



## **Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States**

### **Monthly Message for the Priests Wives**

**July 2022**

### **Changes in the Church**

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

One time, I got into a heated conversation with a longtime church member. He was feeling pretty annoyed and frustrated about the direction the church was headed.

“These people,” he kept saying, “are changing things.”

He and I stood for nearly an hour talking through this issue. During that time, there were many points where I had to re-affirm his place and relevance in the congregation.

“God still has a need for you here,” I said repeatedly. Thankfully, by the end of our talk, he was convinced.

These days, again, I see a lot of changes happening in my church. It hit me that maybe this is something all of us priests’ wives will naturally face in our church lives, that regular change in our church’s culture.

One of the hard things about being priests’ wives is that we tend to stay in one place. We are rarely the ones moving away. More often than not it’s other people who shift around us: new people coming into the church, old beloved people moving away.

As generations grow up and head to college, as people travel to new cities or states for job opportunities or promotions, there is a constant shifting of the dynamics of the church—sometimes subtle and sometimes very strong.

As the church grows and adds new members, your role in the church may need to be redefined, and you may need to change your behavior and approach.

There are four big changes that you may need to make to accommodate growth and change in your church.

#### **Love More**

First, you’re going to have to level up your ability to love. There will be a lot of new people, and it would be very easy to decide to ignore them and stick with the people you know. Do the opposite instead. Reach out, shake a hand, learn a name, and greet with a smile.



Learn people's names! It will get harder, but do it anyway. This small act will be your way of *"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3).

It doesn't take a lot to make people feel welcome in the church, and it's always worthwhile. I think of Joseph the Righteous in prison, networking with the baker and the cupbearer. Who knew one of those guys would get him out of prison one day?

### **Set New Boundaries**

Next, you may have to learn to set new boundaries. With more members of the congregation come more social activities. You will have to decide when to accept an invitation and when to reject it (without favoritism for a certain group).

You might find that service demands change, and you need to create boundaries there, too. You may even need to step down from a role that's better suited for someone else, someone new.

Like Abraham and Lot, the lines may need to be redrawn to make for better relations and more peace. If you can do it with humility and a loving heart, God will bless your decision and give you the best outcomes. As the Psalmist says, with the Lord in charge, *"the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places"* (Psalm 16:6).

### **Bear with It**

Also, as things change, you might find that there are new (and sometimes loud) voices of criticism to bear. New people will appear to test your humbleness of heart and your patience. They may also be there to shed light on things God does want you to change and improve on!

I am thinking here of a boulder in a river. A strong boulder is shaped by the river, but not crushed by it. Instead of crumbling or getting washed downstream, a boulder is polished and shines with the passing of every drop of water.

The devil will try to use changes in your church to crush you, but with prayer and God-centered choices, you will instead be polished by the years by His Spirit through the people who move in and move out of your home church.

If you're facing those kinds of changes now, I'll say to you what I said to him: "God still needs you here!" Don't let the devil make you look back at the past wistfully and turn you into a pillar of salt.

Let those dynamic changes in the church be source of comfort and joy to you.

You are a valuable member of your congregation, whether you are serving in front of everyone or behind the scenes at home. You are a valued child of God, and His house is your house.

It's all happening to the glory of His holy name.

Your sister in Christ,

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