



NEWS of December 2012

1. The Nativity Fast



The Nativity fast started on Sunday, Nov. 25, for 43 days and ends on Christmas Eve, Sunday, January 6, 2013. It depicts the 40 day-fast of Moses before receiving the word of God (The Ten Commandments), plus 3 days, which the church fasted in the ten's century to move the Moquattam Mountain in Cairo, Egypt.

May the Lord grant us an acceptable fast according to the perfect requirements of Isaiah 58 and Matthew 6. It would be nice if we put great goals in our prayers during this fast, such as the salvation of America, Egypt and Syria and to move the mountains of persecution.

2. Kiahk's Vigil



The four week-vigil of the Coptic month of *Kiahk*, starts on Saturday, December 15, 2012. In this month of *Kiahk*, we celebrate the Virginal Birth of Christ and praise St. Mary. The prayers, praises and vigil start every Saturday right after the vespers.

3. Celebrating New Year's Eve (2012/ 2013)



St. John Church celebrates New Year's Eve on Monday, December 31, 2012, from 8:00 p.m. and the program contains spiritual talks, praises and hymns (choir), candle-light-prayers, Santa's gifts for children and ends with the first January 2013th Liturgy.

4. Christmas Liturgy:

St. John Church celebrates the Feast of Nativity with the Liturgy on Sunday, January 6, 2013 from 7:30 p.m. to 12:15 a.m., followed with the Feast's Agape meal in the church hall.

5. The Feast of St. John the Evangelist:

St. John Church in Covina celebrates the feast of her intercessor, St. John the Evangelist on Saturday, January 12, for three days (Thursday, January 10, Friday 11 and Saturday 12).

6. St. John's Fund-Raising Banquet

on behalf of Logos TV Channel is postponed to Sunday, January 13, 2013. At 5:00 p.m. Please reserve your ticket for \$50.00 from the church book-store NOW. Thanks.

7. H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

+ On November 18, 2012 Millions of Copts and others around the world watched over the TV screens the Enthronement of Pope Tawadros at St. Mark Cathedral in Egypt. Everyone felt the hand of God working with power, peace and order in this Election and Enthronement.



+ St. John Church in Covina, California congratulates His Holiness praying that God may support him with His Holy Spirit, power and protection.

+ On November 22, the Holy Synod selected H.G. Bishop Raphael a General Secretary to the Synod and three other bishops to help him, Bishop Thomas, Bishop Youssef of S. America and Bishop Apollo of S. Sinai.

8. H.G. Bishop Serapion:

Bishop Serapion Participated in the Enthronement -celebration of Pope Tawadros and also in the meetings of the Holy Synod and the election of the secretaries.



9. H.G. Bishop Paul of Africa:



On Sunday, Nov. 25, Bishop Paul blessed St. John Church celebrating the English Liturgy and the Servants Meeting.

10. St. John's Convention for the Engaged:

On Saturday, December 15, 2012, St. John Church in Covina holds one-day-convention for the engaged couples from 9 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

11. St. John Senior's Cruise to Mexico:



St. John Church Senior citizens' Fellowship holds its first cruise in the year 2013 to Mexico, from Monday, May 20 to Friday, May 24, 2013. It is 5 days, 4 nights; low prices from \$440 to \$490. For early reservation call:

Maher Saleh (626) 222-6558 or

Hoda Ghazar (626) 905- 4705





A post-election lesson for Americans from Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church

By [Brad Hirschfield](#)

Bishop Tawadros will be ordained Nov. 18, 2012, as Pope Tawadros II. He will be the spiritual leader of a community that increasingly fears for its future amid the rise of Islamists to power in the aftermath of last year's uprising. (AP) The election is over and now the real work begins. Today is not fundamentally about Republicans and Democrats. It is not about winners and losers. It is about us, the American public and how we will be best served by those in elected office.

We endured not only a closely contested election, but one marked by a torrent of high-priced of polarizing ads which leave in their wake, a deeply divided nation even though the contest is over. Now the real work begins, indeed. Will we be one nation, or will we simply continue the same fights in new settings. Will Congress continue to be a paralyzed battleground even as we confront serious challenges on virtually every important issue we face as a nation? How we answer those and similar questions will probably have more effect on our lives than the people we elected yesterday. And rather amazingly, we would do well to look to another electoral process which unfolded this week, for some wisdom about how best to proceed. We should look eastward to the Coptic Christian community in Egypt and their election of a new patriarch, Pope Tawadros II.

Egyptian Copts and clergymen walk past an election poster with pictures and names of the three candidates, Father Raphael Ava Mina, left, Anba Tawadros, center and Anba Raphael, right and Arabic that reads "the structural elections, November 4, 2012," following the papal election ceremony at the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo on Nov. 4, 2012. (AP) The 60-year-old, English-trained pharmacist born as Wagih Sobi Baqi Suleiman, became the head of the Coptic Church when a blind-folded child picked his name out of a bowl. A crazy way to determine who should lead a community with millions of members, or a brilliant process which builds unity and commitment to the new leader regardless of who he is? The latter. I will explain.



The process by which the Coptic Church selects a new pope begins by assembling a long list of potential patriarchs, a list which is then narrowed by a vote in which more than 2,000 church leaders participate.

Ultimately, that list is shortened to three names, all of which are written down and placed in a bowl. Following three days of fasting and chanting, a child is selected to reach into the bowl and draw out the name of the person who will serve as the new leader.

The process is meant to reflect divine intervention in the selection process, with the faithful affirming that the ultimate choice is made by God, who directs the little boy's hand to the "correct" choice.

For the process to work, Copts must believe that any of the three names that are placed in the bowl are people who are capable of leading their church. They may prefer one over the other, but if they did not accept that whatever their preference may be, each man was worthy of serving as pope, they would not see the hand of God in each case, as they do. Now imagine applying that assumption to our own elected officials.

Regardless of how we feel about the outcomes of Tuesday's election races, what if we admitted that in each case, and especially in the race for president, the two candidates made our own version of that short list, and then their names were placed in a giant electoral bowl? The fact is, each man is capable of leading our nation, and now that one has been chosen, we should spend more time figuring out how to come together as one nation regardless of how we feel about the outcome.

Whether one calls it the hand of God, the will of the majority, or anything else, the bottom line remains the same. A winner was chosen from two legitimate choices, and now it is up to us to come together around that choice and be one nation, much as the Coptic community is coming together around their new pope. I hope that we rise to that challenge, and wish both victors the best of luck.





New Papal Enthronement & Biography

By Hassan Ibrahim

Pope Tawadros II was enthroned at Saint Mark's Cathedral on Sunday 18 November in a ceremony that was last carried out on 14 November 1971. Bishop Pachomious, the Metropolitan of Beheira and acting head of the church, presided over the enthronement ceremony.

Pope Tawadros entered the cathedral using a large ceremonial key, symbolizing the pope's new responsibilities and leadership role, and enter with metropolitans, bishops, and all members of the Holy Synod behind him.

During the service, Pope Tawadros put on his new white *tonia*, the white vestment worn by deacons and clergy members during liturgical services, and the accompanying golden *Sedra*, depicting the twelve disciples of Jesus, as the Coptic Orthodox Church often refers to its pope as the "Thirteenth Apostle." He also put on the papal crown for the first time and sat on the throne in the cathedral.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, the newly enthroned pope will fast for an entire year, except for the Church's major feasts. The pope stands as the highest authority within the Coptic Orthodox Church and is considered the "first among equals" in the Holy Synod, the group responsible for ruling on matters of faith. The pope stands as the most prominent voice within the church, is responsible for overseeing the ordination of clergy, and supervises the expansion of the church.

Biography of the 118th Pope

Pope Tawadros II was born Wagih Sobhy Bakky Soliman on 4 November 1952 in Mansoura, Egypt. His father was an irrigation engineer and his family moved around during his childhood from Mansoura to Sohag and then to Damanhour.

- He received his bachelor's degree in pharmacy in 1975 from Alexandria University.

- He earned a fellowship in world health in England in 1985.

- Studied at the seminary in 1981, the same year Pope Shenouda III was banished by President Anwar Al-Sadat. * He was converted to monasticism in 1988 and was ordained a priest two years later.

- He was ordained as Bishop Tawadros, General Bishop of Beheira, by Pope Shenouda in 1997. As bishop, he gained a reputation for his ability to explain complex theological topics and his work with the youth. He enjoys a close relationship with the Metropolitan of Beheira, Metropolitan Pakhomious,

- Pope Tawadros has expressed his belief that the church's role should be spiritual, pastoral, service-oriented, and not as a political actor. In an interview with Bishop Paul of Tanta, pope Tawadros stressed the importance of reintegrating large segments of the Coptic youth back into mainstream society after many had isolated themselves within church communities.

- Pope Tawadros enjoys a close relationship with acting head of the church Metropolitan Pachomious and both oversee the same diocese of Beheira. Pachomious has drawn overwhelming approval during his tenure as locum tenens. Many think his relationship with Tawadros will have a positive lasting effect on the papacy, "He is a student of [Bishop] Pachomious," said Emad Gad, a political analyst at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and member of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party. "We think that he will be a wise man, he will be moderate, and he will try to work towards an Egyptian agenda. He will try to renew the role of the church and concentrate on the spiritual, not political aspects."





By Pope Shenouda

God has done too much for us during the last year. We cannot forget His benefits but remember them all with thanksgiving. But what did we do for the Lord and how did we act?

Everyone of us should sit down with himself and examine himself or herself. Are we growing in the grace or deteriorating? Are we walking in a monotonous routine without thinking? Ask yourself, "Who am I now?" Am I the same as usual with the same attitudes, temper and bad habits? Have I changed as the Bible says, *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Romans 12:2).

Did I treat and correct my previous faults and errors, or rather, I added to them new ones? Is there any growth in my life, in thinking, grace, knowledge, in spiritual matters and in my relation with God and His love?

Have I won new friends and enlarged the circle of my love to people? Did I add to the Kingdom of God some people whom the Lord put in my way?

Is my life active or stagnant? Is it moving to the better or worse? Do I stand firm like the rock for my faith, values and principles?

If I have some shortcomings, did I attack my lack? Did I make my weak-points the goal of my struggle in prayers and fasting? Do I feel free from the bondage of sin and bad habits or still a slave to evil thoughts, words, passion and wrong desires? Is the New Year, which you are going to receive, will pass the same style as the one before? Do you have a good program to follow up and a good goal to achieve? Examine my dear brother, your life in the light of God's will and commandments, and ask for His help to offer repentance and to welcome the New Year with a new hope, new heart and mind and enthusiasm.

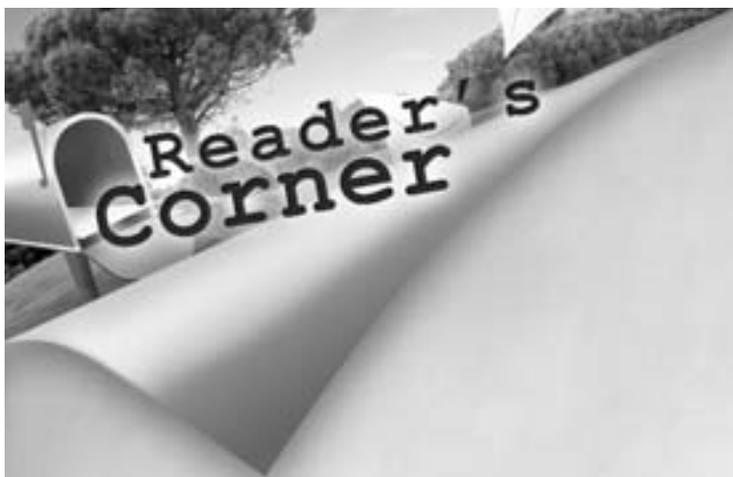


*The
Word
of God*

Purposes in its Names

1. **Milk:** to nourish (1 Peter 2:2)
2. **Bread:** to live on daily bases (Matt 4:4)
3. **Honey:** to delight (Ps. 19:9, 10)
4. **Solid food:** to invigorate (Heb. 5:12)
5. **Gold:** to treasure (Ps. 19:9,10)
6. **Lamp:** to guide (Ps. 119:105)
7. **Medicine:** to heal (Proverbs 4:22)
8. **Mirror:** to reveal (James 1:23-25)
9. **Hammer:** to break (Jer. 23:29)
10. **Fire:** to warm (Jer. 23:29)
11. **Rain:** to produce fruits (Isa. 55:10)
12. **Companion:** to keep company (Ps. 119:24)
13. **Water:** to cleanse (Eph. 5:26)
14. **Cleanser:** to remove sin (Ps. 119:9)
15. **Law Book:** to legislate (Ps. 119:1)
16. **Seed of life:** to grow and beget children (Matthew 13:23 & James 1:18)
17. **Scalpel:** to cut (Hebrews 4:12)
18. **Sword:** to fight (Eph. 6:17)
19. **Song:** to be sung (Psalm 119:54)
20. **Word of God:** to reveal God's thoughts (Heb. 4:12)





Dear FR AUGUSTINE,

The spirit of competition

"I in them and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me." (John 17:23)

A story is told about F.B. Meyer, the great Bible teacher and pastor who lived a century ago. He was pastoring a church and began to notice that attendance was suffering. This continued until he finally asked some members of his congregation one Sunday morning why they thought attendance was down.

A member volunteered, "It is because of this new church down the road. The young preacher has everyone talking and many are going to hear him speak."

His name was Charles Spurgeon. Meyer, rather than seeking to discourage this, exhorted the entire congregation to join him and go participate in seeing this "move of God" as he described it to his congregation.

"If this be happening, then God must be at work."

Meyer, even though he was an accomplished preacher and teacher, recognized where God was at work and joined Him in it. Can you imagine this story taking place in our competitive world today? Competition has penetrated the Church so much that many churches and Christian organizations approach ministry like a sports event. They view their mission as a business that seeks to gain market share among Christians - donors, members, influence - all under the name of God. I am sure God looks down at us and asks, "Whatever happened to John 17:23?" Sometimes we must remind our fellow servants that we are all on the same team! We should be seeking to impact the Kingdom of God, not increase our own market share.

When Jesus made this statement about unity in John 17:23, it represented the key to bringing salvation to many. He was saying that when His Body is unified, the non-Christian would be able to see who Jesus really is - the Son of God. Are you contributing to unity in the Body of Christ? Or are you contributing to a spirit of competition? Ask God where you can be an instrument of unity in His Body.

With prayers and love,

Mona Singh



Basma ran home to her mother crying. On her way back from school, she ran into two bearded men who shouted: "Cover your hair," attached to other things I can't mention here.

This wasn't the first time Basma got intimidated going to school. So, her mother tried a quick fix.

She dressed Basma in *isdal*, an Islamic garb, which covered her from head to toe.

When the Volunteer Rep couldn't convince Basma's mother to change course, he went to the priest. The priest told him: "Most of the families in my parish are doing the same thing."

Safety has become the obsession of many in Egypt. But if Coptic women start dressing in Islamic attire because they are afraid, what other pressures will fear lead us to accept?

Many fear that Islamists in Egypt will bring the country back to the Dark Ages. We can't do much about Islamist movements, but we can do something about safety.

I remember back in September, His Grace Bishop Angaelos said that the thing really driving today's radical trend in Egypt is basic insecurity on the streets: lack of access to food, fuel, safe transportation, good education and appropriate housing.

Our volunteer Reps—90% of our total workforce, work every day to get families that kind of access.

Your support to families like Basma's is a power that can never be smothered by fear or endangered by changing seasons.



CHRIST IN

By Fr. Gawargious A. Kolta

THE BOOK OF GENESIS (21)

15- Jacob blessed his sons (cont.)-(Gen.49):

5- Zebulun: Jacob said: “*Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea. He shall become a haven for ships; and his border shall adjoin Sidon*” (Gen. 49:13). The tribe of Zebulun dwelt west the river Jordan, west of the Sea of Galilee and worked as traders.

St. Ambrose said that Zebulun shall dwell by the sea that he may look upon the shipwrecks of others while being himself free from danger. The shipwrecks belong to the Jews and the heretics who refused the Author of faith. He added that the church is like a harbor of salvation, because all people look for refuge in harbors. The church dwells beside the waters, but not disturbed by the waters. It is like a harbor, ready to give help rather than being subject to danger.

St. Hippolytus interpreted Jacob’s words “*Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea*”. Zebulun dwelt west of the river Jordan, west of the Sea of Galilee. That is a symbol of the union of Israel and the Gentiles; as the sea symbolizes the Gentiles, while the river symbolizes the Jews; so the two together unite to form one flock, under the One Great Shepherd. He added that the haven for ships designates a secure Haven, referring by this to the Lord Christ, the Anchor of hope. He said that Jacob presented a prophecy concerning the church of the Gentiles by saying ‘*his border shall adjoin Sidon*’. This appeared in the Gospel: “*The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people who sat in the darkness saw a great light*” (Mat. 4:15, 16). That is why, Moses in his blessing said: “*Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out*” (Deut. 33:18).

6- Issachar: Jacob said about him: “*Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; he saw that rest was good, and that land was pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a band of slaves*” (Gen. 49:14, 15).

St. Rufinus said that Jacob liked Issachar to a strong donkey; as that tribe used to work as farmers who are characterized by patience. His tribe lived in a fertile land and they were satisfied with agriculture. They did not care about politics, and thus they were exposed to paying taxes. He added that Issachar represents the person who waits for the reward of his good works, walks on the right path of virtues and rests

in the midst of the commandments of God.

St. Hippolytus said that Jacob’s saying “*the land was pleasant*” refers to the body of Christ, rich with His gifts, presented to us in the inheritance of the land of promise that floods with milk and honey, nourishing us. He added that Jacob’s saying “*he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden*” means that we must carry the burdens of others showing love for the tired, and enslaving ourselves to set others free. When St. Paul got aware of the divine gifts, given to him through his fellowship in the body of Christ, he bowed down his shoulder and said: “*For though I am free from all men, I have myself a servant to all, that I might win the more*” (1 Cor. 9:19). He bowed down his shoulders, saying: “*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*” (2 Cor. 11:29). St. Paul also said: “*I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved*” (2 Cor. 12:15, 16).

St. Ambrose said that Issachar means ‘reward’, and therefore he represents Christ, who is our reward. Our Lord rests among the lots of the Old Testament and the New Testament and in the midst of the prophets. Thus He appeared in His transfiguration between Moses and Elijah (Mat. 17:3). He bowed His shoulder to the cross, in order to carry our sins. He bowed His shoulder, applying Himself to the plow, patient in the endurance of all insults. He was a subject to affliction that He was wounded on account of our iniquities and weakened on account of our sins (Isa. 53:3-5).

7- Dan: Jacob said about him: “*Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path that bites the horse’s heels, so that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your salvation, O Lord*” (Gen. 49:16-18). As this prophecy carries bitterness, Jacob started it with forewarning. He proclaimed that Dan who was born to a concubine (Gen. 30:1-6) was one of the tribes of Israel. His descendants were known as having been shrewd violent, as described by Moses: “*Dan is a lion’s whelp; He shall leap from Bashan*” (Deut. 33:22).

St. Ambrose said that however, Samson was from the tribe of Dan and judged for 20 years, yet the prophecy does not refer to him, but to the Antichrist; a cruel judge and a



savage dictator, who will come from the tribe of Dan and will judge the people. Like a serpent sitting in the way, he will try to throw down those who walk in the way of truth, for **he desires to overthrow the truth**. He is going to bite the horse's heel, so that the horse is injured by the infusion of poison and wounded by the serpent's tooth. He will lift up his heel, **as the betrayer Judas**, when tempted by the devil, lifted up his heel upon the Lord Jesus (Ps. 41:9), to throw down the Rider, who threw Himself down in order to lift up all people. He added that when we run well (Gal. 5:7) in the way, let us beware that the serpent, hides anywhere in the path and undermines the footsteps of the horse (our body), and suddenly throws the sleeping rider. Therefore let the sleep of neglect, and the sleep of the world not overwhelm us. **Judas was sleeping (the sleep of wealth); therefore he did not hear the words of Christ, and the devil let himself in Judas' heart.**

St. Hippolytus also said that the antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan, by quoting the words of the prophet Jeremiah: **"The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan. The whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones. For they have come and devoured the land and all that is in it, the city and those who dwell in it. For behold, I will send serpents among you, vipers which cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you"** (Jer. 8:16, 17). He added that all this will happen when **the antichrist would come out of the tribe of Dan to make war against the church all over the world** and to bite the believers with the poison of blasphemy.

Fr. Tadros Malaty said that as our Lord came out of the tribe of Judah, the antichrist will come out of the tribe of Dan. The serpent will be the deceiving antichrist that was mentioned in (Gen. 3:1) that deceived Eve and Adam. He will be a fearsome judge and a son of Satan.

St. Bede explained the verses mentioned in the Book of Revelation (7:4-8) about the number of the sealed, that **only Dan's tribe was omitted**. He considered that the antichrist will come from this tribe (*Ancient Christian commentary on Revelation, vol. XII, p 106*).

8- Gad: Jacob said about him: **"Gad, a troop shall tramp him; but he shall triumph at last"** (Gen. 49:19). The tribe of Gad chose the region east of Jordan as its portion (Num. 32:28-33). This made their land a battle field between Aram and Israel, and they were exposed to attacks of the Amonites and the Amorites. They were described as mighty and trained for battles (1 Chr. 12:8).

St. Ambrose said that this prophecy refers to Christ. His trial was a **cunning assembly of scribes and priests, who tried the Lord Jesus about Caesar's tribute**, but Jesus turned the trial back upon them. They asked Him, saying: **"By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?"** And Jesus answered saying: **"I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John was it from**

heaven or from Man?" (Mat. 21:25).

Moses explained clearly this prophecy of Jacob, saying: **"Blessed is he who enlarges Gad; he dwells as a lion, and tears the arm and the crown of his head. He provided the first part for himself, because a lawgiver's portion was reserved there. He came with the heads of the people; he administered the justice of the Lord ..."** (Deut. 33:20, 21).

St. Rufinus said that, on the moral level, Gad represents the person who has made progress but continues to be tested by temptation. He added that no one reaches perfection if he is not first tested by temptation.

9- Asher: Jacob said about him: **"Bread from Asher shall be rich; and he shall yield royal dainties"** (Gen. 49:20). Jacob prophesied about the prosperity of Asher.

St. Ambrose said that Moses the prophet delivered a very appropriate prophecy when he said: **"Let him dip his foot in oil"** (Deut. 33:24). The tribe of Asher enjoyed fertile land, rich in olive trees, from which olive oil is extracted, which is exported to other tribes. Their dwelling was close to the sea that enabled them to import foreign items, and sell them to other tribes.

St. Ambrose and **St. Hippolytus** said that Asher is interpreted as "richness", and they interpreted **"the bread from Asher shall be rich"** as a **reference to Christ**, who is the bread of life descending from heaven which is food and drink for the saints, as He said: **"I am the bread that came down from heaven"** (Jn. 6:48). St. Paul said: **"Being rich He became poor for our sakes, that by His poverty you become rich"** (2 Cor. 8:9).

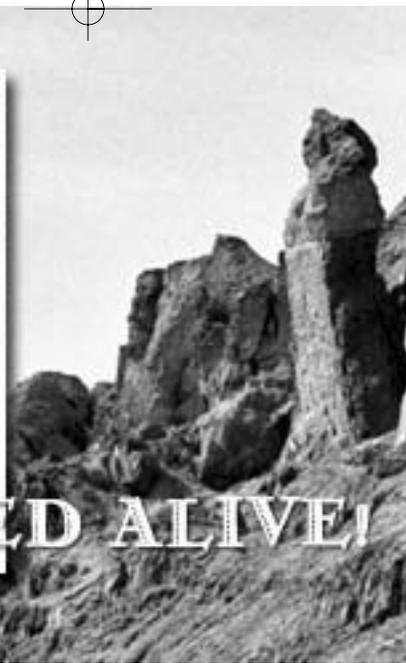
10- Naphtali: Jacob said: **"Naphtali is a deer set free, that bears beautiful words"**. That tribe, in its love for freedom, simulated a gazelle running free in an open wilderness, with good relation with the other tribes.

St. Ambrose and **St. Hippolytus** said that he represents the people who are called to **freedom through faith and to the fullness of grace in the church**. They added that **Moses blessed this tribe** before his death, saying: **"ONaphtali, satisfied with favor, and full of blessing of the Lord possess the west and the south"** (Deut. 33:23).

Fr. Tadros Malaty said that this tribe, who had good relationship with the rest of tribes, offered full blessings of the Lord. In the book of Judges, **Deborah**, the prophetess sang, saying: **"Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their life to the point of death; Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield"** (Jud. 5:18). That is probably in reference to their strife in wars.

St. Rufinus said that on the moral level, the name Naphtali, interpreted to mean "vine" or "leafy tree", signifies the person who has made such progress as to be worthy of the priesthood or who manifests the wisdom of God. (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Genesis, II, p.320-334*). (*Father Tadros Malaty, on Genesis, p. 375-381*).





(Genesis 19: 26)

“Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32)

There is a riddle that says,

“A Bible character without a name, who never to corruption came; who died a death none ever died before, whose shroud forms part of every household store.

Lot’s wife, of course! But based as it is upon old-fashioned beliefs that seem untrue. Archaeological and geological findings have shed new light upon the ancient account, and modern critics have been confounded.

We know now that the cities of the plain perished in flames, just as the Bible describes. The historical record is absolutely true.

A Sure Word

“Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground” (Gen.19:24, 25).

Modern discoveries have revealed that the ancient cities were built over an oil field, and that this has been burnt out. Geologists have also discovered faults in the strata of the earth, on either side of what was once called the cities of the plain. To complete the picture, a layer of rock salt can be seen throughout the entire district. In some strange way the salt deposits of the earth were flung into the air, finally to fall in tremendous quantities over the entire neighborhood. Thus the ancient scene can be reconstructed. At the time when Lot entered his city of refuge, an earthquake rocked the district, and the cities within the limits of the faults slipped into the earth. The terrific pressure thus brought to bear upon the underlying oil, forced millions of gallons high into the air, where it became ignited, to fall in burning masses upon the doomed habitants. Lifted by irresistible forces, vast quantities of disintegrating rock salt were flung upward, to fall later as a gigantic snow-storm.

Overtaken by this unprecedented disaster, Lot’s wife was

instantly buried and suffocated. She became the inside of a pillar of salt, and perished within a short distance of her husband’s refuge!

A Stupid Woman

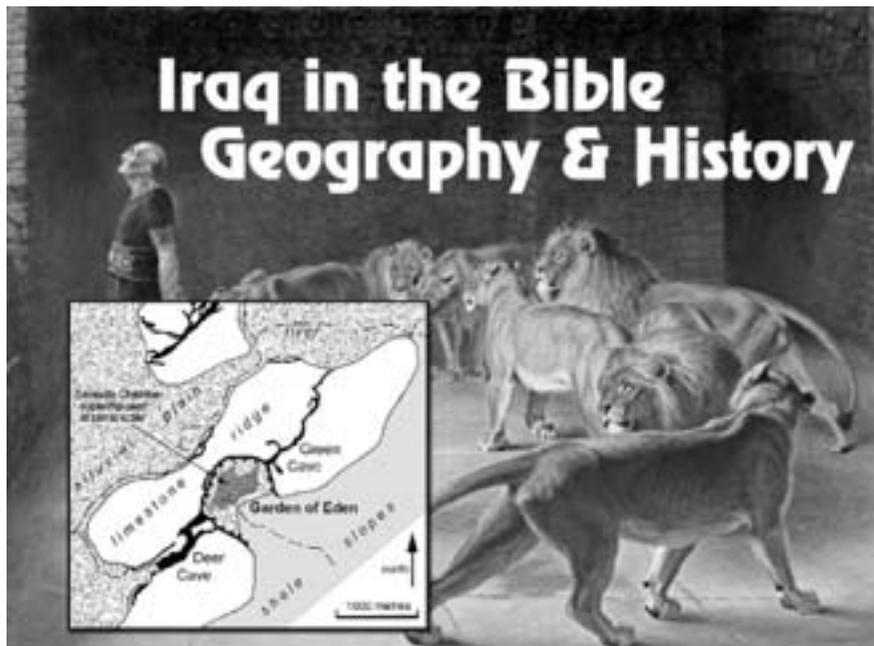
“And it came to pass, when the angels had brought them forth abroad, that one said, ‘Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain, escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed,’ (Gen.19:17). Releasing his hold upon the hand of Lot’s wife, the

angel sent her hurrying to safety. If she had ever recognized the urgency of her need, she ignored it, and slowly decreasing her speed, she paused to look back at the place she had left forever. Who was she?

In all probability Lot had lived in Sodom for twenty years. His children had been born and brought up within the environs of that wicked city. It is truly significant that while his sons and daughters stayed behind with their brothers-in-law (v. 12), Lot’s two daughters were willing to leave their husbands in order to accompany their father. The boys belonged to the “younger set” and loved the attractions of Sodom. In her scramble for safety, the mother remembered the things she had left behind. She had heard and partially believed the angels’ message, but obedience demanded a degree of sacrifice she seemed unwilling to give. While her husband frantically rushed for safety, she lingered and died within sight of the open gates. The earth trembled; the atmosphere was set alight, and her terrified screams were suddenly silent.

A Serious Warning

When the Lord Jesus was asked for signs of His return, He said, “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. **Remember Lot’s wife**” (Luke 17: 28-30). This suggests that she hesitated because she suddenly remembered possessions left behind in her home. Thus Christ taught that nothing should ever be allowed to interfere with our readiness to meet the returning Lord. If we placed our hand to the plough, and then look back, we advertise our unfitness for a place in His eternal kingdom. Most people erect monuments with their hands; Lot’s wife erected hers with her feet.



Edited by Fr. Augustinos Hanna



1. The Garden of Eden was extended from Iraq to Egypt (Gen. 2:8, 13, 14 & 13:10).

2. The third river of the Garden Eden was Hiddekel, which is now Tigris and the fourth river is Euphrates in Iraq.

The second river of the Garden of Eden was Gihon, which is now the Nile of Egypt.

3. Noah built the ark in Iraq.

4. The Tower of Babel was in Iraq (Gen.11).

5. Abraham was from Ur, which was in Southern Iraq.

6. Isaac's wife, Rebecca, was from the city of Nahor, which is in Mesopotamia; now Iraq.

7. Jacob met Rachel in Iraq.

8. Jonah preached in Nineveh - which is in Iraq.

9. Assyria, in Iraq, conquered the ten tribes of Israel.

10. Amos cried out in Iraq.

11. Babylon, which is in Iraq, destroyed Jerusalem.

12. Daniel was in the lion's den in Iraq.

13. The three Hebrew children were in the fire in Iraq (Jesus Christ had been in Iraq also as the fourth person in the Fiery Furnace!)

14. Belshazzar, the King of Babylon saw the 'writing on the wall' in Iraq.

15. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, carried the Jews captive into Iraq.

16. Ezekiel preached in Iraq ...

17. The wise men (Magi) were from Iraq.

18. St. Peter preached in Babylon (some say in Iraq, and some in Egyptian Babylon-1 Pet. 5:13).

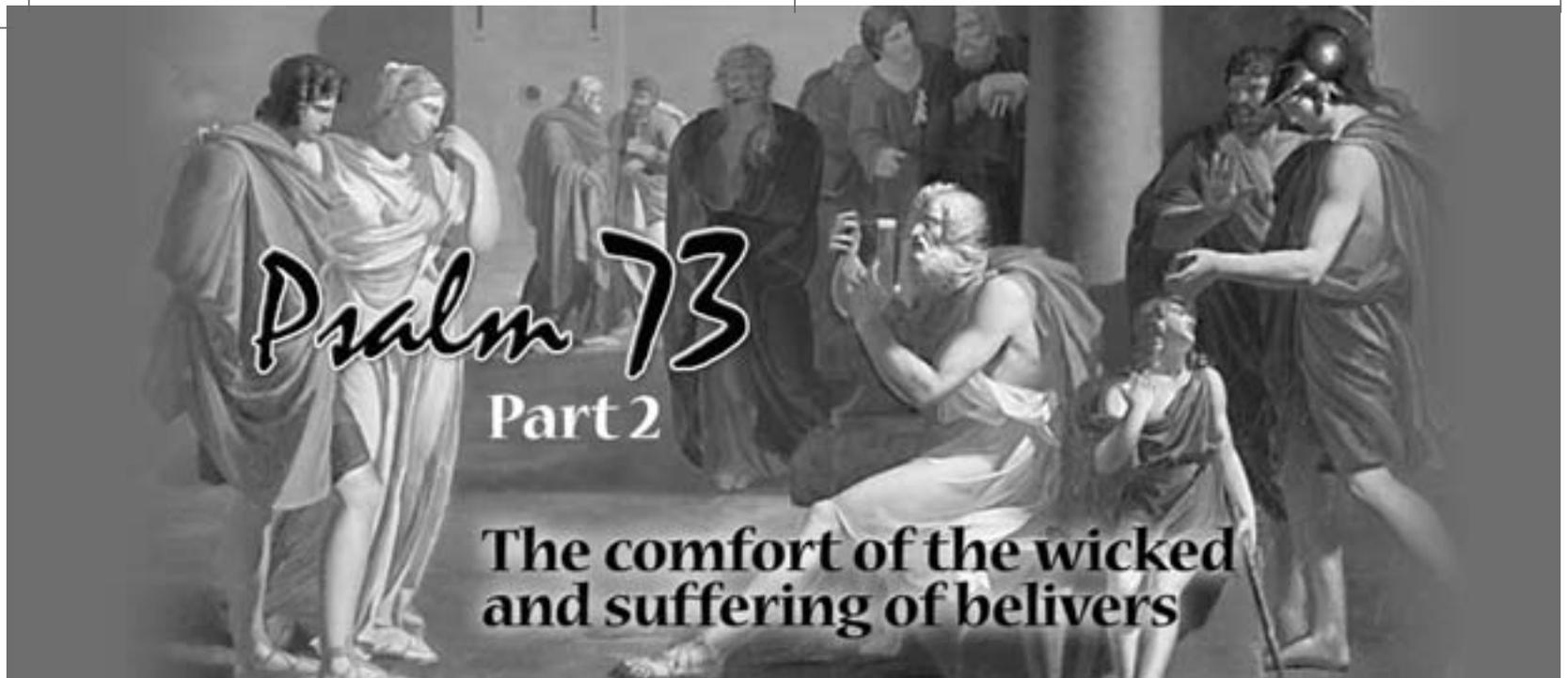
19. The 'Empire of Man' described in Revelation is called Babylon—which was a city in Iraq (Rev.17:5;18) However, Iraq is not the name that is used in the Bible. The names used in the Bible are the ancient names; Babylon, Land of Shinar, and Mesopotamia. The word Mesopotamia means between the two rivers, more exactly between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which is Iraq. The name Iraq means country with deep roots. Indeed Iraq is a country with deep roots and is a very significant country in the Bible.

No other nation, except Israel and Egypt, has more history and prophecy associated with it than Iraq.

And also, this is something to think about: Since America is typically represented by an eagle. Saddam should have read up on his Muslim passages, The following verse is from the Quran!

Quran (9:11) - For it is written that a son of Arabia would awaken a fearsome Eagle. The wrath of the Eagle would be felt throughout the lands of Allah and lo, while some of the people trembled in despair still more rejoiced; for the wrath of the Eagle cleansed the lands of Allah; and there was peace!





Psalm 73

(Part 2)

8. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression. Their heart and life are corrupt. The stench of the grave rises through their mouths; the nature of the soul is revealed in their speech. They choose oppression as their subject; they not only defend it, but also advocate and glory in it and would make it the general rule among nations. “Who are the poor? What are they made for? What, indeed but to toil and slave that these of the educated and good family may enjoy life. Out with the knaves for parting about their rights! A set of wily demagogues is stirring them up, because they get a living by agitation. Work them like horses, feed them like dogs. If they dare complain, send them to the prison or let them die in the workhouse. “There is still too much of this wicked talk. Although the working classes have their faults, and many of them are grave and serious, yet there is a class of people who habitually speak of them as if they were at inferior order of animals. God forgive the wretches who talk like this.

They speak loftily. Their high heads, like tall chimneys, vomit black smoke. Big talk streams from them; their language is massive, and their magniloquence ridiculous. They are speaking as if from the judge’s bench and expecting all the world to stand in awe.

9. They set their mouth against the heavens.

Against God, they aim their blasphemies. To hear them, one would think that they were demigods. Their heads are high above the clouds; they speak as from a sublime elevation. Yet they might let God alone, for their pride will make them enemies enough without defying Him.

And their tongue walks through the earth. Leisurely and habitually, they travel the world to find victims for their slan-

der and abuse. Their tongue prowls every corner and spares no one. They try to be universal censors and are in truth perpetual beggars. Like the serpent, they go nowhere without leaving their slime. If there were another Eden, its innocence and beauty would not present it from their filthy track. They think themselves to be beyond measure and worthy of all honor, and the rest of humanity, except for a few of their parasites, are fools, hypocrites or worse. When their tongues are out for a walk, unhappy are those who meet them. They push all travelers to the kennel. It is impossible to avoid them, in both hemispheres they are out revolve, on land and sea they make their voyages. The city is not free of them, the village swarms with them, they waylay people in the king’s highway, and they are able to hunt across country. Their whip has a long lash that reaches both high and low.

10. Therefore his people return here.

God’s people are driven to His throne for shelter. The doggish tongues fetch home the cheep to the shepherd. The saints come again and again to their Lord, laden with complaints of the persecutions they endure from the proud and graceless. **And waters of a full cup are drained by them.** Though loved by God, they have to drain the bitter cup. Their sorrows are as full as the prosperity of the wicked. It gives them greatly to see God’s enemies so high and they so low. Yet the Lord does not alter His dispensations but continues to chasten his children and indulge His foes. The medicine cup is not for rebels but for those whom (God) Jehovah Rophi loves.

11. And they say, “How does God know?”

Thus, dare the ungodly speak. They flatter themselves that their oppressions and persecutions are unobserved by heaven. If there is a God, is He too occupied with other matters to know what is going on in this world? So they console

themselves if judgments are threatened. Boasting of their knowledge, they dare to ask. **Is there knowledge in the Most High?** Well were they called foolish! A God, and not know? This is an impropriety in language, a madness of thought. Such, however, is the acted insanity of the graceless theists of this age. They are theist in name, because avowed infidelity is disreputable, but that they are atheists in practice is beyond all question. I cannot bring my mind to accept the thinking of the many expositors who think this refers to tried and perplexed saints. I am unable to conceive that such language could flow from their lips, even under the most depressing perplexities.

12. Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease. Look! See! Consider! This is the standing mystery! The puzzle of providence! The stumbling-block of faith. The unjust are rewarded and indulged, not for a day, or an hour, but in perpetuity. From their youth, those who deserve perdition revel in prosperity. They deserve to be hung in chains, but chains are hung on their necks. They are worthy to be chased from the world, but the world becomes their own. Poor pure blind sense cries, "See this!" Wonder, be amazed, and make this square with providential justice, if you can.

They increase in riches or strength. Wealth and health are their dowries. No bad debts and bankruptcies weigh them down. Their substance piles up by robbery and usury. Money runs to money; gold pieces fly in flocks. The rich grow richer; the proud grow prouder. Lord, how is this! Your poor servants, who become yet poorer and groan under their burdens, wonder at Your mysterious ways.

13. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain.

Poor Asaph. He questions the value of holiness when its wages are paid in the coin of affliction. His sincerity has had no effect; no advantage has come through his purity. The filthy-hearted are exalted and feed on the fat of the land. Foolishly, the wisest will argue when faith is napping. Asaph was a prophet, but he could not see when reason left him in the dark. Even prophets must have the sunlight of revealed truth, or they grope like the blind. In the presence of temporal circumstances, the pure in heart seem to have cleansed themselves in vain. But we must not judge after sight of the eyes.

And washed my hands in innocence. Asaph had been careful of his hands as of his heart. He had guarded his outer as well as his inner life. It was a bitter though, that all of this was useless, and it left him in a worse condition than foul-handed, black hearted sinners. Surely the horrible character of the conclusion must have made it untenable. This could not be, while God was God. It smelled to strong a lie to be tolerated long in the good man's soul. Thus, we see his mind turning in another direction.

14. For all day long I have been plagued.

He was plagued from the moment he woke until he sent to bed. His griefs were not only continued, but also renewed every day.

And chastened every morning...

This was a vivid contrast to the lot of the ungodly. There were crowns for the reprobates and crosses for the elect. Strange, that the saints should sigh and the sinners sing. Rest was given to the disturbers and peace was denied to the peace-makers! The downcast prophet was in a muse and a maze. The affairs of mankind appeared to be in a fearful tangle. How could a just ruler permit things to be turned upside down and the whole course of justice to be dislocated? Here the case is stated in the plainest manner. Many Christians will recognize their own experience. Such knots have we also sought to untie and have sadly worn our fingers and broken our teeth. This wisdom has been expensive, but we bought it; henceforth, we cease to fret because of evil doers, for the Lord has shown us what their end will be.

If I said, "I will speak thus, **Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.** "When I thought how to understand this it was too painful for me- Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.

15. If I had said, "I will speak thus." It is not always wise to speak one's thought. If they remain within, they will only injure us, but once uttered, their mischief may be great. The psalmist's discontent would have been a heavy blow and deep discouragement to the entire brotherhood. He dared not come to such a resolution. He paused and decided not to declare his feelings. It was well, for in this case, his second thoughts were best. **Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.** I would scandalize, grieve, and perhaps offend them. We need to look at the consequences of our speech on others, especially in the church of God. Woe to the one who offends! Rash, undigested, ill-considered speech is responsible for much of the trouble in the churches. Would to God like Asaph we would bridle our tongues. When we have any suspicion of wrong, it is better to silent. It can do no harm to be quiet, but it may do serious damage to spread our hastily formed opinions. To grieve the children of God by acting falsely and betraying the truth is a heinous sin. Expressions that convey the impression that the Lord acts unjustly or unkindly are as dangerous as fire-brands among stubble. They are used for blasphemous purposes by the ill disposed. The timid and trembling are sure to be cast down by them and to find reason for even deeper distress.

[To be continued]





The Christian Exodus from Egypt

**FOR COPTS, A PERSECUTING DICTATOR
WAS PREFERABLE TO THE ISLAMIST MOB**

By **SAMUEL TADROS**

Visit any Coptic church in the United States and you immediately recognize the newcomers. You see it in their eyes, hear it in their broken English, and sense it in how they cling to the church in

search of the familiar. They have come here escaping a place they used to call home, where their ancestors had lived for centuries.

Waves of Copts have come here from Egypt before, to escape Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalizations or the growing Islamist tide. Their country's transformation wasn't sudden, but every year brought more public Islamization. As the veil spread, Coptic women felt increasingly different, alien and marked. Verbal abuse came from school teachers, bystanders in the bus station who noticed the cross on a wrist, or commentators on state television. But life was generally bearable. Hosni Mubarak crushed the Islamist insurgency of the

1980s and '90s. He was no friend to the Copts, but neither was he foe. His police often turned a blind eye when Coptic homes and shops were attacked by mobs, and the courts never punished the perpetrators—but the president wasn't an Islamist. He even interfered sometimes to give permission to build a church, or to make Christmas a national holiday. To be sure, Copts were excluded from high government positions. There were no Coptic governors, intelligence officers, deans of schools, or CEOs of government companies. Until 2009, Copts needed presidential approval to build a new church or even build a bathroom in an existing one. Even with approval, state security often blocked construction, citing security concerns.

Those concerns were often real. Mobs could mobilize against Copts with the slightest incitement—rumor of a romantic relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman, a church being built, reports of a Christian having insulted Islam. The details varied but the results didn't: homes burned, shops destroyed, Christians leaving villages, sometimes dead bodies. The police would arrive late and force a reconciliation session between perpetrators and victims during which everything would be forgiven and no one punished! What pained the Copts most was that the attackers were neighbors, co-workers and childhood friends. Then came last year's revolution. Copts were never enthusiastic about it, perhaps because centuries of persecution taught that the persecuting dictator was preferable to the mob. He could be bought off, persuaded to hold back or pressured by outside forces. With the mob you stood no chance. Some younger Copts were lured by the promise of a liberal Egypt, but the older generation knew better.

The collapse of the police liberated the Islamists, who quickly dominated national politics but were even more powerful in the streets and villages. This is where the "Islamization of life" (as Muslim Brotherhood leader Khairat Al Shater called for) was becoming a reality. The Muslim Brotherhood aimed to ease Coptic fears while speaking in English to

American audiences. The reality was different. When Coptic homes and shops were looted in a village near Alexandria in January, Brotherhood parliamentarians and Salafis organized a reconciliation session that didn't punish the attackers but ordered the Copts to evacuate the village. Soon after, the Brotherhood's Sayed Askar denied that Copts face any problems in building churches, saying they have more churches than they need. Elections featured accusations that Copts backed the old regime. When attempts to build a non-Islamist coalition were led by businessman Naguib Sawiris, a Copt, the Brotherhood's website accused him and his co-religionists of treason.

Westerners may debate how moderate Egypt's Islamists are, but for Copts the questioning is futile. Their options are limited. While Copts are the largest Christian community in the Middle East, they're too small to play a role in deciding the fate of the country. They are not geographically concentrated in one area that could become a safe zone. The only option is to leave, putting an end to 2,000 years of Christianity in Egypt. The sad truth is that not all will be able to flee. Those with money, English skills and the like will get out. Their poorer brethren will be left behind.

What can be done to save them? Egypt receives \$1.5 billion in U.S. aid each year, and Washington has various means to make Egypt's new leaders listen. Islamist attempts to enshrine second-class status for Copts in Egypt's new constitution should be stopped. Outsiders should also keep an eye on Muslim Brotherhood politicians who are planning to take control of Coptic Church finances. At a minimum, donors should demand that attacks on Copts be met with punishment as well as condemnation.

Yet looking at the faces of the new immigrants in my Fairfax, Va., church, I cannot escape the feeling that it is too late. Perhaps the fate of the Copts was sealed long ago, in the middle of the last century, when the Jews were kicked out of Egypt.





July 20, 1969 - by Eric Metaxa

Forty-two years ago two human beings changed history by walking on the surface of the moon. But what happened before Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong exited the Lunar Module is perhaps even more amazing, if only because so few people know about it. “I’m talking about the fact that Buzz Aldrin took communion on the surface of the moon. Some months after his return, he wrote about it in Guideposts Magazine.

And a few years ago I had the privilege of meeting him myself. I asked him about it and he confirmed the story to me, and I wrote about it in my book, “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But Were Afraid to Ask.)” The background to the story is that Aldrin was an elder at his Presbyterian Church in Texas during this period in his life, and knowing that he would soon be doing something unprecedented in human history, he felt he should mark the occasion somehow, and he asked his minister to help him. And so the minister consecrated a communion wafer and a small vial of communion wine. And Buzz Aldrin took them with him out of the Earth’s orbit and on to the surface of the moon.

He and Armstrong had only been on the lunar surface for a few minutes when Aldrin made the following public statement: “This is the LM pilot. I’d like to take this oppor-

tunity to ask every person listening in, whoever and wherever they may be, to pause for a moment and contemplate the events of the past few hours and to give thanks in his or her own way.” He then ended radio communication and there, on the silent surface of the moon, 250,000 miles from home, he read a verse from the Gospel of St. John, and he took communion. Here is his own account of what happened: “In the radio blackout, I opened the little plastic packages which contained the bread and the wine. I poured the wine into the chalice our church had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon, the wine slowly curled and gracefully came up the side of the cup. Then I read the scripture,

‘I am the vine, you are the branches. Whosoever abides in me will bring forth much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing.’ — “I had intended to read my communion passage back to earth, but at the last minute [they] had requested that I not do this. NASA was already embroiled in a legal battle with Madelyn Murray O’Hare, the celebrated opponent of religion, who was upset that the first words ever heard or read on the moon were the words of Christ and the first act was Communion!

It was interesting for me to think: the very first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the very first food eaten there, were the communion elements.”





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Congratulations Matthew Tadros and Puvley Botros
for obtaining the Eagle Degree







Pope Tawadros II Presides the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church

