

SAINT JOHN

A COPTIC CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.23 | No. 258 | February 2012

St. John and the Lamb

by Murillo

17th Century

Verse of the month:

"Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your
Presence? If I take the wings of the
morning, and dwell in the uttermost
parts of the sea, Your hand shall
hold me" (Psalm 139:7-9)

SAINT JOHN

(ISSN # 1530-5600)

A Christian Coptic Orthodox Monthly
Magazine published by St. John Coptic
Orthodox Church, 21329 Cienega Ave.
Covina, California 91724, a parish of the
Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Egypt
under the Papacy of

H.H. Pope Shenouda III,

The 117 Patriarch of Alexandria and
116th successor to the See of St. Mark the
Evangelist and the Diocese of Southern
California and Hawaii under

H.G. Bishop Serapion.

St. John reflects the Biblical, doctrinal, and
spiritual views of the early Church
in English and Arabic.

Editor in Chief:

Fr. Augustinos Hanna

Customer Service:

(909) 592-8847

Annual Subscription:

\$50.00 in U.S.A.

\$70.00 in foreign countries
(as a suggested donation).

"Periodicals Postage paid at Covina, Ca.
and additional mailing offices"

Postmaster:

Send address changes to

St. John

P.O. Box 2144

Covina, CA 91722-8144

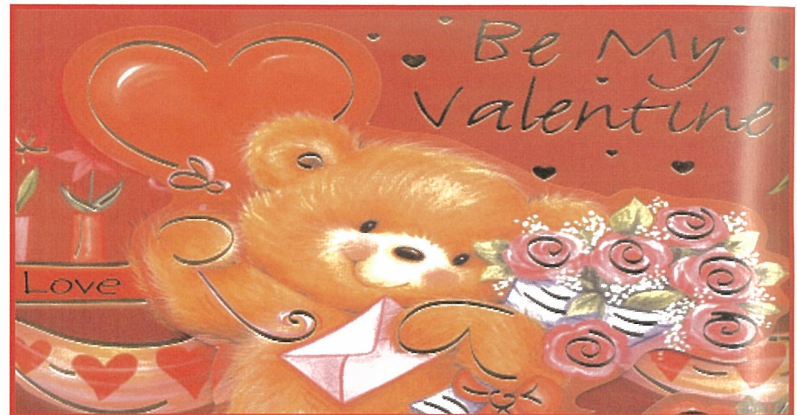
DESIGNED & PRINTED BY

714-285-0095
The Print Shop

printshoporange@sbcglobal.net

1111 W. Town and Country Rd., #32
Orange, CA 92868

- 2 Schedule & News
- 4 The Papal Message of the Nativity..... By H.H. Pope Shenouda
- 5 Festal Message of Nativity By H.G. Bishop Serapion
- 6 Coptics News Update Prepared By Dr. Emil Goubran
- 8 Psalm 139 Edited By Fr. Augustinos Hanna
- 10 Christ in Genesis (16) By Fr. Gawargios Kolta
- 12 And the Door was Shut By Mark Hanna
- 14 Slavery, Terrorism & Islam By Dr. Peter Hammond
- 16 Readers' Writings (Does Satan cause all our adversity?) By Mona Singh
- 17 Five Reasons People Don't Give/ Believe it or Not Unknown Author
- 18 Short Stories
- 19 Jonah- Proper and Improper Fasting By Fr. Daniel Habib
- 20 Congratulations



February, 2012 Schedule:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
English Liturgy 8:00 - 11:00 AM			Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 AM	+ Senior Citizen Club 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Liturgy 8:00 - 10:00 AM Prayer Meeting every first Friday of the Month	Liturgy 8-10 AM Vespers & Bible Study 7:30-8:30 PM + Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 6:00 PM + Elementary Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:15 AM				+ Family Meeting 7:30-9:00 PM	Arabic Youth Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 PM Followed by refreshments	College Youth Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 PM High School & J. High Meetings 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Servants' Meeting 12:00-1:00 PM						

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

Or visit us online @ www.mystjohn.org

Fax (909) 592-5088 / (909) 305-1025 · Church Tel: (909) 592-8847 · Tel: (909) 592-0475

Mailing list service (909) 319-6435 / (909) 592-8847





NEWS of February 2012

1. The Fast of Nineveh (Jonah):

The three-day-fast of Nineveh starts from Monday, February 6, and ends on Wednesday 8. There will be daily Liturgies from 12 noon until 3:00 p.m. The feast of Jonah, Thursday, Feb. 9 and its Liturgy will be celebrated from 8:00 –10:00 a.m. May the Lord accept our fasting and prayers, especially for our persecuted church in Egypt.



2. The Feast of Presentation:

On Thursday, February 16, the church celebrates the Lord's Minor Feast of Christ's Entry to the Temple at age 40 days. In that day, Simeon the Elder carried Him and said, "My eyes have seen Your Salvation", and prophesied about His cross which will be resisted, and also, the praise of St. Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:22-38).

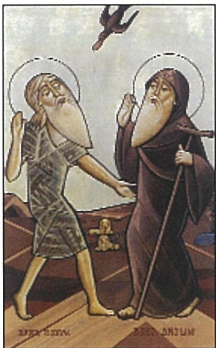


3. Great Lent (Feb. 20):

Great Lent starts on Monday, February 20, until the Feast of the Resurrection (Easter) on April 15, 2012.



4. Feasts of Church Saints during February:



These are some of the feasts of the famous saints and martyrs that the Coptic Orthodox Church honors in Feb.:

Feb. 1: The departure of St. Timothy.

Feb. 10: Departure of St. Paula, the first hermit.

Feb. 18: Martyrdom of the Apostle St. James, son of Alphaeus and author of the letter of St. James.

5. Ten Commandments Hike X111 2012:

Hundreds of Scouts (girls and boys), leaders, family members, dignitaries and other faith' representatives will gather in St. John Coptic Orthodox Church in Covina, California, Saturday, February 25, 2012 from 8:00 a.m. for one hour then visit other churches in the area.

H.G. Bishop Serapion and Honorable Michael Antonovich and Covina Mayor are expected to attend the event.

6. H. H. Pope Shenouda III:

+ His Holiness Pope Shenouda traveled to America after Christmas for medical treatment in Cleveland, Ohio.

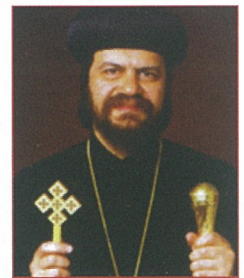
The Patriarchal Secretary announced that his health is fine and the Pope may spend in U.S. about one month or more for pastoral works.



+ The Holy Pontiff will broadcast his weekly sermon from Cleveland, God willing, through the Coptic TV channels.

7. H.G. Bishop Serapion:

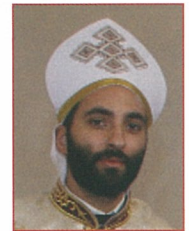
His Grace, our father the Bishop, will bless St. John the Beloved church in Covina twice during the month of February, on Saturday 4th and on Sunday the 19th.



All are invited to have the blessing.

8. The Catechumens Weekly Meeting:

Fr. Daniel Habib of St. John Church serves the new members who join the Coptic Orthodox Church, every Tuesday from 6:45 to 8:00 p.m., and then leads a Bible Study to them for one hour from 8:00- 9:00 p.m.



9. St. John's Medical Clinic:

Voluntary physicians serve freely the sick that have no medical insurance twice every month, in the first and the third Sunday from 12 p.m.



10. Valentine's Day (Feb. 14):



On February 14, America celebrates Valentine Day, known as the "Day of Love." Its historical background says that St. Valentine was a priest in the 3rd century, at the time of the Roman Emperor Claudius.

He was caught marrying persecuted Christians under-ground. He preached Christ to the Emperor and was executed in 269 ad. He became the patron saint of the engaged couples and happy marriages. We will celebrate it on Sunday, February 12, after the church service.





The Nativity Message of H. H. Pope Shenouda III

tomorrow I will give it,' when you have it with you." (Proverbs 3:27-28)

Goodness is not only in materialistic giving, but in spiritual giving also: in the ministry, in a good word, in a word of advice, in a word of benefit, in a word of sympathy, in a word of kindness and compliment by which you gain friends. Doing good is leading people to goodness, and in the soft answer, which "turns away wrath." (Proverbs 15:1)

You can do good by comforting wearisome souls, as the Lord said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) You can do good by having a happy and smiling appearance. By this, people will be pleased when they see you.

You do good if you are able to share in mission work, or by conveying the word of God to those who do not know it, or by conveying the faith to unbelievers.

Ministry in the Church is doing good, there do not let Satan plant tares in it by the way of division and love of the self.

My beloved children, place this principle in front of you in this New Year: that every day you do not do good, do not count this day as day of your lives.

God created you in His image and God is the Beneficent One. So you also be likewise, in the image of Your Heavenly Father, beneficent as He is. Let this not only be when people ask from you to do good to them, but rather do not wait for them to ask. May you possess the

Sensitivity by which you can comprehend what will make people happy and try to make them joyful. In this manner, you will go about doing good.

May the Lord be with you, and may He make us always hear all good news about you.

Pope Shenouda III

Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

Feast of Nativity, 2012



By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

On the occasion of the Nativity Feast 2012

My beloved children in the lands of immigration, clergy and laity:

My greetings and love to you, wishing you all goodness from the Lord, hoping that you are all growing in grace and in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I congratulate you on the Feast of the Nativity and for the beginning of a New Year, may it be new for you in all things and especially for your spirituality.

Amongst the words that I remember on the occasion of the Feast of the Nativity, is what was said about Him during His Incarnation, that "He went about doing good." (Acts 10:38). It is a lesson to us in our lives, to be like Him, going about doing good.

Goodness is not only leaving sin, for this is only the negative aspect. The most important aspect however, is the positive side. That is, doing good with everyone, in order that everyone who meets us on the path of life will gain goodness, by any means. The Bible said about this positive goodness, that, "to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Hence, sin is not merely committing evil or impurity, but not doing good also is a sin. This is not the case in the New Testament only, but also in the Old Testament, for the Bible says "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.

Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, and





Festal Message for the Glorious Feast of the Nativity 2012



"God is with Us"

His Grace Bishop Serapion

My Beloved, the Blessed Children of the Holy Church,

It is my pleasure to wish you a Blessed Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ and a joyous New Year.

This past year was deeply tinted with the blood of our martyrs in Alexandria, Al-Muquattam, and Maspero. We lived through the harsh events in Egypt and America.

In Egypt, the Church offered tens of pure martyrs and hundreds of confessors as victims of the religious bigotry and violence. Some churches were destroyed and many of our brothers and sisters endured physical and emotional aggression. Additionally, along with their Egyptian brothers and sisters, they are enduring the loss of security, economic collapse, and political chaos, which Egypt is currently suffering. Our beloved Egypt is now going through a dark tunnel. Some see a light at the end of the tunnel. But no one can determine whether this light means the end of the tunnel or it is the light of the on-coming train in the opposite direction to destroy every-thing.

As for us in America, we share in the suffering of our loved ones in Egypt. Additionally, we suffer from the troubled economy and the political failure to manage this nation, which leads many to wonder about the future of this great country.

In the midst of all these difficult events, the Feast of the Nativity carries for us a message of comfort and joy, which is "God with us"; and **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** (Rom. 8:30). In the midst of the darkness of these events, our Good Lord shines upon us with the light of His wondrous birth.

As the shepherds were keeping watch over their flock in the darkness of the night, **"Behold an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"** (Lk. 2: 9-11)

Our Living Christ shines upon us with the light of His birth and tells us, **"It is I; do not be afraid."** (Jn. 6:20); **"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matt. 28:20). No matter how profound the darkness surrounding us is, we don't fear for Isaiah the Prophet prophesied, **"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned"** (Matt. 4:16). It is the light of our Lord Christ, who said, **"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."** (Jn. 12:46)

My Beloved,

The Gospel of St. Matthew reminds us of the prophecy of Isaiah the Prophet, **"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and**

bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23). Regarding the goal of this prophecy, St. Cyril of Alexandria said, **"the goal is that truly He is like us and that He sanctified our nature."**

* **God with us**, but are we with Him? God became like us, but have we become like Him? He has come to us, but have we returned to Him? Indeed, St. Gregory the Theologian said, **"Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ from heaven, go out to meet Him. Christ on earth, exalt Him."**

* **God with us**, so how can we be afraid? From whom are we afraid? David the Prophet in the Psalm of the Shepherd said, **"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want....Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me"** (Ps. 23).

* **God with us**, for He grants us His peace, which sur-passes all understanding, and He is the One saying, **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"** (Jn. 14:27).

* **God with us**, and He calls us to abide in Him, saying, **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"** (Jn. 15:5). * **God with us**. So, we should not be surprised at the world's hatred for us, since this is the sign that we belong to Christ and not to the world, as our Lord told us, **"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you"** (Jn. 15: 18-19).

* **God with us**, so we should not fear the world's persecution to us, since Christ previously informed us and said, **"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble... the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service"** (Jn. 16: 1-2). He gave us a true promise, **"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"** (Jn. 16:33).

* **God with us**, so we should not weaken when facing temptations, **"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted"** (Heb. 2:18).

* **God with us**, so we should feel confident and secure, as David said, **"He who dwells in the help of the Most High shall lodge in the shelter of the God of heaven. He shall say to the Lord, 'You are my protector and my refuge, my God; I will hope in Him; for He shall free me from the snare of the hunters, and from every troubling word"** (Ps. 90). Let us pray for the peace of the Holy Church, for our beloved father, H.H. Pope Shenouda III, and for every suffering and troubled soul, so our Lord may grant us to live a peaceful and tranquil life in all godliness and purity.

Wishing you many happy returns.

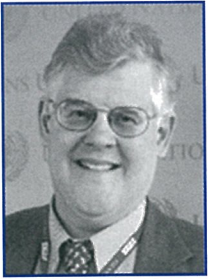
Bishop Serapion





Coptic News Update

Mideast Christians face widening persecution



By John J. Metzler

UNITED NATIONS - Though it's the birthplace of Christianity in ancient times, the modern Middle East is increasingly hostile to Christianity as civil conflict, Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism grow in scope and strength.

Although most regional states have a small but successful Christian minority ranging from Egypt to Iraq, only Lebanon, Israel and Jordan maintain amicable relations with this ancient faith. But in other places such as Iraq and now Egypt, Christian communities are coming under assault.

A few months ago, during the U.N.'s annual debate, the Vatican's Secretary of State Archbishop Dominique Mamberti told assembled delegates that Christians currently suffer more persecution because of their faith and any other religious group. He warned that this "denial of religious freedom threatened peace and security and precluded human development."

Archbishop Mamberti stressed, "Respect for religious freedom is the fundamental path for the construction of peace, the recognition of human dignity and the safeguarding of human rights."

Though the forum of the United Nations regularly echoes calls for global rights, freedoms, and religious tolerance, rarely are any states singled out as persecutors of Christianity? especially in the Middle East.

Iraq offers a bittersweet example. The country's Christian community dates to the 2nd century A.D. with communities in the Chaldean and Assyrian churches comprising about 15 percent of the prewar popula-

tion, a presence numbered approximately 500,000.

Though Saddam's regime did not persecute Christians for their religion per se, many believers nonetheless fled due to political intolerance. Following the 2003 Anglo/American invasion toppling Saddam, the genie of sectarian strife was out of the bottle.

"Iraq's Christian community has dwindled since the U.S.-led invasion. Though no reliable statistics exist, most experts believe that less than 300,000 Christians remain in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands have sought refuge in Jordan and Syria," the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) said. Sixty-six percent



belong to the Chaldean Catholic church. Interestingly one out of five Iraqis was a Christian in 1932; today the number has dwindled to 1 in 33.

Christians are targeted by Islamic factions and as recently as 2010, some 52 people were killed during the siege of a Catholic church in Baghdad. Estimates say as much as half or more of Iraqi Christians have left the country or are internally displaced.

According to the New York-based Catholic Near East, many displaced Iraqi Christians have found religious refuge in the Kurdish-controlled north of the



country. The Kurds remain committed to protecting religious minorities and thus Christians have found safe haven. But the winds of the Arab Spring have not been kind to Christians in Egypt, where the country's large Coptic community has come under assault. Though approximately 10 percent of the population largely protected during the secular government of deposed President Hosni Mubarak, the communities have come under assault over the past year. Domestic political chaos, growing Islamic fundamentalism, and simmering discrimination has targeted this vulnerable community.

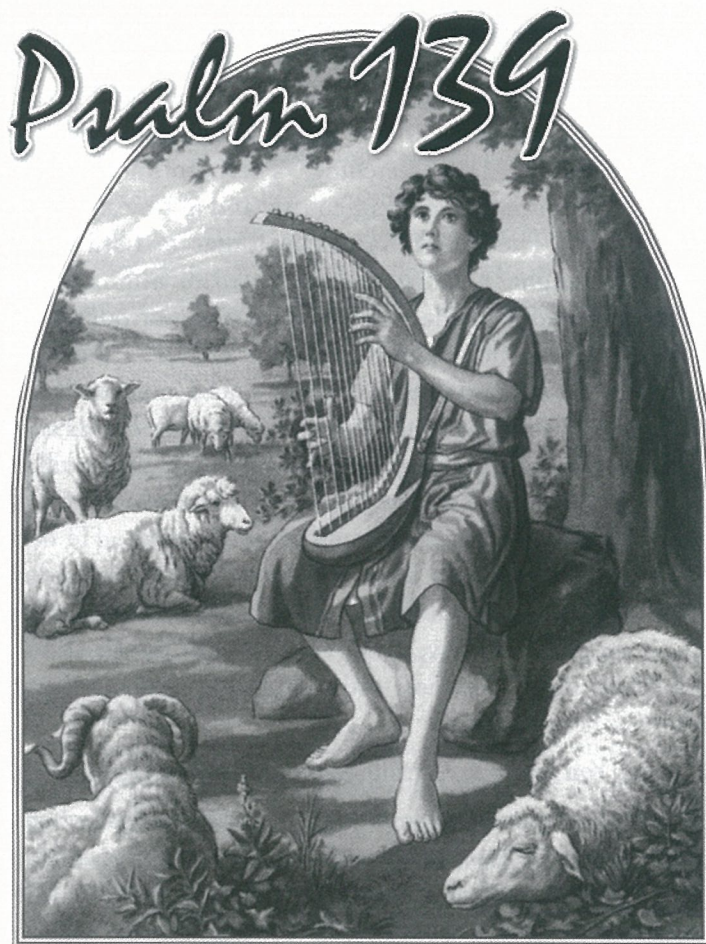
Equally in Syria, a 5-percent strong Christian community, remains divided between Greek Orthodox and Catholics. Despite the secular Assad family dictatorship, the minority has not been specifically targeted but many Christians have emigrated. Still Syria has hosted fleeing Iraqi Christians who number 150,000 according to CNEWA.

On the positive side, tiny Lebanon hosts a Christian community numbering over a million and comprising over a third of the population. Partly reflecting the legacy of French rule, a strong Maronite church among others shares political power with Muslim factions to this day. Sadly the Lebanese civil war in the 1970s was rooted in sectarian strife. Today's Lebanon, again regaining prosperity, remains a place of tolerance.

So too does the Kingdom of Jordan where the Christian population has dropped from 5 percent to the current 3 percent. Significantly in the Royal Parliament, nine of the 110 seats are specifically reserved for Christians and relations are generally positive. Israel allows its small Arab Christian community to practice their religion freely too.

Sadly in the lands of the ancient Christian denominations, highly politicized Islam remains a challenge to the churches. Given the fragile or fragmented role of secular Arab states, Christian minorities are among the first to be demonized and often targeted. The world watches and does little about this blatant religious intolerance.

John J. Metzler is a United Nations correspondent covering diplomatic and defense issues. He is the author of "Transatlantic Divide; USA/Euroland Rift" (University Press, 2010). Contact him at jjmcolumn@earthlink.net



God's omniscience and omnipresence

Edited by Fr. Augustinos Hanna

The brightness of this psalm is like a sapphire or Ezekiel's "awesome crystal" (Ezek.1:22). It throws out flaming flashes of light, so as to turn night into day and to throw a clear light even to the ends of the sea. It warns against practical atheism, which ignores God's presence and makes shipwreck of the soul.

"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain it."

1. O Lord, You have searched me and known me.

David invokes the Lord Jehovah, the all-knowing God, and goes on to adore Him by proclaiming one of His special attributes. If we are to praise God properly, we must



draw the matter of our praise from Him, "O Lord, You have," No pretended god knows about us. The true God knows and understands us. He is intimately acquainted with our person, nature, and character. How good it is to know the God who knows us! Divine know-ledge is extremely detailed and searching. The Lord knows everything naturally, as a matter of course, and not by any effort on His part. The psalmist's meaning is that the Lord knows us as thoroughly as if He had examined us minutely and had interfered into the most secret corners of our being. This infallible knowledge has always existed. You have searched me, it continues to this day, since God cannot forget that which He has once known. There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there never will be a moment when we will be beyond His observation. Note how the psalmist makes this doctrine personal. He does not say, "O God, You know all things," but, "You know **me**." It is always wise to bring truth home. How wonderful is the contrast between the observer and the observed!" God and me! This most intimate connection exists, and therein, lies our hope.

2. You know my sitting down and my rising up.

I am observed when I quietly sit and marked when I resolutely rise. My most common and casual acts and my most needful and necessary movements are noted by You. You know the thoughts that regulate them. Whether I sink in lowly self-renunciation or ascend in pride. You see the motions of my mind as well as those of my body. This is a fact to be remembered every moment; when sitting to consider or rising to act, we are seen, known, and read by our Lord.

You understand my thought afar off.

Before it is my own, it is foreknown and understood by You. Though my thought is invisible to sight, though I am not aware of the shape it is assuming, You have it under Your consideration. You perceive its nature, source, drift, and result. Never do You misjudge or wrongly interpret me. My thoughts are perfectly understood by your impartial mind. Everything about me is transparent to Your piercing glance.

3. You comprehend my path and my lying down:

My path, my bed, my running, and my resting are alike in the circle of your observation. You surround me as the air surrounds all living creatures. I may leave the path, but You will never leave mine. I may sleep and forget You, but You never slumber nor fall into forgetfulness. The Lord judges our active life and our quiet life, our actions and our rest, and He marks what is good and what is evil in them. There

is chaff in all our wheat, and the Lord divides with unerring precision.

And are acquainted with all my ways:

You are familiar with all I do. Nothing is concealed from You, or surprising to You, or misunderstood by You. Our paths may be habitual, accidental, open or secret, but with them all, the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with awe, so that we do not sin, and with courage, so that we do not fear, and with delight, so that we do not mourn.

4. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether:

The unformed word that lies on the tongue, like a seed in the soil, is completely known to the Great Searcher of hearts. A negative expression is used to make the positive statement all the stronger. **Not a word** is a forcible way of saying that every word is well known. Divine know-ledge is perfect, not a single word is unknown, nor even an unspoken word. Every word is **altogether**, or wholly, known. What hope of concealment can remain when the speech with which too many conceal their thoughts is transparent before the Lord? O Lord how great You are! If Your eye has such power, what must be the united force of Your entire nature!

5. You have hedged me behind and before:

As though caught in an ambush, or besieged by an army encircling the city, we are surrounded by the Almighty Lord our God. God has set us where we are and placed us where we should be. Behind us, there is God recording our sins or, in grace, blotting out the memory of them. In front of us, there is God foreknowing all our deeds and providing for all our needs. We cannot turn back to escape Him, for He is behind. We cannot go forward and outmarch Him, for He is ahead. He not only beholds us, but also hedges us. Lest we should imagine that the surrounding presence is a distant one, it is added, **and laid Your hand upon me**. The prisoner marches surrounded by a guard and gripped by an officer. God is near and at hand (Phil.4:5). We are entirely in His power, and from that power there is no escape, and His power is in our favor. It is not said that God will hedge us, but that it is already done; You have hedged me. Shall we not alter the figure and say that our heavenly Father has folded His arms around us and embraced us with His hand? This is so with those who are by faith the children of God, the Most High.

6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me:



I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded. **Such knowledge** not only surpasses my comprehension but also my imagination. It is high, I cannot attain it. Soar as I may, this truth is too lofty for my mind. It seems to be always above me, even when I soar to the loftiest regions of spiritual thought. Is this not so with God's every attribute? Can we attain any idea of His power, wisdom, and holiness? Our mind has no line to measure the Infinite. Do we question? It is better to believe and adore. We are not surprised that the Most Glorious God should in his knowledge be high above all the knowledge we can attain. This must be, for we are such poor limited beings. When we stand tiptoe, we cannot reach the lowest step of the throne of the Eternal.

7. ***"Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me, If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to You."***

Here Omnipresence is the theme, a truth to which omniscience naturally leads. Where can I go from your Spirit? It is not that the psalmist wished to go away from God or avoid the power of the divine life; he asks this question to establish that no one can escape the Moiré-sent being and the observation of the Great invisible Spirit. Observe how David personalizes it. **Where can I go?** It is good to apply this truth. It is wise to say, "The spirit of the Lord is ever around me, the Lord is Omni-present to me.

Or where can I flee from your presence? If, full of dread, I hasten to escape from the nearness of God that has become my terror, where can I turn? **"Where?" Where?** He repeats the cry, and no answer comes back. The reply to his first "Where?" is its echo, a second "Where?" He cannot be hidden from the sight of God. But that is not all. He cannot be withdrawn from the immediate actual, constant presence of God. **We must be as near to God as our soul is to our body.** This makes it dreadful work to sin, for we offend the Almighty to His face and commit acts of treason at the foot of His throne. We cannot go, or flee, from Him. Neither by patient travel or hasty flight can we withdraw from the all surrounding Deity. His mind is in our mind. He is in us. His Spirit is over our spirit. Our pres-

ence is always in his presence.

8. *If I ascend into heaven, You are there*

Filling the loftiest region with His loftier presence, the Lord is in the heavenly place, at home on His throne. The ascent, even if it were possible, would be unavailing as a means of escape. Rather, it would be flying into the center of the fire to avoid the heat. There would be an immediate confrontation with the terrible personality of God. Note the abrupt words, You, there. Weather we rise or rest, take our wing or make our bed; we will find God near us.

Behold, is added to the second clause, since it seems more amazing to meet God in hell than in heaven, in Hades than in Paradise. Of course, the presence of God produces different effects in these places, but it is unquestionably in each. The bliss of one, the terror of the other. What an awful thought, some people seem resolved to dwell for a night in hell, a night that will know no morning!

9. *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea:*

If I could fly swiftly and find a place where no mariner has plowed the deep, I still could not reach the boundaries of the divine presence. Light flies at inconceivable speeds and flashes far beyond all human view; it illuminates the great and wide sea and set its waves gleaming. But its speed would utterly fail if employed in flying away from the Lord, as in the case of Jonah! Were we to travel on the wings of the morning breeze and discover oceans unknown, to chart and map, even there we would find the Lord already present. He who saves to the uttermost would be with us in the uttermost parts of the sea.

10. *Even there your hand shall lead me:*

We could only fly away from God by his power. The Lord would be leading, covering, preserving, and sustaining us even when we were fugitives from Him! And Your right hand shall hold me: In the uttermost parts of the sea, my arrest would be as certain as at home. God's right hand would seize and detain the runaway. Should we be commanded to go on the most distant errand, we may assuredly depend on God's upholding right hand to be with us in all mercy, wisdom, and power. Both the hands of God are with His servants to sustain them, and they are against rebels to overthrow them.

[To be continued]





CHRIST IN

THE BOOK OF GENESIS (16)

By Fr. Gawargious A. Kolta

17- Joseph's brothers came to Egypt (cont.)

As the famine was severe, Jacob was compelled to send Benjamin with his other sons to Egypt. They departed with the best fruits of the land as a present for the man of the land; balm, honey, spices, myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. He asked them to take double money and the money that was returned in the mouth of their sacks. He prayed, saying: "May God Almighty give you mercy before the man that he may release your brother and Benjamin" (Gen. 43:14).

Fr. Tadros Malaty said that the presents which were the best fruit of the earth, resemble the fruits of the Holy Spirit that are given to us to carry as a present of love from Christ. The fruit of the Spirit that is mentioned by St. Paul (Gal. 5:22, 23) is the Balsam that can heal our souls; we can offer them as a present of love to the Father through His Son.

Jacob's sons stood before Joseph for the second time and they bowed down to him to the ground. When Joseph saw Benjamin, he asked the steward of his house to take them to his home and to prepare a banquet that he might eat with them at noon. They were afraid and they thought that Joseph might make a case against them and take them as slaves, because of the money that was in their sacks. They declared that to the steward, who relieved their fear, saying: "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasures in your sacks" (Gen. 43:23). He brought Simeon out to them, gave them water, washed their feet and gave food for their donkeys. Although Joseph's brothers confessed their sins (Gen. 42:21-23), yet they were afraid, as a sinner will never feel peaceful. Here we can see that the steward of Joseph spoke to them kindly, mentioned the word 'God' twice; this may indicate that Joseph's steward believed in God as he learned that from his master.

When Joseph came home, his brothers brought him the present and bowed down before him to the earth. He asked them about their father, and they told him that he was still alive, and they bowed again. When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin, his heart yearned for his brother and he sought somewhere to weep. Then he washed his face and returned back to eat with them. He had his own place and his brothers in another place, according to their seniority of age that made

them astonished. He gave food to Benjamin five times as much as any of them (Gen. 43:30-34).

Many scholars mentioned mystical interpretations to this chapter, that are given in the following:

1- Joseph met his brothers in the second time in a different way. In the first time Joseph appeared rough; it can be a shadow of our encounter with our Lord during the passion of His crucifixion, as the divine justice was fulfilling the debt of our sins in the body of Christ. In the second time Joseph offered his brothers food. This may refer to our encounter with Him in His tomb and receiving Him as a Savior. He offered us Himself as a spiritual food.

2- The first meeting took place outside Joseph's house; as our Lord has been crucified outside the camp, where we are asked to go to Him, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13). The second meeting was inside Joseph's house. This resembles the departed in hope, who meet with the buried Lord in Paradise (Lk. 23:43).

3- Joseph went into his chamber and wept, then he washed his face, came out, and ate food with them. The chamber where Christ the Lord, the true Joseph, went may represent the holy tomb, where He met with death; washed our death not with tears, but with His pure blood, then resurrected to give us His risen body as eternal life.

4- In the first meeting, Jacob's sons did not recognize Joseph, although he knew them. This resembles the Jews who did not recognize the true Joseph 'Jesus', but He knew them. Although He was condemned by their synagogue, and crucified, yet He loved them. They would recognize Him, when they realize that He is so merciful that He would forgive their sins.

5- Joseph set three tables; one for him, another for the Hebrews, and the third for the Egyptian guests. This gathering may refer to the unity of the church in the Head (Jesus), where men of the Old Testament (the Church of the Jews) gather with those of the New Testament (the Church of the Gentiles), in the Lord Jesus. The table (the Bible) is offered for all.

6- Joseph's brothers looked in astonishment because they saw that their sitting was according to their seniority of age. They did not recognize Joseph, but he recognized them, and arranged their sitting. The Lord Jesus Christ knows us by



name, before we know Him (Jn. 10:3).

7- Before entering Joseph's house, they washed their feet; this may refer to us as we can not be included in the fellowship of the church nor get into God's house except through the water of Baptism, where we wash our sins (Tit. 3:5), the dust that clanged to our soul.

St. Ambrose said that Joseph returned back the money in the sacks of his brothers with the grains. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the True Joseph, does not demand from us the price of His grains, which is the gift of gladness. The money in their sacks represents the true spiritual gift given by Christ, as the Psalmist says: "You have put off my sackcloth and closed me with gladness" (Ps. 30:11). The God of our fathers has given us the money in our sacks, and we betrayed Him. But He grants pardon and forgiveness and receives us back if we would return to Him.

St. Ambrose said that the brothers made presents ready for Joseph's coming at noon. When God appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, it was noon, and everlasting light from the Lord's presence shone on him. If anyone opens his way to the Lord and hopes in Him, the Lord shall bring forth his righteousness as the light and his justice as the noon-day (Ps. 37:5, 6). Joseph asked about Benjamin: "Is this your youngest brother?" St. Ambrose said that Benjamin resembles St Paul who considered himself the least of the holy apostles (1 Cor. 15:9), although he sought to reach to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

St. John Chrysostom gave some comments on the weeping of Joseph when he saw his brothers. He said let us be like that man; let us be sad and weep for those who harm us; let us not get angry with them, as they actually are worthy of our tears, because of the punishment that awaits them, and the judgment into which they cast themselves.

St. Jerome said that as Joseph's brothers ate, drank and were merry with him, as Joseph was with them. Also when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, and filled them, they became joyful and spoke with many different tongues, but they were accused of being drunk (Act. 2:13).

Putting Joseph's silver cup in Benjamin's sack: (Gen. 44:1-34)

It was not possible for Joseph, having seen his younger brother, who entered his house and sat at his table, to let him go. He ordered to put his silver cup in the mouth of Benjamin's sack. By that way, he could return him back to him, and at the same time examine his brothers' honesty towards Benjamin whether, or not, they would forsake their brother and go without him. As soon as they were sent away, Joseph's steward followed them, overtook them and rebuked them for stealing his master's silver cup, repaying evil for good. Their response was: "How then could we steal silver or

gold from your Lord's house? With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves". So he searched, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city. When Joseph unfairly accused Benjamin of stealing, he discovered the change of the hearts of his brothers, who had torn their clothes and spoke in bitterness for the sake of Benjamin. For that reason, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. For their repentance, and for their unselfish love for their youngest brother, they were found worthy of the third meeting with Joseph.

Many scholars mentioned mystical interpretations to this chapter that are given in the following:

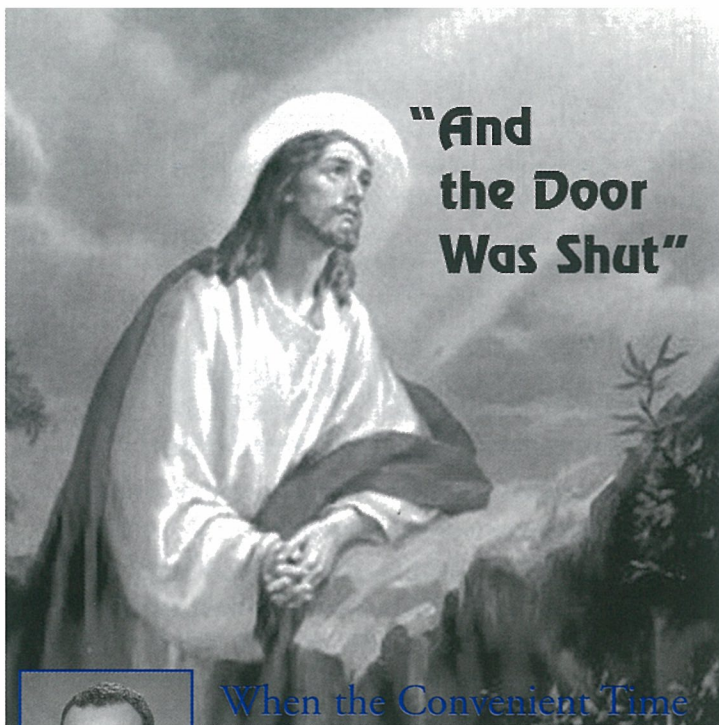
1- As Joseph revealed himself to his brothers on the third meeting, we also may become worthy to meet the risen Lord proclaiming His resurrection to and in us. However, the first meeting Joseph can be a shadow of our encounter with our Lord during the passion of His crucifixion. In the second meeting we encounter with the Lord in His tomb and receive Him as a Savior, who offered us Himself as a spiritual food.

2- Judah said: "With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die and we also will be my lord's slaves" (Gen. 44:9). That is the voice of humanity that cried: "It was expedient that one man should die for the people" (Jn. 18:14). The Lord Jesus drank the cup for our sake and we the believers drank the same cup as we all became slaves to our Lord (St. Jerome).

3- Judah admitted his sins on behalf of his brothers (not only in whose sack was found Joseph's cup), saying to him: "God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are my Lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found" (Gen. 44:16). Joseph's insistence that only Benjamin ought to remain as a slave was interpreted by St. Ephrem the Syrian who says the justice that hinders us from sinning against one, who has not sinned against us, compels us to be avenged on that one, who has caused us offence.

4- Benjamin represents the humanity that bears the sin, for whose sake, the One of the tribe of Judah came out to intercede and to offer His life for salvation of mankind. That was what Judah did, as he approached Joseph to deliver himself a ransom for his younger brother, saying: "Let your servant remain... Let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father" (Gen. 44:33, 34). The attachment of Jacob's soul to Benjamin motivated Judah to offer himself a surety for the sake of his brother. That is a faint portrait of the love that binds the Father to mankind (Jn. 3:16), to make the Only Begotten Son, in His love to His Father, and to humanity, offer Himself a redeemer and Savior to the world. (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Genesis, II, p.281-289*). (*Father Tadros Malaty, on Genesis, p. 341-349*).





"And the Door Was Shut"



When the Convenient Time is Always Inconvenient

By Mark M. Hanna

The Apostle St. Paul stood before Governor Felix in defense of his life. Rather than defend himself, he proceeded to preach Christ to the governor. St. Paul talked to Felix about "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come." In response to hearing the message of St. Paul, the governor was "afraid and answered, Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:24-25).

As another new year starts, it is appropriate to reflect on the progress of the obstacles that impeded our relationship with God. People always put off their return to God, the beginning of their spiritual life, or just about anything related to walking in the light of God until a more *convenient time*. We are all lazy about certain things. Many of us are expert procrastinators. We procrastinate in doing those things that will require us to expend any type of effort, time, thinking, change, or repentance, until a more convenient time.

So, when is that convenient time? There are only two possible answers to that question. Either now or later. The latter answer is usually the typical answer. The elusive convenient time never seems to arrive or will arrive when it is too late. In the case of Felix the Governor, the book of Acts indicates that Felix lost the chance when he was replaced as governor. He missed the opportunity to respond to St. Paul's message of the gospel and as a result, it was too late and he missed his chance to Christ. For him, that convenient time he waited for, never happened. As for many others, "later" meant "never."

The Lord Jesus emphasized the same point in His parable of the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-12). It is not that God created the foolish five with less wisdom but they were foolish because of how they lived their lives. Their procrastination in filling their lamps with oil -being prepared- for the

expected coming of the bridegroom is telling of a general state of laziness. The coming of the bridegroom was to be expected in that they were to be ready to go out and meet him. The foolish virgins' decision to go to sleep was not what made them foolish, for the Lord said, "They all slumbered and slept." The wise then too slept. However, it was their decision to go to sleep when they were not prepared that made them foolish. It was folly for them to rely on using the last few drops of oil to get them to the wedding of think that they would be able to rise when called and borrow oil. Their procrastination in filling their lamps with oil cost them access to the wedding as the door shut. It can be said that it was *inconvenient* to fill their lamps at that late hour when it was time to sleep. If it was not convenient to go out and fill the lamps with oil at that late hour, why was it not convenient to fill them earlier when the time was more convenient? The foolish virgins would surely contend that there were food reasons that handicapped them. But those are bad excuses and justifications for the eternal consequences of their "inconvenience."

Note that in referring to the oil, Christ pointed to the Holy Spirit of God. This was the oil that the foolish virgins did not have. Without the Holy Spirit in their lives there was no chance to rise when the bridegroom called and obtain that oil. Two people could not share the oil for God intended that each one be full with this oil. For this reason, these virgins never found a convenient time-routinely rejected every opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in them-and therefore, they were denied entry to the wedding. In other words, they did not find a convenient time to fit God in their lives and therefore they were not allowed into God's eternal company.

The devil will do everything in his power to make sure that a convenient time never comes. The convenient time to go to church is always early when planning the night before, but when it is actually time to wake up for church then he tells us, "God's understands, He knows your good intentions and that you wanted to go early but now you're tired so it is better to sleep some more." The convenient time to repent is later in life. The convenient time to pray is when you are in a crisis. The convenient time to read the Bible is when one retires and has time to read or when one grows older to understand the mysteries contained therein. The convenient time to correct the mistakes that sabotaged our progress in life is always at a later time- some times in the future. Likewise, the convenient time to draw near to God is not now but when one has done everything he wants, and there are not so many sacrifices to be made. The convenient time never seems to arrive. It is always inconvenient in the mean time.

In waiting for the convenient time or when the times is right, you wasted much time and let too many opportunities escape you. Consider the years that passed while you felt God close to you but refused to let Him into your life permanently. Consider all the opportunities you missed. The convenient time never came, did it?

Now is the Right Time!

Whether the time is convenient or inconvenient is not important. The convenient time is a tool of the devil's making



and it will always elude you. For this reason, the Spirit of God spoke to Isaiah saying, “*In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you*”(Isaiah 49:8). The apostle St. Paul further emphasized, “Behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold **now** is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). There is immediacy to responding to the need to come to God. “Now,” the Apostle says. Not later in life, not when I get a better job, not when I get my life together, not when I have more time for God. Not then but **now!**

“*Now is the accepted time... now is the day of salvation.*” *Now* is the time that God calls and *now* is the best time that God sees in His wisdom for you to respond to His call. The urgency to respond *now* is to avoid the door being shut eternally, as it was for the virgins who were known as “foolish.”

The Church emphasizes the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) not because it is a nice story, but because of the example of repentance Christ wanted us to learn from the prodigal son. He was the son that had everything, that could have lived like royalty in his father’s house, but instead chose to break away and see what the world had to offer. After he wasted and squandered all he had, including his dignity and his humanity, he came to his senses and said that’s enough. Enough time wasted, upon realizing this he said, “I will arise and go to my father and will say to him,” Father I have sinned against heaven and before you...” Christ then stressed the point of immediacy by stating, “And he arose and came to his father...” the importance of this emphasis on the son’s thought of returning to his father, but he acted immediately, he acted *before the door was shut*. This is why the church called this son, “the clever son” rather than the prodigal son.

Anyone who expects to one day make a positive change in his/her life must realize that convenient time will never present itself. Anyone who expects to draw near to God when a more convenient time or age arrives must realize that such a time will not come. The son in the prodigal son parable is called “clever” because he realized that his life would be so much better once he was in his father’s embrace and therefore, he immediately returned. He did not plan for this weather to be better so he could return. He did not plan to work until he raised some money for the journey back. He did not plan on anything except that he would rise right-then-and-there- and return to his father.

Speaking to the community of believers living in Ephesus, St. Paul in chapter 4 of his epistle wrote to them about many practical ways to distinguish themselves from the people who lived a life far from God. He urged them to kill the old person that lives according to lusts and cares of life. Then amidst a litany of practical advice about how to so live he told them, “Let him who stole steal no longer” (Ephesians 4:28). He was talking about those who made a livelihood stealing, but another spiritual interpretation is, let the devil who stole so much of your life with God “steal no longer.”

Let not the devil who stole the seeds God planted steal any longer (Mark 4:15). Let not the devil who stripped you of your wedding garments (Matt. 22:12) and your riches in Christ leav-

ing you half dead do so any longer (Lk. 10: 30-35). Let not the devil who kept you busy stealing your time with God do so any longer. Let not the devil who had free access to your life do so any longer. Finally, do *not* let the devil who fooled you into waiting for the convenient time to return to God do so any longer.

St. Paul reminds everyone, “Today if you hear His voice; do not harden your hearts: (Hebrews 3:15. Pope Shenouda III in *The Life of Repentance and Purity* explained that grace from God visits us motivating us to repent. God indeed uses every available means to wake us up from the state of sinful slumber we fall into as the five foolish virgins. The devil has so distorted our priorities that in the noise of life God’s voice is hard to discern.

Nevertheless, God’s voice calls (Proverbs 9:4-6). God knocks at the door of your heart (Revelations 3:20). God calls out seeking you, “where are you?” (Genesis 3:9).

In all those times where you hear God calling you, do not harden your heart. Be ready to respond to His voice even if you don’t know how to answer. Tell Him like young Samuel, “Speak Lord for your servant hears” (I Samuel 3:10). In every liturgy you attend you hear God addressing you in the Gospel. In every sermon you hear God speaks to you. In every meeting you attend God somehow is talking to you. In every circumstance in life know that God has his eyes on you and waits knocking on your heart’s door for you to open for Him.

The foolish virgins missed out on the wedding because the bridegroom was not worth toiling to prepare for. If coming to or returning of God was important to you then you would treat that event with importance. St. John Chrysostom compares the two ways leading to eternal life saying: there is a way that is narrow, unattractive, full of bumps, and thorns, but in the end leads to eternal life with God. On the other hand, he says, there is a nice road, adorned with greenery on both sides and broad that leads to eternal damnation.

The broad road in this parable is the life the world entices us with. It is the road of convenience where everything happens according to our own time and plan. This road will lead to a life of convenience, an easier life, but it will lead to eternal inconvenience in hell. Christ, however, did not promise us an easy life, but He did promise us a better life (John 10:10).

The end of the last year reminds us of the end of life. So many years passed and we all did not hear or deliberately chose not to hear God’s voice. We knew that He would one day come but we choose to imitate the foolish virgins who slept while unprepared rather than the virgins who slumbered but were ready to go to the wedding when the bridegroom came. St. Paul says, “Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Ephesians 5:14). He adds, “knowing that *now is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than we first believed*” (Romans 13:11). Let us rise, hear His voice *now*, know how the devil entrapped us in the past, wasted our time, and robbed us of every possible opportunity whereby we would come back to God and live. In this New Year, if God gives us life, let us be ready to begin a new beginning with God.





The Historical Roots and Contemporary threat

By Dr. Peter Hammond

This, not the Chinese or the Russians, represent the greatest threat to the world. Islam is not a religion, nor is it a cult. In its fullest form, it is a complete, total, 100% system of life. Islam has religious, legal, political, economic, social, and military components. The religious component is a beard for all of the other components.

Islamization begins when there are sufficient Muslims in a country to agitate for their religious privileges.

When politically correct, tolerant, and culturally diverse societies agree to Muslim demands for their religious privileges, some of the other components tend to creep in as well. Here's how it works:

As long as the Muslim population remains around or under 2% in any given country, they will be, for the most part, regarded as a peace-loving minority, and not as a threat to other citizens. This is the case in:

United States — Muslim 0.6%
 Australia — Muslim 1.5%
 Canada — Muslim 1.9%
 China — Muslim 1.8%
 Italy — Muslim 1.5%
 Norway — Muslim 1.8%

At 2% to 5%, they begin to proselytize from other ethnic minorities and disaffected groups, often with major recruiting from the jails and among street gangs. This is happening in:

Denmark — Muslim 2%
 Germany — Muslim 3.7%
 United Kingdom — Muslim 2.7%
 Spain — Muslim 4%
 Thailand — Muslim 4.6%

From 5% on, they exercise an inordinate influence in proportion to their percentage of the population. For example, they will push for the introduction of halal (clean by Islamic standards) food, thereby securing food preparation jobs for Muslims. They will increase pressure on supermarket chains to feature halal on their shelves — along with threats for failure to comply. This is occurring in:

France — Muslim 8%
 Philippines — 5%
 Sweden — Muslim 5%
 Switzerland — Muslim 4.3%
 The Netherlands — Muslim 5.5%
 Trinidad & Tobago — Muslim 5.8%

At this point, they will work to get the ruling government to allow them to rule themselves (within their ghettos) under Sharia, the Islamic Law. The ultimate goal of Islamists is to establish Sharia law over the entire world.

When Muslims approach 10% of the population, they tend to increase lawlessness as a means of complaint about their conditions. In Paris, we are already seeing car-burnings. Any non-Muslim action offends Islam and results in uprisings and threats, such as in Amsterdam, with opposition to Mohammed cartoons and films about Islam. Such tensions are seen daily, particularly in Muslim sections in:

Guyana — Muslim 10%
 India — Muslim 13.4%
 Israel — Muslim 16%
 Kenya — Muslim 10%
 Russia — Muslim 15%

After reaching 20%, nations can expect hair-trigger rioting, jihad militia formations, sporadic killings, and the burnings of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, such as in:

Ethiopia — Muslim 32.8%

At 40%, nations experience widespread massacres, chronic terror attacks, and ongoing militia warfare, such as in:

Bosnia — Muslim 40%
 Chad — Muslim 53.1%
 Lebanon — Muslim 59.7%

From 60%, nations experience unfettered persecution of non-believers of all other religions (including non-conforming Muslims), sporadic ethnic cleansing (genocide), use of Sharia Law as a weapon, and Jizya, the tax placed on infidels, such as in:

Albania — Muslim 70%
 Malaysia — Muslim 60.4%
 Qatar — Muslim 77.5%
 Sudan — Muslim 70%

After 80%, expect daily intimidation and violent jihad, some State-run ethnic cleansing, and even some genocide, as these nations drive out the infidels, and move toward 100% Muslim, such as has been experience and in some ways is ongoing in:

Bangladesh — Muslim 83%
 Egypt — Muslim 90%
 Gaza — Muslim 98.7%
 Indonesia — Muslim 86.1%
 Iran — Muslim 98%
 Iraq — Muslim 97%
 Jordan — Muslim 92%
 Morocco — Muslim 98.7%



Pakistan — Muslim 97%
 Palestine — Muslim 99%
 Syria — Muslim 90%
 Tajikistan — Muslim 90%
 Turkey — Muslim 99.8%
 United Arab Emirates — Muslim 96%

100% will usher in the peace of 'Dar-es-Salaam' — the Islamic House of Peace. Here there's supposed to be peace, because everybody is a Muslim, the Madrasses are the only schools, and the Koran is the only word, such as in:

Afghanistan — Muslim 100%
 Saudi Arabia — Muslim 100%
 Somalia — Muslim 100%
 Yemen — Muslim 100%

Unfortunately, peace is never achieved, as in these 100% states the most radical Muslims intimidate and spew hatred, and satisfy their blood lust by killing less radical Muslims, for a variety of reasons.

'Before I was nine, I had learned the basic canon of Arab life. It was me against my brother; me and my brother against our father; my family against my cousins and the clan; the clan against the tribe; the tribe against the world, and all of us against the infidel. — Leon Uris, 'The Haj'

It is important to understand that in some countries, with well under 100% Muslim populations, such as France, the minority Muslim populations live in ghettos, within which they are 100% Muslim, and within which they live by Sharia Law. The national police do not even enter these ghettos. There are no national courts, nor schools, nor non-Muslim religious facilities. In such situations, Muslims do not integrate into the community at large. The children attend madrasses. They learn only the Koran. To even associate with an infidel is a crime punishable with death. Therefore, in some areas of certain nations, Muslim Imams and extremists exercise more power than the national average would indicate.

Today's 1.5 billion Muslims make up 22% of the world's population. But their birth rates dwarf the birth rates of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and all other believers. Muslims will exceed 50% of the world's population by the end of this century.

Well, boys and girls, today we are letting the fox guard the henhouse. The wolves will be herding the sheep!

Obama appoints two devout Muslims to Homeland Security posts. Doesn't this make you feel safer already?

Obama and Janet Napolitano appoint Arif Alikhan, a devout Muslim, as Assistant Secretary for Policy Development.

DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano swore in Kareem Shora, a devout Muslim who was born in Damascus, Syria, as ADC National Executive Director as a member of the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC).

Devout Muslims being appointed to critical Homeland Security positions? Doesn't this make you feel safer already?

That should make the US homeland much safer, huh!! Was it not "Devout Muslim men" that flew planes into U.S. buildings 10 years ago?

Was it not a Devout Muslim who killed 13 at Fort Hood?

Can a good Muslim be a good American?

This question was forwarded to a friend who worked in Saudi Arabia for 20 years. The following is his reply: **Theologically -no.** Because his allegiance is to Allah, The moon God of Arabia

Religiously - no. Because no other religion is accepted by His Allah except Islam (Quran, 2:256/Koran)

Scripturally - no. Because his allegiance is to the five Pillars of Islam and the Quran.

Geographically -no. Because his allegiance is to Mecca, to which he turns in prayer five times a day.

Socially -no. Because his allegiance to Islam forbids him to make friends with Christians or Jews..

Politically -no. Because he must submit to the mullahs (spiritual leaders), who teach annihilation of Israel and destruction of America, the great Satan.

Domestically -no. Because he is instructed to marry four Women and beat and scourge his wife when she disobeys him (Quran 4:34)

Intellectually -no. Because he cannot accept the American Constitution since it is based on Biblical principles and he believes the Bible to be corrupt.

Philosophically -no. Because Islam, Muhammad, and the Quran do not allow freedom of religion and expression... Democracy and Islam cannot co-exist. Every Muslim government is either dictatorial or autocratic.

Spiritually -no. Because when we declare 'one nation under God,' the Christian's God is loving and kind, while Allah is NEVER referred to as Heavenly father, nor is he ever called love in The Quran's 99 excellent names.

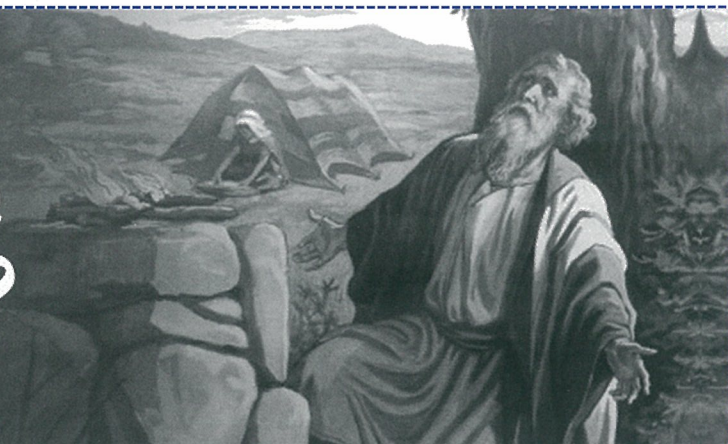
Therefore, after much study and deliberation. ... Perhaps we should be very suspicious of ALL MUSLIMS in this country. - - - They obviously cannot be both 'good' Muslims and good Americans. Call it what you wish, it's still the truth. You had better believe it. The more who understand this, the better it will be for our country and our future. The religious war is bigger than we know or understand. **Can a Muslim be a good soldier??**

Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, opened fire at Ft. Hood and Killed 13. He is a good Muslim!!!

Footnote: The Muslims have said they will destroy us from within. SO FREEDOM IS NOT FREE. THE MARINES WANT THIS TO ROLL ALL OVER THE U.S.



Does Satan cause all of our adversity?



The quick answer is, "No".

While the Book of Job makes it obvious that the devil can and does afflict us, some of our adversity comes simply because we live in a fallen world.

All people - believers and nonbelievers alike - suffer adversity not "caused" by anything we or others have done.

In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus declared that victims of two separate local tragedies died not because they had sinned worse than anyone else in Jerusalem, but simply because they were at the wrong place at wrong time. In a fallen world, any of us could die at any time - and that is why we must always be ready to stand before God.

Adversity can also come into our lives as a result of personal sin. Each sin we commit carries some consequences, a natural outflow of adversity tailored to the nature of our disobedience. In cases like this, we can't blame God, the devil, or others. We must follow David's example and say, "I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." (Psalm 51:3-4)

Let's say that I hear a juicy rumor and choose to gossip about it. Then imagine that the "news" turns out to be completely untrue. The result? No one trust me anymore. I am rightly seen as a malicious gossip. I have destroyed my public witness. I can't blame anyone else for what happened; it was my own fault!

Finally, some adversity comes straight from almighty God. We don't like to think about this one, but let's be clear: **God is ultimately concerned with our spiritual growth, not with our happiness or momentary pleasures.** He always has the big picture in mind whenever He allows or sends adversity into our lives. So David wrote, "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right and that in faithfulness, You have afflicted me." (Psalm 119:75)

Unfortunately, adversity is often the only thing that will get our attention. I once heard a fine teacher explain it this way: **God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience but shouts to us in adversity.** If God doesn't get our attention through His blessings or by stinging our conscience, then He will certainly put us flat on our backs in adversity so that we can get the message!

With love & prayers

Mona Singh

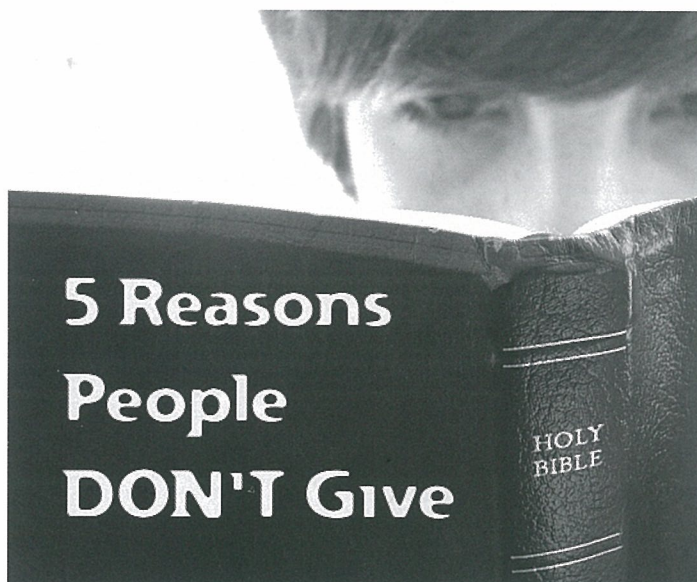


Quote of the month

God allows us to experience difficult, often life-changing events. He even orchestrates them-all for our benefit. God puts us against the "Red Seas" in order to show His power in and through us. If we do not know God can deliver, then we can never learn to trust Him. Circumstances that go beyond our capabilities of solving them, place us at God's complete mercy. This is how He likes it.

Do not fear the calamity that comes your way. If you are faithful to Him in the test, you will see God's power manifested like never before.





Do you hope and pray for more people to follow stewardship principles? It can be so frustrating!

I have a vision for the church and not be able to fund it. It is time to understand the reasons why so many people do not give.

1. They don't see the need.
2. They don't understand the cost or the vision.
3. They don't know anyone.
4. They don't know how.
5. They don't understand or believe the Bible.



Jesus

Jesus died over 2000 years ago.
Nobody has ever referred to
Him as the late Jesus!
Not even the heathens.
He is the Living God!
When Jesus died on the cross
He was thinking of you!
May God smile at you today.



**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**



MP'S FROM ALL PARTIES CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF EGYPTIAN BLOGGER AND POLITICAL PRISONER MAIKEL NABIL

NABIL ON 87TH DAY OF HUNGER STRIKE. PROFESSOR COTLER, NABIL'S INTERNATIONAL LEGAL COUNSEL, SAYS,

"HIS LIFE IS HANGING BY A THREAD"

Irwin Cotler, Liberal Justice and Human Rights Critic, and NDP MP Wayne Marston today called for the immediate release of 26-year old Egyptian blogger Maikel Nabil – one of the early leaders in the Tahrir Square Revolution and of the launch of the "Egyptian Spring" – who was convicted last March and sentenced by a military tribunal to three years in prison in a trial devoid of legality.

Maikel Nabil – one of the first political prisoners of the post-Mubarak era – jailed for exercising rights protected under Egyptian law and for defending minority rights – is on the 87th day of a hunger strike with his life hanging by a thread.

Mr. Cotler and Mr. Marston – Vice-Chairs of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights – urged the Canadian government to continue to make representations at the highest level with a view to securing his release and quashing of all charges with all deliberate speed. This week, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights unanimously adopted the following motion:



Are all our visions from God?



Some brothers came to find Abba Anthony to tell him about the visions they were having, and to find out from him if they were true or if they came from the demons.

They had a donkey which died on the way. When they reached the place where the old man was, he said to them before they could ask him anything, "How was it that the little donkey died on the way here?" They said, "How do you know about that, Father?" And he told them, "the demons showed me what happened." So they said, "that was what we came to question you about, for fear we were being deceived, for we have visions which often turn out to be true." Thus the old man convinced them, by the example of the donkey that their visions came from the demons.

Short Stories

By Fr. Augustinos Hanna

The Faithfulness of the Whore who Married the Governor

Abbot John the Dwarf said:

"If a king wanted to capture the town of his enemy, first of all he would cut off its water supply and prevent food from getting in. The enemies, dying of hunger, would surrender. In the same way we should treat the passions of the flesh. If someone lives in a fasting and hunger, in a short while the enemies of his soul get exhausted."

One day, speaking about conversion of the heart, the Abbot told the story to one of the brothers:

"Once there was a woman of ill repute in a city. She had many lovers. The governor approached her and said: "If you promise me you will behave properly, I will take you for my wife." She promised, he married her and took her to his own home.

The lovers, who still wanted her, said, "That official has taken her. If we risk going into the palace, he'll catch us and punish us. But we'll get out of that. Let us go round the back and whistle to her. She'll hear it and come down, and then we'll be all right."

"But the woman, when she heard the, whistling, blocked her ears, bolted the doors and hid herself in the innermost part of the house."

The old man explained the story. "The woman of ill repute is our soul. Her lovers are our passions. The governor is Christ. The innermost part of the soul can always find refuge with its Lord."

Win or Lose

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

During the 2009 college football season, University of Texas quarterback Colt McCoy began every post-game interview by thanking God for the

opportunity to play. When he was injured early in the national championship game, he was forced to watch from the sidelines as his team lost.

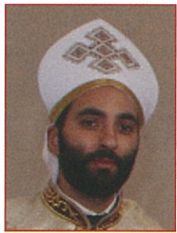
After the game, he told a television reporter, "I'd have given everything I have to be out there with my team....I always give God the glory. I never question why things happen the way they do. God is in control of my life and I know that if nothing else, I'm standing on the Rock."

The Apostle Paul experienced God's deliverance many times, but he didn't insist on things going his way. From prison in Rome he wrote to Timothy: "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim.4:6). He added, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith..." He looked forward to an eternal crown. As we walk with God, we can praise Him for His faithfulness, yes, win or lose.



jonah - proper and improper fasting

By Fr. Daniel Habib



As is the current Coptic Tradition to fast three days like the Ninevites fasted in the book of *Jonah*, let us take a moment to reflect on their fast. Such a contemplation will benefit us as we prepare for this year's fast, as well as for all of our many edifying and beautiful fasting periods.

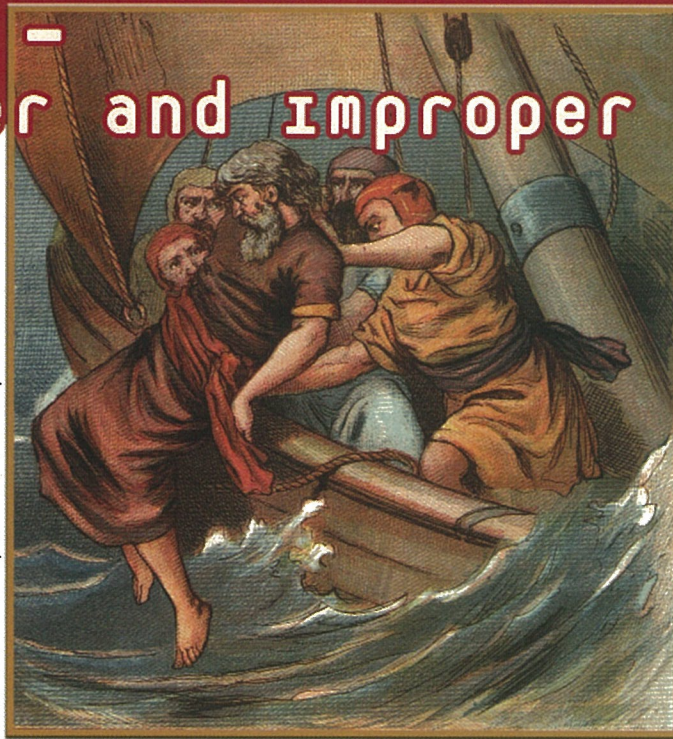
After Jonah prophesied to the Ninevites, telling them of their impending destruction by God, they proclaimed a fast. In addition, the king of Nineveh ordered his people to *"cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may yet repent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we perish not?"* (Jonah 3:8-9).

St. Cyril compares the fasting of Ninevites with the fasting of Israel. First he praises the Ninevites and highlights their proper fasting by writing that "the Ninevites were very wise, devoting themselves to an abandonment of depravity by means of fasting, this being the single authentic and blameless form of repentance." The people of Nineveh did not just give up eating and drinking, they stopped sinning as well. For this reason, their fasting was accepted because it was done properly.

St. Cyril contrasts the Ninevites with Israel. "Since Israel by contrast did not possess a facility for it, and sometimes gave evidence of a fasting that was ill-considered and profane, God ordered the prophet to raise his voice and proclaimed to them, *'This is not the fasting that I wanted, says the Lord'; and he supplied the reason for this mentioning it: 'On your fast days you serve your own interests and oppress all your workers; you fast to quarrel and to fight, and to strike the lowly with your fist. Why fast, I ask you, so that your voice may be heard today in a loud cry? This is not the fasting that I wanted, a day for people to humble themselves.'* (Isaiah 58:3-5)."

The fast of the Israelites was not accepted due to the sin that accompanied their fasting.

St. Cyril goes on and writes, "The Ninevites therefore did better by performing for God a pure and blameless fast, the sacred text confirming that *they all turned from their evil ways and from the iniquity in their actions*. What was done was rea-



sonable and sensible; they believed that *God would relent and turn away the effects of his wrath*. Now, by *relent* he means 'have second thoughts' on seeing them abandoning depravity for goodness, when He for His part would adopt the benignity and love dear to Him, being kindly by nature. On the other hand, he inflicts punishment of sinners and on those inexorably committed to obduracy, imposing effects of his wrath like a kind of bridle to check them and bring them into compliance."

What makes Israel's improper fasting even more foolish is that they had been taught about the kindness and love of God. "Whereas Israel in its wisdom, though instructed by Law that the Lord is good and kind, could not bring themselves to take this view. Instead, remember, they explained, 'our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them: how then can we live?' (Ezekiel 33:10-11)." While Israel *gave up spiritually*, so to speak, the Ninevites did not. Even though the transgressions of the Ninevites weighed down heavily upon them, instead of asking "how can we live?" they offered a pure and proper fast to God.

St. Cyril concludes, "The Lord is quick to show mercy and bring salvation to the repentant; He immediately relieves them of their former crimes if they desist from their sin, cancels His wrath, and thinks instead of kindly actions. When He sees them turning to good behavior, He makes a change to clemency, puts off their overthrow, and accords them pity. Scripture is in fact right to say, 'why will you die, house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord Adonai, my wish being for them to turn from their way and live.' (Ezek. 18:31-32)."

May the Holy Spirit inspire us and encourage us to offer a pure and proper fast to the Lord God, seeking His mercy upon us, our towns, communities, countries, and all of His creation. May our God accept our humble fast and prayers, and look with a compassionate eye upon us during this period of time. The blessing of the Fast of the Ninevites be with you all.

¹ Robert C. Hill, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets v. 2*, The Fathers of the Church v 116 (D.C.: The Catholic Univ. of Am. Press, 2008), 170.

² Ibid., 171.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 172.



Congratulations



St. John Church in Covina congratulates,
Medhat & Monica Yacoub

for their marriage, praying the Lord to bless their life together in joy, peace and plenty of good fruits, in a happy Christian home built on the Rock of Christ's love, His Church and Bible. Congratulations to their families.



St. John Church congratulates,
Dr. Mina & Helena Youssef

for their blessed marriage. May the Lord Jesus grant them love, joy, peace and all the fruits of the Spirit with a successful ministry in Christ. Congratulations to their two families.



St. John Church congratulates
Madonna and Joseph Hanna

For their wedding; may the Lord Jesus who blessed the wedding of Cana of Galilee, bless their marriage and grant them happiness, success in their new life and continuous spiritual songs.



Adel, Odaite and Rami Bishai
Congratulate

Kerlos E. Baker & Sally Bishai

for their blessed marriage, wishing them a life full of love and happiness with the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages (Matthew 7:24).

Congratulations to

Sally Bishai and Kerlos Baker

For their marriage. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless their life together with joy, peace and harmony

-Love, Uncle Samy, Sanaa, uncle Safwat, Mona, and cousins Miral, Peter, Mark and Christine.



Congratulations to our beloved
Mark Moussa and Mira Soliman

For their marriage. May our Lord bless your life together and grant you many years of joy and happiness - *Mary and Essam Soliman, Nawal and Raouf Moussa, Neveen and Joe Soliman, Rita and Maged Gindi.*





with the Pope in Cleveland



Clergy Meeting at St. John Church



Children's Choir

