

# ST. JOHN

JANUARY 1992

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 4, NO. 25

21329 Cienega Ave. Covina, CA 91724 Fax & Tel: (714) 592-8847 Tel: (714) 599-9075

## The Richest Became the Poorest

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).*

In celebrating Christmas, we must know these facts:

1. *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."* It is an amazing grace that *"God was manifested in the flesh"*, in person of Christ, to show us the real and perfect image of the invisible God (Jn. 1:18, Co. 1:15, 1 Tim. 3:16), and to come especially to die instead of us!
2. *"He was rich!"*, He is the richest person because He is God, the owner and creator of heaven and earth.
3. *"For our sakes, He became poor"*. . . the poorest person on earth. He was born in a manger among sheep and cattle! None of the people could imagine that this poor baby was God! *"There was no room for them in the inn"* (Lk. 2:7). How sad, while the angels glorify Him, there is no room for Him in many hearts, houses, and human societies!
4. *"Yet through His poverty, we might become rich"*, in faith, love, wisdom and unlimited riches in heaven.

### St. John Coptic Orthodox Church

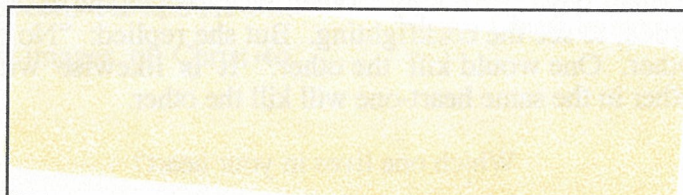
P.O. BOX 598  
WEST COVINA, CA 91793-0598

**Address correction requested.**

**Do not forward.**

**Return Postage guaranteed.**

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SAN GABRIEL, CA  
PERMIT NO. 116



Printed by San Antonio Graphics (818) 912-1977



## A Letter to Santa Claus



This is an old story about a small boy, very innocent, and most anxious to contact this immortal friend of children. His parents were ill; they needed comfort, especially since Christmas-time was approaching.

Surely father Christmas would be sympathetic, and willing to help a little boy cheer his parents! Guarding his secret well, he took paper and ink from the drawer, and slowly wrote his message,

*"Dear Santa Claus, my Mammy and my Daddy are ill, and I want to buy them a present for Christmas. Would you please send me ten dollars?"*

In due course, the letter reached the General Post Office, and was handed to the Postmaster. He smiled, and opened the envelope. The appeal was irresistible: it won his heart, and he decided to show the letter to the members of his club. The kind fellows were charmed by the boy's innocence, and taking a collection, raised seven dollars. The Postmaster volunteered to go round to the boy's home to deliver this amount. The lad was demure and shy, but he admitted that he had sent a letter to Santa Claus.

"Well my boy," continued the Rotarian, "Santa Claus was very pleased to receive your letter. He is sorry that your parents are ill, and hopes they will soon recover. He asked the Rotary Club to bring this money to you." The little boy's eyes shone as he received the cash. He was pleased and asked the gentleman to thank Santa Claus on his behalf.

Once again the boy had scribbled a thought-provoking note:

*"Dear Santa Claus, Thank you very much for the money; but next year, don't send it through the Rotary Club- they took three dollars out."*

That is FAITH. The boy asked father Christmas to send ten dollars, and Santa could not fail to answer the request. He knew exactly what had happened- those wretched Rotarians had helped themselves to money which was not theirs. He would need to warn Santa Claus, or they would continue to swindle him! Yes, that is faith. In spite of what had taken place, his faith in Santa Claus remained unshaken. Such faith, when it is found in the hearts of men and women, can easily remove mountains.

The vital element in faith is called TRUST. It is because we believe in Christ, that we trust Him. We know He is able to support us in any time of need, and we are not afraid to rest in His care. He could never fail us.

When I was a small boy, I asked my mother once to open the door of the wire net dividing the chicken in our garden, to see the cockfighting. But she replied: "No my son; those two kinds could never live together. One would kill the other." It is likewise with FAITH and FEAR. They cannot live together in the same heart-one will kill the other.

Which one lives in your heart?

## A Thought Before 1992

As we come to a close in the year of 1991 there is a need for us as Christians to review this past year before we move on to the next. Christianity calls for a progression in our spiritual lives. "*Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect*" (Matt. 5:48). Before we can become perfect we must first realize what our faults are. It is essential for us to examine ourselves and ask ourselves honestly if we have lived this past year with Christ.

Everyday of the past year God greeted us with the sun and brightened our lives with His Divinity. At the close of each day he allowed us to rest in the shadow of His wings. Did we thank Him each morning and night for His amazing deeds? He told us to seek His face. How many times did we try to escape His face? Christ visited us through every person in our lives. Did we show Him that we love Him by our behavior toward others? He told us to carry out His Commandments if we love Him. How often did we show that we love Him? He stood at the door of our hearts and knocked each day. When did we invite Him in? He offered a Heavenly Sacrifice for our sakes every week. How often were we too busy and declined the Sacrifice? Every day He yearns to speak to us. How many times did we open the Bible to hear His Words? He called us to witness to Him. How often were we too ashamed to answer that call. He said He will abide in us. Were we images of Christ to

others? Christ told us to carry our crosses and follow Him. Did we carry our crosses or did we blame God during any time of trouble? Christ wept for us and opened His arms on the cross to us. How often did we run to greet Him?

I am sure that all of us in our weakness have failed Christ in some way. Luckily for us God's mercy is as high as heaven and He will never stop calling us to Him. He wants to abide in us, we just have to offer Him our hearts. In this New Year we should try to weed out these faults. We must have a change of heart and an intent to want to live in Christ.

Christ told the parable of the man who went to pick fruit from a fig tree and it was barren. Because it was unfruitful the man wished to cut it down. The vinedresser told him to leave it for one more year. If it did not bear fruit he would cut it. Let's make sure that this year we bear fruit before we are cut down.

### New Year Prayer

Lord, in this year we ask of You, let us begin this year anew.

Grant us Your Peace from day one to the end. We thank You O Lord for Your Son You did send.

From us do not hide Your illuminated Face. Show us Your smile and unrelenting Grace.

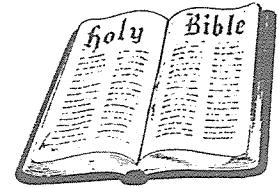
So day by day we ask and trust Our Lord Jesus Christ to have mercy upon us.

by  
Mark Guirguis



THE LETTER OF J A M E S  
By Fr. Augustine

---



## THE BOOK OF JAMES

The letter of James is the book of Christian works, and of practical spiritual life.

Faith without works cannot be called faith. Faith without works is dead (2:26) and a dead faith is worse than no faith at all. Faith must work; it must produce; it must be visible and tangible through works. Verbal faith is not enough; mental faith is insufficient. Faith must inspire action.

Throughout James epistle to Jewish believers, he integrates true faith and everyday practical experience by stressing that true faith must manifest itself in works of faith.

Faith induces trials. Trials come and go, but a strong faith will face them head-on and develop endurance. Faith and patience are twins, as faith and works are also twins. Faith understands temptations. It will not allow us to consent to our lust and slide in sin. Doubt is the enemy of faith and prayer.

Faith obeys the Word of God (1:21-25). It will not merely hear and not do. Faith produces doers. The Word is likened by a mirror to reflect the inside.

Faith removes discrimination and harbors no prejudice. For James, faith and favoritism cannot coexist and mercy triumphs over judgment (chapter 2).

Faith displays itself in works, not in words. Faith is more than mere words; it is more than knowledge; it is demonstrated by obedience; and it overtly responds to the promises of God.

Faith controls the tongue (chapter 3), this small but immensely powerful part of the body must be held in check.

Faith acts wisely (1:5 & 3:13-18). It gives us the ability to choose wisdom that is heavenly and to shun wisdom that is earthly.

Faith produces separation from the world and submission to God. It provides us with the ability to resist the devil and humbly draw near to God.

Faith waits patiently for Christ's return (5:7-9) as the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth.

Faith prays for the afflicted, the sick and the sinners (5:13-20).

Faith does miracles through prayer (3:17) gives healing and forgiveness.

# ORTHODOXY

Is Orthodoxy a mere branch of Christianity? Is it merely confined to Oriental Cultures? It is a label for the practice of Rites and Traditions? Orthodoxy is often misunderstood and misrepresented particularly in the West. It is commonly misperceived that the Orthodox Churches are deeply attached to traditions, trapped by cultural practices and tied up by language [Coptic, Arabic, Greek, etc. . .).

Orthodoxy, however knows not such boundaries for it transcends culture and language. It is an inseparable component of the Christian Faith and when correctly understood and properly practiced it is immensely enriching and edifying.

The word ORTHODOXY has the double meaning of ORTHO = Right and DOXA = Glorification; thus its the Church which Glorifies Him with Right Worship. Orthodoxy therefore is a living continuity of the Christian faith with strong Apostolic Roots. Its characterized by a profound treasury of spirituality built upon spirituality well as traditional foundations.

With over 300 Churches today many youth ask why is the Orthodox Church so conservative? In comparing it with other denominations, a writer used the following parable: "A master departed leaving his teachings to his three disciples. The eldest faithfully preserved all the teachings changing nothing. Of the two others, one added to the teachings and the other took away from it. At his return the master without being angry with anyone said to the younger disciples, 'thank your older brother, without him you

would not have preserved the truth which I handed to you.' Then he said to the eldest, 'Thank your younger brothers, without them you would not have appreciated and understood the truth entrusted to you.'"

*Orthodoxy is often misrepresented as being too steeped in traditions.*

Tradition is not a parrot like repetition of prayers, readings and Rites. It is not something Mechanical, a dull process of handing down what has been received. Tradition is not static but dynamic; a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present. Tradition is not only kept by the Church, it lives in the Church, it is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Tradition, writes, Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty, is the living stream of the one life of the Church which brings up the past with all its aspects as a living present.

An American Protestant Minister who attended a Coptic Orthodox Christening in Dallas, Texas in 1971 said to Fr. Tadros Malaty: "During this long Baptismal Rite, I felt that I am living in the Apostolic age." Such a remark encapsulates the essence of tradition. The Orthodox Church is characterized by a unique sense of living continuity with the Apostolic Church. It sees itself as Heir and Guardian to a great treasure of spiritual inheritance, received from the past and believes it is her duty to transmit, this inheritance unimpaired to the future.

by  
Maged Attia

# FROM PARADISE OF THE HOLY FATHERS

## The Blessed Abba Antony the Great

*Father of all Monks*

The story of the blessed man Abba Antony is one which is full of great battles between the forces of good and evil which constantly war within our weak human nature. His life is one of victory over sin and its master. His life is one of humility, self asceticism, self denial, vigilance, the true life of monasticism and at the same time and in so many ways it is the ideal Christian life.

When the Enemy, the hater of the virtues and the lover of evil things, saw all this great perfection in Abba Antony, he could not endure it. At the beginning of his temptings of the saint he approached him with flattery, and cast into him anxiety as to his possessions, and his love for his sister, and for his family and his friends, and the love of money and lust of various kinds, and the thought of the rest of the life of the world, and finally the hard and laborious life which he lived and the weakness of the body which would be a source of his suffering with the lapse of time.

Now when the Enemy saw that his craftiness in this matter was without profit, and that the more he brought temptation unto Saint Antony, the more strenuous the saint was in protecting himself against him with the armour of righteousness, he attacked him by mean of the vigour of early manhood which is bound up in the nature of our humanity. With the passions he used to trouble him by night, and in the daytime also he would distress him and pain him with the

same to such a degree that even those who saw him knew that he was waging war against the adversary. The more the Evil one brought unto him filthy and maddening thoughts, the more Saint Antony took refuge in prayer and in abundant supplication, and he remained blameless.

At times, Satan would appear to him in the form of a woman, but the blessed Antony knelt down upon his knees on the ground, and prayed before Him Who said, "*before they call, I will answer*" (Isa. 65:24), and said, "O my Lord, this I entreat You, let not Your love be removed from my mind, and behold, I am, by Your Grace, innocent before You." And again the enemy multiplied in him the thoughts of lust, until Saint Antony became as one who was being burned up by lusts, but he would immediately put on his mind the thought of the judgement, and of the torture of Hell which is never-ending. But although the blessed Antony saw the Enemy made powerless he never boasted in spirit or let the thoughts of self-righteousness get hold of him. He knew that the enemy would return thus he kept vigil and his body under subjection to the will of freedom. Saint Antony kept in mind the importance of self denial and day by day he added to his toiling and increased his former work of asceticism and patient endurance. *May his blessings be with us all. Amen.*

# A While Christmas

A Christmas retreat consisting of four days, December 22-25, was held at the snowy Pine Crest Conference Center. The emphasis of this retreat was upon spiritual growth and those aspects deterring it. A typical day began at 8:30 A.M. with the Agpya prayers, followed by breakfast, and Bible Study. Lunch came next, then free time, quiet time, a lecture and discussion meeting, followed by dinner and more free time.

The Bible study consisted of the Epistle of St. James. Both Abouna Augustinos and Abouna Gorgios discussed the chapters of this epistle in great detail. The lecture and discussion meetings explained the ways leading to spiritual growth, and the avoidance of obstacles, such as laziness and temptations of the world, that hinder it. Other spiritual activities, such as Bible trivia and quiet time were very beneficial. Many group activities took place during the assigned free time. Such activities consisted of sports, board games, and ice skating.

The retreat was overall beneficial spiritually, as well as entertaining. Unity was a major theme as we were all members in one body of Jesus Christ, praying and appreciating the beautiful nature that only God can create.

by  
Dalia Atalla

## Time Waiting on God is Never Wasted Time

*"Wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps.27:14).*

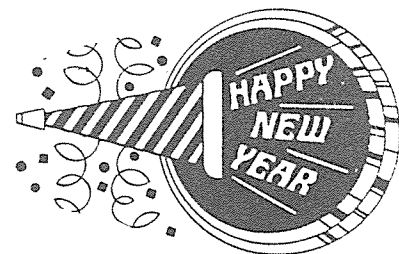
We must learn to wait on the Lord to grant us all our request, realizing that either the time may not yet be ripe for the answers we seek, or we are not yet fully surrendered to His will. Therefore, the immediate answer to many of our prayers is "Wait a while."

If we cannot accept this but insist on running ahead of God, we get into trouble. We must trust Him and believe His timing is best.

The kind of waiting God requires is not forced resignation or anxious fretting. It is a cheerful endurance that moves forward in the confidence that God will answer in His own good time. Though years have passed since then, do not despair, for His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.

Take courage, dear Christian. God's delays are not denials. Don't let the waiting time weaken your faith.

by  
Mary Habib



## **St. Hilaria**

Saint Hilaria was the elder daughter of the fourth century emperor Zeno; who had two daughters. Hilaria, sought the monastic life but Theopiste, the younger, did not share such desires. Hilaria secretly, in male attire, traveled to Alexandria, where she prayed in the Churches of Saint Peter the Martyr and Saint Mark the Evangelist. The apostles answered her in the affirmative through the words of scripture. She then entrusted herself to Theodorus the deacon, who accompanied her to the monastery. She went first to Saint Menas, then to SCETIS to Saint PAMBO. The ascetic did not recognize her as a woman, for she was only eighteen, and he advised her to go to ENATON, where life is less strict. But she insisted on staying, and earned monastic habit.

Three years later, Pambo learned through revelation that Hilaria is a woman and asked her to not reveal herself, in order to avoid scandal. Nine years later, still being beardless, she became known as Hilarion.

A demon entered her young sister, who is at Constantinople. The Emperor Zeno, not knowing what to do, left the matter to the monks of Scetis. As a consequence, Theopiste was brought before Saint Pambo. To everyone's astonishment, Hilarion's reaction is extreme; she drenched the ground with a flood of tears. Touched by such

compassion, St. Pambo entrusted the afflicted young woman to Hilarion. For a week the latter prayed consoling and finally curing her young sister, who did not recognize her. Once cured, Theopiste received the sacraments and returned to her father in the palace. She told the emperor that, to comfort her, Hilarion the monk kissed her on the mouth and slept in the same bed with her.

Shocked, Emperor Zeno summoned the healing monk to come to him on the excuse that there is another cure to be done at Constantinople. Taking Hilarion aside, Zeno disclosed that his mind is troubled. To avoid any scandal, Hilarion unveiled herself to the emperor alone, provided he lets her go back in peace to her monastery. For an hour the emperor remained stupefied. Only the empress and the younger sister were informed. The recognition resulted in tender tears.

Hilaria again became Hilarion in the monaster of Scetis, and twelve years later she died. Pambo then wrote the life of the saint, who was buried fully clothed.

The Coptic Orthodox Church remembers the great Saint Hilaria on: 21 Tubah, the date of her departure from this world. *May her blessings be with us all. Amen.*

---

### *"There Goes Your Quarter Lord "*

A mom trying to plant the love of giving alms within her five year old daughter, gave her two quarters and told her, "Here is one quarter for you and the another quarter for you to give to the Lord, in the Church box."

So the little girl took both quarters and started walking down the street, throwing both quarters in the air and catching them with in the palm of her hand. As she did this, one of the quarters fell off her hand and rolled into one of the drains in the street. The girl looked down the drain and upon realizing that it was gone for good, she said, *"There goes Your quarter Lord "*, and she continued walking.

Our selfishness always makes us disregard God's rights!



# Church News

1. His Grace Bishop Roweis will celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Epiphany, on the evening of Sunday January 19, 1992. He will also give a sermon to the youth meeting on Friday January 17th.

2. On Sunday, January 12, 1992, the Church will celebrate the feast of St. John and will have a spiritual day.

3. The Church will have a trip to St. Antony Monastery, on Saturday, February 1st.

On the occasion of the Feast of St. Antony, the Monastery will hold a bazaar. There will be a private bus departing from the Church (\$15 per person). The latest date for reservation will be Sunday, January 12th. The number is limited to 45 persons. Priority will be to those who reserve first.

4. The Church has established an office for Social Services under the leadership of its two priests

and a number of volunteers members known for their love of service and loyal to confidentiality. The objective is serving the needy, unemployed, and newly arrived immigrants. There are special boxes in the Church for the financing of this vital project.

5. The Church congratulates the beloved Fr. Gorgios Attala on his 60th Birthday and wishes him the best of health, fruitful service, and long life.

---

## 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 6:00 - 8:00 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.

بقي على قسط الكنيسة الثاني شهر ونصف والموقف حرج!

« هذا اليوم يوم شدة لأن الأجنة دنت إلى المولد ولا قوة على الولادة »

(اشعيا ٢: ٢٧ من صلاة حزقيال الملك)

يستحق قسط الكنيسة الثاني في فبراير ٩٢ ولا يزال متبقيا منه في ذمة الكنيسة مبلغ ١٧٠٠٠ و \$  
مائة وسبعون ألف دولار (من ٢٥٠ ألف) الرب يدبر ويسدد.