



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States
Monthly Message for the Priests Wives
January 2022

Uncharted Territory

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

Are you entering a new stage of your life? Has some big change shaken up your world-as-usual?

We all answered God's call at least once in our lives, when we accepted our husband's call to priesthood, but life is full of calls from God.

Our day-to-day life is often routine and predictable. We wake, we eat, we pray, we sleep. We repeat. Our life is tiny little habits that form the mosaic of this stage of our life. Then, sometimes, unexpectedly, we're called by God to a new stage, a new chapter of our life.

Are you on the cusp of a new stage? Have you heard a new (or renewed) call from God?

Sometimes this call comes in the positive form: a new child, a promotion at work, a new service. Sometimes this call comes in the negative: a new health issue, the loss of someone—or something—you love.

Life, for a while, seems impossible. "I'm not trained for this," you think to yourself.

Yet, that is God's call to us. He asks us to step into the unknown, untrained and unprepared.

The other day Abouna was talking about how the Virgin Mary received Archangel Gabriel's message from God. At first, she was confounded by the greeting she heard.

When we first hear a call, we are baffled and overwhelmed. *How* can I do what God is asking me to do? *How* can I take this next step, to walk boldly into this future God has shaped for me?

In the story of the Annunciation to Mary, we are reminded of the Lord's guidance for entering into uncharted territory:

- Fear Not
- Remember Nothing Is Impossible
- Humble Yourself

FEAR NOT

First, as God tells us repeatedly in Scripture: "Do not be afraid." These were among Gabriel's first words to Saint Mary.

God tells us to be unafraid because fear paralyzes. We cannot grow, progress, or be saved without action. Paralysis does not help us make healthy decisions and courageous choices.

But how can we be unafraid? We must remember that the One who was with us, my sister, will continue to be with us. The One who was with you in your last trial or last stage is the same unchanging and faithful God who will be with you in this new trial or new stage.

I was listening to a podcast the other day and the host was encouraging us listeners to write down all the things that we have accomplished in our life so far—all of them. Every little accomplishment. She was mentioning that we often downplay the good decisions and choices that we have made (by the grace of God).

It got me to thinking. What if we instead made a list of things God has done for us in our lives? What if we dedicated time to recalling all the many, many, many, many occasions that God stood by us, holding our hands, as we crossed uncharted territory in the past?

- He allowed me to survive the womb and infancy.
- He gave me parents who loved and cared for me.
- He gave me ten fingers and toes.
- He allowed me to learn to walk, to learn to talk, to learn to think critically.
- He blessed me with an education.

I haven't even scratched the surface here of what God has done for each of us individually. Can you see how quickly this list will become MASSIVE?

And what do we do with this massive evidence when we reach strange lands? We panic. We fear. We ignore it all completely and are again like little babes who have never seen the ocean.

There is an old Protestant song that repeats: "What a mighty God we serve!" Yet, we forget.

Do not be afraid! Remember the God you serve!

REMEMBER NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

This impossible situation in front of you? It's not new to God. It's not impossible to God, for "With God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

Abouna mentioned that, when Moses and the children of Israel came to the Red Sea, not one person in that group knew how the problem would be solved. An army behind them, the sea before them: an impossible situation.

In God's hands, though? It's all in a day's work. Very normal. Not even an issue.

In the book *The Hiding Place*, the author Corrie has a terrible vision of her entire family being carted away from their beloved town in a black wagon. When she tells her older sister, Betsie replies, "If God has shown us bad times ahead, it's enough for me that He knows about them. That's why He sometimes shows us things, you know—to tell us that this too is in His hands."

Your new stage of life—whatever has been added or taken away—is in His powerful hands. Nothing is impossible.

Who could have predicted that the entire sea would part to allow the children, the women and men, the animals and goods they brought with them to cross safely? When had it been solved this way before? As we say in the Midnight Praises, "The very deep / become a walkway."

In our life, too, even if we can't see a way, we know and trust that God does know the way, He sees the resolution. It has not taken Him by surprise.

HUMBLE YOURSELF

To move safely into uncharted territory, we need one last tool.

Along with *courage* (do not be afraid) and *faith* (nothing is impossible with God), we need humility. We need to say, "*Let it be to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38)

Mankind's biggest stumbling block, especially when it comes to entering new territory, is letting go of our ego. It's our ego that gets in the way of good work.

When we rely on our own weak strength to lift and resolve, we find ourselves lacking.

Saint Mary was able to submit herself to the mighty hand of God. We too must humble ourselves in His sight, trusting Him to lift us through this new stage of our lives.

His way will surprise us. We cannot predict the situations and outcomes as He works them out. But if we trust Him, the outcome will be more miraculous than we could have ever conceived.

The results will be added to our ever-growing list of things God, in His mercy and love, has done for us.

"Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you" (1 Samuel 12:24)!

Your sister in Christ,

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