



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

**Ride or Die**

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

One of the beautiful things about being the wife of the priest is that you are part of everyone's celebrations—the births and baptisms, weddings and graduations. In the last two weekends, I attended so many back-to-back events I was telling Abouna I need a better system for gift-giving.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are weeks where the grief is too much. Too many panicked middle of the night calls, too many funerals in a row, and I feel like I'm drowning.

The other day I was walking on the beach with a friend, and she said to me, "I always feel for you as the priest's family because not only do you have your own suffering and worries, but you also carry that of the whole congregation." I had never thought about it so frankly before.

It's true that all the joys and all the sorrows of the congregation make their way into our house and into our hearts. Sometimes the overwhelming emotion of it knocks us out.

There may come a time in your husband's priesthood when it will be too much, when you feel yourself start to lean back and away from the congregation. I know many priests' wives who choose this path, choose—for sanity and self-preservation—to uncouple themselves from the congregation, choose to be anonymous and on the outside. This is a completely valid choice.

But today, I want to suggest to you that when it's hard, you might want to lean in instead.

What if, instead of trying to avoid the pain (and in doing so, avoid the joy), you press forward, face the pain, and embrace the whole roller coaster of life as the priest's family? What if you stand shoulder-to-shoulder with your community through the bad times and the good? What if you ACTUALLY live Romans 12:15 and "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep"?

Oh, I'm not going to pretend that's an easy choice. It's a choice that will hurt. It will mean that you're physically, emotionally, and/or mentally sitting at the bedside of the ill, the lonely, the destitute, and the doubting, alongside your husband. It will mean that you are faced more often than others with your own mortality and the inevitability of the passing of everyone you know and love.

It will also mean that you are the one who comes to be intimately acquainted with death's defeat and the joys of the resurrection.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not telling you to do this because I'm great at it. I'm posing the question to myself as much as you. In recent years, I have been leaning back more and more (until I'm sure the chair will flip with me in it). This past weekend there was a wedding of one of our youth and although it was happening ten minutes from my house, I was just not going to go. "I don't even know them that well—what's the big deal?"

The big deal is that I've been doing that increasingly more often, finding excuses to step back. And yet, when I engage, it's actually delightful. It's not a hassle AT ALL to be with people I love and make small talk. It's not a hassle to love people.

This is the harder road and the one less travelled by. But it is SO worthwhile to engage fully in your community and to be a part of other people's lives. What you get in return is a richer, fuller life of faith, where you are a witness to miracles and a hand to hold in hard times. A life that you can only survive with God as your seatbelt, firmly buckled into His promises and His mercy.

Leaning back gives you a semblance of control. Or you can choose to lean in and relinquish control, to hand over the reins to God and say, "I'm here for all it," to be God's "ride or die."

No pressure here. Just know that it's an option.

Your sister in Christ,

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