virtues will become impure, filthy, and discarded before God because they were not done with humility and love.
Saint John the Golden Mouth

40. How does man mature and become straight? This is done through humility. For as long as man proceeds towards the virtue of humility he forges ahead and he grows.
Saint Barsanuphius

41. An elderly was asked, "How is man saved?" He said, "Man is saved by humility, because the more he puts himself down the more he is lifted up and the more he is able to forge ahead.

42. Let it be known to you, my brother, that nothing is more acceptable to God than purity and humility.
Saint Samaan Al Amoudi

43. Humility has saved many without sweat. The toil of man without humility is void.

44. Humility purifies every adversary thought.
Saint John el-Daragi

45. I was looking for a way to reach you and be yours, but my search bore no fruit, for there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (Tim 1 2:5). For He has commanded me to stick to Him in order to reach You, and He – may His name be glorified and blessed – calls on me saying, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6). And when He saw us acting like small children

unable to reach Him and follow His example since He is God, He became man like us out of his kindness for our condition.

Since I lacked the humanity that led me to Jesus Christ, the meek and the humble, I did not know what He brought with Him to teach us when he carried our weakness. That is, I did not know that Your eternal Word that is exalted above all creatures has descended to see people with Your own eyes! God has descended so that people should no longer turn up their own noses and be arrogant but should embrace humility and be subservient out of their love for Him, so He will grant them power and prestige.

Saint Augustinos

Humility Vanquishes the Devils

46. No asceticism, no hard work or fast can substitute total humility. For it was said of an ascetic man who delivered the demon-possessed that he once asked the demons, “By what will you come out? By fasting?” They answered, “We do not eat.” “By staying up?” They answered, “We do not sleep.” He then asked, “By deserting the world?” They answered, “We live in the wilderness and among ruins.” “By what then do you come out?” he asked. And they replied, “Nothing crushes us like humility.” Humility then vanquishes the devils.

Mother Taadurah

47. Acquire humility for it breaks all the enemy trappings.

Saint Barsanuphius

48. One day Saint Makarious the Great was walking when he was met by the devil who wanted to cut him down with a scythe he was holding in his hand, but he was not able to. He said, “Makarious, you pull me down to the ground with a great force and I cannot overcome you. But look, every deed you do I can do also. You fast and I never eat. You stay up late at night and I never sleep. But there is one thing with which you beat me. “And what is it?” asked Makarious. The devil said, “It’s your humility, and that is why I cannot overcome you.” Makarious then raised his hands in prayer and the devil disappeared.

49. Saint Antony the Great saw the devils all over the earth. Sighing, he said, “Lord, who can break away from all these?” A voice from heaven said to him, “The humble break loose from them!”

Saint Bladius

50. Humility can defeat, dismantle, and nullify all enemy power.

51. The path made by the plow to cut open the land is humility so loved by God that all classes of devils are terrified by it. It is a virtue no devil can slide beneath!

52. All striving workers (those who work to acquire virtues) must acquire a lot of humility because through it they can trample all traps of the devils.

Saint Gregorius, Head of Cyprus Hermits

53. If we humble ourselves God will dispel the devil for us. So, we **should reproach ourselves all the time and in every matter because this is how we can win the battle.**

Saint Barsanuphius

54. They told of two saintly monks who lived in the wilderness as close brothers. The devil strove to separate them. One day the younger of the two brothers lit a lantern and placed it on a stand. Employing a trick, the devil caused the lantern to fall and go out. The devil then incited the older of the two brothers who beat the younger brother. Doing a metanaya to the older brother, the younger brother said, "Brother, do not get angry. Please be patient with me and I will re-light the lantern." When God saw how the younger brother was patient he tormented the devil till the morning. The devil went and told his boss. The pagan priest who was serving them was present. On hearing this he left everything behind, believed and became a monk. Since he became a monk he has been acting with full humility, saying, "Humility can defeat, dismantle and nullify all enemy power." I heard them say to one another, "Every time we tossed our bait among the monks they received it in humility, each doing a metanaya to the other, thus nullifying our power."

Saint Bladious

No Fall With Humility

55. As the earth does not fall because it is under, he who humbles himself does not fall.

Saint Abba Pimen

56. Another said to Abba Temothious, "I see my thought to be always with God." The saint said, "What is better is to **see yourself always below all creation, for there is no fall with humility.**"

57. The fathers said that the following three virtues are magnificent and whoever acquires them can live in the middle of people, in wilderness, or wherever he wants. These are: **That man should reproach himself, suppress his likings, and walk under all creation. For the humble man lives under and he who is under will never fall.**

Saint Barsanuphius

58. Love humility because it will safeguard you against sin.

Saint Abba Isaiah

59. Entrench yourself in these traits I mention to you: Solace, submissiveness, and silence, for they all bring forth humility, which absolves all sins.

Saint Abba Isaiah

Humility and Gifts

60. The grace of the Holy Spirit always seeks the humble heart.

Saint Toma Kambisi

61. Gifts are not acquired through hardship alone, but through genuine humility.

Saint John el-Daragi

62. Gifts are not granted for the good works in and of themselves, but for the humility with which those works were performed.

Mar Isaac, Bishop of Nineveh

63. God defends and saves the humble. He is kind to the humble man and He loves and comforts him. He bestows His great blessings on the humble person and lifts him up to glory after submissiveness. He reveals His secrets to the humble.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

64. If you are indeed humble of heart, God will reveal His glory to you.

Saint Mar Isaac the Syrian

65. He who held himself to be the most despicable of all and judged himself to be least worthy of all will be more qualified to receive greater blessings.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

66. Humility comes ahead of grace.

Mar Isaac, Bishop of Nineveh

Peace to the Humble

67. The humble lives in peace, even if he is disgraced, because he takes refuge in God, not the world.

68. With the humble there is constant peace, but in the heart of the proud there is envy and anger without ceasing.

69. My peace is with the humble and meek of heart, says the Lord.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

70. If you have reached a point where you totally despise yourself, let it be known to you that you enjoy the utmost possible peace in your estrangement on earth.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

CHAPTER TWO

Characteristics of a Humble Person

1. The humble person accepts humiliation. How?
 - By convincing myself that the humiliation was caused by my sins
 - By self-humiliation
 - By self-control
 - By obeying the commandment of Christ
 - By loving the person who humiliated me

- By blinding myself to the cruelty of people

2. The humble person masters obedience.
3. The humble person masters prayer.
4. The humble person calls himself to account.
5. The humble person does not condemn anyone.
6. The humble person does not despise anyone.
7. The humble person humbly reads about humility.
8. The humble person does not like cosmetics.
9. The humble person does not like praise.
10. The humble person does not get angry or cause others to get angry.

1. The Humble Person Accepts Humiliation

71. If you indeed wanted to be humble, you would endure the grievance and distress caused by others.

Saint Abba Serabion

72. The humble person is not he who despises himself but he who accepts humiliation joyfully and his love does not diminish.

Saint John el-Daragi

73. This is utter humility: To endure insult and disgrace and everything that has befallen the teacher of virtues, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Saint Barsanuphius

74. The proud person cannot stand a sermon for he is a lover of glorification.

Saint Abba Isaiah

How to Respond to Humiliation

+ By Convincing myself that my sins were the cause:

75. If a person hurled a harsh word at you do not be disgusted or become haughty but hasten and make a metanaya. Do not blame him in your heart for in this way you will give rise to anger.

If someone accused you of something you did not do, do not be distressed or get angry, but humble yourself and do a metanaya. Whether you did it or not say, "Forgive me. I will not do it again."

Saint Abba Isaiah

76. Accept the insults and injustice inflicted upon you as right and do not concern yourself with how to convince people that you were insulted and done injustice; rather, ask for forgiveness!

Saint Mar Isaac the Syrian

77. My son, do not be grieved if others bad-mouthed you and said something against you that you do not want to hear; rather, you should distrust yourself all the more and hold that there is no one weaker than you are.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

78. If some one insults you do not respond until he stops. Search in yourself the fear of God for you will find what you heard to be abiding in you and that it was caused by you. So, give him a metanya as a man who knows the truth of the matter and that has sinned.

Saint Abba Isaiah

79. It was said of a monk that when insulted he would run towards his insulter and ask for forgiveness.

Saint Bladius

80. It would benefit us most of the time, in order to reinforce our humility, if people can see our shortcomings to rebuke us on account of them. When man humbles himself as a result of his shortcomings he will easily invoke the other's mercy and seek to please the person who was angry with him without difficulty.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

81. If you were bad-mouthed and you suffered and felt pain in the conscience, no tears or prayers would stop you from getting angry and feeling troubled until you fully believe that you are the sinner and offender, whether you did sin or not.

Saint Mar Isaac the Syrian

82. If you really want to be humble, crave humiliation and persecution as a hungry person craves food because you justly deserve it and you are not making a concession.

Father John of Kronstadt

+ Self-Humiliate

83. It behooves whoever is insulted to believe that he caused the insult for his misconduct. The insulter thus humiliates him from without while he humiliates himself from within! He will thus be like David the Prophet who prevented his companions from killing his insulter, saying, "Let him insult me. Let him so God may see my humiliation and have mercy on me."

It also behooves the insulted to emulate Jesus Christ, because when He was insulted He did not insult and to regard your offender as someone who freed you from false praise if you knowingly tolerated him in the belief that God had sent you an effective medication through his mouth.

Saint Antony the Great

84. Pope Thaofellos, the 23rd Pope (376-404 Martyrs), wanted to test Saint Moses the Black before ordaining him. So he told the priests, "When Moses enters the altar,

drive him out and let us see how he will react.” When Moses entered they scolded him and threw him out saying, “Get out of the church, you Ethiopian.” Abba Moses did leave saying, “They did well with you, black-skinned! And since you are not human, why attend with people!”

85. Abba Moses the Black once entered the church and many were assembled for an after church service meal (aghabi). When the table was made he sat with the brethren to eat. A man looked at him and said, “Who let this stranger enter to eat with us?” He then asked Abba Moses to leave, which he did without a complaint. When others saw this they were saddened and went out after him and let him come in, which he did. A brother asked him, “What did you feel in your heart when they drove you out and when they brought you in?” He said, “I looked on myself as a dog; if expelled, he will go out and if called in he will come in.”

Saint Bladius

86. An envious elderly saw Abba John the Short sitting with the brethren in front of the church. He told him, “John, you are full of charm.” In response, Abba John said, “It is so, my father, as you said, but you based your judgment on what you ostensibly saw in me. What would you say if you saw what is hidden?”

Saint Bladius

87. It is good for us if people become hostile towards us sometimes and consider us to be bad or flawed, even though our acts and intentions are good, because this will suit us and cause us to be humble and safeguard us against self-adoration and false glory. For when people despise us from without and lose trust in us, we will have comfort that God is a witness to what is within us.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

+ Self-Control

88. It came to pass that while Saint Moses the Black was sitting with some hermits, some men came by and taunted him for his shameful past, but he was silent and did not respond. When the men were gone his disciples asked him, “Were you upset, father, when you heard those men’s degradation?” He said, “Yes, I was upset but I thank God for keeping my mouth shut.” When asked about what he meant by that, he said, “The perfection we are seeking cannot be accomplished except by two steps: The first is that nothing should have an affect on our physical senses and the second is that nothing should have an affect on our psychological senses. The first is achieved when man controls his feelings by keeping silent when offended. And the second step cannot be achieved unless a monk can feel completely comfortable no matter how much insult or taunt he is exposed to.

Saint Bladius

89. If you heard what annoyed you, suppressed your anger and never let a harsh word escape your mouth, you will thus be able to extinguish the fire of your anger and your internal distress will be relieved when grace is restored.

Saint Toma Kambisi

+ Obey Christ’s Commandment

90. A man of bad reputation once insulted a virtuous man who said, "I was able to respond accordingly, but my God's commandment shuts my mouth."

Mother Taadorah

91. Some brethren came to Saint Antony and said, "Father, tell us how to be saved." Saint Antony replied, "Did you hear what the Lord said." They said, "From your mouth, father." He said, "Who struck you on your right cheek turn the left also." They said, "We cannot stand that." He said, "If you cannot stand that, then put up with the one strike." They said, "We can't do that, either." He said, "If you cannot, then do not reward your oppressor (that is, do not reciprocate)." They said, "Nor can we do that." Then, Saint Antony called his disciple and said, "Give them something to eat and dismiss them for they are sick. This they cannot stand and this they cannot do and God's commandments they do not want. What else can I do to them?"

92. Abba Daniel was quoted to have said that a wealthy man in Egypt had a demon-possessed daughter. She could not be cured. A friend of the man was a monk who said to him, "Your daughter could only be healed by the elderly and monks. But if you request that from them they will not answer your request because of their humility. So, I advise you to do what I direct you to do. When they come to the market to sell their products pretend that you want to buy stuff from them and take them home to pay them. There, ask them to pray and I am confident that your daughter will be healed."

When the man went to the sale site he found only one monk sitting. He took him home with his baskets to pay him for them. When the monk came in his crazy daughter came out of her room and slapped Abba Daniel and he turned the other cheek according to the commandment. The demon was tormented because of this and he came out screaming in pain, "Wail to us from Jesus' commandments because they annoy us." When the elderly learned about this they praised the Lord saying, "Nothing degrades the power of the devil as doing the commandment of Jesus humbly."

Saint Bladius

+ Love Your Offender:

93. If you heard that a brother insulted or humiliated you in your absence or presence, show him your love to him.

Saint John el-Daragi

94. Love him who rebukes you for your sins.

Saint Asanathius

+ May My Eyes Be Blind to People's Cruelty:

95. Why should you harbor in your hearts trivial things such as these? Unless you are still clinging to the body and pay more attention to people than necessary. You fear to be despised so you don't want people to blame you for your shortcomings and find any pretext to conceal them. But you need to take a closer look at yourself to realize that the spirit of the world is still alive in you and the false wish to be admired by people still strong in your heart. Your disgust with humiliation and shame on account of your shortcomings demonstrates that you are not truly humble and that the world

and its vainglory have not been crucified in you. Pay no attention to people's talk. For if it was said about you everything that malice can make up what harm can reach you if you disregard it, counting it as chafe flying in the wind?. Can that remove one single hair from your head? He who does not have a heart inside him and God is not the focus of his eyes will quickly be upset on hearing a taunt.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

96. Total humility is to put up with insult, disgrace, and everything that has befallen the teacher of virtues, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Saint Barsanuphius

+ Humiliation Is Less Harmful Than Honor:

97. He who tolerates his enemy when insulted by him is strong and forbearing. But he who does not tolerate insult will not tolerate honor, also. For an insult is less harmful than an honor.

Saint Timotheous

+ Humiliation Had The Effect of A Cure For A Repenting Patient:

98. He who humiliates you acts as Jesus' iron, for while insulting you he comforts you and saves you from false praise. He who rejects and rebukes you acts as the purifying medication of Jesus. If you cannot tolerate this medication, you do yourself injustice. As for that brother, he did not do you any harm. This pain that has been manifested in you is indicative of your weakness. Otherwise, you would not have suffered on taking the medication. Therefore you should give credit to the brother who humiliated you because through him you came to know your deadly disease.

Saint Abba Pachomius the Great

99. Let us bear our brethren's taunts to escape self-glory.

Saint Abba Isaiah

100. If you set yourself up for repentance, every day in which you do not encounter an insult does not count.

Mar Isaac

101. Humility is the home of divinity. Wherever it is God will reside in it. If you humble yourself, God will abide in you with His entire kingdom. So, ignite in yourself the love of His divinity, for He will make you like a deaf person and you will see all evils as if they were good deeds. The affronts, humiliation, derision and bitter insults you will recognize as good deeds, not evils. If you are grieved when insulted by a relative you will only close your door to the Son of God. For if you return an insult with an insult, He will never abide in you. If you really want Him to abide in you, just dispel from yourself all the pains of pride.

Mar Yakoub Al Serougi

102. There once were three fraternal philosophers. One of them died and left behind a small child after entrusting him to one of his two friends. When the child grew up the guardian wanted to teach him philosophy. So, he ordered him to go away for three years and give a portion of his money to whoever insulted him. After three years he

came back to his guardian who did not accept him but told him that he was not yet disciplined. “Go back again and give a fee to whoever insults you!” So he did as he was told but when he came back he was sent with a letter to a friend in Athenus, the seat of the Council of the Wise. At the door was sitting an old wise man who insulted every one who entered. When the young man entered the old man insulted him but he laughed. The philosopher said, “I insult you and you laugh!” In response the young man said, “Don’t you want me to be happy when for three years I have been giving money to whoever insults me? But now I have found some one who insults me for free. That’s why I laughed.” The philosopher said, “Welcome on board to the Council of Philosophers. This is the door to the City of God; our forefathers entered it joyfully when they tolerated insults and humiliation.”

Saint Abba Makarius the Great

+ Devils dread the endurer of humiliation:

103. When devils see a man who has been insulted or humiliated does not get grieved but puts up with the insult and humiliation patiently, they dread him because they can then see that he is walking God’s path.

Saint Abba Makarius the Great

+ Failure to return the humiliation is a tribute in itself

104. He who is bad-mouthed but does not return the insult but instead extols and thanks the insulter will have the extolment return to him rather than go to the insulter.

Saint John the Golden Mouthed

+ There is no lasting humiliation

105. What good is dignity talk? It evaporates in the air. What is the consequence of a passing loss from a free insult? People die and with them die their dignity and their insults, also.

Saint Abba Antony the Great

106. Do not be saddened or grieved over any thing in this world. And do not worry if you were insulted by all people, for they are like the wind-borne dust. Rather, grieve if you did something triggering an insult.

Saint Abba Antony the Great

There are some who crave an insult:

107. If you want to be truly humble crave humiliation and persecution as a hungry person would crave food because in all fairness you deserve it; it’s not condescension on your part.

Father John of Constadt

2. The Humble Masters Obedience

Obedience is conducive to humility:

108. From obedience comes humility and from humility healing from pains.

Saint John el-Daragi

109. The proud loves bossing but the humble loves obedience.

Saint John el-Daragi

110. If you knowingly tear apart your inclinations you will acquire humility.

Saint Abba Isaiah

Obedience is a force and an honor:

112. Obedience and humility subject the beasts to us.

Saint Abba Abraham

113. An elderly was once asked: “Why do the devils fight us so fiercely?” He said, “Because we have laid down our weapon, that is, obedience, humility and submissiveness.”

114. Obedience is a monk’s honor. He who has acquired it will incline God’s ears to him and will stand before the crucified, the God of Glory, intimately because it was through His obedience to His Father that He was crucified for our sake.

Saint Father Irabis

The wage of obedience:

115.And when they thus select one and install him, let the wills of those who follow him submit to his will, as the disciple says, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for those who rebel against the authority will bring judgment upon themselves.” Complete and true submission to those whose guidance has disciplined them does not consist in getting away from evil as commanded but in doing every good deed after consulting with them. For asceticism, while it is all-good, if practiced by one of his own free will without obeying the master, his sin will be greater, for he who rebels against authority rebels against God. The reward of obedience is greater than the reward of asceticism.

Saint Basilus the Great

116. Saint Abba John the Short once told the brethren: “Who sold Joseph?” They said, “His brothers.” He said, “No, not his brothers!” “Who then sold him?” they enquired. He said, “His humility sold him! Because he was in a position to tell his buyer that he was their brother, but he kept silent and so he was sold by his humility. By that humility he became the king’s administrator in charge of the land of Egypt.”

Saint Bladius

Conceding one’s own opinion:

117. An indication of pride is man’s conviction of his own opinion.

Saint Abba Pimen

118. But failure to submit to others when it is the right thing to do is indicative of pride and stubbornness.

Saint Abba Toma el-Kambisi

119. Unless the disciple leaves his fantasies behind, humbles himself, and becomes submissive in everything, he will not reach the City of Peace.

Saint Barsenuphius

120. Strive, my son, to do another's will rather than your own will. Always choose to possess the least not the most and always ask for the lowliest place, to be the least of all men, for such a man will enter the region of rest and peace.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

Obedience of Parents:

121. Do not speak of your wisdom or knowledge, but humbly follow your holy fathers' counsel.

Saint Gregorgius, Head of Cyprus Hermits

122. Those who are wise in their own eyes seldom follow humbly the others' steps.

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

123. My son, you have to obey and be humble to spiritual fathers lest you should fall like the devils, for through their pride and disobedience to God they fell and perished.

Saint Abba Barsenuphius

124. Therefore, we should, my beloved, emulate the obedience of saints. Ponder what was said of our Father Abraham when God commanded him, "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you." He obeyed God at once and left behind all his possessions and elected for the sake of God to be a wretched stranger for this was his prime virtue.

When he came to Palestine, the land God gave him to be a stranger in, there was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while. There they took his wife away from him. He did not rebel against God's plan but endured meekly this harsh injustice for the sake of God. Not only this, but it happened again when Abimelech sent for his wife Sarah and took her. He did not resist but thankfully endured. That is because he was resolved in his heart to obey God in every thing, thus he put up with every thing patiently and never for a moment challenged what God was doing to him. He focused all his attention on obeying God's commandments to him utterly and without delay. That is why God finally gave him his blessed son Isaac as a gift to him for his long and consistent patience.

After that, when Isaac grew up a little and manifested to his parents the promise that through him their offspring would be multiplied, God ordered Abraham to take Isaac up a mountain and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering. When he heard this final order and discerned this nature-defying direful service, that is, to slaughter his own son with his own hands, he obeyed and endured meekly and firmly, never allowing his mind to be stunned or his heart to be upset. He did not collapse, but acted as someone who was going to slaughter a lamb. Thus he carried the yoke of true obedience and went with his son quietly to execute God's order. He did not check the cause of this order or its purpose for he took utmost care to deliver full obedience. Thus he became the righteous chosen servant through his faith and obedience.

Let's now talk about how much our Savior's disciples obeyed him. When He called them they left every thing and followed him. He told them of the pain and suffering they would go through on his account, but this did not separate them from Him, even though they were wishing against those hateful things because they hoped that He would reign quickly and that they would be gloried with Him in His Kingdom. This is borne out by the fact that Peter began to rebuke Him when he told his disciples that he must suffer many things at the hands of the elders and by what the sons of Zebedee wanted Him to do for them. It is written that Peter said, "Never Lord. This shall never happen to you!!" (Matt 16:22). And the sons of Zebedee said, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." (Mark: 10:37). In spite of these wishes He told them, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me." (Matt 24:9). They did not answer him at all, nor did they say: We came to you hoping for victory, everlasting life, and glory, and now you warn of persecution. Instead, they bent their hearts under the yoke of obedience and immediately submitted themselves to what He told them. They endured insult, beating, stoning, humiliation, and the dragging to jails, synagogues, crucifixion, and death. They endured all these so energetically that they rejoiced, as they felt worthy of sharing Christ's suffering. For it is written that they rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name (Acts 5:41). The monk therefore should demonstrate obedience to his teacher. For Christ had given through his disciples an example for us to follow. The teacher is required to fulfill the example set by our Savior, that is, to serve as an intercessor between God and people, raising to God the salvation of those who obey him, like an offering.

That is what we have come to know from Jesus when He installed Peter as a shepherd, saying, "Do you love me more than these?! Feed my lambs." This power and authority He gave equally to all shepherds and teachers from one generation to the next. He also gave them equal power and authority to bind and loosen people's transgressions. Therefore, hermits should obey their teachers as lambs would their shepherds without attempting to check the orders given by their leaders. And just as the carpenter and builder use their own tools appropriately, and no tool would say, "I am not going to do this job," but rather becomes pliable in the hands of its use, the hermit should relate to his teacher as the lamb does to the shepherd and the tool to the tool user, following him and obeying his orders in order to complete spiritual growth. And just as the tool does not choose the job to work on but the tool user is the one who does that, so should the hermit do likewise because his teacher and leader is wiser and more knowledgeable of his motives. It is very difficult for man to know himself and heal it by himself because men are prone to love themselves. Therefore, man should not resist what he is ordered to do.

Saint Basilus the Great

125. And if this man does not obey his father, then why should he stay with him? If he chose to stay then he should comply with whatever task he is assigned to do, and in every matter should manifest humility and obedience to death, recalling God who was obedient to death on the cross. He who resists and responds differently will only betray his pride and lack of sincerity because no one should disobey his teacher unless he is cast off first.

Saint Basilus the Great

126. Saint John Al Tabasi, disciple of Abba Apollo, was known for being very obedient. In that area was a cemetery and a fierce hyena lived there. When the sheikh (master) saw a Yemeni jar on the ground at the cemetery he asked John to go and pick it up. "But, father, what shall I do with the hyena? He asked. The master said," When it approaches you tie it up and bring it here." The disciple proceeded to do as he was told and it was evening. When the hyena walked toward him he moved forward and it ran away from him but he chased it, saying, "My master told me to hold and tie you up." So, the hyena stopped and he was thus able to hold and tie her up. He took the hyena to the master who was sitting in a pensive mood. On seeing his disciple he was surprised that he was able to bring the hyena. So, in order to protect him from pride, he rebuked him, saying, "I told you to bring the hyena, not a dog!" So, the disciple immediately untied and released the hyena.

Saint Bladius

127. A holy father once said that he had seen four ranks rising in heaven: the first was a patient putting up with his illness and thanking God; the second was a healthy person hosting strangers and comforting the weak; the third was a diligent recluse living in the wilderness; and the fourth was a disciple obeying his father for the sake of God's name. It was found that the disciple's rank was higher than the other three. The father was asked how the lowest in rank became the highest, and he said, "Each one did good of his own will but the disciple suppressed his will and obeyed his teacher, and obedience for the sake of God is the best virtue."

Saint Bladius

128. While in the monastery we prefer obedience to asceticism because one teaches pride and the other humility. We should not look after our own affairs but obey what he, in whom we have confided our secret, orders us to do.

Saint Seferniki

How far shall I obey?

129. The apostle has taught us to obey one another, for he has instituted for us the obedience of Christ who humbled Himself until death – even death on a cross (Phil 2:8). He said, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Phil 2:5), and in another place said," Be devout one to another with spiritual love." The crown of obedience is for man to be humbled until death. For he who refuses to do a job assigned to him and asks some one else to do it corrupts humility and breaks loose from it. In this way he does not reject his own self but pursues his own wishes and becomes inclined to resist commandments. Since man does not know what is best for him he tends to choose what is bound to hurt him in the belief that it will do him good. He will also make his brothers suspicious of him. In short, lack of obedience is the root of great evils. If he has a good and solid reason not to obey he should mention it to his superiors and let them test the matter and resolve it as they see fit.

Saint Basilus the Great

130. "Father, what shall I do to consummate obedience?" "Listen, I have heard about two men, each was given seven acres to harvest in one day. When one of them saw the acres he said to himself, 'Who among men can harvest all these in one day?' He then walked away and did not harvest anything. The other, however, said, 'I have to do my utmost and should not stop the harvest.' Who of the two then pleased his

master?” asked the father. “The man who did his utmost, of course,” I said. “Then go and do your utmost and I believe that you will be counted among those who had consummated obedience in the Kingdom of God,” he said.

Saint Baghnetius

131. Train your body to obey your spirit, and train your spirit to obey God.

Saint Abba Pimen

3. The Humble Masters Prayer

132. Prayer is the mother of virtues; seed the heart with humility.

Saint Aghnatius the Bishop

133. A lot of prayers humbles the heart.

Saint Mar Isaac the Syrian

134. A lot of profit is achieved by a humble prayer.

Saint John el-Daragi

135. No one is qualified for heavenly comfort unless he has laboriously subdued himself to spiritual penitence. If you want to acquire penitence go to bed and insulate yourself from the noise of the world for it was written, “Repent in your beds.”

Saint Toma el-Kambisi

136. Reader: Do not rush to blame others if you want to discern knowledge in your reading. Rather, follow with all your heart the steps of humble prayer because it will open for you the door of knowledge.

Saint Agregorius, Head of Cyprus Hermits

137. Do repent, pray and shed tears humbly and with a broken heart.

Mar Isaac

Humility does not picture God in any form:

138. Do not form pictures of the Divine as you pray, and never allow your mind to picture God in any form, because God Almighty is not primordial matter. If you know this you will be able to understand what is appropriate for what is not primordial matter, which is God. Guard yourself against the traps of devils because if they see you praying humbly and purely they will make strange forms appear suddenly before you to attract you into the trap of self-pride. They will do this by picturing the divine for you and make you believe that God has appeared to you, but God is immeasurable and indescribable.

Saint Aughris

Do not crave visions and angels:

139. Do not long to see angels, powers, or Christ with your senses lest you should lose your mind and be seen as a wolf rather than a lamb and worship the devils, your enemies. For pride and vainglory cause the mind to go astray. When the mind

becomes arrogant it aspires to see God in forms. We should never ignore this deception, for at a given time the devils will divide themselves; some will fight you and make you realize that they are devils. If you prayed for help, the rest of the devils would approach you as holy angels, when in fact they are devils, and cast out the first group to deceive you into the belief that they are holy angels, not devils. The devils also will make evil suggestions to you, and then stir you to pray and resist them. After that, they will depart of their own volition so that you may be deceived and think highly of yourself and become arrogant that you have begun to defeat your own thoughts and scare the devils.

Saint Aughris

Praying Audibly:

140. Question: Does one have to pray audibly or silently?

Answer: For psalm reading and prayer, they should not just be done silently but by the lips also. For the prophet said, “Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” (Psalms 51:15). The apostle also said, “The fruits of lips praising His name.” Also, a prayer should be free of any earthly thoughts and should be done in tears and humility because the holy fathers did not correct anything except by hard labor and humility.

Saint Barsenuphius

141. How often did I seclude myself to be alone with You and indulge in a sweet discourse with You! In that seclusion I sang the psalms of David, Your best friend, which contained the rites of faith and worship and a remedy for the malady of pride and vainglory. As I sang them, humility produced intonation in my tongue and the heat of fire glowed in my heart so much so that I wanted to sing them everywhere in the world in order to crush the spirit of vainglory gripping the children of Adam.

Saint Agustinos

4. The Humble Calls Himself to Account

142. He who has known his weakness and failure has attained the utmost degree of humility.

Mar Isaac

143. The humble is not someone to be reckoned with in his own view, nor should he do anything by himself.

Mar Isaac

144. If that humble man sinned in any matter he would quickly repent and hastily take refuge in God’s protection and justice due to his sound mind and discernment.

Saint John the Golden Mouth

145. Grasp, O man, your weak nature. This is sufficient to make you always acquire humility because then you will realize that you are dust and ashes and death, a companion, is near you.

Saint John the Golden Mouth

146. Blessed is the man who has known his weakness, because this knowledge will be a good foundation for him and a source of prosperity. But he who does not know his weakness is approaching the fall of pride.

Mar Isaac the Syrian

147. What is Perfection? Deep humility. How to acquire it? By remembering our failures.

Mar Ishak

148. An old monk was asked, "What do you think of someone who says that he sees Angels?" He said, "Blessed is he who can see his sins all the time."

149. Do not bother your mind trying to find out the faults and defects of people but rather focus on searching your own weaknesses and sins.

St. Basile

150. If we feel that we are accepted by the Supreme Judge it is because He, being the Righteous One, rejoices at the sight of a sinner's repentance.

St. Niels

151. The best thing a man can achieve is to admit his sins before God, blame himself, and keep alert to any affliction that may happen until his last breath.

St. Anthony

152. If one day you miss to take a pause to face yourself in search of faults committed or weaknesses you gave way to, in order to correct yourself, that day is not accounted for in the days of your life.

Mar Ishak

5. The Humble Person Does Not Condemn Anyone

I am the least among men

153. The humble man does not get angry, does not remain in dispute with anyone, and does not condemn anyone. Rather, he considers all men more worthy than himself.

St. Barsanofios

154. Do not despise any man, nor condemn him even if you see him committing a sin; condemnation is the result of self- pride. As for the humble one, he considers all men better than himself.

St. Bakhomios

I am the most vulnerable man to falling

155. If you see someone committing a sin in public or falling into a serious fault, you should not consider yourself a better person. You do not know for sure how long you will keep in righteousness; we are all are vulnerable to fall and should keep this in mind.

St. Thomas of Cambyse

156. If you hear a person condemning another, do not be intimidated and approve him; this angers God. Rather, you may say humbly: "Forgive me, my brother, I am a miserable man plunged in the things you are mentioning. I cannot bear to hear about it".

Amba Isiah

Do not despise a sinner

157. If you see a fallen person, do not despise or discredit him or else you will fall in the hands of your enemies; practice humility that protects from sins".

Amba Isiah

158. Like a dead man does not utter a word, the humble man has no contempt for any one, even if he finds him worshipping idols.

Amba Basile the Great

159. Do not discriminate the vilified - those in prosperity or those who are poor - for fear you are subjected to the beating that hurt them and ask for compassion and you will find none.

Mar Ishak, the Syrian

160. Do not despise anyone for whatever reason; have all people bless you.

Amba Anthony the Great

161. The holy people do not condemn a brother, but they share his pain as he is one of their members. They have compassion for him and comfort him; they approach him to save him the way fishers relax the rope little by little so that the net does not give in and the fish is lost; they wait for the fish to stop resistance and they start pulling it gently. That is the way holy people attract the fallen one through much patience and love to help him stand up.

St Dorothea

162. I know someone who has a reputation for physical endurance. He used to fast for periods of two or four consequent days. On one occasion, he was fasting four days and he collapsed. He heard a voice saying: "Do not despise any of your brothers or condemn any creatures; as for you, do what you can but first humble yourself."

St Joseph

I close my ears to someone's condemnation

I do not scrutinize others behavior

163. Be aware not to criticize people's actions, not to be suspicious, nor proud; avoid arguing heresies or errors. Be simple, as if you were teaching fishers.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

164. If you start categorizing your brothers' characters and their life style, you will definitely be a loser. You will condemn people and by doing so, you indirectly blame the Pantocrator, then justify yourself, thus giving way to pride. Consider the many sins that were the fruits of this fatal tree!

Mar Ishak the Syrian

165. One of the brothers used to see God's grace on the altar. After he told one of the brethren, "Why do you eat early morning?" he never saw it again.

Amba Yousef

Behavior can be changed through repentance

166. Do not judge a brother, but think of repentance. You might have seen him sinning, yet you never know about the time of death. The thief on the right hand was a murderer and Judas Iscariot was a disciple of Christ, one of His own and the fund keeper for the apostles. Yet, in a quite short time, both changed: the thief entered paradise, and the disciple hanged himself and perished.

St. Athanastas

167. Supposing that a person acts in good faith to please God and you think otherwise; or if he sinned, how would you know if he repented and was forgiven or if God condemned him in this world because of his sins? Therefore, he who wants to be saved has to only consider his own faults. For example, a person seeing a brother committing a sin sheds tears saying, "Today, this brother has sinned. Tomorrow, it will be me. Maybe God will allow this man to repent and not allow the same to me." In truth, cursed be the man who condemns a brother. He will perish because he has usurped the right to judge from the real Judge and has hurt those who listen to him. The prophet, referring to that man says, "Curse be upon him who gives a brother a cup of impure water ...cursed be that man who creates suspicion." Lack of love is actually the cause of such things; love ignores all defaults.

St. Dorotheos

168. It is said that Amba John the Short used to cry bitterly at the sight of some one sinning, saying, "This one has sinned but he might repent. As for me, I will sin tomorrow and might not have time to repent." This is a better way of thinking instead of condemning others.

St. Paladius

Hence, honor everybody

169. Let us honor our siblings.

Amba Moses the Black

Cover others' defects

170. In his cell, a brother did something horrible. Father Makarius came to know about it and did not want to rebuke him. When the brothers heard that, they lost patience and persisted to watch him, until they saw the woman entering his cell. They went to Amba Makarius and informed him. He answered, "Do not believe my children, God forbid this to our blessed brother." "Father, come and see for yourself so that you can believe us." He went with them to the said brother's cell as if to visit him and asked the brothers to keep at a distance. At the sight of the father in his cell, the brother lost his countenance and was terrified. He took the woman and hid her under a big recipient he had. The Father sat on the recipient and ordered the brothers in. They started to search the cell and did not find anyone; they did not ask their father to move. They were asked to leave and they did. Then, the father took the brother's hand saying, "My brother, sentence yourself before they sentence you; sentencing belongs to God alone," he sheered him and went away. As he was leaving, he heard a

voice saying, "Blessed are you, Makarius, the spiritual man, who imitated your Creator in covering the falls of people."

St. Baladius

For he who knows himself, he does not condemn

171. A brother once asked an old man: "Why do you think is it that I always condemn people?" The old man answered, "Because you do not yet know yourself. He who knows himself does not consider others defects."

172. We cannot understand what pleases God unless we humble ourselves, so do not focus your mind on discovering the defects and sins of others, but rather concentrate on finding out your own defects and sins.

Amba Bassilious the Great

173. An old monk was asked, "What is humbleness?" He answered, "It is a great divine action and a way that is difficult for the body; you consider yourself a sinner and the least among men." The brother asked, "How can I be the least among men?" The old man said, "Do not consider others sins but yours and keep asking God to have mercy on you."

174. There are several ways towards repentance so that each one can choose which is the best way to be saved. One of these is humbleness. To be humble is to cut the link with your sins. A clear proof is given to us in the Gospel when Jesus speaks about the Pharisee and the Publican saying that both went up to pray in the temple. The Pharisee kept listing his qualities saying, "I am no sinner, unlike most of the people and that Publican," (Luke 18: 9-14). He was such a miserable, greedy man, condemning all people and causing distress to his neighbor, not excepting one individual from condemnation; praising himself for being different from everyone, fasting two days per week and paying alms to the poor. Whereas the Publican, hearing the Pharisee, he did not argue with him about his condemnation, or his knowledge of the Publican's life and behavior. He just got up and walked at a distance bending his head and worshipping God, saying, "Have mercy on me, O God, and forgive the sinner I am." Believe me brothers, the Publican humbled himself and was justified; as for the Pharisee, he was innocent as he went up to the altar but he was no more on his way back.

St John Chrysostom

175. To the chaste man, I say, "Do not condemn the adulterer. You broke the law as well." He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not condemn."

St. Dorothis

176. Do not condemn your brother even if you see him unable to fulfill all his duties for fear you find yourself amid enemies and you fall back in your old sins.

Amba Anthony the Great

177. A council gathered to judge one of the monks, having committed a sin, and a message was sent to Amba Moses the Black to request his presence. He refused to go. The regional priest went to him and told him that all of the fathers gathered and were awaiting his presence. He took a big bag, which he filled with sand and carried

on his shoulders. He also took a small bag containing a small amount of sand and placed it in front of him. At this sight, the fathers asked him what that was. He answered, "These are my sins, which I put behind my back so I do not see them and feel bad about them. Whereas this small amount of sand in front of me, are the sins of my brother for which I shall condemn him." They understood the lesson and forgave the brother without saddening him.

St. Baladius

178. A man came to St. Tadros the Egyptian to sell him a quantity of onions. He bought it and told his disciple to get a similar quantity of corn and give it to the man. Some of the corn had been cleaned and some was not. The disciple got from the latter; the old man looked at him sadly and the corn was spilled and the recipient broken. The disciple bent down in apology but the old man said, "It's not your fault but rather mine because I asked you to do that." He then went to get himself the corn and presented it to the vendor together with the onions.

179. If I observe all the virtues and call my brother foolish, I then, deserve to go to hell. This is the saying of Jacob that, "If a man follows all the law and sins in only one of its decrees, he is guilty in the whole. Without humility, nothing can please God. Do not distract your mind in search of others' faults, but focus on searching your own faults and defects."

St. Basilious

180. If we mind our own business, we will not condemn others. Most of the things we blame others for are, in reality, in us.

Amba Niels

181. If you want to get rid of Satan's persisting temptations of adultery and effectively destroy him, keep your mouth from condemning others in their absence and always admit your sins. This is a strong weapon and will be of great help to you.

St. Zenon

This commandment alone deserves Heaven

182. One of the monks used to be loose in his walk. On his death-bed and during his last moments, he did not fear death but was rather radiant in soul and filled with joy. He was surrounded by the fathers, as is the custom of the monastery to attend one another's death. One of the eldest asked the dying monk, "Brother, we all know you were always loose and relaxed all your life, how did you get to be so happy and fearless at this hour? We indeed are wondering; with God's help, sit up and tell us your secret so that we all know God's wonders." He immediately found the strength to sit up and said, "Reverend fathers, as you say, I spent my life slacking and sleeping; but at this hour, it happened that the Angels brought the book of my lifetime actions as a monk and asked me if I did recognize it. I answered that it was my life and I recognize it. I also said that from the moment I became a monk, I did not condemn anyone, nor slandered anyone, nor ever slept envious of anyone, nor ever got angry. I wish that our Lord Jesus' word be applied to me when He said, 'Do not condemn so that you be not condemned, forgive so that you be forgiven.' As I was saying that, the book of my sins was torn just because of this little commandment." When he had finished, he gave his spirit out. The brothers were edified and gave glory to God.

St. Baladius

183. Pope Theophilus of Alexandria went to see the Father of Nitria mount and said to him, “What is the best thing you have found in your search for perfection?” He answered, “There is no better thing than blaming myself in everything.” The pope said, “Truly, there is no better way.”

St. Baladius

184. Amba Yousef asked Amba Beyman, “Tell me how to become a monk?” He said, “If you ask for mercy in this world and in the other, tell yourself in everything 'I am what I am,' and do not condemn anyone.”

God hates my prayer when I condemn others

185. Beware of condemning anybody or else God will hate your prayer.

Amba Antonious the Great

God is the One to condemn and not I

186. Merits and condemnation of all creatures belong to God alone who knows the secret of the heart as well as the appearances. Sentencing of each man and each act is His business.

St. Dorotheos

187. As I was sitting in the middle of the wilderness, I was visited by a brother from the monastery that came to check up on me. I inquired about our brothers over there and he said, “They are fine due to your prayers.” I asked again about a particular monk who had a bad reputation. He answered, “Believe me, Father, he did not repent since the time when bad news spread about him.” At hearing him, I said, “OUF!” As I was still articulating this word, I went into lethargy as if my spirit had left me; I was standing in front of the Golgotha with Jesus crucified between two thieves. I went closer to worship Him but He ordered His Angels saying, “He usurped my right to judge and condemned his brother before I condemn him.” I rushed for escape, but my robe was caught by the door which closed on it. I got rid of my robe there. When I came back to my senses I told my brother, “This was the worst day in my life.” He inquired why was that? I related to him my vision and said, “I have destroyed the dress God covered me with.”

Since that day, the saint remained lost in the wilderness for seven years, eating no bread, with no shelter over his head and with no sight of any human being. At last, he saw in a dream God ordering a dress for him and it caused him great joy. Three days after he related his story to us, he passed away.

The occurrence was St. John's of Sinai and was related by St. Baladius

188. It is related that Father Ishak El Tabaissi went to the monastery and condemned a brother for a certain action. He then left towards the wilderness. Then came God's Angel and stood in front of the cell's door and said, “God is asking you where do you want to throw the spirit of this sinner brother whom you have condemned?” He immediately repented and said, “I have sinned, please forgive me.” The Angel answered, “God has forgiven you; but you have to take care of yourself and never again condemn anyone God has not yet condemned.”

St. Baladius

In face of a fault, insinuation may help, but silence is more perfect

189. One of the brothers consulting an old one asked him, “If, living with my brothers, something indecent happens, would you want me to speak?” The old man said, “If they are your elders or almost as old as you, your silence will be gain to you and will save you.” He asked again, “What shall I do then, Father, if the spirits incite me to speak and this is upsetting me?” The old man said, “If there is no way out, remind them humbly, so that you will be behind and you submit to God; meanwhile, for your own protection, be cautious not to slander them. In my opinion, silence is best as it is a proof of humility.”

St. Basilios the Great

6. The Humble Man Despises No One

Keep in Mind God the Universal Giver

190. Have an equal consideration for the least man as for the greatest; for the meanest talent as for the most sublime one. No talent is small or mean when you remember the glory of the Giver, no gift from the sublime God can be small.

St. Thomas of Cambyse

191. Five virtues are indispensable to any category of men in order to possibly aspire at being without blame. On the other hand, observing those virtues is a weapon against evil and results in being loved by God as well as by men. These are: a chaste body; a cautious tongue; abstinence from evil desires; refraining from evil in all things with a divine straight aim; honoring all categories and levels of people above what they deserve. Honor people and you will be honored and gratified by God. Honoring people attracts their honoring you and despise is returned by despise. Honor God and you will be honored by Him.

Mar Ishak

The humble man does not despise anyone

192. Like the dead person is mute, the humble one has no contempt for anyone.

Amba Isaiah

193. Give respect to everybody and do not despise those who know less than you. Be modest with all and do not be angry with the one who glorifies himself over you because he lacks knowledge. Lack of knowledge is the cause of self-glory.

Amba John the Short

194. Anba Daniel was once traveling with a disciple. As they were approaching a place called the city Armon, he said to him, “Go to this monastery and tell the Mother that I have arrived.” This was Amba Armios monastery that sheltered three hundred virgins. He knocked on the door and the porter said in a low voice, “Who is this and what do you want, Father?” He said, “I want to talk with the Mother.” Her answer was that the Mother does not talk to anyone but she could pass her the message. He said, “Tell her that there is a monk who wants to speak to her.” The Mother came at

the door and talked through the porter. The monk said, "For the sake of charity allow us to spend the night with my Father or else we will be eaten by the wild beasts." She answered, "Our rules do not allow a man to sleep here; better for you to be devoured by the beasts than by our enemies, the demons." He said, "It is our Father, Anba Daniel, who sent me to you." She rushed to the entrance door, the virgins following her and paving the way to the Father. At once, she got a recipient and a jug of water and washed his feet; then the virgins took the water and washed their faces excepting one virgin who was said to be an idiot and was staying behind, tied to the door. When the washing was over, the Father went back to the so-called idiot; she paid no attention nor did she even greet him. The virgins shouted at her to stand up and kiss his hand as a sign of respect. The Mother apologized saying to Anba Daniel, "Father, she is mad and has often solicited that I let her outdoors. I did not agree for fear I would be sinning." They served a meal and all of them ate. Then the Father said to his disciple, "Let us keep awake this night; you will see the wonderful virtues of that one they call mad."

With darkness extending over the place, the mad one stood up firmly and raised her hands towards heaven, praising God and worshipping Him. Her tears were flowing abundantly as from a source to extinguish her firing love for God. This was her routine every night unless she heard steps coming towards her. She would then lie down on the ground and pretend to be sleeping. Such was her behavior through all her life. Father Daniel asked his disciple to ask the Mother to come quickly. At the sight of the sister worshipping the Lord Jesus, her hands full of light and Angels joining her in her worship, she wept and said, "What a miserable sinner I am! I kept insulting her, vilifying her, and despising her!" When the bell rang signaling the gathering for prayer, the Mother related what she had seen to the sisters. When the poor sister knew that they had found out the truth, she wrote a note and posted it at the door of the monastery and left. She wrote, "I am the miserable one who kept fighting the enemy who sorted me out and took me away from you and from your faces radiant with life. Your spiteful words and contempt have been the fruits I have gathered everyday; isolating me was my gain and my capital was growing every day and hour. Blessed are the moments when you called me an idiot and crazy. As from my side, you are forgiven and innocent from sin. I will be your witness on Judgment Day. None of you is reckless nor loving to boast, nor slave to desire but you are all pure." It was her last message and Anba Daniel after reading it said, "This is the only reason for my spending the night here." The sisters confessed all the bad treatments they had been guilty of and he absolved them. He instructed them that the greatest sin is to despise anyone as Moses said, "Man was created as God's image and likeness, dignified and deserving respect." He then went back to his monastery.

St. Baladius

195. It will not hurt you to humble yourself with all people but boasting over any one person will hurt you.

Thomas of Cambyse

196. Anba Nielsen was once asked how one could humble himself, he answered, "Consider all the creatures - even the animals - better than yourself and condemn no one."

Have respect for everyone

197. Consider all the brothers as good persons and teach your tongue to honor every one.

Amba John the Short

198. Let us have respect for all the brothers in order to avoid condemnation.

Amba Isaiah

199. The old monk advised his disciples to use a certain language when speaking of their brothers as for example saying, "Such is more charitable than me, or such is more committed to the rules, or such is more righteous," on condition to mean what you say. It helps you consider yourself as the least of all and God's spirit will dwell in you. Whereas, despising the brothers and glorifying yourself will take away God's grace and let you fall a prey to the body, which hardens the heart like rock.

200. How to avoid wronging others? He, who blames himself, considers his brother as more respectable and virtuous than himself. But he who thinks he is righteous, he considers his brother as mean and spiteful. That is doing him wrong.

Anba Beyman

7. The Humble Person Is Modest While Reading About Humility

201. Let your readings be a guide towards humbleness rather than a distraction for the mind.

202. There is no merit in undertaking whatever deep a research on the Holy Trinity if you are not humble in heart; the Holy Trinity might even reject you. Salvation and sanctification are not achieved through noble words.

203. Considering myself, I come to despise and belittle myself! Even if I find some good in me, I should know that I am nothing... I just need to submit to Your rules, O Lord, in all humility, knowing that I am absolutely nil...I can find nothing in myself to boast about or any virtue to make me proud ... considering the wisdom of Your judgments.

204. Let us contemplate the crowns allotted to the saints in Heaven and the happiness of those rejected on earth as if they were denied the right to exist. There is no doubt we have all reasons to consider that we are like dust, choosing to submit to all people rather than to be superior to anyone... we should stop wishing the riches and pleasures of this life preferring to rejoice in face of difficulties out of love for God and consider it a gain to be counted as nothingness among the people.

All of the above are attributed to St Thomas of Cambyse

205. Like the salt that gives good taste to all food, such is the effect of our Lord's humility and teachings, which underscore all the virtues that are coupled with humility.

St. Gregory

206. The Lord said, “Take lesson from me as I am meek and humble in heart so that you may find peace of spirit.” Thus, in order to acquire humbleness, you need to understand what He did, consider His patience, and be patient as Him.

St. Barsanofious

207. The Lord said, “Learn from me that I am meek and humble in heart,” that is to say that it is from Him only and not from an Angel, nor a man nor a book that we can learn the true humility, “and you will find the peace of your soul,” that is peace from adversities.

208. It is a sign of imperfection to lose hope when we consider the virtues of the saints, which are above nature; rather, we should benefit from their example either to stimulate us for improving our behavior, or to help us realize our weakness and gain humbleness.

The two above are attributed to St. John Eldergui

209. With a desire to understand the Holy Bible, I found it to be obscure when read by scholars or wise men, but accessible to children: simple in its way, easy in its language and full of secrets. At the time I read it, I was not capable to appreciate it and ignored the means to get rid of my haughtiness in order to understand the depth of its humility. I then focused on reading it and it seemed to me that it was not good enough to be compared to Cicero’s book: my over self-esteem did not allow space enough to enjoy the simplicity of its words. My eyes were unable to reach the inner content between the lines. This was the expression of its humble author in which I had no share.

St. Augustine

210. Keep remembering the lives of the saints in order to become envious of their actions and follow their example.

St Moses the Black

211. Standing before the tribunal of God, shall we say that we did not hear, or we did not know, or we were not told? Here are the books that contain everything.

St Bakhomios

8. Modest People Do Not Care For Embellishment

212. If you love humbleness do not care for appearances: who likes appearances cannot bear to be despised or humbled and will not rush to perform vilifying jobs. God’s servant does not embellish his body: the love of looking physically good is a moral sickness, even if the actions are great.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

213. If you lack humility of heart, strive for physical humility and you will be granted humility of heart as it is written, “Ask and you will receive.”

St Makarius the Great

214. The ascetic does not look for the nice clothes or shoes but his choice goes to less. Choosing the best and leaving the less for others is being proud and lover of worldly appearances far from modesty and love.

St Basile the Great

215. The modest person does not find pleasure in crowds, clamor, riches, embellishment or enjoyment but prefers poverty, need, and scarcity always.

216. The humble in heart is also humble in appearance; the physically impudent is the same in heart.

217. Humility is obtained through humble actions and love through loving actions.

Bishop Theophan

218. **Better be clothed in humility than in purple.**

St Ishak the Syrian

219. When aspiring to higher adoration, you need to be humble in everything and provide your body with only its minimum necessities; those are at the same time the modest, inexpensive and accessible needs, thus, without anxiety about clothing or else.

You also need to choose a back seat, being dressed accordingly, unlike those who are after false glory and wear attractive and rich clothes. The Corinthians were blamed for offering sumptuous food among less fortunate people. In the same way, wearing rich clothes humbles the poor ones. We do not have to compare with those who dwell in the king's palaces; let us follow the example of the Angel, predecessor of our Savior, 'the greatest among the prophets, born of women' John the Baptist, who used to wear camels' skin and his alike among the saints.

As described by the prophet "a dress to cover our body" as suits our original nature: "God made leather clothes and dressed them with," (Gen 3: 21). Moreover, as stated (in Luke 11: 13), "He, who has two clothes, let him give one to the one who has not." Thus, clothes are to cover the body and protect it from cold or bad weather: this is the only purpose.

St Basile the Great

220. It is related that none in the Roman palace was as sumptuously dressed as Anba Arsanious; it is also cited that as he left the palace for the monastery, none was more modestly dressed than him.

221. St Makary was getting ready to meet the Emperor Mercianos. Boutros, a deacon, noticing that his clothes were dirty suggested that he wears something appropriate for a king's visit. The Bishop answered, "Believe me, my son, the king's heart is even dirtier and if I had clothes dirtier than these, I would wear them. The only occasion for me to wear bright clothes is when I go to meet the King Jesus. Princes and rulers embellish themselves with beautiful garments in the presence of the King more than they would do in the presence before whom all will stand. As for me I keep my cloth brilliant until I meet those I love, John and Eliza."

9-The Humble Man Is Not After Praise But Avoids It

Praise spoils man

222. Like rust affects iron, so does praise to the heart that enjoys it; the fruit of the vine gets spoiled by surrounding black beans and unjustified praise hinders man's growth as well.

Anba Moses the Black

223. "What subject of praise do I have? Why do I wish to be estimated for... because of my void? In fact, false glorification is a disastrous epidemic that excludes man from true glory and deprives him from the divine grace: looking for peoples' praise ruins genuine virtues."

St. Thomas of Cambyse

224. The biggest vice for a man is to justify himself by himself.

Anba Moses the Black

225. Once a treasure is uncovered, it decreases; similarly, virtues that get publicity are destructed and ruined. The same as the candle melts when exposed to the fire, so it is of the soul; when praised, it relaxes and loses its enthusiasm.

St. Severnika

226. When someone shows you respect, be alarmed and hate yourself. Do not shy out from admitting your wrongs and escape those who glorify you for fear they drown your boat.

St. Thimotheus

Do not glorify yourself for anything; we are all subject to change

227. Do not boast about riches if you have plenty, nor about strong friends. Rather be proud about God the Giver of everything and most of all, of giving Himself. Do not boast about your body being strong or beautiful: a simple disease can make it ugly. Do not be proud for being smart or a genius for fear you offend Him who is the author of your natural gifts. Do not consider yourself better than any other or you might be worse before Him who knows men's hearts. Do not boast about your good actions because God has different measures and might be displeased by what is being appreciated by men.

St Thomas of Cambyse

228. Almighty God can change anything a person is proud of in order to recall him to humility.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

229. You do not have anything to boast about but rather a lot of things to despise yourself for. You are more vulnerable than you can conceive.

St John Cassian

230. My friend, why do you feel proud of being a successful and rich man? Your riches can be given to someone else, or stolen by criminals or sinners or evil and malicious people, so what is it to boast about? Even if you make good use of it, do not

glorify yourself or you will be transgressing the commandment. Or if you misuse it, you then become slave to the riches and a prey to the serpent of this world. Let us consider what happens to a person sick with fever and he drinks much water: he will be satisfied for the moment he is drinking and then he will be back to a firing throat. Should he be proud for that? And on what basis?

St John Chrysostom

231. An old monk had thoughts of self- pride about good deeds he had done in the past deserving to be counted as a man of God. He reprimanded himself saying, “I am still walking my way and not worthy of praise since I did not yet reach the end of the route.”

St Baladius

232. Extreme humility requires that possessing riches and fortunes be no reason for pride or boasting. Let us, brothers, forget about these vanities since the one that takes pride in spiritual virtues or divine talents will perish for punishment. How greater then, the punishment that awaits the one who boasts about miseries?

St John Chrysostom

Let us remember our evils

233. When troubled by praise think of our villainy.

St John El Dergui

234. This is a story about a young shepherd called Makar who involuntarily killed his friend while they were playing; nobody ever knew about the incident. He immediately took his way to the wilderness, became a monk and lived there in a sterile land in the cold and the heat. Later on, he built a church in the middle of the wilderness where he lived for twenty-five years. Meanwhile, he was granted the divine grace that strengthened him over Satan; he found joy in the asceticism of the monks.

St Baladius (the narrator of the story), having lived by his side for some time, took the liberty to inquire about his thoughts in relation to the murder sin. He answered, “I carried on very tired with this thought haunting me day and night. Finally, God released me from my anguish.

I even came to thank God for the involuntary murder that caused my salvation. When Satan tempted me saying, “You have become a great man surpassing all the monks,” instead of succumbing to self-glorification, I would answer, “What about the murder I committed and the great sufferings that await me in hell?” They would go away or sometimes say, “What are you, murderer, doing here without any repentance? You are tiring yourself uselessly. Go to the worldly life and do whatever you want or else you lose both.” I would answer, “God had mercy on His servant Moses who did not deserve to see God until he fled Egypt for the wilderness because he involuntary committed murder.”

St Baladius

235. As Anba Moses the Black was anointed a priest, a Bishop told him, “Here you are now all white.” He answered, “I wish the inside would be as white as the appearance.”

Remember those above you

236. If you are granted privileges, keep in mind those who are more gifted so that you remain humble.

St Thomas of Cambyse

237. St Isidorus, a priest from Elaskit, having thoughts of being a great man, would reprimand himself saying, "Have I become Anba Anthony, or perhaps Anba Bemoi?" Saying this gave him peace.

Do not imagine reasons for praise

238. He who loves praise, imagine reasons for that; as for the humble one, he does not feel at ease when praised.

St Ishak the Syrian

Keep in the dark what attracts praise

239. God's grace teaches us self-control and how to avoid undeserved praise and self-glorification, and also to keep secret actions of merit that justify praise out of humility. It also implies to ask that God be glorified, in every knowledge as in every talent He awarded us, out of love.

St Thomas of Cambyse

240. Finding inexistent defects with oneself and keeping secret one's talents and virtues is reaching deep humility.

St John El Dergui

Love of praise is a source of negligence

241. A lover of praise cannot avoid the defect of negligence.

Let us search God's praise

242. When praised for trying to progress in virtue, let us not be impressed but let us consider the Giver of true praise.

St Basile the Great

243. The pious man does not give in to the praise and glorification of men, for the one who is praised by many belongs to their category. Such man who delivers the oppressed from the oppressor, who straightens those who err and clears the way for them, who praises the righteous men and gives them respects, he certainly deserves praise. However, do not be satisfied with the purposeful praise of men but seek only the truthful praise of God with no confusion of men's praise. Be assured that you cannot win the praise of all men, nor can you do without the praise of any.

St John Chrysostom

10- The Humble Man Does Not Get Angry Nor Cause Anger To Anyone

244. The humble man does not anger anyone and does not get angry at anyone.

Mar Ishak

245. The humble man does not get angry, nor dispute, nor condemn anyone, but he considers all men better than himself.

St Barsonofious

246. No place for anger with humility.

St John El Dergui

247. Truth does not recognize defiance.

Mar Ishak

My weakness is always behind my anger

248. I know a brother who was living in a monastery and was persistently silent. However, he was suffering from anger everyday of his life. He told himself that he better go and live alone in his cell in order to calm down and escape suffering. He went out to live in a cave by himself. Once he filled a jar of water and placed it on the ground but it rolled and poured out the water. He went and filled it a second and again a third time but the same thing happened repeatedly.

He got angry and threw it on the ground where it broke. When he came back to his senses, he realized that the demons were making fun of him. He said, "Here I am beaten while alone by myself. I'll go back to the monastery because in all situations, man needs to strive, be patient, and needs mostly God's help." He went back to his former place.

St Baladius

249. As water flows downwards, so does anger's power when it drives our mind.

Mar Ishak

Patience with Modesty defeats Anger

250. An old monk had a good disciple he used to put outdoors and mock him, for no reason except that he was bored. The disciple would sit outside the door. On the third day, the monk opened the door and found him in the same position. He fell down on his knees and said, "My son, your humility and patience have overcome my wickedness and the villainy of my soul. Come in and from now on, you be the wise one and I'll be your disciple."

St Baladius

251. A wise man said that to put down the fire of anger one must acquire humility, obedience and trust for everyone. Anger drives a man to his loss, away from God. By contrast, humility burns the demons.

252. A noble man had a creditor to whom he owed a sum of money. He kept requesting from him his money back for as long as ten years. Being a good man the creditor was patient. His friend asked him, "I am wondering how it is you don't get angry at him when you keep requesting your money for so long and he doesn't reply?" He answered him, "You wonder how I could be patient for as long as ten years. God has been asking me to obey His commandments for fifty years now. And

here I am, neither have I answered nor done His will, and He is being patient with me. Considering that the miserable man I am did not respond to God and He did not reject me, how could I, a man, not be patient with a fellow man when he does not answer me?"

St Baladios

253. Talents are acquired through patience and are granted to the Saints once they achieve steadiness of heart and their aspirations are then fulfilled. Patience in everything is the pride of all the saints, and this is the sign of sanctity.

Anba Bakhomios

Friendship with angry people

254. As I was traveling one day with my baskets charged on a camel, I noticed that the camel man was getting angry. I fled away leaving my baskets behind, as it is written, "Do not walk with an angry man nor come with him," (Prov 22:24).

St John the Short

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD OF HUMILITY

1. Humility in Serving

I do not deserve to serve God

255. I do not glorify myself for serving You, my Lord but rather, I consider it a wonderful thing that You accept me to be Your slave and assigned to Your beloved serving staff, taking no account of my indignity and humbleness. May I deserve to serve You, for even a single day, in the way that is suitable to Your Majesty!

St Thomas of Cambyse

256. My Lord, I know and I confess that I am unworthy of Your love, but also, I assuredly know that it is a great honor for me to love You and serve You. You are the One to deserve being served by all the creatures. Permit me, O Lord, to share in this sacred holiness that makes You loved and served by all the reasonable creatures, so that I deserve to love and serve You.

St Augustine

Our Lord Jesus is the example for serving in humbleness

257. What was it that urged our Lord Jesus Christ to, "take a towel and gird Himself and then pour water into a basin and wash His disciples feet?" Is it not, my children, to teach us humility through this deed? For those who are looking forward to recover their original dignity, there is nothing as such humility.

St Anthony the Great

258. In order to be a good servant, one has first to establish himself in the love of Christ with great humility. Thus, his behavior and his appearance will be as convincing as his teaching. He will aim at perfection by imitating Christ as far as our

humane nature permits. Those who are trusted to guide others must be mediators between God and men in such ways that those they instruct will also learn from them to follow Christ's example. Paul said in his Epistle I to Cor 11, "Follow my example as I followed Christ's example." As we admit that we aim at Christ's perfection according to our possibilities; we, therefore, establish that meekness and humility are as intent as taught by Him. He said, "Learn from me that I am meek and humble in heart," (Mat 11: 29). He did not disdain to serve his slaves but rather, He modestly served the mud and dust He had used, to create Man in His image and resemblance and declared being a servant among His disciples. We remember that while serving others we are serving our equals in humanity; unlike Christ, the Perfect One, who served us. However, serving for His sake and following His way, we will be likening ourselves to Him within our possibilities.

St Basile the Great

259. It befalls to the spiritual leader not to give way to self-pride by the fact of his leadership, or else he would shift himself from the blessing of the saints to the rule of Satan. He has to keep in mind that caring for the group comes up to enslave himself for them in the same way as serving the wounded ones and cleaning their infected wounds. He has to search for the appropriate remedy to heal their sickness and insure their security, remembering the saying of the apostle that he will be accounted for each of them as the Lord said, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," (Mat 20: 27). As the greatest among the brothers are servants at the service of the body, so should all share with them without any pride, knowing that through humility, the greater serves the younger, as our Savior has given us the example. He washed the disciples' feet and no one dared to object, except Peter, out of respect, but he soon reversed to obedience. Thus, the smaller will let the greater serve him in obedience and respect for his humility.

St Basile the Great

260. It is suitable for all to be modest and to serve all people with no distinction and the stranger as well. Whatever his rank or nobility, the good servant should be ready to serve his fellowmen and wash their feet. Thus, he will be more respected and appreciated, although he would not have made a great achievement. He will be serving a fellowman, his equal in servitude. Above all, be aware not to be proud of your high position, considering the glory of our Lord the Christ washing his disciples' feet.

St. John Chrysostom

Our Lord has performed humble jobs before us

261. It is becoming for the ascetic one to welcome modest jobs knowing that whatever is done for God's sake prepares him to the heavenly kingdom. It is also a reminder of the two apostles who readily obeyed the Lord's order to go and bring the colt, and of His saying unto them, "Whatever you do to my brothers, you have done to me." We remember as well that being the Lord, His services to His disciples included the most modest ones to the extent of washing their feet. What more glory for Man than to imitate God? In fact, it is through modest jobs that he attains the glory that elevates him to resemble his Lord.

St Basile the Great

The servant's life before starting to serve

262. We have to be pure in order to lead others to purity; we need to learn before we instruct them and to become the light that will guide them to light. Also, we have to get closer to God to attract them to Him and to sanctify our souls for the sake of their souls.

St Gregory the Nazianzi

263. The servant of God must have a contrite heart full of repentance and be absolutely submissive because of the sense of guilt he should keep in mind.

Anba Moussa the Black

264. I have watched a weak man helping the weak through trust and with humility, giving himself in their place and in doing so, he healed them and himself at the same time. I also watched a weak man trusting himself and he heard a voice telling him to heal himself before trying to heal others.

St John El Dergui

265. If you have to blame someone and feel anger in yourself, take the time to heal your weakness first so that you do not perish while you are rescuing the other.

St Makarius the Great

Being a servant is a blessing and those you serve are a blessing as well

266. I know of someone who used to take advice from his children, out of humility, and he was successful; while another one, through vanity, would ask his students then defy them; in fact he was defying himself. In the same way, many leaders were healed from their iniquities due to the decency of their subordinates.

St John El Dergui

267. Humility and compassion cannot reach perfection unless Man finds someone to submit to and have compassion on him. In the same way, he cannot practice patience if there is no one to oppose him. It would be naïve to think that virtues can be acquired through books; a carpenter who knows about carpentry without having ever practiced it. Paul, the Apostle, said, "A righteous man is not the one who listens to the law, but he who puts it into practice," (Rom 2:13). The Lord's love for men was not limited to teaching humility through words but He added to it the washing of the disciples' feet. Let us ask ourselves, "Whose feet did I wash? Am I better than anyone or less than anyone?"

St Basile the Great

268. Do not allow your mind to boast while praying and shedding tears for God's church and people. Tell yourself that you are not the one who prays but rather it is the Spirit who laments and implores for them. It is the Spirit who links you through love and inspires your worship and true righteousness; this is what you experience when suddenly, and without your consent, you lose the sweetness of prayer and the joy of a loving heart.

Father John from Cronstadt

Don't mention your defects to those you serve

269. You need to know your pupils personalities in order to organize a plan of action favorable to each of them and to their relationship with each other. Don't overestimate yourself at any time, nor depreciate yourself before your pupils, so that they keep confidence in you.

St John El Dergui

Keep cheerful when you serve

270. When meeting people, have a smile on your face. As for your heart, let it sigh.

St Augustine

Be strict without anger or flaccidity

271. When reprimanding someone for negligence, we have to be careful to do it in the appropriate measure, keeping in mind God's ways. A criminal uses a knife to cut members out of the body, so does also the surgeon. While the criminal's use of the knife is violent and merciless and for evil actions, the surgeon is merciful and cautious when he holds the knife with a noble, fruitful purpose in mind. Let those who reprimand in good spirit, be moderate in God's views so that the person they deal with benefits and gets rid of his negligence. As for those who are inflicted with anger, they do not serve God. Also, in order to achieve humility, reprimand should be moderate, in the appropriate time, and only when there is need for that. It is said that Moses was the most patient man on earth; even so, when there became a need to reprimand, he was so troubled that he ordered the murdering of his fellow Israelites without compassion (Ex 32: 19-29). The reason was that they made a calf statue and worshipped it. A person who does nothing all day long is, by no means, a modest person but rather a passive one.

St Bassile the Great

272. A person who is in search of praise and avoids hurting people to get their love, is not being a constructive instructor. Whereas, he who has got over such weaknesses, he is capable of overtly proclaiming the word of God with no affectation; actually, this is the one who truly loves his fellowmen.

St Bassile the Great

273. Be alert when Satan tries to confuse you about a brother, and advises you, "Tell him once or twice and let him act as he will and forget about him, following the Fathers." Do not be duped; this is not God's will. Would you toil many years of your life and succeed in making a real fortune, then spend it in one moment and become penniless? What God really wants is to be patient, indefinitely and without anxiety. As for being duped and following Satan's advice, your patience will be a fake one and arise your anger. Only immature people listen to Satan. Consider the following: If your relationship with your pupil is that of a father with his son, would you give him one strong hit everyday showing him his wrongdoing – which would be the right thing to do – or would you let him ignore his wrongs by keeping silent on the subject? Then, having been patient with him for many days, you all of a sudden give him a strong hit to the point of killing him and taking away his spirit? Be cautious, my son, you are being deceived. If his sins are real facts, did you prescribe him the medication that will heal him?

St Barsanofios

274. Looking for the right way to reprimand someone? The same way a father reprimands his son, or the doctor who aims to cure his patient. And the right way to accept reprimand? The way a son accepts his father's correcting him, or the patient following his doctor's treatment.

St Basilious

Do not exalt someone or keep him in suspense

275. A wise man once said, "If you see a young man ascending to heaven on his own, pull his leg down to let him fall, this is in his best interest."

Do not be anxious if those whom you serve do not respond

276. "I gave a sermon on God's love and I was troubled because my brother did not accept my word. What shall I do?" You don't understand what you say. Wasn't your sermon for God's sake and His love? So there is no place for trouble. Even if he hits you, you should bear with him without being troubled. Any sermon that allows trouble is not Godly, but is from Satan, and is mixed with self pride; it becomes clear that it is a temptation. May God keep it away from you and give you the understanding of the enemy's tricks and protect you against him. Pray for me.

St Barsonofios

277. He, who insults the one who is teaching him his salvation is, in fact, insulting the hope of the Lord his Savior.

St Athanase the Apostle

The way to approach a brother

278. A question arises on how to approach a brother. It is a good thing when approaching a brother, to choose your words, or else you may end up by being lead into temptation. Therefore, a conversation about the life and deeds of our Fathers could be advisable, then asking him if he is doing well in life and by adding, "Pray for me as my sins are numerous." This is an example for a good approach; you could then bow to him and leave in peace.

St Barsanofios

279. Another question is the case of a boy teaching someone older than him and the way he should behave. He should follow God's commandment to act relentlessly and without fear, without taking pride; or else, he would become the prey of Satan and, like him, be punished for the same sin of pride.

St Bassile the Great

The desire to serve and guide

280. If you desire to acquire the virtue of humility, do not seek high levels in guidance and if you lack self pride, do not desire priesthood because God takes better care of His people than you. You better choose to be one among the lambs of Christ than being a shepherd requesting their blood from Him. Keep in mind that death is the end

of all of us. Don't ask for leadership and remember that whatever glorified you are today or tomorrow, like everybody, you will be confined in a grave.

St John Eltabayssi

281. It does not become an ascetic man to desire priesthood or leadership because the urge for leadership is a satanic disease that caused Satan's fall. Let us now consider the risks incurred by those affected by such disease: they become envious, aggressive, gossipers, and indecent; they become hypocrites and ill-doers, and practice untimely humility. When they surrender, their hearts remain proud.

Such miserable people envy those who deserve the priesthood or leadership, and try to gossip about them and wish them dead so as to replace them as candidature becomes available; meanwhile they are devoured by anxiety and ill intentions, thus distancing themselves from God and they lose their peace.

Let us prevail against such desire and when it pleases God to choose a leader He, alone in His wisdom, will know whom to assign. May God keep away this hateful disease that kills the soul and knows no good.

St Basile the Great

All those served are equals

282. A wise man said, "He who does not have an equal consideration for his brothers with no preference for anyone, cannot attain perfection."

283. May your brothers' names be sweet to your mouth and their sight beautiful to your eyes, and serving them smooth and easy to your hands. Serve with willingness and modesty; teach indefinitely and with no envy.

St Simon the Pillar

2- Humility and Temptations

284. Trying to escape temptations may lead to succumbing to greater ones and we cannot overcome temptations just by avoiding them. The truth is that we overcome all our enemies through acquired patience and genuine modesty.

St Thomas of Cambyse

285. Temptations are means to get closer to humility.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

286. However stressful and troubling, temptations may be of great benefit.

Temptations cause man to purify, humble, and discipline himself.

St Thomas of Cambyse

287. There are people who get over great temptations and fail many times in face of small daily ones. This is a signal that they have to be humble and not over-rely on themselves in great adversities while they succumb to insignificant weaknesses.

St Thomas of Cambyse

288. O Lord, You keep humiliating us through temptations and adversities until we achieve the humility of heart.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

Temptations uncover my weakness

289. Blessed is the man who acknowledges his weakness. It is the right foundation and the cause of much goodness. Whereas the man who ignores his weakness, he is on the verge of succumbing to pride; without humility an ascetic's devotion is not complete. Hence he will not have sealed his spirituality and, thus, becomes a slave to adversities and calamities. Hence, God uses temptations and adversities to befall those in search of righteousness so that they become aware of their vulnerability and this, in turn, will beget humility. Moreover, hearts that are broken by the suffering of human passions, or by being insulted or ignored by others, or because they are poor or needy, or sick, or ashamed, all of which give way to Satan and his dirty tricks, might hopefully feel their weakness and become humble before it is too late.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

290. God tells us that being patient and humble in adversities pleases Him more than praises and glorification during periods of prosperity. Why be saddened by trivial words or deeds against us or be distressed by more serious incidents? Anxiety has no place or reason. Ignore such things and know that this is the trend of life; it is neither the first time you will encounter hardships nor is it the last time if you have yet a long life before you. You become extremely miserable when adversities come at your door and you lose your spirits and your strength. Meanwhile, you are a good adviser to others and know how to encourage them by your good words. It is in your best interest to encounter adversities.

St Thomas of Cambyse

291. If a person does not fully humble himself, he is delivered to Satan to be tempted through many calamities so that his self pride is uncovered and he feels naked, in great shame and distress.

St Makary the Great

292. Adam, because he was created from earth, did not see God because he did not have the capacity to witness His works and might have boasted himself over God's wonderful works. However, in spite of his modest capacity, he took pride in himself and offended God, his Creator. Had he been given a supernatural gift, he would have been over-spiteful. For that, God endowed the human species with wonderful and brilliant powers, mixed with some mean and despicable sides, so that Man would appreciate the blessings he received and praise the Giver for them; at the same time he would humble himself in consideration of the mean points of his nature. He was given a tongue to spell out the wonders of the creation, the glory of God and praise Him for this organ (the tongue) that enables him to chant about heaven and earth. With that purpose again, God allows a number of miseries and sicknesses so that man realizes that he is mortal. He was gifted with a small pupil to see the visible created wonders and glorify their Creator, but He also allows sometimes a weakness of man's sight and a number of eye diseases, or even loss of sight in order to remind him of his human condition. What if man, despite being subject to such diseases and misfortunes, still rebels against his Creator, who could stand his pride and self-defiance?

John Chrysostom

293. When you face temptations, do not accuse anyone. Say to yourself, “I get what I deserve because I am a sinner.”

Humility links temptation to God’s mercy

294. God allows temptations and misfortunes so that people, including the saints, keep humble and if we rebel, God may strengthen them. On the contrary, temptations faced with humble hearts will soon be met with mercy.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

295. Stressed by increasingly hard temptations and calamities, a monk decided to quit the place. As he started to wear his sandals, he saw a man doing the same. He asked him, “Where are you going?” He answered, “To the same location you are heading to; it is for your sake that I am here and if you are moving, I will do the same as I will accompany you wherever you reside.”

Mother Theodora

Humility excludes the rejection of temptations

296. Do not succumb to temptations in order to please God, knowing that He would spare you if He wanted to; and if He does not, it is for your benefit and you should be thankful in all cases. Unless gold is first cast and shaped, it cannot become a chosen present for the King; as well, wax cannot portray the king’s image unless previously softened. The same applies to the soul; it cannot reflect the image of Christ the King without undergoing a strict discipline of heart and behavior, together with much practice and labor.

St Simeon the Pillar

The miseries of others alleviate yours

297. An elderly monk related the following, “I was once in a situation where some orphans and poor people came to ask for charity. They went to sleep and I noticed that one of them had only a rag, half of it under him and the other half covering him. It was a very cold night. During the night, as he went to pass urine, I heard him raising his spirits in face of the hard cold and saying, “I thank you O Lord! How many rich people are now in jail, their feet tied with iron chains and unable to walk as I do to pass their needs, while here I am, moving like a king in the direction I want.” I listened to him and told my fellow brothers what I heard. They were amazed and benefited from the teaching of his words and praised God.

3. Humility in Fighting Adultery

298. Repentance raises man and laments open the doors of heaven; whereas humility of the mind opens paradise gate.

St John Eldergui

299. Fighting adultery by fasting, without humility of heart, resembles swimming in the ocean using a single hand.

St John Eldergui

300. Blessed is he who acquires a modest mind in imitation of the Lord Jesus. He will be seated with Him in Heaven.

Anba Niels

301. To protect himself from evil thoughts, a young man may keep himself busy by reading the commandments, avoiding laziness, waking up for night prayers, and being in continual humility.

Anba Arsanus

302. If adultery becomes a temptation, humility is the weapon to get rid of it.

Anba Moussa the Black

303. As for you, brothers, do not fear the mind is going astray because humility with tearful prayers will dismiss it in the air.

St John El Tabayissi

304. Humility, rather than actions, is the key for opening the locked heart when assailed by appetites.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

305. Humility purifies all adverse thoughts.

St John El Dergui

306. The suffering of adultery can only be defeated when you get rid of pride.

St John El Dergui

307. To defeat adultery one needs to struggle and be modest; otherwise no one can be saved.

St Barsonofios

308. A monk once said that humility is necessary to reach good discernment because humility is the uncovering of our thoughts and actions to our Fathers who, having undergone temptations, have obtained the blessing of good discernment. We have, then, to follow their advice. Uncovering one's bad thoughts to a Father alleviates his mind. Like a viper coming from a dark place to the light promptly rushes away, so it is of the evil thoughts. Once uncovered, they are destroyed by the virtue of humility.

309. As for the one who hides his sins, he shows that pride is enslaving him.

Anba Isaiah

310. If you want to get rid of adultery and destroy it decisively, you have to abstain from condemning anyone and from committing any sin. Decrying your sins will be a help and strong weapon.

Anba Zion

4. Victory is the Time for Humility

311. A monk's saying: "I prefer to be defeated with humility rather than victorious with pride."

Victory is mercy and help from the Lord

312. When given spiritual consolation, be grateful and acknowledge it is a divine grace and not your due merit. Do not pride or glorify yourself; rather, grow in humility because of the gift. Be cautious about your actions, this is the time for temptation.

St Thomas of Cambyse

313. When your wish is answered, do not get proud. Humility becomes better for God's great mercy.

Mar Isahk

314. When we grow in virtue, let us be thankful, admitting that victory comes from God because it is He Who grew it in us. Humility is the treasure that protects all virtues.

St Basile the Great

315. Examine yourself everyday and determine which struggle you have won without exalting yourself but say, "Mercy and help come from God," and do not think that you have done any good until you reach your last breath.

St Moussa the Black

Do not claim victory: you still are in wonder sea

316. If a flattering thought occurs to you, says an old monk, you should say, "For what am I flattered?" Those who are yet in deep sea know what to expect from tempest to drowning, even at times of calm waters. They do not feel safe until they reach the land; so many were destroyed while reaching the harbor.

317. The thief was on the cross when he was purified by one word while Judas was among the disciples and in one night he lost everything. For that, no miracle-doer glorifies himself because so many were lost because of their self confidence."

St Nestarion

Keep in mind those who are above you

318. The light of the small lamp disappears in the daylight of the shining sun and when contemplating God, the righteous man feels the smallness of his soul in the sight of the Lord. Abraham, the just man, called himself dust and ashes when he confronted the Lord; Peter said to his Lord, "I am a sinner." Who then can claim righteousness when addressing God? Who dares find goodness in himself before God?

Mar Jacob El Serougui

319. Remember those who surpass you in goodness so as to feel your weakness when compared to them.

320. Remember the fall of the strong men to be humble in your righteousness.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

321. The rich man considers himself poor at the sight of a richer one. Therefore, there is no reason for self pride.

Mar Joseph El Serougui

God's help covers our weakness

322. When we do not face struggle, we should feel very humble. God, who knows the extent of our weakness, is sparing us temptations and, in case we get proud, He will remove His help and we will perish.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

A bigger fight is awaiting you

323. Do not forget that you have sinned even though you have repented. Laments and the remembrance of sin keep you in humility and will purify you from haughtiness.

St Oghris

324. A brother said to Anba Tadros, "I want to fulfill the commandments." He answered, "As Pope Theopholis was living in the wilderness, he said, 'I want to fulfill my thoughts towards God.' He took some flour and baked bread. Some poor men came to him and asked for charity, he gave them the bread; others also asked and he gave them the straws; and others, he gave them his cloth. He then entered his cell and rolled himself in a cloth, meanwhile he blamed himself saying, "I have not completed God's commandment."

325. The gravest vice for someone is to acquit himself by himself. He who denies himself goes his way in peace, and he who thinks he is without defect is holding in himself all the defects.

Anba Moussa the Black

No Angels for me

326. Even if you see a real angel, humble yourself saying, "I am a sinner, I don't deserve to look at an angel."

St Basile the Great

327. It is said that Satan appeared to one of the Fathers in the image of a luminous angel saying, "I am Gabriel and am sent to you." He answered him, "You are probably sent to someone else, as for me I am a sinner." Hearing these humble words, Satan disappeared.

328. (repetition of 326)

329. I do not want the consolation that deprives me from heart's humility; I do not desire the contemplation that leads to haughtiness. All that is sweet is not necessarily good, nor all desire is pure and not all the lovable are accepted by God.

St Thomas of Cambyse

5. Humility and Science

330. What gain will you achieve if you undertake a profound research on the Holy Trinity while your heart is not humble? You would rather be rejected by the Trinity. No one is purified by noble words, but a virtuous life is cherished by God. I wish to experience a modest heart rather than defining it.

St Thomas of Cambyse

331. A modest farmer who venerates God is of more value than a philosopher who observes the movement of the planets and ignores himself. A man who has a true knowledge of his nature will have a poor opinion of himself and will not rejoice at being praised.

St Thomas of Cambyse

332. It is preferable for a man to have a little amount of knowledge and some understanding and be humble than acquiring a treasure of knowledge with vain pride. Better to acquire a few rather than acquiring a lot and be a prey to vanity.

St Thomas of Cambyse

333. God befriends the simple in heart and makes Himself visible to him. He enlightens the pure conscience and keeps His blessings from the proud man.

St Thomas of Cambyse

334. "I am He who raises the modest mind so as to instantly comprehend the reality of the eternal Truth more than ten years of teaching would," says the Lord.

St Thomas of Cambyse

335. Do not praise yourself for being a genius and a brilliant mind for fear you displease God who granted you all these natural gifts.

St Thomas of Cambyse

336. If you believe that you have a lot of knowledge and a fast understanding, remember that what you ignore is much more extensive than what you know. Do not boast yourself but admit your ignorance; do not put yourself above others. There are so many people with better information and knowledge of the law. Let your quest for enlightenment be oriented towards the wish to be a person ignored and considered as nothing.

St Thomas of Cambyse

337. For those who set their nest in heaven, they lived poorly and reviled. Thus, they have learned not to fly with their own wings but rather under God's wings.

St Thomas of Cambyse

338. The beginning of goodness, as well its fulfillment, is in humbly reaching the true knowledge. Knowledge is the lot of the humble.

Mar Ephram the Syrian

339. Be modest in all things. If you totally know wisdom, be the one who speaks when all have spoken.

Anba Bakhomios

340. If your heart is confident about your works and your understanding, know that temptations are at your door.

Mar Ishak the Syrian

341. Saint Arsanious the Great was once asking an old Egyptian monk about his thoughts when another monk told him, “Father Arsanious, how come that you, the literate man in the Roman and Greek languages, are asking an ignorant Egyptian monk about his thoughts?” He answered, “As for the Roman and Greek literatures, I am well learnt in, but concerning the alpha beta in which this Egyptian excels, I haven’t learned as of yet.”

342. Do not imagine that you are a wise and knowledgeable man for fear your effort goes vain and your boat arrives empty.

Anba Anthony the Great

343. I am speaking to you as someone who has been cheated when still an adolescent, as I was wickedly scrutinizing the Bible and before I reached the receptive mind of someone in search of Truth. I locked myself in face of a divine door, through my rotten life, and when I tried knocking at that door to be opened for me, I was in fact strengthening the lock because I was bold enough to search with pride for that which is only attainable by those who are humble.