



## Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

### Monthly Message for the Consecrated

October 2021

## Toil in Service

*“Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Corinthians 3:8)*

We do not mean by this the toil of the vain world, but the toil for the sake of the kingdom.

The toil for the vain world looks like the toil of Solomon in matters of luxury and wealth as he said later on, *“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:11)*

But before talking about the toil of the service, we must know what is the futile toil that has no profit.

### **Examples on the futile toil:**

#### 1. Toil that does not continue till the end

Sometimes, we see servants start their service with full energy and enthusiasm. They toil a lot in service, but they end up like what is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, you have left your first love” (Revelation 2:4)*

Also, the Lord Jesus Christ gave us the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21 saying, *“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise.*

*And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.'* (Matthew 21:28-31)

How you complete your service is what matters and not how you begin it.

Therefore, St. Paul said, *"Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."* (Colossians 4:17)

Toil that continues till the end is the one about which the Book of Revelation talked saying, *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Revelation 2:10).

The toil that does not continue till the end is the toil of Demas who St. Paul praised a lot for his toil, then after that he said about him, *"For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."* (2 Timothy 4:10)

It is the toil of many servants in the field of service about whom St. Paul said, *"For many, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."* (Philippians 3:18)

The Holy Bible gives us in the First Book of Kings, chapter 13, an example of a great man called a man of God (the Bible does not mention his name). This man gave a command an alter built by Jeroboam to split apart. He prayed and then the hand of Jeroboam which he stretched out toward the man of God withered. Yet, the Holy Bible mentions that when he returned to his place, he disobeyed the word of the Lord and was killed by a lion who devoured him.

This story scares us a lot. This man was called the man of God and he did great miracles and powers, yet his toil did not continue till the end.

## 2. Toil without Christ:

Our Lord said to Martha, *“You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10: 41-42)*

Many times, we toil a lot, like Martha, in service but we forget to allow Christ to come with us in our service (like Mary).

This means, we can do meetings, discussions, service or convention arrangements, and we put attractive subjects’ titles, wonderful songs and speakers yet we forget to pray and ask for the Lord’s guidance and help before we start the work.

This is the toil which St. Peter talked about saying, *“We have toiled all night and caught nothing.” (Luke 5:5)*

Toil without Christ makes you catch nothing.

What is the benefit from meetings, conventions, and trips other than attracting people to Christ? How can you attract them while you did not have fellowship with Christ from the beginning? You are actually attracting them to yourself.

When St. Peter received Christ in his boat it became full of fish as soon as he let down the nets for catch.

David the prophet said, *“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” (Psalms 127:1)*

The Bible says that when Solomon built the temple, *“So that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.” (2 Chronicles 5:14)*

Many servants toil to solve marital problems. Many of them hold academic degrees and did very useful research but all these do not solve people problems because they do not introduce Christ to this house.

One of the pious fathers was talking about the Lord's work with him in marital problems and said, *"When I pray fervently and put the problem on the altar, then I pray with them at their house before they present their problem, it used to be solved in an unexpected rapid way."*

A servant needs the presence of Christ in all his toil like what St. Paul said, *"But I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."* (1 Corinthians 15:10). Even, St. Paul, when he mentioned his labors, he reminded himself that this toil is effective by the presence of Christ with him.

(To be continued)