

Lecture V:
Taking the Spiritual Journey
ΠΧΙΝΒΙ ΝΤΕ ΠΙΩΕ ΕΠΩΕΜΜΟ ΑΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΝ

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (I Corinthians 15:58)

When starting your spiritual journey it is a mistake to look too far into the future. Only one link of the chain of destiny can be handled at a time. *“You do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes”* (James 4:14).

Taking the spiritual journey is he who “advances without changing, grows in greatness without becoming haughty, and remains steady in his strides.” Whether consecration, marriage, or monasticism lies in your destiny the constancy of the spiritual goal should be pursued with all effort and desire. This does not change with the choice in life, through experiences, disappointments, afflictions, or temptation.

Examples of those steadfast in faith are numerous in Coptic history. These persons left the life of sin forever and did not return following repentance. History does not record that St. Augustine returned to the life of sin following his repentance, nor that St. Moses the Black, St. Mary of Egypt, returned to their former sinful way of life.

His Holiness states these saints, *“eradicating sin completely from their heart in utter seriousness and in wonderful sincerity to God whom they had chosen. They were like the surgeon who performs an operation to remove a cancer completely. If he gets rid of all of it but there remains even a hair’s breadth, it will return, grow and become worse than it was before.”*

Our reverently respected martyrs in **Taking the Spiritual Journey** sole goal was God and their life with Him in the blissful Eternity. This is the reason they could follow Him wholeheartedly, even to death if necessary, unheeding temptations and tortures of which none could alter their heart which abided in the Lord.

St. Paul writes, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor heights nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39).

St Clement of Alexandria wrote, *“Rightly then the spiritual man is not disturbed by anything that happens. Nor does he suspect those things that, through Divine arrangement, take place for good.”* (c.195)

Nearing the end of the spiritual journey one will realize that by perseverance the snail reached the Ark. *“He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment”* (Proverbs 12:11).

Another outcome of the spiritual journey is the realization that man will eventually die, but their works never will. Men *“rest from their labors; and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). The old adage that death stills the man’s tongue, but influence gives him another one that speaks forever. In the Holy Bible it is written of Abel, *“...being dead yet speaketh”* (Hebrews 11:4).

What will your spiritual journey say of you?

Recommended Reading:

1. 'Characteristics of the Spiritual Path' by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.
2. 'Experiences in Life' by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.
3. 'The Christian Meaning of Marriage' by His Grace Bishop Moussa, Bishop of Youth.
4. 'Holy Matrimony, Sacrament of the Church,' (Vol.6) by His Grace Bishop Mettaous.
5. 'On Marriage and Family Life' by St John Chrysostom.
6. 'Paradise of the Spirit, The Life of Service' by His Grace the late Bishop Youanis of Gharbia Egypt.
7. 'From the Beginning' by the late Father Marcos Bishay of Beni-suef and Chicago USA.

