

Sunday, September 25, 2011

## The Sacrifice of Obedience (2)

### \*\* Obedience versus surrender:

The notion of blind obedience does not exist in Christianity. Obeying blindly means surrendering one's mind without rational thinking or enlightenment. However, obedience in Christianity is based on the love and trust of those we obey, while being continually vigilant and watchful such that we don't deviate from the commandment of Christ.

Christian obedience is founded on illumination, and through it I constantly seek the guidance of Christ in my heart.

### \*\* The blessings of obedience:

1- **Comfort and peace.** An obedient person doesn't grow weary because of thinking and planning, but rather calmly carries out what is asked from him. He understands that the responsibility lies on the person who commands not the one who obeys, especially in the case of obeying the spiritual father.

2- *"God does not abandon those who submit their lives in obedience for His sake." [St. John Climacus]*

3- **Eternal life.** He who keeps [lives] the commandment of Christ, will have everlasting life.

*"I know that His command is everlasting life"* (John 12:50)

*"If anyone keeps [obeys] My word he shall never see death"* (John 8:51)

4- **Acquiring humility,** which is the pillar of our spiritual life. Therefore, one of the church fathers says that obedience is more important than asceticism (fasting, metanoias, sleeping on the floor, nightly vigil, etc.). **This is because obedience enables man to attain humility** which makes man's heart a comfortable dwelling for the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, asceticism could lead man to pride and falling, if the practices are not for the love of Christ, but rather for self pride.

5- **God works in our lives and blesses it.** Take for example the story of Saint John the short, **the famous story of the tree of obedience.** Because of the obedience of this saint to his spiritual father Anba Pemoa in planting a walking-stick and watering it daily, God was glorified as the rod flourished and became a fruitful tree through the miraculous work of God. Thus, because of obedience, God's power always accompanies us and His blessing overflows upon us. Hence the famous saying: *[Upon the son of obedience, blessings will abide]*

### \*\* The glory of obedience:

There is a delightful story in the book "Paradise of the Fathers" which demonstrates the glory of obedience. It goes like this: A father once saw four high ranks in heaven:

**The first:** A sick person who is patient in his sickness and thankful to God.

**The second:** A person who is hospitable towards strangers and cares for the weak and the sick with great diligence.

**The third:** A hermit monk in the wilderness who strives with all his power.

**The fourth:** A disciple who is obedient to his spiritual father for the sake of God.

The father saw that the rank of the disciple, the fourth one, was higher and more elevated than the other three cases. He wondered how is this disciple has greater glory than the rest although he is the youngest!? An answer came to him: "Each one of the rest does good deeds of his own will." As to this disciple, he severed his own will for the sake of God, and obeyed his teacher. Obedience for the sake of God is better than all virtues.

My brothers and sisters, we are all invited to offer a sacrifice of obedience to attain this great glory.

*Fr. Yohanna Naseef*

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

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL