

**WHAT FOLLOWS WAS SAID ABOUT ABBA JOHN THE SHORT. THE PARENTS OF A YOUNG GIRL DIED, AND SHE WAS LEFT AN ORPHAN; SHE WAS CALLED PAESIA.** She decided to make her house a hospice, for the use of the Fathers of Scetis. So for a long time she gave hospitality and served the Fathers. But in the course of time, her resources were exhausted and she began to be in want.

Some wicked men came to see her and turned her aside from her aim. She began to live an evil life, to the point of becoming a prostitute. The Fathers, learning this, were deeply grieved, and calling Abba John the Short said to him, 'We have learnt that this sister is living an evil life. While she could, she gave us charity, so now it is our turn to offer her charity and to go to her assistance. Go to see her then, and according to the wisdom which God has given you, put things right for her.'

So Abba John went to her, and said to the old door-keeper, 'Tell your mistress I am here.'

But she sent him away saying, 'From the beginning you have eaten up her goods, and see how poor she is now.'

Abba John said to her, 'Tell her, I have something which will be very helpful to her.'

The door-keeper's children, mocking him, said to him, 'What have you to give her, that makes you want to meet her?'

He replied, 'How do you know what I am going to give her?' The old woman went up and spoke to her mistress about him.

Paesia said to her, 'These monks are always going about in the region of the Red Sea and finding pearls.' Then she got ready and said to the door-keeper, 'Please bring him to me.' As he was coming

up, she prepared for him and lay down on the bed. Abba John entered and sat down beside her. Looking into her eyes, he said to her, 'What have you got against Jesus that you behave like this?'

When she heard this she became completely rigid. Then Abba John bent his head and began to weep copiously.

She asked him, 'Abba, why are you crying?'

He raised his head, then lowered it again, weeping, and said to her, 'I see Satan playing in your face, how should I not weep?'

Hearing this, she said to him, 'Abba, is it possible to repent?'

He replied 'Yes.'

She said, 'Take me wherever you wish.'

'Let us go,' he said and she got up to go with him. Abba John noticed that she did not make any arrangements with regard to her house; he said nothing, but he was surprised. When they reached the desert, the evening drew on. He, making a little pillow with the sand, and marking it with the sign of the cross, said to her, 'Sleep here.' Then, a little further on, he did the same for himself, said his prayers, and lay down. Waking in the middle of the night, he saw a shining path reaching from heaven to her, and he saw the angels of God bearing away her soul. So he got up and went to touch her feet. When he saw that she was dead he threw himself face downwards on the ground, praying to God.

He heard this: 'One single hour of repentance has brought her more than the penitence of many who persevere without showing such fervour in repentance.'

THE DESERT CHRISTIAN, Benedicta Ward,  
Macmillan Publishing, pp. 93-4

**For true repentance not years and days are needed but one instant.**

STARETZ AMVROSY [of Optina] by John Dunlop, Nordland Publishing, 1972, p. 55

**PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS**

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