

*Food for Thought
for
New Presvyteres*



Compiled by the
National Sisterhood of Presvyteres
of the
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese
of America

Dedicated
to you,
who lovingly chooses
to share the ministry
of your husband,
the Priest

First Edition. March, 1999.

Cover:
Icon of Jesus Christ visiting
Saints Lazarus, Martha and Mary
© Conciliar Press

CONTENTS

The Purpose of this Pamphlet 2



What is the National Sisterhood of Presbyteres? ... 2



Some Helpful Suggestions 3



Clergy Family Facts 5



FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) 7

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAMPHLET

The purpose of our pamphlet is threefold:

- 1) To promote thought and discussion between you and your fiancé/husband on the subject of the Holy Priesthood and the life you will share together as a married couple.
- 2) To encourage you to maintain an active spiritual life and to participate frequently in the Sacraments.
- 3) To be aware that the National Sisterhood of Presbyteres and Diocesan Sisterhoods are support systems which can direct you to resources.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL SISTERHOOD OF PRESBYTERES?

We, in the Sisterhood of Presbyteres, are a diverse group, each of us having her own personality, temperament, talents, set of circumstances, aspirations or career goals. However different we might be as individuals, we share common experiences as Presbyteres. Because of this, we lovingly offer the following thoughts, which we hope will prove to be of value to you.

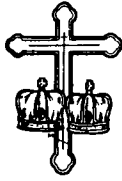
SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

- Know your faith! strive to live our Orthodox Faith to its fullest by strengthening your relationship with the Lord, through the studying of the scriptures and by adhering to the teachings of our Holy Orthodox Church. Maintain an active spiritual life through prayer, fasting and receiving the Sacraments, being sure not to neglect the sacrament of Confession. Try to locate a spiritual Father who can guide you in your spiritual struggles. As a Presvytera, you will be confronted with many challenges. Maintaining an active spiritual life, therefore, will give you the strength to overcome these obstacles, as well as, to lead you towards a stronger personal alliance with Jesus Christ.



- If you decide to help or lead in different parish ministries, you should do so because you are an Orthodox Christian, not because you are a Presvytera and you feel you must.
- Don't try to be someone you're not. Be yourself, with all the wonderful gifts and talents God has bestowed upon you.

-
- Your marriage is sacred; before you were Father and Presvytera, you were husband and wife. Do everything you can to maintain the loving relationship which brought you both together. Make time to do things outside of the social life of the parish. By understanding the fact that church functions and obligations are a part of your husband's ministry, you can lessen the feelings of resentment.



- Keep in mind that it is your husband who was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by the laying on of hands and that it is his responsibility to counsel and advise.



- Don't be afraid or embarrassed to talk to another Presvytera with whom you can establish a loving relationship. Most likely, she has had similar experiences and talking to her will be helpful to you.



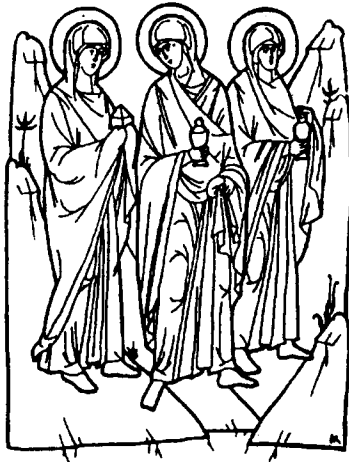


CLERGY FAMILY FACTS

- Transfers and new assignments are part of the life of a clergy family. Because of the diverse needs of the Church and the fact that there are more parish vacancies than Priests available, transfers are inevitable in the life of a parish Priest. If you have a career outside of the home, it may be interrupted for a short period of time. If you have children of school age, you will need to help them adjust to a new environment. In any case, moving is a reality and if you are faced with a new assignment, it is important for you both to discuss one another's concerns with each other and with your family.
- Everyone except the priest is "working for the weekend." His typical weekend is busy preparing for Sunday's Divine Liturgy which might be followed by baptisms, weddings or other church-related events. Usually, a day off is taken on a weekday, therefore, your family time together will need some readjusting. Your fiancée/husband will spend many of his evenings in meetings with the various church organizations and in appointments, with those who are unable to meet with him during the working day. Flexibility in planning free time is essential to a healthy marriage.

-
- As a Presvytera, your parishioners will most likely, expect you to take on certain responsibilities. The level of your involvement and the way you respond to these expectations is a decision upon which both you and your fiancé/husband should agree.
 - Being a clergy family sometimes means that you do live in a "fish bowl" environment. Curiosity, whether sincere or otherwise, is part of human nature. The amount of privacy which is necessary for your well being, should be determined by you and your husband.

THE MYRRHBEARERS





FAQ's (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

The following questions are most commonly asked by women who are thinking about becoming or about to become a Presvytera. The National Sisterhood of Presvyteres hopes that by listing them here, positive and constructive discussions can take place between fiancées or a husband and wife. Please keep these thoughts in mind while reflecting on these questions.

- How do I cultivate my own spiritual life? Where do I go for confession? How do I go about finding a spiritual father?
- Do I have a role as a Presvytera? How involved should I be in the life of the parish? What do I feel comfortable doing? What are my fiancée/husband's expectations? What are my own expectations? What are the parish's expectations?
- Will I be lonely? Can I have close friends in the parish? Do I need to create boundaries for my friendships? What are healthy boundaries?
- As a Christian woman, how do I handle criticism directed toward me, my husband or my children?

- ☛ What do I do when a parishioner asks for advice, or comes to me with a personal problem or a theological question?
- ☛ Will things be different for me because I am a convert? If I am in a parish, where many of the parishioners are immigrants, how will I communicate with those people whose English is limited?
- ☛ What will my husband's schedule be like? How can we create family time?
- ☛ Should I work outside the home? If I choose to have a career or simply need to work out of necessity, how do I balance the responsibilities of the family, the church and the job?
- ☛ Will I be invited to all the baptisms, weddings and other social functions? Do I need to bring gifts? Should I attend everything?
- ☛ How often will our family have to move?

These questions don't have easy answers. Much depends on your personal preferences, as well as, on your fiancé/husband's advice. As with many other things in life, one's personal "style" can only be learned or discovered through prayer, patience and experience. Although, the life of a Priest and his family is not easy, it is filled with many, many joys and blessings.



The Apolytikion of Saints Martha and Mary

Tone Three

Since you believed in Christ
with strong and ardent faith,
and ever worshiped His
divine and mighty deeds,
you both adorned yourselves
with all the splendor of sacred virtues.
With your holy brother now,
you are also granted to dwell
with the ranks of Saints on high,
O sisters of Lazarus;
and with him, O wise Mary and Martha,
pray for us all unto the Master.