



## Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

### Monthly Message for the Monastic and Consecrated Servants

July 2015

My beloved,

Peace and grace.

I hope you are all benefiting from the letters on the steps in the *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Although this month should be on the third step, we will pause for a moment so that I may share with you something beautiful that was recently sent to me. God willing, we will resume with the book again in August.

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A monk's letter.

My beloved brother,

Years ago, I made the decision to leave my position in my field of work, to say goodbye to my homeland, my family, my church and my closest friends and to offer, as a sacrifice to God, the desire to have a family and children so that I could say with St. Paul, "*but what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.*"<sup>1</sup>

I joined the monastery with the highest expectations of myself; looking forward and eager to toil until the point of great exhaustion and pain because I knew that this was the road I had to take if I wanted to become a saint. God called each one of us to become saints, so I was not wrong in my desire but I was mistaken to be so confident that I would attain these great spiritual heights quickly and with ease.

Today I humbly accept that I am still a product of my carnal past and only through God's mercy and your prayers can I become a new creation. The road to sainthood is the most challenging one I will ever take. Nothing is more dreadful than facing the reality of my sins. However, I do not despair because although I discover things about me that I never

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. 3:7-9

imagined were part of my personality, by God's grace I grow in faith when I turn to Him for mercy and I truly feel the hand of God picking me up everytime I fall.

My brother, I want to learn to live and love you as though we were born from the same womb.

Often when the devil comes between us I do not show you love but rather I complain about you to others and avoid talking to you altogether. Forgive me, brother. My Lord carried my cross and covers my sins yet I readily expose our troubles and expect from you more than I am able to offer myself. The Lord said, "*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone*"<sup>2</sup> and so I ask for your forgiveness brother and, by God's grace, I promise to come to you when I have a heavy heart.

I often find it easier to obey when it is my elders who are asking me for something, but please do not look to me with anger because inside of me is a battle I am fighting to win. I have taken a vow and I want to live my life being blessed by it through your patience and prayers.

God allowed me to once know brothers that would truly die for each other. You could not tell who was younger because they both respected each other as though each one were the greater amongst them. Nothing divided them and even when they were in disagreement with each other, no one could use that opportunity to shake them. They did not compete with each other and neither of them ever accepted a negative word to be said by anyone to them about the other. They were a true team of brotherly love.

Forgive me that I often see your faults before mine. Forgive me that I judge you before I judge myself. Forgive me that I always like to declare that something was my idea just in case you will try and take credit for it. Jesus Christ never glorified Himself but always the Father, but I often defend myself and put the blame on you. I have often refused to submit to you or to humble myself before you because I honestly did not feel that I should do either of those things. Be patient with me brother and pray for me to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did not hesitate for a moment to humble Himself before man in every occasion and to be perfectly obedient until death. Forgive me for feeling victimized because I did not see us as a unity, but as separate individuals with separate rights and I believed that you are infringing on mine.

If I ever wrong you do not loose heart, because God sees the truth, and if we turn to each other He will be quick to unite us again.

I've sinned. Forgive me, brother. I don't want to walk the path without you.

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May the peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Glory be to God forever.  
Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Matt 18:15