

SAINT JOHN

A COPTIC CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.23 | No. 257 | January 2012



Christmas
is the day
that holds all time
Together
2012

*Ghada
Mannier*

Verse of the month:

"When the fullness of the time has come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman to redeem those who were under the law"
(Gal. 4:4)

SAINT JOHN

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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.

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January, 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 8-10 AM 7:30-8:30 PM	Liturgy 8-10 AM Vespers & Bible Study 7:30-8:30 PM
Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:15 AM				+ Family Meeting 7:30-9:00 PM	Prayer Meeting every first Friday of the Month	+ Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 6:00 PM
Servants' Meeting 12:00-1:00 PM					Arabic Youth Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 PM Followed by refreshments	+ Elementary Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 PM
						College Youth Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 PM
						High School & J. High Meetings 7:00 - 9:00 PM

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NEWS of JANUARY 2012

1. Christmas Liturgy:

The church celebrates the Feast of the Nativity- Christmas' Divine Liturgy on Friday, January 6, 2012, from 7:30 p.m., until midnight followed with the Agape supper.



2. Feast of Epiphany:

The Feast of Epiphany, baptism of Christ, also known as "*Theophany*", will be celebrated on Friday, January 20, 2012.

The service starts Thursday 19 evening from 7:00 p.m., with the vespers – *Laqqan* – then the Liturgy, followed with the agape meal.



3. Feast of St. John the Evangelist:

St. John Church celebrates the Feast of her great intercessor, St. John the Beloved, on Friday, January 13, with the Liturgy at 8:00 a.m. There will be three-day- sermons on the life of St. John and his works on Thursday 12, Friday 13 and Saturday, January 14, 2012 evenings.

4. Feast of Circumcision:

On Sunday, January 15, the church celebrates the Feast of circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the Lord's Minor Feasts. (Read the origin of circumcision in Genesis 17, and its meaning to Christians in baptism as explained by St. Paul in Colossians 2:11).

5. Feast of Cana of Galilee' Wedding:

On Sunday, January 22, the church celebrates the Liturgy of this Lord's Minor Feast in her regular Liturgy, but in festal tunes. In this occasion the Lord Jesus showed His Divinity by transferring the water into wine upon St. Mary's request and intercession.

6. Feast of St. Anthony:

The Church celebrates the Feast of St. Anthony, on Tuesday, January 31. A trip to St. Anthony Monastery in California desert will be arranged and announced two weeks before that.

7. H.H. Pope Shenouda III:

+ On December 15, His Holiness returned to Egypt from Cleveland after medical treatment.



8. H.G. Bishop Serapion:



+ On Thursday, January 3, His Grace Bishop Serapion celebrates the Liturgy at St. John Church and presides the Clergy monthly meeting.

9. Fast of Nineveh (Jonah):

The Fast of Nineveh starts from Monday, February 5, until Wednesday 7, 2012. The daily Liturgies will be from 12 noon to 3:00 p.m. The Liturgy of Jonah's Feast, Thursday 8 from 8:00 a.m. This Fast usually comes two weeks before the Holy Lent.

10. St. John's Senior Fellowship Annual Cruise:



The seniors announce early about their cruise-ship to Hawaii for 15 days, from November 7 to 21, 2012.

For reservation call: Mr. Maher Saleh Tel: (626 222-6558 or Ms. Hoda Ghazar Tel: (626) 905-4705 or Sam Travel at (805) 522-4772.

11. The Engaged Couples' Retreat:

Fr. Gawargios lectured the engaged couples' at St. John Church from December 3 to 5, 2011.

12. St. John's Youth Winter Retreats:

Fr. Shenouda Ghattas and Fr. Daniel Habib attended the College and High School winter retreats on December 2011

13. St. John Clinic:

St. John Medical Clinic continues serving freely the new comers who do not have medical insurance, every first and third Sunday after the church service.

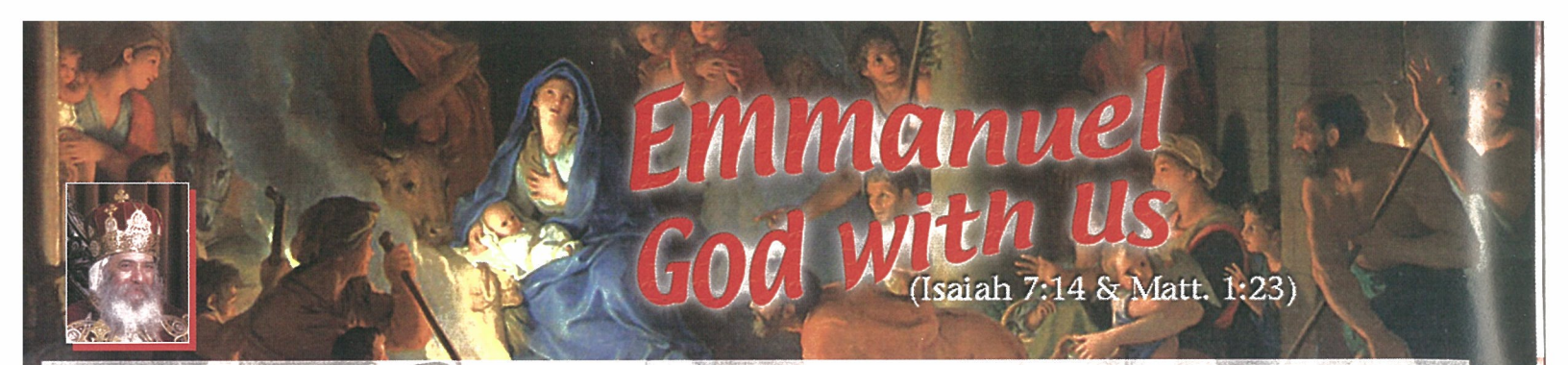
14. New Comers:

Due to the growing Islamic persecution against the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt, a big number of new comers who fled for their lives came to the church area and need a lot of financial help, guidance, work, used cars and furniture.

15. St. John's Computer Lab:

The computer lab is teaching computer training work and principles every Sunday.





Emmanuel God with us

(Isaiah 7:14 & Matt. 1:23)



By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

Blessed and sweet is the name which our Lord Jesus Christ was called in His birth, Emmanuel; God with us. A name, that gives comfort, joy, peace and God's love to us. The blessing of the Nativity is this: to feel that Christ is God with us, God is among us, dwelling with us and His *"delight is with the sons of men"* (Proverbs 8:31). He likes to give us the pleasure of being with Him.

Since God created man, He wanted his heart to be a place for His residence. Thousands of years passed away and our good Lord is trying to find a place in our hearts. But "As it is written: *"There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; there is none who does good, no not one"* (Rom. 3:10-12). God found no place in the hearts of men to lean His head...what about you? Does God look at your heart and say, *"This is My resting place forever? Here I will dwell for I have desired it"* (Psalm 132:14).

The Tabernacle of God with Men:

The dwelling of God with people is an old story. It is the story of the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting. It is also the description of heavenly Jerusalem in eternity, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God"* (Rev. 21:3). God explained that meaning in a stronger way depicting His love: He said that He is the head and we are the member of His body. St Paul described us as a Church that *"we are Christ's body."* This also what the Lord meant by saying, *"I Am the true vine and you are the branches"* (Jn.15:1-5). He asked us *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me"* (Jn. 15).

This is part of His long prayer, *"I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one"* (Jn.17:23). God who dwelt in virgin Mary's womb to have a body out of her, wants to dwell in your heart to fill it with love. The best place of God's dwelling is your heart. He prefers your heart more than heaven to dwell in and stands at the door of your heart and knocks to open to Him (Rev. 3:20). The Lord considers your body a temple of His Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God dwells in you (1 Cor. 3:16). Your heart is God's true heaven, therefore, He always says, *"My son give Me your heart and let your eyes observe My ways"* (Prov. 23:26).

The verse, *"God with Us"*, doesn't mean that Emmanuel is with us here only, or in the time of His incarnation, but that

He is with us always and forever. He said, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt.28:20).

The Lord will continue to be with us in eternity. He said to the Father, *"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, for you loved Me before the foundation of the world"* (Jn. 17:24). The Lord Jesus assured us, "I go to prepare a place for you and come again to receive you unto Myself, that were I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:3). The blessing of Christmas is focused in this word, "Emanuel", "God with us." If you, my brother, feel that you are with God and God is with you, so you have enjoyed really the blessing of the nativity. Do not think that Christmas is just a feast to break your fast. All the celebrations of Christmas are designed to make you feel the fellowship with Emmanuel, God with us.

God wants to make friendship with you. The Bible says: *"And Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him"* (Gen. 5:24). St. Paul explains the second coming of Christ on the clouds and our rapture to Him and ends with saying, *"And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:17). All the saints used to feel that they are always in the presence of God. Elijah, used to say, *"As the Lord of Hosts lives, before who I stand"* (1 Kings 18).

The person who feels God's presence will not sin and will be ashamed if he sinned. Do you think, my brother, that only atheists who deny the existence of God? I assure you that every sin you commit proves that you have forgotten the existence of God or denied His presence actually. When we think always of the presence of God that will give us immunity, purity, holiness and protection.

Also, our feeling the existence of Emmanuel gives us courage and will deliver us from fear. The sin of fear is a sin of unbelief in Emmanuel and in His care.

The Lord Jesus appeared to the apostle Paul in a vision and said to him, *"Do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you"* (Acts 18:9). St. Paul believed the statement and lived with it all his life. He was filled of the power of faith and stood before kings like Agrippa, governors like Festus and princes like Lisias and none of them could harm him. But on the contrary, they were the ones who feared him. This is Emmanuel who was with the three children of Israel in the fiery furnace and the fire had no power over them (Dan. 3:27).





Coptic News Update

Death toll mounts as Cairo clashes enter fourth day

Reuters - By Pauline Godart and Yuka Royer
December 19, 2011

Egyptian security forces fought opponents of army rule in Cairo for a fourth day on Monday and the United States, worried by the violence, urged the generals to respect human rights.

Medical sources said the death toll had risen to 13 since Friday, when clashes erupted. Hundreds have been wounded.

Police and soldiers using batons and teargas drove stone-throwing protesters out of Cairo's Tahrir Square, hub of the uprising that ousted Hosni Mubarak in February, overnight.

Hundreds had returned to the square by morning after security forces retreated behind barricades in streets leading to parliament, the cabinet office and the Interior Ministry.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the "excessive" force used against the demonstrations that have widened a rift among Egyptians over the role of the army and cast a shadow over the country's first free election in decades. The violence broke out just after the second stage of a six-week election for Egypt's new parliament that starts the slow countdown to the army's return to barracks. The military has pledged to hand power to an elected president by July.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she was "deeply concerned" about the violence and urged the security forces "to respect and protect the universal rights of all Egyptians".

In a statement to a nation which has received billions of dollars in U.S. military and other aid, she also called on protesters "to refrain from acts of violence".

An army source said 164 people had been detained. A security source said a 26-year-old man had died in custody, although the cause of death was not immediately clear.

State news agency MENA said the public prosecutor had detained 123 people accused of resisting the authorities, throwing rocks at the army and police, and setting fire to government buildings. The prosecutor had released 53 others.

Beating protesters

Many Egyptians want to focus on building democratic institutions, not street activism, but have nevertheless been shocked by the tactics of security forces in and around Tahrir. Soldiers in riot gear have been filmed beating protesters with batons even after they have fallen to the ground. A Reuter's picture showed two policemen dragging a

woman lying on the street by the shirt, exposing her underwear.

Protesters said they had seized four soldiers who had been part of the attacking force in the early hours of Monday.

"We quickly got the four into vehicles and drove them away from the square, otherwise they would have been beaten to a pulp by angry protesters who experienced the army's vicious attacks," said Sayyid Abu Ella, speaking by telephone from Tahrir.

Late on Sunday, protesters had hurled petrol bombs at lines of security forces and chanted "Down with Tantawi" a reference to Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi who heads the army council and was Mubarak's defence minister for two decades.

Ban Ki-moon "is highly alarmed by the excessive use of force employed by the security forces against protesters, and calls for the transitional authorities to act with restraint and uphold human rights, including the right to peaceful protest", the U.N. Secretary-General's office said in a statement.

The violence has overshadowed the election that is set to give Islamists the biggest bloc in parliament.

The West, long friendly with Mubarak and other regional strongmen who kept a lid on Islamists, has watched warily as Islamist parties have swept elections in Morocco, Tunisia and now Egypt following this year's Arab uprisings.

Tough tactics

Hard-core activists have camped in Tahrir since a protest against army rule on Nov. 18 that was sparked by the army-backed cabinet's proposals to permanently shield the military from civilian oversight in the new constitution. Tough security tactics against hot-headed youths also sparked a flare-up last month that killed 42 people.

A small group of activists approached protesters hurling stones on Sunday and called on them to stop, but they refused, citing the deaths of 10 people as a reason not to "negotiate".

Other activists handed over to the army people they said were making petrol bombs.

The violence has deepened the frustration of many ordinary Egyptians, who want an end to months of unrest that has left the economy in tatters.

"There are people who wait for any problem and seek to amplify it ... The clashes won't stop. There are street children who found shelter in Tahrir," said Ali el-Nubi, a postal worker, adding the army should have managed the transition better.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon both condemned the "excessive" use of force by Egyptian security forces in dealing with protesters, as bloody clashes in Cairo entered their fourth day on Monday.





"They entered into an oath to walk in God's Law, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our God" (Nehemiah 10:29).

In 1722, a famous servant of Christ, called Jonathan Edwards drew up a **list of 70 resolutions** dedicating himself to live in harmony with God and others.

The following resolutions give a picture of the serious purpose with which he approached his relationship with God. He resolved:

- To do whatever is most to God's glory.
- To do my duty, for the good of mankind in general.
- Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.
- To study the Scriptures steadily, constantly, and frequently.
- To ask myself at the end of every day, week, month, and year if I could possibly have done better?
- Until I die, not to act as if I were my own, but entirely and altogether God's.

In Nehemiah 10, God's people made an oath, vowing to follow all the commands, laws, and regulations of the Lord. This oath was so serious that they were willing to accept the curse of God if they failed to keep these commands.

Our resolutions need not be so serious as that (oath). But any resolution to follow God is not a casual promise. Rather, it is a solemn and serious declaration that –with the help of

the Holy Spirit—we can renew every day. For Example, say:

My Resolutions This New Year Are:

1. To repent and restore the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:12, 13, 17; 25).
2. To start reading and studying my Bible daily.
3. To increase my prayers in number, time and depth.
4. To quit immediately every bad habit like drugs, drinking, cigarettes, shisha, judging and backbiting others.
5. To start serving Christ, the church, the needy and everybody.
6. To be honest in my tithes and help Christian TV preaching channels to spread the gospel all over the world.
7.etc.

"I cling to Your testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame! I will run the course of Your commandments" (Psalm 119:31, 32).

Many people make resolutions on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day, promising themselves (and some-times God) that the next year of life will be different. We determine that habits are going to be changed and new patterns of behavior developed.

Resolutions like these are highly commendable and often serve as a stimulus to spiritual growth; but not always. Sometimes our resolutions are carried out only for a little while and all too soon are forgotten!

One of my friends told me that he wrote in his journals, the following statement:

"I have corrected no external habits, nor kept any of the resolutions made in the beginning of the last year, yet I hope still to be reformed, and not to lose my whole life in idle purposes."

It is good to engage now and then in self-examination

We should face up to the changes that need to be made, and then make plans for the way we're going to implement them. For example, if we realize that our devotional habits are weak and inconsistent, let's resolve to spend some time daily in focused fellowship with God. Let's ask the Lord to help us in this consistent practice through all our tomorrows.

Today is a good day to start. Remember that if you will keep postponing the most important resolutions until tomorrow; tomorrow never comes!

God speaks to those who take time to listen, and He listens to those who take time to pray. King David, despite of his extremely daily busy schedule, said,

"I will run the course of Your commandments, O Lord. I cling to Your testimonies."



The Great Mystery of the Nativity

By Saint John Chrysostom

I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn! The cherubim resound their joyful praise! The seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy.

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in the place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice!

Ask now how this was accomplished, for where God wills the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He has the power. He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today, He Who is born. And He Who Is becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man – while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His.

And so the kings have come and they have seen the heavenly King that is come upon the earth, not bring with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominations, nor powers, nor principalities, but treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb. Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold the kings have come that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; women, so that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of child birth to joy;

Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin, **infants** that they might adore Him Who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; **children**, to the Child Who raised up martyrs through the rage Incarnation of the Logos.



By St. Gregory the Wonder Worker

“And there was no room for them in the inn.”

He found no room who founded the whole earth by His word. She nourished with her milk Him who imparts sustenance and life to everything that has breath.

She wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes Who binds the whole creation fast with His word. She laid Him in a manger who rides seated upon the cherubim. A light from heaven shone round about Him who lightens the whole creation. The hosts of heaven attended Him with their doxologies Who is glorified in heaven from before all ages.

A star with its torch guided them who had come from the distant parts of earth toward Him who is the true Orient. From the East came those who brought gifts to Him who for our sakes became poor.

And the holy *Theotokos* kept these words, and pondered them in her heart, like one who was the vessel of all the mysteries. Your praise, O most holy Virgin, surpasses all because God took flesh and was born from you. To you every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, offers you honor. Indeed, you are described as the true cherubic throne. You shine as the very brightness of light in the high places of the kingdoms of intelligence.

In you the Father, Who is without beginning, and whose power overshadowed you, is glorified.

In you the Son is worshipped, whom you bore according to the flesh. And in you, the Holy Spirit is praised, who effected in your womb the generation of the mighty King.

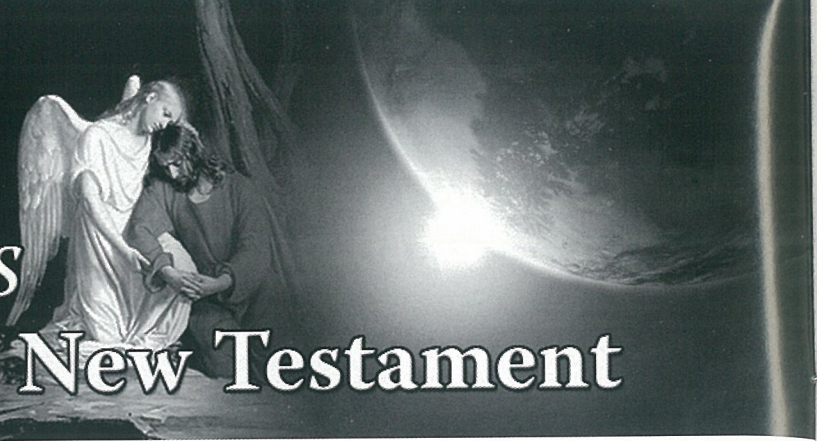
Through you, O you who are highly favored one and full of grace, the holy and consubstantial Trinity is known throughout the world.

Make us worthy, with yourself, to partake of your perfect grace in Jesus Christ our Lord: with whom, and with the Holy Spirit, be glory to the Father, now and ever, and unto the ages of the ages. Amen





The Angels in the New Testament



By Fr. Gawargious Kolta

The Angels were created on the first day of the creation, as it is written: ***"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"*** (Gen. 1:1). It means that God created the heavens and all who are in the heavens. It is also written: ***"Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire"*** (Ps. 104:4). They are holy spiritual creatures, living in righteousness and purity. They have no materialistic bodies, or gender, and thus they neither marry nor are given in marriage (Mk. 12:25). Angels are very powerful (2 King. 19:35), and obedient to the Lord, as it is written: ***"Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word"*** (Ps. 103:20). They are the armies of the Lord who can fly very fast from one place to another according to God's will (Rev. 14:6, 18:1). They see the face of God in heaven (Mat. 18:10). They serve and protect God's people, as the Psalmist says: ***"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them"*** (Ps. 34:7). God sends them to keep and protect us: ***"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone"*** (Ps. 91:11, 12).

Angels in the Old Testament:

The angels were fearful to the people of the Old Testament as they remember some fearful incidents; in which angels were involved, such as:

1- When God drove out Adam from the Garden of Eden after his fall, He placed Cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

2- The Lord sent two angels to Lot to rescue him from Sodom, and they struck the men who were at the doorway of his house with blindness. Then the Lord destroyed the city with brimstone and fire (Gen. 19:11).

3- Before the children of Israel left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, the Lord sent the destroyer angel who killed all Egypt's firstborn children (Exod. 12:23).

4- When the children of Israel moved and camped near Moab, Balak, Moab's king, was afraid and he asked the prophet Balaam to curse them. Balaam saddled his donkey to meet Balak. An angel stood in the way and gave instructions to Balaam, after his donkey spoke to him (Num. 22:21-35).

5- When King David had numbered his people, the Lord sent an angel who stretched his hand with a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men died. After the appropriate time the Lord told the angel to restrain his hand (2 Sam. 24:15, 16).

6- In the time of Hezekiah, king of Judea, the angel of the Lord went out and killed in the camp of Assyrians 185 thousand of the army of Sennacherib and saved Jerusalem and the Jews from his boast (2 King. 19:35).

On the other hand, there were many incidents when the angels of God showed protection to His people, and revealed the will of God to them. The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush, and he revealed to him the deliverance of His people from the Egyptians (Exod. 3:2-6). The angel of the Lord revealed the will of God to His people at the end of Joshua's life (Jud. 2:1-5). The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and asked him to go and deliver the children of Israel from the hand of the Midianites (Jud. 6:11). The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah and his wife and proclaimed the birth of Samson (Jud. 13:2-23). The Lord sent His angel to the fiery furnace and saved the three young men (Dan. 3:16-30). The Lord sent an angel to the prophet Daniel in the lion's den and shut the lions' mouths, so that they did not hurt him (Dan. 6:22). In the story of Tobit, the angel Raphael took care of Tobit in his entire journey and returned him back safely to his father. The angel interceded for the rebuild of Jerusalem and the thus Lord had mercy on the city (Zach. 1:11-17). The angels helped the prophets of the Old Testament and interpreted the visions (Dan. 7:15, 8:16, 26, 10:11-18, Zach. 1:9, 10).

Angels in the New Testament:

The activity of the angels in the New Testament is more remarkable. The majority of their activity is in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Some brief references to the angels are included in the epistles. The Apocalypse of St. John mentions some references to the angels which are comparable to parts of the books of Daniel, Isaiah and Zechariah.

1- The Nativity Period:

+ The angels were joyful in that period for the reconciliation of the world to God was about to begin because there would be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Lk. 15:7). This joy was proclaimed to the shepherds (Lk. 2:8-15).



+ Archangel Gabriel announced the birth of John the Baptist to his father Zacharias, while he was praying in the temple, and proclaimed that John the Baptist will be great in the sight of the Lord (1:11-20).

+ The archangel Gabriel announced the birth of the Lord Jesus to St. Mary telling her to rejoice for she will bring forth a Son and He shall be called Jesus, the Son of the highest and that of His kingdom there will be no end. When St. Mary was astonished because she did not know a man, the angel told her: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"* (Lk. 1:35).

+ An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, who was betrothed to St. Mary, in a dream and asked him not to be afraid to take to him Mary, for that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 1:19-24). Also when Herod wanted to kill the child, an angel appeared in a dream to Joseph and asked him to flee to Egypt; and again appeared to him after the death of Herod and asked him to go back to Israel (Mat. 2:9-20).

+ The angel of the Lord stood before the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock near Bethlehem and told them that he brought to them good tidings about the birth of Christ (Lk. 2:9-12). Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host, praising God and saying: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men"* (Lk. 2:14). The Joy of the heavenly hosts for the birth of Christ is manifested in that song that is chanted in the whole world in all generations, showing: 1- The glory of God (Isa. 6::3). 2- The peace of the King of peace brought to the earth which was filled of disobedience, division, and many disputes. 3- The good will offered to mankind by the Lord who would remove the sorrow and anxiety of men.

2- Angels in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ:

+ The Lord proclaimed to Nathanael, saying: *"Most assuredly I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending upon the Son of Man"* (Jn. 1:51).

+ The angels came and ministered to the Lord after the temptation by the Devil in the wilderness (Mat. 4:11).

+ Before His crucifixion, when the Lord was praying in Gethsemane, an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him, while His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Lk. 22:43).

+ After His resurrection, an angel descended from heaven, came and rolled back the stone from the door of the tomb and sat on it, and proclaimed to the women the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Mat. 28:2-7).

+ When the Lord ascended into heaven, two angels stood by His disciples and told them that Jesus will so come in like manner as they saw Him go into heaven (Act. 1:9-11).

3- The angels will come with the Lord in His second coming:

+ This was declared to us in (Mk. 8:26).

+ The Lord said: *"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds"* (Mat. 24:31).

+ The angels are called 'Reapers of the Harvest' as the Lord said: *"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire"* (Mat. 13:39-42).

+ St. Paul mentioned the appearance of the angels in the Second Coming of the Lord, saying: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first"* (1 Thess. 4:16). He mentioned the same thing in (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

+ In the Book of Revelation, angels were mentioned many times. For example, St. John saw an angel standing on the sea and on the land (Rev. 10:8-11). He saw the seven angels performing the will of God, and opening the seals (Rev. 8-10). He saw an angel who had a golden censor, and he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints (Rev. 8:2-4). He saw the angel who asked God to reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe (Rev. 14:15-20).

3- The angels serve the believers:

The angels serve the believers, who are striving in the world. They are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). They carry our prayers to the Lord (Rev. 5:8).

+ The angel of the Lord opened the prison doors to the apostles, when the members of the Synagogue laid their hands on them and put them in prison; and an angel brought them out (Act. 5:17-20).

+ An angel freed St. Peter from prison when King Herod seized him intending to bring him before the people to kill him (Act. 12:3-10).

+ An angel speared to Cornelius and told him: *"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God"* (Act. 10:4). He told him to send for St. Peter, who would tell him what he must do. Cornelius was the first one of the Gentiles who was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended on Him (Act. 10-11).

+ The angels serve the believers in their whole life on earth, and guard them (Act. 12:15). The Synxarium is full of stories of angels appearing to saints to guide them, protect them, or give them instructions. We believe that angels would come in the time of the departure of the believers and carry their souls to Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16:22).

Let us be faithful believers in order that we can be surrounded by His angels, that, by their camp, we will be guarded and guided (The conclusion prayer of every hour, in the Agpeya).



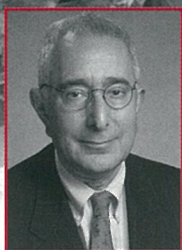
My Confession:

Is it Christmas tree or Holiday tree?!

By Ben Stein

And recited by him on CBS
Sunday Morning Commentary

Edited by Dr. Emil
Goubran



Apparently the White House referred to Christmas Trees as Holiday Trees for the first time last year which prompted CBS presenter, Ben Stein, to present this piece

which I would like to share with you. I think it applies just as much to many countries as it does to America ...

My confession:

I am a Jew, and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. And it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful lit up, bejeweled trees, Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are, Christmas trees.

It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, 'Merry Christmas' to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a creche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away. I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period.

I have no idea where the concept came from, that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution and I don't like it being shoved down my throat.

Or maybe I can put it another way: where did the idea come from that we should worship celebrities and we aren't allowed to worship God? I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where these celebrities came from and where the America we knew went to.

In light of the many jokes we send to one another for a laugh, this is a little different: This is not intended to be a joke; it's not funny, it's intended to get you thinking.

Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed on the Early Show and Jane Clayson asked her 'How could God let something like this happen?' (regarding Hurricane Katrina).. Anne Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response.

She said, 'I believe God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?'

In light of recent events... terrorists attack, school shootings, etc. I think it started when Madeleine Murray O'Hare (she was murdered, her body found a few years ago) complained she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said OK. Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school. The Bible says thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbor as yourself. And we said OK.

Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave, because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem (Dr. Spock's son committed suicide). We said an expert should know what he's talking about. And we said okay.

Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates, and themselves.

Probably, if we think about it long and hard enough, we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with 'WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.'

Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how you can send 'jokes' through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny how lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene articles pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion of God is suppressed in the school and workplace.

Are you laughing yet?

Funny how when you forward this message, you will not send it to many on your address list because you're not sure what they believe, or what they will think of you for sending it.

Funny how we can be more worried about what other people think of us than what God thinks of us. Pass it on if you think it has merit.

If not, then just discard it.... no one will know you did. But, if you discard this thought process, don't sit back and complain about what bad shape the world is in.

My Best Regards, Honestly and respectfully,

Ben Stein





ASAP

By Fr. Augustinos Hanna

“O Lord our God, I pray, Save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God. You alone” (2 Kings 19:19).

For most English-speaking people, the acronym ASP means “As soon as possible” or immediately. But for the Christian it can also mean, “Always say a prayer.”

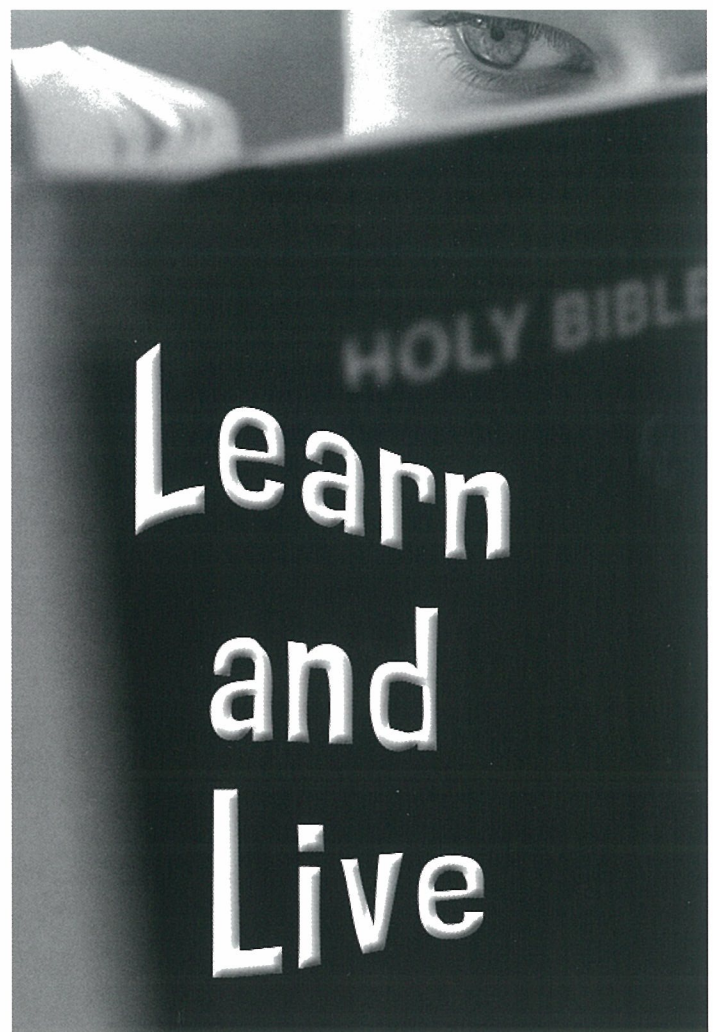
King Hezekiah was one of the Judah’s best kings. He restored the worship of God to his nation after his father Ahaz’s evil reign (2 Kings 18:3, 4). Yet when the Assyrian king attacked Judah, Hezekiah capitulated to the king and stripped off the gold from the temple in Jerusalem to placate him (vv.13-16).

That did not satisfy the Assyrian king, however, who returned to issue another threat. It was then that Hezekiah turned to the Lord. He prayed, “You are God. You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth....Save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God. You alone.” (2 Kings 19:15-19).

When Hezekiah prayed, God answered him in a remarkable way and delivered him from his enemies (vv.35,27).

You may be facing a problem that leaves you feeling helpless. It may be the loss of a job, a difficult family or work situation, or health struggles. We have a powerful God to whom we can bring our concerns. **So before you do anything else, remember to ASAP – Always say a prayer. Prayer should be our first response rather than our last resort.**

I think this the typical situation that our Coptic Christian minority faces among the Muslim majority wolves. All what we need to do, is to ASAP, pray to the living true God alone, to save us.



A church had a new pastor who preached the same sermon every Sunday. When people started complaining; he told the congregation, “I’ll preach a new sermon when you act on this one!”

As followers of Christ, we are to live what we learn. St. James says, “Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jam. 1:22). To many times at a funeral I hear “He never did any harm, and I want to scream, “Did he ever do any good?” You haven’t really learned the word, until you live the word.





Romans 8:28 (part 3) **God Works**

**"We know that in all things God works
for good to those who love Him"**

By **Fr. Anthony Coniaris**

Someone once asked a holy man why God appeared and spoke to Moses from a burning bush. The answer he received was, "God spoke from the burning bush to teach us that there is no place where God is not present, not even in a thorn bush..." (Of course there are many other answers better than that).

Let us remember that it was out of the thorn in his flesh that St. Paul discovered the all-sufficient grace of God (2 Cor. 12:7 – 9).

One devout Christian said after a serious illness, "I have learned more of God since I came to this bed of pain than in all my life before." To those who will listen, God continues to speak, as He did to Moses, even – sometimes especially – though the thorn bushes of life.

"God works," i.e., "in all things God works for good to those who love Him." This is a far better translation of Paul's Greek than the more familiar one in the King James translation: *"All things work together for good to those who love God."* All things do not automatically and impersonally work for good to those who love God. For, God is the agent behind all this. He is the One Who sees to it that all things do work for our good. Without Him, it would never happen.

Nothing Can Defeat Him

God is the One Who "works for good." Everything in the universe is under His control. So powerful is He that He can wrest good even from evil. He has not been overpowered. Nothing can possibly happen which defeats Him. Nothing is allowed to happen which finally frustrates His plans. No wicked event escapes His power. He will let things go only so far. In the lives of those who love Him, He will take the very evil that afflicts them and turn it into a blessing, both for the sufferers themselves and for others.

A good example of this was the Apostle himself. He ended his life imprisoned for the sake of Christ. The course of his career as an apostle seemed to go down and down until he was finally killed for his faith. He had committed his life to the Lord Jesus as Lord. He lived by faith in the Son of God Who love him and gave Himself for him. So, no matter how beaten or torn he was by life, Paul never lost sight of the fact that the love of God was at work in his life, preparing the ultimate victory. Listen to him as he speaks in 2 Cor. 4:8-10, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."

The Trapped Bee

It's much like a bee flying into a room through an open window and buzzing around, frantically trying to find escape. It dashed its little body against the windowpanes. You take a towel and try to guide it toward the open window, but the bee considers you an enemy, and dashes itself against the towel. At last you maneuver it to the open window. Suddenly free again, it darts out into the great open spaces.

God sometimes like that man with a towel; and we, like the bee, mistaking the towel for an enemy, keep resisting His gentle push toward freedom and fulfillment.

"For Good"

In all things God works "for good." What is this "good" for which God works? Over the centuries people have sought to discover the highest good. What is the highest good? This has been the chief quest of ethical philosophy. The Epicureans and the Stoics; Plato and Aristotle and many others have sought to answer this question.

Not only philosophers, but each one of us is constantly searching, consciously or unconsciously, for the answer to this question: what is the highest good in life? And when we find it, we don't hesitate to dedicate our life, our all, to whatever we consider to be the highest good.

What is the Highest Good?



If you ask a child, the answer will be toys. If you ask a hungry person, the answer will be food. If you ask a poor person, the answer will be money. If you ask a sick person, the answer is health. If you ask a mother whose son is at war, the answer would be the safe return of her son. What is the highest good?

Is it Health?

There are those who say that the highest good in life is health. We have heard all people say, "If you lose your health, you lose everything. If you have your health, you have everything." Now, there is no doubt that health is a gift-a good and great gift. We have reason to be grateful to God for it. But does this mean that when illness comes we have no reason to be grateful? Hardly! The strength to bear illness courageously and graciously is a great gift, too-and it comes from a heart that trusts in God.

Health is a gift from God to be used to glorify Him, but it is not the ultimate end of life, the highest good. For, even when health fails, we are still supported by the same God Who gave health to us. He never leaves us or forsakes us. He is able to use both health and illness for our ultimate good.

Gibran tells the story of one oyster who spoke to a neighboring oyster, "I have a very great pain within me. It is heavy and round and I am in distress." And the other oyster replied with haughty complacency, "Praise be to the heavens and the sea, I have no pain with me. I am well and whole both within and without." At that moment a crab was passing by and heard the two oysters, and he said to the one who was well and whole within and without, but the pain that your neighbor hears is a pearl of exceeding beauty."

If good health is the greatest good, then illness must be a great evil, but is it? Does not God use illness with great design and purpose in the lives of those who love him? Indeed does He not use it to produce "precious pearls of exceeding beauty?" Thus, how can health be the greatest good?

Is it Happiness?

There are those who feel that happiness is the highest good in life. Yet those whose sole aim in life is to make themselves happy are usually the most selfish, self-centered and miserable people in life much more important than happiness- fidelity, honor, truth, justice, loyalty, love, sacrifice, the Kingdom of God. Happiness may be the highest good for the Epicurean pleasure seeker but certainly not for the Christian. What then is the highest good?

Is it Possessions?

For many people the highest good in life is to be found in an abundance of material possessions. A person said to a friend who was driving a Jaguar, "you're very prosperous these days," His rich friend replied in all seriousness, "Why, God

gave me this Jaguar. He wants His children to have the best." The friend replied, "You know, it's interesting that God gave you a Jaguar, because He gave His only begotten a cross. He gave His first and best disciple decapitation, imprisonment, stoning, shipwreck and a host of other troubles." For the true Christian who loves God, material possessions are gifts to be used by us as stewards for God's greater glory, but they are certainly not the highest good in life. What then is the highest good?

Is it Life?

There are those who live by the adage that life is the highest good and the supreme value in life. Everything that increases life is good, and everything that decreases life and leads to death is evil. But for the Christian the supreme value and highest good is not the life we have in common with the animals-*bio* biological life, but the life we share with God-the *zoe* life, the spiritual life that opens itself up to receive the Holy Spirit; the life that rises up to God. Biological life, animal life, life without God, ends in the grave, in Hades; spiritual life, life animated by the Holy Spirit, rises up to heaven to spend eternity with God. Mere physical life is not the highest good. What then is the highest good?

Is it romantic love? Is it peace? Is it the world?

None of these, the Lord Jesus answered, "*What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world...*" (Matt. 16:26). This world is nothing but a passage way to the real life beyond; and passage ways are very unimportant places. It is of little account what sort of things they contain, or how they are furnished. One just hurries through them to get to the place beyond.

Not for our Pleasure, but for our Good

Our verse says, "We know that in all things God works for good to those who love Him" St. Paul did not mention any of the previous things as that good. He is like a physician who does not give us medicine to make us happy but to effect a cure. Sometimes the medicine or treatment hurts, but you know it is best because of the cure that is effected.

Is Suffering Bad?

A certain wise man said once, "When a man suffers, he ought not to say: 'That's bad! Nothing that God imposes on man is bad. But it is all right to say: 'That's bitter! For among medicines there are some that are made with bitter herbs.'"

In a small village there lived an old woman who always seemed cheerful. Seeing her radiance, a visitor asked her one day, "But surely you must have some clouds in your life?"

"Clouds?" she replied, "Why of course, if there were no clouds, where would the blessed showers come from?" In all things- sweet as well as bitter-God works not for our pleasure but for our best interest, for our ultimate good, if we love Him.





2011: Egypt's Year of Deception

By Fr. Augustinos

On January 25, 2011, a great youth and peaceful revolution happened in Egypt and resulted in over-throwing Mubarak's presidency, which lasted 30 years!

This long period in Egyptian recent history was accurately described as a dictatorship where the country suffered from corruption, poverty, oppression, plots, torture, bribery, forgery of elections, and sectarian hatred and much more important the persecution of the Coptic Christians and violating their Human Rights, while they are the original natives of Egypt before the Islamic conquest and invasion which took place in the 7th century.

After Mubarak, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took over, headed by Field-Marshal Hussein Tantawi. Everyone hoped for the better, but unfortunately, the situation deteriorated from bad to worse.

Since February 2011, when this military council came to power, Egypt has been on the brink of civil war, with massacre after massacre, killing and maiming both Christian and Muslim protesters. The policy of the military government is no better than Mubarak's time, but a complete failure due to the continuous lies, fraud and same deception. While they are going through the motions of trying Mubarak in a civilian court, they themselves need to be tried for the same crimes against humanity!

During the year 2011 alone, around ten Christian churches and monasteries in Egypt were attacked, burned down and destroyed by the army and Muslim mobs. To this day, there has been no accountability, prosecution or justice for any of these criminal attacks.

According to Michael Bosner, Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, one hundred Christians were killed and butchered; and he considered Coptic Egyptians as the largest minority in the world now suffering systematic persecution.

On October 9, 2011, the Egyptian military forces attacked viciously a mainly Christian peaceful and legally permitted demonstration, which were carrying crosses and candles protesting the destruction of their churches. They brutally killed 28 Christians and ran over 9 of them with tanks and leveled them with the streets near Masspero (*an area surrounding the National Television Broadcast building*) and injur-

ing 300 in critical condition, throwing five corpses of the victims in the River Nile!

When the entire world criticized bitterly this heinous massacre, the high ranked military officers appeared in the Egyptian TV, trying to cover up and justify their scandals, with fabrications, claiming once that the military forces were not armed, then they said, the tanks were hi-jacked by Christians who ran over other Christians, and a third big lie that the tanks-drivers had a nervous breakdown when they saw the big crowds! State TV also fabricated flagrant lies that night, blaming the victim, calling all Egyptians to go out and help the army claiming that Christian protesters were attacking the army and killing soldiers. What fake leadership, corrupt politicians, masters of deception!

Now, the military council is handing over the Egyptian Parliament to Islamic extremists, like the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists, supported by financial campaign donations from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. This threatens to further alienate and oppress Christians in Egypt. The military governors betrayed the will of the revolutionary youth, hijacked the revolution, and sold out the Egyptian people. **We may label the year 2011 in Egypt as the "Year of Deception!"**

On 11/11/11, there was an unprecedented prayer meeting in Mukattam Mountain in Egypt, attended by 70,000-80,000 Christians, praying and praising God, asking Him to bless and save Egypt according to His promise in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 19:25. The meeting continued for 12 straight hours as people called on the name of Jesus and cried "LORD have MERCY."

St. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:13, "Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." To deceive is to make others believe falsehood as truth and accept wrong as right.

Our defense against deception is to know God's Word, for "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).

Correction is to set right what is wrong, and instruction is to make known what is right. God's word not only makes us aware of wrongs, it also prompts and teaches us to speak up for what is right.

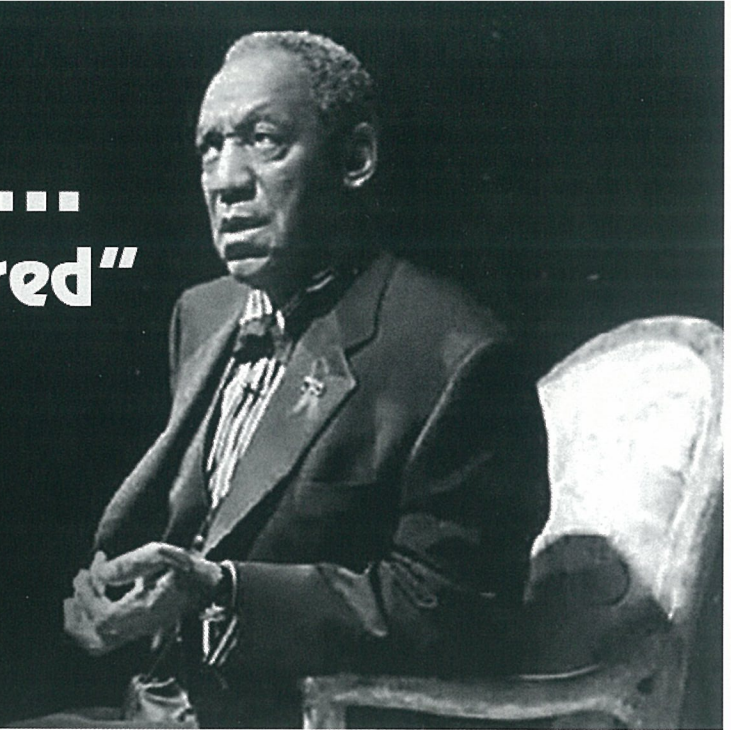
We pray that our New Year's, resolution is to walk rightly before God and others and to be "thoroughly equipped for every good work." Let us pray, read and apply God's word, asking the Lord to make every Egyptian an honest person of integrity. The more we meditate on Scripture, the more readily we'll detect error. May the Lord, God make the New Year a better one and to turn all the Satanic deception into good for His people. Amen.



The Truth is ... "I'm 76 and I'm Tired"

Bill Cosby "I'm 76 and Tired"

This should be required reading for every man, woman and child in Jamaica, the UK, United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and to all the world...



I'm 76

Except for brief period in the 50's when I was doing my National Service, I've worked hard since I was 17

Except for some serious health challenges, I put in 50-hour weeks, and didn't call in sick in nearly 40 years. I made a reasonable salary, but I didn't inherit my job or my income, and I worked to get where I am. Given the economy, it looks as though retirement was a bad idea, and I'm tired. Very tired.

I'm tired of being told that I have to "spread the wealth" to people who don't have my work ethic. I'm tired of being told the government will take the money I earned, by force if necessary, and give it to people too lazy to earn it.

I'm tired of being told that Islam is a "Religion of Peace," when every day I can read dozens of stories of Muslim men killing their sisters, wives and daughters for their family "honor"; of Muslims rioting over some slight offense; of Muslims murdering Christian and Jews because they aren't "believers"; of Muslims burning schools for girls; of Muslims stoning teenage rape victims to death for "adultery"; of Muslims mutilating the genitals of little girls; all in the name of Allah, because the Qur'an and Shari'a law tells them to.

I'm tired of being told that out of "tolerance for other cultures" we must let Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries use our oil money to fund mosques and madrassa Islamic schools to preach hate in Australia, New Zealand, UK, America and Canada, while no one from these countries is allowed to fund a church, synagogue or religious school in Saudi Arabia or any other Arab country to teach love and tolerance.

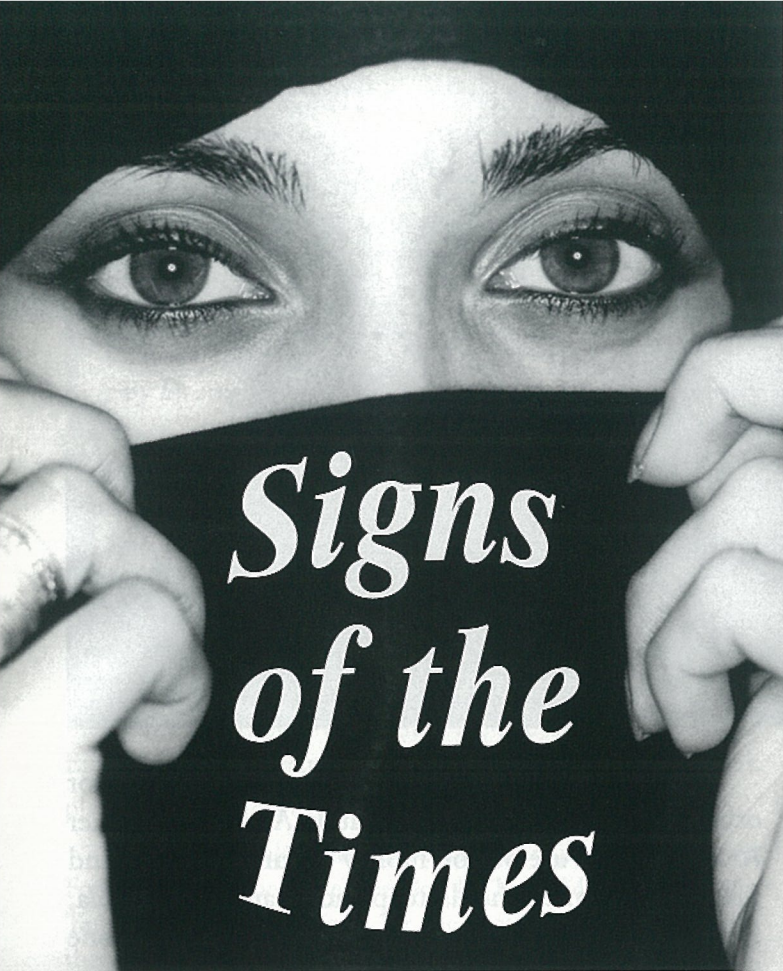
I'm really tired of people who don't take responsibility for their lives and actions. I'm tired of hearing them blame the government, or discrimination or big-whatever for their problems.

I'm also tired and fed up with seeing young men and women in their teens and early 20's be-deck them selves in tattoos and face studs, thereby making themselves unemployable and claiming money from the Government.

Yes, I'm damn tired. But I'm also glad to be 76. Because, mostly, I'm not going to have to see the world these people are making.

I'm just sorry for my granddaughter and her children. Thank God I'm on the way out and not on the way in.





Signs of the Times

Canada

Should veils be banned during oaths of citizenship?

December 12, 2011

By *Community Team*

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney has announced a ban on face coverings, such as **niqabs**, for people swearing their oath of citizenship.

Muslim woman wearing a niqab attends a protest against islamophobia in Bern on Oct. 29. (Michael Buholzer/Reuters) The ban, announced Monday, is effective immediately.

As a result, Muslim women will have to remove their niqabs or any other face-covering garments, such as burkas, before they can recite the oath of citizenship to become Canadians.

Kenney said he's had complaints from MPs and citizenship court judges that it's hard to tell whether people with their faces covered are actually reciting the oath of citizenship, which he says is a requirement to become Canadian.

"We cannot have two classes of citizenship ceremonies. Canadian citizenship is not just about the right to carry a passport and to vote," Kenney said.

America (Catholic Magazine)

December 19, 2011

Is Egypt the Next "Iraq" For Christian Minorities?

The explosion of sectarian tensions that followed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 has led, almost eight years later, to the devastation of Iraq's Christian minority. Since Saddam Hussein was driven from power, at least 54 churches have in Iraq been bombed and 905 Christians killed in various acts of violence. Fewer than 500,000 Christians remain in Iraq as many as 900,000 have fled.

Now some Christians in Egypt wonder if the recent parliamentary elections there suggest a similar fate is in store for that Arab nation's ancient Christian community now denied the protection of the deposed strongman Hosni Mubarak.

An estimated 100,000 Coptic Christians have already emigrated since Mubarak's ouster, according to the Egyptian Union of Human Rights Organizations. Coptic churches have been the targets of repeated deadly assaults; and the suppression by the Egyptian military of a demonstration led by Copts in October led to 28 deaths. In the first round of voting for a new parliament in early December, the biggest winner was the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party with 37 percent of the vote. But the big surprise was the success of the Hizb al-Nour (Party of Light), backed by the extremist Salafist Islamists, which received 24 percent of the vote. A group of secular parties received about 25 percent.

The Rev. Antoine Rafic Greiche, an official spokesman for the Catholic Church in Egypt, called the election results a cause for alarm not just for Christians but for moderate Muslims, who will be very annoyed by what has happened."

Fr. Greiche said the Salafists "look at Christians and even moderate Muslims as Koffars" (infidels), a derogatory term for non-Muslims,"and say they want to implement the Shariah Islamic Law rigorously."

Fr. Greiche said Salafists had taken responsibility for a number of attacks on churches. "The Salafists" attitude to Christians is to say that they can get their passport to go to the U.S. A., France, the U.K. or somewhere else in



the West,” he said, “They always talk about Egypt as a Muslim country even though there are up to 12 million Christians living here.”

That figure is a source of hope for Stephen director of the Office of International Justice and Peace at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, although he acknowledges the U.S. church’s continuing concern for the Christians minority in Egypt and other “Arab Spring” nations. Iraq’s Christians were no more than 2 percent of the population he said. The Coptic Church alone constitutes as much as 10 to 15 percent of the Egyptian population, and its historical and cultural roots go deep. The attacks on Christian churches were disturbing but seemed to be the work of a “fringe element.” Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson considered Egypt as part of the Holy Land.

Sweden

(From Midnight Call Magazine, October 2011)

Church Says Don’t Baptize Muslim Converts

Several Swedish publications are reporting that the Church of Sweden will advise its pastors not to baptize converts from Muslim countries who are seeking asylum in Sweden.

A draft letter from the bishops notes that being baptized can mean a risk of death if the convert is returned to his home country. The draft also states that a person who is baptized “has a responsibility to remain active in a Church of Sweden congregation,” and thus a person who may be deported from Sweden is not eligible. The draft is expected to be approved at the next bishops’ meeting.

EGYPT

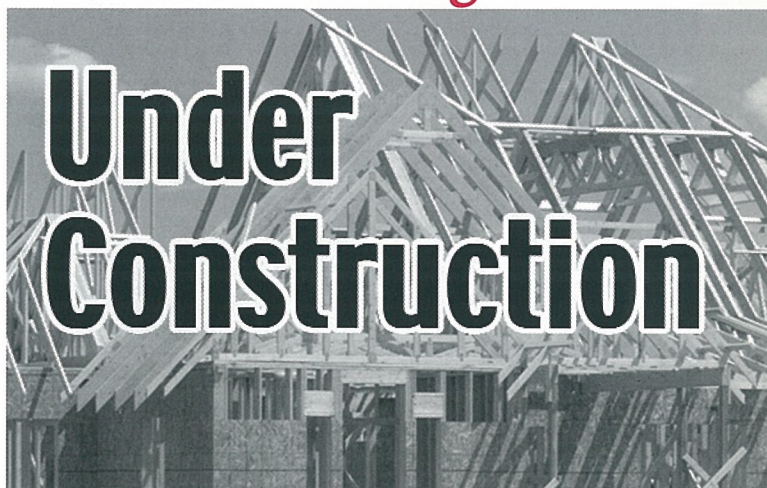
From Record Magazine (American Bible Society)

This year has seen unrest in Arab nations that is being called the Arab Spring. Please pray that God would mightily in bringing people to Himself, through avenues opened because of this.

Pray for creativity and means to encourage Bible engagement via satellite and new media and technology. Our challenge is to provide an oral community with audio and dramatized Scriptures in new formats.

People here want the Bible pray for many more opportunities to make God’s Word even more widely accessible, year-round, to thousands in the public sphere in a welcoming atmosphere of open interaction.

Readers’ Writings



When I was a little girl, my parents bought their first house. One afternoon, the family hopped into the car and drove to see where we soon would be living.?

I couldn’t believe it. The house had no windows or doors, and there was a strange odor. The basement was clearly visible through big gaps in the floor and we had to climb a ladder to get down there.

That night when I asked my mother why they wanted to live in a house like that, she explained that the builder wasn’t finished with it yet. “Just wait and see,” she said. “I think you’ll like it when it’s done.”

Soon we began to see changes. The house got windows, then doors. The “funny smell” of new lumber faded. The holes in the floor were covered and a staircase was added. Walls were painted. Mom put up curtains at the windows and pictures on the walls. The incomplete house had been transformed. It had taken some time but finally it was finished.?

As Christians, we need “finishing” too. Although the groundwork is laid at our conversion, the growing process continues throughout our life. As we obediently follow Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrew 12:2), one day we too will be complete.

“And I am sure that God, who began a good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.” (Philippians 1:6)

With love & prayers

Mona Singh



By Jennifer Ibrahim



Saint Barbara lived during the end of the third century; a time of turmoil and disease. Her father, Dioscorus, was a wealthy governor who lived in a large and beautiful palace. He was a pagan, like the majority of others during this time, raising Barbara with the same beliefs. Dioscorus, treasuring his daughter a great deal, did not want her living in a world of disease and war so he kept her in a tower near his palace.

St. Barbara, not allowed out her tower, often wondered about the Creator of the stars, land, and sun. Through her attendants, who she thought of as her friends, she was able to learn about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice that granted salvation to all. For St. Barbara, hearing about this was enough to believe in the Lord. Through the grace of God, she came to know in Him, not the gods that her father encouraged her to believe in. Secretly, she became a Christian, with her father not knowing about her newfound faith in Christ.

Some point after St. Barbara became a Christian, Dioscorus left for a long period of time. In the meantime, he instructed his palace workers to build a bathhouse near the tower his daughter was living in. St. Barbara saw that the bathhouse only had two windows so she instructed the workers to add a third window to symbolize the Holy Trinity.

Once her father returned, he saw the changes that were made and questioned his workers about it. They proceeded to inform him that his daughter told them to make the changes.

Dioscorus then questioned his daughter about why she



Women of the Church *St. Barbara and St. Juliana*

had the changes made and it was then that she confessed her faith in Christ and that she was no longer a pagan. Her father was infuriated, causing St. Barbara to flee from the city and hide from her father's rage. However, Dioscorus found her and dragged her back to the city where he beat her and deprived her of food and water until she gave up her faith in Christ. She stood strong in spite of the torture her father put her through and vowed never to denounce her love and faith in God.

Her father then turned her over to the governor, Marcian, so he could try to persuade her to offer incense to the pagan gods. She again refused so Marcian had her undergo

severe torture for her disobedience. Julianna, another woman that was also a firm believer in God, seeing what St. Barbara was being put through, came and proclaimed her faith in God along with St. Barbara. Marcian then proceeded to torture both women for their faith in God.

St. Barbara was eventually beheaded at the hands of her own father and St. Julianna was beheaded at the hands of Marcian, both receiving the crown of martyrdom.

May the Lord grant us strength, courage, and faith as displayed by St. Barbara and St. Julianna who were willing to die in order to attain Eternal Life.

"St Barbara Orthodox Monastery— Life of St. Barbara." *St. Barbara Monastery*. Web. 1 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.stbarbaramonastery.org/life-of-st-barbara>>.

"St. Barbara." *CopticChurch.Net - Coptic Orthodox Church Network*. Web. 1 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.coptic-church.net/topics/synexarion/barbara.html>>.



Congratulations



St. John Church in Covina congratulates
Drs. Ramy Hanna & Christine Barhoma
For their blessed engagement, praying for their happy
successful future together.

Beloved Ramy Hanna & Christine Barhoma,
Congratulations. God bless your life, engagement and
complete your dreams together. We love you.
**Love, Magdy, Suzan Hanna; Maged, Monica
& Sophia Soliman.**

Our love, prayers, and congratulations to
Dr. Christine Barhoma & Dr. Ramy Hanna,
for their engagement.
May the Lord continue to bless your lives and complete
your marriage in joy and peace.
Love: Amir, Nahed & Mark Barhoma



Dear Mark Soliman & Sara Eshak,

St. John Church, congratulates you for your engagement
on November 20, 2011. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless the
two of you and fulfill your holy desires for a happy marriage.
Also, congratulations from your parents, family and friends.



St John Church, Covina, congratulates George Lois and
Mary for the baptism of their baby boy,

Jayden

Praying God to bless his life and his Christian citizenship
for being born again from heaven (Jn. 3:3; Phil. 3:20).
May the Lord grant him health, strength and long life.



St John Church congratulates Daniel and Nancy William
for the baptism of their first baby girl,

Demiana

Wishing her blessed future with spiritual growth in faith,
health and stature. Congratulations also to her grandfathers
and grandmothers, with special thanks to
Fr. Mauritius Mikhail and Fr. John Paul.



St John Church congratulates her blessed children

Mark Moussa and his bride Mira

for their marriage. May the Lord Jesus Christ grant them
happiness, harmony and a fruitful home
built on the "Rock of Ages"
(picture not provided)





Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

From the New Generation



Youth Party



Senior Citizens