

Sunday, September 18, 2011

The Sacrifice of Obedience (1)

I would like to start talking about obedience with an interesting and related interview with one of the church spiritual fathers. The title of the dialogue was:

The sacrifice of obedience is greater than offering any sacrifices

Q: What is obedience?

A: Obedience is a very important virtue. Adam's sin was the lack of obedience, and it has no cure except for the Son to obey the Father. The obedience of the Son to the Father gives man power to obey. Christ emptied Himself from everything to obey the Father, thus He gave these qualities to us as inheritance just as He gave us His body, blood, love, and humility as inheritance. Included in this inheritance he gave us His obedience. The Holy Spirit extends to us this obedience, and he who is filled with the Holy Spirit is able to obey.

Q: How can we live the life of obedience though it is difficult?

A: We ought to start by obeying in the small matters, such as: Obeying the guidance of our father of confession regarding prayer times and frequency, obeying the Holy Spirit who reminds us to pray, and obeying the commandments of the Bible. When we keep any commandment, even though it may be a simple one, we are elevated to the level of other commandment. This makes the Holy Spirit give us strength and ability to obey even more.

Q: What are the exercises that enable us to start practicing the life of obedience?

A: Obedience in prayer times and frequency is the loveliest and easiest of all obedience exercises and it blesses one's life. He who can't obey in prayer, will not be able to obey or obtain any other virtue.



In two articles we will address the meaning of obedience and how it is related to love, as well as the blessings of obedience and its glory.

**** The meaning of obedience:**

To be obedient is to give up my own will and to submit to a different and an external will. In other words, I don't carry out my will but the will of someone else even if I don't agree with or may be against my own will.

The Church Fathers call obedience "severing the will", that is to say, one would give up his own will to obey the voice of God. This is where the expression "the sacrifice of obedience" comes from, it means that I sacrifice my own will to obey my beloved Jesus, do His will, and to follow His commandments.

**** Obedience and Love:**

Without love man cannot obey, but through love he can sacrifice all his personal desires to obey Christ. Love is the foundation, and he whose heart is full of love, will be able to obey easily with content no matter how difficult the matter is.

+ **Regarding obeying Christ,** meditate upon His cross, His love, the word of His Gospel, and contemplate on His work with you and His care for you. Then your heart will be filled with His love and you will find yourself easily obeying His commandment.

+ **Regarding obeying the parents:** Also reflect on their toil with you and their eagerness for your comfort and this will certainly make it easy to obey them.

+ **Regarding obeying who are in charge:** Always pray for them so that the Lord may support them in their responsibilities. Pray that your heart may be filled with love towards them and accept them, this way you may be able to obey them with content.

The Lord Jesus summarized this principle in a golden verse that says:

"If you love Me, keep (Obey) My commandments." (John 14)

**** Who do we obey?**

I ought to obey he who loves me, and hopes for my success, well being, and edification. I obey who cares for me and my happiness.

Is there anyone other than God that has these qualities?

Thus the Bible teaches us that:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

After that, I also ought to obey those who have these qualities, like my parents, my father of confession, ministers, teachers, friends who bring me close to God, and anyone who gives me a genuine advice that doesn't contradict with the Bibles. Thus, we ought to learn when to say no! This is an important principle in life. Not all things are appropriate and not all things edify.

Fr. Yohanna Naseef

fryohanna@hotmail.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL