



**Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States**  
**Monthly Message for the Priests Wives**  
**October 2021**

**The Problem with Other People**

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

Sometimes we find ourselves wishing the people we serve (and who serve alongside us) weren't so frustrating. Their personalities, their weaknesses, their actions and demands grate on us and annoy us. We find ourselves wishing they would just get out of our way, so we could finally serve how we imagine or dream. "My service would be perfect if only this person were out of my way"

But that is not the service Christ has called us to but a service of our own egos.

I want you to imagine with me what it would be like if Christ reacted to people the way we do. There were many people during Christ's service He could have resented for their personality or actions. People who asked Him to act outside His intended plan, who questioned Him, who took matters into their own hands, and even those who betrayed Him.

Let's take the example of some of these people. Let's look at the Virgin Mary, The Apostles Thomas and Peter, and Judas Iscariot. The nag, the doubter, the troublemaker, and the betrayer.

(Bear with me, please, for this next part.)

Imagine if Christ, instead of being our amazing Lord, behaved like us instead of Himself.

Imagine that His time had not yet come (John 2:4), and His mother Mary dared to ask Him to act at the wedding in Cana. Oh, sister, if it were us in that situation instead of Christ! How do we react when an older woman in the church asks us to do something? Imagine how we would roll our eyes. How we would huff and puff. How dare she push us to do something when we're not ready? What a nag she is, pecking at us when we're already busy doing something else!

Imagine Thomas—he dared ask Christ to prove Himself? We have people in our lives who ask irritating questions, who make us second guess our decisions perhaps or who make us defend them. Oh, how we howl to others about these people! We find a close friend to grumble to and resent this person endlessly. We dig our heels in, becoming more stubborn in reaction. But that is not how Christ reacts.

And what about Peter? I'll bet you have a Peter in your life—the American phrase is "a bull in a China shop"—people so full of energy and eagerness that mistakes get made. "Slow down!" "Think it through!" but they never do. Quick with their words, quick with their swords—loud proclamations and sometimes little follow through. Who knows if they'll have your back when the going gets tough, you wonder... If Christ were not Christ, how long would He have kept Peter around? Would He have had the wisdom to give Peter an important job—to give Peter the keys to His kingdom (Matthew 16:19)?

And Judas. We know who Judas is in our lives. The person we know we can't trust. We know they are being cruel to us behind our backs. Yet... Christ did not kick Judas out of the core group. How? How could He continue to serve him so honestly, all the way to washing His feet on the eve of the Cross, knowing this was the Betrayer?

It seems so disrespectful to think of the Virgin Mary, Thomas and Peter in these ways. We honor them now because Christ honored them so much while He served them and was among them. The fretting mother, the doubting friend, the overzealous man... Christ loved them and so accommodated their weaknesses! Even Judas! Even Judas whom He KNEW, fully KNEW would betray Him, He treated with love up to the end.

Do we act gracefully and accommodate others' personalities, weaknesses, questions, and actions as best we can? Or do we instead turn an opportunity to serve God into an opportunity to serve our own ego, complaining and rolling our eyes?

When we get resentful of others in the Body of Christ—fellow servants and those we serve—we need to ask ourselves, "Are we serving our ego instead of serving others?" and reminding ourselves that's not what Christ called us to do.

Your sister in Christ,

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