Here we go again.

Yianni Pappas

We began the new Church year this September of 2014 and we were then advised of yet another story. This was reported to us from an eastern state of the United States in the Metropolis of Pittsburgh. The theme is a recurring episode of the spiritual mishandling of a recently widowed woman by those who we would characterize as fundamentalist spiritual sharks. We hear this so often that it is like watching those old reruns on TV. Once the person affected ends her second sentence of the conversation with you about the issue, you have heard it so often you could finish her the factual account for her. But, that would not be right, so we listen. People of hope and Faith first listen, then react with a view towards helping.

It began after her husband died; the woman sought comfort and spoke to her parish priest. At some point during the conversation he insisted she speak with the spiritual leader of the Monasteries. After all, this is where he (her parish priest) gets “spiritual renewal”. She heeded his counsel and considered his suggestion, which in fact bordered on insistence. After all, this woman had financial means, so after her husband’s funeral she flew out to see the leader expecting an experience that was to be both deep and profound. Instead, what she went through was an ordeal she did not expect. She was told she needed confession. She agreed. During confession it was reported to us that this older woman was barraged with a litany of sexually inquisitive questions asking about detailed sexual activities she engaged in throughout her marriage with her husband. The woman was correctly and remarkably disturbed at this. She could not wait to leave. She swears she will never return.

Let us look at all the disturbing components of this story:

A. A woman’s husband dies (that is a deep pain in and of itself). On the advice of her Parish Priest, she travels to the center of the Ephraimite universe and has a horrible experience with the focus of the questions asked being of an arbitrarily sexual nature.

B. Her outlook and feeling toward Monasticism in the United States will forever be tainted. We are fortunate she remained Orthodox, but her relationship with her Parish Priest is now strained. As anyone in her position would understand that once again someone in her Faith (her parish Priest) places a man (the Elder) above what is their personal moral duty to her (to care for her well-being). Ask: why would one of our Priests tell her to see someone else rather than suggest confession with him? Is he abdicating his responsibility as the Parish Priest?

C. Based upon interviews and conversations with those who have similar experiences, we believe that she has also lost that good feeling one has toward their home Parish. It would be understandable if she felt that her own Parish Priest misguided her to go to the Elder. The Monk’s actions appeared insensitive to her pain as he spent time going into his script. People of normal religious sensitivity would agree that all this appears to be the worst kind of sexual voyeurism.

An advocate of this type of sexual voyeurism once said that these detailed questions are likened to a list of questions a doctor asks a new patient. One wonders where they pulled this one out of? This is not part of the curriculum of training for priests at Holy Cross in Brookline, MA. But it has found its way as a standard practice of those who follow the fundamentalist teachings of Elder Ephraim. Many people already know that the fundamentalists do not think very kindly of our Seminary and our Hierarchs. This is because they feel the mainstream is not spiritual enough. Apparently their adherence to arbitrary sexual voyeurism as “being spiritual” is okay with their understanding of being a Father confessor.
Will this happen again? Of course it will, given the current conditions of the affected Metropolises. However in all likelihood not everyone will remain Orthodox after being scandalized by this unfounded intrusion and violation. This is just another day in the typical goings on of the fundamentalist movement in the United States, under the very noses of the hierarchs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and their Metropolitans. The new form of Orthodoxy being forcefully fed to us includes: spiritual abuse, exploitation, with impunity, and if the intimidation is not enough, financial exploitation.

**Feedback from the GOTRUTHREFORM.ORG EDITORS:**

Ask yourself the following:

1. **Where are the Hierarchs in this?**

2. **Does the Priest that sends the uneducated “lambs” to be traumatized by Fundamentalists Ephraimite “Spiritual Fathers” feel any compassion for participating in this breach of trust?**

3. **Why do the vast majority of victims remain silent? Why is it so difficult for them to speak up? What atmosphere have we, and we mean almost all of us facilitated within the Church that allows this to spread?**

4. **Does any of this have anything to do with MONEY? We are constantly surprised by the number of Clergymen in Orthodoxy that seem to pledge allegiance to the Ephraimite movement and ignore the Faithful within their Parishes. To be fair, we are receiving an increase in the number of reports of Ephraimite Clergy outside the GOA. You see the wolf has left our backyard and is now on someone else’s doorstep.**

5. **Observers of these issues are getting increasingly hostile to the Church, its Hierarchs and Ephraimite Clergy. The Clergy who are sacrificing their flock to meet the needs of their cause or Elder are now angrily viewed as simple “pimps”. Again we ask: Where are the Hierarchs in all this?**