

# SAINT JOHN

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A COPTIC CHRISTIAN BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
COVINA, CA



# RISEN

DEATH WHERE IS YOUR STING?





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*Verse  
of the Month*



**"In the midst of the throne stood a  
Lamb as though had been slain."  
(Rev. 5).**

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**SCHEDULE of MEETINGS and EVENTS  
for the MONTH of September & October 2015**

SUNDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
+ English Liturgy 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.  * * *	+ Liturgy 9:00 a.m - 12:00 During Lent	+ Liturgy 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. During Lent	+ Liturgy from 8-10 am  + Vespers; Bible Study 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
+ Arabic Liturgy 8:00 - 11:30 a.m.	+ <u>Thursday Morning</u> + Senior Citizen Club 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		+ Beginners' Deacons- Meeting 5: 30 p.m. + Elementary Meeting 7:15 - 8:30 p.m.
Servants' Meeting + 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday. + Boy Scouts 12 pm	+ THURSDAY Family Meeting 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Fr. Augustinos	+ Arabic Youth Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. Fr. Gawargios	+ College Youth Meeting 7:30- 9:00 p.m.
	Tutoring for new students 6:00-8:00 pm for girls & boys on Thursday 6-8 p.m.		High School & J. High Meetings 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

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# NEWS of

## March & April 2017

### 1. The Holy Lent:

The Holy Lent started on February 20, until the Feast of the Resurrection on Sunday, April 16, 2017.

Daily Liturgies during the Lent are as follows:

+ **Tuesday to Thursday: 9:00–12:00 noon.**

+ **Friday: 12:00– 3:00 p.m.**

+ **Saturday from 8: 10 a.m.**

Much prayer is greatly needed for our spiritual growth, safety of America, Egypt and the entire world.

### 2. Feast of Appearance of the Holy Cross & the 5th year Memorial of Pope Shenouda III: (March 19)

On Saturday, March 19, the church celebrates the Feast of the Appearance of the Holy Cross. The Liturgy will be in festal tunes of Palm Sunday. The procession of the cross takes place during matins. Vespers, Friday, 7 pm.

### 3. March & April Famous' Saints:

(1) March 9: Departure of Pope Kyrellos 6.

(2) March 17 Departure of Pope Shenouda III

(3) Saturday March 21: Departure of Fr. Bishoy Kamel.

(4) March 26: Departure of Fr. Mikhail Ibrahim.

### 4. The 36th. Anniversary of Fr. Gawargious Kolta:

St. John's priests, congregation and the Board of Deacons congratulate the very Rev. Fr. Gawargious on his ordination on March 15, 1981. May God grant him health, strength, fruitful service and long life.

### 5. The 4th Anniversary of Fr. George Aziz and Archdeacons Thomas and Antonious' Ordinations

St. John church congratulates Fr. George and Archdeacons Thomas and Antonious on their fourth anniversary, praying the Lord Jesus Christ to grant them every blessing in life and ministry.

### 6. The 5th Commemoration of H.H. Pope Shenouda III:

St. John Church will celebrate the fifth year memorial of our beloved father the Thrice Blessed Pope Shenouda for three days:

(1) Friday morning, March 17, H. E. Metropolitan Serapion celebrates the Liturgy from 12:00 noon.

(2) Saturday evening Vespers with H.G. Bishop Kirollos; (3) Sunday, March 19, 2017 H.G. Bishop Abraham will serve the Liturgy then at 11:30 a.m. at the Church Hall will be lunch, choir and video about the great pope.



### 7. H.H. Pope Tawadros II:

+ On January 6, Pope Tawadros received the President El-Sisi of Egypt, who came to St. Mark Cathedral to congratulate the Copts in Christmas and he brought roses for the martyrs of St. Peter church.

+ Pope Tawadros delivered a pastoral message, through a video conference, to the joint clergy conference of the two dioceses of Los Angeles and South America, which was held in LA from Feb. 13-15, 2017



### 8. H. E. Metropolitan Serapion:

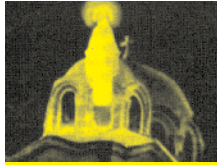
+ On February 2nd H.E. blessed St. John Church in Covina by celebrating the Liturgy and the Clergy Meeting along with their grace Bishop Abraham and Bishop Kerillos.



## News of April 2017

### 1) April 2nd Apparition of St. Mary in Zytoun, Egypt; Sunday of Baptism & Lenten Luncheon after the Liturgy:

Tickets will be available in the Book Store on behalf of the needy



### 2) Feast of Annunciation: (April 7)

On Friday, April 7, the church celebrates this Lord's Major Feast with the Liturgy from 11:00



### 3) Palm Sunday: April 9

St. John Church celebrates this Major Lord's Feast on April 9, in one Liturgy. The service starts from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, followed by the general funeral until 2:00 p.m.



### 4) Covenant Thursday: (April 13)

Pascha prayers start at 8:00 a.m., followed by the rite of washing of the feet, then the Liturgy of the Eucharist until 2:00 p.m.

The evening Pasch is from 5:00-9:00 pm.



### 5) Good Friday: (April 14)

The church celebrates this great Day of Redemption and Salvation from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.



### 6) Feast of the Resurrection (April 16):

The Easter Liturgy will be celebrated on Saturday, April 15 from 7:00 p.m. until mid-night, followed by the Agape meal in the Church Hall.



### 7) Easter Picnic: (April 16):

On Easter day, Sunday, April 16, St. John Church in Covina celebrates Easter picnic at Bonnell Park in San Dimas from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Food is served by Pot-Luck.

# The Glorious Feast of The Cross



By Pope Shenouda III

The Church celebrates the Feast of the Cross twice every year, on March 19th and September 27th. On the feast of the Cross we remember many vital matters: Spiritual, theological, doctrinal and symbolic.

***(1) We remember the love with which Christ loved us to the point where He died for our sake:***

We remember His words, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Sacrifice is the greatest sign of love, and self-sacrifice is the summit of sacrifice.

***(2) In the Cross we also remember Redemption:***

A soul that dies for another soul, this is the principle of atonement. We were under the judgment of death, then came He who would die for us in order for us to live. His death on the Cross can be described as follows, “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6).

***(3) In the Cross we remember endurance.***

The great sufferings that our Master endured, whether the sufferings of the flesh of which He said, “They pierced my Hands and my Feet; I can count all My bones”, or the sufferings of dishonor, He endured happily for our sake; that is, whilst He was happy with our salvation. Hence, the Apostle said about Him, “... who for the joy that was set before him before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...” (Hebrews 12:2). How great then is this endurance if it is with joy?! This is a lesson for us.

***(4) In the Cross we remember forgiveness;***

How our sins were forgiven on the Cross and how the Master spoke to the Heavenly Father whilst on the Cross saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Lk. 23:34).

***(5) In making the sign of the Cross we remember***

***the Holy Trinity, the one God.***

***(6) In the Cross we remember the Incarnation and its aim:***

We remember whilst making the sign of the cross how the Lord came down from heaven to earth to transfer us from the left to the right, from darkness to light and from death to life.

***(7) In the Cross we remember our sins:***

Our sins that He carried on the Cross and for which He was incarnated and crucified. With this remembrance we are humbled and our souls contrited, and we are thankful for the price which He paid for our sakes, “For you were bought at a price” (1 Cor. 6:20).

***(8) In the Cross we remember the Divine Justice:***

That forgiveness was not on account of justice, but Divine Justice fulfilled its right on the Cross. Therefore, we must not underestimate sin, which has such a price.

***(9) When we remember the Cross, we remember the great power that defeated the devil:***

All of the devil’s effort to destroy mankind was completely lost on the Cross with the redemption which the Lord offered. Hence, the devil is extremely terrified of the Cross. On the other hand, we find in it safety and protection, that is why we remember the Apostle’s words, “But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

***(10) In the remembrance of the Cross, we remember how we should be crucified with Him:***

As the Apostle said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). We also remember the Lord Jesus Christ saying, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34).





# The Scarlet Cord of Blood

*through the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation*

Through the rivers of blood of the sacrifices which started right after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, we find the plan of God for our redemption and salvation. They were types of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which shall be shed on the cross in the fullness of time.

These are some examples of that scarlet cord of which Rahab put in her window as a token of her salvation and security (Joshua 2:18, 21): The skin coats (Gen. 3:21), Able's offering (Gen. 4:4), Noah's burnt offerings (8:20), Abraham's ram and Isaac's sacrifice, the blood of the lamb of the Passover (Exod. 12), the four bloody sacrifices of Leviticus. This scarlet cord of blood is penetrating almost every book of the Scriptures till Revelation 1:5 & 5:6 & 7:9-14 & 12:11 & 13:8).

**The key verse** that explains all these sacrifices is in Leviticus 17:11 says: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

That is why St. Paul says: "And according to the law almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). The idea of the blood sacrifices in the Old Testament as a type of a shadow of the blood of Christ is explained in detail in the Letter to the Hebrews chapters 9 & 10.

When the Lord Jesus instituted the **Sacrament of Eucharist**, He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying:

"Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:26-28).

St. Peter assures the same fact by saying: "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver of gold... **but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation**

**of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."** (1 Pet. 1: 18-20).

## **10 Essential Works of the Blood of Christ**

**1. Redemption:** "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. 1:7 & Col. 1:14).

**2. Forgiveness:** "This is My blood which is shed for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28).

**3. Cleaning:** "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 Jn. 1:7) "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." (Rev. 7:14).

**4. Reconciliation:** "By Him- Jesus- to reconcile all things to Himself... having made peace through the blood of His cross." (Col. 1:20).

**5. Victory over Satan:** "And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb" (Rev 12:11).

**6. Justification:** "Being justified freely by His grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus by His blood" (Rom. 3:24).

**7. Overcoming the World:** "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14).

**8. Sanctification:** "For by one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." (Heb. 10:14).

**9. Rescue from Judgment:** "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you" (Exod. 12:13).

**10. The right of entering into Heaven:** "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus..." (Heb. 10:19) & "These are the ones who...washed their robes in the blood of the lamb" (Rev. 7:14).



# THE HOLY PASSION WEEK

by Fr. Gawargious Kolta



The church, during the holy lent, instructs us to live a life of repentance, returning to the Fatherly bosom, asking Him to reign over our hearts. The Passion Week starts after Palm Sunday celebrations. In this week the church follows the Lord's steps, in His passion and agony, contemplating on those holy memories. For this reason, many believers spend this Week in the church, in worship and meditation, abstaining from eating the whole day.

During this Week, the walls of the church, the icons, the pillars and the lecterns are covered with black cloth, to create a mourning atmosphere. Special grieving hymns and songs are chanted during the prayers. All the church sacraments are inactive during this Week, except those of confession and priesthood. No church masses are held in that Week, except the liturgy of Covenant Thursday and that of Bright Saturday. The prayers of Agpeya are replaced by the Passover (Pascha) hymn, remembering the suffering of the Passover Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ and following the incidents of every day hour by hour.

## The Passover Lamb:

The story of the Passover lamb is mentioned in (Exod. 12). It precedes the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt, fleeing from the slavery to freedom. This lamb is a symbol for our Lord Jesus. It must be a one year old male, without blemish, kept under observation from the 10th day to the 14th day of the first month of the year. They ate it roasted in fire, with bitter herbs, without breaking its bones.

Similarly, our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God who carried the sins of the world, stayed in Jerusalem under observation by the Jewish high priest and elders. He kept going to the temple and coming back to Bethany for four days, till He offered himself on Covenant Thursday, as a holy Sacrifice, before being captured by the Jews. On that day He offered Himself figuratively when He offered His body and His blood to His disciples. The actual crucifixion was accomplished the following day (Friday), the Passover day. St. Paul mentioned that: "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

The church service during the Pascha is performed in the second portion of the nave, because our Lord was crucified outside Jerusalem, so we go forth unto Him outside the camp bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13).

## The Pascha Hymn:

The church hymn during the Passion Week addresses the suffering Lord, saying: "Thine is the Power, the Glory, the Blessings and the Might forever Amen". The heavenly hosts and the victorious church chant this hymn in front the divine throne (Rev. 5:12). The church chants this hymn twelve times in the beginning of every canonical hour (five day hours and five night hours), remembering the sorrow, the distress and the great agony of our Lord during this week that ended by His crucifixion and physical death.

We say to our Lord: "Thine is the Power" in Your weakness, humiliation and distress. We remember that You are the source of all power and authority. We tell Him: "Thine is the Glory" for You emptied Yourself from all glory and privilege, taking the shape of a servant in offering Yourself as a sacrifice on the cross for our redemption. We tell Him: "Thine is the Blessings" for You could bear the shame of the cross and the curse of crucifixion to release us from the shame of sin. We sing to Him: "Thine is the Might" O King of kings and Lord of Lords, in spite of Your weakness, O Almighty God (Phil. 2:5-8).

## The Agony of the Lord in the Passion Week:

Our Lord Jesus Christ lived this week in sorrow and distress, and He said before His crucifixion: "**My Soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death**" (Mat. 26:38). This feeling was due to the following facts:

1- His soul was sorrowful for the Jews, the elected nation who were preferred over all nations. This special people whom God chose, gave them the Law and disciplined them by the prophets, rejected Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (Jn. 1:11). Thus the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: "**I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Alas sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger, the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward**" (Isa. 1:1-4).

2-The Lord's soul was sorrowful **for mankind** who were creat-



ed on God's own image, but gave up themselves to sin and disobedience. They became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened, and they lost their purity (Rom. 1:21-23).

3- The Lord's soul was sorrowful for those people who did not give fruit despite all His teachings and signs: the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up and the poor had the gospel preached to them, but, they were offended because of Him (Mat. 11:5,6). They did not acknowledge what He did to them and did not repent.

4- The Lord's soul was sorrowful for those wicked people who were **deceived by their leaders**, changing their minds within few days. While they glorified Him and considered Him as their King during His triumphal entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, they came after few days to capture Him, carrying lanterns, torches and weapons. Those people were stirred up by the priests cried saying: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him" (Lk. 23:21).

5- It was sorrowful to find the **Jewish priests, scribes and the elders**, full of envy and disobeying the Law of Moses. They ignored the prophecies that were mentioned in their books about Him. They were hypocrites, and did not allow those who were entering the kingdom of heaven to go in and shut it against them (Mat. 23:13). Those murderers dealt treacherously and sentenced the Lord to death, after spitting in His face, beating Him and striking Him with the palms of their hands (Mat. 26:65-67). The Lord had foretold that those elders were the wicked vine-dressers who should be destroyed by the owner of the vineyard, and the vineyard would be given to others (Mk. 12:1-12).

6- The Lord's soul was exceedingly sorrowful for **His disciple Judas**, who betrayed Him and sold Him for thirty pieces of silver; then hanged himself and lost his eternity. He did not listen to the warnings of his Master who tried several times to save him from eternal perdition.

7- He was sorrowful for **His Disciple Peter, who denied Him three times**, in front of the servants of the high priest. The Lord had predicted Peter's denial and He told him: "**When you have returned strengthen your brethren**" (Lk. 22:31-34). Peter, instead of praying, left his Master tried by the Sanhedrin and sat by the fire among the servants.<sup>1</sup>

8- The Lord's soul was exceedingly sorrowful for **His disciples** who celebrated with Him the last supper and then left their Master deeply distressed, praying alone in Gethsemane, and they all fell asleep (Mat. 26:36-46). When He got arrested, they escaped and hid themselves away from the crowds. The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, that the Lord had trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Him (Isa. 63:3).

9- His soul was sorrowful for **Jerusalem**, the city of the great King, the prophets and the fathers. This city was the symphony of the Psalmist, who prayed for the peace of Jerusalem and prosperity within its places (Ps. 87, 122, 128). Our Lord wept over it and lamented, saying: "For the days will come upon you

when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you and your children, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Lk. 19:43, 44). The Lord wanted many times to gather the children of Jerusalem together, to protect them and care for them as the hen gathers her brood under her wings, but they were not willing (Lk. 13:34,35). The beautiful city was destroyed. The great temple, which was visited every year by many pilgrims in many generations, was completely desolate. The Lord's soul was sorrowful for the children of Israel who were killed by the Romans soldiers, during this embankment in the year 70 AD. The Lord told the women who lamented Him in His way to Calvary: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk. 23:28), how horrible was the fate of Jerusalem, the temple and the inhabitants, living therein.

10- His soul was sorrowful for the **unbearable agony of crucifixion** and what the Jews did to Him, the green wood. He had predicted what was going to happen for Him, thus He prayed with a deeply distressed soul, that an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. Being in distress and great sorrow he prayed more earnestly and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Lk. 22:39-44). He suffered from **the unjust trials of the Sanhedrin, the governor, and the cruelty of the Roman soldiers**. He was predicting the mocking and despise of the people, and the bleeding wounds and the crown of thorns, and the unbearable agony of crucifixion. The prophet Isaiah foretold us the facts, concerning His agony that were precisely fulfilled. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53).

**Now, the Lord's soul is also sorrowful for the souls, who did not enjoy His salvation.** How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation (Heb. 2:3)? He is sorrowful for those **who betray Him** and ignore His commandments, for temporary pleasure and wordily lusts. He is sorrowful for those who **sell themselves to Satan**, preferring the life of sin and do not appreciate His great love, forgetting that He paid His precious blood that was shed on the cross as a price for our freedom and eternal life.

Also, He is sorrowful for **His children who will not be with Him in the heavenly kingdom** and will be punished into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, because they did not have good works and mercy (Mat. 25:41-46). He is sorrowful for **many Christians who are lukewarm**, faltering between two ways: following Christ and loving the life of sin and conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:22).

**The Lord did the sacrifice of love for all mankind. We must acknowledge what He did for us. We, Christians, must be faithful to Christ, presenting our bodies a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1), by walking in the Spirit, becoming yielded instruments for the service of God, spiritually, physically and mentally.**

# Let This Cup Pass from Me



BY FR. AUGUSTINOS HANNA



*"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39)*

When Jesus prayed 'Father take this cup, ' it was a real prayer by a real man who was fully submitted to His Father's will.

After sharing the Last Supper with His disciples, "Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him" (Lk.22:39). The Garden of Gethsemane was a place where He met often with His disciples.

Once they arrived, Jesus gave His disciples specific instructions to pray. Then "He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed" (Luke 22:41). Later Jesus finds the Eleven asleep and again charges them to "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:41).

The picture in St. Luke's gospel of the event is briefer than the more detailed account of Gethsemane in the other synoptic gospels. Those Gospels describe the Lord Jesus returning three times to find them sleeping! But St. Luke wanted to intensify the focus on Jesus' relationship to His Father in prayer. Here we are taken into Jesus' heart as never before. In Gethsemane we see an aspect of Jesus that has never before appeared in any of the Gospels. This is the "Holy of Holies" of Jesus' heart.

## **No Hesitation**

Up to now, Jesus has shown no hesitation. During the temptation in the wilderness, He remained unintimidated and immovable (Lk. 4). When His hometown people had attempted to kill Him, He eluded them with assurance (Luke 4:29,30). Shortly after that, Jesus silenced a screaming demoniac with a cool "Be quiet!" (Lk. 4:33-35). His preaching was fearless, as seen in the six fiery woes Jesus delivered to the Scribes and Pharisees (Lk. 11:37-54). And toward the end, as He taught in the temple, His repeated conflicts with the authorities were all done with total serenity. He had calmly instructed His disciples about His impending death. After the Transfiguration, He said to them, "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men" (9:44).

A short time later, "As the time approached for him to be

taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51).

Just before ascending the hill to the Holy City, He said, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again" (Lk. 18:31-33).

In the Upper Room, He was eager to eat the Passover with His own-though He knew that He was the Passover Lamb who would be devoured! (Lk. 22:14-16). Finally when the troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came with lanterns, torches and weapons, Jesus went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, "I am He", and when He said to them, "I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:3-6).

## **Deeply Distressed**

Nevertheless, in the Garden, Jesus "began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.' He said to them (Mark 14:33,34). St. Luke adds, "An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Lk. 22:43,44).

As Jesus poured out His heart, an angel strengthened Him. And He was so in anguish (literally, "agony") that His sweat fell like drops of blood from a running wound and splashed on the ground. Jesus' body and soul were racked with anguish. Jesus knew that death is the "wages of sin" (Rom.6:23)- and that He would bear that judgment. He knew that He would become sin (a sacrifice of sin- 2 Cor. 5:21).

The Holy One who is worshipped from angels and arch-angels will become a mass of sin and carrier of sin of the whole world. It was intolerable to Him "Who did know no sin" to bear the sins of mankind in all generations including you and me! It was much easier to Him to endure all the physical pain and torture without complaint, rather than carrying sin on His blessed head.

In great-inspired words Isaiah described His agony saying:



“He is despised and rejected by men.

A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... He carried our sorrows...

Wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity

Of us all.” (Isa. 53:3-7).

He knew that He would pay the total wages in full. He also knew that death is a result of the judgment of God (Rom.5: 12)- and He would bear that terrible judgment – and that He would propitiate it to the full (1 John 2:2).

That is why Jesus was filled of such anguish. That was also the reason for His prayer, “*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done*” (Luke 22:42). Jesus began with the expression “Father” which calls to mind His relationship with the One to whom He prayed, and also the character of that One. Though Jesus is God and is co-eternal and co-equal with God, He exists in relation to the Father as Son. They always existed in eternal, perpetual, unbroken relationship (Jn. 1:1-3).

### **Submission to His Father:**

Christ’s invocation “Father” reminds us that God loves to give to His Son. The phrase (meant for all of God’s children) how much more will your Father in heaven give...” (Lk.11:13). Jesus asked His Father who had never refused Him. At the same time, **His using the word Father invoked protection.**

Basically, as St. Cyril says, “Prayer is offered to the Father, through the Spirit, by the Son”, because it is the role of Father to protect. Thus this request went directly to the Father’s heart. He would do anything to protect His Son. Jesus’ use of “Father” also suggests submission. As He Himself declared, “I always do what pleases Him”.

We must remind ourselves that this is a real prayer by a real man (notwithstanding His divinity) with real deep feelings of sorrow and pain. Jesus’ words if you are willing addressed the disposition of His loving Father. He was not praying to an impotent Father, but the Omnipotent Father, for whom all things are possible. God can do anything!

Isaiah records that once God had taken the cup of wrath that Judah had drunk and put it into the hands of their godless tormentors (Isa. 51:17-23). Perhaps God would do a similar thing for His Son! Perhaps there could be some other “cup”, some other way.

Christ’s Gethemane prayer testifies to the authenticity of the Incarnation, that He was a real man as well as truly God. As a man, He had placed the exercise of His omniscience at the discretion of the Father. Jesus was saying that if there was any other way. He wanted the Father to use it. He was not seeking to disobey God’s will, but in His manhood He desired to not suffer the shame of the cross and all it entailed.

The Lord’s plea to “take this cup from Me” was grounded in the fact of His absolute sinless purity, and the fact that the cup was filled with sin, filth and wrath. The cup was steaming with a brew so awful, so fearful, so dreadful, so unbearable, that Jesus’ soul was reluctant to accept. But the Lord drank our cup of bitterness, filth and condemnation and gave us a new cup of the New Covenant of love, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, victory and eternal life (Matt. 26:26-28).

### **No Other Way**

**Was Jesus prayer heard? Yes, though His request was denied!** In the letter to the Hebrews we read, in reference to Gethsemane, that, “*During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His godly fear*” (Heb.5:7). His submission was “Yet not my will, but yours be done” That is the prayer God answers. Jesus’ prayer was one of great faith because He trusted the Father with everything. All true prayers of faith end with “Yet not my will, but yours be done.”

Jesus was ready for the culmination of His mission and would soon stand before Caiaphas, before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, before Herod, and before His executioners—doing His Father’s will perfectly throughout. He was the model of fearless, loving strength.

But the disciples gave themselves to sleep, brought on by their emotional exhaustion, and perhaps by their Pass-over feast. They had been so eager to fight God’s war with man’s weapons (22:38), but they now were convinced of a more essential weapon-prayer. Their failures would be there for all to see- their silly use of the sword, their denial by the bravest of them.

Still, there in the garden the omnipotent Father listened to His perfect Son’s agonized pleas for an alternative way. If there had been any other way, He would have done it. But because there was not, He willed His Son’s death!

What a blasphemous insult to God when people think sin does not matter, or to say that God does not care about us! Instead, we should join St. John in amazement: “What manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 Jn.3:1 & Jn.3:16).



## The Armor of The Roman Soldier



# The Armor of God

In Ephesians 6:10-17, we are told what to wear to protect us from the devil.

1. Buckle the **BELT OF TRUTH** around your waist. Always tell the truth, admire others who are honest, and remember that God never lies. (Read Psalm 100:5)

2. Strap the **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** on your chest.

Protect your heart by not letting harmful feelings in or out. Do not mistreat other people, and when others hurt you, forgive them and then forget about it. (Read Isa. 54:14)

3. Fit your feet with the **GOSPEL OF PEACE**.

The Bible says the Lord hates feet that are fast in running to mischief. Being kind and considerate to others will help you find the path to feeling content and happy. (Read Proverbs 2:20).

4. Take up the **SHIELD OF FAITH**.

Trust God to take care of you. Don't worry about what might happen, for God promises us He will help us get through anything. (Read Psalm 56:11)

5. Wear the **HELMET OF SALVATION** on your head.

Use your brain and learn about Jesus. Believe that He is God, that He came back to life after being crucified, and that when you die you will go to heaven. (Read Romans 10:9)

6. Grasp the **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT** in your hand.

Read and study the Bible to learn about God's Spirit. The Bible is the Word of God and is a mighty weapon against evil. (Read Hebrews 4:12)





# The DNA Evidence for a Creator



By Dr. Emil Goubran

## Does scientific evidence support the belief in a higher intelligence that could have created life?

DNA (acronym for Deoxyribo-Nucleic-Acid) is the material found in cell nuclei and stores genetic information that controls all body functions. This includes all mechanisms pertaining to the development of the human body from the first embryonic cell to its full term, body growth after birth, functions of all body organs and systems, and healing mechanisms. DNA even controls the aging process and how body functions will ultimately stop. In other words, DNA contains all biological information that controls all processes from the day of conception to the day of demise of the human physical body.

In depth study of human genetic material shows that the information stored in DNA is in the form of a chemical language that uses four particular molecules as its alphabet. Those molecules are called bases and are given the acronyms A, T, C, and G by biochemists to symbolize the alphabet. Each three of these letters constitutes a word. The DNA language is, therefore, made up of several sequences of those three letter words. Each particular sequence represents a command code to perform a certain function, e.g., synthesis of a protein molecule. In conclusion, the information stored in DNA represents a very complicated, specific and highly sophisticated biological software program written in biochemical language of infinite capacity to address all possible functions of the human body. This also applies to all biological entities belonging to either the animal or plant kingdoms.

In mid 1980s there was a major research project before the US Congress for discussion. The proposed research aimed at reading and recording the actual sequence of the entire genetic code of human DNA and was called "The Human Genome Project". The word "Genome" refers to all the genetic (hereditary) information

encoded in the entire human DNA. The scientist that sub-

mitted the proposal to the congress was Dr. James Watson, one of two scientists who discovered the biochemical structure of the DNA in 1953 and was later awarded the Noble Prize for his historic discovery. After he made the case for the project before the congress and got the approval around 1987, he became the first director of the genome project, which started in 1990. Two years later Dr. Francis Collins took over the project, which was completed in 2003.

In his book "The language of God", published in 2006, Dr. Collins talks about his experience with this research project and shares his thoughts about the "amazing complexity of the information carried within each cell of the human body." In order to demonstrate such complexity and the vast information carried in the human DNA, Dr. Collins states that "reading of that genetic code at a rate of one letter per second would take thirty one years, even if reading continued day and night". He also states that "printing these letters out in a regular font size on normal bond paper and binding them all together would result in a tower about the height of the Washington Monument", which is about 555 feet high.

It is well known that behind every computer software program there is one or more intelligent programmers. The question now is; "Who is the Author of the genetic codes for all living organisms?" It is now scientifically confirmed that the genetic code written in the human DNA is a highly complex and specific biological program written in biochemical language that must require a very high level of intelligence and can't be the product of time and chance as the evolutionary theory states. This DNA evidence points strongly to the necessity of an intelligent cause (creator) behind the origin of life. We call Him almighty God.

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# On Fire for God



By Mark M. Hanna

This article is not about the 3 Holy Youth who were thrown in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3), because the fire did not burn them. Nor is this article about Joseph the Righteous who was thrown in the fiery furnace of temptation, when his master's wife repeatedly enticed him with fornication. This article is not about Timothy who in his youth was ordained bishop of one of the most corrupt cities in the Roman Empire—Ephesus—home of the goddess Diana. This article is also not about anyone who was thrown into a compromising setting and fell. This article, rather, is about those heroes and heroines who took on kings, empires, powers, demons, trials, temptations, and tortures, but overcame them and triumphed ultimately.

The heroism of these men, women, and children makes for the greatest adventure stories that we can tell our children. These were all superheroes who were not empowered by anything but their God. No superhero suit, utility belt, cape, or bulletproof bracelets, but the cross of their Savior. The cross that their savior was crucified upon was like a trophy that they had to each have. Finishing their term in this life was the greatest graduation ceremony where Christ Himself stood handing out their graduation certificates or entry passes into His eternal rest.

How happy are we when our loved ones earn a higher honor, position, or ranking and how displeased are we when they receive that gift which cannot be taken from them? This is the paradox of earthly wisdom! St. Paul addressed this paradox when he wrote, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (v. 18). The seen goal is not an end while the unseen Goal is the ultimate end, the lasting end, or "that good part, which will not be taken away" (Luke 10:42).

There are indeed those who were put or even thrown into situations that tried their faith as through fire. However, these all gladly endured the fire of trial finding delivery in their God who was Himself tried by the fire of our sins. If you ever visited the Coliseum in Rome, undoubtedly you will have goose-bumps all over your body realizing the toll all those who were tortured and martyred for Christ there paid—their lives. Do not think that all those who were martyred were led to martyrdom by their executioners, for many went voluntarily, despising the shame, humiliation, and pain of these momentary sufferings (Hebrews 12:2).

Executioners over time invented new ways to torture Christian men, women, and children. Being thrown to wild beasts made for a great spectator sport for the bloodthirsty emperors and spectators who filled the coliseum. The beasts gored, tore and ripped the flesh and clothes of these heroic martyrs. The early Christians endured all these joyfully looking past the pain and humiliation to the Reward. The focus on the Reward caused many of them to accomplish near perfection in their struggle. For example, St. Berbetwa, who for the sake of preserving her chastity, reached to cover the portion of her leg that was uncovered when a devouring beast attacked her. She did not want to lose the crown of chastity that she protected all her life.

These heroes were not challenged by the life or death odds that faced them, but were



themselves the lions who scared their executioners. This is our legacy as sons and daughters of the martyrs. Unfortunately, however, we glory in their legacy but do not imitate their courage in taking on the various challenges that the world hurls at us. Today, the world does not throw us to wild beasts, but Satan will not be left without a device to try God's children. He poses everyday-challenges that we all experience. For example, the trials on our faithfulness to God by flooding the television airwaves by provocative content in shows, movies and commercials during sporting events. There are temptations at schools or universities to disbelieve God's authority over the creation or that there was even a creation, and if there was no creation then there is good reason to doubt what we know as God and His word altogether. There are pressures to be like the sons of the world so that we, as Christians, would not be despised. Little by little this thinking has come into our sacred assemblies, i.e., church services, celebrations, e.g., weddings, engagements, bridal showers, and graduation celebrations.

We are, in fact, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God that trivializes the world. The world has been challenged by us and our resistance to its enticement. What is a dance, a movie, a passing thrill compared to life eternal with God? We are those who look to the example of heroes like Christ, St.



Peter, St. Paul, St. Mark, St. Demiana, St. Antony, St. Athanasius, Sts. Palagia and Mary of Egypt, and many, many more.

This article is about:

### **Christ our Example**

Starting with Describing Christ's focus on the goal, St. Paul wrote, "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:1-2). Lest we become weary and lose sight of the goal, St. Paul goes on to write, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (v.3). This was the focus that our Lord had so that He went to Jerusalem where He knew the Jews wanted to capture Him, and He went all the way to the cross because the goal was our salvation. It was not His eternity that was on the line, for He is God, but rather ours.

### **St. Paul As An Example**

St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk as you have us for a pattern" (Phil. 3:17). He tells them of his achievements here on earth, but he points them to what's important saying, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). To young Timothy, the new Bishop of Ephesus he writes, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day...(2 Timothy 4:7-8). To the Romans he reminds them of the inseparable love that eternally ties us to Christ,

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter". Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 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. 8:35-39).

To the Hebrews he encourages them to endure and not be discouraged by the severity of the persecution against their faith writing, "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed..." (Heb. 12:4). In fact, he writes this verse encouraging them to struggle against sin, but this goes to the same point, since whatever separates us from Christ is sin. Any power, goal, or aim, meant to discourage us from wholeheartedly following God, or taking precedence over God as our goal, must be correctly put in the right order of priority, i.e., second.



## **GOD Does Not Always Stop The Storms!**

**LIFE USUALLY HAS ITS STORMS.**

Sometimes storms come naturally, sometimes sent by the Devil and sometimes God causes them to happen.

God will not always keep us away from the storms, but He is always near in the times of trouble.

He does not always calm the storm, but he does give us the inner strength to endure it and to have a safe landing.

For it is in facing storms that we grow.

When the Lord Jesus Christ Himself endured the terrible storm of anxiety in the garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion; He said, "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death". God did not stop the storm. Rather He strengthened Him inwardly to be able to face the cross.

Let us trust Him to keep us safe whether He gives us calm or storm.

God could have kept Daniel out of the lion's den... He could have kept the three Hebrew children out of the fiery furnace... He could have kept Sts. Paul and Silas out of the Jail...But God has never promised to keep us out of hard places or to still all our storms.

What He has promised is to go with us through rough seas and hard places and to bring us through victoriously. He promised to remain with us always in the same boat.

**"I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE" (Matt. 28:20).**

# The Orthodox Life of Service



by John Awad  
From St. John Youth



“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus,” (Galatians 3:28). These are the words St. Paul wrote to the churches in the province of Galatia as he earnestly sought to remind the believers that though they were of different races and backgrounds, they were all brethren and sons of God through their faith and baptism in Christ Jesus. As I read this verse, I could not help but find comfort in knowing that our God is not one of division or strife, but a unifying force even in times of deep divide. For while our nation seems polarized, our mother the Church reminds us that within Her womb we are all one indivisible body, regardless of our ethnicity, backgrounds, employment, or social status.

This sentiment is reiterated within the “Inward Mission of Our Church”, a writing of Father Justin Popovich. Father Popovich was the late Archimandrite and Professor of the Theological School in Belgrade, Serbia. He wrote a series of texts now compiled in the *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, where he outlines the essential practices of our Church and identifies how life through Her connects us eternally with Christ. He eloquently describes the Church as “God-human, eternity incarnated within the boundaries of time and space. She is here in this world but she is not of this world [John 18:36]. She is in the world in order to raise it on high where she herself has her origin. The Church is ecumenical, catholic (universal), God-human, ageless, and it is therefore a blasphemy—an unpardonable blasphemy against Christ and against the Holy Ghost—to turn the Church into a national institution, to narrow her down to petty, transient, time-bound aspirations

and ways of doing things. Her purpose is beyond nationality, ecumenical, all-embracing; to unite all men in Christ, all without exception to nation or race or social strata.” He then repeats Galatians 3:28, adding that the Church brings unity practically through the holy sacraments and “God-human” works of ascetic virtues.

But what does this mean to us in practice in the present day? How do we become a part of the Church and how does the Church in turn make us one body? Popovich’s answer is simple but oft-overlooked: The Church unites all people through the sharing of the Holy Eucharist, the flesh and blood of Christ. In turn, we as humans participate in the divine energies of the Logos by living a life filled with the virtues of faith, prayer, fasting, loving others, compassion and giving of our time, money, and alms. This latter portion is what I would like to focus on, the practical side of Christianity that is forgotten amongst the politically-fueled arguments and disputes of our generation.

Popovich outlines the cornerstones of Christian life: love of all people, faith in Christ, fasting and prayer, and humility and meekness. He defines this Love as one that “knows no bounds, does not question who is worthy and who is not, but loves them all; loving friends and enemies, loving sinners and evildoers, without however loving their sins and their crimes. It blesses the accursed, and shines both on the evil and the good”. This familiarly echoes Christ’s novel teachings to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and do good to those who spitefully use and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Practically, this means a genuine effort and exertion of energy on our part. In order to deepen our love and faith, we are to pursue the ascetic practices of



prayer and fasting. Popovich writes that this virtue “must become our way of life [as it is] the Christ-given means of purging not only the human personhood but also society, the people, and the human race at large, of every defilement. It is prayer and fasting which are able to cleanse our people’s souls from our defilements and sinning.” He writes that it is the Church’s mission to “infuse” these virtues and ascetic practices into the people’s everyday lives. In order to save ourselves and the world, we must live with the “meekness of sheep and harmlessness of doves” to bring about genuine change in ourselves and others.

Through a dedication to asceticism and devotion to following the guidance of the Church, one can begin to allow Christ to shape them for His mission outlined in the “Parable of the Virgins”. In Matthew 25, Christ defines part of this mission in a framework of actions for us to partake in. He addresses the righteous, saying, “Come you blessed of My Father...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was in prison and you came to Me...inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to Me,” (Matt. 25: 34-40). Christ clearly identifies those groups who are most marginalized and forgotten in society as those most in need. He challenges us to reach out those who are hungry and thirsty, both physically and spiritually. We are to serve them with our money but more importantly our time; not content to simply share material wealth but also looking to eagerly share the more important treasures of the teachings of Christ and the Church. While we are sometimes satisfied simply with donations and tithing of our goods, Christ urges us to go a step further and meet people where they are. He earnestly calls us to leave our comfort and offer help directly to those struggling members of our society. He calls us to put ourselves in situations where we can converse with those outside of the Church and give them a “reason for the hope that we have” as St. Peter writes in his First epistle.

Christ above lists those who we ought to

help on daily basis: those in physical poverty, prisoners, and those without a home. Within the body of our Church, we have a diverse group of skilled, educated members of all classes with a variety of gifts and talents. If we were to put together our blessings, we can truly be a force of change in this world for all to see and glorify our Father in heaven. The opportunity for change in our nation is at a peak, just as the need for service is also at its highest. As everyday people, we can serve our neighbors through visiting soup kitchens, organizing food and clothing drives for our communities, helping new immigrants adjust and acclimate to our nation, and forming groups that visit prisoners to offer them a variety of services. In our own Church we can immerse ourselves in the teaching of the Bible and Church Fathers through Sunday school and catechetical courses. We can then use this to serve as youth leaders and role models for those children in desperate need of guidance. In short, the opportunities to serve are endless for all who are ready and able.

St. James summarizes the heart of service aptly, “pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). While one of eternal depth, the Orthodox life in Christ is indeed one of simplicity. It means resisting evil tirelessly through dedications to prayer, virtue and ascetic practice. It means greeting all we come across with a smile and readiness to lend a helping hand. It means becoming involved in our communities by serving people of all ages, ethnicities, genders, and beliefs, even if they are different than our own. It means that before we are Republicans and Democrats, Liberal or Conservative, Egyptian or American, we are Orthodox Christians and followers of Christ above all else. United, we all serve together yearning for the day we hear the sweet words of our God saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord,” (Matt. 25:23).





# The Bible

## *Our God-given Navigational Tool*

**LIFE IN THE MODERN WORLD** is like trying

to navigate an uncharted, rapidly changing, unpredictable ocean. We have sailed off the edge of our best maps. The first need is to have a fixed, unchanging reference point. That North Star is our triune God, made known in the Lord Jesus Christ. Navigation, however, requires much more than a fixed reference point. We may know how to find the North Star in the night skies, but we don't have the slightest idea how to find our location by using it. Even if we did, we would need the appropriate tool to enable us to bring the North Star down to our horizon.

A Christian knows that the Bible is the God-given navigational tool to enable us to reach our God-intended destination, which is likeness to Jesus, for the glory of God and the good of others. But we need more than knowledge that the Bible is our spiritual sextant. We need to know how to use it properly.

### **1. Navigating life requires a deep confidence in the Word of God.**

The Lord Jesus lived, loved, and was loyal to God's revelation in Scripture. It was his guidebook for life, his protection in spiritual warfare, his authority in teaching, and his directive for his ministry. He obeyed its commands, and he honored its meaning with his teaching. The implications are obvious and essential. If our Lord and Savior shaped his life by Scripture, how could we imagine we need it less than he did? If we call him Lord and teacher, how can we have a lower view of Scripture than he did? If we are his followers, how can we rely on it less than he did? We are no match for the wiles and seductions of Satan, but Scripture retains its power as the sword of the Spirit, able to put our enemy on the defensive.

### **2. Navigating life requires a working knowledge of God's Word.**

The Lord Jesus not only valued Scripture, he also

knew it and used it. The passages he quotes from the book of Deuteronomy show His deep familiarity with Scripture. His respect for the Bible is also shown by his refusal to allow Satan to misuse the Bible. Scripture has a meaning intended by its divine Author; therefore, the next must be handled properly, not manipulating it to speak our truths rather than God's truth. Near the end of his earthly ministry, He prays for us as his people: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is the truth" (Jn. 17:17). The great need is for Christ-followers to handle Scripture properly. It is impossible to be deeply affected by what you do not know.

### **3. Navigating life requires a lifestyle of obedience.**

The goal of confidence in the Bible as God's revelation and of knowledge of the Bible is conformity to the truth of the Bible. It does no good to have accurate navigational instruments and readings that we don't follow. The Lord Jesus declared His life principle in these pithy words: "My food...is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish his work" (Jn. 4:34). "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me" (Jn. 6:38). "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do" (Jn. 17:4). At every point, Jesus' life was shaped and directed by the will of his Father. He navigated life by his Father's guidance.

[The Bible] reveals where we are, often with painful precision, by convicting us of sin. It points us where we need to go by showing us the marriage to which we need to aspire, the character we need to pursue, the behaviors we need to avoid, the habits we need to develop. It holds before us our ultimate destination, which makes the whole journey worthwhile, and inspires us to keep on keeping on.

It is not enough to know the Bible or merely to be inspired by it; we need to steer by it. The Bible does its God-appointed work only as it becomes the active navigational tool in our lives. By revealing God to us, especially in the person of Jesus, it gives us the point by which we find our bearings and move forward.



# Muslim Refugees

in UK are Having Visions and Dreams of Jesus



Many Muslims who came to the UK as refugees are converting to Christianity after having visions and dreams of Christ.

For many Muslim refugees to the UK, this will be the first Christmas they will spend as Christians. According to ChristianToday.com, a Christian church in Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent in the UK has been instrumental in ministering to these refugees and leading them to Christ.

Rev. S. Smith is the vicar of St. Mark's--the church ministering to the Christian converts, says the church was a rather stagnant community until the UK's Home Office began resettling dozens of refugees nearby.

The church now has a ministry welcoming Muslims who are new to the area and their community is thriving. Although those who minister to the refugees do not try to proselytize, many Muslims have accepted Christ due to the warm welcome and the kindness they are shown.

Many also have testified that they have had visions and dreams of Jesus.

"One man, Hassan, had a dream. In this dream, Jesus came to him as a light. He told him to come to this church and be baptized. He knew it was the Lord who had wrapped himself around him," Smith shared.

"Another man saw Jesus in a dream and he was shown a picture of this very church," said Smith.

Recently, St. Mark's hosted a live nativity scene. The particularly incredible thing about this nativity was that all but one participant was a Muslim convert to Christianity. Some of the participants had even been baptized into their new-found faith the very same day they took part in the nativity.

***Pray for Muslim refugees around the world, that they would find and embrace the love of Christ.***

*Photo courtesy: Thinkstockphotos.com  
Publication date: December 19, 2016*

## Trump Mulls Banning Muslim Brotherhood as Terrorist Group

*Senior members of Trump's transition team told reporters the White House is considering adopting the policy.*

*By Elliot Friedland  
- Sun, January 29, 2017*



A pro Muslim Brotherhood protester demonstrates against a visit by Egyptian President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi in the UK. (Photo: © Reuters) The White House is mulling designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, according to unnamed members of Trump's transition team who described a faction in favor and a faction against the move. A bill to designate the international Islamist group the Muslim Brotherhood is gathering steam in Congress.

In November of 2015, Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) introduced the bill, which identifies three Brotherhood entities in the U.S. including the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). The United Arab Emirates designated CAIR as a terrorist organization in 2014. "We have to stop pretending that the Brotherhood are not responsible for the terrorism they advocate and finance

... We have to see it for what it is: a key international organization dedicated to waging violent jihad," Cruz told the Washington Free Beacon at the time. The bill included is an unprecedented opportunity to educate members of Congress about the Muslim Brotherhood's involvement in terrorism. It reviews the Brotherhood's terrorist history and how it is banned by the governments of Egypt, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Syria. Egypt released videos showing the Brotherhood's involvement in terrorism and the Egyptian government's website warns about the Brotherhood lobby in the United States.

The bill also outlines how the Brotherhood is linked to CAIR, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT). The U.S. designated the Brotherhood's Palestinian wing— Hamas— in 1997.





Not takin' in Syrian refugees and closin' our borders isn't "mean" or "heartless." I lock the doors to my house every night. I don't lock them because I hate the people outside my house. I lock them because I love the people inside my house.

## REFUGEE CRISIS

To the left is a member of ISIS, to the right a Syrian refugee in Greece on his way to the U.S. Let me know when you get it



MEDALS IN TWO WARS GETS \$1,200 PER MONTH



MIDDLE EAST REFUGEES GET \$1,700 PER MONTH

**FIVE OF THE WEALTHIEST MUSLIM COUNTRIES HAVE TAKEN NO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN AT ALL, ARGUING THAT DOING SO WOULD OPEN THEM UP TO THE RISK OF TERRORISM.**

**THEIR LEADERS ARE OBVIOUSLY MUCH MORE INTELLIGENT THAN OURS.**

**SIMPLE QUESTION:**

You're telling me we have the money to "relocate" and "resettle" an undetermined number of "refugees"



But not enough to supply our seniors with a cost of living increase?

**WOULD ISLAMIC COUNTRIES WELCOME MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS?**



Go To [RightAlerts.com](http://RightAlerts.com) For Breaking News

**It Takes A Special Kind Of Lunatic To Think That Importing Welfare Recipients Who Want To Kill Us Is A Good Idea.**

Only **1%** of Muslims are terrorists?

Islam has 1.57 billion adherents, making up over 23% of the world population.

One percent of 1.57 billion is 15.7 million terrorists.



# The most attended funerals in the world

Based on the number of attendance at their funerals, these are probably ones of the most beloved individuals through the history. There was a massive grieving for some, eternal admiration and respect for other, and some were just famous. However, think of the fact that the number of people at these funerals outnumbers the population of many countries in the world.

## *Victor Hugo – 2,000,000 people*

Victor Hugo's death from pneumonia on 22 May 1885, at the age of 83, generated intense national mourning. He was not only revered as a towering figure in literature, he was a statesman who shaped the Third Republic and democracy in France. More than two million people joined his funeral procession in Paris from the Arc de Triomphe to the Pantheon, where he was buried. He



shares a crypt within the Panthéon with Alexandre Dumas and Emile Zola. Most large French towns and cities have a street named after him.

## *Umm Kulthum – 4,000,000 people*



Umm Kulthum was an internationally famous Egyptian singer, songwriter, and film actress active from the 1920s to the 1970s. She was given the honorific title "The Star of the East". Known for her extraordinary vocal ability and style, Umm Kulthum was one of the greatest and most influential Arab singers of the 20th century.

The Star of the East died February 3, 1975, at age 76. Her funeral procession became a national event, with around 4 million grief-stricken Egyptians lining the streets to catch a glimpse as her cortège passed, even as many as the crowds that attended the funeral procession of Umm Kulthum's contemporary, President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

## *Gamal Abdel Nasser – 5,000,000 people*

Following the announcement of Nasser's death, Egypt, and the Arab world were in a state of shock. Nasser's funeral procession through Cairo on 1 October was attended by at least five million mourners. The 10-kilometer (6.2 mi) procession to his burial site began at the old RCC





headquarters with a flyover by MiG-21 jets. His flag-draped coffin was attached to a gun carriage pulled by six horses and led by a column of cavalymen. All Arab heads of state attended, with the exception of Saudi King Faisal. King Hussein and Arafat cried openly, and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya fainted from emotional distress twice.

### ***Abraham Lincoln – 7,000,000 people***

The funeral and burial of Abraham Lincoln included a three-week series of events in 1865 held to mourn his death and memorialize him. Following United States President Abraham Lincoln's death by assassination, funeral services were held in Washington D.C., and then at additional locations as he was transported to his burial.

The President was brought from the capital to the burial site in Lincoln's hometown of Springfield, Illinois by funeral train, accompanied by dignitaries. Because of the length of the funeral, historians have called this event "The Greatest Funeral in the History of the United States".

### ***Pope Shenouda III – 25,000,000 people***

*Pope Shenouda III was the 117th Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. His episcopate lasted 40 years, four months, and 4 days from 14 November 1971 until his death on 17 March 2012. Pope Shenouda III died on 17 March 2012 (8 Paremhat 1728 in the Coptic calendar) of lung and liver complications at his official residence shortly after returning from medical treatment abroad. He had stopped taking medication because he was too weak.*

*During the night, an estimated one million or more mourners were said to have visited his body at St. Mark's Cathedral, causing traffic jams stretching for kilometres.*

*Mourners from across Egypt went to Saint Mark Cathedral in Abbaseya to pay their respects. Bells tolled in Cairo's Abbasiya district, where the primary cathedral of the Coptic Church is located. So large was the crowd of mourners gathering in Cathedral Square to pay their respects that three were killed and 137 injured in a crash as the queue to view the body of the deceased pope stretched for more than one kilometre.*



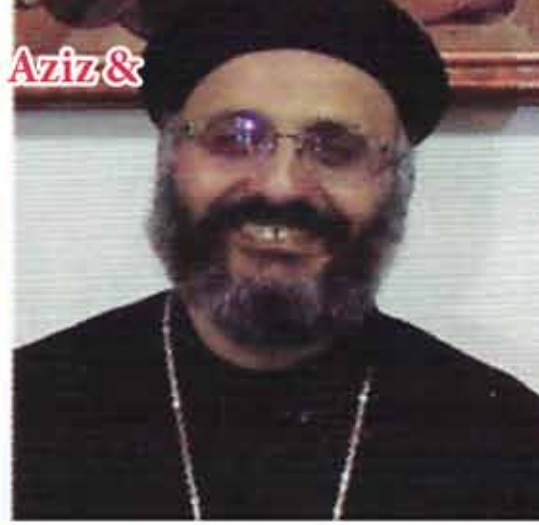




بعض الخدام يحتفلون ببلوغ القمص زكريا بطرس والقس  
اغسطينوس سن ٨٢



## The 4th Anniversary of Ordination of Fr. George Aziz & Archdeacons Thomas and Antoious



### صور لها تاريخ

زيارة البابا شنودة للكليريكية بولس اجلوس سنة ١٩٩٠ عند تأسيسها ويظهر في الصورة معه بعض المدرسين - القمص فيلمون والقس اغسطينوس وبعض التلاميذ رسم منهم ثلاثة كهنة هم القمص اثناسيوس والقمص بولس مجلي والقس يوحنا اسكندر.



البابا شنودة يبحث موقع كنيسة القديس أبانوب والأنبا انطونيوس بكورونا قبل الموافقة علي تأسيسها.



القس اغسطينوس يقود ترنيمة قلبي الخفاق عند زيارة البابا شنودة لكنيسة مارمرقس في نوفمبر ١٩٨٩ قبل الرسامة بأيام ويظهر في الصورة نيافة الانبا سراييون ونيافة الانبا رويس



"I am the Resurrection and Life"



July 1944 - February 2017

### **Kamal Elias**

Departed to Paradise after serving faithfully the Lord Jesus Christ, the church, the community and his family. He was survived by his blessed wife Mervat, his two daughters Dr. Jermaine wife of Dr. Tony Soliman; Gina wife of Dr. Charles Kamel, and his two brothers Nabil Elias husband of Laila and Emil Elias husband of Emily and uncle of attorney Vivian Elias wife of Nagy Shahid and Rany Elias and Mariam wife of Moheb Said. St. John Church prays the Lord to repose his soul, reward him richly and comfort his family, relatives and friends.

### **Dr. Alfred Andrawis**



July 1947 - January 2017

Dr. Alfred departed this world after battling cancer. He was married to Dr. Madeleine, worked and served the church at S. Dakota and was survived by his wife and two sons David and Danny Andrawis, daughter Mary and her husband John Refla. St. John Church in Covina, California bids her deep condolences to Madeleine and her family praying for the repose of Alfred's soul.

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Fr. Augsutinos and Dr. Marcelle Hanna bid farewell to

### **Dr. Nemat Ashamalla**

May the Lord repose her blessed soul and comfort her daughters, Heba, Mona and friends.

"Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23: 43)



### **Mona Girguis**

Mona was the wife to Naim Girguis, mother of Rami and Peter, sister of Nadia Girguis wife of Accountant Samir Girguis, and Nabila Iskander wife of Dr. Ramsy, sister to Engineer Maged Kamel, aunt to Dr. Mark and Fr. Paul Girguis, John Iskander, Dr. Tawfik and Dr. Ramez. She departed to Paradise after finishing her race in faith, peace and good works. She was faithful to the end and struggled patiently with cancer. She was a loving wife, mother, sister and friend and will be greatly missed. St. John church in Covina, California prays for the repose of her blessed soul. May the Lord reward her and comfort her family and friends

أرشيدياكون توماس ونوال موسي يودعون  
للفردوس الأخت المباركة

### **مني جرجس**

ويقدمون خالص العزاء للأحباء نادية  
وسمير جرجس والعائلة. الرب ينيح  
نفسها الطاهرة ويعزي أسرته ويعوضهم  
أجراً صالحاً سماوياً.

### **Jacque Boyadjian**



July 1941- 2017

Jacque was a good Christian who faithfully loved and served the Lord Jesus, the church and family. He was survived by his wife Flora, son Gabriel husband of Amany, daughter Lucy wife of Michael Joyner and sister in law Aida Hanna. The church cannot forget his devoted service, meekness, patience and prays for the repose of his soul and heavenly reward.

"Then the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43)



### **Nazmy Hanna**

Nazmy Hanna departed to Paradise after a long life filled with faith, virtues and good works. He was survived by his faithful wife Sisil Hanna, his three sons Robert, Remon and Richard Hanna. St. John Church extends her deep condolences to his blessed family, praying our Good Shepherd to repose his soul and reward him in the resurrection of the righteous in Heavenly Jerusalem.

"She has done a good work for Me"  
(Matt. 26:10)



### **Samira Nakhla**

Samira departed our vanity world to be with Christ. She was the wife of late Adly Stephanos, mother of Nagy Stephanos the husband of Refka, and Emil Stephanos the husband of Nadia, and Amal the wife of Emad Abdel-Shahid, and grand-mother of Lilian, Abram, Mary, Valery and Andrew. St. John Church beseeches the Lord to repose her soul in Paradise and comfort the family.

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**St. John Senior Citizen Fellowship** extends its condolences to the families of **Nazmy Hanna & Samira Nakhla** and the family of **Dr. Nemat Ashamalla**

May the Lord bless their souls and make their memory eternal.