



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States
Monthly Message for the Monastic and Consecrated Servants
November 2015

Dear Beloved,

I share with you...

A Letter from a Layman

Today, I awoke an hour before my alarm went off – when this happens, I usually go right back to sleep, but this time I considered that this day could be my last and so instead, I got up and began to pray. I stood before my Creator and deeply and individually thanked Him for everything I could possibly think of. I also prayed for those who had asked for prayers – each one by his name – for our rulers and for our church and for every created soul. I then asked for His blessing and to live this day according to His will, not mine, and to do all for the glory of His name.

I felt tired and thought to skip my prayer rule, but I remembered that this day could be my last, and so I picked up my Book of Hours and prayed my morning psalms.

I thought to have a big breakfast because so many choices were laid out before me, but I remembered that this day could be my last, and so I restrained myself and chose to abstain for a little longer instead.

As I was driving to work without the usual managing between drinking my coffee, eating my breakfast and making my phone calls, I remembered that this day could be my last, and decided to listen to a few chapters of the Gospel instead.

When I arrived to work, I remembered that this day could be my last and so I prayed before beginning anything at all.

During my first meeting, a subordinate spoke with me abrasively and I desired to respond with authority, but I remembered that this day could be my last, and so I expressed understanding and shared with him an encouraging word.

As I was riding the crowded elevator to exit the building for lunch, it stopped at a middle floor before a man carrying several items, and just as the door was about to shut again – for there was no room on this ride – I remembered that this day could be my last, and so I exited to let him take my place and took the stairs instead.

On my way to lunch, there was that homeless man sitting on the floor in the alleyway of the restaurant whom I always give some food on my way back to the office, but I remembered that this day could be my last, and so I invited him to dine with me instead.

When I arrived back to the office, my superior asked to meet with me to explain the reason why the promotion, which was meant to be soon for me, would be given to someone else. I felt anger and frustration stirring within me but then I remembered that this day could be my last and so I thanked God for the opportunity to suffer the slightest injustice so that I may offer it to Him as a sacrifice; I left the matter in His hands, thanked my superior and shared with him a kind word.

When I returned back home, I discovered my house had been broken into. I felt despair and fear filling my heart but then I remembered that this day could be my last and instead I lifted my heart to God and professed my trust in Him, prayed for those who must have been in need of my things and asked for the grace of never being attached to material things on this earth.

Before making myself something to eat, I remembered that this day could be my last and so I got back in my car and picked up my new friend from the alleyway by the restaurant; we returned and set the dining table for three – a seat for our Lord – and ate a thanksgiving meal together.

During our meal, my friend and I spoke about how this day could be our last and so after dinner we decided to go to church. We entered and stood together in the pews, closed our eyes and prayed from our hearts.

I invited my friend to take shelter in my house for the evening but he laughed suggesting I join him in the alleyway instead, where no one can break in! So we parted ways but promised each other that if God were to give us another day, we would meet again.

When I returned home, I spent the evening in prayer and unceasing tears asking God to purify my heart so that I may see Him when I depart from this world.

I thanked Him for every difficulty that gave me an opportunity to learn humility, for every disagreement that gave me an opportunity to deny my will; I thanked Him for every injustice and harsh word that allowed me to offer myself as a sacrifice, for every shame that broke my pride and strengthened me to carry my cross. I thanked Him and thanked Him all night, pleading for His mercy and asking for his blessings for my brothers, for the world, and for myself.

I unwillingly fell asleep and woke up the next morning not knowing if this day would be my last.

“This, then, is the sixth step. He who has climbed it will never sin. *‘Remember your last end, and you will never sin’* (Ecclus. 7:36).”¹

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

¹ Climacus, J. (1982). On Remembrance of Death. In *The ladder of Divine Ascent* (p. 135). New York: Paulist Press.