



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

Vanities and Grasping

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

Last month, I did something that others would consider wild, reckless—maybe even dangerous. I went parasailing.

I'm not sure if it was the mocking of my fellow travelers, insisting I was too scared to go, or the trials I had gone through shortly before, but I threw caution to the wind (pun intended) and agreed to take my 15 minutes in the sky.

To be very honest with you, my sister, I didn't really think through what I was going to do. I didn't really think at all. A note on the website to register for my flight emphasized that no skill was required, and, with all the trials of my life recently, that was enough reassurance for me.

It was surprisingly easy to get in the car headed to the shore, easy to climb on the boat. Easy to put on the life jacket. Easy to hold on to the harness.

At every step, I committed myself to just thinking about the next right step, the small motion asked of me. I didn't try to think ahead and decipher how I would get down from the sky, whether I would get seasick or not... and so on. I just thought about the step before me.

This is not my usual philosophy about life. I am, by nature, a worrier and over-planner. I draw outfits in a journal before an overseas trip. I calculate the number of minutes it will take to get dressed and then to drive to my destination. (Yet, somehow, I'm always late to Liturgy.) I count the number of steps from my room to the children's rooms in an emergency.

But it was easy to climb to the edge of the boat, easy to let the parasail lift me. All the movements were small and familiar. Nothing was bigger than my human ability.

As the wind picked me up, I thought to myself how this is all that God asks of us. He never asks us to handle more than the small step before us. He never asks more of us than the next right thing. The next right decision, the next move.

He doesn't show us the whole journey—but He KNOWS the whole journey. As Abouna said in a recent sermon: God already knows exactly how it will all play out.

That's where our faith and trust come in. We have to take the steps lit before us by His Spirit and not worry about the rest of it. Just putting one foot in front of the other in His will.

How do we know what's right or wrong, what's in His will, what the next step should be? It's very simple. We ask ourselves just one question: Is this bringing me closer to who God intended me to be and to my salvation or is this taking me further away from God, His intent in my life, and my salvation?

When I was 1200 feet in the air—a quarter of a mile up—I thought about how small the boat looked. Ah, how tiny my problems were when I looked with God's eye view. *"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity... Indeed, all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 1:2b, 2:11b)

I measured the curve of the horizon. I took in the miniature skyline and all its worrying, striving inhabitants. How we toil to please each other or to fight each other!

That day, my sister, I left it all on the boat. All the pain and the worry. The overthinking and striving for useless things. And when I fall again into those human habits, I close my eyes and picture again the size of the boat, the size of the city, the curve of the horizon, the hand of my God that lifted me.

Your sister in Christ,

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