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**The Martyr
St. Mercurius
Dec 4 - Hatur 25**

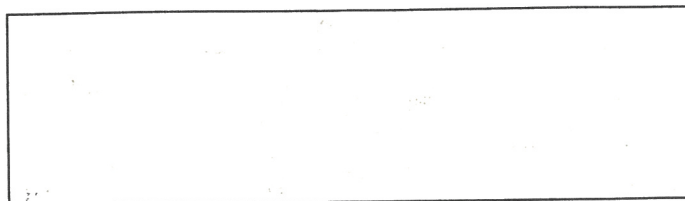


**The Martyr
St. Jacob The Mangled
DEC 6 - HATUR 27**

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The End !

*"The end of a thing is better than its beginning"
(Ecclesiastes 7:8)*

By
Fr. Augustine R. Hanna

In the occasion of the end of year 1992, it is useful to think of some "ENDS", the good endings and the bad ones, then make our choice.....

* The Rule & Exception:

The general rule which everybody knows is that everything in the material world has an end. The universe has an end. The earth has an end. The life of man, beast and plant on earth, has an end. The time, whether it is a moment or a year or a century, has an end. Every journey travelled by air, sea or land, has an end. Each book or a story, has an end. Health, work, education, marriage, pleasure, fun and life, has its end. All our belongings, money, houses, cars and furniture etc., have an end. This fact is beyond dispute.

The only exception here is man. The human soul or spirit never ends. Man shall live forever and ever, because God created him according to His image and likeness to be immortal.

Therefore, every human being, man or woman, will have eternal life in either way, whether the blessed happy life in heaven with God, or the cursed miserable everlasting life in hell with the devil and his demons (Matthew 25:34, 41, 46).

So, as far as the Bible declares, there are NONE perpetual, except God, angels, man, demons, heaven and hell.

* 2 Ways & 2 Ends:

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed this fact in many occasions, let us pick up some of them and mention the references to the others. In the sermon on the mount, He said: *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it"* (Matt. 7:13,14). There is a famous Italian proverb says, "All roads lead to Rome", but this is not applicable in the spiritual life. There is only ONE WAY that leads to everlasting life in heaven. It is the narrow way, the way of the Cross, it is Christ who said: *"I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6)*

St. John Chrysostom inquired, "Which do you choose? Is it the attractive Broadway that ends suddenly into a horrible execution, death, shame and everlasting torture in the lake of fire? or the poor-looking narrow- road, which leads to a great future and inexpressible eternal glory in God's golden city?"

* The Happy Ending:

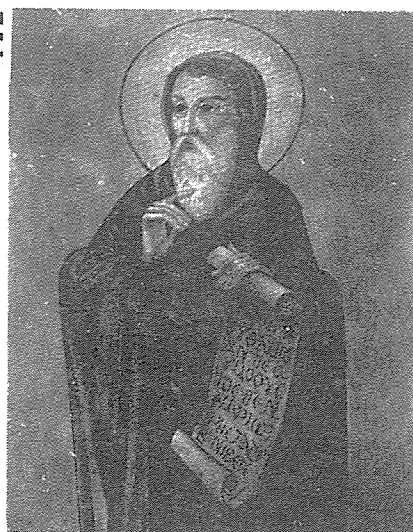
Why did Solomon the wise king say, in our golden verse, *"The end of a thing is better than its beginning?"* Certainly he did not mean "any end", but rather the happy, glorious and victorious end.

When a ship travels, people usually ask about the end of the trip, not its beginning. What is the result? Did it arrive safely at the end or not? What shall we benefit if the voyage started well then was wrecked? Likewise In the spiritual life, many people start well but do not complete well. They had a great beginning, but a sad ending, because they did not abide in Christ to the end. That is why the Lord says, *"He who endures to the end shall be saved"*
2 (Mark 13:13, see also Rev.2:10).

Spiritual Perseverance

By

Fr. Matthias Farid



St. Athanasius the Great, the 20th Pope of the Coptic Church (from 328-373 A.D.), asserts that God's grace is able to perfect, animate and illuminate man's life. The beneficent grace of Christ could not be expressed in one term, or even be concentrated in one of His actions. The Lord is at the same time Liberator, Animator, Saviour, and Sanctifier (The Paschal Letters, from Syriac, 1,3,7).

The needed sanctification is under the absolute and continuous dependence on Christ. At the same time, there is a part of man; he has to work for grace. The holy life is achieved by the relation with Christ in the Holy Spirit, through the Sacraments of the Church and perseverance of man.

The Holy Communion in the Eucharist is the heavenly food which nourishes the soul. The Saviour says, "Take eat, this is My body, and drink, this is My blood." (Matt.26:26-28 - Ibid, 4,11).

But in addition, man's part is that he must be constantly thirsty for God's grace, and stretch towards God by thoughts and acts. The state of the Christian is a continuous fight against sin, although this fight may be victorious by means of the presence of Christ inside him. Man cannot get rid of sin unless he is faithful in the exercise of piety. He follows the Lord Jesus, so that if the enemy makes war against him, he fights against sin, strengthened by His grace through which sin and corruption will run away. Thus, "The God of peace Himself will

sanctify him completely and preserve him blameless in spirit, soul, and body." (1 Thess. 5:23 - Paschal Letters, from Coptic, 25).

We need to maintain purity and cling to the Lord as the Apostles did when they said to Him, "Lord, to; whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68). And while we walk on earth, our dwelling is in heaven (Phil.3:20). We must be fervent in the spirit, in fasting and watching in prayer with lying down on the ground (Paschal Letters, from Syriac, 7,19).

Finally, we must be burning like a flame.

Now: What is this divine flame?

(To be continued)

Smile

- **Parking**

I solved the parking problem. I bought a parked car !

- **Mother-in-law**

A lawyer wired his client, "Your mother -in-law passed away in her sleep last night. Shall we order burial, embalming, or cremation?"

Back came a reply to the lawyer, "Take no chances, order all three !

- **Distrust**

One characteristic men and women have in common is that they both do not trust women!



Christmas, Is It

December 25th, or January 7th?

By
Dr. Wafaa Michael

This is a question that surfaces every year at the time of the feast of the incarnation (Christmas) and its timing that differs from that of the Western Churches. The Eastern Orthodox Churches celebrate Christmas on the 7th of January and the Western Churches celebrate it on the 25th of December. Which one is more accurate ?

There are two views that concern us. One is a church view and the other is an astrological view. In addition, there is a spiritual side of the timing of the feast.

1. THE CHURCH VIEWPOINT:

From the church view the first announcement of the feast came from the mouths of the holy Apostles when they recommended: "Our brethren observe the day of the feast of the birth of Jesus Christ to be on the 25th day of the ninth month of the Hebrews (the month of Kisleu) which corresponds to the 29th day of the fourth month of the Egyptian calendar (Kioahk). This is how our Coptic Orthodox Church kept that holy day (the 29th of Kioahk) of the Coptic calendar as the feast for the birth of Jesus. Other church events have been tied to this holy day. For example: Nine months before it is the feast of the Annunciation (the 29th day of Baramhat). On the 8th day following it is the feast of the circumcision of Jesus (the 6th day of Toubah). On the 40th day after it is the feast of the entrance of our Master Jesus Christ into the Temple (the 8th day of Amshir). Also the church has arranged the fast for the Holy Birth 43 days before that day. The church arranged the Holy Month of Kioahk to prepare the believers to receive our born Savior Jesus Christ. For that reason the month has its own hymn known as the "Hymns of Kioahk"

in addition to the usual yearly hymns. The Sundays during that month are arranged in memory of the events prior to and are tied to the Holy Birth.

These events are in the following order:

1. The announcement of the Angel Gabriel to Zacharias of the birth of John the Baptist, on the first Sunday.
2. The announcement of the Angel to the Virgin Mary, on the second Sunday.
3. The visit of our Lady, the virgin, to Elizabeth, on the third Sunday.
4. The birth of John the Baptist on the 4th Sunday (the last Sunday before Christmas).

The church's objective is to get her children involved in these holy events to live in it, be blessed with it, and to benefit from it. Therefore, the church has been careful to keep that holy sequence without paying too much attention to the exactness of these dates in regards to their astrological accuracy which is not too important from the spiritual viewpoint of the church's life.

We notice that this church view is more clear in the Feast of the Resurrection (The Easter) in which the church does not pay attention at all to the astrological date of the year as much as it does to celebrate it on the following Sunday of the Jewish Passover. In the Old Testament the Jewish Passover is considered to be a symbol for the Cross and Salvation. As the Jewish Passover changes its date from one year to another because the Jewish year is lunar and not solar, and as the lunar year is less than the solar year, the church did not object that the date of the feast of the resurrection would change from one year to another; thus preferring to keep the church meanings that are tied to it, rather than to keep it as a fixed date when it happened. That date in the year of the resurrection itself was the 29th day of the Egyptian month (Baramhat) which corresponded to April 7th.

II. ASTROLOGICAL VIEWPOINT:

The ancient Egyptians were the first to develop a calendar to measure time. They divided time into years, months, and days. They used a solar calendar related to the star "Seirios" which was previously known as "Stit". The appearance of that star indicated



the beginning of the new year. It takes exactly 365 days and 6 hours for that star to complete a full circle around the earth, i.e., once every 365-1/4 days. Thus the length of the year is 365 days for three consecutive years and 366 days in the 4th year (leap year). This calendar goes back to 4241 B.C.

They divided the 365 days into 12 months, each consisting of 30 days. The remaining five days were put separately in a month called Nisea (little month).

The ancient Egyptian months are as follows:

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Tout | Thout | (September) |
| 2. Baba | Paapi | (October) |
| 3. Hatour | Hathor | (November) |
| 4. Kyahek | Koiahk | (December) |
| 5. Touba | Tobi | (January) |
| 6. Amshir | Mechir | (February) |
| 7. Baramehat | Paremhat | (March) |
| 8. Baramouda | Paramoude | (April) |
| 9. Bashense | Paehons | (May) |
| 10. Baouna | Paoni | (June) |
| 11. Abiba | Epip | (July) |
| 12. Messra | Mesori | (August) |
| 13. El-Nassey | (little month, 5 days)
Nisea | |

The year was divided into three seasons. The first season was the flooding of the River Nile. The second was the agricultural season (planting). The third was the harvest season. These are the same three prayers which our Coptic church still keeping today. We, the Copts, continued observing the same calendar but decided to adopt for church use a calendar of the Martyrs: "*Anno Martyri*".

The first year of the Coptic calendar was **284 A.D.**, the first year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305 A.D.). His persecution of the Christians in general and to the Copts in particular, was so fierce that the Copts decided to remember their martyrs by establishing the Coptic calendar.

The 29th of Kioahk is tied to the Coptic calendar which is an old Pheronic calendar connected with the circulation of the star "Seirios". The JULIAN CALENDAR is a Roman calendar that was established in the

year 45 B.C., by an Egyptian astronomer from Alexandria, named Sosygen, upon the request of the Roman Julius Cesear. It was a solar calendar thought to be made up of 365 days and 6 hours i. e., 365- 1/4 days.

The 29th day of the month of Kioahk of the Coptic calendar coincided with the 25th day of the month of Kislew of the Jewish calendar and with the 25th of December of the JULIAN CALENDAR. These three dates coincided with each other from the time of celebration of Christmas during the apostolic era until the year 1582 A.D., the astronomers discovered that the Julian solar calendar is actually 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds; that is the period during which the earth circulates around the sun with complete circle. Thus the solar Julian year is less than 365-1/4 days by 11 minutes and 14 seconds; i.e., it is less than the Coptic year by 11 minutes and 14 seconds. That difference makes one full day every 128 years.

During 1582 A.D. Pope Gregory of Rome calculated that difference across the years since the birth of Christ and found that it was 10 days. He dropped those 10 days from that year on the 4th of October. He made the following day the 15th of October of that year. For this reason the name of the Julian calendar was changed to the GREGORIAN CALENDAR after the adfustment was made.

Also, it was decided to make every year that can be divided by four as a leap year and the years that cannot be divided by 100 shall remain as a regular year. Whereas, the year that can be divided by 400 also becomes a leap year. This is why the year 1700 was reduced one day, the year 1800 was reduced another day, and the Year 1900 was reduced another day. This, in addition to the 10 days that Pope Gregory reduced in the year 1582, makes the difference of 13 days.

This made the date that corresponds to the 29th day of the Coptic month of Kioahk to be the 7th of January (formerly the 25th of December). That date will also change by one day every 128 years (thus it will become the 8th of January, the 9th...and so on....)

On the contrary, our Coptic year has proven to be exactly 365-1/4 days. This is the time required for the star Sierios to complete its circle around the earth. It does not need any adjustment or correction.

Stuffed Christians !

(Luke 18:18-30)

By
Fr. Augustine Hanna

Sam owns a dead lion. It's been stuffed and mounted on a wooden platform. The "big cat", about the size of a German shepherd, is standing in a threatening position, its wide-open mouth revealing sharp fangs. It's green glass eyes glare in a furious scowl. Sam found it great for a practical joke.

One year Sam took his lion and the youth group he worked with up the mountain to summer camp. It was a large camp of several hundred kids from quite a few churches. Everyone was looking forward to a fun week.

Sam's youth group, who knew about his lion, started spreading rumors that a cougar had been spotted nearby. Leaders of the camp went along with the gag. They announced that all the campers should be careful, especially at night. Even that year's main speaker warned his audience to watch their steps. After three days of this, everybody was travelling in packs. There is safety in numbers, it was hoped. Only the foolhardy went out alone at night. After all, there was a mountain lion on the prowl.

All the campers were nervous, but there was one cabin which was downright scared. These were the seven boys who had been brought up from an orphanage in Mexico as guests of one of the American churches. As you can imagine, they were already uncomfortable enough being in a strange new culture and surrounded by hundreds of people who didn't share their language. They were the natural targets of Sam's joke.

One night, while everyone was in the meeting hall, Sam took his lion out from under the covers in the back of the bus, down a winding path through the pines and into the boys' dark cabin. He placed the beast in the center of the floor, positioning it so it could stare malevolently at any hapless soul who entered the door. Before he left, Sam removed the lone light bulb from the ceiling. Then he sneaked back to the hall.

The meeting soon ended. Everyone headed back to the cabins, using flashlights to pick their way along the forest trails. The kids from the orphanage all climbed the three cement stairs to their door and one of the boys reached inside to flip the light switch. Nothing! Two of the boys leaned in, beaming their flashlights into the eery blackness.

There it was- the biggest, meanest, ugliest monster, poised to strike. In the split second that it was illuminated, the boys could see the evil glare in the killer's big green eyes. They saw the hideous snarl, the lips curled back off the razor blade teeth ready to bite out chunks of human meat. It looked as if the tail twitched in awful delight.

There was total pandemonium. The two guys with the flashlights screamed shrilly, jumping backwards in horrified reflex action. They crashed into the rest of the group, knocking everyone down the stairs like bowling pins. Picking themselves up off the dirt, they ran raving into the forest, legs churning like airplane propellers. They disappeared into the darkness shouting "Panther" and "Cougar" in Spanish.

Luckily, those boys had a good sense of humor. They were able to laugh the next day.

It was, after all, a pretty dirty practical joke.

+ The Lord Jesus, while on one of His preaching tours, ran into a stuffed lion! It was a “stuffed human”. You can read the story in Luke 18:18-30. It concerns a rich ruler, a godly man who had faithfully kept all the Old Testament rules and regulations. Yet when Jesus challenged him to give his riches to the poor in exchange for treasures in heaven and to follow Him, the man was unable to comply. All his godliness had been a thin veneer which made him look religious and good. But under the veneer there was nothing. He was a “stuffed lion”, all exterior.

+ Are there “stuffed Christians” rolling around today?

We heard about stuffed grape leaves, stuffed green peper, stuffed pizza, stuffed nose, stuffed toy animals and dolls etc., but never heard about stuffed Christians! Yet they are present everywhere. There are many people who look, talk and act just like true believers, but they simply have no heart inside. They are covered with a thin Christian veneer but are hollow and empty.

They might be stuffed with money, food, talents, knowledge, degrees or even moralities, but they lack the love of God in their hearts, missed the first and greatest commandment. There is no life inside.

There are two kinds of “stuffed Christians”:

(1) Those who are making an honest attempt to be religious, just like the rich ruler, but are misled or attracted by other gods- money, pride or lust- instead of Christ.

(2) The persons who intentionally deceive, or trample on the Christian principles if they contradict their own purposes. The Bible calls them “Wolves

in sheep’s clothing (Matt 7:15 & Acts 20:29,30).

Finally, St. Paul says that true Christians are “*full of goodness, filled whith all knowledge, able to admonish one another*” (Rom 15:14).

A Lesson within a Short Story

A Lesson From the Birds

by

Peter Iskander

“Surely, in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird ” (Prov. 1:17).

Birds sometimes have more sense than people. When King Solomon wrote this verse, he was referring to wicked people, who can be more foolish than the fowls of the air. Birds are smart enough to flee when they see a net being spread to catch them, but people often rush heading into the devil’s snares.

A farmer learned that some crows were stealing his corn. So he went out and strung twine about 5 feet from the ground between the trees surrounding the area where he had planted his crop. He thought that the black-feathered thieves were probably watching him and would become leery. He was right, they stopped eating his corn. They wouldn’t take a chance of being captured.

How strange that we are less worried! Even when we recognize dangerous temptations, we indulge in sins that appear inviting, thinking it will not matter or that we will not get caught.

Beware! Don’t yield to there evil urges. The devil is setting a trap for you. Learn a lesson from the birds.

Peter I

PETER I, seventeenth patriarch of the See of Saint Mark (300–311). Peter succeeded **THEONAS** (282–300) and, according to tradition, he was the last or the “seal” of the martyrs. The accounts of his turbulent and tragic archiepiscopate comprise a fascinating and important source for early Church history. Peter not only defended the orthodox faith against schism but also opposed the edicts of the emperors **DIOCLETIAN** and **Maximin Daia** proscribing Christian services, and further expounded upon his theological position while in prison awaiting execution. **MELITIUS**, bishop of Lycopolis (Asyût), figures prominently in the many ancient references to Peter. As an advocate of leniency and terms of penance for those Christians who paid homage to the pagan gods after Diocletian’s edict of 303 (the *lapsi*), Peter ran afoul of the more stringent Melitius, who favored excluding them from communion with the church. Peter went into hiding to escape persecution, but finally came to trial and was executed on 25 November 311, during the reign of Maximin Daia.

Almost nothing is known of Peter’s early life, including his date of birth, but it is probable that he was from Alexandria. Peter’s life, including the account of his incarceration and his execution, a section known as the *Passio*, is the subject of an Encomium attributed to **ALEXANDER** (312–326), his second successor. The Encomium, highly hagiographical and legendary in nature, survives in Sahidic (Orlandi, 1970, pp. 247–62), in Bohairic (Hyvernat, 1882; Vivian, 1988, pp. 78–84), and in a considerably different Arabic version written by the tenth-century Coptic bishop of al-Ashmūnayn, **SAWIRUS IBN AL-MUQAFFA’** (*History of the Patriarchs*, Vol. 2). Various other texts in several languages have more detailed accounts of the *Passio* (Telfer, 1952; Spanel, 1979–1982, pp. 97–99; Haile, 1980).

The Bohairic version of the Encomium is the most informative. Several blatantly contrived statements render its historical value suspect; nonetheless, it remains the sole source of Peter’s childhood and early career. It begins with Alexander’s comparison of Peter’s virtues to those of John the Baptist, Aaron, the apostles Peter and Paul, and others, and goes on to praise Peter as “the one who closed the mouth of the heretics” (Hyvernat, 1882, pp. 247–48). Peter was allegedly the son of Theodosius, first presbyter of Alexandria, and Sophia. Through the intervention of saints Peter and Paul, the infant Peter was born to the barren Sophia and was named after the first apostle by the archbishop, who predicted that he would be a “mighty foundation of

the orthodox faith and a protector for all Christians,” thus recalling the Lord’s pun on the apostle Peter’s name (Mt. 16:18; Jn. 1:42). The narrative continues with the education of the young Peter in Alexandria under the tutelage of the archbishop. His first important encounter ostensibly came when he was sent by the patriarch to repulse the heretic Sabellius, who, according to Alexander, was “a transgressor who confined the Deity to a single hypostasis and to a single person” (Hyvernat, 1882, pp. 248–53). This anachronistic passage exemplifies the Encomium’s limited value as a historical document. Sabellius was active in the mid-third century, considerably before Peter’s time.

In a fragment of the Sahidic Encomium (Orlandi, 1970, p. 163; Spanel, 1979–1982, pp. 88–90), Peter’s promotion to the rank of presbyter came about as a result of his successful contending with the Sophist “philosopher” Diogenes. On his deathbed, Theonas urged the assembled clergy and populace to accept Peter as his successor, a selection, he said, that was ordained by God Himself in a dream (Hyvernat, 1882, pp. 255–57). Although these accounts are probably fanciful, church tradition does indeed connect Peter very closely with Theonas, who is often referred to as Peter’s “father” and as “the one who raised him.” In the Arabic version, the assembled presbyters approved the choice by a laying on of hands (*History of the Patriarchs*, Vol. 2, p. 383). This passage has been cited as evidence for papal election by the presbyters of Alexandria up to the election of Alexander, whom the bishops chose (Telfer, 1949; Kemp, 1955, pp. 133, 138–40; Stevenson, 1957, pp. 378–79).

Almost from the beginning of his office, Peter was beset with difficulties. In 303, Diocletian issued his first edict of persecution, which contained orders for destruction of churches and the scriptures. Not long thereafter, the heads of the churches were imprisoned and made to sacrifice at risk of torture. The fourth edict, issued by Galerius in 304, required all Christians to pay homage to the pagan gods, failure to comply being punished by death. A passage of highly questionable historicity in the Bohairic Encomium has a confrontation between Peter and the heretic **ARIUS**, who claimed that the Son was inferior to the Father. According to Arius, Christ was created by God and therefore was not consubstantial with Him (Hyvernat, 1882, pp. 260–61). Although the Encomium states explicitly that Peter excommunicated Arius, no independent and unequivocal confirmation exists for a meeting between the two, much less the excommunication.

Arius was surely a nuisance only after Peter's death, during the archiepiscopates of ACHILLAS and ALEXANDER I (Bell, 1924; Gregg and Groh, 1981).

What Peter most certainly faced was the Melitian schism. Melitius, bishop of Lycopolis, refused to accept Peter's schedule for the readmission of the *lapsi* as promulgated in the *Canonical Letter* issued in the third year and after the fourth Easter since Diocletian's edict. This remarkable document, extant in Greek (PG 18, pp. 467-508) and in two Syriac fragments (Schwartz, 1904, pp. 164-87; Lagarde, 1856, pp. 46-54, 63-73, 99-117), is a splendid witness to Peter's humanity. Peter set the following terms for the various types of Christians who had deferred to Diocletian's order (Vivian, 1988, pp. 185-92):

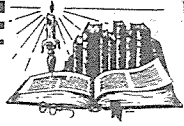
1. Those who lapsed after incarceration and torture were given forty days' penance because "they have not come to their present condition by choice, but because they were betrayed by weakness of the flesh, and . . . some of them now show on their bodies the marks of Jesus."
2. Those who lapsed after incarceration but were not tortured had to spend one more year in atonement. "This time of penance suffices because, actually, they too gave themselves to be punished for the name of Christ, even if they did have in prison the great benefit of aid and comfort from their brothers."
3. Those who lapsed but were neither incarcerated nor tortured and then repented also had to spend a year in penance; thereafter, readmission would be discussed.
4. Those who lapsed and had not repented were banished. "What is crooked cannot be adorned, and what is lacking cannot be numbered."
5. Those who lied or ignored services to escape persecution or sent non-Christians to pay homage instead had to spend six months in penance.
6. Those who were slaves and made to sacrifice had to spend a year in penance.
7. Those who were free and forced Christian slaves to sacrifice in their place had to spend three more years in atonement under scrutiny.
8. Those who lapsed after arrest and then repented and were tortured were to be received immediately.
9. Those who neither hid (nor confessed) were to enjoy immediate readmission.
10. Those clergymen who lapsed and then repented were to be kept from the priesthood because they were the most shameful of all. They had showed themselves to be "like the one who laid the foundation and was not able to finish it."

Nonetheless, they were to be readmitted to the communion of the church so that they would have no excuse for "violent departure" nor reason "to slacken once more from the faith."

11. Those who lapsed during incarceration or punishment for their sympathy with the martyrs were to be readmitted, although no schedule was set.
12. Those who avoided persecution by payment incurred no punishment.
13. Those who "gave up everything for the safety of their lives and withdrew, even if others were detained because of them," also incurred no punishment.
14. Those who lapsed only after severe torture "and no longer had the strength to speak or even to utter a sound or to make any movement of resistance" were to be received immediately.
15. The fourth and sixth days of the week were set as times of fasting.



The different versions of the *Passio* vary in their accounts of Peter's execution (Telfer, 1949). In the "short" Latin version by F. Laurentius Surius, Peter is beheaded in his cell. In another "short" version contained in the Arabic translation, Peter is decapitated in the street outside the prison. The Arabic edition of the *Passio* also contains the single extant "long" version, in which Peter is taken from his cell, allowed to pray at Saint Mark's tomb, and then executed.



4 Great Lessons From 4 Midgets

(Proverbs 30:24-28)

By

Fr. Augustinos Hanna

The author of chapter 30 of the Book of Proverbs, whether he was Solomon or Agur, he was very observant and wise man. He taught us the secret of wisdom and strength from four tiny creatures.

"There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: The ants...the conies (or rock badgers)...the locusts...the spider."

1. Preparing for the future:

"The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer". Ants love sunshine, and on a warm day these underground dwellers swarm through their tiny tunnels in search of food. Ants are very active, love each other and do good and help each other. When one of these creatures discovers a treasure, the news is communicated to the rest of the colony, and immediately every able-bodied creature hastens to help transport the "find" to the neighbors! The ants work hard in day light and summer time, but at night and in the cold winter they remain hidden.

The great Creator granted them wisdom to recognize their own insufficiency and weakness, their need and prepare for the future. It is easy to understand why the Bible says, *"Go to the ant, you sluggard."*

Men are also in great need, and cannot work, (symbolically) at night or in winter, because the day and summer are the time of life, while the night and winter symbolize death. In this regard, Jesus said: *"I must work while it is day, the night is coming when no one can work"* (John 9:4)

It is also written in the Book of Jeremiah: *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."* (Jer.8:20).

That is why the Bible says: *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device in the grave where you are going"* (Eccl. 9:10).

Therefore, the first great lesson, here which

we learn from this tiny creature, the ant, is to be wise and prepare for the eternal future - to think about the salvation and happiness of the soul - to get ready and work actively in summer, the day of opportunity, for heaven.

2. Shelter in the Rock:

"The conies (rock badgers) are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the rocks". These timid small animals -between the size of the rat and the rabbit- have no weapons to fight, and therefore they seek shelter in the strongholds of nature. They are always in the rock or very close to the rocks. The least sound or movement is sufficient to alarm this animal and instantly it is on the alert. They seem to be wiser than men, who have more confidence in their own sufficiency than they have in the Lord of creation!

The Lord Jesus Christ is the "ROCK OF AGES". St. Paul said: *"And that Rock was Christ"* (1 Cor. 10:4). Jesus said: *"Whoever hears My sayings and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.."* (Matt. 7:24,25). He is our fortress, refuge and stronghold. We can't find protection except in Him.

This second great lesson is to abide in Christ our Rock, through His love, His word, His Church, His Holy Body and Precious Blood and His service.

3. The Unity and Undivided Fellowship:

"The Locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks".

Isolated locusts present no dangers to the farmer. *"United they stand: divided they fall."* A swarm of locusts is something to be feared. In their millions they appear on the horizon, and in their passing they obliterate the sun! Surprisingly, the locusts have no leader, but because they stick together they represent a striking force.

The lesson is that the unity of the church is her strength, and the fellowship of the believers and saints should be the greatest thing in the world.

The Lord reminds us of His famous saying: *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand"* (Matthew 12:25).

Alas, the locusts, without leader, is wiser and stronger than man who is the crown of creation! So they are our school masters. Let us return to the one-ness of the Body of Christ to do miracles *"and no longer be a reproach."*

4. Perseverance to the last breath:

"The spider skillfully grasps with its hands and it is in kings palaces". Do not try to count how many times you destroy a spider's web, to find that another soon appeared in its place. The spider's motto seems to be, "If at first you don't succeed, try try, and try again." The very existence of the spider depends upon its ability to overcome persecution.

we are reminded of the words of Christ: *"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God...Remember Lot's wife".*

Dear brothers and sisters, do not lose heart, but be courageous and fight the good fight. *"You have not resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin."* Strive with endurance and perseverance to uproot your shortcomings, and to gain the Christian virtues.

Don't fear to walk in the way of perfection, for *"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind". "He who endures to the end shall be saved". "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

Christmas..Is It

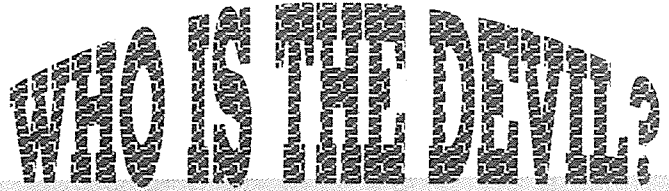
The evidence is that the seasons of weather and agriculture have remained connected to that year without change since the year 4241 B.C. The Orthodox Churches are very careful to celebrate the fixed day that was established by our fathers, the apostles, and it was not connected to the Gregorian calendar which will advance one day every 128 years.

III. SPIRITUAL VIEWPOINT:

The spiritual view should not be ignored. We feel that we do not want to share the Western's way of celebrating Christmas. The Western Christmas takes a worldly appearance connected with buying, selling, food, clothing, and fun. We would like to keep our Christmas holy and spiritual and celebrate it the way our church does. After all, it is the birthday of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, "God Incarnate". This historical incident of the holy birth and the crucifixion and resurrection are the milestones of our Christian faith, heritage and salvation.

continued from Pg. 6

Know Your Enemy (4)

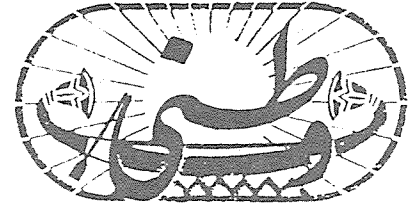


7 Warnings Concerning Evil Spirits

By
Fr. Augustinos Hanna

1. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).
2. "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27).
3. "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11)
4. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith." (1 Peter 5:8,9).
5. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out., and when he is come he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. (Matthew 12:43-45).
6. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.. and every spirit that confesses not that Jesus christ is come in the flesh is not of God. and this is that spirit of antichrist" (1 John 4:1-13).
7. "They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Rev. 16:14).

The Slaughtering of Copts & Demolition of Their Property At Temma In Upper Egypt



انتون سيدهم

By
Antoun Sidhom

*(Translated from Arabic Egyptian Newspaper ,
Watany , By George Gad)*

On Thursday the 15th of October 92, and by the conclusion of the funeral rites of someone who had had a fight with a Copt at Temma, as a result of which the injured was transferred to Assiut Hospital where he died ten days later; the mourners and others staged tumultuous riots in which derisive shouts were levelled against the Christians. Then they attacked the Copts killing four and wounding many others. Christians' houses were looted and destroyed. The police and security forces completely vanished from the scene of events leaving no trial.

The Copts found themselves at the mercy of those wanton killers who went on with their ignominious acts without any restraint whatsoever.

The riots, however; continued unabated on Friday the 16th of October. Two Christians were killed and a third, of the same family, was seriously wounded. The rioters stampeded all over the town looting and pillaging the shops and houses of Copts then they demolished and burnt them. They even attacked the Church, burnt it and levelled it to the ground.

In the meanwhile there was no trace whatsoever of the police force who never responded to telephone calls or appeals for help. Policemen appeared three hours after the cessation of those acts of killing, looting and destruction.

What about the outcome of such acts?

Seven pharmacies were plundered and destroyed. Those pharmacies sustained enormous losses for their owners were saddled with loans and bills which had to be repaid. Other commercial

shops were looted and demolished; their losses ran into one million and half Egyptian pounds. Seven houses and a carpenter's modern workshop and a

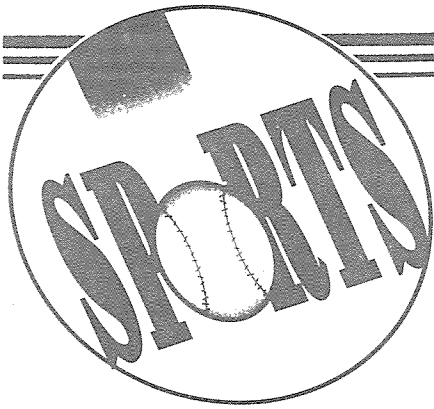
warehouse, five cars and a church were completely burnt and levelled.

The events that had taken place at Temma on October 15 and 16 are shocking and repulsive. What rubs more salt into the wound is that the Ministry of Interior, the police and security forces are invisible when matters worsen. At Temma, they were around only after the criminals had carried out their atrocious acts. They appeared three hours later arresting everyone they met whether innocent or guilty. This is really saddening.

Those acts indicate: First that the government is non-existent, Second that it has relinquished its foremost duty which is the upkeeping and protecting of the security and property of its citizens. It has completely abandoned its important role of upkeeping the commonwealth on which the tribal system was set up leading to the existence of the modern state. We can only presume that the government has confined its role to collecting taxes from its subjects.

The terrorist parties, on the other hand, have resorted to other innovations. Their members do not physically appear on the scene of events, but after thoroughly planning and organising these acts; they send juveniles aged 15-17 to carry them out. They provide them with side-arms such as knives and cleavers. Young men aged 15-17 loot houses and shops and then burn them using sprayers and aluminium coils. If anyone of them is apprehended, he will be tried before juvenile courts.

Our government, with all the long history and tradition of ruling in Egypt has taken a shameful demoralizing stand. We have no alternative but to pray to the Almighty God, supplicating Him to protect us from such horrid plots.



The Coed Volleyball League A Huge Success

By Hani Bishara of St. George Church

Through the grace and blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the COED Volleyball League began with a bang. The first matches were held at St. George Coptic Orthodox Church in Bellflower on Sunday, November 8. The event attracted more than 175 people!

Bishop Yacoubos who celebrated the Liturgy in the morning, opened the league with a beautiful prayer. The youth then walked over to the St. George cafeteria where the famous chef, uncle Ramon, cooked up a delicious hamburger or chicken plate for a small donation of \$2.00. This was a golden opportunity for several youth from various churches in the Southern California Region to meet their fellow brothers in Christ.

We then began the matches. The St. Mark youth played the youth from St. Mary, while the St. George youth entertained the youth from St. John. Each church was represented by an all Guys team which was comprised of 6 Men/Boys and a COED team which was comprised of 3 Women/Girls and 3 Men/Boys. As the league progresses and becomes more popular among the females of each church, we may create an All Girls team as well! According to the league schedule, each church will play the other twice. The teams with the best records will advance to the playoffs and from there a champion will emerge on February 14, 1993 during the COED Volleyball League Finals.

Because we understand it is difficult to play every week, the schedule has been structured in a

way that each church plays every other week. We are hoping that on the off weeks, one of the youth groups from a particular church takes the responsibility of hosting a picnic for all the youth from every church in the Southern California Area. Also, as Sameer Bichai from St. Mark suggested, as we become more organized as ONE Coptic Youth all the youth groups from all the churches should at least, once a month, attend the youth meeting of one church and so on. In returning to Volleyball, after all the matches have been played, Abouna Markos Hanna of St. Mark will lead the youth in spiritual hymns inside St. George Church.

In conclusion, we really hope that the churches that were not represented this time will participate on November 22nd, or December 6th and so on. Keep in mind, even though your church may not have a volleyball team, come join us at St. George anyway for a good fellowship time with your Coptic brothers and sisters because the whole purpose and goal of this idea is not to play volleyball but to unite All the Coptic Orthodox Youth from all the churches in Southern California as **ONE BODY IN CHRIST.**

