



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

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

Dearest Sister in Christ,

When my husband was ordained to the priesthood, I wanted to get him a very useful gift. At the time, iPads were just coming into fashion, so I decided—despite his insistence that he would not need it—to buy him an iPad.

At the time (and maybe it's still possible), you could get the device engraved. I tried to pick a verse that would encourage us both in the hard times:

“The blessing of the Lord makes one rich,
And He adds no sorrow with it.”
(Proverbs 10:22)

Naturally, we thought of the ordination as a great blessing in our life, but we also knew we were not choosing an easy path. We had seen before how priests and their families had struggled, had their pay “delayed” by the board, had been gossiped about, had been rudely and suddenly removed from their position by a fickle congregation.

There was one very sweet older woman at our home church who often in the same breath of congratulating us on the blessing of the upcoming ordination would say things like, “May God guard you” and “May God protect you from the attacks of the devil.”

In choosing this verse, I felt that we would be reminded, in those tough early months, that the ordination was a gift and a blessing and that God's gifts are always perfect.

One month after my husband's return from the 40 days, my mother was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. She was the first person in my family that I was aware of to have cancer. I didn't have any idea of the language of cancer or what treatment looks like except a vague notion that you lose your hair.

I immediately returned to my mother's house to be with her in the early weeks.

My mind would always echo back to that comment about the attacks of the devil and all I could think was how could God let this happen. “At least, hit me directly,” I thought. “Leave my mother out of it.”

Sorrow added to the gift. That's all I kept thinking. But, tsk, that's not what the verse says. So, I kept my eyes peeled for moments to be grateful.

I was the one who clipped my mother's hair before she went to get it shaved. I could literally hear my heart being crumpled like a wad of paper. But I thought "We thank you for every condition" and considered it a privilege that I was there with her, supporting her.

This would not have been possible before the ordination, I reminded myself. Before the ordination, I worked a demanding full-time job. Now I had the flexibility to be with her.

That night, I overheard a private conversation between my mother and father. She showed him her shaved head, and he just said, smiling, "You're always beautiful to me."

A privilege. A gift. A comfort. In the midst of the storm, God was teaching me.

After the first round of chemo, I went home to my husband. In every Liturgy, I stood and whispered, "We thank you for every condition, concerning every condition, and in whatever condition."

I didn't always mean it. More often I was angry at God. I said it anyway. I'm stubborn like that. I said it through gritted teeth if I had to.

My parents came to visit us for Christmas, and mom got the flu, while on chemo. A simple, common virus turned into Christmas in the ER. That evening, my sisters and I stood together and prayed the Agpeya. We stood together and said those words again: "We thank you for every condition, concerning every condition, and in whatever condition." We were stoic, our heads held high, but the tears were shining on our cheeks, united in hope and faith and love.

A privilege. A gift. A comfort. In the midst of the storm, God was teaching me.

I think about some of the youths in my life. The ones who swallow pills when it gets too dark. The ones who cut themselves. They are looking for the same thing in the storm that I am always looking for. They are looking for comfort. But comfort only comes from ONE source.

Not the TV shows I binge-watch or the mobile games on my phone. Not from Pinterest, Instagram, or Facebook. Not from cutting or dieting or a workout or obsessive cleaning. Whatever your drug of choice.

Comfort comes from ONE source. From God Himself—through prayer, through really hearing scripture, and through reminding ourselves every day that "Every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17) but also that every gift from above is good and perfect.

My sister, when you struggle—and you will—remember that "He adds no sorrow with it."

Your sister in Christ,

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