



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
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Without Reproach

The virtue of giving is a great virtue that makes its owner loved in heaven and on earth as he becomes like his God who did not spare even His Son but gave Him for us all. Nevertheless, our giving can become in vain and documented in the heavenly records as a vice rather than a virtue when it is associated with reproach. St. James clarified well in God's attributes that He, "*gives to all liberally and without reproach*" (James 1:5). As the Divine revelation is used to teach us that a single word is not written in the Holy Bible without a certain purpose that serves our

salvation and economy, then St. James must have added the words *without reproach* to emphasize an important thing.

Reproach means that the giver feels that he did a favor to the receiver and that he keeps reminding him all the time that he owes him a lot. Although God's giving to us is limitless as He Himself is limitless, and although our debt to God is a true debt, yet the gentleness of God's heart makes Him refrain from neither reproaching us for His priceless gifts nor requiring us to pay Him back. It is actually a fact that, "*the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*" (Romans 11:29). What proves this fact is that our accumulating sins do not make God regret His gifts to us as He "*makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*" (Matthew 5:45). May be this is the right definition of God's goodness that it is a giving

characterized by two things: liberality and being without reproach. That is why Jesus Christ commanded us in the Sermon on the Mount to avoid this vice by saying, “*Do good and lend hoping for nothing in return*” (Luke 6:35).

The after-giving reproach is a vice connected to many other vices like cruelty of heart, desire to control and gain power over others, desire to feel superior, self-pity and taking the role of martyr, anger, lack of self-control and condemning others for being ungrateful and unappreciative. Also, the vice of after-giving reproach is common in both marital and parental relationships and is considered to be a toxin that putrefies and destroys relationship.

This vice is also common among servants with its two forms, the manifest explicit form that hurts the feelings of the served people and the

implicit repressed form that shows itself in one's behaviors. If a servant, who gives his time, effort, possessions and money to others, feels within himself that he is doing them a favor they do not deserve and that they owe him a lot, then he is actually fallen in this sin like Cain who felt that he was doing a favor to God by giving Him offers from the fruits of the ground.

A priest's wife can be also tempted by this vice. She gives a lot of her time, effort, and money to God, to her husband priest, to her children, to her parents and to the people she serves. Nevertheless, she, many times, spoils her wonderful gifts with her constant feeling that she indebts all people and that she forsook a lot. In such case, Solomon's saying, “*Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment and cause it to give off foul odor*” (Ecclesiastes 10:1), applies to her.

The forms of the after-giving reproach in the priest's wife are many. She may hide and repress these feelings within her heart until inner tension and the urge of her unmet needs rise up and she, then, explodes in a violent tantrum uttering the hurting words of reproach to her husband priest and children accusing them of being ungrateful and unappreciative. She may also, rather than hiding these feelings within her heart, express them continuously in every time she argues with her husband priest reminding him of the great sacrifice she offered and is still offering to him every day by accepting his ordination as a priest. She may even extend her reproach to God Himself by always feeling that He is required to pay her back for all what she gives by granting her both earthly and heavenly goods. If it happens that she enters into a tribulation, she feels great

agony towards God who did not appreciate the favor she did for Him!!!

Now, I like to whisper in every priest's wife's ear saying that all what we give are in fact pseudo-gifts and nothing more as long as we give to God from what belongs to Him and we give to others from what is God's. In fact, we possess nothing. Therefore, we cannot boast and even reproach because of what we give. Neither a husband, children, health, power, time, money, possessions nor the entire life are ours. They are all unrighteous mammon that God entrusted to us. Therefore, the after-giving reproach is considered to be a great foolishness that requires remorse and repentance.