



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of  
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message  
to the Priests' Wives  
January 2017

## **I Have Become All Things to All Men**

While we celebrate, in these blessed days, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, we remember a sentence from both the Creed and the liturgy that says, “*He was incarnate and became man*”; and also the Tasbeha’s words, “*He took what is ours, and gave us what is His*”. Certainly, the church fathers did not add “*and became man*” to “*He was incarnate*” without a purpose just to give more details. They, rather, did that by a divine revelation to emphasize that the Lord Jesus Christ did not just take a human

flesh but also took all what is man’s, except for sin alone. “*In every situation, the Savior, Himself, became everything for everyone. To the hungry he became bread; to the thirsty water; to the dead resurrection; to the sick a Physician; and to the sinners salvation*” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

St. Paul prescribed himself saying, “*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law not being without law toward God but under law toward Christ, that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became a weak, that I might win the*

*weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*” (1 Cor. 9:19–22). This amazing passage shows to what extent St. Paul realized Christ’s mystery which, from the beginning of the ages, has been hidden. **Paul, by becoming all things to all men, likened his Christ who became man to men.**

In order for a servant to become all things to all men, he has to, while dealing with others and serving them, humbly renounce all his personal opinions, inclinations, and attitudes. He must get out of the frame of his personal experience and reverse roles trying to see matters from their point of view, feeling how they feel and understanding the different backgrounds from which their behaviors stem. St. Ambrose says, *“In all of us there is a mutual part with everyone. This commiseration with the other is*

*what Paul embraced in dealing with every specific person*”. In fact, this is the faithful flexible servant who learns how to find a place for himself and for Christ among many. He knows how to become child to children; young to youths; elder to elders; weak to those who are weak; mourner to mourners; rejoicing to those who rejoice; poor to the needy; and sufferer to those who suffer.

In fact, a servant, whatever he does, cannot acquire this gift to himself by himself. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit granted to His disciples who vigil at His feet. It is the **mystery of Christ, who became man**, granted only to those who fear Him and to whom He shows His covenant.

But let no one think that St. Paul was hypocrite. St. Augustine prescribed him saying,

*“He did that, not out of pretence; but he became for everyone as like him, to help him. That is the way when the great mercies prevail, and everyone becomes like everyone else, not with deception, but by putting himself in his position”.* Also, St. Ambrose said about him, *“Did Paul become everything for everyone only in appearance, flattering them? No! He was a man of suffering, and with great care he cared for all and commiserated with all”.*

As for the servant who follows his own will, who does not come to serve but to be served, he reverses things. He takes to himself a slogan saying, *“Let all men become all things to me”!* He remains rigid in his place asking others to mold according to his own desires, will and circumstances. He requires them to like what he likes; hate what he hates; and do what he does.

When he does not get this, he becomes angry with all people and condemns them all. Not only that, but he also requires God to submit to this same rule!!

**Blessed is then the priest’s wife who, by becoming all things to all men, becomes a live icon of the mystery of Christ who became man.** Wasn’t St. Mary, who herself lived the mystery of Christ’s incarnation, all things to Jesus, to Joseph, to Elizabeth, to the people of the wedding of Cana, to John the Beloved, to the apostles, to St. Mathias and to the Maries?!

**I wish you all a blessed year where you become all things to all men through her intercessions!!**