



NEWS

September

2012

1. Feast of Nyrouz (Coptic New Year 1729):

On Tuesday, September 11, the Church celebrates the Feast of the *Nyrouz*, also known as the Feast of the Martyrs and the Coptic New Year 1729 of the Christian Martyrs of Egypt (more than a million).



The Vespers, raising of incense of the Feast will be celebrated on Monday, September 10, at 7:30 p.m. There will be a sermon, hymns and other activities. The Liturgy of the Feast will take place on Tuesday morning from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.



2. The Feast of the Cross:

On Thursday, September 27, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Appearance of the Holy Cross. Vespers will take place on Wednesday the 26th at 7:30 p.m.

3. St. John's Annual Festival (September 21-23):

St. John Church will hold her Annual Festival for 3 days (Friday, September 21 till Sunday, 23). The event is under the auspices of H. G. Bishop Serapion. The program contains daily vespers and morning Liturgies, Book Fair, Mediterranean Cousin. Missionary tours for the guests and Fund-Raise.

4. Logos TV Fund Raising Banquet at St. John's:

On Sunday, October 7, 2012, St. John Church, Covina holds a Dinner Banquet to help Logos TV in her financial needs to continue its Coptic Christian message.

The banquet starts at 5:30 p.m. and the ticket is for \$50. No children allowed. Please come and share in spreading God's word and defending the Copts' Human Rights in Egypt.

4. H.H. Pope Shenouda III (Great Memories):

+ Eight years ago, on Sunday, August 29, 2004 H.H. Pope Shenouda consecrated the Altar of St. John's new Church and her baptismal font. Along with H.G. Bishop Serapion of Los Angeles and seven other Bishops shared in the ceremony. It was a glorious and historical day attended by about 1600 persons and many dignitaries.



+ In the evening of that day, L.A. Diocese held a dinner banquet at Pacific Palms Resort, celebrating the Golden Anniversary of H.H. Pope Shenouda's Monasticism

5. H. G. Bishop Serapion:

+ On Saturday, August 18, H.G. Bishop Serapion blessed the Los Angeles Diocese Youth Competition, held at St. John Church in Covina. The event was attended by about 1200 youth from High School and College and 20 priests.



The program started with a Liturgy, followed with breakfast, then items of the competition in the three floors of the church. After the lunch, the results were announced. St. John Church College youth won the first place (Excellent) and High School received "very good".

6. Abune Paulos

November 3, 1935 - August 16, 2012

Abuna and Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (1992–2012). His full title was "His Holiness Abuna Paulos, Fifth Patriarch and Catholicos of Ethiopia, Ichege of the See of St. Tekle Haymanot, Archbishop of Axum and one of the seven serving Presidents of the World Council of Churches." May God repose his soul in Paradise and bless our sister-church with another Good Shepherd.





“I have this against you that you have Left your First Love”

(Rev. 2:4)



By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

IN THE MESSAGES OF LORD JESUS CHRIST TO the angels of the seven churches, He said:

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘I know your works, your labor, your patience, and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; and repent’” (Rev. 2:1-4).

The phrase “I have this against you” proves that God is gently reproaching his beloved ones. And if He did not love this person, He would not have reproached him. In His reproach, the Lord here refers to the good works of the angel of the church of Ephesus (bishop), and before mentioning what he is blaming him for...God reproaches the one who had love for Him from before, but his love has decreased.

The Lord never mentioned specific faults, but He summed them up in one phrase, that this person has left his first love.

It is enough that your love is not the same as before. And this phrase could be said to you from God or from people or some of your friends “I have this against you” It means that there is something I have to reproach you for. This is similar to what the Lord said in His Sermon on the Mount: *“If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you...”* (Matt. 5: 23), which means that he is holding something that offended him from you.

The amazing thing that the Lord says this statement to a person in a very important position. He was not an ordinary person but to an angel of a church who was in God’s right hand, who worked hard for the church, who persevered and had patience. Is it not strange that such person loses his love? This shows us that we must be careful and strict, observing ourselves; no matter how high we are in life. The Lord calls

that a “fall” that needs “repentance”. The term, “first love” means that he started his relationship with God in a good way. He had love, but did not continue. And God here is not asking him to learn how to have love in his life, but He is asking him to turn back to the same love he had before. How many times an individual started repentance with great zeal but during the course of time it lost its fervency. Sometimes servants started their ministry with great holy warmth then gradually became lukewarm. He even used to enter the church with the feeling of being unworthy, saying to himself, “Who am I to stand among these saints?” His old sins used to fill his eyes with tears and his heart with feelings of humility and contrition. And by time, he became a repentant, then a servant, then a leader, and after that he finds himself lost and hears the voice of His Savior saying to him, “You have left your first love”.

You may pray, but without longing for God. In your prayer, you are not like David who says, “I will lift up my hand in your name. My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water”, “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day”. You pray but with no warmth in the words, no longing and no desire to remain with God. You do have a prayer, but with no real connection with God, just words...mere words!

God says, *“These people honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me”*

In your first love, you never gave preference to anything or anyone over God. He was your top priority. He was the first and before all things. He was even everything. But now you say to Him, Lord, if I find time, I will pray, read the Bible and contemplate...if I have health and strength, then I will fast and serve, and if I have anything left after satisfying my needs, then I will pay the tithes! Otherwise, I have my excuse.” And so, God ends up at the bottom of the list! What happened? Where is God’s preference and priority in your life?

You have left your first love and changed. God says about



you, "This is not the same person I have known for years." You are a different person, not the same one who used to love Me and rejoice in Me. Like a wife who does not feel her husband's love for her, as he always working, always away, and if she blamed him, he says, "I am working hard for your sake, to earn enough money for our home" And she would seek emotions and find none. It is true that you have labored for God's sake but with no love.

That is like the older son in the parable of the Prodigal Son. He said to his father, "Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandments" (Luke 15: 29). But still his feelings were not with his father. And his will was against his father's will. He refused to enter the house, refused to share in his father's joy for the return of his brother, described his father as being unjust and stingy! "You never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends...but as soon as this son of yours came..." He doubted in his father's love!

Someone may move in a routine manner, even in his spiritual life. He prays, fasts, reads, meditates, goes to church, confesses and partakes in communion; but where is God's love in all these? It does not exist. It is like a chain of spiritual duties practiced without love. This is not what God wants, He says, "My son, give Me your heart and let your eyes observe My ways" (Prov. 23:26).

In Solomon's song, the virgin had great love that represents the relationship of the church or the human soul with God. Then came the time when God stood outside knocking on her door, saying: "Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one. For my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night" (Song 5:2 &3). But alas, she answers: "I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them!"

Where is the first love? It has now been replaced by excuses! Nowadays, we find excuses for ourselves concerning our relationship with God, referring to obstacles and justifications. When our love for God is inflamed, we never worry about obstacles, but we prevail over them. But when love gets cold and less, excuses start to appear.

As a young servant, I went once with some other servants to visit one of the youth who has been absent from the youth meeting for a long time. We found out that he became a smoker. One of us started talking to him about the harmful effect of smoking, and another talked about setting the good example, and one of us who always spoke in a spiritual manner, said to him, "I want to ask you one question: Do you still love God as you used to in the past?" Truly when love decreases, one starts to search for verses, convictions and verifications.

In the past you used to surrender to God, but now you argue about every advice and guidance.



"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
(John 10:10)

Have you ever heard about how the Eskimos kill wolves? You're not going to believe this one!

First the Eskimo coats the blade of his knife with animal blood and allows it to freeze. He then adds and freezes more layers of blood, several coats, in fact, until the blade is completely covered with frozen blood. Next, he plants his knife in the snow, the blade facing up and goes about his business.

When a wolf finds his way to the luring aroma of fresh blood, he starts licking. Then more and more vigorously, lapping it until the sharp blade of the knife is exposed. However, by this point, so intense is his craving for the scrumptious blood, that the wolf does not notice the sharp sting of the blade on his own tongue, nor does he even realize that his ravenous craving is now being satisfied by his very own blood! By light of dawn, the Eskimo will find him laying dead in the snow.

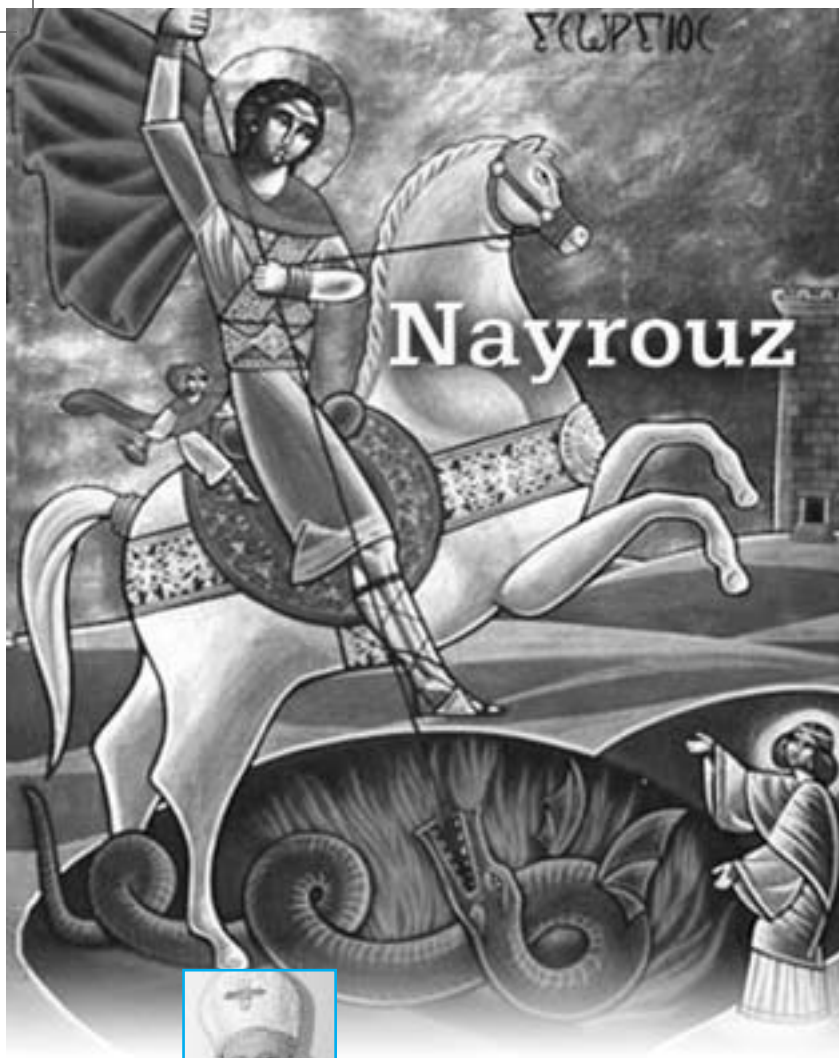
Sin entices and seduces us in precisely the same way. Satan lures us to the place where he plans to ravage us with some sort of destructive fleshly pleasure - gossip, rage, sexual sin etc. Once we give in to its lustful pleasures, our craving for it increases. When we continue to allow ourselves to indulge, it grips us all the more. And before we know it - it completely consumes us. Our friendships are damaged. Our marriages are broken. Our testimony, spoiled. Satan has come only to rob, kill and destroy. destroy.

Let's begin recognizing our enemy's tactics upon us!

There is no more time to give in to his destructive ways!

We must strive to walk in holiness and righteousness for the glory of God's Kingdom! There is so much work to be done!!





The Coptic New Year 1729

By Fr. Augustinos Hanna

On Tuesday, September 11, the Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates its New Year, 1729. This is known as the **Nayrouz** Feast.

The word **Nayrouz**, thought to be of Persian origin, it is originally derived from an ancient Egyptian equivalent adopted by the Persians during their occupation of Egypt. It denotes Coptic New Year's Day, commemorated in the Coptic Church Liturgy but also celebrated as one of the great popular feasts by the whole Egyptian nation. It falls on 1 Tut (September 11) which is the first month of the Coptic Year and takes its name from the Egyptian god Thoth.

The Church started a new era from the year 284 AD, when more than million Coptic Christian martyrs were killed and tortured in Egypt by the Roman Emperors, especially Deoclitian.

Egypt, at the time, was a Christian Country of 20 million population and it lost about 1,000,000 in the horrible persecution of Deoclitian alone!

The Coptic Church of Egypt, as St. Jerome stated, offered more martyrs than the number of all the Churches of the world together.

The Egyptian Christians suffered terrible persecution,

vicious attacks, and extermination war from the Roman Empire, then from Muslims from the 7th century, throughout the ages and up till the present moment.

The Coptic Christians, under Islam, were not only deprived of their Human Rights, but also were executed by the sword, kidnapped, burnt, thrown to wild beasts or forced to convert to Islam and have their churches destroyed. They are still carrying their cross patiently and proudly, and following their Savior. Therefore, it was said that,

“The Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”

I would rather talk now, not about history, but about the spiritual lessons and values of this occasion. It shows:

1. **Great Love:** The Lord Jesus said,

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).

The martyrs showed their great love to God who loved them first and gave His only begotten Son to save them. They proved to love Christ more than their own lives. They could not deny Him but witnessed to Him till the last breath and despite of the horrible tortures.

Do we really love our Lord? Are we ready, at least, to sacrifice our sinful, selfish, lustful life for His sake?! If we do not feel ashamed of ourselves, repent and keep the first and greatest commandment, we do not deserve to be called the children of the martyrs.

2. **Great Faith and Courage:**

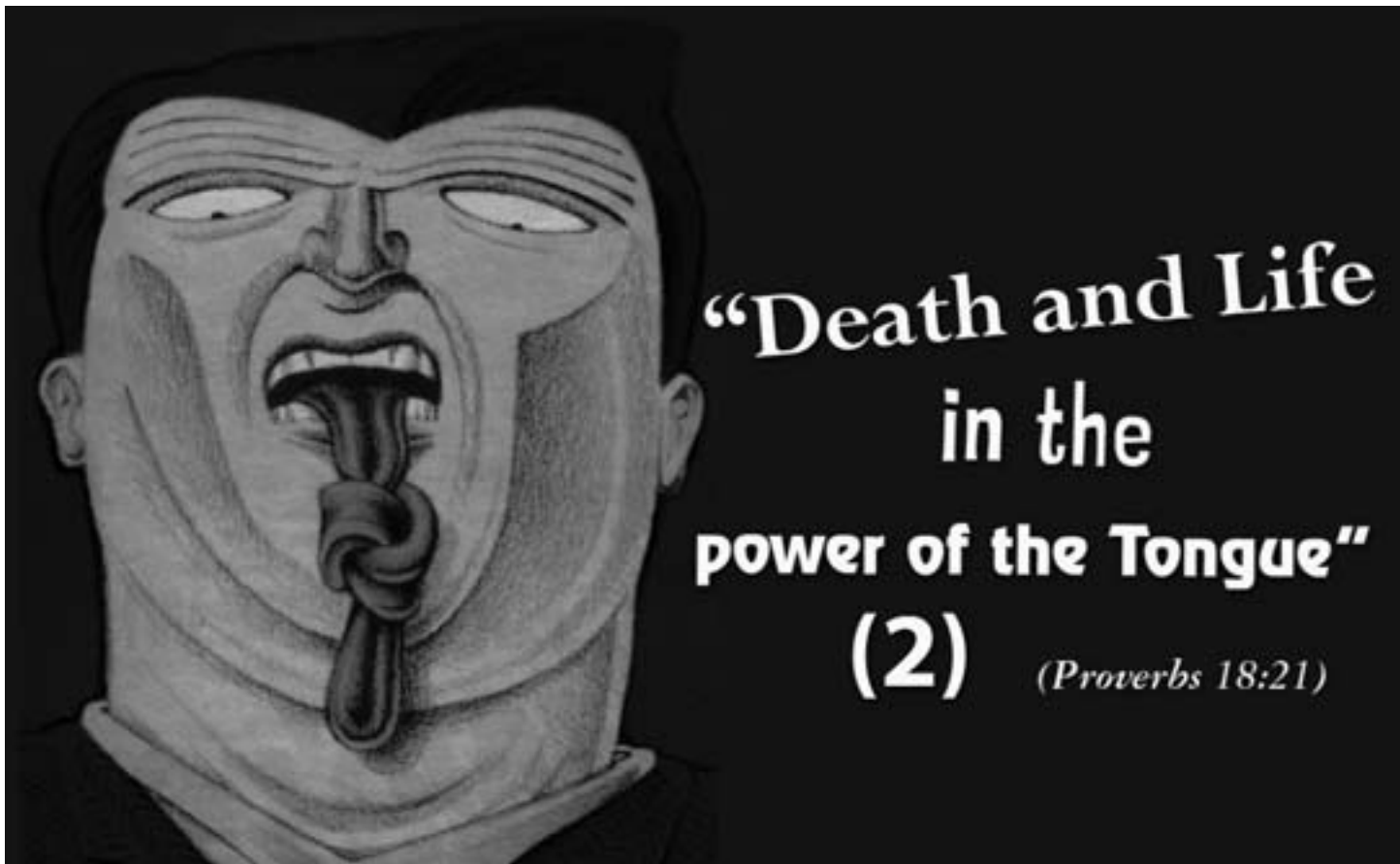
Martyrs proved their firm faith by shedding their blood as a seal of its authenticity. Had their faith been shaken, they would not die for it. When we review the list of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, we would realize the high cost they paid, and their great courage to endure all these sorts of terrible tortments, **“And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, wandered about in sheepskins afflicted, tormented, and of whom the world was not worthy.”** (Heb.11:35-28).

3. **Great Hope:** The army of martyrs is a huge evidence of the great Christian hope in eternal life in Christ Jesus. This hope is like an anchor which grasps the secure port of our heavenly Jerusalem.

St. Paul starts his letter to Titus saying, **“In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began”** (Titus 1:2). He adds, **“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil”** (Heb.6:19).

Do we have the same hope? Or did we lose hope thinking that eternal life is not for us?!





By Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna

In the last issue (August 2012), I wrote about the tongue as the most dangerous member in the human body and then mentioned 21 sins attributed to the tongue. And in this issue I will complete the sins of the tongue; then go, in the next issue, to the remedy.

II. The Sins of the Tongue

22) Words of malice: “Let all bitterness...with malice be put away from you” (Eph. 4:31, see also malicious words in 3 Jn.10).

23) Despising others: “*He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor*” (Prov. 11:12).

24) Words of mockery, ridicule and sarcasm: (Psalm 1:1; “neither filthy, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting” /vulgar Eph, 5:4).

25) Joking like the piercings of a sword (Prov, 12:18); “Like a madman who throws firebrands arrows and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, I was only joking” (Prov. 26:18).

26) Words of arrogance, rudeness and impoliteness: “Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come

from your mouth” (1 Sam.2:2). Cain’s answer to the Lord was very rude when he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9). Pharaoh’s answer also was rude when he said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go” (Exod. 5:2).

27) Speaking proudly: “With their mouths they speak proudly” (Psa. 17:10; Psa. 31:18 & Psa. 73:8, 9).

28) Words of hatred: “They have surrounded me with words of hatred” (Psa. 109:3). “Whoever hides hatred has lying lips” (Prov. 10:18; 26:24).

29) Words of anger, strife, wrath, rage and fury: “A wrathful man stirs up strife” (Prov.15:18): “Love is not provoked to anger” (1 Cor. 13:5; see also Matt. 12:19 & Eph. 4:31).

30) Murmuring: “Nor murmur, as some of them murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10).

31) Heresies: “There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the LORD who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1; remember that



because of Arius heresy hundreds of thousands perished).

32) Words of foolishness and stupidity: “The mouth of the fools pours forth foolishness” (Prov. 15:2). “A fool’s mouth is his destruction. And his lips are the snare of his soul” (Prov. 18:7).

33) Interfering in other people’s matters: “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busy-body in other people’s matters” (1 Peter 4:15); “He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own, is like one who takes a dog by the ears” (Proverbs 26:17).

34) Words of Rejoicing over others’ troubles: “He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; and he who is glad at Calamity will not go unpunished” (Prov. 17:5); “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles” (Prov.24:17).

35) Rush and hasty speaking: “Do you see a man hasty in his words; there is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 29:20). “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

36) Interrupting others: “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him” (Prov. 18:13).

37) Words of lustful carnal songs: It is a compound sin, which is full of ugly offensive and corrupt words.

38) Words of fraud, malice and guile: “Lay aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy and all evil speaking” (1 Pet. 2:1). “My lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit” (Job 27:4). “His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is trouble and iniquity” (Psa. 10:7, see also Psa. 34:13).

39) Exaggeration: It is a common sort of lying and gives wrong and false impression about the facts and truth.

40) False excuses: False excuses contain lies, cheating and attributing our faults to others or to circumstances (see the false excuses of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3; the false excuses of the invitees to the Royal Wedding in Luke 14, therefore, the Bible says, “You are inexcusable, O Man”(Rom2:1).

41) Words of discouragement and hopelessness: (See Numbers 13:31-33).

42) Harsh words: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1).

43) Words of stubbornness: Listen to what the prophet Samuel said to king Saul, “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:23).

44) Words of Atheism: “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God: (Psa. 14:1).

45) Words that create division: (1 Cor. 1:19).

46) Blasphemous words: (Matt. 12:31; Mk. 7:27; Acts 6:11).

47) Foolish arguments and ignorant discussions: “Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes knowing that they generate strife quarrel...” (2 Tim. 2:23).

48) Revealing secrets of others: “Do not disclose the secret to another; lest he who hears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined” (Pro. 25:9).

49) Idle words: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment” (Matt. 12:36).

50) The double or perverse tongue: “He who has a perverse tongue falls into evil” (Prov. 17:20; see also Prov. 20:14 & 1 Tim. 3:8).

51) Talkativeness: “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise” (Prov. 10:19). “A fool’s voice is known by his many words” (Eccl. 5:3).

52) Insolence and false accusations: (1Tim.1:13; Jude 9).

53) Words of destruction: “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor” (Prov. 11:9); also, “By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked” (Prov. 11:11).

54) Frightening words of worrying and lack of faith: (see Numbers 13:31-33).

55) Surety and securing the wicked: “He who is surety for a stranger will suffer for it” (Prov. 11:15).

56) Tale-bearing: “A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Prov. 11:13).

57) The prayer of the wicked: “When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers I will not hear; Your hands are full of blood” (Isa. 1:15; Prov. 28:9).

58) Digging up evil: “An ungodly man digs up evil,



and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends” (Prov. 16:27).

59) Justifying the wicked and condemning the just: “He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just. Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15).

60) Revealing own heart to everyone: “A fool has delight in expressing his own heart” (Prov. 18:2).

61) Backbiting tongue: “A north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue an angry countenance”(Prov. 25:23; Rom. 1:30).

62) Bad words of rebellious mourners in funerals: (Eccl. 12:5).

63) Consulting the dead and calling the spirits: “There shall not be found among you anyone who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead, for all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD” (Deut. 18:9-12).

64) Words of witchcraft and soothsayer and omens: “practicing witchcraft or soothsaying or interpreting omens are abomination to the LORD” (Deut. 18:10).

65) Summon evil spirits: (Deuteronomy 18:9-11).

66) Adopting old wives profane fables: “Reject profane and old wives fables” (1 Tim. 4:7).

67) Words of passion, un-cleanliness and sexual immorality: (Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:4).

68) Despising others: “He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor” (Prov. 11:12).

69) Speaking evil of one another: “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren...he who speaks evil of a brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law” (James 4:11).

70) Spreading false rumors that confuse people: “A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends” (Prov. 16:28).

71) Twisting the facts and distorting the truth:

(2 Peter 3:16).

72) Words of negligence, reckless and indifference:

73) Killing the reputation of others (moral murder)

74) False complaints to the civil and religious authorities.

75) Justifying in vain one’s faults.

76) Vulgar words.

77) Wrong oral self-defense.

78) Denying Christ.

79) Words of betrayal.

80) The wrong silence in the wrong time.

81) Yelling and screaming especially with parents and elderly people.

82) Offensive words or ways of talking (Eph. 4:31).

83) Words of ingratitude and ungratefulness.

84) Plotting against others.

85) Words of envy and jealousy.

86) Filthy and sexual jokes.

87) Words of pessimism and lack of faith.

88) Cruel rebuke that leads to despair.

89) Insulting kings, rulers and presidents, political-ly and religiously (Eccl. 10::20; Acts 232:5).

90) Flattering wicked leaders (Prov. 24:24).

91) Mocking the poor and ridiculing the needy.

92) Words of cowardice.

93) Taking back our promises.

94) Words of boasting and self pride.

95) Words of hallucination.

96) Judging others: (Matt. 7:1).

97) Complicating problems through gossip.

98) The hypocrite prayer of the lips without the heart.

99) Words of nagging.

100) Words of threatening:

“When He (Jesus) suffered He did not threaten” (1 Peter 2:23).

101) Words of favoritism and partiality (James 2:1).

102) The religion of words and not works (Matt. 21:28).

(To be continued: The Remedy)





CHRIST IN

By Fr. Gawargious A. Kolta

THE BOOK OF GENESIS (19)

13- Israel's Encountered with Joseph and Pharaoh (Gen. 46:28-34, 47:1-12):

Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet his father in Goshen. When Joseph met him, **he wept on his neck a good while**. Israel said to Joseph: "*Now let me die in peace, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive*" (Gen. 46:30). Joseph advised his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds to let them live in Goshen.

St. Ephrem the Syrian said that Joseph commanded his brothers to live in Goshen for the following reasons:

1- Goshen was at the north east of Egypt, the nearest location to the land of Canaan, to remind them that they were sojourners in Egypt, and that they must have their hearts set and prepared for departure to Canaan.

2- The Egyptians considered the occupation of shepherding an abomination, so Joseph spared his brothers the despise of the Egyptians.

3- Living far away from the Egyptians would spare them getting in contact with the Egyptians, so that they would not be affected by the pagan worship and the evil customs.

4- Joseph chose Goshen, the best of the land, to allow them to live in prosperity.

St. John Chrysostom said that the exceeding joy caused the tears to flow, and made Joseph to weep a flood of tears. There came to his mind what he himself had suffered and what his father had endured on his account. The flood of tears also revealed that he gave thanks to the Lord that he finally received his father.

Fr. Tadros Malaty said that Jacob represents the Lord's church, when it meets with its real Joseph (Jesus Christ), risen from the dead. The church will be crushed with love before Him, longing to stay forever with Him.

St. Cyril of Alexandria said that it could be a sign, that as Joseph gave his brothers the best part of the land of Egypt; **the Israelites themselves, by coming back in the latter times of the world, will be received by Christ with joy**. That will happen when they become in accord with the new people (the Christian believers). This was mentioned by St. Paul, who said: "*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided some-*

thing better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Heb. 11:39, 40). He added that we wait for the fathers, so that we will not be made perfect apart from them.

Joseph was not ashamed of the occupation of his father and brothers as sheep shepherds, as they were considered an abomination to the Egyptians. He informed Pharaoh of their arrival and **chose five of his brothers** to present to him, after instructing them to be frank concerning their occupation.

Fr. Tadros Malaty said that **it is the same with our Lord Jesus Christ, who will present His church as five wise virgins**, or He will present the believers through sanctification of the five senses.

Joseph's brothers lived as sojourners in the land of Egypt; so the believers must always feel that they are sojourners in this world, until they encounter with the Groom of their souls. Because of the honesty of Joseph, and his love for his brothers, Pharaoh told him to let his father and brothers dwell in the best land of Egypt. He also requested Joseph to appoint his brothers chief herdsmen over his livestock (Gen. 47:4-6).

Jacob Encountered with Pharaoh:

Joseph presented his father before Pharaoh. Despite his old age, yet Pharaoh was impressed by his obvious dignity, and asked for his blessing. When Pharaoh saw Jacob in very old age, he asked him about his age. He answered: "*The days of the years of my sojourn are one hundred and thirty years, few and evil have they been; but they have not attained to the days and years of my father's sojourn in life*" (Gen. 47:9). Actually, his life was full of continuous troubles since the time he escaped from his brother till the episode of Joseph that rocked his whole being. But, **becoming Israel, he presented the church of the Old Testament, and from his seed Christ the Lord was incarnate**.

St. John Chrysostom said that Jacob's use of the phrase '**my sojourn**' showed that all righteous people have the same feeling to the earthly life; as living in a foreign land. King David also used this verse, saying: "*For I am sojourner before You and a stranger, as all my fathers*" (Ps. 39:12). St. Paul also said that those righteous people: "*All died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" (Heb. 11:13). **The believers waited for the city which has foundations, whose**



builder and maker is God.

Jacob and his family lived freely in a city called Rameses, in Goshen. On the other hand, because the famine was severe in Egypt, all the Egyptians gave their livestock, their lands and themselves to Pharaoh, and they became his slaves. They said: ***“Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh”*** (Gen. 47:19).

Origen contemplated on the difference between the Egyptians and the Hebrews in those days. The famine prevailed over the land, but not over the Hebrews (Jacob and his sons). It is written: ***“I was young, but indeed I grew old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”*** (Ps. 37:25). The Lord will not strike down the just soul with famine (Prov. 10:3). He added that **the famine never prevails over those whose souls are nourished by the True Bread from Heaven.** Although famine can come to the just, but it does not prevail over him. St. Paul is found to rejoice cheerfully in sufferings, as he said: ***“... in hunger and thirst, in fasting always, in cold and nakedness”*** (2 Cor. 11:27). **What therefore is an exercise of the virtue for the just is a penalty of sin for the unjust.** He added that there is a great difference between someone who runs to the real Pharaoh (the devil), to ask him to have him as a slave, for grain (temporary lust); and another who is enslaved by Pharaoh by force.

Origen added that the Hebrews fell into servitude by force (Exod. 1:13), but Pharaoh submitted the Egyptians to servitude, without any claim of using force. If the Egyptians were symbolized to the non-believers and were symbols of lovers of this world, and the Hebrews represented the believers, the former coveted the life of humiliation and servitude to the devil, for the sake of worldly lusts, while for the latter, the enemy uses exerts and every effort to captivate them to his side. When the former fell into servitude, they used to live it all their life, while the Hebrew if he was sold as a slave, according to the Law, he should be set free on the seventh year of his servitude (Exod. 21:2). **The man of God, even if he falls, will stand again** because he will not find comfort except in the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Those who mind earthly things (Ph. 3:19), and cannot perceive things that are of the Spirit of God, famine prevails over them.

The pagan priests were wicked; they did not have to sell anything, but received grain from Pharaoh, as his friends, friends of the devil (Gen. 47:22). On the other hand, according to Origen said that as God says to us who live in faith and holiness: ***“No longer do I call you servants ... but I have called you friends”*** (Jn. 15:15). **We must know the difference between the priests of God, and those of Pharaoh;** Pharaoh gave his priests land, while God says to His priests: “I am your portion” (Deut. 10:9).

14- The last days of Jacob:

When Jacob came to Egypt, he was hundred and thirty

years old; and he lived in Egypt seventeen years. His request was not to be buried in Egypt (Gen. 47:29). He said to Joseph: ***“...Let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place”*** (Gen. 47:30). Joseph swore to him; so Israel bowed himself on the top of his staff.

St. John Chrysostom said that Jacob **wanted to lie with his fathers** to let his descendants have a glimpse of the real prospect of returning them some day to the Promised Land. He said that Jacob called the death sleeping. By the eyes of faith, he saw the Promised Land and greeted it (Heb.11:13). He added that the believers sleep in faith, while the only real death is to die in sin.

Origen said that although Jacob lived in Egypt, yet he was not far from God. He believed in the Lord's promise who said to him: ***“I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will be with you”*** (Gen. 46:4). Therefore, even if we appear to have gone down into Egypt, even if placed in the flesh, we undergo the battles and struggles of this world. If we dwell among those who are subject to Pharaoh, nevertheless we are near to God, if we live in meditation on His commandments and inquire diligently after His precept and judgments (Duet. 12:1). God will be always with us, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

When Jacob was ill, **he told Joseph that his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim will be Jacob's own sons.** He made them the thirteenth tribe. This foreshadows the calling of St. Paul as the thirteenth apostle, the apostle to the gentiles. Jacob asked Joseph to bring his sons in order to bless them. He said that he had not thought that he would see Joseph's face, but God had let him see his children also. Jacob kissed them and embraced them. Joseph bowed himself with his face to the ground. Joseph took Ephraim towards Jacob's left hand and Manasseh towards his right hand; but Jacob stretched out his right hand and laid it upon the head of Ephraim (the younger), and the left hand upon the head of Manasseh (the first born), **crossing his hand** and he blessed them (Gen. 48:1-16).

St. John Chrysostom said that Although Jacob's bodily eyes were weak, the eyes of his mind saw through faith what was going to happen. Instead of heeding Joseph, Jacob crossed his hands over in blessing them and gave precedence to the younger.

St. Ephrem the Syrian said that Jacob's crossing of his hands **signifies the mystery of the cross.**

St. Ambrose and **St. Augustine** said that the two sons symbolize two peoples; **the younger people; the Christians, the body of Christ, whom He made to grow, while the older son symbolizes the Jews.** This happened before; Abel was preferred over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, David over his older brothers and finally, the Christian over the Jews who preceded them.

(Ancient Christian Commentary on Genesis, II, p.304-318). (Father Tadros Malaty, on Genesis, p. 363-374).





By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

[14] *Encouraging and Not Forcing*

The people all loved the Truth and were enthusiastic for it, striving to spread it. This is unquestionably right and imperative.

A person's work is to bear witness to the Truth and not at all to force people to do good.

Even God Himself does not force people to do good. He created human beings with free will to do good according to their will. God does not compel.

Because of this, there are unbelievers in the world whom God has not forced to believe, but He will judge them on the Last Day...

There are also in the world those who sin and are disobedient and God has not forced them to do acts of righteousness, but He will call them to account on the Day of Judgment.

And you, with your enthusiasm for Goodness and Truth, your work is only to call and preach and warn. You do not have any authority to force anyone else. You must bear witness to the Truth, but does not use force to compel other people to be devoted to God.

Force does not produce saints and righteous people though it can be a suitable means for teaching discipline and correct manner...

The way to correct things, though, is by making the people want to do good, and persuading them, encouraging and helping them to do so. It means strengthening their will and knowing the obstacles which they are likely to encounter on the way to goodness, and advising them on how to surmount them.

The goodness which comes as a result of conviction and acceptance is much more enduring.

[15] *Tiring Conversations*

Someone who was really fed up said to me:

“What can I do about a person who wastes my time by making me listen to something which I know all about and have heard many times before? Or someone who tries to convince me about something which I have already made up my mind about? The more I tell him that my mind is made up, the more he insists on trying to explain and convince me further!

What should I do with someone who talks to me a lot yet says nothing of any purpose, and who then asks for another appointment on which he can add more nothing to the nothing he has already told me?!

I said to him; “Perhaps these people want to teach you the virtue of being a good listener”.

And he replied, “Forgive me. But what about my nerves, they're tired out and exhausted?”.

So I said to him, “It would be better with these people if you lead the discussion, or try to change the subject that they have brought up and direct it from then on...”

[16] *Is Silence a Virtue?*

Silence is not always a virtue...

Sometimes we are judged guilty for keeping quiet...

The issue requires wisdom, so that we know when to speak and when to keep silent, and if we speak, then what words to use.

The wise man is one who does not remain silent when he should speak and does not speak when he should remain silent.

[17] *Stages*

In life we pass through stages. The heart, thoughts, feelings and spirit all pass through them. Each stage has its impact and effect. It has duration of time beyond which it does not go.

Golgotha is a stage, so is the Resurrection. The ascent to heaven is a stage that extends to the sitting on the right hand of the Father, where there is a final rest.

Golgotha, as a stage in life, does not last forever.

It passes as we rejoice in the resurrection and our situation improves and the cross turns to a crown and glory.

Happy is the one who looks continually with hope for the next stage.

Happy is the one whose difficulties do not send to the other extreme. For a difficulty is only a stage in life and the solution of that difficulty is yet another stage.

Live with faith that there will be a solution and rejoice as you look forward to what cannot be seen.

The world itself is only a stage in life that



will arrive at another stage, that of eternity...

[18] *On One Day!*

I have noticed while traveling along Life's road, that a person might take forty years to build his name, fame and reputation, and that all of this could then be lost in one day, perhaps even in just one hour or by one action! It is a real tragedy...?

[19] *Freedom*

Many young people used to be very sensitive about their personal freedom and would say when they reached the age of maturity, or even before, that they ought to enjoy their full freedom without restrictions and thus do what they liked...

But we would reply to them that freedom has two basic conditions: that a person exercises his freedom in such a way that:

1. He does not encroach on the freedoms or rights of others, and;
2. He does not offend against the public order or the morals or disturb the values and observed customs.

We would say that these two conditions do not pose a restriction to the 'free' individual, but rather amount to a protection for his course through life, like the banks of a river protecting its water.

The two banks do not pose a restriction which limits the freedom of the river but in fact protect its water from flooding out over its sides. If it were not for them the river would turn into a quagmire...

[20] *One Way of Life*

We must reconcile our way of life within the Church and our way of life outside it, so that they proceed along the same line without any contradictions or conflicts.

It is not good for a person to have two personalities: one for the House of God and another for the world.

The righteous person is always the same; he does not wear a different face for each different occasion.

[21] *Who is blown by the Storm?*

Storms blow but they do not shake everything.

The unstable may be demolished, but the firmly-based mountain will not be shaken.

The little tree is blown, but the strong oak is unaffected.

The waters of the Nile with all their force, sweep along in their course any soil which they meet, and dig a channel through it. But they cannot sweep away the six great 'Ganado' stones which remain fixed in the current. Neither its waters nor waves can affect them.

And you ask yourself what are you made of?

Be a fixed slab of stone which the water cannot sweep away. Be a towering mountain which the storms cannot shake.

And remember what was said about Zerubbabel: **"What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground."** (Zech. 4:7)

Do not let new reports shake neither you nor events alarm you. Be bigger than them. Let them pass by or over you while you stay unchanged.

The Apostle Paul said: "Stand firm. Let nothing shake you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord." (1Cor. 15:58) Yes. Stand firm!

The safety of your life is not dependent on external factors, but on faith and on the substance of your heart inside you.

The heart that is strong in the Lord is an unshakable fortress.?

[22] *Learning and Submitting*

To be a student does not just mean listening to the words of a teacher, **but means that one is a seeker after knowledge, who absorbs a particular spirit and lifestyle which is passed from one person to another. Thus it is "Spirit and Life".** (John 6:63)

Being a disciple involves not only instruction but in the main submitting oneself.

A true teacher is someone who can present the divine picture to the people, presenting them with the spiritual life in an entirely practical way. They learn more from life than from words.

The true teacher is a beautiful icon in the Church; he is the image of God before the people.

How do the children in the Church learn? How do the ordinary people and those of limited knowledge learn and those who do not grasp the depth of what books, readings and sermons contain?

They learn from a living image, they absorb the spiritual life and receive its ideas in the example set before them...

Even those who understand the books and the sermons only grasp their depths by way of a practical example.

And you, I wonder, what do you present to the people, words or a living example??

[23] *The Gift of Thinking*

The biggest project begins with an idea, which is why it is important that there should be people who have the gift of thinking, they rely on those who are intelligent and experienced and learn from those who have it.

[24] *Saturday and Sunday*

Whoever prepares on Saturday, finds he has a Sunday. And whoever does not prepare for his tomorrow finds nothing at all and no one to return a favor.

[To be continued]





Summer Contest (3)

By Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna

A-Bible

1. How many books in the Bible are composed of one chapter?
2. The name of Egypt was repeated many times in the Bible. Give example in the following books:
3. Genesis –Exodus –Psalms –Isaiah –Matthew – Revelation.
4. Who described the martyrs and heroes of faith that “the world was not worthy of them”?
5. What are the main three kinds of types in the Old Testament that point to Christ?
6. Who are the Apostles of Faith –Hope- Love-Works in the New Testament?
7. How many persons in the Bible asked God to take his life from him, yet with different motives?
8. Who are the Prophets and Apostles that described “The Day of LORD” and the end of the world?

B-Church History

- 1) To whom the following titles refer?
- 2) The Seal of Martyrs
- 3) The Faith Defender
- 4) The Pillar of Faith
- 5) The Beholder of God
- 6) The Father of Reformation
- 7) The Father of the church history
- 8) The Beloved of Millions, Pope of the Arab, the Second Golden Mouthed.

C-Dogma

- 1) How many dogmas are shown in the sign of the cross?
- 2) How many dogmas are contained in the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to St. Mary?
- 3) Give example from the Old Testament to explain the sacrament of confession.
- 4) Mention three examples from the books of Genesis, Proverbs and Isaiah that refer to the sacrament of Communion.
- 5) What are the verses in the two books of Ezekiel and Daniel that refer to the vegetarian fasting food?
- 6) Mention the verses, which prove that baptism is not just a rite practiced one time in life; but it affects all the life.
- 7) Mention verses from Genesis and Isaiah that refer to the Holy Trinity.

D-True or False:

- 1) The Coptic Orthodox Church offered, and still offering, the largest number of martyrs in history.
- 2) Many martyrs sacrificed their lives for faith or chastity or refusing to offer incense to the idols.
- 3) Martyrdom for the sake of faith lacks flexibility.
- 4) The era of martyrdom did not end and the Copts (Christians of Egypt) started a new era of martyrdom.
- 5) Is it possible that someone denies Christ before people and still be Christian in his heart?
- 6) There is no compulsion in religion.
- 7) We can be true Christians without being persecuted./

E-Who is this?

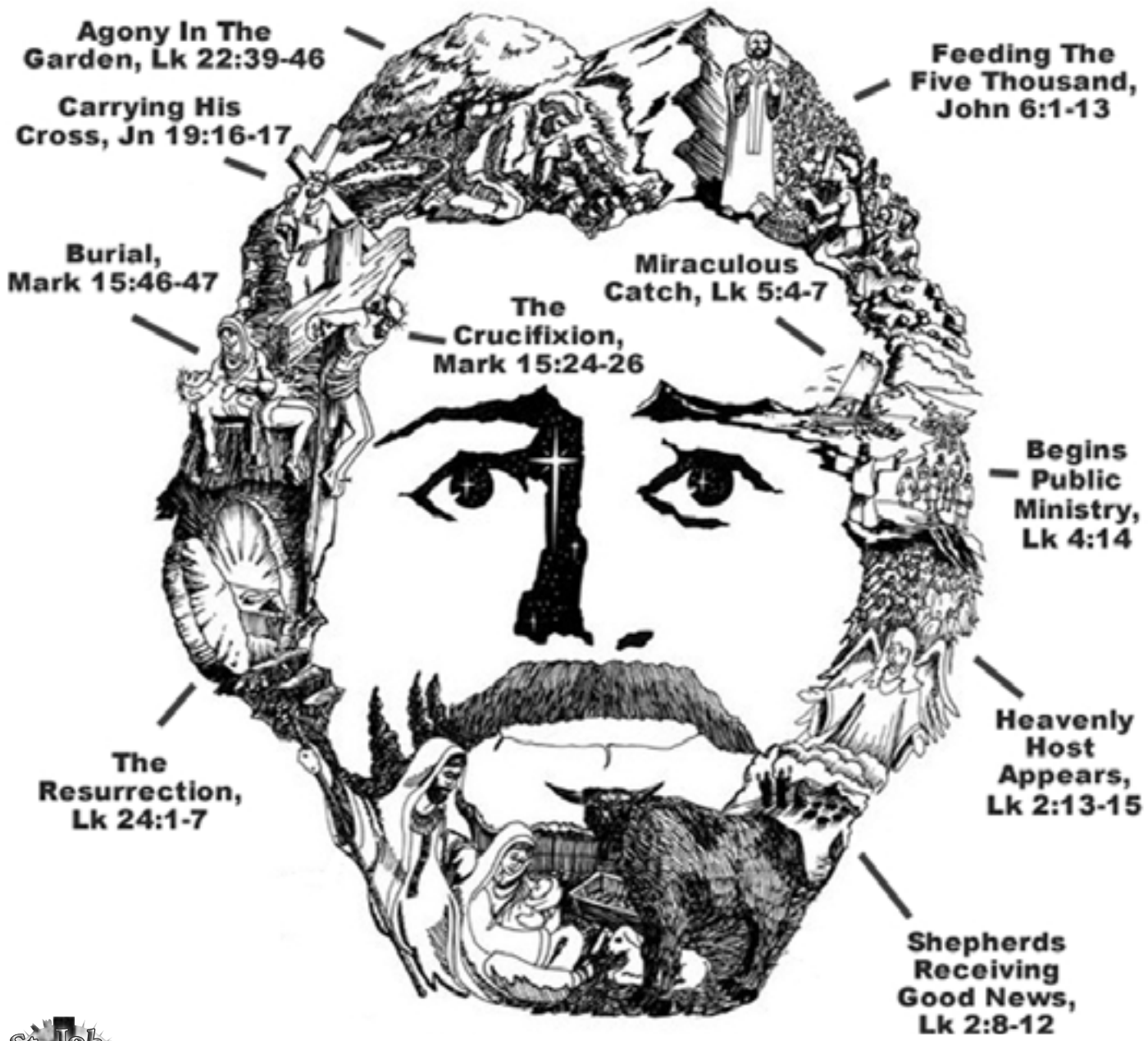
- 1) 480 years passed between whose death and his burial?
- 2) When Jacob blessed his children, he called one of them a “Lion” and another “Strong donkey,” who were those?
- 3) What was the first dress of Eve made of and what was her second one?
- 4) One of David’s wives was famous of being beautiful and the second was wise and the third was irritable?
- 5) The Lord Jesus praised a woman for hearing and keeping the word of God; and warned of another for looking back.

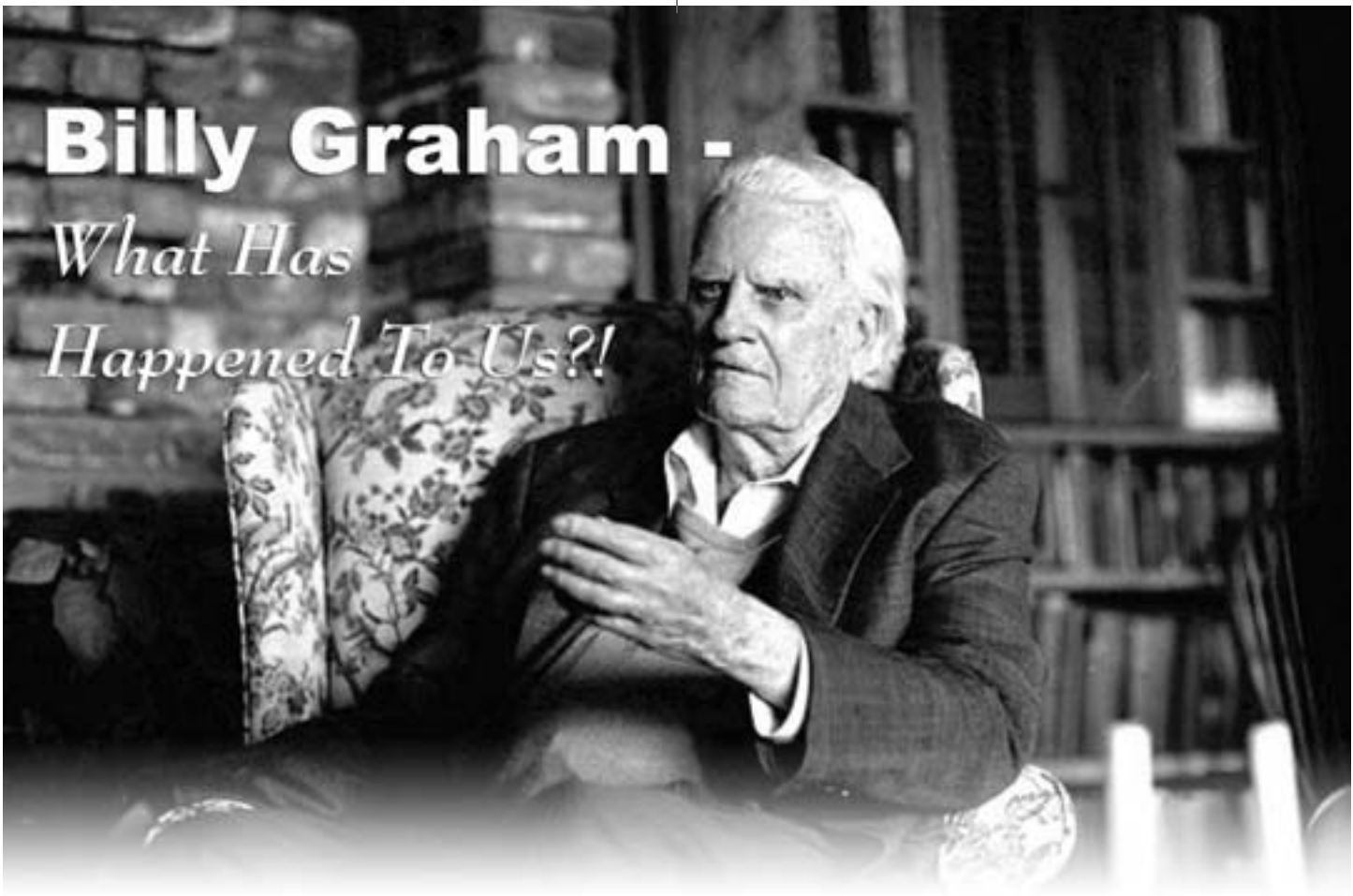




The Picture of Jesus life on His Face!

Seek the Lord
and His Strength;
Seek His Face Continually. Psalm 100:4
St. John's Mission





Billy Graham -

*What Has
Happened To Us?!*

Current Age: 93 Truth from a man the media has never been able to throw dirt on amazing!

He has certainly hit the "world" on the head!

Billy Graham's Prayer for Our Nation

THIS MAN SURE HAS A GOOD VIEW OF WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR COUNTRY!

'Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance

We know Your Word says, '**Woe to those who call evil good**, but that is exactly what we have done.

We have lost our spiritual balance and reversed our values

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare

We have killed our unborn and called it choice

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self esteem

We have abused power and called it politics

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression

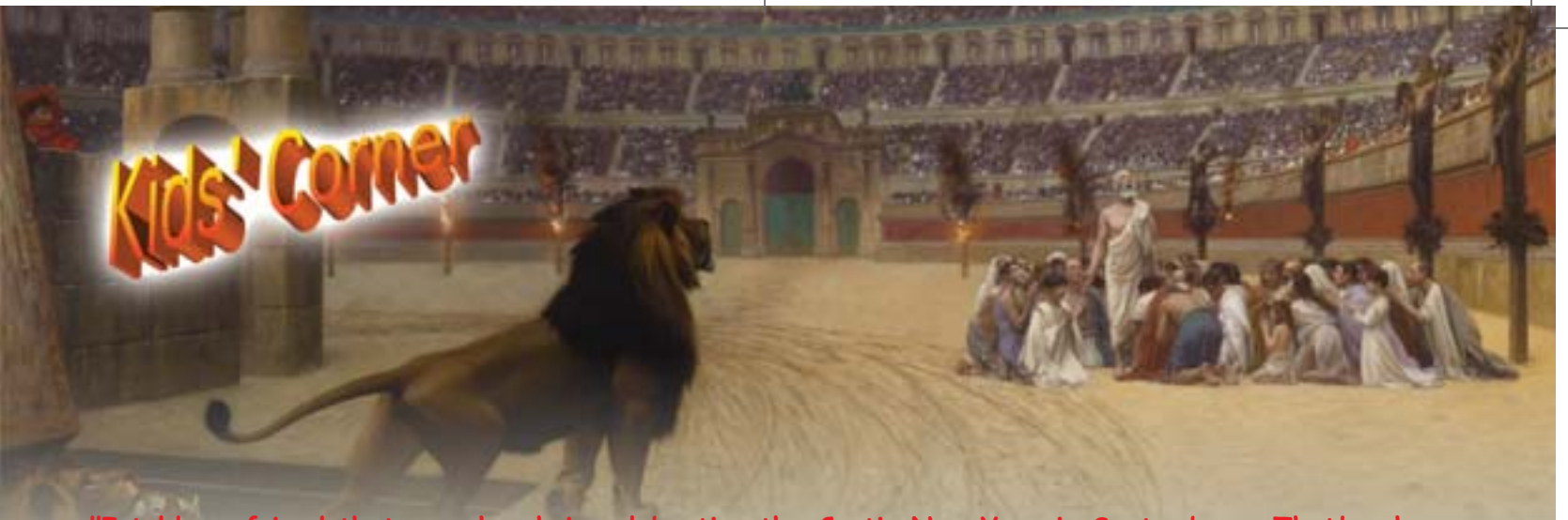
We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment

Search us, Oh God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and Set us free

Amen!'

With the Lord's help, may this prayer sweep over our nation and wholeheartedly become our desire so that we again can be called '**One nation under God!**'





"I told my friend that our church is celebrating the Coptic New Year in September. That's when we remember the lives of the martyrs. My friend asked what do martyrs have to do with us."
"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."
Matthew 16:23-25

Sometimes, we don't always feel like doing what our parents want. That's what denying ourself means. They say, "take out the trash.". You say "yes" without complaining or whining. They say that is enough T.V. You don't say "one more show, please."

Your teacher says to stop talking in class. You talk with your friend AFTER class. The priest says no texting in church. You turn off your cell phone before entering church.

To pick up your cross and follow Christ means not to complain about your problems or the things you don't have. Ask God for guidance and help in every situation so we have Christ in our minds.

We are pleased with the following 2nd grade students who memorized Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immorta from last magazine issue: Carol and Carol Henein.





Mary Mikhail

Congratulations on your great achievement, Masters of Public Health from GW University. May the Lord make you always successful.
Dad (Fr. Mauritius), Mom, Mira, and Verena



Dear Chantelle,

Congratulations on graduating from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Boston and obtaining your degree. We are very proud of your hard work, research and dedication. May the Lord bless you and watch over you in the next chapter of your life
-The Labib family: Emeil, Eman, Patrick and Christy.



St. John Coptic Orthodox Church, Covina congratulates
Miranda Guivara

On her graduation from Junior High and going to High School. May God bless her future and grant her continuous success in life.

Congratulations

Zuleth & Jonathan Salama
Engagement 8/25/12



Congratulations on your engagement. May God pave a smooth road throughout your journey
- Love, the Telleria family and the Salama family

+++

St. John Church congratulates
Zuleth & Jonathan

On their engagement praying that the Lord Jesus Christ may complete their marriage in joy and peace. Congratulations also for their two families.



St. John Church in Covina congratulates Amir Zaky and Christeen for the baptism
Of their baby boy
JUSTIN

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless his life and grant him health and growth in the body and spirit.

