



## Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

### Monthly Message for the Consecrated

May 2023

### **The Role Model Servant**

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). As Christians, we are called to be examples to others in general, and as servants in particular, and this depends primarily on the work of the Holy Spirit in the person who lives for Christ. “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). Similarly, the Apostle Paul also wrote to his disciple Titus, saying, “in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works” (Titus 2:7).

It is required of everyone to be an example, as the Apostle says, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Philippians 3:17). All of God's children should be an example to all people, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Also, Christ, who is the glory of God, has called us to be a light to the world and salt to the earth. Therefore, the Apostle Paul says, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:13-15).

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ himself presented us with an example, saying, “learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28). He also sanctified himself for their sakes (John 17:19). Therefore, all pastors and servants must present themselves as examples, ensuring that they are without stumbling blocks for those they serve, echoing the Apostle's words, “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed” (2 Corinthians 6:3).

The spread of Christianity was not only through preaching and teaching, but also through the example of the believers' lives, which attracted many to the truth of

Christ's teachings. We can say that a life of example is the fifth gospel or the gospel lived out.

+ **Being a role model in speech:**

It means having the good treasure (the heart) from which good things come out. With what tongue do we speak?! The Apostle James advises us, saying, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

Undoubtedly, the language of a person reveals his principles or spiritual examples. "A righteous man hates lying" (Proverbs 13:5). "In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

How do you speak to others?! Do not interrupt others in speech, and do not rush to respond, but learn the virtue of listening.

Beware that your tongue does not speak falsehood that does not glorify the name of your God or defile your mouth with foul language. "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6).

+ **A role model in behavior:**

Any model in behavior... the behavior of the servant must reflect their Christianity, whether at home, in the church, or in the world: At home, obedient and giving; in the church, praying and serving; in the world, working and pure. "Whoever does and teaches the [these commands] he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Wrong behavior by some servants directly affects those whom they serve, causing them to stumble. Therefore, it is said, "Woe to the that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:7).

These mistakes are either imitated by the servants and they lose their spirituality, or they are criticized and fall into the sin of condemnation. The righteous behavior of the servant or of the Christian in general stems from their submission to the divine commandment in their life, which becomes a spiritual method and principle that does not change with changing circumstances.

+ **A role model in love:**

Children of God are known by love, because the love of God has been poured out into their hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them (Romans 5:5). Therefore, a true servant can be a role model in love.

In our love for God, we hate the world and its desires and constantly seek to please Him, do His will, fulfill His commandments, and do not consider ourselves valuable until we joyfully complete the service that we have received from His hand. We do not seek comfort but embrace every hardship for the glory of the Holy Name.

And in our love for our neighbors, even our enemies, we bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who mistreat us. "Being deviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat." (1 Corinthians 4:12-13). Our example is our Lord Jesus Christ, who "who, when He was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten" (1 Peter 2:23).

**+ A role model in the spirit:**

This means the work of the Holy Spirit and its fruits in the life of a Christian, a gentle and quiet spirit, a humble and crushed spirit, a dignified spirit that does not know jest or foolish talk, a faithful spirit that keeps the secrets of others.

As His Holiness Pope Shenouda III says, ministry is not just words but spirit and life (John 6:63). A servant who only has information to offer will not give them anything except information without spirit; for a spiritual servant is not just a lesson but a life of service.

It is a spiritual life that moves in depth and affects others spiritually in an exciting and natural way, and the name of the Lord is sweet in his mouth as he speaks of Him in a way that attracts and wins souls. Some people think that Christian principles are ideals, and they wonder "who can implement them?" But the spiritual servant presents these ideals as implemented in his life.

**+ A role model in faith:**

Faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20) and as John the Beloved says, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). So, we believe that Satan has no power over us, nor sin, nor the world, and we walk as befits children of God, not conforming to the ways of this age.

Faith in eternal life: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to more abundantly" (John 10:10). This is the life that our holy fathers knew by faith, saw, lived, and attested to, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth (Hebrews 11:13), like our father Abraham. So, the true servant lives as a stranger in the world, seeking after the best life for himself and others, and always striving to ensure that his reputation is preserved in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Faith that God is with us: "They will call His name Immanuel, which is translated "God with us"" (Matthew 1:23). The faithful servant always feels that he is not alone, and does not look to his weakness, but trusts that God is his support and helper. He does not fear or be troubled, no matter how strong the winds against him or the waves of this world's sea. He clings to his God and trusts in him. "Blessed are all who trust in him," so that he can strengthen the weak and comfort the distressed.

As the Apostle Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

+ **Role model in purity:**

“In all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness” (2 Corinthians 6:4-6).

Thus, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the necessity of a life of purity for the servant in general, because he calls people to the kingdom, which does not allow anything impure or unclean to enter it. Therefore, he does not participate in the works of darkness, does not follow the path of the scoffers, does not give ear to the worldly falsehoods, and closes his eyes to evil, repeating this commandment:

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).