



## Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

### Monthly Message for the Monastic

May 2019

My beloved children,

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

I pray that the joy of the resurrection is one that we are experiencing in its fullness — “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;” (Gal. 2:20) and so let us once again remember His commandment: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).

It is, unfortunately, not uncommon for us to fall prey to the devil’s tricks and to find ourselves unable to tolerate one of our brothers or sisters. In the monastery/convent, the devil doesn’t have much to fight us with — we have no family or possessions, no titles or rights — we have only God, prayer and each other. These three are tied together and so loosening any one part is a battle won on his [the devil’s] end. I pray that we fight against this with all our heart and soul.

We are resurrected. The old man is dead. We no longer permit ourselves to accept thoughts like, “so and so has a difficult personality and I should avoid them.” Yes, it’s true that we will not automatically bond with every single person that God has put on our monastic path, but we must remember that God has indeed selected each person and knows very well that He has gathered us together specifically into this group together. It is not a mistake. It is not by chance.

God gathered us together on purpose and then *commanded* us to love one another. He did not say that it is okay to “avoid each other for the sake of peace, to grumble against one another and worst of all, to completely accept that we just don’t like each other”. Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to love one another even as we love ourselves!

If the devil were to look at us, how would he be able to tell if we belong to him or to God? Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Could you imagine the devil claiming

ownership on us because we refuse to get along and so are not recognized as Christians?

My dear children, we have left all for the One and if Christ dwells in us through our love for one another, then how can we be separated from Him because we refuse to get along? For a fact, someone's behavior may be completely non-monastic and so we justify ourselves in being irritated with them. I tell you that we are not justified.

We must fight with all our heart and soul against division, which comes from the devil. We are all different and each have our own unique personality with the good and the bad but there is never any reason to conclude that you "just don't get along." It is absolutely not acceptable. You must strive against it always, always, always.

Now is the time to live in the light of the resurrection of love. If you know of a brother or sister that has an issue with you, go and talk to him or her and resolve it together. Humble yourself for the sake of God and be united once again. Do not accept the bad thoughts that come to your mind. Do not delay receiving someone who comes to work out matters with you. Do not reject an apology and do not delay asking for forgiveness. Do not be stubborn about who is right and who is wrong but remember your calling and remember the silence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Glory be to God forever. Amen.