



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
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Psycho-spiritual Warfare Against Priest's Wife

The Holy Bible says, "*Son when you apply yourself to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and **prepare yourself for temptation***" (Sirach2:1). The holy fathers of the church, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, planned this verse to be read in a passage during the ordination of new monks, and also in one of the readings of the third hour of Tuesday of the Holy Pascha. Pope Shenouda III says in his well known book ***The Diabolic Wars***, "This continuing war of the devil may become more severe during holy times. The devil gets very annoyed when we start any spiritual work and uses all his means lest the prey should escape him. Thus, when we start spiritual work, he starts using his wars, devices, and many obstacles.

We start spiritual work, and he begins resistance. He is not comfortable as long as we have any relationship with God, knowing that this endangers his kingdom. Here are some wonderful words from "The Paradise of The Fathers", "When the bell rings in the middle of night for prayers, it does not only awake the monks to pray but the devils are also aroused to fight monks and prevent them from praying...". And thus St. Evagrius said, "When you begin a holy prayer, be ready for whatever may befall you".

In the same way we can say to the priest, "When you begin the call of your priesthood, be ready for whatever may befall you"! It is well known in wars that the enemy condenses his attacks to strike the army commander whose injury or death means an immediate proclamation and celebration of victory as well as dispersion of the whole army and falling of many in captivity, "*I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered*" (Matthiew26:31). Therefore, there is no doubt that the ordination of a priest causes all the powers of heaven to be moved. The armies of

the devil gather to wage a fierce war against him. Nevertheless the troops of the army of the Lord are immediately aligned gathering all their powers to be ready to give him help, so that the words saying, *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them"* (2Kings6:16) remain a fixed spiritual rule applied in every time and place. Actually the wisdom that lies behind the design of the priest's liturgical garments is to always remind him to get use of the spiritual weapons mentioned in (Ephesians6:11-17).

As much as the enemy celebrates the death of the king or the commander he becomes more proud when he takes the queen or the princess into captivity. **Therefore it is very natural that the spiritual war against the priest expands to also include the priest's wife.** She is his partner in sufferings and pains as much as she is his partner in glory and honor. Although the devil does not leave a single domain without waging a war in it, **yet he condenses his battles more in the psyche with all her ramifications so that she becomes one of the**

main battlegrounds and a valuable prey for him.

There is a wonderful passage in the **Memoirs of Job** read in the sixth hour of Wednesday of the Holy Pascha. This passage says, *"Now Satan planned to make Job fall using his wife, Rahmah, like Adam fell through Eve. Satan came unto Rahmah and made her resentful as he reminded her of the loss of wealth and riches and her children that died. She went to Job and said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? And what are you waiting for after you lost all the wealth and children?' Job sensed that Satan affected her, so he rebuked her saying, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? My dear Rahmah, don't be fooled by this world for it is in vain and passing away but Heaven is eternal.' Rahmah was comforted by the wisdom of his words; so Satan fled in displeasure knowing his scheme was ineffective".*

This wonderful passage shows in a very clear way how the devil shoots his arrows

against the priest's wife, that he might by all means stumble some. But God is faithful, who gave us His Holy Spirit who is the true commander of the battle, *"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things"* (1John2:20). The essential work of the Holy Spirit in spiritual battles is to grant us the virtue of discernment, *"Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2Corinthians2:11). This virtue was put by the holy fathers on the top of the list of the virtues and without it any other virtue becomes invaluable. St. Nicodimus of Athos says, [We, as trained soldiers, need in the spiritual wars, especially in the Lords wars, to discern how to escape the different plots, the various tricks, and the diabolic plans used by our enemy. Whoever learns how to discern all these things, also learns how to resist and deactivate all the enemy's plots. He will be able to know his plans, the rules of the warfare that he must follow in each case and the courage he needs to enter the battle. What are the prizes that wait for you when you conquer? They are plenty and great. Listen to them from the mouth of the Lord Himself saying,

"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Revelation2:7);

"He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" (Revelation2:11);

"To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Revelation2:17);

"He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations...and I will give him the morning star" (Revelation2:26,28);

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His Angels" (Revelation3:5);

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God" (Revelation3:12);

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne" (Revelation3:21);

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be His God and he shall be my son" (Revelation21:7)].