



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Monastic and Consecrated Servants

June 2016

My beloved children,

Peace and grace.

The twelfth step of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* – On Falsehood – is covered in a brief chapter, which goes straight to the point that lying is derived from hypocrisy and driven by the lack of fear of God. John Climacus argues that, ‘the man gifted with fear of the Lord cannot lie’¹ and neither can ‘a man drunk with compunction’.² Therefore, to the man who lies, the verse which Climacus mentions that “David says to God, ‘You will destroy everyone speaking a lie’ (Ps. 5:7),”³ means nothing. Let us keep this point in mind while we discuss an important topic that I believe, by the grace of God, would prevent, if not completely eliminate our inclination to tell a lie: how to properly communicate with one another.

There are four methods of communication: direct and clear, direct and unclear, indirect and clear, and indirect and unclear. The only truly acceptable method amongst these four is the first one, and we will expound on how and why this will help in preserving the virtue of honesty.

Telling the truth begins first with being honest with ourselves. If we tell a lie and declare that we are ‘following the example of Rahab’⁴ then we have made our sin acceptable under the guise of a “white lie” and will not likely repent of it. However, if we believe in the word of God that says, ‘*he who speaks lies shall perish,*’⁵ that ‘*lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight*’⁶ that ‘*He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence,*’⁷ then even a “white lie” (of which there is no such thing) would be considered a blemish on our soul which we would not be able to endure even for a moment.

¹ Climacus, J. (1982). On Falsehood. In *The ladder of Divine Ascent* (p. 161). New York: Paulist Press.

² Climacus, J. (1982). On Falsehood. In *The ladder of Divine Ascent* (p. 160). New York: Paulist Press.

³ Climacus, J. (1982). On Falsehood. In *The ladder of Divine Ascent* (p. 160). New York: Paulist Press.

⁴ Climacus, J. (1982). On Falsehood. In *The ladder of Divine Ascent* (p. 161). New York: Paulist Press.

⁵ Prov. 19:9

⁶ Prov. 12:22

⁷ Ps. 101:7

If we are first honest with ourselves, we will examine what our personal intention is for not speaking directly and clearly to one another – is it vainglory? Are we trying to uphold a certain image before others? Is it hypocrisy? Are we more comfortable speaking the truth *about* a person rather than *to* the person? Is it a weakness in our character? Do others intimidate us? I should not deny the truth and lie to myself as though I am above such things – and so what if, for instance, I feel jealous? Does God not already know the truth? *‘For He knows the secrets of the heart.’*⁸ Would it be better to be in denial and act in ways that best suit our comfort level and thus bring about many other transgressions? Or is it better to confess the truth and be free of the shackles, which limit our spiritual growth? Yes, it takes courage to follow the commandments of God, but as it is said, *‘the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you’*⁹ and remember, *‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’*¹⁰

Once, by the grace of God, we can root out the reason why we have lied then we have won half the battle. The other half requires more prayer and courage. Prayer in order for God to help us overcome our sin and courage in order to put into practice what the Holy Spirit then guides us to do. For instance, if I have an issue with one of my brothers/sisters, which comes from a place of jealousy in my heart, I should resist the urge to act on this; and if I have already acted on it, then now is the time to confess the truth and reconcile – *‘Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.’*¹¹ What great blessings come from such an act of love.

My beloved, falsehood is a great disease that mars the soul – it is devious and sly and can skillfully find a residence within our heart. It surrounds itself with a cushion of comfort, convincing us that it is much better not to pay too much attention to it because any disturbance may cause unwanted turmoil with reality and painful death to the ego. It convinces us that nobody likes change, so rather than denying our will, why not take the wide gate, and put our energy into creating an environment that is yet even more comfortable to the ego – a perfect habitat for falsehood – and not to worry about facing the truth? Be very cautious, my beloved. Be very cautious.

Do not be ashamed of the truth. Let our Lord Jesus Christ be your strength. Remember the saints who, with all eagerness, were quick to confess their sins in order to be purified. Learn to be direct and clear when speaking and also when being spoken to. Be free. Be healed and be transformed.

*‘This is the twelfth step. The man who has taken it has obtained the root of all blessings.’*¹²

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

⁸ Ps. 44:21

⁹ Deut. 20:4

¹⁰ Phil. 4:13

¹¹ Jas. 5:16

¹² Climacus, J. (1982). On Falsehood. In *The ladder of Divine Ascent* (p. 161). New York: Paulist Press.