

# SAINT JOHN

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A COPTIC CHRISTIAN BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
COVINA, CA



**"Jesus said to her, Touch me not; for  
I am not yet ascended to my Father"  
(Jn. 20: 17)**



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*Verse  
of the Month*



**"Destroy this temple, and in three  
days I will raise it up"  
(John 2:19).**

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

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

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# NEWS of

## March & April 2018

### 1. The Holy Lent:

The Holy Lent started on February 12, 2018 and continues until Easter, the Feast of Resurrection on Sunday, April 8, 2018.

+ **Liturgies during the Lent will be as follows:**

+ **Tuesday to Thursday:**

from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon.

+ **Friday:** 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

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



### 2. The 6th year Memorial of Pope Shenouda III

On Saturday, March 17, St John church celebrates the 6th year commemoration or the departure of H. H. Pope Shenouda. H.E. Metropolitan Serapion will bless us with the Liturgy, then in the church hall after the Liturgy. There will be a breakfast, choir, spiritual word, video and gifts.



### 3. Feast of Appearance of the Holy Cross:

On Monday, March 19, St. John Church celebrates the Feast of the Appearance of the Holy Cross. The procession of the cross takes place from 8: 00 a.m. during matins



### 4. March Famous Recent Saints:

- 1) Friday, March 9: Departure of Pope Kyrillos 6.
- 2) March 17: Departure of Pope Shenouda III
- 3) Wednesday March 21: Departure of Fr. Bishoy Kamel.
- 4) Monday, March 26: Departure of Fr. Mikhail Ibrahim and martyrdom of Sidhom Bishay of Domyat



### 5. Sunday of Baptism and Lenten Luncheon

On March 25, St. John Church celebrates the Sunday of Baptism followed by the Annual Lenten Luncheon after the Liturgy. Tickets will be available in the Book-store on behalf of the needy.

### 6. The 37th Anniversary of Fr. Gawargious Kolta

+ St. John's priests, congregation and Board of Deacons congratulate the very Rev. Fr. Gawargious on his 37th Anniversary of his ordination. May God grant him health, strength, fruitful service and long life.



### 7. Last Friday of the Lent, March 30

Raising of incense starts from 10:00 a.m., followed by the General Kandeel (Unction of the Sick), then the Liturgy.

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

+ On January 6, Pope Tawadros received President El-Sisi of Egypt, who came to the new Cathedral of Nativity (Birth of Christ) to congratulate the Copts on Christmas and celebrate the opening of this Church as a gift from Egypt.



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

+ On January 21, H.E. blessed St. John Church in Covina by celebrating the Liturgy of the Feast of Cana of Galilee's wedding.

+ H. E. Anba Serapion appointed Rev. Fr. Youhana Morice to serve at St. John Church in Covina starting from January 2018. We thank H.E. and congratulate the church praying that the Lord may bless Abouna Youhana and grant him the support of the Holy Spirit.

+ On Saturday, March 17, H.E. will celebrate the Liturgy of the 6th Memorial of Pope Shenouda III at St. John Church from 8:00 a.m. followed by a celebration in the Church Hall.



## News of April 2018

### 1) Palm Sunday: (April 1)

St. John Church celebrates this Major Lord's Feast on April 1, in one Liturgy (English and Arabic). The service starts from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, followed by the general funeral until 2:00 p.m



### 2) Covenant Thursday: (April 5)

On Thursday, April 5, the church celebrates this Lord's Feast with the Liturgy from 11:00 a.m.



### 3) Good Friday: (April 6)

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



### 4) Apocalypses Vigil (April 6/7)

The vigil starts from Good Friday night 11:00 p.m. until Bright-Saturday Liturgy ends at 6:00 a.m.

### 5) Feast of the Resurrection (April 8):

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



### 5) Easter Picnic: (April 8)

On Easter day, Sunday, April 8, St. John Church, Covina celebrates Easter picnic at Bonelli Park in San Dimas from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Food is served by Pot-Luck.

# Drills During Fasting



By Pope Shenouda III

THESE DRILLS MAY INCLUDE RESISTING SOME weak facets in the life of a fasting person, certain virtues that such a person lacks, or spiritual longings pervading his heart. What matters are that the person who fasts may feel that he has before him in his fast a certain target.

## 1. Drills pertaining to fasting:

### *Some of the drills pertain to self-control:*

They may include the person who fasts stopping himself from eating kinds of food that he covets, to reduce the quantity of food, or to abstain from certain items of delicious food.

Self-control drills may include the period of abstinence, its limitation, during such a period. Some people resort to a system of gradation even within one fast. For example, Lent covers eight weeks during which one who fasts may gradually advance as to the degree of his asceticism and abstention from food.

Self-control also includes pre-fast days. Eating on these days should not be gluttonous and uncontrolled. Drills may be for the virtues accompanying fasting:

In this way they include the spiritual aspects of fasting such as self-control in general outside the scope of eating, general control of body, abstention from bodily lusts and all sensuous luxuries sitting-up-late, and staying away from luxuries.

## 2. Drills pertaining to repentance:

Since fasting is a period of repentance, the repentance drills are numerous such as:

**a) Concentration on a point of weakness or a favorite sin:** Everyone knows well which sin he weakens before, and which sin is always repeated in his confessions. Let one then take such sins as a field of training to overcome them.

**b) One who fasts may train himself to quit a certain habit:** An example of this is a smoker who trains himself while fasting to quit smoking. Likewise is the one who is addicted to drinking and can't get rid of this dominating habit, and the one who is addicted to wasting much time watching television which affects his responsibilities.

**c) Fasting may be a period of drilling in quitting a sin like anger or judging others.** This is one of the well-known sins into which many people slip. Drills may deal with a number of verbal sins that man has become accustomed to. In fasting, he may train himself in their elimination one by one.

**d) Remembering certain verses dealing with sinfulness:** For instance, if he slips into the sin of nervousness, he reminds himself of the Bible verse "For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (Jams 1:20). He should repeat this verse often every day especially in situations where anger attacks him. He should rebuke himself saying: What would I benefit by fasting if during it I got angry and did not do God's will? If he/she slips into any of the verbal sins, he puts the following words of the Bible before his eyes: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment (Matt.12: 36) .He then says to himself in reproach: what would befit me if I fasted with all self-control but didn't control my tongue and said to my brother, "You fool" and thus deserved "hell fire?"(Matt.5: 22).

**e) Whenever you feel hungry and covet food, rebuke yourself:** Say to yourself: when you give up this sin, I shall allow you to eat, for the Bible says, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess: 3:10).

**f) Take your point of weakness and make it the target of your prayers during fasting:** Fully concentrate on it from the point of view of aspiration, accuracy and resistance. Pour out yourself before God and ask Him: "Save me, O Lord, from this sin, I admit

that I am weak in this particular case and will not conquer it without your help. Have mercy, O lord, on my weakness and helplessness.

Collect Bible verses that deal with this sin. Place them before you to read them continuously.

### **3. Seclusion and silence drills:**

The Bible states: “Sanctify you a fast, call a solemn assembly” (Joel 1:14). What is meant by seclusion is being in seclusion with God, not with the radio, or TV, or arguments at home. The spiritual seclusion needed is in your closed bedroom with God alone. Seclude yourself with the Bible, with the history of the saints and prayers. If you have a spiritual schedule you will love seclusion.

Use the drill of some “closed days”... If you cannot close your doors during a fast, then at least close your mouths against sinful talk. As one of the fathers said: “He who talks much is empty inside”. Which means that he is void of spiritual grace inside his/her heart.

### **4. Resisting lost time drill:**

Someone’s main problem may be loss of time. To him, time is a trivial thing. He wastes this time without benefiting of it. This is a primary sin. As a result of wasting his time, he neither prays, reads, nor have any spiritual thoughts. Consequently, Spiritual laxity, and perhaps slipping into sin may ensure. Save the time lost in talking with people, in meetings and visits in useless discussions, and in reading newspapers and commenting on the news. This drill helps us in another one, which is:

**Fasting of the tongue.** Mar Isaac said “a tongue’s fast is better than the fast of the mouth”. If you know this you would train yourself to keep silent as long as you would. If you are unable to do so, then use the following three exercises:

**a) Do not initiate a conversation except when necessary.**

**b) Give short answers.**

**c) Occupy your mind with some spiritual acts that will help you to keep silent.**

### **5. Penitence & Self-abasement drills:**

Train your self in them until pulling yourself down to the level of the dust and ashes. Use penitent words in your prayers like psalm 6 “O Lord do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your displeasure”. If you feel hungry or sit down to eat, say to

yourself, “I do not deserve this food because of my sins. Fasting days offer a good opportunity for confession and self-reproach.

**6. Memorization drills:** You may also take the period of fasting to memorize verses, psalms, chapters from the Bible and hymns.

+ Memorize for instance the Sermon on the Mount, which includes 111 verses. If you memorize 3 verses a day, you will finish them in 37 days.

+ Memorize the 36 passages of the Agpeya.

+ Memorize the thanksgiving prayer, psalm 50, the Trisagion, the hours absolutions, which include 8 of them, and the conclusion of every prayer...

**+ Memorize selected Bible verses, preferably with their references. If you memorize 150 verses every year during Lent alone.**

+ Memorize golden chapters like 1 Corinthians 13, which is devoted to love: Romans 12:1 Thess.5: Eph. 6:10-18; Phil.3: 7-14, etc

### **7. Prayer drills:**

**(1) Prayer drill on the road:** While on your way, let your heart be occupied with God through a Psalm or short prayers.

**(2) Drill yourself also in praying in the midst of people:** Whether you are in a meeting, or in the midst of people anywhere, lift up your heart to God using any statement. In this way you keep silent while your heart is busy with the Holy Spirit.

**(3) Drill in praying while working:** Manual work helps a lot in getting one involved in prayer. Even if your work is totally mental, Lift up your heart to God from time to time with a short prayer.

**(4) Drill in continuing to pray:** Train yourself that whenever you find that prayer is about to come to an end you prolong it for some time.

**(5) Drill in the spirituality of prayer:** These drills include prayers performed with understanding, depth, warmth, and humility and without distraction.

**(6) Drill in praying for the sake of praying:** Saint Issac was asked, “How do we learn to pray?” He answered, “By praying”.

**(7) Drill in praying for others:** Let not your prayer be for yourself alone, But train yourself to pray also for others, for any hardship, or sickness and for the departed. Pray for the church, the safety of the country, for those who do not know God.



## THE NEW PRIEST AT ST. JOHN CHURCH IN COVINA, CA

His Eminence Metropolitan Serapion appointed Fr. Youhanna Mouris to serve at St. John Church starting from the middle of January, 2018.

**Fr. Youhanna** became the 4th priest at **Mar Youhanna** church to serve with Fr. Gawargious Kolta, Fr. Shenouda Ghattas and Fr. Augustinos Hanna. Fr. Youhanna Mouris was born in Egypt on March 28, 1973. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Electronics and Communications in 1995 from the Ain Shams University and worked as an Engineer from 1995 to 2004.

He served as Deacon and Sunday School Teacher in Saint George Church in Heliopolis, Egypt 1995-2004. He was ordained Presbyter by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III along with His Grace Bishop Serapion on October 13, 2004 to serve in the Diocese of Los Angeles. He served at Archangel Raphael Church in Palmdale, California since his ordination until Christmas of 2018.

We thank H.E. Metropolitan Serapion for his loving pastoral care, as well as Fr. Youhanna who accepted to serve us. We also thank his lovely family, his faithful wife Tasonry Sally and his blessed children, deacon [...? .] And of course we thank the congregation of St. Raphael Church in Palmdale for their sacrifice.

Our beloved **Fr. Youhanna** carries the same name of St. **Youhanna**, the disciple of love and whom Jesus loved and the Intercessor of our church.

He is filled of love, zeal, meekness and humility, a devoted young priest, gifted with many talents, caring for all, especially the youth. We pray that our dear Lord Jesus Christ grant him every blessing, success and fullness of the Holy Spirit.

# Short Message

By

**Fr. Youhanna Mauris**

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Let us always think of the good things, stories, virtues, words...God's promises, wonders, ability and authority...the good in everything and everyone.

Positive thinking generates positive feelings; so hopefully we can listen to God's words and reflect on this, and fill our hearts with the joy of the Lord.

Make it a personal choice to focus, think and talk about positive, favorable, good, approving, enthusiastic, supportive, encouraging, constructive, practical, useful, productive, helpful, valuable, beneficial, effective things. Everyone and everything has their own successes and shortcomings.

Ultimately it's your choice what to focus on, hopefully we will always choose to think, talk and behave positively.

May God help me and you and fill your hearts with joy and gladness.

Pray for me.

## The Magic Mustard Seed!

*The answer to sorrow, as well as loneliness, often lies in our willingness and ability to enter into the lives of others and share in their pain, as this Jewish folktale says so powerfully.*

\* \* \*

Once a widow's son died in a tragic accident.

The woman, crazy with grief, mourned her loss so deeply that no one could provide her with comfort. At last a friend took her to the house of a holy man where she made a sobbing plea. "Use your powers to bring my son back to life. Surely you are able by prayer or some magic to induce the Almighty to lighten my grief."

"The old man spoke kindly to the woman, **"Bring me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. I will use that seed to remove the pain from your life."**

Immediately the woman set out in search of the magic mustard seed. "First I will visit the home of a wealthy family," she thought. "Tragedy is less likely to strike them." Soon she approached a beautiful mansion, knocked on the door, and spoke to the woman who greeted her. "I am in search of a home that has never known sorrow. Is this the place? Please, it is vital that I know."

"Never known sorrow!" cried the woman who had answered the door. "You have come to the wrong house." As she sobbed she began to describe all of the tragedies that had touched her family. She invited the widow into her home to explain in greater detail what had taken place. The widow remained in that home for many days, listening and caring.

When she left to resume her search the widow visited a modest home about a mile away. The experience was the same. Wherever she traveled, from mansion to hut, she was greeted with tales of sadness and sorrow. Everyone found her a willing and careful listener.

After months of travel she became so involved with the grief of others that she forgot about her search for the magic mustard seed, never realizing that it had indeed driven the sorrow from her life.

## Who Is This?!

*"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38).*



Imagine standing shoulder to shoulder with onlookers by a dirt road. The woman behind you is on her tiptoes, trying to see who is coming. In the distance, you glimpse a man riding a donkey. As He approaches, people toss their coats onto the road. Suddenly, you hear a tree crack behind you. A man is cutting down palm branches, and people are spreading them out ahead of the donkey.

Jesus' followers zealously honored Him as He entered Jerusalem a few days before His crucifixion. The multitude rejoiced and praised God for "all the miracles they had seen".

Jesus' devotees surrounded Him, calling out, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" Their enthusiastic honor affected the people of Jerusalem. When Jesus finally arrived, "the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" (Matt. 21:10).

Today, people are still curious about Jesus. Although we can't pave His way with palm branches or shout praises to him in person, we can still honor Him. We can discuss His remarkable works, assist people in need, patiently hear insults, and love each other deeply. Then we must be ready to answer the onlookers who ask, "Who is Jesus Christ?"



# SEVEN WORDS ADDRESSED TO THE CRUCIFIED



by Fr. Gawargious Kolta

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke seven times when He was hanged on the cross. These were the seven last words:

1- ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”*** (Lk. 23:37).

2- ***“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise”*** (Lk. 23:43).

3- ***“Woman, behold your son,...Behold your mother”*** (Jn. 19:26,27).

4- ***“I thirst”*** (Jn. 19:28).

5- ***“Eli Eli, Lama sabachthani” that is: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”*** (Mat. 27:46).

6- ***“It is finished”*** (Jn. 19:29).

7- ***“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit”*** (Lk.23: 46).

There are many church fathers and preachers who wrote contemplative passages and books on the seven last words said by our crucified Lord. In this article we are going to meditate on seven words or seven sentences addressed to our Lord on the cross:

1- ***“You who destroy the temple and built it in three days, save yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross”*** (Mat. 27:39, 40).

While our Lord prayed for His executioners ***“Father forgive them ...”*** the Jews sneered, saying: “If You are the Son of God ...”. If He obeyed them, there would be no salvation. Here, they revived the old accusation at the trial (Mat. 26:71). They thought that He would destroy the temple of Jerusalem and make another one in three days, ***not recognizing that He spoke of the Temple of His body***. Satan used the same words when he asked the hungry Lord in the wilderness to change stones into bread but the Lord refuted his temptation.

2- ***“If You are the King of the Jews, save yourself”*** (Lk. 23:37).

This was said to the Lord by the soldiers, while joining the

Jews in mockery, and they offered Him the sour wine. They said those words according to the title which Pilate wrote and put on the cross ***“JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS”*** (Jn. 19:19). The soldiers were stonyhearted and had already shaken dice for His robe. Those soldiers could sacrifice themselves for the glory of the Roman Empire, but Jesus sacrificed Himself for all mankind to give them eternal life. His refusal to save Himself was not out of weakness, but rather obedience of the sacrifice law. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). He gave His life as a ransom for many.

3- ***“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him, for He said I am the Son of God”*** (Mat. 27:42, 43).

This statement was said by the wicked and prejudiced chief priests and the Pharisees, fulfilling the prophecy of David: ***“All those who saw Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him. ... They gape at Me with their mouths like a raging and roaring Lion”*** (Ps. 22: 7, 8, 13). Those surpassingly religious people used each of the three titles, which the Lord had acquired, “Savior”, “King of Israel” and “Son of God” and turned them into mockery.

***He was called Savior*** by the Samaritans (Jn.4: 42). They knew that He raised some from the death, as the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus, but they did not realize the fact that the Lord came to save the world, His creation, from everlasting condemnation (Jn. 3:17).

***He was considered the King of Israel*** when He fed the multitudes (Jn. 6:15) and on Palm Sunday (Mk. 11:10). The kings of the world sit on thrones but our Lord ruled from a cross, to be King over our hearts, through love. They mocked Him after they falsely condemned Him, because that was their hour and the power of darkness (Lk. 22:53).

***He was called the Son of God*** and this was revealed to St. Peter (Mat. 16:16). It was also said by Satan (Mat. 8:29) and by the high priest (Mat. 26:63). The Centurion who was

guarding the cross said: "Truly this was the Son of God", when he saw the veil of the temple got torn, the earth quaked and the rocks split (Mat. 27:51-54).

4- **"If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us"** (Lk. 23: 39).

On Calvary, goodness was crucified between two thieves, to fulfill the prophecy: **"He was numbered with the transgressors"** (Isa. 53:12). The left thief said the forth word to the crucified Lord. This thief understood the physical salvation, but not the spiritual and moral ones. Both thieves were suffering from pains of crucifixion, yet each reacted differently to the Man in the midst. The left thief thought that if He was the Messiah, He would have the power to get him down from the cross. If the Lord saved him from crucifixion, would he have faith in Christ! or he would have continued in his evil life? The Lord knows the secrets of every heart, and thus He kept silent. Instead of admitting his sins and asking forgiveness, this thief's dead conscious did not condemn him, but lead him to perdition.

5- **"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom"** (Lk. 23:42).

The good thief was touched by Christ; and his words were the only ones spoken to the cross without reproach. The penitent thief believed, while the other blasphemed. He called Him **'Lord'** and his faithful words declared that Jesus have a kingdom; but not of this world, as He on the cross bore no outward mark of kingship. The penitent dying thief understood this fact before the apostles. This is the only deathbed conversion mentioned in the gospels, but it was preceded by the cross of suffering. He was touched when he saw Christ forgiving His executioners, and so he did not let his chance slip away. **This blessed** thief rebuked the other one who blasphemed against the Lord, saying: **"Do you not even fear God, seeing you under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man has done nothing wrong"** (Lk. 23:40, 41). He confessed his sins, admitting that he deserved the death penalty. He believed that Jesus is **the Lord and King**, and thus he received salvation. The disciple denied and the thief confessed; despite the Lord's apparent weakness and agony on the cross. So he became worthy to be called **the blessed thief**.

6- **"Look, He is calling for Elijah ..Let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down"** (Mk.15: 35, 36).

When there was darkness over all the earth, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying: **"Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?"** (Mk. 15:35), which meant "My God, My God, what have You forsaken Me? This promoted the sixth verse said to the crucified, which was the fulfillment of the prophecy of king David mentioned in (Ps. 22:1). The Jews, who stood by the cross, misinterpreted the Lord's cry, and they made fun of Him. They knew the

prophecy of Malachi that Elijah must come before the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 3:1). To them this meant that Jesus was not the Messiah, since Elijah had not come yet. They did not understand that the prophecy referred to John the Baptist, who came in the fiery spirit of Elijah as declared by the Lord Jesus Himself: **"And if you are willing to receive it, he (John the Baptist) is Elijah who is to come"** (Mat.11: 14). The Jews did not accept neither the mission of John the Baptist nor that of the Lord Jesus, as mentioned **"For John came neither eating or drinking, and they say, he has a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, look, a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!"** (Mat. 11:18, 19).

7- **"Truly this Man was the Son of God"** (Mk. 15:39).

The Centurion, who was in charge of the soldiers, said these words. He gave this testimony when his heart was moved on seeing the sun hid its light, the earth shook in grief, the rocks rent and the graves were opened (Mat. 27:45, 51, 52). This change happened when he saw the man in the central cross gave up the spirit. He had crucified many before, but he felt that there was something mysterious about this Man, who prayed for His enemies and was so strong in giving up His last breath. He did not only confess that He is righteous and innocent, as Claudia the pagan saw in her dream (Mat. 27:19); but he also proclaimed His divinity. The cross started to bear fruits: the Jewish thief had already asked for salvation and received it, and a Centurion of Caesar, the Gentile, bowed in adoration of the Divine crucified Man. **This pagan Centurion worshipped Him as the Son of God**, while His own people condemned Him of blasphemy and mocked Him.

Our Lord Jesus used many pulpits during His ministry, such as Peter's boat, the temple, the mountaintop, houses and the roads of Galilee and Judea. All faded in significance compared to the **pulpit of the cross**. Nobody was with Him when he was crucified. The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: **"I have trodden the winepress alone and from the peoples no one was with Me"** (Isa. 63:3).

Three faithful persons watched in agony all what happened to our Savior. Those were the only apostle, St. John the beloved, whose heart was broken out of love to His Master, Mary Magdalene who was smashed with grief, and foremost among all, God pity her, was His own mother, through whose soul, a sword was pierced (Lk. 2:35). Three types of souls can be found beneath the cross of the Savior, St. Mary representing purity and innocence, Mary Magdalene representing the penitence and St. John the beloved representing the sincere love and **priesthood**. The Lord wants us to live in **purity, penitence and love**, and with priesthood guidance.



By Fr. Augustinos Hanna



# Why and How we Are Proud of the Cross

Translated by Mr. Magdy Boutros

In his Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul mentioned four great golden verses about the Cross, worthy of being memorized by heart.

He said in the second chapter: ***“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”*** (Gal. 2:20). In the third chapter he rebuked the Galatians for not obeying the truth: ***“You before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified!”*** In the fifth chapter he says: ***“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*** (Gal 5:24). Finally, he said in chapter 6: ***“But God forbid that I should boast 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).

The Egyptian newspaper Al-Akhbar published the following on 8-14-1953, under the following heading: ***(The Islands of Greece Turn Into Tombs And Ruins, The Church Alone Survives Ruin):***

«Across the bay, the people stood, amazed, looking and pleading, and from time to time lowering their eyes from heaven to their city, to watch the collapsed houses and the flames of fire, and then looking up to a single building that remained lofty.. The Church of St. Dionysius .. And their eyes would rise with the tower to the huge cross, which stood defiant amid the melancholy, and the flames of fire” ..... This is what happened 64 years ago, and from time to time earthquakes and wars arise against the Cross but cannot overpower it. Two thousand years ago, the earth shook, the sun was darkened, the rocks were cracked, and the graves opened in the city of Jerusalem, and the original Cross of Christ stood up to challenge evil, conspiracy, hatred, Satan and the kingdom of darkness, and death and the gates of hell. The Cross was triumphant by the glory of the Resurrection. On the occasion of the approaching week of Passion and Good Friday, in which

we pour our hearts, tears, souls and prayers in front of the Cross of the Redeemer Christ, we should consider these two Subject Title questions:

## **First: Why are we proud of the Cross?**

### **1- In the Cross we have forgiveness and redemption**

The Apostle Paul repeated this verse twice in the Epistles to Ephesus and to the Colossians, ***“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”*** (Eph 1: 7 - Colossians 1: 14). The Apostle John adds that ***“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”*** (1 John 1:7). Through the Cross Jesus became a redeemer, a representative and a substitute for us. He bore our sins and their price and punishment i.e. death, and gave us his full righteousness, exchanging places with us, as the Bible expresses it by saying ***The Holy One, “who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”*** (2 Cor. 5:21). All the shameful sins of mankind, from the beginning of creation until the end of the world, have been put on Him. These include my sins and your sins. He died because of them. He paid their price for us and buried them in His grave forever. However, no one benefits from this redemption and forgiveness except those who believe in Him, baptized and repent from sin (Mark 16: 16, Luke 13: 3, 5, Jn 5:24). Therefore ***“we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”*** (Romans 6: 4).

Therefore we are proud of the Cross because in it we have redemption, salvation and forgiveness of our sins. All the sacraments, through which we get forgiveness, derive their effectiveness from the Cross.

## 2- In the Cross we have healing

When the people of Israel grumbled against God and against Moses, because he took them out of Egypt, and they said about the heavenly manna that had given them life forty years in the wilderness, ***“Our soul loathes this worthless bread,”*** the Lord punished them by sending poisonous fiery serpents to bite them. Thousands of them died and the people asked Moses for help, confessing their sin. He pleaded for them. God announced to him the means of treatment was to make a statue of a fiery serpent and place it on a pole, so that anyone who had been bitten and looked at it would heal and live. ) Num. 21: 4-9, 1Cor.10:9, 10). Christ interpreted this symbol to Nicodemus by saying, ***“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*** (John 3: 14).

If the proposed treatment seems neither reasonable nor scientifically or logically acceptable, yet, it proved its validity and its miraculous efficacy as it draws its strength from the Word of God, in whose hand life and death and authority over all creation are found, as well as from being a symbol of a greater fact that was realized in the Cross of Christ Who crushed the head of the great old serpent Satan, and healed with His blood all those whose blood was poisoned by the deadly devil's bite. ***“that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil”*** (Heb. 2:14,15) Therefore, God calls upon everyone in the spirit of prophecy saying, ***“Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth!”*** (Isaiah 45: 1 - 25) Turning one's head and directing a look of faith to the Cross and the Crucified give us healing, stop the action of the poison of the serpent and give life to believers, as Christ ***“took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.”*** (Matt. 8:17)

## 3- Reconciliation with Heaven in the Cross

The first thing that happened immediately after the death of Christ on the Cross was that ***“the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom”*** (Matt 27:50, 51).

Since that veil between God and man arose after the fall of man into sin and disobedience, the ripping of this veil from above, towards Heaven, means occurrence of reconciliation, divine pardon and the removal of anger, conflict, separation and punishment. Therefore the Bible says, ***“God was in Christ reconciling the world***

***to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them”*** (2 Cor. 5:19). In the old days, Job cried out to God, ***“Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both.”*** (Job 9: 33). But, thank God, in the fullness of time the Son, the Word, came and reconciled us with His righteous Father, ***“having made peace through the blood of His cross”*** (Colossians 1: 20). The message of the Cross to you, my brother, and you, my sister, in these holy days is: Be reconciled to God and return to Him and find rest, peace and security in both your present and eternal life.

## 4- The cross gives victory over enemies:

Just as it is said in the church tradition that the Cross of Light appeared to the Emperor Constantine as he was going to war, and he heard a voice from Heaven saying to him: “with this sign you will conquer”, then he believed and won victory, so can we also defeat all our spiritual enemies. These spiritual enemies are:

**+ The flesh:** ***“And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*** (Gal 5:24).

**+ The world:** ***“By whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”*** (Gal 6:14).

**+ Satan:** ***“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”*** (Colossians 2: 14,15).

**+ Sin:** ***“Through His blood, the forgiveness of sins and wiping out the handwriting of requirements”.....***

## 5 . The Cross is the door of hope

The uncountable multitude that St. John saw in his vision, arrayed in white robes in heaven, came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God (Revelation 7: 9-17). ***“By the Cross the door of living hope has been opened to us for an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and does not fade away, which is preserved in the heavens for us, who are kept by the power of God”*** (1 Peter 1: 3-5). The cross to us is the door of hope and Heaven and the key to eternal life.

## Second: How can we be proud of the Cross?

*In a few focused points we say:*



# A GOOD NIGHT SLEEP

## 1- By drawing the sign of the cross:

Refer to our article on the sign of the Cross in "St John" Magazine, September 1992 number, and the patriarchs' sayings and the Biblical, doctrinal and historical basis of this sign. (There is a pamphlet about it in the Church book store).

**2- By loving each other:** For no one has greater love than this, that one lay himself for his loved ones (John 15:13).

**3- By forgiving each other:** The first words of the Crucified were, *"Forgive them, Father"*. Whoever is proud of the Cross must forgive, tolerate and forget abuse 70 times multiplied by seven, i.e, infinitely.

**4- Carrying the Cross behind Christ,** walking in the narrow way which leads to life (Mark 8:34, Matt 7:13), and refraining from loving the world that crucified Him.

**5- Declaring war on sin and evil and the kingdom of darkness,** and triumphing over our spiritual enemies with the power of the Cross for salvation.

**6- Endurance in trials, tribulations, persecutions, diseases and sorrows without grumbling,** but with thanks and pleasure, *"Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross"*. (Heb 12: 2)

**7- Humility and obedience to the commandments, up to the point of death:** *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2: 5-8).

**8- Through the life of sacrifice,** liberal service and helping others in their needs, hardships and sufferings. (Matt 20: 28).

**9- By remembering the glorious resurrection and victory of the Crucified,** that we never give up

"Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4)

During the Battle of Britain, the Germans rained down about thirty-five thousand bombs upon London during nightly air raids, causing terrifying fear and tremendous destruction in large parts of London.

For months, as sirens wailed out warnings of approaching German bombers, the general population automatically hurried toward the nearest Air Raid Shelter! People learned to look after one another during the nightly raids and the 'morning after' walk abouts and clean-ups.

After a terrible night of bombardment, an elderly woman was not seen in her neighborhood for several days. Her neighbors assumed that she had either been killed by the falling bombs or that she had gone to the countryside to escape the danger, disruption of life and noise.

Sometime later, a neighbor spotted the elderly woman walking down the street and expressed his happiness that she was alive and well.

"It's nice to see you back", he said. "I have not been away", she replied.

"Where have you been?" he asked. "I've been at home," said the woman.

"What have you been doing at home during the air raids?" inquired the neighbor.

"Sleeping," she answered. "How could you sleep with all the noise and explosions?" he asked.

"Oh", she replied, I was reading my Bible and found Psalms 121:4 where it declares that God doesn't slumber nor sleep, so I thought there was no point in both of us staying awake."

As the world gets more chaotic during these last days as fear abounds, may the Lord grant you the ability to rest in Him for truly He neither slumbers or sleeps as He watches over you!

**With love & prayers**

**Mona Singh**



# 6 Surprising Times you are Quoting the Bible

## 1. “A house divided against itself” (In Matthew 12)

Jesus tells unwise crowd, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” However the phrase didn’t enter the modern lexicon until it was quoted by Abraham Lincoln in his famous nomination acceptance speech of 1858. Addressing the contentious issue of slavery in the United States, he told an audience of Republican politicians that ‘a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.”

## 2. “Escape by the skin of one’s teeth” (Job 19:20)

This is one of the many proverbs that owe their origin to the colorful language of the Book of Job. The tormented hero Job is complaining about his woes. He has become, he says, so emaciated that “my bone cleaves to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.”

The proverbial meaning is that he has missed death by a tiny margin—as narrow as the (nonexistent) skin on a person’s teeth. But Biblical scholars have argued endlessly about what the phrase originally signified. Some argue for a more literal interpretation. Afflicted with sores from head to toe, Job is left with only the thin porcelain “skin” of his teeth unblemished.

## 3. “Gird one’s Loins”

Two archaic words come together in this phrase. Gird, from the Old English gyrdan, means to put a belt (or girdle) around something. Loins, from the Latin Lumbus, originally described the flanks of an animal and from the fourteenth century, those parts of the human body that, as medieval writer primly put it, “should be covered.” In Biblical times, when long robes were still in fashion, anyone embarking

on strenuous physical activity or going into battle ran a serious risk of tripping on a trailing hem and falling flat on his or her face. The solution? To tuck one’s robe into one’s belt and get ready for action (I.e., to gird one’s loins).

## 4. A “Behemoth” (Job 40:15-24)

The behemoth is a mysterious animal mentioned in the Book of Job. With bones “like bars of iron” and a tail “like a cedar,” this mighty beast was said to be able to suck the whole river Jordan into its mouth. Biblical scholars have long debated whether the behemoth is a mystical creature or just an exaggerated description of an ordinary animal (the most popular candidate is a hippopotamus). Whatever the original “behemoth” may have been, the name has become a metaphor for anything that reaches spectacular size.

## 5. A “Scapegoat” (Leviticus 16)

The Book of Leviticus describes the proper ceremonies to be observed on the Jewish Day of Atonement, when the land of Israel would be ritually cleansed of its sins. The procedure was that one goat her—the “scapegoat”—would be a symbolically loaded with all the misdeeds of the nation before being driven into the wilderness. This ceremony was said to have been carried out since the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.

## 6. “The Ends of the Earth”

Like most other ancient cultures, the ancient Israelites thought it obvious that since the earth was flat, it must have limits. “The end of the earth” therefore, appears repeatedly in the Old Testament as a way to describe the farthest reaches of the then-known world. When, in the Book of Job, God is said to “directs” his lightning unto the ends of the earth,” It’s just a poetic way of saying that God is in charge everywhere.

# HE'S BEING A CHRISTIAN!

By one of St. John's servants in India

We were leaving the train station at night when I saw a commotion in the street. A woman screaming and crying in a rickshaw\*. Next to the rickshaw a man, lying on the ground. He appears to have fallen. Traffic is stopped. Everyone is watching.

I give my bags to Peregrine and run up to the man. He is unconscious, but still breathing. A nasty wound on his head is bleeding and his breath smells of alcohol. I didn't have enough language to express everything I wanted to say to all the people standing around, so I got angry instead.

"What are you doing? Why are you just watching?" I shouted.

They tried to tell me that he was drunk and I should ignore him, but I told them that didn't matter. I bent down and as gently as I could, lifted him off the road to get him to a safe place. As I started to lift a rickshaw driver ran up and helped me by carrying his legs. We placed him on the sidewalk.

Someone suggested water, so I ran back to the station to buy a bottle. We used the water to bring him back to consciousness, and I tried to clean his wound. I got his wife to get him to drink a little. It was hard to access his injuries due to the drunkenness – he was only barely conscious, but whether from alcohol or from the head injury, I couldn't tell.

His wife continued to sob and cry out. I tried to have Peregrine talk to her, but she didn't know what to say to her and the wife didn't seem to want to talk anyway. Over and over people said things to the effect of "leave him alone, he doesn't deserve

it, he's drunk." But I was concerned about the head injury and possibly alcohol poisoning. He was not in a good state.

Eventually I got an auto-rickshaw driver to promise to take the man to the hospital. We loaded him up, propped against the seat, and his wife sat next to him. I tried to pay, but the driver wouldn't take it.

They left, and we left. I felt pretty bad about the whole thing – I wasn't sure what good I had done or whether I'd done it the right way. The wife especially had seemed ungrateful and I wondered if I had been butting in somewhere I shouldn't have been. But Peregrine told me something as we walked away that struck my heart. "When you first went up to him while he was lying on the road, two men were passing behind me. One of them said something about what you were doing, and the other one replied, 'He's being a Christian.'"

*That sentence, and the fact that someone could witness a brief interaction and have that come to their mind, has sat with me ever since.*

*"Ah," said the lawyer, wanting to win the point, "but who is my neighbor?"*



Jesus rose to the challenge. “Once upon a time,” he said, “a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and was set upon by brigands. They stripped him and beat him and ran off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, and when he saw him he went past on the opposite side. So too a Levite came by the place; he saw him too, and went past on the opposite side. But a traveling Samaritan came to where he was. When he saw him he was filled with pity. He came over to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Then he put him on his own beast, took him to an inn, and looked after him. The next morning, as he was going on his way, he gave the innkeeper two dinars. ‘Take care of him,’ he said, ‘and on my way back I’ll pay you whatever else you need to spend on him.’”

“Which of these three do you think turned out to be the neighbor of the man who was set upon by the brigands?”

“The one who showed mercy on him,” came the reply.

“Well,” Jesus said to him, “you go and do the same.”<sup>1</sup> So when he had washed their feet, he put on his clothes and sat down again.

“Do you know what I’ve done to you?” he asked. “You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and you’re right. That’s what I am. Well, then: if I, as your master and teacher, washed your feet just now, you should wash each other’s feet. I’ve given you a pattern, so that you can do things in the same way that I did to you...”

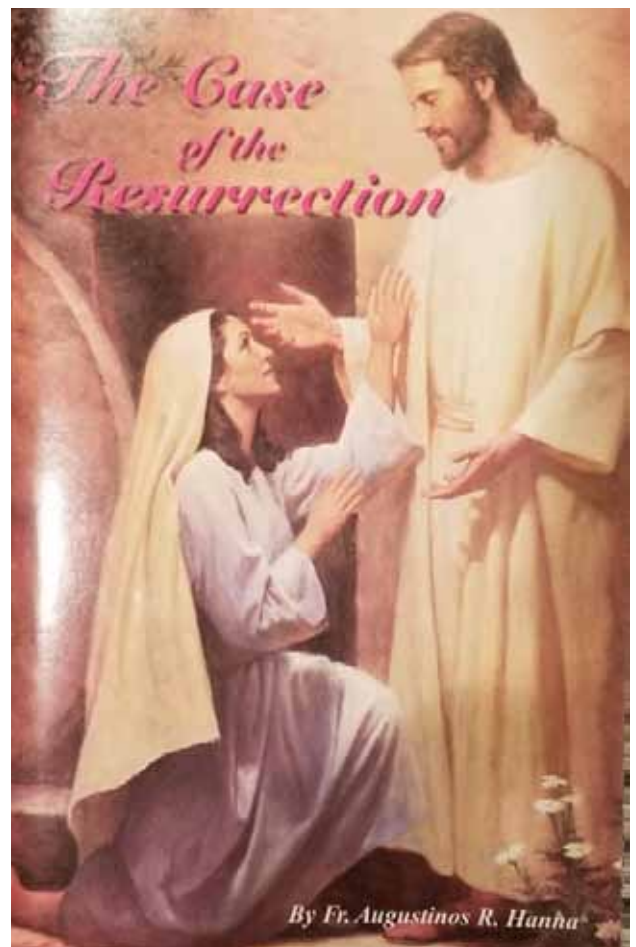
“Just as I have loved you, so you must love one another. This is how everybody will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other.”<sup>2</sup>  
Footnotes:

[1] Luke 10:29-37

[2] John 13:12-16, 34-35

\* A light two-wheeled hooded vehicle drawn by one or more people, used chiefly in Asian countries.

a vehicle similar to a three-wheeled bicycle, having a seat for passengers behind the driver.



## Warning from these 4- four S's

**This is a warning from four common sins or bad habits, which are wide-spread among all people, many believers and even servants. To make them easier to remember, we will put them to begin with the same letter “S”:**

1. Silver (money)
2. Sloth
3. Sex
4. Self



# Faith and Righteousness

By Dr. Emil Goubran



Then the Lord took him (Abram) outside and said “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if you can!”. Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness. (Gen 15:5-6). In the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, the scripture lists a host of saints who pleased God with their faith and were rewarded for being righteous.

## ***Now the question is; what is the relationship between faith and righteousness?***

**First**, we need to define the words faith and righteousness. **Faith** means confidence or **trust**, i.e., believing without doubt. It means we believe in God’s love and care for us, believe in His word and directions for our lives, and believe that He always keeps His promises to us. Therefore, trusting(faith) in God requires following His commandments and directions without any doubt.

**Righteousness** refers to “**good works**” reflecting the practical expression of **love**. The Lord said “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is exactly like it: ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Mat 22:37-39).

However, in the verse, the word “**credited** to him as righteousness” means that righteousness is imparted on Abraham by God Himself, which in turn means that there is no righteousness apart from faith in God. This also confirms that faith in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and His sacrifice on the cross for our salvation, is the only path to eternal life, since the Lord’s righteousness will be imparted on all who have **faith** in Him.

Therefore, those who love and have faith in God will keep (obey) His commandments, which in turn will lead them in the path of righteousness. Hence, Faith is a necessary first step toward Righteousness. Apostle Paul says “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (**righteousness**), which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (**by faith**).” (Eph. 2:10).

The very first human sin committed against God by Adam and Eve was that they believed (put their faith/trusted in) what the devil said to them: “But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:4-5). This contradicts what God has said to them: “You may freely eat of every tree in the garden, but you shall not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen 2:16-17).

Adam and Eve had to make a choice as to who should they believe and put their faith in. By putting their faith in devil’s words, they withdrew their trust (faith) from God and what He commanded them not to do, which in turn led to their disobedience to God’s commandment.

So the root of the first sin was loss of faith (trust) in God’s word. That is why in the epistle to the Hebrews, the scripture says “**And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe....**” (Heb 11:6).

In conclusion, faith is the natural pathway to righteousness through believing and obedience to God’s word and His commandments. The Lord Jesus Christ said “If you love me, keep my commandments.” (Joh 14:15)

# 10 Commandments for Deacons

By Deacon Mark Hanna



**1. According to the general conditions for deacons**, which St. Paul set, is the deacon must be serious, not double-tongued, nor greedy for money, have faith with a clear conscience, and blameless" (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Thus it is NOT permissible to be a slanderer, liar, to be angry with anyone or a smoker, talkative, trickster, joker, etc...

**2. It is mandatory for the deacon to arrive at Church** early (ten minutes before raising of the incense preparing for the service), and

before the absolution of the ministers. Otherwise it is not appropriate for the deacon to put on his service uniform.

3. Upon entering the church, the deacon should kneel down before the altar and pray, *"But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your Holy temple"* (Psalm 5:7).

**4. A schedule a be made and hung up in the church, in order to organize the deacons who serve on the Altar and those who read the Biblical readings and those serving outside the Altar.** Copies of this schedule should be given to all deacons so that it is followed by all. It is NOT permissible for any deacon to enter the Altar out of his turn. (Also, it is not permissible for anyone else who is not ordained as a deacon to enter to the Altar area).

**5. The deacon's uniform, "Tonia", should be washed and pressed (ironed) and complete with its red ribbon (badrashel), before service and the badrashel style should be uniform too.**

**6. A deacon should NOT move around in the church during the liturgy without a necessary reason.** Nor should a deacon engage in conversations or any unnecessary exchange of words during the Divine Liturgy.

**7. It is expected of a deacon to practice reading at home the readings of the church** (The Pauline, Katholicon, Praxis, Psalm, Gospel) so that if he is called upon to read in church, he reads properly, without mistakes or stuttering.

**8. It should be the duty of a sub-deacon to maintain order, do his best to suppress distracting sounds, and help assist people find a place to sit.**

**9. A deacon, especially in the rank of Absaltos and Ognostos should attend the deacons 'meetings.**

10. Little boys should NOT be allowed to dress as deacons unless their father (or teacher) dresses with them in order to keep them from moving, playing or talking.



## The Unique Christ & His Incomparability

**1. Unique in His Preaching:**  
"No man ever spoke like this Man" (John 7:46)

**2. Unique in His Power:**  
"You will find a colt tied, on which NO ONE has ever sat..." (Luke 19:30).

**3. Unique in His Passion:**  
"Now in the place where Jesus crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which NO ONE had yet been laid" (John 19:41) .



# 10 Essential Powers of the Blood of Christ

**1. Redemption and atonement:** *“In Him we have redemption through His Blood”* (Ephesians 1:7 & Colossians 1:14): “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood” (Rom 3:24, 25). See also **Leviticus 17:11, the master key of all the bloody sacrifices, “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.”**

**2. Forgiveness:** *“This is My blood which is shed for the remission of sins”* (Matthew 26:28; Col. 1:14); “Without shedding of blood there is NO remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

**3. Cleansing:** *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and **washed their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb**” (Revelation 7:14). & **“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”** (Psalm 51: 7, 8). **“Jesus Christ...who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”** (Revelation 1:5).

**4. Reconciliation:** *“By Him [Jesus] to reconcile all things to Himself...having made peace through the blood of His cross”* (Colossians 1:20).

**5. Victory over Satan:** *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 12:11).

**6. Justification:** *“Being justified freely by His grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus by His blood”* (Romans 3:24); and **Intercession of the blood:** “to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24).

**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”* (Galatians 6:14).

**8. Sanctification:** *“For by one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 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.”* (Exodus 12:13).

**10. The Right of Entering into Heaven:** “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19); and “these are the ones who...washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

By Pope Shenouda

# Why Do We Rejoice in Christ's Resurrection?

We rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ because it is a great victory over death. It is a restoration of the human nature to life, for God originally created man to live forever and not to die.

Therefore, the resurrection of Christ is a deposit of our resurrection. That is why St. Paul called Christ's resurrection "The first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20).

## **1- He is the first fruit and we follow Him:**

Someone may ask, "How can Christ be the first-fruit and many have been risen from the dead before Him? The son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:22), the son of the Shunammite whom Elisha raised after he had died (2 Kings 4:32-36). Moreover, there are three persons who were risen from the dead by the Lord Jesus Himself ...the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus and Lazarus. But all those people died again and they are still waiting for the general resurrection, while the resurrection of Christ is not followed by death.

## **2. The resurrection enhances the value of man and assures that his life does not end by his death:**

It confirms that there is another life after death, other than this earthly life. We conclude the creed saying, "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen". Thus, we can say that the most important thing in the resurrection is what is after the resurrection.

The resurrection proves that the human life has an extension in the other world and that death is just a stage in the human life. Death became a golden bridge between two lives, one of them is earthly and the other is heavenly. There is no doubt that the eternal life is much better because it is in heaven without sin or curse, in company with God and the angels and saints. It was described in the New Testament as, what an "Eye has not seen, nor an ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

For that, St. Isaac said, "The fear of death scares the foolish man, but the righteous desires death exactly as he desires life."

This is also what St. Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain...For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1: 21-23).

## **3. The resurrection changed the thought of people towards death,** for it became a departure to a better life, it became a pro-

motion and a desire for the righteous. After the resurrection of Christ, death lost its terror. The saints do not fear death nor its causes like sicknesses or the conspiracies of wicked people. Only the ungodly are those who are always frightened of death and the condemnation.

## **4. The resurrection is connected with faith:**

Atheists do not believe in it but believers trust that God is Almighty and can raise the dead as He created man, in the first place, from dust and created dust out of nothing.

## **5. Believing in the resurrection leads to the life of righteousness and virtues:**

The believer knows that he, or she, will stand before the throne of God in the Day of Judgment to give account about his/her deeds.

## **6. The resurrection is a compensation** for all the injustices and sufferings of the earth. It gives real comfort to us that we will see again and live with all our beloved family members and friends who passed away.

One of the blessings of the resurrection is that nothing is impossible, not only with God, but also with the believers. Another blessing is the desire to eternal life.

A third blessing is the transfiguration of the human nature, body and soul. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

## **7. St. Paul adds one more blessing saying that Jesus was risen from the dead for our justification"** (Rom. 4:25). His resurrection was the evidence of the acceptance of His redemption and salvation.

The Lord Jesus had to rise from the dead because He raised others. He proved His Divinity (Rom. 1:4). All the prophecies and types had to be fulfilled in His resurrection (See. Psa. 16:9, 10). The types of Jonah and Isaac were fulfilled in His resurrection.

Also, the resurrection of Christ was a necessity, because His Divinity parted not from His humanity for a moment nor a twinkle of an eye.

# Congratulations

## Baptisms



St. John Church congratulates her blessed children  
Ramy Hanna and Christine Sedky for the baptism  
of their baby boy

### Alexander (Daniel) Hanna

And the blessing of H.H. Pope Tawadros II to the child  
and his family. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless his life  
and grant him health and growth in the grace and a hap-  
py long lifeto his grandparents



St. John Church congratulates Dr. Michael Shehata and  
Dr. Marian, Geddo Dr. Mamdoh and Teta Dr. Hoda (in  
Chicago and Egypt) on the Baptism of their baby girl

### JOY

Wishing her a blessed Christian life full of joy and peace

### The 5th Anniversary of Fr. George Aziz:

St. John church congratulates Fr. George  
on his fifth anniversary in priesthood.  
Wishing him health, strength and long  
life filled with the Holy Spirit and a  
fruitful ministry.



St. John Church congratulates

### Archdeacon Thomas & Archdeacon Antonious

On their fifth Anniversary of  
ordination to serve the church;  
praying the Lord to grant them  
every blessing and reward them  
for their faithful services.



## Weddings



### Kiro Yehia & his bride Sandra Labeeb

Were untied in the holy marriage. St. John Church con-  
gratulates them praying the Lord Jesus to bless their life  
together in harmony, love and prosperity. Congratula-  
tions to their two blessed families.

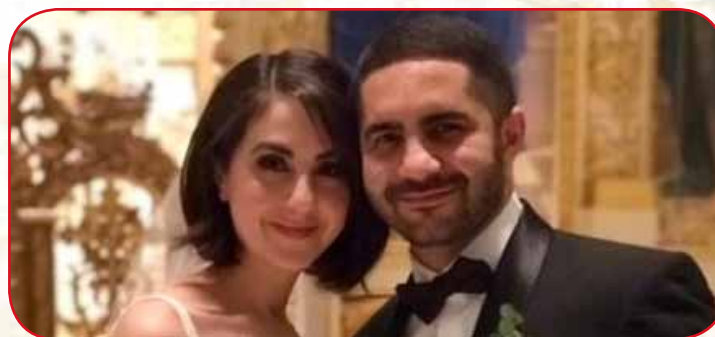
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St. John Church Congratulates

### Peter Gad & his bride Rana Kaliny

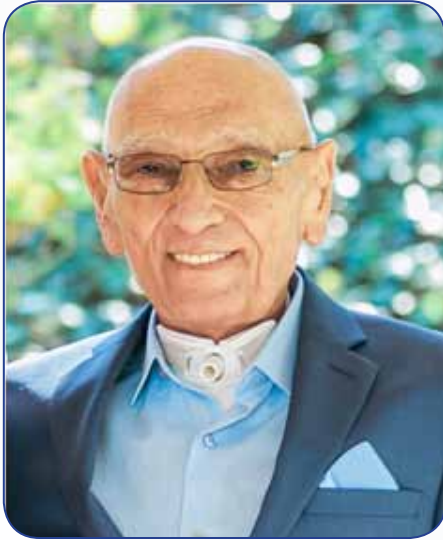
On their marriage, praying the Lord Jesus Christ to bless  
their new life together and grant them health, happiness,  
and long life in God's love and service.



St. John Church Congratulates

### Dr. Andrew Karas & his bride Nicole

Who are united together in the blessed matrimony; pray-  
ing the Lord to crown them with a happy, blessed life  
together full of love, joy and peace. The church also  
extends her congratulations to Dr. Randa Karas, Gamal  
and Elham Kostandy.



## God has a new Angel: **Dr. Wahib H. Faragalla**

With a heavy heart from the Faragalla Family, Dr. Wahib H. Faragalla passed away peacefully at home on February 2, 2018. Dr. Wahib has courageously battled cancer for 7 years, and God took his pain away and rewarded him for his suffering and sacrifice.

Dr. Wahib H. Faragalla had a successful Dental Practice specializing in Periodontology. He enjoyed his life and explored the world God created. His passions were hiking, running, traveling, and spending time with his devoted wife and 3 lovely Children. Dr. Faragalla touched many lives through his generosity, contagious personality, and beautiful smile. He was a big philanthropist always giving back to the church, his community, and various fundraising organizations such as American Heart Association and Cancer Research at City of Hope.

Dr. Faragalla's proudest moments were seeing all three of his children born, graduate college, married, and the birth of his 4 grandchildren. His biggest love was his wife.

**May 1, 1939 - February 2, 2018**

Dr. Wahib H. Faragalla is survived by his devoted wife, Nabila Z. Faragalla, with a successful, loving marriage of over 45 years. He has three children: John Faragalla married to Danielle Faragalla, Dianna Faragalla Padilla married to Richard Padilla and their two children Isabella and Gavin, and Christina Faragalla Mansour married to Tony Mansour and their two children Madison and John. May the Lord Jesus Christ repose his soul in the Paradise of delight and comfort his wife, children and grandchildren.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness." (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

### **For our mother, grandmother, and great grandmother**



### **Alvina Karas**

A year has passed since your departure, and not a day has lapsed without thinking of you, your love, your counsel, and simply your presence. You are greatly missed. Pray for us so the Lord may grant us comfort and the understanding that we will someday be reunited Your loving children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. A Liturgy in her remembrance was held at St. John Coptic Orthodox Church in Covina, California on Saturday, February 24, 2018.



### **George Gad Ayad**

**March 21, 1931 – February 10, 2018**

Mr. George Gad departed to Paradise. He was the husband of Mrs. Nagat Gad, father of departed Sonia Gad wife of Soheil Hanna, Nihal Sedaros wife of Melad Sedaros and Nevine Bishara and brother in law of Dr. Rafaat, Dr. Rashad Wasef and Ramsis Wassif, Nabila Soliman and Souraya Sedky. St. John Church prays that the Lord repose his soul and comfort the family.



## St. John Coptic Orthodox Church (Covina, CA)

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**St John Covina**

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Thank you for your support  
Please pray for us

ان اردت أن تتابع مواعيد القداسات و  
العشيات و الاجتماعات و المناسبات  
المختلفة أو أي نشاطات في الكنيسة  
يمكنك الاشتراك في مجموعة التنبيهات  
بالغة العربية

**" مار يوحنا – كوفينا "**

طريقة الاشتراك :

1. استخدم هذا الكود



و أتبع التعليمات

1. او ارسل رسالة بهذا الكود :

**@sjarab**

لهذا الرقم

**81010**



نشكركم لتعاونكم  
أذكرونا في صلواتكم