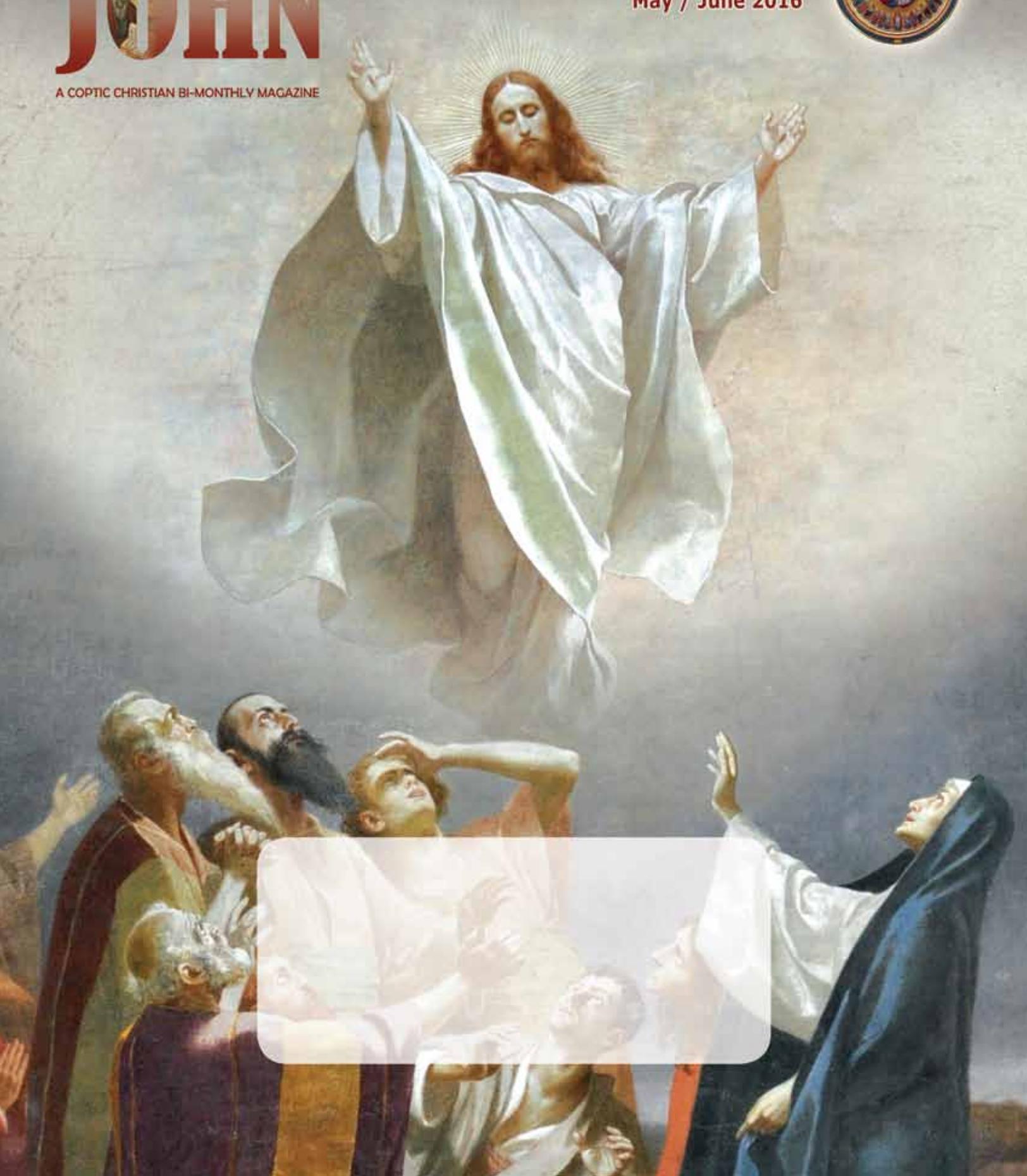


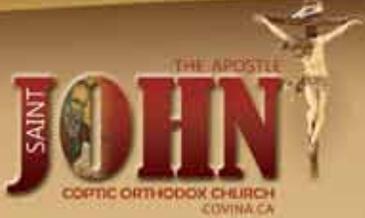
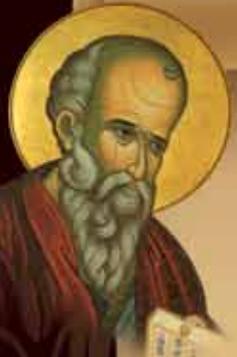
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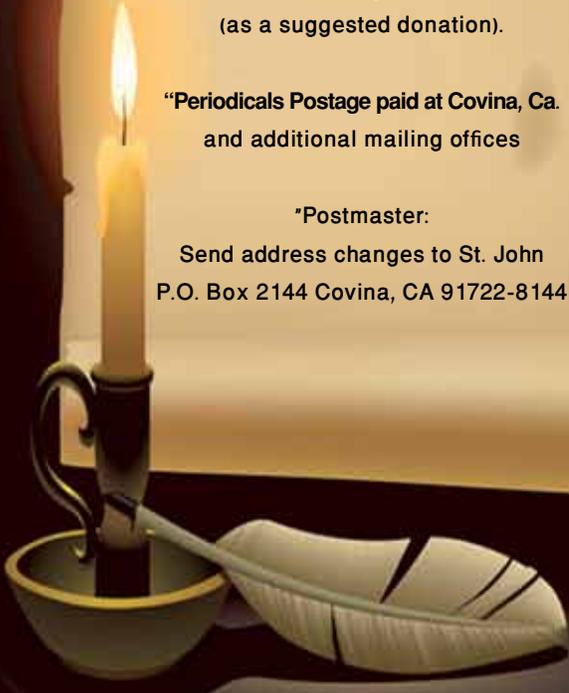
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*Verse
of the Month*



*"He [Paul] preached to them Jesus
and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18).*

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**SCHEDULE of MEETINGS and EVENTS
for the MONTH of May & June 2016**

SUNDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
+ English Liturgy 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.	+ Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	+ Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	+ Liturgy from 8-10 am
* * *	+ Thursday Morning + Senior Citizen Club 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		+ Vespers; Bible Study 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
+ Arabic Liturgy 6:30 - 8:30 a.m.			+ Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 5:30 p.m.
			+ Elementary Meeting 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Servants' Meeting + 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. 2 nd & 4 th Sunday. + Boy Scouts 12 pm	+ THURSDAY Family Meeting 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Fr. Augustinos	+ Arabic Youth Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. Fr. Gawargious	+ New members Fr. Daniel 3-4 pm
			+ College Youth Meeting 7:30- 9:00 p.m.
	Tutoring for new students 6:00-8:00 pm for girls & boys on Thursday 6-8 p.m.		High School & J. High Meetings 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

Email your articles/comments/requests to Frhanna @mystjohn.org

Or visit us online @ www.mystjohn.org

Fax : (909) 592-5088 / Tel: (909) 592 - 0475 / Church Tel: (626) 820-2739

Church Book Store: (562) 900 -2694 & (909) 730 - 9976

1. The Feast of the Lord's Entry to Egypt (June 1):

On Wednesday, June 1, the Church celebrates this minor, Christ's Feast, in which 4 important prophecies have been fulfilled from Isaiah 19:1, 19:19 and 19:25; with Hosea 11:1.



2. Feast of Ascension (June 9):

On Thursday June 9, the church celebrates Christ's Major Feast of Ascension to heaven, after 40 days of His resurrection. The Liturgy will be celebrated from 8:00-10.00 a.m.



3. Pentecost (June 19):

On Sunday, June 19, The Church celebrates the Feast of Pentecost, which is considered the "Birthday of the Christian church" (Acts 2). We celebrate it also after noon of the same day by the "Worship Service" (Sagda) from 1:00- 3:00 p.m. asking for being filled of the Holy Spirit.



4. The Fast of the Apostles (June 20):

The Church starts the Apostle's fast on Monday, June 20 for three weeks until the Apostles' Feast on July 12. May the blessings of our fathers the apostles be with us.



5. St. John's 10th Book Fair (June 1- 5):

St. John Church in Covina holds her annual 10th Christian Book-Fair from Wednesday, June 1- to Sunday, June 5, 2016, in the occasion of the Feast of Christ's entry to Egypt.

6. Mother's Day (May 7):

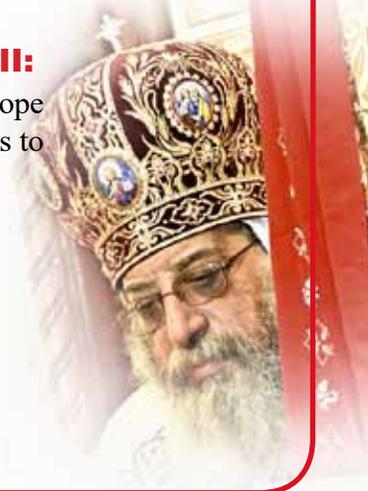
St. John church celebrates Mother's Day on Saturday, May 7, by hosting dinner at 5:00 p.m., in the Church Hall. Tickets are for \$15.00. For more information and reservations call: Teresa at (562) 900-2694.



7. H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

On February 28 2016, Pope Tawadros elevated those Bishops to the rank of Metropolitan:

1. Ava Bephotius (Samalot).
2. Ava Benjamin (Monofia)
3. Ava Tadros (Port Said)
4. Ava Serapion (Los Angeles)
5. Ava Kirollos (Milan)
6. Ava Athanasius (France)
7. Ava Antonius (Jerusalem).



8. H.E. Metropolitan Serapion:

H.E. requested that Pope Tawadros to ordain Rev.Fr. Isaac Boulos and Rev. Fr. John Paul to be Auxiliary Bishops to assist him in his ministry, on Sunday, June 12 before Pentecost. Congratulations to the new Bishops.



9. The 29th Anniversary of Fr. Shenouda & Elevation

St. John Church, priests, deacons and congregation congratulate Rev. Fr. Shenouda Ghatas on his 29th anniversary of ordination in priesthood, and his elevation to Archpriest, wishing him health, strength and long life filled with fruitful ministry.



10. The Feast of St. John the Beloved: (May 24)

11. Senior Citizen's Cruise to Panama:

St. John Church Senior Citizen Fellowship holds its cruise this year to Panama for two weeks, from October 2016.

For reservation call Maher Saleh: (626) 222-6558



12. St. John's 27th Annual Family Convention:

St. John will hold her 27th Family Convention this year at Hyatt Mission Bay Hotel in San Diego, California during Memorial Day long week-end from Saturday, May 28 to Sunday 30, 2016. For Reservation and more information call Dr. Salwa Mikhail at (909) 730- 9976 or the church book store at: (562) 900-2695 (see also the ad).



Witnesses to The Resurrection

“This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead” (John 21:14).

The Gospel of John presents the apostles after Jesus’ resurrection as getting on with their lives, even after he had appeared to them, in as normal a way as one could expect.

Peter and a number of other disciples, including Thomas, James and John, were at the Sea of Tiberius when Peter decided to go fishing, which is what fishermen do. The rest of them said, “We will go with you.” They fished all night and caught nothing, and then Lord Jesus appeared on the shore. No one recognized Jesus initially, a common theme in stories of the post resurrection appearances, until he told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat; they received an abundant catch of fish, “153 of them.”

Once the disciple whom Jesus loved identified the risen Lord, they went to shore, where Jesus was roasting fish over a charcoal fire, Jesus invited his disciples to “Come and have breakfast.” It is such a normal scene—fishing, breakfast on the beach over a charcoal fire with friends—and so utterly astounding. After all, the man cooking them breakfast had been killed, crucified, and was now alive. The oddity is transmitted by the Gospel, as we are told: “Now none of the disciples dared to ask him. ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord.”

The risen Jesus was still difficult to comprehend for the disciples, even though it was the third time He had appeared to them. You can hear the silence in this scene as the men eat their breakfast quietly, stealing glances at Jesus as they sit in the early morning light on the seashore. What exactly do you say to the risen Messiah?

Jesus, in fact begins the conversation with Peter, asking him if he loves Him. It is a powerful scene, in which Peter is challenged three times, the same number as his denials, to declare his love for his teacher. But the first two times Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me,” He uses the verb *agapao*, denoting the self-sacrificial love of God for humanity and the love Christians are to show to God and neighbor. Peter responds that he indeed loves Jesus, using the verb *phileo*, which describes love between



friends. On the third occasion it is Jesus who changes the verb, asking Peter “Do you love me?” using *phileo*. Peter responds, declaring his love, using *phileo* once again.

Jesus accepts the love that Peter can offer at this time and instructs him a third time to “Feed my sheep,” indicating that there will be a time in the future when Peter will show his *agape* in his death (on the upside down cross). Leaving the comforts of his Galilean home and the fishing boat, Peter returns to Jerusalem to speak of the risen Jesus.

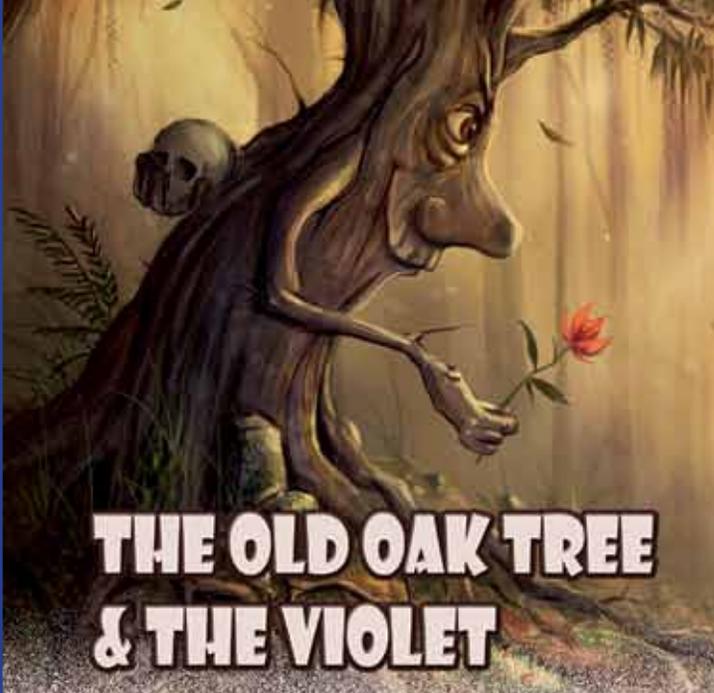
The fearful Peter who denied Jesus three times prior to His crucifixion is gone, replaced by a Peter who has been arrested for speaking boldly of the new life to be found in Jesus’ name. Already told “not to teach in this name,” Peter and the others could only answer, “We must obey God rather than man” or any human authority. It was the experience of the witness of the risen Christ that inspired Peter to speak with boldness.

Peter declared to the council that Jesus Christ who had been killed, was raised up by God, who exulted Him at His right hand as leader and Savior that He might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” The word “leader” can be translated as “author” as in author [originator] of our salvation.” (Hebrews 12:2).

This is the point of Jesus’ resurrection appearances and Peter’s boldness: to speak to this new salvation offered through Christ. Peter says, “We are witnesses to these things.” Yet the experiences of the risen Lord were not private events. They were given so that all could share in the risen life. God had acted in history out of *agape* for humanity. When that love was made present to the first witnesses, it was essential that this same love would have to be shared with all.

Praying With Scripture

Imagine yourself sitting on the shore with the risen Lord and the disciples. What do you want to say to the Lord Jesus? How would you respond to His question about whether you love Him? How would you share His resurrection with others?



THE OLD OAK TREE & THE VIOLET

A violet shed its modest beauty at the foot of an old oak. After it had lived there several days, the oak said, 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself, little violet, when you look up at me?' -you little thing down there- when you see how large I am and how small you are? "No," said the violet, 'we are both where God has placed us, and God has given us both something. To you he gave strength to me sweetness, and I offer Him back my fragrance, and am thankful.

'Sweetness is all nonsense,' said the oak. 'A few days-a month at the most- and where and what will you be? You will die, and the place of your grave will not lift the ground higher by a blade of grass. I expect to stand for a good long time- ages, perhaps. And then, when I'm cut down, I shall be a ship that bears men over the sea, or a coffin that will hold the dust of a prince. What is your lot compared to mine? 'But we're both what God made us, and we're both where he placed us. I suppose I shall die soon, but I hope to do so as fragrantly as I have lived. You too must be cut down at last. It doesn't matter that I see a few days or a few ages. My littleness or your greatness comes to the same thing at last. We're what the Lord made us-we're where He placed us! God gave you strength. God gave me sweetness. And we each do the best we can with what He gave us.'



DO YOUR BEST

There was an article in TIME magazine about a Japanese doctor who lived through the terrible bombing of Hiroshima. When the blast occurred, Dr. Fumio Shigeto was waiting for a streetcar only one mile away, but was sheltered by the corner of a reinforced concrete building. Within seconds after the explosion his ears were filled with the screams of helpless victims all around him. Not knowing for sure what had happened, he stood there for a moment bewildered-one doctor wondering how he could ever handle this "mountain" of patients. Then, still somewhat stunned, Shigeto knelt, opened his black bag, and began treating the person lying at his feet.

Many times we feel overwhelmed by all the problems and needs in our world. We certainly cannot run around trying to help everyone in need. But we can do what that Japanese doctor did. We can help the person lying at our feet. Do the best you can, where you are, with what you have.

I am only one, I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do-I ought to do, what I ought to do-by the grace of God- I will do. You cannot do everything, but you can do something. God wants you to do your best, and leave to Him the rest.

St. Isaac the Syrian wrote:

If you cannot labor with your body, at least make efforts in your mind.

If you cannot fast for two days, fast at least till evening; if you cannot fast till evening, be careful not to overeat.

If you are not a peacemaker, at least do not be addicted to strife.

If you cannot close the mouth of a man who is judging his brother, at least refrain from judging him in this.... DO YOUR BEST

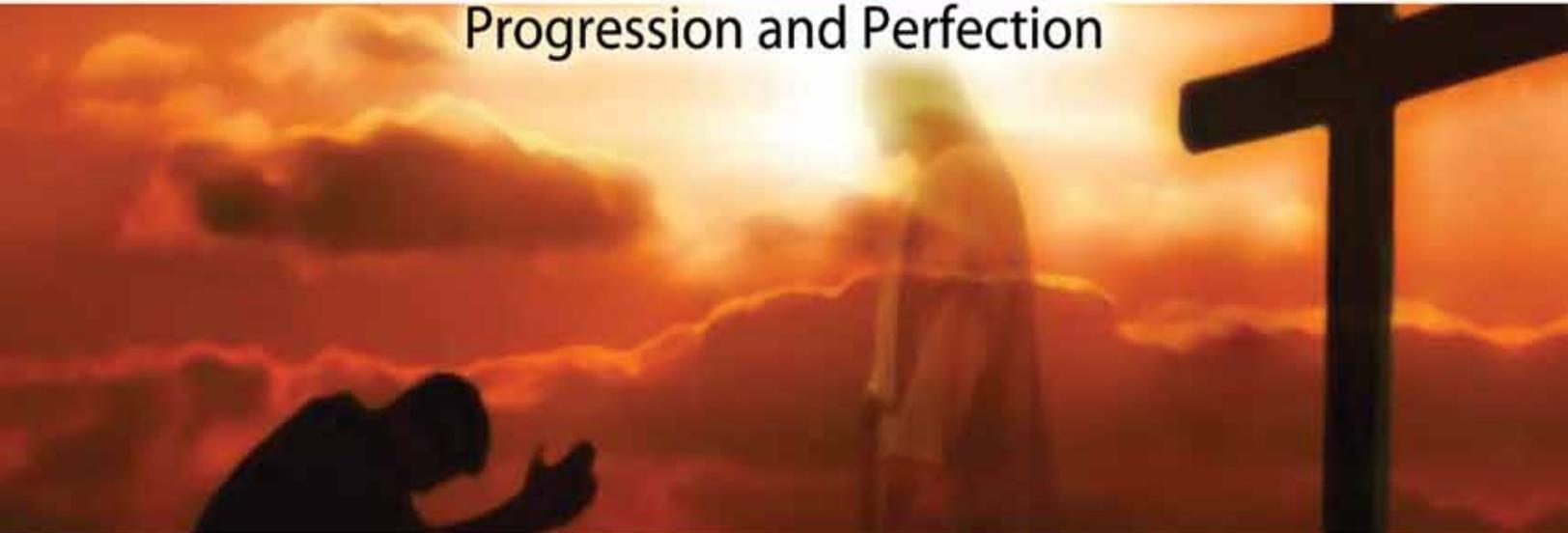
(From his book: Life of Repentance and Purity- St. Vladimir's Seminary Press- New Edition)

By Pope Shenouda III

REPENTANCE



Progression and Perfection



A person progresses and advances in repentance just as in any other virtue. He keeps progressing until he reaches its perfection. ***So then, what is the starting point of repentance? Is it leaving sin in the fear of God? There is a point before leaving sin, and that is the desire for repentance.***

Many do not want to repent because they enjoy sin and wish to remain in it. Their character is beautiful in their own eyes and they do not want to change. So the simple desire to repent is a good starting point. God's grace accepts this desire and asks: "Do you wish to be healed?" The desire to be healed begins the work of His grace in the person. The next step, then, is actually leaving sin.

More important than leaving sin is abandoning it in the heart and mind. A person may leave sin practically, but the love of sin is still in his heart. He yearns for it and regrets certain opportunities when he could have sinned, but did not. Such a person had left sin for the sake of God's commandments, not because he hates sin. He should progress in repentance until sin is removed from his heart.

The perfection of repentance is the hatred of sin. This means a person hates sin with all his heart, is disgusted by it, and does not need any effort to overcome it since it no longer agrees with his nature. Here the person reaches the edge of purity.

Leaving the most prominent sin in one's life and hating it comes after the next upward step. That next step is leaving the sins that are revealed through spiritual progression. Thanks to God's compassion for us, He does not reveal our every sin and weakness to us all at once, so that we do not feel worthless. Each time we hear spiritual sermons and read God's book and other spiritual books, our weaknesses and shortcomings—which need treatment, struggle, and repentance—are revealed to us. Here we enter into a process of cleansing and purification that continues throughout life.

Because the devil leaves one battleground and fights in another, we should be ready for him in every battlefield. Even the sin of which we have been relieved for a period may tempt us again. In this way repentance will remain with us throughout life.

Repentance is not only for resisting sin. There is also repentance for shortcomings in spiritual progression. The penitent should bear fruit worthy of repentance (Mat. 3:8); with this he will enter into the fruit of the sin of not bearing fruit, as the Bible says: "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Repentance, then, is not merely a stage which passes; it remains with us. There is no one without sin, not even if he lived only one day on earth. For we all sin and need repentance. **Therefore, repentance becomes a daily activity.** “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8). **There is a difference between the repentance of sinners and the repentance of saints.** Sinners repent of the sins that are an obvious breach of the commandments, the sins which show their lack of love for God. As for the saints, they repent of minor shortcomings, which are caused by human weaknesses. Because of their desire for the life of perfection, they see before them stages to be overcome before they are perfected. During all of this, their hearts are protected in the love of God.

The Church has laid down for us daily prayers during which we can ask for repentance.

In the petitions and psalms of the Agpeya, we note the following prayers:

- i. The confessing of sin and worthiness of punishment, in Psalm 6 (in the First Hour) and Psalm 50 (51) (in the introduction of every hour) and in the petitions of the Sunset Prayer (the Eleventh Hour).
- ii. The request for forgiveness, such as in the petitions and absolution of the Sixth Hour, and in the rest of the prayers.
- iii. Asking the Lord to save the person who is praying from sin itself, such as the absolution of the Third Hour.
- iv. Asking for guidance for forgiveness along the path, as in Psalm 118, which is prayed in the Midnight prayer, and the petition, “Lord, by Your grace, protect us this night from sin,” which is prayed during the Twelfth Hour.
- v. Blaming oneself and rebuking one’s soul for its falling and carelessness, as in the petitions of the Prayer Before Sleeping (the Twelfth Hour).
- vi. Awakening, the soul to repentance, reminding it about death, the Judgment, and Christ’s Second Coming, as in the petitions of the Prayer before sleeping and in the Gospels and petitions of the Midnight Prayer.

This demonstrated that we ask for repentance every day and at every hour. Here are some examples. The person prays in the petitions of the Prayer before sleeping (the Twelfth Hour): “Behold, I am about to stand before the Just Judge in fear because of my numerous

sins... Repent, therefore, O my soul. So long as you dwell on earth... What answers would you then give? You are lying on the bed in sin and slow to control the body.” In the Sunset Prayer (the Eleventh Hour): “If the righteous through toil are saved, where shall I, a sinner appear?”

In the Midnight Prayer: “Give me, Lord, foundations of tears as You did in the past to the sinful woman.” In the Sixth Hour: “Break the bonds of our sins, Lord Christ, and save us.” In the Third Hour: “Purify us from the iniquities of the body and soul, lead us to a spiritual life so that we may proceed in the Spirit and not fulfill the desire of the flesh.”

More time is required to enter into the details concerning repentance in the prayers of the Agpeya; in fact, this would require a separate book. With all of this daily prayer, would anyone have the courage to say that repentance was a stage through which he had passed, and that he was now entered into a state of heavenliness in which he could ask for virtues and miracles?

He who thinks that he has passed the stage of repentance has not examined himself well. In other words, he has not examined in the light of the commandments and with the spirit of humility. For example, who among us truly loves his enemies (Matthew 5:44)? Who among us enjoys reading the law of the Lord day and night (Psalm 1)? Who among us prays at all times without losing heart (Luke 18:1)? The commandments are many, and we have not fulfilled any of them.

I am embarrassed to go into further detail, since some people might fall into humiliation. Silence is better. Suffice it to say that repentance is a must for all of us, in every day of our lives. If only we would all read and contemplate the spiritual stages that were reached by the saints. Then we would know that we are sinners! Amazingly, the saints who reached these stages used to say that they were sinners who required repentance, and they wept over their sins. What, then, should we do?



"AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP" (Jn. 3:14).

by Fr. Gawargious Kolta

When Nicodemus, the teacher of the Jews met our Lord at night, He spoke to him about the mystery and the goal of His incarnation, mankind redemption and the everlasting life.

The Lord tried to explain to him important spiritual concepts, but Nicodemus could not comprehend anything.

+ This teacher stayed a long time without realizing the core of the message of Christ. He only believed that Jesus Christ was a teacher, who came from God, because he was amazed at the great signs, which the Lord did and the words He spoke (Jn. 3:2). His doubt and confusion remained, till he saw the crucifixion of Christ and His resurrection. He then believed that He is the Messiah who came for our salvation and he became one of His disciples.

+ Our Lord Jesus told Nicodemus some heavenly matters because He knew his kind heart, his confused soul and his eagerness to know the truth. Nicodemus was the man who tried to defend Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin (Jn. 7:50). While the disciples of the Lord fled away and hid themselves when the Jews seized Him, Nicodemus was so brave and faithful to the Lord that he came and took His body after He died on the cross. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds and wrapped the body in linen cloth. He carried the holy body with Joseph of Arimathea and buried Him (Jn. 19:39-42).

+ The Lord knew Nicodemus' sincerity, and thus He explained to him the symbolic meaning of the bronze serpent, which was lifted by Moses in the wilderness. Nicodemus, as a teacher of the Jews, knew that Israel sinned and spoke against God and against Moses, saying: **"Why you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water and our souls loathes this worthless bread"** (Num. 21:5). The Lord sent the fiery serpents among the people and they bit them and many of the people died. When the people came to Moses and admitted their sins against God and Moses, he prayed for them and the Lord told him to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole and whoever was bitten would be healed, when he looked to the bronze serpent (Num. 21:4-9).

+ **Lifting the bronze serpent on a pole was a symbol of the death of Christ on the cross.** All those who believe in the Lord Jesus and His cross receive salvation, and are saved from eternal death. When the Lord said to Nicodemus: **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the**

wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up", He added: **"Whoever believes in Him (who was lifted up on the cross) should not perish, but have everlasting life"**. So, the fiery serpents that killed many people are Satan, the old serpent, who killed many with his poison, and all who were slain by him were strong men (Prov. 7:26).

+ **The bronze serpent was a symbol of Jesus Christ**, who carried the sins of all mankind in His body and died on behalf of us all. He killed the sin by His body. St. Paul mentioned this: **"God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin, He condemned sin in the flesh"** (Rom. 8:3). Thus, man was freed from sin by Him who took the likeness of sinful flesh, to abolish the poison of the serpent (death). We can say: "By Christ's death, He exterminated death. He condemned and abolished death by His death". By His resurrection, He gave us His life, that we can say with St. Paul: "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us ... having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). He, who believes in that great redemption, accomplished by Jesus, has to live a life of righteousness. St. Peter said: **"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed"** (1 Pet. 2:24).

+ Jesus is the Lamb of God who carries the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). He killed the sin and the serpent, as He bruised the head of Satan, who devised people to commit sins. St. Paul clarified this, saying: **"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them in it (the cross)"** (Col. 2:15). Everyone who looks in faith to the crucified Jesus is healed and receives salvation from sin and eternal death, and gains everlasting life, as the power of Satan and corruption are defeated.

+ + +

+ **There are many symbols of the Lord's crucifixion and redemption in the books of the Old Testament:**

1- Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac (Gen. 22).

This event is a living symbol and a clear presentation of God's salvation, through the cross, and declaration of Christ's resurrection. The church meditates on that event on covenant Thursday

liturgy, remembering the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice during the fraction of the Lamb.

St. Paul mentioned Abraham's obedience to God's command as a sign of faith, saying: **"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, .. his only begotten son, .. Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense"** (Heb. 11:17-19). This means that Abraham had faith in the resurrection. The wood of the burnt offering that Isaac carried till he reached the place of offering (mount Moria) was a symbol of the cross carried by Christ in the way to Golgotha.

Isaac (the sacrifice) was the only son of Abraham, and so the Lord Jesus is the only Son of the Father. Thus, the Lord said to Nicodemus: **"God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son"** (Jn. 3:16). St. Paul also said: **"He who did not spare His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"** (Rom. 8:32).

After the three days walk to that mount, Isaac returned back alive with his father; likewise is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus on the third day. St. Clement of Alexandria said: **"Abraham's soul was comforted on the third day, when he knew the mystery of the resurrection of the crucified, and he rejoiced as he saw it in his son (Jn 8:56)"**.

2- The heavenly ladder of Jacob (Gen. 28:12-22):

This ladder is a symbol of the cross of our Lord. St. Jerome said: **"By faith we ascend through the cross to enjoy the heavenly glory. The cross of our Savior is the ladder of Jacob, on which he saw the angles descending and ascending. This vision happened when Jacob was on his way to his uncle to take for himself a wife. Thus, our Lord Jesus Christ (the actual Jacob) was crucified and died on the cross (the ladder) before taking to Himself His church. He offered His blood on the cross as a dowry for His kingdom"**.

3. The Passover lamb (Exod. 12:3-7):

The Passover lamb was roasted in fire on two crossed iron rods, resembling the cross. After the Passover, the Israelites were freed from Pharaoh's slavery. **Our Lord is our Passover who was sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7)** and He suffered the fiery agony of crucifixion to pay our debts to the divine justice, and freed us from the slavery of Satan.

4- The Rod of Moses (Exod. 14:15-29):

Moses lifted up his rod and stretched his hand over the Red Sea and divided it, and the Israelites passed over it and were saved from Pharaoh and his horsemen, who came down to the sea, drowned and died.

Our Lord Jesus stretched his hands on Calvary and struck Satan by the wood of the cross (the Rod), saying: "It is finished"

(Jn.19:30). He came down to Hades and saved mankind from eternal death. Thus, when we believe in His crucifixion and salvation, we have to go through the baptismal water (the Red Sea), as was said by St. Paul: "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1Cor. 10:2). While we are in the wilderness of this world, we follow our Savior Jesus, as the Israelites followed Moses, till we enter the promised heavenly Jerusalem.

Also the Lord asked Moses to take his rod and strike the rock and water would come out of it and Israel would drink and quench their thirst in the wilderness (Exod. 17:5-7). Also, we could have never been filled from the fountain of God's eternal love, if Christ had not been struck by the cross. As the rock was struck once and openly, the Lord was hanged on the cross publicly and offered Himself, once for our salvation (Heb. 7:27). St. Paul confirms "That Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

5 – The green tree cast by Moses into the bitter water in Marah (Exod. 15:23-25):

The Lord asked Moses to cast the tree into the bitter waters in Marah and the water was made sweet, and the people could drink. The tree resembles the cross, as without it and without believing in the crucified Christ, man would perish by the bitterness of sin. Also, by the power of the cross (the green tree) we can fulfill the commandments of God, and their seeming difficulty is turned to ease and sweetness. There is no way for preaching except through the cross of our Lord. St. Paul said: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The sweet water also resembles the water of baptism that demolishes the old nature of man and gives him the new nature (2Cor. 5:17).

6- The defeat of Amalek by Moses' prayers and stretched hands (Exod. 17:10-15):

When the Israelites started to fight Amalek (the giants), Moses stretched his hands in the shape of the cross, till they defeated Amalek. It was written: **"Aaron and Hur supported his hands one on one side and the other on the other side and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek"** (Exod. 17:12,13). The same, when Christ stretched His hands on the cross, He defeated Satan (Amalek), and saved us from eternal death and He will lead us in triumph (2 Cor. 2: 14) and we will be more than conquerors. By His cross Satan fell like lightning from heaven to Hades (Lk. 10:18).

+ + +

Let us carry His cross joyfully, unite with Him sincerely and say with St. Paul: **"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me"** (Gal. 2:20). He Also said: **"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"** (Gal. 6:14).



Always Giving Hope

BY MARK HANNA



From No Hope At All

The circumstances could not be worse! The weather was terrible! The injustice of the judgment was obvious! The execution of a righteous man on false testimony was most unfair! The shame and humiliation of these events was unspeakable! The tears and agony of loved ones who watched was too awful for words! But then there was the resurrection!

We have all been faced with what seems like an unsurpassable crisis. We have all had our backs to a wall with what seemed like a catastrophe fast approaching. We have all experienced feeling like the next moment was going to be the last in our lives. But like the Red Sea wondrously parting as the mighty army of Pharaoh fast came upon Israelites, the resurrection of Christ so wonderfully turned the disciples' and Mary's despondence into an unspeakable exhilaration. News of the resurrection of Christ was perhaps the greatest unexpected twist to what seemed like the end of not only a chapter, but of Life itself. The resurrection came with the splendor of hope once more of a secure future. The fear that the disciples had following the execution of the Lord Jesus so that they went into hiding from the outside world was replaced by courage to once again resume public life. There was again hope for a future in the security of being with God.

The Hopeless Facts of Life

Perhaps we are living in the last days, or maybe not. A characteristic of this day and age we live in is great stress, anxiety, and worry. The future for many seems unpredictable and dim, in contrast to "a bright future." People all over the world get treated for stomach ulcers, one notable cause of which is excessive stress. People in great numbers regularly meet with psychologists and therapists just to talk about their troubles. People take medication for a host of ailments, some just for dealing with anxiety or hopelessness. On a geo-political level, the measure of unrest in the world seems near a boiling point. Just when the war on terrorism seemed to take center stage in the world, there appeared almost out of nowhere the nuclear crisis with North Korea. As if the wars in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan were not enough, now it seems like we are approaching a third World War. It seems that hate and hostility in the world is on the rise. What next? Can there be hope in this world? A line from J.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers struck me as best describing the general spirit of our world. One character told a young warrior, "There is no hope left in this land." He referred to the fictional land of "Middle-earth" where good and evil constantly warred for control. Perhaps the fictional land of Middle-earth represents the state of

the real world you and I live in. But because Christ lives, surely there is hope!

The Rebirth of Hope

The resurrection of Christ was -- and is -- the rebirth of hope for every hopeless person. St. Mary Magdalene was one such hopeless woman as she wept at the tomb of Christ at what seemed like disaster upon disaster -- the body of the killed Lord was stolen. But then Christ spoke to her, being alive as He is immortal God (John 20:11-18). The two apostles on the road to Emmaus were despondent about their supposed Savior Jesus of Nazareth. To them not only did Christ appear but He walked with them, explaining the Scriptures to them, staying with them, giving them "communion" and revealing Himself to them (Luke 24). He restored their hope that He is alive forevermore. When St. Peter, who had denied the Lord three times wept bitterly at his cowardice and denial, thought that he was forever cast out of the group of followers of Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ restored him 3 times by asking St. Peter to, "feed" and "tend" His sheep (John 21:15-17). To all His followers the Lord was sure to point out that even though He would be captured and killed, He would rise again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). This He was sure to promise every time He predicted His crucifixion lest anyone thought that He anticipated that death would be the end of God's story. He also made a point of foretelling this so that there was still hope in waiting for His fulfillment and eventual triumph over what seemed as the end of all hope.

The Hope Christ Always Gave

In His sermons, parables and miracles, Christ always made a point of giving hope. To His hearers on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), He taught that there was a blessing for all who are poor in spirit, sorrowful, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and persecuted for righteousness. These were among the most hopeless of people, but to them Christ gave hope in sharing God's blessing and favor. He assured His followers that there was nothing impossible for God (Mark 10:27). Regarding what some would think are unanswered prayers, He taught "to ask ... seek ... knock" saying, "for everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). To those who prayed long without answer He gave the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) to tell them that one "always ought to pray and not lose heart" (v. 1). To those who strayed or were lost, Christ dedicated three parables to emphasize the point that to him or her who doesn't know how to

return He will come searching for them and to him or her who is lost due to circumstances outside his or her control, He will expend great effort until He restores them and finally, to him or her who chose to be lost, He will yet again be watching and waiting for them to come to their senses and return again to God's embrace (Luke 15). Regarding the sinful people who did not even know how to speak to God out of shame, Christ told the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) so that all who heard it could hope to be justified in spite of their sinful past. Christ demonstrated this same point when He called Zacchaeus, entered His home and accepted his repentance (Luke 19:1-9).

As to those who understood that God's door was closed to them, Christ dispelled this understanding when He exemplified the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself by showing that the Samaritan, considered an enemy or a dog to the Jews, is better than the highly revered priest or Levite so that the Samaritan was considered the neighbor in that commandment. Proclaiming that "great was her faith," Christ praised the Syro-Phoenician woman and healed her daughter (Matthew 15:21-28) even though she was a Gentile perceived to be excluded of God's favor.

The Hope within Us

It is a basic tenet of our faith to look around us and see the good in others, the light beyond the momentary darkness, the hope past whatever current circumstances. We are amazed when we meet someone who has seemingly gone through a great misfortune or disaster yet has a positive attitude and outlook toward the future. We look at them in amazement wondering how he or she can possibly maintain that peace and smile on their face, but it is the treasure of the hope within them. St. Peter tells us, "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is within you" (1 Peter 3:15). That hope within us is the power of Christ who strengthens us. The same Spirit of Him who gave hope to everyone who came in contact with Him must be inside us and we in turn must spread this Spirit to everyone we come in contact with. St. Paul explains this hope writing, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

Sowing Seeds of Hope

The coming Messiah was Philip's hope and in the Lord Jesus his hope was found. Not being able to contain his excitement at finding Christ, Philip ran and told Nathanael (John 1:45). The Samaritan Woman likewise preached to her whole village the hope that the Messiah had come to them (John 4:39).

Likewise St. Mary Magdalene, the tradition says, went to Pontus Pilate holding an unhatched egg to demonstrate to him that Christ had in fact risen from the dead as a living chick comes out of the lifeless eggshell. So it is with everyone who comes in contact with Christ. The apostles proclaimed boldly, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

The book of Acts tells us that the name of the Apostle Barnabas meant "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36) and this son of encouragement did in fact encourage the newly converted Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul) to begin preaching (Acts 11:25-26). This seed of the Christian faith bore tremendous fruit through the preaching of St. Paul who got started due to the encouragement of St. Barnabas.

It was said of the Lord Jesus, "A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoking flax He will not quench" (Matt. 12:20). He saw hope in the feeble reed that was likely to break and potential in the smoking flax to light again. St. Paul similarly told the Hebrews, "**strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed**" (Heb. 12:12-13). It is because we have hope that we can encourage one another. It is because God has filled us with hope that we can wait for the morning that follows the darkest night (Psalm 30:5). There is hope in this land so long as God is with us. That is the significance of His name IMMANUEL, that is "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Yes, in fact, misfortunes and tragedies happen and will happen, but God is present to wipe away our tears. He is there through those who remind us of the hope that awaits us and the hope that is in us. St. Paul when he was thrown in prison wrote his most joyful epistle—The Epistle to the Philippians. He told them, "rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice ... the Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing but in everything with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7). He made sure to explain to them why he was so joyful. He tells them that the Lord is near and that as a result of God's nearness He can adamantly encourage them to rejoice. As if to ask, "how can we not rejoice and be hopeful when God is so very near?" In light of this St. Paul tells the Philippians not to be anxious about anything for there is assured hope in God. Looking back on our life with thanksgiving fuels that trust.

Even though our world seems to have gone crazy-- there are wars and rumors of wars, pestilences, and famines, as Christ told us would happen (Matthew 24), we are secure in the hope that He is near in our distress. We are confident that our Christ wants us to keep our eyes fixed on Him and His promises—"You will keep him in perfect peace," Isaiah writes, "whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). "We are" St. Paul reminds us, "more than conquerors through Him who loved us ... confident that neither death nor life ... nor things present nor things to come ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39).

Looking at the half empty glass is the hopeless look, however, seeing the flip side of it—the glass half full—is the hopeful look we all need to train our senses to see. I love the saying

of St. Paul as he described his state while ministering to the Corinthians, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10). We need to do likewise, sit with people and help them see beyond their fog of hopelessness. Fr. Boules George of St. Mark in Heliopolis, Egypt, said of such a person, “you can meet with a pessimistic person and their tone can just depress you”. In fact, you will meet such people but rather than being overcome by their problems you should help them to see things in their proper perspective. The problem is that people are so mired in their own problems that they cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel, as the saying goes, or that the tunnel does in fact have an end.

St. Paul, nearing the end of his epistle to the Romans, writes, “may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). In fact, we too all need to be filled with hope in order to pass it on to others and for this we need to ask God to fill us with this gift. Christ teaches “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45), therefore let us be filled with hope that would overflow to others.

King David having experienced God’s goodness speaks confidently of his hope saying, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me” (Psalm 138:8). Similarly, St. Paul tells of his faith and hope saying, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it ...” (Philippians 1:6). We all need this hope and confidence in the Source of hope.

The hope that God has given us is the very hope the world needs today to heal from all its depressing ailments. Spreading this hope is done by communicating it—wholly believing in this hope—to one person at a time. As this hope spreads it will affect all who come in contact with you, but the roots of this hope must be first grown in you.

The Holy Spirit, who transformed the apostles’ hopelessness when they came into contact with the risen Christ, will likewise not only transform you but will transform all who see the hope that is in you. As for those hopeless circumstances...“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain [whatever problem or difficulty]? Before Zerubbabel [your name or that of the person you are giving hope to] you shall become a plain” (Zechariah 4:6-7).

The Bible in China:



CHINA:

30 Years of Printing God’s Word

Amity Printing Company, which is the only authorized printer of Bibles for China, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2015. Since its founding, Amity Printing Company has grown into one of the largest Bible printing presses in the world, producing a total of 140 million Bibles—70 million for mainland China and 70 million for other countries. American Bible Society President and CEO Roy Peterson and his wife, Rita, attended the celebration event in November.

“The way for the church in China to be good and healthy

is to have better access to the Bible,” says Peterson.

The number of Christians in China has been steadily growing. Estimates indicate that there are about 100 million believers in China. Through Amity Printing Company, these new Christians will have access to God’s Word in a language and format they understand.

To read more updates about how God is working around the world, visit [Facebook.com/AmericanBible](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanBible).



FAITH and Evidence

One day I was listening to a conservative radio talk show hosting Dr. Richard Dawkins, who is an evolutionary biologist and a prominent atheist. During the dialogue Dr. Dawkins defined faith as "believing without evidence". While this statement is true in its face value, it is not as simple as it seems.

First, let us look at the meaning of the word "faith". According to the dictionary, the English word faith is from Latin *fidem*, akin to *f dere* (to trust). Faith is complete confidence or trust in a person. Trust may either be given to another party/person without questioning, or earned through a track record of trustworthiness of that party/person (trustee).

Trust (faith) that neither requires evidence nor asks questions to ascertain reliability of the trustee is a blind faith. Intelligent faith, on the other hand, is a trust established through a track record based on evidence relating to scope of knowledge and reliability of the trustee. The scope of knowledge of the trustee relates to depth and breadth of information, while reliability relates to the truthfulness of information given by the trustee.

If we apply this to the Christian faith, God has provided evidence all through His relationship with humans as recorded in the Bible, both in the New and Old Testaments. This includes, but are not limited to, the fulfilled prophecies of the old and new testaments, the miracles performed by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and His disciples in the New Testament books, the eye witnesses of the Lord's resurrection, and so many other evidence that points to the existence of a pow-

erful, knowledgeable and loving Creator.

The only challenge to the above argument is whether or not the Bible is a credible documentary of all of these historical accounts. The credibility of biblical account has been consistently challenged by skeptics relative to its integrity and reliability. Integrity pertains to content stability over time without any change, e.g., additions, deletions or modifications. Reliability pertains to authenticity and truthfulness of biblical accounts.

David Limbaugh in his book "Jesus on Trial" has covered the issue of biblical integrity and reliability in chapters 7-10, in great detail using Christian and non-Christian sources, providing the historical and archeological evidence in support of the credibility of the Bible. The bottom line here is that the Christian faith is based on evidence that God Himself has provided, and has been verified fully over time, to dismiss any future doubt about His existence and love for mankind.

Once faith has been established based on evidence and internal conviction we should, from this point forward, trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

At this stage our faith is not a blind faith but rather an embrace of the concept that God has the perfect knowledge and wisdom that we all are lacking, and desperately in need of. That is why God said through the prophet Isaiah "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa 55:9)

The Flesh against the Spirit

Stations of Life

"Kibroth-hattaaveh": The graves of lust

Fr. Augustinos Hanna



Numbers 33 lists 40 places between the exodus from Rameses and the arrival of the Israelites in the plains of Moab 40 years later. We want to compare a station of wandering in the wilderness of Israel with our own life. The Bible says of the time of the wandering, "Now all these things happen unto them for examples; and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4). Numbers 33:16-17, "And they removed from the desert of Sinai, and pitched at *Kibroth-hattaavah* (*which means "the graves of lust"*). And they departed from Kibroth-hattaavah, and encamped at Hazeroth."

What had happened? The people had lusted after flesh, meat. How did this come about? They had let themselves be influenced by the non-Israelites who had left Egypt with them. Instead of ruling over them, they were the ones who were ruled over. "And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" (Numbers 11:4)

Moses was so helpless that he confessed, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me". We often come to a point where the flesh or lust of the flesh wants to rule over us, and we say like Moses, "I can't go on. I can't bear it any more."

God gave Moses a command, to show him how he could bear the lust of the Israelites. He was to choose 70 elders, and the Lord would put His Spirit on them (Numbers 11:16-17, 25-29). Later on, in the camp of the Israelites there were two men who were also filled with the Spirit, which Joshua complained about. But Moses replied "Would God that all the Lord's people

were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Number 11:29).

That is the point! If the whole people were under the leadership and obedience of the Spirit, it would not be ruled by the lust and deception of the accompanying non-Jews. The two men were not in the tabernacle but remained outside in the camp, and were filled with the Holy Spirit. *This is to say to us that we should not only be spiritual in certain times and places, but also in the "camp," that is in our daily lives at home, at work and at school.*

A little later, a wind blew from the Lord which brought quail from the sea. *The people who were lusting after flesh gathered them greedily and began to eat them. But while the flesh was still between their teeth, they were afflicted by a plague. The place of the place was latter called "graves of lust," because the people who lusted were buried there (Number 11:34). The lust of the flesh was punished.*

Thus we see on the one side the working of the Holy Spirit, and on the other side the cry of the people for flesh, and their lust. There are only these two possibilities: order through the Spirit of God, or the results of the lust of the flesh, "*For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live*" (Rom. 8:13)

The great problem was that the majority of the Israelites did not make any room for the working of the Holy Spirit, but held fast to Egypt and let themselves be deceived by the non-Israelites. So God made the shocking statement through the prophet Ezekiel, "*But they rebelled against Me. And would not hearken unto Me:*

they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt” (Ezekiel 20:8).

It took God 3 days to liberate His people from Egypt, but 40 years to free them from the idols of Egypt!

The journey to the Promised Land under normal circumstances would last 11 days (Deuteronomy 1:2), but between Israel and the reaching of the promise stood not the distance but the condition of their hearts. And many of them died.

It is tragic when a person clings to sin for so long, until he dies of it in a “grave of lust.” Israel’s situation symbolizes the battle of the Spirit against the flesh, “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Corinthians 10:6). “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to one another: so that you do not the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:17; Romans 8:4, 9, 13).

Certainly, every Christian can have his own understanding of freedom in Christ within a Biblical framework. For some a glass of wine is forbidden or too much, and others find nothing wrong with it. One person has no TV in the house; the other watches a limited amount of TV. For some, a head covering is mandatory, for others not. One is more broad-minded and the other narrow-minded. One has a pronounced sense of humor, and the other is more serious. Every Christian has his or her idea of freedom and personal limits. And we may not make our subjective attitude a law for others (Roman 14).

For the case in which we really are living in the flesh, the Lord has given us a conscience, the Bible, the Holy Spirit and the Church fathers. We should know how to differentiate between freedom and sin. We should know also that we may not use grace as a cover for sin. It is about things which we know are not good, but sin and lust of the flesh. We carry these burdens around and have a guilty conscience, and so burden ourselves and others. These are things that leave us no peace, and we are always looking for an excuse for. How long did God take to get us here where He wants us? What do we put in His way, and what do we take with us? Is it the “mixed multitude,; the non-Christians? Is it the world that we let deceive us?

“And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again...” (Number 11:4).

In New Testament language this is, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes , and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15, 16). Is it not also true, that what we carry with us from our old life and are not prepared to let go of, continually becomes a snare, a grave of lust? ***We often stumble over the flesh because the Spirit does not rule over us, and we are stuck and cannot make any progress. “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). “They those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5: 24).***

It is also possible that we have not given up ourselves, i.e. let go; that we cling to our lives, our attitude, our religion, although we know that we should let go of our “hobbyhorse” and give it to Jesus in order to really live. It is not that we are committing “suicide,” but are surrendering our lives to Jesus. Moses let go and gave up himself, in that he admitted, “I am not able to bear all this people alone.” And then God intervened and worked through His Holy Spirit.

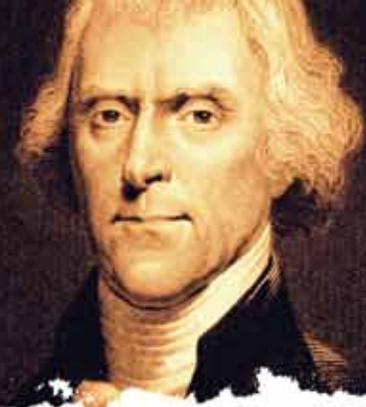
“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

Golden verses memorize about the

HOLY SPIRIT

1. “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).
2. “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5).
3. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom.8:14).
4. “You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you” (1 Cor. 3:16).
5. “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).
6. “Do not grieve the Holy spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).
7. “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19).
8. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6).
9. “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him (Christ). The Spirit of Wisdom and understanding. The Spirit of counsel and might. The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:2).

IT LOOKS HISTORY MAY HAVE TO REPEAT ITSELF!!



When Thomas Jefferson saw there was no negotiating with Muslims, he formed what is now the Marines (sea going soldiers). These Marines were attached to U. S. Merchant vessels. When the Muslims attacked U.S. merchant vessels they were repulsed by armed soldiers, but there is more.

The Marines followed the Muslims back to their villages and killed every man, woman, and child in the village.

It didn't take long for the Muslims to leave U.S. Merchant vessels alone. English and French merchant vessels started running up our flag when entering the Mediterranean to secure safe travel.

Why the Marine Hymn contains the verse, "To the Shores of Tripoli".

This is very interesting and a must read piece of our history. It points out where we may be heading.

Most Americans are unaware of the fact that over two hundred years ago the United States had declared war on Islam, and Thomas Jefferson led the charge!

At the height of the 18th century, Muslim pirates (the "Barbary Pirates") were the terror of the Mediterranean and a large area of the North Atlantic.

They attacked every ship in sight, and held the crews for exorbitant ransoms. Those taken hostage were subjected to barbaric treatment and wrote heart-breaking letters home, begging their governments and families to pay whatever their Mohammedan captors demanded.

These extortionists of the high seas represented the North African Islamic nations of Tripoli, Tunis, Morocco, and Algiers - collectively referred to as the Barbary Coast - and presented a dangerous and unprovoked threat to the new American Republic.

Before the Revolutionary War, U.S. merchant ships had been under the protection of Great Britain. When the U.S. declared its independence and entered into war, the ships of the United States were protected by France.

However, once the war was won, America had to protect its own fleets.

Thus, the birth of the U.S. Navy. Beginning in 1784, 17 years before he would become president, Thomas Jefferson became America's Minister to France. That same year, the U.S. Congress sought to appease its Muslim adversaries by following in the footsteps of European nations who paid bribes to the Barbary States rather than engaging them in war.

In July of 1785, Algerian pirates captured American ships, and the Dye of Algiers demanded an unheard-of ransom of \$60,000. It was a plain and simple case of extortion, and Thomas Jefferson was vehemently opposed to any further payments. Instead, he proposed to Congress the formation of a coalition of allied nations who together could force the Islamic states into peace.

A disinterested Congress decided to pay the ransom.

In 1786, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams met with Tripoli's ambassador to Great Britain to ask by what right his nation attacked American ships and enslaved American citizens, and why Muslims held so much hostility towards America, a nation with which they had no previous contacts.

The two future presidents reported that Ambassador Sidi Haji Abdul Rahman Adja had answered that Islam "was founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Quran that all nations who would not acknowledge their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners, and that every Musselman (Muslim) who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise."

Despite this stunning admission of premeditated violence on non-Muslim nations, as well as the objections of many notable American leaders, including George Washington, who warned that caving in was both wrong and would only further embolden the enemy, for the following fifteen years the American government paid the Muslims millions of dollars for the safe passage of American ships or the return of American hostages.

The payments in ransom and tribute amounted to over 20 percent of the United States government annual revenues in 1800.

Jefferson was disgusted. Shortly after his being sworn in as the third President of the United States in 1801, the Pasha of Tripoli sent him a note demanding the immediate payment of \$225,000 plus \$25,000 a year for every year forthcoming.

That changed everything.

Jefferson let the Pasha know, in no uncertain terms, what he could do with his demand. The Pasha responded by cutting down the flagpole at the American consulate and declared war on the United States.

Tunis, Morocco, and Algiers immediately followed suit.

Jefferson, until now, had been against America raising a naval force for anything beyond coastal defense, but, hav-

ing watched his nation be cowed by Islamic thuggery for long enough, decided that it was finally time to meet force with force.

He dispatched a squadron of frigates to the Mediterranean and taught the Muslim nations of the Barbary Coast a lesson he hoped they would never forget.

Congress authorized Jefferson to empower U.S. ships to seize all vessels and goods of the Pasha of Tripoli and to “cause to be done all other acts of precaution or hostility as the state of war would justify”.

When Algiers and Tunis, who were both accustomed to American cowardice and acquiescence, saw the newly independent United States had both the will and the right to strike back, they quickly abandoned their allegiance to Tripoli.

The war with Tripoli lasted for four more years, and raged up again in 1815. The bravery of the U.S. Marine Corps in these wars led to the line “to the shores of Tripoli” in the Marine Hymn, and they would forever be known as “leathernecks” for the leather collars of their uniforms, designed to prevent their heads from being cut off by the Muslim scimitars when boarding enemy ships.

Islam, and what its Barbary followers justified doing in the name of their prophet and their god, disturbed Jefferson quite deeply.

America had a tradition of religious tolerance. In fact Jefferson, himself, had co-authored the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, but fundamentalist Islam was like no other religion the world had ever seen.

A religion based on supremacy, whose holy book not only condoned but mandated violence against unbelievers, was unacceptable to him.

His greatest fear was that someday this brand of Islam would return and pose an even greater threat to the United States. This should concern every American. That Muslims have brought about women-only classes and swimming times at taxpayer-funded universities and public pools; that Christians, Jews, and Hindus have been banned from serving on juries where Muslim defendants are being judged; Piggy banks and Porky Pig tissue dispensers have been banned from workplaces because they offend Islamist sensibilities; ice cream has been discontinued at certain Burger King locations because the picture on the wrapper looks similar to the Arabic script for Allah; public schools are pulling pork from their menus; on and on and on and on..

It's death by a thousand cuts, or inch-by-inch as some refer to it, and most Americans have no idea that this battle is being waged every day across America. By not fighting back, by allowing groups to obfuscate what is really happening, and not insisting that the Islamists adapt to our culture, the United States is cutting its own throat with a politically correct knife, and helping to further the Islamists' agenda.

Sadly, it appears that today America's leaders would rather be politically correct than victorious!

If you have any doubts about the above information, Google “Thomas Jefferson vs. the Muslim World.”

TOP 12 THINGS WE LEARNED FROM

MAGED RIAD



1. Success is not doing what you love; it's loving what you do. Whether you are the stock-boy at the local convenience store or the CEO of a Forbes 500 company, if you can love whatever it is you are doing and be grateful for the opportunity you've been given, you will be successful.

2. If you can help someone who needs it, help them. If you can't help someone who needs it, help them anyway. We've been very blessed in our lives and it is our duty to share whatever blessings we can with others.

3. Live and die by your word - meaning, think before you speak and don't say anything you don't mean. If you say you will do something, then do it. Without honesty and Integrity, you are worthless, regardless of what you have managed to accomplish or acquire throughout your life. You can fool others, but you can't fool yourself or God.

4. Money in the bank is just a number. You can't take it with you when you go, so if you have it, enjoy it. But enjoy it responsibly.

5. Respect everyone, especially your elders. Whether they are shining your shoes, pouring your water, carrying your bags or parking your car, people are people, and as such, are worthy of your respect and your kindness.

6. One of his favorite quotes was, “Everyone is entitled to my opinion.” And while he would say it jokingly, the truth is he taught us not to be afraid to speak our minds.

7. Hard work and determination, when applied with the proper discipline and a strong will, are the basic tools through which one can accomplish anything.

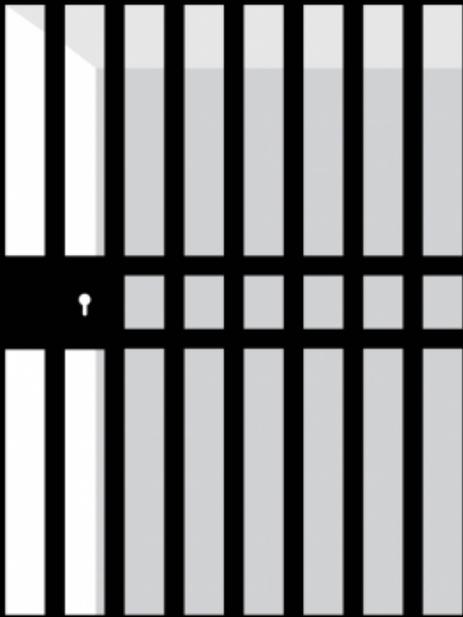
8. Nothing is more important than family. Look after one another, take care of each other and protect each other always. You only have one family and it should never be taken for granted.

9. It is extremely important to be loyal in this life. Without loyalty, the world would just become one big free for all.

10. Avoid conflict whenever possible. Life is tough enough as it is and we don't need to make it any more difficult. Nothing is more luxurious than a peaceful life.

11. If you are going to do something, do it the best that you can. Whether doing something for a client with a \$60 million estate or something for an irritating freeloader, the work you do is a reflection of you, not them. You must take responsibility for your actions.

12. And finally, no matter what is going on in your life, no matter how difficult things may be, you should never be too tired, too stressed or too upset to smile or crack a joke.



Jailing someone for mocking ISIS in a video?

Egypt sentenced four children for doing just that.

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

Freedom of expression is not a crime.

March 13, 2016

Egypt: Reverse Blasphemy Sentences Against Christian Children

5-Year Terms for Video Mocking ISIS

(Beirut) - Egyptian authorities should quash blasphemy sentences handed down to four Christian children and their teacher over a video mocking ISIS. They should also revoke the penal code article that authorities use to prosecute blasphemy.

On February 25, 2016, a juvenile minor offenses court in Minya governorate sentenced three children to five years in prison and ordered the fourth placed in a juvenile facility for imitating Islamic prayer and the act of beheading in a 32-second video that their teacher filmed. The teacher was sentenced to three years in a separate trial.

“These children shouldn’t face prison for expressing themselves, even with an immature joke,” said Nadim Houry, deputy Middle East director. “The continued prosecution of blasphemy cases in Egypt goes against the government’s claim to be promoting a more inclusive vision of religion.”

Two relatives of the children told Human Rights Watch that the teacher filmed the video during a trip in February 2015, shortly after a Libyan affiliate of the extremist group Islamic State, also known as ISIS, released a video showing their beheading of 21 abducted Christians, 20 of them from Minya.

The juvenile court, in the town of Bani Mazar in Minya,

sentenced Mueller Edward, 17; Bassem Hanna, 16; and Alber Ashraf, 16, to five years in prison, while ordering Clinton Yousef, 17, placed in a juvenile facility.

Police arrested them on April 9, 2015, after other students circulated the video and reported it to another teacher in the school. Reports in local newspapers said the video led to anti-Christian protests, including attacks on Christian-owned businesses and an attempt to storm a church. Prosecutors charged the children under article 98(f) of Egypt’s penal code, which outlaws contempt of religion, as well articles 160 and 161, concerning the public conduct of religious rituals, even though the video was filmed in private. The trial began in October 2015.

The relatives of Edward and Ashraf told Human Rights Watch that the village mayor had called them in April and asked them to bring the youths to his house, where police were waiting to take them into custody. Edward’s father said that they thought this was intended as a temporary measure to calm tension in the village. He said that the government had deployed security forces in the village and around their houses for a few weeks to prevent further incidents.

Prosecutors interrogated the children after their arrest and ordered them detained pending investigation. The court renewed the pretrial detention orders until early June, when a judge ordered them released on a 10,000-pound bail (US\$1,280) each. Their lawyer told Human Rights Watch that the families could barely afford to pay.

“They are just teenagers,” said Edward’s father. “They were psychologically troubled by the killings of Cop-

tic Christians in Libya and went for entertainment. They didn't deliberately intend any offense.... How can you try someone for mocking ISIS."

The two relatives said that authorities detained the children in Bani Mazar Police Station, in the same cells as adults and criminal suspects, violating Egypt's Child Law.

"They didn't talk much about what happened inside," Edward's father said. "We were just happy they got out. My son got 98 percent in the high school exams, even though they were taking the exams inside the police station. He wants to study medicine. He's loved by his Muslim colleagues. They were the first ones to warn us that something bad might happen."

The teenagers' lawyer said that a technical unit at Egypt's Radio and Television Union, the government body that oversees public broadcasting, reviewed the video and submitted a biased report to the court that offered opinions instead of simply stating the video's content. The lawyer asked the court several times to review the video to check the validity of the report's claims, but the judge did not respond.

The two relatives said that the youths had to study at home after they were released because they were afraid to go to school.

Egypt's Child Law, passed in 1996 and revised heavily in 2008, requires that children be detained separately from adults and also separated in detention based on the nature of their offense. The law says that officials who do not follow those requirements may be punished with prison and a fine. The law also requires the government to form a special prosecution and court system for children with social and educational staff. Egyptian authorities routinely flout these requirements without consequences, Human Rights Watch said.

The lawyer said that the teacher, Gad Yousef Younan, left his house with his wife and children after a "customary reconciliation" council decided to expel him from the village. Such reconciliation sessions are extra-legal tools typically overseen by officials from the security and religious establishments, and including senior family members that are used to resolve sectarian incidents. They frequently lead to illegal decisions, such as the forced eviction of Christian families. A 2015 report by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, an independent group, counted 45 instances in which reconciliation sessions were used following sectarian clashes between 2011 and 2015. The group stated that such councils foster a pattern of state failure to protect citizens' rights.

More than 28 Egyptian rights groups and political parties condemned the rulings against the children and their teacher and called for the repeal of article 98(f), which has led to an increasing number of prosecutions for blasphemy under the government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights said it has documented at least nine cases in which 12 people were convicted for blasphemy-related charges in 2015, and that 11 cases remained pending. The cases involve both Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians, and atheists.

Younan, who was charged under article 98(f), faced trial in a Bani Mazar minor offenses court, received a three-year sentence for contempt of religion but paid a 2000-pound (US\$260) bail to remain free during his appeal. The lawyer said that the court did not address or order an investigation of the events that led to Younan's forced eviction. Under article 63 of Egypt's constitution, forced eviction is a crime that "does not lapse by prescription."

The children received the maximum punishment under article 98(f), which ranges from a fine of between 500 and 1000 pounds (\$70-130) up to a prison sentence of between six months and five years. The children and their teacher can appeal, but the children must turn themselves in to the police to do so. Ashraf's relative said that the children were terrified from their detention experience in 2015 and do not want to experience it again.

Article 111 of the Child Law gives judges a wide range of disciplinary measures to use in children's minor offenses cases instead of prison, but the judge chose the harshest penalty, the lawyer said. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Egypt is a state party, guarantees the child's right to freedom of expression and that all children should be treated equally and without discrimination, regardless of factors including their or their family's religious background. The convention also requires that children should be detained and imprisoned only according to the law, as a last resort, and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party, guarantees freedom of expression and opinion. The United Nations Human Rights Committee, the expert body that interprets the ICCPR, noted in 2011 that "[p]rohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the Covenant." "Mocking ISIS, or any religious group, with a childish joke is not a crime," Houry said. "Instead of giving in to retrograde views on blasphemy, Egyptian authorities should protect freedom of expression."

Dispatches from the Africa Mercy #3: *The Heroes of Africa*

By Dr. Sherif Emil



Friday, March 4, 2016

March 3, 2016, 22:00: At the end of the third consecutive long operating day, I leave the port of Tamatave for the first time to have dinner at one of the local restaurants with Dr. Heuric Rakotomala, one of four practicing pediatric surgeons in Madagascar, a country of 24 million people. Heuric has come to the Africa Mercy to operate with me for three days. In addition to providing me with a chance to collaborate with local surgeons and learn from them, our joint work has very special significance. (Left-hand photo: Dr. Sherif Emil and Dr. Heuric Rakotomala operating together on the Africa Mercy).

In late 2008, I arrived at the Montreal Children's with an ambitious dream, to integrate a low-income country rotation into our pediatric surgical training program. I felt it would give our fellows a unique perspective on pediatric surgical practice in resource-poor areas of the world, and an appreciation for our own resources. With the help of Dr. Dan Poenaru, who had established East Africa's first pediatric surgical training program in Kijabe, Kenya, we succeeded in creating the rotation and sending Dr. Robert Baird as our first fellow in 2010. The program then evolved into an exchange of fellows between the Montreal Children's and Bethany Kids Kijabe Hospital. Five of our fellows have gone to Kijabe, and we've hosted five of theirs. Heuric was the first graduate of the Kijabe program. Working alongside him on the Africa Mercy in his home country is profoundly satisfying, a fruit of a unique collaboration between North and South.

Heuric is also one of the unsung heroes of Africa, striving to provide pediatric surgical care in the most difficult of circumstances, with major deficiencies in equipment, personnel, funding, and resources. Prior



to arriving on the Africa Mercy, he had traveled to several cities to take care of children who needed his expertise. His trip back home will take two days on difficult, dangerous, winding roads through this vast country. His commitments to his profession, his patients, and his country are unquestionable. (Photo right: Dr. Sherif Emil and Dr. Heuric Rakotomala with ward nurses during rounds).

Heuric also adds a unique flavor to all our work, particularly ward rounds. The patients are proud to see one of their own among the surgical team. His ability to speak the Malagasy language helps break barriers. The nursing staff welcome him warmly and are grateful for his presence. I am comforted, having him with me in the most difficult and challenging cases. In a continent where children die by the thousands every day of completely curable surgical diseases and anomalies, Heuric and those like him are Africa's best hope for improved pediatric surgical care.

Dr. Sherif Emil is a pediatric surgeon and Director of the Division of Pediatric General and Thoracic Surgery at the Montreal Children's Hospital. Over the 2 weeks, he will be part of the volunteer crew of the Africa Mercy, currently docked in Tamatave, Madagascar. The Africa Mercy is the world's largest civilian hospital ship dedicated to bringing hope and healing to tens of thousands of the world's impoverished populations.



Celebrating Our Baptism

...AND GIFT IDEAS TO COMMEMORATE BAPTISMS

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

We celebrate birthdays and wedding anniversaries, but why do we neglect other important anniversaries in our Christian life?

Our baptism and confirmation, through the holy Myron oil in the most transformative moment in our lives; our souls are left with an unforgettable spiritual mark, making us the adopted sons and daughters of God. In our souls receive the completion of baptismal grace and another mark: the seal of the Holy Spirit. Our faith invites us to celebrate and commemorate this day so we never forget the life-changing gifts we have been given in the sacraments.

Baptism day deserves a cake

Do you know the day of your baptism?

Popular author George Weigel posed this question or rather, challenge in his syndicated column for First Things called “Owning Our Baptism.” Since baptism is the most significant day in the life of a Christian and equally as important as a birth-day, arguably more important, why don’t we celebrate it?

Weigel, recalls a story about the former Catholic Pope John Paul 2nd that shows the weight he gave to the sacrament of baptism. In his first pilgrimage to Poland in 1979, “the 264th Bishop of Rome went straight to the chapel that housed the baptismal font and venerated the place where he had been ‘born again’ in 1920.”

Several years later, CBS reporters discovered the



significance of this act. While in Rome filming 48 Hours Inside the Vatican, they had an opportunity to meet and talk with Pope John Paul II. One reporter asked him, “*What was the most important day of your life?*”

You can imagine the reporter’s surprise when the Pope replied, “*The most important day of my life was the day of my baptism.*”

Weigel writes, “The most important day of his life was not the day on which he was ordained a priest, consecrated a bishop, or elected a pope. The most important day of his life was the day of his baptism. Everything else flowed from that, like the waters in Ezekiel’s vision, flowing from the restored temple to renew the face of the earth.”

Following this example, Christians would nice remember the date of their baptism and keep and honor the church certificate of the baptism of their children as they do with their physical birthday certificate, look up the date of their baptism on their baptismal certificate, memorize it, and then celebrate that day in some special way every year hence”.

It would be nice to celebrate our baptisms by remembering that blessed historical day in our prayers and to give thanks to God for the gift of baptism, to remember our faithful parents and the priest who baptized us, and have a cake or dinner with family members and friends and to spread this awareness among them.



The Important Job!

(Author: Unknown)

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.... (1 Corinthians 12:21-22)

In March of 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot as he was walking toward the presidential limousine. Reagan spent several weeks in the hospital recovering from the injuries he sustained in the shooting. And although he was the nation's chief executive, his hospitalization had very little impact on the daily lives of Americans.

On the other hand, garbage collectors went on a three-week strike in a major city not long ago, leaving the city in a mess, causing a major health hazard for the citizens, and bringing the city to a near halt.

Weeks without a president... and weeks without garbage collectors. Which of these had more impact upon the functioning of our nation? Clearly, the absence of the garbage collectors harmed the country much more than the absence of the President. And in the body of Christ, the seemingly insignificant members are often the ones that are most urgently needed.

Your church needs people who will volunteer for seemingly insignificant jobs. Because the truth is that these jobs are not insignificant at all. So don't ever feel like you don't have a crucial part to play in the Kingdom of God. Your skills and talents are needed. Get involved and use them!

Prayer Challenge: Ask God to show you the ministry He's given you to carry out with your gifts and talents.

TIME Magazine

March 7, 2016



Boutros Boutros- Ghali

Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali took the helm of the United Nations at a pivotal time. The end of the Cold War brought new hope, but we quickly realized this brave new world would be far more difficult to manage than we had imagined.

With characteristic directness and intellectual agility, Boutros sought to confront and overcome the complex challenges of the day. It was on his watch that the Agenda for Peace was launched, making the case for preventive diplomacy.

He will be remembered for helping prepare the U.N. for a world where states would no longer be able to control or suppress the forces and furies that ensnare them.

America Magazine

Feb. 29, 2016

Coptic Kidnappings!

More than 150 Coptic Christians took part in a sit-in convened on Sunday, Feb. 7, in front of the provincial administration office in Minya, Egypt, to bring to the attention of the authorities the case of an 18-year-old Coptic girl missing for several days.

The family of the young woman, resident in the city of Samalot, are convinced that she was kidnapped.

Kidnappings that target Christians remain a scourge for the Coptic community in many areas of Egypt. Already several appeals have been launched by Christian organizations to Egyptian authorities, including President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, to ensure that adequate measures are taken to combat this phenomenon.

These flash kidnappings usually end up with ransom demands based on the economic capacity of the families of the hostages. But in several cases, the kidnappings have ended with the death of the hostages!