



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Consecrated

September 2021

The Life of Full Surrender

The second point in the qualities of the consecrated sister that she must have a full surrender the will of our Lord, and we mean by **surrendering oneself**, that the believer hand to God, with all his awareness and will, his whole life i.e. the body and the soul, with obedience and confidence, without fear or doubt, so that God may lead her and guide her according to His good and acceptable and perfect will (Romans 12:2), or according to the words of our teacher St. Peter says, *“commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator”* (1 Peter 4:19).

Then, one's own will would step back, the ego would hide, God would take the entire being and the soul would become a throne of the Lord and her motto would be the prayer the Lord taught us, *“May Your will be done”* (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2).

Surrendering one's life, in this sense, cannot be an accident that comes and goes, but it is a constant position to which the soul has ultimately carried life tests, that reflects on daily life and its attitudes, and is examined in tribulations, adversity, pain, diseases and the approach of death.

In our daily lives, there are examples of surrendering one's life to another. The little kid, holding the hand of his father (or mother) crossing the road, surrenders to him completely, reassuringly and unafraid, and has placed his trust in his father, who does not doubt his love, care and ability. If parents cannot leave their son at risk, then rather how much God does? Here are the words of the Bible that express the immeasurably greatness of God's love for the soul: *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.”* (Isaiah 49: 15-16) If God's love is this much, then we must hand over our lives to Him as if we were children.

However, the life of surrender is not a license to stop practicing vigilance, worship and seeking aid, or to stop thinking, to give up work, to perform duty or to make efforts in all honesty, as if it were a call to dependence, laziness, escape from struggling and practicing life, or a trend driven by despair, weakness and helplessness; but the believer who depends on God does his duty obediently: he lets down the nets (Luke 5:4), goes to Siloam (John 9:7), lifts the stone (John 11:41) (which the Lord has obliged the believers, with whom he made his miracles, to do), and offers his potentialities and talents (even if they are two mites -Luke 21:2), or five breads and two fishes (Matthew 14:17, Mark 6:38, Luke 9: 13, John 6:9), or a little flour and oil (1Kings 17:12), and asks God to use them to glorify His name, open or close the doors (Revelation 3:7).

Those who surrendered their life to God:

If we review the lives of some biblical heroes, we will become increasingly understanding of the meaning of surrender. Among the men of the Old Testament, stands out **Abraham**, who came out of his father's house not knowing where to go, in obedience to the Lord's command (Genesis 12:1, Hebrews 11:8), nor did he resist the offering of Isaac, his only son, as a burnt offering: *"concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead"* (Genesis 22:2, Hebrews 11:17-19).

- **Jacob**, who escaped from his brother Esau's face, sleeps comfortably in the wilderness under god's protection, and enjoys a dream in which a ladder extends to heaven and angels climb up and down. When he woke up, he said, *"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!... and he called the name of that place Bethel"* (Genesis 28:10-22). Wherever God is present, fear goes away and disappear.

- **Joseph** does not see his brothers behind his strangeness and pain, but sees God's plan, the Maker of good deeds: *"It was not you who sent me here, but God; But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good"* (Genesis 45:8; 50:20).

- **Moses** did not think much about the consequences of his disobedience to the king, and the leadership of the people for freedom and exit from Egypt. He only carried out the order of God, who gave him his leadership: *"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible"*(Hebrews 11:27).

- In all his suffering, **Job** remained resigned to God, blessing His name: *"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord"* (Job 1:21).

- **David**, in his surrender to God, says, *"I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it"* (Psalms 39:9). Many of his psalms begin with these words: *"In You I put my trust"* (Psalms 7;11;16;25;26;31).
- **Daniel**, depending on His God, to Whom he surrendered his life, descended to the den, trusting God, who *"sent is His angel and shut the lion's mouths"* (Daniel 6:22).
- **The disciples of the Lord**, who threw all their hope at their Savior, Who loved them to death, did not care about the threat not to mention the name of Jesus, and their explicit response was: *"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:20).
- **Paul**, the blessed, in the first confrontation with the Lord, on his way to Damascus, continuing to persecute the Church, surrendered saying his famous saying: *"Lord, what do you want me to do"* (Acts 9:6). And knowing what adversity will come to him, he said: *"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24).

We lack time to mention the attitude of all **the martyrs of faith** throughout the ages, their surrender was not a claim or mere words, but an honest testimony sealed with blood, with them all those who suffer and bear his pains and persecution with thanksgiving without complaining, for the sake of Christ.

Why surrendering oneself?

People hand their lives to people they are reassured by, or in whom are they find influence and power, or who rely on their money as a guarantee for the future, their strength and health, their positions and authority, or their families and influence. But all of this is not guaranteed, it is not permanent, it changes and dissipates, and the whole world will pass away (1 John 2:17). But God is the principle of everything and his purpose, and He is the One who takes care of all His creation: human beings, animals and plants. Handing over our lives to him is natural logic, as we are surrounded by weakness, inferiority, fear, ignorance, temptations, worries, diseases, the vicissitudes and surprises of days, including death, which we do not know when it comes to us or to others we love. We need to entrust our lives to the One who can preserve, take care of and protect it, remove fear from it, choose with and for it, especially in matters of destiny (such as study, work, migration, consecration, marriage, etc.), and fight for it in the battles of life. God, who is capable of everything, is ready for all these tasks and more, He is trustworthy to hand our lives to Him.

How do we get to the life of surrender?

In front of us is the model of the **Virgin**, who did not excuse herself but rather handed over her life to the divine choice, saying: *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word"* (Luke 1:38) (Gospel of the Second Sunday of Koiahk). Surrender, here, is complete and immediate.

But this may not be the approach of many, who reach the life of surrender through a journey that goes on or falls short, in its spiritual journey, discovering its impotence, shortcomings and limitations, as well as the inability of the world, its tools and its money to give peace and tranquility, in comparison with God's strength, love, wisdom, attention, sincerity of His promises, and His yearning for the salvation of all people (1 Timothy 2:4) and His call to relieve all those who labor and are heavy laden (Matthew 11: 2).

The faithful soul gradually abandons itself in order to come closer to her Savior, increasing her knowledge of Him, and deepening her repentance. Over time and by the accumulation of temptations, her confidence and love for her God increase, reducing her caution, reservation, habits of her thinking, her dependence on her potential and a life governed by balances, numbers, calculations and human logic.

With the growth of fellowship, faith and repentance, comes the time when the soul puts all her burdens, self, concerns and interests on the Almighty. From this moment on, she returns not to herself except with the temptation of the enemy.

Surrendering oneself is the ultimate goal in the strong relationship between the soul and her God, where the soul dissolves in God and has nothing to possess.

However, God may allow stumbles, retreats and weaknesses in order to completely strip the soul of her reservation or remnants of her dependence on her potentialities, and in order to complete her submission, that she puts all burden on God.

For some time, daily worries and concerns may remain an obstacle to the continuation of the relationship with God, until we are visited by grace, and we see in all our interests a completion of the divine will, and they become for God's sake and His glory.

However, we alone cannot hand over our lives to God. It is a difficult adventure that man dares not to have with his abilities, doubts, care, caution and reservations.

Millions of people go through the shocks of harsh life and their bitter experiences without leading them to hand over their lives to God, but to realistically accept what is going on, and to continue life again (sometimes in worthy courage), or to complain and dissatisfaction (such as the conduct of the Children of Israel in the wilderness),

to reject or not discover God's wisdom, or to doubt the existence of a just God in this universe.

The reasons for these reactions are not hidden.

They range from ignorance, pride, self-love, believing in one's thought, physical vision and lack of faith, a life of sin, material calculations, dependency on the arm of human beings, etc.

If those people continue to reject God and withhold their souls from Him, they lose light and wander in the dark, as they lack peace, and are possessed by concern, fear and anxiety no matter how they pretend otherwise. By their voluntary alienation from God and self-reliance, they are subjected to curse (Jeremiah 17:5), and their tragic end is eternal death.

Hence, we need divine action that deliver us from the fear associated with this situation (as if throwing himself into the water and not knowing how to swim), giving us the courage to surrender our lives as if throwing it into God's hands. Perhaps the sight of Peter the apostle asking the Lord to order him to come to Him and walk with Him on the water brings the picture closer to us. At first, trust in God walking on the water was confined to walking beside the ship, and he walked on the water. But when he returned to his reality trapped by the strong winds and separated from the source of certainty, faith faded away and he began to sink (Matthew 12:28-30).

From that hour on, submission and full reliance on God become a habit and an authentic part of spiritual life, practiced by the surrendering soul from the beginning of its day until it ends, asking God's will in every act and thought: in matters of the house, study and work, when reading the word and practicing worship; in repentance, in service, with seeking the support of the Spirit for the love of others, to continue thanks and sufficiency, to reject deviation and evil calls, and to crush self-esteem even in the spiritual sphere, because this disrupts the growth of the life of surrender and leads to fall into the trap of the enemy.

However, the real test of the sincerity of the surrender of life to God is the behavior of the soul in temptations, especially the violent ones. In severe illness, she does not complain, fear not complications, or lack patience when it takes long time to be cured. She rather thanks God and her trust in God's love does not shake even for a while. She considers illness a great blessing to share God's sufferings, carry His cross with Him and preach Him. If **serious surgery** is required, for example, she is preparing to depart as if it were the last hour, and if the healing comes and the life extends, she considers it a new opportunity provided by grace to forget what is behind and extend to what is in front of (Philippians 3:23), and to acquire better experiences, but never forsakes her willingness **to die** every moment, and that

nothing is greater than to settle up and be with Christ *"which is far better"* (Philippians 1: 23).

Handing over our lives to God is a testimony to our faith and the declaration of its vitality and victory, after the oscillation between doubt and certainty comes time for a true practice of faith in self-denial, behaving with humility and subordination of the Savior (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34).

In fact, we surrender our lives for our sake, not for God's. He does not need us or our love and worship. While atheists see God as a tyrant authoritative one Who wants to possess man, believers realize God's love which brought Him to Golgotha and see in surrendering their lives to Him a guarantee He will lead all their journey, He will share with them all life tribulations and pains, and He will defend them against the attacks of the enemy, *"But the Lord delivers him out of them all."* (Psalms 34:19). As their faith is rid of impurities and obstacles, they trust that *"all things work together for good"* (Romans 8:28), and thus experience peace in the midst of battles, and joy in pain. The greatest gifts they would get will remain their eternal salvation, *"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9).

This is the voice of God for those who have surrendered their lives to Him: *"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation"* (Psalms 91:14-16).