

## Understanding the Clergy Family

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The priest and his wife and family experience some unique blessings and challenges in their lives, which many of the faithful are unaware of. For the purpose of this brief article, these will be presented as a list of what clergy families wish the members of the parish knew about them. This list is derived from the results of numerous research studies on clergy wives/couples/families and anecdotes of clergy family life experiences.

- We consider it a privilege and an honor to serve Christ and His Church.
- We have a unique relationship to the parish that no one else experiences; our husband's/father's workplace is also our family's place of worship, fellowship, and community.
- We receive great joy from the opportunities you give us to love you and to serve you.
- We want you to embrace us as members of the community.
- We are human and experience all of the same joys and sorrows you experience.
- We are not always "at the top of our game"; we, too, have good days and bad.
- We are in this struggle to grow in Christ with you, and we want you to walk beside us as we strive to walk beside you.
- We need to be encouraged.
- We are not perfect; in the community however, our mistakes are sometimes more visible than those of others.
- Please forgive us our sins and failings.
- Please respectfully tell us if we have hurt or offended

you in any way.

- We often live far from our extended families and feel isolation, even loneliness.
- We are sometimes overwhelmed by the responsibilities of ministry.
- We sometimes struggle with sharing our husband/father with you.
- Our husband/father sometimes has to miss important events in our lives because of his responsibilities at church.
- We need time for our personal lives, our marriages and our children just as every family does.
- It is OK that we do not always agree about everything.
- If you have something to say about our husband/father, talk to him directly; please do not criticize him in front of us.
- Please accept that sometimes we have to say no.
- Sometimes we feel as if we are living in a glass house; please respect our privacy as a family.
- Please do not hold up our children to a different standard than the other children in the parish.
- We love you.
- Ordained ministry in America is a stressful and isolating vocation.

We, clergy and laity alike, share many of the same joys and challenges of life. However, ordained clergy are set apart within the community in order to lead worship, preach the Gospel, teach the Orthodox faith, co-administer with the Parish Council, pastor those in need, and supervise ministry, mission, and outreach. May God grant that we continue to work together toward mutual understanding and cooperation for the glory of His Kingdom.

