

**The Board of Deacons**  
**By**  
**His Grace Bishop Youssef**

Since nominations for the board of deacons take place in many churches in the month of September, I would like to address a few points relating to this subject.

**Concerning the Nominations:**

**First:** Serving on the board of deacons is not different from any other church service; it is a feet-washing service. I mean that serving on the board of deacons is mainly working on the comfort of each church member in humility and self-denial. In the first apostolic age, the Greek murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The apostles arranged a deacon service to fulfill this need (Acts 6).

**Second:** Fighting over seats in the board of deacons is one type of self-glorification which contradicts Christ's teachings, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"(Mathew 20:26-28). Similarly, turning down service on the board of deacons requires self-examination lest the reason be self-pity for fear of exertion and tribulations, which are issues that one must confront in the service of God as Joshua son of Sirach says, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation"(Sirach 2:1).

**Third:** Although the board of deacons' responsibility is administrative and financial, it must be performed in a spiritual way. That's why in the apostolic age, the apostles insisted that the chosen deacons be known for piety and filled with the Holy Spirit although the service was merely a table service (Acts 6:2). Therefore, those chosen for the service must be known for their deep spiritual life, away from the observance of ritual and the love of show, so that their service may be according to the heart of God.

**Fourth:** The congregation's responsibility in choosing is a serious one that must be done in a spiritual way by raising our hearts to God, asking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, avoiding social compliments, conglomeration, and partiality. Similarly, apathy is rejected because it opens the doors for opportunists and those who are self-serving to achieve their ends leading to problems and stumbling in the service.

**Fifth:** The board of deacons is chosen by nomination. The Bishop will choose the board from among those who received the highest number of votes in the nominations. We, therefore, are guaranteed that those chosen have received the approval of the people (because they received the majority of votes), and the blessing of the church (represented in the choice of the Bishop).

**Sixth:** The spiritual father puts the nominations in front of God in the prayers and liturgies seeking God's rather than his personal choice. He should teach the congregation this spirit by example. His love for his children should be without distinction. He shouldn't favor one person over another or refuse to nominate a particular individual except if there is a strong spiritual reason. As for personal issues and objectives, these have no place whatsoever in a priest's service and spiritual life.

**Seventh:** It is important to represent all sectors of the congregation in the board of deacons like church education, women, social service, youth, deacons, etc. The board should also include the elderly that we may benefit from their experience and the youth that we may benefit from their strength and activity.

**Eighth:** Neither those who quit the board, nor those who didn't receive a majority of votes, nor those who weren't chosen for the board, nor their supporters should assume a negative or a hostile attitude towards the church because the fields of church service are many and are by no means limited to serving on the deacons' board. Each individual has his/her talent. God may have willed to devote this individual to another service better suited to his/her talents and abilities.

**Ninth:** Any disturbance during the nominations is a clear indication of the lack of awareness and the absence of a spiritual sense which requires spiritual treatment and many tears, bent knees and hands continually raised in front of God that we may realize that our relationship with the church is primarily for the salvation of our souls and that all fields of church service is to deliver the message of salvation to the believers away from the love of first seats and leadership.

**Tenth:** Those who have been chosen for serving on the board should understand that the work is that of God; therefore, it must be accomplished with honesty and sacrifice without self-pity and without taunting others with how much time or effort are spent, but giving of themselves in love and humility up till the end, noting that we are primarily responsible towards God not man. If we are honest, we will be blessed according to His promise, "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" (Mt 25:21). As for those who are dishonest, they will be terrified according to His divine words, "A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work!" (Jeremiah 48:10).

To be continued...