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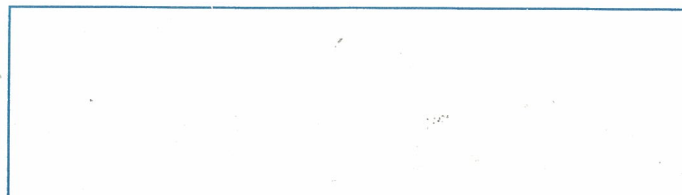


The Winter Youth Convention Dec. 1992

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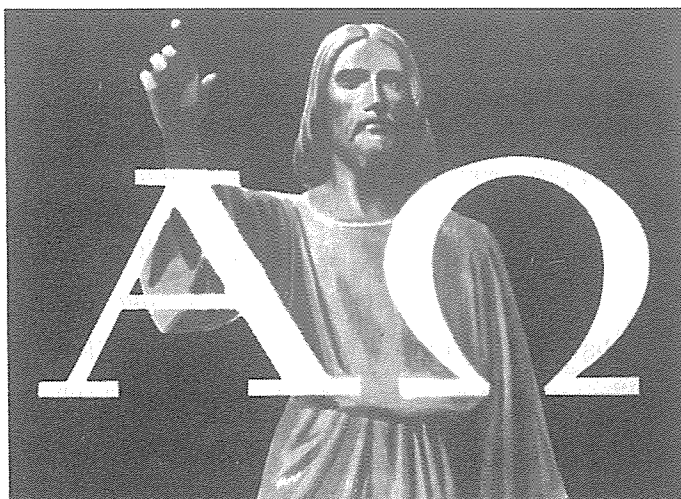
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occasions Of 1992 In Pictures





By

Fr. Augustinos Hanna

There is a great wisdom in this Proverb, which I give to every true Christian through out this new year, 1993, as a personal and precious gift! It says:

Sow a thought....reap an act.

Sow an act.....reap a habit

Sow a habit.....reap a character

Sow a character.....reap a destiny

Note that our destiny is largely determined by how we think. It takes shape in the mind. Our actions, and ultimately our destinies, are determined by our currently dominant thoughts. It is obvious, then that we need a thought director!

The conscience is God's provision to direct our thoughts and actions into appropriate, productive channels.

But the conscience alone is not sufficient, because it may be affected by many things, such as culture, circumstances, customs and habits of the society.

For instance, in some barbaric tribes in middle Africa, if someone got sick, his family may kill him, cook him and eat him

WISDOM

For The New Year

(or her)! They do that without any objection from their conscience, and they may justify this as an act of mercy! But if anyone does the same act here in a civilized country, he will be considered a criminal of a first degree murder, or a wild beast and expose himself to the capital punishment.

Therefore, the conscience must be guided and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.

If we sow good and holy thoughts, we will surely reap good and holy actions. On the other hand if we sow bad, evil thoughts, we will reap bad and evil deeds.

So, we must guard our thoughts *"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* (2 Cor. 10:5). When we get filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and *"Let the word of Christ dwell richly in us in all wisdom"* (Col. 3:16), then it will be easy and natural for us to sow Holy thoughts and reap holy actions.

When we get used to sow good and holy acts, they will turn into good and holy habits, and they will be our characters. These good characters will become our new nature. This new holy nature is the miracle of the live Christianity.

Finally, he who sows holy deeds, habits and character, can guarantee the greatest future and destination of the righteous in the heavenly eternal life.

Christmas Between Appearance & Substance

Christ Is The Reason For The Season

By
Fr. Augustinos Hanna

Someone Once said, *"We are in danger of losing Christmas. It may now be the biggest and most popular of all our holidays, but Christmas is in jeopardy just the same. A subtle but sure erosion is eating away the season's true significance."*

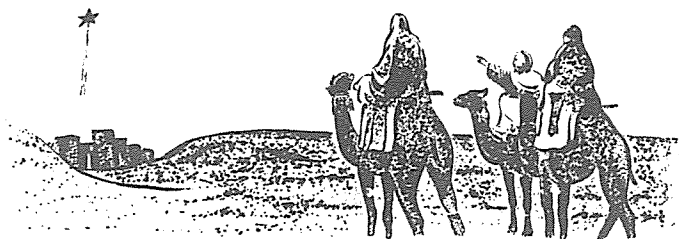
If we ask the average person in America now, "What do you think about Christmas?" Most probably he will answer, "It is the season of sales, holidays, decoration, feasts, Christmas trees, family gatherings and gifts." Nothing more he can add !!

The materialistic affairs overshadow everything in this age, even the sacred occasions. The carnal people, as well as the nominal Christians, lacking God's love in their hearts, they separated themselves from God. As small children, they rejoiced with the gift rather than the giver, they sufficed with the outer appearance and forgot the essence. Isn't it ridiculous to celebrate Christmas without Christ? The Magi were wiser than this superficial generation, *"when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy"*, but they were not satisfied with that, and kept seeking for the

One whom the star was leading to, saying, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him"* (Matt. 2:2).

There is nothing wrong in celebration or ornaments, in gatherings or gifts, but all of that will be empty and meaningless apart from the celebrated Lord of the feast Himself. But if we followed the Magi and sought Jesus, the feast will be real and joyous.

- + The essence of Christmas is "Immanuel, God with us" (Isa.7:14 & Matt.1:23).
- + The substance of Christmas is "Jesus: the Lord saves" (Matt.1:21).
- + Christmas is "GOD was manifested in the flesh"(1 Tim.3:16).And dwelt among us"
- + "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman to redeem us that we may receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4).
- + Christmas is glorifying Humility: God is born poor in a manger" (Luke 2:7).
- + Christmas is Giving donations and gifts to the needy."For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor.8:9).
- + Christmas is Joining the angels in praising the savior, giving glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). "These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matt. 23:23). We should never forget that **Christ is the reason for the season.**



Let Us Praise Him

Let me begin my discourse to you with that which is written in the book of Psalms, "*Come let us praise the Lord, and sing unto God our Savior*" (Psalm 95:1); for He is the Head of our feast-day, and therefore let us tell His noble doings, and relate the manner of that beautifully contrived dispensation, by means of which He has saved the world. All ye people clap your hands; and again add thereto, *Sing with understanding, God has set a king over all the heathen*, (Ps. 47:1,7). For this holy mystery was wrought with a wisdom most befitting Christ, that the Lord, though He is God, appeared unto us and though He is in the form of God the Father, and possesses an incomparable and universal preeminence, took the likeness of a slave. But even so He was God and Lord; for He did not cease to be that which He had been.

The company of the holy prophets had before proclaimed both His birth in the flesh, and His assumption of our likeness as about in due time to come to pass; and inasmuch as this hope had now reached its fulfillment, the rational powers of heaven bring the glad tidings of His manifestation and appearance in this world first of all, to shepherds at Bethlehem, who were thus the earliest to receive the knowledge of the mystery. And the type answers to the truth; for Christ reveals himself to the spiritual shepherds that they preach Him to the rest, just as the shepherds also then were taught His mystery by the holy angels, and ran to bear the glad tidings to their fellows. Angels, therefore, are the first to preach Him, and declare His glory as God born in the flesh in a wonderful manner of a woman.

In the Likeness of a Slave

But perchance someone may object to this, "that He Who was now born was still a child, and wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger: how then did the powers above praise Him as God?" Against such our argument stands firm. Understand, O man, the depth of the mystery! God was in visible form like unto us: the Lord of all in the likeness of a slave, albeit the glory of Lordship is inseparable from Him. Understand that the Only-begotten was made flesh; that He endured to be born of a woman for our sakes, to put away the curse pronounced

upon the first woman; for to her it was said, "*In pains shalt thou bring forth children*" (Gen. 3:16); for it was as bringing forth unto death, that they endured the sting of death. But because a woman has brought forth in the flesh Emmanuel, Who is Life, the power of the curse is loosed, and along with death have ceased also the pains³ that earthly mothers had to endure in bringing forth.

Would you learn also another reason of the matter? Remember what the very wise Paul has written of Him. *For as to the powerlessness of the law, wherein it was weak through the flesh, God having sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and because of sin, has condemned the sin in His flesh, that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit* (Rom. 8:3,4). What then is the meaning of his saying that the Son was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh? It is this: The law of sin lies hidden in our fleshly members together with the shameful stirring of the natural lusts; but when the Word of God became flesh, that is man, and assumed our likeness, His flesh was holy and perfectly pure; so that He was indeed in the likeness of our flesh, but not according to its standard. For He was entirely free from the stains and corruption natural to our bodies, and from that inclination which leads us to what is not lawful.

Extracted from: *He Became Flesh*

By: **St. Cyril the Great**

Edited by: **Fr. Matthias F. Wahba**

S M I L E

Giving:

Isn't it funny how a dollar can look so big when you take it to church, and so small when you take it to the store?

* Remember what Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35)

Comedian:

Did you hear about the comedian's wife who sued for divorce? She claimed that he tried to joke her to death!!

* Many divorces these days are based on such foolish jokes and have no serious reason. Remember that the only serious reason is adultery, and even that is voluntary and not mandatory. If the spouse could forgive, for repentance, this will be much, much better (Matt. 19:2-9).

THINGS THAT SHORTEN LIFE & THAT PROLONG LIFE

By

Fr. Augustinos Hanna

According to the Bible there are many factors that may shorten or prolong the life of man, even though medicine did not discover them!

I. Things that shorten the life:

(1) Despising the word of God:

"He who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded" (Proverbs 13:13). The people who despise God's word, or do not believe it, or neglect it, destroy themselves. Breaking God's word on purpose or by ignorance lead to the same dangerous result. God confirmed this fact when He said: *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6).*

(2) Dishonoring parents:

"Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Eph.6:1-3).

It is also written explicitly many times that, *"He who strikes or curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:15,17).*

(3) Evil and sin:

Sin, in general, is a poison that leads to death and destruction. Committing murder, sexual immorality, getting

intoxicated through drugs, or alcohol, witchcraft, or even lying, expose the sinner to the wrath of God and His discipline, besides it causes the punishment of the society and justice, and many fatal diseases. The generations of the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah were totally destroyed.

When Pharaoh resisted God, he was drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 14, 15). Breaking God's commandments is a sin. Note that Uzzah was struck by Lord and died immediately for his error when he just touched the Ark of God, against His commandment (2 Samuel 6:6). It was a clear demonstration, that Ananias and his wife Sapphira died immediately when they lied to Peter, or rather to God (Acts 5:1-11). It is also written that *"Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord and the Lord killed him" (Gen. 38:7).*

(4) Communion without repentance or worthiness:

St. Paul said, regarding communion, *"whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself first, for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep (die)" (1 Cor. 11:29-32).*

(5) Backsliding, resisting God's will: When the children of Israel betrayed God and worshipped the golden calf, three thousand of the people fell that day by the sword and perished (Exodus 32:28). The congregation of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who rebelled against the priesthood and God choice to Moses and Aron, were consumed and perished immediately (Numbers 16). In the parable of the Potter and the clay, in Jeremiah 18, the reluctant clay vessel which did not Yield to the hands of the potter (its creator), would be destroyed and thrown into the garbage. Also in the parable of the vineyard, in Isaiah 5, after all what God has done for its good, and against expectation it brought wild bitter grapes, He had to *"take away its hedge, burn it, break down its wall, trample it down, and lay it waste..."* (see also Heb. 6:8).

II. Factors That Prolong Life:

In general, they are the opposite of all the above, with some additions, and brief explanations or Biblical references.

(1) Loving the word of God:

God, our creator, gave us a great treasure full of life, light, and hundreds of great blessings in our homes, that is the HOLY BIBLE. It contains all the guidance, peace and protection we need in our short life on earth. When we discover it, we then put our hands on the key of the happiest and prosperous long life on earth and thereafter, the everlasting life in heaven. God says: *"My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of*

days and long life and peace they will add to you" (Proverbs 3:1,2). *"Hear My son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many"* (Prov.4:10). Jesus said: *"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). The more we read the word of God, delight, understand, and meditate in it day and night, the more we love it, get filled with the Spirit and Life of Christ, and enjoy living a great long life.

(2) Honoring Parents and Spiritual Fathers: (Ephessians 6:1-3 & Heb. 13:7).

(3) The Fear of The Lord: *"The fear of the Lord prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened"* (Prov. 10:17).

(4) The Wisdom: The Holy Spirit says: *"Happy is the man who finds wisdom...all the things you may desire cannot compare with her, length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor"* (Prov. 3:13-19). Note that *"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col. 2:3), and wisdom is the Christian virtue which must penetrate all the other virtues. Jesus likened His believers with the wise virgins (Matt. 25:1-10), and His servants as faithful and wise stewards (Luke 12:42). This wisdom is available through prayer, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, and it will be given to him"* (Jam. 1:5).

(5) Keeping The Tongue From Evil: *"I will teach you the fear of the Lord, who is the man who desires life, and loves many*

days, that he may see good ? keeping your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile" (Ps. 34:11-13).

(6) Repentance And Good Works of Righteousness: The word of God says, "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but **righteousness delivers from death**" (Prov.10:2). It was an inspired counsel which Daniel gave the king Nebuchadnezzar, "*Break off your sins (atone) with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity*" (Dan.4:27). We read about Tabitha who was full of good works and charitable deeds, and though she had already died, she was raised from the dead! (Acts 9:36-41).

(7) Prayer: The Bible tells us about King Hezekiah who "*was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, went to him and said "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live. Then Hezekiah ...prayed to the Lord, and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal heart, and hve done what is good in Your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the Lord answered, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years"* (Isaiah 38:1-5).



CHURCH NEWS

1. January 6, 1993 the Church celebrated the Divine Liturgy of St. Gregory on Christmas Eve. After the liturgy the congregation moved to the church hall for the annual Christmas supper.
2. The Feast of Epiphany will be celebrated with a Liturgy in the evening of January 18, from 8 P.M.-12:00 A.M. Once again the congregation will gather in the hall for the annual feastal supper.
3. The Feast of the departure of St. John will be on January 12. May his blessings be with us all. Amen.
4. The English Youth Meeting of St. John Church, held its 2nd Annual Winter Retreat. The topic of the retreat was "going into the depth" and the second epistle of St. Peter was studied with Fr. Georgios & Augustinos. Around 55 of the youth attended. The retreat inspired the youth to make a spiritual commitment for the new year. Everyone participated in group discussions, Bible Trivia contests, cooking, hiking, sledding, and skits.
5. The Arabic Youth Meeting also had a weekend retreat on the 2nd and 3rd of January. Around 40 young people attended. the theme of the retreat was, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation". The retreat was led by Mr. Samir Tanios and Dr. Nagy Zaki. The church priests also served in the retreat.
6. The English Youth Meeting is having a Christmas party on Saturday, Jan. 9th. Secret Santa's will exchanged Christmas gifts and their identities will finally be revealed.
7. On Saturday 30, there will be a trip to St. Antony's Monastery in commemoration of the feast of St. Antony. Seating on the bus is limited to those who make reservations first. The fee is \$10.

EPIPHANY, FEAST OF THE. See Feasts, Major.

EPIPHANY, LITURGY OF THE. The celebration of the Epiphany, one of the seven major feasts (see FEASTS, MAJOR) of the Coptic church, takes place on the eve of 12 Tūbah. It commemorates the manifestation of the divinity of Jesus Christ as He was baptized in the river Jordan. There are four services on this feast.

1. In the evening prayer and the *psalmodia*, the priest conducting the service says the prayers of the raising of incense for the evening of the feast. These are followed by a hymn in glorification of Saint John the Baptist, beginning with: "A glorious name indeed is thine, O kinsman of Emmanuel."

Meanwhile a special tank, or basin, called *laqqān*, is filled with water. At the conclusion of this hymn the clergy and deacons, carrying crosses and lighted candles, proceed to the middle part of the nave of the church, and say the prayers of the office of midnight. Then the *psalmodia* is said over the *laqqān* water.

2. In the *laqqān* service, the *laqqān* basin is a symbolic representation of the river Jordan, scene of Christ's baptism. The Coptic Orthodox church in Jerusalem holds this particular service of the Epiphany festival at the riverside, while the rest of the prayers are conducted in the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist close to the river.

In some of the older churches in Egypt, the *laqqān* basin, which is made of marble, stone, or metal, is usually kept underneath the floor in the middle of the nave, covered with floor boards, marble, or flagstones. It is used only on three occasions throughout the year: for the service of the sanctification of the waters, for the footwashing on Maundy Thursday, (see FEASTS, MINOR) and for the footwashing on the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

The priest begins with the words, "Have mercy upon us O God Father almighty. All-holy Trinity, have mercy upon us. Lord God of powers, be with us, for we have no help in our tribulations and afflictions save Thee." The people say the Lord's Prayer and the prayer of thanksgiving. This is followed by lections containing relevant prophecies from the Old Testament, in this order: Habakkuk 3:2-19; Isaiah 35:1,2; 40:1-5; 9:1,2; Baruch 3:36-38; 4:1-4; Ezekiel 36:24-29; 47:1-9.

The Pauline epistle is taken from 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. The hymn of John the Baptist follows, after which the people recite the Trisagion (see MUSIC), and the priest says the intercession of the Gospel, and reads the Gospel (Mt. 3:1-17). The priest then says "O God, have mercy upon us," etcetera, after which the deacons sing "Kyrie eleison" twelve

times. Then follow the seven great intercessions, for the sick, the travelers, the winds and the fruits, the head of state, the dormants, the oblations, and the catechumens. The priest then recites the petition and lifts up the cross of lighted tapers, and the people say "Kyrie eleison" one hundred times. This is followed by the three great prayers (for peace, the fathers, and the congregation) and the celebrant says the prayer for the sanctification of the waters, at the end of which he signs the water three times with the cross, saying, "Sanctify this water, impart to it the grace of the River Jordan. . . . Thou didst sanctify the streams of the Jordan, having drawn upon them Thy Holy Spirit from heaven. . . . Do Thou now sanctify this water. May it become the fountain of blessing, a gift of purification, an absolver from sin, a purger of sickness, that it may be a purification of the soul, body and spirit, for all who shall draw from it or partake of it. . . ."

The people say the Lord's Prayer, and the priest recites the three prayers of Absolution, followed by the benediction.

At the end of this service, the assistant priest takes a white napkin, called *shamlah* (see LITURGICAL VESTMENTS), dips it into the water, and signs the forehead of the chief priest with it three times, an action symbolic of the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ by the hand of John the Baptist. After this, it is the chief priest who takes the *shamlah* and signs the priests, the deacons, and the congregation on the forehead. Meantime, the deacons sing Psalm 150 and the priest says a prayer of thanksgiving.

3. In the service of morning offering of incense, prayers are resumed from the sanctuary, and deacons go back to their usual place at the choir.

4. The Divine Liturgy, as is usually the case in all major feasts of the church, is celebrated according to the Anaphora of Saint GREGORY, with the following variations appropriate to the Epiphany: (1) following the reading from the SYNAXARION, the deacons sing the hymn of Saint John the Baptist; (2) the psalm versicle is Psalm 117: 25, 27; (3) the Gospel is from John 1: 18-34; (4) after the sermon the deacons sing the Gospel hymn for the Epiphany: "This is the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the world, He who brought a horn of salvation to save His people. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah; Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was baptized in the Jordan"; and (5) the theme of the FRAC-TION prayer is regeneration of man through baptism: "Thou hast granted us the grace of filiation through the laver of the new birth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit."

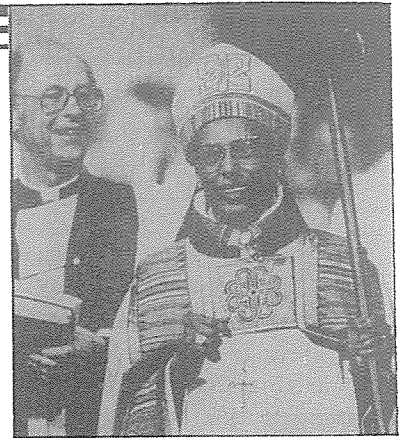
ARCHBISHOP BASILIOS





Woman Ordination

By
H. H. Pope Shenouda II



{ A lecture given by H.H. in a seminar held in London on November 26, 1990
about the view of the Coptic Church on the ordination of women }

My first point is about **our respect for the Holy Bible:**

Of course, everyone may say we respect the Holy Bible, but practically, this is not exactly what happens. Many persons depend upon their minds, intelligence, and understanding more than on the verses of the Bible. We are ready to have the Bible as the basis of our dogma and Theology and to examine what the Bible says.

The Book of Proverbs says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding"* (Prov. 3:5). Since people differ in their understanding, therefore, we may have various dogmas, and many different concepts of Theology, when people depend on their own understanding, and not on the Bible. We have a warning, *"There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is death"* (Prov. 13:12 and repeated in 16:25).

A person may think that his reasoning is correct, and his understanding of Theology is appropriate to him, but this may be at one point contradicting the Biblical teaching. So, we should respect the authority of the Bible more than our minds. For example, the Lord said to Joshua, *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it"* (Josh.1). It is also mentioned many times that Moses did according to what the Lord has commanded him". In the sermon on the mount, and in the Book of Revelation, our Lord Jesus Christ ordered us not to add, not to omit, and gave a punishment for that. St. Paul, also says: *"But even if we - the apostles - or an angel form heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:8 in other translations "let him be anathematized").

We have to respect the Bible and its teachings. I say that because I have heard some scholars, saying that all the first 11 chapters of the Book of Genesis are Mythology; the story of Jonah the prophet is Mythology; and some of the prophecies of Ezekiel are mythologies. They began to subject the Bible to their minds, instead of letting their minds be subjected to the Bible. They respect only what they can accept and reject what they do not accept.

Some people also say, "Oh, this is written in the Old Testament, we accept only what is written in the New Testament !" How can we refuse the words of God in the Old Testament ? Once, I was discussing something with a Bishop from other church, and I quoted a verse from St. Paul. To my surprise, he responded, "Oh, this was said by St. Paul, not by our Lord Jesus Christ !" Then I asked him, "Are the words of St. Paul inspired or not ?" He thought a while and said, "Yes they are inspired." Then I said, "These are the words of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul tells Timothy: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of god and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Tim. 3:16). St. Peter also said something similar to that: *"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Pet. 1:21).

Dogma and Theology need a spirit of humility. The humble person does not put himself in a level higher than the Holy Scripture deciding for himself whether to reject, to omit or not. This is

not humility. Some people, when they see that the Holy Scripture is against homosexuality, would attack the Scriptures in order to defend homosexuals ! If the Holy Scripture does not allow the ordination of women, they are ready to attack verses in the Bible, or twist them, just to please women! We want to know the Biblical teaching... so, let us move to our topic.

As an introduction, I want to say that women are our mothers, sisters, and spiritual daughters. We respect them, love them, pray for them and give them responsibilities in the church. In our Coptic Orthodox Church, we have tens of thousands of girls as Sunday school teachers. In Cairo, Egypt, we have around 10 to 15 thousand girls as Sunday School teachers. For instance, in our Seminary we have four ladies teaching the Old Testament, Hebrew and church history. In every church we have women in charge of many responsibilities, in the church board, and in the different counsels. They are also in charge of the discipline in the church for women.

From the beginning, there were some responsibilities given to women, such as Mariam, Moses' sister, Kelda, and Anna the prophetesses. They may be Queens as Esther who was a wise savior for her whole nation. We know that Mary Magdalene was delegated from our Lord to pronounce the happy news of the resurrection to the twelve apostles.

Many women gave their houses to be churches in the apostolic age, among them was St. Mary the mother of John Mark the Evangelist; her house became church (Acts 12:12). Also the house of Aquila and Priscilla as it is mentioned in Romans 16, and Lydia. Many women served the Lord, as Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, and Susanna and many others who provided for Him from their substance" (Luke 8). Besides, at the cross, women were the majority there. Women can be full of love, emotion, and if they devote their love and emotion to Christ, they can be very helpful.

But in spite of all that, we cannot find in the whole Bible any single example of a woman being a priest. God called women for another responsibilities, that agree with their nature. It is quite obvious in the Bible that women were called for many responsibilities, but not for priesthood.

The first kind of priesthood, was the priesthood of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Noah and Job, they were all men.

The second kind of priesthood, of Melchizedek, mentioned in Genesis 14, psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7, was also of a man.

Likewise, the Levitical priesthood of Aaron and his descendants, was only for men. There is no single woman priestess was mentioned in all the old Testament. If God wanted the woman to be a priest, that would be fine, who can prevent God, but He did not want that, or else He should have told us.

The first-born children who were sanctified to God before the chosen priesthood of Moses, Aaron and his sons, all of them were men only.

At the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, the twelve apostles were chosen to be the first priests, or the first Ecumenical Bishops, all of them were men, and the first Bishops ordained by them were also all men.

Throughout all history we can't find a single example, neither in the Bible nor in the history of the church nor in the tradition.

We have to trace, follow and proclaim the teaching of the Bible. The Christian life was handed down from generation to generation. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11, when St. Paul spoke about the Eucharist, he said, "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you.*" The Lord Jesus delivered the Theological doctrines right to the apostles, and they delivered them to their disciples, the first Bishops who in turn delivered them to the following generation until these doctrines reached us. For that reason St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy, who was the Bishop of Ephesus, "*And all things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*". (2 Tim.2:2).

The church is a collection of the members of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every member is doing a certain work. We can not say that all members must be the same. Every member in the body of our Lord has its dignity, its value, its role, and its significance, but we can not say that all the members must be heads, or all eyes, or arms or hearts. If the woman is not called to be the

head, perhaps she's called to be the heart and there is no difference. Every member has his own role in the church - this is what was said by the apostles.

Also, while St. Paul was speaking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, he said, *"But now indeed there are many members, yet one body." And God has appointed these in the Church; first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then miracles and then gifts of healing, help administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all apostles? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have the gifts of healing?* But God gave every member his own role. Men and women can not be rivals over a certain responsibility.

We accept the word of God, but we can not accept a new teaching that violates the word of God. The New Testament says that the man is the head of the woman (Eph. 5, 1 Cor. 11). Men and women are cooperating together, but still man is the head of the woman. If the woman is headed by the man at home, can she be the head of the whole congregation at church? Among the members of the congregation is her husband who is her head. Can she be his head in church, and be her head at home? I don't know how to find a solution for this problem?

Also the priest represents our Lord Jesus Christ. If women were called to priesthood, the first woman in the world would have been the Holy Virgin Mary. No other woman in the whole world is more worthy, if it's a matter of worthiness, than the virgin Mary. But St. Mary, the virgin, didn't claim to be a priest. She was the spiritual mother of all the apostles, but she was not a priest. Not only priesthood, but also the work of a deacon in serving the altar. When the apostles consecrated the first seven deacons, they said, *"therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business* (Acts 6:3).

In the history of the church we may find some deaconesses, but not for the service of the altar, nor for helping the priests in matters concerning the Holy Sacraments.

In 1 Timothy 2:11, St. Paul does not permit the woman to teach men in the church. We let the woman teach children or other women or girls in Sunday Schools, but they don't teach men. In first Timothy, St. Paul says, *"Let the woman learn in silence, with all submission and I don't permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be in silence"*. That means the work of prayer in the Liturgy is the work of the priest. She may attend silently, but is not to teach men or to have authority over men.

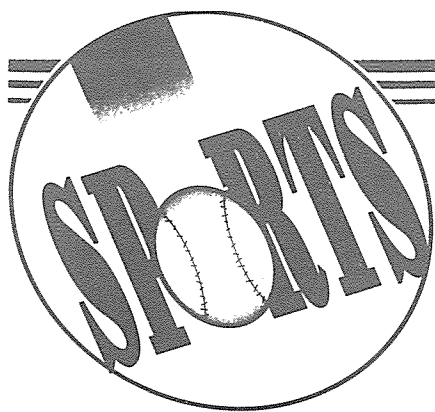
The Bible is not against women but it is a matter of classifying or allocating the gifts of God. There are many things in the work of the priest which may be not suitable for a woman. For example, baptizing men, how can a woman baptize a man? If she is a Bishop and ordains priests, that means these priests will be subordinate to her, under her authority and her jurisdiction. This is contradictory to the teaching of the Bible. The Holy Anointment, how can she anoint men? If she is a priest and pregnant in the 9th month or the 8th month or she's given birth and has to take long periods of rest at home... it is not easy. There are many other points and details concerning women which may deter them from working permanently in the church.

When the Lord instituted the sacrament of Priesthood, he gave this authority to the eleven apostles only (John 20:22, 23), and in the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, He did the same thing (Matt. 28:16 & 26:26,27).

I think that for the woman, it is better to remain a woman, to perform services that fit her, not to try to take male roles. A bird may sing a sweet song on the tree, and the lion may roar in the forest. It would be ridiculous if the bird tried to roar, and the lion to sing!

One of our problems, is that women have no time to have care for their children. I can mention a historical woman, Jochebed, Moses' mother, who could teach her son great lessons during his early childhood. Moses lived in Pharaoh's palace and spent 40 years among so many Pharaonic worships, but he could not forget the faith which his mother implanted in him.

If women take care of their children, they can prepare for us the priests and bishops of the church, without being, themselves, priests or bishops.



The COED Volleyball League

Coptic Youth Unification

By: Hani Bishara of St. George Church



Once again, through the grace and blessing of our precious Lord Jesus Christ, the COED Volleyball League was an even bigger success the third time around. The event which was held on Sunday, December 20th at St. George Coptic Church in Bellflower, easily attracted over 200 people!

The organizers of the league are extremely happy to announce that two more churches have actively joined the Tournament, making it a total of six churches who are now participating in this wonderful youth unifying sports event! The two additional churches are St. Athanasius from the San Fernando Valley and St. Mina of Riverside.

After all the youth from the various churches had arrived and had sometime of fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ, Abouna Bishoy Mikhail led everyone inside St. George Church where we all prayed together. It was an absolutely heart warming sight to see the entire church completely full of only Coptic youth!

We then began the matches. The youth from St. George entertained the youth from St. Athanasius

while the St. Mark youth played the St. John youth. In the third match, the youth from St. Mary hosted St. Mina. Everyone seemed to genuinely enjoy themselves and thanks again to our Lord Who allowed the entire day to go smoothly and as planned. During all this time, the St. George Cafeteria was serving up piping hot and delicious tamia sandwiches for a \$1.00 donation to the church.

We sincerely hope to see everyone who was unable to attend this time at the next match on January 3rd and 17th and so on. We are really hoping from deep within our hearts (with of course the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ), that this COED Volleyball League will be the small seed that will flourish into the unification of ALL the Coptic Orthodox Youth as ONE BODY IN CHRIST!

