



St. Mary & St. Joseph Coptic Orthodox Church

11308 Yonge St, Richmond Hill, ON L4S 1K9

Reflections - October 2020

# THE ROCK

THE LORD IS MY ROCK.

**- PSALM 18:2**

*Lord, to whom shall we go?*

*"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

*- John 6: 66-68*

People can sometimes be fickle, and this is a fact of life. It is hard to entrust yourself entirely to someone and feel completely sure that this person 100% has your best interests in mind, and has no motivations of their own. This is true to some extent even with those who we consider the closest people in our lives.

In these verses we can see that those who were very close to Christ, those whom the gospel names as His disciples even, abandoned Him, when Christ began to refer to Himself as the Bread of Life. Then Christ turns to the Twelve, the closest of His followers, and those who have been with Him since the beginning of His ministry, and like we see many times before, Christ does not force salvation on anybody. Just like the man born blind, and just like the healing of the paralytic, Christ poses a question instead. Having taken on the human condition, one can almost hear the anguish when He says, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" What pain there is in these words. We all experience it when we slowly feel like a friendship is dying. When someone who has spent so much time with us slowly begins to leave. We don't want people to leave, and how much must it have pained Christ to see those disciples of His so close to Him no longer be in His life. How much must it pain Christ who truly loves everybody, to see anyone one of us slowly start to leave. How much does it hurt you when someone you love slowly starts to leave. It is a feeling that eats at many, including Christ who's humanity can be seen so evidently throughout this gospel of John. This is the question Christ asks us whenever a hardship presents itself in our life. Christ looks at us, His little children, with



tears in His eyes, and asks: "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Christ loves us, and all He wants from us is to be with Him, so that He can take care of us.

Then St. Peter, whom Christ called the rock on which He would build the church, answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." What powerful words these are. What brave, wise, and powerful words. What words we would hope to answer, when faced in the point of crisis. When Christ, the Good Father, who loves us, looks in sorrow on us and asks, "You do not want to leave too do you?", I would hope that like Peter, I can have the wisdom and life experience to understand that no philosophy, no lifestyle, no earthly teachers, no amount of wealth, and not even my family and friends, could I truly and fully rely on in my time of need. There is no better place to be for me, than for myself to be a disciple of Christ. As He says in John 13:34-35: **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."** Christ expounded further on this in John 15:13 when he said, **"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."**

Let us hope that in the times of uncertainty, in times where doing the wrong thing may seem easy, or in times where we are eaten up by rage and hatred, that we could hear Christ's pained and anguished voice as He asks, "You do not want to leave too, do you?", and that we could answer Him with love. Love for Him and everyone in our lives. That we would be ready to lay down whatever we can and whatever is necessary to the point of life itself, for those who are in our lives. Maybe then we could truly be considered His disciples, and maybe then we could, in sincerity, reply, "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."



*"Saints submitted to whatsoever God sent them with childlike simplicity"*

- St. Amphilochios of Patmos

By N.S.

In the passage that we just meditated on we see multiple disciples turning back from following Jesus. However, contrary to all the others, Simon Peter stayed. He said "to whom shall we go".



Simon-Peter sets an example for us of following without questioning or “child-like simplicity” as the quote says.

That being said, it is very important to distinguish simplicity from ignorance. We are called to be like children and have that simplicity and purity that we see in children (Matthew 18:3). That doesn't mean that we should believe anything without thinking. God gave us a mind to think with and “filter” what is true and what's not.

Does that mean that the quote says that saints don't use their minds? I mean after all, it says “saints submitted to WHATSOEVER God sent them [...]”.

It is true, there is no spelling error in the quote, they indeed did WHATSOEVER God told them to. Now this is a very special circumstance we are in where God is involved. Truly, God is all-knowing and almighty; He is the Pantocrator so in that particular case we are called to follow “blindly” what God tells us. Not out of slavery but out of knowing that God will never be at fault, God will always tell us to do things for the best, it will never be to hurt us or to make us fail but to the contrary, as God tells us in Jeremiah 29:11: **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”**

We might think that us “normal humans” cannot do that because we don’t know what God wants from us... In some sense it is true, we do not have the same assurance that saints have (that we should all strive for). However, we tend to use this as an excuse not to put in the effort to do what God asks from us...

For starters we have the Bible that gives us many indications on what God wants and what He doesn’t as well as the “ultimate will” in my opinion: **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification [...]”**

**- 1 Thessalonians 4:3**

We should stop doing what we want taking the excuse that we will never know what God’s will really is, because maybe we don’t know it exactly but we have a Bible and a whole history of many people and how God dealt with them and told them to do. You may notice that the wording used in the verse that was previously meditated on “do you WANT to leave too?”. This indicates that it’s a decision to be taken. We can decide to follow Christ or follow something/someone else.

Once we decide to follow Christ we should fully commit to Him as a wife commits to Her husband.. It's not a lukewarm decision meaning "I will do Your will when it pleases me" but a firm decision to always follow God and even in times of doubt, a decision to always seek the truth and God's voice. In taking that decision we should commit to WHATSOEVER God sends us with child-like simplicity as the quote says.

This is what Simon-Peter did... He didn't even understand why Jesus was asking the question because of his great simplicity... He was confused as to what it even meant.. where would he go?? He's fully committed to Christ and follows Him without thinking twice.

May God help us strive to be like Simon-Peter and the saints who followed Christ as His true children with commitment and submission.



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