



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
August 2014

Role or Identity (11)

Different patterns of Practicing the role of priest's wife

There are different ways a priest's wife adopts during practicing her role. These ways vary according to the nature of her identity and the identity of her priest-husband. They also depend on the concepts of every one of them regarding the nature of this role and whether it is a divine call or not. These ways are considered to be constant patterns under which the majority of priests' wives are classified.

(1) The Companion Pattern in which the priest's wife becomes a ministering guardian angel to her priest-husband. She is preoccupied with fulfilling all his needs and taking care of him so that he becomes able to fulfill all the requirements of his sacred call.

(2) The sacrificer Pattern where the priest's wife sees that her husband call to the ministry would not be hindered by any mean and that she should take

care of familial issues and domestic affairs. She almost asks him for nothing and chooses to stay out of his way by taking charge of domestic issues and children's affairs to enable him to be totally dedicated to his ministry.

(3) The Assistant Pattern where the priest's wife helps with her husband different responsibilities and becomes her husband's right-arm in his pastoral service and an extension of his ministry.

(4) The Partner Pattern where the priest's wife shares the ministry with her husband by doing her own work in the ministry, but also serves as the priest's servant. She is fully aware of her personal gifts and makes use of them in her personal ministry.

The concept of the priest's wife about whether her role is a divine call or not plays a crucial role in her adoption of one of the above mentioned four patterns. Of course this will lead us to talk about:

Types of concepts of call to serve as a priest's wife

(1) Specific Calling: Here the priest's wife believes that God called her in a personal way to fulfill the role of a priest's wife. This belief makes her ready to this role on both psychological and spiritual levels.

- (2) **General Calling:** Here the priest's wife believes that she is called to the service in a general way but not necessarily as the wife of the priest. She is open to whatever any type of service she is called to regardless whether it is related to her role as a priest's wife or not.
- (3) **Unexpected Calling:** Here the priest's wife was married to her husband as a lay man and never thought that one day she would become a priest's wife. It happens sometimes that such a wife finds herself not prepared to this role as she feels that the call to priesthood concerns her husband and she feels unsure about her place in ministry. By time she steps into the role believing that if God called her husband to ministry, then He has also called her.
- (4) **Impersonal Calling:** Here the priest's wife does not feel called to ministry on a personal level. She believes that her husband's ministry concerns him alone and has nothing to do with her. Therefore she withdraws from sharing in the ministry and resists becoming involved in it. She is content with the role of the wife to her husband.

Now, here are some questions that can help you determining the pattern of practicing your role and your attitude towards the concept of the divine calling:

- 1) *Do you consider yourself a "Priest's wife" or a wife to a man who became a priest?*
- 2) *Would you marry the same man again?*
- 3) *What if, few years later, your daughter tells you she will marry a man who is called to the priesthood? Will you agree with her?*
- 4) *Are you helping your priest-husband in the ministry just to please him? Because you believe in the importance of ministry in general? Or because you are convinced that the role you are fulfilling in the ministry no one else can fulfill it?*
- 5) *Is what pleases you the most in your role as a priest's wife your feeling of personal development and growth? Your feeling of supporting your husband? Or feeling that you contribute efficiently in the development of others?*
- 6) *Is there anything that you think is not part of your role as a priest's wife that others may assume is?*
- 7) *Do you think that your role as a priest's wife does not differ a lot from the role of any ordinary wife?*
- 8) *Do you think that your role in the ministry as a priest's wife does not differ a lot from the role of any ordinary servant?*