

The Feast of Christ's Entry into Egypt:

On Saturday, June 1, the Coptic Church celebrates the Feast of the Lord's entry into Egypt; also known as the "Flight into Egypt" (Matt. 2).



H.G. Bishop Benyamin will pray the Liturgy.

The Feast of Christ's Ascension:

On Thursday, June 13 the church celebrates the Feast of the Lord's Ascension to heaven.

The Liturgy is from 8:00 – 10:30 a.m.

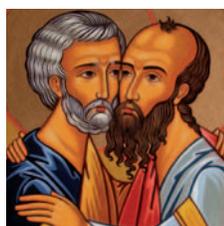
The Feast of Pentecost:

On Sunday, June 23, the Church celebrates the Feast of Pentecost, in which the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. It is considered the birthday of the Christian Church (Acts 2). The Liturgy is followed by the "Sagda Prayer" from 1-3:00 p.m.



The Fast of the Apostles:

On Monday, June 24, the fast of the Apostles starts, for 18 days until the Feast of the Apostles on Friday, July 12, which is the day of the martyrdom of the two great Apostles Peter and Paul.



St. John's Annual Book Fair:

St. John Church in Covina holds her 7th Annual Book Fair from Wednesday, May 29 to June 2nd in the occasion of the Feast of Christ's Entry into Egypt.

The Youth Summer Club:

The summer club starts on Monday, June 10, from 6:00 until 10:00 p.m. The program contains daily Bible Study. There will be two days for family gatherings (Tuesday & Thursday).



H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

His Holiness Pope Tawadros visited H.H. Pope Francis of Rome on May 10, 2013. It was a historical visit and the two Pontiffs exchanged gifts and words of love and reached an agreement of cooperation between the two churches of St. Peter and St. Mark. + Pope Tawadros celebrated, for the first time in history, a Liturgy over the tomb of St. Mark in Venice, Italy.

+ The Pope visits Austria for ten days from May 23, he will dedicate churches, ordain priests and preside the clergy convention of Europe and lectures in our seminary.

H.G. Bishop Serapion:

His Grace Bishop Serapion returned from Rome and will accompany H.G. Bishop Sarabamone to St. Anthony Monastery to ordain monks and travel to Hawaii.



St. John's Graduation Party:



The Church will hold her Annual Graduation- Party on Saturday, June 15. Graduates are required to give their names, pictures and information to St. John Magazine ahead of time to publish and prepare their prizes.

Pope Francis:

Address to Pope Tawadros [full text]

By Mark - Posted on 12 May 2013



Your Holiness,
Dear Brothers in Christ,
For me it is a great joy and a truly graced moment to be able to receive all of you here, at the tomb of Saint Peter, as we recall that historic meeting forty years ago between our predecessors, Pope Paul VI and the late Pope Shenouda III, in an embrace of peace and fraternity, after centuries of mutual distrust. So it is with deep affection that I welcome Your Holiness and the distinguished members of your delegation, and I thank you for your words. Through you, I extend my cordial greetings in the Lord to the bishops, the clergy, the monks and the whole Coptic Orthodox Church. Today's visit strengthens the bonds of friendship and brotherhood that already exist between the See of Peter and the See of Mark, heir to an inestimable heritage of martyrs, theologians, holy monks and faithful disciples of Christ, who have borne witness to the Gospel from generation to generation, often in situations of great adversity.

Forty years ago the Common Declaration of our predecessors represented a milestone on the ecumenical journey, and from it emerged a Commission for Theological Dialogue between our Churches, which has yielded good results and has prepared the ground for a broader dialogue between the Catholic Church and the entire family of Oriental Orthodox Churches, a dialogue that continues to bear fruit to this day. In that solemn Declaration, our Churches acknowledged that, in line with the apostolic traditions, they profess "one faith in the One Triune God" and "the divinity of the Only-begotten Son of God ... perfect God with respect to his divinity, perfect man with respect to his humanity". They acknowledged that divine life is given to us and nourished through the seven sacraments and they recognized a mutual bond in their common devotion to the Mother of God. We are glad to be able to confirm today what our illustrious predecessors solemnly declared, we are glad to recognize that we are united by one Baptism, of which our common prayer is a special expression, and we long for the day when, in fulfillment of the Lord's desire, we will be able to communicate from the one chalice.

Of course we are well aware that the path ahead may still prove to be long, but we do not want to forget the considerable distance already travelled, which has taken tangible form in radiant moments of communion, among which I

am pleased to recall the meeting in February 2000 in Cairo between Pope Shenouda III and Blessed John Paul II, who went as a pilgrim, during the Great Jubilee, to the places of origin of our faith. I am convinced that – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit – our persevering prayer, our dialogue and the will to build communion day by day in mutual love will allow us to take important further steps towards full unity.

Your Holiness, I am aware of the many marks of attention and fraternal charity that you have shown, since the early days of your ministry, to the Catholic Coptic Church, to its Pastor, Patriarch Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak and to his predecessor, Cardinal Antonios Naguib. The institution of a "National Council of Christian Churches", which you strongly desired, represents an important sign of the will of all believers in Christ to develop relations in daily life that are increasingly fraternal and to put themselves at the service of the whole of Egyptian society, of which they form an integral part. Let me assure you that your efforts to build communion among believers in Christ, and your lively interest in the future of your country and the role of the Christian communities within Egyptian society find a deep echo in the heart of the Successor of Peter and of the entire Catholic community.

"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor 12:26). This is a law of the Christian life, and in this sense we can say that there is also an ecumenism of suffering: just as the blood of the martyrs was a seed of strength and fertility for the Church, so too the sharing of daily sufferings can become an effective instrument of unity. And this also applies, in a certain sense, to the broader context of society and relations between Christians and non-Christians: from shared suffering can blossom forth forgiveness and reconciliation, with God's help.

Your Holiness, in assuring you of my prayers that the whole flock entrusted to your pastoral care may be ever faithful to the Lord's call, I invoke the protection of both Saint Peter and Saint Mark: may they who during their lifetime worked together in practical ways for the spread of the Gospel, intercede for us and accompany the journey of our Churches.

How did the Holy Spirit Descend?

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

1. The Holy Spirit descended on the disciples in the form of divided tongues as of fire. “They were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).

They began also to speak with the tongues of all the multitude gathered there on that great Day of Pentecost (about 17 nations). They spoke the wonderful works of God among all those people (Acts 2:9-11). St. Peter delivered a sermon through which the people were cut to the heart, gladly received his word and about three thousand were baptized that day (Acts 2:37-41).



2. Afterwards, the Holy Spirit was received by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, as in the case of the people of Samaria. When the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and Paul to them, “Who when they had come down, prayed for them that they may receive the Holy Spirit... Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 18:15, 17). The Ephesians also “When Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

3. Then the Holy Anointment became the means of receiving the Holy Spirit: By the widespread of Christianity in various parts of the world, the laying of the hands of the apostles became not practical. So, the anointing was substitute which is now effected by the Holy Oil of Myron. St. John the apostle referring to this anointing, said “But you have an anointing from the Holy One...” (1Jn. 2:20), and “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you” (1 Jn. 2:27; 2 Cor. 1:21).

4. As for the priesthood, it was given to the apostles by the Holy Breath of Christ: It is stated in the bible that the Lord Christ breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn. 20:22, 23). It was them the Holy

Spirit that was in them who forgive or retain the sins, but through them. However, the apostles received the Holy Spirit afterwards in the Sacrament of Holy Orders or Priesthood; by the laying on the hands. We know this from the letter of St. Paul to Timothy, “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my

hands” (2 Tim. 6). And regarding the ordination of others, he warned him, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, or share in other people’s sins.” (1 Tim. 5:22)

Also, in the appointing of Barnabas and Saul, that the apostles, “having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:3, 4). The seven deacons also were appointed in the same manner (Acts 6:6). From these examples, we see that the laying on of the hands was accompanied by certain prayers which are now called the ordination ritual. It is also noticed that the disciples received the Holy Spirit directly from God because there was none of higher rank than them to receive the Spirit from him. But since the apostles have become “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1; the situation differs...

Those stewards of God’s mysteries are now the means of giving the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, we practice the Sacrament of the Holy Myron (Chrism) or the Holy Unction after baptizing. This ritual of this sacrament requires that the baptized be crossed with the Myron oil various parts of his body. Then the hand of the bishop or priest is laid upon his head and he breathes on his face saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” As for women who are baptized, the bishop may lay his hand on the woman in prayer to receive the Holy Spirit and crosses only the apparent parts of her body.

It was the Holy Spirit who spoke on the mouths of the ministers.... The Lord Jesus said this to His disciples when sending them out, “it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of Your Father who speaks in you (Matt. 10:20).

THE MOTHER OF ALL SINS



By Fr. Gawargious A. Kolta

Sometimes we think that the greatest sin is adultery, fornication, profane or impurity caused by the lust of the flesh. Truly, those sins are abominable and disgusting, and the scriptures consider them shameful sins, and we must be careful and observe ourselves so that we don't commit them. However, the greatest sin is that which caused the fall of Satan and his followers, one third of the angels, from their heavenly ranks (Rev.12:4,7-9). This sin is pride; for God resists the proud (Isa. 14:14; Ezek.28; Prov. 3:34).

The sin of pride attacks everybody; those who are spiritually weak as well as those who are strong. Many sins can be defeated and overcome by struggle and strife. The lust of gluttony can be controlled by fasting, loving money can be defeated by divestment and free will poverty, fornication can be avoided by chastity, and anger can be controlled by meekness. However, pride and haughtiness cannot be defeated easily, as it needs us to examine ourselves deeply and sincerely to discover the source and the roots of pride in us. Pride is the mother of many sins. It is not a simple sin as stealing or lying. Pride is a complex sin which includes many sins and gives birth to many other, such as anger, envy, judging others, gossiping, screaming, blasphemy, heresies, disrespecting others, selfishness, arguing, despising others and rejecting their feelings or views. Each of these sins can lead to other sins. Selfishness, for example, may lead to committing adultery, disobedience, disrespecting the Lord's commandments, hatred, and living in greediness.

Nothing can defeat pride but meekness, obedience and humility. Pride attacks every person even the saints and never stops till the last minute of our life on earth. Sometimes, even righteous people can mix up between pride and some spiritual virtues. Pride may be hidden inside a virtue or slip into one.

One of the forefathers said: "When I fast (a virtue), I may boast (sin) because I am fasting, and if I break my fast, for covering the virtue of fasting, I may get proud (sin) and feel that I am wise. When others disgrace me, and I do not get mad, I feel happy because I am patient, and when I defend myself, I consider that wisdom for I tried to chasten others".

Every sin can be covered by those who commit it, and can be concealed from others, except pride. A proud person can be clearly recognized. It is a predominant sin in individuals in all organizations, even in religious communities. We can see that adulterers, murders and thieves feel embarrassed to expose their sins, and they try to hide what they commit from others, but proud people do not care about their mistakes and falls. They do not feel that they do something wrong. They only look for their own glory and their own respect. Pride destroys all good relations with others; and thus two proud persons can not live in harmony with each other in the same house or in the same place.

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James. 4:6). God not only hates this sin more than other sins, but He resists the proud for the following reasons:

1- A proud person does not only look down on others, but he also despises the word of God. He does not change when he hears a leader or a priest trying to discipline him. He does not accept God's commandments. Sometimes proud people believe that the word of God is not for them or it is not authentic. Due to pride, many scholars nowadays, try to attack the scriptures and raise many doubts about it and its authenticity; that leads many Christians to stumble and follow them.

2- Pride usually eliminates from the hearts of peoples any compassion, mercy and kindness towards the needy and the weak. Pride shuts the ears from hearing the cry of the poor and closes the eyes from seeing their sufferings and misery. David the prophet said: "The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor" (Ps. 10:2).

3- Pride causes foolish arguments, dispute and quarrel between people and it ends by loosing good relations and love of people. King Solomon said in the proverbs: "By pride comes nothing but strife" (Prov.13:10) and "He who is of a proud heart, stirs up strife" (Prov. 28:25). A proud person easily looses his friends and he looses the respect and the love of people. Due to pride, king Rehoboam, the son of Solomon rejected the advice of the elders, so Israel rebelled against him, and the house of David lost control on ten tribes of Israel.

4- Pride puts down the mighty off their thrones, and the Lord scatters the imagination of the hearts of the proud (Lk. 1:51, 52). It is written: "A man's pride will bring him low" (Prov. 29:23). Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, spoke in pride, saying: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty" (Dan. 4:33). While the word was still in his mouth, a voice came from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Dan. 4:30-32). The same thing happened with King Herod Agrippa the first (37-44 AD). When he arrayed in royal appearance, sat on his throne and gave an oration to the people of Tyre and Sidon, they kept shouting: "It is the voice of a god and not of a Man". Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God and he was eaten by worms and died (Act. 12:20-23). The Lord scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts (Lk. 1:51).

5- God's grace departs from the hearts of the proud. Those who think that they are biblically knowledgeable and are proud in their discussions may fall in blasphemy. Those who are proud of their asceticism may fall in adultery. In the

church history there are many heretics who were clergymen, but because of their pride they fell in bad heresies. Arian the heretic was a knowledgeable priest, who studied theology and philosophy. Also, Makdonius and Nestorius the heretics were patriarchs of Constantinople. Eutyches the heretic was the abbot of a monastery. Due to their pride, they refused to change their own beliefs and accept the doctrine of the church; thus they were degraded and excommunicated, and they died in their sins. Some church saints who were highly spiritual and very ascetic fell in adultery because of their pride. Others, who were leaders and gifted, lost everything due to their haughtiness. The Lord refused King Saul, and the Spirit of God departed from him, and an evil spirit possessed him, because of his pride, as he violated the commandments of God, did not wait for Samuel the prophet and the priest, and acted foolishly by offering a sacrifice by himself (1 Sam.13:5-14).

6- A proud person does not submit to anyone and hates those who disagree with his views or oppose him. King Solomon said: "By pride comes nothing but strife" (Ps.13: 10). King Herod, who killed the children of Bethlehem, killed all those who opposed him, even his wives, his children and his consultants. He wanted every body to exalt, glorify and praise him always. He was like Satan who wanted to steal the glory of God. God does not give His glory to anyone (Isa. 42:8). Those who walk in Pride, God is able to put them down (Dan. 4:37).

7- The proud depends on his own possessions, his power, his position, his richness or his intelligence. All these are strong weapons, used by Satan, to destroy us and separate us from God. The proud does not consider that these gifts are from God's hand. Hannah the mother of the prophet Samuel said: "The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes" (1 Sam. 2:7,8). It is well known that power, position and richness are not lasting, nor a crown enduring (Prov. 27:24). St. Paul told Timothy: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Lazarus the beggar was laid at the gate of the rich man desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, but was not. The money of the proud rich man did not benefit him, and father Abraham said to him: "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented" (Lk. 16:19-25). No one can grantee that all the gifts which we have will last for a long time. All the beauty of anyone may disappear easily due to any disease or accident. The intelligence and smartness may also disappear any time. Many great scientists spent the rest of their lives in mental hospitals. They tried to please themselves and did not consider that their gifts are given to them from God.

How to get rid of pride:

1- We must consider that no gift is due to our own power. All gifts are granted to us from God. Thus, St. Paul said: "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord"(1Cor. 1:31). He also said: "If I must boast, I will boast in the things which

concern my infirmity" (2 Cor. 11:30). Let us remember that we will give account of all the gifts that were given to us from God.

2- Let us remember that "Nothing good dwells in me" (Rom. 7:18). Every thing good in me is from God. We have these treasures in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us (2 Cor. 4:7). Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning (Jas. 1:17).

3- We must not enjoy praises or accept to be glorified by anyone. When we reject people's praises, we can overcome satanic tricks. We have to feel that we are poor, unjust and sinners. Our Lord said: "When you have done all things, which you are commanded, say 'we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Lk. 17:10). We must remember that people don't know our mistakes and our sins, because our kind Lord covered it, out of his great mercy and love to us. One of the forefathers said: "Don't praise or exalt anyone, neither in his presence lest he will fall in pride, nor in his absence lest you will stir up the envy of Satan".

4- We have to practice to control ourselves and not get disappointed when anyone insults or curses us. We have to ask God to forgive him, pray for him that the Lord may strengthen his weakness. Standing any defame and humiliation from others will save us from vainglory. The Lord Jesus Christ accepted the disgrace and humiliation of people, as it was written: "When He was reviled, did not revile in return" (1 Pet. 2:23).

5- We must not compare ourselves to the sinners and the wicked, lest that may lead us to be proud, and stop our strife, and so we become lukewarm (Lk. 18:10). We have to compare ourselves to the saints and the righteous; this will urge us to complete our good fight.

6- We must not be proud when we practice any spiritual activity, like fasting, praying, Bible readings, confession, or donation to the needy. We must perform these deeds in a secret way. We do these by the grace of God, for without Him we cannot do anything good (Jn. 15:5).

7- We must hide our virtues and our good deeds from people. This will protect us from pride and we will be rewarded openly (Mat. 6:1-8). Let us remember the saints who lived hidden lives and we only discovered their virtues after their departure from this world.

8- We must practice the virtue of humbleness seriously; remembering that God resists the proud. King Solomon said: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). The Lord puts down the mighty from their thrones, and He exalts the humble.

New 10 Commandments

They are like the Ten Commandments to follow in life all the time.

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1] Prayer is not a “spare wheel” that you pull out when in trouble, but it is a “steering wheel” that directs the right path throughout.

2] So a Car’s Windshield is so large & the Rear view Mirror is so small? Because our PAST is not as important as our FUTURE. So, Look Ahead and Move on. Concentrate and focus ahead always.

3] Friendship is like a BOOK. It takes a few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.

4] All things in life are temporary. If going well, enjoy it, they will not last forever. If going wrong don’t worry, they can’t last long either.

5] Old Friends are Gold! New Friends are Diamonds! If you get a Diamond, don’t forget the Gold. Because to hold a Diamond, you always need a base of Gold!

6] Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, GOD smiles from above and says, “Relax, sweetheart, it’s just a bend, not the end!”

7] When GOD solves your problems, you have faith in HIS abilities; when GOD doesn’t solve your problems HE has faith in your abilities.

8] A blind person asked St. Anthony: “Can there be anything worse than losing your eye sight?”
He replied: “Yes, losing your vision!”

9] When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes, when you are safe and happy, remember that someone has prayed for you.

10] WORRYING does not take away tomorrow’s TROUBLES, it takes away today’s PEACE.

Step by Step

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way.” (Psalm 37:23)

After ten days of ministry in California, we were on the road, making the two-day drive home. The first day was sunny and bright and we could see for miles. Beautiful scenery. The traffic was light.

The second day was very different - pouring rain, fog and poor visibility. The splatter from the wheels of the big trucks made it harder to see. Most of the time we could only see a few car lengths ahead. We had to really concentrate on our driving.

We had no long-distance vision. We knew, however, that if we stayed on the I-5 north freeway, we would eventually get to the US/Canadian border. The road signs also assured us that we were heading in the right direction, even though we only see a few feet ahead of us.

As Marvin was driving, I thought of the verse: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105).

Life is a journey. If we have asked Jesus to be our Savior and Lord, our destination is heaven. Some days are sunny and bright. Others are foggy and have torrents of problems. In the same way big trucks can it make it harder to see the road, sometimes difficult people or circumstances can cloud our thinking. Still, we can be assured that the path hasn’t changed. God hasn’t changed. Only our ability to see clearly has changed.

During those foggy days, we need to remember God has ordered all of our steps. We are on the right road - the one pointed to heaven. The Bible gives us the road signs. The Bible is the light to our feet.

I encourage you to read the Bible every day so God can encourage you. He will keep you from stumbling and falling. If you fall, He will pick you up again. If you haven’t made it a habit to read the Bible every day, let me encourage you to begin - start with the book of Proverbs and read a few verses every day.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for ordering all of our footsteps. Thank You for your Word, which lights up our day and our way. Give us the sense to go to You for assurance when we need to be reminded that You are directing us and haven’t forgotten us. Amen.

Japan & Muslims



I NEVER KNEW THIS ABOUT JAPAN - We could learn a lot from this country.

Have you ever read in the newspaper that a political leader or a prime minister from an Islamic nation has visited Japan?

Have you ever come across news that the Ayatollah of Iran or the King of Saudi Arabia or even a Saudi Prince has visited Japan?

Japan is a country keeping Islam at bay. Japan has put strict restrictions on Islam and ALL Muslims.

The reasons are:

- a) Japan is the only nation that does not give citizenship to Muslims.
- b) In Japan permanent residency is not given to Muslims.
- c) There is a strong ban on the propagation of Islam in Japan.
- d) In the University of Japan, Arabic or any Islamic language is not taught.
- e) One cannot import a «Koran» published in the Arabic language.
- f) According to data published by the Japanese government, it has given temporary residency to only 2 lakhs, Muslims, who must follow the Japanese Law of the Land. These Muslims should speak Japanese and carry their religious rituals in their homes.

- g) Japan is the only country in the world that has a negligible number of embassies in Islamic countries.
- h) Japanese people are not attracted to Islam at all.
- I) Muslims residing in Japan are the employees of foreign companies.
- j) Even today, visas are not granted to Muslim doctors, engineers or

managers sent by foreign companies.

- k) In the majority of companies it is stated in their regulations that no Muslims should apply for a job.
- l) The Japanese government is of the opinion that Muslims are fundamentalist and even in the era of globalization they are not willing to change their Muslim laws.
- m) Muslims cannot even think about renting a house in Japan.
- n) If anyone comes to know that his neighbor is a Muslim then the whole neighborhood stays alert.
- o) No one can start an Islamic cell or Arabic «Madrasa» (school) in Japan.
- p) There is no Sharia law in Japan.
- q) If a Japanese woman marries a Muslim then she is considered an outcast forever.
- r) According to Mr. Kumiko Yagi, Professor of Arab/ Islamic Studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, «There is a mind frame in Japan that Islam is a very narrow minded religion and one should stay away from it.»

My estimation of the Japanese has risen dramatically!

VERY SMART PEOPLE

From the writings of our youth

The Ladder of Divine Ascent

“On Obedience” (2)



By John Awad

In my last article, I introduced St. John Climacus and his work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. As I previously mentioned, the work itself focuses on asceticism and the journey to draw close to God through acquiring various virtues and deepening one’s own spiritual traits. Previously I focused on the second chapter of the work entitled “On Detachment”, which centers on withdrawing from worldly pleasures with the hope of drawing near to Christ in every aspect of one’s life. For the time being I would now like to shift our attention to the fourth chapter (or “step” as Climacus calls it) entitled “On Obedience”.

Climacus begins his writing in this portion of the work by clearly defining what obedience entails.

He writes, “Obedience is a total renunciation of our own life, and it shows up clearly in the way we act. Or, again, obedience is the mortification of the members while the mind remains alive. Obedience is unquestioned movement, death freely accepted, a simple life, danger faced without worry, an unprepared defense before God, fearlessness before death, a safe voyage, a sleeper’s journey. Obedience is the burial place of the will and the resurrection of lowliness. A corpse does not contradict or debate the good or whatever seems bad, and the spiritual father who has devoutly put the disciple’s soul to death will answer for everything. Indeed, to obey is, with all deliberateness, to put aside the capacity to make one’s own judgment”.

Here we see the clear and strong imagery Climacus uses to describe obedience, equating this virtue to being as a corpse, for a corpse does not act of its own accord or own will. St. Paul describes this same form of obedience in Christ, when discussing His crucifix-



ion on our behalf, he writes, “And being found in appearance as a man, He [Christ] humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Thus, our Lord has given us the perfect example of submission and subduing of one’s will, for He was silent even unto death that through Him many may have life and be saved. If our God has done this on our behalf and accepted this mistreatment readily and without question, how much more must we therefore submit and be obedient in our own lives?

Yet, in our own lives it is often easy to lose sight of obedience and to forget this all-important virtue. However, Climacus gives us practical advice and methods by

which we can gain and nourish this goodness within our souls. First, he declares that we must never judge our superiors, writing that “whenever the thought strikes you to judge or condemn your superior, leap away as though from fornication”. Although the superior he is mentioning in this case is the monastic abbot or leader of the monastery, in our own lives “superiors” are extended to mean anyone of authority we come across (i.e. parents, priests, teachers, leaders, etc.). The thought of even judging or disrespecting one of authority is so heinous to Climacus, that he makes such a thought equal to the sin of fornication. Thus, he calls us to never judge our superiors, but to willingly let them judge us and joyously do every task given to us by them. Second, he writes that we must learn to patiently endure the scorn and contempt of others silently, saying, “Blessed is he who, slandered and despised every day for the Lord’s sake, still restrains himself. Blessed is he who mortifies his will to the very end and who leaves the care of himself to his director in the Lord”. Silence is a well-known virtue of the

ascetics, yet Climacus here calls us to take this silence further and apply it to even when we are being derided or hated by others. Rather than attempting to stand up for ourselves or to apologize to others in order to stop their scorn, we must instead learn to endure their mocking with patience and love. In doing so, we restrain our tongues and squash our own desires, thereby acquiring obedience and humility, which go hand in hand as virtues. Regarding silence, Climacus expands his thought, noting that “he who is not submissive in his talk will certainly not be so in what he does; to be unfaithful in the small things is to be unfaithful in the great”. Consequently, we find here that true silence and submissiveness is a necessity for one to be obedient in the Lord. And what more perfect example of silence and obedience do we find beside when our Lord Jesus Christ is led to the cross, for “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). To be true Christians we must indeed be like Christ, following Him and the example He has laid out before us. Thereby, we must in our daily lives accept our sufferings with silence and joy, submitting our will and accepting the tasks and criticisms given to us not just from our leaders but rather from every man, for “we do not get the name of being patient when we bravely endure the derision of our father, but only when we endure it from every kind of person”.

Obedience is highly stressed by Climacus as one of the most important virtues to acquire in the spiritual journey to attain asceticism. In fact, it is one of the longest chapters in the entire work, for he spends a great deal of time laying out how to obtain obedience, describing the lives of those with or without obedience, and giving numerous examples of pure and unaltered obedience he witnessed at various monasteries throughout his life. It is not just important as a single virtue, for “through obedience comes humility, and from humility comes discernment”. Thus, with all our hearts and with the utmost effort, we must seek to obey our superiors readily, to follow instructions in silence, and to accept criticism and derision from all men (superior or not) in quietness and humility. Let us live our lives humbly, without questioning the motives or instruction of our fathers and mothers and leaders. Instead, let us be joyous when we are asked of any service, for they whom the Lord loves “He has tried like gold in a furnace and he has received them like burnt offerings into his bosom” (Wisdom 3:6).

Friending

“You are my friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:14).

The social networking Web site Facebook.com was launched in 2004 as a way for college students to connect with each other online. It is now open to people of all ages, and currently there are an estimated 500 million users. Each user has an individual page with photos and personal details that can be viewed by “friends.” To “friend” a person means opening the door to information about who you are, where you go, and what you do. Facebook friendships may be casual or committed, but each one is “by invitation only.” Just before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples: You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you (Jn. 15:14-15).

Unselfishness, oneness of purpose, and confident trust are the hallmarks of true friendship, especially in our relationship with the Lord. Christ has taken the initiative by giving His life for us and inviting us to know and follow Him. Have we responded to the Lord Jesus Christ’s invitation of friendship by opening our hearts to Him with nothing held back?

Jesus longs to be our friend...do you accept His Royal friendship?

Muslim Brotherhood Criticized by Famous Egyptian Writer

Fatima Naoot, an Egyptian writer and poet, criticized the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi Sheikh Abu Islam because she allegedly converted to Christianity while also leading a campaign accusing her of infidelity after her defense of Copts in the country. Naoot revealed she felt distressed not for being accused of infidelity, but because there are such shallow minds in Egypt, during a televised interview on Al-Nahar.

«If you know that your house is made of fragile glass, do not throw stones,» Naoot said, addressing Sheikh Abu Islam. «Not only do they allege that I was Christianized by the late Pope Shenouda III, but also that I am leading campaigns to evangelize,» Naoot added. «I did not have the honor to meet H. H. Pope Shenouda III, and when I learned that he passed away I regretted that I did not meet him. He left me his own rosary with one of the church ministers.» She stressed that Pope Shenouda was a great figure from whom both Muslims and Christians learned much.

Naoot then described the efforts by Islamists to shut down the ballet and the opera, insisting that the Muslim Brotherhood’s members are not creative enough and will not be able to run the opera house. «The Brotherhood regime is the most dangerous occupation Egypt has ever seen. The British occupation established the second rail line and the French occupation brought printing to Egypt, but the Muslim Brotherhood is destroying the country,» Naoot remarked.

The Meaning of

“Worthy to Partake in Communion” (3)

By Late Bishop Yoaness

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Many refrain from partaking of the Lord’s Body and Blood although they have the desire. They refrain either because of their fear of the sacrament or because they do not understand what it means to be ready to partake of the Holy Sacrament. The words of the priest in St. Basil’s Liturgy shake them and frighten them, ‘O Lord, make us worthy to partake of Your holies in purification for our souls, bodies and spirits.’ Also, ‘Holy to the holies.’ Also the words of the deacon right before Communion, ‘Pray for the merit of partaking of these holy, pure and heavenly sacraments. ‘What is then the appropriate readiness for communication or state of being worthy of it?’

Is it that you proceed when you have no sin and your life is free from all evil? One of the basic principles of the Christian faith is that personal struggle cannot make the person perfect; but being righteous is due to divine grace only. St. Paul says in this respect, ‘If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.’ (Gal. 2:21) If we do not proceed for Communion and wait till we become righteous, then, this means that we want to become righteous by our own efforts. On the contrary, we should proceed with all our weaknesses and imperfections so that God would make us righteous like the prodigal son. He went to his father with his dirty, worn-out clothes, not after he had changed clothes, and his father was the one who put on him the new robe and shoes on his feet and a ring on his finger. Therefore, our life will not be complete unless we are united with God.

The right preparation for Communion is true repentance from the heart over all our past sins and a hearty determination to submit all our life to God, to live with Him in holiness and righteousness, and to get rid of all our weaknesses which hinder our relationship with God.

To be worthy to partake of the Communion means to proceed in awe and fear and appreciation of that great sacrament with the feeling that we are not worthy of that great



honor. Therefore, the Christian proceeds as a sick person who needs the medicine to cure all his diseases.

St. John Chrysostom comments on the part of the liturgy when the priest says, ‘Holy to the Holies,’ by the answer all the people give at that point saying, ‘We are not holy, but we are sinners not worthy of that name. The only Holy and the Holy of Holies is Jesus Christ who was crucified for our salvation. That is why the people answer the priest saying, ‘One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit, Amen.’

When the deacon says, ‘Pray for the merit of partaking this Holy Sacrament,’ he warns those who dare to proceed for Communion without fear and

with carelessness, As St. Paul said, ‘He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself not discerning the Lord’s Body.’ (1 Cor. 11:29) He also said, ‘Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.’ (Cor. 11:28) This is the most important point: to examine ourselves and see if we confessed an honest confession. St. John Chrysostom says, ‘Let no one proceed to the Holy Communion with Laziness or negligence, but let all go to receive it with enthusiasm and preparation so that we may not be punished. Do not be guilty of His Body and Blood as those who crucified Him.’

Sometimes, after we determine to lead a holy life with God, we revert to sinning, not deliberately or carelessly, but owing to our weak nature. Do not be scared, my brother and do not lose hope. Remember St. Paul’s words, ‘My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.’ (1 Jn. 2:1-2)

The Physical Purity Needed to Partake of the Communion:

As partaking of the Holy Body and Blood needs preparation

and spiritual purity, it also requires physical purity.

1. In the case of the male, masturbation and nocturnal emission (wet dream) is not considered fasting so you should not partake Communion on that day. If this act is repeated, you should confess it to your father, because this might be a war by the devil to prevent the person from Communion, and the priest will guide you as to what you should do to overcome this.
2. In the case of the female, during menstruation and after delivery she should refrain from partaking Communion --forty days following deliver of a baby boy and eighty days following the delivery of a baby girl.
3. Husbands and wives should refrain from marital relation the night before Communion for it is considered not fasting.
4. You should take a bath or shower before Communion and proceed with clean clothes.

The relationship between the priest and the sacrament:

This is an issue we want to make clear because sometimes the devil puts some doubts in the minds of believers as stumbling blocks to prevent them from the blessings of this Holy Sacrament. Some people refrain from partaking Communion with the excuse that the priest is bad or has many faults and therefore they doubt the holiness of this Sacrament. Moreover, they do not go to another priest, in whose righteousness they feel confident, but rather restrain themselves from Communion because they doubt all priests. Obviously, this is a trick of the devil to deprive those people of all the blessings of this great sacrament.

The question now is: Is there a relationship between the holiness of the priest and the fulfillment of this sacrament? And does the changing of the bread and wine into the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ not happen except when a holy priest prays?

Of course the priest should be a holy, righteous person full of faith, worthy of this service, its honor and its holiness. However, the wholesomeness of the sacraments, in general, does not depend on the faith or righteousness of the priest or minister administering them, because the power of the sacrament and the grace it grants do not depend on the worthiness of the priest. Rather, it depends on the worthiness and the will of our Savior Jesus Christ who is granting this grace and on the divine word saying, "This is My Body. This is My Blood." As He said in the past, "Let there be light," and it was and still exists and will remain until the end of the world. Also, the seven sacraments of the church, including Communion, do not depend on the righteousness of the priest but on the work of the Holy Spirit, on Whom the priest calls.

Therefore, the priests are only visible instruments through which the Lord fulfills His sacraments to reach His believers in an invisible way. The human mind cannot believe that God

delivers His grace to the people depending on the righteousness of the priests. Moreover, if the faith of the priest and his holiness were essential matters for the sacraments to be real, this would cause a lot of doubts in the church of Christ, and this would hamper reaping the fruits of the Holy Sacraments. Then, the people will always be in doubt about the righteousness of the priests for no one knows whether the priest has true faith and holiness or not, for only God the Examiner of the hearts, knows. Moreover, the priest may be holy today and evil tomorrow because he has a free will granted to him by God, like all the other human beings. We here mention some of the sayings of the holy fathers on this subject:

St. Gregory Theologos said regarding Baptism, "I have two scales: one made of gold and the other of iron, each bearing the same royal picture. With each, make a print on wax. Is the print made by one seal distinguishable from that made by the other seal? Nothing makes it distinguishable. If you think yourself extremely clever, tell me which is the picture printed by the golden seal and which by the iron one and why both pictures look alike. So, similarly, look upon each of the priests who baptize you, one might be more spiritual than the other, but the power of baptism is the same."

John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus was, "This is the One Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." (Jn. 1:33) If you compare this with what John wrote in his gospel, "Jesus Himself was not baptizing but His disciples," (Jn. 4:2) you'll see that if Peter baptizes, then Jesus Himself would be the One baptizing. If Paul baptizes, it is still Jesus the One Who is baptizing. If Judas baptizes, it is still Jesus Who is the One baptizing. The power that is given does not differ from the one minister to the other, it is the same, for He said, "He is the One Who baptizes." This is confirmed by what St. Paul wrote, "So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. 3:7)

The power and effect of the sacrament are due to Jesus and not to the priest who only has to administer it.

St. Augustine also mentioned in his third book, "It makes no difference as to who administers the sacrament, a righteous person or a sinner, this is like the seeds in the hand of the farmer. Whether his hands are clean or dirty, the seeds will bring forth fruit. If the effect of the sacrament depended on the holiness of the priest, then our salvation would depend on his freedom."

Hence, we conclude by saying that the priests are mere instruments in the hand of God, whom He uses to sanctify this sacrament as well as all the other sacraments through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we should never doubt the effect and the correctness of this sacrament, regardless of the priest who prays. We should proceed with praise and confidence thanking God for His love, mercy and compassion, having prepared "this great sacrament for our righteousness.

Coptic Christians Need Help Now

May 8, 2013

By Eileen F. Toplansky



If Obama were truly interested in the downtrodden of the world, he would be publicizing the plight of Egyptian Coptic Christians who are being decimated as a result of ongoing pillaging and murder by Muslim jihadists. In Raymond Ibrahim's new book, titled *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians* there are, according to baptismal records of the Coptic Orthodox Church, some 16 million Christian Copts in Egypt.

The St. Mark Cathedral in Egypt is «considered the most sacred building for millions of Christians around the world -- above and beyond the many millions of Copts in and out of Egypt.» According to Raymond Ibrahim, the St. Mark Cathedral «holds symbolic and historical significance for all Christians,» and this is «precisely why it was attacked» on April 7, 2013. In short, «this jihadi attack on St. Mark Cathedral is no different for Copts than a jihadi attack on the Vatican would be for Catholics.» Although Egyptian Copts rallied to the defense of the cathedral, government security «intentionally fired 40-50 gas bombs into the compound.» Certainly no government intervention was made to assist the Copts who dared to resist their dhimmi status in Muslim Brotherhood dominated Egypt. For a complete list of the atrocities against the Coptic Christians, see here.

Have local churches and pastors all over the United States spoken out against this oppression of their Christian brethren? Retreats will soon begin with young Christians. Will they be educated and influenced to correspond with their elected representatives? Will there be a letter writing campaign reminiscent of the Soviet Jewish refusenik program that galvanized so many in America to fight for the release of Soviet Jews who were persecuted and thrown in jail in the 1970s Soviet Union? Where are the Jackson-Vanik 21st century equivalents who will bring this issue to the forefront? In fact, during the Soviet refusenik movement,

Groups often cooperated to organize protests, petitions, demonstrations, and rallies in United States and all over the world. They successfully rallied the involvement of U.S. presidents and other leading politicians in activity on behalf of Soviet Jewry and the Jackson-Vanik amendment. They arranged meetings between refuseniks and U.S. senators before the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Their efforts spawned the creation of «The 35», the Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry in Britain, Canada and the United States. They arranged meetings between refuseniks and Jewish visitors to the Soviet Union, who smuggled in mate-

rial and spiritual support. They sponsored benefit concerts on behalf of Soviet Jewry by performers such as Theodore Bikel and Shlomo Carlebach.

Patrick Sookhedeo writes that in Egypt «Islam is taught in all state schools to all pupils, but Christianity cannot be taught to Christian children. Coptic teachers cannot teach Arabic. Copts are encouraged to convert to Islam, but Muslims who convert to Christianity face harassment and severe persecution.» Will American teachers and educators begin correspondence with Coptic Christians to give them moral support and let them know that their cries are being heard? Will concerts by well-known artists be held to publicize their plight and help them financially?

The rising tide of violence by radical Islamists against Copts includes riots, destruction of property, killings, abductions, and forced conversions. Thus, «Christians living in Muslim countries are generally treated as second-class citizens» and «the basis of this lies in the traditional Islamic teaching that Christians and Jews... should be subjugated by force and made to pay a special tax called *jizya*, sura 9, verse 29 of the Quran [.]» Will rabbis, priests and secularists combine forces reminiscent of the Martin Luther King march on Washington, D.C. to provoke a response from the world and to clearly delineate that Americans still value freedom of religion, no matter what emanates from the White House?

Thus, a spokesman for the «Salafist Al Nour party declared that it was forbidden for Muslims to send Christmas greetings to Christians.»

Then three days later, a «Coptic student was detained for publishing an «offensive» image of Muhammad on his Facebook-Al-Masry Al-Youm reported that angry Muslim residents from four nearby villages proceeded to firebomb the student's house. And five days before the [Harvard Institute of Politics (IOP) recognition of Mubarak's resignation], a mob of over 3000 Muslims attacked Copts in Alexandria, looting Coptic homes and shops before setting them ablaze.»

Yet, «none of these incidents was mentioned at the 2012 Harvard panel» event titled «Egypt: From Tahrir Square to Today!»

Graduates of Harvard University should refuse to donate

money to their alma mater until Harvard, once hailed as a bastion of free speech, stops accepting money from the arch-terrorist state of Saudi Arabia? When Mayor Rudy Guiliani returned blood money from the Saudis after 9-11, he sent a forceful message that needs to be repeatedly replicated.

According to Michael Ireland of Christian News Today, at least 100,000 Coptic believers have left Egypt since March 2011 following the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. Copts are coerced into emigration by «threats and intimidation of hard line Salafists, and the lack of protection they are getting from the Egyptian regime.» Thus, «if emigration of Christians continues, it is possible that within ten years a third of the Coptic population of Egypt [will] be gone.»

The Dutch government has agreed «to allow Copts to emigrate to the country without their having to prove that they were being persecuted in Egypt.» In fact, «Coptic lawyer Mamdouh Ramzy said 100,000 Copts have applied for emigration to the US, and others have applied to go to Scandinavian countries.

At Hillsborough Community College, Krista Byrd, editor-in-chief of *The Hawkeye*, highlighted an April 18, 2013 march on Capitol Hill to protest the killing of Christians in Egypt. The protestors expressed anger that President Obama is allying himself with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a 2013 annual report which documented the «many examples of the contempt that governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have toward freedom of religion or belief.» The report stated that the Egyptian government «has failed to protect its religious minorities, particularly Coptic Christians, from sectarian attacks. Egypt's police and security forces have even aided and abetted the violence.» Two years ago President Obama claimed that «...freedom of religions is not a secondary interest... it is a top priority that must be translated into concrete actions [.]»

Unfortunately, we have a president who mouths the words only, because allying with the Muslim Brotherhood and attempting to have freedom of religion is mutually exclusive. Obama's concern with illegal immigration is not about helping people under siege; it is about enlarging his Democratic base.

But we, the people, must nevertheless, «speak out with far more frequency on religious prisoners of conscience.» Moreover, Toby Westerman of *Renew America* asserts that «[i]t is time for the U.S. mass media to acknowledge the persecution of Christians around the world, and to identify those who commit these crimes.» Avishai D. Don writes that «for the sake of religious freedom for Egypt's Coptic Christians, America cannot afford to be silent.»

Our First Amendment rights still remain and it behooves people to write letters to the editor of the mainstream media. Call them out on their indifference. Demand accountability.

At the Children of Holocaust Survivors site, Frank Crimi highlights a 2012 report commissioned by Christian Solidarity International describing «500 cases of Coptic females having been kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam.» Furthermore, the article goes on to explain that Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II has called the kidnapping and forced conversion of Christian girls a «disgrace for the whole of Egypt,» while also asking, «[c]an any family accept the kidnapping of their daughter and her forced conversion?»

Crimi writes that «...while many Christian families may not be accepting of this horrendous practice, it may be safe to assume that the Obama administration is, given its recent decision to send over \$200 million to Egypt in financial assistance.» In fact, «[t]hat money, which is part of more than \$1 billion in US financial aid promised to Egypt by President Obama in 2012, was reportedly contingent upon the Egyptian government's promises of economic and political reforms; a benchmark that the Obama administration apparently believes has been met.» When will a larger segment of the American populace see through the charade of Obama's outreach to women when he patently neglects what is happening to women under the domination of shariah law across the Islamic Middle East? Feminists -- where are you? If the feminists of the first and second wave refuse to speak out, then this new generation of liberated women must understand that true feminism is really humanism of the highest order.

The Associated Press needs to hear from people about their erasing the terms illegal immigrant and Islamist from their stylebook. Each piece of correspondence does count. Pushback must hold these reporters and editors answerable for their actions.

Homeland Security can no longer hide behind political correctness. Newspapers need to be bombarded by readers who demand integrity in the reporting. And Americans must educate themselves and understand the total outreach of the Muslim Brotherhood movement as they now strive to «connect all U.S. Schools» under their mantra -- a horrifying possibility! Parents must insist on detailed explanations of the insidious programs that are being used to educate their children.

This will be a harder fight since Washington is a very different place than it was in the 1970s. The few representatives with moral scruples have an uphill fight; but, then it makes the fight that much more important. The Coptic Christians demand our attention. For in helping them, we liberate ourselves from the encroaching shariah system which brooks no dissension. Bosch Fawstin cites Ayn Rand, who asserted that. When men reduce their virtues to the approximate, then evil acquires the force of an absolute, when loyalty to an unyielding purpose is dropped by the virtuous, its picked up by scoundrels-and you get the indecent spectacle of a cringing, bargaining, traitorous good and a self-righteously uncompromising evil.

The Coptic Christians need our help now and, frankly, America needs to find its glorious voice once again.

Short Story

The Faithful Man

A successful business man was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business.

Instead of choosing one of his Directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together. He said, «It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have decided to choose one of you. «The young executives were Shocked, but the boss continued. «I am going to give each one of you a SEED today - one very special SEED. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO.»

One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly, told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Everyday, he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.

Jim kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew

Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants, but Jim didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure.

Six months went by -- still nothing in Jim's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing

Jim didn't say anything to his colleagues, however, he just kept watering and fertilizing the soil - He so wanted the seed to grow.

A year finally went by and all the young executives of the company brought their plants to the CEO for inspection.

Jim told his wife that he wasn't going to take an empty pot.

But she asked him to be honest about what happened. Jim felt sick to his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of his life, but he knew his wife was right. He took his empty pot to the board room.

When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of

plants grown by the other executives. They were beautiful - in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him!

When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives.

Jim just tried to hide in the back. «My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown,» said the CEO. «Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!»

All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered the Financial Director to bring him to the front. Jim was terrified.. He thought, «The CEO knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!»

When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed,

Jim told him the story.

The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim, and then announced to the young executives, «Behold your next Chief Executive Officer! His name is «Jim!» Jim couldn't believe it. Jim couldn't even grow his seed. «How could he be the new CEO?» the others said.

Then the CEO said, «One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds; they were dead - it was not possible for them to grow.

All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new Chief Executive Officer!»

- * If you plant honesty, you will reap trust
 - * If you plant goodness, you will reap friends
 - * If you plant humility, you will reap greatness
 - * If you plant perseverance, you will reap contentment
 - * If you plant consideration, you will reap perspective
 - * If you plant hard work, you will reap success
 - * If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation
- So, be careful what you plant now; it determine what you reap.

Congratulations

Fr. Shenouda Ghattas' 26 Aniversary:

St. John Church, the priests, board of deacons and the congregation, congratulate Rev. Fr. Shenouda on his 26th Anniversary of his ordination in priesthood. May God grant him health, strength and a long fruitful ministry.

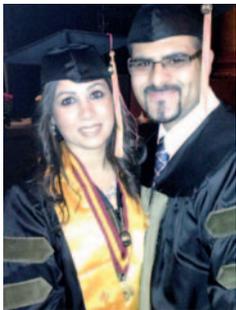


Congratulations George and Mora Korkar

for the baptism of your Baby girl **Emma Gabrielle Korkar**. May the Lord Jesus bless her life and grant her growth in the grace and health.

Congratulations and best wishes to the blessed couple

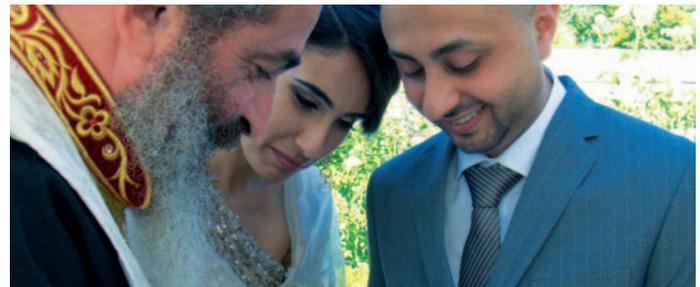
Dr. Paul Georges and



Dr. Mariana Ashamalla

for their graduation from the California North-State University, College of Pharmacy.

-Love, Isaac, Samia, and Beshoy Gerges & Uncle Mark and Aunt Mona Isaac



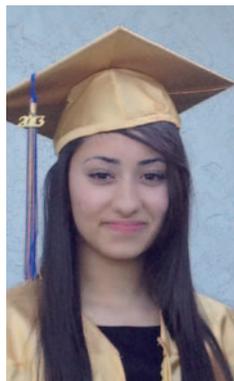
Congratulations

Dina Zaklama and Nader Attia

For your engagement. We wish that our Lord Jesus Christ blesses your life and completes your marriage in joy and peace. We Love you. Magid, Omnaya, Karim, Nashaat, Seham, Marilyn and Mena.

Justina Fanous

Congratulations Justina on your graduation from high school. We are so proud of you and all that you have accomplished during those years and hope that you will continue to accomplish. We wish you the best in college. Love, Mom, Dad, Kerilos, philopater, and the rest of the family and all your friends



St. John Church congratulates Peter and Christine for the baptism of their baby boy

Karas

May the Lord Jesus bless his life and grant him health, strength, wisdom and long life.

