



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
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The Women Who Came by Troops

The Holy Bible mentions that when Moses wanted to make the laver of bronze for the tabernacle, he made it “*from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled (who came by troops) at the door of the tabernacle of meeting*”(Exodus 38:8). The mirrors in ancient times were made of brilliant well-polished bronze. Scholars see that the Israelites women who came by troops at the door of the tabernacle of meeting were assigned the task of

watching the door of the tabernacle especially at night. They were also mentioned at 1 Samuel 2: 22, “*Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting*”. This means that the presence of these women at the door of the tabernacle was not something temporary linked to the time of making the tabernacle in Moses’ time but it was something permanent and was a genuine part of the service of the tabernacle. This is shown by the continuation of their presence for hundreds of years after Moses till the time of Samuel the prophet.

Most probably, these women who came by troops would leave their husbands, children and

all earthly concerns in order to assemble at the door of the tabernacle watching their service with vigil. Giving their mirrors as offerings expresses how they forsook all their garments as long as a woman's mirror is the tool of her ornament and beauty. But on the other side, they received a great honor when their mirrors were transformed into a laver where priests and Levites would wash themselves on entering the tabernacle. The memory of their offering and sacrifice remains eternal as the forsake they did is documented in the Holy Bible.

The work of those women assembled in troops, their service and their sacrifice resemble to a great extent the service, sacrifice and forsake of the priest's wife, and not only the

priest's wife but also every consecrated servant who dedicated her life to the service of the Lord and His house.

The word *in troop* is a deep word that carries a lot of spiritual lessons. Being enlisted in troop carries:

- 1) The spirit of forsake and abandonment: A priest's wife undoubtedly forsook a lot of things in order to fulfill the priesthood call of her husband priest. But this forsake is not exclusive to the time when she accepted the ordination of her husband. It is actually a daily offering as the Holy Spirit insists upon her continuously to forsake her dignity, rest, ego, and needs as long as she is called to be enlisted among the troop of God.

- 2) The spirit of consecration: St. Paul says, “*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier*”(2Timothy 2:4). Therefore, priests’ wives enlisted in the troop of God must realize that earthly matters are really confusing and extract the peace from hearts. Among the different forms of being entangled with the worldly affairs is allowing the worldly spirit to be insinuated within the service by being involved in chatting, gossiping and serving on an emotional level rather than a spiritual one.
- 3) The spirit of faith: It is written, “*Who ever go to war at his own his expense*”(1 Corinthians 9:7). A priest’s wife believes well that the Lord, in whose troops she and all her family

are enlisted, is faithful to all her financial and emotional needs as well as those of her family. How comes for God who ordered His people saying, “*The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning*”(Leviticus 19:13) to be reluctant in fulfilling the needs of those who are dedicated to His service?

- 4) The spirit of obedience and surrender: A soldier enlisted in a troop is not called to fulfill his own will but he waits for the orders of the General Headquarters in order to be committed to obey them literally without objection or dispute. Likewise, a priest’s wife forsakes her own will in all her service and life and lives with a spirit of full surrender to the leadership and economy of the Holy Spirit.

- 5) The spirit of tolerance and perseverance: A soldier knows well from the first moment he joined the army that he is about to live a hard life and he will surely face a lot of hardships, yet he accepts all what he faces with courage, perseverance and tolerance. Likewise, a priest's wife accepts to carry the cross and walk the narrow way according to the apostle's saying, *"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"* (2 Timothy 2:3)
- 6) The spirit of discernment: A soldier must go through hard trainings in order to learn the methods and strategies of the war and how to discern the adversary's plans and snares. Likewise, a discerning priest's wife is taught by the Holy Spirit, has well trained spiritual senses and is not ignorant of the devil's

devices in both her own personal affairs and the service affairs.

Now, behold O courageous soldiers, lose not the honor of your call and deviate not from the real purpose of your dedication like what the women assembled in troops at the door of the tabernacle of meeting did at the time of Samuel the prophet. But I pray God to strengthen and confirm you in order for you to remain faithful to your call till the last breath.