



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

**The Monthly Message  
to the Priests' Wives  
June 2019**

Dearest Sister in Christ,

As the wife of the priest, you might face a lot of difficult and drama with the congregation. There may be members who are rude to you or who ignore you or, worst of all, who gossip about you.

But if you keep your eyes on Christ, He'll also send to you members of the congregation to teach you invaluable life lessons. You will see Him in so many members of the congregation, and you will find opportunities to grow in virtue.

Here are some lessons I have learned from members of my congregation. Their names have been changed, but their stories are true.

#### **REMAIN JOYFUL**

*"Do not sorrow, for the **joy** of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)*

From Emma, I learned how to have joy in adversity. I never see her without a smile on her face. Emma faced so many struggles. She lost her husband too early. Both of her children had their own troubling circumstances. Her own health isn't what it used to be.

Yet through it all, she is so peaceful and happy. She serves in the Church every week with all her might and with a contagious laugh. All the children love her and know her to be a tender source of support. When I face my own hard times, I see her sitting a few pews ahead of me and realize that my own attitude needs to be adjusted.

#### **BE PATIENT**

*"... Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all **patience and longsuffering** with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." (Colossians 1:10-12)*

From Dina, I learned how to survive a difficult situation with infinite patience. Although her child faces many health and learning issues, she never complains and gives him such honest and wholehearted love.

Not only that but through her you can see the verse come to life about a life of fasting with one's face washed. She comes to church looking her best, with a wide smile, and befriends everyone she meets. When I find myself feeling impatient, I think of her enthusiastic longsuffering and feel ashamed for my own complaints.

## **PRAISE GOD**

*"I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing **praise** to Your name, O Most High." (Psalm 9:2)*

From Solomon, I learned that singing praises to God is the ultimate source of happiness. The look on his face as he sings the hymns of the church makes us all appreciate that we have this privilege to sing praises to our Creator, the Pantocrator. A new hymn—or a very long one—is not a hassle or irritation, but an opportunity to grow and offer a special kind of "sacrifice" to God.

Although I love to sing, I never was as energized by the hymns until I saw his endurance through many services. I learned from him that singing praises with all our might is a kind of charging of our spiritual batteries.

## **ENDURE THE CHILDREN**

*"Let the little **children** come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14)*

From Mary, I learned to bring my children to church persistently, to ignore the muttering and glances and focus on the only thing that matters—connecting my child to the Body of Christ. When her son was young, so many people considered him wild and criticized her unceasingly (to her face and, unfortunately, behind her back) for bringing him to services and "letting him run around."

Today, although he is not even eight years old, he has become one of our most dedicated chanters. He comes to all the services and stands with Solomon and is 100% focused on the hymns and responses. Mary, to me, is an example of what happens when we cease to worry about pleasing the people and instead seek to please God.

## **WELCOME OTHERS**

*"... The natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all **welcome**." (Acts 28:2)*

From Sarah, I learned to be welcoming to all who enter the church, to say hi and greet them, to smile and encourage them. When I was new to the congregation, she made an effort to come to me every Sunday and say hello. In time, I have watched her do the same to each new person who comes to church. Even though she is by nature very shy, she pushes herself to have an open posture towards all people, to introduce herself and to get to know them.

Although I am also very shy by nature, I have not yet achieved her courage to introduce myself to all new members and to greet them every week. When I know that I need to say hi and feel myself getting scared and anxious about meeting someone new, I ask God for a little of her bravery, so I can share the love that I have been given with others.

### **YOUR TURN**

What about you? What have you learned from members of your congregation? Who has given you the biggest spiritual lessons?

Your sister in Christ,

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