



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

Monthly Message for the Priests Wives

February 2020

In the Raging Sea

Dearest Sister in Christ,

In the midst of the raging sea, there I was sailing. The waves were pounding me, making me feel afraid. And it seemed that Christ had left me.

A few months ago, I wrote to you about how to launch your faith into the deep. I talked about how Moses turned aside and saw the burning bush. I mentioned how it wasn't this big, dramatic choice that started it all but a simple movement toward God.

But sometimes you don't launch into the deep. Sometimes, you're thrown into the storm. The waves are pounding, and you're dizzy from it all.

I don't know what your storm looks like, but for the sake of this letter, let's say that it involves relationships with others. This could be your boss or coworkers at your job, an issue with members of the congregation or church politics, or maybe even a family relationship.

Are you in a storm now, my sister?

In the storm, I have come to realize something important. You see, in my desire to survive the storm, I would have many thoughts about how to handle it. Sometimes I think to take matters into my own hands, to tie up the sails and grab the wheel. Sometimes I imagine jumping ship! Abandon the whole problem and swim to one shore or another. Sometimes I want to argue with others on the boat, shouting at them and being shouted at, to try to find a solution.

But the truth is that as simple humans, we have no real control over the storm. We cannot quiet the waves. We cannot tell the wind to cease. We cannot keep the spray from soaking us. We cannot even be heard yelling at each other over the howling of the wind.

"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27)

There's only one thing we can control in the storm, and that is ourselves.

To switch metaphors for a bit, imagine that the storm is a scene in a movie or a stage in a video game. You are the main character. The only character you can move is yourself.

In this scene, I get to decide if I'm the victim or the villain. I get to decide if I'm the warrior or the farmer, the sailor or the swimmer. I get to decide that.

No matter what else happens around me, I get to be in control of my own character. I move the joystick. No one else.

I can decide to use my words to cut down others who have hurt me. I can decide to start rumors behind people's backs. I can decide to assume the worst about others and hate them. I can decide to be hard or to be bitter.

Or I can decide to be kind when others are cruel. I can decide to object to false witness by not sharing it. I can decide to assume the best about others, to love them, even when they are struggling to love themselves. I can decide to be warm and to be gentle. I can decide to forgive.

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing." (1 Peter 3:8-9)

The storm, my sister, is so that you can inherit a blessing. The storm is there so that God can be glorified in you, if you live according to His commandments.

To go back to the boat, can you see with me now how my best option is to wake the Man sleeping in the stern, His head on a cushion, with fervent prayers?

Where I cannot control the storm, He can.

Where I cannot quiet the waves, He can.

Where I cannot tell the winds to cease, He can.

Where I cannot change the hearts of those around me, cannot make even a dent, He can go in and change them and soften their hearts towards me.

That is the power of our God and that is the glory in the storm: to remember our Creator and to seek Him.

Your sister in Christ,

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