



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Monastic and Consecrated Servants

October 2013

My beloved Children,

Grace and peace to you.

I wanted to begin by first making mention of how proud I am of each one of you and of your growth; may God confirm you in your calling and continue to strengthen you in your struggles.

I write to you in order to share certain points for your consideration.

John Climacus said that the monastic life is 'a light to all men,' and so we must be circumspect in the manner in which we carry ourselves and behave towards one another, in order that we may be worthy of our calling and that God, in all things, may be glorified.

Let us first address the commandment of love at the monastery. In the unfortunate occurrence when frustrations and contentions arise, rather than allowing any tension or bitterness to develop, perhaps it is wiser to use one of the following approaches:

Communicate with one another. *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church.'* (Matt 18:15-16)

Be patient and, through the grace of God, accept each other's differences; support, speak highly, and pray for one other and even with each other, rather than feel offended by behaviors that you may not understand. *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.* (Phil 2:4)

Offer sincere apologies to one and other and forgive each other. *'...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.'* (Col 3:13)

Also, it is essential that you show reverence when in Church. Refrain from speaking with each other about matters that could wait to be discussed after prayer. Control yourselves from speaking before, during, and after prayer; do not move around, stay fixed in your place; do not run, walk slowly and calmly; do not sit, stand in the fear of God during your prayers and praises; be on time for prayers, praises, and divine liturgy.

Lastly, be submissive to one another and do not develop a habit of frequently objecting to what is being proposed. We should be flexible and accepting; we should help and support each other rather than resist new ideas and try and modify everything to suit our personal needs. Bear in mind that the vow of poverty is not simply poverty of material things, but poverty of one's will.

Remember the reason you left the world and remember the blessed opportunity you have to live a life of service and fellowship with God. I am confident in your growth.

May the peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.