



SAINT COVINA, CA

JOHN

VOL 32 No. 317 July / August 2020

A COPTIC CHRISTIAN BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Congrats!

Class of 2020

## College Graduates



### Mark Adel Girgis

Congratulations Mark for graduating from Azusa Pacific University majoring in Communication and Business Management. May the Lord bless all your steps in life. Love, Mom, Dad, and Miriam.



### Robert Saad

Robert Graduated from UCI with a degree in psychology



### Andrew Atia

*Graduated from UC Riverside with a degree in Biology*



### Joseph Botrus

Joseph will be studying Optometry at Western University "Dear Joseph we are so proud of you graduating and achieving high honors. We wish you a blessed future and great success." Dad, mom, & Tony



## Community College to College (Associate Degrees)

### ANASTACIA KAMEL-ISHAK

Anastacia graduated from Chaffey College with an Associate degree in Psychology and will attend UCLA





**A CHRISTIAN COPTIC ORTHODOX  
BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
PUBLISHED BY**



**SAINT JOHN**  
THE APOSTLE  
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH  
COVINA, CA

(ISSN # 1530-5600)

21329 Cienega Ave.  
Covina, California 91724.

A parish of the Christian Coptic Orthodox  
Patriarchate of Egypt, and the diocese of  
Southern California.

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

Editor in Chief:

**Fr. Augustinos Hanna**

Design:

**Maged Graphics**

(909)702-9911

Customer Service:

(626) 820-2739

Annual Subscription

\$50:00 in U.S.A

\$75:00 in foreign countries

(as a suggested donation).

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

\*Postmaster:

Send address changes to St. John  
P.O. Box 2144 Covina, CA 91722-8144

*Verse  
of the Month*



*"All generations will call me blessed"*

*Luke 1:48*

**In This Issue**

Schedule & News .....	3
Independence Day -July 4 .....	4
Why do we call Virgin Mary "The True Vine"? .....	5
The Holy Spirit Seal, Pledge & Witness/ Love is .....	6
Parents and Children .....	8
Erdogan wants convert Hagia Sophia to Mosque/ Our Church not closed .....	10
Short Stories .....	11
What is God calling us to do during pandemic ... ..	12
Humility .....	14
No one comes to Me unless the Father draws him...By .....	16
The Life and Legacy of Ravy Zachariah .....	17
When God Reveals Himself .....	19
Condolences .....	21
Congratulations on Marriages, Baptisms & Graduates .....	22

**SCHEDULE of MEETINGS and EVENTS  
for the MONTH of July & August 2020**

SUNDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
+ <i>English Liturgy</i> + 6:00 - 8:00 a.m. + 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. * * *	+ <i>Liturgy</i> 8:00 am - 10:00 + <i>Thursday Morn- ing</i> + <i>Senior Citizen Club</i> 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	+ <i>Liturgy</i> 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. * * *	+ Liturgy from 8-10 am + Vespers; Bible Study 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. + Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 6:00 p.m. + Elementary Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.
+ <i>Arabic Liturgy</i> 8:00 - 11:30 a.m. (Old Church)	+ <i>THURSDAY Family Meeting</i> 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. <i>Fr. Augustinos</i>	+ <i>Women's Meeting</i> 6:00 p.m. new church	+ <i>College Youth Meeting</i> 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.
+ <i>Servants' Meeting</i> + 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. 2nd & 4th Sunday. + <i>Boy Scouts</i> 12 pm		+ <i>Arabic Youth Meeting</i> 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. <i>Fr. Gawargious</i> <i>Fr. Youhanna</i>	+ <i>High School &amp; J. High Meetings</i> 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

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

Or visit us online @ www.mystjohn.org

Fax : (909) 592-5088 / Tel: (909) 592 - 0475 / Church Tel: (626) 820-2739

Church Book Store: (562) 900 -2694 & (909) 730 - 9976



## The Apostles' Fast & Feast:

On Monday, June 8, the church started the Fast of the Apostles, until Sunday July 12, the Apostles' Feast (the commemoration of the great saints Peter and Paul). It is one of the most ancient fasts in the church history.



## 2. Martyrdom of St. James the Apostle:

On Saturday, July 25, the church commemorates the martyrdom of St. James the Apostle, one of the twelve, author of the Epistle of good works, and the head of the first Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

## 3. Martyrdom of 3 from the 70 disciples: (Luke 10)

On July 4, 13 and 16 we remember the martyrdom of three Disciples, Annanias, Olimpas and Cleopas (Lk.24)

## 4. Canceling the Youth Summer Club:

St. John Church canceled her youth summer club this year due to the pandemic for the safety of the youth and their families.

## 5. The Youth Graduation Celebration:

Also the graduation party is canceled for the same reason. And instead, the priests of the church recorded via zoom words of congratulations for them and distributed to them their gifts through "take away".

## 6. Fast and Feast of Virgin Mary (August 7- 22):

On Friday, August 7, 2020, the Fast of St. Mary, the holy virgin, starts for two weeks until her Feast on Saturday, August 22nd. May the Lord bless His people and save them from the Corona-virus by her intercession.



## 7. Feast of Transfiguration (August 19):

On Wednesday, August 19, the church celebrates the Feast of Christ's Transfiguration. (read page 19).



## 8. Other 10 Saints' feasts during July & August:

- 1) July 1: Martyrdom of St. Moses the Black.
- 2) July 10: Departure of St. Cyril of Alexandria.
- 3) July 14: Departure of St. Shenouda the Archimandrite
- 4) July 15: Departure of St. Bishoy, the wilderness' star.
- 5) July 22: Departure of St. Ephreim the Syrian.
- 6) July 30 Martyrdom of St. Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced Christ side by the spear on the cross.
- 7) July 31: Martyrdom of St. Abanoub El-Neheissy.
- 8) August 2: Departure of St. Joseph the Carpenter.
- 9) August 4: Departure of St. Mary Magdalene.
- 10) August 28: Departure of the Prophet Micah (5:2)



## 9. H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

On Pentecost, His Holiness decided to postpone the Holy Synod's meetings due to the pandemic.

## 10. H. E. Metropolitan Serpion:



+ His Eminence held three clergy meetings via zoom.

+ He also delivers spiritual sermons every Friday evening and answers questions and they are broadcasted in Logos Coptic TV channel.

## 11. All Summer Retreats at Big-bear are Postponed:

- |                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) Children: Kids' camp | (2) Family Retreat |
| (3) Servants Retreat     | (4) Arabic Youth:  |

## 12. St. John Annual Summer Festival:

This big festival used to be held around the Feast of the Cross at September 27-30. Most probably it will be postponed and announced later on.

## 13. Other Activities:

+ St. John daily Prayer Meeting: from 8:00 PM on ZOOM

+ Senior Citizen Fellowship & Women's Meeting (Postponed)

+ Arabic Youth Meeting: Friday from 8:00-10:00 p.m. Supervised by Fr. Gawargious and Fr. Youhanna Morise is via zoom.

+ The Family Meeting: Thursday from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Fr. Augustinos serves by ZOOM until the pandemic is over.

+ Food Bank & Botique: Services during 2nd and 4th Thursdays, every month from 5:30 p.m.

## 14. The Annual Book Fair:

(will be announced later).

**St. John Church Congratulates  
H.E. Metropolitan Serapion  
On his Silver Jubilee as the Bishop of  
Los Angeles and Hawaii  
& Their Grace**



**Bishop Abraham, Bishop Sureil and Bishop Kirollos**



**On their 4th year ordination.  
May the Lord grant them health, strength and  
long life full of great deeds.**





# HAPPY 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY



COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية

## DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII

أبرشية لوس أنجلوس، كاليفورنيا الجنوبية، وهاواي

### MESSAGE OF GREETING FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY - JULY 4, 2020

To the Blessed Clergy and Congregations of the Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California, and Hawaii,

Greetings in the Lord!

As we commemorate Independence Day, we reflect on the blessings of liberty and opportunity we have received in the United States of America. On this day, we offer our thanksgiving to God as well as our gratitude to the Founding Fathers and forbears who nobly labored and sacrificed to safeguard the blessings of liberty and freedom for future generations.

We Coptic Orthodox Christians are especially indebted to this nation which opened her doors and welcomed generations of Copts to a new life and opportunities for growth, not the least of which is our ability to worship God in freedom, build churches, and raise our children in the Orthodox faith. As a Church, we follow the command of St. Paul to his beloved disciple, St. Timothy, that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority.” We continue to pray for our nation and leaders “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim 2:1–2).

We have been called to freedom in our Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Paul affirms in his Epistle to the Galatians: “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Ga 5:13). In these turbulent times, let us labor to shine bright with the light of Christ, to be sources of solutions, to be defenders of the tenets upon which this nation was founded.

We ask each of you to continue to pray for God’s grace on this nation and to reflect on the ways you can use this freedom to serve God and our neighbor.

Metropolitan Serapion



# WHY DO WE CALL THE VIRGIN “THE TRUE VINE”

By Pope Shenouda III

WHY DO WE CALL ST. MARY, THE VIRGIN “THE TRUE VINE”, in the prayer of the third hour, saying, “O Mother of God, you are the true vine hearing the Fruit of Life”, when the vine is the Lord Jesus Christ who says plainly of Himself, “I Am the true Vine and My Father is the Vine-dresser. I Am the Vine, you are the branches” (John 15:1, 5).

Giving the title, “the true vine” to the Virgin, does NOT contradict the title of Christ as the True Vine. The Lord is the Vine in one sense and the Virgin is the vine in another. The Lord is the Vine when we are the branches; He is the Origin and all of us originate from Him; He is the Head and all of us are members of His body.

As for the Virgin, according to the Church’s hymns, she is the one who bore the Fruit of Life, the Son of God. She is the vine who was not reaped by anybody.

## THE LORD JESUS GRANTED US SOME OF HIS TITLES:

(1) The Lord called Himself, “The Good Shepherd” (Jn.10, 11, 14). This title was given to God by David in Psalm 23:1, when he said, “The Lord is my Shepherd” and also in the book of Ezekiel (34:1-16). Nevertheless, the Lord appoints some of His children as shepherds. He said to Peter the Apostle: “Feed My lambs tend My sheep” (Jn. 21:15, 16). In the Old Testament, the Lord said, “I will give them shepherds according to My heart” (Jer. 3:15). The title “shepherd” became the title attributed to the Apostles’ successors; the bishops who are to “shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). St. Peter says, “Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers” (1 Peter 5:2).

(2) The Lord Jesus calls Himself “Light”, when He said, “I am the light of the world” (Jn.8:12; 9:5). Nevertheless, He calls His disciples, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14) and “Let your light so shine before men...” (Matt. 5:16).

There is no doubt that the Lord is the absolute light in the full sense of the word. His disciples are light because they derive their light from Him and with His light they shine before others. In the same way, He is the Shepherd in the full sense of the word. But they are shepherds because they are God’s stewards appointed by Him to shepherd His flock.

(3) It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the Bishop: “The Shepherd and overseer (Bishop) of your souls” (1 Pet. 2:25). Nevertheless, the Apostles’ disciples were ordained bishops by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1Thess. 3:2; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:7).

(4) It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the “Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:6). Yet there are numerous verses in the Holy Bible about the high priest, the chief priest and the priests to whom God gave an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations (Exod. 40:15).

In the Old Testament it is written: “let Your priests be clothed with righteousness (Psa.132:16); and “You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty” (Exod. 28:2). In the New Testament, we notice that St. Paul calls himself a priest (Rom. 15:16).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Priest in the sense that He offered Himself a Sacrifice on our behalf. But priests from the human race are ministers and stewards of God’s mysteries. They offer the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Old Testament they offered what symbolized Christ’s Sacrifice.

(5) It is written that Christ is the Son of God (1 Jn. 4:14, 15) and that we also are children of God (1Jn. 3:1). Christ is the Son of God in the sense that He is of God’s Essence, Nature and Divinity. But we are children through love and adoption. That is why the Lord Jesus is called the Only Son (Jn.1:18 & 3:16).

## LIKEWISE IS THE TITLE “VINE”

The Lord Jesus is the Vine. The whole Church is called the vineyard and the Lord sang song of the vineyard about the church in the book of Isaiah (5:3-7), in which He says, “Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” And the Divine Inspiration says: “For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel” (Isa. 5:7). The same meaning applies to the Parable of the vineyard and the tenants, which the Lord told in Matthew 21:33-41. In this parable, the vineyard is the church, the tenants are the priests, and God is the landlord. In calling the church “the vine” we quote the words of Psalm 80:14,15, we say to God: “Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts. Look down from heaven and see and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted.” (See also Isa. 27:2, 3).

Did we steal God’s glory if we call the church “the vine” while Christ Himself had bestowed upon her that title?

Did we steal God’s glory if we call the people the vineyard, when the Holy Bible commands us to do so? Moreover, the title “vine” is given to every blessed mother, “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house” (Psa. 128:3). Therefore, it is not surprising to call St. Mary the Virgin “The Vine”.





# The Seal, the Pledge, and the Witness of the Holy Spirit

By Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna

***There are six symbols/types for the Holy Spirit in the Bible, which are:***

- (1) The dove** (Matt. 3:16).
- (2) The water** (John 7:37, 38).
- (3) The oil** (2 Cor. 2: 21, 22 & 1 Jn. 2:20, 27).
- (4) The wind** (Jn. 3:8 & Acts 2: 2).
- (5) The fire** (Matt. 3:11 & Acts 2:4).
- (6) The Seal** (2 Cor. 1:21, 22 & Eph. 1:13, 4:30).

The sealing of the Holy Spirit is one of a series of events that take place at once, of which we may not even be aware, the moment we believe and get baptized, or repent and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior (Jn. 1: 12). God regenerates and justifies us, then the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ (Gal. 3:27). Then we become a temple of the Holy Spirit and takes His abode in our hearts immediately (1 Cor. 3:16). Then He completes our salvation and growth with His continuing work in us.

## **I-The Seal:**

I will focus in this article on the role of the Holy Spirit as a seal. The meaning of the seal in Greek is to confirm or to impress. This word is used three

times in the New Testament in connection with believers. It is also mentioned in the life of Jesus. John says that “on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal” (Jn. 6; 27). Here we find the Father has sealed the Son.

At the moment of conversion, however, believers are sealed with the Spirit for the day of redemption; “Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13 & 4:30).

## **Sealing means Security and Ownership:**

Sealing in the sense of security is illustrated in the Old Testament when the king sealed Daniel into the lion’s den so that he could not get out. Also in ancient times, as when Esther was queen (Esth. 8:8), the king often use his own ring to affix his mark of seal to letters and documents written in his name. Once he had done this, no one could reverse what he had written.

Pilate did much the same when he ordered the soldiers to secure the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 27:65, 66). In an even more meaningful way, when the Holy Spirit seals us or puts His mark on us, we are secure in Christ. Nothing can touch you. “For I am con-

vinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39).

Yet the sealing of the Holy Spirit means more than just security. It also means ownership. In the Old Testament we read that Jeremiah bought a piece of property, paid for it in front of witnesses, and sealed the purchase according to the Law and custom (Jer.32: 10). He was now the owner. You and I are God's property forever!

## II-The Pledge

As we trust in Christ, God gives us the Spirit not only as a seal, however. He is also our pledge, or, as some translations read, "earnest," according to such passages as 2 Cor. 1:22 and Eph. 1:14). ***"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us in God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge"*** (2 Cor. 1:21, 22).

### Legally, the pledge means 3 three things:

- (1) It was a down payment that sealed the bargain.
- (2) It represents the obligation to buy.
- (3) A sample of what was to come.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit seals God's purchase to us. And provides us with a foretaste, a sample, of our coming life and inheritance in God's presence.

**In Numbers 13** when the spies of Israel set out to scout the land of Canaan, they reached it at the time of the first ripe grapes. They came to "the valley of Esheol and from there cut down a branch with a huge cluster of grapes that two men had to carry it together! (Num. 13:23). This they brought back with them for the people of Israel to see. The cluster of grapes was the pledge of their inheritance. It was a small foretaste of what lay before them in the Promised Land. This was God's pledge that as they moved forward in faith, they would receive in

full what they now had only in part.

**In summary**, we can say that when we are baptized into the body of Christ, the Spirit enters our lives and by his presence seals us. He is God's pledge assuring us of our inheritance to come.

## III-The Witness of the Spirit:

Not only is the Holy Spirit our seal and our pledge, but He is also our witness within, assuring us of the reality of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Scripture teaches us the Holy Spirit is a witness to the finality and sufficiency of Jesus Christ atonement for us. We find this in Hebrews 10:15-17, where the writer contrasts the ineffectiveness of the oft-repeated Levitical sacrifices with the sacrifice of Christ, which was offered one for all and once for all. Our conscience should never be finally relieved of its burden of sin by the continual animal sacrifices. But on the other hand, "by one offering He (Jesus Christ) has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us" (Heb. 10: 14, 15). It is a witness linked to Jeremiah 31:34), ***"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more"***

**Also**, the New Testament teaches us the Holy Spirit witnesses that we have become the children of God, by faith in Christ and His work on the cross and baptism; "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16). We have not only been saved and baptized into the body of Christ, but we have been adopted into the family of God. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God" (Gal.4:6, 7).

**Finally**, let me indicate that the witness or the testimony of the Holy Spirit within me, agrees with the truthfulness of the promises of God written in His word; because it is written by God's saints and prophets moved by the Holy spirit (2 Peter 1:21, 22).; and with the Apostle Paul we should say, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).





# PARENTS & CHILDREN

by Fr. Gawargious Kolta



In the previous volumes we mentioned 12 mistakes made by the parents un-intentionally against their children. In this volume, I am going to mention the parent's responsibilities towards their children to bring them up in Christian morals. Also, I will mention examples of parents who did not raise their children properly.

Children are gifts from God to the parents, who are entrusted for their welfare. Parents must be trustworthy, as they will give account of their kids in the judgment day. Nowadays, bringing up children in the right way is a difficult task, and it is very challenging. Parents should teach them spiritual values; modesty, Christian morality and good manners. Our Children are going to face a dangerous world, and thus parents should talk to their children about moral purity from their very early age; from pre-school years. There is no other priority than the responsibility to raise our children properly.

King Solomon said: "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes he will give delight to your soul" (Prov. 29:17). Parents should not withhold correction from their children in order to deliver their souls from hell. Parents, who love their children, discipline them early (Prov. 13:24). Spiritual training at home will make our children truly secure when they became mature. They would make wise choices. St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15).

There are some parents who are religious, but they do not take care of the spirituality of their household. Isaac and Rebekah did not train their son Esau, who was a profane person and got married to two girls from Hittite, who were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. She complained to Isaac, saying: "I am weary of my life of the daughters of the Hittite; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me" (Gen. 27:46).

**Joshua**, in his farewell talks, that he addressed to the Israelites after defeating the enemies, he asked them to keep The Lord's commandments, and he said: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Jos. 24:15). He obeyed what was said by God to all the nations who will be blessed by Abraham: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19).

Some parents also neglect correcting their children from their childhood; thus they suffer from their misconducts when they become grown up. King Solomon instructs the parents, saying: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old

he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). St. Paul also said to the parents: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

**Jacob** the father of the twelve tribes neglected correcting his children. Within the twenty years, that he lived with his uncle Laban, we did not see him speaking to his children about God. He was very busy with pasturing the livestock, and solving the problems of his wives, and ignored teaching his kids' spiritual morals. They committed many mistakes that made Jacob suffer. Two of them became murderers and liars, others committed adultery and most of them were full of hatred towards their brother Joseph, wanted to kill him, and they sold him as a slave. Jacob mourned many years and nobody could comfort him (Gen. 37:11-36).

**Eli**, the priest, did not discipline his sons who were corrupt and did not know the Lord, and Eli did not correct them. It is written: "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them" (1 Sam. 3:13). The Lord allowed the two sons to be killed in the war with the Philistines, the Ark of God was also captured by the Philistines, and Eli fell off his seat and he died (1 Sam. 4:18).

**King David**, the wonderful Psalmist, to whom the Lord gave testimony saying: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" (Act 13:22), he had no enough time to bring up his children in the fear of God from their childhood, because he was engaged in many wars with the enemies. One of his children (Amnon) committed adultery with his sister Tamar, and another son (Absalom) killed his brother Amnon, and made conspiracy against his father, trying to take the kingdom from him. He took his father's concubines, but he was defeated and killed in the war (2 Sam. 15-18).

Parents should be a good example for their children. When they are not, their children will be the same. If they have bad habits, usually their children will behave like them. Some kids became addicts to some drugs, because their parents were. When the parents do not care for the spiritual life activities, their kids will be the same.

**Our father Abraham** made a mistake when he entered Egypt, saying that his wife Sarah was his sister, saying that it might be well with him for her sake. He repeated the same mistake when he stayed in Gerar (Gen. 12:13, 20:2). His son Isaac did the same mistake, when he entered Gerar he said that Rebekah was his sister (Gen. 26:7,9).

**The bad kings of Israel**, who did evil in the sight of the Lord, had



sinned and made Israel sin, worshipping the idols, and walked in the way of Jeroboam who provoked the Lord to anger with his sins (1 Kings 12:20-18:46). The same happened in the New Testament. Herod the great was cruel and killed the children of Bethlehem (Mat. 2:16). His son Herod Antipas was responsible of the imprisonment and death of St. John the Baptist (Mat. 14:1-12, Lk. 3:19, 20). His grandson Herod Agrippa was the persecutor of the early Christians, put St. James the disciple and the brother of St. John to death and arrested St. Peter and put him in prison, intending to kill him after the Passover (Act. 12:2-5).

On the other hand, some parents nowadays, know that there is enmity to religion and faith. They know that their children are exposed at school, through mass media, through library books, and advertisements without any Christian values. The parents do their best to face these challenges by teaching their children Christian morals and tradition.

**Dr. Sophie Koulomzen** said in her book "Our Church And Our Children" that Christian education should be given not only in Sunday schools, but also at home. Our children should be taught the divine liturgies, the sacraments and the life of worship, in order to be good Orthodox Christians. In our secularized society, we should convey to them the sense of the reality of God, the fear of God, Christian wholeness and the mysteries of life. She added that we do not encourage Christian growth by speaking about it, but it will happen when our methods of teaching involve creative effort, trial and error, research and problem solving.

**Dr. Sophie Koulomzen also** said that the family is recognized as the home church, and the task of the parents is really a kind of lay priesthood. Children attend church services for two hours and church school for another hour per week, but family life goes on all the time, every day of the year. A family is not made by legal definition; it is based on the love of husband and wife for each other and the love between parents and children. St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15).

**Charles Boydsaid** in his book "Different children Different Needs" that some parents think that bringing up children with Christian morals is just by taking them to church, keeping them in school, protecting them from drugs, and out of troubles. He advised the parents not to try to bend their children out of the shape that God had instilled in them. They should adapt the training of their children so that it is in keeping with their natural design; when they come to maturity, they will not depart from that pattern of life.

**Charles Boyd added**, saying that parents should know that their children need to learn appropriate behavior and to grow to become responsible adults. He classified the parents to four categories and mentioned their effect on their children:

- 1- Directive parents will bring up determined children.
- 2- Interactive parents will bring up influencing children.
- 3- Supportive parents will bring up soft-hearted children.
- 4- Corrective parents will bring up conscientious children.

He added that parents should not be troubled when they find

that their children have limitations or weaknesses. Parents must address these defects by encouraging, in order to build the children's self-esteem. They will never be like their parents or someone else. Biblical parenting involves consistently encouraging, exhorting and empathizing with the children according to their unique needs. He said that parents should not bend their children's characters out of its natural, God-given design. He concluded that kids understand more than we think.

**Dr. James Dobson** mentioned in his books "Bringing up boys" and "Bringing up girls" that, boys are fundamentally different from girls in many aspects. He mentioned the father's unique contribution to parenting and also mom's role. He gave some advice to the parents, guiding them to the way to bring their children on their journey to maturity.

I advise the parents to read these books in order to help them to face the challenges of their kids in order to become strong, spiritually, physically, socially healthy and confident adults. They should offer their children to the Lord and to the church as holy saints.

We are going to give examples of successful parenting in the church history:

**St. Macrina:** Her father died when she was young, leaving her and her brothers to the shelter of her grandmother and her mother. She took care of her brothers, bringing them in the fear of God, and teaching them praying and Bible reading, as well as the spiritual morals. She was a good example for them in goodness, humbleness and asceticism. Three of her brothers became bishops: St. Basil the great, St. Peter bishop of Sebastea and St. Gregory the bishop of Nyssa. Her brother Nectarius spent his life near the river Iris sacrificing all his life for helping the elders, the needy and the sick. Afterwards, St. Macrina spent the rest of her life at a nunnery that she built in her property in Annesis, near the river Iris.

**St. Refka:** She was a widow and mother of five boys, living in a small village at Upper Egypt called Couse near Luxor. She instructed her children the Christian faith and the meaning of eternal life with the Lord. They confessed the proper faith in front of the ruler of Couse, who tortured them and their mother severely. Finally, they were beheaded and their bodies are now in a church at Sonbat.

**St. Maximus and St. Domatius:** They were the sons of the Roman governor named Valentinian (364-375). Their father was a devout Christian and raised them in Christian life. Although they were princes, yet their father brought them up with Christian morals; the fear of God, purity and chastity. They spent their times reading divine books and praying Psalms, until the court of their father's palace, became as was said, like the abode of the monks. When they reached the age of youth, they secretly travelled to a monk in the Levant, residing in a mountain on the sea side. They wore the monastic garments and stayed there for six years. The monk prayed for them and sent them to saint Macarius in Egypt, in the wilderness of Shehit. They lived a great ascetic life for few years and they got a fever and departed in peace, Maximus first and his brother Domatius after three days.

# **Hagia Sophia in Istanbul: Former church must not be converted into a mosque again**

## **Erdogan wants to convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque:**

### **“Solidarity strengthens mutual respect, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence”**



The Islamic government of Turkey is planning to convert the historic Church Hagia Sophia in Istanbul – which has been used as a museum since 1935 – back into a mosque! Last Thursday (July 2, 2020) Turkey’s Supreme Administrative Court declared that it would rule on the matter by next Thursday, July 16.

The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) is now calling on the mosque communities in Germany to show solidarity with Christian believers in Turkey. Dr. Kamal Sido, Middle East Consultant of the STP, suggested that the large DITIB mosque in Cologne-Ehrenfeld and other communities of the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (Turkish: Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği, DİTİB) and other mosques could put the Christian crosses on display in their mosques for 482 hours – symbolizing the 482 years in which the Hagia Sophia in former Constantinople was used as a mosque. In this way, Muslim associations could protest against the possible conversion of the Hagia Sophia Museum into a mosque, and the German-Muslim associations, especially DITIB, could support the harassed and persecuted Christians and other religious communities in the Islamic world.

“A sign of solidarity is important to promote and strengthen mutual respect, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence in Turkey, Germany, and the whole world,”

Sido emphasized. “Even 567 years after the conquest of Constantinople, the Hagia Sophia is still of great significance for the Christian communities in the Middle East, which are under pressure today.” For the Christians, it is a symbol of their long history in the region and an important part of for their identity.

“The Hagia Sophia should remain an accessible place of interest in Istanbul, a message from the Turkish state to all Christians in the Middle East and all over the world,” Sido added. “The country could show that it respects the heritage of the peoples who once lived on its territory.

This issue could contribute to reconciliation with the descendants of the victims of persecution and genocide

in the Ottoman Empire and in today’s Republic of Turkey or it could do just the opposite. Most recently, radical Islamists – tolerated or supported by Turkey – destroyed many Christian churches in Iraq, Syria, and other countries. Also, many Yazidi churches, monuments,

cemeteries, and other sanctuaries were destroyed or looted.

The Hagia Sophia was built in the 6th century in the Byzantine Empire. After Constantinople was invaded by troops of the Ottoman Empire, it was converted into a mosque in 1453. As of 1934, it was used as a museum. Since then, a possible conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque has been discussed again and again. Before the local elections of 2014 and 2019, Erdogan’s Islamic-conservative government demanded the re-conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque in order to win the votes of strict Muslims. In June 2016, the building was used as a mosque for a short time during the month of Ramadan.

Dr. Kamal Sido is available for further questions: [k.sido@gfbv.de](mailto:k.sido@gfbv.de) or +49 (0)173 – 673 39 80

### **What If ?! Just an opinion!**

Mr. Erdogan is well known as a fanatic Muslim who assists the Islamic terrorist gangs and organizations like Isis and Muslim-Brotherhood. He is playing with fire.

The news said that Mr. Pompeo urged him not to do that and to respect the freedom of religion. But he refused and said that he does not accept any foreign interference!

So, what if Mr. Trump decided to convert all the mosques in America into churches; and said, I do not accept foreign interference, would Mr. Erdogan be pleased for that?!

One more thing: It seems that Mr. Erdogan did not learn something from the lessons of history and what happened to Pharaoh and Sadat when they resisted God’s will and defied the Almighty God.....



## 1. Jesus or Me?!

One morning a little girl asked her mother a surprising question, "Mommy, who do you love more, Jesus or me?"

What a dilemma! If the mother answered "Jesus," her daughter could get her feelings hurt, and if she answered "you," her daughter might think Jesus was not very important in her life." But then just the right answer flashed into the woman's mind. She smiled and said, "Why, honey, don't you know that the more I love Jesus, the more I love you?" Hearing that, the child reached over and gave her mother a big hug. She said, "Oh, Mommy, please love Jesus more and more and more?"

The more we love Jesus, the more we will love others. The closer we get to Him, the more our hearts become like His. Jesus' heart is filled with love for people, and this love fills our hearts too as we develop a deeper relationship with Him.



## 2. Ups and Downs

During a routine physical examination, a patient asked her doctor about the beeping heart monitor that was attached to her body.

Why doesn't the screen show a straight line instead of those peaks and valleys?" She asked him. The doctor replied, "If that line was straight, it would mean that you were dead. Those ups and downs show me that you're healthy and alive."

In a similar manner, the Great Physician allows us to have "Ups and downs" in our spiritual lives, so that we might be strengthened in our faith and develop healthy attitudes. Without the lowly valleys we travel through we would never reach the highest peaks.



## 3. The Tongue Test

Usually, when you go to a physician, he asks you, "let me see your tongue."

This is always the best way to check out a Christian; with "the tongue test"!

For as the maid servant said to the apostle Peter, "Your accent betrays you"; it always does. For the tongue is the pen of the heart and the messenger of the brain.

The Lord Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks" Whatever is in the heart spills out every time we open our mouth. If Christ is in the heart, His words will spill out. One of the servants once said, "For good or ill, your conversation is your advertisement". Every time you open your mouth you let people look into your mind.



## 4. Pentecost and our Purpose in Life:

The Christian's purpose in life is to acquire the Holy Spirit to be deified (St. Aeneas said), to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), to become holy and divine by God's grace and adoption. This purpose was fulfilled on Pentecost where the Holy Spirit came to abide in us in His fullness. But Pentecost is NOW. Pentecost is today and every day. For Pentecost happens whenever we pray "O, heavenly King, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, Who is everywhere and fills everybody. You are the treasure of goodness, and the Giver of life. We ask You to graciously come and dwell within us, purify us from iniquity and save our souls...pitch your tent in us" On the Day of Pentecost, St. Peter quoted the prophecy of Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...." (Acts 2: 17).



The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles at Pentecost. He continues to be poured out on us today through earnest prayer, renewed repentance and holy life.

If the inner person is not filled with the Spirit of God, it will be filled with evil spirits-that are waiting to rush to fill the emptiness. So, the substitute is terrible.

Choose to be filled with the Holy Spirit to live a holy, victoriously life which pleases God.

# What is God calling us to do during the PANDEMIC?



By Fr. Youhanna Maurice



- **Pray & Praise**
- **Appreciate what we have**
- **Never lose Hope**
- **Don't panic**
- **Eat healthy**
- **Manage our time properly**
- **Invest in our talent**
- **Care for others.**

## • **Pray and Praise!**

Maintaining a strong relationship with God and feeling His presence at all times is

what gives us peace, comfort and strength.

Remembering His greatness, His works, His love, His promises, and His sovereignty

is what gives us confidence.

And praising Him is what gives us unconditional Joy! (Remember the three youth in the furnace of fire!)

"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and

making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:19) is what we need most during this time.

## • **Appreciate what we have and give thanks!**

Counting our blessings and giving thanks for everything, about everything and in

everything will fill our hearts with joy and our life with blessing and will make the

burdens of life feel lighter.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which

surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

## • **Never lose Hope!**

There is always hope in God Almighty, the Hope of the hopeless and Help of the helpless.

With Him everything is possible. He is the One who can bring "Out of the eater ... something to eat and out of the strong ... something sweet." (Judges 14:14) ... The One who "gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah 61:3)

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

## • **Don't panic!**

We need to learn to take precautions but NOT panic!

We need to do our part and be responsible, and leave it in God's hands to do the rest.

"For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

## • **Eat healthy:**

We need to eat healthy and exercise, not just to feed the body but also to feed the mind.

We need to remember always that the books we read, the movies (and even the news) we watch, the music we listen to, the people we spend time with, and our time and interactions on social media will all become thoughts. These thoughts will become emotions, and our emotions will direct our actions, which will ultimately form our character and lead us to our final destiny!

It's better to be safe than sorry!

## • **Manage your time wisely!**



We need to ask ourselves: "What does God want me to do during this unique quarantine season?"

"Redeeming the time, for the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16)

We need to make time for the things that matter: time for our souls, time for our families, and time to serve others.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." (Matthew 6:33)

Our schedules need to reflect healthy balance and priorities.

As the wise Solomon said: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." (Ecclesiastes 3) A time to rest, a time to work, a time to listen and a time to speak....

- **Invest your talents!**

Our time, talents, abilities, and opportunities are gifts from God, entrusted to us, to be used for His glory and His Kingdom.

Use this time to learn something new or improve and sharpen your talents. Use your talents wisely!

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)

- **Care for others!**

Comforting, reaching out, listening, encouraging, protecting, providing, and supporting others will give to us more joy and blessing than those whom we are serving. As the Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

Remembering that whatever we do, we do it through His Love and for His Love's sake.

And "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." Hebrews 6:10

***May God the Almighty shower you with blessings, overshadow you with His***

***wings, and work in you and through you to be a light and blessing to everyone around you.***



"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

The love described in 1 Corinthians 13 is the most important ingredient in life. For this love can transform life, bringing hope in time of troubles, comfort in time of sadness, and compassion in time of need. This is God's love—the active love that God showed the world through His Son Jesus Christ.

During the 33 years that Jesus lived on earth, God revealed the full force of His love. As Jesus walked among men, He showed us that God's love is no short-lived sensation or shallow sentimentality. He proved that this love is the most powerful force on earth, overcoming prejudice, hatred, hypocrisy, and selfishness.

But the supreme expression of God's love was Christ's death on the cross for our sins. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God demonstrated His unlimited love for us, even to the extent of sacrificing His Son so that you and I might have new life, eternal life.

Today the risen Christ brings a new life of love, joy, and peace to those who receive Him. The love produced by God's Spirit is the only way to meaningful existence, human understanding, and genuine community, and complete healing. It is the door to God, our neighbor, and ourselves.

When you welcome the risen Christ as Lord and Savior of your life, you can never go beyond the reach of His loving Hand.

His love can lead you daily through illness, depression, uncertainty, pain, hardship, fear, and perplexity. You can stand up to anything because He is always with you. His love never fails.



# HUMILITY

*By Monica M. Soliman*

[Dr. Charles Stanley's article was previously printed with permission from In Touch Ministries and H.E. Metropolitan Serapion]. The second part of this talk is inspired by one of the sermons given as part of the series "The way" given by Fr. Paul Baky Mikhail

## **Humility**

What are some of the areas of your life where you may struggle with pride? What are some practical ways in which you can begin to show sincere humility in your life today? Scripture shows us the natural outgrowth of humility: Prayer (Verse 14). What is prayer if it is not a simple declaration of insufficiency and humility? It is our cry to God that reveals our deep and abiding need for Him. And we are not simply talking about prayer, "Dear God, heal our nation." Instead, we are talking about praying with a burden, motivated by the desperation we see taking place in America today.

Suppose a friend came to you and asked you to pray for his son, who was a bit sick with the flu. I'm sure you would pray for that child once or twice and then perhaps forget the matter entirely. Now, let's take the example a bit further. Imagine that your friend came to you and shared that his son had been involved in a horrible car accident, and was, at that moment, fighting for his life in the hospital. Would that impact the way you pray? You bet it would! That would be more than simply saying, "God, please heal this boy." Instead, you would most likely drop to your knees and pray earnestly and emotionally for God to spare the child's life. That is the kind of prayer we NEED for America-- prayer that is rooted in desperation, recognizing that only God can heal the sick and dying land.

## **Bible Study on Humility- Fr. Paul Baky, Saint Monica Church:**

I heard a Bible Study by Fr. Paul, which was part of a series.

I learned that simplicity paves the way for humility. Fr. Paul explained that some people are born humble, and that is the minority. The majority of us strive to become humble. Humility is a long arduous journey full of struggles, but it is a beautiful road as well. When someone praises you, you might cherish and enjoy it. The beloved Saint Macarius teaches us this concept in this short story below regarding humility: A brother came to see Abba Macarius, the Egyptian, and said to him, 'Abba, give me a word, that I might be saved.' So the old man said to him, Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead.'

The brother went there, abused them and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, 'Didn't they say anything to you?' He replied, 'No.' The old man said, 'Go back tomorrow and praise them.' So the brother went away and praised them, calling them apostles, saints, and righteous men. He returned to the old man and said to him, 'I have complimented them.'

And the old man said to him, 'Did they not answer you.' The brother shook his head no. Then Abba Macarius said to him, 'You know how you insulted them and they did not reply, and how you praised them and they did not speak; so you too if you wish to be saved must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account of either the scorn of men or their praises, and you can be saved. Source: <https://>



**[www.orthodoxroad.com/a-lesson-from-the-dead](http://www.orthodoxroad.com/a-lesson-from-the-dead).**

Since the dead did not answer in any situation, it would be a good exercise to learn that the praise of man does not profit much. However, it is still important to give credit to each other. But, be aware that when a man receives too much praise, it will surely puff him up and that may be detrimental to his spiritual life and growth, and it will give a place for the devil to attack him spiritually.

Regarding humility, there is no one like our beloved savior, who was born in a manger. Can we even fathom that the Son of the Highest was born in a manger? In addition, on several occasions, our Lord chose the path of humility. This is exemplified in the washing of the feet of His disciples, and later at the cross. Consider the Bible verses below from John Chapter 13.

**6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”**

**7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”**

**8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”**

**9 “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”**

**10 Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.”**

**11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.**

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.

13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13: 1-17 NIV).**

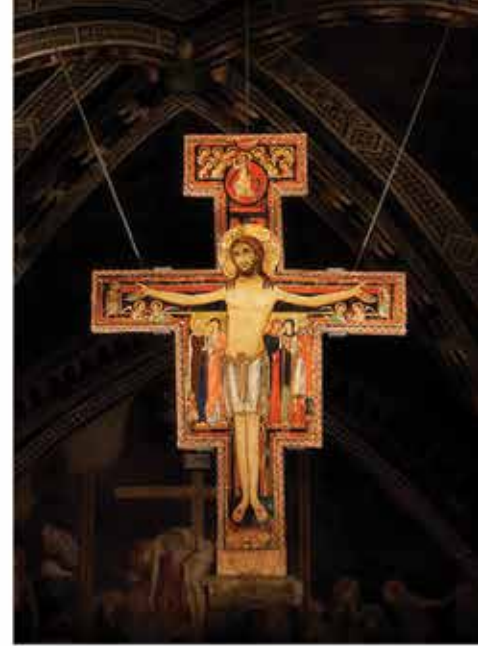
Here, our Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself to a servant, to teach us to be humble servants. How many times have I questioned the authority of my father in confession, or criticized those who are in the leadership of the church? I need to trust more that all of the changes are for the best, and I need to give my constructive criticism. God does NOT need me in the service! It is through His abundant mercy that I am able to serve and I should be pleased and grateful for this honor to be called His daughter or His son. I need to learn from Christ, as he is lowly and humble of heart. I also remind myself that from dust I originated and to dust I shall return. My true self-worth is in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, what becomes important is who HE is and What He did for ME! I remind myself that my life is like vapor that vanishes away. I have to build up and spend time in prayer and preaching through example. St Francis of Assisi said, “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.” Also noteworthy is the difference between humility and being down. A beautiful illustration is an image of a person kneeling down and looking up at Christ, with true hope. Imagine, rather an image of a man kneeling down and looking down. That second image would not be an image of humility. In the later example, a man is focusing on his own sins, rather than on the Grace of Christ. Too much concentration on ourselves renders us unable to focus on the example of Christ, who has already attained Salvation through His precious sacrifice on the Cross. Nevertheless, we must not be negligent, and must rather remember this verse: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12).

**[Written by Monica M. Soliman June 2020].**



By Dr. Emil Goubran

## **“No one can come to Me unless the Father Who has sent Me draws him” (John 6:44)**



Jesus mentioned that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him. Does this mean that we don't have free will, and that the Father will be the one to determine who can be saved?

The answer is found in the Bible as we look at the following verses:

- “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4). This means that God wants all men to be saved and none of them should perish.
- “The one who comes to Me I will in no way cast out” (John 6:73). This means that God will not cast out anyone who wants to come to Him.

If God wants all who come to Him be saved, how could we then reconcile between the fact that no one can come to the Son unless the Father draws him, and the equally valid fact that God's will is for all men to be saved? And that He gave us free will to make choices in life, such as to accept (believe) or reject Him?

In order to reconcile these verses, we need to know that in every choice we make there are two elements that will bring the outcome of our choice into reality. The first is the will to do what we intend to do, and the second is the ability to make it happen.

This means that we may have the ability to do something but we don't have the will to carry it on. Similarly, we may have the will to achieve something but don't have the ability to carry it on.

If we apply this understanding to the issue before

us, what the Bible is saying is that we need to have the will to seek the truth (God being the Truth), but we will not be able to find it based on our own strength or abilities. Only God the Father is the One who will enable those who are seeking Him to get to the Truth by drawing them to the Son, who is the Truth “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6)

Jesus said “Strive to enter in at the narrow gate. For I say to you, many will seek to enter in and shall not be able.” (Luke 13:24). The word strive pertains to the will. The Lord is saying that we need to have the will to enter at the narrow gate. As for the ability to enter, we can't do it on our own ability for only God the Father will draw us to the gate. The gate here refers to Christ who said “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the gate of the sheep.” (John 10:7).

In conclusion, the explanation of what seems to be a conflict between human free will to seek Christ, and the Heavenly Father being the only way to draw them to Christ is not truly a conflict between two wills.

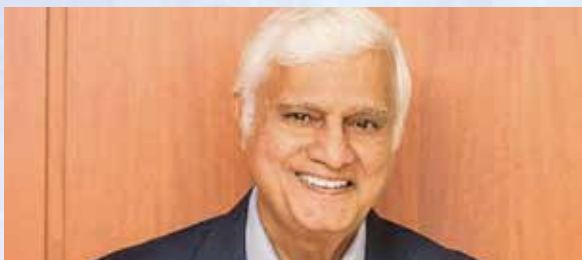
It is actually a compliment between human free will and the Father's own ability to bring them to Christ. So even though human ability will not be capable to bring them to Christ, the heavenly Father will help them to do so.

As it is always the case in our life, we should use our free will to follow the Lord's commandments, and He will help us implement it in our daily life. He said to us “for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 5:15)



# Ravi Zacharias

## (1946-2020)



At the memorial service of Ravi Zacharias in Atlanta Georgia on May 29th, 2020,

Vice President Mike Pence eulogized him saying, "At the death of Abner, King David said to his servants: 'Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?'" ( 2 Samuel 3:38). Mr. Pence proceeded to say that "Ravi was such a man."

Ravi Zacharias was born in India to Anglican parents, but he himself was an atheist until the age of 17, when he attempted suicide. In his hospital bed, a hospital worker entered and gave Ravi's mother a Bible and asked her to read to him from the Gospel of St. John.

Christ began to breathe life into Ravi when he heard the words of Christ, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

At this moment, young Ravi responded by committing to God that if He would give him this new life as it is meant to be lived, Ravi would leave no stone unturned in the pursuit of truth. And so his spiritual journey began....

At the age of 20, Ravi Zacharias' family moved to Canada where he began pursuing theological study. Eventually he moved to Atlanta Georgia, where he raised his family, authored many books and started Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM) where he trained apologists and evangelists (including the Muslim convert Nabeel Qureshi) and traveled with them all over the world to preach the gospel.

He has been compared to Billy Graham, the renowned evangelist of the 20th century. From an Indian atheist to a renowned Christian evangelist who preaches Christ all over the world, especially to Muslims and atheists and became a great apologetic and author of so many famous books.

## Presidential Message on Global Coptic Day, 2020



I send my best wishes for a peaceful and blessed celebration to the millions of Coptic Christians in the United States and around the world observing Global Coptic Day.

Last year marked the first annual Global Coptic Day—an opportunity for the world to mark the contributions, legacy, and ongoing challenges facing the largest Christian group in the Middle East. This year, as we celebrate the second annual Global Coptic Day, we recognize the vital role faith, prayer, and service have in our lives, especially as we continue to face the challenges posed by the novel coronavirus pandemic. We join with people of faith from every corner of the world in asking God to place his healing hand on those fighting the virus and to comfort those who are mourning the loss of a friend or a loved one.

Today is also a time for us to acknowledge the importance of religious freedom and reaffirm our commitment to promoting and defending this core tenet of a free society. Tragically, far too many people the world over face persecution on account of their faith. In September of 2019, during a speech at the United Nations, I called on world leaders to take action to put an end to all attacks by state and non-state actors against citizens for simply worshipping according to their beliefs. I challenged them to work to prevent threats and acts of violence against our sacred places of worship. No one should fear for their safety in a house of worship anywhere in the world.

At my direction, the State Department convened its second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom last summer, where diplomats and stakeholders from government and civil society, as well as religious leaders, engaged and identified tangible and meaningful ways to eliminate religious persecution and discrimination around the world and secure greater respect for freedom of religion and belief for all. We must ensure that we are using every tool at our disposal to ensure that every man, woman, and child feels safe and secure to worship according to their conscience and beliefs—no matter where they live.

I hope today's observance is filled with prayer and joy, and provides those celebrating with a renewed sense of purpose and faith. May God bless each of you.



# When God Reveals Himself

Mark M. Hanna



On August 19, the Coptic Orthodox Church around the world celebrates the Feast of the Lord Jesus' Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9 and Lk. 9:28-36). This is one of the seven minor Lord's Feasts that the Church celebrates. and by the attention it receives from our congregations, one can think that it is called a minor Lord's Feast because not too many people attend church on this occasion. On the contrary, this Feast, although classified as "minor" as compared to Christmas, Epiphany and the Resurrection, is quite significant in it's importance and relevance to our relationship with God.

The Bible record of this occasion takes us atop Mount Tabor where the Lord Jesus had gone to pray. The significance of the setting here on top of the Mount is telling of the prayer life of our Lord. He always sought remote locations where He can be away from distraction to be alone with the Father. On this occasion the Lord Jesus took with Him St. Peter, St. James, and St. John who of His disciples were the closest and most faithful to the Lord.

The Bible tells us that the Lord took them and went to pray. The three disciples fell asleep as the Lord prayed but when they woke up they beheld the glorious appearance of the Lord. The transfiguration had taken place and the Lord was transformed from the human that was observed by human eyes to His heavenly appearance or a glorified appearance. This revelation of Christ's glory is the transfiguration. But why did God hide His glory throughout His life on earth and only reveal it so briefly?

**First**, this revelation of God's glory was meant for all of us as it is God's Spirit that inspired the gospel-writers to relate to us this story. God's glory is our glory. Like a father who is a king and his household are all royal and have authority to rule with their father. Christ sought to show His closest followers a glimpse of the glory He had while in the bosom of the Father, yet **"He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men"** (Phil. 2:7). Why would God come down to our earth and be in the likeness of men? He

emptied Himself of all the glory He had for our sakes and the transfiguration was so we would see just how awesome our God is.

**Second**, note how the three apostles beheld this glimpse of Christ's glory once they were away from the distractions of the world, alone, in the quiet with God. There they beheld a revelation of Christ that no one in the business of life can dream to behold. St. Mary Magdalene had a similar opportunity when she stood outside the Lord's tomb crying, alone she only had the Lord in mind and it was at that moment that the Lord of Glory Himself came to her. In this setting St. Mary Magdalene beheld the glory of Christ in His risen, glorified body (Jn. 20:11-17). On the Island of Patmos, St. John the beloved disciple beheld the glory of Christ and His plan for His chosen. On the Island St. John was secluded from all other distractions and with all obstacles removed God gave His revelation to St. John.

Thousands of years before St. Mary Magdalene or St. John, the prophet Moses shared the same experience. When he spent forty days with God on Mount Sinai he came down with a shining face so that the Israelites could not look at him. Moses' face, like phosphorous, over the period of 40 days alone with God absorbed so much of God's radiance and as a result shown to everyone he stood before (Ex. 34:29-35).

People often wonder why God does not talk to them or is seemingly so distant if in fact He does talk to them. His voice and the answer is as simple as we just do not give God the opportunity to reveal Himself to us. This is why St. James writes, "draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (Jms. 4:8). It is for this reason that we all must learn to designate a time in our every day to sit in solitude with God. Bishop Paul, the Coptic Bishop of Mission Affairs once said,

"We complain that God doesn't talk to us. We just



don't give Him the chance. We stand to pray and ask God, 'give me this, give me that, help me with this, help me with that, heal me, heal her, provide for this family, help the poor, help the needy in Africa, in America, in Asia and everywhere.'" Just when God is about to speak, we conclude, "'Amen!'"

**Third,** God reveals Himself only to those who will receive Him in faith. Sts. Peter, James and John were the three disciples who believed in the Lord Jesus with their whole being. Unlike them, the people of Nazareth, the town where the Lord grew up, rejected Him. Those Nazarenes who lived years around the Lord said, "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary" (Mk. 6:3). St. Luke adds, they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Lk. 4:22) and as a result, "He could do no mighty work there" (Mk. 6:5). The people of Nazareth only saw the Lord as another human like them and did not accept Him as Lord and that unbelief tied the hands of God, so to speak, from performing wonders and mighty works for them. There can be no power that we can expect from God so long as we consider Him just another good Man or just a mere human — "the carpenter's son." Believing in Christ's power as God we can be assured of what St. Paul promises the faithful, **"He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above what we ask or think"** (Eph. 3:20). To those who believe, God is not only able but is also willing to reveal Himself as the all powerful God.

**Fourth,** God reveals Himself to those who know Him intimately. Adam enjoyed this intimate friendship while he was in the Garden of Eden. God was willing to come down and walk in the garden with Adam. Adam was so intimate with God that he knew the sound of God walking in the garden (Gen. 3:8). When Adam sinned by eating of the forbidden tree he ran away and hid from his Friend.

Interestingly, Adam ran and hid but God came searching and calling, "Adam . . . where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). He came searching not being satisfied that the friendship was forever destroyed. Note the question, "Where are you?" It is not possible that God did not know where Adam was hiding for one cannot hide from God. Rather He was giving Adam the opportunity to confess his mistake but he ran away and hid behind excuses only furthering the initial mistake. Our father Adam set the pattern for what we all do when we err, instead of confessing our error, we hide behind excuses when the solution is in the three words, **"I have sinned."** Running away is exactly the opposite of what St. James teaches us about drawing near to God in order for God to draw

near to us (Jms. 4:8). However, if we run away from God and hide behind a way of living that is far away from Him, God remains faithful and keeps on calling, "where are you?" Surely the Father in the parable of the Prodigal son was standing not only waiting but surely He was calling, "My son, 'where are you?'"

Often times we step into various compromising situations and in those situations we can be sure that God is not. Just as sure as we know that God cannot be there, we can be sure that He calls unto us, "where are you?" God is always calling! St. Clement of Alexandria said, "God always speaks to us." God is always looking for ways to reveal Himself more and more to us. In His final prayer in the garden immediately before His arrest and crucifixion, Christ said, "this is eternal life, that they [us] may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn. 17:3). This prayer reveals how God desires us to be living eternal life here and now! For the Kingdom of God, "does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." In other words, the Kingdom of God is not something that we can expect after a faithful person dies, but rather the Kingdom of God is lived and enjoyed for this whole Kingdom is none other than the knowledge of God and living in His presence. There is most certainly a Kingdom of God where we perfected believers will dwell eternally with God, but the source of that Joy is God Himself.

Pope Shenouda once said, "If God was not in the Kingdom of Heaven, then I don't want to go there. I want to go where God is!"

It is such desire for God that led King David to respond so loving to God's call in Psalm 27, "when You said, 'seek My face.' My heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'" (Psalm 27:8). God desires such a response from us — a response that is genuinely, and overwhelmingly loving. To this type of seeking heart God promises to reveal Himself, for "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). When we reach the end of any year we are in the habit of making resolutions that we laughingly look back on remembering how easily we broke that resolution. However, let the Feast of Transfiguration which is a few months away from New Year be a reminder to draw near to God. It is an opportunity to practice the resolution we are going to make so that we can begin practically drawing nearer to God.

“She has chosen the good part,  
which will not be taken away  
from her” (Luke 10:42)

St. John Church in Covina extends  
her deep condolences to Mr. Adeeb  
Yassa and to Rev. Fr, Lazarus Yassa  
for the departure of the blessed wife  
and mother,



## **Mrs. Shadia Yassa**

She was a cherished wife, mother,  
grandmother, sister, aunt and friend.  
Born in Alexandria Egypt, and grew  
up blessed with a large loving family,  
raised in the faith. She and her husband  
Mr. Adeeb moved to the United States  
where they lovingly raised their two  
children, Fr. Lazarus who married Dr.  
Monica Soliman, and Mary who is  
married to Dr. Andrew Cherubim.

Shadia loved God, the church, the Bible  
and the poor. She lived a true Christian  
and angelic life, humble, meek, loving  
and quiet.

Our beloved sister Shadia will be  
greatly missed. We pray the Lord  
to repose her soul in Paradise and  
reward her hundredfold, and comfort  
her husband and her son Fr. Lazarus,  
Dr. Monica, Mary, Dr. Andrew, and her  
grandchildren.

# **CONDOLENCES**

## **Tasony Wagiha Alexander**

“A virtuous woman...her worth is far above rubies”  
(Prov. 31:10)



**1/1/1932 – 6/30/2020**

Tasony Wagiha, wife of late Fr. Youhanna Iskander,  
previous priest of St. John Church, departed to Paradise  
to be with the Lord.

She is the mother of Georgette, wife of Safwat Farag,  
George & Lillian, John & Trina Alexander, Susan &  
John Ibrahim, Marina & Douglas McBratney. And grand-  
mother of Paul & Rossana, Mark & Lourdes, Joseph &  
Kimberly Andrea & Brady, Elizabeth, Natalie, Michelle,  
Alyssa, Teagan, Ramzi, Quentinn, Christopher & Emily,  
Amanda, David, Kelley, Katie, Alex, Leah, Jenna, Erin.

And Great grandmother of: Matthew, Lauren and  
Isla. She was a great wife, mother, grandmother and  
great-grandmother who raised a large family in God's  
love and fear. She lived a saintly life in love, humility,  
peace, worship and serving others.

St. John church in Covina, cannot forget her devoted  
service with her beloved husband, late Fr. Youhanna  
Alexander. We pray for the repose of her precious soul  
in Paradise of Delight and that the Lord Jesus Christ  
may reward her richly with her husband in His Kingdom,  
and comfort all her family members and friends.



# Congratulations



St. John Church congratulates  
**Melad Nakhla and his bride  
Marina**

On their blessed marriage. May the Lord grant them health and happiness in Christ.



St. John Church congratulates  
**Dr. Joseph Tawadros and  
Dr. Ragaa Refaat**

on their engagement. May the Lord bless and crown them with health, joy and complete their marriage in peace and prosperity.



**Emy Vong**

For receiving the blessings of the Christian Coptic Orthodox baptism. Emy is from Hong Kong, spent two years as a catechism student and she is very happy to be a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless her new life and confirm her in the faith, hope and love, wishing her growth in the grace and knowledge of God and happy, fruitful long life.



St. John Church congratulates  
**David Iskander  
and his bride Emma**

On their marriage, wishing them every blessing, joy, health, prosperity and long life in God's love. Congratulations also to their families.



St. John Church congratulates  
**Dr. Michael Amgad  
& his bride Sandra Tahan**  
on their wedding, praying the Lord Jesus to bless their new life together in love, harmony and joy, that they may build a strong Christian home on the Rock of Christ and His Gospel (Matthew 7: 24).

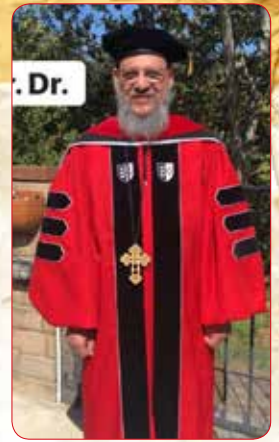
St. John Church congratulates  
**John and Nada Soliman**  
On their marriage. May the Lord who blessed the wedding of Cana of Galilee bless their new life together in love, joy and peace

St. John Church congratulates **Dr. Abram Tawadros and his wife Dr. Nancy Refaat** on the baptism of their lovely daughter, **Rita**

May the Lord Jesus bless her Christian life with health, strength and growth in the grace and stature.



St. John Church congratulates **Ronny Guirgis and his wife Nancy** on the baptism of their child **Aaron** who has become a new creation and a heavenly citizen (Phil.3: 21). May the Lord bless his life and grant him health and spiritual growth in the grace and stature in Christ.







# 2020 Graduation

St. John Church, Covina congratulates her beloved children, the College, High School and Junior High graduates, class of 2020, praying that the Lord Jesus Christ may bless their lives with continuous success in both spiritual and practical life:

## High School



*Verena Missiha*



*Sandra Ashak*



*George Bolis*



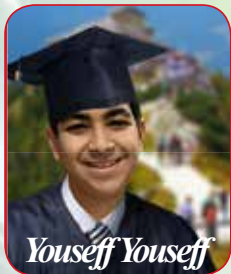
*Joyce Gerges*



*Marcileno Saleh*



*Yousseif Fahmy*



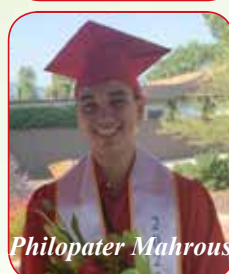
*Yousseff Yousseff*



*Fady Awadalla*



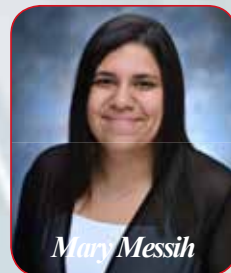
*Michael Ghuly*



*Philopater Mahrous*



*Mina Khalil*



*Mary Messih*



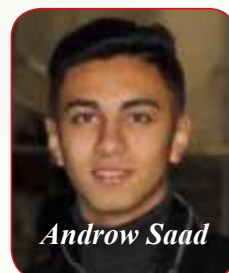
*Kermina Samaan*



*Mira Beshay*



*Sandy Gadalla*



*Andrew Saad*



*Kyrellos Guirguis*

## Jonior High



*Roseanna Ashak*



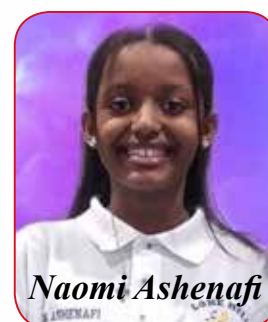
*Verona Fam*



*Rachel Ibrahim*



*Petra Youssef*



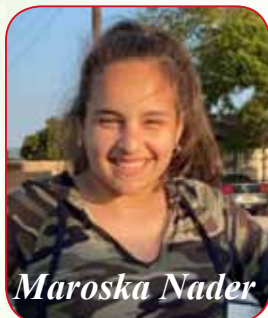
*Naomi Ashenafi*



*Katelyn Hassaballa*



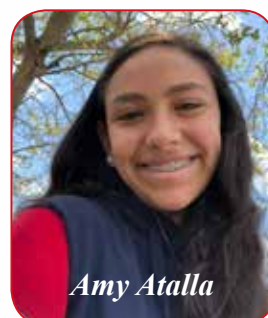
*Marina Ibrahim*



*Maroska Nader*



*Lydia Abbas*



*Amy Atalla*





# 2020 Graduation

St. John Church, Covina congratulates her beloved children, the College, High School and Junior High graduates, class of 2020, praying that the Lord Jesus Christ may bless their lives with continuous success in both spiritual and practical life:



*Abanoop Mahrous*



*Felopateer Zaky*



*Giovanni Youssef*



*John Shehata*



*Marten Saleh*



*Matthew George*



*Mina Soliman*



*Nour Ibrahim*



*Raphael Guirguis*



*Samuel Mekhail*



*Tomas Soliman*

## *Elementary*



*Jonathan Gerges*



*Shenouda Kest*



*Lavina Hanna*



*Joyce Hanna*



*Joseph Anis*



*Edward Hanna*



*Carole Mikhail*



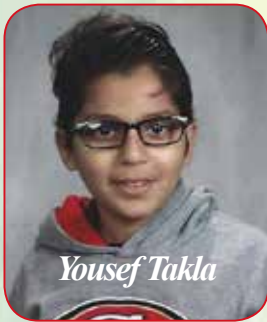
*Maria Mekhail*



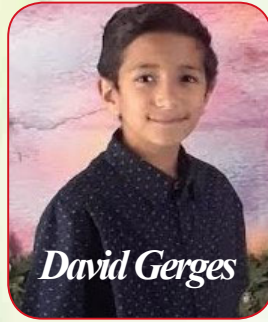
*Karin Metry*



*Flopaten Fam*



*Yousef Takla*



*David Gerges*



*Eva Ghaly*



*Marlene George*



*Danial Zaky*