

A MOTHER'S COUNSEL TO HER CHILD *the life of St. Clement the Martyr, Bishop of Ancyra*

When St. Clement was yet a baby, his father died. His mother, left alone without a husband, put her hopes alone in God. She was so dedicated to him that she became everything to the child: father, teacher, mother.

As Clement grew and was excellently nourished and instructed by his mother, she sensed her death was approaching. With affection and maternal fondness, she embraced her child, who had not yet reached his tenth year of age and sought to make him not an inheritor of her own riches, but of the heavenly treasures. She began to advise him with great love: “ My child, my beloved child, who became an orphan before you even knew your father, but who was enriched, since you gained as your father God, Who made of your orphan hood good fortune, I gave birth to you in the body, but Christ reared you in the strength of the spirit. You have known your Father. Do not betray the qualities of a son of the Saviour. Worship only Christ. Have trust only in Christ. He is true immortality. He is our salvation. He is the One who came down from Heaven for us and by His Resurrection, raised us up with Him to Heaven, making us once again the children of God.

He who submits to Him, the Master, will avoid all difficulties; he shall conquer not only such kings and tyrants as honor idols, but shall shame even the demons, whom the idolaters honor, and their very leader and protector, the Devil.”

Afterwards, having said this, her eyes filled with tears and her soul overcome by divine Grace, saw in a spiritual vision all that would befall her son, which she related to him in a prophetic way: “ I beseech you, my most beloved son, above all to do me one favor. Since we have come upon difficult times and the winds of ungodly persecution blow, I know that you will be led against princes and powers for His sake, as the Lord has foretold. It is this I want you to do for me my child, for the sake of the Saviour: stand up against the tyrants with courage and remain firm in your faith until the end of your life, and I have faith in Christ that the crown of martyrdom will soon blossom on your head.

Ready yourself, then, and incite your soul to courage, so as not to be found unprepared at the hour of your trials. For the fight to which you are called is not one waged against the usual enemies, nor on behalf of everyday good things; rather, they are Evil himself and his followers and servants, the combat is being waged for eternal life and honor or in case the combatant fails the loss will entail unending shame and eternal damnation. Let the good and beneficial things inspire you, rather than being frightened by the hardships which you will experience.

Keep in mind my son , that the soldiers of an earthly king gain nothing of worth from him when they die, however, if you die for the common Master of all, our Saviour Christ, you will then have gained, instead of what is fleeting , eternal life.

Above all my son, you must think about these things: that is, that the Maker of all creation and the Creator of our race became man for us and coming down to earth dwelled among men. But should I not say the most important thing? That our Master was condemned to death by his worthless servant; and was then scourged; and came to His end on the Cross. And all of this He suffered for us and our salvation, that He might abolish the tyranny of death and that the curse of old might come to an end, so that the gates of Heaven might be once again opened to us. How then, my child, when He endured such a fearful passion for us not to wish to suffer for His sake even the slightest of things?

Reflect on these things, my child, and let nothing separate you from the love of Christ, neither the threats of princes, nor bodily torments nor the fear of earthly kings. You must win for yourself above all the good things which have been prepared for the Martyrs; therefore, even Heaven is a reward, should you be martyred.”

These things the mother told Clement every day, having truly within her the spirit of wisdom. And her son was indeed as wise as a white-haired old man. Just before her end, his pious mother added the following words, “ My son, let these be my wages for the pain I tasted when I bore you, that I might be saved by childbearing as St. Paul says, be a light to me by the power of Christ, I ask you from the depths of my soul not to betray the hopes that I have placed in you. I shall be thrice blessed among mothers, if I am greatly glorified because of you. My child, I am departing before you to Eternity. When I die my soul will be bound to yours and with it I will boldly worship at the throne of Christ, taking pride in the wounds of your martyrdom and therefore becoming myself a partaker of your rare and magnificent awards and joy.”

These things the mother said to her son when she kissed him said “I kiss the body of a Martyr; a body will shortly be offered as a sacrifice to Christ.”

Her son fulfilled all his mother’s wishes out of love for her and embraced a dedicated life in Christ. Clement’s example became the three children in the furnace, whose bodies were made invincible by fasting and prayer so as not to be burned by the fire of passions, or by the flame of the furnace of the senses.

St. Clement Hieromartyr of Ancyra is commemorated on January 23 and his Apolitikion is the following:

Thou didst blossom forth for the faithful, O most sacred Clement, as a branch of holiness, a staff of contest, a most sacred flower, and a sweet God-given fruit. But as a fellow-sufferer of martyrs and a fellow prelate of hierarchs, intercede with Christ our God that our souls be saved.