



## Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

### Monthly Message for the Monastic and Consecrated Servants

August 2016

My beloved children,

Peace and grace.

I write to you this month to remind you that you are always in my thoughts and prayers and have been most especially these days. I am thankful for the love and protection of our Heavenly Father and for the growth I see in you through the Holy Spirit. I know that each one of you struggles, and I am proud of your perseverance in carrying the cross.

Whether in the monastery, the convent, or in service, each of you has been given a specific responsibility by which you may glorify God, and although I see your dedication and faithfulness, I want you to also always keep sight of your goal. Never forget for Whom you are living and Whom you are serving. This month, during Saint Mary's Fast, I ask you to search your hearts for the secrets that lie within, of which only God knows, and grow in your life of prayer. Remember our holy and blessed mother and how strong she was in faith and how she always relied on prayer in times of difficulty. Her words were few but her prayers were many. I would like us to strive to be the same for others and for ourselves.

*'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.'*<sup>1</sup> Let us not be so quick to judge the actions of our brothers and sisters, but rather let us pray for the will of God to be accomplished in their lives. If we are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves<sup>2</sup> perhaps it is to remember to always pray for others; since we are patient with ourselves and have hope that we can change, then we must extend that same compassion and encouragement to your brothers and sisters in prayer.

Moreover, as we climb the ladder of divine ascent, we can lose ourselves in the means if we do not have a constant reminder of our goal. This applies to our daily work as well. Perhaps the type of responsibility we are given troubles us or, on the contrary, we may feel superior because of our given responsibility; in either case, if we are feeling this way then we have lost sight of the goal. The same is true when any other matter stirs in us a passion that has

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<sup>1</sup> Jas. 5:16

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 22:39

not as its chief purpose, to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

*‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’<sup>3</sup> Your Creator knows you very well and has a perfect plan to perfect you, so I only ask you to let Him. Open up your heart in prayer and listen to His call. Do not silence His voice when you are told to change your ways. Do not silence His voice when He tells you that you are wrong. ‘If you wish to pray as you should, **deny yourself all the time**, and when any kind of affliction troubles you, meditate on prayer.’<sup>4</sup>□*

We each have a struggle... so pray. We will always find our answer in prayer.

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>3</sup> Ps. 139:23-24

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus, ., Makarios, ., Palmer, G. E. H., Sherrard, P., & Kallistos, . (1983). *The Philokalia: The complete text*. London: Faber and Faber.