

The Spiritual Father (Saint Anthimos of Chios)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)

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“Behold, I and the children God has given me”. I didn’t want to have children in the world by the flesh and God gave me you to have as my spiritual children. That’s why I have you as my spiritual children.



The spiritual father is superior to the father after the flesh. Because if I see you dashing your foot against a rock, I’ll be worried; I’ll run and help. If I see you being dragged to court over some debt that you owe, I hurry along and pay it on your behalf. If I see people condemning you, swearing at you or slandering you, I’ll hasten to take your side and defend you.

If I see you’re sad and you’ve got no consolation anywhere, I’ll try my best to let a drop of my blood drip on you, if possible, to comfort you. If I see that you’re ill, I can’t help but provide you with some sort of assistance towards your treatment.

Because my soul's in pain; I can't see you in need and be indifferent. Because I was given you by the Holy Spirit and I feel for you.

If you're under the sway of some demon, if you're in danger from the passions, if you're troubled by one thing or another, I can't rest. I try with all means possible to relieve you of that. I even give you remission of sins, so that you can go to heaven shriven. But everything depends on you.

Everything we've spoken about now, I'm willing to give you. You've known that for many years and you see it every day. But it depends on your own faith and reverence. It rests on the devotion and fervour you have towards me. You have to have the proportionate feelings towards me, to apply what is appropriate to your position, if I'm to supervise you and to act as your shepherd. Because it appears I'm an unworthy shepherd. I'm not worthy, I know, but I'm the one who's here.

But a shepherd's always wary. When he sees a wolf coming, he not only attempts to guard his sheep with all available means, but he also calls on others to help. The shepherd shouts, whistles, throws stones at the animals, which are incapable of reasoning. I do the same, sisters: at time times I shout, at others I berate you, and then again I get angry. Because I'm the shepherd of sheep who have the power to reason. But there shouldn't be any need to be like that. Because the unreasoning animals have no reason. They don't understand. But for those who have reason, one word from the shepherd and they should listen. But since, maybe because of interference from the demons, from bad habit, or disregard for the shepherd, they don't listen with just one word, then everything that we've talked about has to be applied.

Merely the written word, the word of the Gospel is enough to teach a human flock and for me to protect it from that surreptitious wolf, the devil. But since we don't listen to the word, I am unfortunate enough to have to fight, sometimes with shouting, sometimes with penances, at other times with comfort, all the time watching over you to see you don't overstep your bounds.

Don't be troubled, sisters, over what I'm telling you, but rather engrave it deeply in your hearts, because one day I'll leave and you'll need it. It's my love that moves me to say these things to you. There's this spiritual affection which I can't express to you other than through what I'm telling you.

You have to listen to me. These paltry words of mine are my testament and you must guard them.

I didn't come here to lie down on soft mattresses and rest to my heart's content; I

came to fall into humility. I didn't come here for glory and honour and for you to call me "Sir"; I came to be cursed, to be hungry, thirsty, to labour, to toil to be mocked, to be trampled upon for the love of Christ. I'm no "Sir". The Mother of God and her Son are the Lady and Lord. I'm your servant. I've served you so many years. I'm a slave of yours; I don't even want to be called "Elder". I don't like and I don't want it but it's to your own credit that you honour me so.

Source: *Αγίου Ανθίμου της Χίου, Διδαχές Πνευματικές - Άρτος Ζωής*, Edited by Antonios N. Kharokopos, vol. II, Holy Monastery of Our Lady of Help, Chios, Athens 2001.