

# ST. JOHN

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THE FEAST OF THE LORD JESUS'  
ENTRY TO THE TEMPLE



*"For my eyes have seen Your salvation" (Lk. 2:30).*

## St. John Coptic Orthodox Church

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*“Greater than Jonah is here”*  
(Matthew 12:41)

In the occasion of Nineveh’s Fast, which will begin February 17-19, it is nice to make a comparative study about Jonah and Christ and their generations.

1. Jonah received a message from God to go to Nineveh and preach repentance. The Lord Jesus received the same message to go to the world and save it. His first sermon was, *“Repent and believe the Gospel.”*

2. Jonah rejected his mission and fled to Tarshish, but the Lord Jesus accepted His mission delightedly and used to say: *“My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to complete His work”* (Jn. 4:34).

3. Jonah disobeyed God, gave a stubborn ear and tried to evade his responsibility and escape from God as his grandfather Adam did before. But he realized later that God is in control on both land and sea (Ps. 139:7-12). On the other hand Jesus obeyed to the point of death (Phil. 2:8).

4. Jonah refused to serve Nineveh as a heathen city because he was a selfish fanatic Jew. The Lord Jesus Christ was also a Jew, but He served both Jews and Gentiles and so loved the whole world that He gave His life a ransom for all (Matt. 20:28).

5. Both Jonah and the Lord Jesus slept in a ship. Regarding Jonah it was a sleep of conscience, and as for the Lord Jesus, it was

the sleep of exhaustion from His busy ministry.

6. Both of them were exposed to a mighty storm. The Lord Jesus could rebuke the wind and the sea and calm them because He Is Holy and perfect. But Jonah was about to perish because of his disobedience.

7. Jonah was swallowed up by a large whale, stayed three days in its belly and came out to life miraculously. He was a symbol of Christ who stayed in the heart of the earth three days, then He rose from the dead. (Matt. 12:39,40).

8. The message of Jonah: *“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown”* (3:4), was a terrible message of warning and judgment. But the message of the Lord Jesus was the greatest joyful message of good tidings, love and salvation, accompanied with great miracles of mercy.

9. Despite of that, the people of Nineveh deeply repented in ashes, but the generation of the Lord Jesus rebelled against Him and crucified Him. Therefore, the generation of Jonah will judge even the nominal Christians who have no excuse.

10. When Nineveh (120,000) repented, surprisingly, Jonah became angry! But the Lord Jesus Christ rejoices for one sinner who repents (Lk. 15:7).

# ORTHODOXY II

## THE SAINTS:

Dear to the hearts of all Orthodox Christians are the saints especially Saint Mary (The THEOTOKOS = Mother of God). The Saints serve as a meeting point between heaven and earth. We all form the Body of Christ: the saints are part of the triumphant Church and we on earth are part of the struggling Church. Accordingly, we are dependent on their prayers and intercessions. It is clear from the Bible that there are two kinds of intercessions:

1. Propitiatory: Which is Christ's work alone as stated by St. Paul: "*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*" (1 Tim. 2:5).

2. Imploratory: This is the great assistance accorded to us by the saints. Saint James teaches us: "Pray for one another . . . The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jms. 5:16). Christ has always responded to the intercessions of the righteous, like Abraham (Gen. 18:17, 26-32), Moses (Ex. 32:7-14) and Job (42:7,8).

Foremost among all intercessions is that of St. Mary. Her plea at the wedding of Cana of

Galilee exemplifies her twin roles:

- St. Mary is the dear Mother who presents our needs before Christ with confidence (John 2:3).
- She directs our hearts to the commandments of Christ that we may diligently perform them (John 2:5).

On such strong Biblical grounds, the Liturgical Calendar of the Orthodox Church is filled with feasts of hundreds of saints. These feasts are celebrated with great spiritual enthusiasm: The faithful light candles in front of the saints icon and obtain oil and spices from their holy relics. The Church joins in the procession of the saints icons and chant hymns in their honour. Such devotions express the Orthodox Church's living experience that, although it lives on earth, it is in fact in fellowship with the Heavenly.

*Do Orthodox Christians pray to the Saints ?*

They certainly do not! However, they seek the prayers of the saints. The saints forward our needs and request to the Lord for His Divine Intervention. The saints therefore, through their blessed prayers, edifying teachings and writings, many virtues and fruitful life, inspire and assist us

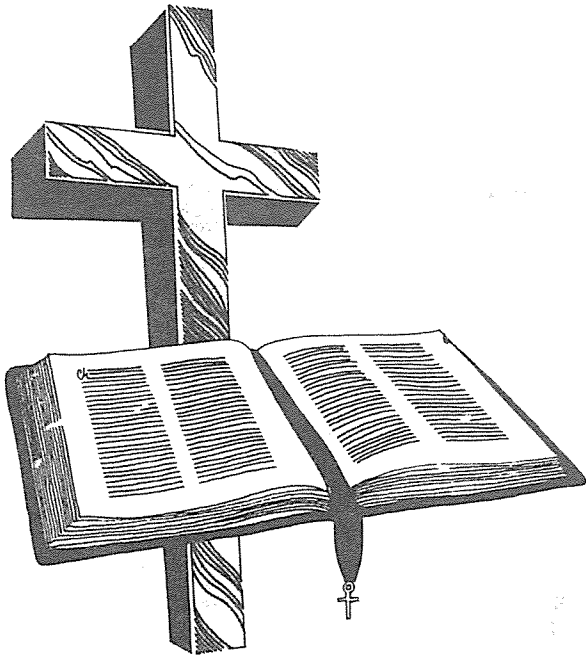
considerably in our journey towards the Kingdom.

## ICONS:

The Orthodox Churches are full of Icons on the walls, on special shrines, and in the sanctuary. Icons are not designed to make the Church "look nice" but have a theological function to fulfill. An Icon is not simply a religious picture designed to arouse appropriate emotions in the Beholder; it is one of the ways whereby the light of Christ is revealed to man. Hence through Icons the Orthodox Christian receives a vision of the spiritual world.

As each person prays, surrounded by the figures of Christ, the angels and saints, these visible images remind the faithful unceasingly of the invisible images presence of the whole company of heaven. The faithful can feel that the walls of the Church open out upon eternity; truly "heaven on earth". Veneration of the Icons is bound up with reverence to the saints who are not looked upon as remote legendary figures from the past but as precious friends.

by  
*Maged Attia*



## THE EPISTLE OF ST. J A M A S (II)

(Chapter 2)

By Fr. Augustinos

Martin Luther opposed the authenticity and inspiration of the letter of St. James. He founded his strange opinion on saying that it contradicts the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, because St. Paul says that Justification is by faith while St. James says that it is by both faith and works.

Luther's disciples opposed him and said he was wrong, then he himself took back his opinion.

In chapter 2 from St. James' Epistle we conclude the following facts:

1. Faith without works is dead (Jms. 1:26).
2. The living faith must bring forth living works.
3. Good works are the manifested part of the Christian faith.
4. By faith we get justified before God, and by works we are justified before God and men.
5. James did not attack faith, but he did attack two specific kinds of false faith only: 1) the dead faith, and 2) the faith of the mind.
6. Paul also never attacked the good works, but he attacked two kinds of false works: 1) the works of self-righteousness, and 2) the works of the Law of Moses without the faith of Christ.
7. Justification and salvation are by both faith in Christ and good works.

## “Love One Another as I Have Loved You”



Just like an apple seed freshly planted, we receive the Holy Spirit upon baptism. Through water and nutrients, the seed grows and matures, as does the Holy Spirit through spiritual feeding. Finally the seed matures into a tree, and the tree gives off fruits. The same occurs with the Holy Spirit. When He's works within us, He also produces fruits. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal.5:22-23). But the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13: 13).

We are the children of God, thus we must love one another because “*God is Love*”(1 Jn. 4:8). The Lord showed us his great and everlasting love on the cross, He died for our sake and the salvation of our souls. “*A new command I give you: Love one another, as I have loved you*”(Jn. 13:34).

Such love does not only extend to our friends and family, but to everyone, friends as well as enemies. It is easy to love those who are kind to you and love you back, yet it is much more difficult to love those who are unkind to you and treat you badly. According to our Lord Jesus Christ, “if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even the sinners love those who love them” (Lk. 6:32). Though loving your enemies is difficult, your reward in heaven is great. We can love such people more if we look at God and not at their actions, thus we treat them through our relationship with God.

Love is the basis of all virtues. If we have all, but

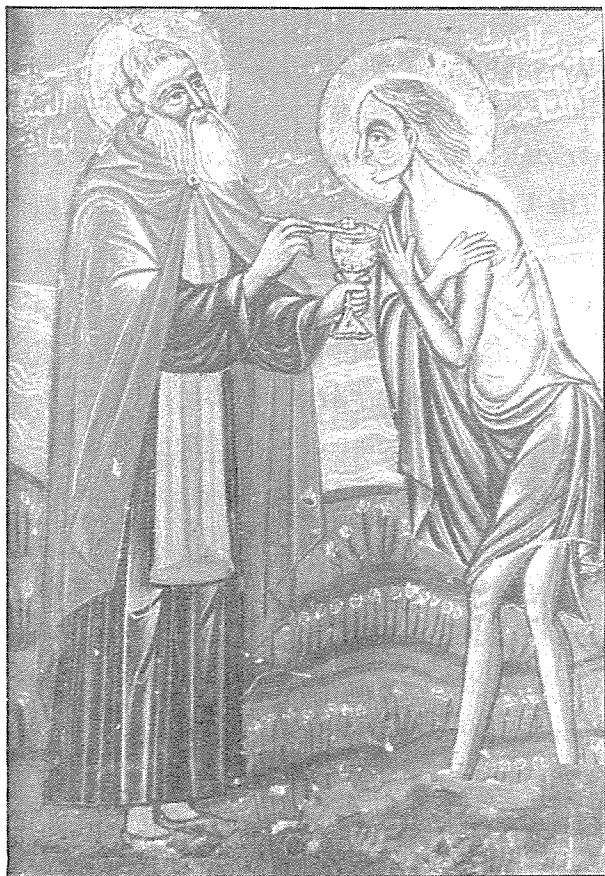
love, we cannot have a relationship with God, because “*God is Love*”, therefore, we are nothing. Love, however, is not shown in words, but in deeds. One example is the love of the four men carrying the paralytic to receive the Lord's healing. They performed many efforts in bringing the paralytic to the Lord Jesus. Their love was truly shown by their deeds. Another example is the love of St. Mary to Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39-56). In her old age, Elizabeth, was pregnant and St. Mary, out of love, realized Elizabeth's need at this time and immediately she went to help her. and serve her for three months.

It is obvious, then, that if we want to have an intimate relationship with God, Who is Love, we must have love for one another and translate that love into good deeds. As the Lord Jesus Christ said to His Apostles, “*All will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*”(Jn. 13:35).

by

*Dalia Atalla*

## ST. MARY the EGYPTIAN



She was an Egyptian, who at the age of twelve, ran away from her parents to Alexandria to indulge in the world and its pleasures. One day she saw a crowd of Libyans and Egyptians Journeying to Jerusalem for the exaltation of the Holy Cross. Suddenly she felt the desire to go with them. In Jerusalem she noticed a crowd of pilgrims moving to the church which is built on the tomb of Christ. She tried to enter the church but suddenly she felt some power pushing her away from the door. She tried again but was stopped for the second

time. Finally after trying three or four times, she stood in a corner weeping and beating her chest and felt that her sins prevented her from entering. Then she looked up over the door and saw an icon of the "Theotokos", the Mother of our Lord, Saint Mary. The purity of her complexion put her to shame. She knelt before the icon and begged for forgiveness. She vowed that as soon as she had seen the Holy Tree of the Cross she would renounce the world and its pleasures and would go wherever Our Savior, the Lord would lead her. As she

prayed she found herself filled with confidence. She mingled with the crowd and entered the door without difficulty. She threw herself on the ground and kissed the Holy Cross with tears and trembling.

When she came out of the church and stood by the icon of the "Theotokos", she asked the Lord to lead her by the hand upon the path of repentance. She heard a voice telling her to cross the Jordan. She came out of the church and started her journey. One of the pilgrims saw her and gave her three pieces of silver. She took them and bought three loaves of bread for her journey. At sunset she arrived at the church of Saint John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan. She passed all night weeping in the church. In the morning she partook of the Holy Mysteries and crossed the river and found herself in the wilderness.

She lived in the wilderness cleaving to her Lord for 47 years. There she met Abbot Zosima and told him her story. She told him about her experience in the wilderness and how she overcame all the

difficulties and hardships including terrible thoughts that troubled her. She asked him to pray for her and to keep her story a secret until she is set free from this earth and departed in peace. She told him not to cross the river the next year in lent and to wait for her on Holy Thursday on the banks of the Jordan with the life-giving Body and Blood of Christ in a sacred vessel. Then she disappeared into the wilderness.

For a whole year he kept it a secret. When lent began he became very ill and remained in the monastery as she told him. On Holy Thursday he took communion, a basket of figs and dates, a small quantity of lentiles soaked in water and went to the banks of the Jordan. He saw her coming toward him on the surface of the water. He wanted to prostrate himself before her but she cried to him not to do so since he was a priest and in addition, he carried the Divine Mysteries. She took the Holy Communion and raised her arms toward heaven and asked the Lord, with a sigh and tears, to let her depart in peace. She asked Abbot Zosima to go back to his

monastery. She asked him to take back the food he had brought her and told him to come back again the next year to the place where he had met her. He asked her to take the food he had, but she touched the lentiles and took three grains and put it in her mouth saying that the grace of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to keep the nature of the soul undefiled. She asked him to pray for her and then she crossed the Jordan passing over the water and disappeared into the wilderness.

Another year passed. Father Zosima reached the same spot, but he saw her dead body lying on the sand. He felt very sad. He knelt down and wept for a long time praying the psalms that are suitable for such an occasions. He noticed written on the sand near her head: "Abbott Zosima, on the night of the Lord's passion, Holy Thursday, I went to my Savior. Bury the body of humble Mary in this very place. Let dust return to dust and pray to the Lord for me." Father Zosima was astonished how she returned to this place after partaking of the Divine Communion last year on the

same day at the same hour and died and how her body remained without decay throughout the whole year. At that moment a lion came out of the woods, licked her feet and began to dig a hole large enough for her body. The father covered her body with earth, asking her to pray for all.

by  
*Philip Michael*

#### **WORDS OF LIGHT**

- Do good to your friend and you'll keep his friendship always... Do good to your enemy and you'll win him over forever.
- Our worst defect is our interest in the defects of others.
- Many depart this world thinking that it would stop without them.
- There is a big difference between those whose love for their children is based on mere instinct and those who love their children primarily because they are the gift of God and thus devote themselves to their spiritual development and to their future eternity.

by  
*Mary Habib*

# FROM PARADISE OF THE HOLY FATHERS

## ST. MAXIMOUS & ST. DOMADIOUS

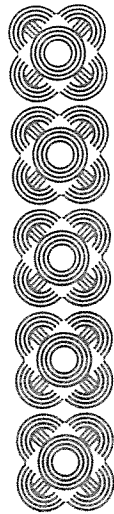


*The Roman Brothers who were perfect. They were the sons of the Roman Emperor Valentine (4th century) and would have inherited the throne, but at ages 13 and 11, they left all and sought the monastic life. First in Syria under the care of St. Agapious for about 6 years and then in the Wilderness of Scete according to the order of St. Macarius. The older died at age 23 and the other at 20.*

Abba Macarius once said:—Two young men, who are strangers, came to me, and one of them had a few hairs as a beard, and the other had the beginning of a beard. They said to me, “Where is

the cell of Abba Macarius?” And I said to them, “What do you want with him?” And they said, “We heard of his life and deeds, and we came to see him.” I said to them, “I am he”; and they offered me repentance (a matania), and said to me, “We wish to live here.” Now, through their appearance I thought that they were not fit for this kind of life, so I said to them, “You will not be able to live here”; and the elder of them said unto me, “If we are

unable to live here, we will go to another place.” Then I said to myself, “Why should I be an occasion of stumbling to them, the work will make them leave”. And I said to them, “Come, make a cell for yourselves if you can”; and they replied to me, “Only show us how to do it, and we will do it.” So I gave them an axe, a sack of bread and salt, and said to them, “Bring wood from the forest and make a roof, and then stay there.” Now I thought that they would leave right away, but they said to me, “What is your work here?” And I said unto them, “The weaving of palm leaves,” and I plucked some leaves from the palms in the grove, and showed them how to begin work to make baskets, and I said to them, “Give them to guardians, and they will give you bread.” From that hour I left them, and everything that I told and showed them, they performed with great persistence and diligence, and they remained there for three years and never came to me; and I continued to debate in my thoughts, saying, “What kind of work is theirs that





they never came to ask me for anything?" The people that are live far from here come to me, and they have gone nowhere else, except to the Church to receive the Holy Communion."

Then I prayed to God and fasted for a whole week that He might show me their works, and straightway I rose up and went to them that I might see how they were: and when I had knocked, they opened the door to me, and they saluted me, and then held their peace; and I prayed, and sat down. Then the elder of the men motioned to the younger, who went outside, and sat down, and he plaited ropes, and said nothing; the younger man came and made a sign to him, and he began to cook a little food. And he made another sign to him and he prepared the table with three bread cakes upon it, and then stood by in silence. Then I said, "Arise, let us eat"; and they sat and ate and then the younger brought us some water and we drank. And when the evening had come, they spoke to me and said, "Are you staying with us?" and I said, "I am going to pass the night here." Then

they laid down a palm leaf mat for me, and they slept down on the bare earth. And when I prayed to God to inform me concerning their struggles, the roof was opened, and the place became as light as it was in the daytime, but they did not see that light. Then, thinking that I was asleep, the elder man woke the younger, and they rose up, and spread out their hands to heaven; and I saw the devils hovering about over the young man like flies, and some of them wished to settle on his eyes, and some on his mouth, and behold, the angel of the Lord was going round him driving them away from him with a sword of fire; now the devils did not dare to approach the elder man. And about the time morning the two men threw themselves on the ground and I made myself to appear like one who had just awoke up from sleep, and they likewise acted to have only then become awake. And the elder man said to me these words only: "Do you want us to recite the twelve morning Psalms only?" And I said to him, "Yes", the younger recited five Psalms and as he did this, I saw fire

come out of his mouth and rise up to heaven; and similarly, when the elder man stood up and recited the Psalms there went forth from his mouth as it were a rope of fire, which ascended into heaven. And I came forth and said to them, "Pray for me"; but they bowed, and remained silent. And I learned that the elder man was perfect, but that the enemy still waged war against the younger man. And after a few days the elder man died, and three days later the other man died also. *May their holy blessings be with us all. Amen.*

### ***HOW I FEEL IS YOUR CONCERN***

Two Russian peasants were sitting together. Ivan turned to Igor and said:

"Igor, I love you."

Igor replied: "What pains me?"

Ivan looked puzzled at Igor's response and said:

"How should I know what pains you?"

"How can you love me", asked Igor, "If you don't know what pains me?!"

*On The Fast of Jonah*

This fast is observed to commemorate the penance of the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah (Jon. 3:1-10).

Originally this fast was kept by the Syrian Orthodox Church and was adopted as one of the fasts of the Coptic Church by Patriarch Abraham, the sixty-second Pope of Alexandria (975-978), as a mark of unity and solidarity between the two sister Churches.

It lasts for three whole days, representing the time spent by

Jonah inside the whale, starting on a Monday, about two weeks before the beginning of the Great Lent. Liturgies are held daily in the afternoon. The eating of fish and all forms of animal fat is not allowed during this fast.

The fraction prayers appointed to be said during the liturgical service include the following words: "It was through fasting and prayer, observed by the people of Nineveh, that God had mercy on them, forgave their sins, and turned His wrath away from them."

***A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT!***

A preacher returned home exhausted. He sank in his arm-chair and said to his wife:

"I am completely worn out! However, my sermon today was most gratifying. I did my best to convince the congregation that it is imperative that the rich should help their poor brethren".

"And what was the reaction?" asked his wife.

The preacher proudly replied: "I've achieved astounding results, I am sure . . . You can say that my sermon was fifty percent

successful; the poor among the congregation were fully convinced by every word I said."

by

*Mr. Samir Sidhom*



"The lion shall lie down with the lamb  
And peace will fill the earth."

## MEETING TIMES

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

## Church News

1. We thank God from all our hearts for responding to our prayers and the second payment for the Church was paid. The amount was \$350,000. Thus we can say with the Prophet Samuel, "Until now the Lord helped us" (1Sam. 7:12). We also thank all who helped in this payment, may the Lord reward them.

2. Nineveh's Fast, or sometimes known as Jonah's Fast, will begin on Monday, February 17th and will end with Jonah's Feast on Thursday morning. Liturgies will be held everyday in the afternoons. This fast will be celebrated according to the same order as the Great Lent; Complete abstinence, until the end of the Liturgies in the afternoons.

### LITURGY SCHEDULE :

Monday, Feb. 17...1:00P.M.- 3:00 P.M.  
Tuesday, Feb. 18...2:00P.M.- 4:00 P.M.  
Wednesday, Feb. 19...3:00P.M.- 5:00 P.M.  
Thursday, Feb. 20...7:00A.M.- 9:00 A.M.

3. The youth from St. Antonios Coptic Church in San Francisco, will be coming to St. John's Church for a mini-conference over President's Day weekend.

4. The Great Lent will begin Monday, March 2nd. 1992.

### An old manuscript

