



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
October 2017

Self-Pity

“Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in this world” (Helen Keller). This sentence is hundred percent true. Self-pity is a toxic feeling that when overwhelms somebody it ruins his spiritual, psychological, and social life. Feeling sorry for oneself when subjected to loss, injustice, or failure is a normal feeling and even a healthy reaction in some situations as it helps one to bypass his sorrows and accept the painful reality. But when this feeling becomes a habit, it turns to be a defense mechanism that one always resorts to

when facing tribulations and that prevents him from adapting to reality and benefiting from these tribulations in achieving a psycho-spiritual growth and development.

There are usually **some psychological motives** behind one's adoption of this toxic harmful feeling:

- (1) Desire to get others' sympathy and attract their attention
- (2) Justifying oneself and releasing her from being responsible for the happening problems
- (3) Escape from taking practical positive steps to solve problems
- (4) Feeling that pain and agony are too much for oneself and that one does not deserve all that suffering he is subjected to
- (5) Sending guilt messages to others in order to control and exert pressure on them

In short, **self-pity is the daughter of pride and of her many vices are born** like for example selfishness, self-isolation, laziness, self-justification, sorrow, despair, grumbling, and blasphemy.

Self-pity is **one the wars Satan waged against Christ** on the mountain and failed to conquer Him in. He tried to convince Him to turn stone into bread out of pity on Himself as He was hungry and weak after a long fast. Self-pity didn't find way to God's heart about Whom it was said, *"He who did not spare His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"* (Rom. 8:32). If Our Lord Jesus Christ would yield to self-pity for a single moment on the cross He would not complete our salvation.

This same war was waged by Satan against the martyrs on the mouths of their tormentors

who were trying hard to deter them from confessing their faith in Jesus Christ through making them pity their youth, their seniority, their beauty, or their children.

There are also **in the Holy Bible many examples** of peoples who fell in self-pity like Abraam in his conversation with God regarding his infertility, Joseph in his conversation with the butler, Elijah in his escape from Isabel, Jonah in his upset from God not punishing Nineveh, Job in his search for a meaning lying behind his sufferings, David in his conflict with God regarding why He gives success to the wicked, the Disciples when they were about to drown, and Martha in her complaints from Mary...etc

The signs of falling in this bad habit are many. Examples are:

- (1) Excessive complaining and grumbling and being unsatisfied
- (2) Sorrow, despondency, and inability to become happy and to enjoy life
- (3) Adopting the victim role
- (4) Over dramatization
- (5) Addicting the desire to get others' attention, sympathy, and acceptance
- (6) Living in the past and continuous rumination of its sorrows
- (7) Low self-confidence
- (8) Exaggerated guilt feeling
- (9) Exaggerated self-esteem and feeling unworthy to suffer
- (10) Selfishness and self-isolation
- (11) Laziness, self-indulgence, and passivity
- (12) Fearing failure and escaping responsibility

Priest's wife and self-pity

A priest's wife does not escape this psycho-spiritual war and is even sometimes tempted with it more than others. She may feel being **the most to** toil, suffer, sacrifice, be miserable, be unfairly treated and the **least to** be lucky, and to get appreciation, care, and sympathy. If the priest's wife happens to yield to this toxic feeling and bad habit, she then finds herself broken, despaired, and void of faith and hope in God. She must, then, be very careful to overcome this weakness by exposing it to her father-confessor, asking the Holy Spirit to help her overcome it, watching its thoughts as soon as they are engendered and immediately getting rid of and yielding not to them, and continuously remembering the attitude of Jesus Christ who was not hindered by self-pity from proceeding to the cross with His full consent and pleasure.