



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

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

Monotony And Routine

One usually gets up in the morning to find himself sleeping in the same bed, in the same bedroom, and in the same house for many years. After that he follows certain routine tasks and successive rituals. He goes to work every day taking the same route. He meets the same people. He returns in the evening to resume another set of routine tasks. He may also wear the same clothes and eats the same food. Even spiritual practices do not escape this monotony. Agpeya prayers, Biblical chapters, and Liturgies do not change. They carry a fixed pattern. This is exactly what Solomon expressed in his words saying, “*That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done,*

And there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, “See, this is new”? It has already been in ancient times before us” (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10).

Monotony has its own fans. May be some people like it because it carries in its nature a kind of stabilization and adaptation to a position void of unpredictability which provides calmness and tranquility. Monotony consumes only a little amount of one’s psychological energy.

There is another group of people who hate monotony and routine. Psychologists described a certain type of mental and physical fatigue engendered by monotony!! Although one does not toil a lot, yet he feels strong exhaustion, strong desire to sleep, and weak concentration. Continuous stimulation of senses leads to brain stimulation and activation of the different mental functions. This would engender a lot of vitality and energy.

Nevertheless, the ascetic fathers and hermits sought this monotony with all their power and willed to dwell in it. St. Anthony the great and St. Paul the first hermit, for example, spent long years where their eyes could see nothing but the desert's sands and their ears could hear nothing but the silence of the valleys. All what they wanted was the silence of their senses in order to reach the state of dispassion in stillness where one's spiritual senses are stimulated to see the Lord.

A priest's wife, like all other people, can be exposed to monotony in her daily life activity. She may even feel it in her service and all her spiritual practice. The need for renewal is one of the psychological needs whose intensity differs from person to person. One priest wife may find no problem in living the same monotonous events, she may even feel comfortable in this routine that keeps her within her comfort zone. Another one may complain of this and feels boredom due to her strong need for renovation. A priest wife may seek to break monotony and routine through

destructive ways like for example exaggerated eating, shopping, watching TV, using social media, chatting through phone..etc. Some may advise her to make some changes in her house, her daily schedule, the route she takes to go to work, and to travel for entertainment from time to time. Unfortunately, all these things are just temporary analgesics. They usually make things more complicated as they add to the feeling of boredom a feeling of guilt and addictive slavery to certain behaviors.

What is the solution then??

By referring to the Holy Bible we find a different meaning for renewal that is required not only from priests' wives but also from every Christian person.

(1) Renewal of the inner man: although one surrounds himself with external renovations yet he still feels unsatisfied because man is prone to boredom by his nature. This renewal was described by St. Paul who said, "*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though*

our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 3:16).

(2) Renewal of mind: meaning that one should renew his view of events, matters and things. He should constantly renew his concepts, “*but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Romans 12:2).

(3) Renewal of the subject of God’s praising and thanksgiving according to the psalm’s saying, “*Oh, sing to the Lord a new song*” (Psalms 96:1). If one meditates on God’s constantly renewed graces and gifts he would never feel monotony and boredom, “*Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning*” (Lamentations 3:22–23).

(4) Putting on the new man through repentance: “*That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness*” (Ephesians 4:22–24); “*No one puts a piece*

of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (Matthew 9:16–17).

(5) Renewal through continuous meditation on God’s word: one can read the same Biblical passage every day for many years but the Holy Spirit still introduces him to new depths. “*I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandment is exceedingly broad*” (Psalms 119:96); “*Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s*” (Psalms 103:5).

(6) Daily renewal of the love covenant with the Lord: “*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah*” (Jeremiah 31:31). Really, they are wonderful the words of the song that say: O Lord, teach us to choose You every day!!