



**Coptic Orthodox Diocese of  
the Southern United States**

**The Monthly Message  
to the Priests' Wives  
February 2017**

## **Someone Who Does Not Follow Us**

The Holy Bible tells us about a story of St. John the Beloved saying to Jesus Christ, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us”. Jesus Christ then replied to him saying, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9:38-40). Actually, the disciples fell into Satan snare as they thought that they were the only ones who acquired the Holy Spirit’s gifts and that by

acquiring the title of “disciples” they got the right to forbid whoever “does not follow them”, meaning whoever “does not belong to their group”, from enjoying the power of Jesus name.

In fact, falling into this snare is not exclusive to the disciples. A lot of priests’ wives are subjected to fall into this same snare like them. The expression of “the group of priest’s wife” is a familiar expression among the church environment though unfamiliar to the priests’ wife herself as it is usually one of the topics of gossip that goes behind her back.

Many times, the priest’s wife surrounds herself with a group of people. They follow her most of the time, join her in most of her activities and usually show up with her in most events. Most probably, the priest’s wife is attracted to this specific group because their members give her a

great support, fulfill her need to get praise, or fulfill her need to gain power and control over others. As for them, they get attracted to her and surround her because of some defects in their personalities. Such defects make them inclined to be followers, biased, opportunistic, curious to get latest news about the church, or desiring to get closer to the priest through his wife.

The priest's wife may wonder asking, "What is wrong in having a group of favorite friends? What is wrong if I feel comfortable with some people and not with some others? What is harmful if I am attracted to some specific persons?"

The simple answer is that there is no harm if a priest's wife develop friendship. But the utmost harm lies in being selective, in favoritism and partialism. Sometimes, it happens in some churches where more than one priest ministers,

hence more than one priest's wife is there, that the congregation becomes divided into groups and allies so that some say, "I am of Paul" and others say, "I am of Apollos" or "I am of Cephas". In some other times, the priest's wife and her allies can be the source of great offence to the congregation as the members of her favorite group can get some specific excellences that most the congregation does not get. They may also push a lot of church and service decisions into a specific direction, either directly or indirectly. This is a very ugly thing not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of the whole congregation.

If we review the context in which this conversation between St. John the Beloved and the Lord Jesus Christ took place, we find that it came immediately after the Disciples disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

Hence, we can easily notice the strong relationship between forming allies and ego inflation. There is also a close relationship between it and spiritual and psychological immaturity. This was actually the problem of the Corinthians who were rebuked by St. Paul, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

What is then the remedy of this malignant disease that when enters among a congregation makes it not a place of rest to the Holy Spirit? In

fact, the treatment lies in the deep condensed words of Jesus Christ, “He who is not against us is on our side”. We conclude from these words that we can only exclude the one who is against us. But let us ask ourselves with honesty, “After Jesus Christ commanded us to love our enemies, can we still prescribe anyone to be against us? Is there somebody else “against us” except the devil? Therefore, everybody is on our side without exception and the kingdom of God is the kingdom of full mature love that knows no alliances!!