



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
November 2015

Complaints Box

It is a natural phenomenon that complaints against a priest are plenty and variable. It is also common that some of them are not true while others are objective and deserve to be examined. One of the most frequent challenges a priest's wife faces is being transformed into a complaints box in which everybody throws his complaints from her husband priest. People expects her to react effectively and quickly with these complaints. These complaints can vary from a mere gentle reproach out of love to harsh serious accusations. By all means, all these complaints, whether gentle or harsh, true or not true, put a

great pressure on the priest's wife added to the many pressures she has to face.

Why a priest's wife turns into a complaints box?

- 1) Some people may think that the priest's wife must be effective **to put pressure on the priest** to change some decisions he made about service that do not please them.
- 2) Some people **displace their negative feelings** towards the priest, like anger and wrath for example, upon his wife. They therefore are not only satisfied with rebuking and sometimes transgressing him but they also seek to transgress his wife.
- 3) Some people do not have enough courage to open their hearts to the priest expressing to him what makes them angry with him.

They therefore express this more openly with his wife knowing well that she would certainly transfer to him what they said. They use the priest's wife as a **post officer** who transfers their messages to him.

Possible reactions of a priest's wife to hearing complaints and criticisms about him

Reactions of a priest's wife varies according to her interpretation and understanding of his role, her role and the complainer's attitude and also according to the degree of her spirituality and her emotional and psychological stability.

1) The wife may hasten to adopt a defensive attitude before examining the situation. In such a moment, she may be overwhelmed by intense fear from her husband's failure in

his service, by feeling frustrated that although all the sacrifices presented by her husband priest and his entire family the congregation are not satisfied, by feeling intense anger against complainers due to their harsh impolite way or by severely regretting accepting the hard priesthood call.

- 2) Some of the priests' wives who tend to control their husband priests and the ministry find in these complaints a golden chance to interfere with the ministry affairs and to impose their opinions on the priest giving him instructions about what he must do regarding different issues and problems in the ministry.
- 3) Some of the priests' wives who tend to be men pleaser in an exaggerated way and avoid criticism by all means try to please the

complainer in an exaggerated way and to use all means to calm him down and this in turn encourages him to continue in rebellion or to get use of the priest's wife to get what he wants.

- 4) Some of the priests' wives may totally ignore these complains and even intend not to mention anything about them before her husband thinking that she, by doing this, would spare him an intense psychological stress he does not need.
- 5) Some of the priests' wives may transfer these complaints to their husband priests in an unwise or dishonest way as they color their narrations of events with a personal view and interpretation. This in turn may provoke the priest against the congregation or may induce misunderstanding between them.

The ideal way a priest's wife should use to deal with complaints and criticism against her husband

- 1) While somebody is complaining from your husband priest to you lift up your heart and mind praying to the Holy Spirit to grant you peace of heart and to put on your mouth the convenient wise reply.
- 2) Show a real listening to the complainer without interference, impulsive response, defense, attacking, sarcasm or minimization.
- 3) Show a body language expressive of gentleness and meekness like for example a sweet genuine smile that encourages a calm peaceful atmosphere during conversation.
- 4) Resist feelings of anger, frustration and wrath that may escalate within you during listening to his complaint.

- 5) Ask him some objective questions that may help him to see things objectively like for example whether he already discussed this issue with the priest and how was his response ...etc.
- 6) Inquire clearly about the role the complainer expects from you and about how you can help him.
- 7) Do not give any promises about any solution or interference. Remember that you do not know the complete details and the missing parts of the story.
- 8) Promise the complainer that you will pray for him and that you will do your best to help him.
- 9) Make this issue a subject of your prayers before you discuss it with your husband priest.

- 10) Beware to be honest, wise and objective while telling your husband priest about what happened. Do not impose solutions or advises he did not ask for. Do not be intrusive asking for private confidential details. In case he delegates this issue to you ask for his guidance and advices, follow them and be keen to update him.
- 11) If you feel some shortage or weakness in your priest husband in dealing with this issue discuss this with him with all love and humbleness bringing his attention to some points he is not paying attention to.

**May the Lord grant you Abigail's wisdom,
May He make you hear His joyful voice
saying, "*Blessed is your advice and blessed
are you*" (1Samuel 25:33)**