

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man hearkeneth to counsel.

Proverbs 12:15

THE DEVIL TRIPS AS HE LIKES the man who trusts his own mind and keeps to his own will. But he has no access to a man who does everything with counsel. That is why he hates questions and the guidance in response, hates the very voice, the very sound of such words. Is it not clear why? Because he knows that his evil wiles will at once be exposed when people begin to ask questions and talk of useful things. And there is nothing he fears more than being exposed, for then he can no longer be wily as he will. When a man asks and hears the advice of someone experienced, ‘do this, but do not do that,’ or, ‘now is not the time for that’ or sometimes ‘now is the time,’ the devil cannot find how to harm or bring him down, since he always seeks counsel and protects himself on all sides. So the saying ‘in much counsel there is safety’ is fulfilled for him.

St Dorotheus of Gaza, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*,
Faber & Faber, p. 163

IF YOU HAVE A SPIRITUAL FATHER and are confirmed in love and faith toward him, then reveal all your warfare and your thoughts to him. But do not trust your own reason in the least, since it is impaired and has been defiled and marred by sins, and do not rely upon yourself in anything until your death. And when you begin to reveal everything to your spiritual father, you will find mercy from God, relief and healing; but if you are negligent about this and entrench yourself in your own reason, you will at the last become incurably ill, and you will never trust anyone in anything again. All your life the devil will lead you wherever he wishes, showing you everything from his own perspective, because your mind will be darkened; every word your brother speaks will make you suspicious, and you will always feel insecure about everything.

*From a letter of Archimandrite Alexander of Arzamas,
to the Elder Moses when he was a layman
The Elder Moses of Optina, p. 286*

© Holy Nativity Convent, Brookline, MA,
used by permission. All rights reserved.

ABROTHER ASKED ABBA PIMEN, “Why should I not be free to do without manifesting my thoughts to the elders?” Abba Pimen answered, “Abba John the Short said, ‘The enemy rejoices over nothing so much as over those who do not manifest their thoughts.’”

The Desert Christian, Benedicta Ward,
Macmillan Publishing, p. 181

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

DECEMBER 16–22, 2013

HOLY TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY Brookline, MA www.htmp.org