

## **An Outstanding Message from a Wise Father**

The following are excerpt from a spiritual message that was sent by Pope Theonas, the 16<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of Alexandria to one of his Christian children. He worked as the chief custodian of the Imperial Palace during the reign of Emperor Diocletian.

Let's reflect together on what he tells us and the lessons that we may learn from his profound words.

“Let your adherence to Christianity to be in action not by words. If we pursue our own glory, we essentially pursue what is passing away, but if we pursue the glory of God, we pursue what is enduring and long-lasting.

I thank God who granted you grace which made you close to the emperor, so that you become the beautiful aroma of Christ.

Be a supporter of truth.

Do not accept bribes to reach your goals or for the flattery of the ruler.

Elevate yourself above the love of money which is not any different from pagan worshipping.

Hold on to politeness and decency and beware of uttering obscenities.

Perform your duty to its fullest.

Love all of your acquaintances in the palace.

Consider all orders issued by the Emperor as though they are God's, as long as they are not contrary to His teaching.

Gird yourself with virtue, and let your heart be full of faith, hope, and love

Dedicate time for prayer and reading the Bible which you ought to consider as your constitution to conduct your self according to it, thus you gain your eternal life.”

We may notice that the Pope Theonas first cares about this man in a personal way. He empathizes with him and, with genuine love, provides appropriate advice to him. He also provides him with a beautiful spiritual vision to help him to take his role in witnessing to Christ through the position in which God placed him.

We can summarize the main points in this message in the following points:

1. **Christian faith should have a practical dimension in our lives and conduct;** otherwise it becomes a dead faith, for *“Faith without works is dead.”* (James 2:20) This practical dimension is demonstrated in faithfulness, love, responsibility, truthfulness, purity of the mouth, and staying away from the love of money.
2. **Through His grace, God places every one of us in appropriate place for him,** for a certain mission. We must thank God for every situation and stand steadfast wherever God puts us, witnessing to His love and care, being faithful in the mission that He gave us, so we become His beautiful aroma to all those around us.
3. **It is necessary to pay attention to the internal aspect of the spiritual life,** which is demonstrated in the prayer chamber, liturgies, and regular reading of the Bible. This inner depth is essential to the success in the witnessing to Christ amidst the society and without it, man would be lost and weakened, the waves of the world would overwhelm him, and the thorns of sins would wound him.
4. **God is Almighty;** the hearts of the rulers are in His hand. We ought to obey the orders of our rulers as though it is from God, as long as they are not contrary to His commandments, and we give reverence to whom reverence is due, and honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:17).
5. **Regardless of the status or position of man on earth, it is not comparable to the glory of the everlasting life** which we are invited to. So, we ought to be seek it before all things and regarded higher than any other interest.

*Fr. Yohanna Naseef*

[fryohanna@hotmail.com](mailto:fryohanna@hotmail.com)

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL

