

My First Wife

Several years ago, I was blessed to speak to a gathering of former Episcopalians who had entered another Jurisdiction. For several days in between my Addresses I listened carefully to what was being discussed among the participants. Very little theology - very little academic discussion - very little discussion about evangelization and nothing about feeding the hungry and housing the homeless. Much of their energy was spent talking about the many offenses of their former affiliation. Numerous articles were cited as to why they had made the right decision to leave. Countless blog sites were visible on their lap tops. There was almost a preoccupation with reading virtually everything that was being written on these blog sites, social media, and web sites about everything negative that was going on in their former affiliation. On one hand it seemed as if they were trying to justify their reasons for leaving by showing how bad everything had become. In other ways, it almost seemed as if they were hoping that everything their former affiliation was engaged in would fail. The worse the news - the greater their delight. More energy was spent daily in their looking back than moving forward. I felt as if I were walking across the Red Sea with half the people looking back instead of looking ahead now that they were free.

I told the group that if a married couple came to see me for counseling, and the wife stated that the reason they came to see me is that she, the second wife, was getting sick of hearing about her husband's first wife. "If he paid as much attention to me as he does to everything his first wife is doing, it would improve our marriage." I would say they had a problem. The second wife was sick of hearing about the first wife. If they want a happy marriage they cannot live their lives discussing the abuses, the unfaithfulness, and the behaviors of the first wife. I would probably also recommend not only therapy but also the Sacrament of Holy Unction, so that he could be healed!

Were there any good moments in the first marriage? Why would a man wish his first wife ill no matter how bizarre her behavior had become? Was every moment of their marriage miserable? Is this what Christ would have us do? If resentment, anger, and preoccupation persists in the lives of those who have "walked away" perhaps they need not to deny that abuse or pain existed, but rather simply to put more energy into where God has called them. We only have so much energy per day; why waste it on looking back?