



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
May 2017

Priest's Wife's Games

In their book, *Every Woman's Marriage*, the Ethridges believe that many married women may have fallen into roles that are damaging their marriages, but most of them do not even know they are adopting such roles. Therefore, it is very important for them to know these psychological games, and detect them in their marriage in order to get out of them. Of course, a priest wife, like all other wives, is also vulnerable to unconsciously adopt these games in her behavior which leads to negative effects on her marriage.

The authors identify four of the most common games that women play:

(1) **The Holy Spirit/Wretched Sinner Game:**

One of the most common games where the wife feels that is wiser and more inspired by the Holy Spirit than her husband, and that his decisions and his way to handle things are not good most of the time. When a priest's wife adopts this role, her husband priest become the subject of her constant advice and criticism to the degree that she loses her respect to him and puts him down not explicitly but implicitly deep down in her heart.

Some factors contribute to the adoption of the priest's wife of this role. Among these factors are her intense worry about the success of her husband's ministry, being plagued with

perfectionism, or being the complaints box where everybody throws his complaints from her husband priest, whether their children or the congregation members.

(2) The Mother/Child Game: here, the wife talk to her husband and deal with him as if he is a child of her. She gives him instructions and orders, suffocates him with excessive care and over-protection, and expects from him to make her the only source of safety in his life like the mother to her child.

A priest's wife adopts this role when she annoys him with her intense worries about him and his health. She, therefore, starts to track him everywhere, urges him in an exaggerated way to give less in his ministry, and even uses all ways to

manipulate him to submit to her motherly instructions to take care of his health and to spare his strength.

(3) The Spoiled Child/Sugar Daddy Game: many wives fall into this snare seeing themselves as a spoiled child whose dad (husband) should provide all things that she desires especially the material ones. Therefore, the husband desires to satisfy his wife and to bring her all what she wants. But this of course has a negative impact on the marriage. He is obliged to spend more time at work to be able to afford all her material needs. This in turn reduces the time they spend together.

In fact, many priests' wives fall in this snare. They hold more on this role especially after the

ordination of their husbands as priests. It is well known that accepting the priesthood ordination most probably shift them to a lower socio-economic level. Therefore, a priest's wife may feel that her husband priest is responsible for putting them in this situation by accepting priesthood. This may make her behave unconsciously as a spoiled child who does not want to feel deprived putting her husband priest under severe stress.

(4) The Patient/Psycho-Therapist Game: In many marriages, wives expect from their husbands to be their personal psychotherapists. In such case, the wife expects her husband to understand all her previous emotional sufferings, to compensate her for all bitterness and emotional

pain she experienced in the past, and to grant her healing from all her psychological wounds. This, of course, puts a huge burden upon the husband who fails most of the time to play the role of psycho-therapist to his wife. This in turn adds more wounds to hers and shake their marital relationship.

Such expectations are exaggerated in case of priest's wife. The pastoral nature of the priest's ministry makes her naturally expect from him to a great extent to listen to her like he listens to the congregation's members, and to comfort her like he comforts those who come to him seeking counseling. Nevertheless, it is a common complaint among a lot of priests' wives that the priest knows well how to offer understanding,

empathy, and good listening to the people he serves while he fails to offer all of these to his own wife and children.

Now after we reviewed these four role priests' wives adopt, it is natural to ask about the way priest's wife can get out of these roles.

- (1) In an atmosphere of prayer, seeking of the Holy Spirit's guidance, and intense honesty with yourself, identify which roles you adopt in your relationship with your husband priest. Take heed of falling into the trap of denial and refusal to admit your adoption of one, some of, or all these roles.
- (2) Think about the negative impacts imposed on your marriage during the last years because of your unconscious use of these psychological

game. This will, actually, give you a good motive to be changed.

- (3) Work on changing yourself first before working on changing your husband priest.
- (4) Know that no man can give you healing of your soul's wounds. Real healing is actually granted by the Holy Spirit alone. Therefore, take heed to develop your friendship with the Holy Spirit. Put the hope of all your expectations in Him and He will never let you down.
- (5) Faith is the effective remedy of every tension, and thanksgiving and satisfaction take every worry and anxiety about material needs away from the heart.