



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

Me Time

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

It's a very popular thing these days to talk about "me time." No matter who and how we serve (our spouses, our children, our careers, our service), we all need some time apart from those we take care of, time for taking care of ourselves.

Sometimes "me time" is hard to come by, stressful and guilt-ridden (think of young mothers trying to sneak a few minutes here or there). At other times, in our capacity as priests' wives, we may find "me time" forced on us as Abouna is away serving. What should we do with those lingering evening hours that are ours alone?

At the end of a long day, the temptation is to spend the time on snacking, back-to-back TV episodes, or whatever habits we've gotten ourselves into. As one article I read pointed out, we spend all day making important decisions, handling impossible tasks for the household, the family, and our careers, and taking on so many emotions. We're anxious and exhausted and tightly wound.

The urge to do anything brainless, to freeze out those feelings, is very strong and understandable. There's nothing inherently wrong in wanting to spend our alone hours on those things. But we may find in time that we're spending every night doing those things when they may not be how we actually want and need to spend those hours.

We have an opportunity in those hours to reconnect with God and with our true inner desires (rather than the gluttony and sloth that fill our surface wants).

Here are some ideas for how to take care of yourself at the end of a long day that don't involve scrolling on your phone, staying up late doing even more work, or unnecessary snacks.

1. Do a Quiet, Easy Chore

I find that a quick tidying of the bedroom or bathroom counter at the end of a long day is very soothing. Putting on some quiet classical music while I put everything physically in order helps

me put all my thoughts in order, too. It leaves room for me to understand how I'm really feeling, what I'm really worrying about, and to give those worries to God.

I have friends who tell me that doing the evening dishes by hand gives them that same feeling. If the house is empty, I feel like walking around with the vacuum could achieve a similar result. All that white noise helps empty the mind.

2. Work on a Hobby

Remember the good old days before cell phones? When our hands and minds were tired, we'd pick up a hobby and work on that. It's been years since I pulled out my knitting needles. Maybe your go-to was embroidery or crochet. Maybe you're the type to prefer sketching, painting, or sculpting.

There are lots of small hobbies that can be done to keep your hands busy and your mind quiet, focused on just the repetitive actions and sounds. When working on a hobby, it's easy to add small prayers, like the Jesus Prayer or Kyrie Eleison. As the work progresses, you might find bigger prayers stumbling out.

3. Read a Book

I know it's hard to find time these days to read but think of all the hours spent scrolling social media or skimming articles online. What if instead we devoted that time to reading a few chapters from a book that could help us grow spiritually? Over the course of several weeks, you could finish lots of books that are on your to-read pile!

Remember that, because this is "me time" and not study time for school, you should pick books that appeal to you, feel relaxed about how you define finished, and write down only notes that are worth remembering for the long run. Don't accidentally turn your "me time" into a stressful environment by reading books that cause you anxiety.

4. Write in a Prayer Journal

One of the ways to process after a long day is to write in a prayer journal. However, we shouldn't turn this quiet time with God into an opportunity to beat ourselves up or to churn up the worries we already have. While it IS recommended that you take the end of the day to repent and while it IS always a good idea to pray to God and share your concerns, I have a different vision for your "me time" prayer journal.

What if you spent this precious time writing down specific things you are grateful to God for in this day? You could write down the best memories, the people God put in your path today, and all the ways He blessed you. As you put in front of your eyes all the things God has done for

you and all the ways He has shown you His love, you will find yourself relaxing and clinging more closely to Him.

5. Go to Sleep

I saved this for last because I know it's the hardest to convince you of. Sometimes, in the evening hours, what you really need to do is sleep. "It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep" (Psalm 127:2). Perhaps like me, you quote this to Abouna all the time to encourage him to remember to rest. What about you? Are you remembering to rest?

You don't HAVE to stay up another hour fiddling with chores, hobbies, or a book. Some nights, you may find the best option is to just go to sleep. In fact, sleeping early might allow you to wake up early and get more things done with a fresh mind. Sleeping is "me time," no matter what social media tells you.

My dearest sister, please do remember to take care of yourself. You are beloved of God and have many roles and responsibilities to fulfill. You can do those best when you create opportunities to recover.

Your sister in Christ,

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