



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
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He Who Is of a Faithful Spirit Conceals a Matter

Solomon in his wisdom used in most of the verses in the book of Proverbs to compare between two opposites as a way to emphasize the meaning of the virtue he is talking about and to clarify the degree of ugliness of its opposite vice. I would like today to meditate upon one of these verses because it concerns a priest's wife to a great extent, which is, "*A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter*" (Proverbs 11:13).

Disclosing secrets is one of the prevailing weaknesses in our churches nowadays. Many people decided not

to go to service or church anymore because they were offended by the priests, priests' wives, and servants who disclose secrets, whether theirs or others'. It happens that a priest's wife unintentionally discloses a certain secret by slips of tongue while dragged into a certain conversation giving a clue about a specific matter to the listener. Disclosing secrets can also happen with good intention under the pretext of offering help or protection from a certain risk. It can also happen with a bad intention as a talebearing (according to Solomon's words) out of being pushed by spirits of anger, revenge, envy, jealousy or pride. One of the most wonderful verses of the Holy Bible that prescribe **the psychological dynamics** taking place into the heart of the secret discloser is Sirach's words saying, "*Have you heard a word against your neighbor? Let it die within you, trusting that it will not burst forth from you*" (Sirach 19:10). What a wonderful metaphor he offers!! It likens the secret to discloser to someone who feels that keeping a secret to himself produces within him a severe tension that will

lead him burst off!! Regarding **the consequences of disclosing secrets**, he says, “*Whoever discloses the secret of a friend breaks faith; and he will not find a friend for his soul. Love your neighbor, and be united with him faithfully. But if you disclose his secrets, you should not continue to follow after him. For like a man who destroys his friend, so also is he who destroys the friendship of his neighbor. And like someone releasing a bird from his hand, so have you abandoned your neighbor and you will not obtain him again. You should no longer seek him, for he is now far away; he has fled like a roe-deer from a snare. For his soul has been wounded. You will no longer be able to bind his wound. For there may be a reconciliation from cursing. But to disclose the secrets of a friend is the hopeless act of an unhappy soul*” (Sirach 27:17-24)

There are many incidents in the Holy Bible where the Lord Jesus Christ entrusted certain secrets to some people and recommended them not to disclose them. When He healed the leper He said to him, “*See that*

you tell no one” (Matthew 8:4); When St. Peter proclaimed that He is Christ, “*Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ*” (Matthew 16:20), (Mark 8:30) and (Luke 9:21); After His Transfiguration, “*Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead*” (Matthew 17:9) and (Mark 9:9); After He healed the deaf, it was written, “*Then He commanded (the multitude) them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it*” (Mark 7:36); After He healed a blind man on two stages, “*He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town*” (Mark 8:26); And after raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead, “*Her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened*” (Luke 8:56)

A priest's wife is a reservoir of the secrets of many people. This happens either directly as many

entrust her with their secrets, or indirectly and unintentionally due to her closeness to her husband priest and the help she offers to him in service. Therefore, she needs a lot of faithfulness and watchfulness in this matter. There are some situations when a priest's wife (or servants in general) allows herself to disclose a secret of someone. For example, a certain person entrusts her with a certain secret of him related to a problem or a weakness he is falling in. She, then, thinks it is okay and necessary to share this secret with her husband priest or with another servant under pretext of helping that person. In fact, this behavior is unacceptable as long as it is written, "*He who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter*" (Proverbs 11:13). In case, the priest's wife thinks that keeping this matter secret may lead that person to fall into a problem or a sin then she needs to pray a lot for this matter first, then encourage him/her to go by themselves asking for the priest's guidance in that matter.

Also among these situations considered to be secretive matters that cannot be released the information that come to the priest's wife knowledge. They may concern a certain misunderstanding between her husband priest and the bishop, his fellow priest, the board of the church, the service coordinator, or a certain servant. Added to this, some information she may get due to her position as a priest's wife concerning some financial or administrative matters related to the diocese, the church, or the service. The devil can use talking about these matters either to vent or to chat in igniting the fire of strife and divisions. Here, it applies St. James words saying, "*See how great a forest a little fire kindles*" (James 3:5), and also Solomon's words saying, "*Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good*" (Ecclesiastes 9:18)

Finally, I would like to conclude with another verse from St. James saying, "*My brethren, these things ought not to be so*" (James 3:10)