



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Priests Wives

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Repentance

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Prayers, fasting, reading the scripture, getting closer to God, and confession:

Engaging in prayers, fasting, reading the scripture, and drawing closer to God is a transformative spiritual journey that plays a profound role in preventing sinful actions, fostering joy, and leading to genuine tears of repentance. Here's an exploration of how these practices contribute to a life aligned with God's will:

1. Prayers:

- **Preventing Sinful Actions:** Regular communication with God through prayer establishes a conscious and ongoing connection. By seeking His guidance, strength, and wisdom in prayer, individuals find support in resisting temptations and making righteous choices.
- **Bringing Joy and Repentance:** Prayer is a channel for expressing gratitude, confessing sins, and seeking forgiveness. Through heartfelt prayers, one experiences the joy of knowing God's mercy and grace. Tears of repentance often accompany the realization of God's unwavering love and forgiveness.

2. Fasting:

- **Preventing Sinful Actions:** Fasting involves self-discipline and self-control. By abstaining from certain pleasures, individuals cultivate discipline over their desires, reducing the likelihood of succumbing to sinful actions.

- **Bringing Joy and Repentance:** Fasting, when approached with a sincere heart, fosters humility and dependence on God. As individuals draw closer to Him through self-denial, they experience a deep joy in spiritual closeness. Tears of repentance may flow as the fasting process reveals the need for cleansing and renewal.

3. Reading the Scripture:

- **Preventing Sinful Actions:** The Bible serves as a moral compass, offering guidance and wisdom. Regularly reading and meditating on the scripture helps individuals understand God's commandments, fostering a righteous and God-centered perspective that aids in avoiding sinful actions.
- **Bringing Joy and Repentance:** Scripture is a source of comfort, assurance, and hope. Reading about God's promises and His redemptive plan brings joy to the heart. Tears of repentance may flow as the scripture reveals the depth of God's love and the gravity of one's departure from His ways.

4. Getting Closer to God:

- **Preventing Sinful Actions:** Proximity to God nurtures a deeper understanding of His character and fosters a desire to live in accordance with His will. The closer individuals draw to God, the more aligned their actions become with His divine standards.
- **Bringing Joy and Repentance:** Intimacy with God brings unparalleled joy as individuals experience His presence, love, and guidance. Tears of repentance may flow naturally as the realization of distancing oneself from such a loving God becomes evident.

5. Confession:

Confession holds a significant place in our spiritual life of the, serving as a vital sacrament that facilitates the journey towards salvation. The practice of confession finds its roots in the teachings of Jesus Christ and has been upheld by the Church Fathers throughout history.

In the New Testament, the importance of confession is highlighted in various passages. James 5:16, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Here, the act of confession is linked to healing and restoration, emphasizing its therapeutic and transformative nature.

Furthermore, in John 20:23, Jesus grants the disciples the authority to forgive sins: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." This verse underscores the role of the priesthood in administering the sacrament of confession and absolution.

The writings of the early Church Fathers further elucidate the significance of confession. St. John Chrysostom, for instance, emphasized the spiritual benefits of confession, stating, "Confession is the first step to salvation." He underscores the notion that confession is not merely a formality but a vital step towards reconciliation with God and one's fellow believers.

Similarly, St. Cyril of Jerusalem stressed the importance of confessing one's sins regularly, comparing it to the act of healing a wound. He writes, "In confession, there are not many to listen to our words, but only God, who is disposed to have mercy."

Confession involves sincere repentance, a contrite heart, and a commitment to amendment of life.

It is the way of spiritual healing and renewal, leading the faithful towards salvation and union with God. By confessing their sins, believers acknowledge their shortcomings, seek forgiveness, and strive for spiritual growth in accordance with the teachings of Christ and the apostles.

Accordingly, prayers, fasting, reading the scripture, getting closer to God, and confession form a holistic approach to spiritual growth. These practices not only prevent sinful actions by fortifying one's spiritual armor but also bring profound joy and tears of repentance as individuals experience the transformative power of God's love and grace in their lives.