



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

**The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
October 2014**

The War of Jealousy

Behold, Satan went out to see. He whispered to Tasoni, who is one of the priests' wives, saying: Are you still indeed the subject of your husband priest's care and love? The poor wife was then disturbed and replied to him immediately, "Yes! I am sure of this". Then Satan departed from her until an opportune time. Next day, Tasoni woke up in the morning with a severe sore throat and high temperature. She was expecting from her husband priest to stay with her this day. But Abouna apologized to her so gently. He explained to her how much his schedule was overbooked with a lot of appointments that he couldn't cancel. A youth was supposed to come for confession finally after many years of praying for his repentance. After that, Abouna was supposed to visit a dying man that no one knew whether he would live till the next day or not. Then, there was a marital problem in which Abouna had to intervene on the same day as the couple were waiting for Abouna to decide whether they would continue in divorce or not. Added to these, Abouna had then to pass by the church to supervise the church's constructions and to manage some administrative obstacles. Then, there was the Vespers and Tasbeha prayer and may be taking some confessions if there would be enough time. Tasoni then sighed deeply and said to Abouna, "May the Lord

strengthen you". As soon as Abouna went out Satan came back asking: "Didn't I tell you that you are the last one Abouna care for? If he did this in your illness then what he would do in your well being? Tasoni then sighed in bitterness saying, "Poor Abouna! May the Lord strengthen him. He is charged with major responsibilities".

The scenario was then repeated many times. It is well known about the devil that he may wait for a long time until he finally achieves his goal as he never surrenders. Tasoni never thought to expose these thoughts to her father of confession as she considered them to be trivial things that she had to ignore. This helped the devil a lot to achieve his plan.

After a while, Abouna started to notice that Tasoni stopped smiling and started to show sour. Then her tone of voice started to be charged with a mixture of anger and grief. She also started to follow him in an exaggerated way. She was pursuing him with phone calls to know his itinerary accurately. She also started to show some signs of feeling uncomfortable with some specific persons. Abouna noticed that talking about them by chance or visiting any of them caused her to feel tension and irritability.

It happened then that Satan came from going to and fro in the earth and from walking back and forth on it trying to sow bitterness and sadness in the heart of Abouna towards Tasoni saying to him, "She is pursuing you in a suffocating way. She wants to possess you for herself 24 hours. She is selfish. She is concerned with herself only. She does not feel empathy towards you and does not understand how are major the responsibilities you are charged with. Where is her spirituality? Where are her promises to share with you the sufferings of bearing the cross of

the service? You showed her a lot of longsuffering. You coddled her a lot. Now try to change your strategy. Do not take heed of her. May be if you ignore her she will stop pursuing you".

Abouna liked this idea and started to implement it. After he was answering every single phone call from Tasoni, he started to answer only one call out of five. He started also to answer very briefly and to reply to her inquiries about where he was and whether he would come to lunch or not in a very vague way. He also neglected her over-concern about the people she disliked. Why he would bear this severe stress that her wife was adding to his many stresses?!

But this prescription made things worse as it led to opposite results. Tension between Abouna and Tasoni started to rise. It reached the peak when they went into a picnic with the congregation. The devil whispered to her, "How poor and lonely you are! Behold every husband is sitting beside his wife and is taking care of her. No one else share him with her. It seems that when you accepted the ordination of your husband as a priest you committed the biggest mistake in your life!" Therefore, Tasoni was not able anymore to hide her embarrassment while Abouna remained confused about the appropriate way to please and comfort her.

In the evening, after they came back from the picnic Abouna entered his room to pray putting his confusion before God asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He was suffering from the idea that he was able to comfort suffering people without being able to comfort his own wife. After he finished his prayer he was comforted and sure that God, who called him to priesthood, would accept his prayer of faith and would help him to rule his own house well.

Next day, Abouna received a phone call from his father of confession who was the father of confession of his wife as well. He was a respected righteous elder well experienced in discerning the wars of the devil. The elder asked to come to Abouna and Tasoni's home for a visit. He explained that Tasoni had called him and asked him for that. Of course, Abouna welcomed this request as he realized that the answer to his prayer was about to be received.

The elder Abouna started to listen attentively to every one of them. He then looked at Tasoni saying, "My daughter, this is the cursed devil of jealousy who always fight against the priests' wives. He put in the heart of the priest's wife severe fear of abandonment and loneliness. He then dramatizes these fears to a degree that she cannot discern what is real and objective from what is just an imagined anticipated abandonment. She almost believes that she lost her husband priest and that she has anymore share in him after she was all his life and the focus of his care and interest. When this devil of jealousy insinuate into the heart of the priest's wife, he does not come alone but he usually brings with him the seeds of anger, sadness, inferiority and confusion. He also kindle a burning fire in her heart pushing the wife to pursue her husband all the time as she imagines that by doing so she will be able to restore her husband and to be restored herself to the centre of his interest and concern. But she does not realize that when she does this she becomes to her husband priest a source of sadness, confusion and puzzlement that may hinder and hurt his ministry.

This devil of jealousy is old age. He waged war against Rachel, Jacob's wife, about whom the Bible said, "*Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die!' And Jacob's anger was aroused*

against Rachel, and he said, 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?' (Genesis30:1-2). Behold how Rachel wrongly imagined that she would lose her husband's love in case she would not bear him any children like her sister, Leah. As jealousy insinuated into her heart she grieved to a degree that she desired death. Her jealousy made Jacob angry at her instead of coming closer to her.

This same devil fought against Hannah, Samuel's mother when Peninnah, her rival, "*provoked her severely to make her miserable because the Lord had closed her womb*" (1Samuel1:6). Although, her husband, Elkanah, gave her a double portion because he loved her yet she "*wiped and did not eat*" (1Samuel1:7). Her husband then rebuked her saying, "*Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?*" (1Samuel1:8).

As St. Paul knows well how much jealousy is dangerous he classifies it among the works of the flesh making it equal to idolatry and fornication, "*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, **jealousies**, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Galatians5:19-21).

As for the destructive consequences of jealousy when it erodes the man's heart, the book of Job says, "*For wrath kills a foolish and envy slays a simple one*" (Job5:2). St. James the apostle warns us saying, "*For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there*" (James3:16). Didn't jealous people mentioned in the Holy Bible harvest a bitter fruit from their jealousy?

Behold where jealousy led Cain (Genesis4:3-16), Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16), Miriam, the sister of Moses when she envied him (Number12) and King Saul when he envied David (1Samuel1:6-8).

Now, my daughter, after you understood the complex nature of jealousy and its roots and you realized its destructive effects on your relationships and your inner peace, you must henceforward learn how to examine yourself as regard this cursed war. Each time you feel troubled ask yourself: Am I jealous? If the answer is 'yes' then you must find out the reason of your jealousy. Is it fear of abandonment, low self-confidence, a desire to possess and to control or feelings of insecurity? If the Holy Spirit, who is the true physician of psyche, shows you that this malignant illness is abiding in the depth of your heart then you must hasten to enter into your room, shut your door and pour yourself before God confessing your weakness to Him asking Him to grant you help and healing. Then you must also know that the effective treatment of jealousy lies in a single word, "**trust**". You must first trust God who shall supply all your psychological and spiritual needs according to His riches in glory. Second, you must trust your husband priest because his heart safely trust you and you are the only one he calls "my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one". Finally, you must have self-confidence as you are God's daughter created on His like and image and you are the virtuous wife who fears the Lord whose worth is far above rubies".

When Satan heard the words of this discerning wise father and saw Tasoni repenting and confessing her weakness, and her husband priest understanding her well and containing her weakness he departed them in severe wrath, but until an opportune time, deciding to come back later to set another snare for them.