



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

**The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
December 2018**

Water Everywhere

My dearest sister in Christ,

There's an old English poem about a ship full of sailors that ends up stranded in the middle of the ocean. Even though they're surrounded by water, they can't drink any of it.

From this poem comes the well-known saying, "Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink."

In case you're wondering, seawater is fatal to humans. Our kidneys can't process it. The more you drink of it, the more you thirst—to death.

As the wife of the priest, you're often surrounded by opportunities to grow spiritually. Every week, there is service after service after service.

But sometimes instead of being nourished, you're parched. The more you drink, the more you feel poisoned. The water is made bitter.

You have 100 reasons to be frustrated, to feel isolated, and to get burned out. Over there standing with the deacons is the man who verbally attacked your husband at the last board meeting. Here in the pew before you is the woman who is calling your husband every night to complain about her husband. If you look back, there are the Sunday School kids who are glued to their phones instead of the service.

Instead of contemplating the Divine Liturgy, you're thinking about how the altar curtain needs repair. Instead of really hearing the sermon, you're thinking of helpful feedback you can give Abouna to improve on next time. Not to mention all your worries about your own child or children!

You are attending the service, but you are not benefiting.

Is there a way to purify this bitter water? To stop poisoning ourselves and really quench our own thirst?

Yes! It just takes a little preparation and a lot of practice.

First, how is your spiritual canon? Are you confessing regularly, praying regularly, opening your Bible privately? Don't make the mistake of thinking that, since you are attending a lot of public services, your private canon is less important. It actually becomes MORE important.

Then, immediately before you get in the car to go to a service, give yourself five minutes alone with God. Say a short prayer. Read and contemplate on just one or two verses. Tell Him your fears and concerns. Ask for His peace and His patience. (If you have children and private time seems impossible, make them do this with you.)

Finally, throughout the service, practice managing your thoughts. Whatever thought is troubling you—turn it away immediately and repeatedly.

If it's a person you can pray for, turn your worry into a sincere prayer. If it's something you remembered to do or an idea, write it down somewhere, and then make a commitment to stop thinking about it and return to your fresh water.

Take the verse you read before the service and make it the reset button for your mind. When your thoughts wander, repeat this verse silently and bring your thoughts back to the service itself.

An easy one to try is "Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Psalm 27:8), but this can be done with so many verses. The trick is to pick just one for the day to bring you back to fresh water.

We are about to begin the biggest roller coaster ride of the year for services. There's the feast of the Nativity and then Theophany. After that, it's time for Jonah's Fast and Feast, then Lent begins. In the blink of an eye, it will be Holy Week. We have to be ready to benefit.

Abouna often reminds me that we can easily count the maximum number of Holy Weeks we have left in our lives. It is not such a big number.

Let's take advantage of the services we have; let's drink and be quenched.

Affectionately,

Ni-ni

Note: Tasoni Ni-ni is a fictional character, a compilation of events and advice gathered through research and interviews. Not everything Tasoni Ni-Ni says or does can be attributed to one person