



Coptic Orthodox

Diocese of the Southern

United States

Monthly Message for the Monastic

September 2019

My sons and daughters,

Read to you during your consecration are these beautiful verses from the Book of Sirach:

“Son, when you apply yourself to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare your soul for temptation.

Humble your heart, and persevere. Incline your ear, and accept words of understanding, and you should not hurry away in the time of distress.

Endure steadfastly for God. Join yourself to God, and persevere, so that your life may increase in the very end.

Accept everything that will happen to you, and persevere in your sorrow, and have patience in your humiliation.

For gold and silver are tested in fire, yet truly acceptable men are tested in the furnace of humiliation.

Believe in God, and He will restore you to health, and straighten your way, and hope in Him. Observe His fear, and grow old in it.

You who fear the Lord, wait for His mercy, and do not turn away from him, lest you fall.

You who fear the Lord, believe in him, and your reward will not be taken away.

You who fear the Lord, hope in Him, and mercy will approach you, to your delight.” (Sir. 2:1-9)

Wisely chosen are these words that depict every needed step to faithfully live a consecrated life to God.

Prepare your soul for temptation— a novice should have a very clear understanding that this life is one of chosen self-denial. Choosing the monastic life is also choosing to accept a life of total submission. You must accept to let go of your own will and desires. You choose a life in which no one will grant you the authority you once had nor the honor and respect you once felt entitled to. Understand this and also understand that the one who begins this path will be fought the entire way in order to fall away from virtue and be driven by their passions.

Humble your heart and persevere— humility is not an easy virtue to achieve. The ego is a strong force and doesn't make anything easy. The ego constantly suggests that it would be better to complain about people and circumstances when we are unhappy rather than endure and judge ourselves first; to ask for exemptions and exceptions when things require too much sacrifice rather than to remain in the same calling in which we were called (1 Cor. 7:20); to lie and deceive rather than to admit weakness. Woe to us when we give in to the desires of our ego.

Incline your ear, and accept words of understanding— it is a very sad thing when the devil manages to convince you to lose trust and faith in your Spiritual Father and Spiritual Guides; chosen by God to help you on your chosen path, are these. One must, at all times, be aware that this is a target for the devil in order to be the one to guide you instead. Remember the simple example that in order to destroy a colony of ants (this marvelous insect in which we learn from) one must just kill its queen. It is truly the humble soul that accepts criticism, guidance and help from others. Woe to us when we give in to the desires of our ego.

Endure steadfastly for God. Join yourself to God— not man, not ranks, not positions, not honor, not personal preferences, but for God and to God alone.

Accept everything that will happen to you— how many monastics are left who apply this in their lives and understand that we must persevere in our sorrow, and have patience in our humiliation. "For gold and silver are tested in fire, yet truly acceptable men are tested in the furnace of humiliation."

Believe in God and fear Him— and He will restore you to health, reward you and grant you the good desires of your heart.

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

Glory be to God forever. Amen.