



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Consecrated

June 2021

Consecrating the Soul for Christ

"Behold, you are fair, my love! You have dove's eyes behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats going down from Mount Gilead" (Song of Solomon 4:1)

We come to the status of the bride in which the heavenly Groom flirts. He talks about the bride's eyes, which are like doves, and then we see Him talking about the bride's hair and saying, "*Your hair is like flock of goats on Mount Gilead.*" The mountain is high, and when the black goat sits on it, the view becomes like black hair above the bride's head and hanging on her shoulders... This is how the bride of Christ is like a high mountain, and her hair is like a goat crouching on his top and coming down to his foot...

We find this hair in the Book of Numbers, chapter 6 where the Holy Revelation talks about the law of the Nazirite saying, "*When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. 'All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow (hence, the bride who let her hair grows is Nazirite). All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.... Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.*" (Numbers 6:2-18).

The bride comes with her hair, which is a beauty crown for her head. She brings it to the Beloved Lord Jesus Christ, so that it is a sign of her dedication and consecration to the Lord Jesus alone as a true Groom of her heart.

In fact, this subject, the subject of consecration, is not limited to the few who preferred the life of virginity or monasticism to marriage, or decided to leave their jobs to devote all their time to service ... But the reality is that the life of consecration is the life that the Lord demands in His beloved bride, the human soul, which he bought with His blood to be His' alone, not other's.

A person may be single or married ... Full-time employee or not working ... But the important question is: Do you have the consecrated heart dedicated to the Lord alone and not others? Or is there a partner of God in the heart? Relationships? Properties? Memories? Amusement parks and pleasures? Etc., You are either consecrated to Satan or consecrated to Christ. The believer in the New Testament is a consecrated person dedicated to God. The Holy Bible forces us to be consecrated to Christ alone saying, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" (Romans 12:1)

We will focus on three points in the consecrated life:

- Good portion.
- Exceeding peace
- Care of the Lord.

First, the good portion

The Groom says, "*Your hair is like flock of goats on Mount Gilead.*" What a great wealth that is not compensated by the treasures of the earth and what is in it. When one takes Christ as his portion, it then is fulfilled in him what the Lord said to Mary, "*But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:42). He will then find the following in Christ:

- 1) A treasure: many people refuse living with Christ thinking He would deprive them of pleasures, with Him they would lose the worldly delights and their life would become a losing deal. How strange is that! Satan, the god of this age, mix facts for these people making them see loss in the only treasure and failure in the unique pearl. The Holy Bible tells us about the merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:46). Did not the great St.

Anthony leave 300 acres of the best lands of Upper Egypt to obtain the Pearl. Therefore, happy is the soul that finds in Christ her only treasure, hence consecrating her beautiful hair to obtain the heavenly Groom, the Great Portion of peoples.

- 2) A steadfastness: The soul that chooses Christ for her portion and devotes her life and love to Him, enjoys great stability even when others are shaken ... She sees Him as the unwavering Mount Gilead. Do you remember Jacob, the father of the fathers, fleeing from Laban, who followed him in Mount Gilead? But God, is the source of fortitude and safety, appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him not to harm Jacob. Laban records this saying, "*It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.'*" (Genesis 31:29). Yes, Satan can make us evil, all evil, but when we dedicate our lives to Christ, we will enjoy security in the arms of the heavenly Groom, so that we will not face evil, and a blow does not approach our tent.
- 3) A healing: in the ancient time, Gilead was famous of an old type of plants called Balm known with its good smell. It is also known with its power to treat many illnesses and wounds. Therefore, Jeremiah asked, "*Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?*" (Jeremiah 8:22). When the Balm tree is injured by an axe, the juice comes out of its shell, and patients receive it in ceramic pots prepared for this... Thus, Christ was wounded on the cross by the spear in His side and blood and water came out of it to cleanse our sins and heal the wounds with which sin wounded us. So, Christ is the real physician of our souls, our bodies, and spirits.

My beloved, did you find in Christ a unique portion? Would you come to Him with me as ceramic pots in which the precious healing Balm of the Beloved is collected to cure the past wounds and the present weaknesses, and to give security to the fears of the future? Let us say with the priest in the holy Fraction, "*And He ascended upon the Cross naked that He might clothe us with the garment of His righteousness. And He opened His side by the spear that we might enter into Him and dwell in the throne of His grace, and that His blood might flow from His body that we might wash ourselves from our iniquities. Indeed, He died and was buried in the tomb then He arose that He might raise us from the death of sin and give us life unto life eternal.*"

Second, the exceeding peace:

The Groom says about the soul fully consecrated to Him, "*Your hair is like flock of goats on Mount Gilead*", meaning it is resting and relaxed. She was asking the Groom saying, "*Where You feed Your flock, where You make it rest at noon?*" Therefore, the true rest and deep peace of the heart cannot be found in the vanity of the worldly treasures, in the pleasures of evil lust, or in the hopes of worldly fame, but in this Groom who said about Himself, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28).

Do you remember Peter the Apostle when he was imprisoned and delivered to four squads of soldiers? Herod intended to kill him as he killed James before. But Peter was sleeping in the midst of this cell in a wonderful peace to the degree that the angel sent by the Lord to deliver him had to strike him on the side to raise him up. It is the peace which the believer who tasted the rest and safety in Christ described saying, "*I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety*" (Psalms 4:8). Benjamin was enjoying this peace as the Holy Bible said about him, "*The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, Who shelters him all the day long; and he shall dwell between His shoulders*" (Deuteronomy 33:12). Therefore, the believer's peace is not built upon properties or relationships but upon a God who does not change like the Mount Gilead. Even if the mounts are removed or the hills are shaken, He remains a fortress of comfort and safety amid fears and sorrows. My beloved, while we are in the era of wars, famines, earthquakes, pandemics, and other disasters that cause panic, confusion and illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiac diseases, where to you find your rest? What is the source of your peace? Did you find it in the beloved Groom? Despite the barren wilderness, the sheep are resting on the source of the wondrous peace.

** Story: At an art competition in one of the countries, the king announced the theme of the competition: Peace. Artists are confused about drawing their paintings. On the day of the competition, the king came to see the paintings painted by artists on peace. He found a lot of traditional ideas about peace. But to his surprise, he found a painting full of storms, tornadoes, winds and trees that were almost taken off by high winds. He then asked the artist who painted the painting about peace in the middle of this painting, which is full of the wrath of nature. The artist replied with confidence, saying: Sir, the real peace is evident in this songbird, which stands on the branch steadfastly, not afraid of the wind, and not caring about storms, but

leaning on the King of peace Who gives his wondrous peace to those who depend on Him no matter how volatile the circumstances of life.

Third, the care of the Lord:

The Groom says to His bride, “*Your hair is like flock of goats on Mount Gilead.*” This mount is known to be full of plants symbolizing the life of satiety. Here, the Groom finds that his beloved had found her satiety in Him alone. Therefore, the Lord while promising His people with rest and satiety said, “*But I will bring back Israel to his home, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan; his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead.*” (Jeremiah 50:19). When you feel hungry in the life journey, you will find no fertile pasture like Him, whom David described in his psalm saying, “*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.*” (Psalms 23:2). The world, the lust, or the ego cannot satisfy you. The wise says, “*The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing*” (Ecclesiastes 1:8). When you have \$100, you want them to become 1000, and want the thousand to become a million. The one who has one son wants a second one. The one who builds the second floor wants to build the third one. Therefore, St. Augustine told the Lord in his confessions, “Our spirits came out of You and will not rest but in You”. How wonderful is the soul that is consecrated to the dear Beloved. She stays in His shade, rests in His green pasture, and is full of the satiety of His house, hence, she enjoys peace.

My beloved, take the chance to consecrate your eyes to Christ that they may not be tempted by the worldly delights, to consecrate your ears that they may not delight in the evil corrupting songs, to consecrate your mouth that it utters nothing but the heavenly hymns instead of lies, curses, swears, and gossips, to consecrate your hands that they may not hold accursed things but you lift them up to the dear Groom as an evening sacrifice, and to consecrate your feet that they may not run except after Him seeking the lost and strayed from His flock till you find him. You would rather consecrate your entire heart to Him alone as you are His Nazirite. Would you enthroned Him as a King whom you follow today and all days? Would you say to Him, “My Lord Jesus Christ, the dear Groom of my soul, I thank You because You are the greatest portion I can choose. I thank You because You want me consecrated and dedicated to You. Behold my love, heart and life, my past, present and future. Humbly accept them as a love sacrifice on the alter of consecration and dedication for You all days. Please accept from me what You already gave me. I am Yours and for others I will never be. Amen.