



**Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States**  
**The Monthly Message to the Priests' Wives**  
**October 2019**

Dearest Sister in Christ,

I recently visited a friend who rents a little cottage right on the beach. I woke up very, very early in the morning and walked the two blocks to the pier. It was long and broad—so long that I could not see the end of it in the mist and so broad a car could have comfortably driven on it.

It was 6 a.m. but the pier was already dotted with men and women watching their fishing poles. There was even a group of surfers floating below, sitting on their boards meditating on the quiet morning water. It was so still, like glass, with hardly a ripple.

As I stepped onto the pier, I spotted an older man preparing to enter the water. I watched as he dove seamlessly into the water and began to swim parallel to the pier. I walked the pier and every so often I looked down over the right side and there he was.

With powerful strokes, he passed the surfers and kept on going. I named him George; he really deserved a warrior name. I walked, and he swam. How far would he go? I wondered.

I kept waiting for him to say, "Oh this was reasonable deep enough" and turn back. I waited for him to turn and swim the safer way—parallel to the shore. He did neither. As I walked the length of the pier—at least half a mile into the ocean—he swam all the way in.

Isn't he afraid! I wondered. What about sharks? He never hesitated or slowed. When I got to the end of the pier, there he was, with a quick turn, swimming back to shore.

Here at the end of the pier, you couldn't tell the sea from the sky. It was all a soft gray, blended together. When I turned to walk back to shore, it was the same. You could not see land from here. We were as if in the cloud. The presence of God could be felt.

As I walked back down the pier, keeping pace with George, I felt a little bit ashamed. Here was a man twice my age who was strong and unafraid. He threw himself into the deep with confidence and discipline.

I wondered if he did this every day or if this was just his Saturday morning entertainment. I wondered what he thought about as he moved through the water. I wondered why I was so afraid and so weak. Why could George launch himself into the deep, in faith, and I could not?

So often we are afraid to launch into the deep with God, to take our spiritual life seriously enough to be like George. We stay so lukewarm. What exactly is holding us back?

Maybe we avoid "launching into the deep" in our spiritual lives because we think it requires a big grand gesture from us. We think it's going to take so much work or effort or a dramatic change that we can't muster up the will to do it. This is a mistaken way of looking at it.

Moses tended his flock in the wilderness for 40 years, but his encounter with the burning bush didn't start off with fireworks and a big laborious decision. All he did was "turn aside" to see an interesting sight. He had no idea that this small turn would completely change his life.

St. Mary of Egypt started her journey with God without even a visible change. She was simply standing in the doorway of the church when she changed her heart. Nothing had changed outside her. It was a small humbling within her. When she was allowed to enter into the church, it wasn't because she made grand plans to escape to the wilderness. All she was "turn aside."

God guided St. Mary into the rest of her journey after an imperceptible change of heart. God guided Moses into the rest of his journey after a small turning aside.

Simon Peter, too, when Christ asked him to launch into the deep, wasn't being asked to do something extraordinary. He had already been fishing all night. It was just one extra trip into the water, letting down of the nets just one more time. He wasn't expecting anything. All the times he'd dropped the nets that same night resulted in nothing.

Yet, obeying in this very small thing gave him nets so full he needed other ships to help with the haul.

We're waiting for that burning bush. We're waiting for the voice calling us to the wilderness. We're waiting for the massive catch of fish. But we're waiting wrong. We're waiting idle. God is asking us to do that small thing FIRST, that thing He already asked of us. He's asking us to turn aside or repent or to let down the net first.

Sometimes I think to myself, "Isn't it enough, Lord, that I already forsook all and accepted my husband's priesthood to follow you? Haven't I done enough?"

It's very dangerous to confuse our husbands' vocation with our own spiritual growth. Our personal spiritual growth has little to do with our husbands' calling. Being a priest's wife doesn't come with a free pass for our spiritual lives—no matter how we wish it would.

Today, look for the ways that God is calling you to turn aside and to begin a new part of your journey with Him.

Launch into the deep at every opportunity. Be as fearless and disciplined in your pursuit of Christ as George is when he goes on his morning swim. Trust God just a little bit more—He's waiting with a grand gesture of His love on the other side.

Your sister in Christ,

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