

Abba Arsenius, Tutor of Kings' Sons:

الأنبا أرسانيوس معلم اولاد الملوك

Life of Silence



Abba Arsenius

- *Born in Rome about 360.*
- *After his parents died, he gave all their riches to the poor, lived an ascetic life, and was famous for his righteousness and wisdom.*
- *Pope Damasus I ordained him a deacon.*
- *A well-educated man, of senatorial rank, he was appointed by the Emperor Theodosius I as tutor to the princes Arcadius and Honorius, for 11 years — Arsenius talked to them while standing.*
- *He lived a lavish life in the palace, but all the time felt a growing inclination to renounce the world.*



Abba Arsenius

- *He left the palace in 394 and sailed secretly to Alexandria.*
- *From there he went to Scetis and placed himself under the guidance of Abba John the Dwarf.*
- *He became an anchorite near Petra in Scetis.*
- *He was renowned for his austerity and silence.*
- *After the second devastation of Scetis in 434 he went to the mountain of Troe where he died in 449.*



Path to Silence

- *While still living in the palace, Abba Arsenius prayed to God in these words, 'Lord, lead me in the way of salvation.' And a voice came saying to him:*
 - *"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26)*
 - *'Arsenius, flee from men and you will be saved.'*
- *Having withdrawn to the solitary life he made the same prayer again and he heard a voice saying to him: 'Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness.'*

Spiritual Education

- *Saint Macarius the Great, committed him to the care of Saint John the Dwarf to try him:*
 - *He left him standing by himself while he invited the rest to sit down at table.*
 - *Arsenius at first retained certain of his old habits, such as: sitting cross-legged, laying one foot over the other, being picky in food.*



Spiritual Education

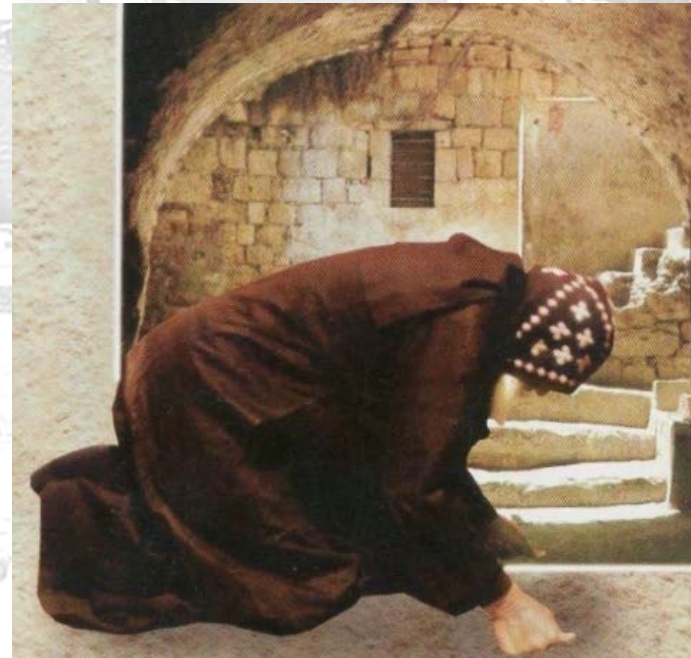
- Someone said to blessed Arsenius, 'How is it that we, with all our education and our wide knowledge get nowhere, while these Egyptian peasants (monks) acquire so many virtues?'*

Abba Arsenius said to him, 'We indeed get nothing from our secular education, but these Egyptian peasants acquire the virtues by hard work.'



Spiritual Education

- *One day Abba Arsenius consulted an old Egyptian monk about his own thoughts. Someone noticed this and said to him, 'Abba Arsenius, how is it that you with such a good Latin and Greek education ask this peasant about your thoughts?' He replied, 'I have indeed been taught Latin and Greek, but I do not know even the alphabet of this peasant.'*



Spiritual Education

- *'Come, and I will show you the works of men.'*
 - *an Ethiopian cutting wood and making a great pile...*
 - *a man standing on the shore of a lake drawing up water and pouring it into a broken receptacle...*
 - *a temple and two men on horseback, opposite one another, carrying a piece of wood crosswise...*



Spiritual Education

- *Interpretation - the works of men :*
 - *he who lives in many sins and instead of repenting he adds more faults to his sins.*
 - *he who does good deeds, but mixing bad ones with them, he spoils even his good works.*
 - *men carry the yoke of righteousness with pride, and do not humble themselves so as to correct themselves and walk in the humble way of Christ.*
So they remain outside the Kingdom of God.

Man of Prayer



- *Abba Daniel said of Abba Arsenius that he used to pass the whole night without sleeping, and in the early morning when nature compelled him to go to sleep, he would say to sleep, 'Come here, wicked servant.' Then, seated, he would snatch a little sleep and soon wake up again.*
- *“one-hour's sleep is enough for a monk if he is a good fighter.”*
- *On Saturday evenings, preparing for the glory of Sunday, he would turn his back on the sun and stretch out his hands in prayer towards the heavens, till once again the sun shone on his face. Then he would sit down.*
- *An anchorite (Abba Arsenius) saw a demon urging another demon to go and awaken a sleeping monk. And he heard the other one say, “I cannot do this, for one time when I awakened him, he got up and burned me by singing psalms and praying.”*

Asceticism

- *Abba Daniel used to say, 'He lived with us many a long year and every year we used to take him only one basket of bread and when we went to find him the next year we would eat some of that bread.'*
- *He only changed the water for his palm-leaves once a year; the rest of the time he simply added to it. One old man implored him in these words, 'Why do you not change the water for these palm-leaves when it smells '? He said to him, 'Instead of the perfumes and aromatics I used in the world ,I must bear this bad smell.'*
- *It was said of him that, just as none in the palace had worn more splendid garments than he when he lived there, so no one in the Church wore such poor clothing.*
- *When Abba Arsenius fell ill in Scete, a priest went and brought him to the church, and he spread a palm-leaf mat for him, and placed a small pillow under his head...*

Humility

- *Archbishop Theophilus, accompanied by a magistrate, came one day to find Abba Arsenius. He questioned the old man, to hear a word from him.*

After a short silence the old man answered him 'Will you put into practice what I say to you?' They promised him this.

He replied: 'If you hear Arsenius is anywhere, do not go there.'



Humility

- *‘His appearance was angelic, like that of Jacob. His body was graceful and slender; his long beard reached down to his waist. Through much weeping his eye-lashes had fallen out. Tall of stature, he was bent with old age’
(Abba Daniel)*



Silence

- *He denied himself to visitors, no matter what their rank and condition and left to his disciples the care of entertaining them.*
- *He was a man who was very quiet and often silent.*
- *To train: he used a stone in his mouth for 3 years*
- *“Many times I spoke, and regretted, but I never regretted my silence.”*

– كثيرا ما تكلمت وندمت ، وأما عن السكوت فما ندمت قط

- *“Arsani, Arsani, contemplate on what you have come out for...”*

– ارسانى ارسانى تأمل فيها خرجت لاجله

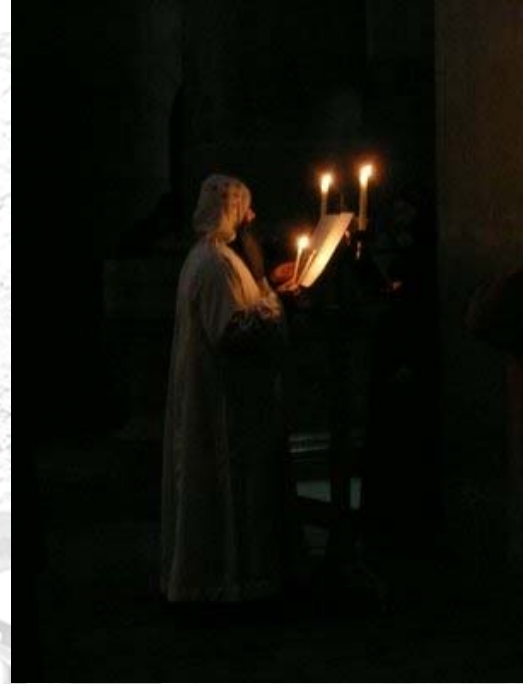
Silence / Calmness

- *Demon tried to cut off his hand, he calmly extended it and said, “Do what you wish for the love of Christ.” Demon cried, “You burned me by your extreme calmness and humility!”*
- *Visitor accompanied by a brother to visit him:*
 - *two ships at sea*



Seclusion

- *Pope's wish to visit: will be kicking him out*
- *"Why do you escape from us?"*
 - *'The thousands and ten thousands of the heavenly hosts have but one will, while men have many'*
 - *while alone with the 'Spirit of God' he is 'in perfect peace'*
 - *I can't leave God's desire and be with men's desires.*
 - *A virgin – her dignity in her father's house*
- *Visit of the Roman noble virgin*
 - *"If you hear of good deeds, imitate them, and do not seek their performer"*
 - *"I will pray that God removes your shadow, name and memory out of my heart!"*



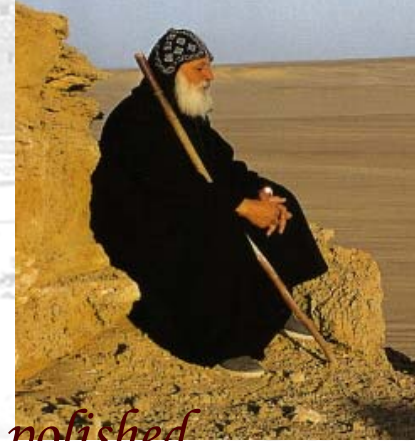
Life of Silence

- *'He who dwells with men, because of the commotion of worldly affairs is unable to see his sins; but if he dwell in the silent repose of the desert he will be able to see God in a pure manner'*



Life of Silence

- *The monk must acquire it in the following way:*
- *A man must go forth from the world, and dwell in a monastery*
- *He must die through contemplation in silence, and through the other labors of his body, and through striving against the passions, and through conflict with devils.*
- *Then through the tranquility of mind (which he will acquire) in silent contemplation, he will:*
 - *remember his sins,*
 - *petition for the remission of his sins,*
 - *suppress his thoughts,*
 - *become constant in pure prayer,*
 - *cleanse his heart from odious thoughts,*
 - *then shall he be worthy to see in his heart, even as in a polished mirror, the light of the revelation of our Lord (shining) upon it.*



Life of Silence

- *Stillness: withdrawal from conventional activities*
- *Silence: withdrawal from commonly practiced patterns of speech*
- *“He who stays in the desert and practices stillness is delivered from three temptations: that of hearing, that of speaking, and that of seeing. He has only one temptation: that of the heart” (Abba Antony)*
- *“Flee from men, stay in your cell, weep for your sins, do not take pleasure in the conversation of men, and you will be saved” (Abba Macarius)*

Stillness



- *Is not: a rejection of life's activities*
- *Is:*
 - *fleeing from futile and distractive activities*
 - *concentration on attentiveness and openness to God in prayer*
- *The outer stillness becomes a venue for the inner stillness that makes prayer possible:*
 - *“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father” (Matt 6”6)*

Stillness

- *Stillness contributes to “opening of the soul”*
 - *Withdrawal from activities and conversation*
 - *Awareness of God and one’s self*
 - *An inner stillness centered in prayer*
 - *A vigilance of mind*
 - *An attitude of heart, away from self-interest and toward self-giving*
 - *Freedom – born of desiring what God desires*
 - *Refinement of the whole person in God*



Stillness

- *Snow can never emit flame. Water can never issue fire.
A thorn bush can never produce a fig.
Just so, your heart can never be free from oppressive thoughts, words,
and actions until it has purified itself internally.*

*Be eager to walk this path.
Watch your heart always.
Constantly say the prayer
“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.”
Be humble.*

*Set your soul in quietness.
(Abba Hesychius of Sinai)*



Silence

- *Stillness provides an environment for silence*
- *Why did the desert fathers avoid speech?*
 - *Speech must be profitable/beneficial*
 - *“If man remembered that it is written: ‘By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned,’ he would choose to remain silent.” (Abba Poeman)*
 - *It was said of Abba Ammos that when he went to church, he did not allow his disciple to walk beside him but only at a certain distance; and if the latter came to ask him about his thoughts, he would move away from him as soon as he had replied, saying to him, ‘It is for fear that, after edifying words, irrelevant conversation should slip in, that I do not keep you with me.’*
 - *What happens at the church atrium/CYC?*



Silence

- A man may seem to be silent, but if his heart is condemning others he is babbling ceaselessly. But there may be another who talks from morning till night and yet he is truly silent; that is, he says nothing that is profitable. (Abba Poeman)*



Abba Arsenius : Life of Silence

- *'Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness.'*
- *"Many times I spoke, and regretted, but I never regretted my silence."*
- *"Arsani, Arsani, contemplate on what you have come out for..."*
- *Stillness: withdrawal from conventional activities*
- *Silence: withdrawal from commonly practiced patterns of speech*
- *Stillness*
 - *Is not: a rejection of life's activities*
 - *Is: fleeing from futile and distractive activities*
 - *contributes to "opening of the soul"*
 - *Stillness provides an environment for silence*
- *Speech must be profitable/beneficial*

