

# Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers

- Amma Syncletice: “It is dangerous for a man to try teaching before he is trained in the good life. A man whose house is about to fall down may invite travelers inside to refresh them, but instead they are hurt in the collapse of the house. It is the same with teachers who have not carefully trained themselves in the good life: they ruin their hearers as well as themselves. Their mouth invites to salvation, their way of life leads to ruin” (Chadwick, Western Ascetism, 71C, p. 120).



# Of Quiet

- “He also said: ‘The man who abides in solitude and is quiet, is delivered from fighting three battles—those of hearing, speech and sight. Then he will have but one battle to fight – the battle of the heart’ (Chadwick, Western Ascetism, Part II, 2, p. 40).
- “Said Abba Nilus: ‘The arrows of the enemy cannot touch him who loves quiet. But he who moves in a crowd will be often wounded’ (Part II, 10, p. 42).



# Of Quiet

- “And he was silent for a little, and poured water into a cup. And he said: ‘Look at the water.’ And it was cloudy. And after a little he said again: ‘Now look, see how clear the water has become.’ And when they leaned over the water, they saw their faces as in a glass. And then he said to them: ‘So it is with the man who lives among men. He does not see his own sins because of the turmoil. But when he is at rest, especially in the desert, then he sees his sins” (Part 2, 16, p. 43).
- “In Scete a brother went to Abba Moses to ask a word. And the old man said to him: ‘Go and sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.’” (Chadwick, Part 2, p. 9)



# Of patience, or fortitude

- “A brother asked Abba Agatho: ‘I have been instructed to go somewhere, and I have a grievous struggle in the place where I have been told to go. I want to obey the order, yet I am frightened of the inner struggle which will ensue.’ The old man said: ‘Agatho was like that. He obeyed orders, and so won the battle’” (VII.2.83).
- Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen: ‘How should we fast?’ And Abba Poemen said: ‘I would have everyone eat a little less than he wants, every day.’ Abba Joseph said to him: ‘When you were a young man, did you not fast for two days on end?’ And the old man said to him: ‘Believe me, I used to fast three days on end, even for a week. But the great elders have tested all these things, and they found that it is good to eat something every day, but on some days a little less. And they have shown us that this is the king’s highway, for it is easy and light’” (X.44.115).

