

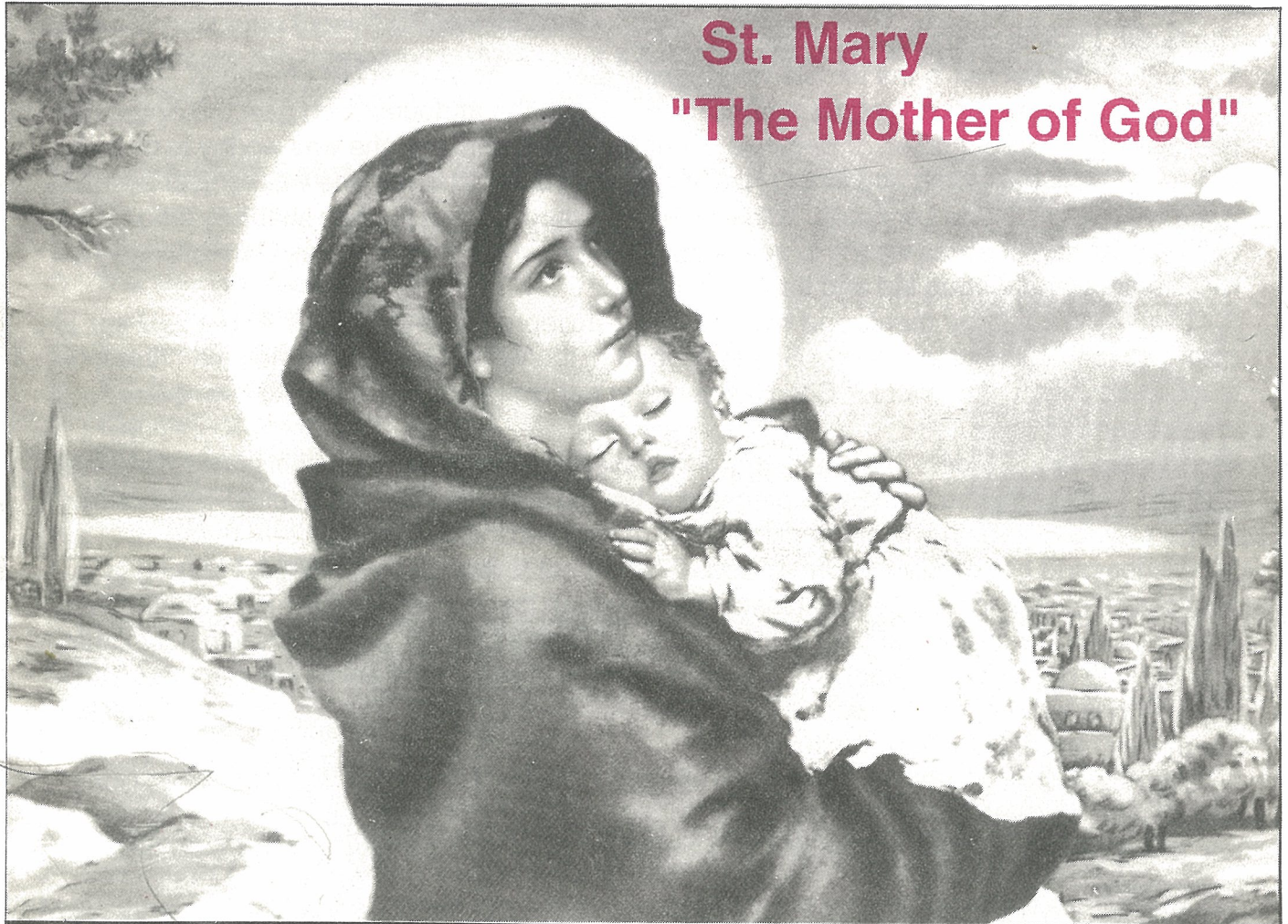
ST. JOHN

AUGUST 1991

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 3, NO.20

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St. Mary
"The Mother of God"

St. John Coptic Orthodox Church

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Saint Mary Our Mother

The Church celebrates on the sixteenth of Messrah (August 22) Of every year the feast of the ascension of the body of pure Mary the mother of God. Saint Mary is a great Saint of multiple virtues and wonderful christian characteristics, that made her a perfect example for each christian to follow. We need to follow her steps in attaining those virtues to reach the fullness of Christ.

Our Great Lady is characterized with:

1- Purity: She served in the temple worshipping God all the days of her childhood. She was full of grace before grace was granted to mankind. On the annunciation day, the Angel told her "Hail Mary Full of grace...." Because of her purity and chastity, she was worthy to bear the Word of God in her womb nourishing Him through her body; and yet, she was forever a virgin.

2- Spiritual Purity: The Lord said: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." She was so pure that she was worthy to see God, carry Him in her womb, nourish Him and care for Him as an infant, a young lad and then as a man.

3- Humility: She was meek and humble. She accepted everything the Angel told her in complete faith (without any fear). She submitted to the will of God in joy, she said: "Let it be to me according to your word." She was gentle in her character, her talk, and kept everything in her heart.

4- Respect for the Elders: She left her home traveling through the mountains to congratulate and help her kin Elizabeth who was pregnant in her old age with John the Baptist. She traveled all the way to Elizabeth without consideration to the hardships of the road.

5- Wisdom and Life of Submission to God: She did not reveal much about the blessing of annunciation except to Elizabeth who said to her through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "Why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Saint Mary told her in trust: "For behold; henceforth, all generations will call me blessed." She acknowledged that God's blessing was with her so she did not fear Joseph her fiance to put her to shame because of her pregnancy, nor did she fear the Jews.

6- Sacrifice of Giving: She gave her life to serve the child of the manger "the Lord Jesus Christ" and Joseph her betrothed. She continued to give the apostles of the Lord all that she kept in her heart until her body ascended to Heaven. Till now, she gives many who ask her intercession.

7- Tolerance of Adversities. She tolerated adversities, both emotional and physical, without complaint. She tolerated the hardship of traveling from Palestine to Egypt when the Holy Family escaped from Herod the king. She also watched her beloved Son, her Saviour suffering on the cross. Simeon told her: "A sword will pierce though your own soul."

Saint Mary has other characteristics such as a life of prayer, a life of strong faith, a life of obedience, a life of patience, a life of simplicity..... For all these traits, God chose Saint Mary to bear the Logos and became truly the Mother of God. St. Cyril the great (the 24th Pope of the See of St. Mark the apostle) said: "Blessed you Mary for in you the divinity united with carnality." We intercede by her always, we trust that her prayers for us before Christ are always accepted.

+ She always presents our needs before Christ with faith, trust and motherly love as she did in the wedding of Cana of Galilee.

+ She helps us in an intrinsic way to fulfill the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ as she tells us to do whatever He asks.

+ We honour the Mother because we honour the Son; whoever does not honour the Mother does not please the Son.

+ She performs miracles with mankind everyday, especially in Egypt. The holy family visited Egypt to escape from King Herod who was seeking to kill the child Jesus. Egypt was honoured by their visit, and the people of Egypt were blessed by the apparition of our Holy Mother Mary in Zeitoun.

1- She appeared in a luminous way, for She is the honorable Mother of Light. she carried the true Light who came into the world.

2- She also appeared as a crowned queen just as the Scripture said: "At your right hand is the queen in gold from Ophir." (Psalm 45:9)

3- Furthermore, she appeared in the form of a luminous dove illuminating the darkness of the night. The church calls Saint Mary the Beautiful dove.

The names of Saint Mary in the Church are:

1- The true queen.

2- Forever virgin.

3- The second Heaven.

4- The honourable mother of light.

5- The golden incense.

6- The beautiful dove.

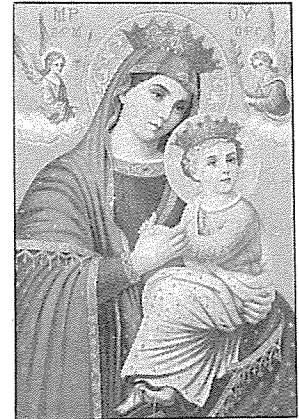
7- The mother of God.

8- The ark lined with gold.

9- The unperishable temple.

10- The hidden menna.

11- The one who is honoured more than the Seraphim and the Cherubim.



In the Psalmody, there are hymns about the mother of God called Theotokos (the one who bore God). She is also called Aaron's rod, Jacob's ladder and Moses' bush.

The church offers a course to identify Mother Mary's presence in the belief of the church (the dogma) and in its different prayers:

1- The Creed's introduction which was put by the third ecumenical council (the council of Ephesus 431 A.D.) says: "We magnify you O Mother of true light..." We say this in the prayers of the hours, in vesper during matins and morning as well as in the offertory.

2- The church has put special psalmodies for the seven days of the week dedicated to the virgin Mary, these are called the Theotokia. In these psalmodies, we find a complete explanation of the Orthodox dogma.

3- The Church says the name of Saint Mary in the congregation of the Saints before all the Martyrs and Saints: "Foremost, the Saintly, the full of Glory, who is ever virgin, the mother of God, the sanctified, the Holy Saint Mary, who gave birth to God, the word in truth..."

4- In the Liturgy, there are special hymns for Saint Mary; these include:

a. The intercessions: "through the intercession of the Mother of God Saint Mary, O Lord grant us the forgiveness of our sins."

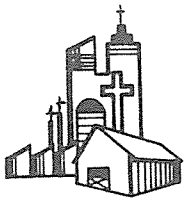
b. Rejoice, O Mary, the maid servant and mother...

c. Tai Shoree...(The golden censor)

d. Shere ne Maria, Hail to you Mary, before the reading of the Book of acts (Ibraxcice).

e. The symbol.

All these hymns and psalmodies are forwarded to God asking Him to accept her intercession for us. This Dogma does not mean that we participate with saint Mary in our worship of God. At the same time, we declare that Saint Mary, the maid servant and the queen, was redeemed



Our Church, it's Faith, Tradition & Struggle

When we tackle these subjects we do not attack anyone. But in love to all we clarify the value of the faith which the church inherited, without any deviation from the faith received from the Lord Jesus by the apostles and handed over to us (1 Cor. 11:23). We are clarifying the faith of our church, to prepare you in this regards to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you (1Peter 3:15). When we know about the true teachings of our church we adhere to it and become aware of any strange teaching or any perversion in interpreting the Bible. We hope that all will be one in Christ, as this was the Lord's supplication in his last prayer with his disciples (John 17:21). But what counts is that there should be unity in faith.

When dealing with these subjects we shall present the faith of the Coptic Orthodox Church through the support of written verses from the Bible, as well as the opposing point of view, thereby learning the true faith of the sound apostolic tradition.

Introduction

Our church kept the true faith and the sacred tradition both in truth and spirit. The reason was that it lived spiritually and far from the materialistic world. It didn't interfere with politics or take over any worldly authority. On the contrary, the church was subject to rulers who believed that every authority is from God (Rom. 13:1). Also monasticism existed in Egypt since the fourth century. This was a great blessing to the church, because it kept the tradition within the framework of the Bible in asceticism and submission. Living in faith in our church strongly correlates to the tradition, as it is clear in our communal prayers (Liturgy), in practicing the sacraments and in it's rituals and hymns, contemplating thoroughly in the biographies of it's fathers, martyrs and saints. This was also manifested in it's spiritual interpretation to the divine inspiration manifested in the holy scriptures, it's teaching and preaching the gospel, and daily life within the framework of the love of Christ.

This is how love grew and deepened in the heart of the church, the bride of Christ towards her bridegroom and saviour Lord Jesus, love which surpassed all love even love of life. The love to all received from the fathers who strived vehemently to keep and stich to what they got from the apostles who entrusted it to trustworthy persons. Therefore they underwent all pressures through torture, deprivation, dispersion, exile, scourging, and killing. The Christian faith was strengthened in the hearts of the believers due to the effectiveness of the tradition in their lives. The tradition has been kept without alteration by the grace of the Holy Spirit who lead the Orthodox Church for twenty centuries. The fathers kept the tradition without dispense. Thus the words of our teacher Diuskoros, after the wife of emperor Markian ordered to smite him on the face and to pull-out the hair of his beard. He picked up the teeth and hair which fell on the ground and sent them to his children in Alexandria saying "This is the fruit of my struggle."

Division of the apostolic church was due to many reasons. Some of the chiefs wanted to change the faith and the tradition which the church received. I mentioned hereafter some of the most important reasons for the division of the church during the ages:

Desire for domination. John Chrysostom said in this respect "He who denies faith destroys one soul i.e. himself, but he who divides the church destroys many souls. Therefore his sin is greater than that of the atheist, and nothing can divide the church as the desire for domination." This was the main reason for the division of the church since the middle of the fifth century, and Jesus the Lord warned his disciples from this desire (Math 20:25-28).

The sin of vanity and pride, this sin was in most of the heretics in the first centuries of Christianity. Each of them interpreted faith and the scriptures from his point of view as he pleased. He insisted on it and didn't want to change it, and didn't accept the interpretation of the forefathers of the church. And pride goes before destruction and a hughty spirit before a fall (Prov. 16:18), and God himself opposes the proud (James 4:6).

Suspicion in the tradition, which the church received from the apostles, the fathers, and denying that the apostles entrusted it to the first church, forgetting that Paul the apostle left Titus in Crete to amend what was defective (Tit 1:5), and also asked Timothy his disciple to entrust what he had heard from him, before many witnesses, to faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). He also commanded the Thessalonians to keep away from any brother who was living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that he received from him (2 Tess. 3:6).

Weakness of faith, this was apparent in not believing in anything which cannot be seen, and not believing in the effectiveness of the sacraments in which the Holy Spirit works. And in these last days we find in addition to that the doubt in the resolutions of the Universal Conferences, deviation from the Orthodox faith as a result of domination of materialistic thinking. Therefore many Christians were attracted to different teachings which did not conform to the essence of faith, mental but lacking the spirit of faith, and the result is that in the Western world there are more than four hundred Christian denominations. Strange enough everyone claims that his sect is the right one and in accord with the word of God proclaimed in the Bible.

Misinterpretation of the verses of the Bible, and depending on one verse, and not on all the verses on any specific subject which should be the basis for studying any theological belief or creed. Also misinterpretation may be a result of ignoring the circumstances or incidents in which the verse was said, or due to the superficial thinking and lack of spiritual depth in interpreting. Some deliberately misinterpret to achieve a specific goal, e.g. to eliminate a belief or tradition of the apostolic church.

Spiritual weakness, and being away from the Orthodox church for some reason; ignorance, negligence of parents, carelessness of pastors, or spiritual weakness of the church at period, during which the believers did not find the satisfying spiritual nourishment in the Orthodox church. In the same time the foreign missions spent abundantly to attract the followers of the Orthodox Church to the beliefs and the churches of these missions, instead of preaching the gospel to non-believers.

The changes in the current time. Some philosophies, scientific ideas, and political trends tend to reject religion and others try to destroy Christianity through strange teachings which do not comply with the true faith, like Jehovah's witnesses, Adventists, Mormans, Christian Science and others. Later we shall tackle their beliefs to show how these churches deviated from the apostolic tradition. This is the time about which Paul said, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings (2 Tim 4:3)." It is the time where many heresies took place as the Bible prophesized (2 Tim 3:1-5, 2 Peter 3:3, 1 John 2:18, Jude 18, 19).

Continued in the nex magazine

by her son's blood which was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of the inequities of the whole world.

Saint Mary used to participate with the apostles in prayers in the upper room of Zion after the ascensin of the Lord Jesus.

As Eve was the mother of every dead after she disobeyed God's commandment, Saint Mary is the Mother of every living on Earth and in Heaven.

Origeon, who is considered a great theologian, says: "No one is able to understand the Gospel of St. John the beloved unless he lies in Christ's bosom and takes the Virgin Mary to be his own Mother."

Question? & Answer.

Question?

What is the difference between living a submissive life and that of a negligent one?

Answer:

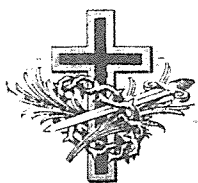
Actually there is a great difference between living a submissive life and a negligent one. Some people lead a lazy unproductive life, neglecting all the talents given to them by God. They misuse what God gave them; good health, money, a chance to improve their life, to grow, and to prosper. Those who engage in this negligent lifestyle often support their position by verses from the Bible. For instance in Mat. 6:25 the Lord states: "Do not be anxious about what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on." Also St. Paul said "Caring for the body is death." Taken out of context these verses seem to support a negligent lifestyle, however that is exactly what's wrong with this interpretation, it takes the verses out of context.

Negligence is a sin. To neglect the precious talent God gave you is a sin. In Mat. 25:26, our Lord condemned and rebuked the lazy, evil slave. Solomen in the book of proverbs 6:6 said; "Go to the ant, O sluggard consider her ways, and be wise." Negligence is a disease that damages and destroys, and there is no cure. When a person neglects his work, studies, health, or home he is messmanaging his life, this leads to a dim future full of failure and disappointment.

In a life of submission a person works at his peak, using all his God given talents, and trusts that God will complete what he lacks. Living in submission also means living happily in peace, without worrying about tomorrow, "For tomorrow will worry about its own things." (Mat 6:34). There is a relation between a submissive life and solemnity in work, and living a life free from anxiety. "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you." (1 Pet 5:7). The Lord Jesus Christ explained this to us in His sermon on the mountain, He said submit your life to God and do not think about tomorrow and its problems. He also stated; "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink....." He wanted to prevent us from being attached to the earthly life, that leads to anxiety. For the love of the world and money leads us through the wide door away from God. God wants us to live close to Him, for He knows our needs, and cares for us, his children.

Saint John Chrysostom had this to say about this subject; " Do not ask for bread through anxiety of this spirit but through hardship of the body, those who struggle good receive abundantly as a reward for their deeds, but a lazy one does not receive anything, but punishment from God." As long as we are in this world we should work without sluggishness, and God will bless the work of our hands. That is why a submissive life requires the following:

1. To live daily with dedication, faith, fulness and accuracy; and to fear God without caring about to-morrow.
2. We should be alert all the time lest the devil tempts us, for the body is weak (Mark 14:38).
3. We would not forget that God rewards man according to his deeds, (Rev 22:12).
4. To trust in all the promises of God, and to acknowledge His deeds with those who keep His covenant and commandments.



Question?

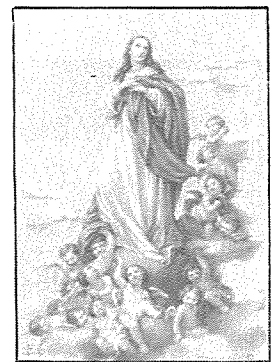
Is the world evil, and does leading a monastic life considered to be an escape from evil?

Answer:

The world is not evil, but the love of the world is a sin. The world is a gift from God to man, so that man can administer and manage the world with care. God created the world and he loves all His creation. For God created every thing good, and did not create evil. The world is a bridge that man has to cross to reach eternity. God created the world with great care, and arranged for it a magnificent system to work it. The heaven speaks of His glory, and the stars speak of His magnificence. God reveals to us His tremendous ability in this magnificent world that He has created and did not leave it to run itself randomly. God always reveals Himself to us everywhere, on the high mountains, in the vast sea, in the far horizon, and from his creation of mankind to the smallest cell.

The world is not evil, but man uses the world in the wrong way and, uses his own will to spoil and destroy God's work. The ax that man uses to plant and cut trees can also be used to kill others. All talents and objects, if used correctly, can glorify God, however when misused they destroy and create evil. The human body can serve as another example, it is the dwelling place of the soul which is the most precious thing to God. Some use it for lust and sin, while others use it for its original purpose, to serve God.

My brother, so many of those who live in the world can live a virteous life and in deep relationship with God. They lead a life of sanctity, and righteousness, and they transform earth to heaven. This leads us to answer the second part of the question. To escape from life to a monastic life, and being a monk is not a goal in itself to escape evil as it is to be alone with God out of pure love. Being alone with God, to be filled with the spirit, and to have experience to serve the church with sanctity, through his experience, teachings, piety, and virtue, these are the goals of the monastic life. A person should not enter into the monastic life because he wants to escape, but because he loves God, and wants to get closer to Him, as well as to serve Him.



Feasts during the month of August

- 1- The commemoration of the death of Anba Balamon (August 1st 316 A.D.).
- 2- The commemoration of death of Saint Joseph the righteous (betrothed) the fiance of St. Mary (August 2, 16 A.D.).
- 3- The commemoration of Saint Mary the Magdalene (August 4).
- 4- The beggining of the fasting of St. Mary (August 7).
- 5- The commemoration of Archangel Michael (august 18).
- 6- The transfiguration. It is a big feast because it concerns Jesus Christ (August 19)
- 7- The commemoration of the death of St. Marina the ascitic (August 21).
- 8- The commemoration of death of St. Tekla Hemanout the Ethiopian (august 22).

Consubstantiation

Consubstantiation, theological term applied by Martin Luther to the actual substantial coexistence and combination of the Body and Blood of Christ with the bread and wine of communion following the eucharistic consecration of the elements. This doctrine is rejected by the Orthodox Church, which holds that the bread and wine, through a mystical transformation not easily grasped by the senses, change into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The early fathers asserted this belief in their writings. Saint Ignatius (35 - 107), an apostolic father by reason of his having been a hearer of the Apostle John, speaks of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ: "They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayers, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again" (*Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*). Likewise Justin Martyr (100 - 165) says, "For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made

into the Eucharist by the prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus" (*First Apology 66*, in Jurgens).

Equally firm beliefs were expressed by, among others, Saint Irenaeus (130-200), CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (150-215), Tertullian (160-220), JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (374-407), and CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA (444). A particularly outstanding testimony is given by Saint ATHANASIUS (295-373) in his sermon to the newly baptized. "You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table. So long as the prayers of supplications and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, "Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine - and thus is His Body confectioned".

Temptation through Lust

A brother overcome by lust went to see a great old man and besought him, saying, "Be so good as to pray for me, for I am overcome by lust." And the old man prayed to God for him. A second time he went to the old man and said the same thing, and once more the old man did not omit to beseech God for him, saying, "Lord, reveal to me the manner of life of this brother and when does this action of the devil come, for I have already besought You and he has not found peace": Then God revealed this to him about the brother: He saw him sitting with the spirit of lust beside him and an angel sent to his aid, was standing beside him and becoming angry with him because he did not fall down before God but, taking pleasure in his thoughts, delivered up his spirit completely to the action of the devil. So the old man knew that the cause came from the brother, and taught him how to resist thoughts, and the brother, restored by the old man's prayer and teaching, found rest.



Church's News



- 1- A group of 38 persons travelled to Egypt under the pastoralship of God. The supervisors of the trip are Father Augustinos Hanna, Deacon Ramses Wassef and the beloved brother Wagdy. Most of the group will return August 3rd, may the Angel of peace accompany them.
- 2- Father Samuel Samaan (former deacon Farouk Samaan), returned from Egypt after he has spent 40 days in the Monastery of St. Bishoy in Natroun valley. St. Johns' church congratulates her deacon who became a priest for the Lord on the Church of St. Antony and the Martyr Abanoub in Corona. He prayed his first Mass on Sunday July 21st. May God bless his service in that place.
- 3- The Church's club started its activity on Monday 7/15/91, after the fence surrounding the Church's borders was finished. The Church thanks all who participated in putting the fence and illuminating the playground.
- 4- The engagement of Amani the daughter of Deacon Fawzy Rezkallah to Dr. Bassem Lewis was performed on Sunday 7/14/91. May the Lord bless the couple. This was the 2nd engagement performed at St. John's Church.
- 5- The engagement of the blessed daughter Meryam to the blessed son Raafat Luka was performed on Saturday 7/20/91. May the Lord bless the couple.
- 6- Brother Fawzy lied on the hope of resurrection; he is the uncle of the engineer Magdy Moussa. This occurred on Wednesday 7/17/91. The church offers her condolences to all the family members and asks repose to the deceased.
- 7- The church is preparing to receive Anbà Moussa Bishop of the youth. He is going to meet with the youth of the churches of West America in their 2nd convention from August 26 to August 30th. The church is inviting all the youth to participate in this convention at Arrowhead Springs.
- 8- The church will perform daily liturgies for the occasion of St. Mary's fasting starting on Wednesday 8/14/91 to Thursday 8/22/91. There will also be vespers with sermons every night. An announcement will be placed concerning this spiritual activity.

Meeting Times

1. Sunday Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:30 A.M.
2. Sunday English Liturgy 8:00 - 11:00 A.M.
3. Wednesday Liturgy from 8:00 - 10:00 A.M.
4. Friday Liturgy 9:00 - 11:00 A.M.
5. Saturday Vespers from 7:00 - 9:00 P.M. including Bible Study from the Old & New Testaments.
6. The Arabic youth meeting: 7:30 - 9:30 P.M.
7. The youth meeting (English): Saturday from 7:30 - 9:00 P.M.
8. The deacon's meeting: Friday 6:00 - 7:30 P.M.
9. The Sunday school teacher's meeting: Sunday following the Liturgy at 1:00 - 2:00 P.M.

A brother asked an old man, "How does the fear of God come into the soul?" And the old man said, "If a man has humility and poverty, and if he does not judge anyone, the fear of God comes to him."