



**Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States**  
**Monthly Message for the Priests Wives**  
**August 2020**

**The Promised Joy**

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

I am writing to you on joy in the middle of what's possibly the least joyful year of my life, if measured objectively. Yet—what a joy it is to serve our Lord Jesus Christ! I can say that without hesitation, trusting in His faithfulness.

The promise of life with Christ is a promise of an enduring joy. Isn't that what He said to His disciples? "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

If only it felt so easy every day. Where is this promised joy? That full joy that remains in good times and bad? It can sometimes be hard to see. Some days we wonder how we can rejoice when all around us is pain and a broken world that offers no comfort. Our joy can feel so tiny, like a helpless seed in uncertain soil. And yet, how many times in Scripture does God exhort us to rejoice? It is the will of God for us (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

So then, what can we rest on to find that enduring joy in the midst of pain? If the world and our circumstances are always in flux, if pain is a constant companion to the earthly life? What can we rely on? God Himself, God the Faithful One.

In her book *Suffering Is Never for Nothing*, Elisabeth Eliot says that our joy is in knowing that we're not at the mercy of chaos or chance. We are in the hands of our mighty God. Our joy then comes from our faith in His faithfulness. It's a joy of trusting God in our pain, not apart from it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, standing before Lazarus's tomb, said to his weeping sister Martha, "I am the Resurrection" (John 11:25). If the Resurrection is our Master, what do we have to fear? Not death, certainly, but also not the dark nights of our lives. You know what I mean: those nights we lie awake and worry.

For every sealed tomb in our lives on a dark Friday evening, my husband once said, there is a bright, empty, open tomb on Sunday morning. Even when it's dark, we know that He will fill it

with light in due time. We know that it's only a matter of time. "For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). His mercies are new each morning (Lamentations 3:23).

And our daily resurrections, when we rely on Christ, have a different flavor from unbelievers. We don't fall and rise like unbelievers do. We rise each time to greater glory: virtue, resilience, and strength. You know someone like this. In my life, it's the tantes, the aunties, who, despite facing so many incredibly difficult life situations, are still sitting in the first pew early Sunday morning, praising God with all their being. They know His faithfulness.

God is faithful. He shows us His faithfulness in the way the sun continues to rise and shine. He shows His faithfulness in the cycle of the moon and the never-ending march of the seasons. He shows His faithfulness in the tiny seeds that burst forth with unimaginable life.

This time in quarantine has changed my relationship with seeds. How many years of my life had I spent munching on sunflower seeds? They are the size of the tip of my pinky.

But the sunflower seed I planted in April has given me a stalk and leaves taller than I am. A flower the size of my head. That growth in between? That's God's faithfulness. That's the power of His life-breath. That's the joy He offers.

When Christ says, "Have faith like a mustard seed" (Matthew 17:20), He isn't just making a general remark about the tiny size of the mustard seed and how little faith He needs from you. He's talking about how when you put that speck in the ground, when you take that small step of faith, seed to soil, God's unrelenting faithfulness makes it grow. Let us rejoice in His faithfulness.

Your sister in Christ,

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