

Detachment

The word 'Detachment' comes from the Latin root *abiungo*. It means separate, dissociate, abandon etc. Detachment simply cannot happen because the roots of attachments to things, persons, wealth, honor, approval, are deeply embedded in us. To grow into Christ, to experience the real freedom detachment is the fundamental factor. Detachment does not mean running away from things and persons; rather it is a gradual attainment of balance and equilibrium in life. You cannot observe certain external rules and regulations and say that you are growing, progressing and forming yourself for the future. This is wrong. It is a total and integral change that must happen in a person. It is a growth inside out. When you are attached to something you cannot in any way grow as St. John of the Cross would put it "like a bird that is tied with a cord or by a slender thread" it cannot fly.

Detachment is a big factor for formation in any state of life be it civil or religious or spiritual. The term 'detachment' is expressed through multiple other equivalents, such as abnegation, renunciation, mortification, stripping off of old self, renunciation, self-abandonment, forgetfulness of self, self-sacrifice, humility or spiritual freedom. Our Lord said: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16.24); and again to the rich young man "sell all that you have and distribute it to the

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come follow me" (Lk 18.22); "there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive an over abundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come" (Lk 18.29-30). All these passages point to the attainment of a higher good at the denial of a lower one. St. Paul says it is "taking off the old self with its practices of immorality in order to be re-clothed with the new self, renovated in the image of its creator" (Col 3.5; 8-12).

Detachment in human relationship does not in any way mean absence of caring. If your prayer is genuine you will know that love is for giving and not for taking.

No man can serve God and wealth. There is a normal tendency in you to get attached to money. You handle money and gradually there is a danger that you become the victim of money. Instead of managing money, money begins to manage you. Detachment means the awareness that you are not steered by money. If you strongly feel that you must have money in order to feel happy and successful, then you are basically attached to it. Here you need the help of prayer and dependence on God. Prayer begins in you a process of inner healing which does not allow you to be dependent on wealth or money. Your inner voice begins to affirm that you cannot buy happiness, peace and joy through money. Prayer

strengthens you to be free and to be content with what you have.

Your life cannot always be a bed of roses. Life is full of sufferings and pain. Without sufferings you cannot be a really complete human person. The Psalmist says “our life is over like a sigh, our span is seventy years or eighty for those who are strong. And most of these are emptiness and pain. They pass swiftly and we are gone. Give us joy Lord to balance our affliction” (Ps. 90). We undergo all kinds of suffering; physical, psychological, moral, spiritual, sociological, political etc. There is not a day perhaps when you have not suffered. This does not mean that you alone suffer. Often you are attached to your own pain without getting out of yourself. When you come to know that there are millions of people over the globe suffering in innumerable ways, your sufferings will be lightened. Since you have been thinking only of your sufferings you have become blind to the sufferings of others. You may be suffering of a toothache or the painful agony of an incurable sickness. I do not deny that pain and suffering nor do I like to make it light comparing it with the sufferings of others. But the fact is that the moment you live your pain with yourself that becomes unbearable for you. You can just imagine the way millions suffered in the concentration camps of Hitler during the Second World War. The excruciating pain of separation, nakedness, tortures of various kinds, lack of food and basic amenities of life, psychological isolation etc were endured by people like me and you.

When you suffer you have company, a community around you, medical security and spiritual help is provided, you are given the best possible treatment, you are helped to accept your pain. A lot of people pray for you. Imagine the situation of a person on the streets, a beggar, a vagabond, having no financial security leave alone medical security; who lives for the day and do not even have enough money to get his daily bread. There are many such people who suffer innumerable pains and even incurable sicknesses. Now who is better? you or those unfortunate people? Believe that God has given you a cross that you can carry. Carry it with the spirit of Christ. Detach from thinking on your own sufferings and become a part of humanity's suffering. Pray for others and learn from others how to carry your own cross. Prayer opens up your will to accept whatever God gives you. Let this be your prayer "naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return again. Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back. Blessed be the name of Yahweh" (Jb 1.21).

Fr. Rudolf V. D'Souza OCD
Vancouver - Canada