

Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

OUR Lord so sets] for [*the doer of virtue*] a great and august assemblage of spectators, and what he desires, that very thing He bestows on him in great abundance. “For what,” saith He, “dost thou wish? is it not to have some to be spectators of what is going on? Behold then, thou hast some; not angels, nor archangels, but the God of all.”

And if thou desire to have men also as spectators, neither of this desire doth He deprive thee at the fitting season, but rather in greater abundance affords it unto thee. For, if thou shouldst now make a display, thou wilt be able to make it to ten only, or twenty, or (we will say) a hundred persons: but if thou take pains to lie hid now, God Himself will then proclaim thee in the presence of the whole universe. Wherefore above all, if thou wilt have men see thy good deeds, hide them now, that then all may look on them with the more honor, God making them manifest, and extolling them, and proclaiming them before all.

Again, whereas now they that behold will rather condemn thee as vainglorious; when they see thee crowned, so far from condemning, they will even admire thee, all of them. When therefore by waiting a little, thou mayest both receive a reward, and reap greater admiration, consider what folly it is to cast thyself out of both these and, while thou art seeking thy reward from God, and while God is beholding, to summon men for the display of what is going on. Why, if display must be made of our love, to our Father above all should we make it; and this most especially, when our Father hath the power both to crown and to punish. And let me add, even were there no penalty, it were not meet for him who desires glory to let go this our theater, and take in exchange the theater of men.

For who is there so wretched, as that when the king was hastening to come and see his achievements, he would let him go, and make up his assembly of spectators of poor men and beggars? For this cause then, He not only commands to make no display, but even to take pains to be concealed: it not being at all the same, not to strive for publicity, and to strive for concealment.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, pp. 131–2.

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

Week of January 12–18, 2009



A disciple of Abba Ammon’s told the following story: “On one occasion when we were singing the service, my mind became confused, and I forgot the verse in the Psalm; and when we had ended the service Abba Ammon answered and said unto me, ‘Whilst I was standing during the service it seemed that I was standing on fire and was being consumed, and my mind was unable to make me turn aside either to the right hand or to the left. And as for thee, where was thy mind when we were singing the service? for thou didst omit a verse from the Psalm. Didst thou not know that thou wast standing in the presence of God, and that thou wast speaking unto Him?’”

Paradise of the Holy Fathers,
Volume II, #251, pp. 56–7